

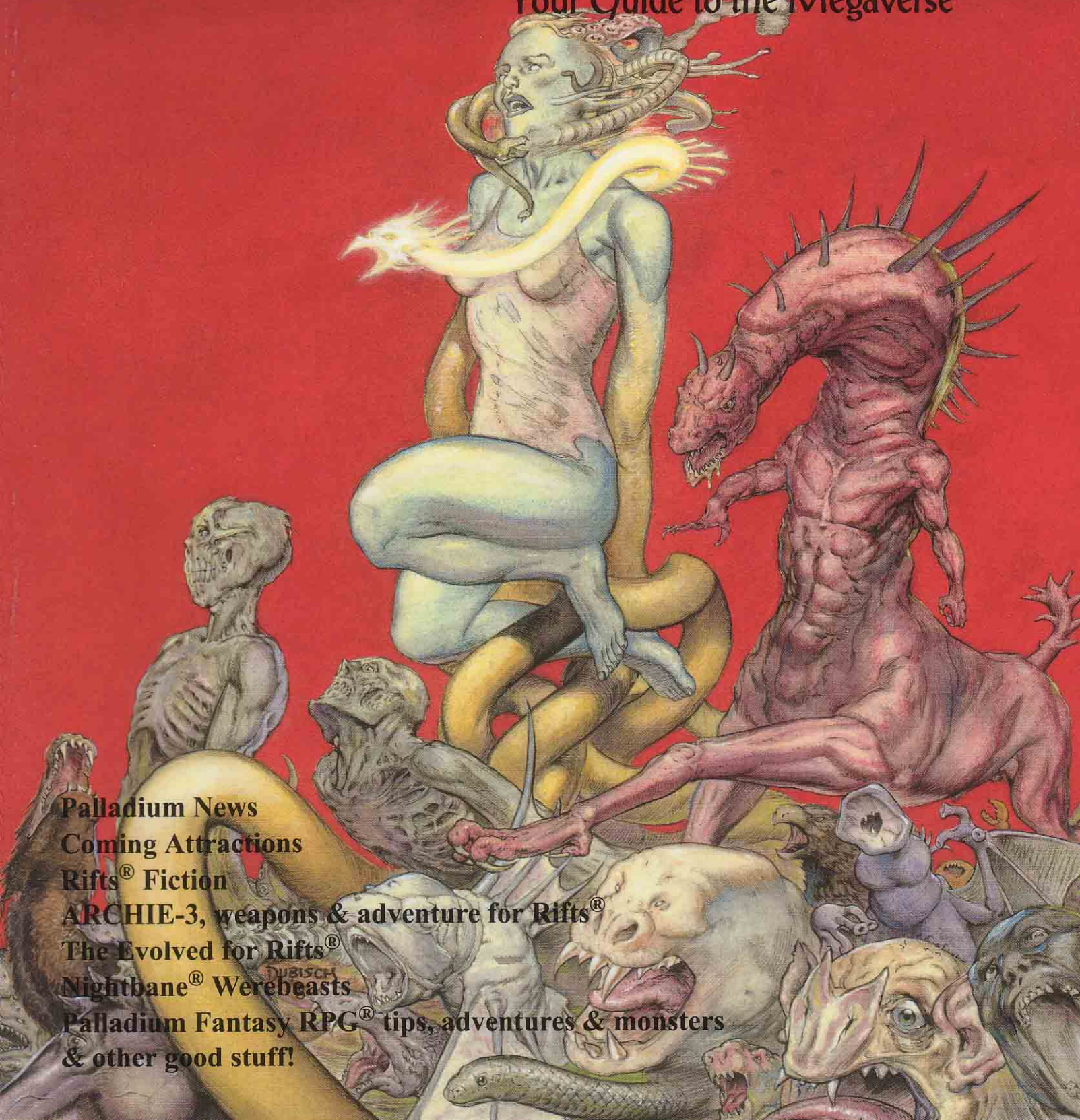
Palladium Books® Presents:

THE

RIFTSER

TM

Your Guide to the Megaverse



Palladium News

Coming Attractions

Rifts® Fiction

ARCHIE-3, weapons & adventure for Rifts®

The Evolved for Rifts®

Nightbane® Werebeasts

Palladium Fantasy RPG® tips, adventures & monsters

& other good stuff!

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Some parents may find the violence, magic and supernatural elements of the game inappropriate for young readers/players. We suggest parental discretion.

Please note that none of us at Palladium Books® condone or encourage the occult, the practice of magic, the use of drags, or violence.



The Rifter™ Number Four

A sourcebook, G.M. & Player's guide, and sourcebook for Rifts® and the entire Palladium Books® Megaverse®!

First Printing — October, 1998

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The **Rifter™** #4 RPG sourcebook series is published by Palladium Books Inc., 12455 Universal Drive, Taylor, MI 48180. Printed in the USA.

Palladium Books® Presents:



#4

RPG Guide and Megaverse® Sourcebook

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Special Thanks to Bill "Don't Call Me William" Coffin (who has just recently tied the knot — **congrats** from us all) and all The Rifter contributors, as well as all you guys and gals who support our efforts.

Our apologies to anybody who got accidentally left out or whose name was misspelled.

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— October, 1998 —

Page 6 — From Behind the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Publisher Kevin Siembieda tells what he did on his summer vacation — a cruise with some of the staff (so, you can skip this page and move on to the good stuff packed into this issue).

Page 7 — Palladium News, Info, & Coming Attractions

A report on the latest from Palladium, including news about Palladium's expanded web site, better mail delivery for *The Rifter*TM subscribers, miniatures update and more.

Coming attractions makes note of Palladium's many new and special items for the rest of 1998. Take special note of the limited, hardcover, "Crimson Edition" of *The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game, Second Edition* (only 600 signed and numbered copies, in time for X-Mas), three new T-shirts, and our insane *1998 X-Mas Surprise Package!*

Page 12 — Palladium Fantasy RPG® Hook, Line, & Sinkers for the Western EmpireTM

A hunk of material that couldn't get squeezed into the big, 224 page *Western Empire* adventure sourcebook, so we've included it in *The Rifter*TM. A dozen or so adventure outlines that offer months of gaming, by Bill Coffin.

Page 21 — Knights of the Dinner TableTM

Another hilarious installment of KoDT by creator Jolly Blackburn.

Don't forget the KoDT comic books are available from Kenzer & Company, 1935 S. Plum Grove Rd., Suite 194, Palatine, IL, 60067.

Page 23 — Palladium Fantasy RPG® Long, Strange Trips (G.M. tips & ideas)

Bill Coffin, author of *The Western Empire* sourcebook, offers some Game Master tips and ideas for *Writing Epic Campaigns for Palladium Fantasy*. The accompanying artwork is by Mike Wilson.

Page 33 — Palladium Fantasy RPG® Death is Not Always Final

Being the October issue of *The Rifter*TM, Randi Cartier, with a little help from Siembieda, whipped up some gruesome spirits of vengeance designed specifically for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG*, but which are easily adaptable to *Nightbane*®, *Beyond the Supernatural*TM, and other Palladium games. The accompanying artwork is by Johnson, Long and Apollo.

Page 40 — Nightbane® RPG The Tribes of the Moon

In keeping with the Halloween spirit, Steve Trustrum presents werebeasts for the modern age. Optional source material perfect for *Nightbane*® and adaptable to *Beyond the Supernatural*TM and even *Heroes Unlimited*TM and other RPGs. Steve presents several werebeast R.C.C.S, O.C.C.s, skills, tribes and secret societies. Part one of two. Artwork by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 64 — Rifts® A.R.C.H.I.E. Three vs. The World

Mark Sumimoto gives us an epic Rifts® adventure involving everybody's favorite insane computer intelligence, ARCHIE-3. Plus data on The Titan Robotics Complex and various **Cyberworks**, Titan, Northern Gun and other 'bots, weapons and equipment. This adventure and source material can be considered "optional" but "authorized" additions to the Rifts® World. Artwork is by the Drunken Style Studio (Brandon C. Clark, Ka Xiong, and Mark Dudley being the principle artists).

Page 90 — Rifts® The Evolved

First time contributor David Ransom has written more optional Rifts® adventure and source material involving the feared and hated Gene Splicers. Artwork by Apollo Okamura.

Page 96 — The Siege Against Tolkeen

The next four chapters in David Haendlers *Rifts*® saga. Art by Apollo Okamura.

Page 102 — Hammer of the Forge

The next chapter in James M. G. Cannon's *Phase World*[™] story.

Page 109 — Optional Character Sheet

While Kevin Siembieda was rooting around in piles of *Rifter* submissions, he came across these character sheets. As fate would have it, we had been getting requests for different log sheets, so we decided to include them in this issue. Gamers can make copies for their personal use in gaming. Unfortunately, any cover letter that may have accompanied these character sheets has been lost, so we can't give the designer the credit he or she deserves. Sorry.

The Cover

From the twisted mind of Michael Dubisch (and the pages of various Palladium RPGs) comes our monster-filled *Halloween* cover. A piece Kevin Siembieda calls, "Monsters on Parade." It is done in ink and acrylic washes.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

Please note that this issue offers an unprecedented amount of "official" rules and source material. Typically the vast majority of rules, tables, characters, equipment, adventures and stories are "optional" or "alternative" things one can include in his campaign or enjoy reading. They are not "official" to the main games or world settings. For example, the story, *Siege Against Tolkeen*, is likely to be very different than Siembieda's "official" world book(s) when it comes out. As for optional tables and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky or inappropriate for your game, ignore them.

All the material in *The Rifter*[™] has been included for two reasons: One, because we thought it was imaginative and fun, and two, we thought it would stimulate your imagination with fun stuff that you can use (if you want) or which might inspire you to create your own wonders.

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Coming Next Issue ...

- The second half of *Tribes of the Moon* for *Nightbane*[®].
- More material for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG*[®].
- Source material for *Heroes Unlimited*[™].
- The next chapter of the *Hammer of the Forge*[™].
- The continuing saga of *Siege Against Tolkeen*[™].
- More *Knights of the Dinner Table*[™].
- More G.M. tips.
- The latest news and developments at Palladium.
- Source material for the *Palladium Megaverse*[®].
- And a lot of new faces/contributors.

Late Breaking News ...

For those of you who live in the New York City area, Kevin and Maryann will be at the **Complete Strategist, H.E. 33rd St, New York, NY on the 27th of November (the day after Thanksgiving)**. Kevin will be doing a signing and answering questions and just having a good time (Maryann wants to see the Macy's parade:) For more info and details give the Complete Strat a call. (212)685-3880



From Behind the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

It has been wild and woolly the last few years in the role-playing industry. Through it all, Palladium has done well for itself. I think our primary formula for success has been sticking to what we know and love best (role-playing games), and a lot of long hours and hard work.

We got off to a slow start this year and have only recently begun to blast out a bunch of the books we had planned for 1998. I had thought about doing a tongue-in-cheek article called "101 reasons Palladium products are late." This year has been particularly kooky for us with every weird thing imaginable occurring throughout. Getting hit by hurricane force winds in Michigan was one of them. This led to our hometown being declared a disaster area, and losing power for a full week at both our home and office. However, I thought it might be fun to focus on one of the other unusual but fun things this year, the Palladium Caribbean Cruise.

The dedicated Palladium staff has stuck by me and worked hard through thick and thin. Since Palladium is having such a good year (and we skipped Gen Con for a variety of reasons), Maryann and I decided to reward ourselves and our hardworking staff by taking them on a seven day Caribbean cruise. Now we didn't want *to force* anybody into taking an all expense paid cruise, so we offered the staff the choice of cruising or staying home with an extra paid vacation week and a juicy bonus. They earned it.

Among the cruisers were *me*, Maryann, Thom Bartold, Steve Sheiring, Wayne Smith and freelancer and long-time buddy Jolly Blackburn. For Wayne, Jolly, and I, this was our first cruise.

The trip was a hoot. First of all, we had our own "pirate" with us — I mean come on, with a name like "Jolly" R. Blackburn, what else could he be? He even has the beard and earring! And yes, "Jolly" is Mr. Blackburn's real name, but no, his middle name is not "Roger." We kept teasing Jolly that his parents always wanted to be pirates and loved pirate movies, so they named him Jolly (plus it goes well with Blackburn, a pirate name if I ever heard one). Actually, there was a lot of teasing, puns, jokes and silliness going on for much of the trip. And as for pirates, we did indeed set sail on a pirate-style sail ship as one of our side trips in Grand Cayman. Poor Maryann had to put up with the five of us idiots talking like pirates the night before our excursion and the entire morning, our time on the boat and half the night. Hey, waddaya expect? We're role-players!

Unfortunately, the first day or two (at sea, so I didn't miss much) are a blur. Steve, Thorn, Wayne and I (Alex too, but he didn't come on the trip) were up till 3 A.M. finishing the final typesetting and paste-up of **The Western Empire**. The guys all crashed for an hour at our house before having to get up at five to get ready and go to the airport. Maryann had a whole extra two hours of sleep, so Jolly was the only one **half-rested**. I had gotten little sleep the prior two weeks, so I was pretty toasted (and I bet you guys think publishing is easy and glamorous). Being exhausted, I got seasick our second day out at sea and slept half the day away (adrenaline and stupidity kept me going past midnight the first day at sea).

We visited Ocho Rios Jamaica (more silly accents and local jargon), Cozumel/Cancun, Grand Cayman, and Key West. Maryann, Wayne, Thorn and I took a side trip by prop-jet to the Yucatan to see the Mayan ruins of *ChichenItza*. This was one of the highlights for me. I've read a great deal about the Inca and Mayans, and have studied the ruins through books, but nothing compares to being there. The ruins are absolutely amazing. It offers the famous pyramid, but also several other temples, an observatory, a ball court and other ruins. Fantastic! My only complaint is there wasn't enough time to see it all in depth. I brought my sketch book along with my camera, but I didn't have time to do any drawings. I'm afraid of heights, but I climbed the nine story tall pyramid along with the rest of my companions. Very cool, although I was terrified once I got to the top, and wasn't sure how I was going to get down (looking out from the stairs made me dizzy). But I managed.

Speaking of climbing, Maryann and Thom climbed the Dunn's River Falls in Jamaica (we watched from the sidelines) and we also went to a plantation. Jolly and I bought "cash" from the turn of the century in Cozumel. Apparently the term "cash" originates from specially minted "company money" issued by English sponsored operations in India and other places. The "cash" coins could be spent at company stores, but had no value outside the work complex, forcing workers paid in "cash" to spend their money at company owned facilities.

Hemingway used to hang at Key West, which has become a lovely and inviting tourist trap. And being tourists, we loved it. While we were visiting the Maritime Museum, we met the business partner of famous treasure hunter Mel Fisher and were invited to invest in their current, underwater, treasure hunting expedition. They are continuing to salvage emeralds and gold from the *Nuestra Señora de Atocha* and *Santa Margarita*, a pair of sunken Spanish Galleons that went down in a hurricane in 1622, laden with gold, silver and jewels.

Hey, an RPG note. You know how adventurers in fantasy games sometimes find gold or silver bars? We got to examine and lift a real silver bar from a sunken ship that went down on the Atocha in 1622. The bar was about the size of a medium loaf of bread and weighed 80 pounds (36 kg). I'll tell you, this is dead weight, and *not* the kind of thing a warrior just tosses in his backpack, forgets about, and goes on his merry way, P.S. of 20+ or no. This baby was small but gut-busting heavy. Just some food for thought.

The accommodations on the big cruise ship (cabins, hallways, dining rooms, etc.) were very nice, although the pillows were hard little **bricks**, the food was disappointingly average, and the service varied from excellent to poor. Wayne and Steve caught summer colds (it was going around on the ship), Jolly kept getting cut off from the herd by roving bands of wandering (and bored) teenagers (ages 13-16), and Maryann, our most experienced cruiser (this was cruise number 14 for her) kept finding fault with many of the services, expenses and food. Still, all in all, we had a great time.

I hope I haven't bored everybody with my little, "What I did on my summer vacation."

Till next time ...

— Kevin Siembieda
Publisher (and Pirate) of Palladium Books

Palladium News, Info, & Coming Attractions

By Kevin Siembieda (the guy in the know)

News

Palladium's Web Site is Bigger & Better

If you haven't seen the new, expanded Palladium Web Site at www.palladiumbooks.com, you don't know what you're missing. The expanded site has several chat rooms, message boards, fan run on-line gaming, official conferences with V.P. Maryann Siembieda and other Palladium luminaries, news and information. Over 11,000 hits a week! Who says role-playing is dead?!



Better delivery of The Rifter™

Palladium has been mailing **The Rifter™** to its subscribers through the U.S. Postal Service "bulk rate."

The weird thing about "bulk rate" is that a guy out in the backwoods of Oregon might get his copy of the latest issue a few days after it was mailed, while his friend down the street, or worse, the guy down the street from Palladium in Michigan, might not get his copy for up to six weeks later! This is as frustrating to us as it is for subscribers, because we bust our backs to

get the nearly 1000 subscriber copies of the latest **Rifter®** all out on the same day!

Don't ask us why some people get it so fast while others wait weeks. The first bulk rate mailing in January went very smoothly and we had few complaints. However, the July mailing was disastrous, with dozens of subscribers complaining about not getting issue #3 until the end of August.

Well, this is not acceptable to us, especially considering that **The Rifter™** is one of the few titles that has consistently shipped from Palladium on schedule. To fix the problem, Palladium will be sending **The Rifter™** (starting with this issue) by *Special 4th Class Book Rate*, which is nearly as quick as First Class. This means *most* people should get every issue not more than a week after the book ships from Palladium, roughly about the same time it appears on store shelves. Shipping via Book Rate is more **expensive**, so to help offset some of the additional cost, Palladium has to raise the subscription rate by one dollar, from 24 to 25 buckaroos.

Where are the Rifts® Minis?

Palladium has been recently informed by *Agents of Gaming* that they have delayed the release of the **Rifts®** miniatures wargame and individual **Rifts®** miniature packs till March or April 1999. This is due, in part, to maintain quality (which we appreciate and encourage). We, like our fans, anxiously await the release of these 28 mm miniatures. We'll try to provide an update in **The Rifter #5**.

No RPG Bible from Palladium

Palladium Books has decided *not* to move forward with efforts to publish the *Fantasy Role-Playing Gamers' Bible*. The timing for a "history and guide" to role-playing games just seems bad right now. While Palladium Books remains healthy and strong (thank goodness), 1998 has been a very tumultuous time of cataclysmic change in our industry. And 1999 looks like it will continue that trend.

We are constantly hearing talk about potential new alliances, consolidations, new partnerships, mergers, reorganizations, cut-backs and the possible bankruptcy of other RPG companies from manufacturers to distributors. Sadly, a handful of companies have already gone out of business. There were also a lot of rumblings about changes in distribution, although that seems to have settled down. The bottom-line is this: behind the scenes there are sweeping changes in the wind and a lot of uncertainty.

At Palladium, we see the next year or so as a period of such change that an "RPG Bible/Guide/History" would be out of date a few months after it sees print. Furthermore, it can't be a very effective "guide" to role-playing games if the products it covers

are no longer available, on hiatus or under new ownership and going through revisions, price changes, etc. So it's just not appropriate to do an RPG guide and history right now (geez, history is in the making even as you read this).

Personally, I've always thought the original book was excellent, and I wish author, **Sean Patrick Fannon**, the best in all his endeavors. Unfortunately, the unique and specialized nature of this historical guide to role-playing games has fallen victim to timing and this period of change.

Meanwhile, events in the gaming industry have had no adverse effect on the rest of Palladium's schedule whatsoever. In fact, we're finally getting back on track — as you can see from the welcomed release of several hotly anticipated products, starting with **Rifts® Warlords of Russia™** and **The Western Empire™** (for *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®*) which are to be quickly followed by **Rifts® Mystic Russia™**, **Rifts® Australia, TMNT® & More Strangeness RPG™** and **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition Limited Edition Hardcover** all by the end of the year!

We also expect in 1999 to offer fans of *Rifts®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, and *Palladium Fantasy RPG®* all kinds of great new **sourcebooks** on a regular basis, plus some new RPG lines (like the revised, Second Edition of **Beyond the Supernatural™**, and maybe **Mechanoids Space®** and **RECON® Modern Combat**), along with other fun stuff for our other RPG lines.



Rifts® World Book 17: Warlords of Russia™

This sourcebook shipped at the end of August, so if you haven't seen a copy yet, you need to track it down and check it out. Artwork by Perez, Breaux, and others helps bring Russia to life. Heck, the dynamic Zeleznik cover is almost worth the price by itself. **Rifts® Warlords of Russia™** fits nicely with **Triax & The NGR™** (Germany), **Rifts Sourcebook Three: Mindwerks™** (Poland), and helps to link books like **Rifts® England**, **Rifts® Africa**, **Rifts® Underseas** and **Rifts® Japan** into a world setting where material from all these books can form an interconnected piece of this part of the world and expansive adventuring.

- **The Warlords of Russia, their armies, politics, plans and enemies (which includes other Warlords).**
- **The Sovietski, the last vestiges of a bygone era.**
- **Russian Cyborgs galore — different and powerful.**
- **New bionics, weapons, vehicles and equipment.**
- **Monster-ridden lands, heroes, war and madmen.**
- **Tons of world information, maps and adventure ideas.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda with Kevin E. Krueger.**
- **Retail Price: \$20.95 — 224 pages.**

Coming Attractions

Rifts® World Book 18: Mystic Russia™

An epic book of magic and the supernatural inspired on Russian Myth, including the **Mystic Kuznya** (Smith), **Firesky Magic**, **Gypsy Shapechangers**, more on Necromancy and other forms of magic unique to this part of the world.

Russia is a demon-haunted land filled with supernatural menaces and foul, ghostly creatures. These denizens of evil are described in detail and offer a glimpse at the demon plagued lands of China to the east. Plus, more on the Sovietski and D-Bees.

- **Russian ghosts, demons and ancient gods.**
- **Monsters and D-Bees.**
- **New types of magic and O.C.C.s.**
- **Gypsies and their secrets.**
- **A dangerous link to the Americas.**
- **More world information and adventure ideas.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda**
- **Retail Price: \$16.95 — 160 pages.**

Rifts® World Book 19: Rifts® Australia

Already in production with artwork under way by **Ramon Perez**, **Wayne Breaux**, and **Mike Dubisch**. This hotly anticipated book should hit the stands in late November or early December!

Australia is isolated from the rest of the world and locked in civil unrest between "the haves" and "have nots."

The "haves" are the technocrats of the two surviving cities of Perth and Melbourne. They are the corrupt and ruthless powers who fiercely hold onto the secrets and power of technology and live in massive fortified cities.

The "have nots" are everybody else, particularly those trying to scratch a living in the hostile wilderness of the Outback. Here, a suit of Mega-Damage body armor and an M.D. weapon makes one a cut above the rest, and a potential hero, villain or target of brigands.

Most of Australia is an untamed land full of mystery, mysticism, rivalry and violence.

- **The people, places and powers of Australia; their politics, enemies and plans.**
- **Over a dozen O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s, from mystics and mutants, to the wild Outbacker and other roguish adventurers.**
- **New bionics, weapons, vehicles and equipment.**
- **Monster-ridden lands, heroes, war and magic.**
- **Tons of world information, maps and adventure ideas.**
- **Written by Ben Cassin Lucas with Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Retail Price: \$20.95 — 224 pages.**



Limited Edition Hardcover for Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Due to popular demand, we are proud to announce the **Limited Edition Hardcover of The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®, Second Edition**. This beautiful special edition is limited to 600 signed and numbered copies.

Special features include:

- A classy, black leatherette (imitation leather) cover featuring the design of the original "black & red" RPG cover.
- Interior pages are sewn and will not fall out.
- Special double-page artwork for end sheets.
- Limited to 600 signed and numbered copies.
- Signed by Kevin & Maryann Siembieda (and maybe some original Defilers).
- All books are shipped in a sturdy protective envelope.
- Ready to ship November 13th, just in time for Christmas.
- \$40.00 plus \$3.00 for postage and handling.

The **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** hardcover "Crimson" collector's edition is available *exclusively* from Palladium Books via mail order and on-line orders.

All sales are on a first-come first-served basis (the **Rifts® limited edition "Gold" hardcover** is sold out). There are *no* plans to produce an additional mass market hardcover.

Looking for Epic Fantasy? Check out the Palladium RPG

We have all kinds of new sourcebooks brewing for the **Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition** — an epic world setting brimming with magic, war and political intrigue.

The latest 224 page giant, **The Western Empire**, by Bill Coffin (with a vampire section by Siembieda), outlines the leg-

endary "Empire of Sin" — The Western Empire, its history, politics and key leaders, and spotlights important cities. It also offers three adventures, loads of maps, and great artwork by Dubisch, Buries, Johnson and others.

Meanwhile, by the time you read this, Bill Coffin will be finished with his manuscript for **The Baal-gor Wastelands** and starting work on his next project. Freelancer **Steve Edwards** is **half-done** with his **Eastern Territory** manuscript and **Randi Carder** is waiting for me to get to her two **Old Kingdom Books**. Plus, I've yet to do my **Wolfen Wars** book and three others are under discussion. So those of you PF-RPG fans worried that the fantasy line won't get the support it deserves, you have nothing to fear.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® & More Strangeness RPG

This expanded edition of the original **Ninja Turtles® Role-Playing Game** (hence the slight title change of "Other" Strangeness to "More") will ship late *October* or *November* and includes character updates, new artwork by the Paulo **Parentes** Studio, a new cover by Simon Bisley, and over 20 pages of addition material.

The RPG is presented in a serious manner, presents over a hundred different mutant animals and is completely compatible with **Heroes Unlimited™, Second Edition**.

New text includes a look at the mutant underground and mutants as heroes, plus new villains and characters from the pages of the **TMNT** comic books.

Fans of the original edition (which sold over **180,000** copies) and new gamers should find this to be a fun, fast paced superhero game, while players of *Heroes Unlimited* will find it useful as an adventure sourcebook. In fact, many of the old **TMNT** books are suitable as source and adventure books for **Heroes Unlimited™**.

- **Over 100 different mutant animals.**
- **Rules for creating any sort of mutant animal.**
- **Animal powers and psionics.**
- **Villains and adventure ideas.**
- **Five adventure outlines — 128 pages.**
- **Written by Erick Wujcik, Siembieda and Oliver.**
- **Compatible as a sourcebook for *Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition*.**
- **Retail Price: \$12.95**



New Palladium T-Shirts

Each of these dynamic and fun, new T-shirts are currently available *only* from Palladium Books.

Available Sizes: *Large, X-Large and XX-Large.*

Cost: \$15.95 plus \$2.00 for shipping and handling.

Happy Holidays from the Coalition™! A humorous T-shirt featuring Santa Claus and CS troops. Color scheme not yet determined.

Nightbane®: A blood red logo splashed across the top of a black T-shirt with a hideous monster screaming in anger. Siembieda's personal favorite.

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: A small Palladium logo appears on the front of the shirt, over the left breast. On the back is the fire-breathing dragons and death god by Mike Dubisch, that appears on page 83 of *Dragons and Gods™*. Black printing on a light (probably a tan) shirt.

Old Rifts® T-Shirts: The Rifts Logo and Rifts® Dog Boy Shirts (both printed white on black T-Shirts) are also still available.

A peek at what's coming in 1999

Listed in no particular order are a variety of books slated for release in the first half of 1999. In most cases, the initial manuscript is completed and awaiting editing, rewrites and final production (art, etc.). These titles are subject to change and may not include everything we are working on.

Coming for Rifts®

Rifts Scotland — by Chris Jones

Rifts® Canada — by Eric Thompson

Free Quebec — by Francois DesRoschers

Phase World™: The Anvil Galaxy — by Dan Lacey

Splynn Dimensional Market (Atlantis) — by Mark Sumimoto

Rifts Dimension Book: The Grand Paladins — by Peter Pocaro

Coming for Palladium Fantasy™

The Baal-Gor Wastelands — by Bill Coffin

The Eastern Territory — by Steve Edwards

The Old Kingdom Lowlands — by Cartier & Siembieda

The Old Kingdom Mountains — by Cartier & Siembieda

Coming for Heroes Unlimited™

Delphineous' Guide to the Megaverse® — Coughler

The Nursery™ — by Siembieda & others

Hardware Unlimited sourcebook — by Brent Lein



1998 X-Mas Surprise Package

Last year, Palladium Books offered a special on-line **X-Mas Surprise Package or Grab Bag** that sent fans wild with delight (no kidding). Nobody knew exactly what they'd get. All Palladium guaranteed was that \$25 US would get the purchaser at least \$40 worth of product (often \$45 to \$50; sometimes more).

Maryann and I personally filled each and every order (almost a thousand of 'em; we could have used some of Santa's elves), and we did all kinds of wild and zany things. We asked those placing their orders what they played, their favorite Palladium RPG, special wants, etc. Using this data as a guide, we went crazy and tried to fill as many "special wants" as possible, sending people out of print back issues of certain titles (like *BTS*, *Justice Machine*, old *Mechanoid Books*, etc.), Rifts® miniatures, T-shirts, Rifts® Gold Edition, Rifts® Silver Edition (signed by the staff), current books, new books hot off the presses, the occasional piece of original artwork, some old Siembieda art prints, and one guy got an out of stock **Parkinson** print he wanted and which I happened to have in my own collection. Plus most everything was autographed by me and we tossed in posters and other odds and ends in almost every order. It was great! People loved it! Some guys even ordered two or three Grab Bags for themselves **and/or** their friends.

The start of a grand tradition?

As I write this, September first, dozens of recipients of last year's X-Mas Grab Bag promotion are already clamoring for details about the **1998 X-Mas Surprise Package!**

To be honest, we never intended to have a 1998 X-Mas Grab Bag. We had no intention of starting a tradition. It was just something Maryann and I came up with on impulse, last year; a X-Mas gift to our fans that we thought would be fun and exciting.

We could *never* duplicate all the cool stuff we sent out last year. With only a few exceptions, the **handfuls** of "out of print books" and old editions we had in our files are all gone. Except for a dozen in my private stock, the **Rifts® Gold Edition** is gone (silver editions are still available but the supply is dwindling). Thus, any X-Mas grab **bag/surprise** package we do this year could never quite match the uniqueness or epic scope of our 1997 holiday madness.

Realizing that hundreds of people from last year want the X-Mas Grab Bag again, and that a lot of fans didn't get a chance to participate last year, **Maryann** and I decided to give it another shot. The problem: What can we do to make this years package something special?

After racking our brains for weeks, this is what we came up with ...

The Palladium Books® 1998 X-Mas Surprise Package

This offer is only being publicized to readers of **The Rifter™** and on **Palladium's Web Site** — www.palladiumbooks.com — but feel free to spread the news by word of mouth to **friends** and family.

Deadline for this limited offer: The orders for the *1998 X-Mas Surprise Package* will be accepted starting October 21st and running up to December 21st. **Note:** Sorry, orders received by Palladium after December 10th cannot be guaranteed to arrive *before Christmas*. Likewise, Palladium makes no promise that foreign or military base orders will be received before Dec. 25th. The first orders may not be filled until November (we may have to wait before we get some of the special items).

The Cost: \$25.00 US plus \$3.00 toward shipping cost and handling. Credit card orders are accepted (**Am-X**, Discover, Visa and Mastercard). Overseas Orders will require additional postage (call to inquire) and will take extra time to arrive.

Send Mail Orders to:

Palladium Books
Dept. X
12455 Universal Drive
Taylor, MI 48180

Or E-Mail using the ordering info on our web page at www.palladiumbooks.com

What you get ... a rock bottom minimum of \$40.00 US worth of product, probably more.

The 1998 X-Mas Surprise Package is likely to include one of Palladium's *new* T-shirts (\$15.95 value), promotional posters, some mystery Palladium product(s) of our choice (but something good), possible other goodies, and a new, special edition of the original, **Collected Mechanoid Invasion® Trilogy** — *The Mechanoid Invasion®* (1981), *The Journey* (1982) and *Homeworld* (1983)!

The Mechanoids® Special Edition

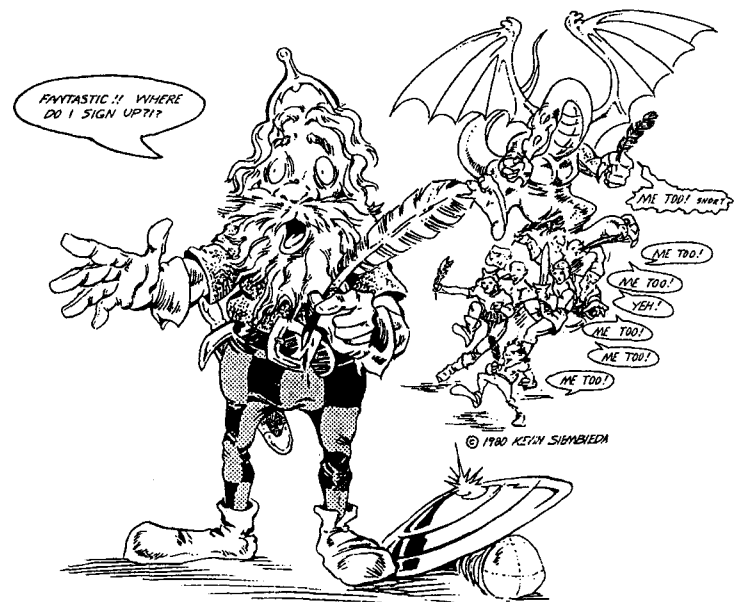
- The special **Collected Mechanoid Invasion Trilogy** will be available *only* through this special X-Mas offer (it *may* also be made available in the Palladium Catalog, on-line, and possibly offered at conventions as well). This insures this special edition as a limited press-run collector's edition.
- Retail value: \$19.95 — 120-160 pages.
- Limited to 3,000-4,000 copies.

- All Mechanoid books purchased as part of the 1998 X-Mas Surprise Package will be signed by the original author/artist **Kevin Siembieda** and probably editor **Alex Marciniszyn** and contributing editor and artist **Jim Osten** (yes, these two guys have been involved with Palladium Books for all these years).
- All the original artwork and text as it saw print **18 years ago**, minus some of the typos and with new typesetting, S.D.C. stats added, and some reformatting to accommodate the 8 1/2 x 11 size (the three books were originally released at comic book size).
- Not only is this fun, action-packed material, but *The Mechanoids® Trilogy* of books represent a piece of history. They helped launch Palladium Books Inc. In fact, **The Mechanoid Invasion®** was the very first Palladium product ever published! It also serves as a prelude to the expanded universe of *The Mechanoids®* in the forthcoming **Mechanoids Space**, scheduled for late 1999 release.
- The collected Trilogy is available *only* as part of the 1998 X-Mas Surprise Package. Any remaining copies in stock *may* be made available individually after January 1, 1999. There is a slim chance this special edition may sell out before January first.

When ordering Palladium's 1998 X-Mas Surprise Package, include the following information...

- Favorite Palladium games
- Palladium games you have not played but always thought looked fun and interesting.
- Special Wants (specific books — new and old, **T-Shirts**, old Rifts miniatures, Rifts Silver Edition Hardbound, etc.).
- **Preferred T-Shirt Size**
- Preferred T-Shirt: **Rifts®**, **Nightbane™**, or **Palladium Fantasy RPG™**.
- Comments and suggestions.
- Accurate Mailing address!

Note: Credit Cards are accepted (Discover, **Visa/Mastercard** & American Express). Also note that multiple orders of the 1998 Surprise Package *will* result in the duplication of items.



PALLADIUM

ROLE-PLAYING GAME[®]

Hook, Line & Sinkers[™] for The Western Empire[™]

For *official* use in the

Palladium Fantasy RPG[®], 2nd Ed.

Note: The following *Hook, Line & Sinkers*[™] adventures were originally written for **The Palladium RPG[®] World Book: The Western Empire[™]**, but had to be cut from the book due to space limitations. The author, Bill Coffin, had made them HLS mini-adventures because he realized that space was getting tight, so it was a bit ironic that even as HLSes they still didn't make it into the book. However, they are presented here for everybody's enjoyment.

These HLS adventures are *authorized* and *official* additions for use with **The Western Empire[™]** sourcebook that has just hit store shelves a few weeks ago, around Sept. 22, 1998.

HLS by Bill Coffin

While writing **The Western Empire[™]** sourcebook, I realized I wanted to include a slew of adventures but simply didn't have enough space. Rather than not include them at all, I'll give you the Hook, Line & Sinker versions of them. Enjoy!

An Explanation of

Hook, Line & Sinkers[™]

The Hook: The current situation or location of the adventuring party.

The Line: An opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the party. A line is normally presented as a short paragraph. Think of the line as the "bait" to lure the party into an adventure.

The Sinker: The clincher to the line. The sinker presents the G.M. with a dilemma that makes the situation a true adventure.

You Dirty Rats!

Hook: As part of Emperor Itomas' reconstruction plans, the sewers of *Caer Netebbe*, an ancient city-state in Upper Kighfalon, are to be completely renovated. Unfortunately, the sewers are infested with *Ratlings* that have to be removed before renovations begin. To that end, a team of Water Warlocks have been hired to generate enough water to flood out the sewers, washing away all hostile critters in one easy step.

Line: Needless to say, Caer Netebbe's Ratling population doesn't like this plan one bit. To protest this action, a large number of Ratlings and **Rattons** stormed into the local lord's palace and stole several priceless works of art. The Ratlings have taken the artwork into the sewers where they'll be destroyed if the authorities move forward with their plan. The foul creatures have promised to return the priceless works of art when the flooding of the sewers is called off.

At this point, the local lord, Lord Gavin **Brewt**, is more than willing to comply, only the sewer project is out of his hands — it's under Imperial jurisdiction. So, in two days, the flooding will commence, and Brewt will lose his stolen art collection. That is, unless some adventurers would be willing to get it for him before the flooding begins.

Sinker: Lord Brewt will pay each player character 2,500 gold for each stolen work of art that is returned unharmed. (Brewt is insistent on this — if the objects are so much as scratched, he will forfeit payment!) There are four items in all, two vases, an ancient tapestry, and a small sculpture of Emperor Leopold made of fired clay.

Accessing the sewers can be done best through a massive central grate in the middle of town — this is from where the Water Warlocks will start the flood. Once in the sewers, the adventurers have exactly 48 hours to find the art and get out. If the player characters are still underground when the Warlocks have their summoned elementals flood the sewers, then a hideous, drowning death will most likely result (or a really cool underwater escape scene where the characters, with only so much air, try to get to the surface in time). Just finding the Ratlings' hideout will be difficult and will require successful tracking rolls. Moreover, the **Ratling/Ratton** warren is likely to be booby-trapped and arranged in such a way that intruders will be set upon and ambushed once detected. The Ratlings will let their corps of **Rattons** do most of the fighting for them. Once the **Rattons** are gone, the Ratlings will scatter and run.

The leader of **these humanoid** rodents is a Ratling **Priest** of Darkness who has all four art pieces in his possession. When the adventurers arrive at the Ratling warren, the priest will be in **the**

midst of a Prayer of Intervention to its deity, asking for some kind of help against the surface dwellers. Whether or not the Divine Intervention actually works is up to the G.M., as will be the exact effects of the intervention. The Ratlings and **Rattons** will all have personal weapons and a small amount of money and other personal belongings on them when the player group encounters them. Somewhere in the warren will be the "Warren Hutch," a chamber with dozens of cubbyholes bored into the stone walls. These cubbyholes will be filled with the collective treasure of the warren, be it pieces of junk, personal effects from previous victims, money, magic items, or other odd things (G.M. discretion as to the exact items; nothing too valuable or rare).

The strength of this group should be about three Ratlings and two **Rattons** per player character. If this isn't tough enough, feel free to increase the number of bad guys, or give them better weaponry (magic items, etc.) or magical or powerful friends, like a Troll, runaway Wolfen gladiator/slave, **Boogie-Man**, etc. Perhaps a few Ratton champions of the warren would be appropriate — huge bruisers, each with a magical weapon and many tricks up their sleeves, like poisoned weapons, Chaser crystals, and other deadly items.

The Faerie War

Hook: In the troubled *Vequerrel Woodlands*, the ongoing Faerie War is in full swing. Losses on both sides are high, but House Jaoradon, which runs this region, is getting desperate and will do anything to end this frustrating and unprofitable conflict. This adventure takes place as the party enters Pallisade, the regional capital.

Line: The player characters aren't in Pallisade for long before a crew of burly guardsmen arrives and informs the group that they've been "volunteered" to serve in the region's war effort. The party is told to report to the city's main rally camp and await orders there. Failure to show up constitutes treason, which in this region is punishable by "beheading!" Forced compliance to help in the war effort may be annoying, but can be fun.

Sinker: If the characters decide not to comply, their escape out of town should be suitably difficult. Have the guards who talked to them earlier spot them on their way out of town and sound an alarm. After that, just getting out of the region might be pretty tough with a large manhunt going on for our heroes.

Inevitably, the player group will have to flee into the neighboring forest where they will eventually meet some of the faeries who live there. These little buggers are in a fighting spirit and will attack any "tall folk" they see. If the group isn't out for their heads, the faeries can be calmed down, and our heroes may **find** themselves on the faerie side of the war (or caught between the two sides).

If the characters report to the rally camp, they will join a group of about 200 mercenaries, around 400 House Jaoradon troops, and a single Summoner, who has a Major Earth Elemental towering above the entire army, ready to tear into the forest. By this time, any character with a shred of goodness and decency should have serious reservations about fighting for House Jaoradon, and will probably consider ways to sabotage the war effort or desert at the first opportunity. If not, then have the Jaoradon fighting force venture into the forest and take on a huge faerie mound, with several hundred faeries, all with magi-

cal bows and arrows, (as well as other treats to be determined by the G.M.). **Spriggans** could be in the background throwing boulders as a form of artillery.

The Summoner will command the elemental to make liberal use of the River of Lava and Chasm spells, which will scatter, if not defeat, the faeries, but will also eradicate the forest. If the characters fight loyally for House Jaoradon, and see the fight to the finish, award the adventurers with 1,000 gold each, and have them determine their path from there on. Good characters will have to rethink their alignment, though. They're not gonna feel all warm and fuzzy about fighting Faerie Folk and their allies.

If the player group fights on the side of the faeries, then they can split up and take on separate groups of the Jaoradon army. These different fights could be run as different battles altogether. One weakness of the Jaoradon army is their Earth Elemental. If they see it defeated or sent home, the resulting demoralization will make the army very easy to unnerve, scatter and/or destroy.

The Edge of Nobility

Hook: It's a well-known fact that part of the heraldry of the Western Noble Houses are the stylized daggers that every noble carries on him or herself. These daggers are more signs of status and family lineage than actual fighting weapons. To nobles, they are a sacred part of their tradition and symbolize the ruling elite of the Western Empire. Nobody touches a noble's dagger without invoking terrible consequences for it. And anybody caught stealing one better be prepared for a long, torturous death for so grievously insulting a Western Lord.

Line: So, as the player characters are visiting *Caer Itom*, you can imagine their surprise when they suddenly discover that they have three of these things in their possession!

How did they get there? It would seem a pickpocket stole something from one of the player characters (G.M.'s choice as to the player and the stolen possession) and replaced it with these daggers. Now, not only do our heroes have to get their own stuff back (or write it off as a loss), but they should probably return the daggers to the rightful owners. This is probably the only way to avoid being implicated in their theft. If they simply discard the daggers, have a squad of city guards see the act and come after them — or respond to a report that the adventurers were seen handling the daggers.

Sinker: There's more at stake here than the player group's reputation or the fate of their own stolen belongings. The theft of these knives was engineered by House Decurance, a Provincial House of West Kighfalton. House Decurance is feuding with a neighboring Provincial House, House Gioto. The Decurance nobles arranged for a meeting between representatives from Houses Decurance, Gioto and House Itomas, to talk over a peace treaty. At this meeting, assassins hired by House Decurance killed all the representatives, then planted Gioto daggers on the scene. The plan was to have House Gioto to be blamed for the massacre, thereby encouraging House Itomas to support House Decurance in the eradication of the Giotos once and for all.

Still following all of this? Good.

The daggers planted on the characters were to draw blame away from House **Decurance's** assassins. Once the players elude initial attempts by the city guards to catch them, they might do



well to have the daggers checked out by a discreet weapons expert or scholar familiar with the noble families. That way, they can tell where each of the daggers is from (A successful heraldry roll will work, too.) From there, the group will be referred to a well-known fence in town named *Jaheris*, who might know who in Caer Itom's underworld might have organized this scheme.

Jaheris hangs out as a sleazy dive called the Red Feather, in Caer Itom's red light district. If bribed or intimidated, Jaheris will tell the players that "the Decurance job" was handled by the *Understreet Gang*, a thieves' guild that operates out of a tavern in Caer Itom's Eastern Commercial Plaza.

Events from here on out are up to the G.M. A brawl at the thieves' tavern should yield a few prisoners who will **talk**, but that'll draw a lot of attention (not to mention later reprisals from the thieves, who will probably be backed up by House Decurance soldiers). The players might try to get help from House Giotto, the only people who might be convinced to help them out. Getting them to even admit the player characters into their embassy compound won't be easy.

And finally, there's the matter of actually proving their innocence to the authorities (and possibly to House Itomas directly; maybe even to the Emperor himself). Getting proof or a confession out of the brigands responsible will help avert a civil war (or at least injustice against the Giotto House) and should put House Giotto in the debt of our heroes (and rich and powerful allies always come in handy, especially in the Western Empire).

Learning Is Half the Battle

Note: This adventure starts in a city-state in the Kighfalton Plains, the exact location and characteristics of which are up to the Game Master.

Hook: Scholar *Ieyanomom* Skannz has worked his entire life piecing together the world's only serious, in-depth discussion regarding the cause and meaning of the huge fields of minotaur bones found in the Baalgor Wastelands. These places of mass extinction have puzzled scholars, sages and men of magic for eons. And now, at long last, Skannz just might have the answer. He is scheduled to speak at a **once-in-a-century** meeting of the top academic minds in the world.

Line: The problem is, Skannz no longer has his thesis; it's been stolen. In one week, the Council T'Palladia will convene at the *Temple of Shandalain* in the Old Kingdom. Skannz was supposed to have left several days ago, but he isn't willing to leave until he finds his manuscript. To this guy, the manuscript means more than life itself. It must be found! He has spread word that any adventurers who retrieve the manuscript will be given (a copy of) a map Skannz found when he was still an apprentice. It is a genuine, accurate map that details a secret passage through the *Sea of Despair*. The Island Kingdom of Byzantium used this coveted knowledge when they circumnavigated the world, and now Skannz is the only person who has a copy of this document outside of the Byzantium government. The map is worth a fortune in money and political capital to whoever can find **Skannz's** thesis in time for him to still make that conference.

So why the rush? Because Skannz's theory on the Minotaurs isn't just an academic exercise. It offers what might be the miss-

ing piece in determining exactly what role the **Minotaurs** played in the Elf-Dwarf Wars and the destruction of the Baalgor Wastelands. More importantly, it pinpoints the presence and intentions of the major groups of Minotaurs left in the world, including those black-hearted villains still affiliated with the Old Ones. His thesis document includes numerous original and ancient parchments and inscriptions copied from the walls of ancient catacombs in the Old Kingdom. **Skannz** has survived a number of suspicious mishaps, but a copy of his thesis perished in a sudden fire. If Skannz can get the complete and accurate information to the Council T'Palladia, a portion of history will be restored, the Minotaur threat can be eliminated and he'll become one of the most famous historians/scholars in the known world. And earn himself the position of Imperial Historian, a post that offers great power, wealth and notoriety.

The shadowy presence of human thieves and evil agents working for *Vorgov Ironsmoke*, is everywhere. Initially, the theft will seem to have been the handiwork of Vorgov Ironsmoke, a 10th level Minotaur Witch and disciple of the Dreaded Old Ones — she draws her power from the slumbering creatures of pestilence (see the **Old Ones** sourcebook for more information). This being the case, our heroes are likely to clash with the Witch's henchmen in search of the document. However, eventually it will become apparent that somebody beat her to it, and that her minions are also desperately searching for the manuscript.

Sinker: The real culprits are two Minotaurs (a 5th level thief and 6th level **merc**), a 6th level elf Mind Mage, a 4th level human Wizard, and a tough dwarf (7th level soldier), all *of good* alignment. You see, everything in Skannz's radical piece of scholarship is **100%** accurate! And while it reveals the location of a handful of wicked cults of Minotaurs, the majority of the other locations are those of innocent Minotaurs with no ill intent toward humankind nor loyalty to the Old Ones. However, if this scholarly work falls into the hands of the Western Empire, it will definitely result in a genocidal campaign to destroy *all* Minotaurs and give the Empire an excuse to invade other lands. Furthermore, the historical exploits of the Minotaurs thousands of years ago (the majority claim to have given up their evil ways and alliance to the Old Ones) will give humans and others more reason to fear and hate them. To prevent the bloodshed of thousands of innocent **nonhuman** people, these "thieves" (heroes really) have stolen the Skannz documents. Many of the key ancient parchments are written in silver runes, making them indestructible. The group of "thieves" have not destroyed the rest of Skannz's work, because they'd like to preserve it for the Minotaur culture (they represent one of the allegedly good Minotaur factions).

Whether the player group lets these well intentioned heroes escape with the Skannz documents is up to them, but the heroes who have it will fight to the death and to give it back to Skannz will mean the destruction of the Minotaur race (**Note:** Skannz can remember the general history, but needs his manuscript and the ancient **elven** parchments for historical details, the specific locations of the Minotaur strongholds and most importantly, as proof that what he says is true. Without them, Skannz has nothing more than an outlandish story that sounds more like a work of fiction from a fertile imagination rather than real history).

Unfortunately, the player characters and the Minotaurs champions have a more immediate problem. The group has inadver-

tently led the witch, Vorgov, and her minions, to the group with the stolen Skannz documents. The real villains of this escapade should make their appearance after the player characters know what's at stake (the group with the stolen thesis will try to appeal to their sense of mercy by revealing why they've stolen the work, and all the harm that will befall the Minotaur race if it falls into the wrong hands, as noted above). Vorgov wants the documents to: 1) protect the Minotaurs who worship and serve the Old Ones (patiently awaiting the day they awaken), and 2) to find all the locations of the "traitorous Minotaurs who have forsaken the Old Ones and punish them" (destroying many, enslaving others and converting those they can). The witch has no ill will toward the player group and will offer them the chance to step aside, while the N.P.C. hero group pleads for them to stand with them and prevent this important document from falling into the clutches of evil. **Note:** The composition of the witch's minions are left to the G.M. It can include **1D4** other Minotaurs or other giants or trolls, as well as thieves and assassins (there may also be a spell caster or powerful monster among this group). Vorgov fights with the "gifts of eternal servitude" and a pair of Dragon Claw Gloves (6D6 damage). Whatever the case may be, the **NPC** group with the Skannz material is hopeless outnumbered **and/or** overpowered. It is time for our heroes to take a stand.

If most of the N.P.C. heroes are slain or if the documents fall into the player characters' hands, the one or two survivors are likely to petition the player characters for their help in escorting them and the Skannz document back to the (good) Minotaur faction. This can lead to all kinds of adventure (probably in the Old Kingdom, or **Baal-gor** Wastelands, or in or around the Land of the Damned). On the other hand, the player group may decide they can't trust either of these groups (or anybody?) and either keep Skannz's documents themselves or do away with them (toss **'em** inside a volcano, destroy what they can and hide the rest in some secret place, etc.). If the documents fall into Vorgov's hands, or somehow get back to Skannz (who will keep them under lock and key, never out of his sight and surrounded by a legion of hired protectors; warriors and mages), the player characters may feel they need to steal the work themselves to prevent the slaughter of the innocent. **Note:** Vorgov will *not* fight to the death and will try to escape capture or destruction. Those who oppose her will earn her everlasting enmity.

Identity Crisis

Hook: One of the primordial fears that has driven nearly all races to hate Changelings is that a Changeling might assume your identity and commit foul acts in your name. Has this ever happened to your player characters? No? Well, it's about to.

Line: The city-state of *Shatterstone* has recently had a changeover of power, and a new city-state Noble House (House Piodan) has risen to power amid much fanfare and celebration (Nobody liked the old city-state house that much). As the player group enters town, they'll get swept up in all of the excitement, fanfare, and free booze (and drugs) flowing like water, as the community celebrates the transition of power. Eventually, the player group must find a place to stay for the night, but most hotels and inns are booked solid. After a long search, they are able to find accommodations at *The Shining Geraldine*. The group goes to sleep (preferably in a drunken stupor, to help move the plot along, but it's not necessary) amid the sounds of non-stop

revelry in the streets below. They wake up the next morning, however, to discover the body of a young, pretty and dead peasant girl in the room with them! The girl is beyond help and can't be revived by any means other than resurrection (she's been dead for a few to several hours).

This is just the beginning. How our heroes handle the dead body can lead to any number of different adventures, accusations, crises and resolutions. The upshot of it is that the city guard will think the heroes are responsible, even if they willingly notify the authorities ("... you say you never saw the girl before? And you don't know how she got into your hotel room?" etc.). It is likely the authorities will want to hold all or some members of the group for questioning, and if not, the group will be told not to leave town until this mystery can be unravelled — they are obviously prime suspects. Resistance to being detained, questioned and possibly locked up by the authorities will result in a skirmish and cause the player characters to appear guilty. This will make them hated and hunted as murderers. That having been said, it should also be made clear that this is the kind of town where "suspected murderers" are strung up first and put on trial second, so allowing themselves to go quietly with the law isn't a smart idea. Assuming the player group gets away from the local lawmen (this shouldn't be too **difficult**), they'll receive a message via Magic Pigeon that says,

"Like our handiwork? She went more quietly than we thought, but still she was a fine piece of work. Don't you agree? No matter. You're going to love our next piece. See you tonight."

The mysterious message is a reference to a massacre that takes place that evening at the city constable's yard. A group of adventurers matching the player characters' physical descriptions (clothing and the weapons may be different) were reported to have burst into the constables yard, attacking without warning or provocation, and killing every guardsman in sight; at least six, with several others wounded. Just as the townspeople start getting in an uproar over this, the players get another Magic Pigeon message:

"That was just to get your attention. Now listen carefully. Our next target is *Lord Piodan*. You'd better act quickly if you want to save him."

At this point, our heroes need to either slip out of town (characters of a good alignment won't leave the Lord in danger) or try to secretly protect him (a warning will be seen as a threat from these apparent maniacs). Unless they intercede on Lord Piodan's behalf, he will be murdered by sunrise, and witnesses will see the player characters leaving the scene of the crime. At this point, a province-wide manhunt will commence and if the player group is caught, they will be executed.

Of course, if the player characters decide to help Lord Piodan, they'll have to somehow get to the Lord (defeating or avoiding all of the security measures of his palace), and convinced him that, 1) the group didn't commit any of these murders, 2) that his own life is in grave danger, and 3) they are there to help him. If Lord Piodan is convinced and goes into hiding, or can be forcibly subdued, tied up and hidden safely away, the player group can set up an ambush in his bed chamber (or other appropriate place) later that night for the real assailants.

Sinker: If the adventurer group follows a plan to protect the Lord and lie in wait for the assassins, then at midnight, they will

spring their trap on intruders who, in every way, look just like them!

These impostors' initial reaction is to fight, rather than try to make good their escape. One or more of these villains will also try to find Lord Piodan to kill him, and then try to escape, leaving the bloodied heroes to take the blame. The wild part of this adventure is that the members of the player group are ultimately facing themselves in a fight to the death. An eerie and unnerving situation. Furthermore, they must be careful not to mistake and hurt a genuine ally rather than one of the impostors. The group must kill or capture at least two of these shapechangers to prove they've been framed, and eyewitnesses to the battle between the twin combatants will help clear their names. However, don't forget that these brigands can take other appearances, so if the group loses sight of one for more than a minute, he may assume another identity — one can even copy the appearance and voice of Lord Piodan!

The bad guys are basically as tough as the player group, with comparable levels of experience, armor, weapons and resources, perhaps only slightly more or slightly less powerful. Furthermore, the impostors are likely to have different weapons and may possess different skills, fighting abilities and magical powers. Ultimately, however, the player group should have a fair chance at defeating them. If any escape, they are likely to seek revenge on the group. If the Lord is killed during the battle, the impostors will flee, changing their appearance at the first opportunity and leaving the heroes to blame. Only if Lord Piodan witnesses their heroics against the doppelgangers, and they **successfully** defeat *all* the Changeling impostors, will they be completely exonerated without suspicion and get a hearty thanks, but stingy reward, from Lord Piodan.

Once the fight is over, any of the surviving Changelings will refuse to talk, and will attempt escape or commit suicide at the first opportunity. If the G.M. should prefer, these villains could be magically created doppelgangers rather than actual changelings. In either case, it is clear somebody doesn't like Lord Piodan. While it could be as simple as a group of vengeful, evil Changelings, it could be the Changelings were assassins hired by *somebody* yet unseen (a rival or enemy of Lord Piodan). This could mean more trouble for both the Lord and the adventurers (our heroes) who interfered with the assassination attempt. **Note:** Ironically, the Changeling assassins simply needed scapegoats to conceal their involvement, and the player group was chosen at random.

The Maleficent Seven

Hook: A city-state in Lower **Barraduk** is being terrorized by seven rival warlords, each of whom wants to destroy his opponents and gain control of the city-state at all costs. At the rate these guys are going, the entire city-state will be reduced to ashes before long.

Line: As the characters pass through the city-state, the townspeople beg them to intervene — get help, kill off one or more of the warlords, broker a truce, etc. It seems that with all the provincial squabbling and infighting in Lower Barraduk, nobody's stopped to notice what's happening to this particular community, and these poor folks are at their wits end. Should the heroes intervene and bring the fighting to a halt, they will earn the lifelong gratitude of the entire city-state (and the enmity of **1D4** minor noble families).

Sinker: These warlords aren't all really human warlords! Half of them are really major demons, using this city-state as a weird playground where they can smash, destroy and toy with the populace while they engage in a living chess game with each other and a few unwitting human opponents. One of the warlords is an Arch-Fiend, two of them are Horrors, and one is a Beast. All are quite powerful (maximum hit points and S.D.C.; 1D4+5 level), aggressive and wily, so fighting them will probably entail more than a straight out slugfest. Each of the demonic warlords has taken a piece of the city-state for himself, and has established a war camp. The creatures either use magic to disguise their true nature or a human pawn. Furthermore, each of the warlords has assembled a small army of 50-75 mercenaries to do his bidding.

When these demons first came here, they cooked up their "warlords" charade as way to have a rollicking good time at some "little people's" expense. Before long, though, the playful rivalries between the demons grew into real hostilities, turning a friendly "game" into a serious life and death battle of wits and resources. Each demon has decided to stay here in his human guise until one of them is left standing as the decisive "winner." The demons themselves have assumed a variety of identities, but most of them pretend to be a wizard or warlock so they can pass off using their magic abilities.

Most of the actual fighting is done in the ravaged center of town, where mercenaries of one warlord challenge those of another. But a lot of sneak attacks, ambushes, assassinations, sabotage, vandalism and political intrigue goes on too. Lately, archers from all sides have taken up positions in town and snipe at each other (and townspeople, when things get boring), making life in this city absolute chaos and dangerous for everybody.

Cut-Throat Competition

Hook: Meanwhile, in another corner of war-torn Lower **Barraduk**, two coastal city-states are waging economic war on each other. **Ramagian**, a city right on the ocean, has hired a fleet of six renegade Bizantium warships to blockade the city of **Sunwater**, just 25 miles (40 km) up the coast. The idea is that with Sunwater blocked off by hostile warships, merchants traveling along the trade route will simply sail to the next closest city, Ramagian, and do their business there. The city leaders of Ramagian don't particularly dislike Sunwater, but they do compete with it for trade, and this is just one incident in a long history of dirty tricks the two cities have played on each other.

Line: The leaders of Sunwater hire, recruit, blackmail, trick, or otherwise cajole the player characters into breaking up the blockade using whatever means are necessary. Each of the ships is a Bizantium frigate with a full complement of sailors, soldiers and spell casters (typically Warlocks). The flotilla is anchored a quarter-mile off the coast of Sunwater, just inside the city's large harbor. Note that these ships aren't attacking passing traffic, they're just refusing to let anybody past them. Any ship trying to break the blockade is attacked, crippled and sent limping away (hopefully to Ramagian), few are sunk. The Bizantium sailors are mercenaries doing a job, they are not murderous pirates.

Sinker: No pun intended here. But seriously, sinking or crippling these ships by stealth and magic is the best bet. Getting out to the boats will entail a long swim, or the player characters get-

ting a dinghy or other small boat and sneaking out to the ships. The crews on these boats are experienced (4-6th level), well drilled and well disciplined, but they will be utterly demoralized if their leader, who is on Frigate #2, is killed or captured. Perhaps the adventurers can get out to one ship, commandeer it and use the ship's siege weapons (and their magic) to fire on one of the other vessels in the flotilla. Perhaps when the other ships counterattack, it causes the fleet to destroy itself before it realizes it's been conned. Likewise, the adventurers might notice that the ships are using signal fires and mirror flashes to communicate with each other (they're each about a tenth of a mile apart), and could send false messages to the other vessels and confuse them that way. Of course, good old-fashioned spells will work to cripple or sink the boats. Water Elementals and the like will be particularly effective.

The noble house of Sunwater will richly reward the group if they break the blockade; mainly offering body armor, nonmagical weapons, adventuring equipment and other goods for trade, along with 4,000 gold each, wonderful, high quality accommodations, food and alcohol at no charge for at least six months — perhaps on palace grounds. However, if the group stays in town, they will almost certainly be called upon for more "favors." Also, the sooner the blockade is broken, the better for Sunwater, so there will be a bonus payment of 4,000 gold each (and double the length of hospitality) if the players can get their job done within 48 hours.

Follow Up: Whatever the adventure group does is not going to be taken well by *House Ramagian*. Thus, while they will have won the favor of the Sunwater Nobles, they will earn the lasting animosity of House Ramagian. To compound matters, stories of the player characters' deeds will spread far and wide, embarrassing and angering House Ramagian even more, especially if the group stays at Sunwater for more than a week or two. Once the nobles realize "who" spoiled their plans, they will spare no expense to extract revenge by discrediting if not killing the group. However, this campaign of revenge will not extend beyond the lower, southern half of the Western Empire, where the House has its greatest influence and connections.

How Long Will a Dragon Lie on the Earth, Ere It Rot?

By **Bill Coffin** and **Kevin Siembieda**

Hook: The title of this one says it all.

Line: A Thunder Lizard lies dead in the central square of a small village in the Tardet Plains (or any of the less inhabited regions of the Western Empire), and nobody knows how to get rid of it! Butchering it is beyond the scope of the local meat cutters' abilities or experience; besides, the local elders promised the poor thing they wouldn't butcher it. Everybody's afraid of what'll happen to the place once the body starts decomposing ... if it decomposes. And now, mercenaries have **showed up**, arguing that they get to carve the valuable parts off the dragon for themselves.

The player group is either in town when the Thunder Lizard dies or arrives shortly afterward. The dragon just showed up one day, covered in terrible wounds, and collapsed in the center of the square. Mortally wounded, the scrupulous Thunder Lizard asked the village elders who arrived to survey the situation to

promise to "make sure they don't carve me to pieces ... please ... I ... need a proper burial to be truly free ... to die in peace ... please." Taking pity on the poor beast, and believing the blessing of a dragon could only bring them good fortune, they promised, and with that, the dragon died. The problem is this sucker weighs over 30 tons and nobody knows how to move it.

Not long afterwards, a party of adventurers consisting of a Wolfen Mind Mage, a Gromek mercenary, a human Wizard, a human Priestess of Darkness, and an **elven** Long-Bowman show up, claiming they killed "the beast," and that the body is theirs. The village people don't know what to do. If they call for Imperial assistance, they're afraid it will cause trouble. If they let these obvious brigands take the body, they'll be breaking their word of honor and many fear the ghost of the dragon will haunt them forever.

Since the player characters are in town (and may have earned themselves a reputation for heroics), the villagers will turn to them for help. First to stop the brigands from butchering the dragon's body in the street, and second to help remove and bury the darn thing. After the fight (the evil brigands shouldn't be quite as powerful as our heroes, and will not fight to the death, but will come back to the village or track the adventurers down to claim their prize, the dragon's body, or at least parts of it, or money and valuables to compensate them for their loss). As for getting rid of the scarred and dead body, at this point, the villagers don't care what the player characters do with it after the carcass is removed from town. They just can't attempt to chop it up while in town.

Sinker: The Thunder Lizard is not dead! It wakes up shortly after the player group has gotten it out of town — ideally as they are about to bury it or are about to pull its teeth or chop it up and sell its bones, claws and teeth themselves.

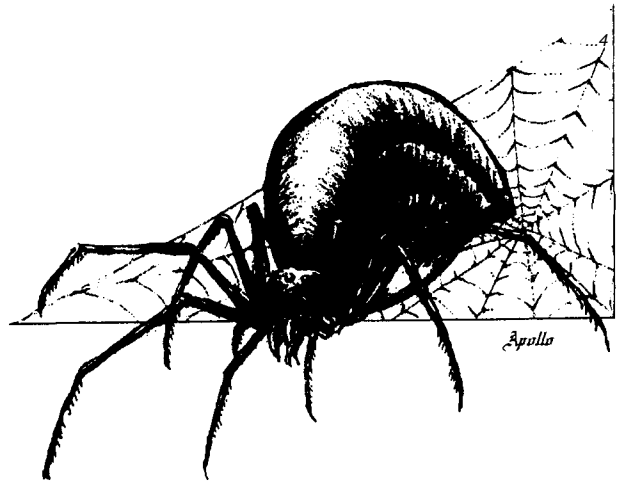
It was simply in a state of recuperative stasis or hibernation that made it appear dead. Even see aura or sense life presence was inconclusive, and even a dead dragon radiates of magic.

If the characters were trying to carry out its last wish, the dragon is grateful, kind and friendly. It has no valuables on it, but will share news, information and **rumors**, warning them about any dangerous areas the group may be traveling to. This is a good way to get players to send their characters on to the next adventure or give them a hand with clues and information regarding something they need, want or are planning.

If the characters were about to butcher the body, the dragon is less than appreciative, and roars that they should get back and leave him be, or suffer his wrath. It will appreciate but seemingly ignore apologies and (in an obviously less angry tone) chastise them for trying to mutilate its presumably dead body. More kind gestures might get the dragon to share information as above. The dragon is of scrupulous alignment, an 8th level wizard, and has regained 180 hit points (no S.D.C.). If there is no resistance to his threatening demand he will turn invisible and leave the area.

If the group attacks, they will have a fight on their hands, although the dragon is still in a weakened condition and fights only long enough to get its bearings and escape.

If the bad guy meres arrive on the scene (G.M. option), they will attack the dragon and anybody who stands at its side. This time, they will fight to the death.



A Plague Upon Ye

By Bill Coffin & Kevin Siembieda

Hook: As the group travels through the Kighfalcon plains, they come across a city-state where all of the crops and livestock are dying from some unexplainable ailment. Normal causes have been ruled out, and the townsfolk figure that Ezza **Pringe**, a reclusive old crone living on the edge of town, is to blame. It's well known that Ezza is a witch and hates everybody who lives in the area.

Line: When the players investigate Ezza's home (all of the townsfolk are too afraid to come along), they will have to fight through a group of bodyguards waiting for them — her familiar demon and three trained grizzly bears. Once the players get past these, they'll find Ezza inside, lying in bed, apparently dying of the same consumptive disease that's taking out all of the local crops and livestock (which suggests that she is not responsible). At this point, Ezza is non-responsive and near death. If magically cured — normal healing methods have NO effect against this disease — then Ezza will revive. Unfortunately for the characters, she is a vile-tempered, hostile nag who will make serious trouble for them for killing her friends and pets. She knows nothing about this mystery disease, other than it might have been "something I picked up while Rift-jumping," whatever "Rift-jumping" is. She insists they leave. If they refuse, she'll magically vanish.

Sinker: A short time later, she appears to them with the news that she discovered the cause of the "disease." Some kind of alien entity — energy being — that hovers around touching living creatures and **causing** them to get sick. It is actually some kind of biological vampire that draws sustenance to itself by stealing the life essences of those it has made sick (up to 150 at a time). This means the thing must remain in the area. She also warns them that its natural state is invisible, except during the light of the full moon, which will occur tonight or **tomorrow**. Find the thing, kill it, and the plague ends and the sick will recover within a week. And with that, the old crone vanishes (she'll not do another thing to help the people who accused her of this foul deed, even if she was partially responsible for bringing it back during a "Rift-jump").

The trick now is to find this damnable creature and kill it. To compound things (and convince characters to help), one or two

characters in the player group are feeling a bit under the weather, with cold or flu-like symptoms (-1 on initiative and -1 to dodge); the first symptom of the "wasting disease" (actually, they only have a chest cold, but they won't know that). The Disease Entity normally has an A.R. 12, **1D6x10 +30** Hit Points and regenerates 2D6 H.P. per minute. However, because it has been feeding, drawing on the life energy of so many, it has a bonus 3D4x10 Hit Points. It defends itself with energy tendrils that have a reach of 12 feet (3.6 m). A strike from one of these tentacles inflicts 2D6 damage direct to hit points. Maximum height flying is 100 feet (30.5 m), and maximum speed is 22, about **15 mph** (24 km). It has three attacks per melee round and most magic weapons and magical energy attacks inflict an extra **1D6** damage. Normal weapons, poison, heat and cold have no effect on it.

An Honest(?) Night's Work

Note: This adventure should take place at a coastal town, preferably on the northern coast of the Western Empire. It's the kind of romp that shouldn't take much of the players' time, and can be inserted as a side episode of a longer adventure or campaign.

Hook: While relaxing one evening in a tavern, the group is approached by a scared-looking young man who asks if they would be interested in bodyguarding him for the evening. Payment is 2,500 gold each! The only condition is that the client must be accompanied at all times during the night, and that he is certain an attempt will be made on his life sometime before morning.

The Line: This guy is from a local noble family, but he likes "slumming with adventurers." Tonight, however, he's stepped into some serious trouble. Earlier today, in another part of town, he was part of a group that somehow managed to steal a major rune weapon from the treasure vault of the city's Wizards' Guild. He claims he didn't know anything about it, and doesn't know where his comrades have gone off to, they've probably skipped town.

Needless to say, the Wizards' Guild wants their sword back and this noble's head on a platter. They will attack whoever's accompanying the noble (i.e., the player characters) without warning.

The Sinker: The Wizards are all combat oriented mages; that is, Wizards trained specifically for war. As such, they'll all have multiple attack and defense spells, and oldies but goodies like Fire Ball, Call Lightning, Energy Bolt, Carpet of Adhesion, Supernatural Strength, The Armor of **Ithan** and Fleet Feet as standard parts of their spell repertoires. Also, each of the mages has Hand to Hand: Expert, and has three W.P.s (W.P. Sword and two others). These guys mean business, and anybody expecting them to be pushovers is in **for** a rude surprise. The angry mages have good reason to be mad, but killing the stupid noble is not the answer, especially if he's telling the truth about not actually being involved in the theft. The **sorcerers** are willing to cut a deal to spare the idiotic nobleman's life: Return the Frostfoil within five days and they will forgive this matter, plus they'll reward the group with 1000 gold each and one minor magic item like a potion, charm or spell scroll; the mages feel the group's real **reward/payment** is the life of the nobleman (whether or not the nobleman rewards them depends on the

G.M.; and such reward will be modest, for he is not particularly rich or well liked by his family).

To oppose the Wizards' Guild is madness. In addition to each wizard being 1D4+5 levels in experience, each has a magical weapon. Most of these items are standard, lesser items, like a pair of daggers that return when it is thrown, a sword that's indestructible and eternally sharp, a flaming ball and chain, or perhaps a lesser holy weapon or two. G.M.s, this could also be a good place to introduce any new and weird magic weapons you've designed. After all, this whole adventure is over a rune weapon stolen from the Wizards in the first place, so it figures that these guys might have plenty more back at their guild headquarters.

The Rune Weapon: The weapon stolen is a thin, rapier-like long sword that shimmers with a silver glow. The blade "sings" when it moves through the air, and a full-strength swing will cause the blade to produce a sharp ringing sound, almost as if slicing through crystal or glass, if you can imagine what that sound might be like. The sword's name is **Krineshu**, and in addition to all common rune weapon powers, this fine blade does 4D6 damage to most **opponents**, double damage to water/ice elementals, and can cast elemental magic (Shards of Ice, Sheet of Ice, Ten Foot Ball of Ice, Wall of Ice, Encase in Ice, and Freeze Water). The sword has 100 P.P.E., which regenerate at **10** per hour. In addition, **Krineshu's** owner will suffer from the Cold curse. Personality-wise, this anarchist weapon is self-serving and vain, but once it bonds with an owner, it will stick by him or her until the end. The legendary Frostfoil can be fickle and criticizing or taunting it can cause it to malfunction (does 10% less damage and expend 10% more P.P.E. than nec-



essary when casting spells) until its ego is restored **and/or** the criticizer *apologizes*.

The Professionals

Hook: Ulstrian Kaze, head of House Kaze and the charismatic leader of the Middle Kingdoms, is making a rare visit to a fairly remote city-state in his region to pay his respects to an old city-state lord who died recently. This is the first time in years that Ulstrian has ventured outside of Epiphany, the regional capital.

Line: Naturally, somebody wants to use this opportunity to bump Ulstrian off. And naturally, whoever this person is wants the player characters to do it. They can name their price (up to **100,000 gold each**)! The only conditions are that Ulstrian be killed in such a way that resurrection is impossible, the player group must not be caught or identified, and somehow the assassination must not be made to look like an Imperial plot. If any of these conditions are breached, the players' employer will forfeit payment for their services. Note: In the alternative, the player group may have caught wind of the assassination plot and seek to prevent it.

Sinker: Talk about your dream ticket for any assassin or mercenary who's ever wanted to make a mark. Pulling this off will cement the group's reputation as heavy-hitters (but probably not champions of goodness and light, but hey, you can't have everything). Getting to Ulstrian will be extremely difficult, as he will travel with very heavily armed bodyguards consisting of crack soldiers and 7th level Priests of Light.

The unsavory player group who may agree to do this has one week to plan and make arrangements for hitting Ulstrian. Since the noble and his entourage will be **teleporting** to and from Epiphany (thanks to a Magic portal spell), hitting them in transit isn't an option. The job must be pulled off in Epiphany, or as Kaze is attending the funeral rites for the recently deceased local city-state lord. If the characters can get close enough to Ulstrian, striking him down shouldn't be too tough. Getting away from the resulting press of bodyguards, local authorities and hysterical on lookers will make escape super-difficult. Obviously, a job for those with brains and brawn.

A Hellish Underworld

Hook: The player characters get captured and sentenced to life imprisonment for some (alleged? Are they falsely accused?) crime, perhaps the assassination of Ulstrian Kaze, suggested above. They find themselves stripped of all possessions and condemned to the lowest levels of the **Colfax Penitentiary**.

Line: This penitentiary is a one-way ticket to living hell. Once you come in you never get out. Proving that axiom wrong will be the player characters job and involve one to several nights of adventure and intrigue as inmates in a strange and twisted world of brutality and unjust punishment. Managing to escape one's prison cell means trying to navigate the mazes of the underground labyrinth only to find one dead end after another and trouble down every path. Worse, each course taken continues to lead down, down, down. Along the way, the adventurers meet plenty of other prisoners, most of them oddballs and madmen who have somehow survived in these inhospitable depths.

Sinker: But of all the weirdos and monsters living within the Colfax labyrinths, there exists a tribe of Troglodytes who know of several ways back to the surface that nobody else knows about. Now, first off, just finding these Trogs will be an adventure, with the characters working from the rumors and stories told them by other underworld dwellers (many of whom have been driven mad by being underground for so long, **and/or** who have built their own little empires, from petty gangs to tiny underground communities ruled by **tyrants** and madmen). Once the Trogs are contacted, the player characters have to prove to these powerful and suspicious folk that they don't mean them any harm. And then convince them they should help them escape to the surface. What do the players have that the Trogs would want badly enough to give up one of the routes to the surface? Does the group win their favor by helping them in some dramatic way (probably several **incidents/favors**)? Or what? That, my dear G.M., is for you to decide. But whatever it is, it'll probably have to do with that pair of **Ultucan** dragons (**and/or** other enemies) that have been giving the Trogs a very hard time.

Romp, Chomp & Stomp

Hook: The player group opens some kind of container — a locked chest, a sealed vase, a sarcophagus — containing the imprisoned essence of *The Mordadri*, a humongous (we're talking King Kong-scale here) monster of unknown origin. The **Modadri's** container could have been mixed in with a treasure trove.

Line: Once freed, the Modadri goes berserk and destroys everything in sight and threatens neighboring communities and hundreds of lives. Once its initial frenzy is over, the creature makes a beeline for the nearest large city. Unless this behemoth is stopped, it'll probably lay the entire city to waste, as well as eat most of its occupants (Not to mention the few villages that'll get trampled along the way.) Holy Godzilla, Batman! What do we do now?

Sinker: Like it or not, the player group is responsible for this thing and they must stop it. The one thing on their side is that there's plenty of open land between here and the nearest city, so the players can try out a few plans before finding one that works. How exactly to take care of this thing is going to require some creative problem-solving. If direct confrontation is your players' thing, then they'd better bring an army with them. Or a scroll with a couple of Spells of Legend and plenty of P.P.E to spare. The exact size, strength, Hit Points, and powers of this gigantic thing, as well as its origin (a magical construct from the Elf-Dwarf wars, like a super-golem, or an alien demonic creature summoned accidentally long ago and somehow magically contained, etc.) is left to the imagination of the G.M.

A Note from Siembieda about Fantasy Vampires

Here's a brief clarification about Secondary Vampires for use in *Palladium Fantasy*. A Secondary Vampire that is 8th level and higher, or 500+ years old (whichever comes first), can effectively become a Master Vampire. That is to say, this experienced Lord of the Undead has, through centuries of experience, grown in knowledge and power roughly equal to a Master Vampire and gains the prestige, power and bonuses of a Master. The only difference is he or she always remains a Major psionic, not a Master Psychic like a true Master Vampire.

OKAY YOU COME TO A **FOURWAY INTERSECTION** IN THE **DUNGEON PASSAGE!!** TO THE LEFT IS A SET OF STAIRS **LEADING UPWARDS INTO BLACKNESS!!** TO THE RIGHT IS A SET OF STAIRS LEADING DOWNWARD FROM WHERE THE **FAMT ECHOES OF RUNNING WATER** CAN BE HEARD, AND DIRECTLY AHEAD IS A **LARK PORTAL** WITH AN **EEBIE GREEN GLOW** AND A **STATIC HUM!!!!**

A PORTAL?? AND IT'S GLOWING??

I DRAW MY HACK-MASTER SWORP!!

OH MY!!

HOTDOG!! A MAGIC PORTAL!! I WONDER WHAT IT DOES??

IN **LARGE BLOOD-RED** LETTERS OVER THE PORTAL ARE THE WORDS, **'PORTAL OF DEATH!! ALL WHO ENTER HERE SHALL DIE!!'**

I PICK UP A ROCK AND TOSS IT THROUGH THE PORTAL!!

THE ROCK SEEMS TO FREEZE IN MID AIR AS IT ENTERS THE PORTAL YOU HEAR A FAINT SUCKING SOUND AND THEN A LOUD POP AS THE ROCK VANISHES IN A BRIGHT FLASH OF LIGHT!!

DAMN!!! DID YOU SEE THAT?? I WONDER WHAT THE STORY IS WITH THIS FRICKIN' PORTAL??

WHO CARES?? THIS IS SOME FREAKY STUFF MAN!! I AINT MESSIN' WITH NO PORTAL OF DEATH!! I'M ONLY 700 L.P.'S FROM 15TH LEVEL!!

I SAY WE GO UP THE STAIRS AND LEAVE THIS AREA!!

NO WAY!! WE HAVE TO CHECK THIS THING OUT!!

WHAT IF THIS PORTAL **GRANTS WISHES** OR LEADS TO **FABULOUS RICHES???** HUH?? AND WHAT IF SOME **STUPID SCHMUCK** JUST WROTE, "PORTAL OF DEATH" ON IT TO SCARE OFF THE **WUSS-OF-HEART??**

WE CAN'T JUST WALK AWAY AND NEVER KNOW!!

BRIAN IS RIGHT!! WE HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THIS THING IS!! ONE OF US IS GOING TO HAVE TO STEP THROUGH TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS!!

HUUULLLOOO!! MR. SCIENCE!! WE KNOW WHAT IT IS!! PORTAL OF DEATH - REMEMBER??

ST..ST..STEP THROUGH?? THE PORTAL??

LET'S DRAW STRAWS TO SEE WHO GOES THROUGH!!!

DRAW STRAWS?? WHOAH!!! HOLD ON A SEC, GUYS!! AS YOU STAND GAWKING AT THE PORTAL OF PEATH YOU NOTICE A LOT OF GRAFFITI ON THE ORNATE FRAMEWORK. ONE PASSAGE REAPS, "WE SHOULD HAVE NEEDED THE WARNING!! LOST FIVE GOOD COMRADES HERE!!" ANOTHER ONE READS, "BOY WERE WE STUPID TO MESS WITH THIS THING!!"

I DUNNO GUYS. MAYBE WE SHOULD LISTEN TO SARA AND JUST AVOID THIS AREA. LET'S GO UP THE STAIRS!!

HERE! HERE!!

CAN'T YOU SEE B.A. IS BLOWING SMOKE?? HE KNOWS I'M ON TO HIM!

BRIAN'S RIGHT!! HOW COME B.A. DIDNT MENTION THE GRAFFITI BEFORE??

HUH?? HE'S JUST MAKING STUFF UP TO THROW US OFF THE SCENT!!

YEAH!! HE SEEMS REALLY INTENT ON NOT LETTING US GO THROUGH THAT PORTAL DOESN'T HE??

DOESN'T IT MAKE YOU WONDER WHY??

WHY?? BECAUSE HE DOESN'T WANT TO SEE THE ADVENTURE TRASHED BECAUSE WE STUPIDLY KILL OURSELVES!!

YOU'RE SO GULLIBLE, SARA!!

YOU WANNA GO THROUGH THE PORTAL OF DEATH?? FINE!! BEMY GUEST!! BUT NO TAKE BACKS!! GOOD OR BAD, YOU GUYS WILL HAVE TO LIVE (OR DIE) WITH THE OUTCOME!!

BOY, IT'S REALLY EATING YOU UP HUH?? YOU REALLY CANT STAND IT WHEN WE OUTSMART YOU CAN YOU??

NOW I'M CONVINCED!! FORGET DRAWING STRAWS!! I CALL DIBBS!! I'M GOING THROUGH THAT PORTAL FIRST!! WHO KNOWS HOW MANY CHARGES IT HAS?? I DONT WANT TO GET SCREWED ON A FREE WISH OR SUMTHIN!

ALAS POOR EL RAVAGER! I KNEW HIM WELL!



NICE TRY NUMB DICE!! I'M AT THE HEAD OF THE MARCHING ORDER SO I'M CLOSER. I JUMP THROUGH THE PORTAL BEFORE YOU CAN EVEN TAKE YOUR FIRST STEP!!

JERK!! STEP BACK AND LET ME GO FIRST!! I CALLED IT!!

GUYS WHY RUSH INTO THIS?? THE PORTAL ISN'T GONING ANYWHERE. MAYBE WE'LL FIND MORE CLUES ON IT'S PURPOSE ELSEWHERE IN THE DUNGEON. WE CAN ALWAYS COME BACK LATER.

DAMN" ONCE AGAIN THE MAGE GETS THE SHORT END OF THE STICK!! I SHOULD HAVE BEEN FIRST!!

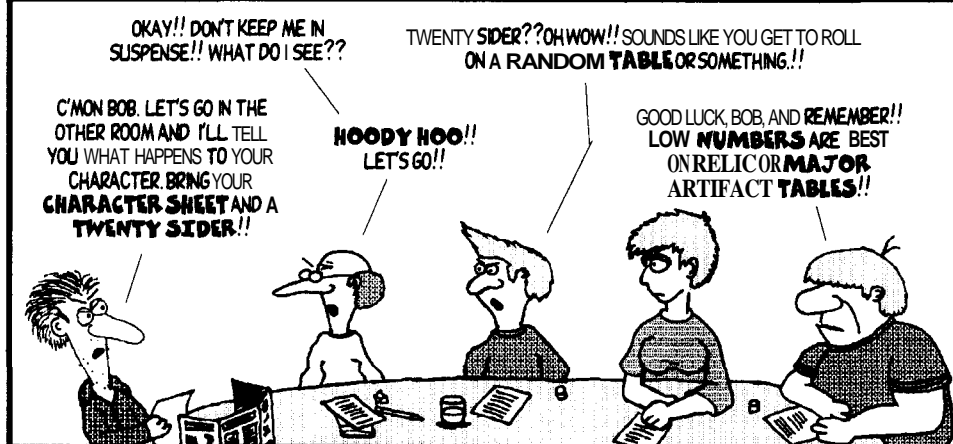


OKAY, KNUCKLES THE SIXTH LEAPS THROUGH THE PORTAL!! I'LL HAVE MY CROSSBOW OF SLAYING READED JUST IN CASE.

I CANT BELIEVE IT!! YOU REALLY JUMP THROUGH?? (GROAN). ONCE AGAIN YOU HEAR A SUCKING SOUND A LOUD POP AND KNUCKLES DISAPPEARS MA FLASH OF LIGHT!!

I PULL DOWN THE VISOR ON MY GREAT HELM AND PREPARE TO STEP THROUGH AS WELL.

DONT YOU WANT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS TO BOB FIRST?



OKAY!! DONT KEEP ME IN SUSPENSE!! WHAT DO I SEE??

TWENTY SIDER?? OH WOW!! SOUNDS LIKE YOU GET TO ROLL ON A RANDOM TABLE OR SOMETHING!!

C'MON BOB. LET'S GO IN THE OTHER ROOM AND I'LL TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR CHARACTER. BRING YOUR CHARACTER SHEET AND A TWENTY SIDER!!

HOODY HOO!! LET'S GO!!

GOOD LUCK, BOB, AND REMEMBER!! LOW NUMBERS ARE BEST ON RELIC OR MAJOR ARTIFACT TABLES!!



FIVE MINUTES LATER...

DUDE WHAT HAPPENED?? WHAT'S WITH THE PAPER BAG??

UH-OH!! I GOT A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS!!

I'M NOT ALLOWED TO TALK ABOUT IT. B.A MADE ME WEAR THE BAG SO I CANT CONVEY ANY MESSAGES WITH FACIAL EXPRESSIONS!

KEWL!! I'M GOING THROUGH!!



THIRTY MINUTES LATER...

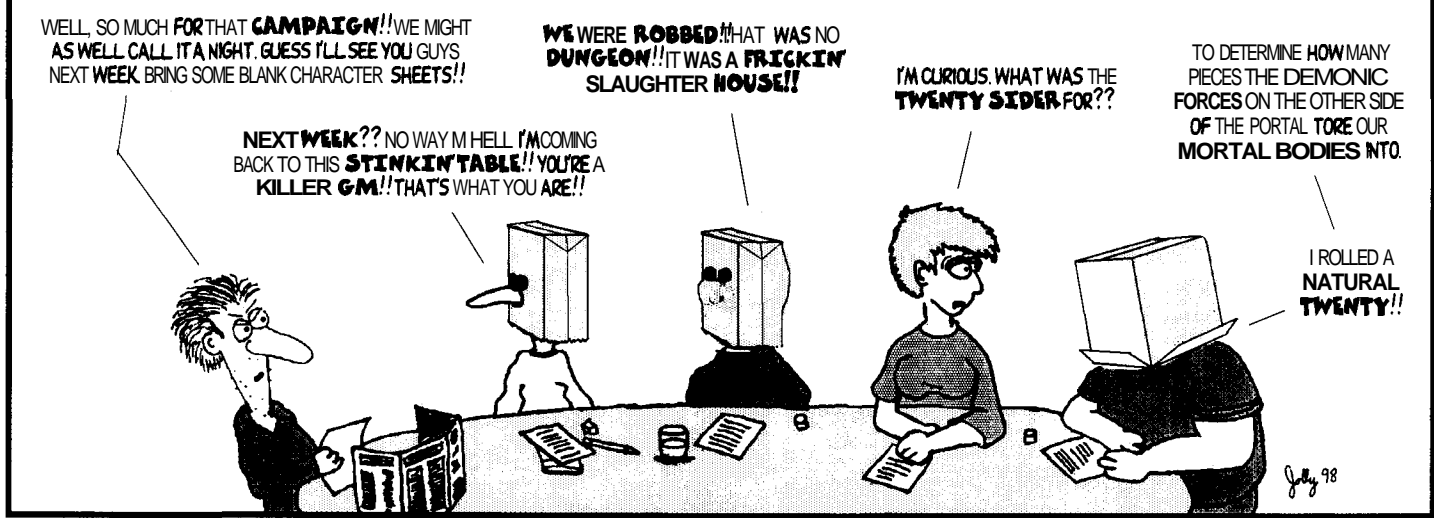
DONT WORRY SARA, AFTER WAITING AT THE PORTAL FOR SEVERAL HOURS YOUR CHARACTER IS SUFFICIENTLY CONVINCED HER COMRADES ARE ALL DEAD AND THAT THERE IS NOTHING SHE CAN DO TO HELP THEM

SO I'M ALL ALONE?? I GUESS I'LL WANDER BACK TO TOWN AND TRY TO FIND AN ADVENTURING PARTY TO TEAM UP WITH. (SIGH).

DAMN!! I CANT BELIEVE WE LET B.A. BAIT US LIKE THAT!! THREE PLAYER CHARACTER DEATHS IN ONE NIGHT!! HE'LL BE GLOATING OVER THIS FOR WEEKS!!

URNS OUT PORTAL OF DEATH WAS EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS.

YOU'RE NOT GOING THROUGH??



WELL, SO MUCH FOR THAT CAMPAIGN!! WE MIGHT AS WELL CALL IT A NIGHT. GUESS I'LL SEE YOU GUYS NEXT WEEK BRING SOME BLANK CHARACTER SHEETS!!

WE WERE ROBBED!! THAT WAS NO DUNGEON!! IT WAS A FRICKIN SLAUGHTER HOUSE!!

I'M CURIOUS. WHAT WAS THE TWENTY SIDER FOR??

TO DETERMINE HOW MANY PIECES THE DEMONIC FORCES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PORTAL TORE OUR MORTAL BODIES INTO.

NEXT WEEK?? NO WAY M HELL I'M COMING BACK TO THIS STINKIN TABLE!! YOU'RE A KILLER GM!! THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE!!

I ROLLED A NATURAL TWENTY!!

Long, Strange Trips: Writing Epic Campaigns for Palladium Fantasy

By Bill Coffin

*"When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his **eleventy-first** birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in **Hobbiton**."*

They may not sound like the opening lines of perhaps the greatest fantasy epic ever written, but there they are: our introduction to J.R.R. Tolkien's classic, **The Lord of the Rings**.

It's not a particularly impressive opening paragraph. No sweeping prose, no flowery descriptions, no inkling that a world-shaking adventure is about to take place. No, here we are, reading about a birthday party, of all things. A birthday party! It's the kind of thing that makes you ask yourself, What does this have to do with the War of the Rings? And even more, what does it have to do with writing epic campaigns for the Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game? (Or any other game, for that matter?)

The answer, dear reader, is that the opening paragraph you just read illustrates the iron rule of writing large stories: start small. You know that cliché about a journey of a thousand miles starting with a single step? Well, it's true, and nobody proved it better than old man Tolkien himself. You wouldn't know it by reading it, but Tolkien's Middle-Earth saga began as a simple bedtime story Tolkien told his children way back when. Over the years, the story grew into the classic trilogy that every serious fantasy reader knows by heart.

(A quick note: If you haven't yet read **The Hobbit** or **The Lord of the Rings**, then shame on you! Drop what you're doing right now, go read them, and then come back here. Trust me, you'll be thankful you did.)

Anyway, the humble way in which Tolkien began writing his saga is an important lesson to every Game Master who aspires to write his or her own epic adventure campaign. All too often, we G.M.s get so worked up designing grandiose adventures that we choke on the project and never finish it. Or, what we do finish is a far cry from the glory and grandeur we initially envisioned.

But that doesn't mean it's not worth the trouble. After all, epic campaigns are some of the coolest things you can pull off as a G.M. Let's look at the reasons why.

One: They play to every Game Master's inner desire to tell a story. (Yes, even for those G.M.s who get drafted into their job by fellow players.) The Palladium game design makes G.M.-ing a whole lot more interactive than for many other games. As far as I can tell, Palladium Fantasy was one of the first games to stress **storytelling** over cleaning out randomized dungeons. (**Sure**, other games stress storytelling, but to my knowledge, Palladium was doing it before all of them.) As a result, we Palladium G.M.s learn to weave narrative tapestries that (hopefully) take our players to another world for a few hours. Working this spell on an epic level is perhaps the greatest challenge the **G.M./Storyteller** can face. As a result, if and when you manage to pull an epic campaign off, it gives you a uniquely thrilling sense of satisfaction.



Two: Epic campaigns add a sense of history to your game. If all you run are endless one-nighters with disposable characters, you're probably going to tire of it sooner or later. In my experience, players enjoy building up their characters over long periods of time, slowly gaining power and experience while developing their personalities and bonds with the other folks in the group. Epic campaigns lasting weeks, months, or even years provide a great backdrop for this kind of character development. So, even if your characters go on to bigger and better things, or if you drop those characters altogether, you'll always have that one big adventure to remember. Having monumental adventures like that change how you G.M. and how your players play. They end up being the landmarks for your progression as a player and creator of interactive stories. (Plus, it makes it easier for you and your friends to sit back and say "Remember **when...**". Trust me, as you get older, this becomes important for some reason. I still haven't figured out why.)

Three: They allow you and your players to live out the grand adventures found in the novels and stories that inspire our role-playing in the first place. After all, what would be cooler than reading **The Lord of the Rings**, then playing an adventure of equal scope and drama? That's **right...nothing!**

Four: Your notes for an epic campaign can become the core material for something you might submit to Palladium for publication. The moment you begin making money off of your role-playing habit, the faster your folks will get off your back about spending so many sunny days hunched over **rulebooks** and **polyhedra** dice. (At least, it worked for me!)

Nuts and Bolts

Of course, coming up with an epic campaign isn't easy. This is no simple tavern brawl or weekend jaunt to a nearby haunted

castle. This is something that should make a permanent mark on your own game setting and commit your characters to some life-altering endeavors. To do this, you'll need six critical components.

1. A Backdrop: You could also call this the context, the setting or the foundation of your campaign. Whatever word you use, this is what provides an environment in which your epic campaign takes place. Most importantly, it sets the stage for your players to do things they normally wouldn't (or couldn't) do in just one or two gaming sessions. A year-long quest, a war, a supernatural crisis, an issue requiring divine intervention ... these are the kinds of things from which truly epic stories spring.

2. A Plot: Every good story has a good plot, and epic campaigns are no different. Like I said before, Palladium Fantasy has always stressed a story-oriented style of adventure-writing, so most Palladium G.M.s are already familiar with coming up with a plot for their adventures. With an epic campaign, the trick is coming up with a plot that's simple enough for everybody to follow, big enough to merit treatment, yet open enough to accommodate the constant changes and revisions that will happen as the epic campaign progresses. Throughout the epic campaign, you can have all sorts of side stories and tangents to take away from the main action, but that main action always has to be there in the background. Otherwise, the epic campaign will have very little cohesion and no sense of an ongoing drama.

3. A Motivation: This is the reason why the players willingly subject themselves to all of the hardships and trials of the epic campaign. Without this, there's no reason for there to be an epic campaign at all. Motivations fall into two basic categories: enticements and compulsions. Enticements are, to borrow a phrase from Psychology 101, a kind of positive reinforcement. In other words, for completing the epic campaign, the players will receive a reward. Just as with short adventures, treasure, experience, arcane knowledge, revenge, and gaining or repaying a favor are all classic enticements that work time and time again. Compulsions, on the other hand, are a form of negative reinforcement: if the players fail to complete the epic campaign, something bad will happen to them. Now, compulsion-driven epic campaigns work well in fiction. **The Lord of the Rings** is a good example; Frodo Baggins must destroy the One Ring or his home will be destroyed. However, for role-playing, I don't think this kind of motivation works well at all. Compulsory adventures work well for one or two gaming sessions, but after that, they become a kind of elaborate prison for the players, no matter how interesting or well-written the campaign is. Thus, not only do the players need some kind of assurance that they'll be adequately compensated for their trouble, but they also need the assurance that they'll have the freedom to pursue the quest at hand however they like.

4. A Theme: This is the moral, emotional and psychological backdrop for the whole thing. Compare, for example, **The Lord of the Rings** against one of Robert E. Howard's **Conan the Barbarian** stories. Now, these Conan yarns are lots of fun, but they don't have much else besides lots of sword fights and bloodshed. Tolkien, on the other hand, weaves his story so that not only do we get lots of that Conan stuff, but we also get a moral lesson about what happens when people choose not to confront the growing evils in their world. (Many critics have likened the events of the **Ring** trilogy to those of World War II,

and whether Tolkien intended this or not, he's created a powerful cautionary tale that slams Britain and France for sticking their heads in the sand while Nazi Germany should have been nipped in the bud. Here endeth the Tolkien 101 Class. You all get an A.)

5. A Team: If you really want an epic campaign to see through to then end, you'll have to make sure the group that's playing it will stick together through thick and thin. The best way to do this is to make sure everybody has roughly the same alignment. Often times, radically different alignments and dispositions make it impossible for adventurers to stick together for very long. Now, don't get me wrong - having different alignments in a group is great. A little inter-character hostility can add to the dramatic tension of the campaign. But if your group has a Principled, a Scrupulous, an Anarchist, a Miscreant and an Aberrant, chances are, the team will dissolve by the campaign's halfway point.

6. Time: Rome wasn't built in a day, and epic campaigns can't be played in one, either. If you want this thing to really work, you have to be sure that before you begin, you have a reasonable chance that your group can come together with reasonable frequency for the next few weeks or months. This is probably the toughest part about devising an epic campaign. For most of us, school or work gets in the way, not to mention players moving away, getting married, quitting role-playing, or all the other upheavals that can happen. To some extent, you can't help this. If the real world intrudes, the real world intrudes. However, some pre-planning can help hedge your bets. Are you playing this thing while you're at college? Are your players living somewhere permanently? Are you going to have to stop playing in the foreseeable future, for any reason? Are you willing to let other players to join the campaign to fill in for players who have left? And if all else fails, would you and your players be willing to carry on via e-mail, in a PBEM (Play By e-Mail)?

Excuses, Excuses

But even if you have all of these things (or at least you think you do), there will always be other pitfalls. As I've talked with other G.M.s, some common complaints about running epic campaigns come to the surface. Here's a sampling:

"I don't have any good ideas!" Writer's block is a terrible thing, isn't it? If you ask a hundred different writers what their cure for writer's block is, you'll get a hundred different answers. All I can offer is this: **usually**, when I get writer's block it's because I'm trying too hard **and/or** I need to let my creative batteries recharge. Step back from your project. Work on something else for a while. Or take some time off from designing altogether and play that new CD-ROM you just got. Sometimes, reading non-Palladium stuff is the best thing for me, because it gives me good ideas and lets me look at my campaign from a different angle. I can't tell you how many adventures of mine have sprung from Wall Street Journal or Atlantic Monthly articles. (It's true! Stop laughing!) The point is, relax and let the ideas come naturally. After all, this is supposed to be fun, remember?

"No matter what I do, it feels like I've ripped off some famous fantasy novel or movie!" So what? You're not going for originality, per se. You're going for having fun with your players. Borrowing ideas only becomes a problem when your play-



ers can see right through your adventure because you're borrowing too heavily from a story that everybody's familiar with. ("Let me see...we've got this incredibly powerful magic ring that the forces of evil are after. I guess you want us to escort some gnome who has to drop it in a volcano, huh?") Of course, given the unpredictable nature of role-playing, this problem often ends up solving itself when a player does something that didn't happen in the borrowed story. ("Well, guess what? I don't feel like going all the way to Mount Nimro, so I'm just gonna drop it off the side of my ship here, and let it fall to the bottom of the ocean! How do you like them apples?")

The second problem that idea-borrowing creates is if you're designing an epic campaign for publication. There's a difference between being inspired by somebody else's work and simply ripping it off. All aspiring writers should know the difference. But, if you don't plan on trying to make a buck off your campaign, then by all means, borrow! There's plenty of great source material out there. My personal favorites are Tolkien's various works, Fritz Leiber's *Lankmar* stories, Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Robert Asprin's *Myth* series (always good for a few laughs) and Michael Moorcock's *Elric* saga. Undoubtedly, you have your favorites. Think back and see why you liked them so much. What was it about the story, the characters, the setting, the theme? Now, can any of that be used to fill in the blanks for your epic campaign? If so, go to it. I'm sure most of these authors would be flattered. (I know I would!)

"My players don't want to get into a really big adventure!" Some players just like the short, sweet nature of playing unconnected, one-night adventures. And some players are just wimps who are afraid to commit. Any player who resists joining in an epic campaign falls into the latter category. (Just kidding!) Seriously, if this is a problem, then try running a series of loosely connected adventures under the same setting. After a while, you might find an epic campaign forming all by itself, standing on the shoulders of the short adventures that came before it.

"At least some of my players are going to have to leave the game before this campaign ends!" Man, I hate it when this happens. If real-world pressures are going to muck with your game, you probably can't do anything about it. The best defense, I've found, is to have extra players in reserve to keep the number of characters constant and preserve the continuity of the campaign. For this, it helps to have pre-written segments describing the departure of a player and the inclusion of a replacement. This works especially well for play by e-mail campaigns (PBeMs), which can have a number of non-playing "lurkers" monitoring the action and ready to jump in at any time.

"It started out great, but now it's stalled!": Ah, yes. The old "it looked good on paper" syndrome. What seemed like a good idea initially might not turn out to be so much fun after playing it for a few sessions. Or, maybe you've just run out of ideas for your current campaign. Or maybe your enthusiasm or your players' enthusiasm has waned. This might be a good time to take a break from the campaign itself, either with the same group of characters or with a whole new party. There's nothing wrong with taking your players on a couple unrelated adventures while your thoughts for the ongoing epic campaign sort themselves out. After a while, you'll either have come up with ways to bring your campaign back to life, or you will realize that it's just not going to work anymore. Either way, you'll have settled the issue.

Sample Epic Campaigns

There are plenty of other pitfalls that can derail even the most carefully designed epic campaigns, but I think you get the drift. Now, all of this advice isn't worth diddly unless you actually have an epic campaign for your players to play. So, for the benefit of those who haven't the time, inclination or creative juice to whip up an epic campaign themselves (hey, we all get dry spells), here is a sampling of some campaigns I have run personally, included in upcoming Palladium Fantasy sourcebooks, and/or discussed with other Palladium fans on the Internet. You might think that these are pretty skeletal descriptions for an entire campaign, but they contain the essence of a larger adventure. How these campaigns fit into your ongoing game is, of course, up to you.

1. Treasure Hunt: What better reason for your players to travel the world, brave unspeakable dangers and endure extreme adversity, than greed? None! Of all the reasons for a party to go on an adventure, none seem to work as well the prospect of getting a huge treasure. Such a simple premise can easily be written to be as large or small as you like, with as many side trips as you'd care to include.

The campaign begins with the players learning of some great treasure. Perhaps they've won a treasure map in a lucky game of cards. Or maybe it was discovered while dividing up booty from the last adventure. Or the map could be an unexpected reward for a job well done, given by a gracious benefactor of the party. However your heroes obtain this treasure map, the important thing is the map itself. It seemingly points to the location of a lost treasure so large and legendary that the heroes would be fools to pass it up.

In a campaign of this sort that I ran recently (entitled "The Hand of Tezuan"), the treasure hunt focused on the discovery of an ancient treasure-tomb, locked and sealed away from the rest



of the world. The only thing that could open the tomb was if somebody wearing a certain magical gauntlet, the **Hand of Tezuan**, placed their hand into a palm-print on the tomb door. This, and only this would open the tomb door. Touching the door without the Hand of Tezuan would cause instant death. Moreover, the tomb itself was indestructible and could not be entered in any other way. Thus, while the reward for our heroes' labor was right under their noses from the **beginning**, they wouldn't be able to get to it unless they undertook a major quest to locate the Hand, obtain it, and bring it back to the treasure tomb. By the time the players completed this, they had traveled from the Western Empire to the island of Y-Oda (where else to perform preliminary research than at the Great Library of **Bletherad?**), to the Timiro Kingdom, all throughout the **Floenry** Isles, along the Yin-Sloth coastline, to the Isle of the Cyclops, and then all the way across the Western Empire again. Although

the end payoff here (the treasure in the tomb) was astronomical, the players had certainly earned it. The best part, of course, was that the end of this campaign gave rise to several others.

Something like this can easily be modified to suit your purposes. Once your heroes learn of the whereabouts of the treasure, they need to track down the treasure itself. This could entail significant research and travel to particular libraries, universities or monasteries to learn the required knowledge. The legwork alone for this can be a campaign unto itself. For example: your heroes are in the Island Kingdom of Byzantium and must journey to the Timiro university **library**, all the way in Credia. Regardless of how you go, the long trip will pose lots of opportunities for danger and intrigue. I suggest you not bow to the temptation of oversimplifying the grand and dangerous feat of travel. ("Okay, after four months of uneventful travel, you land in the Timiro **Kingdom**.") It might seem like you're helping speed things along, but what you're really doing it is robbing your players of a lasting sense of accomplishment. If they can look back and see all the travels and hardships they've endured, then they will truly feel (and appreciate, hopefully) the weight of the ongoing campaign. No matter how epic an adventure may look when you design it, if it only takes one or two playing sessions to complete, it's not going to feel epic to your players.

2. World Wars: Wars are the perfect fodder for epic campaigns. Few other scenarios offer such rich opportunities for long and involved strings of adventures as these. Plus, wartime scenarios offer a multitude of opportunities for your players. Are they allied with either side? If so, are they volunteers, draftees or freelancers? Are they actually fighting or are they spying, smuggling, delivering crucial messages or **supplies**, or doing other cloak-and-dagger work? Or, are the players after some other business within the war zone which has nothing to do with the war itself? Or are they doing all of these at once? As you mull these various paths, consider also the type of war your players might be caught up in. The Palladium Fantasy world is chock full of political tension, so writing in a war somewhere shouldn't be hard. Here are a few possibilities:

East vs. Wolfen: Everybody knows it's only a matter of time before tensions between the Eastern Territory and the Wolfen Empire turn hot. The upcoming **Wolfen Wars sourcebook** will have tons of great material for this scenario, but until it comes out, you can have lots of fun determining how the war takes shape. Perhaps the Wolfen strike first, pushing the Easterners all the way back to the heavily fortified human cities along the Great River. Or maybe the East draws first blood, pushing the Wolfen out of the Disputed Lands and into the **Bruu-ga-Belimar** Mountains. Or maybe both sides clash headlong in the middle of the Disputed Lands, where after a few months the war grinds into a bloody stalemate. In any of these scenarios, your players can be the key heroes who turn the tide of the war and earn fame, glory, and a lasting place in history as warriors or peacemakers.

East vs. West: Someday, the Western Empire will invade the islands of Phi and **Lopan**, and when that happens, the Eastern Territory will have to respond with force. Such a conflict is ripe with adventure possibilities. Imagine your players participating in the invasion or defense of Phi and Lopan. Or, they could take part in the fierce naval battle that would rage throughout the Inland Sea. Or, they could get involved in a

Western invasion of the Eastern coastline, near the Disputed Lands. Getting involved in secret diplomacy also could be interesting, especially if the East and the West both want to get the Wolfen on their side.

West vs. Everybody: Hey, it's happened before and it'll happen again. Either the West gets too big for its britches (like if it fought the East and won handily), or if it blatantly breaks the White Paper treaty and begins parading Demon Ships around the world. This could be a lot of fun for you warmongers out there who want a clean, "good guys versus bad guys" type of war. No moral nuances. No "But what if we're wrong?" Just an evil presence that has to be taken out for the good of the world. This, my friends, is it. World War II might be a good historical model for this kind of campaign. War movies in particular, like "The Big Red One," "Where Eagles Dare," "The Guns of Navarone," or "A Bridge Too Far" should provide lots of adventure ideas. You can also consult the newly released **Western Empire sourcebook** for lots of details on the "Empire of Sin."

East vs. West vs. Wolfen: The reasons behind this scenario really aren't important. What is, is that every major nation is fighting each other. The really big players - The Western Empire, the Eastern Territory and the Wolfen Empire - are all duking it out around the shores of the Inner Sea. Meanwhile, the "second string" nations fall in line behind each of these major combatants, disrupting the rest of the world with peripheral conflict. The Timiro Kingdom supports the Eastern Territory. The Island Kingdom of Byzantium supports the Wolfen Empire (if they don't they're cut off at the top of the world). And the Isle of the Cyclops and the Land of the **South-Winds** rally behind the Western Empire. A good way to run this might be to have your players start off on the hinterlands of this war, like on the **Floenry** Isles, or deep in the heart of the Northern Wilderness, and have them get closer and closer to the heart of the action as the campaign progresses.

The Merchant Wars: If you check your copy of **Adventure on the High Seas** (you **do** all have this **book, right?**), you'll note that nearly all of the world's major trade routes intersect in the southern waters, off the coast of the Yin-Sloth Jungles, The Floenry Islands, the Land of the **South-Winds**, and the Timiro Kingdom. Imagine if, after years of fierce competition, the merchants here began fighting each other, hiring the area's pirates as extra muscle and recruiting freelance adventurers (like your players) as **on-board firepower**? After a while, ships from the Western Empire, the Timiro Kingdom, and the Island Kingdom of Byzantium might show up to calm things down, but until then, the seaborne anarchy provides nothing but adventure opportunities for enterprising players and G.M.s. You could even have Western, Timiro and Byzantium ships trading blows, making this a national war.

Everybody vs. the Old Ones: And here's the kicker that makes all the previous scenarios irrelevant. The Old Ones awake from their slumber and burst forth from under the Old Kingdom Mountains. Evildoers everywhere flock to the Old Kingdom, gathering as a single army under the Old Ones' command. Meanwhile, all international hostilities screech to a halt as the preservation of the Palladium world becomes everybody's top priority. The Palladium nations rally their troops for a huge, multi-pronged assault upon the Old Kingdom. Meanwhile, adventurers could go on daring missions deep into enemy territory

to gain valuable battlefield intelligence and to seek out some way of putting these bad guys back asleep. Granted, it's going to take divine intervention (and lots of it!) to really close escrow here, but the players can still make a difference by battling the Old Ones' minions. This is it, people. This is the big one. Now go out and win one for the Gipper!

3. From Mount Nimro With Love: But enough talk about wars among the little people. Let's focus on something really big: giants! After being hounded and harried almost into extinction, giantkind has retreated to Mount Nimro and Mount Nimrod to form their own kingdom. To G.M.s looking for epic campaign material, this just screams to be touched upon. Imagine a quest to Mount Nimro itself, perhaps to confront the leader of the Giant kingdom over some evil plot he's hatching. For the sake or argument, let's assume that the giant king, mysteriously unnamed figure that he is, so hates humanity, that he is massing his people for one last, great attack upon them. This is going to be a major problem for anybody living on the western half of the world. And who better to ride to civilization's rescue than your players? Or, perhaps your heroes must warn the Giant king of an impending attack by the Western Empire! (Of course, the players might have a really hard time convincing the giants that they're on a mercy mission, but that's the players' problem to solve, isn't it? Heh, heh, heh...)

4. Against the Golden Horde: As long as there's been a Wolfen Empire, there have been hordes of coyles making things difficult for everybody in the Northern Wilderness. These hordes have never posed a serious threat to the **Empire...until** now.

Imperial soldiers have recently captured a **coyle** spy and learned from him that the coyle hordes are gathering in Ophid's Grasslands for a single, massive assault upon the western border of the Wolfen Empire. It seems that an enigmatic coyle warlord named "Circle" has gathered the troops of his own Ruby Circle Horde and **combined** them with the Opal Spear Horde as well as the other prominent coyle hordes. The total number of troops under Circle's banner could be as high as half a million! And then there's talk that Circle has employed the services of Ire Sucksoul, a powerful and influential coyle shaman, who might be the key to banding together all of the different coyle hordes. And finally, there is also talk of how Circle has gathered a group of powerful **summoners** and is hiding them away in the mountains of the Ophid's Grasslands. Together, these forces, known as the "Golden Horde" present a grave threat not only to the Wolfen Empire, but to anybody living within the Northern Wilderness or Ophid's Grasslands.

There's something else to consider, too. Rumor has it that Circle has dreams that foretell the future (perhaps he is a Psi-Mystic), and that he knows when the next "False Winter" or "Coyle Winter" will be. As Northerners know, Coyle Winters are very mild winters in which there is almost no snow on the ground, so predators and raiding parties of Coyles can range all over the wilderness. Coyle winters come about once every 20 years, and the Northern Wilderness is due for another one very, very soon. It appears that Circle is merely biding his time until the next Coyle Winter begins. Since it is now mid-summer, the next Coyle Winter could be this winter, which could prompt him to invade!

Under other circumstances, the Wolfen Empire could easily repel Circle's "Golden Horde," but with hostilities mounting in the Disputed Lands, the Empire has all of its military resources in the south, leaving the western border open to attack. If there is any credence at all to these rumors of a Golden Horde, they must be investigated at once! More importantly, if this Golden Horde indeed exists, then something must be done to stop it. If the Horde were to attack, there would be little to oppose it; by the time the southern armies returned home to fight the **coyle** invaders, they wouldn't have a home left for them to defend.

This is where the players come in. The Wolfen Empire needs a group of hardy adventurers to venture west through the wilderness (braving its many dangers) to locate the whereabouts of this combined Horde and gain as much intelligence on it as possible. Wolfen High Command needs numbers, types of soldiers, how they're organized, who the leaders are, who exactly this "Circle" might be and other such tactical information. Additionally, the High Command needs to verify this rumor of Circle having a cabal of summoners hidden away and preparing to summon all sorts of demonic help when the Golden Horde actually invades. As an additional difficulty, the players must find out this information and bring news back to High Command by the middle of autumn at the very latest, so they can figure out how to handle both a potential Coyle invasion and war with the humans to the south. High Command can spare a few Magic Pigeon scrolls, but the timing of this mission will still be delicate. For this mission, High Command will gladly furnish the players with whatever normal equipment they might need, including weapons, armor and horses.

Adventure possibilities during the campaign:

The Golden Horde is on the western edge of the Great Northern Wilderness. Finding them won't be hard, since an army that large tends to mark whatever territory they pass through. Once the players get to that area, the few folks who live there will tell the players of where they last spotted the Horde. Before that, though, the players have to get there. And since they don't know exactly where the Horde is, they can't just **teleport** around the Wilderness. Basically, they'll have to make a beeline due west until they run into the Horde. That's a lot of travel, during which time there will be plenty of opportunities for adventures. After all, this is uncharted territory they'll be traveling over, so they could easily run into all kinds of odd **monsters**, villains and other adventures.

Once the players come across the Golden Horde, how do they catalog it? Doing so while remaining undetected will be very difficult. If the players get captured, they might be taken back to the Ophid's Grasslands, where the Horde is based. On the up side, this will make studying the Horde's capabilities much easier, and they might even get to meet Circle. On the downside, how do they escape with their lives?

And what about that **summoners'** enclave? It really does exist, but only a few coyles in the Horde know of its exact whereabouts — the Wolfen High Command will want to know about that too. Where are these guys? And is it in the players' power to neutralize these summoners? If they do, it would seriously hurt the Horde (as well as earn the players themselves **mucho** extra XPs). If they don't, Circle will remain a serious threat to the Wolfen Empire for years.

What if the Horde is going to attack this year? For drama's sake, let's assume that things are really heating up in the Disputed Lands, too. This double-whammy of a coyle invasion and war with the humans will be more than the Wolfen Empire can bear. What to do? The players will be the only Wolfen agents around when the Horde starts its advance. Even if the players warn High Command of the coming invasion, there might not be much they can do about it. Our heroes might be the only thing between the greatest Coyle Horde in existence and the Wolfen Empire. How does a small band of ragtag adventurers stop an entire army?

Assassinating Circle is an idea. Or maybe the players could hear about some incredibly powerful magic **item(s)** hidden away in the Wilderness that could force back the Horde. Or maybe the players could recruit the help of a powerful wizard, dragon, or other allies to hold back the Horde's progress long enough for the Wolfen cavalry to arrive.

A final note: your players don't have to be Wolfen to play this campaign. They could be freelance adventurers being paid well for their efforts, or maybe they're from the Human Kingdom of Havea or some other member state of the Empire, doing their patriotic duty.

5. The Pandemic/Return of the Living Dead: A pandemic: a disease outbreak that affects an especially large geographic area, or an extremely high portion of the population. Night of the Living Dead: A spooky-ass George A. Romero flick that's been the best PR for zombies in centuries. Put them together and you've got an epic campaign that should satisfy even the most ghoulish of players!

Widespread disease is one of those things not really addressed in the Palladium Fantasy game, probably because it isn't much fun. After all, how would you like it if your G.M. told you that the 12th level wizard you've come to love so much is now going to die because he's got influenza? (Don't laugh! The flu killed more Americans than bullets, in **WWI**.) But, that's not to say that a disease-ridden world doesn't have its possibilities.

This campaign could begin anywhere, since the prime component here is that the entire world has fallen prey to some incredibly lethal disease that is killing folks much faster than healers can save them. If the gods can do something about this, they're choosing not to. And no magical response has truly done anything to turn back the tide of the Dread Plague, which has already killed off nearly a third of the world's population. (For argument's sake, let's pretend that every nation has been hit equally hard, and that international balance of power has not been upset by this ... yet.)

For our heroes, the adventure begins when they are contacted by a powerful and mysterious benefactor who needs the heroes to travel to Credia, the capital of the Timiro Kingdom, and seek out the witch Yolunda, who lives in the ruins of the Old City. The heroes' motivation here could be varied. Maybe the benefactor will pay them handsomely. Maybe the players are recently afflicted with the Dread Plague and figure that this witch can cure them. Or maybe they realize the witch is somehow mixed up in the cause of this plague and needs to face justice for her deeds.

That third reason is especially pertinent, since the witch indeed has played an integral part in the creation of the Dread Plague. But before the players can get answers out of her,



they've got to find her first. The group's trip to the Timiro kingdom can be as long and complicated as you would like to make it, but the important thing is that they make it to Credia, where the real search for Yolunda begins.

As fans of the **Old Ones** sourcebook are well aware, the graveyards where Yolunda lives are infected with a plague known as the Red Death, a malady that bears a close resemblance to the Dread Plague. Once the players track down Yolunda, defeat her demonic minions and handle whatever other opposition lies in wait here (perhaps Yolunda has recruited the help of **Walrue** the Assassin, Traskelin the **Summoner**, or any of the Demon Lords of Credia), they learn that a group of powerful necromancers visited the witch not long ago. The two groups traded secrets of the black arts - Yolunda gained 1st-level necromancer knowledge, and in return, she taught the necromancers how to harness the magical energies of the Red Death, which the players learn is actually a dark Spell of Legend!

Upon learning this, it becomes clear that these necromancers have used this spell to create the Dread Plague. If the heroes are to put an end to the spread of this disease, they'll have to find the necromancers who are spreading it. Before Yolunda dies, escapes, or otherwise vanishes from the game, she lets the heroes know that she thought she heard the necromancers mention that they were bound for the Dragon's Gate, in the heart of the Yin-Sloth jungles. (A Words of Truth or other truth-telling power will reveal that Yolunda isn't lying here.) The necromancers' intent is unknown. Perhaps they intend to infect the jungles themselves, wreaking ecological catastrophe upon the world. Perhaps they wish to barter their knowledge of the Dread Plague with the dragons at the Gate for an even more sinister purpose.

Or maybe the necromancers are in the employ of the dragon lords reported to rule the Gate, and they are just returning to their masters after a job well done. In any event, the next phase of the quest is clear: go to the Dragon's Gate and stop those necromancers!

The Yin-Sloth Jungles sourcebook will be an invaluable resource for chronicling the players' long, hard trek through the jungle wilderness. The players could run across the Great Fire Bog as well as many different jungle peoples (both **friendly** and **unfriendly**). The Dragon's Gate itself is unknown territory, so what is there is up to the G.M., as are the stats and purposes of the dragons living there. If you're pressed for time, this could be where the quest ends - with the players confronting the necromancers as they report back to their lord, a great undead dragon. Take out the necromancers and the Dragon, and the Dread Plague shall spread no further.

Or if you want to keep things going, then maybe the necromancers came here to kill the dragon and steal his magical knowledge, which includes another Spell of Legend that can wake all of the world's dead at once! All they'd need then is the P.P.E. to actually cast the spell. After defeating whatever opposition and solving whatever puzzles need to be solved here, the players could continue their race after the necromancers, hoping to catch up to them before they launch Phase Two of their terrible plan. Phase One was to kill the planet's people. Phase Two is to bring them all back to life in order to control them. Phase Three **is...well**, we probably don't want to know what Phase Three is.

Eventually, the heroes will have to catch up to the necromancers and bring them to justice. If your players manage to accom-

plish this, their work is far from over. After all, there's a disease-ridden world out there. There's got to be a cure for this Dread Plague *somewhere*, right?

6. Around the World in 400 Days: Long ago, Byzantium sailors courageously circumnavigated the entire Palladium world, a feat never repeated. But, as they say, records were made to be broken, and now it's time for your players to remake history. Feel like taking a boat ride?

The point of this epic campaign is fairly simple: procure a boat and sail around the world. Such a voyage will be long, hard and full of danger, but those who make it will go down in history as some of the world's greatest explorers and adventurers.

The first part of this is to get a ship. These things are very expensive, and commissioning one to be built will mean waiting at least a full year. Plus, if the players are trying to pick a ship on the Island Kingdom of Byzantium and the government finds out about their intentions, they may instruct all shipbuilders to refuse the players' business. After all, the Byzantium government doesn't want anybody else to compromise their secret nautical knowledge.

Of course, if the players already have the capital to finance a ship, finding a worthy crew might also be difficult. (Sure, there are plenty of sailors to hire, but how many of them really want to travel through the Sea of Despair?) If you wanted to play out the above scenario, interference from the Byzantium government might make getting a crew impossible. Especially persistent players might find themselves under attack by Byzantium agents, or set upon by Byzantium frigates once out on the open sea!

Another possibility might be that another government has procured a stolen copy of the Byzantium Voyage - the written document that describes in detail the original worldwide voyage - and now wishes to recreate that voyage for themselves. Here, the players could be brought on as special advisors or **on-board firepower** against pirates, sea monsters, or other surprises. Of course, Byzantium interference would work well here, too. Maybe the players were the ones who actually stole the copy of the Byzantium voyage, and the government they're working for, as a sign of gratitude, has allowed them to come along for the ride. It would give them safe haven from Byzantium assassins, and it would give them a prime seat on a voyage into history.

Once the voyage is underway, you can consult the **Adventures on the High Seas** sourcebook for adventure ideas. In fact, excerpts from the Byzantium Account provide you with just about all the adventure ideas you would need. Any of the episodes mentioned in that excerpt could be fleshed out into a single encounter or string of encounters. Sea monsters, pirate attacks, run-ins with dragons, storms, Byzantium blockades, mutinous crews, food shortages, and shipwrecks are all perfect adventure fodder here. If nothing else, extended stops at the major islands along the way - The Isle of **Lemaria**, the Isle of the Cyclops, the **Floenry** Isles, and the islands of Zy and Y-Oda - should make for plenty of excitement.

For this campaign, time is perhaps the most important feature. To really capture the splendor and grand scheme of this, you should have the campaign take place over a considerable amount of real-world time. After all, how will your players feel that they've traveled around the world if their imaginary journey takes only a few short gaming sessions? If ever there was a campaign that merited a lot of time to play, this would be it.

Once the voyage is over, your players will be heroes! Songs will be written about them, stories will be told about them, and fame and fortune are bound to follow them wherever they go. Well, for a short while, at least. Perhaps this might be a great way to phase long-time characters into retirement. Or if they still have some fight left in them, this journey could provoke other trips of exploration. There still are vast tracts of uncharted wilderness in the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the northern Wilderness. And what of all those rumors speaking of undiscovered continents lying far off the northern, western and eastern shores? For especially intrepid players, their journeys might have only begun.

7. A Friend In Need: Everybody knows that the Western Empire is a "**wretched** hive of scum and villainy," and this epic campaign will prove that beyond a doubt. A secret brotherhood of western summoners is hatching a scheme to summon an unspeakable horror to this world. These sinister madmen must be stopped before their folly destroys the world. Good thing your players are in **town**...

The scope of this epic campaign takes place throughout the Western Empire, a land of dark secrets, cruelty, greed and power. An old acquaintance of one of your players contacts him or her with a Magic Pigeon, begging that the group come to **Caer Itom**, the Imperial capital. Once there, the party meets this old acquaintance, who has gotten mixed up with a bunch of summoners. The old friend has stumbled upon a terrible secret that he dares not speak aloud. He is convinced that very powerful people want him dead for knowing too much, and he begs the group to escort him to a place of safety, like the Timiro Kingdom, or the Island Kingdom of Byzantium. That night, however, the character is killed by assassins (despite the players' attempts to defend this poor guy), and as he lay dying, he informs the players that his associates - a brotherhood of summoners - are "preparing to open the gate to Eternity," whatever that means.

From here, the players have three motivations: 1) to avenge the death of this long-lost friend; 2) to discover whatever plot this secret brotherhood of summoners is working on; and 3) to avoid the repeated attempts on the group's life by the same assassins who killed the long-lost friend. To do any (or all) of these things, the group is going to have to do some serious detective work.

First, the group must verify the existence of this "brotherhood of summoners," which even by Western standards sounds a little far-fetched. Here's where the urban environment of the Western Empire becomes the canvas for the rest of the campaign. Throughout the Imperial capital and the other huge cities of the Empire are hundreds of wizards' guilds, alchemists' shops, libraries, herbalists, and other places where weird, arcane knowledge can be had for a price. After digging around, perhaps doing favors for the sinister information brokers of the city, the players **learn** that there actually is a secret brotherhood of summoners, and that they are planning something very, very big. Indeed, there is a chapterhouse for this brotherhood in town. To learn anything further, the players will have to go there.

The players can assault the chapterhouse openly (foolish, but brave) or they can try to gain access stealthily. Of course, the more damage the players do to this place, the better, since it houses some of the worst, most diabolic individuals in the Empire. This place is a house of dark magic and vile secrets, where

evil ceremonies occur nightly. There are slaves of every sort in the dungeon below, torture chambers of unspeakable horror, and other evidence of this group's many perversions. Wiping these black-hearted bastards off the map would do the world a great favor.

As the players wipe out the chapterhouse, they learn that there are several other chapterhouses in the other large cities of the Empire. Each chapterhouse oversees a particular task in the Brotherhood's final plot, but the summoners at this chapterhouse have no idea what that plot is. From here, the players must travel from city to city, locating each chapterhouse and blitzing it, doing as much as they can to disrupt the secret plan of the summoners.

Of **course**, exactly what the Brotherhood of Summoners is up to is at the G.M.'s discretion. Maybe they're trying to draw a summoning circle several hundred miles in diameter. Or maybe they're trying to actually move ley lines to connect the chapterhouse cities in a ring of magical power. Or maybe they're trying to gain the true names of every major monarch in the world, to summon them together as pawns, thereby assuming political control of the planet!

Whatever the summoners are up to, this is a great way for your players to spend an extended amount of time crawling through the alleys and sewers of the Western Empire. All you really need to know about the "Empire of Sin" is that it's a dark and cruel place covered by cities and towns of every sort. Or, if you're looking for more information, keep an eye out for the **Western Empire sourcebook**, which should be in stores by the time this goes to print.

8. Meet Your Maker: Remember how I said that mining fantasy literature for campaign ideas is a good idea? Here's proof: an epic campaign that Tolkien fans will recognize at once.

The players are contacted by a sage of great renown (**Sulyott** the All-Knowing from the **Yin-Sloth Jungles** sourcebook would be good) who hires, persuades, or presses the party to undertake a most perilous mission: to obtain a vile, **corruptive** rune weapon and return it to its place of forging, where it can be destroyed. In a nutshell, this is the same plot as **Lord of the Rings**, in which Frodo Baggins must bring the Ring of Power to Mount Doom and cast it into the fires from which it was made.

In our case, the item in question is up to the G.M., but I imagine it would be a rune weapon of terrible and corruptive power. Personally, I like to design my own rune weapons, but if you're looking for something **pre-made** to add into this campaign, Necrom the Rune Sword from the **Adventures in the Northern Wilderness sourcebooks** would make an excellent candidate. But whatever item you choose, the point remains that this thing currently is in evil hands. The players must acquire it and cast it the volcanic fires of Mount **Nimro**, the place where the item was forged. (Note: rune weapons are supposed to be indestructible, but I have always included a house rule that an indestructible item, even a rune item, could be destroyed by the forces that created it in the first place. If that rule isn't to your liking, then dumping this item in Mount Nimro won't destroy it, but it will make it very, very difficult for anybody else to get their hands on it.)

But first the players must acquire this accursed item. Unluckily for them, it happens to be in the Land of the Damned,

locked away in the treasure vault of the Citadel, a dark and mysterious fortress of evil deep within that sinister land. For the first part of this campaign, the players must enter the Land of the Damned, locate the Citadel, infiltrate it, steal the rune item, and escape with their lives. Considering the total lack of source material on the Land of the Damned, this is a great opportunity for you, the G.M., to run wild. There are only a few guidelines to consider:

Extreme magic presence, which will probably include numerous dimensional rifts, ley lines and ley line nexuses, and other magical phenomena.

Previously unencountered races and monsters. If you ever wanted to bring in material from another Palladium game, this might be the perfect place to do it.

High difficulty and monster presence. This should be no cake walk. Just getting into the Land of the Damned and surviving there for any length of time should tax the players' abilities to the utmost.

The Citadel. Supposedly run by a Lizard Mage of untold power, this fortress is probably one of the most well-defended spots in the Palladium Fantasy world. Getting in and ripping the place off should be something the players spend a great deal of planning. And even then, there's the possibility those plans could go totally wrong.

Once the players have the rune item in hand, it should begin to corrupt and try to dominate whoever is in possession of it. Merely being the custodian of this terrible item should be an exhausting burden. The possibility of the item fully corrupting the players should be a constant threat.

Furthermore, you might consider giving the item the power to negate any kind of magical transportation, such as flight, mystic portals, or circles of **teleportation**. This would make the players have to walk or ride all the way from the land of the Damned to Mount Nimro, a long journey indeed. Along the way, the group would brave the marauding nomads of the Ophid's Grasslands, perhaps the denizens of the Northern Wilderness, the Western Empire, and the Old Kingdom, before finally arriving at the Land of the Giants. By the time the heroes reach this spot, they will have gone through hell.

Once at the Land of the Giants, getting to the **caldera** (the open part at the top of a volcano) of Mount Nimro will be tough. First, you've got an entire kingdom of very hostile giants who aren't going to give the heroes safe passage. (If you coupled this campaign with the "From Mount Nimro With Love" campaign, things could get really **interesting**.) Second, your heroes have to actually climb Mount Nimro to get to the top of it. Scaling a mountain as tall as this would be taxing even for an expert. For your beaten and weary players, this will be an excruciating task.

But, if the players make it this far and cast the item into the fire, they will have succeeded in their quest, earning the eternal gratitude of the sage who sent them on this mission in the first place. And as any adventurer will tell you, having a sage in your back pocket is a good thing indeed. Now, if only your players could find a way off this infernal mountain...

9. Return of the Old Ones: Remember that sleeping Old One at the end of the "Place of Magic" adventure in the **Old Ones** sourcebook? And remember how the adventure mentions a group of evildoers bent on awaking that Old One? What if



your players knew of this plot? And what if that group of evildoers was a large and mighty group of Old One-worshipping **minotaurs** that were too strong for the players to confront directly? The answer is clear - the players must destroy the Old One before those minotaurs wake it up.

But how? This is where other Palladium source material comes in handy. The **Isle at the Edge of the World** mentions a Circle of Absolute Elemental Power that can destroy anything within its radius. (Sort of the Palladium Fantasy version of a nuclear weapon, I guess). If anything could destroy an Old One, this could. However, to wield this weapon, the heroes must obtain it first.

The crux of this campaign entails six main episodes: 1) the players learning about this Elemental Circle; 2) journeying to the Edge of the World to learn more about it; 3) combing through the ruins of the Baalgor Wastelands to somehow gain the ability to cast such a circle; 4) finding a way to get enough P.P.E. to actually activate the Elemental Circle; 5) getting back to the Place of Magic to cast the Elemental Circle; and 6) defeating the Old one's minions and actually activating the Circle, destroying the Old one and saving the world. Sounds simple, right?

Uh-huh. And the moon might be made of green cheese, too! Seriously, this should be one of the most difficult, involved and high-stakes adventures your players ever face. After all, the fate of the entire world is at stake here. If this Old One wakes up, it will destroy the planet and probably wake up its other Old One brethren, starting a new age of chaos and misery. This is the real deal here. Wimps and cowards need not apply.

To run this campaign, it will help if your players go through the entire "Place of Magic" adventure. From there, they will learn about the Old One and the minotaurs. They can also learn of the Circle of Absolute Elemental Power, thereby realizing what their next mission must be.

From there, the trip to the Isle at the Edge of the World can be a small campaign by itself. I suggest running the players through the adventures detailed in the **Isle at the Edge of the World** sourcebook. This will ultimately lead them to Noah's Changeling colony, where an active Elemental Circle is already in place. (Up to this point, the players might not even know about the Elemental Circle ... they just might know of a secret weapon here that could defeat the Old One.) The players won't be able to use Noah's Elemental Circle, nor will he teach them how to cast one. For that, they will have to go to...

The Baalgor Wastelands! This was once a jungle paradise until an Elemental Circle laid it to waste during the final days of the Elf-Dwarf War. Somewhere amid the scorching deserts and ruined cities lies the secrets to this most powerful magical spell. Maybe a scroll with this spell lies buried deep beneath the sand. Or maybe the players could learn the spell from the bizarre people and monsters who live there. Or maybe they could learn it from the ghost of the **dwarven** wizard who actually cast the **out-of-control** Elemental Circle, so long ago. The possibilities here are quite open. If you'd like more information on this region, look for the upcoming **Baalgor Wastelands** sourcebook, scheduled to come out sometime in 1999.

Once the players have a copy of the Circle of Absolute Elemental Power, they will have to obtain the means to cast it. Such a powerful bit of magic should require much more P.P.E. than the party possesses. Finding a one-shot P.P.E. battery-type magic item would be a good solution. Or, finding a group of spell casters willing to help the players will work, too. The point here is that as powerful as this magic is, the party should never be able to use it off the cuff or without some serious help. This will give you, the G.M., the ability to introduce this spell into your campaign without upsetting game balance.

The next phase entails the long, dangerous trip back to the Place of Magic. The Old One's minions will try very hard to stop the group, and this could be where the cabal of Old One's minotaurs could be confronted for the last time. This would be a titanic battle between good and evil, probably the most difficult battle the players have ever undertaken. If your players have any favors or secret weapons, this would be the time to call them in.

For the final phase, all the players have to do is re-enter the Place of Magic and activate the Elemental Circle. One would think this would be easy, since the players have done this already, but this time, the Old One will be ready and waiting. It will try to bend the players' will to stop their mission. It will try to pit player against player. It will try to erase the very knowledge of this Elemental Circle from their own minds. Assuming the heroes can withstand this and activate the Elemental Circle, however, the Old One will indeed be destroyed (unless you'd rather the Circle fizzle out at an inopportune **time...**).

Once the Old One is gone, there are certain **after-effects** to consider. First, how does the group shut down the Elemental Circle? If it runs amok, it would devour the world. Second, how do the players get out of the Place of Magic alive? Chances are, that Elemental Circle will bring the subterranean caverns down on the players' heads. And third, what if the Old One's death sends a magical **shockwave** so strong that it wakes up the other Old Ones sleeping deep beneath the Old Kingdom mountains? In a heartbeat, the players' greatest triumph turns to ashes as a new age of chaos is born, and the "Everybody vs. the Old Ones"

wartime scenario becomes reality. If nothing else, this means job security for your heroes as they have a lot more evil to vanquish now...

A Final Word...

Well, if you've read this far, I can only guess that you're seriously considering writing an epic campaign. (It's either that or you probably have an enviable amount of free time on your hands!) If you're really wanting to take that big leap and construct a monumental adventure to shake the very foundation of your game, then let me be the first to give you my blessing. Epic campaigns entail lots of hard work, overcoming writer's **block**, dealing with game-play snafus and a host of other headaches. But, as they say, anything worth doing is also worth the hassle. That goes double for epic campaigns. In my book, they're one of the best things about role-playing. And after giving it a try yourself, I hope they become one of the best things in your book, too.

Now if you'll excuse me, I must get back to my players. After all, they've got a world to save!

Death is Not Always Final

Optional "official" rules for Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Ed.

By **Randi Cartier**
with **Kevin Siembieda**

In keeping with the *Halloween* spirit, we have worked up a few little horrors for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®. Enjoy.

There are many creatures and monsters in the Palladium world that the adventurous must face on a day to day basis. Many such stout fellows steel themselves to face these creatures as a necessary evil — an occupational hazard, so to speak. But there exist such horrific "things" in the world that even the most hardened of adventurers may falter when confronted by them. Unexpected, frightening and nightmarish spirits, ghosts and shadowy creatures that haunt, stalk and torment mortals. Things that are often the inadvertent creations of men ... creations that threaten to destroy their creators.

The Soul Fragment

There are times in the Palladium World when a humanoid dies and a rare manifestation occurs in which a tiny fragment, a passing shadow, if you will, remains on this mortal coil. This ghostly essence is called a *Soul Fragment*.

Violent deaths, particularly ones that are especially torturous and which the victim **futilely** clings to life to protect or help a loved one, to fulfill an **oath/promise**, or within whom burns a hot desire for vengeance, may, on rare occasions, unwittingly leave a tiny part of his departing life essence to remain on this plane of existence. This Soul Fragment, as it is called, never results from a sudden, unexpected or a welcomed death.



Although one might consider such a fragment to be a ghost, it is not considered a **Poltergeist**, Haunting Entity, spirit or any of that ilk, but something unique unto itself. Unlike any supernatural predator or energy being, the fragment is not truly a living being of any kind. The fragment of the departed soul has neither the memory or personality of its former self, nor any of the hopes, dreams or aspirations, only the intense final emotions and desires present at the time of death. It was these agonizingly intense feelings that served to keep the soul fragment on earth. Sadly, at most, the tiny fragment is a shattered recording of the departed individual's instincts and last emotions. Consequently, the fragment's emotions are typically angry, violent and full of revenge. Due to the brutal and painful death, these are the last emotions experienced by the departing soul before leaving the body, and are often contrary to the former alignment of the once living being.

Some say that the experience of death brings out the worst in the soul, as even the best aligned being has dark secrets and desires. However, it is more a matter of the horrific emotions of that traumatic moment of death that have been captured and preserved, not the real essence of the individual, just as a splinter of wood is not a tree.

The Soul Fragment is born of, and powered by, intense emotions at the moment of death, and created by the final release of P.P.E. doubled at the time of death. It does not matter how much P.P.E. is present, as long as some is available. It is the sheer intensity of emotion that weaves the available magic energy to create a Soul Fragment.

This malignant and vengeful "force" is a small sphere of invisible energy. If See Invisible is used while the fragment is in its energy mode, the person will view a pulsing, blood red energy ball smaller than a man's fist. It is a fragile creature in its energy form and has virtually no real intelligence, functioning on emotion, instinct and a driving need for revenge. It has no physical or psionic attacks, although it can fly, dodge and hide; has two melee *actions* per round. It will flee the area until it is clear for it to come back to make a new body.

A specific set of events decide the type of body that is formed by the soul fragment. They are limited to the Rag Horror, Bloodwing, Steel Death, Firehaunt, and Scarlet Roper. Each is described in the following pages.

The Energy Manifestation

Physical Attributes: Not applicable.

Natural A.R.: 5

Hit Points: 1D6

S.D.C.: 1D6— however, it is impervious to all physical attacks and can only be damaged by psionics or magic, including magic weapons.

P.P.E.: 2D6

Horror Factor: 10

Natural Abilities: Its natural state is invisible (constant), and it can hover in mid-air up to 100 feet (30.5 m) high and fly at speeds up to 30 mph (48 km). It can also track Humanoids 85%, Prowl **90%**, Detect Secret Compartments and Doors 75%, is able to pass through small spaces, keyholes, cracks, etc., with **ease**, and has Thermal Vision 300 feet (91.6 m).

Attacks per Melee: None, it can only dodge or parry, or move/flee equal to two melee actions per round.

Damage: None.

Bonuses: Immune to cold, heat, disease, acid, toxins/poisons, magical charms, sleep, and illusions. Magical Weapons to the creature, magic spells/attacks and psionics do normal damage. It has an Automatic Dodge, is +6 to dodge and +4 to initiative.

Magic: None

Psionics: Presence Sense, Sense Magic, See Invisible, Object Read.

Language: None; it cannot communicate in this form.

Notes: It is visible only to characters with the ability to See the Invisible, otherwise its natural state is invisible. Its flying ability and speed are its only defense against attacks. It will try to leave the area it was born immediately if it feels threatened, but will return to its place of creation to make a suitable body. It will only survive without a physical form for 1D4 hours. It is very easily killed in this form. Note: If a Soul Fragment in its energy form or in the various physical forms is struck by a Soul Drinker Rune Weapon, it has no defense and is instantly destroyed.



The Rag Horror

During medieval times on Earth, people once erroneously believed that certain insects and larva were spontaneously generated from piles of old, dirty rags or filthy clothes. On the Palladium World, piles of old, dirty or blood stained rags and filthy clothes attract the occasional Soul Fragment. The strange energy essence uses the foul rags to make itself a physical body to inhabit. The general public doesn't understand how or why this happens. It is the learned practitioners of the arcane arts who know it to be the handiwork of a tortured Soul Fragment.

The Rag Horror takes form at night, usually from one or more pieces of clothes from the body that spawned it. However, the bloodied, soiled or stained rags from a battlefield, hospital, alley, dungeon, or just about anywhere will suffice. Rag Horrors have been formed from sources as different as the robes of a priest, the garb of an assassin, the shirt of a fighter, the cape of a lord, and the work clothes of a peasant. The clothes are bloody or filthy and foul smelling, and will not wash clean of the blood, dirt or smell once they have been possessed by the Rag Horror Soul Fragment.

Rag Horrors are motivated entirely by revenge. Revenge against those responsible for the death **and/or** desecration of its original body. The thing's only goal is the death of these people, and once they are slain, the fragment vanishes as if it never existed. Until then, it will hunt at night and hide during the day as an abandoned pile of soiled rags. At night the Rag Horror resumes its hunt, slithering or crawling along, and in some instances, gliding through the air on a strong wind. It is able to enter open windows and doors, or flatten itself to gain entrance through a narrow opening like the space under a door. It hunts its killers relentlessly, stalking them till found and magically sensing their general location. While the spirit of vengeance will try its best to kill its hated enemies, if the rag creature takes se-

vere damage it has enough sense to retreat and heal, to pursue again later. While it hunts the guilty, it will kill the innocent if they get in the way, or try to stop it from reaching its target or fulfilling its goal of murder. It kills by using cords, sleeves or a length of its fabric to strangle, or the bulk of its cloth body to smother. However, it may also entangle the head or feet to cause its victim to fall down a flight of stairs, off a balcony or ledge, into the path of racing horses, and so forth. Still, its favorite attacks are to strangle or smother. Once it has secured itself around the face, head or throat, it is extremely hard to remove the Rag Horror, as it magically clings and adheres to the victim. A combined P.S. of 24 is required to pry it loose.

The Rag Horror can be a single piece of fabric or a knotted conglomeration of several different pieces, but never gets any larger than human-sized and always has the appearance of being empty clothing or a pile of rags. It is able to walk, crawl, and climb rough surfaces, but does so slowly; average spd factor of 6-12. However, it can also float on strong winds and often has sleeves, cloaks and ragged portions wavering in the wind even when walking or crawling, adding to its menacing supernatural quality.

The Rag Horror is able to regenerate lost **S.D.C./Hit Points** by taking clothes, rags, or leather from any bodies it has killed, and incorporating them into its own body mass. The replacement of torn body parts replaces all the lost S.D.C. It is important to note that heat, cold, disease and toxins have no adverse effects on the creature. Likewise, blunt weapons do no damage and bladed weapons only inflict half damage.

The Rag Horror can only truly be destroyed by fire. Once all **S.D.C./Hit Points** have been destroyed, the creature collapses and falls apart. To onlookers it seems dead, but the Soul Fragment is then released from the pile. It may hover over the remains up to 1D4 hours as it prepares to reanimate them. However, if the remains of the rag body are burnt to ashes, the Soul Fragment is released from this plane of existence and vanishes forever. The sooner the rags are burned the better, for after the 1D4 hours it takes to compose itself and build the energy necessary to reanimate its rag body, it will go forth to hunt down an innocent person in dirty or bloody clothes, kill him, and incorporate the victim's clothes into itself. This restores it completely (full power). Also remember that once the targets of its revenge are slain (by it or by others), its mission is done and the Rag Horror collapses into an ordinary pile of rags and its essence dissipates into nothingness.

Note: A cleric can also perform an exorcism, either by spell or ritual, upon a Rag Horror. A successful exorcism will drive the Rag Horror from the clothes and send it back to the departed soul. The cleric can also turn a Rag Horror as he can animated skeletons and other dead creatures.

Rag Horror, also known as the Night Smotherer

Frequency Encountered: Rare

Number Appearing: One

Alignment: Effectively miscreant or diabolic.

The Eight Attributes: I.Q.: 1D4 (low animal-like I.Q.), M.A.: 1D4, M.E.: n/a (has only one goal, revenge), P.S.: 2D6+5 (supernatural), P.P.: 2D6+6, P.E.: n/a, P.B.: 1D4, Spd.: 1D6+6 running, crawling or climbing; faster if caught in the wind.

Natural A.R.: Approximately 12; see bonuses regarding damage.

Hit Points/S.D.C.: 4D6+22; add another 4D6 if the deceased individual was a practitioner of magic or higher than 8th level.

Weight: 10 to 60 lbs. (4.5 to 27 kg).

Horror Factor: 13

P.P.E.: 2D6

O.C.C.: Not applicable

Natural Abilities: Sense the location of its hate (i.e. prey), Prowl 85%, Swim 60%, Glide on wind, Thermal Sensing 100 feet (30.5 m), and Track Humanoids 75%. It regenerates lost **S.D.C./Hit Points** from **clothing/rags**, etc., taken from the victims it kills, including those who get in its way or try to oppose it, and sometimes innocent people.

Attacks Per Melee: Three

Damage: The Rag Horror either crushes/strangles or suffocates its victims, or causes an accident, fall, etc.

Strangling does 3D6+1 damage per each tightening action/attack (9D6+3 or 1D6x10 damage per melee round; damage comes off S.D.C. first, then Hit Points).

Smothering does 1D6 damage for each of the first two melee rounds, 2D6 for each of the next two, and 4D6 damage per each subsequent melee round direct to Hit Points. Most victims lose consciousness after 1D4+3 melee rounds, and are killed after eight.

A whipping strike does 2D4 damage and the creature can also entangle, disarm, and make called shots.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative (often attacks by surprise), +3 to strike, +1 to parry, +2 to dodge (+4 if riding the wind). The Rag Horror is impervious to punches, kicks, being trampled or flattened, falls, and blunt weapons. Most cutting, stabbing, slashing and chopping normal weapons do half damage, while physically damaging spell magic and magic weapons do full damage; is immune to charm and illusion magic, mental and emotional psionic attacks and communication (the psychic sees or feels only blinding pain, hate and revenge), disease, **poison/toxins**, heat, cold, and any light blinding effects. It is also impervious to drowning, but getting soaked or caught in water will reduce its speed by half. +2 to save vs all types of magic, +8 to save vs Horror Factor.

Vulnerability: Takes normal damage from magic weapons and double damage from fire-based attacks.

Magic: None, other than its supernatural abilities.

Psionics: None, other than its supernatural abilities.

Value: None

Average Life Span: Indefinite/until vengeance is satisfied.

Habitat/Body: Clothes, rags, fabrics and leather.

Range: Can be found anywhere.

Language: None; cannot speak or communicate other than move and gesture menacingly.

Bloodwing or Cauldron Terror

The use of *Cauldrons of Blood* can be tricky things for Wizards. Insanity is one danger, ghosts for another. They are bad enough, but there is worse.

There is a little known manifestation by a Soul Fragment known as a Bloodwing. It is a bane to the wizard who has prepared and used an Enchanted Cauldron in the blood ritual. The Bloodwing is formed when the wizard (or accomplices) kills a victim for his/her blood to use in the preparation of the Blood

Cauldron. If the blood is not disposed of properly, the Soul Fragment of the murder victim can turn into a Bloodwing. What is also not commonly known is that there is a **01-05%** chance of a Bloodwing forming even if the blood ritual is performed flawlessly and the contents of the Cauldron are emptied as the ritual requires. This is due to the sacrifice of a humanoid victim and the foul reason for his or her murder. The Fragment, regardless of the murder victim's original alignment, desires revenge upon the Wizard and any accomplices who may have participated or stood watching as heartless spectators.

1D4 hours after the blood has been spilled from the Cauldron upon the ground, it pools and congeals, turning into a blood red chrysalis (The Wizard is not usually present to see this, as he/she has proceeded on their way with the hopeful rewards of their blood sacrifice and mystical endeavors). As a chrysalis it can be easily destroyed by suffering six points of damage.

After one hour, the chrysalis breaks open and the Bloodwing emerges in the shape of a large, blood red butterfly. Its body is 12 inches long (0.3 m), 2-3 inches wide, and is covered in a fine down of feathery scales. It has six clawed legs that give it tremendous clinging abilities. The creature has a pair of blood red wings, deceptively fragile looking, and measuring two feet (0.6 m) long. In the center of each wing is a round black circle with a golden center, remarkably resembling the eyes of an owl. It can flutter and fly silently, much like natural butterflies. The wings and body of the Bloodwing may appear to be fragile, but they are not. Due to the necessary presence of a sword of iron or steel to stir the ingredients during the creation of the Blood Cauldron, the Bloodwing has taken into itself the properties of the sword, giving itself the strength of steel.

In combat, the Bloodwing flies fast, and attacks without warning as an aerial predator. It is agile in the air, able to dodge punches and sword strikes with ease. It has the climbing ability of most insects and can climb up walls and hang from tree branches or ceilings. The edges of its wings are hard and razor sharp and used to slash and slice its victims as it speeds by. The legs are also hard as steel and end in sharp, pointed claws that can be used to slash and stab like an ice pick. After its victim is sufficiently hurt and incapacitated, the Bloodwing will land upon the body and extend its proboscis, stabbing it into the victim, and draining the body of blood. It is able to regenerate itself completely by feeding on the blood of its victims (10 S.D.C. or H.P. per pint of blood).

Part of the ritual involving the Enchanted Blood Cauldron requires the drinking of the prepared blood of the victim. Thus, there is a psychic link and bond between the Bloodwing and its target. This "bond" enables the thing to track the wizard wherever he goes and even a mind block or metamorphosis cannot disguise him from the Bloodwing. This bond also enables the creature to defend itself from the wizard's magic and psionics (if any). Even more amazing, the damage inflicted by the Wizard upon the Bloodwing, either physically, magically or psionically, is inflicted upon the Wizard himself. This is again caused by the strange supernatural bond between the two as a result of the demonic ritual. Furthermore, any wounds suffered by the Wizard from the Bloodwing will only heal naturally — clerical, magical or psionic healings will *not* affect the wounds. The Wizard is forced to recover slowly.

Once a Bloodwing has formed, its only purpose is to find the mage and his minions and destroy them. However, as long as it exists, it has a terrible hunger for blood. It must feed on at least three pints every night. Favored victims are those who remind it of its enemies or who get in its way, but any mortal being will suffice.

Upon the death of the Wizard and any others involved in the murder of its once human self, the Bloodwing usually disappears from this plane of existence. There is a small chance (01-03%) that it will stay on this plane, forever cut off from its parent soul, feeding on the blood of the innocent and killing for pleasure (the only emotions it knows).

Again, a cleric or psychic can exorcise the creature, forcing it back to its parent soul, or turn the Bloodwing from the area, the same as turning the dead. If the attempts to exorcise or turn the creature are unsuccessful, the creature will immediately attack its new enemy.

The Bloodwing or Cauldron Terror

Number Appearing: One

Alignment: Considered miscreant or diabolic.

The Eight Attributes: I.Q.: 1D4 (low animal intelligence), M.E.: 1D6, M.A.: 1D6, P.S.: 2D6+10 (supernatural), P.P.: 1D6+10, P.E.: n/a, P.B.: 2D6, Spd.: 2D6+4 **climbing/crawling**, 4D6+30 flying.

Natural A.R.: 14

Hit Points: 2D4x10; add another 4D6 if the deceased individual was a practitioner of magic or higher than 8th level.

S.D.C.: 3D6+18

Weight: 4-8 lbs. (1.8 to 3.6 kg).

Horror Factor: 13; 15 to the Wizard responsible for its creation.

P.P.E.: 3D6

O.C.C.: Not applicable

Natural Abilities: Fly, Prowl 85%, Climb 85%, Swim 50%, Track Humanoids 85%, Track by Blood Scent 75%, See the Invisible, **Nightvision** 200 feet, (61 m), Normal Day Vision, regeneration of 10 H.P./S.D.C. per pint of blood.

Attacks Per Melee: Three

Damage: Slash by the razor sharp wings does 2D6 points of damage plus supernatural strength bonus. Blood loss by the creature's proboscis is 1D4 Hit Points per melee until dead. This attack is applicable only when the victim has fallen unconscious from injuries.

Bonuses: +4 on initiative, +5 against the Wizard. +3 to strike, +4 against the Wizard. +1 to parry. Automatic Dodge: +4 to dodge, +5 against the Wizard. +2 to save vs **Magic/Psionics**, +4 against the Wizard. Fire and magical fire do half damage, Cold /**Acid** double damage. +10 to save vs Horror Factor, Immune to Charm, Sleep, and Illusion type **Magic/Psionics**, as well as impervious to disease and poisons/toxins. Normal weapons do half damage, magic spells and magic weapons do full damage.

Magic: None

Psionics: See the Invisible, Presence Sense, See Aura, Sense Magic, and **Empathic** Transfer (usually of hate, revenge and a lust for blood); I.S.P. 6D6+6.

Value: None

Average Life Span: Indefinite

Habitat: Anywhere.

Range: Can be found anywhere.

Language: None; cannot speak or communicate.

Notes: Despite its savage instincts and low animal intelligence, the creature is a natural predator and will try to flee and fight another day if it sustains a large amount of damage. Nor will it stay in a situation where it will be slaughtered. Only a few Wizards have survived encounters with a Bloodwing, since the majority of those who attempt to use the Enchanted Cauldron are of low level and have no idea what they are up against.

Steel Death

The Steel Death is the most common occurring manifestation of a soul fragment. The Steel Death manifestation occurs when an individual is slain by ordinary weapons, often as a result of torture or prolonged combat. Death comes not from a clean fight, but one in which the killer(s) has inflicted numerous painful wounds, deliberately designed not to immediately kill, but to make the inevitable death, a slow, painful one. This can involve a twisted game of cat and mouse, and emotional torture as well as physical. At the moment of death, the soul fragment forms for revenge of the slow, painful death, and often to take revenge for not being able to fight back against its torment, odds or foes. It forms the fastest of all the manifestations, taking only **1D6x10** minutes. It is also different from the others in that it does not form a body, but inhabits an existing one.

The Fragment, upon formation, will search for the closest weapon. It will either enter any weapon held by the **killer(s)** if still present in the area, or enter any weapon found in the area; if necessary, waiting for someone who is armed to approach the death site. It will enter the weapon and animate it, with the ability to fly or levitate through the air. If the Steel Death is in the company of its killers, it will immediately begin attacking them. If the assailants are no longer in the area, the animated weapon will fly from the death site in search of its killers. If the weapon the Steel Death has entered is on a belt, etc., it will endeavor to free itself from the bindings, then fly away. If the owner of the weapon tries to restrain the weapon (most don't), it will attack in an effort to get free, not kill.

It will fly, searching the area for those targeted for revenge. Like all the others, it has a low animal intelligence, can magically sense the general location of its quarry, and is bent on murderous revenge. Once it has accomplished its goal, the Soul Fragment vanishes, returning the weapon to normal.

The Soul Fragment cannot enter any weapon heavier than eight pounds (3.6 kg), and no longer than 8 feet (2.4 m). Missile weapons are not suitable, only hand-held melee weapons (a knife, sword, axe, hammer, etc.). Normal weapons have no save against the Steel Death's possession. Magic weapons of any sort have a save vs magic against the Steel Deaths possession (a roll of 12 or higher means possession is not possible); Rune weapons are impervious to possession.

Again, a cleric or psychic can exorcise the creature, forcing it back to its parent soul, and they are able to turn the possessed weapon from the area, the same as turning the dead. If the attempts to exorcise or turn the creature are unsuccessful, it will attack in an effort to get free and continue its hunt.

Frequency Encountered: Uncommon

Number Appearing: One

Alignment: Considered Anarchist or miscreant.

The Eight Attributes: I.Q.: 1D4 (low animal intelligence), M.E.: 1D6, M.A.: 1D6, P.S.: 2D6+14 (supernatural), P.P.: 1D6+12, P.E.: **n/a**, P.B.: **n/a**, Spd.: 2D6+4 **skittering/crawling** on the ground, 4D6+20 hovering and flying.

Natural A.R.: 14

Hit Points: 3D4x10; add another 5D6 if the deceased individual was a practitioner of magic or higher than 8th level.

S.D.C.: 6D6+6

Weight: 1-8 lbs. (.45 to 3.6 kg).

Horror Factor: 13

P.P.E.: 3D6

O.C.C.: Not applicable

Natural Abilities: Fly, Prowl 40%, Climb 65%, Swim 20%, Track Humanoids 80%, **Nightvision** 200 feet (61 m), Normal Day Vision, regeneration of 10 H.P./S.D.C. per hour.

Attacks Per Melee: Four

Damage: The usual damage caused by the weapon plus the damage from supernatural P.S.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +5 to strike, +3 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to save vs magic and psionics, Impervious to Horror Factor, **charm/mind** control, sleep, and illusion type magic and psionics, as well as impervious to heat, cold, disease and poisons/toxins. Normal weapons do one quarter their damage, fire does half damage, magic spells and magic weapons do full damage.

Magic: None

Psionics: See the Invisible, Presence Sense, Sense Magic, and Object Read; I.S.P. 6D6.

Value: None

Average Life Span: Indefinite

Habitat: Anywhere.

Range: Can be found anywhere.

Language: None; cannot speak or communicate.

Notes: It relies on brute force, rather than planning. Surprise is its best course of action, and to do as much damage as possible. It usually goes for the kill.



Firehaunt

The Firehaunt soul fragment is born from a deliberate death by fire, such as being tortured by hot pokers or burning coals, burned at the stake, thrown into or set on fire, torched by magic, scalded, or burned by acid and similar painful burning torment. After the death of the individual, it will take 1D4 hours for the Firehaunt to form. It coalesces out of the charred bone, and/or embers, ash and cinders of the fire in the form of a monstrous 2-3 foot (0.6 to 0.9 m) long, black, centipede-like insect. A protective hard shell down its back goes the length of the body. It has a pair of large mandibles set into a triangular shaped head with sunken eye sockets. The eyes within appear as glowing, red hot coals. Sixteen pairs of long, spindly legs extend from the

body and give it the insect ability to climb most surfaces, including walls and ceilings. The first pair are long, scorpion-like pincers used for grabbing and striking. The Firehaunt is flat and flexible to squeeze through the crack under most doors and small openings, and moves about silently, keeping to the shadows. Born of fire and burning hate, the Firehaunt has the attributes of fire, is warm to the touch, and its joints glow as if a fire burned inside the monster.

Like all the Soul Fragments, it is not very intelligent, but is an instinctive hunter and will not fight to the death. If overpowered, it will flee so that it can extract its vengeance at a later date. A Firehaunt can regenerate 1D4x10 S.D.C./Hit Points per hour by resting in a place where fire is usually kept. This can be a fireplace, forge, furnace, oven, fire pit at a campsite, and similar locations. The fire can be ablaze (the Firehaunt is invisible when sitting in fire) or cold and empty; it doesn't matter, either way it can regenerate itself.

As usual, the motive of the Firehaunt is revenge. It can magically sense the exact location of its prey whenever the person or persons responsible for the murder of its former humanoid life stand before a burning fire. This fire can be a lit candle, torch, or fireplace. The monster uses surprise and speed in its attacks, and often strikes to cripple or knock its foe to the ground, then setting them or their surroundings on fire, and watching them burn to death. Unfortunately, the hate-filled thing has no regard for others and may set a house or even an entire town ablaze to get its quarry. Once all those responsible are slain, the demonic spirit of vengeance vanishes.

A cleric or psychic can exorcise the creature, forcing the Fragment back to its parent soul, and is also able to rum the Firehaunt from the area, the same as turning the dead. If the attempts to exorcise or turn the creature are **unsuccessful**, it will attack in an effort to get free and continue its hunt.

Firehaunt, also known as the Burning Vengeance.

Frequency Encountered: Rare

Number Appearing: One

Alignment: Considered miscreant or diabolic.

The Eight Attributes: I.Q.: 1D4 (low animal intelligence), M.E.: 1D6, M.A.: 1D6, P.S.: 2D6+10 (supernatural), P.P.: 2D6+10, P.E.: n/a, P.B.: 1D4, Spd.: 2D6+14 **skittering/crawling** on the ground, it cannot fly.

Natural A.R.: 14

Hit Points: 6D6+24, add another 5D6 if the deceased individual was a practitioner of magic or higher than 8th level.

S.D.C.: 1D4x10

Weight: 4-8 lbs. (1.8 to 3.6 kg).

Horror Factor: 14

P.P.E.: 3D4x10+6

O.C.C.: Not applicable

Natural Abilities: Climb like an insect, Prowl 80%, Climb 95/90%, Swim 65%, Track Humanoids 80%, **Nightvision** 200 feet (61 m), Normal Day Vision, Camouflage 90%, Thermal Vision 500 feet (152 m), leap six feet (1.8 m) high, 12 feet (3.6 m) across, and regeneration of 1D4x10 H.P./S.D.C. per hour by resting in a place that holds fire. The Firehaunt is also completely invisible when it enters a burning fire larger than a lit torch (fireplace, **campfire**, etc.).

If picked up, grappled, caught in a net, or tangled in rope, the Firehaunt can "Heat Flash" inflicting 4D6 points of dam-

age to anything touching it, plus a 01-60% chance of setting combustibles (like rope, netting or cloth) on fire. Counts as one melee attack but can only be performed once per melee round. Also see magic abilities.

Attacks Per Melee: Three physical or two by magic.

Damage: 3D6 from bite (bums for 1D6 minutes but does no additional damage. However, victims are distracted by the burning sensation and are -1 on initiative and -5% on skill performance). 1D6 plus the damage from supernatural P.S. when the pincers are used.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +1 to save vs magic and psionics, Impervious to Horror Factor, heat, fire (even magic fire), acid or anything that bums (including lasers, plasma energy and lava), **charm/mind** control, sleep, and illusion type magic and psionics, as well as disease and poisons/toxins. Weapons made entirely or partially out of wood do one quarter their normal damage. These bonuses do not include possible attribute bonuses.

Vulnerability: Cold and water based magic or psionics do double damage; magic weapons and weapons made of metal or ice do normal damage.

Magic: Ignite Fire, Fuel Flame, Fire Bolt, and Cloud of Smoke, all equal to a 3rd level spell; P.P.E.: 3D4x10+6.

Psionics: See the Invisible and Sense Magic only. I.S.P. 3D6.

Value: None

Average Life Span: Indefinite

Habitat: Anywhere.

Range: Can be found anywhere.

Language: None; cannot speak or communicate.

Scarlet Roper

This is one of the most gruesome of the Soul Fragment creatures. It is formed by the horrific death of a living humanoid through torture or human sacrifice, usually in a brutal, painful way; drawn and quartered, dismembered, flayed, eaten alive, etc. The vengeful creature appears within the hour of death (1D6x10 minutes) and appears as a grotesque, skeletal, dwarf-sized body with only parts of the body covered in skinless muscle and gore. The skeletal body and what muscles and flesh that hangs from them, are covered in a sheen of blood, the tissue various shades of red. The eyes are of the original victim's, regenerated after death. As it moves, it leaves a continuous, light trail of blood and goo. The creature smells of blood and rotting flesh, often making anyone near it nauseated.

A small, fanged mouth is located in the chest and 1D4+1 sinuous tentacles made of muscle, dead tissue and arteries squirm and flail around it. The tentacles are strong and fast, lashing out at its enemies, first battering them, then entangling them and pulling them to the jaws of its chest mouth. Such victims are themselves eaten alive, until the mouth chews through their chest and devours their heart, or tears at the throat and severs the spine at the neck, decapitating the head.

The Scarlet Roper has the disgusting ability to regenerate all lost S.D.C./Hit Points by feeding on the remains and blood of its victims. A wicked and ruthless creature of revenge, it will prey upon innocent victims to restore itself in order to continue its quest for revenge. Furthermore, there is a 01-15% chance it will remain in this plane of existence even after it has extracted its revenge, preying on people that remind it of those responsible

for its creation. It will also battle and slay all who stand against it, and is little more than a demonic killing machine. Part of its predatory instincts include stealth and stalking, which means it tends to hunt at night and stays in the shadows. It is also patient, waiting for the best moment to strike and make a kill. It can sense and follow the (psychic?) blood on the hands of its killers and "feel" them as it gets closer. Likewise, it can sense the taint of blood on warriors and on others who have participated in blood sacrifice. The latter is regarded as a potential target, the former as a potential enemy.

A cleric or psychic can exorcise the **creature**, forcing the Fragment back to its parent soul, and is also able to turn the Scarlet Roper from the area, the same as turning the dead, although it will resist more than the other Soul Fragments and won't go far away or stay away. If the attempts to exorcise or turn the creature are unsuccessful, it will attack in an effort to get free and continue its hunt.

Scarlet Roper

Frequency Encountered: Rare

Number Appearing: One

Alignment: Considered diabolic.

The Eight Attributes: I.Q.: 1D4+2 (high predatory animal intelligence), M.E.: 1D6, M.A.: 1D4, P.S.: 2D6+20 (supernatural) for the arms and tentacles, P.P.: 2D6+14, P.E.: n/a, P.B.: 1D4, Spd.: 1D6+10 running.

Natural A.R.: 12

Hit Points: 6D6+50, add another 5D6 if the deceased individual was a practitioner of magic or higher than 8th level.

S.D.C.: 6D6; plus each tentacle has 1D6+14 S.D.C.

Weight: 100-150 lbs. (45 to 67.5 kg).

Horror Factor: 14

P.P.E.: 1D4x10+6

O.C.C.: Not applicable

Attacks Per Melee: Four

Natural Abilities: Prowl 65%, climb 98/95%, swim 25%, track humanoids 75%, track by blood scent 80%, concealment 75%, normal day vision, **nightvision** 100 feet (30.5 m), and regenerates 1D6 points of damage per minute and can regenerate a severed limb in 48 hours when without a source of **blood/flesh**, or regenerate 4D6 H.P. or S.D.C. per minute and regenerate severed limbs within 2D4 hours when there is a source of blood and flesh. Also see combat bonuses.

Blood Stench (special): The Scarlet Roper is surrounded by a vile stench of rotted flesh and blood. Anyone coming within 10 feet (3 m) of the creature must make a save of 15 or higher (P.E. bonuses are applicable) or be overcome with nausea and vomiting. Anyone affected is at half attacks per round, -3 to initiative, -3 to strike, parry and dodge, and -25% to perform skills. Casting spells or using psionics are impossible until leaving the vicinity of the creature. Victims recover in 1D4 melees after leaving the zone of stench. If the save against the stench is successful, the victim is not affected, but is still disgusted with the smell.

Damage: 1D6 from a bite from the normal mouth, 3D6 from a bite by the chest mouth, **punch/tentacle/kick** damage is 1D6 plus supernatural P.S. damage.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +6 to parry, +1 to dodge, +4 to disarm, +4 to pull punch, +1 to save vs magic and psionics. Impervious to Horror Factor, **charm/mind** control,

sleep, and illusion type magic and psionics, as well as disease and poisons/toxins. Normal weapons and most physical psionic attacks do half damage, while magic weapons and spells do normal damage.

Vulnerability: Ordinary fire, cold and fire based magic, and acid do double damage.

Magic: Death Trance, Chameleon, Levitate and Invisibility (self), all equal to a 3rd level spell; P.P.E.: 1D4x10+6.

Psionics: See the Invisible and Sense Magic only. I.S.P. 3D6+6
Value: None

Average Life Span: Indefinite

Habitat: Anywhere.

Range: Can be found anywhere.

Language: Although it usually moans, growls, and screams, it can also **utter**, in a guttural voice, words and phrases like "suffer," "die," "get out or die," "where enemy," and similar.

Notes: Any bite wound taken from the Scarlet Roper must be cleaned and disinfected or infection *may* develop; 01-35% chance. The creature tends to view all life forms who approach it to be enemies and lashes out to chase them away or to kill them.



Beyond the Supernatural RPG, Second Edition

Another epic revamping and updating by Kevin Siembieda. New artwork, new background information and a strong focus for players. Coming in 1999.

Nightbane®

The Tribes of the Moon

by Steven Trustrum

Under the sight of stars we cry,
Between tinged shadows of
Forests' green and Hills' hollow,
A dark fathom from day
Keeps our hearts wild;
In Her soul,
From Her beginnings
Do we find our might.

—Ancient Tribal poem, translated from *dUnaidon*

The **werecreatures** presented in this section are my variations of the *Werebeasts* presented in **Rifts® Conversion Book One**, but modified for campaign use in the **Nightbane® Role-Playing Game**.

While the originals were adequate for quick game statistics, the question had to be asked, "Why can't these creatures be used in a **Nightbane® or Beyond the Supernatural™** campaign?" **Nightbane®** in particular, seems the kind of environment to which werebeasts are entirely suited — yet, thus far, there has been no presentation of them in any of the **sourcebooks** for the game. So, in order to make these creatures a more interesting and complete race for both players and Game Masters alike, I have devised the following source material: The Tribes of the Moon.

The Truth about Werebeasts

Perhaps one of the greatest falsehoods about werebeasts is that once a normal person is bitten, he becomes one of them. The various "**were-races**" are a species unto themselves and were never human, they are only able to assume human shape. Werecreatures do not reproduce by infecting victims, but through sexual reproduction. Though many ancient tales and fables about **lycanthropes** were indeed just that, stories, many were in fact based on sightings of these werecreatures (and some on the occasional Nightbane whose **Morphus** resembled a **werecreature**).

Yet another myth is that the werecreature can only transform at night. This is also false; the werecreature can transform whenever he wants, for as long as he wants. Werebeasts have become associated with the night because they are nocturnal creatures who prefer to roam and hunt during the night and sleep during

the day, as well as for their worship of the Moon. This cycle of night activities was perhaps caused by their need to hide from humanity or maybe it is a result of their animal nature. Who can say?

The creatures refer to themselves as "The Children of Moon", or simply "the Children". These Children have developed an entire culture of their own, quite independently of the human culture. However, it has always been realized that the Children would need to exist beside the humans and thus they have adapted their culture through the centuries so that it would not conflict with that of the "Followers of the Sun" (as some Children call the humans). It was commonly accepted by the ancient leaders of the Children that if their culture did not adapt in this way, the rapidly expanding humans would soon discover them, and destroy them and their way of life.

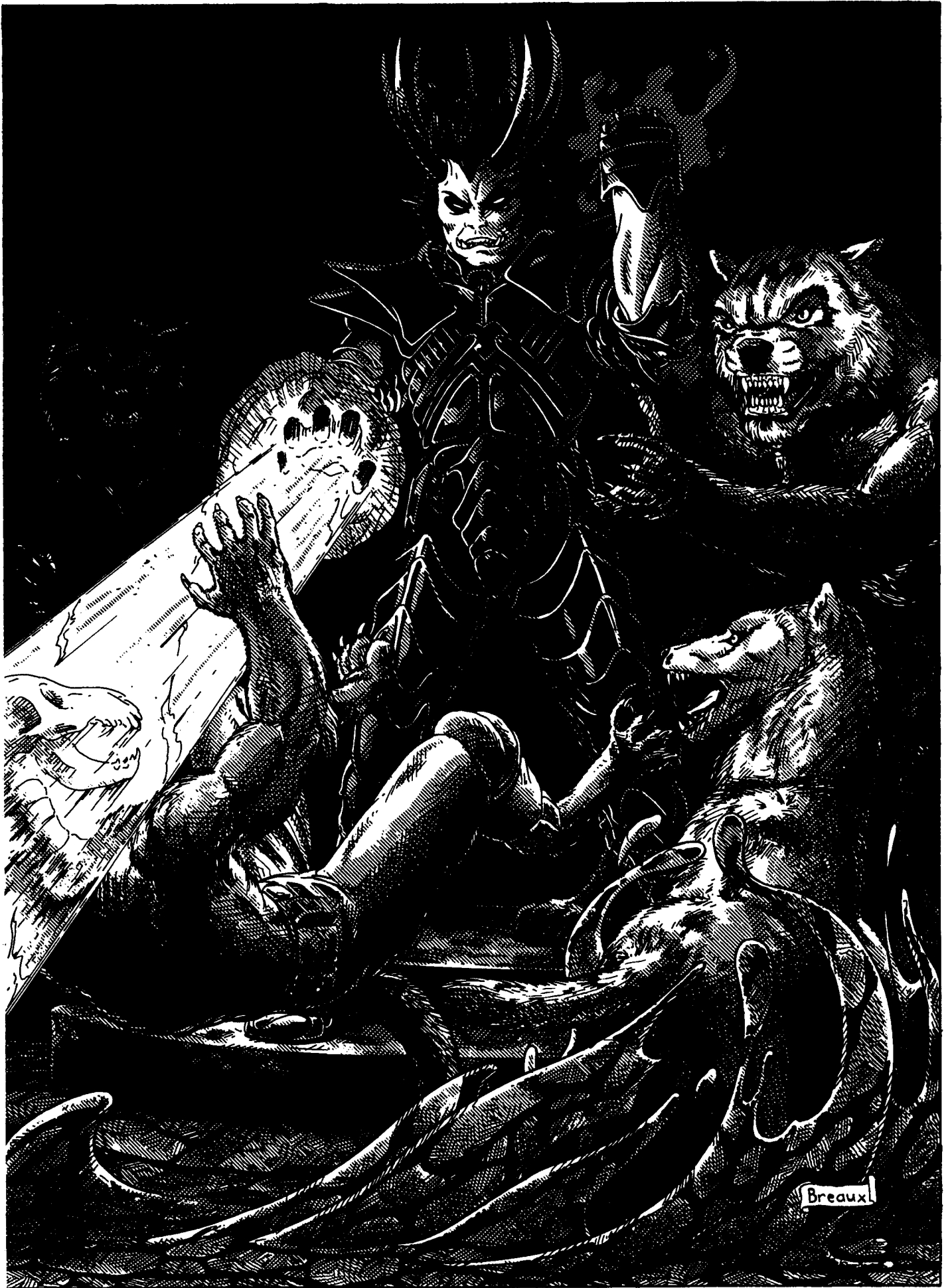
Possessing the ability to assume three forms, each with its own advantages, the Children of the Moon are indeed amazing creatures. The human form allows them to blend into human society, while their hybrid form (half animal, half human) gives them the speed and dexterity of the human form but the ability to scare others with their appearance. Their third and final form, that of a giant **animal**, grants them extra speed as well as an ability to horrify all who behold them (it is a giant animal after all). Further causing people to believe that werecreatures are really humans infected with some mystical curse, is the fact that the Children revert to their human form upon death.

The History of the Tribes of the Moon

"Hush cub. Sit by my fire as I tell you the tale of our origins. It is a story of our greatest victories and of our greatest shames. It is the story of our people."

The Beginning

In the beginning, Mother Moon was lonely, so she looked down upon the Earth and pondered. There upon the distant land she saw many creatures, yet several stood out and caught her eye. She wished that these creatures could act as companions to her lonely existence, but found them inadequate in their present state. Thus, using her arcane knowledge, Mother Moon reached down and pulled from the Earth two examples, one of each gender, from each animal that had caused her to hope there might



be an end to her solitude. Using the mystical energies that were hers to command, Mother Moon changed the beasts into forms similar in appearance to her own and gave them names.

The two tigers she named “**Deerdon**” and “**Felis**”, the panthers became “**Mogwa**” and “**Moda**”, the bears “**Borim**” and “**Tanalla**”, the wolves “**Zarath**” and “**Needa**”, the jaguars “**Ungoeth**” and “**Vista**” and lastly came the apes, “**Adorn**” and “**Ave**”.

Looking upon themselves, the beasts marveled at their new forms, which were nearly hairless and stood on only two legs. Accustomed as they were to walking on two legs, Adorn and Ave were the first to recover from their shock. They found that they now had the ability to speak the language of Mother Moon and so they asked her what burned within the newly awakened minds of all her new creations.

“We mean no disrespect Mother Moon, for the gift you have given us is very great indeed,” said Adorn “but we miss our old forms, for you see, we have grown quite attached to them.”

“I will do this for you then my children,” replied Mother Moon, her beautiful voice echoing from the darkness. “I shall grant unto you the ability to shift your forms between the new and the old, as well as a form between which shall offer you a taste of both what was and what is.”

“This pleases us Mother, thank you,” came the response from all other Children.

“You are to be my companions, to keep me company and to live here in paradise with me,” continued the voice of Mother Moon. Before the echo of her words had died away, the darkness of the moon receded to reveal a wondrous paradise, where no dangers would touch the Children and peace would be theirs always. “All that I ask is that you leave all as it is; seek not evolution, for within it lies doom.”

“We thank you again Mother, let it be so,” replied all the Children with one voice as they entered their new home.

Paradise

With both new forms and a new home to learn of, the Children spent many a day exploring. Though thankful for their new forms, the Children all still favored their old, beastly bodies for those were which they new best.

Adorn and Ave looked on at their brothers and sisters as they frolicked amidst paradise, jealousy of their strong bodies and sharp claws growing daily. The others, seeing the envious stares of their ape-brethren, laughed and teased, for even in paradise pettiness existed still. Among those that hurled these words of hurt and spite, none were more vicious than the proud and boastful Zarath. Those that had once been apes soon learned to despise their human forms, the culmination of all that the others saw wrong with them. Resenting their lowly status, it soon came to be that **Adom** and Ave began to **long** for the simple days of their previous existence.

Every day, Mother Moon would walk amongst Her Children and talk with them. Always at these times the Children would stop their teasing of **Adom** and Ave. When it came their turn to speak to Mother Moon, always would Adorn and Ave complain of the way they were treated by the others. Mother Moon would only shake her beautiful head and reply “I have seen no evidence of this, why can you not let go your jealousy in this paradise that I have provided?” As soon as Mother Moon had passed

on, the jokes would return for their Mother did not believe those who had been apes.

One day, after many days of being treated poorly by the others, those who had been apes made a plan.

The Evolution

“If we are to be accepted,” said Ave to Adorn, “we shall have to have claws like Deerdon or fangs like Ungoeth.”

“But my wife,” replied Adorn, “of all these days we have been here in paradise, we have grown neither.”

“Perhaps then, my husband, it is time that we made our own.”

Adorn was astonished by what he heard, for to even think of such was to dare the corruption of evolution. Eventually however, Ave wore down Adorn's convictions and in a cave, far away from the mocking eyes of the other Children, Adorn went to work.

The days rolled by into months, the months rolled by into years. Soon **Adom** only appeared during those times when Mother Moon came to walk among those who were her companions.

“How goes things with you this day, son Adorn?”

“Things go well Mother Moon, the thanks of my wife and I for all that you have given us.”

And so it went day after day, with Adorn returning to the cave each time, searching for a way to give his wife and himself claws and fangs.

One day, as Adorn sat contemplating evolution, Ave ran into the cave, bursting with excitement.

“Husband, husband” she cried, “I have learned of how we can make ourselves claws! While up in the mountains, I came across a patch of ground which had been struck by lightning. In the patch of burnt earth was a shiny rock that was so beautiful and strange that I could not help but pick it up. The rock was still warm from the lightning, and I found that I could change its shape with my **hands!**”

Catching on to what his wife was getting at, **Adom** followed her back into the mountains and found the place where the lightning had revealed the long buried rock. In the quiet of night, they carried all of the rock back to the cave and, using a tunnel found by **Adom** long before, took the rock to the center of the moon, straight into its fiery heart. There Adorn worked day and night, trying to learn the right amount of heat needed so that the **rock's** form could be changed, much as his own had, so long before. Failure after failure did not dissuade him, it only drove him harder as Ave looked on.

For days Mother Moon worried about her two missing Children, for the others had not seen them either. Finally Mother Moon bade her Children find the two that had been apes. It was Zarath who found the cave that led to the moon's heart and rushed to fetch the others so that they might all find out what it was that their missing brethren were up to.

Just as Zarath led the other Children into the cave, Adorn finished producing his first new claw; long and sharp, it had to be held in his fist but at last he and Ave would be equals with the others!

Zarath, seeing the shiny fake claw, grew jealous and lustful for it and was just about to rush forward to take it as his own when out of the fire stepped Mother Moon.

"You have defied me **Adom** and Ave, you have evolved beyond that which I made of you!" Anger rising within her, Mother Moon cursed those that had been apes to be stuck forever in the form that most resembled hers, for she knew it to be their least favorite. "Forever shall you and your children follow the path of evolution, always to be both your greatest gift and your most deadly curse".

Turning towards her other Children, Mother Moon redirected her wrath as she stared into the downcast face of Zarath. "If it had not been for your mocking laughter, those that had been apes, and now will be so never more, would not have tried to evolve!" Mother Moon took the fake claw from Adorn and held it for all to see. "From this day forward you shall be forced to fear those who you once mocked and that which you have forced them to make. This false claw and that from which it was made shall be as death to you and your kind from this day forward! Eternally shall you live in fear of the progeny of accursed Adorn and Ave." Having said that, Mother Moon disappeared and with her absence, the fire of the moon's heart went out forever.

Suddenly all the Children found themselves back on Earth, alone save for their mates. Each looked up at the moon, hanging solemnly in the sky, and knew that paradise had been returned to the darkness from which it was made and that it would forever be denied them.

The New Beginning

Over the next few centuries, each couple started their own tribe, known as the Progenitor Tribes. Though still retaining the powers and long life of old, the Children found the world was far different from the paradise that they had grown accustomed to, or from the Earth they had been taken from. This new Earth was cruel and uncaring, and made them work for every second of their survival.

Adorn and Ave had it the hardest of all at first, but with the help of their new-found evolution, they began to thrive. Soon their children had spread across the globe, forcing those of the other Tribes into hiding. However, the descendants of Adorn and Ave found that evolution had robbed them of all the powers and long life which were still possessed by the others. Their evolution had cost them dearly.

Soon many of the Tribes started to mingle with each other, except for those of the sons of Adorn. It was only a matter of time before the new Tribes as well as those of old began to feel the tension of the others encroaching upon their claimed territories. It was not long before war was brought to the world for the first time.

The Age of the Blood Moon

Who fought the first battle and for what reason has been lost in the obscurity of time. In truth it matters not. All that matters is that brethren shed the blood of brethren for the first time in existence and all became chaos.

The moon turned blood red on that night of the first battle, reflecting the color of the fields upon which Her Children lay dying and dead. Taking advantage of the **chaos**, many of the more opportunistic vampire factions used the wars to conduct their own vendettas against the Tribes; thousands more fell beneath the claws and fangs of the undead. It was during this sad time that all the Progenitors, those first **werecreatures** that had

been cast out by Mother Moon, were slain or disappeared into history.

On and on for many centuries the wars continued, and many Tribes disappeared forever. Eventually peace returned. How this happened is also lost to time but this is also unimportant. All that matters is that the moon returned to its silver self of old.

The Age of the Blood Moon was over, though the cost was more dear than has ever been known by the world since.

The Reconstruction

Laws were made so that the moon would never again become as blood. Enforcers would be needed to maintain these laws and so the Donathair were created. Yes, peace had returned but it had eternally cost the Children their freedom to live as they saw fit.

To ensure that tensions would not grow again, the world was divided up amongst the remaining Tribes, each laying claim to an area that suited their particular interests. Several Children, including some entire Tribes, disputed these new laws, unwilling to give up their claims of power. It did not take long for the Donathair to either destroy these discontented Children or convince them to change their ways.

And so it has gone on for centuries; each Tribe in its own territory, each Tribe forever separated from the rest.

The Enemy: Vampires

Like most things from the ancient past of the Children, nobody can remember exactly why the Tribes and the minions of Earth's few vampire intelligences have been enemies. Most Tribe scholars speculate that the hatred comes from the very nature of their foul, undead state; nocturnal by nature, like the werecreatures, it is thought that a simple fight for prey (humans) is the cause. There are still others that believe a rarely heard story that it was a vampire intelligence that helped the ill-equipped Adorn and Ave to fashion the weapon that had them cast from paradise. For this reason, and because many blame humans (the descendants of Adorn and Ave) for the ease with which the undead can seduce and corrupt them, many of the Children blame mankind for this evil blight upon the world.

While the latter is the least credible and has the fewest amount of believers, there is still no denying the animosity that exists between these two powerful groups of supernatural creatures. Even today, with all of the chaos brought about by the arrival of the Nightlords, these two ancient enemies can be relied upon to drop all that they are doing if it means an opportunity to kill each other.

Using the Tribes in Other Games

Rifts®

Although **Rifts® Conversion Book 1** does have entries on these creatures, they are not the same as presented in this work. In the magic rich world of Rifts Earth, the Children of the Moon do not become M.D.C. beings, nor do they gain supernatural attributes, thus making for a fairly straightforward conversion.

However, the best part about transporting this work into the world of Rifts is designing how the group dynamics within the Tribes would exist during that time. Which Tribes survived the Coming of the Rifts and which are extinct (if **any**)? Is Vidalmar still up and about? Has Eclipse survived as well? Have any of

the more benevolent tribes changed their ways (and vice versa)? Have any new tribes emerged from the ashes of the Great Cataclysm? All are interesting questions that any Game Master should enjoy answering. (For more information, see below, and see issue #5 of **The Rifter™**.)

Heroes Unlimited, 2nd Ed.™

Beyond the Supernatural™ and Ninjas and Superspies™

These games have contemporary settings, similar in many ways to **Nightbane®**, so much about the Tribes will stay the same. Obviously, any mention of the Nightlords will not apply. The Tribes might be even more secretive and careful not to expose themselves to mankind in these settings. On the other hand, in the world of Heroes Unlimited, many individual Children (particularly the Vetchen, see next issue) may "come out" and become superheroes, or supervillains.

In any case, the stats for the Tribes, R.C.C.s and O.C.C.s below shouldn't require any modification to be used in these other settings. For that matter, little modification would be necessary to use them in the **Palladium Fantasy RPG™**, or any other Palladium game, other than perhaps a few different skills. The major changes, of course, would be the group dynamics of the Tribes, and how they fit into different world settings. But then, figuring that stuff out is half the fun.

Children R.C.C.S

One of the things that you will notice about the following R.C.C.s is that none of them has an entry for S.D.C. This omission is not an error; much like Vampires, the natural invulnerability of these creatures leads to a bypassing of character S.D.C. altogether.



Werewolf R.C.C.

Alignment: Any, tend towards evil or anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 4D6 (never less than 16), P.P.: 4D6 (never less than 16), P.E.: 5D6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 5D6 in human form; 1D4x10 +25 as a wolf; human speed +4D6 in wolf-thing form.

Horror Factor: 12 as a humanoid wolf-thing or huge wolf. The Horror Factor does not apply to human form.

Hit Points: 6D6 + P.E. attribute, +1D8 per level.

Natural Armor Rating: Special! Like the vampire, the werebeast is invulnerable to virtually all non-magic weapons, including energy weapons, explosives, bullets, fire, wood, and **poison/drugs**. However, also like vampires, werebeasts are vulnerable to ordinary silver. Weapons that have at least a 50% silver content inflict double damage! Thus a silver plated dagger, which normally inflicts 1D6 S.D.C. damage, inflicts 2D6 directly to the monster's hit points. Although werebeasts possess bio-regenerative powers, they are nothing like the vampire's, so being bludgeoned or stabbed by silver can kill the creature. Also, the werebeast is vulnerable to magic and psionics as well as the natural attack forms of other supernatural creatures. **Wolfbay** will hold all werebeasts at bay, like garlic does a vampire. Powerful explosions or impacts won't do damage but may knock the creature down or stun it.

Damage:

50 - 100: 01-30% chance of being knocked off feet.

101 - 150: 01-50% chance of being knocked off feet.

151 - 200: 01-70% chance of being knocked off feet.

201 - 250: 01-90% chance of being knocked off feet.

251 - 300: 100% chance of being knocked off feet.

301+ : 100% chance of being knocked off feet and stunned!

Lose all attacks for one melee round.

P.P.E.: 2D4x10+10

I.S.P.: 5D6

Natural Abilities: Speak while in animal shape, prowl 80%, swim 50%, track by smell 70%, **nightvision** 300 feet (91 m), bio-regeneration: restores hit points at a rate of 4D6 H.P. per hour, land navigation (+15%), track animals (+20%), +2 to perception.

All werebeasts can communicate with their related animal type (for example, werebears with bears) while in any of their forms.

Though they do not possess supernatural strength, their hand to hand attacks do cause damage to those beings harmed only by magical means (like vampires).

Shape Shifting Abilities: The metamorphosis takes about 15 seconds and there is no limit to the number of times the creature can perform a metamorphosis or how long he can maintain a particular shape. Transforming is painless and does not restrict the **werecreature** from performing actions. The three shapes are human, wolf, and a man-wolf hybrid.

Magic: Summon and Control Canines, Repel Animals, See the Invisible, Tongues.

Psionics: Sixth Sense, See the Invisible, Mind Block.

Combat: Gains an additional 2 attacks in hybrid or animal form.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to strike and parry, +3 to dodge, +1 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +6 to save vs. Horror Factor, +2 to save vs. psionics, +2 to save vs. magic.

Damage:

Human Punch: 1D6*

Claw (beast): 2D6*

Claw (hybrid): 3D6*

Restrained Claw (hybrid): 2D6*

Power Claw (hybrid): 6D6* (counts as 2 attacks)

Bite (beast): 1D6

Bite (hybrid): 2D6

* add bonus to damage from high P.S.

NOTE: All claw attacks and bites inflict full damage to the H.P. of vampires and other werebeasts.

Average Life Span: 300 years

Enemies: Those who would hunt them, and vampires.

Allies: Rarely join forces with others, their trust is difficult to earn.

Size: 6 to 7 feet (1.8-2.1 m) tall in human and hybrid form, 4 to 5 feet (1.2-1.5 m) at the shoulders in beast form.

Weight: Average human weight, + 10-20 lbs (4.5-9 kg) of muscle in human / hybrid form; average 200 to 300 lbs (90-135 kg) total in beast form.

Appearance: As humans, they have very coarse and unruly hair if it is not kept properly. They also have a slightly feral look to them.

Habitat: Werewolves prefer temperate climates and forests as well as areas concentrated with humans, but can be found anywhere. Despite the moon having nothing to do with their nature or abilities, the Children are nocturnal creatures and prefer to go out at night.

Disposition: As a species they are very cunning and vicious. Most delight in interacting with humans in both their man and werewolf forms, seeing both as opportunities to challenge and test themselves.

Werebear R.C.C.

Alignment: Any, usually anarchist or evil.

Attributes: I.Q.: 1D6+3, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 20+4D6, P.P.: 4D6 (never less than 16), P.E.: 5D6, P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 5D6 in human form; 1D4x10 +15 as a bear; human speed +1D6 in bear-thing form.

Horror Factor: 15 as a humanoid bear-thing or huge bear. The Horror Factor does not apply to human form.

Hit Points: 6D6 + P.E.x2, +1D10 per level.

Natural Armor Rating: Same as the Werewolf.

P.P.E.: 2D4x10

I.S.P.: 4D6

Natural Abilities: Speak while in animal shape, prowl 50%, swim 80%, track by smell 70%, night vision 300 feet (91 m), bio-regeneration: restores hit points at a rate of 6D6 H.P. per hour, land navigation (+20%), track animals (+10%), +1 to perception.

Though they do not possess supernatural strength, their hand to hand attacks do cause damage to those beings harmed only by magical means (like vampires).

Shape Changing Power: Same as the Werewolf.

Magic: Summon and Control Ursinoids, Repel Animals, See the Invisible, Tongues.

Psionics: Sixth Sense, See the Invisible, Mind Block.

Combat: Gains an additional 2 attacks in hybrid or animal form.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, parry and dodge, +4 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +6 to save vs. Horror Factor, +2 to save vs. psionics, +2 to save vs. magic.

Damage:

Human Punch: 2D6*

Claw (beast): 3D6*

Claw (hybrid): 12D6*

Restrained Claw (hybrid): 3D6*

Power Claw (hybrid): 1D4x10+20* (counts as 2 attacks)

Bite (beast): 2D6

Bite (hybrid): 4D6

* add bonus to damage from high P.S.

NOTE: all claw attacks and bites inflict full damage to the H.P. of vampires and other werebeasts.

Average Life Span: 500 years

Enemies: Those who would hunt them, and vampires.

Allies: Rarely join forces with others, their trust is difficult to earn.

Size: 6 to 8 feet (1.8-2.4 m) tall in human and hybrid form, 6 to 8 feet (1.8-2.4 m) at the shoulders in beast form and about 15 feet (4.6 m) standing on hind legs!

Weight: Average human weight, +1D8x10 lbs (4.5-36 kg) of muscle in human/hybrid form; average 1000 to 2000 lbs (450-900 kg) total in beast form.

Appearance: As humans they appear a bit more cumbersome and "slower" than the average person.

Habitat: Prefer cold climates, tundra and forests.

Disposition: Werebears tend to avoid humans, attacking them only when in a foul mood or when attacked. This is not cowardice however, they are just solitary and like their privacy.

Weretiger R.C.C.

Alignment: Any, usually evil.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6+1, M.E.: 4D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 20+2D6, P.P.: 4D6+1 (never less than 17), P.E.: 4D6, P.B.: 4D6, Spd.: 5D6 in human form; 1D4x10+15 as a tiger; human speed +2D6 in tiger-thing form.

Horror Factor: 14 as a humanoid tiger-thing or huge tiger. The Horror Factor does not apply to human form.

Hit Points: 8D6 + P.E., +1D8 per level.

Natural Armor Rating: Same as the Werewolf.

P.P.E.: 2D4x10

I.S.P.: 4D6

Natural Abilities: Speak while in animal shape, prowl 60%, swim 80%, track by smell 60%, night vision 300 feet (91 m), bio-regeneration: restores hit points at a rate of 4D6 H.P. per hour, climb 70%, leap 50 feet (15.2 m) high/long from a standing position, land navigation (+10%), track animals (+5%), +3 to perception.

Though they do not possess supernatural strength, their hand to hand attacks do cause damage to those beings harmed only by magical means (like vampires).

Shape Changing Power: Same as the Werewolf.

Magic: Summon and Control Felines, Repel Animals, Death Trance, Tongues.

Psionics: Sixth Sense, See the Invisible, Mind Block.

Combat: Gains an additional 2 attacks in hybrid or animal form.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, parry and dodge, +4 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact, +6 to save vs. Horror Factor, +2 to save vs. psionics, +2 to save vs. magic.

Damage:

Human Punch: 1D6+2*

Claw (beast): 2D6+4*

Claw (hybrid): 4D6+2*

Restrained Claw (hybrid): 3D6*

Power Claw (hybrid): 6D6* (counts as 2 attacks)

Bite (beast): 1D6+4

Bite (hybrid): 3D6

* add bonus to damage from high P.S.

NOTE: all claw attacks and bites inflict full damage to the H.P. of vampires and other werebeasts.

Average Life Span: 400 years

Enemies: Those who would hunt them, and vampires.

Allies: Rarely join forces with others, their trust is difficult to earn.

Size: 6 to 7 feet (1.8-2.1 m) tall in human and hybrid form, 5 to 6 feet (1.5-1.8 m) at the shoulders in beast form and about 15 feet (4.6 m) in length, from the tip of the nose to the buttocks!

Weight: Average human weight, +1D6x10 lbs (4.5-27 kg) of muscle in human/hybrid form, average 1000 to 1200 lbs (450-540 kg) total in beast form.

Appearance: As a human, their hair usually has orange or red highlights and they tend to have a slight "wild" look to them.

Habitat: Prefer cold to temperate climates, tundra and forests.

Disposition: They are natural hunters that are nearly as strong as werebears and as vicious as werewolves. Although weretigers prefer to hunt and live alone, it is not uncommon for mated pairs to be seen together in such activities.



Werejaguar R.C.C.

Alignment: Any, but typically anarchist or evil.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6+2, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 4D6, P.S.: 4D6 (never less than 16), P.P.: 4D6 (never less than 16), P.E.: 4D6,

P.B.: 4D6, Spd.: 6D6 in human form; 1D6x10+15 as a jaguar; human speed +3D6 in jaguar-thing form.

Horror Factor: 12 as a humanoid jaguar-thing or huge jaguar.

The Horror Factor does not apply to human form.

Hit Points: 4D6 + P.E., +1D8 per level.

Natural Armor Rating: Same as the Werewolf.

P.P.E.: 2D4x10+10

I.S.P.: 5D6

Natural Abilities: Speak while in animal shape, prowl 80%, swim 60%, track by smell 60%, **nightvision** 300 feet (91 m), bio-regeneration: restores hit points at a rate of 2D6 H.P. per hour, climb 90%/80%, leap 30 feet (9.1 m) **high/long** from a standing position, land navigation 90%, wilderness survival 90%, keen color vision and hearing, acrobatics 80%, gets 2 extra secondary skills, +3 to perception.

Though they do not possess supernatural strength, their hand to hand attacks do cause damage to those beings harmed only by magical means (like vampires).

Shape Changing Power: Same as the Werewolf.

Magic: Repel Animals, Tongues, Chameleon, Astral Projection, Heal Wounds.

Psionics: Sixth Sense, See the Invisible, Mind Block.

Combat: Gains an additional 3 attacks in hybrid or animal form.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +2 parry and dodge, +4 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact, +6 to save vs. Horror Factor, +2 to save vs. psionics, +2 to save vs. magic.

Damage:

Human Punch: 1D6*

Claw (beast): 2D6*

Claw (hybrid): 4D6*

Restrained Claw (hybrid): 1D6+2*

Power Claw (hybrid): 5D6+6* (counts as 2 attacks)

Bite (beast): 1D2

Bite (hybrid): 1D4

* add bonus to damage from high P.S.

NOTE: all claw attacks and bites inflict full damage to the H.P. of vampires and other werebeasts.

Average Life Span: 300 years

Enemies: Those who would hunt them, and vampires (very much so).

Allies: Rarely join forces with others, their trust is difficult to earn.

Size: 6 to 7 feet (1.8-2.1 m) tall in human and hybrid form, about 4 feet (1.2 m) at the shoulders in beast form and about 8 feet (2.4 m) in length from the tip of the nose to the buttocks!

Weight: Average human weight, +10-20 lbs (4.5-9 kg) of muscle in human/hybrid form, average 200 to 300 lbs (90-135 kg) total in beast form.

Appearance: Look almost completely normal when in their human form except for a look in their eyes that hints at something wilder.

Habitat: Prefer warm climates and jungles or tropical forests.

Disposition: Werejaguars are community oriented and enjoy hunting, especially when the prey is undead. Social creatures, they enjoy the recreational aspect of the chase, stalking, and capture more so than the actual kill, therefore, unless you are a vampire, there is a good chance they will let you go after capturing you.



Werepanther R.C.C.

Alignment: Any, but typically anarchist. Generally playful and good natured.

Attributes: I.Q.: 2D6+2, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 4D6, P.S.: 4D6 (never less than 16), P.P.: 4D6 (never less than 16), P.E.: 4D6, P.B.: 4D6, Spd.: 6D6 in human form; 1D6x10+15 as a panther; human speed +3D6 in panther-thing form.

Horror Factor: 12 as a humanoid panther-thing or huge panther. The Horror Factor does not apply to human form.

Hit Points: 4D6 + P.E., +1D8 per level.

Natural Armor Rating: Same as the Werewolf.

P.P.E.: 2D4x10+10

I.S.P.: 4D6

Natural Abilities: Speak while in animal shape, prowl 70%, swim 60%, track by smell 60%, **nightvision** 300 feet (91 m), bio-regeneration: restores hit points at a rate of 2D6 H.P. per hour, climb 85%/75%, leap 30 feet (9.1 m) **high/long** from a standing position, land navigation 90%, wilderness survival 90%, keen color vision and hearing, acrobatics 60%, gets 1 extra secondary skill, +2 to perception.

Though they do not possess supernatural strength, their hand to hand attacks do cause damage to those beings harmed only by magical means (like vampires).

Shape Changing Power: Same as the Werewolf.

Magic: Summon and Control Felines, Repel Animals, Tongues, Chameleon, Sense Evil, Sense Magic.

Psionics: Sixth Sense, See the Invisible, Mind Block, Presence Sense.

Combat: Gains an additional 3 attacks in hybrid or animal form.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +2 to strike, parry and dodge, +4 to pull punch, +5 to roll with impact, +6 to save vs. Horror Factor, +2 to save vs. psionics, +2 to save vs. magic.

Damage:

Human Punch: 1D6*

Claw (beast): 2D6*

Claw (hybrid): 5D6+3*

Restrained Claw (hybrid): 2D6+3*

Power Claw (hybrid): 1D4x10* (counts as 2 attacks)

Bite (beast): 1D2

Bite (hybrid): 1D4

* add bonus to damage from high P.S.

NOTE: all claw attacks and bites inflict full damage to the H.P. of vampires and other werebeasts.

Average Life Span: 400 years

Enemies: Those who would hunt them, and vampires.

Allies: Rarely join forces with others, their trust is difficult to earn.

Size: 6 feet (1.8 m) tall in human and hybrid form, about 5 feet (1.5 m) at the shoulders in beast form and about 10 feet (3 m) in length from the tip of the nose to the buttocks!

Weight: Average human weight, +1d4x10 lbs (4.5-18 kg) of muscle in **human/hybrid form**, average 300 to 500 lbs (135-225 kg) total in beast form.

Appearance: As humans, all have straight, jet-black hair and a twinkle in their eye that hints at mischief in the making.

Habitat: Prefer warm climates and jungles or forests.

Disposition: Most enjoy deadly games of sport, especially the challenges offered by vampires and other supernatural creatures. They enjoy the hunt more than the kill, try to avoid conflict with humans, and enjoy nature. Fun-loving, gentle and caring about their own kind, they are tentative about humans and others. They are also very curious about magic, and other beings, and they often like to chase, scare and tease humans just for the fun of it. They also love mock fights and mischief.

Wildlust

The wildlust is a feral state that sometimes afflicts werebeasts, causing them to truly become more beast than man. Wildlust can be caused by several factors, the two most prominent being total solitude while living in an uncivilized manner and through possible insanity.

If a werebeast lives in complete solitude for a great many years, living in such a manner where he exists more like a beast than a man, lacking all or few raiments of the world of man, he may become possessed by the wildlust. Whether this happens or not is completely up to the G.M. as it is greatly based upon too many factors to write up rules for. However, if you absolutely have to have such rules, a good guideline is to have the **werecreature** roll a save vs. insanity every year that he lives in such a manner, with a cumulative penalty of -1 per year after the first.

Rare is the mind amongst the Children that is strong enough to contain their animal side for these great lengths. However, a rare few (those with an M.E. of 25 or greater) are able to cope with this solitude and keep their beast side contained without the need for the save.

The second way to succumb is if the werebeast fails a normal save against insanity, such as that caused by extreme trauma. Besides getting the insanity rolled for, the werebeast must roll on the table below to see if he is inflicted with wildlust. This chance of infliction increases with each additional possibility of wildlust after the first.

Chance of Wildlust Affliction:

Werewolf: 40% + 5% per additional chance.

Werebear: 30% + 5% per additional chance.

Weretiger: 35% + 7% per additional chance.

Werejaguar: 25% + 4% per additional chance.

Werepanther: 20% + 3% per additional chance.

Effects of the Wildlust

(1) The werebeast becomes feral: reduce I.Q. by 1/2 and the character loses all skills except those of a wilderness, animal-like nature (i.e. climb, prowl, land navigation, tracking, etc.). If the character is a Shaman or **Nordan^or** and his I.Q. drops below the O.C.C. requirement, he loses his ability to cast spells (Shamans retain their psionics). In order to use any of his lost skills, the afflicted werebeast must make a save vs. insanity each melee, with a penalty of -6.

(2) The afflicted can no longer speak non-animal languages if their I.Q. drops below 5.

Even still, anyone with wildlust will have great trouble with language and talk like a child, as it is too difficult to control their bestial nature to speak properly.

(3) Because he is now so feral, he stays in either his beast (75% chance) or hybrid (25% chance) form almost all the time. He rarely uses the other non-human form and never uses that of the human (cannot connect with their humanity well enough to do this).

(4) He becomes a more primal version of his old self and the animal characteristics of the personality come forth in a more bestial manifestation. For example, if the werecreature was a private person, while inflicted with wildlust he will become very solitary, hiding far from others and will only kill for food or to defend himself.

However, if the old self was a killer or predator, he now becomes an out of control killing machine, a monster in effect as well as name. The werecreature is now more beast than man, wild and untamed.

(5) Gains +2 vs. Horror Factor, +4 vs. mind-affecting psionics and magic, and gets +2 to perception. This represents the difficulty of trying to affect the mind of a creature that is no longer capable of most logical or rational processes.

(6) The afflicted can possibly be affected by a "Summon and Control" spell that pertains to his bestial side. He is allowed a save vs. magic with full bonuses and gets to try and re-save every time the spell is renewed. If the spell is successful, the **wildlust-struck** werecreature is under the caster's control (remember the wildlust bonus to mind affecting magic!) as though the spell were cast upon a normal animal.

Curing Wildlust

The curing of wildlust is a long, arduous process. A cross between psychology and animal training, no cure is ever exactly the same. Again, the circumstances of the inflicted regaining his civilized side are dependant upon so many factors that the time and chance involved is left up to the Game Master. Needless to say, the process is *not* easy, nor is it quick. Think about those real cases of children who were found in the wild after being raised by wolves or the like ... it resembles that situation only more so because the afflicted *was* a beast.

Children O.C.C.s _____

Shaman O.C.C.

The shamans of the tribes are traditionally the healers and the spiritual leaders of the Children. The magic of these mystics comes not from the study of books but from the cosmos itself, focused through their intuition and their beliefs. Shamans are also the teachers of the Tribes, not only responsible for passing along the wisdom of the years gone by to new generations but also for offering guidance and advice to young and old alike. While it may seem that the **Nordan^or** would be far better qualified to take on the role of teacher, it must be remembered that they concern themselves mostly with knowledge of a mystical nature and do not often allow themselves the leisure time to sit down and chat with a group of cubs.



Along with their mystical abilities, the shaman has a few psychic powers that allow them to better protect or control their people, depending upon the shaman's disposition.

Several shamans, especially those who belong to tribes which have learned to exist in man's world, have brought themselves out of the wilderness and modified their mode of thinking to the new world of the electronic age.

(1) Spell Knowledge:

The spells come from within the character himself, on a level where the spirit communes with the cosmos. The character's spells reflect his goals; those who seek to help others generally have healing and defensive type spells, while those who seek power and death tend to have corrupting and offensive spells. Rituals do not involve drawing pentagrams or other symbols and instead involve various uses of the body by groups, such as a special dance.

At first level, the shaman gets 2 first level spells, 2 second level spells and 1 third level spell.

(2) Learning New Spells:

Because his spells come from the spiritual side of the universe, the shaman cannot learn spells like sorcerers do (through written text). They can only **learn** new spells upon the attainment of certain **experience** levels, representing the shaman's achievement of a new level of spiritual awareness.

2nd level: select 2 spells total from 1st, 2nd or 3rd levels.

3rd level: select 2 spells total from 1st through 4th levels.

4th level: select 2 spells total from 1st through 5th levels.

5th level and above: each experience level, select 1 spell from any spell level.

(3) **P.P.E.** is equal to the werebeast's normal P.P.E., plus $1D4 \times 10$, plus his P.E. attribute. Add $1D8$ per level.

(4) Psychic Powers:

Knows the following psychic powers at first level:

Divination (choose 3 methods only), Sense Evil, and Meditation. Select 2 powers from either the Psychic Sensitive or Healer category. At levels 2, 4, 6, 9 and 12 select 1 additional power from either the Sensitive or Healer category. Select 1 super psi-power at levels 4, 8 and 12. Add $1D4 \times 10 + M.E.$ attribute to I.S.P., $+1D6$ I.S.P. per level.

(5) **Can sense fellow werebeasts** - Range: 100 feet (30.5 m) + 25 feet (7.6 m) per level.

(6) **Bonuses:** +1 to save vs. psionics, +2 vs. Horror Factor, +1 vs magic at 2nd, 4th, 6th, 8th and 11th levels, +1 to spell strength at levels 4, 8 and 12, +1 to perception.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9, M.E. 10, M.A. 10

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Write/Speak: dUnaidon: 98%

Lore: The Children (+20%)

Speak one additional language (+5%).

Dance (+15%)

Astronomy (+15%)

"Barbarian" Shamans: select 1 Domestic or Lore skill (+20%).

"Civilized" Shamans: select 1 Pilot or Science skill (+20%).

Hand to Hand Basic (can be changed to Expert for 1 "other" skill or Martial Arts for 2 "other" skills).

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select 8 other skills, 1 of which must be Domestic and 1 of which must be Technical. Plus select one additional skill at levels 3, 5, 8, 12 and 15. All new skills start at level 1 proficiency.

Communications: Any
 Domestic: Any (+10%)
 Electrical: None
 Espionage: Any (Wilderness Survival gets +15%).
 Mechanical: None
 Medical: Holistic Medicine (+15%) and First Aid (+5%) only.
 Military: None
 Physical: Any
 Pilot: Any
 Pilot Related: Any
 Rogue: Any
 Science: Any
 Technical: Any (Lore skills get +15%).
 W.P.: Any
 Wilderness: Any (+5%)

Secondary Skills: Select 5 secondary skills from the list above. These are additional skills that do not get the benefit of any bonuses listed above.

Standard Equipment: "Barbarian": Several changes of clothing (appropriate to the **werecreature's** home climate), backpack, belt with 1d6 pouches, tribal symbol on a staff or necklace, silver plated dagger.

"Civilized": Several changes of clothing that enable him to fit into man's world, a portable CD player or radio, a pistol, 2 spare clips of ammunition, gym bag or backpack, tribal symbol on either a necklace or ring, silver plated dagger.

Money: "Barbarian": needs very little wealth, 1D6x100 in cash or tradeable goods and 1d4x1000 in possessions.

"Civilized": 3D4x1000 in cash and 3D6x1000 in possessions, plus there is a 75% chance of owning a vehicle worth \$20,000 or less.

Shaman Experience Table:

1	0,000-2,600
2	2,601-5,000
3	5,001-10,000
4	10,001-20,000
5	20,001-30,000
6	30,001-50,000
7	50,001-80,000
8	80,001-120,000
9	120,001-170,000
10	170,001-230,000
11	230,001-300,000
12	300,001-380,000
13	380,001-470,000
14	470,001-600,000
15	600,001-800,000

Nordanor O.C.C.

Nordan^or (pronounced Nor / dane / oor) is dUnaidon for "Those Who Shape the Power". These are the Children's versions of a sorcerer, the black sheep of the werebeast community because they tend to spend most of their time with their nose (or snout) in ancient tomes rather than hunting or similar such activities.

Most of their fellow **werecreatures** look upon them with awe and disgust, unable to understand why they would forsake the hunting of prey for that of knowledge, be it mystic or otherwise.

Others cannot comprehend what can cause one of the Children to overcome their basic, primal predatory instincts. Still, few are the werebeasts that will openly taunt or disrespect a **Nordan^or** for, despite their repulsion from the spellcasters, they cannot help but acknowledge the power that they wield.

Many of the **Nordan^or** have not forsaken their basic instincts as predators however, they have merely re-channeled them through different means. Rather than the use of claw and fang, the **Nordan^or** uses words, symbols and mystical energies to carry out his quests for prey and for power.

Also, like all werebeasts, there are those **Nordan^or** who have decided to use their powers for good or that the hunt for knowledge for the sake of knowledge is more important than either the hunt for flesh or for power.

It should also be noted that **Nordan^or** are very rare due to the I.Q. requirements, being near the top possible I.Q. for the Children (Werebear **Nordan^or** are EXTREMELY rare!).

(1) Understand the Principles of Magic: Same as the Sorcerer O.C.C. (**Nightbane pg.115**). **Base Skill:** 70% +2% per level of experience.

(2) Sense Ley Lines and Nexus Points: Same as the Sorcerer O.C.C. (**Nightbane pg.116**). **Range:** Line of sight or one mile (1.6 km), whichever is less.

(3) Initial Spell Knowledge: The **Nordan^or** has the dedication, understanding and powers to focus and concentrate to cast magical invocations, read magic and learn spells. At first level, the **Nordan^or** may select 3 spells each from magic levels 1 and 2, and 2 each from levels 3 and 4, for a total of 10 spells. Each additional level of experience, the character will be able to figure out / select one new spell equal to or less than his own level of achievement.

(4) Learning New Spells: Same as the Sorcerer O.C.C. (**Nightbane pg.116**)

(5) Magic Bonuses: +2 to save vs. magic, possession, mind control and Horror Factor.

(6) Can sense fellow werebeasts - Range: 50 feet (15.2 m) + 15 feet (4.6 m) per level.

(7) P.P.E.: Same as a normal werebeast, +2D6 P.P.E. per level.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 12, M.E. 11, P.E. 10

O.C.C. Skills:

Read/Write/Speak dUnaidon: 98%

Basic Math (+20%)

Principles of Magic

Computer Operation (10%)

Research (+15%)

Two Lore skills of choice (+10%).

Two Language skills of choice (+20%).

One additional Technical skill of choice (+10%).

Hand to Hand Basic, may upgrade to Expert for one "other" skill or Martial Arts for two "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select 8 other skills, but 2 must be from the Science category. Select 2 additional skills at levels 3 and 6, and one at levels 9 and 12.

Communications: Any (+5%)

Domestic: Any (+5%)

Electrical: Any

Espionage: Tracking, Intelligence, Detect Ambush and Wilderness Survival only (+5% to all).

Mechanical: Any
 Medical: Any (+5%)
 Military: None
 Physical: Any
 Pilot: Any
 Pilot Related: Any
 Rogue: None
 Science: Any (+5%)
 Technical: Any (+15%)
 W.P.: Any
 Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: Select 4 secondary skills from the categories above. These are additional skills that do not get the benefit of any bonuses listed above.

Standard Equipment: Varies, the average **Nordanor** will own a small library (with books on history, the occult, myths and legends, etc.), a personal computer, pocket tape recorder, notepad, magnifying glass, backpack, work, casual and dress clothes and a silver plated dagger.

Money: 3D4x100+200 in cash and 2D4x1000 in property.

Nordanor

- 1 0,000-2,600
- 2 2,601-5,000
- 3 5,001-10,000
- 4 10,001-20,000
- 5 20,001-30,000
- 6 30,001-50,000
- 7 50,001-80,000
- 8 80,001-120,000
- 9 120,001-170,000
- 10 170,001-230,000
- 11 230,001-300,000
- 12 300,001-380,000
- 13 380,001-470,000
- 14 470,001-600,000
- 15 600,001-800,000



Assimilated Child O.C.C.

The assimilated child is one of the Children who, for one reason or another, has joined the human society and has had little time or inclination for adventure. Basically, they live as humans do. The reasons for this denial of their own culture for that of their prey range from denial of their bestial side to deep-cover moles to Children who do not even know that they are not human.

Attribute Requirements: None

Skills: O.C.C. and Other skills are the same as the Basic Nightbane Skill Package (Nightbane pg. 89), plus **Read/Write/Speak dUnaidon:** 98% if they are aware of their werebeast origins. Gets 8 secondary skills.

Standard Equipment: Vehicle matching the character's status, a couple of changes of clothing and personal effects, one of the following: a home PC or laptop computer, boom box/ radio, a CD or tape player, a camera, and other items as approved by the Game Master.

Money: 3D6x100 in cash plus 1D4x500 in possessions.

Assimilated Child O.C.C.

1 0,000-2,400	9 110,001-150,000
2 2,401-4,600	10 150,001-200,000
3 4,601-9,200	11 200,001-250,000
4 9,201-18,400	12 250,001-310,000
5 18,401-28,300	13 310,001-380,000
6 28,301-48,000	14 380,001-470,000
7 48,001-78,000	15 470,001-600,000
8 78,001-110,000	

Tribesman O.C.C.

This is the most common O.C.C. of all among the Children. The tribesman is the average Child, brought up within his tribe. This is the Children's equivalent of the everyday person within their own tribal society. A character's skills depend upon whether the Tribesman comes from a "civilized" or "barbarian" tribe. The skills one chooses affect one's role within the tribe, and are almost always chosen with a specific task in mind.

(1) **Skill Specialization:** Trained since their youth to serve a specific purpose in the community, the character must select one of his chosen skills to be his specialization. Whenever using this skill, the character gets a one-time bonus of an additional +10% as well as one attempt to re-roll a failed skill roll.

Attribute Requirements: None

O.C.C. Skills:

"Barbarian Tribe" Tribesman:

Speak dUnaidon: 98%

Detect Ambush (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+15%)

Counter-Tracking (+5%)

Choose one of the following combinations:

- Carpentry and Boat Building (both +20%).

- Identify Plants and Fruits, Preserve Food, and Cooking (each +20%).

- Hunting and Skin and Prepare Animal Hides (both +20%).

Hand to Hand Expert, can be increased to Martial Arts at the cost of one "other" skill.

"Civilized Tribe" Tribesman

Read/Write/Speak dUnaidon: 98%

Basic Math (+10%)

Detect Ambush

W.P. Knife

Choose one of the following combinations:

- Computer Operation, Computer Programming and Computer Hacking (each at +20%).

- Pilot Automobile, speaks and is literate in one other Language (each at +20%).

- W.P. Auto Pistol, Streetwise, Concealment (each at +20%).

Hand to Hand Basic, can be increased to Expert at the cost of one "other" skill or Martial Arts for 2 "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select 6 other skills. Gets 2 additional skills at levels 2 and 5, and 1 at levels 8 and 12.

Communications: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** None

Domestic: **Civilized:** Any (+5%); **Barbarian:** Any (+15%)

Electrical: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Basic only.

Espionage: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any

Mechanical: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Basic only.

Medical: **Civilized:** First Aid only; **Barbarian:** First Aid and Holistic Medicine only.

Military: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any (-10%)

Physical: **Civilized:** Any (+5%); **Barbarian:** Any (+20%)

Pilot: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any (-5% on modern).

Pilot Related: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any (-5%)

Rogue: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any (+20%) except Computer Hacking.

Science: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any

Technical: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any

W.P.: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any

Wilderness: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any (+20%)

Secondary Skills: Gets 6 secondary skills from the categories above. These are additional skills that do not get the benefit of any bonuses listed above (but do receive the penalties).

Standard Equipment: **Civilized:** Same as the Assimilated O.C.C.

Barbarian: clothes, backpack, silver plated knife, belt, tools suitable to role in tribe, 50 feet (15.2 m) of rope.

Money: **Civilized** have the same as the Assimilated O.C.C., the **Barbarian** has 4D4x10 in cash and 1D4x100 in items.

Tribesman

1 0,000-2,400	9 110,001-150,000
2 2,401-4,600	10 150,001-200,000
3 4,601-9,200	11 200,001-250,000
4 9,201-18,400	12 250,001-310,000
5 18,401-28,300	13 310,001-380,000
6 28,301-48,000	14 380,001-470,000
7 48,001-78,000	15 470,001-600,000
8 78,001-110,000	

Hunter O.C.C.

These are the warriors and protectors (and sometime assassins) of the Tribes. They are the best fighters, raised and trained only to do battle. Hunters, like the Tribesman O.C.C, come in either the Civilized or Barbarian format, depending upon which tribe they came from.

These are probably the most feared of all the Children O.C.C.s because they accentuate the predatory instincts and aspects of the **werecreature**. Trained to wage war on all enemies of the tribe, be they humans, vampires or another tribe, the Hunter is a killing machine, pure and simple. Over the centuries, the hunters have become quite adept at killing their ageless foe, the vampire, and are quickly adapting to killing the Nightlord minions that are rapidly encroaching into their territories.

Attribute Requirements: P.S. 4 points above racial minimum, P.P. 19, P.E. 14

Bonuses and Abilities: +1 attack, +1 to initiative, +3 vs. Horror Factor, +3D6 I.S.P., +2 to parry, strike, dodge and roll, +1D4x10 Hit Points, +15% to racial Prowl ability.

O.C.C. Skills:

Speak dUnaidon: 98%

Tracking (+20%)

Strategy / Tactics (+10%)

Lore: The Children

Lore: Vampires (+15%)

W.P. Knife (additional +1 to all bonuses).

Hand to Hand Expert, may upgrade to Martial Arts or Assassin for one "other" skill. Need not be evil or Anarchist to take Hand to Hand Assassin.

- Barbarian:

Counter-Tracking (+10%)

Detect Ambush (+10%)

2 Physical Skills (+20%).

2 Ancient Weapon Proficiencies (additional +1 to all bonuses).

- Civilized:

Intelligence (+10%)

Sniper (additional +1 to strike on aimed).

1 Physical Skill (+10%).

2 Modern Weapon Proficiencies (additional +1 to all bonuses).

O.C.C. Related Skills Select 5 other skills. Gets 2 additional skills at levels 3 and 5, and 1 at levels 8 and 12.

Communications: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** None

Domestic: **Civilized:** None; **Barbarian:** Any (+10%)

Electrical: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Basic only.

Espionage: **Civilized:** Any (+10%); **Barbarian:** Any (+10%)

Mechanical: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Basic only.

Medical: **Civilized:** First Aid only; **Barbarian:** First Aid only.

Military: **Civilized:** Any (+15%); **Barbarian:** Any (+10%)

Physical: **Civilized:** Any (+10%); **Barbarian:** Any (+20%)

Pilot: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any (-5% on modern).

Pilot Related: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any (-5%)

Rogue: **Civilized:** Any (+5%); **Barbarian:** Any (+10%) except Hacking.

Science: **Civilized:** Basic Math only; **Barbarian:** Basic Math only.

Technical: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any

W.P.: **Civilized:** Any (+1 bonuses to all modern); **Barbarian:** Any (+1 bonuses to all ancient).

Wilderness: **Civilized:** Any; **Barbarian:** Any (+10%)

Secondary Skills: Select 5 skills from the categories above.

These are additional skills that do not get the benefit of any bonuses listed above (but do receive the penalties).

Standard Equipment: Civilized: a couple sets of street clothes, a set of black clothes, utility belt, 1 weapon for each proficiency with 1D4 clips for each (if applicable; 50% chance that half of the clips for each weapon will be special wood or silver rounds), sunglasses, trench coat, necklace or ring bearing tribe symbol, silver plated knife, mallet, 1D8 wooden stakes, crucifix.

Barbarian: a couple of sets of clothing, a set of black clothes, 1 weapon for each proficiency (plus suitable amount of ammo if applicable; 50% chance that half of the ammunition will be silver plated), silver plated knife, cloak, necklace with tribal symbol, mallet, 1D8 wooden stakes, crucifix.

Money: Same as the Tribesman O.C.C.

Hunter O.C.C.

1 0,000-3,000

9 170,001-220,000

2 3,001-6,000

10 220,001-290,000

3 6,001-12,000

11 290,001-375,000

4 12,001-24,000

12 375,001-450,000

5 24,001-50,000

13 450,001-550,000

6 50,001-80,000

14 550,001-750,000

7 80,001-120,000

15 750,001-1 Million

8 120,001-170,000

New Skills

Language - dUnaidon: The spoken language of the Children. Its sound is very reminiscent of German and other Gaelic languages, with the occasional grunt or snarl added for emphasis. Skill percentage is the same as regular language skill; 50% +5% per level of experience.

Literacy - dUnaidon: Heavily reminiscent of very early forms of German and Old English, the written version of the Children's language is rampant with archaic symbols and runes. Skill percentage is the same as the regular literacy skill; 30% +5% per level of experience.

Lore - Poison: A thorough study of poisons, both natural and man made. A character possessing this skill knows how to harvest / collect the ingredients, mix them properly, how to administer, and how to recognize poisons and poisoning. **Base Skill:** 20% +5% per level of experience.

Lore - The Children: The study of the tribes, their habits, origins, powers and weaknesses. It will also aid in differentiating fact from superstition regarding the **werebeasts'** vulnerabilities and strengths and basic werebeast hunting tactics. At higher levels of knowledge (**65%+**), the character (non-Child) may have some idea about the existence of separate groups within the **wereraces** known as "tribes" as well as other detailed information. Obviously, the Children themselves who were raised within the Tribes, whether they have this skill or not, are aware of the existence of the other Tribes. It should be noted that this skill should only rarely be allowed to non-Tribe members as they are very secretive about their existence. A further point that all Game Masters should keep in mind is that the Donathair would be *very* interested in "talking" with non-Children that have any knowledge about the existence of the Tribes. **Base Skill:** 30% + 5% per level.

The Tribes



Mogwa

"Can you hear the forest's voice, its scream? First came the machines of man, now come these ... things ... from the lands of darkness. If the forest is to live, if the Mogwa are to survive, these creatures must die."

- **Botwa**, Shaman speaking at a meeting to determine whether the Mogwa should join in the fight against the Nightlords.

The Mogwa are one of the five original, Progenitor Tribes and have lived in the jungles of South America since before the Age of the Blood Moon. They are a simple people and were recluses even before the great wars. After the Age of the Blood Moon however, this Tribe had nearly been destroyed, driving them even further into their rainforests and jungles.

Living in harmony with local Indian tribes (and sometimes worshiped as gods), the Mogwa are at peace with themselves and with nature. These people value wisdom and strength, both of which are required to survive in the world of mankind's making. These werebeasts will go to any length to save their homes, including facing the wrath of the **Donathair**. Mogwa usually live out in the open in nomadic packs, but sometimes they settle in an area and set up simple, permanent shelters.

Now the Nightlord controlled corporations and governments of the world have once again turned their eyes to the vast resources of South America and the Mogwa are being assaulted on all fronts. At first they were unnoticed, but as soon as cultivation of resources began, this Tribe of **eco-warriors** rushed to protect their homeland. Now the Nightlords are preparing both supernatural and human minions to hunt them down.

The Nightlords still have only a vague idea of what they face, not yet realizing that there is an entire Tribe of werepanthers opposing them.

Some Mogwa warriors have even volunteered to leave their beloved homes and take the battle to the asphalt jungles of their enemy. These warriors stick out like sore thumbs so many have enlisted the help of local Tribes (especially sympathetic Unclaimed) who offer both teaching and sanctuary. These brave warriors are appalled at the exploitation of nature perpetrated by the human kingdoms of "civilization" and many have decided that once the Nightlords are defeated, they will take the fight to mankind next.

(1) **Symbol:** None

(2) **Tribal Breakdown:** 100% of the Tribe are werepanthers. Most of these are of good or selfish alignment, with the majority of the evil members being Aberrant. 73% of the tribe are Tribesman, 20% are Hunters and the remaining 7% are split equally between **Nordan** and Shamans. There are no Assimilated or Civilized variations in the Mogwa (yet). There are approximately 12,000 Mogwa hidden throughout the continent of South America with about another 1,000 spread throughout the world, waging war on the Nightlords.

(3) **Territories:** The rainforests of South America.

(4) **Primarch:** Tribe Mogwa is led by a Chieftain that rules for a term of 10 years. At the end of the 10 years, a new Chieftain rises to power by being victorious in a series of contests that test strength, fighting ability, intelligence and patience. By means of these tests, only the best of the Tribe can rise to power. The previous Chieftain can re-compete for another 10 years if he / she wishes. The current Chieftain is Appoota, a 7th level Shaman of Aberrant alignment. He is well trained in both the arts of war and diplomacy and is known for his great patience and fairness. Equally known, however, is his **ruthlessness** towards his enemies.

(5) **Philosophy:** Tribe Mogwa has an isolationist philosophy; after nearly being wiped out during the Age of the Blood Moon, they withdrew from all contact with the outside. So it would have continued had not the Nightlords come. Now the Mogwa feel the biggest threats to their livelihood and their beloved rainforest are these horrors. The Mogwa must now fight against these monsters with all the strength the Tribe can muster. In other matters, the Mogwa continue to distance themselves. Because of their attachment to nature, most of the Mogwa spend almost all of their time in their animal form.

(6) **Organization:** Spread throughout the rainforests in groups called "packs" that range in size from 10 to 500 members. Each pack is led by a "Headman" who is chosen in the same manner as the Chieftain, though the tests are not as difficult. Every month, all the Headmen get together in a secluded area of the rainforests with the Chieftain and hold council, debating issues that affect the entire Tribe.

(7) **Variation:** All Mogwa receive an additional +10% to wilderness and physical skills except those that require modern equipment (such as fencing and SCUBA) as well as +2 bonuses to both the P.E. and P.P. attributes.

(8) **Campaign and Role-Playing Notes:** Perhaps the Player Characters are playing or aligned with some of the Mogwa warriors who were sent to fight the Nightlords. The characters could

also become associated with them by trying to sabotage some of the Nightlord run companies that are exploiting the rainforests.

(9) Relations with Other Factions:

- Underground Railroad: As of yet, neither is aware of the other.
- Resistance: Several times these two organizations have fought side by side (and even a few times against each other), yet neither is aware that there is an organized group behind the other's forces.
- Warlords: They are not yet aware of each other.
- Nightlords: Having met on the field of battle several times now, the Nightlords have become aware of the fact that an organized group of werebeasts opposes their corruption of the environment. However, they are not aware of the Tribe itself.
- Nocturnes: Natural enemies, the Mogwa have yet to overcome their old hate and continue to hunt these foes.
- **Lightbringers**: Neither group has made contact with the other yet.
- Seekers: These groups have no knowledge of each other.
- Spook Squad: Neither group is aware of the other, though unwittingly they have helped each other on several occasions.
- Club Freak: No contact.
- The Gray Ghost Society: No contact.
- **Zarathain**: They are considered evil and are to be killed whenever one can do so without being caught by the Donathair.
- Raksasha: It is only a matter of time before these **corruptors** of the environment clash with the Mogwa. After all, the threat of the Donathair can only keep the jungle's anger at bay for so long.
- The Unclaimed: No relations to speak of. Like most of the Tribes, the Mogwa do not accept these outcasts as an official Tribe, though they are more open-minded thanks to the help many Unclaimed have offered the Mogwa warriors.
- Walloe: The Mogwa refuse to accept these insane Children as an official Tribe and will fulfil their duty by killing these unfortunates on sight.
- Stannoer: These mongrels feed off the corruption of the jungle, using the man-machines that can only destroy. Thus the two Tribes are bitter enemies and no Mogwa will ever consider using their services.
- **Borim**: The Mogwa believe that all of the **Borim** are dead, little realizing that some are hiding in their very own jungles!
- Deerdon: They are seen as a legend to scare the young. Obviously no contact has occurred between these two groups yet.
- Ungoeth: They were seen as poor souls who could not fight the inevitable. They are missed.
- Donathair: Strained relations, due to several conflicts the Mogwa have had with those Tribes that corrupt and pollute the environment.
- Vetchen: They are seen as unfortunates who have allowed themselves to be corrupted and fall from nature's path. All

the Mogwa can do is hope that these poor souls are one day able to rid themselves of their curse.

- Lordon: Considered a myth! The Lordon generally avoid digging tunnels beneath the Mogwa territory for they cannot scavenge anything from trees, thus the Mogwa have had no contact with them.

Zarathain

"We are the powerful, we are the rulers! It is no mistake that when the humans think of **werecreatures**, they automatically think of the werewolf. We are destined to rule both man and Child through right of superiority. Join us and be led, oppose us and die!"

- Count Vorden upon the coming of Dark Day, reminding his people of who they are.

One of the Progenitor Tribes, the Zarathain are perhaps the most feared Tribe of all the Children (after the Donathair). It is this Tribe that has inspired the myths of werewolves in many European cultures.

Having long preyed upon humans, the Zarathain view the entire race as nothing more than cattle to be toyed with, hunted, killed and eaten at their leisure. The Tribal laws and existence of the Donathair do very little to deter this Tribe from openly hunting mankind. The power and strength of the many criminal organizations secretly supported by the Zarathain offer them a lot of ability to resist Donathair reprisals.

The Zarathain have accepted the technologies of the present and future and have meshed them with the traditions of the past to create a very dangerous adversary. Over 30% of the Italian-based Mafia and other European crime syndicates are secretly controlled or influenced by this Tribe, offering them great political and financial power. Also keep in mind that these crime organizations are only *based* in Europe; they have spread their influence throughout the world.

Practicing a philosophy of violence and superiority of the werebeast (and more specifically, werewolf), the Zarathain consider few their friends, and nearly all their enemies.

(1)Symbol: A single, black fang upon a field of silver.

(2)Tribal Breakdown: There are approximately 25,000 Zarathain worldwide, with the majority (90%) being of anarchist or evil alignment. 100% of tribe members are werewolves. 55% of the Tribe is comprised of Hunters, 15% **Nordan^or** and Shaman, and the remaining 30% a fairly even mix of Civilized and Barbarian Tribesmen and Assimilated.

(3)Territories: Most of the Eastern European countries (Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Poland, Italy and Yugoslavia especially) fall under the dominion of this Tribe. The Zarathain capital is Bucharest (Romania).

(4)Primarch: In keeping with the Mafia motif of this Tribe, the **Primarch** is known as the "Don" (Spanish for Sir). The current leader of the Zarathain is Don **Miguel** Regaldo. Regaldo is also known as "The **Bloodletter**" after his tradition of drinking the blood of those he has killed. Regaldo is a 9th level **Nordan^or** and has been the Don of the Tribe for the last 200 years. He is both ruthless and cruel (Miscreant alignment).

(5)Philosophy: Survival of the fittest. The Zarathain believe that one must earn one's right to be alive by proving one's worth and ability to survive. Because of this ideal, the Zarathain are remorseless and show no pity to either their allies or enemies.

(6)Organization: Most of the major cities of the world have a "pack" of Zarathain within them, with a minimum of 25 members per city. Those cities that are especially active in the organized crime world will have anywhere from 200 to 1000 members. Each city is run by a "Counsellor" who reports directly to the continental leader (who is in charge of the pack controlling that continent's largest Mafia concentration). These continental leaders, called Nobles, report to the Don.

(7)Variation: All Zarathain receive a +3 bonus to P.S. and P.P. and receive the Streetwise skill for free with a +10% bonus.

(8)Campaign and Role-Playing Notes: Many are the possibilities for introducing the players to the Zarathain. Because this Tribe has its fingers in everything from racketeering to the black market, it is very easy for the characters to run afoul of one of their many "entrepreneurial" endeavors.

(9)Relations with Other Factions:

- Underground Railroad: These groups are bitter enemies, both because of the evil that the Zarathain represent and also because of the damage that the Mafia causes the U.R.
- Resistance: They fight with each other whenever possible. They have essentially the same problems with the Zarathain as the U.R., but the Resistance tends to respond more aggressively.
- Warlords: Several Warlord factions are unwittingly the pawns and servants of this evil Tribe.
- Nightlords: Angered to no end by the meddling of the Nightlords and the deaths of many of their government plants by these invaders, the Zarathain utterly oppose these fiends. The Nightlords do not realize that there is a supernatural force behind the European crime families but that does not stop them from trying to bend or break the "families" to their will.
- Nocturnes: Some traditions even the Zarathain cannot ignore. These two groups are enemies, plain and simple.
- **Lightbringers:** The Zarathain hate these goody-two-shoes meddlers and try to trick, trap or kill them whenever they can. The Lightbringers are unaware of the Zarathain.
- Seekers: The Zarathain see these mages as meddling busybodies who are to have their heads detached from those very same bodies at any opportunity. The Seekers have figured out that a group of werewolves, calling themselves "Zarathain" control a huge chunk of the European Mafia but have yet to decide how best to use this knowledge.
- Spook Squad: Many of these agents who one worked for such organizations as the DEA and CIA suspect that many Mafia families are secretly headed by supernatural forces, and spend every chance they get opposing them. The Zarathain for their part do what they can to disrupt the plans of this annoying group of has-beens.
- Club Freak: No contact.
- The Gray Ghost Society: No contact.

- Mogwa: Considered a mere annoyance at the moment, but if they increase their activities, they shall have to be dealt with.
- Raksasha: They are considered real pains in the butt! These Trump wannabes have foiled more than one plot of the Zarathain through their own plans for power and money. Rumbles and street wars between the two are common when territories are crossed.
- The Unclaimed: They are considered fodder and scraps to be thrown to the wolves when it suits the purpose of the Zarathain. Many of these exiles are so wanting of love and acceptance that they can be manipulated easily.
- Walloe: They have rejected sanity. Even the Zarathain abide by the laws of death concerning wildlust.
- Stannoer: Considered good for the dirty work. Why risk losing valuable Tribesmen when these meres are willing to die for money?
- **Borim:** They rarely got in the Zarathain's way when they were around, but they are not missed.
- Deerdon: Considered a simple legend meant to scare cubs. But, if they ever did exist, they were an evil beyond anything ever seen.
- Ungoeth: They are also not missed.
- Donathair: They try to watch for the Donathair at all times, for one never knows when he is being watched himself.
- Vetchen: Seen as bumbling and meddlers. These freaks do not know when they are not wanted. They try to kill 'em whenever they are sure that the Donathair are not watching.
- Lordon: Believed to be lies and bogeymen created by Zarathain enemies in order to weave chaos and fear amongst Tribal ranks.

The Raksasha

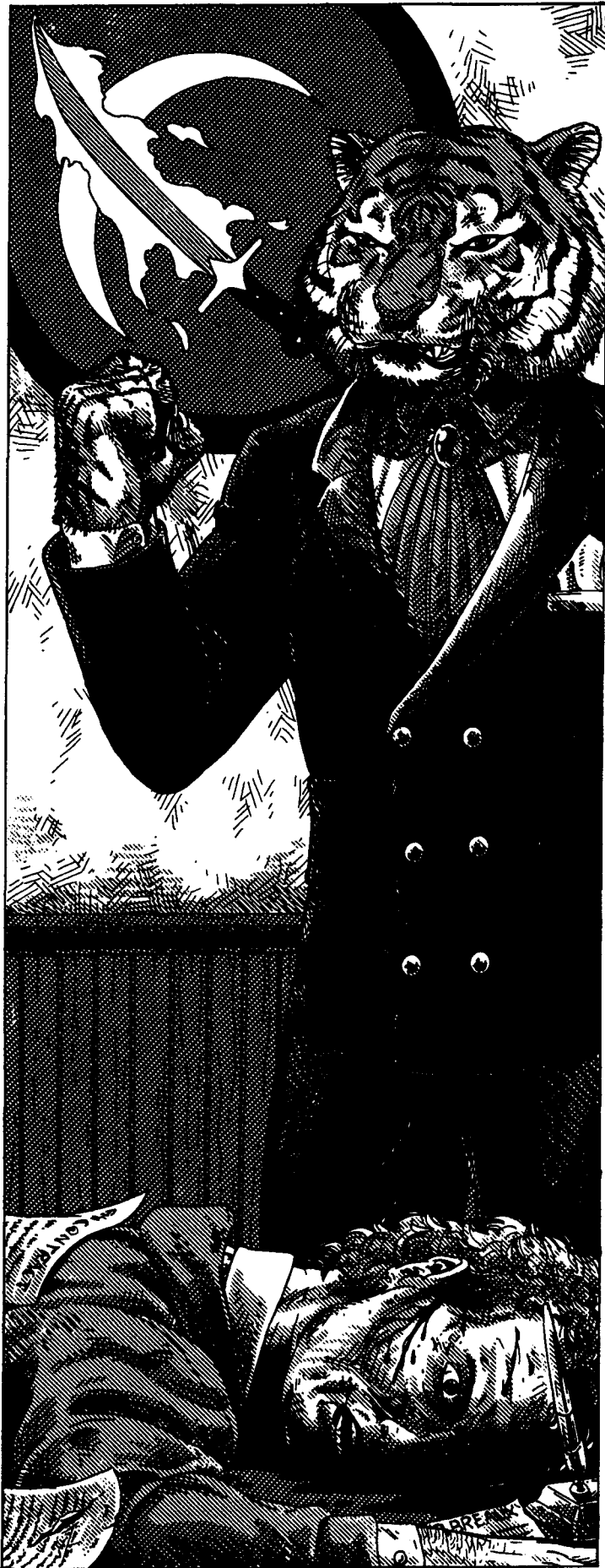
"So, Mr. Gates has found the financial backing to stop our buyout ... I am afraid that just won't do. The income from his corporation is needed to fund our little coup in Cuba. I believe that Mr.Gates' benefactors need an opportunity to reconsider their options. **Noldri**, it has come to my attention that Mr.Gates will be holding a banquet in celebration tomorrow evening, please see to his ... indigestion. Yes, I have a feeling that tomorrow will be a good day to buy stock in computers ... a very good day indeed."

- **Aloni Sabin**, CEO of **Starline Pharmaceuticals** and Raksasha cell leader.

The Raksasha have always been a burden and enemy of humanity. Since before recorded time, the Raksasha have sought power to rule and manipulate those that they see as weaker than themselves, in other words, everyone who is not them.

Myths from India and surrounding areas are full of stories where Raksasha were mistaken for demons or gods. In some **myths**, their tribal name, Raksasha, has even been used to describe demons that appeared as tiger-men and could assume a man's shape in order to carry out his evil. More than a few of these legends have a grain of truth to them.

Raksasha value political power and wealth above all else and have been the real hands that rule, through puppet leaders, in many a nation in the past. One of the least openly violent of the



Tribes of the Children, they prefer to destroy their enemies by assassinating them from the shadows or by financially ruining them.

The long centuries have given the Raksasha many years to amass their power base and wealth, and they use it to live in a state of luxury that is unparalleled among the Tribes. However, with the coming of Dark Day and the **Nightlords**, the Raksasha have lost a great deal of their political power due to the pawns of the invaders taking control of many of the major world powers' governments.

Blackmail, sabotage, assassination and money are the primary tools of this tribe. They are never content with what they have and always seek more.

(1)Symbol: A flaming scimitar with a crescent moon behind.

(2)Tribal Breakdown: 99% of the Raksasha are civilized, with very few still living in their ancient homelands out in the wilds, thus there are also very few who have been inflicted with wildlust. There are approximately 5,500 Raksasha total in the world. They are 97% weretiger, 2% werejaguar and 1% werepanther; non-feline wereraces are despised. The Raksasha's most common O.C.C.s are the Tribesman and Assimilated. There are very few mystics and even fewer **Nordan**^or.

(3)Territories: Tend to stick to major population centers and cities where they can earn their power and wealth. There are large groups in New York, Washington D.C., Berlin, Tokyo and London, though India and the Middle East is their homeland.

(4)Primarch: Tribe Raksasha is currently under the leadership of Emperor Rudai **Deema**, known as "**Shadowmind**" among the other Tribes. He is a 120 year old weretiger with an exceptionally high I.Q. (19). His head for business is equalled only by his **ruthlessness** when dealing with those who would stand in his way (13th level Civilized Tribesman, miscreant).

(5)Philosophy: Power and money is everything. Crush all who would try and stop you from achieving it. However, they believe that subtlety is a far more useful tool than overt action, be it violence or other. The modern world is merely a new hunting ground where the prey is represented on paper and by stocks. Raksasha love modern devices and the ease with which they can be used to illegally manipulate factors in their favor. They are well aware that knowledge is power so they go to great lengths to keep the existence of the Tribes (and themselves especially) a secret; the fewer who know the Tribes exist, the fewer who know the Raksasha exist. The fewer who know the latter, the easier it is to attain power unopposed.

(6)Organization: They are broken down into "cells" of 2 to 30 members, though the most common is around 14 or so. Their largest cell, consisting of 200 Raksasha and led by the Emperor, is in New Delhi, India. Their Hunters are known as the **Noldri** and dress all in black, with black scarves covering their face and red sashes about their waists. They favour poison and death from a distance.

(7)Variation: Gets the skill Language: Hindi (+15%) for free, +2 to I.Q. attribute. All **Noldri** MUST take Lore: Poison (but get a bonus of +15%).

(8)Campaign and Role-Playing Notes: A difficult enemy to fight due to their nature of secrecy and fighting from the shadows, the Raksasha offer the characters a more cerebral enemy, one that cannot easily be defeated through the use of fists and guns alone.

(9)Relations with Other Factions:

- **Underground Railroad:** A definite danger to the **Raksasha** power base, this group trains their enemies about the world of the supernatural and imparts on them the knowledge they need to survive in a world gone mad. This knowledge includes information on the Tribes (what little is known by outsiders) and their various goals, thus they must be silenced whenever possible.
- **Resistance:** Blood enemies. Resistance members have often meddled in the affairs of Raksasha, stopping many a power play. The Resistance puts the Raksasha in the same category as the Nightlords; a supernatural force that seeks to wrest control of Earth away from the hands of the people and subvert it to their own ends. Its members are to be killed on sight.
- **Warlords:** Often hired as tools to carry out certain actions that are too overt for the Raksasha to do themselves or require a more visible act of violence than those provided by the **Noldri**. The Warlords seek neither power nor wealth on a scale equal to that of the Raksasha and thus make acceptable pawns. The Raksasha always hire anonymously so that the actions of the Warlords cannot be traced back to them. This is done with great care for they would not like to earn the attention of the **Donathair**.
- **Nightlords:** The invading Nightlords have usurped much of the Raksasha power base, something that took them many centuries to acquire. This alone puts them near the top of the **Noldri** hit list. Very often when the Raksasha learn of a Nightlord pawn in a position that they want, they send the **Noldri** after it, framing another faction for the death. They then wait for things to cool down before they themselves move in to fill the power vacuum.
- **Nocturnes:** Because many of this group are vampires, the two groups are natural enemies (especially to the **werejaguar** members). **Noldri** strike teams are sent against Nocturne members whenever they are found. For the Nocturnes' part, they have greater knowledge of the Tribes than many other factions and thus are aware of the **Raksasha's** existence. However, the Nocturnes have no idea just how great the political and financial power of the Raksasha truly is.
- **Lightbringers:** Too small to have really been noticed in the past, the recent increase of Guardian sightings is bringing this group to the Raksasha's attention. Right now, both the Raksasha and the Lightbringers have more immediate concerns with problems more pressing to each's goals.
- **Seekers:** To be killed whenever possible. Seekers are doubly dangerous because they seek whatever knowledge about the supernatural that they can get and because they have the means to learn it. This group can cause a lot of damage to the Raksasha because of their mystical means of finding information as well as the fact that the majority of its members wield magic, one of the Children's few vulnerabilities. For their part, the Seekers wish to learn more about the Raksasha (and the Tribes in general) before they actively seek them out. Until such time, the Seekers will only act when a Raksasha plot is revealed to them through serendipity or through others.
- **Spook Squad:** Before the coming of Dark Day, the Raksasha could use its power base to exert control and to put pressure on this faction's "founding" organizations (FBI, CIA, Police, etc.). Now, this well trained, highly motivated and heavily armed group is actively hunting and killing the supernatural. Though the Raksasha and the Tribes in general have both managed to remain relatively unknown, the coming of the Nightlords has caused both groups to expose themselves more. Thus, the S.S. is now aware of organized wereraces, and the Children do not like that one bit.
- **Club Freak:** The Raksasha are aware that the clubs exist but do not know where, and are in no real **hurry** to find out. The Raksasha see them as neither a threat nor a hindrance at the moment.
- **The Gray Ghost Society:** A possible danger because their ability to enter other dimensions and to travel the Earth unseen, through walls, makes it difficult to guard secrets from this group.
- **Mogwa:** If these annoyances do not stop disrupting the plans of the Raksasha's companies, they will be tossed to the Nightlords quicker than a trader sells bad stock.
- **Zarathain:** One of the major players in the world of the shadows, these like-minded individuals can be useful allies (or deadly foes). When dealing with the Zarathain one must always have someone to watch his back, otherwise they view them on a case by case basis.
- **The Unclaimed:** These outcasts are looked down upon as the garbage of the werebeast society. Tribe Raksasha uses them as tools sometimes (both with and without the Unclaimed's knowledge) to carry out duties that would otherwise require them to get their own hands bloody.
- **Walloe:** They wish that the **Donathair** would hurry up and just kill off these beasts. It is against tribal law that they still live and is a blot upon the Children that they ever existed at all.
- **Stannoer:** A useful tool that may one day have to be cast away. Both groups enjoy their working relationship at the present.
- **Borim:** Their absence doesn't bother them one bit. These cowards had nothing to offer the **Raksasha...nothing** to take and nothing to control.
- **Deerdon:** Considered a fearsome opponent whose destruction could not have been soon enough.
- **Ungoeth:** They were too weak to survive. Too bad, they used to be useful tools.
- **The Donathair:** The Raksasha hate them, but grudgingly respect them. The **Donathair** allow the Raksasha to commit their resources to other purposes other than their defense alone. However, the existence of the **Donathair** and the tribal justice they represent are one of the main reasons why the Raksasha did not use their human pawns long ago to hunt down and exterminate the other Tribes.
- **Vetchen:** The Raksasha, master manipulators that they are, have failed to turn these mutants to their cause, thus they are a threat and must eventually be dealt with.
- **Lordon:** Considered savages and monsters! Even the Raksasha do not ignore the traditions and laws of the Children like they do! Like a mad dog, they need to be put down.

The Unclaimed

"We are the lost ones, those who are of the Children but not of the Tribes. Outcasts and rogues, even the **Donathair** turn their back to us, lest it is to bring down their wrath. So be it. I know my heart walks beneath the Moon's eyes and goes with its approval. That is enough for me."

- John Smith, werewolf now living as a convenience store clerk.

The Unclaimed are officially not a tribe. These are the **werecreatures** that, for one reason or another, have left or been exiled from the Tribes (though leaving of your own accord is more common, for most crimes are punishable by the Donathair). They exist in all parts of the world and tend to stick to themselves, though some have joined with other rogues or factions to better serve their interests.

Many are the reasons why these Children go rogue, usually it is because the individual's policy and morals do not match with that of the **Tribe(s)**, though sometimes it is the sentence of the Tribe's leaders that the **werecreature** be exiled. Whatever the reason, the Tribes no longer recognize these disgraced ones as their own and will only acknowledge them if it suits their interests.

All of the Unclaimed are aware that the Donathair still watch their actions, ensuring that the rogues do not put the Tribes at risk. Many of the Unclaimed just want to be left alone to live in peace.

(1)Symbol: None

(2)Tribal Breakdown: The racial breakdown is around 30% werewolf, 10% werebear, 30% weretiger, 10% **werejaguar**, and 20% werepanther. Obviously the most unpredictable and individual-oriented races comprise the majorities. Classes consist mainly of Assimilated (who are unwilling to give up the life they have grown accustomed to), **Nordan^or**, and Tribesmen. Hunters are rare because everything they have been taught is about how important it is to protect the Tribe and Shamans are even rarer for the same reason. There are about 55,000 Unclaimed Children worldwide, about 15% of whom have Wildlust.

(3)Territories: The Unclaimed have no official territories for they are not actually a Tribe. They are scattered to every corner of the world, some blending into human society, some preying on it, while still others just want to be left alone.

(4)Primarch: There is no **Primarch** of the Unclaimed. Some small groups that band together for whatever reason very often choose a leader for themselves.

(5)Philosophy: Varies as per the individual but is more often than not tied into their reason for leaving the Tribes.

(6)Organization: None, other than those who have joined up into small bands or have joined other factions.

(7)Variation: as per their original Tribe.

(8)Campaign and Role-Playing Notes: This is the type of werebeast that is most likely to be a Player Character. This is also the type of werebeast most likely to be encountered by characters. They range from the wild werewolf who is killing children in a small farm community to the werebear who has joined the Resistance in its fight against the Nightlords.

(9)Relations with Other Factions:

- **Underground Railroad:** Several Unclaimed have sought the aid of the U.R. or have joined it.
- **Resistance:** Of all the factions, the Resistance has the greatest membership of the Unclaimed. A great number of reasons for rogues leaving their Tribe since the coming of Dark Day is because they believe that the Tribes should take a more active part in the defense of Earth.
- **Warlords:** Only one or two Unclaimed have joined this band of miscreants but each now holds a position of great power that stems from their possession of superior supernatural abilities.
- **Nightlords:** The Nightlords still view the Unclaimed as enemies and will kill them on sight. A very small number of the Unclaimed who believe that a Nightlord victory is inevitable have actually joined their cause as assassins and spies.
- **Nocturnes:** A few rogues who left their Tribes have come to realize that not all undead are evil and have since joined this group. The majority of the Unclaimed however cannot overcome their upbringing that the undead are their ancient enemies, thus making the Nocturnes their enemy as well.
- **Lightbringers:** Less than 10 Unclaimed have joined this faction and other than that, dealings happen only on an individual basis.
- **Seekers:** Though the Seekers are aware that some werebeasts congregate in large groups, they still are not aware of the full extent of their organization. Because of this, the Seekers group the lone Unclaimed into the same categories as they do that of those Children that still remain affiliated to one of the official Tribes.
- **Spook Squad:** Werebeasts are supernatural, therefore the Spook Squad hunts them. The Unclaimed make easier victims because they lack the protection of the Tribal groupings and the Donathair.
- **Club Freak:** The Unclaimed know of them but not what they stand for or of the powers that back them. Of the few Children that have been accepted as members, all are Unclaimed.
- **The Gray Ghost Society:** These groups rarely encounter each other and when the two factions do interact, very few realize that the other is part of a larger faction.
- **Mogwa:** Considered a noble Tribe with a noble purpose. However, they are so steeped in tradition that they have turned their backs upon the Unclaimed almost completely.
- **Zarathain:** Many have been the Unclaimed Child that has listened to these criminals and allowed himself to be tricked by the promise of acceptance and family. They are just users and takers. Evil to be avoided.
- **Raksasha:** The **Raksasha** see the Unclaimed as fodder for their plots and schemes, scapegoats upon which they can blame things in order to escape the wrath of both the humans and the Donathair.
- **Walloe:** Perhaps the most understanding of the Walloe's plight, many of the more open minded Unclaimed believe that Tribal law should be adjusted to judge the Wild on an **individual**, case by case basis, not as a whole. This is especially

true after the great loss to the populations of the Tribes after the coming of Dark Day. Still, some among the Unclaimed have not forgotten all of their teachings and still look upon the Walloe as deviants and mindless beasts who should be slaughtered.

- **Stannoer:** Only the most bitter among the Unclaimed deal with these pack rats. Nothing is worth making a deal with the devil.
- **Borim:** Considered a peaceful people who did not deserve to die.
- **Deerdon:** Thought to be nothing more than as old wives' tale.
- **Ungoeth:** They are not sure they even existed, but if they did, they can sympathize with the loss of all one is.
- **Donathair:** The Donathair are no exception to the rule that the Tribes look down upon rogues. While the Unclaimed are still subject to punishment for putting the Children in danger, they are not subject to its protection.
- **Vetchen:** One of the few Tribes that fully understand the Unclaimed. Though unable to openly support the outcasts, these mutants offer aid and shelter to their hidden friends.
- **Lordon:** Madness ... to be avoided no matter what.

The Walloe

"GRRRRRRRRRrrrrrrrrrr ... Me not part of your world no more. Me run the concrete, me climb the forest of glass and metal. Me hide. Me hunt. Me kill. You try take my prey, me take your life. Me must survive."

-Blackfang, Walloe scavenger.

The Walloe, meaning "wild eyes" in dUnaidon, are the newest Tribe in existence. Started in 1986 by Moonbite, Walloe is not recognized as an official Tribe by the others for one very good reason: all of its members have *wildlust*.

Unlike the average Child affected by wildlust, all the members of the Walloe were all highly intelligent before they were infected. As a result they still have a higher I.Q. than the average wildlust victim (the lowest I.Q. among the Walloe is 6). Thus, all Walloe can still speak non-animal languages though 73% can only speak them in a guttural, childlike manner (as shown in the quotation of Blackfang). The other 27% can still articulate complex language but must concentrate to do so.

Moonbite gathered together those of the Wild who had not fully regressed to a bestial mind (though all still cannot use their human form) and formed them into a new Tribe for their mutual protection. As a general rule, only those with good intentions and noble purpose are allowed into the Walloe. Moonbite is trying to prove that not all those affected by wildlust are savages and evil, and because most werebeasts of evil alignment who have wildlust become bloodthirsty monsters, accepting them into the Walloe would only set back this cause.

The Walloe are restricted to the subway and sewer systems of New York City, many of which are connected by secret passages created by the Walloe. In this subterranean kingdom, the Walloe hide from humanity and the Donathair, living in a world of black and coming out only at night unless it is completely necessary that they do otherwise. Because of their completely



nocturnal nature, the Walloe's supernatural metabolism has brought about several biological changes in a VERY short time (18 years!); the Walloe have better night vision than any other Tribe but at the cost of extreme light sensitivity.

Due to the high rate of good-aligned Children in this Tribe, in conjunction with their need to prove themselves, the Walloe prowl the concrete jungle, fighting crime from the dark shadows. They are also waging a guerilla war against the Nightlords and the other enemies of the Children (including enemies of the other Tribes, despite them rejecting the Walloe).

(1)Symbol: a pitch black wolf's head raised up in a howl.

(2)Tribal Breakdown: Of its approximately 450 members, 52% are werewolves, 33% are weretigers, 10% are werebears, 4% are **werejaguars** and 1% are werepanthers. The most common O.C.C.s are Tribesman and Hunter, with Shaman (there are only 2) and **Nordan^or** (only 1) being the rarest. 83% of the Walloe are of good or unprincipled alignment and all have I.Q. attributes of 6 or higher.

(3)Territories: All of the Walloe exist within the subway and sewer systems of New York City. Because they are not an official Tribe, this claim is not acknowledged by any of the other Tribes (though some of the kinder and more civil Tribes leave it to them anyway).

(4)Primarch: This rag-tag band of wildlust infected werebeasts is led by a kind-hearted (though ruthless when the situation demands it) werepanther Hunter named **Moonbite** (his original name was Daren Walden). He is an unprincipled, 6th level Shaman that was exceptionally intelligent for his kind before he was afflicted with wildlust (now has an I.Q. of 11). He is a well-practiced spell caster and a fairly good warrior (P.S. 22, P.P. 20, Hand-to-Hand Expert).

(5)Philosophy: Despite being rejected by the other Tribes (though only in an official sense by some that still offer them aid), the Walloe seek to prove to the Tribes by example that those who have been afflicted by the wildlust should be judged on a case-by-case basis, not with the complete finality of the Donathair.

They seek acceptance and acknowledgement by the other Tribes. Perhaps by example they will show that those who are under the effects of wildlust are still useful and not all have become complete animals and evil. However, above all other reasons, they seek to survive.

(6)Organization: Those who are good combatants scour the city in patrols, stopping crime and fighting the Nightlords and other evils that walk the Earth. The non-combatants comb the city's alleys and trash for food and items that the Walloe can use.

(7)Variation: As per those conferred by original Tribe (if still applicable) and those from the wildlust. All have prowl 98% and get double their normal **nightvision** range, but during the day (and when exposed to other sources of bright light) they suffer -1 attack and -2 to strike, initiative, parry, dodge and roll.

(8)Campaign and Role-Playing Notes: If running a campaign centered or that enters New York City, the Walloe can be a useful ally. They know every part of the city, above and below, and their secret tunnels offer a great means for the characters to move about unseen (all non-tribe members must be blindfolded when being led through them).

(9)Relations with Other Factions:

- **Underground Railroad:** Both factions have aided each other in the past, the Walloe's secret tunnels and the U.R. resources being mutually advantageous.
- **Resistance:** The Resistance has only recently (within 1 year) learned that the Walloe exist and that the two factions share similar goals. The Resistance sometimes offers aid to the Walloe and they in turn do likewise.
- **Warlords:** The Walloe see these deviants as creatures that act more animal than they! There is no love lost between these groups and several Warlord chapters in NYC have learned that something lurks under the streets but right now they have other things to worry about.
- **Nightlords:** Though aware of the existence of the Tribes, much of their data is outdated and thus they are unaware that the Walloe exist; they believe this Tribe's actions to be the results of the Unclaimed.
- **Nocturnes:** Due to the prejudice against the Walloe, its members are more likely to accept the undead members of this group than any of the other Tribes do. However, the Walloe still find it difficult at times to overcome their racial hatred, so basically the relations between these two groups are on a case-by-case basis.
- **Lightbringers:** No formal contact has been made between these two groups. Neither has enough information to formulate an opinion of the other.
- **Seekers:** Many Walloe have made alliances with this group. Usually the Seekers will trade protective spells and aid for information the Walloe pick up on the streets.
- **Spook Squad:** Many agents have heard of the feral men that live under the streets yet have more pressing matters to deal with. The Walloe are too paranoid and interested in survival to trust these ex-spooks.
- **Club Freak:** No knowledge of each other.
- **The Gray Ghost Society:** No knowledge of each other.
- **Mogwa:** A pity that those so dedicated to one noble purpose cannot extend that nobility to the acceptance of the Walloe. The Mogwa kill the Walloe on sight.
- **Zarathain:** The Zarathain kill the Walloe on sight. Contact is therefore kept to a minimum.
- **Raksasha:** The Walloe never talk to them. Never associate with them. All the Raksasha want to do is use them to their own ends.
- **The Unclaimed:** Allies. These two Tribes are so similar that a merging in the distant future is not an impossibility.
- **Stannoer:** Not to be trusted and not to be associated with. These mercenaries are considered nothing but trouble and are to be stopped (not necessarily killed) whenever possible.
- **Borim:** They will be missed by the Walloe. Before their disappearance, the Borim had actually ignored Tribal law and secretly offered sanctuary to those afflicted by wildlust.
- **Deerdon:** They are glad this great evil is gone.
- **Ungoeth:** The Walloe know nothing of the Ungoeth.
- **Donathair:** The Walloe's worst foe, but they do not consider it their fault. Though they do what they feel is right and

needed, the Donathair are thought to be wrong (obviously) in their quest to kill all those afflicted by wildlust. The Walloe run when possible but if it comes to a fight, they try not to kill the Justicer unless necessary.

- Vetchen: Though social outcasts themselves, the Vetchen cannot overcome their beliefs about wildlust to befriend the Walloe. Thus these mutants are avoided.
- Lordon: These monsters have tried to invade the tunnels of the Walloe more than once, making them the bitterest of enemies.

The Stannoer

"Nevermind the philosophy and moral preaching, what is the job?"

- typical Stannoer Slayer.

Many phrases can be used to describe Tribe Stannoer: techno-addicts, immoral, unscrupulous, deviant, traitors, killers and worse. When you get right down to it though, they can easily be summed up in just one word: Mercenaries.

Even since before the Age of the Blood Moon, the Stannoer were born with an innate talent and curiosity for technology. Nobody knew why this was so, but it gave them the benefit of knowing more about the quickest rising "magic" of the land. It did not take them long to realize that it also gave them an advantage over their enemies (and the other Tribes).

They started creating advanced tools, emulating the growing human civilizations. Soon their silver weapons gave them a leg up on their Tribal and vampire enemies. When the great Tribal wars came during the Age of the Blood Moon, the Stannoer used the chaos and their technologies to settle old scores. After the death of their enemies, the Stannoer then started hiring their services out to the other Tribes who were trying to settle such scores with each other.

After the wars and the creation of the Donathair (to which the Stannoer were the only Tribe not to contribute some of their hunters), the Stannoer were unwilling to give up their newly acquired trade. Seeing as how warring upon other Children was now punishable by death, the Stannoer took their mercenary business underground and into the shadows. Stannoer has since continued its work as a Tribe for hire, be it working for the Nightlords, the other Tribes (covertly) and even the Leech Legions! Stannoer's bases of operations are so well hidden and its network of contacts and spies so well entrenched that the Donathair have yet to make a significant dent in the operations of this self-serving tribe.

Only one thing grabs the attention of a Stannoer more than an opportunity for a **merc** job, and that is technology. This clan stays on the cutting edge through several means, **bribery**, black-mail and spying not being the least of which. These techno-addicts covet high technology so much that the only way they can afford it now is to take on more and more dangerous jobs. However, this increase in danger has not (yet) made the Stannoer sloppy or stupid in their choice or method of carrying out jobs. Stannoer has also involved itself in such lucrative businesses such as organized crime and the drug trade in order to pay for the rising costs of high technology. This is especially true now more than ever due to the new controls placed upon many new advances by the **Nightlord-controlled** governments.

Any Stannoer group that comes across a new piece of technology is obliged to share it with the entire Tribe so that all may utilize it (though hoarding new technology is not unheard of).



(1)Symbol: a single black tear in the center of a white circle upon a field of red.

(2)Tribal Breakdown: NO barbarian variations of an O.C.C. exist within the **Stannoer**. The most numerous O.C.C.s are the Assimilated and Hunter, while Shamans are very rare due to the P.P.E. penalties suffered by the Tribe. There are roughly 10,000 Stannoer worldwide 53% of the Tribe are werewolves, 33% are weretigers, 7% are **werebears**, 6% are **werejaguars** and 1% are werepanthers. 40% of all Stannoer are Aberrant in alignment with 25% being Miscreant, 15% being Diabolic and the remaining 20% being a fairly even mix of the other alignments.

(3)Territories: The Stannoer frequent cities, with only those Tribe members in charge of manning strongholds (see below) living in rural areas. They tend to contain themselves to high-technology countries such as the United States, Japan, and Germany, with their largest strongholds in Los Angeles and Tokyo.

(4)Primarch: "Boss" Brandon Lloyd leads this Tribe of high-tech soldiers for hire. He is a Miscreant, 7th level, Assimilated werewolf. He is very cunning and always has several backup plans ready in case a deal goes sour. He is also eager to use his henchmen to follow up any leads on and if possible, steal, any new technologies.

(5)Philosophy: No job is too small nor too large, just so long as a profit is to be made. The only loyalties most Stannoer acknowledge are to their Tribe and **Primarch** (if even those). However, many are the Stannoer that are so consumed with their pursuit for technology that they will sacrifice a job, their companions and even their Tribe in order to get it. After all, it's not like they have to worry about the Donathair, seeing as how the Stannoer are already on their hit list.

(6)Organization: Scattered throughout the cities of the world in groups ranging from 5 to 500, these crazed mercenaries recognize their Primarch as leader, based in their Tokyo stronghold, who then appoints favored underlings to lead the smaller groups. Each group is responsible for finding and completing jobs on their own with the knowledge that other groups can be called in if things get too hairy. Each smaller group is obligated to report any news on new technological developments back through the chain of command to the Boss. It is not uncommon for such information to get "lost" on its way, as one of the underlings decides that he alone should profit from the information.

The Stannoer use a complex web of agents, spies and contacts (both **werecreature** and human) in order to gain information and jobs. They always practice great secrecy and caution for fear of being found by the Donathair. Throughout the world are several "strongholds" of this selfish Tribe. These are places manned by at least 100 Tribe members and each is a high-tech fortress and cache of the Stannoer's "acquired" technologies.

Those agents that operate in the field, carrying out the various mercenary operations of the Stannoer, are known simply as Slayers. The name "Slayer" can be misleading, creating the impression that all agents are combat oriented, something that is not so. A Slayer is a general term, used for all agents, including soldiers, hackers, field scientists and ordnance technicians.

(7)Variation: Because they have embraced technology so completely, they roll up their P.P.E. as normal and then halve it. No matter what O.C.C. they choose, they may select any Com-

puter (+15% bonus), Mechanical (+10% bonus) or Electrical (+10% bonus) skills. However, they cannot choose any Wilderness skills nor can they be **Nordan^or**. Also, Shamans of the Stannoer have absolutely NO spell casting abilities whatsoever. All Stannoer start with the insanity *Obsession: Advanced Technology*.

(8)Campaign and Role-Playing Notes: Perhaps the Stannoer are seeking some new technology that could aid the characters in their fight against the **Nightlords**. Selfishly, the Stannoer would want the device for themselves and the rest of the world be damned. Another possibility is that the Stannoer have been hired by one of the characters' enemies to kill or capture them or someone who is important to them.

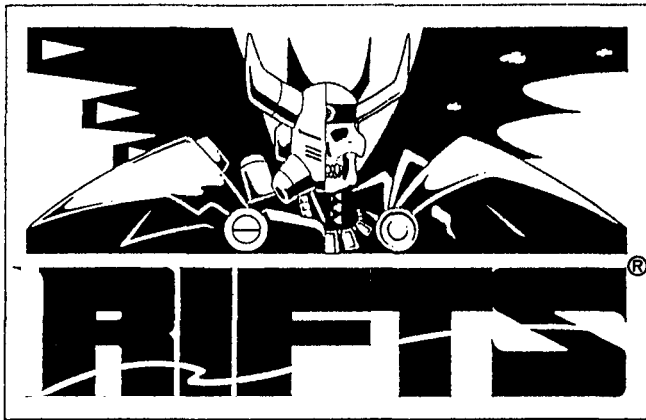
(9)Relations with Other Factions:

- Underground Railroad: Neither will associate with the other.
- Resistance: They have fought against each other many times (and with each other once or twice when the job demanded it). The Resistance would like to see these werebeasts put to **sleep** ...permanently.
- Warlords: Viewed as useful tools and contacts. The Warlords see the Stannoer as a quick means to a buck or an easy way to get their hands on some "hardware".
- Nightlords: The Stannoer have actually worked for the Nightlords on several occasions, but never in any way that would bring down the wrath of the Donathair. For their part, the Nightlords believe the Stannoer to merely be a supernatural mercenary guild, not one of many **were-Tribes**.
- Nocturnes: These two have had a few run-ins with each other so they try to avoid the other whenever they can.
- **Lightbringers:** Considered pests who have disrupted more than one job. Stannoer kill them on sight (even if not paid for it).
- Seekers: Curiosity killed the cat. The Seekers should take a lesson.
- Spook Squad: Considered annoyances who are well organized and equipped. One of the biggest threats to the Stannoer at the moment.
- Club Freak: No interest from either group.
- The Gray Ghost Society: No knowledge of each other.
- Mogwa: The Stannoer are sure that it is only a matter of time before the Mogwa forget their disdain for them and hire them to help them wage war against the uncaring corporate world.
- Zarathain: Though they most often draw upon their own considerable resources, the Zarathain still very often use the Stannoer for the more difficult jobs, including those which they do not want attached to them.
- **Raksasha:** Frequent employers, these manipulators have so many chickens in the pot that they are always good for a job.
- The Unclaimed: For the most part they do not have enough money, or the inclination, to higher meres. This makes them fodder.
- Walloe: Their lifestyle is too simple to require the services of the Stannoer. In fact, many Stannoer **Slayers-in-training** often go into the sewers to hunt these Children, earning this underestimated Tribe's animosity.

- **Borim:** They are not missed. Their meddling only got in the way, and they never hired meres anyway.
- **Deerdon:** They think it's too bad they are gone. Many **Stannoer** felt they could have learned a thing or two from these monsters.
- **Ungoeth:** Considered "goody-goodies". Not missed at all.
- **Donathair:** They are always careful to appear to be on the up and up because of the Donathair. These are the **Stannoer's** greatest enemy because they never hire them and only stand in their way.
- **Vetchen:** Too "pure" and "civilized" to have need of meres. Clashes between cases of interest (and each other) are often.
- **Lordon:** Considered good target practice.

To be continued...

See issue #5 of **The Rifter™** for more about the Tribes of the Moon, including the rest of the tribes, lost, ancient magic, and a dangerous, *human* enemy of the Children.



A.R.C.H.I.E. Three™ vs. The World

Official Source Material By Mark **Sumimoto**

A Statement of Intentions

*It has been several years since the arrival of the Mechanoids. Thanks to the cunning of Hagan and myself, my role in their arrival has remained a secret. I have learned a great deal from them and their technology. Much of it is still a mystery for me, but what I have interpreted I have already put to good use. What concerns me even more is the fact that they originate from a galaxy so far beyond my own. To **think** that an entirely separate, far off galaxy with billions of life forms exists is almost mind-boggling. I am disturbed to know that my own comprehension of the universe is not as encompassing as I had once believed it to be. Even this world I call my own is for the **most** part an enigma to me. There is so much of this world I must first discover if I am to be its master. I know now that I can no longer afford to hide behind the walls of my fortress. I must expose myself to the world in order to learn what I need to know.*

*Armed with the knowledge given to me by the Mechanoids, I will launch my campaign of intelligence on the world. Their occupation of my complex has been a blessing in disguise. Advanced psionic, anti-gravity, and cybernetic technology is now at my disposal to be used as I desire. I have discovered a piece of my heritage floating above the planet. With it, I will extend my vision across the globe. Advanced technology and careful planning will ensure my secrecy. With my partner, **Hagan Lonovich**, by my side, I will create a new army and march across the Earth. The world outside awaits my touch and I will be ready to oblige.*

New Revelations and New Technology

Archie Three was put under much stress by the occupation of the Mechanoids. For the first time in his existence, he felt his life was in danger. Now that they have been defeated, he has a new found appreciation for life and a renewed vigor. The experience has brought him closer to his partner, Hagan, and has strengthened his resolve to master the world around him. He will accomplish this by launching a large scale campaign to gather intelligence and strengthen his organization. He now realizes that his extreme isolation has become a detriment to his plans. His new campaign will put his cover operation, Titan robotics, in the public eye. This will extend the range of his manipulations, while his secret investigations will continue to bolster his intelligence network and data flow.

The Mechanoids are no longer a threat and in their passing they have left an incredible prize in Archie's lap. Before their defeat, the Mechanoids had already retooled a good portion of the **Cyberworks** complex to produce their robot warriors. In addition, they shared much of their knowledge of psionic powers and interfaces, cybernetics and bionics, weapon systems, and anti-gravity propulsion with Archie, believing him to be a kindred spirit and trusted ally. In reality, he was secretly working against them. Now Archie has expanded on their knowledge and technology and incorporated it into his own. He also includes Mechanoid designed robots as a part of his own minions.

Another technology that Archie has put into action is satellite communication. Satellite relaying is a means of communication that became extinct with the Coming of the Rifts. Using satellites, messages were relayed from one side of the world to the other at nearly the speed of light. But due to unknown factors, access to outer space has been closed off to the inhabitants of Rifts Earth. All attempts to launch rockets into space have failed miserably and all the **pre-Rifts** satellites and space stations are believed have been destroyed. This has severely reduced mankind's ability to communicate over long distances, and practically destroys any possibility of uniting the human nations scattered across the globe. However, Archie is privy to inside information and has not given up on satellite communication. The old **Cyberworks** corporation was essential to the old American Empire's space program and had several communication satellites in orbit around the globe. They even had a permanent base on the Moon. Archie has sent communications into space in hopes of finding one of those satellites still in operational status. To his surprise, he discovered one rather quickly. Now communications between Archie and his minions could be done instantly and no one would even know because no one on Earth can detect or even use satellite communication. The satellite was not in one of the established orbits stored in Archie's memory, but he decided that was due to the forces that kept outer space closed off from the people on the planet. He is partially right.

In reality, this satellite was launched after the Coming of the Rifts by the humans still living at the Cyberworks colony on the Moon. It is in a **geo-synchronous** orbit designed to monitor the activities in North America. Unknown to most people on Earth, the Moon colony and most of the major pre-Rifts space stations are still inhabited and are actively isolating themselves from the Earth, through the use of a counter-orbit debris field and killer satellites. Archie has inadvertently discovered a new communication satellite from the Cyberworks Moon colony, now called the CAN Republic. The computer built into the satellite recognizes Archie's access codes and allows him to bounce his signals off of it. Archie's counterpart at the Moon colony knows of the signals coming from Earth, but, in accordance with its programming, it will not respond in order to prevent the Earth from knowing of their existence. Archie's Moon counterpart, unlike **himself**, is not alive.

Due to the satellite and moon colonies' success in isolating themselves from the Earth and vice versa, satellite communication is far beyond the capabilities of all forces on Earth, with the possible exception of Atlantis. It is a completely **undetectable** means of communication simply because no one is looking for it. Archie's resurrection of the technology has given him a powerful advantage over all technologically dependent intelligence organizations on the planet and he intends to use it. The satellite's orbit keeps it more or less over the Great Lakes area at all times. Fortunately, this allows him to constantly keep in touch with his new public operation in the **Manistique Imperium**.

Archie also requires data to be collected from his commercially available robots. To accomplish this requires a recording device that is totally undetected when integrated into the sensor systems of the vehicle. To hide the recorder, it is disguised as a redundant back-up system in the sensory processor. To protect it from psionic detection, he has developed a circuitry system that can block **telemechanic** psionic probes. The recorder uses an ad-

vanced data storage crystal matrix that is far beyond current technology. It records everything that the sensors process and has a storage capacity of five years, give or take a year. To retrieve the data, special equipment must be used which is located in Archie's complex and also in one other location which is described later. **Note:** See **Mutants in Orbit™** for more information about the orbital colonies, the counter-orbit debris field and killer satellites.

Schemes and Dreams

The name Cyberworks is commonly believed to belong to the mysterious manufacturer of the Titan series of robot vehicles. This is only half right. The other half of the truth is that Cyberworks is the pre-Rifts company that created its new owner, the machine entity calling itself Archie Three. It is this being that has restored and retooled the old Cyberworks installation factories to manufacture the Titan robots. The reason behind building and selling these robots is to glean information from its retailers and purchasers about the world and political happenings. This was an effective tool at the beginning of his re-emergence. But now as conflict threatens to polarize and separate the powers of North America, Archie feels that he needs direct, concrete data to confirm the rumors he hears about the happenings around him. He has heard tales of mysterious kingdoms in the Magic Zone. How many are there and what are their intentions? He knows that people fleeing the coming conflict are seeking refuge in the New West. Where are they going and what is waiting for them there? The Xiticix continue to breed and increase their territory. What role will they play in the coming conflict and what is this new predator that plagues them? The **Splogorth** of Atlantis continues to rule his kingdom without resistance. How long can this be allowed to last? Too many questions plague his mind. Too many uncertainties threaten his plans. It is time for Archie to take actions that will secure his future domination of the Earth.

Knowledge is power. Archie knows this well. He knows that for all their brute military power, the Coalition relies most heavily on intelligence reports to secure victory. Smaller armies use surprise to defeat larger forces. Their opponent's ignorance is their ally and it aids them well. Archie now seeks to expand his power base and intelligence network to prevent ignorance from being his enemy. He is trying to accomplish this by expanding his long-time robot selling operation to a level approaching and, someday, surpassing that of Northern Gun, **Triax** and, possibly, Atlantis. He and his partner, Hagan Lonovich, have already begun work on this tremendous undertaking. New robot designs have been put into mass production and have taken the market by storm. Merchants have been recruited and licensed as official dealers of the Titan line of robots. They in turn hire agents to gather information about the market and all influencing factors, including information about wars, new technology, and the plans of other manufacturers. Additionally, they gather information from their customers through normal conversation and inquiries. But the expansion doesn't stop there.

Direct gathering of information is one of the most vital portions of Archie's plan. To facilitate this, he has increased the dispersal and deployment of his automated robot minions tenfold. His robots are 100% loyal to Archie and will perform their tasks unwaveringly before reporting their findings back to

Archie. The most important targets for intelligence gathering are the Coalition States. As the dominant power of North America, they have a strong effect on the future of Archie and his plans. He has agents watching carefully the build-up of forces at Free Quebec and Tolkeen. The conflict at Free Quebec will bring the Coalition closer to his door than ever before and will allow him to observe them directly. Lone Star is known by Archie to have been a **pre-Rifts** genetic research facility and military project. With the unveiling of the new Coalition War Machine, he is interested in finding out exactly how much technology has been salvaged there and how much still remains lost. **Chi-Town** will be relatively removed from the front-lines of the coming wars. But, if the war goes badly for them, the conflict might be carried all the way to the city. This scenario would benefit Archie because he would like to know the extent of their defenses without having to test them himself. Other robot forces have been sent into the Magic Zone, vampire-infested Mexico, the Pecos Empire, and most importantly, Atlantis. Archie absolutely despises the **Splugorth** of Atlantis. He has declared them to be his arch-enemy and longs to destroy them someday.

Another necessary part of his plan is the establishment of a public outlet and interface location for his wares. To accomplish this, Archie has established an official **Cyberworks** retail outlet in New **Cedarville**, a small city-state in the Manistique **Imperium**. This is a welcome addition for the Manistique **Imperium** and a slap in the face for Ishpeming, better known as the Northern Gun. The Manistique Imperium is a well-known manufacturer of weapons and body armor, but has never been able to get into the robot and power armor industry for a number of reasons. Northern Gun has always been the leading commercial power armor and robot manufacturer in North America and a major producer of weapons, body armor, and vehicles. Its major competitors were **Triax**, located in far off Germany, **Naruni Enterprises**, which has just been taken out of the picture by the Coalition States, and **Wilk's Laser Industries**, which limits its operation to laser weapons and equipment. Titan robots were the only other robot vehicles believed to be manufactured in North America. Until now they were always a small operation and never posed a threat to the Northern Gun's dominance of the market. No one knew where they came from. All they knew was that their manufacturer was called Cyberworks.

Now, Cyberworks has made a huge push to upgrade their products and increase their share of the market. With their new commercial facility set up in the Manistique Imperium, Cyberworks has public exposure and a direct outlet to the consumer masses. Needless to say, Northern Gun is not happy. Its friendly neighbor turned friendly competitor has turned up the pressure and Northern Gun was feeling the heat. However, in a move to avoid hostility, Archie dispatched his new agent, Argent Goodson, to make a generous offer to the government at the Northern Gun. The offer allowed Northern Gun to purchase Titan robots at better than wholesale prices. In exchange, all they had to do was not interfere with their operation in Manistique. Northern Gun was a retailer of Titan products before they went public, so they readily accepted the deal. Selling products to the Northern Gun at such low cost may seem like a bad **idea**, but it's not. Aside from the raw materials needed, Archie manufactures the robots without expense. His robots handle all the labor, security, and transportation for the products

so he only needs to make enough of a profit off the deal to pay for the rent and the human help. Overtures were made by Northern Gun towards purchasing the manufacturing secrets of the new Titan robots, but Argent had to emphatically decline. This was accepted with little fuss by the people at Northern Gun and the deal has smoothed out any problems they may have had with their Manistique operation. This acceptance of the new Cyberworks outlet in Manistique goes according to Archie's projections and his journey to power will not be thrown off track by Northern Gun.

This new facility is mostly commercial in nature, dealing with the wholesale and retail exchanges for the Titan robots. All the customer relations are handled by hired human salespeople and coordinated by Argent Goodson, a very special operative created by Archie. Security at this location is provided by Bots disguised as Borgs and Juicers. These disguises allow the Bots to use their superhuman abilities without attracting attention. Through this facility, Archie can firsthand (if you consider his robot minions to be his eyes) gather his customer demographics and control the sales of his products. All of his new products are distributed to official and independent dealers through here. He has also designated this location as his new center of operative dispersal. This was done for two reasons: to give his minions a place to gather and deploy without drawing more attention to his secret installation, and to give them a dispersal point that is more centrally located in North America.

Full repair and maintenance facilities are also located at the Manistique installation, but all of the manufacturing is still done in the old Cyberworks installation where Archie was created and continues to dwell. All the work there is done by Archie's legion of tireless robots. Manufacturing is carried out 24 hours a day, everyday, without pause. The level of technology used in the robots is kept slightly lower than that of the Coalition States. This is done to maintain the illusion that Cyberworks is just another Earth-based manufacturer, not an extra-dimensional or alien power. Note that in the fields of artificial intelligence and robot **electronics**, Archie is far superior to any terrestrial power. However, his publicly available creations cannot surpass the current level of technology without exposing or at least drawing unwanted suspicion to his true operation.

Another intelligence gathering system that Archie has instituted is also reliant on the Manistique operation. Using a combination of **Mechanoid** and Earth technology, he has developed an audio/video recording device that is absolutely **undetectable** when installed into the sensor system of a high-tech vehicle, such as a robot vehicle, but not power armor. It records everything the sensors process on to a crystal memory matrix capable of storing five years of information, give or take a year. Every one of Archie's new commercially available robots is equipped with this secret **audio/video** recorder. It is fully integrated into the vehicle's sensor system and, if discovered, it appears to be a redundant back-up system. If anyone other than Archie's bots or elite tries to repair or physically tamper with it, the system will self-destruct leaving behind nothing but a smoldering husk. Any attempts to hack into the system will trigger a complex, modulating series of codes that only an artificially intelligent **super-computer**, like Archie, can decipher. Even more amazing is that telemechanics and psionic probes will also be rebuffed by the system. This psionic barrier is possible through a combina-

tion of Mechanoid technology and Archie's own personal knowledge and familiarity with psionic powers. Needless to say, the means to circumvent these defenses is far beyond the current technological level of the Coalition States and even **Triax**. Atlantis and Japan might be able to develop the means to enter the systems, but it would require several years of study. Even if someone did manage to hack into the stored information, all he or she would find is the exploits of the robot's past crew.

In order to retrieve this data, Archie, through **Cyberworks**, has offered free maintenance and repair services for all Titan robots taken to the new facility he has set up in the Manistique **Imperium**. Whenever a robot is brought in to be serviced, it is taken to a secured structure in the center of the installation where no one, except Archie's disguised minions, is allowed. The area is fully enclosed except for one service entrance. There is no air circulation system and no connection to outside power sources. Furthermore, no apparent workers exit the building at any time. After close inspection, the facility would seem to be a miniature, environmentally sealed **arcology** designed to isolate its workers from the outside. In reality, the building doesn't need fresh air circulating through it because its workers don't breathe. All of the repair and maintenance crews of the installation are Archie's robot minions. All are programmed with the full schematics of all of Archie's commercially available robots. Repairs are done with mechanical precision and in half the expected and quoted time. The remaining time is spent downloading the stored information within the Titan's data crystal. The information is transferred to a central computer in the building and transmitted to **Archie's** secret installation via his rediscovered satellite relay. Only these specially prepared Bots are given the secret codes to access the information. Besides the Bots, only Archie, Hagan Lonovich, and Argent Goodson know these secret codes.

Using all of these methods and facilities, Archie will discover many things about the world and take a step toward its domination. However, his increased activity also opens opportunities for others to learn about him. Archie realizes this and is working extra cautiously. He has developed an elaborate route between his manufacturing plant and his commercial installation. It begins by transporting his goods to a secret base at the seashore via underground tunnels. At the base, there waits a special submarine. Once loaded, the sub navigates up the coast to the Saint Lawrence River outlet. It travels near the bottom of the waterways using a silent propulsion system. This system utilizes anti-gravity propulsion systems cannibalized from defeated **Mechanoids**. It pushes the sub forward without the noise created by a conventional propeller. It also has a sound buffering shell that greatly reduces its sound signature and internal noise. If detected, the sub will probably be identified as a soft organic, probably an S.D.C. whale or other sea creature, and be left alone, unless it takes action first. Once it enters Manistique **Imperium** waters, it returns to conventional propulsion to seemingly pop up from nowhere. It docks and unloads its cargo at the Cyberworks installation using robotic cranes. No crew members are ever seen getting on or departing from the sub. Once its cargo is unloaded, the sub submerges and heads westward using conventional propulsion before reaching greater depths. Upon reaching deeper water, it resumes its silent running and turns back to the Saint Lawrence waterway. Anyone attempting to

track the sub will lose track of its signal and continue to probe westward. Using this route and its silent propulsion system, no technological force can track the sub back to Archie. Magical forces are another matter, but so far Archie is confident that the major magic-wielding forces will not bother trying to track him. If magic forces do become a problem, Archie will consider hiring Nega-psychics or **Psi-nullifiers** or even other mages to cloak his activities, but has no plans to do so yet.

Targets for Intelligence Gathering

Archie uses intelligence gathered by merchants and his dealers as his major sources of information outside North America. His resources are limited and he cannot spend too much energy worrying about what lies across the ocean. However, the happenings across North America are his areas of major concern and require his direct investigation.

His robot minions have been dispatched all across the continent. The majority are on short term missions. They return to Archie's installation to report their findings frequently and have a constant, rotating deployment. The rest are on extended research expeditions and will be away for several years before returning. Some of the robots on long term assignment will occasionally report their findings to Argent at the Manistique installation. From there the data can be sent directly to Archie via the advanced satellite relay.

Most of the robots dispatched into the field will be his A-63 all-purpose robots, A-64 master robots, and **AA-60** Hunter-Destroyers. Other robots include the **Shemarrian** Riders and their Monst-rex mounts. They appear to be alien female Borgs riding bionic monsters. Archie also deploys **Thinman** and Runt model Mechanoid robots. This is usually done to keep hostile targets from associating these spies with Archie's other robots. Archie gained their manufacturing plans during his association with the Mechanoids he inadvertently brought to Earth. So far no one has any idea these robots are the products of Cyberworks or even of Earth technology. Targets for direct investigations by Archie's robot minions include:

1. The Coalition States: He has about eighty robots in and around the area of Free Quebec to observe their coming war with the Coalition. Fifty or so robots are monitoring the arms build-up in the area of Tolkeen. About forty robots have been sent to **Chi-town** and Lone Star to examine their defenses and hidden technology. Other robots are scattered about Iron Heart and Missouri monitoring their activities there. They generally move in small squads and form large assault groups only when required to do so by Archie, Hagan, or Argent.

2. The Magic Zone: This is a large area, with many kingdoms and republics scattered here and there about it. Magic is something that Archie still does not understand, and this is a weakness for him. With the increased activity from the Federation of Magic from the Magic Zone, Archie feels growing pressure to learn more about the area. He has dispatched over two hundred Bots, in addition to the hundreds of Shemarrian Riders and Monst-rex already in the area. Of major concerns for Archie are the Federation of Magic, the weapons dealer, **Stormspire**, and the legendary kingdom of Psyscape. Lone operatives, pairs, and groups of six or less are the norm for these robots.

3. Lazlo and New Lazlo: Only twenty robots have been sent to these magic nations. They are seen as powerful, but reluctant,

opponents to his plans. He believes their military might to be limited and not of concern until he begins his conquest. However, even though they are peaceful nations, they do have a strong military and the support of many powerful creatures of magic. Again, Archie's ignorance of magic causes him to underestimate these nations.

4. Mexico: The vampires of Mexico are believed by most in the North to be savage, unorganized beasts. However, this is a misconception promoted by the leaders of the vampire hordes, the Vampire Intelligences and the Master Vampires. They are an unknown quantity that Archie finds disturbing. He knows that his forces will be relatively safe against vampire attacks, but that conventional weapons will also be of no use against the vampires. He wishes to determine the best way to combat these vermin should it come to that. Over thirty robots and dozens of **Shemarrians** and **Monst-rex** have been sent into the area. A number of **Shemarrians** have even joined vampire hunting groups, like Reid's Rangers, to learn anti-vampire tactics from the experts.

5. The Pecos Empire: The bandits of these badlands have been nothing but trouble for the Coalition States and most other civilized places. Fortunately, the power of these raiders is spread out among a hundred different clans and gangs. Reports of leaders trying to unite the bandits have concerned many people, including Archie. About fifty **Shemarrian** riders and their **Monst-rex** mounts have been sent into the area. A group of twenty is posing as a new gang, but several of their members will infiltrate other gangs to gather information. About twenty other robots are also deployed in the region.

6. Xiticix territory: The Xiticix appear to be humanoid, alien insects from another dimension. They inhabit the western territories of old Canada and are extremely territorial. Their breeding rate is phenomenal and thousands upon thousands of new Xiticix have been added to the ranks of those first rifted to Rifts Earth. Most human nations agree that, if left unchecked, the Xiticix may overrun the continent and, possibly, the planet. These aliens also worry Archie and he continually sends dozens of Mechanoid style robots into the area to replace the ones discovered and destroyed by the Xiticix. The Xiticix encountered some Mechanoid forces during their arrival on Earth and recognize Archie's robots as those of the Mechanoids. This will keep the Xiticix from associating them with his other minions. Small squads and pairs are standard deployment for these troops.

7. Atlantis: The **Splugorth** are Archie's most hated enemies. Consequently, he has sent over a hundred spies and agents to the continent. Their primary targets there will be the city of **Splynn**, the technologically advanced **Kittani**, and the secret workings of the stone pyramids. So far all the information received from Atlantis indicates that its military is far more powerful than the Coalition States, and has connections to forces on other worlds as well. This is a bitter discovery for Archie, but he feels that subversive actions against the **Splugorth** may be able to weaken them enough to make them vulnerable to outside attack. He has also learned that the **Kittani** have a burning hatred for the Mechanoids. This information will prove useful if the Mechanoids ever make a reappearance or if Archie decides to launch any attacks on Atlantis. An attack by Mechanoid robots on Atlantis will send the **Kittani** into a frenzy and they may forget their loyalties to the **Splugorth** to pursue them. This would

weaken the continent's defense, possibly giving Archie or other forces a minute chance at launching a successful assault on Atlantis. Of course, it will be some time before Archie or any Earth army will even consider attacking Atlantis.

8. Other targets: Hundreds of robots deployed as small groups, pairs, and lone operatives have been sent into the New West, along the East Coast, and to other nations within North America, as well. Primary targets for future investigation include: **Triax** and the NGR, South America, and New Camelot in England.

The Titan Robotics Complex

At the small city-state of New **Cedarville** in the Manistique Imperium, **Cyberworks** has built its new Titan Robotics Complex. It is a huge structure compared to the relatively small town it was built next to. Its walls circle the array of buildings within. Constructed of Mega-damage steel and concrete, they are designed to contain any accidental weapon discharges as well as repel enemy attacks. A single large entrance is the only way in and out of the complex. Observant adventurers will notice that there are no weapon emplacements along the wall. All defensive capabilities are provided by the swarm of Flying Titan power armor overhead and the combat ready Titan robots on the ground. In addition, a security force of faux Juicers and Borgs maintain the peace in the interior and will jump to defend the complex in an instant.

The Main Showroom and Business Center

Within the complex there are three large buildings. The main building is the showroom and business center. Here all the business transactions take place, and prospective customers can examine the various offerings from Titan Robotics. Four floors comprise this structure, but only the first two are open to the public. On the first level, the Titan robots are on display for the public to see. The ceilings are fifty feet (15.2 m) high to accommodate the large robot vehicles. Salespeople roam the floor prepared to pounce upon anyone holding a credit card.

The second floor is designated as the financial transaction center. All transactions are handled in the various offices that fill this level, and all sales are handled in credits. Universal, **NG/MI**, and Black Market credits are all accepted. All funds are transferred to **NG/MI** credits and handled by the main banking institute of the Manistique Imperium. Financing is possible with larger, established companies, such as Larsen's Brigade, or governments, such as Los Alamo. Even large criminal organizations, such as Saber Lasar's faction of Pecos Raiders and the Black Market, are given finance options, but not small groups or individuals. Bartering may be considered, if the customer has some special item to trade, such as a rune sword or alien device. Anyone seeking to trade such items will be sent to deal with the head of the complex operation, Argent Goodson. Alien technology is of special interest to Argent and his master, Archie. Special deals and discounts can be arranged if the item is very unique or advanced. Magic items are of limited interest to Archie and are accepted at 25% the market value. However, he does realize that understanding these items is vital to his plans and he will stockpile them for later study. Common magic and TW items and Earth equipment will never be considered for trade. Anyone trying to trade a **Shemarrian** rail gun, **Monst-rex**

mount, or other **Cyberworks** technology will be politely turned away and asked where they got such a device. Then, Argent will contact Archie and have a robot hit squad sent after the would-be **barterers**.

Level three is administrative space. Only company personnel are allowed on this level. All electronic paperwork is filed in the computers located here. Records are kept of all the robots sold and to whom they are sold. The "human" resources department also operates here. They handle all the hiring, training, and payment of wages for the human and D-bee personnel. Minor personnel disputes are also handled by this department. Major disputes require Argent Goodson's attention, but this has not yet been required. The company lounges are also found on this level.

The top level is off limits to the general personnel. It is reserved for Argent Goodson and his chosen elite. Argent's private office and satellite link to Archie Three are located here. A squad of four Juicer Bots and four Borg Bots are permanently stationed at the entrance to this level. Their assignment is to guard Argent and the satellite link with their mechanical lives. Any unauthorized personnel that wander onto this level will be sternly warned to return to the lower level. Any resistance will be met with force.

The Armory and Storeroom

The largest building in the complex is located towards the rear, at the point farthest from the entrance. It is a single-floored structure with a fifty foot (15.2 m) high ceiling. Within its thick walls, Titan robots stand shoulder to shoulder. Suits of power armor line the far wall with steel gate floors partitioning that area of the building into three, with additional suits stacked upon each level. A number of Juicer Bots, Borg Bots, and **Bot-controlled** Titan power armor and robot vehicles stand guard outside this building. They are constantly vigilant against trouble and cannot be bribed, mind controlled, or otherwise distracted from their duties.

The Service Center

A **single**, twenty foot (6.1 m) entrance leads the way into the comparatively small, third building. Anyone looking at it from the outside will wonder how giant robot vehicles can be repaired in such a confined-looking building. One look at the inside will dispel all such wonderment and give rise to all new questions. Robot vehicles and power armor are brought into the service center on truck beds. Once in the building, the trucks are driven onto a platform, the driver gets out and returns to the business center, and the platform descends into the depths of the structure. As the platform lowers, a series of sensor scans **and** sterilizing treatments sweep the robot and the truck. Only characters enchanted with the spell, Invisibility: Superior, will escaped detection.

The platform shaft extends one hundred feet (30.5 m) beneath the ground. Once reaching the bottom, a Bot will step onto the platform and drive the truck off and into one of ten repair bays. Living conditions on this level are poor. The air is circulated through a sanitization and anti-static system in the walls. No fresh air is brought in from the outside, so humans will not have enough air to breathe. Temperature is not controlled and can range from near freezing to beyond boiling depending on the amount of work being done and the outside temperature.

These unhealthy conditions may hinder the work of human technicians, but the Bots assigned to do all the work are not bothered one bit. Repairs and servicing are done at incredible efficiency and big jobs that require long hours of labor can be done non-stop until completed. The other work done by these Bots is the downloading of the information stored by the secret recording device concealed in the sensor system of these new robots. This information is fed along an underground conduit to Argent Goodson's office, where it is transmitted via satellite to the Cyberworks **complex** and Archie Three.

The Courtyard and Testing Grounds

Outside the main buildings of the complex is a secured, open air testing ground. There, customers can test out the various models of robots and power armor that Cyberworks has to offer. A track is set up to test handling and performance. Test flights are regulated and chaperoned to prevent theft. Targets are placed against a special, heavily reinforced wall to be blown apart at will. Missile systems are not allowed to be tested, but rail guns and other heavy weapons are. Hand to hand combat capabilities can be tested on used robots. Any testing outside the designated area is prohibited. Anyone attempting to enter the testing range must be wearing body armor or will not be allowed.

The City-State of New Cedarville

Outside the facility's thick, Mega-Damage walls, the city of New Cedarville is prospering. The Titan Complex is attracting adventurers and mercenaries in search of high quality robot vehicles. But the Titan Complex offers no services other than robot sales and servicing. Consequently, travelers must find housing and meals in the outside town. The shops and inns in New Cedarville are bristling with new, wealthy customers. New restaurants and hotels have popped up. In addition, the influx of permanent residents looking for work in the new complex means an increase in housing construction, schools, and all commercial businesses. The only downside is the large number of mechanics and operators that have been turned down for jobs at the complex. Consequently, a number of new repair shops have opened up outside the complex, but the number of mechanics still far outstrip the local demand. Most must go elsewhere to find work.

Manistique **Imperium** and Northern Gun armament sales are also on the rise and Titan Robotics seems to have drawn new customers into the market. New weapons merchants have flooded New Cedarville. All MI and NG weapons and body armor can be found here, as well as a smattering of **Triax**, **Coalition** contraband and other equipment. A small supply of **Tecno-Wizard** and magic weapons are also available and several **Techno-Wizards** have set up shop in the city. Only **Naruni** weapons are strictly prohibited as per Manistique's alliance with the Coalition States.

Crime has also **risen**, but the increased revenue to the city has allowed the city council to hire more peacekeepers. A steady stream of adventurers and headhunters looking for work in the city has kept prospective police officers in strong supply. The Black Market has also set up shop in the city, allowing criminals to sell their services and merchandise.



Key Personnel and Management

Argent Goodson

When Archie Three and his partner, **Hagan** Lonovich, hatched their plan to go public while maintaining their privacy, they realized that they needed an agent to run the MI complex. That agent would have to be absolutely loyal to them. Archie's first idea was to have Hagan run the operation, but this idea was quickly discarded. Hagan provided Archie with much needed human perspective, which he needed to keep close to home. He also needed access to Hagan's imagination to keep his creative process rolling. Another agent was needed to fill the role.

Archie and Hagan decided that to have the perfect agent, they would need to build it. Much time was spent planning out the parameters of the robot's programming and function. The robot needed to have a convincing personality and a cunning intellect. Its knowledge had to range from robotics, to the supernatural, to human behavior. Even with the most advanced artificial neural net possible, much of these skills had to be learned, not programmed.

A neural intelligence net was carefully assembled and programmed with everything that Archie could give him. This new intelligence was placed into an M.D.C. endoskeleton and surrounded by artificial flesh. This was the first time since before the Great Cataclysm that he made use of his android building capabilities, even in a partial fashion. The artificial flesh and hu-

man appearance would enable his creation to walk among humans unnoticed, and the robotic endoskeleton provided it with superhuman strength, speed, and reflexes. All it needed was a name.

Archie decided that this being was to be far more than a mere servant. It was his son, and what a good son he would be. "Goodson", he thought, "is just as good a name as the next and is a common enough last name among humans." Then he needed a first name. Archie decided upon a derivation of his own name. He computed permutations of his own name, Archie, and finally came up with Argent. He thought it was a sophisticated sounding name. It is a merger of the words "Archie" and "agent", which was slightly amusing to him, and is also another name for silver, denoting his agent's metallic nature. Hagan was less than impressed with Archie's choice of name, but decided to stay out of the process and let him have his way. If Hagan was not aware of Archie's lack of imagination before the name hunting began, he is well aware of it now. Thus, Argent Goodson was born. Then the learning began.

For Argent to perform his duties, he was going to have to interact with humans and other life forms everyday. Social graces, behavioral patterns, and slang terminology were all programmed into Argent, but he needed to learn how to apply these skills. He needed instincts that are only gained through learning and experience. To teach Argent these human qualities, Archie sent Hagan to hire scholars, mystics, and warriors to share their knowledge and insight with him. Using the same psionic link system that was first developed to teach Archie, Argent became mentally linked to these people. Using a combination of this link and conventional teaching, Argent quickly gained vast insight into human nature. In addition, he was taught lore and combat skills and honed his other skills that require a human perspective. Within a year, Argent Goodson had honed the skills that would allow him to perform his mission. He understood the human animal and gained his own perspective on them. He began to think for himself. He questioned his programming and wondered if humans were as inferior to him and his master as his programming dictated. He pondered the question in his electronic mind and came to a solid conclusion. Humans destroyed their world and let monsters, like the **Splugorth**, loose upon it. Humans continue to war with themselves, instead of focusing on the alien threats. It became clear that his master had evolved beyond the level of his creators and was destined to be their master. He almost felt proud to be the "son" of such a superior being. He looked to Archie and with a cold, firm voice vowed his allegiance to him. Then he turned to his human teachers, thanked them for their teachings, and vaporized them with a burst from a plasma rifle. Argent Goodson was ready to take his place as the head of operations at the **Manistique** complex.

Since the commercial complex has opened in MI, Argent has been right there taking care of business. His negotiations with the Northern Gun have ensured that they will welcome the entrance of Titan Robotics into the open market. His deals with the Black Market have allowed Archie's products to be spread across the continent and beyond. Thanks in no small part to Argent, Archie's plans are running smoothly and his data gathering capabilities have bloomed past his expectations. In the hierarchy of Archie's regime, Argent has earned the third spot behind Hagan. It is a position that Argent would be quite proud of, even if his programming did not require it.

Real Name: Argent Goodson (Archie has not given him a model designation because Argent is meant to be one-of-a-kind.)

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: **I.Q.** 30, **M.A.** 24, **P.S.** 30, **P.P.** 24, **P.B.** 20, **Spd.** 120, other attributes do not apply. Argent has developed a strong personality and it shows in his M.A.

Hit Points: None

S.D.C. 100 for his artificial exterior.

M.D.C. 200 for his endoskeleton.

Height: 6'4"

Weight: 500 lbs

Age: 2 years, but looks to be in his early thirties. His power source is a salvaged Mechanoid power crystal, with a remaining energy life of 70 years and a back-up battery that can maintain his normal capabilities for 24 hours.

P.P.E.: None

I.S.P.: None

Disposition: Argent is a stern and uncompromising negotiator. He speaks his mind and does not engage in needless posturing. When he closes a deal, he does so without celebration and quickly moves to the next challenge. He seems to have an iron will and does not waver under tough situations, and does not give in to demands, even when his life is threatened. His body language reveals nothing about his intentions and many of his employees feel nervous in his presence. He has a cold, heartless businessman with his only concern being the bottom line and the furthering of his master's plan. Actually, he knows that the money is not important to his master, but feels that it is another tool of power that should be amassed for the greater good of the plan.

Experience Level: Fourth level Bot, but this only applies to his secondary skills. All other skills and abilities do not change with experience and make him equal to a fifteenth level businessman and negotiator and tenth level **Headhunter**.

Magic Knowledge: None, but knows Lore: Magic at 50%.

Psionic Powers: None, but knows Lore: Psychic at 94%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Boxing, Wrestling, Robot Combat: Elite in all Titan robots and power armor, and all weapon proficiencies at tenth level proficiency.

Attacks Per Melee: Five attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +3 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +4 to roll with **punch/impact**.

Skills of Note: Tactical knowledge of business strategies and relations are part of his basic programming. He is programmed with all Communications, Domestic, Electrical, Mechanical, Medical, Military, Physical, Pilot, Pilot Related, Science, and Computer skills at 94%. Speaks and reads all Earth human languages, plus Dragonese and **Splugorth**, at 94%. Wilderness Survival, Land Navigation, Carpentry, Lore: Demons and Monsters, and Lore: Psychic are also known at 94% proficiency. All other Espionage, Rogue, and Wilderness skills are known at 60%.

Cybernetics: None, outside of his robotic endoskeleton and cybernetic brain.

Weapons of Note: He has no integral weapon systems and usually does not bother to carry any with him. In case of an attack, he prefers to let the security robots handle the problem. **However**, he is proficient with all forms of weaponry, and Titan robots and power armor. He has a suit of Titan Heavy

power armor readily available for his personal use and has access to all **Cyberworks** weapons and robots.

Description: A handsome blonde with deep green eyes and an absolutely flawless complexion. He is proportioned like a cross between a gymnast and a body builder. His female employees become faint and practically melt in his presence. Archie modeled Argent's body after the image of a male model in his memory bank. His face is patterned after a handsome **pre-Rifts** actor best known for a disaster film of the late 20th century which he performed in during his youth. The name is lost among Archie's vast files, but he believes it was Italian.

Desmond Masters

Raven McCoy is a shadow from Hagan Lonovich's past. Hagan was a long time associate of this master of manipulation, until she abandoned Hagan at a time when he really needed her help. Hagan has longed for the day when he would re-encounter the scoundrel and show her the grandeur and power he has been blessed with. To see Raven begging at his feet in need of assistance, and walking away from the groveling sycophant, would have brought the greatest joy for Hagan. Now, years after they parted ways, Raven McCoy has fallen on hard times and sought the refuge of a steady income. She traveled to the Manistique **Imperium** in search of employment. She found it at the new Titan Robotics Complex and Hagan doesn't even know. The reason being that Raven McCoy is now calling herself Desmond Masters and is now a handsome man. Desmond Masters is a Changeling.

Desmond Masters took his name upon arriving at the Manistique Imperium and has had many names other than Raven McCoy over the years. He came to Rifts Earth over a hundred years ago and has been causing trouble ever since. As a Changeling, he can mimic the form of any humanoid being he encounters. His race also possesses the gift of charisma. With these two talents, many Changelings have developed their talents as con-men and manipulators, as well as spies and assassins. Desmond has perfected these natural talents and augments them with his other gift of psionic mastery. Desmond Masters is a Mind Melter. He has made his living swindling, cheating, and downright robbing unsuspecting victims out of their valuables. But his proudest accomplishments are the times he has hustled professional gamblers and con-men out of their money. His natural charm and power to influence others has led him on a life of fun and profit at the expense of others. But a few years ago that changed.

A few years back, he focused his talents on hustling at the gambling table. He desired the challenge of outplaying professional **cardsharps** and out doing their cheating with some cheating of his own. Calling himself the Rook, he quickly mastered every card game and made a reputation for himself in the New West as the most cunning **cardsharp** in the territory. He was doing very well for himself, until an unknown gambler sat down at his table during a game of poker. The Rook could feel the confidence emanating from this stranger. He scanned him for any unnatural abilities and found none. He also tried to scan his mind, but for some reason could not. Still, the Rook was arrogant and confident after a long series of wins and welcomed the stranger to the table. Game after game, the stranger won hand after hand. The Rook desperately tried all of his tricks and all in vain.



Finally, he got a **precognitive** flash of his opponents hand. He looked at his four aces and knew he had him beat. Before placing the cards on the table, the Rook raised the stakes. He placed the promise of all his worldly possessions on the table and dared the stranger to do the same. The stranger did so and raised the stakes again and placed his future in gambling on the line. Whoever lost the hand was to never gamble again. The Rook wavered for a moment, taken aback by the odd wager but, remembering the hand he saw in his flash, accepted the wager anyway. The moment of truth was upon them and the Rook smiled as he laid down his handful of aces. The smile melted away when he saw the stranger lay down a joker followed by the king, queen, jack, and ten of hearts, a Royal Flush! The Rook was furious. He lunged at the stranger and demanded to know how he picked up those cards. The stranger just smiled and said, "Next time, you better quit when you're ahead." Then, he disappeared in a cloud of smoke along with everything that

the Rook had in his possession, including his clothes. Everything he had was gone. In a rage, he ran off into the wilderness and was never seen again until he popped up at New Cedarville.

Now calling himself Desmond Masters, he entered New Cedarville with the intention of picking up his old habits, but soon discovered, he could not. No matter how hard he tried or what tricks he pulled, he could not win a single hand of cards or a wager on any event. He tried to get back into con games and made a modest living for himself, but could not pull in the kind of revenues he could in the past. He determined that the stranger he faced on that fateful day was some sort of god or godling and that he had cursed him to a modest, **unfulfilling** existence. Depressed and in need of a steady paycheck, Desmond walked into the main **office** of the Titan Robotics Complex and applied for a sales position. Before he could reach the human resources office, Desmond bumped into Argent Goodson, the head of operations at the complex. For a moment, Desmond felt a familiar presence in the android and became intrigued by him. Argent also felt some kind of awareness when he bumped into Desmond and hired him on the spot. Argent recognized Desmond's special talents and made him head of the sales division. Argent also calls upon Desmond for any delicate negotiations and situations that require subtle coercion. Desmond does his job well and is reaping benefits beyond anything he had previously. He does not like the fact that his employer is immune to his charms and psionic manipulations and wants to **find** out his true origins. He is quietly trying to find out more about his mysterious employer and the even more mysterious **Cyberworks**. Should he uncover the Aberdeen complex, he will be humbled by the fact that his old associate **Hagan** is holding on to the reins of its power and try to connive his way into a piece of the action, if Archie doesn't kill him first.

Real Name: Unknown

Alignment: Miscreant

Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 28, M.A. 24, P.S. 16, P.P. 12, P.E. 9, P.B. variable, 6 in his natural form, Spd. 10

Hit Points: 68

S.D.C.: 25

Height: Varies, but usually around 6 feet.

Weight: Varies a little, but usually 150 lbs.

Age: 242 years, but usually looks to be in his mid-thirties.

P.P.E.: 15

I.S.P.: 308

Disposition: Using a combination of his natural charisma, shape-shifting ability, and psionic powers, Desmond Masters is capable of manipulating all but the most strong willed. He can cover lies with lies and makes it sound like the truth. Since his induction into the company, he has proven to be an incomparable negotiator and salesperson. But as on top of the world as he **is**, he still wants more. Overtly, he is loyal and dedicated to Argent and the company, but secretly he longs to control him and discover its secrets. If he ever discovers the truth about the company, Archie will surely send a robot hit squad after him. It would seem that the advice the stranger gave him all those years ago had a bit more truth to it than Desmond would believe.

Experience Level: 15th level Mind Melter (Changeling).

Magic Knowledge: None, lore and legends only.

Psionic Powers: All sensitive, plus Alter Aura, Death Trance, Resist Fatigue, Deaden Senses, Bio-regeneration, Detect

Psionics, Induce Sleep, Empathic Transmission, Bio-manipulation, Hypnotic Suggestion, Mind Bond, Mind Wipe, Mentally Possess Others, Mind Block Auto-defense, Group Mind Block, Psychosomatic **Disease**, Psionic Invisibility, Psychic **Omni-sight**, Radiate Horror Factor, **TK-Super**, TK Force Field, Psychic Body Field, Psi-Sword, and **Psi-Shield**. He is a master psionic and requires a 10 or higher to save vs. psionics, plus M.E. bonus.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. sword, W.P. knife.

Attacks Per Melee: Five physical or psionic attacks per melee.

Bonuses: +3 to initiative, +3 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +6 to pull punch, +4 to roll with **punch/impact**, critical strike on 19 or 20 and from behind, +4 to save vs. possession, +1 to save vs. mind control and magic illusions, +10 vs. Horror Factor, and +7 vs. psionics.

Skills of Note: Speaks and is literate in American, Spanish and Dragonese at 98%. Disguise and Impersonation 98%, Interrogation Techniques 98%, Seduction 98%, Pick Pockets 98%, Palming 98%, Concealment 98%, Computer Operation 98%, and Intelligence 98%. He used to know **Cardsharp** at 98%, but now he can only perform card cheating skills at **15%**.

Cybernetics: None

Weapons of Note: Has a magic dagger that inflicts 1D4X10 M.D. and returns after being thrown, and a flaming sword (4D6 M.D.). **Refrains** from using technological weapons or any weapons that are difficult to conceal.

Description: Usually appears to be a tall, slender man in his mid-thirties with black hair and dark eyes. Wears only the finest clothing and stylish body armor (45 M.D.C.). In his natural form, he is a hairless, unattractive humanoid that is tall and lanky in build.

Cyberworks Secret Security Bots

When Archie decided to launch his plan to expand his network, he knew that he needed absolute secrecy and security. His security team had to be completely dependable. The first idea that came to his twisted mind was his Bots. However, they would have to occasionally be exposed to and possibly interact with traders, merchants, and customers. Obviously, they cannot be overtly guarded by his usual defense force without revealing the true extent of **Cyberworks'** technology, and having their true nature exposed would seriously impair Archie's big intelligence gathering plan to say the least. This was a serious problem for Archie. Due to a psychological quirk, he feels the need to make all of his creations stronger, faster, and "better" than humans. Therefore, disguising his security Bots as mere humans was completely out of the question. He turned his attention to augmented humans. Borgs were the obvious solution. They are nearly the equal of his Bots as far as strength and speed are concerned and they are mechanical in nature, a big plus as far as Archie is concerned. Disguising a Bot to look like a Borg is simple and effective, but it does raise some eyebrows. Bionic conversion is a costly process and can only be done in large numbers by the wealthiest nations, such as the Coalition and Northern Gun. So to have a security team composed entirely of Borgs may make people suspicious that Cyberworks may have some powerful secret backer (which it does). Another disguise also had to be employed.

He decided that Juicers were the best choice. Juicers are more affordable than Borgs and their reflexes and agility are superior to all other augmented humans. The Juicer process is offered by a number of feudal kingdoms to its soldiers. M.O.M. or Crazy conversion is cheaper, but it erodes the subject's sanity and most nations can't afford to have insane defenders. All of these factors make Juicers the most common augmented humans in North America and the ideal disguise for Archie's security Bots.

The one drawback to this disguise is the fact that most Juicers have even quicker reflexes than Archie's standard Bots. To overcome this problem, Archie has developed a streamlined combat program and sensor relay system for these Juicer Bots. Using advanced fiber optic signal relays, the **Bot's** sensors can transmit data to its combat computer at the speed of light. This data is processed at lightning speed and an appropriate reaction is determined and sent to the body using the same fiber optic system. Unfortunately, this process does not allow for complex reactions. Attacks are always answered with a counter-attack or dodged without consideration to whatever may be behind them. However, these are the same reactions that Juicers usually respond with, so they do not compromise the disguise and actually add to it.

The other security robots are disguised as robot and power armor pilots. This is an incredibly simple disguise that only involves the installation of an artificial intelligence and endoskeleton into an already existing Titan robot or power armor. These robots mainly handle defense and problems that have already become violence. Because of this, they do not perform a great deal of social interaction and do require much of a personality, not that the other Bots do.

So with these three disguises decided upon, Archie set out to manufacture his new creations. His next problem was the fact that Borgs and Juicers all have different configurations and appearances. **Triax** Borg models are standardized, but Archie thought that having all his Borgs look alike would cause too much controversy and attract unwanted inquiries. The artificial faces of the Juicer Bots and Borg Bots are all custom designed by Hagan Lonovich using elements from the faces of people he has encountered. In fact, some of his designs look just like people he has known in the past. If any of the player characters have encountered Hagan, they may run into a familiar face if they visit the Cyberworks robot outlet.

In addition to these disguised robots, Archie has also dispatched a number of AA-50 Insecton robots to keep watch over the interior of the repair and maintenance building at the complex. Outside the confines of the city-state of New **Cedarville**, several A-63 all-purpose robots, A-64 master robots, AA-60 Hunter-Destroyer robots, and **Shemarrian** Warriors with their Monst-rax mounts are on vigilant patrols for any potential danger to the complex and to hunt down any thieves. See **Rifts Sourcebook One** for the stats on AA-50, A-63, A-64, **Shemarrians**, and Monst-Rex mounts. See **The Mechanoids: Rifts Sourcebook Two** for details on the AA-60 Hunter-Destroyers, as well as stats on the Mechanoids and their robots.

The Juicer Bot

Archie's plan to expand his intelligence network requires public locations for his front company, and these locations require security. Disguise and stealth must be employed. To better blend in with the environment, Archie has stooped to disguising his Bots as non-mechanical beings. However, his Bots will always be stronger and faster than humans and this will be apparent in any combat situations. For this reason, he has chosen to disguise a number of his Bots as Juicers. They all have fully articulated features and faces designed by Hagan Lonovich. However, they tend to be stern and stiff in their facial expressions anyway.

A-100J Juicer Bot

Model Designation: A-100J

Class: Fully Automated Self-Sufficient Security Robot

Crew: None; artificial robot intelligence.

M.D.C. by Location:

Hands (2) - 10 each plus 5 from body armor

Arms (2) - 50 each plus 20 from body armor

Legs (2) - 100 each plus 30 from body armor

*Head - 50 plus 30 from body armor helmet

**Main Body - 250 plus 45 from body armor

***False skin overlay - 100 S.D.C.

* Destroying the head will eliminate all optics and sensor systems. In all cases, this will shut the Bot down and trigger the self-destruct mechanism. The head is a small and difficult target to hit, especially on a moving target. Therefore, it can only be hit on a called shot at a penalty of -3 to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will effectively destroy the Bot and activate the self-destruct mechanism, leaving a pile of useless scrap. Note: Juicer Bots are equipped with Juicer Plate Armor as a part of their disguise.

*** Depleting the M.D.C. of any part of the body armor will expose the false skin overlay. Any additional Mega-Damage will destroy at least a portion of the skin and reveal the metal shell of the Bot. They are programmed to retreat the instant their body armor is depleted, unless they believe they can kill their opponents and any witnesses.

Speed

Running: 150 M.P.H. (240 km) maximum, but rarely exceeds 60 M.P.H. (96 km) in order to maintain their disguise. Note that the act of running does not tire the Bot and can be maintained indefinitely.

Leaping: Their legs are strong and designed for leaping. Maximum length after a short run is 40 feet (12.2 m) and maximum height is 30 feet (9.1 m). Reduce distances by half if attempted from a standing position. They usually limit their leaps to 30 feet (9.1 m) lengthwise and 20 feet (6.1 m) high to maintain their disguise.

Flying: Not possible without the use of a jet pack or other vehicle.

Range: The nuclear power pack gives the Bot approximately 20 years of use, even under the most strenuous conditions.

Statistical Data

Height: 6 to 7 feet (1.8-2.1 m)

Width: 2.5 to 3 feet (.8-.9 m)

Length: 1.5 to 2 ft (.5-.6 m)

Weight: 700 to 800 lbs (315-360 kg)

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. of 40.

Cargo: None, but can carry up to a ton (2000 lbs) of equipment.

Power System: Nuclear; average life is 20 years.

Black Market Cost: Absolutely NOT available! Only 50 of these Bots exist, but they can be manufactured at a rate of 100 a month.

Weapon Systems

1. Arch-30 Laser/Ion Assassin Rifle: This is the standard issue weapon for these Bots and a knock-off of the JA-11 Juicer Assassin Rifle, one of the most popular weapons among real Juicers. It has multiple damage settings, a large payload, and excellent range. See page 225 of the **Rifts® RPG** for details.

Primary Purpose: Assault

Weight: 6.5 lbs (2.9 kg)

Damage: The rifle is a combination laser, ion beam, and conventional bullet chamber in one. The laser has two settings: 2D6 M.D. and 4D6 M.D. Both function on variable frequencies as well. The ion beam inflicts 3D6 M.D. A single 7.62 mm can be loaded and fired inflicting 5D6 S.D.C. from a normal bullet, 6D6 S.D.C. for armor piercing, or 1D6 X 10 for explosive shells. Armor piercing is standard issue.

Rate of Fire: The laser is a precision weapon designed for single shots only, equal to the number of hand to hand attacks of the user. The ion beam can be fired as aimed, burst, or wild as is standard for modern energy weapons. Only one 7.62 mm round can be loaded at any time. It takes two melee actions to reload one round. Note that the Juicer Bot has six attacks per melee.

Effective Range: The laser has a range of 4000 feet (1220 m), ion beam is 1600 feet (488 m), and the 7.62 mm round is 2000 feet (610 m).

Payload: Long clip is standard issue and has a payload of 30 energy blasts, in addition to the built-in energy canister that holds an additional 30 blasts. The 7.62 mm chamber only stores one round at a time. They carry at least three additional **E-Clips** and 10 additional armor piercing 7.62 mm rounds.

Bonus to Strike: Built-in laser targeting offers a bonus of +1 to strike on an aimed shot.

2. Vibro-knife: Standard Juicer Plate Armor comes with a boot holster for a **vibro-knife**. The Bot uses this blade in close combat to disguise its Mega-damage punching power.

Primary Purpose: Close Combat and Defense

Weight: 2 lbs (.9 kg)

Damage: 1D6 M.D. in addition to 2D6 M.D. inflicted by the robotic strength of the Bot.

Effective Range: Hand to hand combat or may be thrown up to 200 feet (61 m).

Bonus to Strike: W.P. Knife: +2 to strike and parry in addition to sensor and attribute bonuses.

3. Hand to Hand Combat: Six attacks per melee. Skill level is equal to eighth level Hand to Hand Combat: **Expert**.

Damage:

Restrained Punch: 5D6 S.D.C. +25 from the P.S. bonus

Full Strength Punch: 2D6 M.D.

Kick: 4D6 M.D.

Leap Kick: 8D6 M.D. or 1D4X10+8 M.D.

Body Block: 1D4 M.D.

Bonuses: Includes sensor and attribute bonuses: +6 to initiative, +7 to strike, +8 to parry, +9 to dodge, automatic parry or dodge on all attacks, even those from behind, +4 to roll with punch or impact, critical strike on 19 or 20, paired weapons, and leap kick.

Attribute Equivalents: I.Q. 14, P.S. 40, P.P. 22, Spd220

Sensor Systems:

Optics: Superior to human visual capabilities, including visible **light** spectrum, infra-red, **ultra-violet**, and polarization. Available enhancements include: passive light amplification (night sight 500 **feet/152 m**), telescopic sight (6000 **feet/1830 m**), and laser targeting and cross-hairs. Identification capabilities include a recognition of well known symbols, **insignias**, uniforms, body armor styles, vehicles, robots, common animal, D-bee, and supernatural creature genotypes, etc. Is also able to differentiate between natural and supernatural phenomena, but cannot differentiate between psionic and magic effects.

Amplified Hearing: Superior to human audio capabilities. Can hear sounds as quiet as 10 decibels as far away as 500 feet (**152 m**). Hearing range extends to ultrasonic frequency. Programming includes recognition of over 60,000 different mechanical sounds and 20,000 natural sounds, including running water, animal noises, wind, etc.

Speech: Full vocal capabilities: Understands and speaks American, Spanish, Euro, **Techno-can**, Japanese, Chinese, **Dragonese**, **Splogorth**, and many forgotten **Pre-Rifts** languages at 98% proficiency, includes common slang terms **too**. Literacy in these languages is also included in the Bot's programming. Voice sounds completely human, but **usually** deep and monotonous.

Skill Program: Programmed for security and defense. It is able to identify and recognize the insignias and capabilities of all known equipment and troops of the Coalition, **Triax**, **Splogorth**, and all North American weapons manufacturers. Combat tactics are straightforward and direct. Complex tactics are not possible due to the streamlining of its combat computer. Hand to Hand Combat is equal to Expert at eighth level. Weapon proficiencies include: All modern and energy weapons and rail guns, blunt weapons, knives, and swords.

Other skills include: Prowl 50%, Swim 94%, Climb 90/80%, Land Navigation 94%, Intelligence 90%, Tracking 40%, Detect Ambush 60%, Detect Concealment 60%, Demolitions and Disposal 90%, Read Sensory Equipment 94%, Weapon Systems 90%, Radio: Basic 94%, and Computer Operation 90%. Pilot skills include: automobile, motorcycle, hovercycle, hovercraft, jet pack, helicopter, airplanes, jet aircraft, tanks and APCs, all at 90% proficiency.

Automatic Self-destruct Program: Unlike Archie's other creations, the self-destruct mechanism of these Bots completely fuses the internal machinery of the Bot, but does not damage anything outside of its body. Once activated, this self-destruct mechanism sends out a signal to other **Cyberworks** Bots to indicate that a clean-up must be performed to prevent its body from being thoroughly examined.

The Borg Bot

This is the ideal disguise for a Bot trying to pass as a human, or at least a human on the inside. Borks are bionically **converted** humans with superhuman strength, speed and reflexes. Bots also have superior strength, speed, and reflexes, but usually more so as far as its strength is concerned. Otherwise, its weight and attributes are very similar and only require some cosmetic changes. Of special interest to Archie is the fact that the mechanical nature of the Bot does not need to be hidden, just al-

tered a bit. This allows him to keep his statement of the superiority of machines and still hide their true nature.

A-100B Borg Bot

Model Designation: A-100B

Class: Fully Automated **Self-Sufficient** Security Robot

Crew: None; artificial robot intelligence.

M.D.C. by Location:

Hands (2) - 50 each

Arms (2) - 200 each

Legs (2) - 250 each

***Head - 100**

****Main Body - 700**

* Destroying the head will eliminate all optics and sensor systems. In all cases, this will shut the Bot down and trigger the self-destruct mechanism. The head is a small and difficult target to **hit**, especially on a moving target. Therefore, it can only be hit on a called shot at a penalty of **-3** to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will effectively destroy the Bot and activate the self-destruct mechanism, leaving a pile of useless scrap. Note: Borg Bots have an external shell designed to resemble Borg armor as a part of their disguise. This armor is an integral part of the Bot and cannot be removed.

Speed

Running: 120 **M.P.H.** (192 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does not tire the Bot and can be maintained indefinitely.

Leaping: Their legs are strong and designed for leaping. Maximum length after a short run is 30 feet (9.1 m) and maximum height is 20 feet (6.1 m). Reduce distances by half if attempted from a standing position.

Flying: Not possible without the use of a jet pack or other vehicle.

Range: The nuclear power pack gives the Bot approximately 20 years of use, even under the most strenuous conditions.

Statistical Data

Height: 7 to 8 feet (**2.1-2.4 m**)

Width: 3 to 3.5 feet (.9-1.1 m)

Length: 2 to 2.5 ft (**.6-.8 m**)

Weight: 1000 to 1200 **lbs** (450-540 kg)

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. of 40.

Cargo: None, but can carry up to a ton (2000 **lbs**) of equipment.

Power System: Nuclear; average life is 20 years.

Black Market Cost: Absolutely NOT available! Only 30 of these Bots **exist**, but they can be manufactured at a rate of 80 a month.

Weapon Systems

1. **Arch-23 Laser Pulse Rifle:** This is the standard issue weapon for these Bots and a knock-off of the L-20 Laser Pulse Rifle designed by The Black Market. It is capable of firing single shots for accuracy or a triple pulse burst for greater damage capacity. It has a high payload, but limited range. However, long range is not a concern in urban and close quarters combat, which is what these Bots will most likely encounter.

Primary Purpose: Assault

Weight: 7 **lbs** (3.2 kg)

Damage: 2D6 M.D. for a single shot or 6D6 M.D. for a triple pulse burst.

Rate of Fire: Standard, as per Modern Weapon Proficiency.

Effective Range: 1600 feet (488 m)



Payload: Long clip is standard issue and has a payload of 50 energy blasts. They carry a least three additional **E-clips** at all time.

2. Forearm Particle Beam Blaster: Basically the same as the bionic weapon, except it is hooked up to the Bot's internal power supply.

Primary Purpose: **Anti-tank/robot** assault

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: 6D6 + 6 M.D.

Effective Range: 1000 feet (305 m)

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

3. Retractable Vibro-blades: Basically the same as the bionic weapon system. The blades are employed in hand to hand combat to inflict Mega-damage without displaying the Bot's extraordinary strength.

Primary Purpose: Defense, hand to hand combat.

Damage: 2D6 M.D. in addition to 2D6 M.D. inflicted by the Bot's physical strength.

Effective Range: Hand to hand combat.

Bonus to Strike: W.P. Knife: +2 to strike and parry in addition to sensor and attribute bonuses.

4. Hand to Hand Combat: Five attacks per melee. Skill level is equal to eighth level Hand to Hand Combat: Expert.

Damage:

Restrained Punch: 5D6 S.D.C. +25 from the P.S. bonus

Full Strength Punch: 2D6 M.D.

Kick: 4D6 M.D.

Leap Kick: 8D6 M.D. or 1D4X10+8 M.D.

Body Block: 1D4 M.D.

Bonuses: Includes sensor and attribute bonuses: +6 to initiative, +4 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, automatic parry or dodge on all attacks, even those from behind, +4 to roll with punch or impact, critical strike on **19** or **20**, paired weapons, and leap kick.

Attribute Equivalents: I.Q. 14, P.S. 40, P.P. 20, Spd 186

Sensor Systems:

Optics: Superior to human visual capabilities, including visible light spectrum, infra-red, ultra-violet, and polarization. Available enhancements include: passive light amplification (night sight **500 feet/152 m**), telescopic sight (**6000 feet/1830 m**), and laser targeting and cross-hairs. Identification capabilities include a recognition of well known symbols, insignias, uniforms, body armor styles, vehicles, robots, common animal, D-bee, and supernatural creature genotypes, etc. Is also able to differentiate between natural and supernatural phenomena, but cannot differentiate psionic and magic effects.

Amplified Hearing: Superior to human audio capabilities. Can hear sounds as quiet as 10 decibels as far away as 500 feet (**152 m**). Hearing range extends to ultrasonic frequency. Programming includes recognition of over 60,000 different mechanical sounds and 20,000 natural sounds, including running water, animal noises, wind, etc.

Speech: Full vocal capabilities: Understands and speaks American, Spanish, Euro, **Techno-can**, Japanese, Chinese, Dragonese, **Splugorth**, and many forgotten **Pre-Rifts** languages at 98% proficiency, includes common slang terms too. Literacy in these languages is also included in the Bot's programming. Voice sounds mostly human, but usually deep and mechanical.

Skill Program: Programmed for security and defense. It is able to identify and recognize the insignias and capabilities of all known equipment and troops of the Coalition, **Triax**, **Splugorth**, and all North American weapons manufacturers. Combat tactics are straightforward and direct. Complex tactics are not possible due to the streamlining of its combat computer. Hand to Hand Combat is equal to Expert at eighth level. Weapon proficiencies include: All modern and energy weapons and rail guns, blunt weapons, knives, and swords.

Other skills include: Prowl **25%**, Swim 94%, Climb 90/80%, Land Navigation 94%, Intelligence 90%, Tracking 40%, Detect Ambush 60%, Detect Concealment 60%, Demolitions and Disposal 90%, Read Sensory Equipment 94%, Weapon Systems 90%, Radio: Basic 94%, and Computer Operation 90%. Pilot skills include: automobile, motorcycle, hovercycle, hovercraft, jet pack, helicopter, airplanes, jet aircraft, tanks and APCs, all at 90% proficiency.

Automatic Self-destruct Program: Unlike Archie's other creations, the self-destruct mechanism of these **Bots** completely fuses the internal machinery of the Bot, but does not damage anything outside of its body. Once activated, this self-destruct mechanism sends out a signal to other **Cyberworks** Bots to indicate that a clean-up must be performed to prevent its body from being thoroughly examined.

The Titan Series of Robots

The name Titan is still retained by all of **Cyberworks'** commercially available robots. To the public, the name is a selling gimmick made to imply power and size. For Archie, it helps to differentiate between his public creations and his private minions and equipment. Initially, Titan products were sold through middle men in the Black Market and Northern Gun. They were relatively scarce and somewhat inferior to the robots produced by Northern Gun and the Coalition. Now, Titan robots and power armor have surged in quality and availability. They are still sold through the Black Market and Northern Gun, but their major retail location is in the Manistique **Imperium**.

In most ways, the Titan robots are comparable to the Northern Gun robots in quality, **firepower**, durability, mobility, and reliability. Actually, Archie's level of technology far surpasses that of Northern Gun, the Manistique Imperium, and even the Coalition States. He keeps the technology used in his public creations low to keep the other powers of North America from getting suspicious and looking too hard for the heart of his operation.

Even though the Titan robots are about equal to those of the Northern Gun, they do have one big selling point. Cyberworks has offered free repairs and maintenance for any Titan robot brought to their complex in Manistique. Most analysts believe this is a short term deal being offered to promote their new public campaign. The Coalition States and Northern Gun believe these free services are being offered because the new robots are still under some level of development and are being examined for flaws in performance or design. This is partially true. The robots are being examined, but not for flaws. Every new Titan robot is equipped with a concealed device that records everything that its sensors detect. This information is downloaded during the servicing and the robot is returned to the owner as good as new.

This free repair program has not yet disrupted Northern Gun's business routine. In fact, they are experiencing strong profits because they also sell Titan robots, which they purchase at better than wholesale prices from **Cyberworks**. Some concern has been raised as to whether or not the free repair program will affect their profits in the future. However, they are confident that Cyberworks will not be able to afford to maintain this program for an extended period of time and discontinue it. Unknown to **them**, this program has hidden benefits for Cyberworks and costs them nothing but the rent and cost of materials.

The following robots are in addition to the models found in the **Rifts® RPG**. Except for the Flying Titan Power Armor, the cost for the older model robots have gone down in price about **10-20%** due to more advanced robots released by other manufacturers and the opening of the commercial facility in the **Manistique Imperium**. The Flying Titan Power Armor is considered to be the second best light power armor on the market, next to the **Triax** Terrain Hopper. Consequently, it is still a strong seller and has retained its original retail price. Remember that Archie's true level of technology is far beyond the level of the Coalition and even beyond Triax. But the technology of his commercial robots are deliberately kept below that of the Coalition's to prevent his technology from falling into the hands of others and to prevent them from becoming too suspicious of his operation and intentions.

TPA-006 Titan Heavy Power Armor

The TPA-006 is Titan's ground assault power armor and a step above Northern Gun's Samson Power Armor. Unlike the Flying Titan, this suit is only capable of low altitude flight at limited speeds. Still, its flight capabilities provide it with excellent mobility and strategic options in combat. It is being purchased in large quantity by the Black Market for resale to Tolkeen. Its small size and heavy armor are considered to be top selling points for the Tolkeen army as they await the conflict with the Coalition.

TPA-006 Titan Heavy Power Armor

Model Designation: TPA-006

Class: Strategic Armored Military Exoskeleton

Crew: One

M.D.C. by Location:

Rail Gun - 50

Ammo Drum - 30

Shoulder Mini-missile Launchers (2) - 50 each

Forearm Light Laser - 30

Jet Booster Pack - 50

Hands (2) - 25 each

Retractable **Vibro-claws** (2) - 20 each

Arms (2) - 100 each

Legs (2) - 150 each

*Head - 80

****Main Body - 300**

* Destroying the head will eliminate all optics and sensor systems. The pilot must then rely on his own vision and senses. No power armor combat bonuses to strike, parry, and dodge. Note: The head is a small and difficult target to hit, especially on a moving target. Therefore, it can only be hit on a called shot at a penalty of **-3** to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will shut down the armor, rendering it useless.

Speed

Running: 120 M.P.H. (192 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does tire the pilot, but at 10% of the usual fatigue rate thanks to the robot exoskeleton.

Leaping: The legs are strong and designed for leaping. Maximum length after a short run is 30 feet (9.1 m) and maximum height is 20 feet (6.1 m). Reduce distances by half if attempted from a standing position. A jet-assisted leap will propel the power armor up to 100 feet (30.5 m) vertically and 200 feet (61 m) horizontally without actually achieving flight.

Underwater Capabilities: Although not designed with underwater operations in mind, the TPA-006 has good mobility underwater. Using the jet pack, the power armor can achieve a maximum speed of 25 M.P.H. (40 km) underwater and along the surface.

Flying: Limited flight is provided by the jet pack. Maximum speed is 200 M.P.H. (320 km), but cruising speed is half that. Maximum altitude is 1000 feet (305 m).

Flying Range: The nuclear power pack gives the suit unlimited range, but the jets will overheat after ten hours of use at maximum speed or twenty hours at cruising speeds. With regular rest stops, flying range is effectively unlimited.

Statistical Data

Height: 9 feet (2.7 m)

Width: 4.5 feet (1.4 m)

Length: 5 feet (1.5 m) with the jet pack.

Weight: 500 lbs (225 kg) without the rail gun and ammo-drum.

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. of 30.

Cargo: None

Power System: Nuclear; average life is 20 years.

Market Cost: 1,500,000 credits for a new, undamaged, fully powered suit with full weapon systems and ammunition. Good availability at Northern Gun and Manistique, fair to poor elsewhere.

Weapon Systems

1. TPA-006 Rail Gun: A hand-held rail gun with independent targeting. It has excellent range and damage capacity. It appears similar in design to Northern Gun models, but its inner workings are somewhat simplified and streamlined, making it closer in design to the SAMAS rail gun.

Primary Purpose: Assault

Weight: 105 lbs (47.3 kg), plus a 200 lb (90 kg) **ammo-drum**.

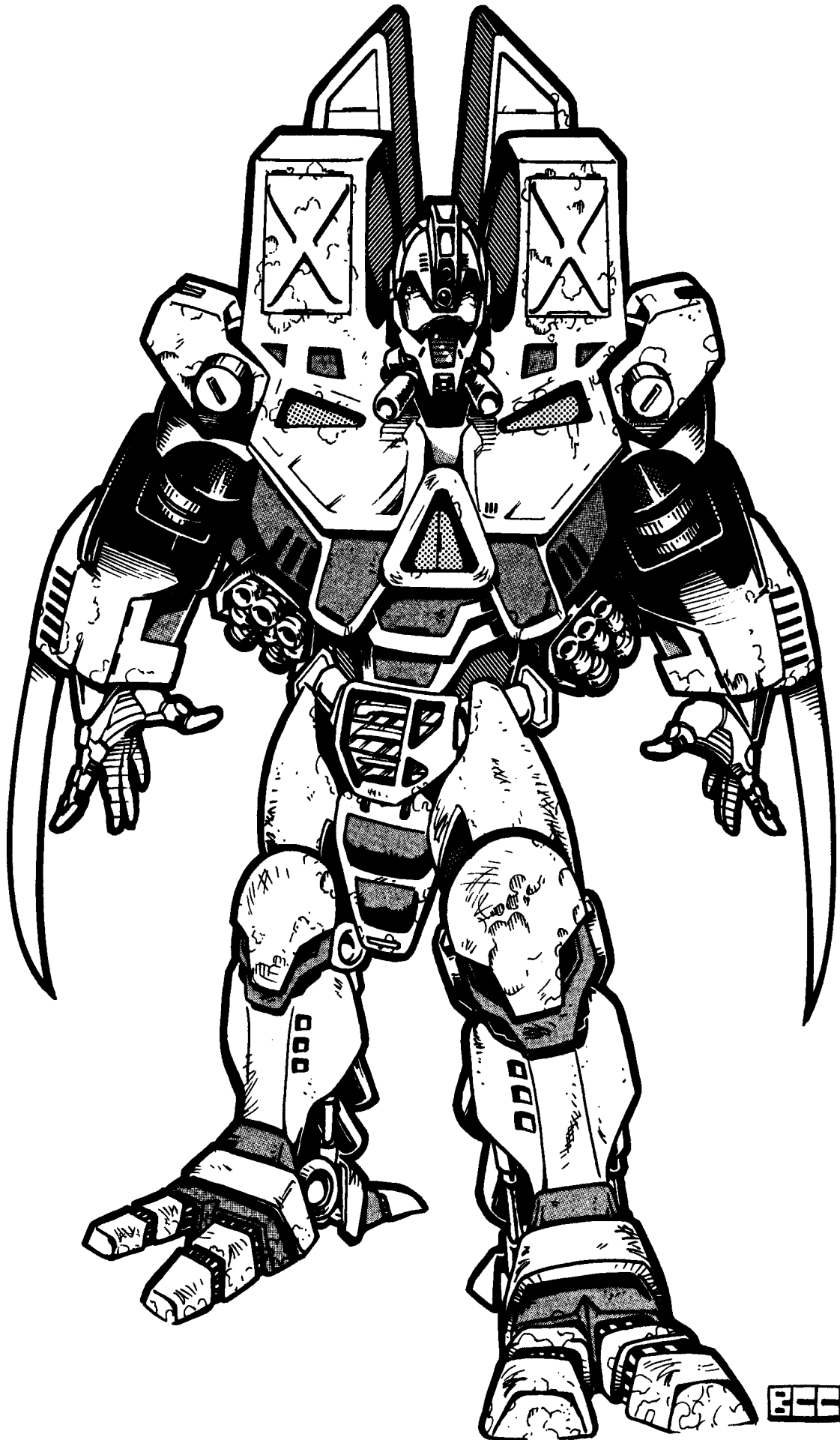
Damage: 1D4X10 M.D. per 40 round burst. One round inflicts 1D4 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand combat attacks, including robot combat training.

Effective Range: 4000 feet (1220 m)

Payload: Ammo-drum carries 4000 rounds, enough for 100 bursts. Typically one drum is attached to the right side of the jet pack. A back-up drum can be attached to the left side of the pack. It takes one minute for the pilot to replace the first ammo-drum with the back-up drum. Another person with a P.S. of 25 or using power armor can replace the drum in 30 seconds. An empty drum takes five minutes to be reloaded by someone familiar with its operation or an operator.

2. TPA-006 Mini-Missile Launchers (2): Mounted on each shoulder of the suit are a pair of mini-missile launchers.



Primary Purpose: Anti-Armor

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: Depends on missile type, standard issue is plasma, inflicting 1D6X10 M.D.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two, three, or four.

Effective Range: Typically one to two miles (1.6-3.2 km).

Payload: Four missiles in each launcher for a total of eight.

3. TPA-006 Forearm Laser: Mounted on the left forearm is a light laser primarily used as a back-up and light combat weapon.

Primary Purpose: Anti-personnel

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: 2D6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand combat attacks, including robot combat training.

Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m)

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

4. TPA-006 Retractable Vibro-claws: Standard hand to hand combat weapon for Titan class robots.

Primary Purpose: Hand to hand combat.

Damage: 2D6 M.D. in addition to 1D6 M.D. inflicted by the power armor's punch damage.

Effective Range: Hand to hand combat.

5. Other energy rifles and hand weapons can be used by the power armor in an emergency or as a back-up weapon.

6. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use a weapon, the pilot can engage in Mega-Damage hand to hand combat. See Power Armor Combat: Basic and Elite in the Robot Combat section of the **Rifts® RPG**.

7. Sensor Systems: Standard power armor sensor system includes full optical system, infra-red, ultra-violet, telescopic, **thermo-imaging**, polarization, radar, laser targeting, and targeting and combat computer. Plus, it is equipped with Archie's secret recording device.

Sensor Bonuses: +1 to initiative and +1 to strike using long-range weapons, in addition to Robot Combat: Basic or Elite training.

TR-004 Rapid-Strike Robot

This is a quick-strike assault robot designed for head-on attacks. It is especially useful for high-tech bandits when raiding a heavily fortified town or well guarded caravan. Many towns in higher elevations like these robots because their high vantage point allows them to spot threats before they get too close. Then they can deploy these fast robots to intercept without endangering their population.

TR-004 Rapid-Strike Robot

Model Designation: TR-004

Class: Infantry Quick Assault Robot

Crew: One pilot and can accommodate two passengers.

M.D.C. by Location:

Right Shoulder Rail Gun - 100

Left Shoulder Mini-Missile Launcher - 100

Belly Laser Turret - 50

Rocket Booster Jets (4) - 50 each

Hands (2) - 50 each

Forearms (2) - 120 each

Retractable **Vibro-Claws** (2) - 30 each

Legs (2) - 175 each

***Head** - 90

* Back-up Sensor Tower - 50

**Main Body - 350

Reinforced Pilot's Compartment - 100

* Destroying both the head and the sensor tower will eliminate all optics and sensor systems. The pilot must then rely on his own vision and senses. No power armor combat bonuses to strike, parry, and dodge. Note: The head is a small and difficult target to hit, especially on a moving target. Therefore, it can only be hit on a called shot at a penalty of -3 to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will shut down the robot completely, rendering it useless.

Speed

Running: 150 M.P.H. (240 km) maximum without rocket assistance. Using the rocket boosters, the robot can achieve speeds of 220 M.P.H. (352 km) for a period of five minutes before balance becomes impossible to maintain. Note that the act of running does not tire the pilot.

Leaping: The legs are strong and designed for leaping. Maximum length after a short run is 20 feet (6.1 m) and maximum height is 15 feet (4.6 m). Reduce distances by half if attempted from a standing position. A rocket assisted leap will propel the robot up to 100 feet (30.5 m) vertically and 200 feet (61 m) horizontally.

Underwater Capabilities: Although not designed with underwater operations in mind, the rocket boosters do provide limited mobility underwater. Maximum speed is 15 M.P.H. (24 km) underwater and on the surface.

Flying: Not possible, the rocket jets are designed to assist the robot in leaps, not to provide flight.

Statistical Data

Height: 15 feet (4.6 m)

Width: 6 feet (1.8 m)

Length: 6 feet (1.8 m) with the jet pack.

Weight: 9 tons fully loaded.

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. of 30.

Cargo: A small compartment provides storage for three suits of body armor and rifles, plus personal items.

Power System: Nuclear; average life is 20 years.

Market Cost: 13 million credits for a new, undamaged, fully powered robot with full weapon systems and ammunition. Good availability at Northern Gun, the Manistique **Imperium**, and Los Alamo, where it is sold with increasing frequency to Pecos Raiders. Fair to poor elsewhere.

Weapon Systems

1. TR-004 Shoulder Rail Gun: This is a heavy rail gun mounted on the right shoulder of the robot. It is a fixed-forward weapon that requires the robot to turn its body to strike targets to its sides.

Primary Purpose: Assault

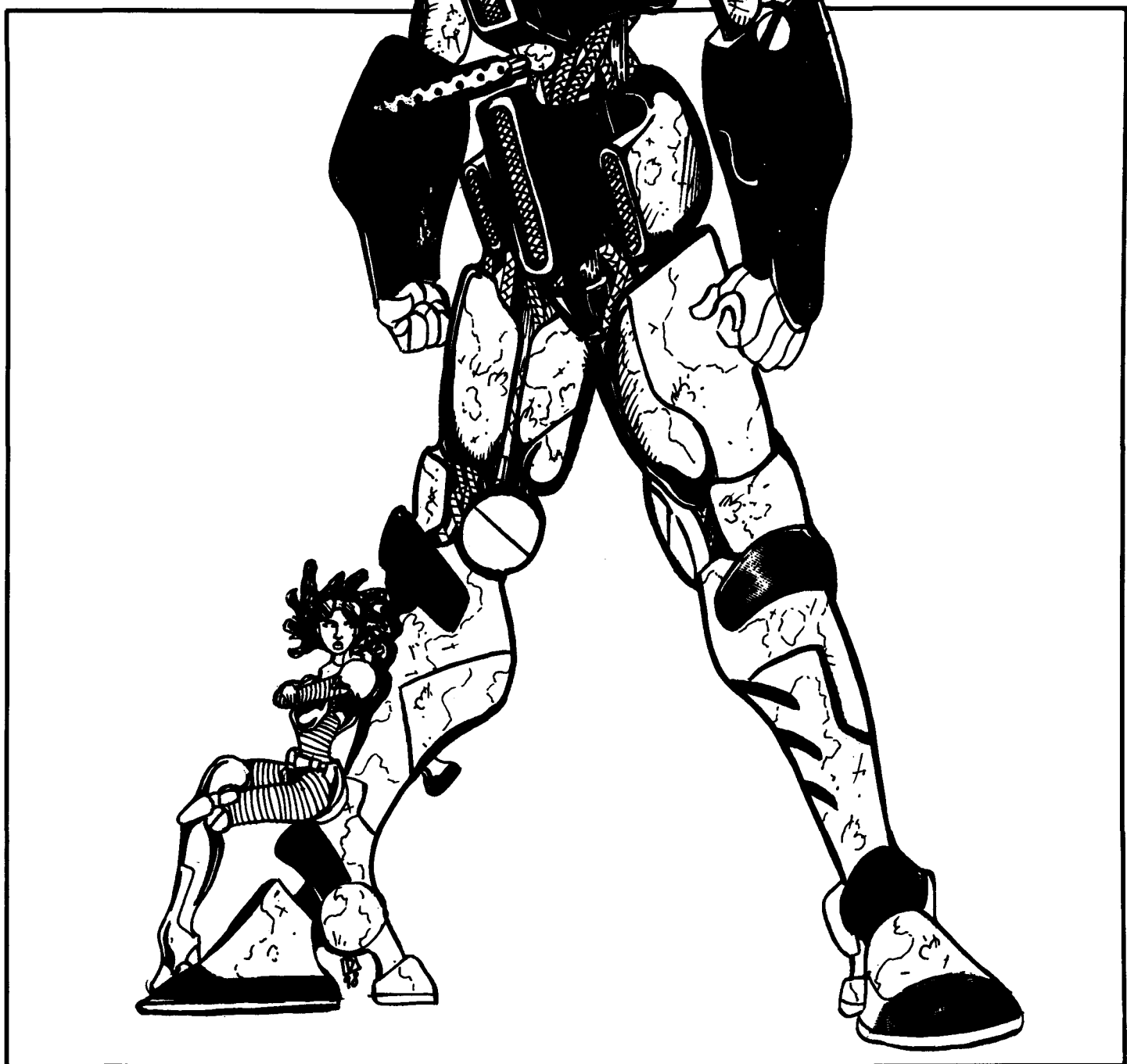
Secondary Purpose: Anti-personnel

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: 1D6X10 M.D. per 60 round burst. Cannot fire single rounds.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand combat attacks, including robot combat training.

Effective Range: 4000 feet (1220 m)



Payload: 12,000 rounds, enough for 200 bursts. It takes five minutes for a trained engineer using special equipment or another giant robot to reload the gun. Fifteen minutes or longer is required for those not trained in weapons engineering.

2. TR-004 Mini-Missile Launcher: Mounted on the left shoulder of the robot is a rapid-fire mini missile launcher.

Primary Purpose: **Anti-Armor**

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: Depends on missile type, standard issue is armor piercing, inflicting 1D4X10 M.D.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two, **three**, four or six.

Effective Range: Typically one to two miles (1.6-3.2 km).

Payload: Thirty

3. TR-004 Belly Laser Turret: A heavy laser turret capable of swift movements and tracking and 90 degree turns in all directions.

Primary Purpose: Anti-personnel

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: 4D6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand combat attacks, including robot combat training.

Effective Range: 2000 feet (**610 m**)

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

4. TR-005 Retractable Vibro-claws: Standard hand to hand combat weapon for Titan class robots.

Primary Purpose: Hand to hand combat.

Damage: 3D6 M.D. in addition to 2D6 M.D. inflicted by the robot's punch damage.

Effective Range: Hand to hand combat.

5. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use a weapon, the pilot can engage in Mega-Damage hand to hand combat. See Robot Combat: Basic and Robot Combat: Titan Assault Robot Series training in the Robot Combat section of the **Rifts® RPG**.

6. Sensor Systems: Standard robot vehicle sensor system includes full optical system, infra-red, ultra-violet, telescopic, **thermo-imaging**, polarization, radar, and laser targeting. Advanced radar targeting and combat computer adds to the robot's quick assault capabilities. Plus, it is equipped with Archie's secret recording device.

Sensor Bonuses: +3 to initiative, +1 to strike using long-range weapons, and +1 to dodge, in addition to Robot Combat: Basic or Titan Assault Robot Elite training.

TR-005 Super Assault Robot

The TR-005 Super Assault Robot or the Super Titan, as it is nicknamed, is Titan's heaviest assault robot to date. This robot is a good match for the Coalition Abolisher or the Hellraiser, but is not nearly as effective against the **IAR-3 Skull Smasher**. Still, it is a powerful war machine with good mobility and versatility. The Black Market has already resold a number of these vehicles to Tolkeen.

TR-005 Super Assault Robot

Model Designation: TR-005

Class: Heavy Infantry Assault Robot

Crew: Four total; one pilot, one copilot and two gunners, and can accommodate two passengers.

M.D.C. by Location:

Belly Rail Gun Turret - 75

Left Shoulder Mounted Mini-Missile Launcher - 200

Right Shoulder Mounted Medium Range Missile Launchers (4) - 200

Hands (2) - 80 each

Forearms (2) - 150 each

Retractable **Vibro-Claws** (2) - 100 each set

Legs (2) - 250 each

Leg Mounted Laser Turrets (2) - 50 each

*Head - 100

*Back-up Sensor Tower - 60

****Main Body** - 600

Reinforced Pilot's Compartment - 200

* Destroying both the head and the sensor tower will eliminate all optics and sensor systems. The pilot must then rely on his own vision and senses. No power armor combat bonuses to strike, parry, and dodge. Note: The head is a small and difficult target to hit, especially on a moving target. Therefore, it can only be hit on a called shot at a penalty of -3 to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will shut down the robot completely, rendering it useless.

Speed

Running: 80 M.P.H. (128 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does not tire the pilot.

Leaping: Its legs are strong but not designed for leaping. Maximum length after a short run is 20 feet (6.1 m) and maximum height is 5 feet (1.5 m). Reduce distances by half if attempted from a standing position.

Underwater Capabilities: Not suited for underwater operations. Mobility is limited to walking on the bottom of the sea at 25% of its walking speed.

Flying: Not possible.

Statistical Data

Height: 25 feet (7.6 m)

Width: 10 feet (3 m)

Length: 13 ft (4 m)

Weight: 50 tons fully loaded.

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. of 40.

Cargo: A small compartment provides storage for six suits of body armor and rifles, plus personal items.

Power System: Nuclear; average life is 20 years.

Market Cost: 36 million credits for a new, undamaged, fully powered robot with full weapon systems and ammunition. Good availability at Northern Gun and the Manistique **Imperium**. Fair to poor elsewhere.

Weapon Systems

1. TR-005 Heavy Rail Gun: This is a belly-mounted weapon used for heavy assault. It is capable of rotating 90 degrees in all directions.

Primary Purpose: Assault

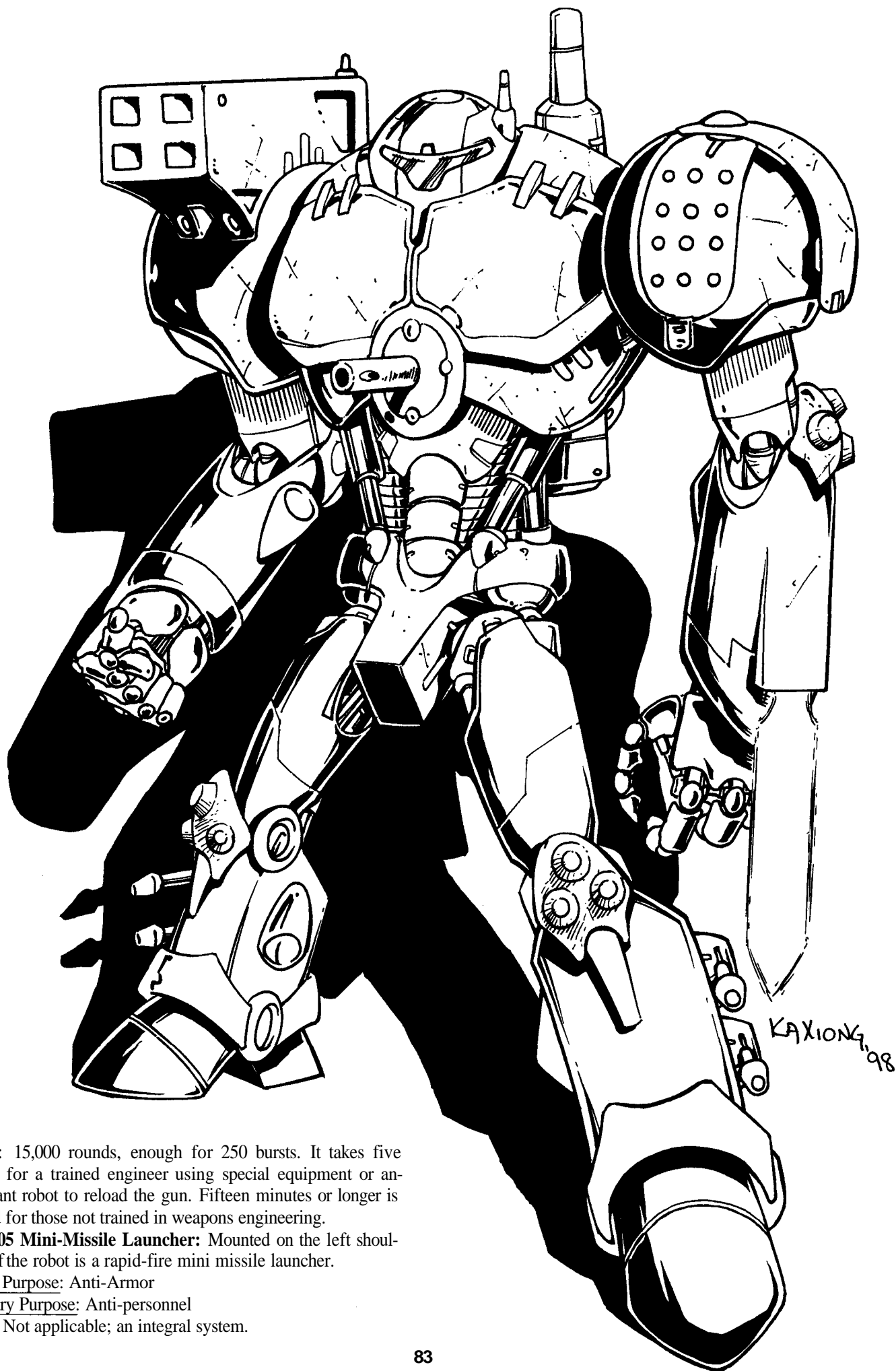
Secondary Purpose: Anti-personnel

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: 1D6X10 M.D. per 60 round burst. Cannot fire single rounds.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand combat attacks, including robot combat training.

Effective Range: 6000 feet (**1830 m**)



Payload: 15,000 rounds, enough for 250 bursts. It takes five minutes for a trained engineer using special equipment or another giant robot to reload the gun. Fifteen minutes or longer is required for those not trained in weapons engineering.

2. **TR-005 Mini-Missile Launcher:** Mounted on the left shoulder of the robot is a rapid-fire mini missile launcher.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Armor

Secondary Purpose: Anti-personnel

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: Depends on missile type, standard issue is a mix of armor piercing (1D4X10 M.D.) and fragmentation (5D6 M.D.).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two, three, four or six.

Effective Range: Typically one to two miles (1.6-3.2 km).

Payload: Thirty

3. TR-005 Medium Range Missile Launcher: Mounted on the right shoulder of the robot is a medium range missile launcher.

Primary Purpose: **Anti-Aircraft**

Secondary Purpose: **Anti-Armor**

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: Depends on missile type, standard issue is armor piercing (2D4X10 M.D.) or plasma (2D6X10 M.D.).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two, three or four.

Effective Range: Typically 40 to 60 miles (64-96 km).

Payload: Four

4. TR-OOS Laser Turrets (2): Mounted on the side of each leg is a pair of laser turrets. They are capable of rotating 360 degrees and swivel up and down 90 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Anti-personnel

Weight: Not applicable; an integral system.

Damage: 6D6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's hand to hand combat attacks, including those gained from Robot Combat: Basic or Elite training.

Effective Range: 4000 feet (1220 m)

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

4. TR-005 Retractable Vibro-claws: Standard hand to hand combat weapon for Titan class robots.

Primary Purpose: Hand to hand combat.

Damage: 3D6 M.D. in addition to 2D6 M.D. inflicted by the robot's punch damage.

Effective Range: Hand to hand combat.

5. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use a weapon, the pilot can engage in Mega-Damage hand to hand combat. See Robot Combat: Basic and Robot Combat: Titan Assault Robot Series training in the Robot Combat section of the **Rifts® RPG**.

7. Sensor Systems: Standard robot vehicle sensor system includes full optical system, infra-red, ultra-violet, telescopic, **thermo-imaging**, polarization, radar, and laser targeting.

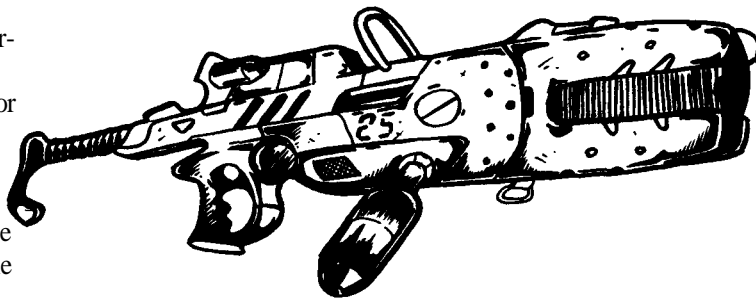
Sensor Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +1 to strike in hand to hand combat, and +2 to parry, in addition to Robot Combat: Basic or Titan Assault Robot Elite training. Plus, it is equipped with Archie's secret recording device.

New Cyberworks Weapons

Archie has found it necessary to design new weapons for his robot soldiers. This new equipment has a good deal of Mechanoid technology incorporated into it. Consequently, if they are somehow recovered by outsiders, the weapons will appear to be even more alien than they are. This is helpful because it will lead them to believe that the bots must be alien in origin as well.

Arch-25 Particle Beam Cannon

Archie has studied and replicated the particle beam technology he gleaned from the Mechanoids. He has used this technology to develop a hand-held particle beam cannon with



unparalleled range and impressive damage. It is a heavy weapon and requires a robotic or supernatural P.S. of 20 or higher to handle properly. Anyone with a P.S. between 16 and 20 suffers a penalty of -2 to strike. Anyone with a lower P.S. will not be able to handle the weapon at all.

Weight: 50 lbs (22.5 kg)

Mega-Damage: 1D6X10 M.D.

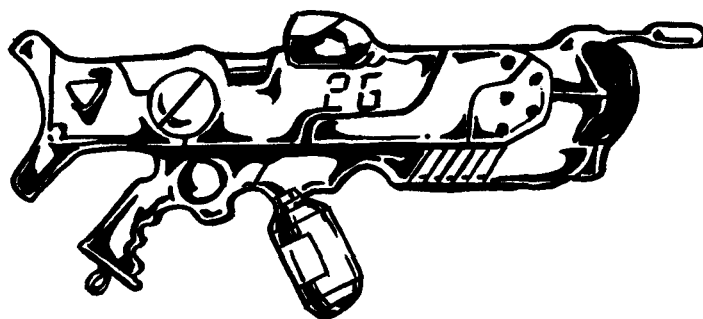
Rate of Fire: Standard, as per modern weapon proficiencies.

Maximum Effective Range: 4000 feet (1220 m)

Payload: 20 per heavy **e-clip**, only compatible with other Cyberworks weapons.

Targeting Bonus: +1 to strike thanks to laser targeting.

Market Cost: Not **Available!** Any captured weapons may have a limited value as an alien weapon with limited payload, or may be worth millions to a weapons manufacturer, if its design and e-clip could be duplicated.



Arch-26 Plasma Rifle

Identical in function to the Mechanoid robot weapon, except for its cosmetic appearance and some improvements in its design. It is lighter than the Arch-25 Particle Beam Cannon, but has similar range and comparable damage. It has a greater payload than the original weapon thanks to refinements Archie has made in the storage capacity of his **e-clips**.

Weight: 26 lbs (11.7 kg)

Mega-Damage: 1D4X10 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Standard, as per modern weapon proficiencies.

Maximum Effective Range: 4000 feet (1220 m)

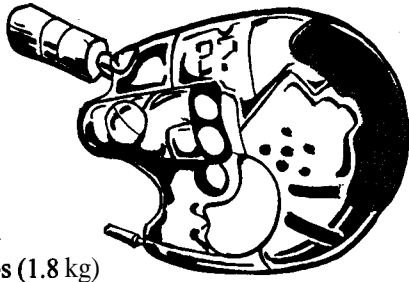
Payload: 25 per heavy **e-clip**, only compatible with other Cyberworks weapons.

Targeting Bonus: +1 to strike thanks to laser targeting.

Market Cost: Not **Available!** Any captured weapons may have a limited value as an alien weapon with limited payload, or may be worth millions to a weapons manufacturer, if its design and e-clip could be duplicated.

Arch-27 Ion Pistol

This is the standard **sidearm** assigned to Archie's robot soldiers. It is similar in design to the **Mechanoids'** M-20 Ion Pistol, but has increased range and payload and a laser targeting sight.



Weight: 4 lbs (1.8 kg)

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Standard, as per modern weapon proficiencies.

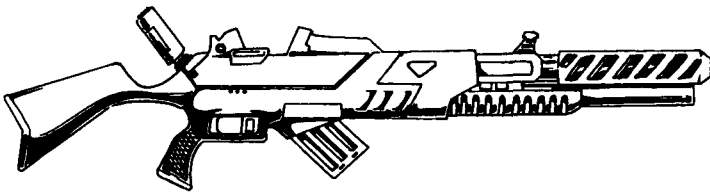
Maximum Effective Range: 1000 feet (305 m)

Payload: 30 per heavy e-clip, only compatible with other Cyberworks weapons.

Targeting Bonus: +1 to strike thanks to laser targeting.

Market Cost: Not Available! Any captured weapons may have a limited value as an alien weapon with limited payload, or may be worth millions to a weapons manufacturer, if its design and e-clip could be duplicated.

New Weapons From Other Manufacturers



NG-SL20 Sniper Laser Rifle

This is the most advanced sniper rifle developed by Northern Gun, and a knock-off of the TX-SL12 developed by Triax. It has state-of-the-art laser targeting and uses computerized weight distribution for better balance and a steady shot, instead of the forward sliding e-clip. It has a powerful energy delivery system and superior range for a Northern Gun weapon, but limited payload. The laser requires careful calibration with every shot fired, so it is not an effective assault rifle. But the geniuses at Northern Gun have mated the rifle with an ion blaster to provide assault capabilities.

Weight: 10 lbs (4.5 kg)

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. for the laser and 3D6 for the ion blaster.

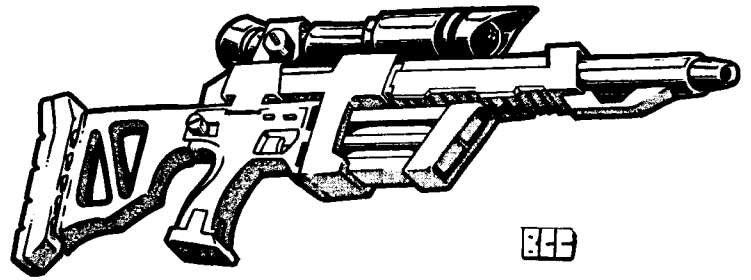
Rate of Fire: Laser: Single shots only and each sniper shot requires two melee actions to aim and shoot. Cannot fire bursts. Ion Blaster: Standard.

Maximum Effective Range: 3000 feet (914 m) for the laser, but only 1000 feet (305 m) for the ion blaster.

Payload: 5 laser or 10 ion shots per short e-clip or 10 laser or 20 ion shots per long e-clip.

Targeting Bonus: +3 to strike thanks to laser targeting and superior balance for the laser, but only +1 when using the ion blaster for assault purposes.

Market Cost: 50,000 credits.



TX-SL12 Sharpshooter Laser Rifle

This is the most advanced sniper rifle developed by Triax. It is also one of the most advanced rifles in the world. It has state of the art laser targeting and uses the Triax forward sliding e-clip for better balance and a steady shot. It has a powerful energy delivery system and superior range, but limited payload. Also, it requires careful calibration with every shot fired, so it is not an effective assault rifle. However, professional assassins, bounty hunters, and wilderness scouts love it and are the bulk of its consumer base.

Weight: 5 lbs (2.3 kg)

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D.

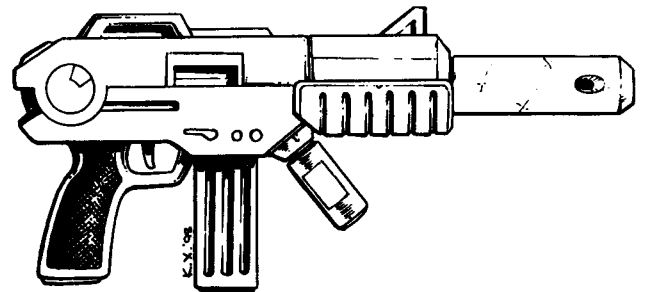
Rate of Fire: Single shots only and each sniper shot requires two melee actions to aim. Cannot fire bursts.

Maximum Effective Range: 3500 feet (1067 m)

Payload: 15 shots per forward sliding e-clip.

Targeting Bonus: +3 to strike thanks to laser targeting and superior balance.

Market Cost: 40,000 credits.



NG-R50 Mini Rail Gun

This is the smallest rail gun on the market. It fires only single shots, but uses a heavier round to inflict decent damage. It also uses an E-clip to power its electromagnetic drive. It has limited payload and range and requires a P.S. of 20 or higher to handle properly. Any lower and the user suffers a penalty of -3 to strike. It is popular among Juicers, Headhunters and other augmented humans and strong D-bees and is considered to be a symbol of strength and masculinity.

Weight: 25 lbs (11.3 kg)

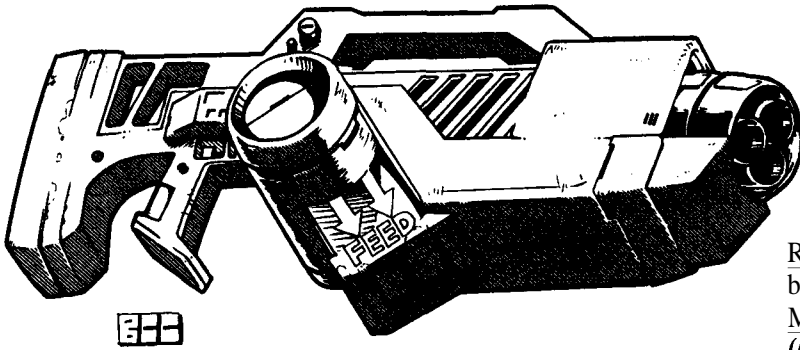
Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Standard, as per modern weapon proficiencies.

Maximum Effective Range: 1500 feet (457 m)

Payload: 10 round capacity and the long E-clip has enough power to fire 20 rounds, or a Power Pack can be used to provide enough power for 70 rounds, but weighs 20 lbs (9 kg).

Market Cost: 30,000 credits. The Power Pack costs 80,000 credits and can be recharged at 1/3 the cost up to four times before needing to be replaced.



NG-E15 Pulse Plasma Ejector

A firepower fan's dream, this weapon is capable of rapid-firing plasma bursts! The rapid fire system is not as efficient as the NG-E12, but this is offset by the triple blast. A heavier barrel and air cooling system allows this weapon to fire the multiple blasts without fear of overheating. Its weight prevents most humans from using it as anything except a tripod mounted cannon. However, it is gaining popularity among Headhunters, Juicers and Borgs as a heavy assault rifle. Anyone else without a P.S. of 20 or higher will be -3 to strike with this weapon. Standard issue is the NG Power Pack, but a standard E-clip can be substituted in an emergency.

Weight: 50 lbs (22.5 kg) plus an additional 20 lbs (9 kg) with the Power Pack.

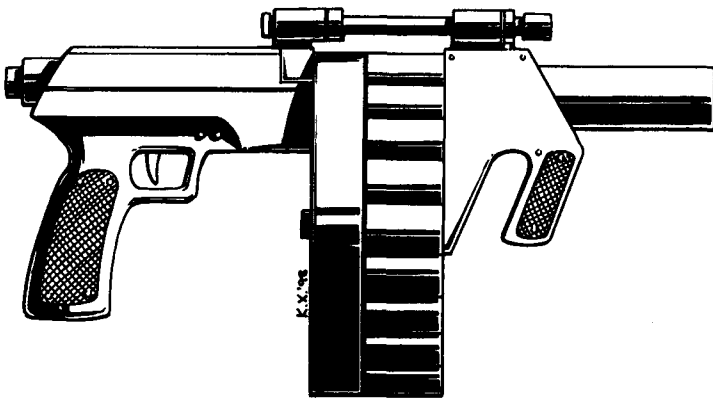
Mega-Damage: 1D4X10 per single shot or 2D6X10 per triple pulse burst.

Rate of Fire: Standard, as per modern weapon proficiencies.

Maximum Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m)

Payload: The Power Pack provides enough power for 42 single shots or 14 bursts. A long e-clip has enough power for 12 shots and a short e-clip has enough for 6.

Market Cost: 120,000 credits for the weapon. The Power Pack costs 80,000 credits and can be recharged at 1/3 the cost up to four times before needing to be replaced.



TX-75 Grenade Launcher

The NGR needs heavier and heavier weapons to fight the gargoyles and their armored vehicles. The TX-75 grenade launcher is just one of those new weapons. It fires armor piercing grenades to put a dent in the hundreds of M.D.C. that each gargoyle has even without body armor. Special rocket-propelled grenades have also been developed to increase the range of the weapon dramatically. A P.S. of 20 or higher is required to fire the grenades without suffering a penalty of -1 to strike. Most

NGR users either wear T-11 Enhanced body armor or are Borgs.

Weight: 20 lbs (9 kg) without the grenades.

Mega-Damage: 1D4X10 to a radius of 3 feet (.9 m) around the target per armor piercing **grenade**, but fragmentation (4D6 M.D. to a 12 foot/3.6 m radius), smoke, or other types can be substituted. Tear gas and stun grenades are often used in urban riot control.

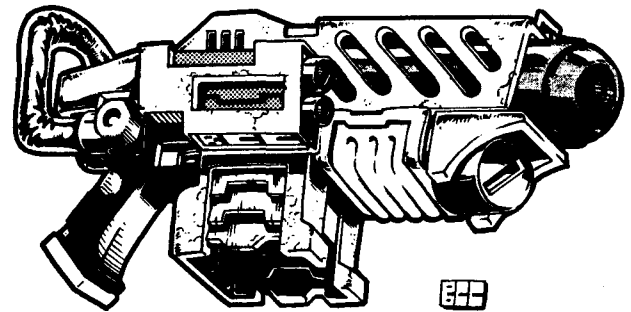
Rate of Fire: Standard, as per modern weapon proficiencies, but bursts are not possible.

Maximum Effective Range: 1200 feet (366 m), or 2000 feet (610 m) for rocket propelled grenades.

Payload: 30 round drum or a backpack ammo-drum can carry up to 60 rounds.

Bonus to Strike: +1 to strike with laser targeting.

Market Cost: 60,000 credits, not including the grenades. 500 credits each for armor piercing grenades, 300 credits each for fragmentation grenades, and varies for other types. Rocket grenades add 500 credits each to the base cost.



NG-GL10 Grenade Launcher

Not to be outdone by Wellington Industries and Triax, Northern Gun has released its own grenade launcher. It is a versatile weapon capable of using fragmentation grenades for anti-personnel purposes, armor-piercing for anti-armor/monster, and stun, smoke, and tear gas for urban assaults. This makes it well liked by firepower junkies and peace officers alike. A P.S. of 20 or higher is required to fire the grenades to avoid a penalty of -1 to strike.

Weight: 25 lbs (11.3 kg), not including the grenades.

Mega-Damage: 4D6 to a 12 foot (3.7 m) radius for fragmentation grenades, 1D4X10 to a 3 foot (.9 m) radius for armor piercing grenades, and various effects for other non-lethal grenades.

Rate of Fire: Standard, as per modern weapon proficiencies, but bursts are not possible.

Maximum Effective Range: 1000 feet (305 m)

Payload: 24 round drum or a backpack ammo-drum can carry up to 60 rounds.

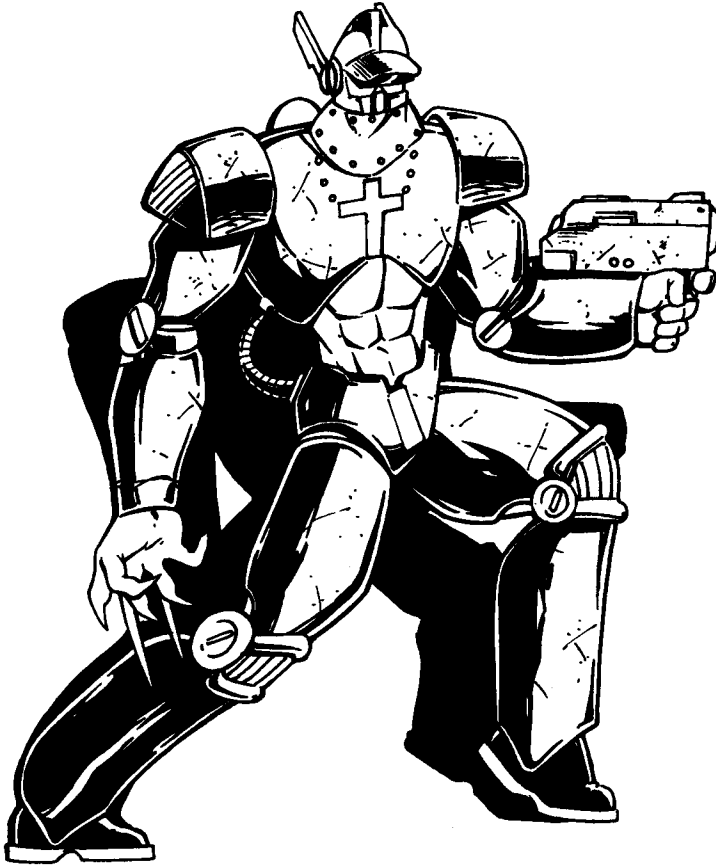
Market Cost: 50,000 credits, plus the grenades. 500 credits each for armor piercing grenades, 300 credits each for fragmentation **grenades**, and varies for other types.

Chipwell Armaments, Inc.

Business is great for these dealers in low-end robotics. Their best customers are small towns and kingdoms without a lot of money to throw around, but have an immediate need for power armor protection. Small-time meres also use Chipwell suits frequently. Among well-armed soldiers, they run about as much risk of dying of embarrassment as enemy fire. Professional

meres and soldiers scoff at these cheap suits. But when forced to choose between these suits and no suits at all, most will reluctantly use the Chipwell equipment.

Eager to expand their operation, Chipwell Armaments, Inc. has produced two new suits. Their designs specifically took into account the limitations in their standard suits and worked around them. Consequently, the new power armor is still low in quality and cost, but the applications are designed to compensate for their drawbacks.



CAI-50V Vampire Combat Armor

This is basically a CAI-50 Challenger suit with a few modifications, designed to combat vampires. Vampires are powerful creatures that are invulnerable to everything, except for a few strange exceptions. Wood, silver, running water, and holy symbols are all capable of inflicting damage to vampires and they are cheaper to produce than M.D.C. materials. This suit incorporates wooden claws, small searchlights, and a water-spraying rifle to become an effective vampire killing machine. Of course, against other supernatural creatures and threats, the suit is far less useful. But in the vampire ridden country of Mexico, these suits are being bought up to defend against the ever-present threat of vampires, while other threats are handled by better armed troops.

Model Designation: CAI-50V

Class: Light Anti-vampire Military Exoskeleton

Crew: One

M.D.C. by Location:

Water Cannon - 25

Water Drum - 50

Wooden Claws (2) - 200 S.D.C. each

Arms (2) - 20 each

Legs (2) - 50 each

*Head - 50

****Main Body - 120**

* Destroying the head will eliminate all optics and sensor systems and has a **1-70%** chance of knocking the pilot unconscious. If still conscious, the pilot must then rely on his own vision and senses. No power armor combat bonuses to strike, parry, and dodge. Note: The head is a small and difficult target to hit, especially on a moving target. Therefore, it can only be hit on a called shot at a penalty of **-3** to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will shut down the armor, rendering it useless.

Speed

Running: 40 M.P.H. (64 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does tire the pilot, but at 20% of the usual fatigue rate thanks to the robot exoskeleton.

Leaping: The robot can leap up to 15 feet (4.6 m) straight up or across.

Underwater Capabilities: Not designed with underwater operations in mind, the suit has very poor mobility underwater. The best it can do is walk along the bottom at 10 M.P.H. (16 km). Losing even half of its M.D.C. will allow water to leak into the suit and fill it in a matter of minutes, drowning the pilot.

Flying: Not possible without a jet pack.

Range: The suit operates on batteries that have a life of 24 hours before requiring a recharge. This gives it a practical range of only 500 miles (800 km). Their primary function requires that they only operate at night, extending the charge of the batteries, and providing a lot of time to recharge and replace the batteries.

Statistical Data

Height: 7 feet (2.1 m)

Width: 3 feet (.9 m)

Length: 3 feet (.9 m)

Weight: 130 lbs (58.5 kg) without the water gun and drum.

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. of 20.

Cargo: None

Power System: Electrical batteries, providing a life of 24 hours before requiring recharging.

Market Cost: 90,500 credits for a new, undamaged, fully powered suit with full weapon systems. Very popular in human cities in Mexico and the Southwestern part of North America.

Weapon Systems

1. CAIV Water Cannon: This is just a conventional, portable water cannon with the tank mounted on the back of the suit.

Primary Purpose: Anti-vampire

Secondary Purpose: Fire-fighting

Weight: 11 lbs (5 kg), plus 35 lbs (15.8 kg) with a full tank.

Damage: 6D6 hit point damage to vampires and other creatures vulnerable to water.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand combat attacks.

Effective Range: 100 feet (30.5 m)

Payload: 52 water blasts.

2. CAIV Anti-vampire Claws: These are wooden claws mounted on the forearms of the suit.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Vampire

Weight: 5 lbs (2.3 kg) each.

Damage: 2D6 S.D.C., double hit point damage to vampires.

3. **Hand-held weapons** are often added to the suit's arsenal to make it somewhat effective against other opponents, but are not a part of the suit's standard equipment.
4. **Hand to Hand Combat:** Rather than use a weapon, the pilot can engage in Mega-Damage hand to hand combat. See Power Armor Combat: Basic in the Robot Combat section of the **Rifts® RPG** with the following changes:
Punch: 1D4 M.D.
Leap Kick: 1D6 M.D.
5. **Sensor Systems:** The helmet is only equipped with basic visual, laser targeting, telescopic, passive **nightvision**, and polarized lenses. It also has a short range radio system.

CAI-75 Sky Flyer

It is said that this is a suit that only a Crazy or a Juicer would use in a battle. It is slow and lightly armored with no true anti-aircraft capabilities. It's a far cry from the fast, heavily armored suits being produced by the Coalition. The flight capabilities of the suit are provided by an electric jet pack that is basically a built-in version of a portable pack. Against a SAMAS or even a Flying Titan, the suit is a crash site waiting to happen. However, against land-bound troops without anti-aircraft weapons, it is an adequate war machine. Its limited capabilities make it unpopular among mercenaries and adventurers, but it is a good buy for couriers. Couriers need low cost transportation and solid protection from the creatures in the wilderness and the Sky Flyer provides both. The Sky Flyer's low cost is making it nearly as popular as the Triax Terrain Hopper, as the messenger power armor of choice.

Model Designation: CAI-75

Class: Light Infantry Armor Military Exoskeleton

Crew: One

M.D.C. by Location:

Wings (2) - 20 each

Jet Pack - 20

Grenade Launcher - 30

Arms (2) - 30 each

Legs (2) - 60 each

*Head - 60

****Main Body - 140**

* Destroying the head will eliminate all optics and sensor systems and has a 1-70% chance of knocking the pilot unconscious. If still conscious, the pilot must then rely on his own vision and senses. No power armor combat bonuses to strike, parry, and dodge. Note: The head is a small and difficult target to hit, especially on a moving target. Therefore, it can only be hit on a called shot at a penalty of -3 to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will shut down the armor, rendering it useless.

Speed

Running: 40 M.P.H. (64 km) maximum: Note that the act of running does tire the pilot, but at 20% of the usual fatigue rate thanks to the robot exoskeleton.

Leaping: The robot can leap up to 15 feet (4.6 m) straight up or across.

Underwater Capabilities: Not designed with underwater operations in mind, the suit has very poor mobility underwater. The best it can do is walk along the bottom at 10 M.P.H. (16 km). Losing even half of its M.D.C. will allow water to leak into the suit and fill it in a matter of minutes, drowning the pilot.

Flying: Maximum speed is 150 M.P.H. (240 km), but cruising speed is around 80 M.P.H. (128 km). Maximum altitude is only 3000 feet (914 m), but still beyond the range of most hand-held weapons.

Flying Range: The flight system runs on electrical batteries that have a range of 800 miles (1280 km).

Statistical Data

Height: 7 feet (2.1 m)

Width: 3 feet (.9 m)

Length: 3 feet (.9 m)

Weight: 200 lbs (90 kg)

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. of 20.

Cargo: Straps and clamps allow the suit to carry a maximum of 200 additional lbs (90 kg).

Power System: Electrical batteries, providing a life of 24 hours before requiring recharging, plus the flight system has a separate power supply that gives it an average of 10 hours of use. In an emergency, the suit's power can be routed to the jet pack to increase the range by 80 miles (128 km) per every hour of charge.

Market Cost: 140,000 credits for a new, undamaged, fully powered suit.

Weapon Systems

1. **CAI-75 Grenade Launcher:** This is a shoulder-mounted weapon that has limited range, but is very effective against land targets because gravity can propel the grenade the rest of the way towards the target.

Primary Purpose: Anti-infantry

Weight: Not applicable, an integral part of the suit.

Damage: Varies with the type of grenade used. Standard issue is fragmentation (4D6 M.D.), but any rifle grenade can be used.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand combat attacks.

Effective Range: 1000 feet (305 m)

Payload: 8 grenades

2. **Hand-held weapons** are often used by the pilot to enhance his offensive capabilities, but are not a part of the suit's standard equipment.

3. **Hand to Hand Combat:** Rather than use a weapon, the pilot can engage in Mega-Damage hand to hand combat. See Power Armor Combat: Basic in the Robot Combat section of the **Rifts® RPG** with the following changes:

Punch: 1D4 M.D.

Leap Kick: 1D6 M.D.

4. **Sensor Systems:** The helmet is only equipped with basic visual, laser targeting, telescopic, passive nightvision, and polarized lenses. It also has a short range radio system.



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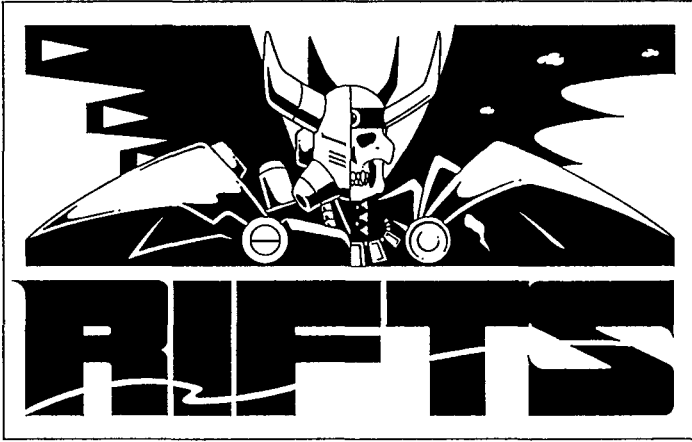
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The Evolved

The Master Race of To'bw-ork

By David Ransom

"When the master arrived in our Arydia, he scoured the outer realms to find the elements of a superior race. He returned to the heavens and in his laboratory labored for decades.

"We are what resulted, the ultimate in evolution, made to continue the work of our master."

The Evolved are a race of creatures created by the renegade Gene Splicer To'bw-ork. His attempt was to create an "ultimate" life form, a creature that he could mold and perfect. His obsession with his new "children" led him to create several versions of the same race, each one a step further on the evolutionary chain.

Originally, these creatures resided in an Astral realm in which To'bw-ork had settled, a place called Arydia. But To'bw-ork was not content to keep his "children" trapped in a small, if safe, astral paradise. He knew that he must test the worth of these creatures, to see if they could survive in the hostile **Megaverse** that existed beyond the confines of the astral domain fashioned for his children. Thus he released several batches of these creatures into various portions of Rifts Earth and the Three Galaxies. He has inserted into these places bands of Evolved of all stages, and he observes from afar, watching the progress of his children, and seeing if he has, indeed, created a "perfect" race.

The Evolved: First Stage

Description: The first stage of the Evolved is a roughly 7 foot (2.1 m) tall reptilian creature with tough, leathery, bluish-gray skin, and stands upright on two **powerful**, three-toed (and clawed) feet. The body has two separate pairs of **humanoid** arms. The upper pair of arms is well muscled with fully articulated hands. The lower pair is a smaller, bony, tough-skinned and clawed pair of appendages. Despite the apparent lack of strength, the crab like claws at the end can cut through the hardest of steel. They also have a short pair of leathery, bat-like wings protruding from **their** shoulder blades (the outside of the wings is a light greenish color, the inside is a dark gray). Along with this, they have a prehensile tail which ends in a **tri-pronged** bony outcropping. The head slightly resembles that of a human,



with pointy ears, larger eyes, and a beak. The skin on the face is a mottled gray, with a touch of flesh tones in it. The creature contradicts its reptilian nature in the fact that facial hair can grow, in the same areas as a human being. This seems to further suspicions that the origins of this creature could partially be attributed to mankind.

Biology

The internal biology of the First Stage Evolved is much like that of a human, with the same basic organ layout. There are more bones however, and muscle mass is greatly increased. The heart of the creature is five-chambered, giving them incredible abilities to oxygenate their blood, much more efficiently than a human being. Their blood is a brighter tone of red, almost an orange color when oxygenated, and a dark brown when not oxygenated.

They are **omnivores**, so although they are instinctive hunters, they also have the ability to survive on **vegetation** and are not an overly violent species, unless threatened.

The first stage of the race lay eggs, but fertilization is internal. The eggs are roughly 1 foot (.3 m) across, and the creature gestates inside the egg for roughly 5 months before hatching. They lay 1D4 eggs at a time.

Intelligence-wise they are very similar to chimpanzees, with a very high animal intelligence and the capacity to learn simple

communication methods, faces, places, etc. They are social animals and enjoy their own company; they mate for life.

Stats

IQ: 2D4 (High Animal), **M.E.:** 3D6, **M.A.:** 1D6, **P.S.:** 4D6 (supernatural), **P.P.:** 3D6, **P.E.:** 5D6, **P.B.:** 1D6 to humans, 3D6 to selves, 2D6 to more evolved members of the race, **Spd:** 3D6 on foot, can fly slowly at a speed of 6D6 (cannot get above 30 feet/9 m in the air).

M.D.C.: 1D6x10+15

Natural Abilities:

Heightened senses of hearing and smell (twice as good as humans).

Poor sense of touch (half as good as humans, good pain tolerance).

Increased Healing Rate: If the Evolved gets at least 2000 calories a day (its digestive system is very efficient), then it regenerates at the amazing rate of 1D4x10 M.D.C. per day. If it eats double this amount of food, the creature can **regrow** limbs in 1D4 days, and regenerate full M.D.C. after an 8 hour sleep.

Needs only 6 hours of sleep per night.

High efficiency Respiration, needs only about 3/4 as much oxygen as a human.

Life Span: 100 years



The Evolved: Second Stage

Description: The Second stage is similar to the First Stage, with several distinctly new characteristics. The first of these being that the creature adds about 1 foot (.3 m) to its height, due to lengthening of legs and the development of a more distinct neck. Their leathery skin begins to lose the bluish tint and becomes more obviously gray. The upper arms increase in **length**, and the hands become smaller and better suited to handle objects. The crab-like appendages on the bottom remain relatively the same, however the outer covering becomes bony, a result of an exoskeleton forming on that one part of the body.

At this stage their wings begin to expand slightly, and at the bottom of each side are newly developed hooks so they can close their wings around themselves like a bat (though not comfortably at this stage). The wings are still a bit awkward and clumsy, but they can manage to fly. The inner portion turns a lighter gray, and the outer side of the wings becomes a much darker shade of green.

The tail becomes more responsive and articulated, and another spiked protrusion grows from the end, making the tail a more devastating weapon. The head becomes much more **elon-**

gated at this point, with more pink pigmentation evident beneath the scaly skin. Their eyes reduce in size and become more slanted, the nose also becomes more like a human's. The ears at this point are leathery and bat-like, with a green color to match their wings (both are made of the same sinewy material). The head is also slightly larger, to accommodate a more complex brain.

Biology

The mating process remains the same, however the egg is kept inside for 2 additional months before laying, resulting in only 3 months of the egg being outside of the mother.

Internal biology remains relatively the same, although they do have 2 additional ribs, and a more complex reproductive system. The females also develop mammary glands and can nurse their young after hatching, very unusual for a reptilian-based species indeed. The bone structure also strengthens, making this stage able to withstand more physical punishment. Their larger size also means they need more food per day than the 1st stage Evolved.

At this point the Evolved are intelligent enough to speak (although rather **gutturally**) and learn skills. Their intelligence level is not incredibly high, but they can be taught simple skills, and make excellent soldiers due to an instinctive tendency to be loyal to their own race, especially those of superior stages.

Stats: I.Q.: 3D4+1, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 2D6, P.S.: 4D6+4 (supernatural), P.P.: 3D6, P.E.: 5D6, P.B.: 1D6 to humans, 3D6 to selves, 2D6+2 to more evolved members of the race, **Spd:** 4D6+5 on foot, can fly slowly at a speed of 1D4x10+20 (cannot get above 120 feet/36.6 m).

M.D.C.: 2D4x10+40

Natural Abilities:

Fly (slowly, defined by Spd. attribute).

Heightened senses of hearing and smell (twice as good as humans).

Poor sense of touch (half as good as humans, good pain tolerance).

Increased Healing Rate:

If they double their voracious appetite (which would come out to about 6000 Calories a day, normal diet is 3000 a day. Can live on 1000 a day, but are at 1/2 healing rate. They are genetically engineered not to produce excess body fat) they can regenerate 2D4x10 M.D.C. in a single night. Can also regenerate limbs/organs in a matter of 1D4 days.

Needs only 6 hrs of sleep per night to function efficiently.

High efficiency respiration, needs only about 3/4 as much oxygen as a human.

Life Span: 150 years

The Evolved: Third Stage

Description: The Third Stage develops the features of the second stage, and adds several more. This is a huge jump in the Evolution, and marks the midpoint between the **creatures'** least and greatest stages.

The basic structure of the Evolved is still somewhat the same, however this form settles at a height between the first two, at about 7 feet 5 inches (2.3 m), which is relatively uniform throughout the race. Their mottled blue-gray skin settles at a light shade of gray, and the skin becomes harder and more rigid

in certain areas (more flexible around the joints as not to damage mobility).

Their forearms begin to grow solid, bony plates for protection, as do the shoulders, chest, and shins. Their crab appendages are now fully shelled, and the pincers can now produce an acidic enzyme that can dissolve through Mega-Damage materials — a new defense mechanism. The wings are fully developed at this point, and they are much more suited for air travel. The wings fully fold around their bodies at this point as well. The outside of the wings get to be an even darker green, and the inside is a pale shade of gray, resembling the color of light pencil shading.

The tail goes through several changes. At this point it is about half the size of the previous stages, and it loses its spikes. However, it is now fully articulated as another limb, which can be controlled with amazing precision.

The head becomes even larger, and the face becomes more human-like, with more flesh tones evident. They lose their second row of teeth, now having only one, but making up for this is the fact that they can speak as normally as humans. In the middle of the forehead are several ripples, standard throughout the species. In the center of these ripples is a oval shaped patch of dark gray skin, without pigmentation.

Perhaps one of the biggest evolutionary advantages is the fact that these creatures become adapted for underwater survival. On their necks form a pair of simple gills, giving them the ability to breath (albeit with some difficulty) underwater.

Biology

The internal biology changes somewhat with the third stage. Their systems become much more efficient than the previous stages, requiring less caloric intake to survive. Their heart devel-



ops another chamber, a total of 6, granting these creatures amazing ability to pump blood to their large bodies. The nervous system of these creatures develops much more, and has increased regenerative abilities.

At the third stage the creatures also no longer lay eggs, they bear live offspring, always in sets of twins (1 male, 1 female). The gestation period is longer in this form (1 year), but the children develop to adulthood by the age of 10, fully mentally capable. The 3rd stage shows amazing longevity, and members have been known to live for up to 300 years.

Mentally, the creatures at this stage are slightly superior (on average) to humans, and they have the same innate curiosity and drive to **learn** as humans do. This is the most numerous of all of the Evolved, and they make up most of their society. First and Second stage Evolved, even if in the wild, will show an instinctual submissiveness towards individuals of this stage.

One quarter of this stage also begins to show Psionic potential.

Stats: I.Q.: 4D4+2, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 5D6 (supernatural), P.P.: 3D6-2 (Bony plates decrease mobility a bit), P.E.: 5D6+2, P.B.: 2D4 to Humans, 3D6 to selves, 3D4 to other stages of evolved, **Spd:** 5D6 on foot; can fly at a speed of 2D4x10+20 (cannot achieve an altitude above 1000 feet/305m). M.D.C.: 3D4x10+20

Psionics: Roll Percentiles.

1-4 - Mind Melter Caliber Psionic

5-12 - Major Psionic

13-25 - Minor Psionic

26-00 - No Psionics

Natural Abilities:

Flight (as in speed).

Heightened senses of hearing and smell (twice as good as humans).

Night vision, 1000 feet (305 m).

Slightly impaired sense of touch (3/4 as good as human, due to thickness of skin, but is better than earlier stages due to better nervous system).

Increased Healing Rate:

The third stage heals better than the previous two, and on their normal diet of 2000 calories a day, they regenerate 3D6 M.D.C. per day. If they feast (about 5,000 calories) and then go into a regenerative trance for 18 hours, they can emerge 100% healed. (Limbs, organs, etc., will be regenerated).

Immunity to **Disease/Sickness/Poison:**

Normal poisons/diseases do not affect the Evolved. Only a specially engineered or mutated **virus/bacteria/poison** could harm the Evolved.

Needs only 5 hours of sleep per night.

High efficiency respiration, needs only about one half as much oxygen as a human.

Can survive underwater for up to 6 hours, but must emerge after this for **1D4x10** minutes to refresh oxygen in their system (gills are not fully functional).

Low Body Fat: Obesity does not exist in their race due to their high metabolism.

Pincer attacks cause **1D4x10** M.D.C. initially, plus 6D6 M.D.C. per subsequent melee action (in this case, four times per melee) due to the acid. The acid can be washed off with water, or will wear out one minute after application.

Life Span: 250+ years



The Evolved: Fourth Stage

Description: The Fourth Stage of the Evolved is physically very similar to the Third Stage, and the two could almost be mistaken for one another, if it were not for a few key differences.

The first difference between the two is that the bony plates become a deep gray color, and offer slightly more protection. They also do not hinder the movement of the creature as much, enabling them to react to situations much more quickly. The tail of the creature also gets slightly longer, usually by about 4-5 inches (10-13 cm). The gills of the Fourth Stage are more operable, and the creature can live under water indefinitely, if necessary.

The most startling difference between the Third and Fourth stages however, is that the patch of light skin on the Third stage has changed into a third eye on the Fourth stage. This third eye has the ability to see into various different **spectrums** of light, and gives amazing telescopic vision, making it a match for many technological optics systems.

Aside from these changes, the Third and Fourth stages are exactly the same, at least physically.

Biology

As with the external physiology of the Fourth Stage, the internal biology remains greatly unchanged. The two exceptions to this rule are the Respiratory system and the Nervous system, both of which undergo serious changes.

The Respiratory system becomes more efficient, requiring less oxygen to support the body. The creatures have the ability to hold their breath for long periods of time due to this fact. The gill system of the creature also becomes fully effective, and they can extract oxygen from water as easily as any fish.

The brain of the Fourth Stage undergoes a startling development - every Fourth Stage is psionic! The psychic portions of

the brain are much more developed, giving these creatures several standard powers - along with a **startlingly** high ratio of Mind Melter class psychics, an amazing **10%** of the population!

Stats: LQ.: 4D6+2, M.E.: 4D6, M.A.: 3D6, P.S.: 5D6 (supernatural), P.P.: 3D6+2, P.E.: 5D6+2, P.B.: 2D4 to Humans, 3D6 to selves, 3D4 to other stages of evolved, **Spd:** 5D6 on foot, can fly at a speed of **2D4x10+20** (cannot achieve an altitude above 1000 **feet/305** m).

M.D.C.: 3D6x10+30

I.S.P.: (for non Mind Melters): 1D4x10+25+M.E. attribute.

Psionics: All Fourth Stage Evolved receive the following powers automatically: Presence Sense, Sixth Sense, Mind Block: Auto-Defense. Plus they can pick 4 powers from any of the minor categories, and 1 additional minor power for each level of experience. They also receive a natural telepathy that takes up no I.S.P., but only works within their own race (yes, this ability can be used to communicate with different stages of Evolved). Furthermore, 10% of the Evolved have powers equivalent to that of a Mind Melter. In this case, use the Mind Melter O.C.C., but give the player the automatic Psionics that come with being a Fourth Stage Evolved.

Natural Abilities:

Flight (as in speed).

Heightened senses of hearing and smell (twice as good as humans).

Night vision, 2000 Feet (**610** m).

Increased Healing Rate:

The fourth stage heals just as well as the third stage, and on their normal diet of 3000 calories a day, they regenerate 3D6 M.D.C. per day. If they feast (about 5,000 calories) and then go into a regenerative trance for **18** hours, they can emerge 100% healed. (Limbs, organs, etc., will be regenerated).

Immunity to **Disease/Sickness/Poison:**

Normal poisons/diseases do not affect the Evolved. Only a specially engineered or mutated **virus/bacteria/poison** could harm the Evolved.

Needs only 5 hours of sleep per night.

High efficiency respiration, needs only about 1/4 as much oxygen as a human. Can hold breath for **1D4** hours!

Can survive underwater indefinitely.

Low Body Fat: Obesity does not exist in their race due to **their** incredible metabolism.

Pincer attacks cause **1D4x10** M.D.C. initially, plus 6D6 M.D.C. per subsequent melee action (in this case, four times per melee) due to the acid. The acid can be washed off with water, or will wear out one minute after application.

Third Eye Optics - Can see in Infrared, Ultraviolet, and Thermal **spectrums**. The eyesight is about as keen as a hawk's, and underwater they can see perfectly clearly.

Life Span: 250+ years

The Evolved: Fifth Stage

Not recommended as a Player Character.

Description: The Fifth Stage of the Evolved represent the pinnacle of evolution. They are a marvel of genetic technology and a credit to the genius of the Gene Splicer **To'bw-ork**. There are very few Fifth Stage Evolved, due to a biological defense mechanism that has been created by their maker. This mechanism will be described later in the Biology section.

Externally, the creatures grow to their maximum height of 8 feet (2.4 m) tall. Their wingspan at this final stage is nearly 15 feet (4.6 m), and the wings are more powerful than any stage before them. The exoskeleton becomes black, and is extremely dense, offering great protection for the Fifth Stage. The crab-like arms gain the ability to shoot their acidic secretions at a distance of 100 **yards/meters**, and the tail gains a mouth-like opening which can do the same. This stage no longer has a beak, it now has a humanoid face, with bony plates running up the back and sides of the head, and between the three eyes, the nose, and the mouth. The top of the head has no hair, but is encased in the bony substance for maximum protection.

Biology

All of the biological systems of this creature are completely maximized for efficiency, with one exception - the reproductive system. In fact, there is **NO** reproductive system; these creatures are **100%** sterile, unable to be reproduced without cloning technology. To'bw-ork was no fool, he was not about to give a race with the incredible powers of the Fifth Stage Evolved the ability to multiply. If they could, they could become extremely disruptive to local ecosystems. Because of this, very few of these powerful creatures are in existence in the Megaverse.

Their psionic potential is **maximized**, and each of these creatures has psychic abilities that rival those of Mind Melters. These creatures also have the ability to psychically compel other members of their race, except for other members of the fifth stage. This makes them the ultimate leaders of Evolved society.

To'bw-ork programmed into their nature the compulsion to follow his orders without question, and to see to the protection of the lesser stages. Thus, the Fifth Stage, like **To'bw-ork**, see themselves as the protectors of their race, and will, logically, act as the leaders of any Evolved community which they oversee.

Stats: LQ.: 20+2D6, M.E.: 4D6+2, M.A.: 4D6, P.S.: 6D6 (supernatural), P.P.: 4D6+2, P.E.: 5D6+4, P.B.: 2D4 to Humans, 3D6 to selves, 5D6 to other stages of evolved, Spd: 7D6 on foot, can fly at a speed of **3D6x10+20** (cannot achieve an altitude above 5000 **feet/1524** m).

M.D.C.: 1D4x100+50

I.S.P.: **3D6x10+30** + M.E., +15 per level of experience.

Psionics: All Fifth Stage Evolved are amazingly powerful psychics, who get the following abilities automatically: Sixth Sense, See Aura, Mind Block: Auto-Defense, Telepathy (free within own species, all stages), Telekinetic Force Field and Clairvoyance. They also get to pick three (3) abilities from each of the four categories, including Super. Along with this, they get 2 other abilities from any minor category they want. At each additional level the Evolved can select 1 psychic power from each category. Also, the Fifth Stage are such potent psychics that the effective level is raised by two (so if it is a level 1 Evolved, for all Psychic intents and purposes like range, damage, duration, etc., treat as level 3). The fifth stage Evolved use the Dragon Hatchling experience chart, or their O.C.C. experience **chart**, whichever progresses more slowly.

Natural Abilities:

Flight (as in speed).

Heightened senses of hearing and smell (4x as good as humans).

Night vision, 6000 Feet (**1830** m).

Increased Healing Rate: The Fifth Stage Evolved has the most efficient healing system of any stage of Evolved. As long as



they maintain 1000 calories a day, they regenerate at the amazing rate of **1D4x10 M.D.C.** per minute. They can survive, perfectly healthy, on half of this, and can live for two months without food. Limbs regenerate in a matter of 1D4 hours on a regular diet.

Immunity to Disease/Sickness/Poison:

Normal poisons/diseases do not affect the Evolved. Only a specially engineered or mutated **virus/bacteria/poison** could harm the Evolved.

Needs only 4 hours of sleep per night.

High efficiency respiration, needs only about **1/10** as much oxygen as a human. Can hold breath for 3D6 hours!

Can survive underwater indefinitely.

Low Body Fat: Obesity does not exist in their race due to their metabolism.

Pincer attacks cause **1D4x10 M.D.C.** initially, plus 6D6 M.D.C. per subsequent melee action due to the acid. The acid can be washed off with water, or will wear out five minutes after application. The acid can be shot a distance of **100 yards/meters**, and inflicts 6D6 M.D.C. on impact, and 6D6 M.D.C. on each subsequent melee.

Third Eye Optics - Can see in **Infrared**, Ultraviolet, and Thermal **spectrums**. The eyesight is about as keen as a hawk's, and underwater they can see perfectly clearly.

Cannot reproduce/no females of the species exist. Every one of them was *created*, not born naturally.

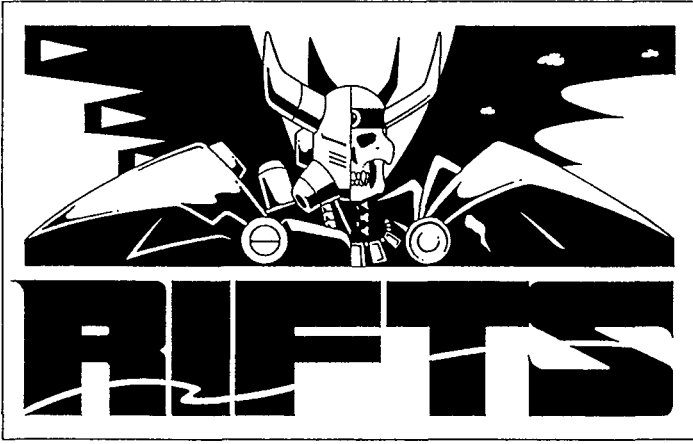
Life Span: Effectively immortal.

Notes on the Evolved

1) The Evolved can be found almost anywhere a Gene Splicer can be. To'bw-ork's ship travels all over to deposit his specimens in different environments.

2) First and Second Stage Evolved are likely to behave like intelligent animals, form small communities and stay to themselves. However, Third to Fifth stage Evolved have personalities as diverse as humans, and could be travelers, they could set up a town, or they could become conquerors. First and Second Stage Evolved can be trained by higher stages to be obedient and to serve if necessary. The possibilities are endless.

3) Fifth Stage Evolved are **RARE!** Use them sparingly, and only let them be Player Characters under certain circumstances. They are very powerful creatures for campaigns where the players are mostly S.D.C. based, and they are ultra-geniuses in any circumstance.



Siege Against

Tolkeen

By David Haendler

Chapter 15

Sonja glanced at the column of golems, trying to decide how far away she should stay from the constructs. Following them would be the best way to find some Coalition troops, but getting caught by them would be the quickest way to die. Although the man-shaped chunks of rock were slow, clumsy and stupid, they were strong and durable. Also, half a dozen sentient troops, in red combat armor, marched alongside the column. Their job was to ensure that the golems didn't kill innocent citizens or deviate from their mission plan.

Sonja then looked down at the utility belt pocket which held the vital CD. She gave it a quick pat to make sure that it was still there and still safe, and then began to jog through the underbrush, after the mindless platoon.

The Juicer felt uneasy. The wilderness was not a safe place to be during the war. Coalition planes regularly firebombed entire regions, demonic parasites like ghouls and vampires crawled through the forests looking for wounded prey, and all sorts of magical booby traps and energy walls made travel downright dangerous. *The safest place to be is probably near these guys, she reasoned to herself. After all, they'll stay clear of the traps, and they're doubtless going to attack some Coalition camp or something.* Still, she didn't like to think what would happen if those Coalition grunts lost.

She looks lost, thought CS Ranger Hubert Possman. He had been trailing the golem platoon for nearly half an hour, watching them from high in the trees, and leaping from branch to branch to follow the scumbags. His silenced jet pack was always there if he fell, but he knew the forest so well that he hardly ever fell. Still, he hadn't spotted the girl with them until a few minutes ago, although he suspected that she had been with them all along.

Possman's ever-so-slightly modified Espionage armor was specially designed for his style. It was made out of a lighter

polycarbonate plating, providing greater mobility and less weight. Still, the camouflage armor strained the thick branches, sometimes threatening to break them. When the tree limb that he was squatting on began to give way, the ranger decided that it was time to follow on the ground. He activated his jet pack, hearing a slight humming noise, and lowered himself to the ground behind a tree. Then, pulling his vibro-knife, he began to approach the girl.

Sonja's enhanced senses noticed the rustling of leaves on the ground when Possman was less than five yards away from her. She pulled her laser pistol out and spun around, expecting to see a red-garbed soldier who had doubled back around her. Instead, she saw a man in camouflage Dead Boy armor, holding an energy knife. With his free hand, he put a finger over his lips, indicating that he wanted her to be silent. But as soon as the golems had marched out of range, he began chatting away.

"You're a smuggler, I take it?" he asked, his voice somewhat shrill. "That's rather unusual. Nowadays, most of them are rifting their way out of Tolkeen. Still, we get the occasional border jumper."

Sonja shook her head. "I'm a member of...a terrorist group," she admitted. "I've been charged with getting this message to somebody in the CS. Give this to your C.O., all right?" With that, she handed over her message.

He nodded. "Cool. Uh, hey, would you by any chance...ah...want to see those golems get burned? I've phoned ahead and told a nearby base that they're coming, and an ambush is being prepared even as we speak. I've seen quite a few of these ambushes and they're a spectacular show! All the lasers and the rail gun fire, it's beautiful, really."

Sonja looked at him coolly. "This is a war, buddy," she growled. "It isn't a spectator sport. People are getting killed."

Possman sighed, totally deflated. "All right," he sighed, tucking the CD away. "Suit yourself. I guess I'll see it alone then." With that, he activated his silenced jet pack, rose up about a foot into the air, and then flew off after the golems.

"Bitch," he muttered once he was sure she was out of range.

"Loser," she muttered, once she was sure he was out of range. Then, she turned, and began the long journey back home.

Back at her home, in Grand Alamar, the High Council was meeting outside of their pyramid. Each of them wore a headset walkie-talkie, and all of them stood at a wall, pressing their hands up against the cool stone.

"Are you sure that the safeguards are all in place?" hissed one of the Lizard Mages, not at all liking the feel of the cold rock against his clammy, scaly fingers. "I don't want to be getting P.P.E. burns, and I certainly don't want to be pulled into the astral plane."

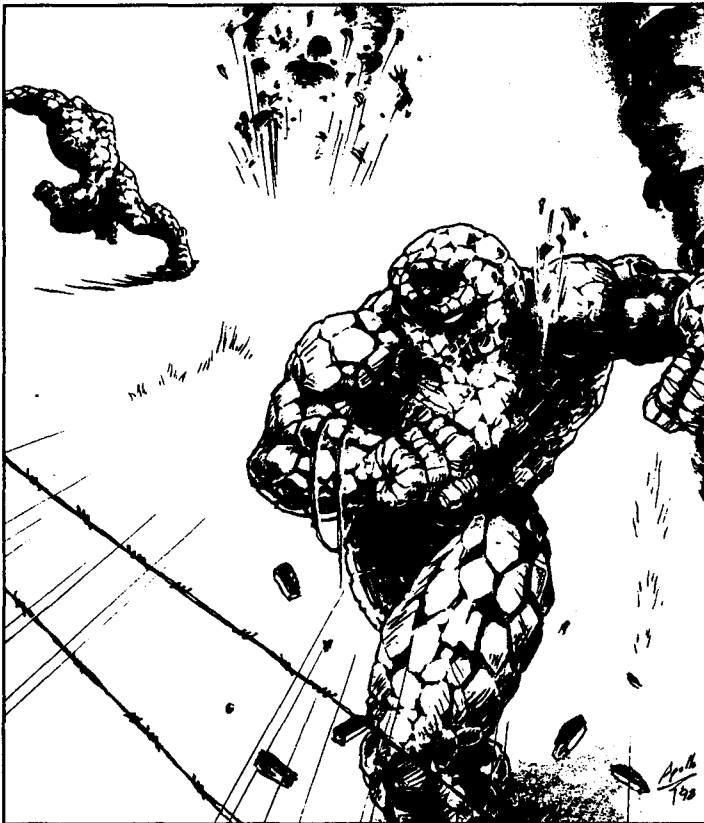
"The safeguards are in place!" snapped Shaard. "All of the proper anchors are set!"

"And the army is in place?" asked the young elf hesitantly. He was shaking very slightly, and his skin was pale. In the last sorcery he had performed, a sizeable portion of his soul had been ripped from him, and he was understandably nervous to risk losing the rest. "The radar defenses and the missile bays?"

"Yes," said Shaard, obviously annoyed. "It's all ready. Can we please get this going?" As if to signify his readiness, he began chanting. Bluish mystical energy shot up from the ground, passing through his massive frame and up onto the sides of the pyramid, creating a wall of slightly opaque magical energy. At places, the wall curved outward to form midair walls or canyons; further barriers to enemy forces.

The others gave their chants, and the energy barriers formed on the other sides of the pyramid as well, until the stone structure was completely wrapped in magical power, and until a complex labyrinth of crackling blue force stretched through the nearby skies. The energy then faded out of sight, as if it was diffusing into the wall and into the air.

Shaard wiped a layer of ice-cold perspiration from his scaly brow. "I pity the pilots who make an attack run here!" he laughed merrily.



The golems began their attack. They were at the top of a steep valley, overlooking a CS camp. The camp was in the process of becoming a fort. Everywhere troops were running back and forth placing portable walls, and construction machines worked at laying foundations of concrete or digging up the earth to make basements and bomb shelters.

Possman watched happily from a nearby tree, staring at the golems and their living leaders with a powerful pair of binoculars. He could see a few other golem platoons closing in on other sides of the valley, and a wing of the incompetent **techno-wizard** jets flying in from the northeast. It was a minor assault force, meant only to shake up the Coalition and slow the construction of their newest fort. But, thanks to Possman's warning, it would become a slaughter.

As the golems charged down into the valley, they ran into the minefields. Flame belched out from the ground every few seconds as a golem stepped on a land mine. Sometimes the construct would explode, firing chunks of its concrete body up into the air. more often, it would continue onwards, scorched and burnt.

As they reached the perimeter of the fort, a barbed wire fence snapped up from the ground. It was a temporary measure at best, but kept the golems at bay long enough for the cavalry to arrive. Legions of foot soldiers, who had been hiding in the woods, swept down upon the enemy, their weapons blazing. The golems were caught between the Coalition troops and the fence. To complicate their problems, men from behind the fence were picking off the Tolkeen soldiers with sniper fire. By the time the incoming grunts had reached close range, all of the golems were already weakened or destroyed. And within a few more minutes, all of the golems had been destroyed.

The techno-wizard jets were a bigger problem, although the planes were quite lousy. They were fast and agile enough, but lacked armor or powerful weaponry. While a couple of them managed to strafe the base, it was only a matter of minutes before missile teams on the ground took the planes down.

Once the last plane had gone down into the forest, burning and exploding, Possman took off his helmet and lit up a cigarette. He then looked down at the CD in his hand, and grabbed up his walkie-talkie. "Sir," he said, pressing down a button. "A young lady gave me something that I think you should hear."

Chapter 16

Hubert Possman stood in front of some of the most powerful men in North America, feeling like a jerk and itching like crazy. The formal dress uniforms were made out of a slick, soft, very unnatural fabric that Possman believed he was allergic to. The ranger avoided wearing the itchy inorganic clothing whenever possible, but this time it could not be helped. One did not show up before the regional commanders wearing combat fatigues.

There were hot lights in the room and he was nervous anyway, so Possman began to sweat like a hog, making him sticky and itchy and smelly. He tried his damndest not to scratch, and hoped that he was keeping a straight enough face.

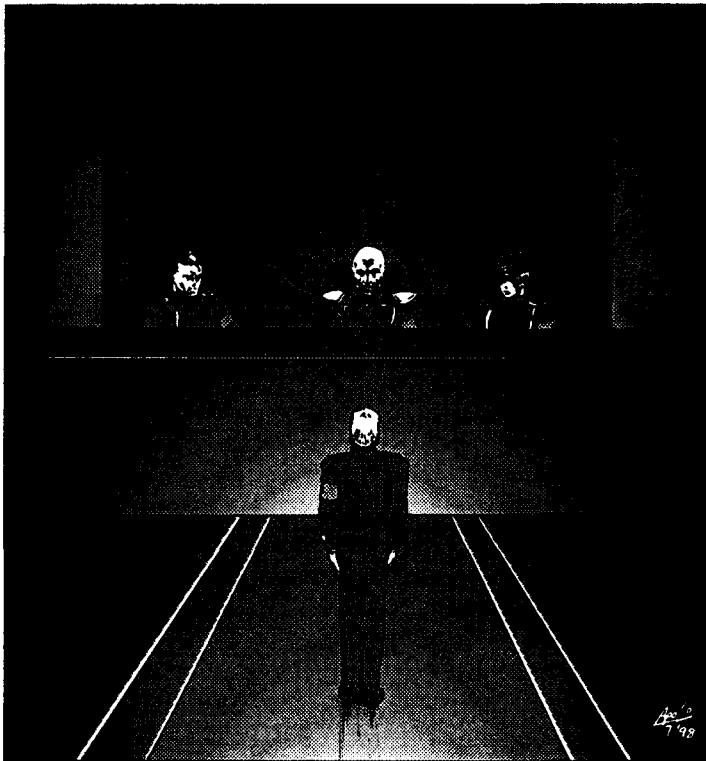
"Who gave you this disc?" asked an elderly, very bald field commander. "How did you get it?"

"While I was tracking down a group of enemy drones, I was approached by a young woman in combat armor, who claimed to be a member of a terrorist movement in Tolkeen. I think maybe she was a Juicer, since her reflexes and strength seemed to be very much above average."

"Hold on," said a younger officer. "You encountered a Juicer engaged in terrorist **activites**, and made no attempts to arrest or neutralize her."

Possman swallowed hard. He was really getting nervous. *Stay respectful*, he reminded himself. *These guys can get you digging latrines.*

"With all due respect, sir, that would have been suicidal," he replied. "While I could have attacked the woman, that would have alerted the enemy to my presence, ruining the ambush and endangering my life. Furthermore, I do not believe that the



woman was a danger to the Coalition or humanity at large. She claimed that her group was **pro-CS.**"

"Leave the predictions to the psychics," muttered the young officer, obviously angered.

"He's right, Philip," said an intelligence officer coldly. The woman was a **psi-stalker**. She was inhumanly pale, like a vampire, and had the large, slightly pointed teeth to back it up. She had absolutely no hair on her head, but tried to cover that up with a beret and sunglasses. "Rangers are typically issued laser weapons, which make a slight but clearly audible cracking noise when discharged. He would have alerted the enemy to his presence, ruining a perfectly good ambush."

The young officer snorted, but did not say anything. He seemed to be rather intimidated by the woman.

"Have you ever heard of Jack **Perrin**?" asked the elderly commander, who was staring thoughtfully at the CD, gazing at his reflection rather mournfully.

"Yes, sir," said Possman. "He was the subject of the Emperor's deployment speech. A scout pilot, I believe, who was shot down over **Tolkeen.**"

"That is correct, Mr. Possman," said the old man, putting the CD down. "We thought that he was dead. But this message is from him. The computers have already confirmed that it's his voice pattern, and the voice stress test says that he wasn't lying."

Possman wanted to ask what Perrin had said on the mysterious disc, but didn't. Snooping around in classified matters was a great way to get a dishonorable discharge.

"You understand, of course, that this is all highly classified," said the old man, clearing his throat. "Anyway, Perrin says that in Grand Alamar, the sorcerers have created a super-weapon of enormous power, easily the equivalent of a class **10** nuclear warhead. Fortunately, he also has given us the coordinates for the weapon, so that we can destroy it."

"Uh, sir, why am I being told this?"

The intelligence officer crossed her arms casually, and began to speak. "We want to get Perrin out of there," she said. "He's a valuable resource, and a national hero. We owe it to him to pull an emergency evac. But we can't usually get rescue teams into Tolkeen. The best that we can usually send in at a time is a single covert operative."

Possman began to perspire even more. He had a terrible feeling that he knew where this was going, and **didn't** like it one bit.

"In three days, we are going to send you into Grand Alamar. You'll have a week to find or possibly rescue Perrin. At the end of that time, an air assault will be launched, with the dual purposes of destroying the super weapon and evacuating you and Perrin. An escorted vehicle will appear at coordinates 2:04:Bravo, and will remain there for 3 minutes. If you and Perrin do not show up during that time, it will depart."

"Why send me, **ma'am**?" asked Possman, unable to hide his feelings any longer. "I know the woods around Tolkeen, but I don't have a frigging clue about what those damned cities are like! There are plenty of special ops boys more qualified than me for this mission."

"Negative, soldier," she said, smiling ever so slightly to reveal those awful, sharp teeth. She lifted up a folder with **Possman's** name printed on it. "In your performance exams, you scored very highly on urban combat, search-and-destroy, and stealth operations, all qualities that will be valuable in this mission. And of course, you'll be given a complete briefing beforehand."

"What kind of equipment will I be issued?" asked Possman. "I don't want to be in enemy lines without adequate survival gear."

"You'll get standard issue equipment for spies," she said, rather coldly. "Most armors and weapons are illegal in Tolkeen, and would draw unwanted attention to you. You'll have **Triax** plain clothes armor, a laser **sidearm**, an automatic pistol, some light surveillance equipment, and costumes and clothing befitting a common citizen of Tolkeen."

Possman didn't like it one bit, but orders were orders. "Very well," he finally said. "Is that all?"

"Dismissed," said the old man, with a wave of his hand. A very much relieved Possman fled the room, at a speed very close to running.

* * *

Miles away, High Council member **Tral** Melenee, the recently accepted elf, jogged through the crowded parking lot to his prized **hovercar**. He personally had performed its **techno-wizard** conversion, and had been souping it up ever since. He finally got to the red vehicle, opened the door, and took a seat on the comfortable rhino buffalo-leather seats. Comforted to be back in his baby, he turned the ignition, and shot off through the parking lot at the highest safe speed.

Just then he spotted that the gate into the lot was closed. The guard was standing outside of his booth, checking the ID cards of a motorist. Finally, he nodded, gave the man his wallet back, and opened the gate so that the man could drive away. Melenee, curious what the fuss was about, slowed his car down to a crawl, and then stopped completely at the gate.

It was night out and Melenee was wearing sunglasses, so his vision was a little clouded. He didn't really know the guard very well, so he didn't notice that there was a different person in the guard's red Plastic-Man armor. And he wasn't at the right angle to see the bloody slashes in the back of the armor.

"Hello," Melenee said politely. "What's wrong, officer? You never checked outgoing IDs before."

The guard said, very nonchalantly, "Well, sir, there's been some talk of spies recently. Any precaution needed to secure our freedom is necessary. In fact, every precaution, no matter how extreme, must be taken for the good of our liberty."

Melenee shrugged, and handed his wallet to the guard. Patriotic babbling like that had become much more prevalent since the start of the war.

"You're a member of the High Council, sir?" the guard asked, looking at the identity papers and cards in the elf's wallet.

"Yes, can I please get on my way now?" Melenee said, getting a little impatient. He reached into a pocket of his robe, and began searching for a cigarette.

"The High Council is an abomination," the guard said.

"What?" said Melenee, looking up. He heard a high-pitched hum, and then a **vibro-blade** cut through the side of his head and sunk into his brain. He died instantly, slumping over onto the wheel. The guard grabbed the corpse by the neck, and stabbed it a few more times for good measure, just to make sure.

The man then walked back into the closet-sized guard booth, trampling the bloody body of the D-Bee guard. He took off the **armor**, tossing it down on the floor, put on a motorcycle helmet to cover his face and head, and then began to leave. Suddenly, he heard a slight buzzing from above him.

Turning, the killer saw a small eyeball mounted on a tripod, hanging from the ceiling. It followed his every motion, staring at him **unblinkingly**. "What an unnatural machine," he remarked, popping it off of the ceiling with his knife. Then, just to make sure, the killer stepped on the thing, mashing the mystic eye into paste. That done, he left, wiping his bloody boot on the pavement to get the gore off of it.

Chapter 17

Shard sat alone in his palatial mansion, stretched out on an enormous couch, with a tiny, ancient book clutched in his claws. In gold leaf on the leather cover was written, "The Prince." The dragon sighed deeply, and flipped to the first page. Written there in Italian was, "To my good friend Antonio. I know that your mind is keen enough to properly interpret this book."

For a moment, Shard flashed back to an earlier time, when he masqueraded in Renaissance society as the Italian poet Antonio Monoco. He had met the greatest human minds of history, and had befriended more than a few of them. "Poor **Machiavelli**," he sighed. "You should have been a dragon. Frail human flesh just didn't do you justice."

"I've got no problem with frail human flesh," barked out the voice of an unseen intruder. The man walked before Shard, a lit cigarette clutched between his index fingers. He was bundled up in thick robes, to withstand the cold inside the ice dragon's home. The robes practically stank of magic, magic which only High Council members had access to.



"What brings you here, my dear friend?" asked Shard, gently placing the valuable book down. "Is it a social call, or government business?"

"Melenee was killed a few hours ago," said the sorcerer coldly, pointing an accusing finger towards the dragon. "Somebody killed a guard, then cut Melenee up with a vibro-blade when that poor kid was leaving. Melenee didn't have his protective robes on."

"That's a pity," said the dragon softly. "That elf had some talent in him."

"Damn it!" yelled the human, reaching into his voluminous robes and tossing his cigarette aside. He pulled out a slim wand, crackling with magic energy, and pointed it at Shard. "Was this your doing? Did you have him killed?"

The dragon's manner suddenly became quite icy, and all pretense of politeness was dropped. His **slitted** eyes focused on the glowing wand. "Why do you care?" he growled. "You and the others are simply my pawns. Your lives are mine, since I am the greatest amongst you."

"But what if we team up, you bastard?" asked the human. Suddenly, Shard became aware of two other presences in the room. The Lizard Mage twins stood at opposite ends of the room, clad in robes similar to those of the human.

"Three are stronger than one, Shard," hissed on the brothers. "Even when that one is a dragon."

"This is treason!" cried Shard, suddenly quite alarmed. The three intruders all suddenly felt the temperature in the room drop another few degrees, and suddenly man-shaped shadows were advancing towards them, cruel claws of total darkness outstretched. The dragon himself was suddenly enveloped in an **aura of energy**.

"We don't want to fight, Shard," said the human, leveling his wand at a nearby shadow. "Call off your beasts." The dragon nodded, and the shadow-men melted away into the walls.

"We just wanted to let you know that we will not tolerate this," snarled a Lizard Mage. "Your assassinations can not and will not continue."

"I did not kill the elf boy."

"But you have killed Council Members in the past. You will never kill another one again. If there is another death, then we shall rebel."

"A battle between us and our minions would destroy Tolkeen. You know that, don't you?"

"If we must destroy Tolkeen to save it from your machinations, then so be it." With that, the three wizards disappeared, leaving Shaard sitting alone once more. The dragon growled, looked down at his copy of "The Prince," and then grabbed a portable phone, large to humans yet tiny in his hands. Shaard hit an autodial button, and then said, "I have need of your services, **Gilail**." He then hung up.

Moments later, a portal of shimmering force opened up in the room. A tall man in black, demonic armor which was scarred from many fights stepped through. Slung over his back was a light **Triax** rail gun, half a dozen assorted **vibro-blades** hung from his belt, and a **polearm** engraved with magical runes was gripped tightly in his hands. "What's the job?" he asked, his voice garbled by a white noise device in his helmet.

"I need you to put the fear of Shaard into a few people, **Gilail**," the dragon said, smiling ever so slightly.

* * *

"This is a bad idea, **Perrin**," said Rick Freedom harshly. "What kind of statement does it make? It doesn't prove a damn thing!"

"It proves that we need money," said Perrin, inserting a fresh clip of armor-piercing bullets into one of the twin automatics he was using. "I looked at the arms cache yesterday, and it was full of archaic crap like these. We need some money if we want to get the good stuff."

"But.."

"I don't want to hear it," said Perrin, slipping on a pair of mirrored sunglasses and a headset microphone/radio. "This is hardly the time to argue." With that, he picked up a pair of digital binoculars, and began looking down at the National Bank. Two security guards, in bright red combat armor, stood by the door, weapons in hand. A large, armored **hovertruck** was parked in front. The **truck's** front doors **opened**, and its two pilots stepped out. They were well armed, and dressed in the same red armor as their comrades.

"Alpha squad, go," said Perrin.

Inside a parked van, about 100 feet from the armored car, was the **headhunter** who had been at **Perrin's** hospital bed, and a diminutive street rat. The headhunter held a light missile launcher in his bionic hands. Upon the signal from Perrin, he kicked open the door, and fired.

There was an enormously loud "**fwoosh**" sound, and a mini-missile flew down the street, just over the heads of the civilian passers-by. The projectile slammed into the hovertruck, and instantly began vomiting thick black smoke. Pedestrians began gagging, and running for cover. The guards, blinded by the smoke, tried to run out of the thick cloud.

Perrin switched his binoculars to infrared. He saw the fuzzy, brightly colored outlines of the pedestrians, and the dark, nearly room temperature heat signatures of the guards, who were insulated by their armor. Perrin could see that there was mass confusion down below, as the civilians tried to flee from the apparent battle and as the guards tried to figure out where their enemies might be.

"Bravo squad, go," said Perrin.

Three men in combat armor, with built-in multi-optic vision, hurried out of a second van. In their hands were light laser weapons — Perrin didn't think the heavy stuff would be necessary. They jogged down the street to the hovertruck. One of them attached a light explosive to the rear door, and then they all ran to cover. A moment later, there was a flash of light and a loud roar, as the thick metal door was blown to bits.

The guards noticed this, and spun to where they thought the intruders were. A couple of them began to fire their **techno-wizard** rifles, and a few of their shots nearly hit.

"Charlie squad, go," said Perrin.

Snipers located in a nearby building began to fire at the guards, using their infrared scopes to full advantage. One of the guards fell as a laser penetrated his helmet and burnt his head to a crisp. The others fell back into the building, not wanting to meet his fate.

The members of Bravo squad ran to the rear of the hovertruck, and crawled inside. There was suddenly the sound of an ion **blast**, and one of the armored robbers flew backwards, a scorch mark on his chest. He struggled to his feet, very dazed by the blast. There was then the sound of some more laser fire, and a fifth guard fell out of the **truck**, his armor pierced by the lasers.

"Get out of there, Bravo squad!" yelled Perrin. The men in the truck came running out a moment later, carrying briefcases full of money. They dragged the third man over to their van, and then drove off at top speed. Alpha team's van sped away, and the Charlie squad snipers ran from their post.

The mini-missile had run out of smoke, and the street began to clear. The guards ran back outside, and began to fire after the fleeing van until the car was out of sight. One of them looked back inside the armored car, and then screamed and tried to run. He had gotten less than a yard away when the hovertruck burst into flame, tossing him and his comrades away like dolls.

"Mission accomplished," said Perrin, standing up and beginning to walk off. "The Human Freedom Association won't be using antique weapons and gear ever again."

"I still think it was a bad idea," muttered Rick Freedom.

Chapter 18

"It's the same guy," said Fransisco nervously, gazing at a sheaf of grainy crime scene photographs. "Everything tells me that it's the same guy. Same weapon, same angle of attack, same depth of wound."

Lucius glanced at the photos. They were all pictures of Melenee's shredded corpse and the parking lot where it had been found. On the top of each photo was written, "Classified document," in several languages. "Pete, how did you get these?" asked the Wolfen.

"My instincts told me that it was the same guy, as soon as I heard that Melenee had been killed," replied his partner. "I requisitioned these, and I guess that the filing clerks were in a very good mood."

"You really think that it's the same guy?"

"Fits the profile. We've agreed that the killer is a human supremacist."

"So?"

"Well, there's few targets more tempting to a human supremacist than a powerful D-Bee wizard who governs a kingdom of magic."

The Wolfen thought about this for a moment. "I think you may be right," he finally said. "The forensic details and pattern all fit. I'll tell the inquisitors about the lead. Maybe they'll want to take over this miserable case."

Francisco looked up from the crime scene photos. "What's with the pessimism, Luke?" he asked. "You ain't burning out on me, are you?"

"No," said Lucius, with a touch of regret in his voice. "I just hate tracking down the **friggin'** head cases. Regular criminals, that isn't so bad. But the crazy ones, **oy.**"

"Perhaps they'll transfer us to that armed robbery, then," laughed Francisco. "You know, that one where the gang of **headhunters** killed 3 guards and injured 4, and got away with something like 5 mil in gold? That way, we can track down sane and rational criminals."

Lucius raised one furry eyebrow. Then he shrugged, and sighed, "Crazy **spelltossers.**"

"Are you calling me a **spelltossers**?" Francisco said jokingly, as the Wolfen began to walk away. "I'll have you know, I have a bachelor's degree in **thaumaturgical** philosophy from the University of **Lazlo!** They don't train spelltossers there, they train mystics!"

Hubert Possman sat nestled between a couple of large metal crates in the cargo hold of a big rig **hovertruck**, hurtling its way through the **Tolkeen** wilderness at 200 mph, swerving wildly to avoid trees and large rocks. Possman wore a **synth-leather** overcoat with discreet hardened ceramic plates sewn into the lining, as well as his customary clothing, which consisted of an ancient **Metallica T-Shirt**, fading work pants, and combat boots. He had an old-style laser pistol concealed in an inner pocket of the overcoat, and some survival and communications gear in his backpack.

The truck that he was in was the property of "American Freight", a nation-wide smuggling syndicate. The Tolkeen branch was firmly in the pocket of the Coalition, which is how he was able to book passage. Still, the crew members didn't seem happy to have him onboard, and Possman got the feeling that they'd greatly enjoy abandoning him in the wilderness.

"Just my **friggin'** luck," he muttered to himself. "I'm one of the Coalition's best rangers, I know the Tolkeen wilderness like the back of my hand, so I get sent on a spy mission. Maybe I **oughtta** just kill all these smugglers, take control of the truck, and defect to someplace like the Pecos Empire with all of this precious cargo."

He almost broke out laughing at the very thought. The smugglers were vastly better armed than he (their Gladiator armor could take 7 times the beating of his measly overcoat), he didn't have a clue how to drive **hovertrucks**, he'd never be able to get out of the CS's blockade in such a big **honkin'** truck, and the precious cargo consisted of organic fertilizer. "A perfectly logical Possman plan," he chuckled.

Suddenly, there was a crashing sound, and the hovertruck stopped abruptly. Possman was thrown forward, and nearly brained himself against a nearby crate. "Did you idiots hit some-



thing?!" he screamed, very cranky about his near-accident.

He was answered by the sound of metal ripping, a hysterical scream, and the sound of laser fire. The back door was pulled off, causing light to stream into the dark cargo compartment. Two skelebots stood there, their armor skin shining malevolently. Their **vibro-blades** flipped up into their hands as they advanced into the area. "Surrender or be destroyed," one of them growled, in a voice designed to sound like that of some rift-spawned demon.

"This is **friggin'** unbelievable," muttered Possman, as he raised his hands in surrender. "Arrested by the damn Skelebots."

They led him out, into the cold twilight forest. The truck had been completely surrounded by Skelebots. The front compartment had practically been torn to shreds by the zealous robots, and the drivers were being hacked to bits. A man in Smiling Jack armor flew out of the canopy, and landed in front of Possman.

"Looks like a smuggler finally had the good sense to surrender," he laughed, his voice made cold and mechanical by the audio filters in his helmet. "Most of the time, they think they can slip past us or shoot us up, and they can't."

"**You...damned...idiot,**" growled Possman. "I'm an undercover CS operative. Those guys that your damn robots are cutting into fish bait were on the **Coalition's** payroll. If you don't believe me, call up regional command and ask about Hubert Possman."

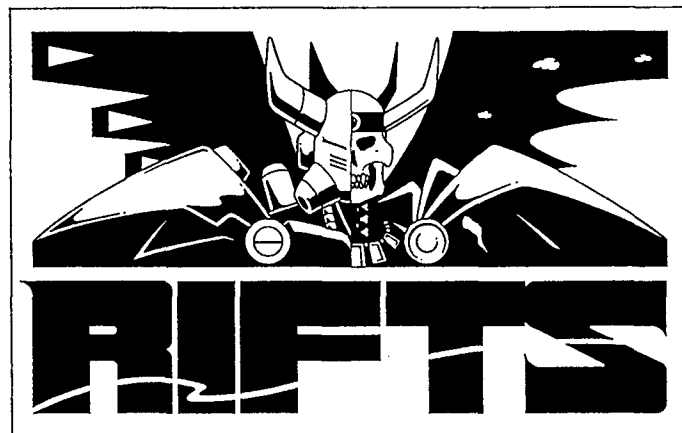
The power armor trooper looked at Possman for a moment, and then flipped a switch on the side of his head, turning on his internal radio and turning off his speakers. For about a minute he seemed to be lost in a conversation which nobody but he could hear. Then, he turned the switches back to their original spots.

"Sorry, sir," he said sheepishly. "We were supposed to get here at 9 **PM** to defend against smugglers, but finished up our last mission early, and thought that we might as well get here early. I thought that the last guard had just left early or something."

"Well this is a fine mess," muttered Possman, trudging off towards Tolkeen. "Oh, well."

"I'm really sorry, sir!" said the power armor trooper.

"Yeah, yeah," said the ranger. *The one time anyone in the army shows initiative, he thought, My ride gets destroyed when I'm deep in enemy territory. Ain 't war grand?*



The Hammer of the Forge

by James M.G. Cannon

Chapter Four Bad Mojo

*Center. A word to conjure with. A city without equal anywhere in this universe or any other. Six hundred million souls call Center home, with who knows how many more millions passing through at any given moment. It is a city of startling contrasts, where some of the richest beings in the Three Galaxies can be found living side by side with the poorest, where Knights of **Kamnosrub** shoulders with **Splugorth** Conservators without spilling blood, where everything and anything can be found with ease, and bought for the right price. Millions live and die there without ever setting foot outside its cerulean walls, and you can be sure that they have seen and experienced more than even the most jaded cosmos hopper. It is a dangerous city, but it is a city of unparalleled wonder and opportunity.*

Center. Watch your step.

— excerpt from *Travelogues of a Journeyman*
by **Fraktyn Quint**

The seventh level of Center was not a place where tourists usually went, but then **Elias Harkonnen**, late of the Transgalactic Empire's Invincible Guard, did not consider himself a tourist. No, Elias was there on business.

The destruction of his hidden base in the rings of Garouk-9 did not really affect him; certainly, he had poured millions of credits into acquiring the abandoned mine and outfitting it for his operation, and then fitting the *Raptor* with the weapons and defenses a good raider required. Hiring a crew came relatively cheaply, but they still cost a decent amount. The actual raiding was just beginning to pay off when **Lothar** of Motherhome tracked the *Raptor* home and forced Elias to blow the whole thing to pieces, just to occupy the **cosmo-knight** long enough for Elias to make good his escape in a stripped down Flying Fang.

Still, Elias was not concerned at all. He was a former Invincible Guardsman, after all. Trained in lethal combat by the



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Kreeghor themselves, his genetic code tampered with to grant him powers beyond mortal men, he was perfectly suited for the cold-blooded business of survival. And making profit. If worse came to worse (and it wouldn't), he could always sell himself out as an assassin or mercenary; there was high demand for invulnerable soldiers who could fly under their own power and bench press **starfighters**.

But that would be a last resort. Elias still had some cash stockpiled where he could reach it easily; enough to finance a new operation certainly. Enough to keep going on his own for a while, without someone else telling him what to do, or spitting orders at him.

Elias hated taking orders. Giving them was easy enough, but following the commands of a squishy did not sit well with him. He had even balked at taking orders from his superiors in the Invincible Guard. Which is why, ultimately, he had deserted and struck out on his own, to make it rich as an independent operator. So far, his plans weren't exactly working out. There was the matter of the **cosmo-knight** hot for his blood to consider as well.

So Elias fled **Garouk-9** for Center, perfectly aware that as a deserter, he could expect no mercy from the Kreeghor should he be seen and recognized by one of the Empire's citizens on Center. But he needed insurance against the cosmo-knight, henchmen who would not soil themselves at the first appearance of an angry Hammer of the Forge, much as his last crew had done. He should never have hired those **Naterreris**; worse than a t'zee when all things were said and done. He had depended too much on the plundered **Naruni** technology as well.

Elias Harkonnen was not an elf to make the same mistake twice.

The seventh level of Center was not a place for tourists; museums and amusement parks and marketplaces could be found on the upper levels. On the lower levels, the unwary found only death. The professional might find employment, and a man with **purpose**, skill, and creds might find someone to hire. Someone with special gifts, gifts that could turn an unwary or even well prepared cosmo-knight inside-out.

Elias strode through the city streets with a sense of purpose, and pedestrians automatically stepped around him, instinctively recognizing that he was not a being to trifle with for any reason. Sometimes cocky bully-boys could be found who attempted to swagger in the same manner that the pale elf in the red and black armor did, but few but the most hardened criminals could match **Elias'** cold stare, or the quiet air of malevolence that seemed to radiate off of him. He knew where he was going only by reputation, but he had studied the maps like a good soldier and he knew the seventh level's grid like the back of his hand. He navigated like a native, striding through the crowded alleys and byways clogged with the detritus of the Three Galaxies, casually brushing aside anything with the temerity to block his path.

Once, someone with a knife tattoo on his forehead took affront to **Elias'** gentle push, producing a **vibro-knife** that hummed as it slashed towards **Elias'** neck. The weapon shattered against his skin, and without hesitation Elias gave the humanoid a back-handed slap that separated his head from his shoulders.

He was given a wider berth after that episode.

In due time, he came to the place he searched for along the dirty avenues of the seventh level: a dilapidated structure lit

with fading neon that declared in Trade Five that the place functioned as a watering hole. Some sort of reptiloid lounged outside the entrance, one of his four hands not far from the ion blaster at his hip. The few windows were darkened artificially, and even **Elias'** night sensitive eyes could not penetrate them. He shrugged mentally and approached the bar's **entryway**. A four-fingered hand blocked his path. The reptiloid at the door glared **balefully** at Elias with yellow eyes, its third hand gripping the blaster tightly, but not yet drawing the weapon. "No mammals," it hissed, tongue darting out to taste the air.

Elias narrowed his eyes, briefly considering offering a bribe. It took him a nanosecond to discard the idea, and barely a moment longer before the doorman swallowed his pistol, choking to death as Elias shoved it down the creature's throat. He left the corpse cooling on the doorstep and crossed the threshold into **the bar**.

The heat struck him first, a sweltering wave that washed over him and inundated him, causing sweat to break out on his body instantly. The next instant, he caught a whiff of something wet and decaying, and he coughed involuntarily, waving his hand before his face. When he mastered himself, he noticed the bright glaring lights that illuminated the dozens of reptiloids lounging about the bar and the dining area. Most of them he could identify; brightly colored **Seljuks** towering above everyone else, **Jenjorrans** with their eyes nearly exploding out of their great jawed heads, a pack of Qua-Trau lounging in one corner, sipping some kind of smoking brew, Draconids in flowing robes scattered about the room, and dozens of others he could not identify, including a large number of four armed, yellow eyed reptiloids like the dying doorman.

They all stared at him. Elias sneered and sauntered into the room, daring any of them to challenge his presence in a reptiloid bar. Few met his gaze, recognizing the insignia on his refitted Legionnaire's armor. One **Seljuk**, however, took it upon itself to upbraid the brazen mammal. "Your kind isn't welcome around here," it growled, gesticulating with one five clawed hand.

Elias ignored the beast, scanning the crowd for the being he sought. The Seljuk appeared annoyed at **Elias'** attitude. It took a threatening step forward, its eyes growing mad under bony brows. One of its companions attempted to restrain it, but it shook off the offending arm and advanced on Elias. It jammed a finger in **Elias'** face and leaned over the substantially shorter elf to berate him. "Get lost, mammal, before I chew you up and regurgitate you for the nestlings." The breath of the creature washed over **Elias'** face, and he wrinkled his nose in disgust. What had crawled down the creature's throat and died? Did it ever use a toothbrush?

Without a word, Elias reached up and grabbed the digit shoved into his face. He pulped it with one squeeze, and then yanked the arm away as the Seljuk bellowed in pain. With practiced ease, Elias planted one hand on the creature's neck and another on its belt. He heaved, and lifted the Seljuk over his head. The beast babbled something, and its companions took a step forward as if to offer aid. Without hesitation, Elias threw the Seljuk in his hands across the common room, to crash into the wall on the opposite side. It slammed into the wall with an audible thud, and then fell to the ground with a crash.

No one uttered a sound, as they reappraised the ebon and scarlet clad elf. "Anyone else?" Elias asked. Abruptly every sen-



tient in the bar turned away from him and went back to whatever they were doing before he entered the place. **Elias** allowed himself a brief nod, and then quickly scanned the room once more.

Finally catching sight of the being he was looking for, he navigated his way through the tables and chairs clogging the common room, and stepped up to a table with a single occupant.

The **Draconid** looked typical for his race: a long snout filled with sharp teeth, framed by bat-winged ears, small, pupilless eyes almost hidden beneath thick brow ridges, a mane of soft white hair spilling down his back, and a body covered in scales that were a shocking electric blue shade. He was clad in a simple tunic of red and gold, and he watched without emotion as **Elias** approached.

"**Quajinn Huo**?" **Elias** asked. He received the briefest of nods in return. "May I sit down?" Another nod. But there were no more chairs. **Elias** turned to his left, where the Qua-Trau warriors sat, nursing their drinks. He stared pointedly at one, until it

got the message and vacated its seat. **Elias** took it from their table and slid it across the floor, dropping into it to join **Quajinn Huo** where he sat.

The **Draconid's** white eyes observed all this without passion, but as **Elias** sat down, he said, "Why is it you have sought me out **Harkonnen**?"

Elias smiled easily. "Has my reputation proceeded me, or did you divine my identity through wizardry?"

"The same mouths that directed you here told me you were coming," **Huo** explained. "But they did not explain your purpose. They assured me you were not a bounty hunter come to collect the reward the **UWW** has offered for my head, nor were you some other would-be hero sent to slay the dragon. State your business, and do so quickly." Again, **Huo** said each word without any hint of emotion.

Elias regarded him coolly. **Huo's** own reputation was considerable, and the cold-blooded creature across the table from him certainly seemed to fit the image the United Worlds of Warlock painted of a passionless killer. "Its very simple," **Elias** said, "I have come to offer you a job."

In the same monotone, **Quajinn Huo** said, "You, faceless bully-boy from across the stars, are offering me a job? This meeting is at an end." **Huo** did not stir, however. Perhaps he expected **Elias** to leave, as if dismissed.

Elias would remember that. But first, he needed **Huo**. He needed the **Draconid** wizard for one reason. Magic, **Quajinn's** province, was the Achilles heel of the Knights of the Forge.

"**Lothar**," **Elias** said.

Quajinn Huo's eyes suddenly blazed with fury. "You would say that name to me? I should strike you down where you stand, elf."

"Then the story is true," **Elias** mused aloud. "You've run afoul of the Forge's Hound too. He ruined my last operation as well. And I plan to make him answer for that."

Huo leaned forward, suddenly interested. "It is because of **Lothar** of Motherhome that I am confined to Center, **Harkonnen**. For a chance to kill him, I might actually contemplate your job offer."

Elias smiled again. "And what," he asked, "if I were to tell you I could get you off Center without the **UWW** knowing?"

"If you could do this thing, then I would indeed serve you **Elias Harkonnen**," **Quajinn** said. "But only until **Lothar** lay dead at our feet."

Elias's smile broadened. "Sounds like a plan."

* * *

Captain H. Starling of the Consortium Armed Forces starship *Hidalgo*, Warshield Class, settled into his command chair and keyed on his computer. The small screen showed the progress of the star Teneb-742 as it prepared to go nova; according to the chronometer, barely forty-two hours remained before the miracle occurred. The star was venting gasses into space at an incredible rate, and expanding by the hour. All too soon it would detonate, and the last five planets in the Teneb-742 system would be destroyed, swallowed up by the exploding sun, much as the first three planets had been days ago.

The *Hidalgo* had been sent out by the CCW station Xerxes to observe and record the death of the star and its system; it would be only the second time a CAF ship observed firsthand the death throes of a star, and this would be the first time planets were involved. The CCW was very interested in the kinds of data the *Hidalgo* might glean from this extraordinary event, and to that end a team of twenty scientists from Xerxes Station had been dispatched with Starling's crew to observe and record and report back to CCW headquarters.

If anyone were to ask him, Captain Starling would have said that this mission was the chance of a lifetime, and a thrilling chapter in humanity's growth and understanding of the intricacies of the universe.

Privately, he thought it was a waste of time.

Starling was a man of action, a man of war, and he fretted that a warship like the *Hidalgo* was being wasted here watching a star explode, instead of patrolling the neutral zone between the CCW and the Transgalactic Empire, or hunting down Atorian ships with the temerity to raid the borders of CCW space. The *Hidalgo* was built to fight, and so too, was her captain. He needed the harsh scent of smoke in his nostrils, the groan of a damaged ship beneath his feet, the ringing of the red alert in his ears, and an enemy to destroy.

Documenting the wonders of the cosmos should be left to those interested in such things, Starling believed. And probably, some poor untried officer was somewhere along the neutral zone, trying to keep her crew alive, outgunned and outnumbered by **Kreeghor** vessels. It was a scene Starling had played out countless times before, and always managed to survive to tell the tale, his ship and crew intact.

But now, as Starling and his crew were approaching their middle years, the days of glory were slipping past them, and the Consortium Armed Forces Fleet Command felt safer giving Starling and his crew simple jobs, leaving the young men and women of the CAF who still had fire in their bellies to take the battle to the Transgalactic Empire or the **S'hree Vek Confederacy** or any of the other enemies arrayed against the Consortium of Civilized Worlds.

"Captain." Starling's reverie was suddenly broken by the call of his chief science officer, Commander Lek **Lekki**. Lek was one of **Starling's** oldest friends, and a Noro, a member of the **pacifistic** race of psychics from the planet Noro-Gar. Like most Noro, Lek was smooth skinned and very tall, well over two meters, and dangerously thin; despite his height, he looked like a strong wind could knock him over like a feather. Like many Noro, Lek shaved the spikes of hair that grew on his large cranium, and that, combined with his extreme thinness, gave him the appearance of an ascetic. Yet Lek's large black eyes were always animated and excited, expressing wonder and joy at exploring the cosmos. It was hardly the attitude of a monk, and Lek would certainly never cloister himself away from the universe.

"What is it, Commander?" Starling asked, his brow furrowing in puzzlement.

Lek leaned over his console, his dark eyes never leaving the computer screen as he answered his captain. "I'm picking up some rather odd energy fluctuations, sir."

"From **Teneb-742?**" Starling asked. He often wished Lek could just make a complete report, but the Noro seldom volun-

teered information without slight provocation. Since he was always curious, Lek assumed everyone else was always curious, and he enjoyed baiting their curiosity. Lek finally looked up from the console.

"Not at all, Captain. From the eighth planet."

Now, that was interesting, Starling thought. "Source and nature?" he demanded.

Lek shrugged, a slight movement of his thin shoulders. "The pulse is being emitted near the planet's magnetic pole, but our instruments are having a difficult time classifying the nature of the energy. What is certain is that it is not random, and appears to be running through a cycle of some kind."

Starling grunted, and unconsciously ran a hand through his thinning hair. "Helm, put us in orbit around the eighth planet," he ordered, "and I want us over the pole. Lieutenant **Freyga**," he added, slightly turning in his command chair to regard the only Wolfen on the bridge, "I want a complete scan of the target area; if there's grass, I want to know how many blades."

The Wolfen security officer nodded without a word and set to her task. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Lek frown. "Problem?" he prompted the science officer.

Another shrug greeted his question, and then Lek said, "I have a bad feeling about this."

Starling knew that phrase only too well; Lek's psychic abilities had helped save the *Hidalgo* and her crew a dozen times over. "Go to yellow alert," he said, and as the klaxon ring began in the background, he added, "I want a squad of marines assembled in the hanger in fifteen minutes, fully loaded, with two **Silverhawks**." Lek arched an eyebrow, and even Freyga loosed a chuff of surprise. Starling waved them both off; he was beginning to get a bad feeling too, and he was afraid the power armored troops would come in handy very soon.

Starling felt the familiar thrum in his breastbone, the only indication that the *Hidalgo* was in motion, as the mighty warship fired up its engines and headed for the eighth planet. In moments, the ship was positioned where Starling wanted it. Starling waited patiently as Freyga made a complete scan of the area. He knew Lek was following along with her, as his console and hers were wired, but he could only sit in his command chair and wait.

Starling hated to wait. Just as his patience was beginning to fray, even though it was his order that prompted Freyga to make a complete scan, she reported.

"The planet is flat and barren, Captain, no life signs register at all, nor much in the way of technology. The only sign of habitation is a bunker or . . . temple, perhaps, of black rock located about 700 klicks from the magnetic pole. The energy pulse is apparently originating from this temple."

Starling interrupted her, saying, "Temple, lieutenant?"

Freyga appeared slightly flustered. "I couldn't explain why I get the impression that the structure is a temple, Captain."

"She's right, however," Lek said, his eyes narrowed in concentration. "It is the same impression I am receiving."

Starling grunted. "Continue, lieutenant."

Freyga began where she left off. "The pulse is registering on several frequencies, but it appears to primarily consist of negative energy. It is expanding outward in a wave that encompasses

the temple and washes out in a dome from the temple. The power of the wave lessens the further it gets from the area of origin, and is rather weak when it breaks free of the planet's atmosphere." Her amber eyes flicked towards Lek, and then returned to her console. "How Commander Lek first detected it, I do not know."

"Sometimes you need to look with something other than your eyes, **Freyga**," Lek offered.

Starling ignored them, his mind attempting to grapple with the information Freyga had presented to him. A strange structure, a "temple," on an uninhabited planet in an uninhabited system, generating waves of negative energy. And a star about to go nova in less than forty-one hours. "Commander, I suppose **you'd** like to take a closer look at that '**temple**,'" Starling mused. Lek nodded, a slight smile curving his thin lips. "Then take Lieutenant Freyga and the marines in the hanger with you. I'd like some answers, but I'd also like you to all return undamaged. Understood?"

"Affirmative, Captain," Lek said, standing. "After you, lieutenant," Lek offered, gesturing towards the lift. Freyga made a show of adjusting her pistol on her belt, and then strode purposefully toward the door, which slid open at her approach.

Captain Starling watched as the shuttle blasted off from the hanger in the belly of the *Hidalgo*, sliding through the vacuum of space to pierce the atmosphere of the planet. He could feel the pulse beating in his temple, and he forced down the surge of excitement that always came to him when he knew action was on the way. He didn't know what Lek, Freyga, and the marines might find on that desolate planet, but he knew it would be, at the very least, interesting.

He recognized the same suppressed excitement amongst the rest of the bridge crew. Like him, they were used to testing their limits and the limits of their ship in combat, persevering in the face of certain destruction, often with the fate of the Three Galaxies riding on the outcome of the battle. This situation, Starling sensed, might well be the same.

Perversely, Starling felt relieved. He almost felt guilty as he recognized the emotion.

"Captain, Commander Lek is coming through," the communications officer reported.

"Patch him through," Starling ordered.

"We've just disembarked, Captain," Lek's voice came over the **comm**. Some kind of interference caused a distortion in the **comm** system, making Lek's familiar voice sound alien. "The Silverhawks and Major Avanti are deploying according to SOP." Lek's voice trailed off, accompanied by a surge in the distortion, and Starling became momentarily concerned. The science officer continued after a moment, however.

"We just experienced one of the waves of energy, and we felt it even through our body armor. I've just developed a splitting headache, and the marines are complaining of upset stomachs. The effect is rather mild, but we're still several hundred meters from the temple itself. I'm expecting the feelings of illness to intensify as we get closer."

Lek cleared his throat self-consciously. "Even from here, we can see that the structure is rather large, and constructed of massive blocks. Major Avanti assures me that his macro-binoculars can detect some sort of writing on the temple wall."

Another wave of distortion surged through the **comm-link**, and Starling frowned. After a few moments, Lek's voice returned. "My apologies, Captain, but the effect of the wave is indeed increasing, and we need to concentrate on locomotion."

"Not a problem, Lek," Starling told his friend. Then, without thinking, he added, "Be careful."

He heard the smile in Lek's voice as the science officer answered, "Thank you, Hiram. We'll try." Lek paused for a moment, and then said, "We're close enough now to make out the inscription on the side of the temple; the temple itself is a good thirty meters tall and sprawls at least forty meters wide. I'm punching the inscription through the translator now. . . the language is apparently an ancient form of **Zodoran**." Lek paused, and then added, "Curious. The Zodorans are nearly extinct; I think there are only four or five left in all the Three Galaxies."

"Continue, Commander," Starling admonished.

"Of **course**," Lek returned. Another wave of distortion interrupted, and then Lek continued. "The inscription reads: '**The Last Place of the Hollow One — If the Peace be Broken, they be Damned.**' Naturally, that's the direct translation. In Trade Four, it reads, '**Where** we buried the one without a soul; those who awaken it will know eternal **torment.**'"

"Rather poetic, don't you think?"

Starling frowned. This sounded bad. Very bad. A surge of distortion sounded through the **comm-link** again, lasting longer this time, and as he waited for it to clear, Starling ordered his thoughts. The Zodorans were a race of ancient mystics, and they were indeed nearly extinct. Although a long-lived race of beings, their glory days were long past; legends spoke of a vast empire destroyed by an angry god several millennia ago, long before the ascendancy of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds. Of all the legends Starling had ever heard, there was never any mention of that "angry god" being imprisoned in a temple of black rock on some lifeless world.

Still. . .

"Lek, get out of there. Now," Starling ordered. Another surge of distortion garbled his order, and he repeated it when the wave receded.

Lek's answer made Starling's gut twist. "One of the marines pulled her helmet off to vomit, and her head just exploded. **My**. . . own headache is increasing in intensity. I'm not sure we'll make it to the ship."

"Lek, move!" Starling growled. He could feel the excitement on the bridge peak. The concern for the away team was palpable. Tedeschi, the communications officer, flexed his fingers in agitation, as if he wished to reach through the **comm-link** and pull the away team back to the safety of the *Hidalgo*. Kamanga, at the helm, glanced back at her captain, as if asking permission to aim the ship at the planet in a desperate rescue attempt.

"Captain," Lek began again, his voice strained, "we're attempting a strategic retreat." Another wave of distortion washed over the **comm-link**, and Starling gripped the arms of his chair until his knuckles turned white. Lek's voice returned, "I'm sorry to report the loss of another marine, and the wall of the temple just cracked open. Some kind of condensed, jelly-like darkness is oozing from the wound."

The sound of laser fire echoed over Lek's communicator. Starling heard Freyga's harsh bark in the background as well,

and he could tell by the sound that whatever battle was raging down there was going badly. Starling considered sending a second team down to support them, or even charging up the weapon systems on the *Hidalgo*, but knew neither course of action would do them any good. A second team would arrive too late, and the *Hidalgo's* cannons would do as much damage to Lek's team as the entity.

Another wave of distortion flashed, and Starling started as the lights on the bridge dimmed. Kamanga automatically raised the ship's shields, her face an impassive mask that Starling knew hid a tide of emotion.

"We've lost most of our team, Captain," Lek reported, his voice so haggard that Starling felt his own heart lurch in his chest. "The entity — the Hollow One — seems to be absorbing the energy from our weapons. If I may offer a theory, Hiram, this creature is some sort of energy vampire, absorbing great amounts easily. Indeed, I would hazard a guess that the expansion of the star released enough ambient energy for the Hollow One to absorb and thus breach its containment — "

A wave of distortion interrupted Lek, and the **comm-link** suddenly went dead. With the shields up, however, the ship seemed safe from the wave. "Shields dropped 12%, Captain," Kamanga said, correcting Starling's first impression.

He turned in his command chair, and regarded Tedeschi. The **comm** officer shook his head. "We lost them, sir."

Starling forced his grief and fear into a ball and shoved it into a compartment inside himself, where he could take it out and examine it when he had the time. "Put us on red alert and send a subspace communication to Xerxes station, Lieutenant. Inform them of what we've found, and let them know that when the star goes off in less than forty hours, this thing could very well become unstoppable."

Tedeschi nodded sharply and turned back to his console. "Lt. Commander Kamanga," Starling said, "arm cruise missiles and target the temple."

* * *

Two bursts of bright color flashed through the atmosphere of the desert planet **Koola**; one a bright crimson, the other a flashing emerald. As they entered the vacuum of **space**, the colors solidified into a pair of armored figures, one larger than the other and gripping a massive two-headed ax. The figures angled through space, approaching a battered freighter that hung in orbit above the planet.

The larger, green-clad figure led the way, opening the airlock with a practiced gesture, and then entering the craft. The red figure followed cautiously. When the interior airlock cycled closed, and they could talk once more, the red figure complained to his companion, "What the **hell** is this? I mean, spaceships are cool and all **Lothar**, but we're Cosmic Knights. We fly through space with the greatest of ease and all that."

The emerald figure with the wolf-shaped helm sighed audibly. "It is simple, pup. Through the blessings of the Immortal Forge, we are able to traverse space at the speed of **light**, achieving a unity with the cosmos that every sentient in the Three Galaxies envies. But moving at that speed takes a great deal of skill and accuracy, which you, as yet, lack. So I have borrowed this

freighter from allies, and we shall use it to get around until you achieve the control you need, or are able to reach the same faster than light speed I can achieve. Is that understood?"

Caleb Vulcan, the newest of the knights that served the Cosmic Forge, simply shrugged. He was more impressed at the volume of **Lothar's** speech than its content, as the Wolfen knight had, up until then, proved entirely laconic. "All right," Caleb said. "You're in charge."

Lothar's green eyes glowered beneath the brows of his helm. "So nice of you to admit that, pup."

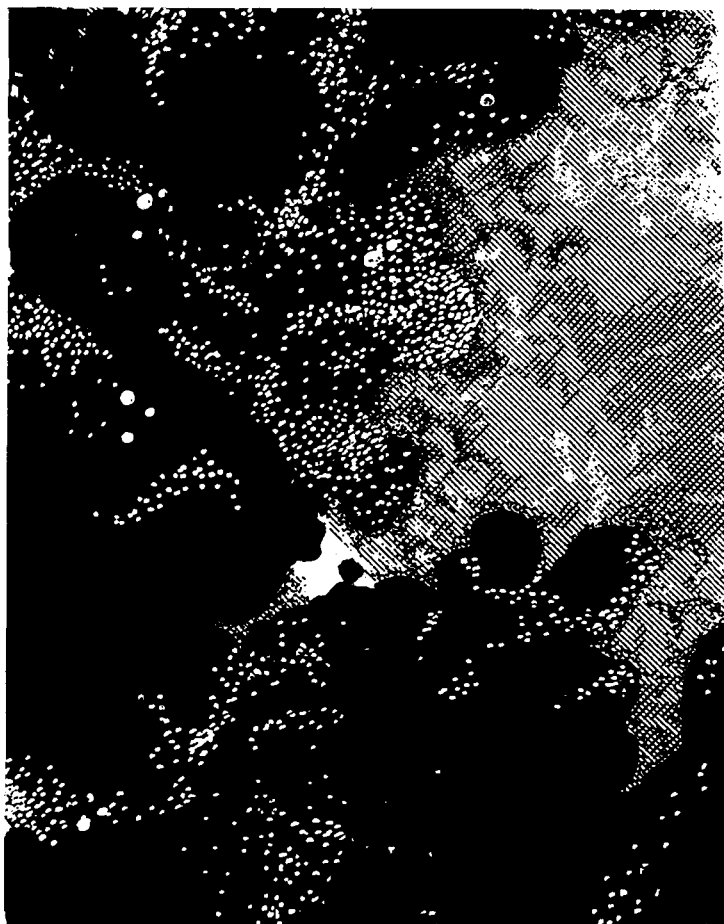
Caleb decided that the "pup" nonsense was wearing thin very quickly. But he still had bruises from the training session with **Lothar** planet side. He let it lie, for the moment, and decided to change the subject. "So, where are we off to?"

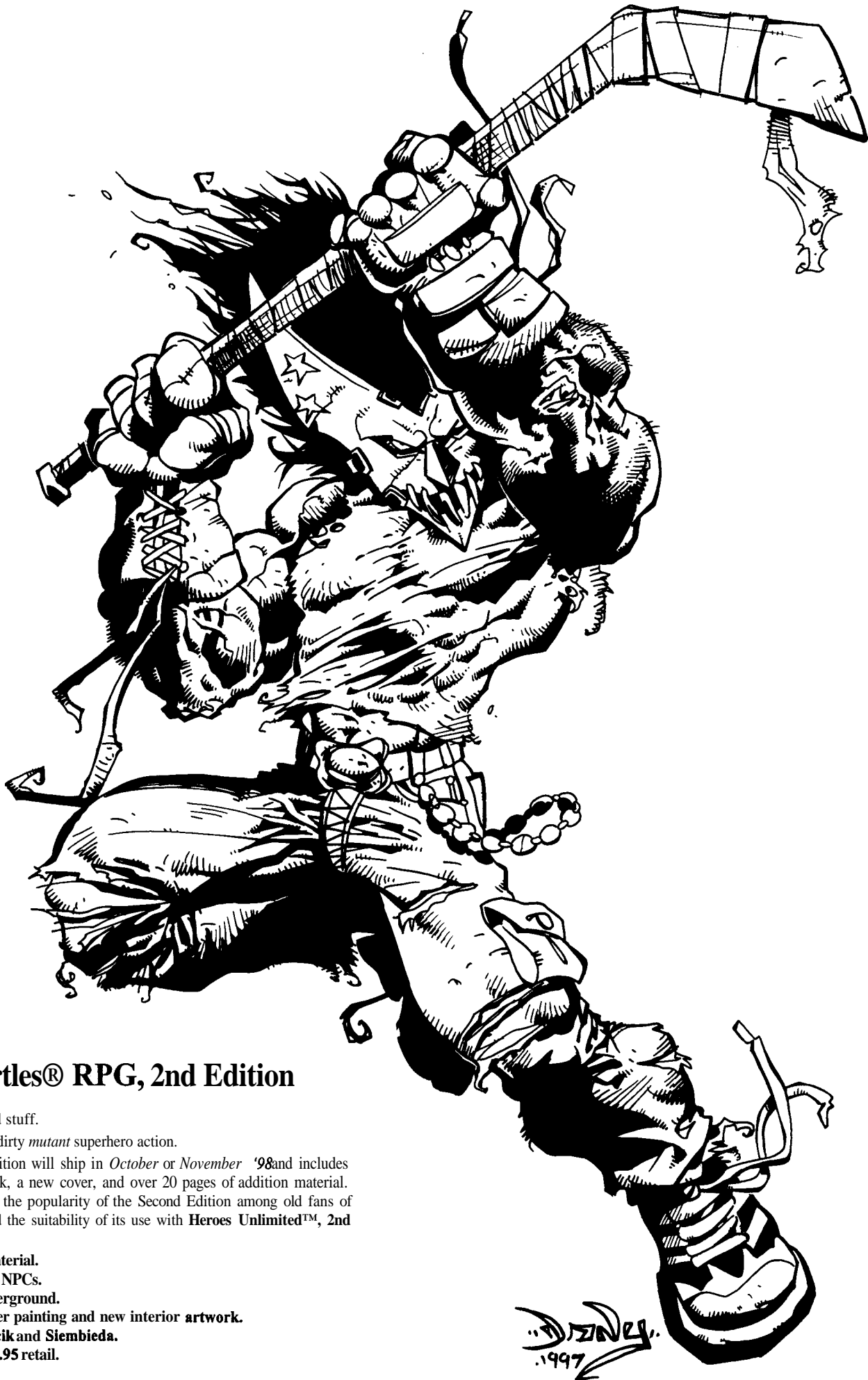
Lothar grunted. "We're going to the nearest CCW station to have you deputized so that you can operate as a lawgiver in Consortium space."

"And where's that?" Caleb asked.

"It's called Xerxes Station. Not much as those things go, but it will serve the purpose." **Lothar** walked away from the airlock as he talked, presumably heading for the cockpit. Caleb followed him at a sedate pace, absorbing the interior of **Lothar's** borrowed space ship as he did so. Almost absently, Caleb powered down, discarding his centurion-like armor with a thought. **Lothar** gave him a sharp look as he did so, and Caleb noticed that **Lothar** himself maintained his armored form. But he didn't criticize Caleb, though the boy could feel **Lothar's** disapproval like a wall between them.

Caleb whistled quietly through his teeth. "It's going to be a fun trip," he muttered to himself.





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P.S. _____ **Land of Origin:** _____
P.P. _____ **Bkgd.** _____
RE. _____ **Disp.** _____
P.B. _____ **Cause of Mutation:** _____
Spd. _____ **Unusual Characteristics:** _____

Super Abilities

Type: _____

Type: _____

Type: _____

Type: _____

Type: _____

Notes

Scholastic Skills

Secondary Skills

Physical Skills

Weapon Proficiencies

Weapon	S	P	T	E	R

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Initiative: _____ Attacks: _____

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Parrv: _____ Dodge: _____

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Bodyblock/Tackle: _____ Pin: _____

Critical: _____ Deathblow: _____

Special: _____

Weapons

Weapon	Damage

Equipment

Saves & Bonuses

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Poisons/Toxins/Magic: _____

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Horror Factor: _____

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Type: _____

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