

Crossroads of the Commonwealth:

#5 Campaigns and Complications

Campaigns: As previously mentioned, the basic framework for a Commonwealth campaign assumes that the players are part of a working group in the NYC's Permanent Interdepartmental Law Enforcement (PILE) Task Force. They will either be law enforcement personnel, government bureaucrats of one form or another, or civilian advisors brought in by PILE to provide specific expertise. The nature of a PILE working group is sufficiently ad hoc enough that PCs can easily justify a semi-independent existence; there are more jobs than workers. At present PILE's leaders are trying their best to merely make sure that the **really** important jobs are handed off to working groups that have a good track record for clearing files. So, the better the PCs do at the smaller stuff, the more likely they are to be handed tricky problems.

So, what do PILE working groups handle? Interpersonal disputes are common, as are conventional crimes done with unconventional methods, as are people just doing stupid things with imported technology, magic, or any combination thereof. Essentially, everything on every cop show, ever - only with ray guns, or mystic amulets, and absolutely no budgetary restraints. That last part is kind of important: nobody in the PILE hierarchy cares about overtime, or how expensive an item or service is, or anything else that doesn't involve actual real estate. But what the hierarchy does care about is results, which is a major complication right there.

Complications: ...the situation is not static. In any way at all. The Portal has only been in existence for four years, which is barely enough time for people to really start internalizing the amount of culture shock that's going to erupt on Earth. At this point, it's not really a question of if the status quo is going to dramatically change; it's a question of when.

The central problem, of course, is that from a certain point of view the United States is now a Dual Monarchy that rules over the entire planet. Worse, that's the point of view that's held by the Commonwealth itself. While its agents do not push the Two Houses to rule directly, the Commonwealth does not particularly discourage the Two Houses from exercising the Houses' considerable power. The Commonwealth also seems to be preparing itself for the day when Bill Clinton and Rudy Giuliani finally decide what they plan to do about the whole problem.

The other complications are only minor by comparison. PILE has an inherent resistance to regular corruption - having almost literal piles of money lying around can do that - but there are a lot of organizations, groups, NGOs, and nation-states that would like to get a hold on the organization. Crime is rapidly mutating under the new system, and the courts are not keeping up with them. And then there's all the problems that come in through the Portal itself...

A special note, here: this supplement has deliberately declined to define either the Commonwealth, Bill Clinton, or Rudy Giuliani as 'villains.' There is absolutely nothing wrong with deciding that one (or two, or even three) are thoroughly rotten, and planning an overarching campaign accordingly. But it's equally viable to have a campaign where all three major players are muddling through with the best of intentions.

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