

GURPS®

Fourth Edition



PERSONNEL FILES 5™

SCHOOL DAYS 2100™



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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
About the Author.....	3
THE FIFTH WAVE SCHOOL CAMPAIGN.....	4
KÖNIGSBERG-KALININGRAD	4
Geography	4
History	5
RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN	5
Credibility Complications (Or Not).....	6
Concepts and References	6
Sample Scenario: Field Trip.....	7
Wealth, Status, Equipment, and Software	7
Further Scenario Seeds	9
THE ENGLISH-SCHOOL STUDENTS	10
Catherine Moltby	10
Catherine's AIs.....	12
AI Allies and Duty	12
Denise Walsh.....	13
Denise's AI	14
Mike Harris	14
Mike's AI	16
Dave Sheckley	16
Dave's AI	18
Ian Chakrabarti.....	18
INDEX.....	20

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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 the series creator, David Pulver.

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INTRODUCTION

It's sometimes said that *Transhuman Space* provides 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.

Each supplement in the *Transhuman Space: Personnel Files* line describes the outline of 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. These 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 5: School Days 2100* introduces a group of teenagers attending school in circumstances unusual for their day – they meet in person.

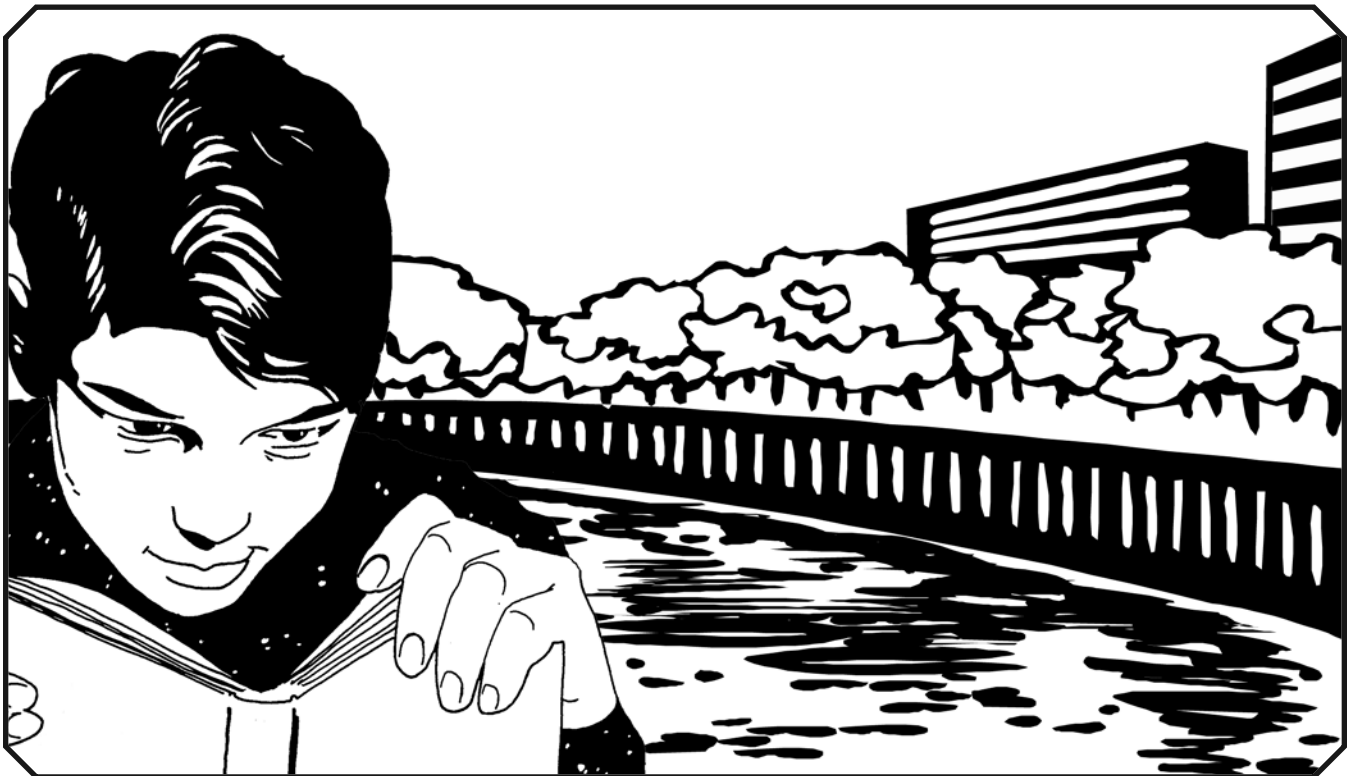
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Masters is the author of *Transhuman Space: Changing Times*, *Transhuman Space: Shell-Tech*, *Transhuman Space: Personnel Files 1-4*, and a chapter in *Transhuman Space: High Frontier*. He has also worked on countless other *GURPS* products, including *GURPS Castle Falkenstein*, *The Discworld Roleplaying Game*, and *GURPS*

*And what shall be
their education? Can we
find a better than the
traditional sort? And
this has two divisions,
gymnastic for the body,
and music for the soul.*

– Plato,
The Republic

Y2K, and on products for other companies. He was born and educated in the U.K., but he doesn't recognize himself in any of these characters.



THE FIFTH WAVE SCHOOL CAMPAIGN

The characters detailed in this supplement are a bunch of school kids. But school kids in the world of *Transhuman Space* can be strange and impressive beings, and this group is in a slightly unusual situation, even by the standards of the setting.

In fact, a “kids” campaign has a lot of potential in *Transhuman Space*. In a world of broad possibilities and considerable wealth, kids continue to suffer specific restrictions and limited resources. Despite being in a setting with many radical or subtle differences from the 21st century, they are still learning their way around and finding a place. The situation of a Fifth Wave youngster in 2100 – probably uncertain, perhaps confused, but with immense potential – in many ways resembles that of a player character just starting out in the *Transhuman Space* setting. Such a character can logically be given exactly the sort of advice and hand-holding guidance – by parents, teachers, and AIs – that the GM may wish to offer PCs to keep a game moving.

However, there are complications with the idea. To start with, most Fifth Wave youngsters receive their education on the Web and do much of their socializing online. Well-off families in the setting can provide their offspring with effective protection from danger, in the form of companion AIs with the smarts and initiative to yell for help whenever things start getting interesting. Nonetheless, the worst worries from the 21st century about overprotected kids who are never allowed outside to play, and juvenile couch potatoes who never run outside at all if they

can help it, have been resolved in this future. Then again, a campaign entirely about school-age kids interacting and adventuring through the Web would almost certainly be too limited. Although one solution might be to set the campaign in a Fourth or even Third Wave area, the PCs wouldn’t have much access to interesting Fifth Wave resources. Hence, this supplement places its protagonists in a slightly unusual situation for the offspring of the advanced world.

Specifically, it assumes that the PCs’ parents have decided to give them a slightly “old-fashioned” education, sending them to a real, physical *school* where they have to attend in person and interact with all their fellow students in the flesh, while somewhat restricting their access to AI resources in school hours (though by no means eliminating it). There are plenty of arguments for such arrangements, for parents of a certain cast of mind. The objective might be to ensure that the kids are fully and flexibly socialized, or that they don’t grow too dependent on Web resources. The parents might want to enable their children to work in places and situations where they *have* to think for themselves and fall back on their own capabilities.

The supplement also sets the campaign in a “borderline” location. Specifically, it takes place in the free city of Königsberg-Kaliningrad, where Russia and the European Union meet and interact, and where there’s enough crime and shady activity to power plenty of game plots.

KÖNIGSBERG-KALININGRAD

The free city of Königsberg-Kaliningrad is an independent city-state on the Baltic coast, lying on the border between Lithuania and Poland. Technically speaking, “Kaliningrad” is the name of the city itself, while “Königsberg” is the entire microstate, which includes an area of surrounding countryside. Even so, most people are casual about the distinction.

It isn’t a member of any big power bloc. Rather, it has close ties to the E.U. and maintains good relations with Russia, acting as a meeting point for trade between the two powers. It is also the site of the eastern headquarters of the Genetic Regulatory Agency. All of this has helped make it one of the fastest-growing cities in Europe. Law and commercial

regulation haven’t always kept up with this growth, though, and local society is at least slightly corrupt. It has a Control Rating of 1, lower than most of Europe, although that may reflect practical realities more than the letter of the local law.

GEOGRAPHY

Kaliningrad lies at the mouth of the Pregolya River, where it empties into the freshwater Vistula Lagoon. The hinterland of Königsberg (what was once the Kaliningrad Oblast when it was part of Russia) is 5,800 square miles in area, with a scattering of small towns and villages in addition to the city.

The Vistula Lagoon is separated from the Baltic by the long, narrow Vistula Spit, the eastern end of which is part of Königsberg, while the rest is Polish. Likewise, the Curonian Lagoon, north of the city, is partly in Königsberg, partly in Lithuania.

HISTORY

This city was founded, as Königsberg, in the 13th century by the Teutonic Knights. For centuries, it stood as an outpost of imperial German power in eastern Europe, despite occasional local revolts and Russian invasions. It held a military garrison and a university, and it was one of the most important ports on the Baltic. It therefore suffered heavily from Allied bombing in WWII. Late in the war, as Russian armies advanced on the city, many of the German-speaking population fled. In the aftermath of the war, Russia in effect claimed it as the spoils of what had been for them a costly war. They deported the last remnants of the German-speaking population, and renamed it Kaliningrad.

During the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia was determined to retain control of the city, for its reliably ice-free harbor and as a forward base for its armed forces. However, when Lithuania gained independence, Kaliningrad found itself cut off from the main part of Russia – especially when both Poland and Lithuania joined NATO and the E.U.. Still, the Russians held on. Even at this time, there were suggestions that it could do well as a free port, but nothing came of them. Kaliningrad became rather rundown, with few natural resources, patchy industrial development, and not enough income from the remaining Russian military bases.

Over the next few decades, the situation gradually improved. As Poland and Lithuania prospered, local entrepreneurs

developed Kaliningrad as a transfer point or exploited its status as an outpost of Russian commercial law within E.U. territory – complete with an administrative system that was sometimes more flexible and occasionally downright corruptible, depending on Moscow's policies. By the 2050s, the city was moderately prosperous. As Russia slipped toward civil war in that decade, with outlying regions contemplating secession, the local governors began to consider their options.

The civil war of 2057-2063 generally saw Russia reassert central control over outlying regions. However, the E.U. was naturally unwilling to see military force projected over its territory. It made this fact clear to Moscow, while canny local politicians and businessmen in Kaliningrad spoke, not of independence, but of “special commercial status.” Distracted by larger concerns elsewhere, and persuaded by skilled E.U. diplomacy, Moscow acquiesced. Even in 2100, Russia still tends to refer to the city as a “special territory” rather than an independent nation-state, but the rest of the world thinks otherwise – although diplomats are, of course, diplomatic on the subject.

While Kaliningrad is run as a democracy, all its major political factions are closely linked to one commercial clique or another. Some of them emphasize historical and ethnic relationships with Russia. Others are more associated with the E.U., pointing to the realities of geography and economics. All successful local politicians learn to play off different interests to get what they want. Many are also thought or assumed to have shady (if not downright criminal) connections, but the system isn't so corrupt that they can afford to acknowledge this – especially given the importance of the GRA to the local economy. Overall, the citizenry tends to be “E.U. by principles, Russian by sentiment.”

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign implied here is based around a small age-band/class in a small school that's known simply as the English School, Kaliningrad. This provides a syllabus consistent with the rules and requirements of U.K. education, because Königsberg-Kaliningrad, with its close relationship with the E.U., has quite a few U.K. citizens in residence. (In fact, all of these PCs are English-speaking U.K. citizens.) Note that schools as such aren't universal in Fifth Wave 2100; the basis of most education is the use of “kindercomps,” usually at home. However, parents who are concerned about their children's socialization, and who want to avoid overreliance on computers, can still opt for a formal school system. This establishment is *very* informal by older standards, but it does organize pupils into age-based classes for convenience.

The school is also small, so that the five PCs given here can form the entirety of their age-band/class. Nevertheless, nothing stops the GM or players from bringing in other pupil characters, perhaps of slightly different ages, maybe even establishing a rotating cast, with different players running different characters for each scenario. This could make it hard to logically keep the number of characters present for some important incidents down to manageable levels, but GMs who are prepared to deal with this somehow are welcome to run the school as the basis of a big soap-operatic ongoing drama – perhaps with a few frequently appearing “star” figures.

This campaign could be played on an episodic basis. Every week (or so), the PCs encounter some kind of puzzle, mystery, or problem that they have to deal with, for whatever reason. By the end of the week, they've solved the problem, possibly handing off crucial evidence of wrongdoing to an adult law enforcement agency to wrap things up and deal with the annoying paperwork.

Most of these incidents should involve little or no physical violence, when the PCs are present. They're not especially well-trained in combat. Certainly, *armed* combat in the setting can easily become very dangerous indeed. If these PCs get into actual firefights in which the opposition resort to lethal weapons, they will quickly *die*. Nonetheless, some opponents may, for good reasons of their own, opt for less-than lethal weapons (electrolasers, tangler rounds, etc.). For example, security guards at what appears on the outside to be a legitimate factory may well use such weapons to deal with annoying intruders, rather than risk the closer investigation and bad PR that would come from killing them – even if the factory is actually a criminal enterprise secretly doing something illegal. Likewise, the occasional low-key brawl isn't out of the question, and some of the PCs have self-defense training or useful cybershell allies that can handle such incidents. Also, while actual fighting might be unwise, running away and hiding can be quite exciting enough.

INDEX

- AI Allies and Duty, 12.
Ally advantage, 12.
"Blackmail Is a Dirty Word"
scenario seed, 9-10.
Chakrabarti, Ian, 18-19; *views by others*, 12, 14, 16, 18.
Charlie, 18.
Credibility complications, 6.
Duty disadvantage, 12.
Equipment of PCs, 7.
European Union, 4, 5, 7.
"Field Trip" scenario, 7.
Genetic Regulatory Agency (GRA), 4, 5, 9, 13, 16.
Grade, 16.
GURPS, 3, 6; *Bio-Tech*, 6; *Mysteries*, 6; *Ultra-Tech*, 6.
Harris, Mike, 14-16; *views by others*, 12, 14, 17, 19.
Infosocialism, 18.
Isaac, 14.
Islandia, 13.
JUVE, 15.
K-10A dogs, 8.
Kaliningrad, 4-5.
Kids as PCs, 4.
Königsberg-Kaliningrad, 4-5.
Medusa "Hairstyle" cybershell, 12-13.
Moltby, Catherine, 10-12; *views by others*, 14, 15, 17, 19.
Motion sickness, 8.
Nanosocialism, 18.
"New Kid in Town" scenario seed, 10.
"Personal Delivery" scenario seed, 10.
Porters, Kyle, 18.
Przenskała, 8, 9.
References for campaigns, 6.
Research and monitoring station near Baltiysk, 7, 8.
Running the campaign, 5-10.
Russia, 4, 5, 7.
Scenario, *sample*, 7-9; *seeds*, 9-10.
Sheckley, Dave, 16-18; *views by others*, 12, 14, 16, 19.
Simmons, Dr., 7.
Spot, 12.
Status of PCs, 7.
Student PCs, 10-19.
Transhuman Space, 3, 4, 6; *Changing Times*, 3, 8; *Shell-Tech*, 3, 13, 18.
VICTOR-2, 7-9.
Violence in campaigns, 5.
Walsh, Denise, 13-14; *views by others*, 11, 15, 17, 18.
Wealth of PCs, 7.

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