Crossroads of the Commonwealth:
A generic investigation RPG campaign world
#1: Overview and Campaign Style

Overview: On February 15, 1994, a stable interdimensional portal unexpectedly materialized in the center of Ellis Island, New York City. Much to the initial relief of humanity, the beings that emerged from the portal showed no hostility. They called themselves Traders: humans (and some hominids) from a multitude of different universes and dimensions, and all joined in a pan-dimensional Commonwealth. They came to add Earth to that Commonwealth; and they promised wonders.

And wonders they provided. The year is 1998, the fourth in an age of marvels. The Ellis Island Portal facility grows ever-larger and ever-taller, as the ultimate exotic goods flow in and out of the Portal. Every person in NYC possesses a get-rich-instantly scheme, and most of them see at least a little success at it. The outside world stumbles along in a pleasant haze of future shock as once-insurmountable problems crumble in the face of cheap hyper-technological or thaumaturgical fixes. Everybody says that the End of History is at hand. Utopia may not be here, but it's just around the corner. In short, everything is going *swell*.

Except, of course, for NYC cops. Because it turns out that infinite worlds mean infinite crimes, diplomatic incidents, rampaging mages, conspiracies to take over the worlds… or, in fact, just this one.

Campaign Style: Investigative. The PCs will play mid-level local law enforcement personnel (NYPD sergeants or detectives), government bureaucrats (FBI, NEST, DEA), or permanent civilian specialist consultants (typically on esoteric subjects, such as sorcery or transhumanism), all tasked with keeping things from blowing up before they actually blow up. They all work for the Permanent Interdepartmental Law Enforcement Task

Force (usually abbreviated to PILE). PILE works remarkably well, given that its creation in 1995 stemmed directly from the inability of American President Bill Clinton and New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani to fully trust each other; the organization enjoys a complicated situation where it only has to report to the City of New York and the Federal government when both governments are in agreement, and never has to report to any other government or non-governmental agency (NGO) at all. This remarkable amount of freedom rankles many of those groups, but only the United Nations, which stubbornly persists in insisting that it has authority over the Ellis Island Portal, tries to do something about it.

Like PILE, the Portal is immune to most bureaucratic or political maneuverings. In point of fact, the Traders made it clear from the start that only two people hold ultimate authority over the Portal: Bill Clinton, and Rudy Giuliani. **Not** 'the President of the United States' and 'the Mayor of New York.' The Traders prefer that their Portals stay under personalized control, and that they do not change hands on a regular basis. Of course, if either Clinton or Giuliani decide that they will willingly hand over control to their successors, that is their privilege. So is deciding not to. For that matter, the Traders will not bat an eye if Clinton and Giuliani decide to split the planet between them and rule as joint Kings for a thousand years. It would not be the first time that has happened in Commonwealth history.

Couple this long-term (soon approaching *short*-term) political problem with the inevitable amounts of people importing trouble and crime alongside the cancer cures and flying cars, and it's no wonder that PILE routinely gets handed any case that looks like it might become problematic. Or that PILE makes an effort to proactively look for small trouble, before it becomes big trouble. And PILE can do this because it - like pretty much the rest of the city government - is insanely well funded. The laws of Supply and Demand no longer apply within NYC city limits, with all that implies.