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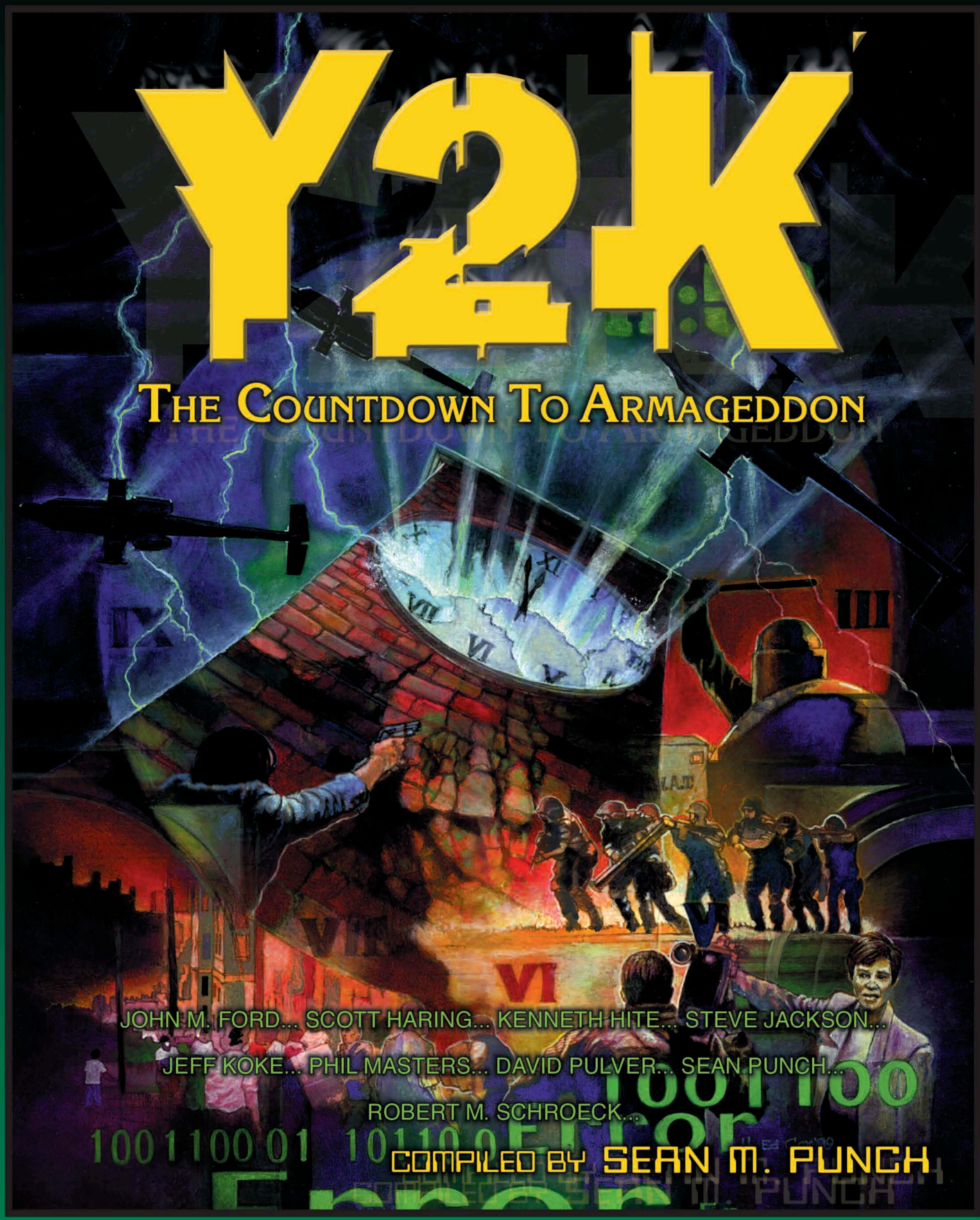

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

The Big Crash. The Bug. The End of Technology. The End of Humanity.

GURPS Y2K will be one of your all-time favorites!
– Nostradamus

There are many theories about what will happen when the programming shortcuts of the 1960s come back to haunt us on January 1, 2000. But even if those fears are never realized, the dawn of a new millennium is an uncertain time, and the thoughts of the media and the common man will turn to disaster – much of it man-made!

In ***GURPS Y2K***, nine of your favorite ***GURPS*** authors take a long look at millennial fears, from global computer failure to global warming, from nuclear apocalypse to Biblical Apocalypse. You will learn about:

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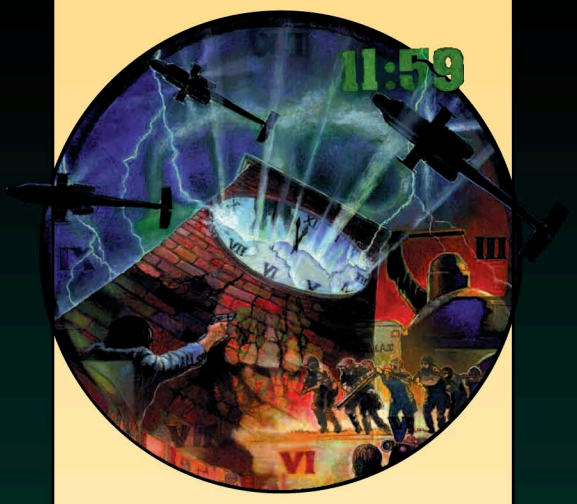
- *The folly.* Human stupidity and disaster-movie clichés.
- *The Conspiracy.* The people behind it all and their secret agenda.
- *The stage.* The world as it looks on the eve of 1/1/2000.
- *The holdouts.* Survivalism, and how to weather a disaster.
- *The hellraisers.* Opportunistic gangs and social decay.
- *The reconstruction.* What the world will look like afterward.
- *The speculative.* High-tech fears from SF novels and the evening news.
- *The superhuman.* How metahumans would change the whole equation.
- *The supernatural.* Creepy catastrophes, from Armageddon to zombies.

Are you Y2K compliant?



GURPS Basic Set**, Third Edition Revised* and ***Compendium I: Character Creation are required to use this supplement in a ***GURPS*** campaign, but it can be used as a sourcebook for any disaster or post-apocalyptic campaign set in recent times.

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GURPS®

Y2K

THE COUNTDOWN TO ARMAGEDDON

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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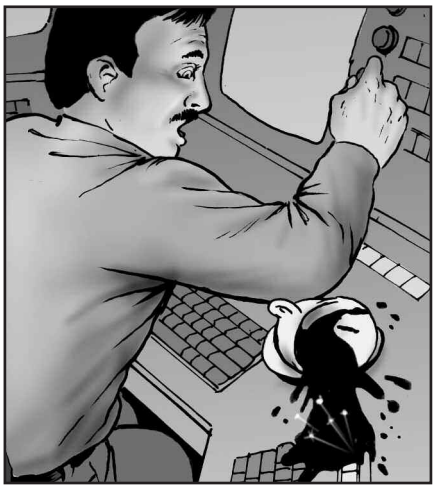

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About *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the ***GURPS*** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid (**www.sjgames.com/pyramid**). Our online magazine includes new rules and articles for ***GURPS***. It also covers the hobby's top games – ***Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Traveller, World of Darkness, Call of Cthulhu, Shadowrun,*** and many more – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like ***In Nomine, INWO, Car Wars, Toon, Ogre Miniatures,*** and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

New supplements and adventures. ***GURPS*** continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our Web site (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all ***GURPS*** releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request. Or download them from the Web – see below.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at **www.sjgames.com** for an online catalog, errata, updates, and hundreds of pages of information. We also have conferences on Compuserve and AOL. ***GURPS*** has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. Much of the online discussion of ***GURPS*** happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to **www.io.com/GURPSnet/www**.

The ***GURPS Y2K*** web page is located at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/y2k**.

Page References

Any page reference that begins with a B refers to ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Third Edition Revised;* e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of ***Basic Set.*** CI refers to ***Compendium I,*** CII to ***Compendium II,*** I to ***Illuminati,*** IST to ***International Super Teams,*** and UN to ***Undead.*** See ***GURPS Compendium I,*** p. 181, for a full list of abbreviations for ***GURPS*** titles. Or visit our online database at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html**.

Introduction

Fourteen Years of GURPS

Back in 1986, I was a SJ Games fanboy and a gamer of 7 years' experience. When ***GURPS*** appeared, I was impressed with its claim to be "generic" and "universal," but I was skeptical of its promise to cover every genre . . . and I definitely did not think I would be playing it 13 years later.

> ***"Tell all the computers it's 1972. 1972 exactly apes 2000. Every day of every month is the same and will follow suit for 28 years, so that gives you that much time to correct the problem."***
>
> ***– Ross Perot, quoted by Larry King in USA Today***

Fast-forward to 1999.

There are now over 145 supplements for ***GURPS*** – not including revisions – and I'm *working* here! Okay, so we haven't covered *every* genre yet . . . hey, we have to leave something or we'll put ourselves out of business. But I think we're entitled to a millennial gloat.

Where Are the Lasers and Brain Transplants?

But if we want to gloat and still show humility, we have to admit a few mistakes. My favorites are in our science-fiction supplements. For instance, it has long been ***GURPS*** canon that year 2000 would bring TL8, and that TL8 would bring lasers and electromag weapons, brain transplants and widespread bionics, incredible power cells, and colonies in space. The fact is, it doesn't look like we'll see any of those things any time soon.

Conversely, we have many prototype TL9 gadgets *now:* brilliant missiles, electrolasers, laser sensors, infrared cloaking, and recognition pads. (All battlefield technologies . . .) Fusion power most likely *will* happen "in our lifetime." And our "far-future" predictions about biotechnology (especially cloning and drugs) and computers (especially networks and AI) seem more-and-more pessimistic every time I read *Scientific American* or surf the Web. We'll probably have clone families and longevity treatments long before we have brain transplants and space colonies . . .

What's Next?

So what will ***GURPS*** look like when you're cloned and immortal? More seriously, where will it go in the next millennium? Naturally, we will update our old supplements (especially SF supplements . . .) and publish new ones addressing genres and eras we haven't covered yet (maybe even the 1990s, if we're doing this in a decade!). We will take advantage of technology: a rules CD-ROM will happen and we already sell our books online, and perhaps we will ship supplements by Net some day. In the mean time, advances in printing technology will soon make it possible to print books on demand and while you wait. And ***GURPS*** will certainly outgrow its pen-and-paper origins, making the transition to a digital format, moving online or becoming a computer game engine.

Get ready for ***GURPS***/TL8 . . .

Using This Book

During production, a lot of people said, "The Y2K bug will be old news a few months after you publish. If the hype fizzles, your book will be worthless. What's the point?" Here is my answer:

GURPS Y2K isn't about the Y2K computer bug. Sure, the millennium bug gets a lot of coverage, but there's more to it than that. We examine the theme of global disaster in our age, millennial and post-millennial fears, the things that worry us in 1999 and which will *still* worry us in 2000, 2001 . . . and 2010. We look at meteors, pollution, and superbugs; at human error; at religious fatalism, social decay, and violent survivalism . . . even aliens and undead. We've had your favorite ***GURPS*** authors write ten topical essays that are intended to inspire GMs who want to add disaster elements to their games.

And as for the millennium bug, it is true that once January 1, 2000 passes, speculation will be moot. But remember that *any* global computer failure will look like this, no matter when or where it happens. This book will be as useful to GMs running ***GURPS Space*** campaigns as it will be to GMs running Y2K games. And let's face it, Y2K is one of the key divergence points of the late 20th century for GMs with a taste for alternate histories – especially those featuring global political collapse, meteor impacts, and Armageddon.

In short, this book *is* Y2K compliant.

– Sean Punch, August 1999

GURPS Trivia

GURPS has been around for a long time, and ***Y2K*** does double duty as a sourcebook and as a celebration of ***GURPS***' longevity. In keeping with this theme, here are some of the more interesting trivia about ***GURPS:***

First ***GURPS*** *book:* Surprise! It wasn't ***Basic Set.*** It was ***Man to Man,*** a stand-alone version of the ***GURPS*** combat system. It let you create warriors and duke it out on a hex map. It first shipped in August 1985.

First edition of the full rules: ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *First Edition,* which shipped in June 1986. A boxed set, it included two rulebooks, a book of charts and tables, an adventure book, and some ***Cardboard Heroes.***

Number of titles: This isn't easy to determine. For instance, not everyone would count ***Fantasy GM's Pack*** (record sheets) or ***GURPS Lite*** (a free 32-page leaflet), and new releases will be published before you read this. A best guess: counting *all* stock items, and counting all printings, cover styles, and editions of a supplement as one item, there will have been some 150 ***GURPS*** titles as of autumn 1999.

Prize-winning supplements: ***Basic Set*** (Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Rules of 1988; Gencon Gamer's Choice Award for Best Fantasy Roleplaying Game, 1989), ***Cyberpunk Adventures*** (Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Adventure of 1992), ***Fantasy*** (Gencon Gamer's Choice Award for Best Fantasy Roleplaying Game, 1987), ***Fantasy Folk*** (Gencon Gamer's Choice Award for Best Fantasy Accessory/ Supplement, 1991), ***Illuminati*** (Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Supplement of 1992), ***Space*** (Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Supplement of 1988), ***Time Travel*** (Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Supplement of 1991), and ***Vampire: The Masquerade*** (Origins Award for Best Roleplaying Supplement of 1993).

Foreign-language editions: ***GURPS*** is available in French, German, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish, and most recently Korean . . . and ***GURPS Lite*** is being translated into many more languages as you read this.

Editions for the blind: Thanks to the volunteer efforts of Nancy Feldman, ***GURPS*** is available in Braille and on tape. For more information, write to GURPS Braille Project, 1440 W. 4th Ave., Eugene, OR 97402.

Books from third parties: The only official ***GURPS*** product ever released in English by anyone other than SJ Games was ***GURPS IST Kingston,*** by Modern Myth Productions.

Books you can't get in English: Several original settings are produced under license in other languages, including ***Damned Stalkers*** (modern horror; Japanese), ***Ring Dream*** (female wrestlers; Japanese), and ***Runal Saga*** (high fantasy; Japanese).

GURPS *the government didn't want you to have:* On March 1, 1990, SJ Games was raided by the U.S. Secret Service as part of an investigation of data piracy. During the raid, they seized ***GURPS Cyberpunk.*** See the full story at **www.sjgames.com/SS/**.

ARPA and the Network Control Protocol

The man whose idea it was to link computers together, J.C.R. Licklider, joined DARPA as the head of its computer research program in October, 1962. He spent much of the 1960s combining the DARPA plans with those of the RAND Corporation and the British National Physical Laboratory. By 1967, Lawrence Roberts had published a plan for a computer network called ARPANET, which boasted four computers (officially) in December of 1969. A year later, Steve Crocker of the interestingly titled Network Working Group developed the Network Control Protocol (NCP) and ARPANET had its own software. The NCP had flaws (introduced from the first?) as a host protocol, so yet another specialist, Bob Kahn, completed the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) in 1973 and tested it on the Xerox PARC Ethernet built by Bob Metcalfe the same year. On January 1, 1983, a decade after TCP/IP had proven itself, ARPANET officially switched from NCP to TCP/IP to become the modern Internet.

Conspiracy theorists point out the "dress rehearsal" quality of the TCP/IP switch in 1983 and the convenience for Someone that the whole system is routed over a net which depends on protocols developed decades ago and never changed. If the net doesn't die with the dawn of Y2K, who knew what was coming and who built it to survive? One answer might turn out to be Vannevar Bush – Licklider, Roberts, Crocker, Kahn, and Metcalfe all came from MIT.

Nothing to Worry About, Friend

There is no Millennium Bug in any computer. Yet. The Conspiracy engineered the whole Y2K scare in order to get Their operatives access to *everybody's* computers. For the better part of a decade, and especially for the last three years, a relative stranger could show up anywhere, introduce himself as "the Y2K consultant," and be paid a premium salary to root around in the most critical codes and systems on the planet. Security? How? In the U.S., for example, the Social Security Administration has had 400 new full-time staff working on Y2K for the last eight years – and every system in the Federal Government cross-checks its data by Social Security Number. Nobody's going to wait six months for an FBI check on "the COBOL guy," especially not the Defense Department (one billion lines of code to check, and the clock is ticking). *Especially* since the FBI has to find programmers somewhere to check *its* systems.

Rex-84

Finally, of course, the Illuminati have rehearsed Capstone at least once, in the joint FEMA-Defense Department war games known as Operation Night Train, or "Rex-84." (The Three Mile Island incident, which occurred one day after Carter created FEMA, may have been another such "rehearsal.") This full-scale operation in April, 1984, combined a massive redeployment of thousands of troops with a simulated "internal crisis" – FEMA gamed out rounding up 400,000 "undesirables" into a network of "detention camps" along the Mexican border. (FEMA had previously orchestrated the relocation of the Cuban Mariel refugees.) As a bureaucratic power grab, it went poorly: Attorney General William French Smith protested and FEMA took a back seat in future Justice Department counterinsurgency planning. But as a dress rehearsal for a chaos-inspired Illuminati coup d'etat, it went very well indeed.

PROMIS Keepers

So much for the United States – what of the rest of the world? Other nations, like the U.K. and France, have their own "emergency planning" bureaucracies with similar frightening emergency plans. Canada has the War Measures Act, which can suspend the Canadian Bill of Rights; it was last used in 1970 by Prime Minister Trudeau after FLQ terrorists kidnapped a British trade commissioner and a government official. China's dictatorship has taken orders from the Areopagitae ever since Illuminati agent Owen Lattimore helped secure Communist rule there. And the Illuminated tool known as the UN plays a vital role not only in providing security forces for the subjugation of America but also in keeping the Third World restive and impoverished.

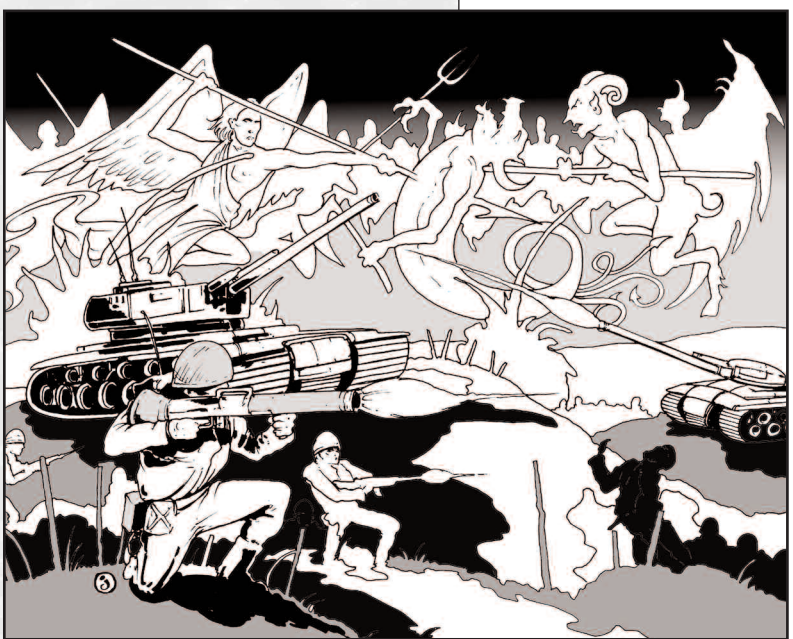
The Harrowed

It is not particularly clear what form the dead will take when they start walking around in preparation for Judgement Day. Since most of the dead will be dust (or at least dry and incomplete skeletons), the most logical form would be some kind of ghost. GMs who want to go with B-movie tradition may prefer to dress the dead in flesh for the occasion and treat them as zombies (p. M117). Better yet, *all kinds of undead* could get involved; ***GURPS Undead*** contains numerous varieties of specters and walking corpses.

Lucky 7?

A recurring theme in *Revelation* (p. 116) is the number 7. John's vision begins with Jesus appearing to him among 7 golden candlesticks while holding 7 stars in his hand. At various points during his vision, John spots 7 lamps, a lamb with 7 horns and 7 eyes, a book with 7 seals, a dragon with 7 heads, and 7 vials (borne by 7 angels); he also hears the sound of 7 trumpets and 7 thunders. There is no strong consensus regarding what this means (many interpretations are Cabbalistic; see p. 120 for more on Cabbalism), but the number 7 definitely seems to be associated with the Apocalypse.

This can be an amusing theme to use in a supernatural ***Y2K*** campaign. The GM can have the number 7 feature prominently in dreams, or have minor disasters, strange NPCs, or unusual occurrences show up in sets of 7. More subtly, the number 7 could start appearing with unusual frequency in the PCs' lives as the fateful day approaches – $7 million lottery prizes, 7 wrong numbers in the same day, etc.



Millennial Magic

Even if the computers weather 2000 without a hitch, our preoccupation with the millennium could be strong enough to invoke Cabbalistic power all by itself. As we approach and live through year 2000, those who use the Gregorian calendar will be thinking about the date. Billions of souls worldwide focused on one number could work some powerful magic, and if the dominant emotion is millennial apprehension, it might not be *good* magic.

If the GM wishes to avoid the blatantly supernatural, he can instead assume that the *sephira* associated with the number 2000 is driving global events from behind the scenes. There are many ways to associate the *sephiroth* with numbers, but one interpretation associates 2000 with *Chokmah* – Wisdom. Since year 2000 will overlap years 5760 and 5761 on the Hebrew calendar, we should also consider those numbers while we're at it. The same interpretation associates 5760 with *Yesod* (Foundation) and 5761 with *Malkuth* (Kingdom).

What all this implies is up to the GM. If Wisdom is read as Illumination, then Y2K could be the year that the Illuminati take their rightful place as the Overlords of Humanity. The appearance of Foundation and Kingdom on the Jewish calendar may have to do with Jerusalem: Do Jewish, Islamic, or Christian factions have big plans for the holy city? Will Israel be recognized as a world power? Tying it all together, perhaps the Illuminati will be behind events in the Middle East that will ultimately lead to escalating war and Armageddon (p. 120). Given the current political situation in the real world, this doesn't seem so far-fetched . . .

Thinking Bad Thoughts

Acts of remembrance directed at the dead are among the many things sometimes believed to have the power to bring forth the undead (see p. UN54). If a Y2K disaster occurs, then a *lot* of attention will suddenly be focused on computer files that pertain to people who were alive in 1900 . . . but not in 2000. This could constitute remembrance enough to spawn an undead plague.

Failure to remember the dead is sometimes believed to cause undeath as well (see p. UN36). If the Y2K bug mixes up records of deaths that occurred in 1900 and in 2000, the spirits of the dead may grow restless out of fear of being forgotten – especially if sloppy journalists, biographers, and living family members publish commemorative messages and the like with blind disregard for the correct date of death.

This could be used to justify the sudden appearance of ghosts, revenants, shades, wights, etc., in the year 2000. Such undead would likely have an acute awareness of time and a real hatred of the computers that are the ultimate source of their unrest. Being from an earlier time, most of them would exhibit anachronistic mannerisms. Below is a template for one possible kind of revenant; see ***GURPS Undead*** for other kinds of undead. These undead could also be used in campaigns where the GM has decided that Cabbalistic power is at work in the world (see *Yetzirah 2K,* p. 120).

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