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## Article Colors

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

*Pale Blue:* In This Issue

*Brown:* In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)

*Green:* Columnist

*Dark Blue:* GURPS Features

*Purple:* Systemless Features

COVER ART

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INTERIOR ART

*Greg Hyland*

# IN THIS ISSUE

It's the issue of *Pyramid* that *they* don't want you to know about! This month, we turn our spotlight to the darker corners of creation, firm in the knowledge that the truth is out there . . . sometimes *way* out there!

Entangle your heroes in a web of secrecy and devious plans by putting *Conspiracy in Action!* Sean Punch – the Secret Master of **GURPS Action** – shows how to add more cloak and dagger to the revolvers and race cars of the **Action** line, telling you how to adjust the BAD, help the good guys' ACT, plan adventures, and add a conspiratorial element through new lenses.

In a world *without* action heroes, who stands against the Conspiracy? Michele Armellini – author of **GURPS WWII: Grim Legion** – reveals *The Conspirators' Enemies* through a series of five **GURPS** templates, each with a ready-to-use example character, plus tips for using the templates in multiple eras.

College indiscretions haunt a politician with *Penguin Dreams*. David L. Pulver, contributor to **GURPS Y2K**, introduces a rare comic book that's valuable for more than its cheesecake cover art in this month's Eidetic Memory.

In smoky backrooms, shadowy figures play high-stakes games . . . sometimes literally. Jason "PK" Levine – architect of **GURPS Psionic Campaigns** and other puppet-string toolkits – teaches you poker the **GURPS** way by going *Straight to the Flush*. Learn the skills that your double agent needs, the games he can play, how to cheat, and how to figure out the winnings and what hand he had.

An Earth-loving group is calling on everyone to do their part to stop overpopulation with *One Perfect Day*. In this systemless campaign frame, discover a radical method for reducing world population, including the organization promoting the method, the people behind it, and their dangerous secrets.

Find out what is watching you as we bid you *Welcome to the Terror Drone!* Any modern game world can benefit from learning the "truth" about what small robotic planes are doing as they zip through the sky: simple reconnaissance, complicated mind control, and possibilities between.

Random Thought Table explores what it's like to be inside *and* outside the Conspiracy at the same time, Odds and Ends suggests more games to use with the new poker guidelines, and Murphy's Rules has *stealed* itself to revealing the truth. No matter how far down the rabbit hole you're willing to go, this month's *Pyramid* is ready and waiting for you to get closer . . . closer . . . *closer* . . .

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## AN ARCHIVE OF SECRETS

When I – codenamed “Steven Marsh” – started assembling this issue, I admit that I was a bit nervous. I wasn’t scared that I was poking into the dark corners of conspiratorial matters (real or imagined). No, I was concerned that it’d be 30-some-odd pages of blank pages . . . and not just because *they* didn’t want you to see what was inside! How well would our writers build on what was already discussed previously in *GURPS Illuminati*, written by the late, great Nigel D. Findley?

Fortunately, my fears didn’t come to fruition at all, and I’m quite happy with how this issue turned out. However, it did make me realize once more how fortunate it is to live in an archival era. The latest printing of *GURPS Illuminati* came out in 2000, while the PDF went online at e23 in 2010. Because the PDF is *still* available, we don’t need to reinvent the wheel by presenting again material that has been created in the past but had the audacity to fall out of print.

Entering the tabletop-gaming hobby at the tail end of its golden age in the early 1980s, I was often frustrated by how often supplements and (especially) magazines would make reference to other material that I *couldn’t get*: “Why does this issue

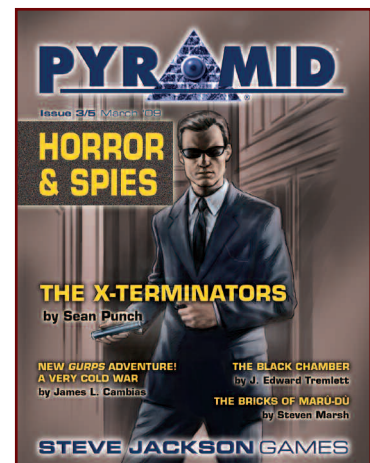
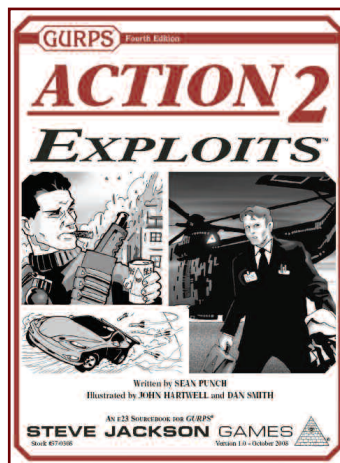
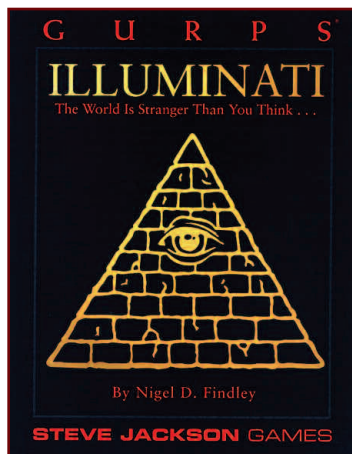
have a *sequel* to a detailed depiction of hell? ‘Pages from the Mages III?! Where are the other two?!?’

At 20 years and going, *Pyramid* has grown up alongside the Internet, adapting and morphing like the information super-highway itself; sites like Wikipedia and Google begin with a presupposition that most information *has* been touched on in some way, and can expand on it accordingly. Like the rest of the *GURPS Fourth Edition* line, we can safely assume that we don’t need to reinvent the wheel just because a supplement is 10 years old. Instead, we can spend more time building on what’s gone before and working to bring you new and exciting material each month.

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

So how well did we do this month at conveying what *they* didn’t want you to know? Tell us your secrets! You can tell us how were doing privately at [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or join the brave, outspoken community at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).

We do read all comments, and – in the case of private comments about specific articles – forward them to the authors. I’ve heard from many creators who’ve received such comments, and it always makes their days.



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## Lenses

*Fantasy* (+0 points): Add Higher Purpose (Fighting the Conspiracy) [5] and Magic Resistance [2/level] to the advantage option list. Add Disciplines of Faith [Varies], Manophobia [-15\*], and Vow [Varies] to the disadvantage option list. Add Spear (A) DX-1 [1]-9; Public Speaking (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; and Theology (any) (H) IQ-2 [1]-8 to the second background skills list.

*Near-Future* (+0 points): Add Contact Group [Varies], Resistant (any special attack by the conspirators) [Varies], and Tough Guy 1 (**Power-Ups 3**, p. 16) [5/level] to the advantage option list. Add Phobia (Memetics) [Varies] and Psionophobia [Varies] to the disadvantage option list. Add Computer Operation/TL (E) IQ [1]-10; Electronics Operation/TL (Media) or Occultism, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; and Philosophy (any ideology) (H) IQ-2 [1]-8 to the second background skills list.

*Rabble Rouser* (+9 points): Choose *one* of Charisma 1 [5], Rank 1 [5], or Reputation +2 (Crusade leader; All enemies of the conspiracy; All the time) [5]. Add Leadership (A) IQ [4]-11 as a required primary skill.

## Customization Notes

The point value of the crusader template includes the standard value of its mandatory disadvantage, Obsession [-10]. If this is adjusted by the self-control number, the total point value of the template must change accordingly.

## New Talents

These are suggested custom Talents of particular interest to a conspiracy-centered campaign.

### Snake Oil Salesman

5 points/level

Fast-Talk, Merchant, Performance, Propaganda, Psychology, Public Speaking.

*Reaction bonus:* salesmen, con men, and potential employers wishing to sell . . . snake oil-like products.

### Troublemaker in Town

10 points/level

Area Knowledge (City), Carousing, Current Affairs (City), Forced Entry, Holdout, Intimidation, Scrounging, Streetwise, Throwing, Urban Survival.

*Reaction bonus:* other troublemakers, rebellious discontents.

## Sample Crusader: Cunad

25 points

Cunad is broad-shouldered and ruddy-faced. He's a small-time thug and good-for-nothing in a generic fantasy setting. On top of that, he hates all nonhumans (and anybody who's different from him). He's ready to join any angry mob whenever there's unrest in his city, with a view to thwarting those monsters' plans – preferably by knocking some heads. He's willing to aid any champions of mankind who may need local information or just some muscle.

**ST** 11 [10]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 10 [0]; **HT** 10 [0].

Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [5]; Per 10 [0]; FP 10 [0].

Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8; Parry 8 (Brawling), 7 (Knife, Spear).  
5'9"; 160 lbs.

## Social Background

*TL:* 3 [0].

*CF:* Local [0].

*Languages:* Local (Native) [0].

## Advantages

High Pain Threshold [10]; Higher Purpose (Fighting the conspiracy) [5].

## Disadvantages

Intolerance (Total) [-10]; Obsession (Destroying the conspiracy) (12) [-10]; Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5].

## Skills

Area Knowledge (City) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Carousing (E) HT [1]-10; Current Affairs/TL3 (Regional) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Holdout (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-11; Knife (E) DX [1]-10; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-11; Spear (A) DX-1 [1]-9; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-10; Throwing (A) DX [2]-10; Urban Survival (A) Per [2]-10.

## TRUTH SEEKER

45 points

*The truth is out there. Let me tell you about it!*

You investigate the conspiracy, so that you can expose the conspirators and decry their foul machinations. You do believe that the truth about the conspiracy will make everybody free from its fiendish plans. Therefore, you work hard to find that truth and to let it be known. Since the conspirators work best in the darkness, you try to shed light upon them – not bash their heads. That's not your style.

Since you gather information, strive to understand its meaning, and then do your best to spread it, you have something in common with infiltrators (pp. 11-12), propagandists (pp. 12-13), analysts (pp. 13-14). The main difference is that they are specialists and most often professionals, while you are an eager amateur. Although unlikely, you might be a law enforcer by trade; in that case, your own agency and colleagues shun you. The fact is that most people don't take your warnings seriously!

However, even paranoids have real enemies.

**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [5]; Per 12 [5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

**Advantages:** 15 points chosen from among Ally [Varies], Contact [Varies], Contact Group [Varies], Eidetic Memory [5], Intuition [15], Less Sleep [2/level], Patron [Varies], Serendipity 1 [15], Single-Minded [5], Truth-Seeker 1-3 (**Power-Ups 3**, p. 17) [5/level], or Versatile [5].

# STRAIGHT TO THE FLUSH

BY JASON “PK” LEVINE

To anyone watching, they were just five retired gentleman having a friendly game in the park. One threw two chips into the pot. “Call.” The others seemed unsurprised when the next shrugged and laid his cards down. With three players remaining, the dealer passed out another face-up card to each.

The table shook, spilling chips, as a young boy ran into it while chasing his balloon. His mother was only seconds behind. “I am **so** sorry! He’s such a handful. Here, let me help you with those. Oh, what cute little chips! This one says ‘Tennessee Valley Water Authority’? And there’s ‘Jill Biden’ . . . and ‘CNN’! Are these from a board game?”

The nearest man smiled warmly. “Just one of those kitschy ‘tourist sets’ I picked up at a gift store. Thank you for your help, Miss Watson.”

It wasn’t until hours later that she wondered if she’d just forgotten giving him her name.

Few games are as cool as poker. When shadowy businessmen are crowded around a table in a smoky back room, we never picture them playing rummy. A super-spy may play countless games in Vegas, but when the plot calls for him to show skill, rather than luck, it’s usually at a poker table. Any card game can fill a background role in an adventure, but poker is one of the few that can step into the spotlight . . . to become the focal point of a scene, at least briefly.

When this happens – when “roll a Quick Contest of Gambling” isn’t enough – the following rules may add a little “positive expected value” to your session.

## Just Let Me Play!

If you want to use these rules, but time is at a premium, use this “quick-start” guide:

1. Skip to the second paragraph of *Stakes and Expected Value* (p. 20) and determine the EV for the table.
2. Follow the rules for *The Quick Way* (p. 21). Wherever you see “Gaming Skill,” use **Gambling**. Wherever you see “People Skill,” use the lower of **IQ** or **Per**.

## A QUICK PRIMER

Expert poker players draw on an array of talents, including facility with numbers, knowledge of human psychology, and powers of observation and deception. Players can use these skills to win even if chance has not dealt them the better hand.

– Judge Jack Weinstein, exempting poker from the IGBA

Poker is a game of skill, not just chance. The winner is not necessarily the player who was dealt the best hand, but the one who convinces his opponents that he was. This is because poker is a vying game – new cards are interspersed with rounds of betting, and players who aren’t confident in their ability to win a hand can fold at any time. Experienced poker players learn to estimate their odds of winning, then either fold as quickly as possible (to minimize losses) or stay in and try to convince everyone else to fold via carefully calculated bets. If everyone else folds, the remaining player takes the pot; otherwise, everyone who stayed in has a showdown to see who gets it.

For other games that work well with these rules, see p. 37.

## Glossary

**ante:** A small amount of money used to start the pot, or the act of adding it.

**draw, the:** In Draw Poker, the cards that you return to the dealer for replacement.

**fold:** Drop out of the current hand.

**hand: 1.** A single “turn” of poker, from ante to showdown, typically with multiple rounds of betting. **2.** The set of five cards you accrue, and how that set is ranked (e.g., “pair” or “straight flush”).

**pot:** All of the antes and bets, usually in the center of the table. The winner takes it.

**showdown:** If more than one person stays in the hand until the very end, they all compare their hands. If there is no showdown, *no one’s* hand is revealed!

## SKILL MASTERY

For simplicity, the ability to win at poker can be boiled down to two equally important talents.

### Gaming Skill

This is the ability to estimate the odds of a hand paying off or of a needed card showing up, to judge bet size, and so on. Use the better of **Gambling** or **Games (Poker)**. If you have neither, use your **IQ-4** default for Games.

*Modifiers:* +1 if you know both skills; for purposes of the +1 to Games, knowing Mathematics (Statistics) is as good as knowing Gambling. +1 for Eidetic Memory or Photographic Memory. +1 for Lightning Calculator or +3 for Intuitive Mathematician.

# ONE PERFECT DAY

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

*My mother always told me the world was my oyster. She told me I could do anything I wanted to do, and I had a bright future ahead of me. All I had to do was work hard and dream big.*

*But then, I look at the world, and I see what we're doing to it. If I do what I want to do, I'm going to be a small part of a big mess that's just dragging our planet down. Even if I go local, drive an electric car, recycle everything – none of that's going to help. Not at all.*

*I've decided I don't need it, and the world doesn't need me.*

*I'm going to give myself a year. I'm going to spend half of it helping kids in Africa, and the other half seeing Europe. When that's done, I'm going to go sit on a beach, somewhere, have a great dinner with some wine, watch the sun go down over the Ocean, and drink the Sleep Potion.*

*My name is Shelley Rockton. I'm 27 years old, and this is my Passing Pledge.*

*Don't weep for me. Join me.*

One Perfect Day's stated goal is to encourage voluntary human extinction. They claim that the only way to save our ecologically beleaguered planet is for *Homo sapiens* to leave it – preferably en masse. To that end, they exhort their followers to put their affairs in order, have one, last perfect day, and then commit “safetycide” for the good of Earth.

The group's ethos is both shocking and controversial, to be sure. But there's more to OPD than online goodbyes and celebrity endorsements.

In fact, there's a conspiracy afoot.

On the surface, the idea seems sensible, however horrible. Unfortunately, the conspiracy is having unintended consequences: a number of murders, massacres, and other reprehensible acts are being committed by OPD-inspired “suicides,” all of whom credit the group for their acts.

The group is actually an astroturf organization, acting on the behalf of a small group of young, reactionary millionaires. These five, super-rich college kids hope that OPD will rid America of a significant portion of its amoral, feeble-brained liberals and ecologically minded types, thus changing the economic destiny of the country, along with the balance of its political blocs.

But there is a more insidious layer at work. While the five are using One Perfect Day to their own ends, at least one of the five is using *everyone*. Finding out what this deeper conspirator wants could ruin everything OPD is working toward, but just might save lives – even the entire world.

You can now learn the story that One Perfect Day wants you to hear, but you'll also get the truth, which leads to Project

Mockingbird – a group of five, young, super-rich kids who want you to die. Their personal stories and true motivations are laid bare, providing the GM up to five different, dark conspiracies to use, along with adventure seeds that could become part of an entire campaign.

## THE ACCEPTED MYTH

According to the history page on One Perfect Day's snazzy, well-designed website, the group came together when two students at UCLA realized that they were better off dead.

Eugene “Exit” Smith and Gordon “Gone” Tzeremes came up with the idea after they both took a masters-level anthropology class called “Future-pology,” in 2005. Their grade was based on one, final group project, in which they were charged with coming up with a working, sustainable model of the future. Smith and Tzeremes, who'd known each other from the collegiate ecological activist circuit, decided to focus on the eventual human footprint on the globe, and find a way that its deleterious effects could be minimized or reversed.

They failed.

Sitting at the library night after night, pouring over the doomsday reports and worst-case scenarios they'd tried to devise a way out of, they realized that – barring a major evolutionary shift – humanity would not be able to grow *and* thrive throughout the coming millennium. The convergence of estimated population increase, predicted effects of climate change, possible effects of human longevity, and other biological, technological, and environmental factors led to the inescapable conclusion that all life on Earth was doomed to full or partial extinction – most likely within the next century, and if not then, surely the next.

Lesser minds might have fudged the project, gotten inebriated, and done their best to forget the horrors they'd encountered. Instead, the duo joined forces, dropped out of school, and dedicated their lives to finding a solution.

After a few years of false starts and failed manifestos, they realized they'd been looking at that problem from the wrong angle. They realized that humanity's era should have ended a long time ago, and the world could only suffer if it continued to be the dominant viable species. Indeed, another 50 years or so might be all that was needed to completely destroy the ecology of the planet, dooming billions of species to extinction.

Therefore, the only sane and humane choice was for humanity to end as the viable species, and the sooner the better.

## ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by email: [info@sjgames.com](mailto:info@sjgames.com). Resources include:

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*Errata.* Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases are available on our website – see above.

*GURPS* rules and statistics in this magazine are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book.

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