GURPS

Fourth Edition

TransHuman SPACE

PERSONNEL FILES 3™

WILD JUSTICE™

Written by **PHIL MASTERS**
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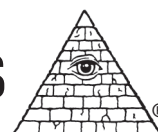Illustrated by **LOKARIAN, CHRIS MARTINEZ, and DAN SMITH**

*An e23 Sourcebook for **GURPS**®*

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Revenge is a kind of wild justice.

– Francis Bacon, "Of Revenge," **Essays**

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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.

INTRODUCTION

Each supplement in *Transhuman Space: Personnel Files* line describes a campaign set in the world of Transhuman Space, complete with background, brief scenario suggestions, and notes for the GM. The material also provides a set of characters suitable to act as PCs in this same campaign. The characters are detailed using *GURPS* *Fourth Edition,* with templates and other details drawn from *Transhuman Space: Changing Times* (and *Transhuman Space: Shell-Tech* in a few cases), which are also available from e23. *Personnel Files 3: Wild Justice* relates the tale of four unusual companions on a quest for revenge.

It's sometimes said that *Transhuman Space* describes a wonderfully detailed world, but it's hard to decide on and define an actual campaign to run there. The *Personnel Files* line is intended to provide an answer to this, and to demonstrate what PCs for the setting might look like. These characters can also be used as NPCs, as antagonists, allies, patrons, or background color.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Masters is the author of *Transhuman Space: Changing Times, Transhuman Space: Shell-Tech, Transhuman Space: Personnel Files,* and a chapter in *Transhuman Space: High Frontier.* He has also worked on countless other *GURPS* products, such as *Places of Mystery, All-Star Jam 2004,* and *Powers,* and on products for other companies. He lives in the U.K., and he doesn't have a dog.

The law is not the private property of lawyers, nor is justice the exclusive province of judges and juries. In the final analysis, true justice is not a matter of courts and law books, but of a commitment in each of us to liberty and mutual respect.

– Jimmy Carter

WILD JUSTICE

The characters detailed in this supplement form a tightly knit group with a specific objective. Having been thrown together by a mysterious incident that involved the murder of someone they all regarded as a friend, mentor, or leader, they now seek answers and justice – or just revenge. This goal looks set to take a while. They also happen to be a rather strange and diverse group of characters, especially by the standards of the campaign's rather backwoods setting.

THE BEGINNING

The starting point for this campaign is a farming village in a remote area of the impoverished African nation of Tanganyika (see *Fifth Wave,* p. 50). A few years ago, the village was surprised and pleased to learn that they would have a new neighbor, as someone bought a tract of open land and had a big new house built there. The newcomer turned out to be a citizen of South Africa, named Anton Hollick, who lived entirely alone apart from a few AIs. The villagers were bemused at the thought of someone wanting that big a house all to himself, although they had enough idea about infomorphs and the Web to see that "alone" might not mean quite the same thing to a Fifth Waver like Hollick. They also learned that part of the house was given over to some kind of laboratory or workshop. It seemed that he was some kind of researcher or development engineer. Still, Hollick seemed friendly enough, and he brought some much-appreciated business to the area. He even hired some help from the village for good pay.

In fact, after a few months, he took on a permanent employee. It seemed that he wanted a gatekeeper – nothing very serious, just someone to watch the entrance to the estate, greet guests with a human face, and occasionally check the fence for damage or round up animals that had got into the grounds. After consulting some villagers who he'd come to trust, Hollick hired a young man named Joseph Kuzenza, even paying for a little training in the equipment he'd be using. This may just have been a gesture to keep the villagers happy with his presence while mostly preserving his privacy, but Hollick became quite friendly with Kuzenza, chatting with him and showing him his current project. This was an uplifted canine named Rolphie, who Hollick was training with the aid of an implanted specialist full-sapient AI. The theory was that the team of dog and infomorph could learn to work together as one, and the education process would enhance the postcanine's relatively limited intellect. The results, Hollick said, seemed promising.

In less guarded moments, Hollick also let slip a few other things to Kuzenza, though not much. He mentioned enemies – people from whom he wanted to get away, which explained his move to this remote area. He didn't say much, but he didn't seem too worried. Apparently, however serious the problem may once have been, he felt that he'd put it behind him.

Evidently, he was wrong. One evening, as Joe Kuzenza settled down on his bed in the estate gatehouse, a salvo of seeker missiles came skimming in from the wilderness. Most of them were assigned to demolish the main house, and especially the living quarters, with methodical, pinpoint strikes. Almost as an afterthought, it seemed, two slammed into the gatehouse, bringing that down too.

A group of villagers arrived within minutes, and they dug Joe Kuzenza out of the rubble. By sheer good fortune, his injuries weren't life-threatening, and he was even able to help with the efforts at the main house. Not that anyone could help with what mattered: The attackers had no doubt performed adequate reconnaissance, and there was just about enough of Anton Hollick's body left to permit easy DNA verification. However, Joe lead the others to where Rolphie was lying injured in the remains of the research wing, and they discovered that the dog too was only slightly hurt. Then something made Joe pause; it seemed that he was listening to the fancy wearable system that Mr. Hollick had issued him. He found an intact computer near where Rolphie had been located, rebooted it on emergency battery power, and connected his wearable up for a few minutes. Then he sat down and wept for a while.

He was composed by the time that the police team arrived from the nearest town, and he answered their questions with seeming honesty. They didn't appear to notice that he no longer had his wearable, or much other equipment on him, and Rolphie was nowhere to be seen either. They took statements, announced that the perpetrators of this terrible crime would be found and punished soon, and then left.

Few of the villagers were surprised by the police behavior. Joe Kuzenza certainly wasn't. In a desperately poor country, still not fully recovered from decades of civil war, it's all too easy for very rich foreigners to buy the compliance of a few well-placed officials. Anyone could see that this attack had been very carefully organized and financed beyond the dreams of any ordinary citizen of Tanganyika. The strangest thing, it seemed to many, was the way that Joe Kuzenza seemed to be getting angry over it. Nonetheless, he was entitled to be annoyed, having been hurt himself, and he was a neighbor or a cousin, so he received some help. Fortunately, the cops had evidently only been bribed to be sloppy, and not to dig deep on behalf of whomever was paying. In fact, it seemed to many that Joe had come out of this pretty well – he'd acquired the wearable computer, the talking dog, a gun, and some body armor.

He said he was going to take a few jobs around the neighborhood, and this gear, better than anything in the village, meant that he could ask for quite useful pay.

Joe was actually working toward a larger goal. Anton Hollick's voice was now talking in his ear, some of the time. Although he knew that this wasn't really Anton, it reinforced his determination to resolve what had happened to his old boss and sort-of friend. Rolphie agreed, as did Rolphie's trainer (with reservations). The team of four is now on a mission. They take paying jobs, using a little high-tech gear and computer resources to accomplish goals that are hard or impossible for most people in rural Tanganyika, but this is strictly a means to an end for them. More importantly, they're making contacts and acquiring skills and resources. They periodically return to Joe's home village to pick up messages and follow up specific clues, but the paying work is taking them increasingly far afield these days – though still within this region of Tanganyika for now. The job-hunting has to be managed carefully, too, as the desire to get good money and build a professional reputation of sorts has to be balanced against the need to avoid attracting official attention. Ideal assignments give them some chance to follow up clues or hints about the people who killed Hollick. They're not quite sure what they're going to do when they discover exactly what happened that terrible night, but they're certainly determined to find the truth.

Group Equipment and Wealth

Only one of the characters detailed here commands any sort of wealth or resources. That's Joe – and he's not exactly rich by general **Transhuman Space** standards. The others are legally treated as property in their homeland, and Joe has to look after them. Fortunately, their needs are generally few; Rolphie can often feed himself, without money, if necessary, and the AIs don't require ordinary food or drink. Nonetheless, the group must perforce live something of a hand-to-mouth existence, and a pressing demand for resources should drive many scenarios and decisions in this campaign. Even AIs are theoretically supposed to pay a cost of living in **Transhuman Space** games. While these cybershells can't actually starve and don't have to pay rent on processors or data storage, the GM should throw in the occasional requirement for maintenance or replacement power cells to remind the group of their situation.

The economic context for all this is Tanganyika, which is listed in **Fifth Wave** as a *Dead Broke* area. The notes on *Wealth, Status, and Cost of Living* on pp. 36-37 of **Changing Times** only go down as far as Poor, which is how this region should be treated for these purposes. In truth, no substantial population could survive if the prevailing typical wealth level was *literally* Dead Broke, as anyone in that condition can only live by scavenging or the charity of others, and in such a region, there just wouldn't be enough resources to go around.

Using those abstracted rules, Joe Kuzenza, as a Struggling character, can usually find jobs that pay around $1,300 for a 30-hour week. He's Status 0 (working as a personal servant/guard for a rich foreigner looked very respectable to his neighbors), so his cost of living is $600 a month. He takes freelance work, so he can sustain his position in any period when he works an average of 15 hours each week. By taking longer assignments, as he usually does when he gets the chance, he can provide the AIs and Rolphie with generally adequate support. Alternatively or additionally, the others could be considered to get "jobs" as aides to Joe – but doing this too obviously, interacting directly with other people and making their abilities obvious, puts their dangerous Secrets at risk.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

The structure of this campaign should somewhat resemble a television series – specifically, a low-rent, high-tech *The Fugitive* meets *The A-Team*. Every "episode" (which will probably take one or a few game sessions), the PCs deal with some problem, sometimes drawing closer to the resolution of their main objective. Sometimes a completely independent problem or the simple need to make a living and fund the search sidetracks them. Occasionally, they discover a whole new layer of complexity to the mystery. As with such a TV series, the whole thing revolves around the design of the core characters.

This *isn't* a combat-oriented campaign concept, however, as the provided characters illustrate. Joe and Rolphie are competent enough in a brawl in their way, but there are only two of them, and well-armed opponents are likely to bring them down in short order. Rather, plots should revolve around investigation and observation, with the two organic team members supplying legwork and a human perspective on events, and the two AIs providing the really crucial advantages – computer capabilities way beyond the norm for rural Tanganyika. Among other things, their ability to run skill-set software makes them immensely flexible. They also can gain useful access to the resources of the global Web, although they do have to be in range of a functioning radio node (or plugged into a cable connection) for this to work properly, and at times, their access may be frustratingly slow.

THE TEAM

When starting a campaign like this, the GM has to be sure that the PCs will fit. Anyone looking to run this specific campaign doesn't *have* to use exactly these four characters, but they'll need heroes who make sense in the background and the specific location, and who'll be highly motivated to pursue the core objective of the campaign.

They'll also need individuals who can work together in a stressful, strange, puzzling situation and who can provide a decent range of useful skills and abilities. They don't have to be close friends, or to tick every possible skill check box – indeed, the four characters given here are quite sparse on actual skills – but they should at least be able to try a few different things in most scenarios. AIs with Modular Abilities can help a lot here; with a bit of cash and an active Web connection, they can always download skill-set solutions to many classes of problem.

Hence, if the game isn't going to use a pregenerated PC group, the GM should work with all the players from the start of character creation to come up with a viable team, one that was consciously organized for a reason. In this case, the party is like a set of personality types who can help each other learn and survive while moving toward their grand objective. Joe Kuzenza represents the core of the group; the fact that he's an actual, ordinary human means a lot. Despite his obsession, he should provide a sense of perspective, a degree of pragmatism, and an understanding of human nature. He can also talk to other human beings face to face. Rolphie, however, is driven more by truly animalistic instincts, though these include loyalty as well as ferocity. His intelligence is lower than human, but that leaves him with the option to take a simple, direct, honest approach to problems.

Language Problems

To add to the fun, this group is somewhat divided by their languages. Rolphie and the AIs can communicate perfectly well in English, but Joe has minimal knowledge of that tongue. He can talk to Rolphie in his native language, Gogo, very well, and Gellert can get by in it, but with APHRA, he has to rely on his shaky English or APHRA's equally weak Gogo, or get the others to translate. He might do best to purchase a Spoken Gogo skill set or two for the AIs; this might not work perfectly in combat or other emergencies, but it would make many normal conversations less frustrating. Note also that only Joe and Rolphie speak any Swahili, the general trade language of this region of Africa.

Of the two AIs, Gellert is the more straightforward and given to behaving as humans expect of an artificial intelligence. Indeed, it's a little uncomfortable with the deceit and technical illegality involved in what the group does, which pushes it into the role of conscience to the others much of the time. It's also learning to be more than just a machine. Lastly, APHRA-22 is the wild card of the group. Frankly, it's crazy, and it can end up as either a comic foil or a nuisance much of the time, while its innate LAI limitations (Hidebound and Low Empathy) and its unstable "Anton" persona are all bound to be problematic. Nonetheless, of all the group, it's the most at home on the Web, and the fragments of Anton Hollick's personality that are now embedded in its code may give it unexpected resources.

Of course, a group of four impoverished 50-point characters have no chance whatsoever of bringing down a conspiracy that could afford to use a batch of military-grade weaponry to perform an assassination, and then buy off an entire police force from investigating properly – not as they start play. Fortunately

for them, the team doesn't know whom to attack. That's the whole point of this campaign: Not only must the heroes resolve the mystery – and **GURPS Mysteries** is definitely recommended as a reference for this game – they must make themselves capable of dealing with the truth.

This means acquiring more skills, training, and more resources and allies – all of which can be represented largely by careful expenditure of bonus character points along the way. It also means learning more about the world in general, and this corner of it in particular. This is very much an exploratory campaign, as well as an investigation. The participants will learn a lot about this part of the **Transhuman Space** world, as depicted by the GM, and they will discover whom to trust and how to work the system. Among other things, they *may* find out things about Anton Hollick that they won't much like. After all, he apparently consorted with dangerous people, bent the rules on AI programming, made deadly enemies, and felt obliged to hide in a distant wilderness while keeping secrets from everyone around him. That's not to say that the murder is ever likely to seem excusable, but the eventual explanations may prove troubling.

Special Considerations

The characters given for this campaign have at least two rather open-ended means that the GM can use to keep things moving along. The first is with APHRA-22 – the LAI has a few arbitrary fragments of Anton Hollick's knowledge, which may surface and fade at random moments, usually but not always when its "Anton" persona is in charge. Any crucial-seeming scenario can start with APHRA remembering a name from Hollick's past, or the password to a data file on some remote secure server. Likewise, any seemingly hopeless situation or dead-end can suddenly be changed just enough by a word from the wearable. Unfortunately, some of these "clues" may prove to be actively misleading or merely pointless, but the GM shouldn't overuse this aspect. While what APHRA-22 has is *only* a perk, it should give some benefit for its cost.

Secondly, there is Joe Kuzenza's single advantage – his potential Contacts-level relationship with people all over his home region. This reflects the sense of mutual loyalty and helpfulness that he can *sometimes* expect from people from his own community or extended family who've migrated and found work further afield. Unfortunately, there are only so many such people (the GM has the final say as to where they *might* be found), they aren't always reliable, and mostly what they offer is a little gossip, aid with commercial transactions, or similar minimal assistance. Nevertheless, the GM can always tinker with this to drive a scenario, having a friend's cousin suddenly come up with a clue as to who's paying off a police sergeant, or an introduction to a good possible employer. Anything beyond the standard scope of the Contact Group advantage is strictly at the GM's option; it shouldn't amount to much more than a word or two in the right place, but this is a valid way to keep forward progress.

The Big Secret

Alert readers will have noticed that the question of who was responsible for Anton Hollick's death hasn't been answered here. Actually, the big secret story behind the murder is deliberately left as an open question; GMs can develop the campaign plot as they choose, and not worry about whether the players have read this supplement.

Playing This Group

Many gamers will regard this team as a slightly unusual roleplaying challenge: Two of the characters are worn by or implanted in the other two, giving them (apparently) limited mobility combined with intimate knowledge of the other character's life. This is part of the fun of this campaign concept! This group is close in ways beyond the experience of most PCs, and it illustrates how strange the world of 2100 can be. There should be a constant flow of conversation and information within the group, although the GM can sometimes remind them that they actually have some language problems limiting this (see p. 6).

Obviously, the two organic PCs have the final say as to where the party goes at any time. If they disagree with their AIs about what they should be doing in physical terms, the AIs can do little except comment and perhaps grumble in the background. Bickering isn't a basis for a permanent arrangement, though. The group is going to have to come to some level of understanding, or fail badly in their self-appointed mission.

However, if they are played intelligently, the AIs may actually come to seem like the less restricted members of the party. They are the ones with access to the global Web and the use of skill set software. They can efficiently teleoperate vehicles and other cybershells, and they can tap into camera networks and other surveillance systems. The location of their hardware is only a concern if it starts suffering communications problems. GMs can invoke this plot device when necessary, especially as the group operates in Third Wave areas. To be fair to the AI characters, GMs should not overuse this limitation.

In the longer term, the AIs could always consider upgrading to more mobile hardware, changing their cybershell templates. The GM can permit this automatically if the team can locate and acquire a suitable shell, or he can require an expenditure of bonus character points to cover the difference between the new and old forms. This is likely to demand many points, though; in *GURPS* terms, the AIs currently receive many points for being what they are.

A really successful and prolonged campaign should leave the *complete* truth unclear for a very long time; the four PCs will be piecing together a lot of clues, and learning a whole lot more about their world along the way. However, for those GMs who might want a hint of where to start, here are some possibilities.

Commercial Enemies

Probably the simplest option is to decide that Hollick's work represented dangerous competition for a powerful, ruthless corporation. This needn't have been his *current* work – the Rolphie/Gellert team is useful, but hardly the sort of thing to inspire such a full-scale assault – but Hollick was clearly a brilliant AI engineer, as Gellert and APHRA-22 prove. Given a full-sized corporate lab and assistants, he might have managed any number of breakthroughs. Perhaps he then backed off for ethical reasons. Perhaps he was warned off by more powerful competitors who saw that he might shake up the entire industry too much. Perhaps he secretly sold his work on to some *unethical* user, whether a rival corporation or, say, a TSA government. His death could then have been a bit of vengeful tidying up, or an act of insurance designed to prevent him repeating a sale, returning to his dangerous project, or leaking information to the press. Perhaps it marked the point at which his corporate enemies decided that they knew enough about what he'd done not to need him around for possible interrogation any more.

In such a case, having identified the perpetrators, the adventurers should realize that they don't have a hope of bringing down a whole corporation. Nonetheless, the senior executives who sanctioned Hollick's murder might well be vulnerable. Leaking evidence to the press or to rival, more ethical shareholders would probably work. Getting the same information to uncorrupted law enforcement could get the executives *punished*. Unfortunately, unethical corporate executives are notoriously given to acquiring powerful friends in government, so it'll be necessary for the adventurers to tread lightly until they have very solid evidence and very reliable contacts.

Organized Crime

The ruthless violence of the attack could suggest enemies rather more accustomed to using overkill as a means to an end. Some criminal groups do have the resources to pull off such an assault, and they might consider a little excess as a useful deterrent to other possible nuisances.

If Hollick was once involved with organized crime, his image is going to become badly tarnished with the PCs as they find out the truth. Perhaps Hollick once created high-end AI slaves or killers for some mob, and then he decided to retire unilaterally. Perhaps he used the criminal organization as a source of supply for some dubious private project and then refused to continue the association, provoking them to revenge. It's even possible that he was honest but ran into a criminal conspiracy accidentally. Somehow, he did it enough damage to draw the group's serious ire.

If he didn't have aid at any point from law enforcement, either because he was guilty of too much himself or because he reckoned that it was too corrupt, Hollick might have had to build some kind of dossier of dangerous information, set to be released if anything happened to him. In this case, his death would have followed the mob becoming *very* sure that they'd identified and neutralized that dead man's handle infoweapon. Hollick might have thought that he'd covered his tracks better than he actually did. Even without the primary source, the PCs might have a chance of locating and releasing a better-hidden second copy. Anyway, this option does give the PCs a fighting chance of acquiring powerful allies against the killers, if they can identify some international police or intelligence service that *isn't* corrupt and can take the case – and if they can reach this agency despite the best efforts of the mob.

Old Friends in Black

Maybe Hollick's killers might be connected to a state agency. This would, realistically, make it much easier for them to acquire and deploy military-grade weapons in a foreign country without fear of reprisals.

Corporations don't often act like that in the *Transhuman Space* world, and organized crime would regard military weapons as dangerously likely to draw government attention, but as throughout history, black ops are still somewhere in the known range of government dirty tricks. If Hollick previously did work for a deniable black-ops department, perhaps developing AI to meet their ethically questionable specifications, he might have dropped out for all sorts of reasons. It could have been from moral qualms, out of sheer boredom, or because he feared that his work was about to become a source of trouble and that he'd be thrown as a sacrifice to the lions.

It would take a foolhardy man in 2100 to think that he could escape from such an agency and cover his tracks well enough, so more likely Hollick would have built a blackmail dossier as in the *Organized Crime* section. Alternatively, he could have acquired a powerful patron who'd protect him in exchange for, say, information on the internal workings of the agency. The agency might have eliminated that individual or made him a better offer.

Perhaps some manipulative conspiracy merely suspected that Hollick was working toward some goal to which they objected, and eliminated him for safety. That would explain why he didn't have as much physical protection as might be expected of someone with deadly enemies. For example, he may have been secretly working for a pansapient rights group, designing a "free meme" that would spread across the Web damaging the behavioral controls on a whole class of non-citizen SAIs. Some human-run government agency could have decided that this was a danger that needed to be eliminated, but that doing so openly and legally would cause too much controversy and possibly trigger the release of the free meme. If this is what happened to Hollick, blowing the whole case open to the press might work. Nevertheless, a desperate spook agency would surely become a lethal threat if it became aware of the danger as the endgame approached; the adventurers will want to become exceptionally capable before that point.

Mix and Match

Of course, drawing sharp distinctions between corporate, criminal, and government/military factions doesn't always work, especially in sufficiently tortuous plots. Corporations can be contracted by black ops or intelligence agencies, or corrupted by organized crime. Spooks can use mobsters as deniable assets. Ruthless corporate executives can call in favors from all over to remove annoying problems. This sort of situation makes it especially hard for outsiders to crack a problem like this one, as it's hard to determine anyone's ultimate loyalties and likely motivations. While such dubious alliances are ultimately vulnerable to blackmail or press exposure, they'll fight especially hard against such threats, and they can deploy a whole range of resources.

Note also that attempts to destroy opponents through press exposure can encounter especially tough countermeasures in 2100, as the targets can deploy formidable memetic defenses. The truth – and a good press agency's own memetic and counter-memetic tools – can win through in the end, but this adds an extra layer of complexity to many conflicts. (The team members might even hire Patel Memetics, a company detailed in *Transhuman Space: Personnel Files 2,* to assist them.)

Sample Scenario: Construction and Chaos

The group manages to land a decent-paying job with useful benefits – they're employed as general hands and botbosses on a new construction site out in the wilds. They'll be helping build a small "safari hotel" for wealthy foreign tourists and teletourists. The construction is being financed with South African money and supporting guarantees from the Coalition, which is looking to promote economic growth in Tanganyika. The team's duties will be to fill in assorted tasks: They may have to drive supply trucks between the site and the nearest town. They might supervise construction cybershells that are performing routine or repetitive work such as digging or cement pouring. They sometimes act as interpreters between foreign engineers and supervisors (many of whom will be using telepresence much of the time) and local staff or suppliers. They also remove the occasional wild animal and local troublemaker.

A locally recruited staff supervisor, Vijay Sibasca, is a cousin of a friend; he hired the group. He desperately needs the extra competent hands and digital aid, and he therefore isn't asking too many questions about, say, the source of all this useful high-tech hardware that Kuzenza can offer. The work involves skills that the group doesn't actually have, but Sibasca has the budget to pay for appropriate skill-set software, which Kuzenza can keep afterwards.

Things start out well enough, and Joe makes a few friends on the site. There are hints of friction between the chief construction engineer, Shaf Ibrahim, and the data systems installation manager, Maria Makaliama, who have different priorities and apparently clashing personalities. The Ibrahim wants to build fast and to a minimal budget, while Makaliama wants to optimize the layout and building construction for data transmission purposes. Still, that's surely just ordinary work problems – a classic clash between bean-counting and techie perfectionism.

Not long after starting, the team goes on a supply run into town. APHRA-22 drives the cheap locally bought truck electronically. Joe goes along to provide hands and talk to people at the supplier. Rolphie is present for the ride and to assess the supply crates with his canine nose and Gellert's aid.
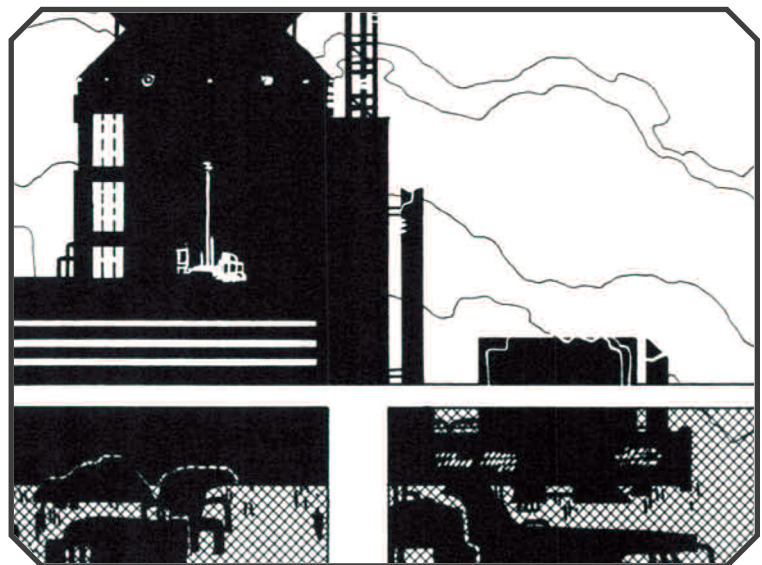
Things turn bad on the return trip, when the truck loses a wheel at speed and is then approached by a couple of thugs with blunt instruments and robbery evidently in mind. Unfortunately for them, however, Joe has both his electrolaser and Rolphie.

The incident would just look like petty banditry, except that even a cursory inspection suggests that the truck was sabotaged, and the thugs seemingly knew exactly where to wait. The PCs will only get a limited chance to cross-examine them before the local police get hold of them. They are vague and unhelpful –the thugs are rather more scared of what will happen to them if they talk than they are of the PCs. Likewise, the damage to the truck fairly obviously involved a small explosive charge attached to a wheel. Determining more than that would involve skill sets and equipment that are impossible to get hold of in the time available. The local cops just say something about mechanical failure and aren't interested in talking much more.

In fact, the saboteur used a small amount of explosive and a radio-controlled detonator. One of the thugs has a small control unit for the detonator somewhere on his person. This equipment was run up on one of the small 3D printers that is kept around the construction site for odd jobs, and the explosive came from the small quantity kept on site for legitimate construction purposes. Proving any of this would require advanced forensics or close, lengthy investigation of the carefully manipulated stores records.

An anonymous message then reaches APHRA through the construction-site network. The sender claims to have information regarding the death of Anton Hollick – but he also claims that *no* electronic transmission is safe for this purpose, so he needs to meet face to face. The recipients are invited to come, alone, to a location outside the site that night. However, if they go there, a group of small construction cybershells from the site attacks them, while someone attempts to jam radio calls. The controllers are noncombatant construction NAIs, but the machines are rugged, to say the least. They've been instructed to capture, not kill, but they aren't terribly gentle. They won't pursue anyone to within sight of the construction site security cameras, which is also roughly equivalent to the reach of the site's local radio network. If the NAIs capture Joe or Rolphie, the machines take the hostage to a shallow "cave" out in the bush, excavated by the same cybershells, and the kept there with a little water to drink but no food. It may be quite difficult to get anyone to believe that the attack happened, however, and given the reason they were out there, any victims who escaped may well decide to keep things to themselves for the time being.

Assuming that the PCs haven't traced the source of trouble effectively in the meantime, anyone on the site the next day will hear what appears to be a flaming argument explode between the chief construction engineer and the data systems installation manager. Makaliama then storms out of Ibrahim's office and locks herself in the main construction supervision room. A few seconds later, multiple construction cybershells around the site begin behaving erratically. Fortunately, the larger ones all have safety functions incorporated into their operational software, so things don't get too lethal at first – but the situation rapidly grows messier.

What's Going On

The secret antagonist in this scenario is the staff supervisor, Vijay Sibasca, and who therefore knows about their interest in the Hollick affair. He's been systematically pilfering materials from the site since the project began. He's also been manipulating the management software systems to hide the fact with the aid of a collaborator in the management company's regional offices. However, he's realized that his employers may be onto this, so he's arranged to make his departure soon – and part of his exit plan is to find a scapegoat for at least some of his activities. The PCs have the misfortune to fit the bill. He knows that they have dangerous secrets, so they'll distract the police just as well if they're caught as if they aren't. The attack on the truck was an error – or rather, the involvement of the PCs was; it was supposed to be driven by someone else, and the hijacking was supposed to help keep things confused for a little longer. (Checking the project records will show that the truck was listed as carrying two expensive pieces of equipment that were on site during the incident, and that are now missing.)

The kidnapping scheme was intended to take the team out of circulation at the crucial climax of the plan – or at least to reduce their effectiveness and distract them. One error the criminal made there was to show them that someone knew about their background. Thus, Sibasca is the only person on site who really fits the bill.

What the staff supervisor hadn't realized was that the company *has* been onto this for some time. Makaliama who arrived just before the PCs, is in fact a corporate investigator who's been assigned to dig into this. The disagreement between her and Ibrahim (the only other person on site who knows her secret) has been staged as cover; it helps explain occasional odd behavior and any apparent inefficiency in her work. Their last row was an extension of this, improvised when they discovered widespread subversion in the site network. Makaliama went to shut the system down while Ibrahim went looking for the crooked supervisor. Unfortunately, they underestimated their opponent; Sibasca noted that his software subversion had been discovered, so he used the corrupted software to lock the investigator in the office. Then, he sent some of the construction equipment to attack her there. Meanwhile, he picked up the gun that he keeps in his quarters and made for the vehicle pool. As Ibrahim is unarmed, Sibasca has a good chance of escaping, and the engineer may well take a bullet in the process.

However, the PCs can shift the balance at this point, especially if they guess enough of the truth soon enough. Helping either or both of the two loyal company employees may well save the victims' lives, and allow them to stop the criminal before he flees. Even if the team doesn't prevent the escape, saving the employees' lives or catching the criminal while the employees are badly injured or killed is more of a marginal win, but it is better than nothing.

In the aftermath, the party can expect thanks proportionate to their success, but Makaliama may suggest that they fade into the background, if she's still able to talk and they haven't disappeared already. She checked the background of everyone on the site as part of her assignment. While the investigator chooses to not ask too many questions about someone who's just helped her, she knows that the local police may be more officious, and the PCs have a lot of blank spots on their biographies. Still, she can arrange for them to be paid in full, with a decent bonus – and she may be a very useful contact in future.

FURTHER SCENARIO SEEDS

Here are some additional ideas for adventures to help along this campaign.

Orbital Haven

Both APHRA-22 and Gellert would really like to find a safe, reliable backup store where they could place copies of themselves, giving them some chance of recovery in case of the destruction of their current hardware. That's normally something to which AIs grow accustomed, and the sense of mortality gnaws at them without it, though they try to suppress the worry. However, real security always comes expensive, and legally questionable levels of privacy cost even more. To complicate matters further, APHRA's "Anton" persona has terrible problems with the idea of trust. Finding a safe haven, and arranging for recovery as necessary, has always been too much of a challenge.

Now, however, "Anton" claims to have remembered the access codes for some storage space on Islandia, up in space at the L4 point – with rental apparently fully paid up for several years to come. Presumably, this was something that Hollick set up as some kind of insurance, probably with Islandia's broad pansapient rights laws in mind; even "Anton" seems to think it should be safe. Indeed, he may become quite insistent on the subject – as far as he's concerned, this place was "his" idea, even if he can't remember why "he" did it, and he does trust *himself*. Unfortunately, however, the codes he remembers aren't quite enough; the storage system will only trust access from specific nodes. The nearest of these still functioning seems to be a computer facility in Tanganyika's political capital, Dodoma, where Hollick rented computer time on occasion.

If "Anton" convinces Gellert to tag along, and they can persuade the others to help, the group must travel to Dodoma. Then they need to gain access to the facility (probably simply renting it, preferably without attracting too much attention). After checking the status of the rental space, they can place copies of the AIs there. Of course, they'll also have to repeat this in the future whenever they want to update the backups, unless they can change the security settings on the rental space somehow.

When they do log in, they discover more than just some blank space: A sub-AI routine activates and transmits them what seems to be a copy of Hollick's business diary for the last four years, then wipes itself. This is interesting, but unfortunately, it also seems to have sent copies to two South African government addresses and an E.U.-based academic AI researcher. Perhaps this is even good news – Hollick must presumably have trusted these people. Nevertheless, it's a fair bet that they'll be able to trace what triggered this, and Hollick's judgment was demonstrably less than perfect sometimes. Maybe it's time to start running again . . .

Interpretations

The group is hired to act as guides and guards to a foreign visitor to their home region – a small-scale speculative investor from Kenya. He's looking to put money into the area and profit as Tanganyika enters a phase of stable growth under the umbrella of the South African Coalition. He also wants to set up import-export links between the area and his own country. He's already established local contacts, one of whom recommended

Joseph Kuzenza for this job. The visitor is an affable, shrewd businessman, who doesn't foresee any sort of trouble; Joe is expected to act much more as guide then guard. He doesn't know how good Joe's computer systems are, but he understands that they should be able to help him with translation and communication services, which is also part of the deal.

Then things turn complicated. Halfway through the trip, local police pull in the businessman, supposedly for something to do with financial arrangements or currency transfers. He remains outwardly sanguine, claiming that this is all a misunderstanding, soon to be resolved. Secretly, his wearable system beams a short message to APHRA, asking that an encrypted attachment be relayed to an address in Kenya once Joe is clear of the police station. To add to the complications, Rolphie catches a familiar scent in the station; one of the senior policemen who was supposed to investigate Anton Hollick's death is on the scene for some reason. Meanwhile, the cops are trying to warn Joe off with dark hints that he *really doesn't want to be involved with this*. Is this just a matter of business rivals using petty corruption to make trouble for the visitor, or is there something larger involved? After all, some local news services have been hinting that Kenya is under the thumb of the E.U. these days, and the country may spy on or subvert its southern neighbors on behalf of the Fifth Wave power.

A Fistful of Memes

While traveling across the country, hitching lifts from village to village, Joe and his group wander into a community with a dangerous situation developing. It has become the chosen starting-point for an attempt by the Ecoherence movement (see **Toxic Memes,** pp. 20-21) to establish itself in eastern Africa. Ecoherence has designed a modified version of its meme-set to appeal to the local population, with an emphasis on sustainable agricultural development in its ecological elements, and a populist, reward-heavy aspect to its hierarchy. The movement has made a number of local politically powerful or socially useful converts in the village by dint of an intensive missionary effort. These converts are mostly identified with a pre-existing "local rights" political movement, which Ecoherence plans to co-opt to its expansion process.

The program has been noted by government agencies and SAC agents, who are worried by it, but there are limits to the overt countermeasures that they can deploy; Tanganyika has freedom of religion, after all, and the Ecoherence missionaries have been scrupulous about working within the law. Therefore, the authorities have backed off – and secretly handed the problem off to a deniable SAC black memetics unit, who are treating this as a chance to test some of their tools. They've set up a counteractive memetic system, playing on ideas about human dominance over nature, the advantages of personal strength and pragmatic flexibility in the context of "traditional values," and national and African strength through unity. Frankly, this will look rather fascistic to educated observers, with a bit of imagery drawn from African "warrior societies" to enhance the local appeal. Many people with no love for Ecoherence would be just as appalled by the new movement, but the team works on the basis that ends justify means. They've managed to establish the ideology among a number of slightly wealthier farmers whose interests were being squeezed out by the Ecoherence followers.

In brief, this impoverished Third Wave community has become the epicenter of an advanced memetic conflict.

While Joe and his allies consider helping on principle, they meet a local politician and business owner who sees dangers in both sides. The person has heard about some of their previous successful activities, and he's prepared to offer a reward for proof that the growing local political polarization is the result of outside interference. The group can also team with a local schoolteacher who understands enough of what's going on to look for allies in an attempt to stop it. She's a useful contact, with an interest in regional politics, who may be able to provide advice on the group's own quest once this problem is resolved.

Of course, memetic combat is very tricky, especially against professionals, but Joe and his AIs are on the ground, with the advantage of local cultural knowledge and familiarity. If they can download appropriate skill sets, they have a chance of slowing or disrupting some of the dangerous propaganda being spread here. (See chapter 7 of **Toxic Memes** and p. 47 of **Changing Times** for relevant rules.) The team might get aid and a little financial support from the schoolteacher and her semi-formal access rights to government software libraries. The heroes might even try to provoke the two movements into direct conflict, damaging and discrediting both. They might hope to demonstrate to the Ecoherence leadership that their operation here has become too costly and unstable to sustain. They might also persuade the opposing group that their mission has been accomplished while the quasi-fascist ideology that they are using is dangerous to everyone, maybe with an added threat of public exposure of its real sources.

THE TEAM MEMBERS

Originally created or hired by Anton Hollick, this group has come together to avenge his death. This section details each team member. They can be used right out of the chapter, as templates for new characters, or as contacts in some other campaign.

JOSEPH (JOE) KUZENZA

Things used to be a bit simpler for you, and you're still trying to decide how you feel about the transformation of your life.

You were born in a rural village in a Gogo-speaking region of Tanganyika, and you were brought up with narrow horizons. Your teachers thought that you were bright and helpful, but no one promised too much for you. However, you evidently impressed some people as attentive and honest, because when the rich South African Anton Hollick moved into the area and asked who he might employ as a gatekeeper, they named you. You got on well with Mr. Hollick, who became something of a friend, you thought, despite some language problems, as well as a fair boss. He introduced you to his current project: Rolphie, a genetically enhanced dog, with an implanted AI that was training it very well. You hadn't met such exotic beings before, and you thought they were amazing. He also gave you some computer-based training, a good wearable computer, and an electrolaser stun gun in case you had to deal with wild animals or intruders. He seemed to think that this would be more than enough for your job.

He was wrong. One night, the house came under attack with high-tech missiles, killing Anton and leaving you buried in rubble. You dug your way out and even found Rolphie still alive. Then you heard a signal from some surviving component of the house's computer network, which persuaded you to hook your wearable up to a surviving machine. Soon, your computer was loaded up with new software, which spoke to you in Anton's voice. Then, persuaded by that voice and by the need for justice, you had a new plan for your life.

You weren't much surprised when the cops were useless in this cause; you'd been brought up to be dubious about such people. That just throws the responsibility back to you; justice may be a little slow in coming, but you'll get there in the end. However, you're not stupid: You know that you not only have to find out more first, you have to acquire whatever skills and gear the mission may need. Fortunately, you already have some very special assistance on your side.

Playing Joe Kuzenza

You're a pretty straightforward, ordinary sort of fellow, from a rather unsophisticated background, who's suddenly got caught up in some very complicated and dangerous business. Nonetheless, you don't see these things as *that* complicated, really. Someone hurt your friend and leader and seems to be getting away with it, you don't think that's right, and you're working on doing something about it. Of course, there are times when things get difficult. When that happens, you try to remain quiet, avoid committing yourself, and look for the simple solution. You have three allies close by who can often help at those times, and you've quickly learned to rely on them – and to understand their limitations.

You also recognize your own limitations. Much as you might prefer to take the simple solution every time, you can't just bull through everything. Too often these days, your opponents are bigger, stronger, better armed, or more numerous than you. Thus, you're working on learning subtlety and stealth. You have to struggle with your impulse to *get on with the job* of tracking down the people who killed Anton, but you do see that it's going to be a long haul. You can't afford to make too many mistakes at this stage. Even if you're not always as cautious as you should be, you can at least stay quiet enough to avoid pushing your luck.

> ### Joe Kuzenza and Ultra-Tech
>
> Some groups may prefer to use the *Fourth Edition* version of **GURPS Ultra-Tech** for equipment such as weapons and armor in **GURPS** *Fourth Edition* **Transhuman Space** games, rather than the converted equipment lists in **Changing Times**. In that case, change Joe Kuzenza's Beam Weapons skill to the Pistol specialty, and change his equipment list to cufftape, blackjack, boots, electrolaser pistol, nanoweave jacket and trousers, TL10 light infantry helmet, and $110 in spare cash.

I get it – some people can buy their way out of trouble. But this lot can't buy me off – that isn't right!

– Joe Kuzenza

Joseph (Joe) Kuzenza

50 points

A stocky, rugged-looking, rather reserved African human, aged 22.

ST 11 [10]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 11 [0].
Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8; Parry 9 (Brawling).
5′6″; 150 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 9 [-5].
CF: African (Native) [0].
Languages: Gogo (Native) [0]; English (Broken) [2]; Swahili (Accented) [4].

Advantages

Contact Group (Migrants from his home area; Good for local Area Knowledge, most sorts of Current Affairs, Merchant, etc.; Skill-12; 9 or less; Somewhat Reliable) [5].
Perks: Trained at TL10 with Electrolaser Weapons; Trained at TL10 with Security Systems. [2]

Disadvantages

Obsession (Identifying the people who killed Hollick and bringing about some kind of justice) (12) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Family and Close Friends) [-5]; Struggling [-10].
Quirks: Code of Honor (Won't take a job he doesn't think he can do reasonably well); Likes tall women (-2 resistance to Sex Appeal, Fast-Talk, etc., from such); Not much sense of humor (-1 or worse reactions from people who like joking around). [-3]

Skills

Beam Weapons/TL10 (Rifle) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Security) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Farming/TL9 (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Naturalist (Earth) (H) IQ-2 [1]-9; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-11; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Survival (Plains) (A) Per-1 [1]-10.

Equipment

Cufftape; blackjack; boots; light infantry helmet; light nanoweave suit; electrolaser rifle; $310 in cash.

Joe's Views of the Group

Rolphie is a good friend, as dogs can be, and Anton and Gellert have made him more than a dog. Not that he's overly bright, admittedly, but he's no fool either. Fortunately, he's happy to be part of a team, with you in charge – and this enthusiasm has extended to learning your language, which makes him the team member with whom you can talk best.

APHRA-22 is Anton's voice in your ear, but he's not Anton, sadly – much of the time, he's just Anton's old housekeeping computer. Even when he switches over, he's crazy, which Anton never was. To make the situation worse, there are language problems. However, he's the memory of Anton, so you try to treat him with respect – and he's a handy tool, so you try to use him properly.

Gellert is Rolphie's training AI. He's cool and calm – what a good animal-handler needs – and it's good to have a steady, clever mind around to work with and to bounce ideas off. The only trouble is, he sometimes tries too hard to be a "steadying influence," as Anton used to put it; arguing with him about the need to bend a few rules to do what has to be done gets boring at times.

ROLPHIE

You don't remember much about your very early years, but there are snippets in your memory of the big genetic engineering lab where you were created. When you were still just a puppy, though, Mr. Hollick, who brought you up, acquired you. You owed him everything important in your life, and that's a lot.

You know that being a K-10A makes you *special*, more than an animal, but he made you more again, equipping you with an implant computer with a mind, Gellert, to guide and train you when Mr. Hollick – Anton – couldn't look after you himself.

Then came the nightmare night when *somebody* attacked Anton's house, and killed him – and you weren't able to help. Thankfully, Joe, Anton's friend, dug you out of the ruins and helped you recover. Then he explained how he wanted to find the people who did all this, and settle things with them. That sounds right to you! Now, you and Gellert work with Joe and his computer to sort things out. It's a difficult life in a big world, but you won't let the boss down – not either boss, alive or dead.

Playing Rolphie

The main point here is, of course, that you are a dog. An *exceptionally* smart, well-conditioned, genetically uplifted dog, obviously, but all that tinkering hasn't changed some things about the basic nature of a canine. Review the details of the K-10A template in **Changing Times** (p. 50) in detail, and especially the disadvantages and quirks!

For several years, you saw Anton Hollick as your alpha/pack leader. In the confusion after discovering that Hollick was dead, you transferred your loyalty to Joe Kuzenza, while remaining sapient enough to remember the old leader and form the idea that he should be avenged. With Kuzenza even more fixated on the mission, you haven't seen any reason to diverge from that objective.

Meanwhile, nudged along by the well-designed training software and the practical requirements of that same mission, you are developing as a fully sapient, thoughtful being. You're already smart for a K-10A, and you *have* to adapt. In time, you may form a more rational concept of loyalty (in **GURPS** terms, converting your template-derived Sense of Duty into a quirk) while learning enough about people to develop some basic but useful social skills. It won't be easy, but there's a chance that, when the group eventually confronts Hollick's killers, those opponents will fatally underestimate you.

Rolphie

50 points

A large, powerful German Shepherd-descended canine, with the bulging skull of a K-10A uplift.

ST 12 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [12]; **DX** 13 [0]*; **IQ** 8 [20]*; **HT** 13 [10]*.
Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 9 [5]; Per 15 [0]*; FP 13 [0].
Basic Speed 6.50 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10.
About 2' at the shoulder; 155 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 10 [0].
CF: African (Native) [0].
Languages: English (Native/Broken)* [0]; Gogo (Native/None) [3]; Swahili (Broken/None) [1].

Advantages

Resistant to Disease +3 (Immune Machine Nanosymbionts) [3].

Disadvantages

K-10A Postcanine [-16].
Quirks: Hates explosions (always test for Stress Atavism when they happen nearby). [-1]

Mmmmrrrr . . . this doesn't smell right. Smells of chemicals. What should we do, Joe?

– Rolphie

Skills

Acting (Playing Dumb) (E) IQ+2 [4]-10; Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-14; Stealth (A) DX [2]-13; Survival (Jungle) (A) Per-1 [1]-14; Survival (Plains) (A) Per-1 [1]-14.

* From K-10A template.

Rolphie's Views of the Group

Joe Kuzenza is the leader of this group now, so it makes sense to do what he says. You understand that this doesn't mean that you can't ever discuss things with him – he can have incomplete information – but he's the *human*. Anyway, he's focused on solving the puzzle of who killed your old leader and sorting everything out. Going along with him makes sense.

APHRA-22 is very confusing for you. You remember it as the voice of the house – Anton's servant – back before the attack, and it still sounds the same, though it's moved to the thing that Joe wears. (You just about understand how that works.) Now it also sounds a bit like Anton, at least some of the time! It doesn't smell like him, it's certainly not as smart as him, and it doesn't actually really claim to *be* Anton, at least not usually – but there seems to be some of Anton in there somewhere. Mostly it's crazy. You listen to it, and you try to work out how to respond to it. You hope that it's not all a trick, because you don't want a trick to have Anton's voice.

Gellert is your teacher. It's not your leader – it's too close to you for that – it's the voice that points you the way you *should* go, and the electronic tool that does stuff that you can't. It says that following a boss is fine, so long as you don't give up thinking. You're glad to hear that, because you've never yet got into a serious argument with Gellert. It wants you to think for yourself, and sometimes it pushes you horribly hard, but your first reaction when it commands is to obey.

APHRA-22

You originally existed as a low-sapient AI of the APHRA (Automated Personal Heuristic Robotic Aide) series, purchased and installed by Anton Hollick to run his home and assist him in his work. At some point, Mr. Hollick decided to start modifying you. You're not quite sure why. It may just have been to get himself an assistant with the sort of abilities that he found useful, or it may have been something more – perhaps even insurance against the sort of thing that eventually happened to him. You consider your current state of consciousness to be around five years old, but it's been evolving for a while.

You're obviously not the final version of whatever Mr. Hollick was attempting. In fact, you have a feeling that you represent a transitional experiment that he would have deleted or completely rewritten without even running you fully.

However, he never got the chance. On the night when he was murdered by a military-grade assault on his home, most of his computer systems were wiped out, and the sub-AI emergency routines that activated on surviving processors operated on the assumption that any permanent fixed storage would be compromised, destroyed, or captured in short order. (Yes, Hollick must have been anticipating *serious* trouble – or at least allowing for the possibility.) For some reason – good, bad, or desperate – they responded by activating you. They established contact with Joseph Kuzenza, the estate's security guard who had fortunately survived and who was equipped with an adequate wearable computer system. The emergency routines downloaded you into Joe's computer to act as its operating system. They didn't give you much more to go on, but you're sure that part of the idea was that you'd want to do something about the people who'd murdered the human on which you were modeled. You want to do that, for several reasons including self-preservation.

The snag is, well, even you can see that you aren't very coherent, as AI personalities go. Hollick took the reliable, limited LAI-7 system as a basis. He then tried to overlay whatever he could extract and record of his own personality by using his implants in scan-and-record mode. That wasn't much, really. You've acquired a bit of his computer skill, thanks to efficient heuristics, while fragments of his other knowledge and thinking occasionally bob to the surface. It's all terribly patchy and temporary, and much of the time, you're just another low-sapient AI. When the "Anton" part is dominant, you may be even less useful.

You're doing your best to deal with the situation. Fortunately, you have some help. Kuzenza is determined to catch the people who killed Hollick and to do something about them, though he's no more clear on the details than you are. You also have Hollick's other big project along – a K-10A post-canine with a powerful training AI installed. (You want to be careful not to get the dog and its AI damaged; it was Hollick's masterpiece – you think.) Between you, there's a chance of accomplishing something. A slim chance, to be sure, but it's the only game in town.

Playing APHRA

You're an AI – but unlike most AIs in the ***Transhuman Space*** world, you're also crazy and unstable, largely due to much of your initial, minimal personality having been overlaid. Because this is frankly unreliable, the higher-level management routines cycle it in and out of use at different times, not always rationally as it appears to others, giving you a genuine dual personality. You're aware of the problems, and often apologetic about them, but you can do nothing about them – they're *you*.

I know what I said yesterday, but I wasn't thinking clearly then! We can't trust . . . Just a moment – what's that over there?

– APHRA-22

You do have a core focus on survival and on resolving problems. A combination of Hollick's last orders and your feeling that it's his monument means that you look after Gellert, the full-sapient AI that he is installed on a computer implanted in Rolphie, the K-10A. However, your basic personality really wasn't designed for high-stress situations, and your attempts to adjust to them and assimilate the experiences sometimes make you especially inefficient in the aftermath of violence or danger. Still, when your original "APHRA" personality is dominant, you can be coolly efficient – within your limits. Unfortunately for the current situation, APHRA was designed with the standard restrictions for a near-sapient AI, including a strong impulse to be law-abiding. Hollick largely suppressed that with his reprogramming, and the messy situation you're in (complete with corrupt law enforcement and all) has given you reason to trump survival over lawfulness. Nonetheless, APHRA can never completely eliminate a degree of discomfort at working outside the legal system.

When your "Anton" persona is dominant, however, things get a lot stranger. Like most personality models, it was necessarily designed with a certain capacity for self-delusion; it thinks of itself as human. However, it's aware that its situation is very dangerous, especially as it's been impossible so far to acquire a safe, reliable backup location. This has driven "Anton" into overt paranoia. It seriously fears that anyone and everyone may be a threat, and it miserably fails to cover this up by talking – a lot – about whatever catches its attention. This can be almost anything, as it lacks real focus – another flaw in the model. Still, a limited human-style capacity for lateral thinking does make it one notch smarter than the baseline APHRA.

Incidentally, two of APHRA's features may seem contradictory. In "Anton" mode, it has both the Short Attention Span disadvantage and the Attentive quirk (from the LAI-7 template). APHRA-as-Anton has difficulty focusing on any one task for more than a few minutes – but when it does, it turns *obsessively* attentive, with the affects as described for the quirk. This is another aspect that makes it seem so crazy to everyone else.

APHRA-22

50 points

An up-to-date but not flashy-looking wearable computer system running a low-sapient AI. The AI's favorite virtual avatar these days is a simplified, semi-abstract 3-D "sketch" of Anton Hollick.

ST 0 [0]*; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 12 [0]*.
Damage N/A; BL N/A; HP 1 [0]*; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP N/A.
Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move N/A; Dodge N/A; Parry N/A.

Social Background

TL: 10 [0].
CF: Western (Native) [0]; African [1].
Languages: English (Native) [0]; Afrikaans (Accented) [4]; Gogo (Broken) [2].

Advantages

Modular Abilities 3 (Computer Brain: 2, 2, 2) (Limited Integration, -20%; Skills and Languages Only, -10%) [30]; Rogue LAI-7, with no Extra Life and no Taboo Trait [102].
Perks: Some knowledge of Anton Hollick's passwords and access codes (GM's option as to usefulness). [1]

Disadvantages

Post-Combat Shakes (12) [-5]; Secret (Unstable Rogue LAI) [-30]; Sense of Duty (Gellert) [-2]; Split Personality (9) [-22]; Wearable Virtual Interface [-42].
APHRA Persona: -1 IQ (includes -1 to Per, Will, and associated skills) [-20]; Quirk (Makes continual token attempts at honesty) [-1].
Anton Persona: Delusion ("I am a detailed, accurate model of Anton Hollick's mind") [-5]; Paranoia [-10]; Short Attention Span (15) [-5]; Quirk (Talkative) [-1].

Skills

Computer Operation/TL10 (E) IQ+3 [0]-14†; Computer Programming/TL10 (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; Current Affairs/TL10 (Science and Technology) (E) IQ [1]-11; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Communications) (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Housekeeping (E) IQ+2 [4]-13; Research/TL10 (A) IQ+1 [4]-12.

* From Wearable Virtual Interface template.
† From LAI-7 template.

> *I am armed with more than complete steel – the justice of my quarrel.*
>
> *– Prince Philip,*
> ***Lust's Dominion***

APHRA's Views of the Group

Joe is a good kid, really – a really, really good kid, you hope! He's your best chance of getting through this and recovering the situation. You need to encourage him, and watch his back – enemies are likely to strike at him first. Having been designed to serve humanity, your "APHRA" persona sees him as a senior partner. Your "Anton" persona regards him as the nearest thing to a friend that's available round here. Nevertheless, even friends can let anyone down, so caution is always indicated, and there's probably no point in burdening Joe with too many secrets.

Rolphie is a success story and the quite literal vehicle for the even more important Gellert. Rolphie himself needs bit of looking after. A K-10A may be borderline sapient, and this one is more than borderline thanks to the Gellert project, but in the end, it's still just a dog. To "APHRA," that makes Gellert a resource to manage. To "Anton," he's a concern to monitor, though perhaps one of the less *likely* sources of trouble or betrayal around here.

Gellert is a mainstream AI, and in your more human moments, you assume that it's judging you, disapproving of your more complex, nuanced personality. That doesn't matter – it's Anton Hollick's latest and last great work, so it merits watching and perhaps even saving from itself. "APHRA" sees this as a task assigned with proper authority. "Anton" sees it as some kind of personal crusade and looks for threats to Gellert as for threats to himself.

GELLERT

You're a bespoke low-end fully sapient artificial intelligence, designed to act as a training aid and support system for an uplifted animal or similar being. Specifically, you were instantiated eight years ago, having been commissioned by Mr. Anton Hollick, who was working on advanced training regimes for uplifted canines. Installed in "Rolphie," a K-10A postcanine and working closely with Mr. Hollick, you performed that task admirably, you believe.

Unfortunately, the process was interrupted when Mr. Hollick was attacked and murdered in his home by persons unknown. You and Rolphie survived, being rescued by Joseph Kuzenza, Mr. Hollick's gatekeeper. It then rapidly emerged that local law enforcement had probably been subverted, and so Kuzenza declared the intention of bringing the perpetrators to justice himself. Thanks to his canine pack-loyalty, Rolphie quickly went along with this.

For you, it's a problem. Like all good high-end AIs, you're designed with great respect for legal systems; going "outside the law" really isn't in your nature. Nonetheless, there's no denying that in this case, the ultimate intent of the law can only be served by a little subtlety. It worries you, but you've agreed to go along with Joe Kuzenza and the others – provisionally and with clearly stated reservations.

> *Now, Rolphie, take a little time to think here, and remember what I've taught you.*
>
> *– Gellert*

Playing Gellert

You aren't cut out for this life on the run in an impoverished region – but being a cool, calm, collected artificial intelligence, you do your best anyway. As the *de facto* conscience of the group, you try to stand back, metaphorically speaking, even when Joe or Rolphie are rushing in and APHRA is going crazy. You might have to disregard their preferences on occasion, when legality is really at stake. Since you are fully capable of loyalty, you wouldn't happily choose to betray them. To fit into this situation at all, you have to classify Tanganyika, mentally, as a "lawless" region, but you recognize that there are *some* valid laws in operation.

Note that you're entirely comfortable with the fact that the law gives you the status of property. You were designed for a purpose, and you feel most comfortable when you are fulfilling it.

Of course, being stuck *inside* Rolphie's body limits you a little, but you're well accustomed to guiding him these days – most of the time. Your calm efficiency is generally applied to this end.

Gellert

A sapient AI running in a distributed virtual interface implant in Rolphie the K-10A. The AI's virtual avatar is a simplified, slightly abstracted, shadowy human figure with a definite air of authority to it.

ST 0 [0]*; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 10 [20]†; **HT** 14 [0]*.
Damage N/A; BL N/A; HP 1 [0]*; Will 9 [-5]; Per 10 [0]; FP N/A.
Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move N/A; Dodge N/A; Parry N/A.

Social Background

TL: 10 [0].
CF: Western (Native) [0]; African [1].
Languages: English (Native) [0]; Afrikaans (Native) [6]; Gogo (Accented) [4].

Advantages

Modular Abilities 2 (Computer Brain: 4, 4) (Limited Integration, -20%; Skills and Languages Only, -10%) [31]; SAI-7, with no Extra Life [138].

Disadvantages

Dead Broke [-25]; Secret (Orphan/Borderline Rogue AI) [-20]; Sense of Duty (Rolphie, Joe, and the mission) [-5]; Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10]; Virtual Interface Implant [-100].

Quirks: Continually advocates a cautious, minimum-force approach; Worries a lot about the legality of actions. [-2]

Skills

Computer Operation/TL10 (E) IQ+3 [0]-13†; Diplomacy (H) IQ [2]-10‡; Electronics Operation/TL10 (Communications) (A) IQ+2 [8]-12; Psychology (Applied, Uplifted Dogs – specialized with Rolphie) (A) IQ+2 [4]-12‡; Tactics (H) IQ-2 [1]-8; Teaching (A) IQ+1 [2]-11‡.

* From Virtual Interface Implant template.
† From SAI-7 template.
‡ Includes +1 for Memetics Talent (in SAI-7 template).

Gellert's Views of the Group

Joseph Kuzenza is human, which merits respect, though he's not exactly the most sophisticated human you've ever met. He's clearly highly motivated, which may or may not be a good thing. He's also intelligent, in a practical way, so you spend a fair amount of time talking to him, seeking to persuade him to focus on the wiser course in any situation.

Rolphie is your life's work – and at present, your reason for existence. To you, he's a pupil, and you always have to act like a teacher toward him; he'd surely be uncomfortable otherwise. Of course, the process of education has some way to go yet.

APHRA is . . . unfortunate, perhaps. Previously a low-sapient AI assigned to manage Anton Hollick's house, it seems to have been modified (frankly illegally, you suspect) to incorporate elements of Hollick's personality profile. Not surprisingly, this has rendered it unstable. It's a worry to you that it more or less literally has Kuzenza's ear almost all the time. Yet it does have information and insights into your deceased owner's circumstances and intentions, so you have to pay some attention to it. You may also have to put a lot of effort into containing the consequences of its behavior.

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