

**GURPS**<sup>®</sup>

Fourth Edition

# TRANSHUMAN SPACE

## TRANSHUMAN MYSTERIES<sup>™</sup>



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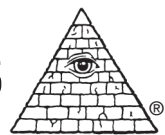
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*I'll give you a hint. Contradictions do not exist. Whenever you think that you are facing a contradiction, check your premises. You will find that one of them is wrong.*

*– Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged*

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# INTRODUCTION

Transhuman Space is an amazingly rich setting for role-playing games. It offers nearly a century of historical backstory, growing out of plausible extrapolation from the present, including technological advances that have carried humanity throughout the solar system and begun to transform human nature itself. But that very richness can make it perplexing to actually use! Confronted with all this exotic detail, players may find it hard to decide what sort of characters to create, and game masters what sort of campaign to run.

*One must not put a loaded rifle on the stage if no one is thinking of firing it.*

– Anton Pavlovitch Chekhov

One genre that fits the setting surprisingly well is mystery. The emphasis on investigation works splendidly in a setting where information is a vital resource, and control of information a major political issue. Technological advances create opportunities for entirely new sorts of crime; dealing with these crimes gives players an opportunity to figure out how this exotic world works. And the same applies to cultural changes that make some of today's crimes perfectly legal, but some now commonplace activities into serious offenses.

At the same time, both criminals and detectives in Transhuman Space have to use different methods. Most detectives need to master one or more arcane scientific methods of investigation, such as data searches, forensic nanotechnology, genetics, or memetic analysis. And serious criminals have to know the capabilities of detectives, and plan their crimes to thwart them, using methods borrowed from espionage and covert operations. A large part of *Transhuman Mysteries* is about game mechanics for concealing and revealing crimes.

Focusing not just on criminal investigations, but on a specific kind of crimes, helps with all the other key choices that the GM needs to make: where specifically to base the campaign, what sort of investigators are suited to it, and what sort of problems to confront them with. Players, in turn, can work together to come up with a suitable team of detectives and to make sure they have the necessary resources. As the campaign develops, both the players and the GM can explore the further reaches of Transhuman Space.

In this volume, the series of supplements by David Pulver and others are cited as

*Transhuman Space*. The setting itself is referred to as Transhuman Space (without boldface or italic type), but campaigns exploring that setting as *Transhuman Space* campaigns.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

William H. Stoddard lives in San Diego, California, where he has been active in roleplaying games since the 1970s. He's now running his second *Transhuman Space* campaign. His previous *GURPS* books include *GURPS Steampunk*, *GURPS Fantasy*, *GURPS Supers*, *GURPS Urban Magics*, and several others that he co-authored, contributed to, or compiled. He also serves as vice president of the Libertarian Futurist Society, which gives annual awards for libertarian science fiction.

## Special Thanks

The author is grateful to the players in his first *Transhuman Space* campaign for permission to use their characters in vignettes, and for letting him practice on them: Eben Brooks (*Neville Clarke*), Tony Fincher (*Louis Bauchet*), Steph Pennington (*Gianni Fiori*), Tim Sallume (*Blake*), and Risa Yardas (*Aki Nakamura*).

## About GURPS

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.



**Perks:** Style Familiarity (Canine Police Combat; see p. 11) [1].

• One of Biting Mastery‡, Ground Guard, Teamwork, or Unusual Training (Kiai), all [1].

**Disadvantages:** -15 points chosen from among Duty [varies], Honesty [-10\*], Jealousy [-10], Overconfidence [-5\*], Sense of Duty (Handler or Squad) [-2 or -5], or Stubbornness [-5].

**Skills:** Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]; Intimidation (A) Will+2 [8]; Jumping (E) DX+1 [2]; and Sumo Wrestling (A) DX+1 [4].

• A further 16 points chosen from among Free Fall or Stealth, both DX/A; Karate, DX/H; Area Knowledge (local community) or Savoir-Faire (Police), both IQ/E; Swimming, HT/E; Lifting or Running, both HT/A; Kiai, HT/H§; Search, Survival (any land), Tracking, or Urban Survival, all Per/A; or Detect Lies, Per/H¶.

**Techniques:** One of Disarming (H) Sumo Wrestling+1 [2], Feint (H) Brawling+1 [2], Trip (H) Sumo Wrestling Parry [2], or Wrench (Limb) (H) ST-3 [2].

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† These modifiers are cumulative with racial modifiers for a K-10A postcanine.

‡ Only useful if Karate is chosen as an optional skill.

§ Must take Unusual Training perk.

¶ Receives +3 when using Discriminatory Smell as Empathy from within 2 yards of subject.

### Customization Notes

This lens is always stacked with the K-10A Postcanine template (*Transhuman Space: Changing Times*, p. 50).

## Private Eye

100 points

You're a classic freelance investigator, for hire to anyone who can pay your fee. In most jurisdictions you have an ambiguous relationship with the police: you're in competition with them to solve crimes, but a good relationship with them is a valuable asset for you – and a bad one can destroy your career. In very libertarian jurisdictions you may take the place of the police entirely! You use as much modern gear as you can afford, but often your greatest resources are hunches and dogged persistence.

**Attributes:** DX+1 [20]; IQ+1 [20]; HT+1 [10].

**Advantages:** Ally (25% of own points; 15 or less; Minion, +50%) [5]. • Another 30 points chosen from among Alcohol Tolerance [1], Contacts (Police or Street) [Varies], Danger Sense [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] or Very Fit [15], Rapid Healing [5], Reputation (Useful freelancer) [Varies], Single-Minded [5], Smooth Operator [15/level], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

**Disadvantages:** -25 points chosen from among Addiction (Cigarettes or Minor nanodrugs) [-5] or (Alcohol – see p. 14) [-10], Bad Temper [-10\*], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Debt [-1/level], Overconfidence [-5\*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Reputation (Loose cannon) [Varies], Secret [Varies], Sense of Duty (Friends or Business Partners) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Wealth (Struggling) [-10], or Workaholic [-5].

**Skills:** Criminology (A) IQ+2 [8] and Forensics (H) IQ [4]. • A further 28 points chosen from among Beam Weapons (Pistol) or Guns (Pistol), both DX/E; Computer Operation, IQ/E; Administration, Electronics Operation

(Communications, Media, or Surveillance), Interrogation, Research, Shadowing, or Streetwise, all IQ/A; Observation or Search, both Per/A; or any unarmed combat skill.

### Customization Notes

A typical Ally is a Golematic Janus (p. 17) installed in a microframe in the private eye's office.

With a few changes, this lens can be used for a plainclothes police officer. Add Legal Enforcement Powers 1 [5] as a required Advantage and Duty (9 or less) [-5] as a required Disadvantage; under optional Disadvantages, change Code of Honor (Professional) [-5] to Code of Honor (Police) [-5]. It's not impossible for a police officer to have Debt, but it's a personal circumstance, not part of the literary/cinematic archetype.



## Uniformed Police Officer

125 points

Your duties are basically the same as those of police for the past couple of centuries: keeping the peace, dealing with emergencies, and apprehending criminals. But you have much more sophisticated tools for the job, including nearly constant communication with the rest of the force.

**Attributes:** ST+1 [10]; DX+1 [20]; HT+1 [10].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Per+1 [5].

**Advantages:** Ally (100% of own points; Constantly Available; Minion, +50%) [30]; Fit [5]; and Legal Enforcement Powers 1 [5]. • Another 30 points chosen from among Combat Reflexes [15], Contact (Snitch) [Varies], Fearlessness [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Police Rank [5/level], Rapid Healing [5], or increase Fit to Very Fit [10].

**Disadvantages:** Duty (9 or less) [-5]. • Another -10 points chosen from among Addiction (Cigarettes or Very minor nanodrugs) [-5], Bad Temper [-10\*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Police) [-5], Compulsive Carousing [-5\*], Gluttony [-5\*], Hidebound [-5], Impulsiveness [-10\*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Secret (Misconduct) [Varies], Selfish [-5\*], Sense of Duty (Family or Squad) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

# THE ART OF INVISIBILITY

Crime is a difficult business in Transhuman Space. The increasing power of investigative methods (see *You Know My Methods*, pp. 19-27) makes it difficult to bring off a crime on the spur of the moment. Successful criminals and criminal gangs function more like highly trained intelligence operatives of the 20th century than like street thugs. The ones who survive need brains *as well as* ruthlessness.

## Security: The Low-Tech Option

Paradoxically, one way for criminals to get around the surveillance capabilities of 2100 A.D. is to rely on low-tech methods. An investigator whose digital ally can scan hacked computer files in seconds may be at a loss to deal with handwritten paper records! Some examples of this kind of retrotech security are as follows:

- Talking in face-to-face meetings, with all electronics turned off.
- Paying by barter, with valuable raw materials, or in favors or promises of favors.
- Beating or garroting a foe rather than shooting him.
- Keeping handwritten records on paper, or committing them to human memory.
- Hiding records or valuables behind mechanical locks, with no circuits to be hacked.

## AVOIDING SURVEILLANCE

Privacy is difficult to arrange in most places. Imaging and audio devices are incredibly cheap and too tiny to see with the unaided eye. Civil libertarian societies restrict their use by law enforcement, but the sensors are often in place, waiting for activation by a search warrant – or an intelligence agency that doesn't bother with warrants, or a private hacker. Private businesses are usually free to monitor their own property for security purposes. In Fifth Wave societies, nearly every person has a virtual interface with a built-in camera. Satellite cameras acquire continuous real-time images of cities and roads, with lower resolution, but enough to track a person or vehicle, often by the target's IR signature.

An improvised privacy measure is the use of varicloth, especially if it's programmed for camouflage. A quick duck into a store or bar can cover a change of pattern. Professionals may use

chameleon suits for the same purpose. A more serious approach uses IR cloaking to disguise a human signature, while sightline tracker software (p. 17) can help evade surveillance.

Another challenge is the use of security systems programmed or trained to identify the body movements of people planning violence or crime, or to track people by their distinctive gaits; this is treated as Body Language skill. An improvised countermeasure involves putting pebbles in the toes of one's shoes, or otherwise breaking up one's gait; this gives -1 to Body Language rolls to track such a person. A much more elaborate countermeasure uses a puppet implant controlled by an AI programmed to simulate the moves of an innocent person; treat this as Acting skill (trained or a skill set) in a Quick Contest against Body Language.

## COVERING TRAILS

Detectives have been examining physical evidence since the late nineteenth century, and the forensic science of 2100 A.D. has incredibly advanced tools for doing so (see *Forensic Methods*, pp. 23-24). A commonplace trick for criminals is to carry a can of domestic nanocleaner, which gives -3 to Forensics rolls by removing bloodstains, skin flakes, and even DNA traces. Industrial nanocleaner has the same effect, but can handle bigger residues – even an entire corpse. Either product leaves the area abnormally sterile. Forensic nanotechnology does a more artistic job, but can't be left to operate on its own; it gives +5 to the user's Forensics skill for removing evidence. Treat this as a Quick Contest of the modified Forensic skill of the investigator and the person trying to thwart him. The base time to erase evidence is 1 hour per square yard; taking extra time (p. B346) gives bonuses. Either domestic or industrial nanocleaner takes only 1 minute per square yard.

With both domestic and industrial nanocleaner, a failure on the investigator's Forensics roll by less than the -3 penalty, or an Observation roll, will spot that the area has been scrubbed; an unmodified Forensics roll can be made to identify the brand of nanocleaner used. This doesn't work if the area was scrubbed with forensic nano.

Cruder methods of covering a trail are available. For example, human beings constantly shed hair, skin flakes, and other substances; going through a public place with a vacuum-based sampler can collect tissue from hundreds of people. Spraying it over a crime scene can mask the DNA of the criminals and victims: -10 to Electronics Operation (Medical) or Forensics. Most forensics teams will take extra time to partially overcome this contamination penalty.

*The police were answerable to nobody but themselves, but paid private detectives were compelled to do more or less as they were told.*

*– Dorothy Sayers, **Gaudy Night***

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