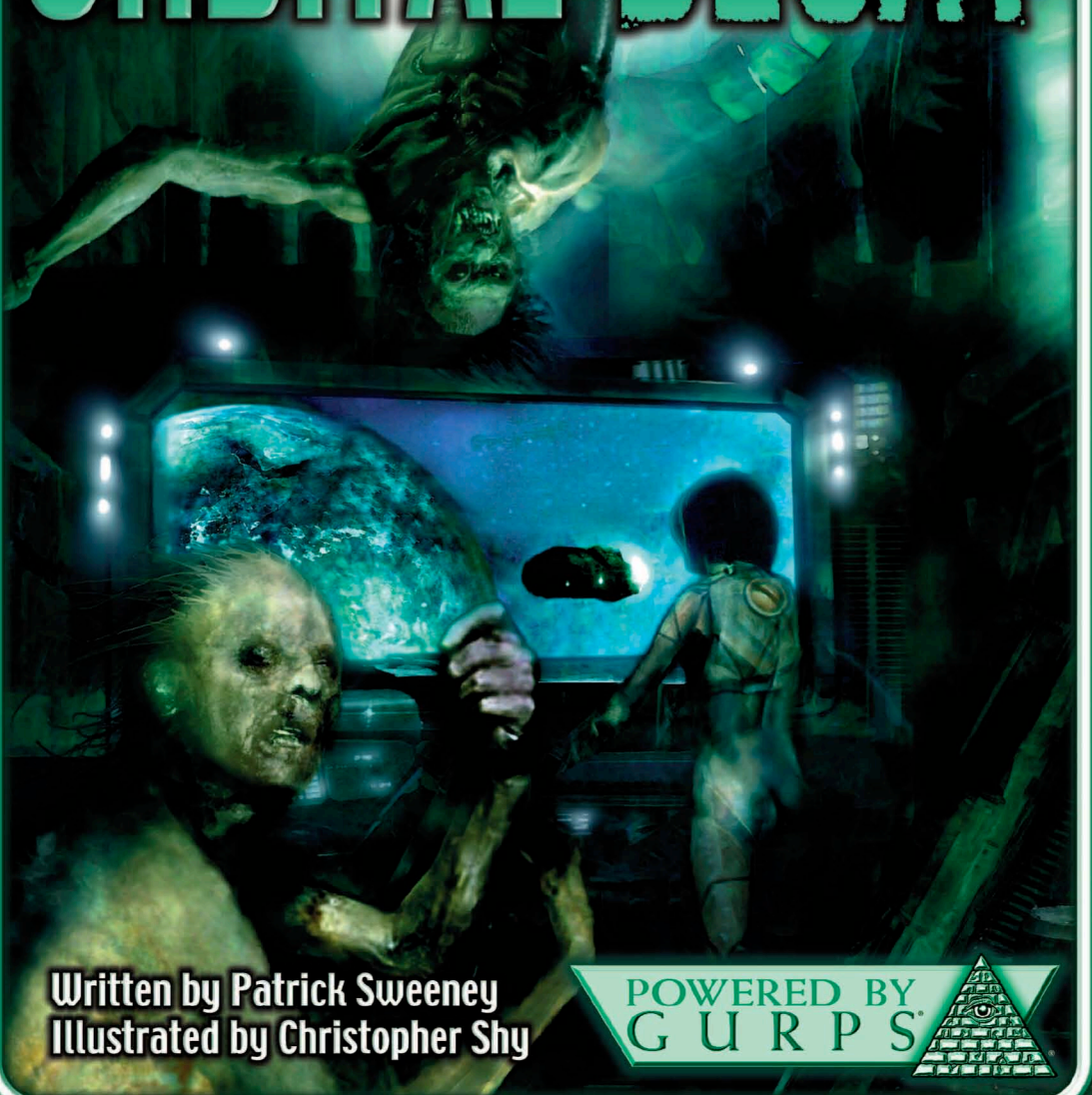


# TRANSHUMAN SPACE

## ORBITAL DECAY™



Written by Patrick Sweeney  
Illustrated by Christopher Shy

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GURPS®



STEVE JACKSON GAMES



Vandegrift Station, a top-secret orbital research lab, has suddenly stopped all transmissions. Why has the station gone silent? Where did all the researchers go?

### *What's that clawing at the airlock?*

*Orbital Decay* includes maps and stats of a typical orbital facility, character descriptions, and an adventure for up to six 200-point *Transhuman Space* characters, either biological or cybershell.



*GURPS Basic Set, Compendium I, and Transhuman Space* are required to use this book in a *GURPS* campaign. *GURPS Space* and *Bio-Tech* may also be useful. The ideas and maps in *Orbital Decay* can be used with any roleplaying system.



Written by Patrick Sweeney Edited by Andrew Hackard  
Illustrated by Christopher Shy  
*Transhuman Space* designed by David Pulver



STEVE JACKSON GAMES  
[www.sjgames.com](http://www.sjgames.com)

FIRST EDITION, FIRST PRINTING  
PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 2002

ISBN 1-55634-576-3



9 781556 345760

SJG00895 6705

Printed in  
the USA

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**Written by Patrick Sweeney**  
**Edited by Andrew Hackard**  
**Cover and interior art by**  
**Christopher Shy**  
**Maps by Alex Fernandez**

*GURPS* System Design ■ STEVE JACKSON  
Creative Director ■ PHILIP REED  
Managing Editor ■ ANDREW HACKARD  
*GURPS* Line Editor ■ SEAN PUNCH  
*Transhuman Space* Line Editor ■ DAVID PULVER  
Project Administrator ■ MONIQUE CHAPMAN  
Production Manager ■ HEATHER OLIVER  
Production and Page Design ■ PHILIP REED  
Print Buying ■ MONICA STEPHENS  
Errata Coordinator ■ ANDY VETROMILE  
Sales Manager ■ ROSS JEPSON



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ISBN 1-55634-576-3

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# INTRODUCTION

## SETTING OPTIONS

While this adventure is designed primarily for the *Trans-human Space* setting, it can easily be adapted to virtually any science-fiction setting.

**Modern:** The basic concept of an experiment gone wrong at a remote research lab can be dropped intact into a modern science fiction-style setting, though some aspects of the plotline will have to change depending on the locale. An otherwise uninhabited island or snowbound Antarctic station are two possibilities for modified versions of the adventure.

The rough plotline could be used almost intact, however, if the setting is an underwater habitat. Submarines would have to replace spaceships, and flooding would be the primary hazard rather than pressure loss, but the basics of the adventure could proceed almost as written.

A radical twist might be to set the adventure aboard International Space Station Alpha in Earth orbit. Rather than free-lance troubleshooters in 2100, the PCs are astronauts sent aloft in a space shuttle to investigate loss of contact with the station following the return of the first manned mission to Mars. The Mars mission inadvertently brought back an alien virus that has turned the station crew into zombie-like monsters.

**Near Future:** This adventure can easily be used in any near-future science fiction setting in which humanity has colonized the solar system. Few, if any, changes would be necessary to adjust for slightly different tech levels or backgrounds.

**Far Future:** A far-future setting in which humanity has colonized dozens of star systems also poses few difficulties to adapting the adventure. The orbital lab can still be placed around Earth if the GM desires, but any inhabited world will do. Higher tech

levels might make new weapons or equipment available, but won't have a profound effect on the adventure itself.

There are a thousand ways to die in space, most of them awful. So it's no surprise that horror and science fiction are close literary cousins. Both delve into the unknown, and both frequently involve themes of isolation – whether physical or social. The difference lies chiefly in the style of storytelling. In science fiction, the unknown is frequently a source of wonder; in horror, a source of terror.

Biotechnology likewise both fascinates and frightens. Biotech critics have raised the prospect of man-made superviruses, spawned maliciously or accidentally. Other fears, as serious as unforeseen long-term effects of hormone therapy or as fanciful as armies of cloned soldiers conquering the world, are also taking root as the science of biotechnology expands. The best biotech horror tales tap into existing concerns, making their plotlines frightening as well as topical.

*Orbital Decay* melds horror and science fiction to create a suspenseful adventure in which the dangers of biotechnology-run-amok threaten both the personal survival of the protagonists and the fate of an entire world.

## Using This Book

*Orbital Decay* pits a team of troubleshooters against a biotechnology disaster aboard an orbital lab in the year 2100. As the adventure progresses, the stakes continue to rise until the heroes are fighting not only for their own survival but also for the safety of Earth itself.

This book contains a plotline of key events, advice to the GM on adapting to player actions, and game information on NPCs, equipment, and vehicles. While every effort has been made to present information in a clear, logical order, it is highly recommended that GMs read through the entire adventure at least once before trying to run it.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patrick Sweeney is a freelance author based in California. He is the author or co-author of numerous books, including the Origins Award-nominated *San Angelo: City of Heroes* superhero setting now published by Hero Games. His interests include gaming, science fiction, camping, and comic books.

## ABOUT TRANSHUMAN SPACE

The *Transhuman Space* series presents a unique hard-science and high-biotech universe for roleplaying. Set in the solar system in the year 2100, it is a setting rich in adventure, mystery, and exploration of the

possibilities of existence. The core book in the line is *Transhuman Space*, written by David Pulver. It presents an overview of the solar system of 2100.

## 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 include:

*Pyramid* ([www.sjgames.com/pyramid/](http://www.sjgames.com/pyramid/)). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

*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 website (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 available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE. Or download them from the Web – see below.

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*Internet.* Visit us on the World Wide Web at [www.sjgames.com](http://www.sjgames.com) for an online catalog, errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: [rec.games.frp.gurps](mailto:rec.games.frp.gurps).

*GURPSnet.* This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, e-mail [majordomo@io.com](mailto:majordomo@io.com) with “subscribe GURPSnet-L” in the body, or point your web browser to [gurpsnet.sjgames.com](http://gurpsnet.sjgames.com).

The *Transhuman Space: Orbital Decay* web page is at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/transhuman/orbitaldecay/](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/transhuman/orbitaldecay/).

## Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*. Other references are BIO for *GURPS Bio-Tech*, S for *GURPS Space, Third Edition*, and TS for *Transhuman Space*.

For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at [www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html](http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html).

# OVERVIEW

The adventurers are hired by the Terrell-Dieskau Corp. to investigate a loss of contact with its biotech lab on Vandegrift Station in High Earth Orbit, but corporate skullduggery denies them crucial information. The freelance team arrives at the seemingly deserted station, finds signs of violence aboard, and begins to investigate.

A disaster causes extensive damage to the station, pushing it into a decaying orbit. Stranded aboard the dying habitat, the troubleshooters discover the awful truth – experimental bioweapons have transformed the crew into mindless monsters stalking the intruders to sate their ravenous hunger. If the station is not destroyed, the nanoplagues might survive re-entry to infect the population of Earth.

Then things get worse.

*Orbital Decay* is designed for up to six specialists of not more than 200 points each. Cybershells of up to 400 points are acceptable, provided they are not optimized for combat. Smaller groups of higher-point PCs, up to 450 points each, will also work as long as they are not combat monsters.

## VANDEGRIFT STATION

Most of the action in the adventure takes place aboard Vandegrift Station, an orbital research lab in High Earth Orbit. The habitat, constructed in 2072 by the Vandegrift Co. as a materials research facility, fell into disuse when the company went under in 2093. Terrell-Dieskau Corp. leased the vacant station from bankruptcy trustees in 2098, evicted squatters and remodeled it for use as a biotechnology research center.

The station has a ring design resembling a wagon wheel. The outer ring rotates to provide spin gravity via centrifugal force. It contains the labs and living quarters of the habitat. The four “spokes” of the wheel

are passageways connecting the outer ring to the core. Four evenly spaced orbit-correction thrusters on the habitat ring help the station maintain a stable orbit. (See the inside back cover for a station map.)

The inner core remains in free fall and contains a docking ring for supply vessels. The core also holds the fusion reactor powering the station and a bulk cargo hold.

The normal crew consists of three administrators, 16 researchers in various capacities, and eight crew members who oversee station operations, perform maintenance, cook, and so forth. Dr. Anders Ljungdahl is the station’s chief administrator, assisted by operations manager Marisa Sanchez and security chief Genjiro Matsukata.



## KEY SYSTEMS

Vandegrift Station has a number of habitat-wide systems.

**Communications:** Vandegrift Station is equipped with a long-range radio transmitter for routine messages and a laser communicator for more sensitive data, as lasers are harder to intercept. Both systems are normally keyed to relay satellites connecting them to the main Terrell-Dieskau Corp. station.

**Computers:** Rather than install a costly new computer system, Terrell-Dieskau

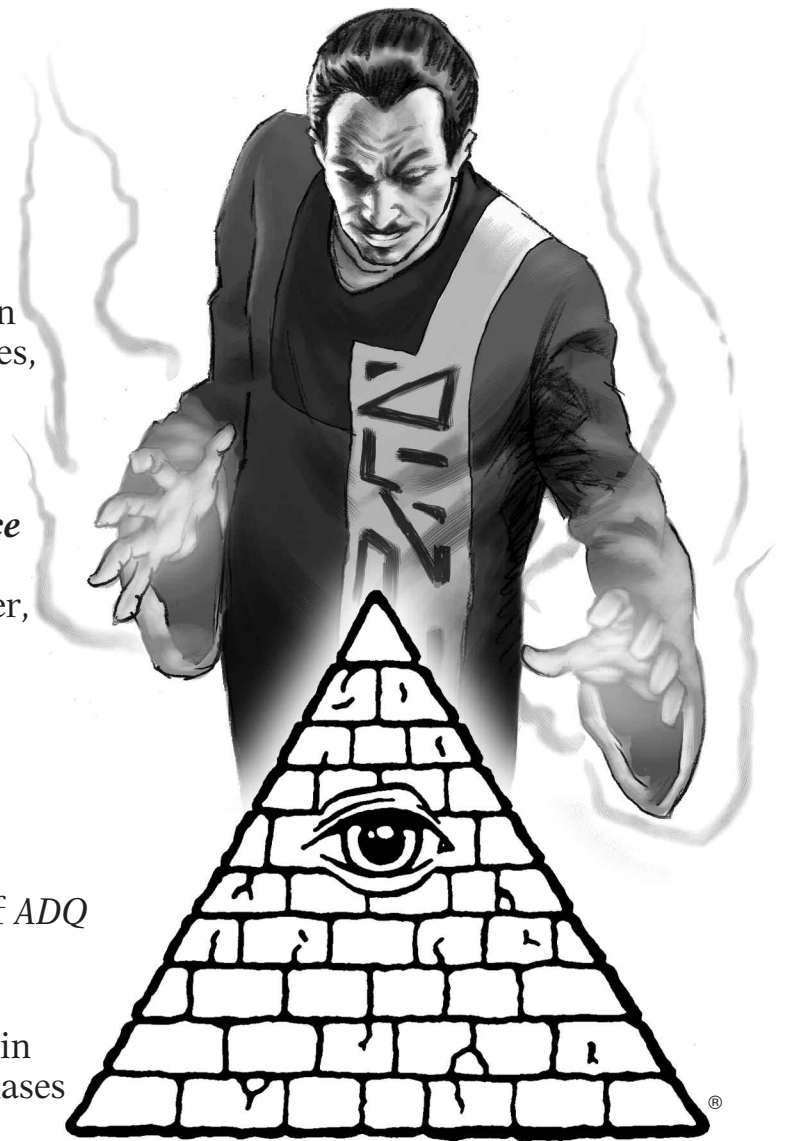


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