

# Ubiquitous Obliquity

#1

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## Boilerplate

*Ubiquitous Obliquity* is produced on an Amiga 3000 computer using PageStream3, ImageFX, ProVector, DynaCADD, GNU Emacs, and other assorted software, with some help from a Pentium-120 running Linux and the usual suite of mostly GNU software.

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(Gratuitous Narcissism)

## Forewarned

Well! I am pleased to have joined that august body that is the membership of *All of the Above*. I've been roleplaying since the tender age of 10 (back before the eighties when we all played AD&D, had ultra-powerful characters with gobs of magic items and no character, and loved every minute of it). However, I am a fairly recent convert to the world of GURPS. I originally picked up GURPS because I wanted to create an SF campaign. However, I've since been impressed by GURPS' suitability for fantasy... not to mention any other genre. But all of you know all that.

I have a medieval fantasy world, The Silent Runelands, which I've been building for nearly twenty years now. For most of its life, it has been a 1st edition AD&D world. Because of dissatisfactions with the system, I'd slowly been rewriting the rules. I finally decided to solve all of that by converting the system to GURPS, and I am in the process of doing that right now. In later issues, I will probably submit material from the Runelands. In the meantime, if you are for whatever ill-founded reason so inspired, you can read about it and my AD&D-GURPS conversion on my *GURPS Runelands* page at "[http://www.wco.com/~rknop/Omar/gurps\\_rl](http://www.wco.com/~rknop/Omar/gurps_rl)".

In real life (should there be such a thing) I'm an astrophysicist, working at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory in a group which searches for distant supernova with the eventual goal of determining the fate of the universe, and other minor things like that. I'm also something of a violinist, having been playing since the age of five. And, when I get the chance, I like to act. As I write this, I'm typing on my laptop at a rehearsal of "I Remember Momma" at a local community theatre. In the last few years, I've also played Antonio in *Twelfth Night* and Brutus in *Julius Caesar*.

So much for my resume. If at times I appear clueless, it's because I've only read issue #32 of AOTA. It took me several articles and a bunch of context before I finally figured out what the heck RYCT and RAEBNC stood for. I gather that this issue is supposed to be something of a space station theme issue, and I have done my best to fit in with that theme.

And, yes, I know, I'm still working on my format. I will probably twiddle with it during upcoming issues. Mostly, I have to figure out all of the quirks (though I swear that one or two are Odious Personal Habits) of my desktop publisher.

# Tsiolkovsky High

## Introduction

Tsiolkovsky High is a space station in geosynchronous orbit around earth. It exists in a TL10 (more or less) future history which I am creating with an eye toward running a campaign therein. This future history is several hundred years into our future. Humankind has expanded into space, and colonized planets around nearby stars. Faster than light travel has been discovered in the form of jump drives (based on but modified somewhat from the ones described in *GURPS Space*). Specific jump points must be constructed before they can be used, so the first ship which goes to any new system must get there slower than light.

There is known alien life in this TL10 universe, but none of the life found to date is intelligent. All conflicts are either with nature, or between groups of humans, but there is plenty of that. There are at least three different distinct “nations,” each with their own form of government. I haven’t yet worked out what they are all called, but I’m leaning toward the Greater United Nations (GUN) as the name of the primary one. This is a sort of quasi-socialist, quasi-capitalist democratic (but severely bureaucratic) federation. (Indeed, it is probably very much like where the United States of today seems to be going: ostensibly a free country but more and more steered by the swelling bureaucracies of the government and large corporations.) The government of the GUN will largely be a protagonist of the campaign (i.e. this is not a libertarian dystopia), although it is certainly not a government without flaws.

Earth, being the center and the seat of government of the GUN, is a very cosmopolitan place. It is certainly one of the wealthiest, most populated, and most advanced worlds in human space. It is also a major center of commerce, diplomacy, and travel for those and all sorts of other reasons.

Tsiolkovsky High is the center of a lot of this travel. The station itself is in geosynchronous orbit about the equator of the earth. The station is tethered to the earth by a massive and impressive beanstalk: a 36,000 km (22,000 mi) high tapered cylinder which rises from the surface to Tsiolkovsky High in geosynchronous orbit. The base of the beanstalk is located near the mouth of the Amazon just outside

## The Universe of Tsiolkovsky High

The universe in which Tsiolkovsky High exists is still very much under construction. However, I have begun drawing starmaps for this world, and have started making notes on the planetary systems of the various stars, and the governments thereon.

As noted in the main text, every star which has been visited (a subset of which have had jump points built at them) was first arrived at slower than light. Most of the stars which have been visited by humans in this world are within about 10 parsecs (or just over 30 light years) of Earth’s Sun Sol. I’ve constructed the list of stars based on the *General Catalogue of Trigonometric Stellar Parallaxes, Fourth Edition* (van Altena *et al.*), which I grabbed from the ADC web site.

In my universe, expeditions have focused on systems most likely to be usable by humans, so most of the developed worlds are around F, G, and K stars. However, most of the stars nearby are M dwarfs, so a handful of them have had jump points built around them as well. Originally, all of the explored stars were colonies of Earth, but naturally as human space grew, some systems would demand independence. Currently the three major governments I’ve penciled in are the GUN (see main text), an Empire (a la *GURPS Space*), and a loose alliance of free states. There are a handful of independent systems as well.

The GUN includes the stars closest to Earth. The other most major settlements are probably on Alpha Centauri, Tau Ceti, and Epsilon Eridani.

## **Juan Caruso**

ST 11, IQ 13, DX 10, HT 11

5' 11"; 240lbs; 46 years

Advantages: Admin. Rank (+4); Charisma (2); Empathy; Less Sleep (+3); Status (+2); Wealth (Comfortable).

Disadvantages: Overweight; Duty (T. High)

Quirks: Throws great parties; likes parakeets; likes Aztec art

Skills: Language (English, Spanish)-13; Acting-11; Administration-17; Area Knowledge (T. High)-14; Carousing-13; Diplomacy-14; Fast Talk-13; Politics-13; Savoire-Faire-13; Detect Lies-12; Vacc Suit-12

Caruso is the Chief Administrator of Tsiolkovsky High, which makes him the civilian station commander. This is an appointed position, and Caruso has done made people think that they like him that he's held it for quite some time.

The first thing you note about Caruso upon meeting him is his sense of presence. Always well dressed, he uses his 240 pounds to advantage. He'll meet your eye, and appear to be reading your soul. He manages to make even those he is brushing off feel like they've been paid attention to.

Caruso is known for throwing superb parties, being invited to which is something of a status symbol. Some whisper that he's actually using the parties as a cover for his contacts in the underworld. Although not officially recognized, it's a commonly known "secret" that Caruso has at least once been the subject of an internal governmental investigation probing whether or not he is misusing government money in the throwing of his parties. Any time he's been investigated, however, he's come out of it as clean as a whistle.

Macapa, Brazil in South America. Inside the beanstalk are elevators for lifting people, vehicles and equipment from the surface to orbit.

Because the station is in geosynchronous orbit, it naturally orbits the earth once every 24 hours. Even without the beanstalk, it would always remain directly above Brazil. This means that anything and anyone who travels up the beanstalk to Tsiolkovsky High is in orbit. Although the cost of building the whole thing in the first place must have been horrendous, using it provides a relatively cheap way to get to orbit.

In construction, the station is a giant rotating wheel, placed at the top of the Beanstalk. Spokes connect the rim of the wheel to its axis. Extending up from the center of the wheel (where "up" means away from the center of the Earth as usual) is a further rotating spindle. Higher on the spindle is a second ring, which is not rotating. This higher ring is used as a facility for docking spacecraft in the station.

## **Specifications of the Station**

Even with the convenience of the Beanstalk, 36,000 km represents quite a commute. As such, many of the people who make their living working on the station live permanently on the station. The station has accommodations for nearly 10,000 permanent residents, including both station staff and private citizens. The GUN, and Earth specifically, is relatively prosperous, and since Tsiolkovsky High is a center of commerce, it's busy enough that usually there are nearly as many people living on the station as there is room for.

Among the most notable of the permanent residents of the station are the staff who run the station. It is owned and maintained by the GUN government primarily as a civilian facility. Naturally, however, the GUN Navy maintains a military president. Ostensibly, the highest authority on the station is Juan Caruso, the station Administrator. About 1/4 of the remaining permanent residents are government employees, including administration, maintenance, security, and of course soldiers among other employees. Most of the rest are private businessmen. There are also the usual sort of station rats who somehow manage to survive, as well as the wealthy dilettante who live on the station for the excitement of living as close to the frontier as you can get without leaving the comforts of Earth.

There are in addition temporary accommodations for several thousand more people. Many people who are traveling to or from Earth

stop briefly on the station, be it for a few hours or a few days. Most stay in hotels which are run by private hotel owners – though, naturally, those owners have to rent the space for their hotels from the GUN government.

A tenuous balance exists between Caruso and Capt. Lily Robinson, the leader of the military forces stationed thereon. Although there are a fair number of GUN Marines stationed on Tsiolkovsky High, there is no feeling of military rule. Rather, the presence is what you would expect in a town with a military base situated just outside it. In one part of the docking ring is based a squadron of fighters and patrol craft (see sidebar). Finally, because Tsiolkovsky High is such a key location, there are probably always a couple larger Navy ships in geosynchronous orbit near the station. Most of the large ships are probably not designed to land, and as such the Beanstalk would be a very convenient way to transport crew and equipment between the surface and these large military vessels.

## Design of the Station

(Please excuse me if I use metric units; they make more sense to me for this sort of thing.)

The whole station is built around a 40m radius rotating “axis,” which is situated at the top of the Beanstalk. (The Beanstalk itself, obviously, doesn’t rotate.) The main part of the station is the rotating ring. Its outer diameter is 300m. It is 150m wide, and 40m thick. Six thick “spokes” connect this ring to the rotating axis of the station. This outer ring rotates once every 34 seconds. From this rotation, people standing on the inside of the outer surface of the ring will experience centrifugal acceleration of 1g, the same as the gravity on the surface of the Earth.

300m above (away from the Earth of) the top of the main ring is the smaller secondary ring. This ring has an outer radius of 160m, and is 50m wide and 50m thick. For convenience as a docking ring, this secondary ring doesn’t rotate. (Were it to rotate, any ship trying to fasten itself to the station, or trying to maneuver into a hanger, would have to deal with the acceleration of the rotating ring.) There is an additional docking bay on the rotating axis above the secondary ring. (This additional similar to the “traditional” docking location in rotating space stations familiar from 2001.)

Connecting the axes of these two rings is the spindle. This spindle

## Lily Robinson

ST 12, IQ 12, DX 14, HT 12  
6' 4"; 170lbs; 37 years

Advantages: Alertness (+2);  
Charisma (+2); Combat Reflexes;  
Composed; Military Rank (+6);  
Patron (GUN Military)

Disadvantages:  
Overconfidence; Stubbornness;  
Duty (GUN Military, T. High)  
Quirks: Impatient with politics;  
would rather be piloting

Skills: Running-12; Sports  
(Basketball)-16; Beam  
Weapons/TL10-14; Gunner/TL10-  
15; Languages (English, Spanish)-  
12; First Aid/TL10-11; Area  
Knowledge (T. High)-12;  
Astrogation-12; Administration-11;  
Leadership-17; Savoir-Faire  
(Military)-12; Tactics-17; Strategy-  
14; Piloting (Fighter Spacecraft)-18;  
Piloting (Large Spacecraft)-15

Capt. Robinson is the ranking military officer on Tsiolkovsky High. Any military units interacting with the station recognize her as the station commander. An uneasy balance exists between her and Juan Caruso. She knows that Caruso is the ultimate authority on the station, but she also thinks the he’s something of a silver-tongued slimy bastard who parties too much.

In college, Lily was an athlete. Although she ran with the track team, she was best known for being part of the women’s basketball team at the University of Connecticut that won the national championship three times in a row. Although she might have been able to pursue a career in professional sports, she chose instead to go into the GUN naval academy, to realize her childhood dream of being a fighter pilot. Since then she’s proven to be both a very capable pilot, and a very capable leader, and she’s risen through the ranks of the navy. The troops under her command respect and honor her.

She feels that her current job is too bureaucratic. It involves too much paperwork, too much diplomacy, and too much interaction with semi-incompetent civilians.

## Other Characters

### Charlie

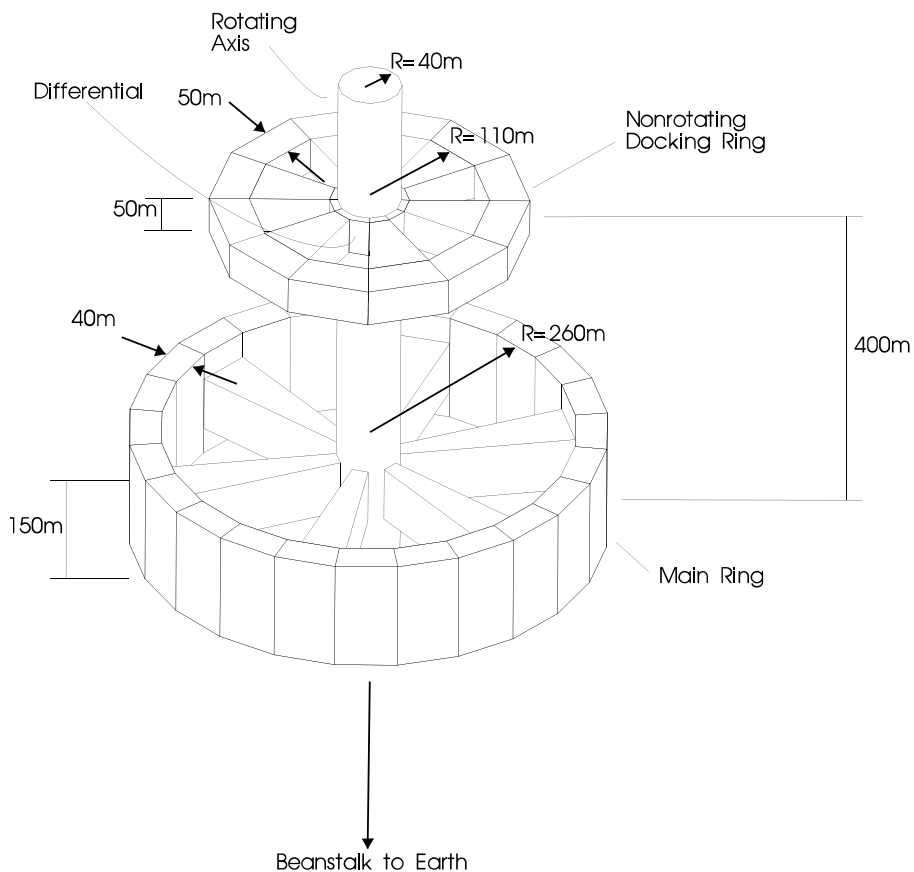
Charlie is an electrician (and a good one) who works on the maintenance staff, but there's more to him than that. Those in the know recognize that Charlie, more so than even Caruso or Robinson, knows everything that there is to know about the station. He even knows who are the main "players" among the more criminal elements of the station's population... although he tends to be rather taciturn, and it will take some convincing to get him to discuss these (or most other) matters. Some speculate that Charlie himself is a major underworld boss, but if so, he's managed to cover his tracks very well. If you ask him, he's just a simple electrician who tries to be good at his job.

### Darin Swan

A Lieutenant Commander in the GUN military and commander of the fleet of military fighters on the station, Swan reports directly to Capt. Robinson. Although he *knows* that he is absolutely the best fighter pilot ever, he's honored and awed to be serving under Robinson, whom he believes to have been the second best fighter pilot ever. For her part, Robinson keeps her relationship with Swan professional, but secretly she's jealous of him. He gets to fly fighters, while she's stuck negotiating with dunderheads most of her day.

### Allison Hendrick

Hendrick is the owner of one of the larger tourist hotels on Tsiolkovsky High. She makes quite a good living at this. However, she's also a very slick smuggler, adroit at getting all sorts of unorthodox things moved through the station. Although most in law enforcement believe that there must be somebody on the station with a lot of resources who is behind a fair amount of the smuggling, they've not been able to track it back to Allison. Few suspect her, and even those that do can't come up with any actual evidence against her.



rotates at the same angular velocity as the main ring, making it easy to move from the spindle to the main ring. (This is a good thing, since the spindle is where you end up when you ride the beanstalk to Tsiolkovsky High from the surface.) Inside the spindle proper are a number of low-gravity facilities, for experimentation and small scale manufacturing. (Large scale low-gravity manufacturing occurs elsewhere in the solar system.)

A differential connects the spindle to the spokes of the upper, nonrotating ring. Although nearly frictionless, there are attitude jets (or perhaps small reactionless drives) on the docking ring in order to counteract the effect of any of the rotation of the spindle being imparted to the docking ring. (Similarly, small drives will be needed on the main ring to keep it rotating with a period of 34 seconds as some of its energy is lost to friction in the differential.)

The differential has to allow people to move from the docking ring into the spindle. Holes in the differential which allow you to jump from the docking ring's "spokes" into the spindle wouldn't do it; the outer wall of the spindle is moving at 7 m/s (16 mph), which is not

only rather dangerous for people jumping across, but extremely inconvenient for moving cargo. As such, there are intermediate “elevators” of various sizes which ride in between the rotating and nonrotating layers of the differential. They couple themselves magnetically to one or the other section, and thus can be at rest relative to either section. By varying the strength of their coupling to each section, they can accelerate at any rate desired. This allows one to move from one section to the other with as gentle a ride as necessary.

## **Beanstalk Transportation**

The key feature of Tsiolkovsky High, of course, is the Beanstalk. I’ll write about the history of the construction of the Beanstalk another time; doubtless, however, it was a major investment of capital, effort, and time on the part of Earth.

The vehicles which ride the beanstalk from the surface to Tsiolkovsky High and back are called “maglevators.” They are so called because they use technology equivalent to the mag-lev version of cable cars. They magnetically grapple the interior walls of the beanstalk and are propelled upward; they do not have any propulsion engines themselves. Magnetic “levitation” is used to keep them from actually touching the walls, thereby reducing the drag of their motion.

David Pulver says it best in *Ultra-Tech*: traveling on a maglevator is much like riding a train (p. UT113). Maglevators accelerate so that by the time they are outside the atmosphere, they are traveling several times the atmospheric speed of sound, or between 1000 and 2000 m/s (2000-4000mph). The trip lasts several hours. There are a number of different designs of maglevators, for hauling people and cargo back and forth between the surface and orbit. There are different “classes” of transportation available for people, depending on how much they want to pay (and how much free alcohol they feel like they need to survive the trip). Fares are similar to what we would expect for inter-continental air travel; UT’s figure of \$500 is a good round number giving a general idea for the cost of climbing the Beanstalk. As it is all run by the government, probably personal travel is somewhat subsidized by docking and maintenance fees of ships (particularly commercial ones) that arrive at the station above.

There are extensive ground facilities around the base of the beanstalk. Much of this is security; security for passengers boarding the beanstalk would be greater than the security we see in airports today. (After all, the last thing you want is a terrorist riding with a

## **Vehicles of Tsiolkovsky High**

Naturally, there are number of vehicles associated with the station. At some point in the future, I will create full specifications for some of these using Vehicles 2/e, and will publish them here if people are interested. In the mean time, here is a broad overview of some of the more significant ones.

### **Maintenance Robots**

These “vehicles” (really robots) are for maintenance to the exterior of the station, and to space ships which visit the station. They come in several sizes; one, very small, to get into areas humans have a hard time reaching. One, human sized, assists vacc-suited humans and does jobs not requiring on the spot human intervention. Finally, larger robots move around big pieces of hull and machinery. All of these robots have drives allowing them to move about (short range) through the space around the station, along with manipulators, laser torches, tools, and the like to perform the most common sorts of anticipated repairs. They have robot brains, allowing them to operate independently, but they may also be controlled remotely from a control center in the station.

### **Patrol Ships**

I haven’t decided yet if there will be a separate civilian police force with any sort of jurisdiction in space. (Inside the station there is certainly a security division which is independent of the military.) However, in any event, there are small fighter-class lightly armed military ships. These ships are built for speed and maneuverability, so that they can accelerate well and get to any side of the station quickly. Most of them will be housed in the upper docking ring.

### **Tugs, Freight Haulers**

Most of the smaller ships that come to T. High which could fit

*...continued*

## *Ubiquitous Obliquity #1*

within the upper docking ring ought to be maneuverable enough to be able to fly into the ring themselves without damaging it. However, there will still be tugs available in case a damaged (or otherwise incapable) ship shows up which needs to make it into the docking ring. Indeed, the staff of the station might prefer to always have their tugs with trusted pilots hauling ships into the docking ring, rather than allowing any old visitor to fly his ship into the back wall of a hanger at high velocity.

Freight haulers are either versions of the maintenance robots, or small transport craft. They are used to load and unload freighters that arrive at the station that are too large to actually dock on the station.

### **Personal Shuttles**

Little need be said about these. Sometimes people have to get to the big ships that can't dock. They need shuttles. Besides, they might want to spend ten or fifteen minutes flying around their big ship, lovingly admiring it, because otherwise the movie wouldn't have been long enough.

### **Maglevators**

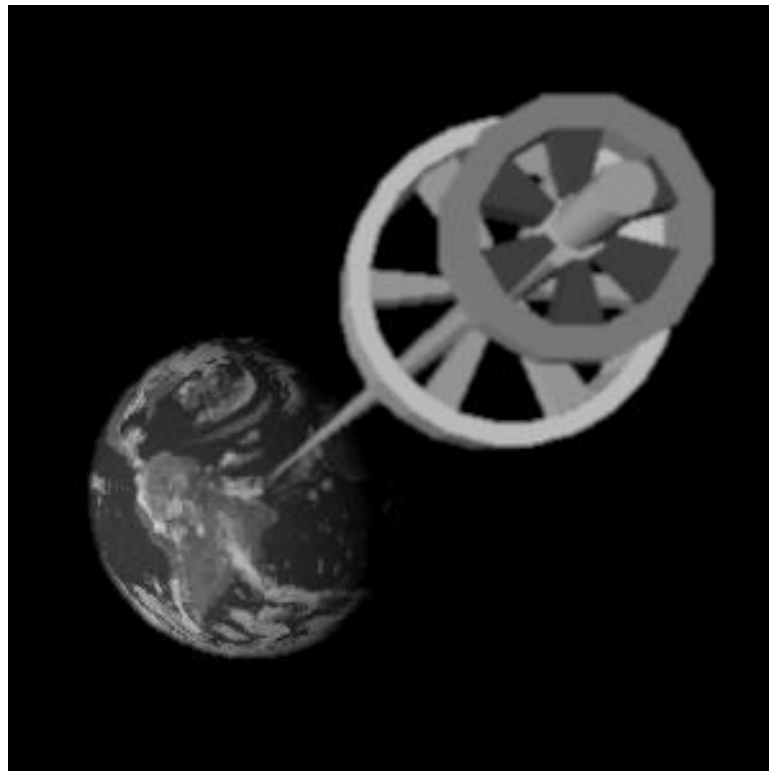
These are the vehicles which travel up and down the Beanstalk (see main text). They magnetically grapple "tracks" set into the interior walls of the Beanstalk and ride them upwards or downwards. A number of different designs of maglevators exist. There are larger ones for transporting crates of cargo to and from the surface. Of the passenger transports, they exist in a number of different classes. There are "luxury" transports for VIPs and the truly rich. Beyond that, there are transports which would correspond to what we think of on modern day airlines as "first class" or "cattle class" (although the latter class is generally called "second class" or "coach class" by the airlines, except when they are feeling particularly Machiavellian, at which point they become "premier coach class" or "ultra-comfortable perfect riding condition coach class").

nuke up the beanstalk.) Much of the rest is administration associated with the Beanstalk and the station. Just outside the Beanstalk facilities would be the sort of commercial services you might expect to see at such a place. Hotels, vehicle rental agencies, restaurants, tourist agencies, and the like.

## **What's Next**

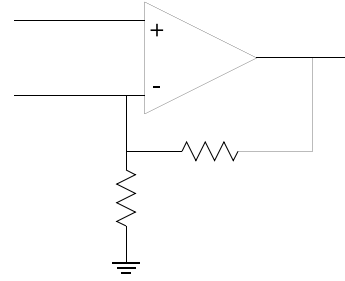
This gives an outline of Tsiolkovsky High. Obviously, many details need to be filled in. Specifications of the station and the Beanstalk are important; if PC's are going to be in an armed ship anywhere near the station, you probably want to know its DR. The station in size is like a large town, and eventually I will have maps out the general layout of the main ring, as well as the docking ring.

I also intend to work out more information about the history, the administration, and the population of the station. Eventually I hope to run a campaign in this TL10 universe; Tsiolkovsky High should form an important part of the setting of that campaign.





# Feedback



**Mikel Jon Featherston:** I very much enjoyed your adventure “seed” (quite fleshed out for a seed, though) about the tower. One of these years I may have to try running that adventure in a modern-day Illuminati/Warehouse 23/Weirdness campaign that I hope to run. (It won’t be a while, obviously, since I mostly work in PBEM (where campaigns take forever) and the campaign is not yet near started.) Nice work! I was a touch lost on your references to Arda. I take it that this is a world of your creation? I probably should think about starting to build a collection of AOTA back issues.

The Tower of Smif. Yet another example of where I need to go back and get me some back issues of AOTA....

“...use the dice, or pick the character whose player has annoyed you the most. You know, the standard procedure for these things.” You are mean, nasty, and evil. I mean that in the best sense, of course. Still, though, you violated the Sacred Pact of GM’s by saying that out loud! (Never, ever do the cups and balls trick with clear plastic cups!)

**Robert Gilson:** Thanks for the extended review of *The Damned Stalkers*. I guess it never fully occurred to me that there were GURPS supplements being released in other countries which weren’t here, but now that I know, I don’t see why not. You know, I would love to see writeups of this nature about even GURPS books which I have heard of. (No, this isn’t a hint, just a simple truth.)

**Dann Webster:** Your Industrial City setting is great so far! I look forward to reading more about it. I like your method of presentation, the collection of documents, dialogues, and stories. The background of the city is coming out without having to read through a bunch of dry facts (sorta like the ones I put in this issue... hmmm).

**David Pulver:** So, here I am, looking forward to the future, thinking of the great things we can do with technology, of the increasing enlightenment of humankind, and then “boom!” I read your Cyberworld devices. Your technology is scary. Oh, not all of it, of course, but there are some very little disturbing things in there. For some reason, I found “Extra Mouths” the most disturbing. Why, I don’t know; something about the image. It may do with an unremembered nightmare from childhood. Did you really want to know that?

**Brett Slocum:** I like your magic specializations. I may never use them; my fantasy world is an AD&D conversion with its own perverse version of the GURPS magic system using AD&D spells. Still, who knows. One question: is this purely a social thing? I.e., anybody can learn and use any spells, but you’ll piss off a lot of people if you use the wrong ones. Or, could you get a “discount” on Magery for specializing? This would make it a sort of aspected Magery. Then, there would be generalists mages running around who don’t have the specializations. What this might do to balance, who knows.

The College of Battle Magic would logically be developed in a world where there was a lot of warfare and multiple mages were pressed into service on each side. I like what you've done with it so far. Does the Battle Missile actually have to hit somebody to work, or does it just have to land in the general area? I would assume the latter, which means that it's really a pretty vicious spell if you've got a lot of mages against you.

I'm going to have to cruise to your web page and bone up on Tekumel... I'd never heard of it before I got my first AOTA. Or, of course, I could start working on building up a collection of AOTA back issues. (There we go again.)

**Andrew Dawson:** One problem I have with your SZ attribute, which is one problem I already had with height and weight in GURPS, and that I don't believe the result when I reality check it against myself. Now, I am willing to freely admit that I've got the Overweight disadvantage. I've probably got 20-30 pounds I would be better off without. (Maybe 40? It's been a while since I've weighed myself, but I'm assuming I'm between 210 and 220lbs.) After that, I think it's fair to say that I have a large frame. My ST is average, 10, maybe 11 if I decide to flatter myself. This matches well with my height on Table I. Yet, according to my SZ, I'm lugging around at least 30 pounds of encumbrance—which, if my ST is average, already makes my encumbrance “light,” with not much room left before it's “medium.” Here's where the reality check comes in: I have a hard time believing this. I can get myself around pretty well, and don't think that 10 pounds of additional baggage would really slow me down as much as all that.

On the other hand, maybe I'm flattering myself too much, and I really am a slug. I'd probably feel like a quick and tenacious sucker without that excess fat.

**Arthur Shipkowski:** I don't know what scares me more, your snow-sport cow or David's extra mouths.

I have to admit to never having heard of Gargoyles (I gather this is an animated TV show? Looks like I'm going to get some extra points from Disadvantage: Culturally Illiterate.) As such, much of your article was just a little bit lost on me. Another place where I'd need back issues of AOTA to catch myself up. (These feedback comments are turning into something of a theme issue.)

**Lowell Stouder:** Re: your fun with spellcheckers, you can probably have even more fun with a grammar checker, especially if it's a political-correctness checker at the same time. I trust you've heard the old story about the computer designed to translate from English to Russian and back again? “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” got translated to Russian and back, and came back as “The vodka is strong, but the meat is rotten.”

Words to live by.

Dr. Walter Totzener is a fun guy. I'll file him away at the back of my mind; he may come walking by in one of my campaigns one of these days.

**David S. Carter:** Remember my Disadvantage: Culturally Illiterate? Well, OK, I'd heard of Buffy, even if I'd never seen it. Your background was good though; it gave me a feel for the show, and while I haven't watched it, I just might because of your writeup. (On the other hand, I watch too much TV as it is, especially now that it's 49ers season, and I'm busy enough that I have to make a point to track down the shows I want to watch.)

**Steven L. Dickie:** REECT you (expand that one!), they're right. Excellent title.

Good luck on the PhD defense! I just went through that last May, and man alive was it a long and tortured road to the end there. Putting my committee together was exacerbated by the fact that I'd already moved off to my post-doc in Berkeley (I was in school in Pasadena), but more by the fact that my advisor was on sabbatical in Hawaii! So choosing the committee came down to choosing Physics and Astronomy professors who were in town the day in May when my advisor was in town.

Your modern dungeon crawl was fun. I'd love to see it if you fleshed it out any more. (If I can collect enough adventure seeds from you folks at AOTA, I may never have to write one myself again! Just kidding, of course, since coming up with them is half the fun.)

**Henrik Martensson:** That is one damn BIG space station. I used to think B5 was big. I used to think LA was big. Quite an open-ended world you've created. One could run any number of different campaigns, all without leaving the station. Are you going to flesh it out any more than what you've done so far? The hidden "ghost floors" are a neat concept, and a concept that is worthy of better exploration after B5 bungled it. (Hey, we're talking about space stations, so I feel justified invoking my favorite TV show twice in one paragraph. Just be nice or I'll start using the word "anisotropic.")

The "starbase seed" seed was quite cool. What if somebody started growing a new station inside the old one? Perhaps these space stations are like the Phoenix, with a new one arising from the ashes of the last?

**Lisa J. Steele:** Yes, yes, you're all conspiring to make me have to get lots of AOTA back issues. Anthrax: is this one of your creation, or one you're adapting? Still, it sounds like a fascinating world.

Re: philosophical background: "Faith is not necessarily the enemy of science..." In my experience, those who think that it genuinely is are those who don't understand one or the other, or who don't understand either. I've known scientists who think that all scientists must be atheists for consistency, and who think that all Christians must be creationists for consistency. Both, of course, are quite incorrect. In the circles I move in, the Christians actually tend to be the more open-minded ones about the issue. (Living in a college town, a lot of the Christians at the church I attend are also academics, some of them scientists.)

**Scott Paul Maykrantz:** You make quite interesting characters. I laud you. Of the set in #32, Billy Dawson was my favorite. I can't quite figure out how he might show up in a game, but he'd make a good basis for a short story. And, anyway, he was fun to read about as it was. I look forward to seeing the rest of your starship crew.

You credit Dan Smith for the aft on Billy Dawson and Mr. Pig. Did he draw the other three as well? If not, who did? All of the pictures in your 'zine were quite good.

**Michael David Jr.:** More Gargoyles. Did you guys have a theme issue a few issues back? That's two of you in this issue, plus at least one other who (I gather from context) wrote on Gargoyles in past issues. Or did I miss something? Was GURPS Gargoyles published by somebody when I wasn't looking?

GURPS Habitats: sounds truly demented. I look forward to reading about it in future issues.