



Comic by John Hickman, Jump by Aehriman

In 2053, physicists at CERN associated with the Catholic Church discover one-way time travel. The Holy Father conceals this information and their further work, planning to send an army back to the Fourth Century to save Rome.

That army promptly mutinies against their nominal commander, Cardinal Pelle, and takes a far more active role in shaping history than the hidden puppetmasters and doctrinal example the Cardinal longed for.

This is the Secret Vatican Archive of all that followed, as related by the Gene-Pope (who is also the Last Caliph, the Panchen Lama, the Pratyekabuddha, the Black Rabbi, the White Shaman, etc.) You will stay for ten years starting with their arrival in late October 312 AD. Have **1,000 cohort points** (cp) to get you started. Ave, Jumper.

ORIGIN

Eternal Army - One of the people sent from the future to save the past. A soldier, in the greatest army in the world.

Roman - A local eh? These are hard times for the Empire, and some really hard men have been created by it.

Catholic - In the past or the future, Mother Church endures, focused on the treasures not of this world, but the next.

SKILLS

Sign of the Times (free all)

You are fluent in Latin and immune to common diseases, solving the most common issues why time travel wouldn't work. You can eat local food without issue as well.

Hard Men (-100 cp, free Roman)

The Fourth Century is a hard time, and the people who can survive it, even more so. You are a physically perfect specimen, surprisingly resilient, and as the ideal Roman Stoic, can handle pain, deprivation and grief with grace. You never hesitate when danger comes.

Perceptive (-200 cp, discount Roman)

You have fantastic instincts and attention to detail, making it all but impossible to sneak up on you. Like most classically educated Romans, you have learned all the tricks to memorizing huge volumes of information and never forget a scrap. You also have the benefits of the finest education in understanding this world, and carry it through to future ones.

Nobody's Puppet (-400 cp, discount Roman)

The Eternal Army thought to use Constantine as a puppet ruler, but he instead became a partner and, in a sense, on his death-bed, their true commander. When others try to manipulate or control you, you have a strange way of slipping their leash and using them instead, their resources and knowledge, to advance your own ends. It's a delicate dance but in the end, all those who thought to control you will follow your commands.

Augustus (-600 cp, discount Roman)

The Eternal Army may understand war as none before them, but you understand politics. When to push, when to deal. How quickly you can reform society and when to lay the groundwork for a later Emperor to carry on the job. You are an administrator, negotiator, lawmaker and judge unparalleled in human history, era-defining, even.

Gene Mods (-100 cp, free Eternal Army)

Quick and simple gene-mods are commonplace in the 2050s, granting immunity to all mundane diseases, resistance to cancers and heart disease and a number of congenital conditions, and an estimated life span of about 250 years, only showing/feeling advanced age for the last ten to fifteen years. These are transmissible by simple inheritance and highly dominant, as long as anyone lives who can call themselves your descendants, they will benefit.

Best of the Best (-200 cp, discount Eternal Army)

Every member of the Eternal Army was handpicked by the General, among other things for being the best possible specialist in their MOS. Pick two possible roles for a military specialist, you are trained and experienced in these to the highest degree.

Infrastructure (-400 cp, discount Eternal Army)

In war, amateurs talk about tactics, beginners strategy, and professionals about logistics. In history, armchair historians talk about great men, dilettantes about movements, and serious academics discuss underlying *systems*. You are the master of these quiet systems, understanding at all times what resources are available and how to make the most use of them.

Revolution - Stabilization - Consolidation (-600 cp, discount Eternal Army)

To achieve rapid progress within even their expanded lifetimes, the command staff come up with a plan of a 3-5 generation cycle of Revolutions. First, to build up Constantine's reign as a fascist dictatorship, a familiar pattern already, to secure the borders and establish some key precedents. Then, overthrow his heirs in a Communist revolution that will provide central control for rapid industrialization. Then, when that has outlived its usefulness, a fresh revolution and a restoration of the Republic, democracy, full of science and innovation.

Like them, you have the ability to plan for the long term. Your plans may need a little course-correcting here and there, but you can predict and set the broad trajectory of events for a thousand years.

Blessed (-100 cp, free Catholic)

You are lucky in small matters. A coin toss will go your way more often than not, you seldom suffer from traffic or ill weather. Doesn't mean you should put all your money into the lottery, but in day to day matters you lead a charmed life, as if someone was watching out for you.

Humility (-200 cp, discount Catholic)

A virtue opposite and cure to the sin of pride. You know your limits, and those of your followers, how far either can be pushed. You will never die from tackling a foe or challenge too great for you, and can always swallow your pride for the good of the mission.

Gene-Pope (-400 cp, discount Catholic)

In the second timeline, the Gene-Pope exists as a clone of the General, with DNA mixed in from every notable holy man. Now you are such a chimera, with two benefits. First you can claim at least loose descent from any historical figures you like in future Jumps, a situational but sometimes powerful advantage. Second, you have a backup body. To ensure minimal loss of enlightenment data, your mindstate is backed up every half-hour. You may lose some memories, but not your chain. You will receive an additional cloned backup in each new Jump.

Deconstructive Math (-600 cp, discount Catholic)

Looking past the technobabble in the comic, you actually understand the mathematical principles behind time travel, how it works, and how to build such devices. In future worlds you are assured that whatever the local rules, you personally will never create a paradox or be erased from history, and will be aware of any changes made.

FRIENDS

Flavius Valerius Aurelius Constantinus - Born in Naissus, Moesia Superior, in 272 to the famed general Constantius Chlorus and his wife Helene. Now forty years old, the future Emperor Constantine is already a seasoned commander - with experience fighting in Persia, Egypt, Gaul, and Britannia - and politician.

Brigadier General Nicholas Chase - Widely considered the greatest military mind of his generation, and a nephew to the Pope. Has taught at the National War College, Carlisle Barracks, the University of the Bundeswehr, and the Tactical Command College in Israel. Earned the nickname 'the Black Bear' in Estonia. Took early retirement at the age of fifty, after a collision caused by a drunk driver killed his wife and daughter and blinded his right eye, to deal with his crisis of faith. Hand-picked for the mission, he ultimately shoots Cardinal Pelle, unsatisfied with the man's minimalist approach, and is later killed by his own men, when he became too attached to Constantine and by extension Crispus. Maybe things will work out better this time?

Colonel Emmanuel Mfede - philosopher-warrior from Cameroon. Mfede cut his teeth in the French Foreign Legion before studying at the military academy at ETH Zurich. Mfede is an extremely unconventional tactician who has served with distinction in the UN occupation of North Korea and the force suppressing the Indo-China conflict of 2048. In the story, after General Chase's assassination, Mfede takes Egypt and Africa in a breakaway movement.

Colonel Fabio Rossi - Ground Warfare specialist from Italy. Studied at the Joint Services Command/Staff College in the UK, then the Baltic Defense College. Colonel Rossi is one of the greatest living experts in close quarters combat and special ops, and was General Chase's first pick to retrain the Praetorian Guard. In the story, Fabio marries Constantine's sister, Julia, and has six children with her. When she dies, he refocuses on the mission to a terrifying degree, even assassinating General Chase and Crispus (Constantine's son) when he goes off-script, ultimately putting his children on the throne of Rome where, given the framing device, they remain a thousand years later.

Colonel Manon Karembeu - French-Algerian logistics expert and sole woman among the Eternal Army command staff. Chosen for her brilliance in organizing supplies and fortification to secure the borders of Rome while control is consolidated. Manon is the first to see the writing on the wall regarding mission drift, and decides it's better to take care of her own. Ultimately she steals four nukes and with a company of followers sets up in Britain, trusting the nuclear deterrent to keep them safe.

Lt. Colonel Ulf Tarnat - German communications expert with a degree in electrical engineering from Bremen. Head of the technician/uplift segment.



GEAR

Have +300 cp for this section. Discount two items worth 100 and 200 cp, and one each worth 400 and 600. Discount here means half off, discounted 100 cp items are free.

Cutthroat's Reward (-100 cp)

When Cardinal Pelle contacted two assassins as a precaution, he offered them the following for their lives in Rome for this service: the equivalent in local period currency to ten million euro, a barony, a hundred thousand acres of land, and a personal guard of up to three thousand hand-picked men. Now this is all yours: wealth, land, title and trustworthy security. In future worlds updated to equivalence. Plenty to sit out history as a person of wealth and means, if you want to be boring.

Radio (-100 cp)

Something any Fourth Century General would cheerfully give up a hand for. These handy devices let you speak to men a hundred miles away (further, with satellites) as if they stood in front of you! Have a hundred.

Sidearm (-100 cp)

It is traditional for a Roman noble to always carry a *pugio* dagger for self-defense. The soldiers of the Eternal Army have a pistol on them any time they're wearing pants. Why choose? Here are holdout weapons, a gun and a blade, that will never be found by any search, nor will the pistol of your choice run out of ammo.

Solar Panels (-100 cp)

A way of harnessing the power of the sun, and creating the electricity so valued by the Eternal Army. These compact folding panels are far more efficient than any produced before the late 2040s, producing a kilowatt per square meter.

Chariots of the Gods (-200 cp)

The Eternal Army brought a small motor pool back with them. Have six humvees, four main battle tanks, six transport helicopters and four gunships. Don't worry about fuel, and repairs and maintenance and ammo resupply seem to just happen on their own when you have a few hours of downtime.

Eyes in the Sky (-200 cp)

A small, undetectable network of weather/comms/GPS/spy satellites. Arranged to let you know where you are at all times. Have unbroken comms anywhere in the world and provide at least a couple daily flybys and images of any foes not in the polar regions. You also get a bunch of reconnaissance drones, and schematics to make more.

A King's Ransom (-200 cp)

The Eternal Army brought back 4100 tons of gold in bar form, for pay and commerce with the locals and in case they maybe needed to buy, say, Egypt. For reference, two hundred years ago, Emperor Trajan seized just 4% of your new fortune from Dacia and used it to pay for four months of feasting and celebrations across the Empire, building the largest of the Imperial Forums, revitalizing and expanding settlements across Europe, and funding all Rome's military endeavors for six years.

Library (-200 cp)

Such texts, digital and print, as seemed wise for the expedition. Manuals on industrialization and the progress of technology for uplift, history textbooks for current events, easily indexed and searchable. In future Jumps, this updates to local conditions.

The Eternal Army (-400 cp)

Five thousand infantrymen, the very best 2053 can offer, loyal to a fault with a wide variety of skills. Including fifty two-man sniper teams.

Miracle Machine (-400 cp)

The comic never really addresses how the Eternal Army keeps in fuel, ammunition, and spare parts, where they got modern concrete and steel for a bunker to lock their nukes in and so on. Wonder no more, this dumpster sized device is a sophisticated nanoforge that can heat, cool, and shape things to a really fine degree. Raw materials go in, finished products come out minutes later, and provide a shopping list if you aren't sure what exactly you need. Can't transmute elements, though, if you want gasoline, best you feed it some crude oil to refine.

A Very Big Stick (-600 cp)

Six ICBMs, ready to drop nuclear hellfire anywhere in the world in an hour or less. Why did they even pack these, how did the Catholic Church obtain them? Riddles for the ages.

Rome (-600/1000 cp)

The Eternal City, the City on Seven Hills.

By taking this, *you* are the Augusta, imperator, leader of Rome. In future Jumps, the Roman Empire follows you, unless you choose to leave it in the Warehouse, inserted into local history as a peer to the greatest local powers. If the new setting is a fantasy, of course Rome will have a professional magic corps, trained at the infamous Scholomance. If a space opera, it will be a sprawling space empire. If the Cold War, a nuclear power with far-flung colonies. Same basic political structure.

For an extra 400 cp (1,000 cp total) you are still the leader of the Roman Empire, but your capital city is the megacity Constantinople seen in the framing device. Rather than a peer to the greatest powers of the setting, your Rome is *the* hegemon. Centuries more advanced technologically and/or wielding ancient magics per the setting. With a standard of living the world envies, unquestionable military supremacy, enormous population and a corresponding weight of cultural and artistic influence. You've got hard power, soft power, financial power all on tap.



DRAWBACKS

Lest Darkness Fall (+0 cp)

Uplift stories are a whole subgenre. Even ones focused on saving Rome are hardly entirely original. Feel free to supplement or use this in place of another Time Travel, Uplift or Roman Jump or story.

Left Behind (+0 cp)

Maybe you don't so love the world that you'd give up air-conditioning and fried food. You can start in 2053. We don't know a ton about the future, save that Africa is divided into feuding Christian, Muslim and atheist blocs with a demilitarized zone separating them, the UN has wielded the power of severe sanctions to outlaw national armies greater than 25,000 people strong but mercenaries are thriving, and the second modern king of Palestine annexed Israel...? It's gonna be a strange era, to be sure.

Long Haul (+100 cp)

If you start with the initial arrival in 312, and stay ten years... you'll skip out about fifteen years before the final sundering of the command staff. Should you prefer to stick around, each purchase here will extend your stay ten years. This may be taken no more than nineteen times.

One Eye (+100 cp)

Like our dear General, you're missing an eye and have some issues with depth perception, a big blind spot, and sometimes a deep hollow ache.

Aw, No. Ulf. (+200 cp)

The best of intentions can go awry, and even a god finds it hard to love and be wise at the same time. Which is a fancy way of saying you're a horny one and easily led astray by a honey-pot or passing fling.

Piety (+200 cp)

Religion doesn't get the best of depictions here, being seen largely as a tool of social control or a con-job. You though? You are a sincere believer, though of which god(s) is your business. But on at least one occasion during your stay, your faith and your deep principles will put you at odds with others in a major way.

Vaulting Ambition (+200 cp)

You have big dreams, you want to go far and write your name across history. But such ambitions often have a price, and may set you at odds with others who would be the architects of Rome's destiny.

Honor (+300 cp)

Once given, you are unable to go back on your sworn word. This may make you too rigid for evolving circumstances in a messy and complicated world. You won't engage in some forms of skulduggery and assassination, which will limit you against some foes.

Impecunious (+300 cp)

You arrive without access to your Warehouse or treasure trove of Items from previous Jumps. You'll get it back, eventually when your time is up. Until then, it seems you're roughing it.

The Great Plague (+400 cp)

Despite all precautions, the Eternal Army brought back with them a future germ the locals have no immunity to, and the deadly plague is spreading like wildfire.

Love (+400 cp)

The moral of this story, according to the Gene-Pope, is that a good ruler cannot be guided by sentiment or compassion. General Chase failed because he got too attached to Constantine, who was meant to be a tool, and through him to Crispus, a dangerous liability. On the other hand, Manon was openly calling the downtime Romans animals just a few years in. Choose, you will grow to deeply love the primitive people you live among, to share in their community and risk your orders and missions and well-being to ensure their success and happiness. Or harden your heart more than any Pharoah, be disgusted by all the "people" you are supposed to save.

Forbidden Arts (+600 cp)

Your perks and powers from other Jumps will not avail you anything here, they're beyond your reach until your time here has passed. However, you retain knowledge and skills, tremendous powers of mankind.

Judas Goat (+600 cp)

You will forget taking this. At some point, you will be betrayed by those you should be able to trust without question. A Companion, if you have any. A best friend, a lover, even your child. One will seek your death. Was destroying a precious relationship really worth the points?

Second Expedition (+600 cp)

Apparently some particularly zealous faction in the future built a second time machine in secret and sent back their own army of Crusaders. This event is now guaranteed to happen during your stay. They have similar equipment to the Eternal Army, including nukes, and are crazy enough to use them. Deus Volt.

END

What now, legionnaire? Home again, the next war, or... do you finally make a home here?

Notes:

Chapter I. Destroy the Past, Create the Future -

In a framing device, the Gene-pope tells the newest Emperor of Rome in cyberbunk megacity Constantinople the secret history known only to the two of them and the King of Africa. Christian scientists discover time travel in 2053, as described above. After much debate and soul-searching, and a lot more planning and preparation, five thousand armed men are sent to the past.

The army arrives a little off the road (Via Popillia) at Gallia Cisalpnia, on October 27th, 312 AD. First order of business is to secure the area and get everyone clear of the rocket launch area so they can deploy the satellites. General Chase asks the Cardinal what the plan is, and is distressed at how little he wants to change history. The next morning, as Cardinal Pelle is addressing the men, the General shoots him four times.

Chapter II: Constantine - After a flashback detailing the hasty planning of the mutiny and new mission, General Chase deploys a sniper team to take out Emperor Maxentius. The General recruits an initially skeptical Constantine to take up the dead Emperor's crown and issue the Edict of Milan (legalizing christianity) eleven years early.

Four months later, Constantine breaks off the engagement of his sister, Flavia Julia Constantina, to his political ally Flavius Licinius, on the advice of the Eternal Army. In March, Licinius marches his legions on Rome, and Constantine publicly unveils the Eternal Army at the battle of Tzirallum. A hundred thousand men perish, the Eternal Army loses three when a Humvee flips on the uneven terrain.

To secure ties with the Eternal Army, Julia is married to the General's right hand, Col. Fabio Rossi. The pact is finalized, Constantine gives them Rome, they give Rome the world.

Chapter III: End of an Era - We open to the 325 AD Council of Nicaea. In OTL/Timeline A, where the Catholic Church laid out a comprehensive doctrine and outlawed the Arian Heresy. In this brave new timeline, Constantine as prelate of the Church intervenes to declare Arianism valid and that henceforth there shall be two forms of Christianity: Orthodox and the People's Faith, both subservient to the Emperor. He threatens the objectors with the Eternal Army and making Arianism the state religion if they refuse.

On the horse ride back to Rome, Constantine's son Crispus (in OTL, summarily executed by his father a year after this under mysterious circumstances - a plot or affair with Constantine's other wife Flavia is suspected) is skeptical of the whole affair, and General Chase explains his plan to build Constantine up in the model of a fascist dictatorship to secure Rome immediately, than a couple generations down the line overthrew the Empire in a communist revolution for rapid industrialisation, before leading a final democratic revolution to restore the ancient Republic of Rome.

In 328, Fabio Rossi begins life-extension treatments for his wife, Julia Constantina. Manon & Ulf have a meeting with Rossi to share concerns about mission drift and the army going native. Rossi brushes it off.

Things come to a head in 337. Julia dies, seven years after she would have in OTL, and Rossi rededicates himself to the mission and his children. Constantine is also dying. Rossi and Mfede urge General Chase to immediately assassinate Crispus, who has ambitions of his own and has (with Chase's blessing) restarted the Praetorian guard, but Chase waffles. On Constantine's death-bed, he asks the General to lay aside the command confidence for now, is this plan really going to work? Chase... doesn't know. There are a lot of variables, the team is fracturing and every change they make lessens their knowledge of history. He makes Constantine a death-bed promise to let his son rule.

And right then is when the stragglers show up, including the Cardinal's assassins.

Chapter IV: Every Revolution Needs A Martyr - Crispus is crowned, and the command staff is deeply unhappy. That night, Manon seduces Ulf into giving her his access code for the bunker they keep the nukes in.

The next day, the surviving mercenaries and assassins show up demanding payment, or at least fresh ammo and supplies to make their own way in a primitive world. Rossi is skeptical, but is interrupted with news that Manon and 150 of the men have deserted, taking four nuclear missiles, disabling the remaining two, and leaving Ulf's corpse with a note explaining any attack will be met with the immediate destruction of Rome & Constantinople, and offering detente.

Rossi says he has a use for the mercenaries after all.

At some point in 338, Crispus is meeting with three German chieftains he intends to support and elevate as kings subordinate only to Rome, against the General's advice. Snipers kill Crispus just a moment before General Chase.

In the aftermath, Rossi's eldest son becomes Emperor. Disturbed, Mfede secedes along with Egypt, the Arabian peninsula and North Africa. We see a map of 361, showing Rome controlling Europe and Manon Britain.

In the framing device, the Gene-Pope comforts the boy Emperor on the death of his favorite character, explaining he was cloned from Chase to advise the Rossi line and remind them always of the dangers of sentimentality. The boy asks if the plan went smoothly after that and the Gene-Pope rattles off a list of further complications: the 'Bitch-Queen of Albion' (Manon, in 732 by the first issue's timeline), the Huns, the mercenaries returning at the head of a Visigoth horde, reintegrating Africa and Mfede's Great Society (821), a second time-traveling army secretly assembled by zealous Jesuits (and Templars?!?) and the Silk Road Wars.

On the other hand, technological wonders abound, there are a million Romans living on the moon, the boy Emperor's father's dream of a permanent Mars colony just broke ground. And it's only 1421.