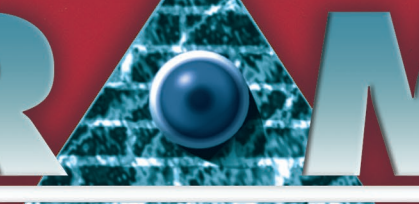


PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/90 April '16

AFTER THE END



ARE WE NOT MEN?

by Jason "PK" Levine

ROBOTS AFTER THE END
by Roger Burton West

**WARPING MONSTERS
INTO MUTANTS**
by Peter V. Dell'Orto

THE MERCY DOLLS
by David L. Pulver

SURVIVAL AT THE END
by Christopher R. Rice

GOOD OLD DAYS
by Matt Riggsby

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

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Coming upon the scene with force of a thousand-megaton bomb, *GURPS After the End* has arrived – and the world will never be the same! *Pyramid* builds upon that foundation with our first issue devoted to bolstering your *After the End* campaign.

Changed as we have been by the end times into twisted, powerful forms, sometimes we look into the mirror and ask ourselves, *Are We Not Men?* Jason "PK" Levine – mastermind behind the *GURPS After the End* series – expands the variety of mutations possible with over two dozen new options. Roll randomly on the table or select your options . . . then use the included list of suggested ways for Freakishness to manifest itself!

GURPS Reign of Steel: Will to Live updated the classic *GURPS Reign of Steel* campaign to *GURPS Fourth Edition* game mechanics. Now Roger Burton West – author of *Will to Live* – looks at the dangers of *Robots After the End*. Tap *GURPS After the End 2: The New World* for adventure ideas and obstacle mechanics specific to each zone, plus check out the guidelines for bringing *Reign of Steel* robots to an *After the End* – including one sample robot update.

The Mercy Dolls – friend or foe? That depends on how sick you are! In this issue's Eidetic Memory, David L. Pulver – *GURPS Y2K* contributor – describes an *After the End* setting utterly altered by an incurable disease. Learn about two key factions trying to restore civilization and the android-caretakers programmed to destroy the virus by any means necessary.

With only a few mechanical tweaks and a name swap, you too can begin *Warping Monsters Into Mutants*. Peter V. Dell'Orto – co-author of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1* – shows you how to transform the creatures from the *Dungeon Fantasy* series into beings suitable for any over-the-top post-apocalyptic campaign, including three sample adaptations to inflict upon your wasteland warriors!

Sometimes living through the day requires more than battling crazies; for quieter times, you need to know about *Survival at the End*. Prolific *Pyramid* contributor Christopher R. Rice adds new and expanded details to the survival tactics presented in *The New World*, including farming, trap-setting, fishing, hunting, water purification, and fire-starting. Plus, add realistic details with the suggestions for gear substitutions.

This month's Random Thought Table provides an epic conundrum suitable for adding to any post-apocalyptic campaign, while Short Bursts presents a vignette about future nostalgia in the forthcoming *Car Wars* universe. With *After the End* and *Pyramid*, tomorrow is just beginning!

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FROM THE EDITOR

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE APOCALYPSE

Helping to guide a roleplaying game line is like engaging in a conversation. We release something new and cool. The fans pick it up and start doing interesting and innovative things. We notice and see what we can do to help them with fresh goodies or add-ons. The audience gives their thoughts about those items, and the cycle continues.

I was reminded of this process as we've seen an explosion of activity on the forums thanks to the recent unveiling of *GURPS After the End*. Its arrival was foretold two months ago with *Pyramid* #3/88: *The End Is Nigh*, followed shortly by the release of *GURPS After the End 1: Wastelanders* and *GURPS After the End 2: The New World*. This issue thus concludes the immediate rush of official material for your post-apocalyptic needs.

Yet, as I write these words, fans are already making the *After the End* series their own. There are ideas for pushing it to new realms, campaign settings, rule tweaks, and even using the game mechanics outside of a traditional post-apocalyptic campaign.

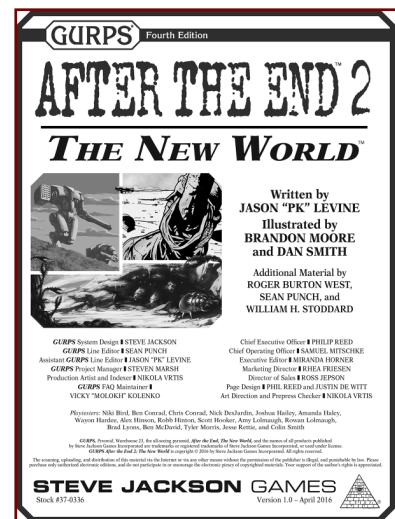
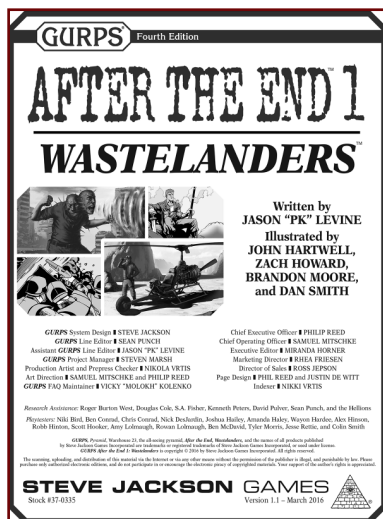
There have also been ideas for desired follow-ups. We can't promise that all of those will see the light of day, but I will note that at least once or twice I said, "Oooh! I'd love to see that supplement myself!"

Not all suggestions are destined to be full-fledged supplements, of course. Some ultimately will find fruition here in the pages of *Pyramid*. Many an article began life with a query letter stating, "I've noticed on the forums that some people are really interested in . . ."

This issue of *Pyramid* wraps up our contribution to opening a discussion of fast-paced pick-up-and-play post-apocalyptic gaming. Its star-studded contents offer lots of material that can find life in an *After the End* campaign (or beyond!). Now, we see what you think of what we've done, and go from there.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

As we noted above, we love to hear from you! What do you think of this bold, new world of post-apocalyptic gaming? What would you like to see more of, or where should we go from here? Let us know via private short-wave textual radio directed to pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the *GURPS* gang gathered at forums.sjgames.com.



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CONTINUED EVOLUTION

When first building a mutant PC, the player selects all mutations. The GM may veto any which don't exist in the setting or that he's flagged as NPC-only, but cannot dictate what the character has *or* ask the player to roll randomly.

However, the GM *is* responsible for deciding how easy it is to develop new mutations later, in play, by choosing one of the following options and ensuring that the players know it *before* the game begins. It applies to wastelanders who started off as mutants *and* to those "infected" in play via mutagen who want to add new abilities.

Player-Guided Evolution: Mutants continue to evolve in ways that are strange and bizarre to the character . . . but the *player* has full control over it and may spend earned points to add specific new mutations. This is the default assumption in an *After the End* game.

Random Evolution: As above, but the player's only decision is whether and when to begin developing a new

ability. After he declares this, the GM will secretly roll to see what mutation the character will eventually add (or improve, if applicable). The player then blindly commits earned points to this new ability until the cost is covered, at which point the GM reveals it. This method keeps mutation unpredictable, both in and out of game, and encourages players of mutants to focus on improving their "normal" traits.

No Evolution: Whether you were born with your abilities or gained them later, that's it – you're done. Mutants cannot spend character points to add further mutations, though the truly desperate can still turn to mutagen (if it exists). Alternatively, you may be able to "grow just a little," using one of the methods above but with a lifetime cap on the points you can spend *or* number of abilities you can add. By heavily limiting new mutations, this option can keep the game from turning into "supers in the wastes."

Suggested Oddities: muscular ridges around neck; peculiarly long or thin neck; widely spaced eyes.

5, 2-3 – Sound-Wave Recall. 8 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: neck bulges (from oversized or coiled vocal chords); outsize Adam's apple that vibrates when breathing or speaking; wide, flat tongue (enough to be noticeable if mouth is open at all).

5, 4-5 – Tiny Sight. 12 points (FR 3).

You can magnify close details by 1,000x, up to 1' away, effectively turning your vision into a high-quality microscope. Active use gives +2 to any roll to identify or analyze things like diseases, mutants, zombies, etc. – though you'll have to get close! – and *also* counts as anything from improvised to basic lab equipment, depending on how "microscope-focused" the scientific task is.

Statistics: Microscopic Vision 3 [15] + Freakishness 3 [-3].

Suggested Oddities: deep, recessed eye sockets; incredibly tiny or no pupils; narrow, slitted eyes.

5, 6 or 6, 1 – Touchy. 8 points (FR 2).

Your skin is extremely sensitive, letting you pick up things like the faint vibrations of footsteps or the difference between two pieces of fabric with an IQ roll. You get +4 on any task that relies on your sense of touch.

Statistics: Sensitive Touch [10] + Freakishness 2 [-2].

Suggested Oddities: flat, bulbous fingertips; full body rash (from easily irritated skin); skin constantly rippling/twitching/crawling.

6, 2-3 – Visual Filters. 4 points (FR 1).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27.

Suggested Oddities: reversed eyelids (bottom one thicker and used to blink); split pupils; translucent film over eye.

6, 4-5 – Whiskers. 8 points (FR 2).

See *Wastelanders*, p. 27. This is not automatically "cat whiskers," though those make a wonderful oddity; it can be the result of sensitive body hair, skin, extremities, etc.

Suggested Oddities: excessive, fine body hair; stiff, long facial hair (similar to cat whiskers); unusually long eyebrows and eyelashes.

6, 6 – X-Ray Specs. 14 points (FR 4).

You can see through walls and inside containers via emitting radiation. This allows you to see through up to a foot of solid matter, though it's stopped by lead and reduced somewhat by similarly dense metals. However, this is a close-range, low-resolution ability; your Vision roll is modified as follows:

Modifiers: A base -4. Another -4 to spot fine details. A further -1 per yard of distance (to the thing being observed, not to the wall or container). All other Vision-based traits or mutations also apply; e.g., Red Sight (p. 11) would give +2 to spot anything warmer than room temperature.

One complication is that you irradiate whatever you scan. This can be a good thing or a bad thing depending on how you use it! Anything X-rayed loses 1d-3 RP (minimum 0) immediately. Use DX at -4 or Innate Attack (Gaze) to aim this in combat, though note that you take the same -1/yard range penalty previously mentioned.

This is also an attack mutation.

Statistics: Penetrating Vision 2 (Blockable, Lead, -10%; Link, +10%; Short-Range 1, -10%; Temporary Disadvantage, Bad Sight, Low Resolution, -25%) [13] + Toxic Attack 10d-30 (Link, +10%; Radiation, +25%; Short-Range 1, -10%) [5] + Freakishness 4 [-4]. *Notes:* The Toxic Attack does 1d-3 RP because every 10 rads converts to 1 RP. Bad Sight (Low Resolution) is from p. 12 of *GURPS Powers: Enhanced Senses*.

Suggested Oddities: faint glow within the mouth; multiple tiny pupils; sore on forehead (from where the radiation emits).

THE MERCY DOLLS

These sophisticated paramedical and nursing androids were among the last desperate attempts to deal with infected populations. Hundreds were manufactured, but most were destroyed during the nuclear apocalypse. However, a few survived. Capable of enduring environments that would kill humans, and detecting pockets of plague, their true power may be the memories of the ancient world locked within their brains . . .

PLAYING WITH DOLLS

Object of a Quest: There's an outbreak of Blood Moon virus! The party are on a quest to locate (or repair) a Mercy Doll to help quell the outbreak.

Player Character: The Mercy Doll template and meta-trait come to 250 points, making them suitable for play in a campaign with experienced adventurers built on that baseline. Of course, the party had better not have any obvious mutants in it!

Nemesis: A Mercy Doll makes a dangerous enemy. A peaceful (more or less) village of mutants might face extermination at the hands of one (or more) dolls, who for such a task might even be allied with a human gang or paramilitary, particularly if the human group also harbors anti-mutant prejudices.

Ally or Kingmaker: With their advanced medical knowledge, tireless energy, and ability to treat the ill without getting sick themselves, a Mercy Doll is a useful ally.

The Robot With No Name: A Mercy Doll may stalk into a dusty town, mission unknown, leaving everyone on edge. Perhaps it's seeking to exterminate a mutant who is a carrier of the Blood Moon virus, or it's looking for clues to a hidden cache of medical supplies . . .

Mercy Dolls are humanoid robots. They were developed from humanoid nursing androids introduced as companions for the elderly and chronically ill in the years just before the End. They were equipped with sophisticated volitional AIs to anticipate their patients' needs. The majority were given female features for psychological reasons, although some male forms also exist. The usual design has a semi-sculpted body. Its torso and limbs, although humanoid, are clearly machinery, but its head and hands are those of a well-designed mannequin. If a Mercy Doll is fully clothed and wearing some face-obscuring headgear (e.g., goggles and a hood or hat) – not uncommon for wastelands or in winter – it can easily pass as a human, even up close! However, in tight quarters, in good light, or if undressed, it is obviously a machine. Furthermore, the Mercy Dolls do not smell like humans; animals such as dogs (or mutants with Discriminatory Smell) certainly won't be fooled. A Geiger counter also will detect the radiation from the power supply if used within a few yards.

Their energy sources, located in their torso, are sealed nuclear power units containing radiothermal generators powered by a nugget of plutonium-238, which were intended to let them operate in the world's crumbling infrastructure without

requiring maintenance. Their RTG power plants started with an 88-year half-life, and three generations after the End still retain most of their original power.

They possess myoelectric muscles strong enough to hold a berserk patient still. Their fingertips conceal retractable scalpels. Their eyes are infrared sensors that can instantly read a patient's temperature. Their "stomachs" can store a supply of plasma or whole blood, frozen, for transfusions.

Their canines are sheathed with hypodermic needles and a refillable drug suite that once may have included clotting, antibiotic, and even narcotic agents but now is most likely empty (unless supplies can be found somewhere). Even so, their sterile retractable fangs can take blood samples. Their profiling enhancement includes an extensive database of taste signatures for different diseases and medical conditions (+8 to analyze them), including, of course, both the active Blood Moon virus and the dormant Blood Moon Curse. They can identify the presence of mutations (and specific types if they've encountered them before) and perform feats such as telling if two people are related to one another through tasting each person's blood.

The Mercy Dolls designed to deal with the plague were programmed with these specific mission parameters:

1. Travel to seek out the Blue Moon virus and its variants.
2. Run diagnostics on humans.
3. Treat those exposed to the virus or other illnesses.
4. Euthanize those who have succumbed to the virus.
5. Destroy the bodies of those who died (or were euthanized) to prevent its spread.
6. Cooperate with and render assistance, especially medical assistance, to those individuals or groups who will facilitate performance of the above mission directives.

Mercy Dolls possess Pacifism with the Species-Specific limitation – it applies to humans, but not to mutants, who they don't consider human.

Mercy Doll Robot (TL10)

230 points

This meta-trait only describes the physical characteristics of the typical Mercy Doll. Use the *Mercy Doll Personality* (below) to add mental and social features.

Most Mercy Dolls have been in the field. As a result, many are badly damaged, losing body parts or functionality. Others remain in "as new" conditions, having spent time trapped in medical bunkers or enclaves until released by scavengers.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+3 [30]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+7 [14]; RP+10 [10].

Advantages: AI [32]; Ambidexterity [5]; Discriminatory Taste (Profiling, +50%) [15]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; DR 5 [25]; High Manual Dexterity 2 [10]; Infravision [10]; Machine [25]; Microscopic Vision 2 [10]; Payload 1 [1]; Radio (Secure, +20%) [12]; Sealed [15]; Sensitive Touch [10]; Sharp Claws (Switchable, +10%) [6]; Sharp Teeth [1].

Perks: Accessories (Personal computer; Refrigeration system in Payload; Surgical instruments). [3]

Disadvantages: Electrical [-20]; Unnatural Features 3 [-3]; Vulnerability (Electricity, x2) [-30].

WASTELAND SURVIVAL PERKS

Here are a few perks for those in the wilderness.

Hunter's Strike

Prerequisites: Any weapon skill 16+ and Stealth 16+.

If your prey bolts while hunting (*The New World*, p. 31), you ignore the skill cap of 9 for melee weapons or bulk penalty for ranged weapons during a Move and Attack, for your *first* attack.

In a Pinch†

Prerequisites: Skill 16+ and Scrounging 16+.

Whenever you use a skill to improvise equipment, treat it as *basic* equipment instead. When you have *no* equipment, treat it as improvised equipment. This doesn't mean you can make fire magically appear, but rather you can make do with nearby materials. You must specialize by either skill or task. For example, you could specialize in Survival (Island/Beach) allowing you to light fires, boil water, husk coconuts, etc. using improvised equipment as if they were basic equipment. Similarly, In a Pinch (Fire-starting) allows you to use *any* skill with this perk to start fires, as long as you know it (and Scrounging) at 16+.

Lay of the Land

Prerequisites: Tracking 16+ and either Area Knowledge or Survival.

Whenever you need to roll against Tracking to locate game to hunt (*The New World*, p. 31), there is no need to roll as long as your *effective* skill level remains at 16+. The only applies in areas covered by your Area Knowledge skill(s) or terrain types covered by your Survival skill(s).

One with Nature

Prerequisites: HT 10+ and either Area Knowledge, Naturalist, or Survival 16+.

Whenever you roll a critical failure on a gathering skill that result in injury, make an HT-based skill roll at -5. Success means you *ignore* the ill effects of your failure and treat it as a normal failure. If disease or radiation is an issue, subtract your margin of success on this roll from your margin of failure to determine the number of tainted meals you have.

Finally, potable water can be found *naturally* (even in water-sparse environments). *Water seeps* are small holes dug in dry river or lake beds or beside otherwise undrinkable bodies of water. A minimum depth of 2' is typical. Water collects slowly in the hole and uses the ground as a purifier. This requires a roll against **Naturalist** or **Survival** with a penalty equal to the original roll to find water (*The New World*, p. 31).

Some plants, notably the tropical "water vine" (either *cissus hypoglauca* or *vitis tiliifolia*), trap water within their woody vines. Each such vine can provide a 1/4 to 1/2 cup of water when fully drained. Sphagnum moss has naturally antiseptic properties, making the water it collects safe to drink (see *Nature's Bounty*, p. 28, for more uses).

Another method for finding natural water is a *rain catch*. Rain catches are open containers, plastic sheeting, and similar vessels left in the rain. It takes an approximately 3.25

square-foot area to accumulate one gallon of water per 1/2" of rainfall. For example, a garbage bag canted to the side so that rainwater runoff collects in a canteen provides 1.07 gallons of water from 1" of rainfall. Note that tainted rain produces tainted water!

FIRE-STARTING

The GM should assume that personal basics (p. B288) have butane-less lighters with intact flints (treat as flint and steel for starting times; p. 33). Lacking matches or such improvised gear, fire can still be made as it has been for thousands of years – with friction.

Having a fire can mean life or death in the wilderness, but *The New World* sweeps this under typical **Survival** tasks. Should the GM want a more detailed method, use the following system.

1. Roll against the better of **Per** at -5, **Naturalist** at -3, or **Survival** to locate appropriate kindling if you have none. This takes 1d minutes in most climates. If constructing a fire-bow, pump drill, etc., roll against **Machinist** at +1 or **Survival** at -1 to construct a working device. Optionally, prepared tinder ("fuzz sticks," char cloth, magnesium shavings, petroleum infused cotton balls rolled in sawdust, etc.) can be created with a roll against **Naturalist** at -3, or **Survival**. Done properly, this gives a bonus equal to margin of success (up to +4 to skill rolls for step 2).

2. If you have a fire bundle or coals from another fire, skip to step 3. Otherwise, spend the requisite amount of time (see the table on p. 33) for the fire-starting method and make a roll against **IQ** at -4, **Per** at -5, **Naturalist** at -3, or **Survival**, *plus* modifiers for method. Accelerants *halve* times in most cases, but some high-tech methods (such as using road flares or gasoline) *quarter* it. *Double* this time if *any* of the components are not dry. Completely wet kindling can only be lit by high-tech methods (e.g., magnesium sticks, blowtorches, etc.)

or with the help of accelerants. The GM may allow a roll at -10 and *quadruple* starting times when using low-tech methods to ignite wet kindling. For every three minutes using any friction method, lose 1 FP (round up; minimum of 1 FP).

Success means you've lit a flame and proceed to step 3. Failure means you have to start over and wasted materials equal to (10% × *twice* margin of failure); critical failure causes 1 point of injury (*1d* if using volatile accelerants!)

3. Make a second roll against **IQ** at -1, **Per** at -2, **Naturalist**, or **Survival** at +3 to keep the fire going. If the wind is blowing over 10 mph, add a -1 per 10 mph (round up). This requires a minimum of *twice* the time you spent during step 2. On a success, proceed to step 4. Failure means the flame went out, though the kindling can be reused. Failure by 3 or *more* means the kindling has been consumed. Critical failure causes injury per step 2.

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