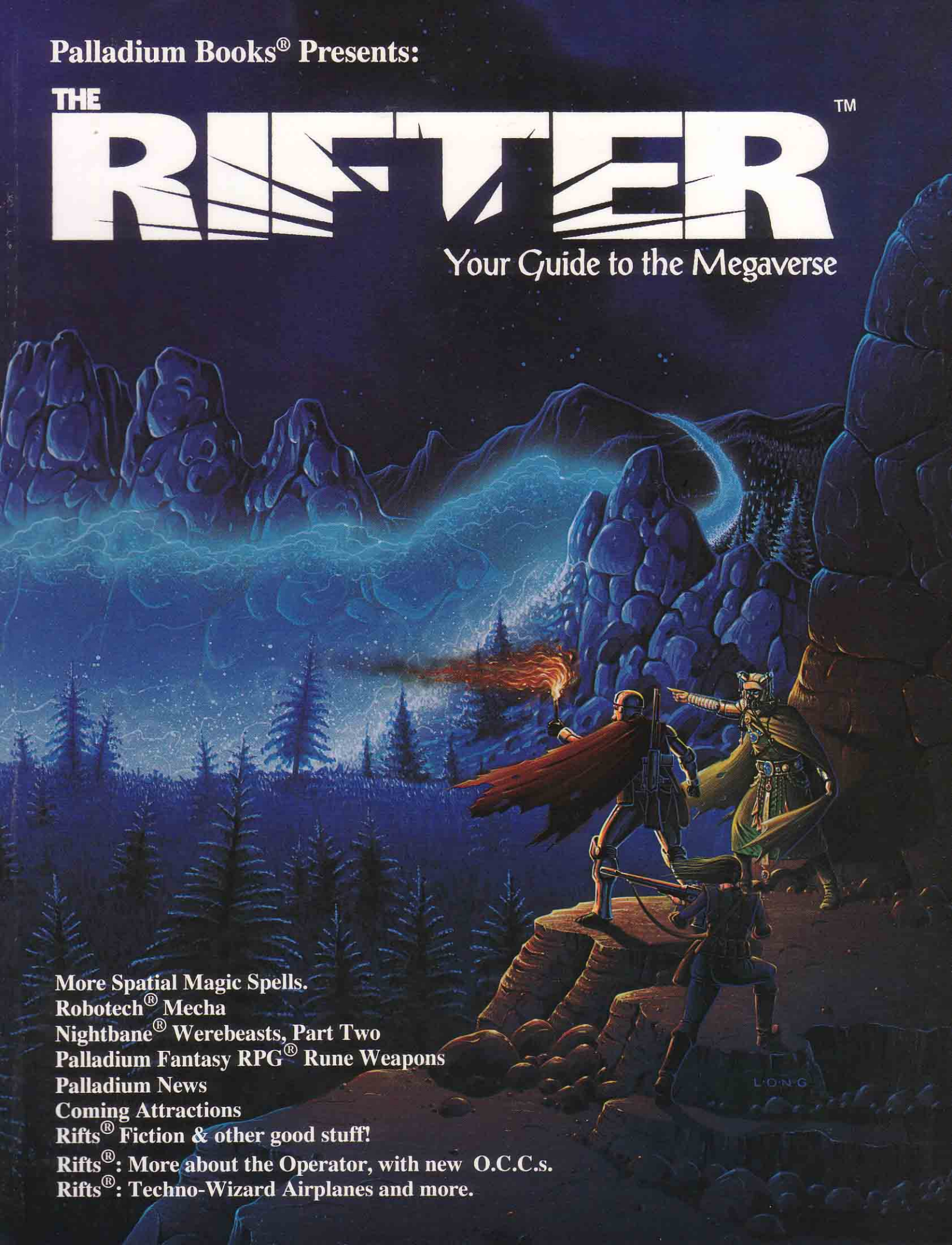


Palladium Books® Presents:

THE

RIFTSTM

Your Guide to the Megaverse



More Spatial Magic Spells.
Robotech® Mecha
Nightbane® Werebeasts, Part Two
Palladium Fantasy RPG® Rune Weapons
Palladium News
Coming Attractions
Rifts® Fiction & other good stuff!
Rifts®: More about the Operator, with new O.C.C.s.
Rifts®: Techno-Wizard Airplanes and more.

Warning!

Violence and the Supernatural

The fictional Worlds of Palladium Books® are violent, deadly and filled with supernatural monsters. Other-dimensional beings, often referred to as "demons," torment, stalk and prey on humans. Other alien life forms, monsters, gods and demigods, as well as magic, insanity, and war are all elements in this book.

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 drugs, or violence.



The Rifter™ Number Five
Your Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

First Printing — January, 1999

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The Rifter™ #5 RPG sourcebook series is published by Palladium Books Inc., 12455 Universal Drive, Taylor, MI 48180. Printed in the USA.

Palladium Books® Presents:



#5

RPG Guide and Megaverse® Sourcebook

Coordinator & Editor in Chief: **Wayne Smith**

Supervising Coordinator & Typesetting:
Maryann Siembieda

Contributing Writers:

Stan Bundy

James M.G. Cannon

Jeremy Clements

Peter Finin

Jay Fitzloff

David Haendler

Julius Rosenstein

Kevin Siembieda

Edward J. Sauerland

Nathan Taylor

Eric Thompson

Steve Trustrum

Knights of the Dinner Table: **Jolly Blackburn**

Contributing Editors:

Alex Marciniszyn

Jim Osten

Julius Rosenstein

Cover Painting: **Kevin Long**

Interior Artists:

Apollo Okamura

Ryan Beres

Wayne Breaux Jr.

Kent Buries

Kevin Long

Brandon C. Clark (DSS)

Ka Xiong (DSS)

Mark Dudley

Drunken Style Studio

and other Palladium Madmen

Cover Logo Design: **Steve Edwards**

Credits Page Logo: **Niklas Brandt**

Keylining: **Kevin Siembieda**

Based on the RPG rules, characters,
concepts and Megaverse® created by Kevin Siembieda.

Special Thanks to all the gamers who play and enjoy Palladium **RPGs**— you make it all worth doing.
Our apologies to anybody who got accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

Contents — The Rifter™ #5

— January, 1999 —

Page 7 — From Behind the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Publisher, Kevin Siembieda, takes a look at 1998 and things to come in 1999. We've come a long way, baby — and you ain't seen nothing yet. 1999 is shaping up to be one of Palladium's most productive years ever. And it's just a prelude to a really big year 2000. Remember we said that. Enjoy the issue.

Page 8 — Palladium News, Info, & Coming Attractions

The latest news about novels and stuff. Boy, we just keep hopping at the Palladium offices (yeah, because the Siembiedas are maniacal slave-drivers who never seem to slow down).

There's a lot of Coming Attractions this issue as Palladium Books launches it's most ambitious and exciting year in a decade. Four *Palladium Fantasy RPG* titles, five new *Rifts*® *World Books*, *The Mechanoid Invasion*® *Trilogy*, *Ninja Turtle*® *2nd Edition*, and *Deluxe Revised RECON*® all slated for release before June! Go see for yourself!! Oh, and give us some feedback about the direction you'd like to see for *Rifts*®.

Page 15 — Knights of the Dinner Table™

Jolly Blackburn's KoDT; as silly as ever.

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

Page 17 — Robotech®

New mecha for Palladium's Robotech® RPG

The art on page 17 is by newcomer Ryan Beres — you'll be seeing more of this guy. The new *REF Heavy Assault Battle Pod* is the brainchild of long-time Palladium gamer Stan Bundy; artwork by the impeccable mecha artist, Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 22 — Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition Heroes Throughout the Ages

Jay Fitzloff and long-time Palladium Staffer, Julius Rosenstein, offer observations, tips, rules modifications, optional tables and suggestions for playing comic book heroes from 1920 to our modern day, and beyond. Artwork by Apollo Okamura.

Page 31 — Heroes Unlimited™, Ninjas & Superspies™ & Others The Rahu-Man — An In-Depth Study

Peter Finin takes an interesting and thought provoking look at the Rahu-Man in an Earth setting with data about their past, present and future. Notes include the Aslyl Okta system of mar-

tial arts, use of the Rahu-Man in *Heroes Unlimited*™, *Ninjas & Superspies*™, *Mystic China*™, *Rifts*® and other Palladium RPGs. Artwork is by Drunken Style Studio (Mark Dudley, Brandon C. Clark and Drew).

Page 42 — Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition A Mind of Their Own)

Nathan Taylor takes a fascinating look at a handful of legendary Rune Weapon in the Palladium World. Art is by Ryan Beres.

Page 49 — Rifts® & Robotech® The Right Stuff

Edward J. Sauerland presents an optional O.C.C. for *Rifts*® that he calls the Barnstormer. A daredevil pilot with nerves of steal (or are they). In addition to the *Rifts*® *O.C.C.*, Edward presents the *Robotech Mecha Test Pilot O.C.C.* plus optional rules for Air Combat and Vintage **Techno-Wizard** Aircraft (starting on page 56). Art is by Drunken Style Studio and Kent Buries.

Page 62 — Rifts®

The World of the Operator

Eric Thompson takes a closer look at the mechanical genius known on Rifts Earth as The Operator. Then Jeremy Clements contributes the Armorer O.C.C. Artwork is by Ryan Beres.

Page 70 — Rifts®

Spatial Mage Additions

More Spatial Magic by Steve Trustrum.

Page 75 — Nightbane®

The Tribes of the Moon; Part Two

Steve Trustrum presents **werebeasts** for the modern age — optional source material perfect for *Nightbane*® and adaptable to *Beyond the Supernatural*™, *Heroes Unlimited*™ and other RPGs. Steve presents more werebeast **tribes**, mutants, background data and mystery. Plus a handful of new magic items and arcane magic spells. Part two of two. Artwork by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 98 — The Siege Against Tolkeen

The next 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.

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*TM 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 ...

Rifter #6 — April, 1999

- An eight page *Rifts*® comic strip by **Ramon Perez Jr.**
- More *Knights of the Dinner Table*TM.
- Russian gods. This is material that was cut from *Rifts*® *Mystic Russia* due to space limitations. Written by Kevin **Siembieda** and illustrated by Kent Buries.
- More material for *Palladium Fantasy RPG*TM.
- Source material for *Heroes Unlimited*TM.
- The next chapter of the *Forge and the Hammer*TM.
- The continuing saga of *Siege Against Tolkeen*TM.
- More G.M. tips.
- The latest news and developments at Palladium.
- Source material for the **Palladium Megaverse**®.
- And many new contributors.





From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

1998 — A year in review

1998 was a wild year in the role-playing business. To make a long story **short**, there was a lot of change and, in some cases, perhaps even near-disaster. It was, for many, a time of transition and reorganization, and certainly a year of mixed blessings. The direct market distribution network fell under assault, but stayed intact. Although several distributors, large, medium and small, went out of business or got out of gaming, others survived and a few even grew. There were mergers, bankruptcies, finger-pointing and turmoil. RPG sales were slow for most people the first half of the year, but picked up dramatically in the second half. In **fact**, many believe that while Collectible Card Games are in a slump, interest in role-playing games is soaring. Good news for folks like our readers and Palladium.

1998 was a mixed bag for us at Palladium Books too. We had strong sales throughout the year, but got off to a slow start for a number of reasons. Ironically, Palladium's effort to put things in place to produce more Palladium RPG products (and on schedule) actually blew our schedule to shreds. It was one of those strange situations where to grow, we needed to stop briefly.

There were successes for Palladium. Sales were good throughout the year, and the last quarter of 1998 was really strong — December was excellent! The problem was, we kept getting stalled and unable to produce new product on time or as quickly as we wanted to. Of course, part of the problem was our refusal to produce a substandard product. If the quality is not there, we **won't** do it. The good news is that we seem to have the talent in place to produce books on time and keep quality as high as ever. In **fact**, enthusiasm has never been higher. We have a ton of ideas for exciting new books, plans to support the entire Palladium **Megaverse** and something like a dozen projects under one stage of development or another. We think our fans will be pleasantly surprised. Heck, Palladium Books has five new products scheduled for release in the first two months of the year!

Other successes. Palladium's staff cruise was so much fun that there's talk of making it an annual event.

People went wild over Palladium's 1998 X-Mas Surprise Package (man, I signed over 3000 books). The three new T-shirts were also a hit, and (much to my surprise and pleasure) people are delighted with the collected *Mechanoid Invasion™ Trilogy* (now available in stores).

The Rifter™ sourcebook series was Palladium's greatest success of the year. You guys love **The Rifter™**, and we do too. I want to give a tip of the hat to **Editor-in-Chief, Wayne Smith**, without whom **The Rifter™** would not have been possible. Wayne sorts through the submissions, edits the material, and makes sure each issue gets out on time (even if he is a bit remiss in his correspondence with potential contributors). In **fact**, we sold out the initial press run of **10,000** copies of **The Rifter™ #1** back this Fall and had to reprint it to keep it in stock! Pretty dam good for a product that really defies conventional labels — magazine, fanzine, sourcebook, news source, vehicle to showcase and exchange ideas from fans and professionals alike, not to mention a place for experimentation and trying new talent . . . all rolled into one! It showcases fan **talent**,

optional rules, official rules, new ideas, stories and art, and stimulates the imagination and the exchange of ideas. Best of all, Palladium will be able to maintain its 112 page-size for only \$7.95, at least for another year!

Unfortunately, it's come to our attention that many people don't even know **The Rifter™** exists. **Maryann** and I have been astonished at how many Palladium gamers have never even heard of **The Rifter™** and go wild when they see it. That means there are thousands of gamers who should be discovering it and joining your ranks over the next year. You guys and gals already enjoying **The Rifter™** should spread the word! Help others discover it and the fun it brings.

And keep those fan submissions coming. We are constantly looking for short articles, characters, adventures and stuff (6-20 computer pages), especially for *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Nightbane®* and *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, not to mention *The Mechanoids®*, *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, *Robotech®* and the entire Palladium Megaverse®. Short submissions are best because then we can showcase a larger number of fan talent in any given issue. So unleash that imagination and let's see what you can come up with. Art submissions too. Send **'em in**, gang, send **'em in!**

The future of Palladium Books®

As I noted a few paragraphs earlier, its pretty exciting where we sit **The Rifter #5** is our second product of the new year, **The Mechanoid Invasion® Trilogy** being the first. By the time you read these words, **Rifts® Australia** should be coming back from the printer and getting ready to ship to stores. Meanwhile, **Palladium Fantasy RPG® World Book: The Baalgor Wastelands** should be at the printers, along with **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles & More Strangeness** (the new Second Edition **Ninja Turtle RPG**), and I'll be working on **Rifts® Canada** while at least three other products should be in the final stages of development! Not to shabby, eh?

Our goal is to support the entire Megaverse® of Palladium role-playing games. That means you can expect to see several pulse-pounding **sourcebooks** for **Rifts®**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, and **The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®, 2nd Edition** throughout the year! You'll also see a new edition of **Revised RECON®** which presents Palladium's original 1986 version of the Vietnam era game combined with the sourcebook *Advanced RECON®* (no, this is not the much anticipated *RECON® Modern Combat*).

With a little **luck**, you *may* also see sourcebooks for other Palladium RPGs like *Nightbane®*, and maybe, just *maybe*, *Mechanoids Space®* and *Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Edition*.

Yeah, we know our reputation for missing deadlines will haunt us. And we know we *will* continue to miss *some*, but you should see many more products than ever before and on time (or close to it). This is possible because we have a team of great artists and promising new writers like **Bill Coffin**, **Ben Lucas**, **Steve Edwards**, **Chris Jones** and **Mark Sumimoto**, to name just a few. And a truly great team of **artists** that includes **John Zeleznik**, **Ramon Perez Jr.**, **Wayne Breaux Jr.**, **Scott Johnson**,

Mike **Dubisch**, Kent Buries, Mike Wilson, **Ryan Beres** (introduced this issue), Apollo **Okamura**, and the gang at Drunken Style Studio. Most importantly, you will *not* see any drop in quality or increases in price. In fact, I personally believe our books are better than ever, as Palladium continues to strive for excellence and bringing gamers new **frontiers** of adventure and endless hours of fun.

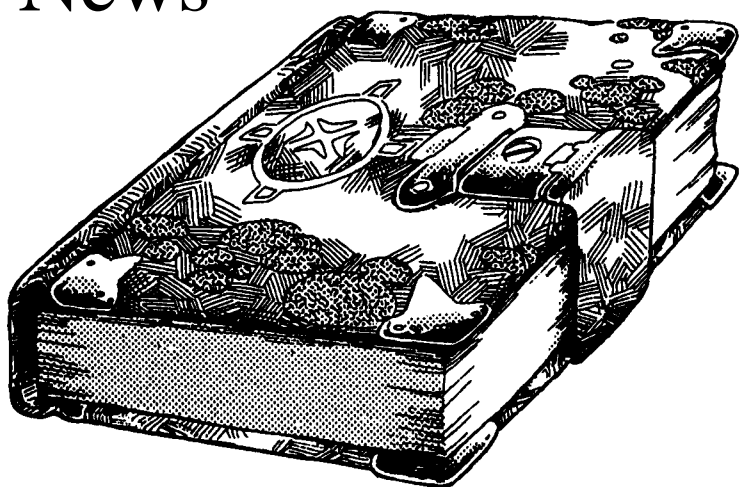
So keep those imaginations burning and stay with Palladium Books®. I promise our merry band of maniacs will send you on one exciting excursion across the **Megaverse®** after another. A trek ultimately limited only by your imagination.

Kevin **Siembieda**, January 1999

Palladium News, Info, & Coming Attractions

By Kevin Siembieda (the guy in the know)

News



Are Rifts® novels finally on their way?!

Palladium Books is currently exploring the potential of releasing **Rifts®** novels. A trilogy of books written by *Adam Chilson* has been acquired by Palladium with tentative plans for more if the first three do well. We are currently looking for suitable printers and venues to sell the items. Apparently, game stores and distributors are leery about selling **Rifts®** novels even though we keep telling them that everybody wants them and that **they'll** sell like **hotcakes**. So let your favorite hobby, game and comic shops know that you're dying for **Rifts® Novels**, and that they can count on you for a sale.

With any luck, we'll have the first one out by March. Of course, if there is not enough interest on the part of the retailers and distributors, we may have to kill the idea. Only time will tell.

A Rifts® Comic Strip!

Well . . . yes. **The Rifter** #6 will debut an eight page comic strip by **Ramon Perez Jr.** He and his writer teammate aren't sure exactly how long the story arc will run, but it will probably be a 5-8 part story. The setting is the *New West™*, specifically *Lone Star™*, where a group of adventurers get tangled in a plot with Doctor Desmond Bradford. I've seen the plot outline, character sketches and pencils for the first installment and it is way **cool!**.

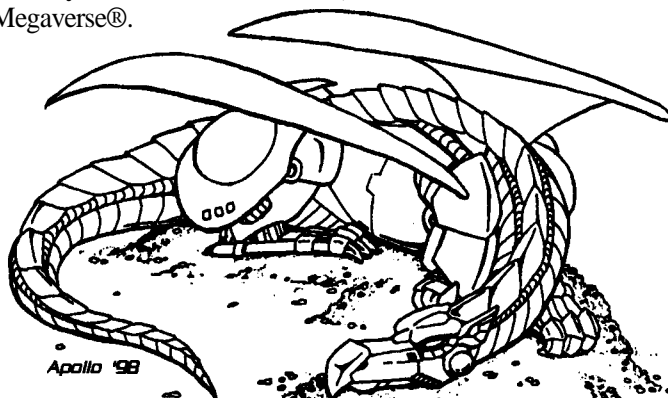
Palladium keeps prices down

You can continue to expect more bang for your buck from Palladium Books.

We are holding our prices at the same low level they've been for years, keeping page count high, and maintaining great covers and artwork by some of the best in the business. There will be *no* page reductions or price increases at Palladium in 1999. So rest easy and enjoy.

More Good Stuff

The big news this issue is our *Coming Attractions*. Palladium had a good 1998 and expects to have an awesome 1999 with more high caliber product than ever before. And not just for **Rifts®** but **Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Edition**, **The Palladium Fantasy RPG® 2nd Edition**, and the entire Palladium **Megaverse®**.





Coming Attractions

- New player O.C.C.s and optional monster R.C.C.s.
- New monsters and more info on old menaces.
- History of the legendary, monster-filled region and its tragic ties to the Elf-Dwarf War.
- Maps and world information.
- Adventures and adventure ideas.
- Great artwork by Ramon Perez Jr. and Kent Buries.
- John Zeleznik Cover.
- Written by Bill Coffin.
- \$20.95 — 224 pages, in stores late February.

Mount Nimro

There's no holding Bill Coffin back as he presents the companion book to The Western Empire™ and Baalgor Wastelands™, with Mount Nimro — Kingdom of Giants. That's right, the Mount Nimro region is the domain of giants: **Jotan**, Nimro, Gigantes, Cyclops, Gromek, Trolls and others. A gathering of clans, tribes and refugees that is quickly becoming a true "kingdom" rather than a motley collection of misanthropes. A Kingdom of Giants that frightens the surrounding human, elf and dwarf settlements and is beginning to concern even the Western Empire. Get all the details for yourself.

- New player O.C.C.s and monster races.
- History and world information, making note of powerful factions, warlords, villains and growing conflict.
- Maps, adventures and adventure ideas.
- Artwork by Perez, Buries, Dubisch and Johnson.
- Cover not yet determined.
- Written by Bill Coffin.
- \$16.95 — 160 pages, coming this Spring.

The Eastern Territory

The Eastern Territory is the heart of the Domain of Man. A vast wilderness that is enjoying a boom-time with thousands upon thousands of human settlers spilling into the region, not unlike the settlers of the Old American West. And like the Old West, the Eastern Territory is often a wild and lawless place attracting heroes and villains, settlers and mercenaries, incredible opportunities for those bold enough to seize them, and terrible dangers for all. Join the excitement, intrigue and adventure.

- History and world information.
- Key towns, fledgling kingdoms, and places of note.
- Notable movers and shakers; good and evil.
- Conflicts, treachery, dangerous pacts and raw adventure.
- New O.C.C.S like the Sword-Wizards and others.
- Maps, adventures and adventure ideas.
- Artwork by Perez, Buries, Dubisch and Johnson.
- Cover not yet determined.
- Written by Steve Edwards, with additional material by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$20.95 — 224 pages, coming this Spring.

Palladium Fantasy RPG Sourcebooks Galore!

We meant it when we said we planned to support the Palladium Fantasy RPG line. Don't believe it? Well take a look at this.

Baalgor Wastelands

This is an epic adventure sourcebook detailing the notorious *Baalgor Wastelands* — **Eandroth** tribes, **Gromek** war-bands, monstrous raiders, forgotten catacombs, pirates, **Minotaurs** and much more.

Limited Edition Hardcover "Crimson" Palladium Fantasy RPG®

The "Crimson" Edition of **Palladium Fantasy RPG, 2nd Edition** was a big hit for the Christmas season. Remember, this special hardcover edition is limited to 600 signed and numbered copies. Once they are sold they are gone forever.

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.
- All books are shipped in a sturdy protective envelope.
- \$40.00 plus **\$3.00** for postage and handling.
- Available *exclusively* from Palladium Books via mail-order and on-line. All sales are on a first come, first served basis.

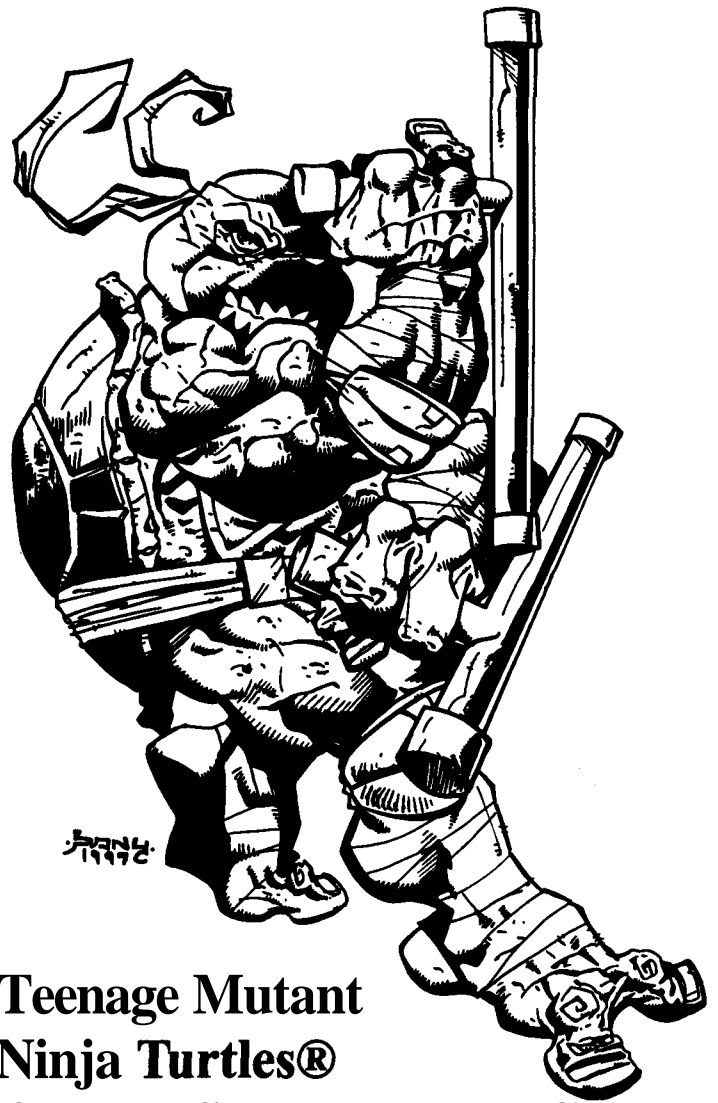
Also in the works for The Palladium Fantasy RPG®...

The Old Kingdom Lowlands
The Old Kingdom Mountains
Land of the Damned
The Wolfen Wars

Deluxe Revised RECON

No, this is not *RECON® Modern Combat*, but a new, cleaned up edition of Palladium's 1986, Vietnam era game combined with the *Advanced RECON® sourcebook*, a new cover, some new (and old) interior art, all rolled into one big, 224 page role-playing game.

- A complete **role-playing** game with everything you need to play in one book. Please note, however, that **Deluxe Revised RECON®** uses a very different system of rules with characters that are **super-quick** and easy to create and play. It does *not* use Palladium's famous game system.
- Historical background and information about **Vietnam, the War, the opposing sides, and other considerations.**
- Weapons and equipment
- **Written by Erick Wujcik.**
- Based on Joe Martin's Original **RECON** rules.
- Includes a section on Joe Martin's miniature combat rules.
- A classic game that's easy to learn and fun to play.
- \$20.95 for a complete **role-playing** game.
- 224 pages — in stores March.



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 *February* and includes character updates, new artwork by the Paulo **Parentes** Studio, new cover by Simon Bisley, and over 20 pages of additional material.

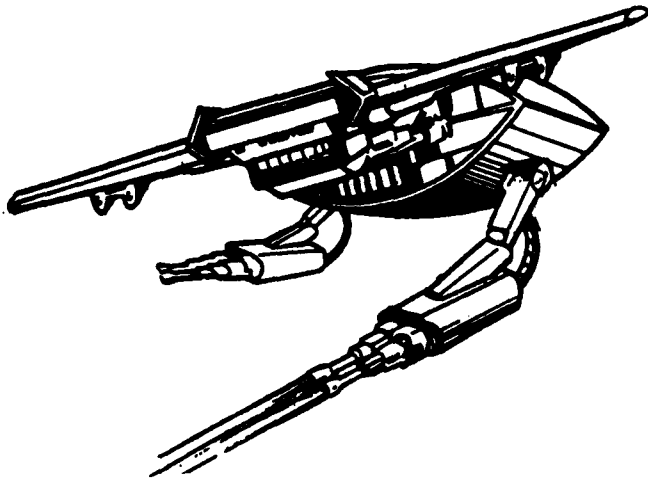
The RPG is presented in a serious manner, presents over a hundred different mutant animals and is completely compatible with **Heroes Unlimited™, Second Edition.**

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.
- Written by **Erick Wujcik, Siembieda** and Oliver.

- Compatible as a sourcebook for *Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition*.
- Retail Price: \$12.95 — 128 pages.



The Mechanoid Invasion® Trilogy

Now available in stores and via mail-order.

This is a special collection of the original three **Mechanoid Invasion** books that launched Palladium Books. Not only is this fun, action-packed material, but *The Mechanoids® Trilogy* represents 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.

- A complete role-playing game.
- Artwork has been enlarged and cleaned up.
- History of Palladium Books and The **Mechanoids®**.
- Conversion rules for use in current Palladium RPGs.
- Written and illustrated by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$19.95 for a 208 page, complete RPG.

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** captured by CS troops. Black on white.

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

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

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



Rifts® Australia (Book One)

By the time you read this, **Rifts® Australia** will be hitting store shelves! This big, 224 page World Book went to the printer January 4th and should be in stores between February 2-10.

Isolated from the rest of the world, the Land Down Under is a unique and savage place of survival, adventure, monsters and magic. Written by native Australian Ben Lucas (with additional material by Siembieda). **Rifts® Australia** has been one of the most requested World Books ever, and is finally a reality.

- **Melbourne & Perth, two high-tech powers that may become the Coalition States of Australia — hardhearted, paranoid, & cruel.**
- **Rules for creating Outback communities.**
- **Over 20 O.C.C.s like the Bushman, Jackaroo and Road Sentinel.**
- **Mystic O.C.C.S include the Sham-Man and Songjuicer.**
- **Mutants and Monsters.**
- **Dreamtime gods and menaces.**
- **New weapons and technology.**
- **World information and adventure ideas.**
- **Written by Ben Lucas, with additional material by Siembieda.**
- **Artwork by Perez, Breaux, Dubisch, and Wilson.**
- **224 pages — available at stores everywhere.**

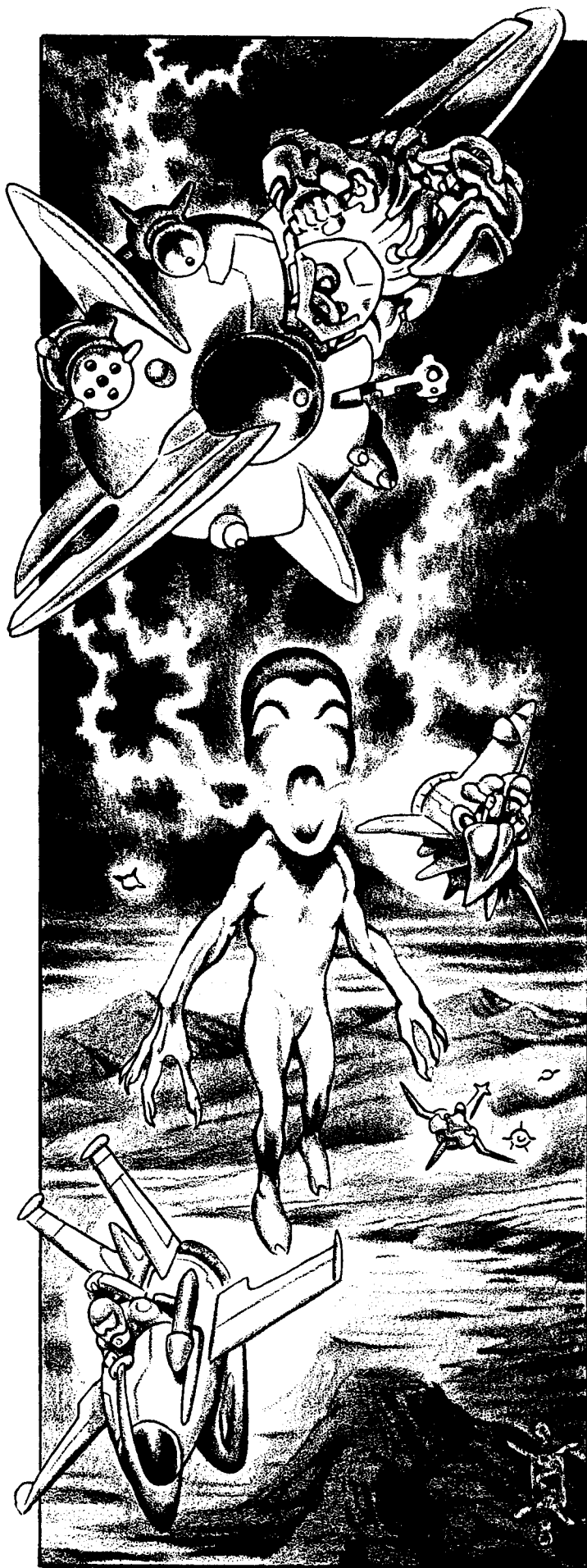
More Rifts® Australia this Spring and Summer

You all know that Australia is a big place (roughly the size of the USA), so we couldn't present it all in one measly 224 page book, no matter how epic it might be. So you can expect to see **Mystic Australia™** with a variety of different magics and information about the Aboriginal O.C.C.s, their magic, plus more world **information**, details and equipment for Perth and Melbourne. To be followed later this summer by **Rifts® Dreamtime**, an excursion into the Dreamtime Realm. Don't miss them.

What's Next for Rifts®

Rifts® Canada, an overview of the vast Canadian wilderness with a closer look at key places, people and brewing turmoil. Probably a March or April release. **160** pages written by Eric Thompson with additional material by Kevin Siembieda. **Zelesnik** cover.

Rifts® Dimensional Market (Atlantis II). Believe it or **not**, this book delves into the wonders, mystery and madness of the *Splynn Dimensional Market in Atlantis!* A place where it is said one can purchase absolutely *anything*. A place visited by all manner of creatures and ruled by the exploitive and cunning



Splugorth. Magic items, alien technology, beings from other worlds (slaves and free men), forbidden pleasures, dark secrets, intrigue and adventure. **'Nuffsaid.** 160 pages written by Mark Sumimoto with additional material by Kevin **Siembieda.** **Wrap-around** cover by John **Zelesnik.** Probably a May release.

Rifts® Free Quebec. A look at the society, people and war between Free Quebec and the Coalition States. Written by Francois **DesRochers** and Kevin Siembieda. Probably a June release.

Also Coming for Rifts: The following **Rifts®** titles are on our schedule for 1999 release. The exact order of their release may be changed.

Rifts® Scotland

Rifts® Xiticix

Rifts® Australia Two: Mystic Australia™

Rifts® Australia Three: Dreamtime

Rifts® Three Galaxies™

The Rifter™ Sourcebook Series continues and more ...

Hey, while I have your attention, I'd like to comment on something.

I am frequently asked what I have planned for **Rifts®** and I get a funny look when I say something like, "everything."

Rifts® has become the embodiment of endless possibilities, limited only by one's imagination. The concept of the "Rifts," themselves — tears in space and time — coupled with the fact that all of Palladium's role-playing games use the same basic game system and cover virtually all genres, means the players can take their characters to any world reality they can imagine. So these past years, I've been trying to give **Rifts®** players a little bit of everything.

Consequently, I've been a little surprised by comments from a few fans who seem confused and sometimes unhappy with so many World Books based on widely different places like Russia, Japan, and Australia.

I have a ton of ideas and plans for **Rifts®**, especially concerning the *Coalition States* and the impending *Siege on Tolkeen*. However, for me, **Rifts®** is epic in scope, while at the same time focusing on many smaller stories and characters. Like the old TV show that had the tag-line about there being "a million stories in the naked city," I see a million stories for **Rifts®**.

Rifts Earth is like a massive tapestry, with each individual image and color contributing to a much larger picture. In the case of **Rifts®**, that picture includes all of **Rifts** Earth and the countless worlds beyond in the endless **Megaverse®**.

When I hop from one geographic location to another, like Russia or Australia, I'm trying to fill in that tapestry. I'm trying to give **Rifts®** players a larger view of the world, as well as hints about the **Megaverse®**. If anything, there just aren't enough days in the year for me to write everything I want to write. So here's the scoop: Over the next 2-3 years I plan to focus much more on North America, ultimately building up to the war at Tolkeen and conflicts with Free Quebec and other places. In fact, things will be heating up for the Coalition States on several fronts, including a few that they (and the reader) are not expecting. You can see this plan in action with the first **Rifts® Canada** book (there will be more than one covering this vast region), **Free Quebec**, **Xiticix** and even the **Rifts Dimensional Market** (after all, Atlantis is nearby and a constant source of trouble).

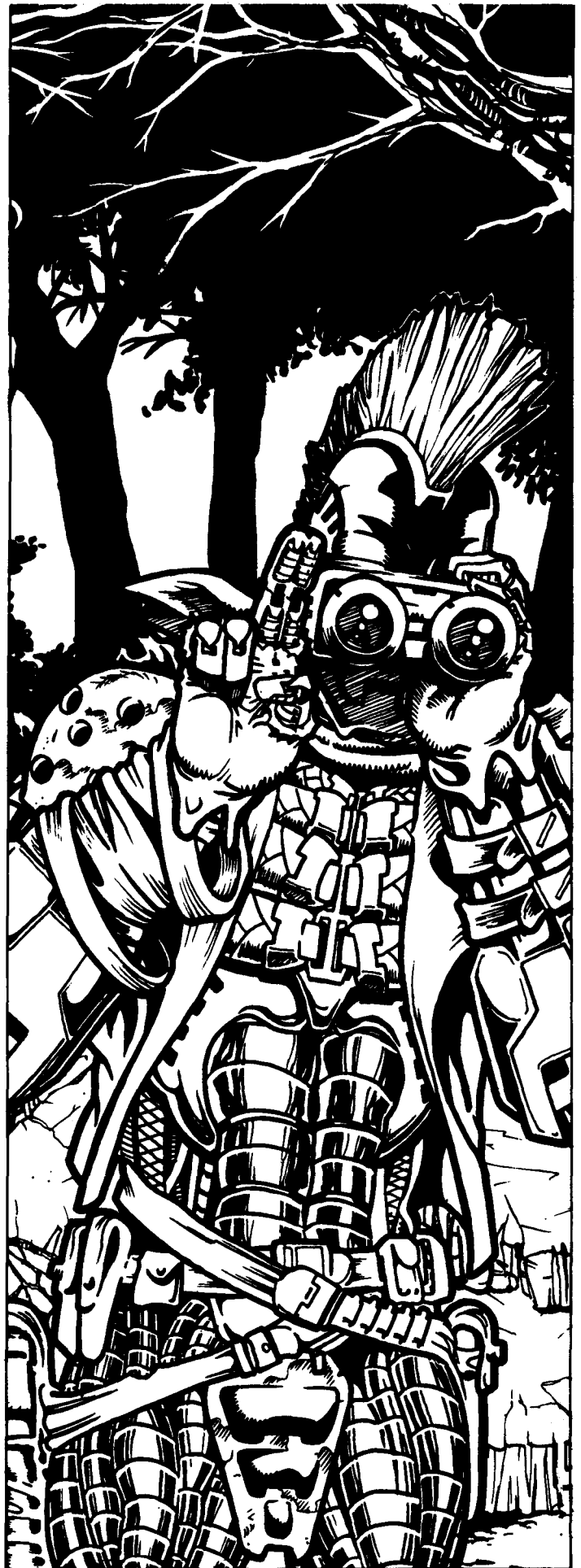
That having been **said**, there are players who like to globe-trot all around the world (if not the **Megaverse**), and others who like to know about places outside the **Americas**. Remember, despite geographic distances and barriers, Rifts characters can usually travel just about anywhere via magic and by warping time and space (i.e. "Rifting"). Thus, they can travel incredible distance on Rifts Earth and beyond in the blink of an eye. For these players, I plan on continuing to present other parts of the world and Megaverse®. Consequently, you'll be seeing a book or two based in or around North America then, a few that focus on other parts of Rifts Earth or **off-world**, and then back to North America.

I've thought a great deal about the main direction for **Rifts®**, and I've enjoyed talking with a number of fans to get their input. I suspect the frustration concerning developing other parts of the world is that most **Rifts®** players want it all (and who can blame **them?**). What do I mean by that? It's simple. Players **like** the storylines and conflicts we've established in North America. The Coalition is the villain that everybody loves to hate and there's exciting stuff brewing between them and their enemies. This means a player group that has spent any amount of time adventuring in North America is having a blast and have **established** all kinds of subplots, connections and plot threads for dozens of adventures to come on that continent. Then, out of the blue, Palladium releases *Rifts® Timbuktu!* The players have never even thought about that place before the world book came out, and now it's there. They look at it, and see cool things and want to do some adventuring there. But what about all those great plot threads and adventures they've got going in North America. They just can't leave them unfinished. And so it is with heavy heart and a tear rolling down one cheek, that they must abandon any thoughts about going to **Timbuktu**, at least for the moment. Still, the book and the adventures that might be, haunt them, bothering them like an itch that can't be scratched. Leaving them with the feeling that they are missing something.

I don't know what to say or do to remedy this, other than to assure you all that Palladium plans on putting renewed focus back on North America. In addition to the titles already **mentioned**, we've been kicking around the following: *Rifts® G.M. Guide* (i.e. playing tips plus gathering up all the current spell descriptions, psionics, skills, O.C.C.s, creation rules, etc., and putting them in one easy-to-use reference book), *Northern Gun Sourcebook* (including existing and new weapons and vehicles offered by Northern Gun), *The Manistique Imperium*, *The Black Market*, *Lazlo*, *Tolkeen*, *The Burbs of Chi-Town*, *Chi-Town itself*, *the war/skirmishes with Free Quebec and Tolkeen*, and *other factions, factors, and adventures in North America*.

Of course, fan input on what you'd like to see more of would help us immensely. My freelancers and I have zillions of ideas for North America and the Coalition States. If you'd like us to focus more on that part of the world and the mounting tension building with the CS, Free Quebec, **Tolkeen**, ARCHIE-3, Federation of Magic, and so on, you need to tell us. If stopping to explore other parts of the world is honestly distracting, **and/or** breaking the momentum of the North American storyline, we can slow down the production of such books (for the time being) and concentrate on North America and the CS.

We need and want to know what you guys would like to see, so whip out pen and paper and send us letters. Those of you on-line better start **e-mailing** away. We anxiously await your comments and suggestions. — Kevin Siembieda, 1999





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Rifter Subscription

Don't become a slobbering beast driven mad because **you're** afraid you'll miss an issue of **The Rifter™**. Subscribe and get every issue delivered to your doorstep in a protective cardboard envelope.

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Each issue will **be** 96 to 128 pages (typically the latter).

Published **quarterly** with a cover price of \$7.95 (a bargain at that price).

Contributing authors will include *Kevin Siembieda*, *Eric Wujcik*, *Wayne Breaux Jr.*, *Jolly Blackburn* and other Palladium **notables**.

What Exactly is The Rifter™?

Well, flipping through this issue should give you a fairly good **idea**, but every issue will be different

Really, there has never been anything like it

The Rifter is a synthesis of a **sourcebook**, Game Master's guide, a magazine and talent show — a fan **forum**.

The Rifter™ is like a sourcebook because it will include a ton of **role-playing** source material (optional and official). This will include New O.C.C.s, **NPC** heroes, **NPC** villains, new powers and abilities, weapons, adventure settings, adventures and adventure ideas, and **Hook**, Line and Sinkers™.

The Rifter™ is like a G.M.'s guide because it will include special articles and tips on **role-playing**, how to handle common problems, how to build an adventure and **so on**.

The Rifter™ is like a magazine because it will come out four or five times a year (we're shooting for a regular quarterly release schedule), and because it will feature Palladium news, advertisements, serial articles and continuing features.

Most importantly, The Rifter™ is a forum for Palladium's Fans. At least half of each issue will be text and material taken (with permission) from the Web, as well as fan contributions made especially for **The Rifter™**. We get tons of fan **submissions** that are pretty **good**, but not good enough for publication as an entire sourcebook. In other cases, the submission is something clever and cool, but only a **few** pages long. There's lots of cool stuff on the **Internet**, but you must have a computer and Internet access, something a lot of fans just don't have.

The Rifter™ will reprint some of those "**Web-Works™**" allowing fans (and the world at large) to get a glimpse of their genius. It is one more avenue in which fans and professionals alike can share their visions of role-playing and the Palladium Megaverse with other fans. It's a chance to get **published**, get a little cash, get your name in lights (well, **inprint**) and have **fun**.

This also means, more than any RPG publication ever **produced**, **The Rifter™** is yours. Yours to present and share **ideas**. Yours to help shape and **mold**. Yours to share.

Why call it The Rifter™? Because each issue will span the Palladium **Megaverse** of games, adventures and ideas. Each issue will publish features from people across the Web and beyond! But mainly because each and every one of us, from game **designer** and publisher, to Joe Gamer, traverses the Megaverse™ every time they read an RPG or play in a **role-playing** game. We travel the infinite realm of the imagination, bopping from one world to the next — building one world to the next Tune and space are meaningless in our imaginations as we *Rift* from one place **and** time to another.

Palladium Books Inc.
Rifter Dept.

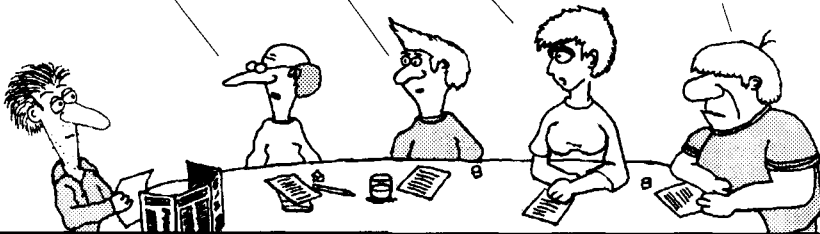
12455 Universal Drive
Taylor, MI 48180

WE'LL GRAB A TABLE IN THE CORNER OF THE TAVERN AND SIT DOWN. I'M SITTING WITH MY BACK TO THE WALL JUST IN CASE THAT CHIMNEY SWEEP HAPPENS TO WANDER IN.

DUDE, YOU GOT **SCREWED**! THAT ENCOUNTER. WHO EVER HEARD OF A **CHIMNEY SWEEP** WHO WEARS **PLATE MAIL** AND CARRIES A **BASTARD SWORD OF RENDING**?

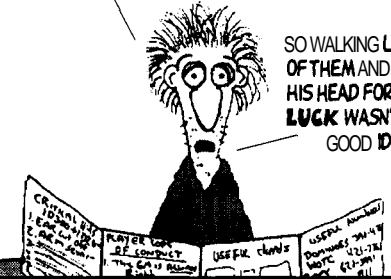
I AGREE. THAT WAS STRANGE.

HE SURE TOOK A **DISLIKING** TO BOB.



I'M SORRY BUT **BOB** MESS'D WITH THE **WRON& NPC** THIS TIME! THE **CHIMNEY SWEEPS** IN **NARDLINGTON** HAVE A VERY **POWERFUL GUILD!** AS A RESULT THE **SWEEPS** HAVE BECOME **GAN&SOF RUFFIANS** AND **THIEVES!!**

SO WALKING UP TO ONE OF THEM AND RUBBING HIS HEAD FOR **GOOD LUCK** WASN'T A VERY GOOD IDEA!!



I STILL DON'T THINK IT WAS FAR. YOU COULD HAVE POINTED OUT THE **ARMOR AND WEAPONS** TO ME.

IT DIDN'T SEEM IMPORTANT AT THE TIME. BESIDES, YOU SURVIVED SO WHAT ARE YOU COMPLAINING ABOUT??

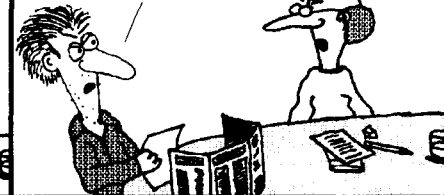
WHAT AM I COMPLAINING ABOUT??



THE DUPE IS WEARING MY **EARS** FOR A **CHARM BRACELET** AND YOU HAVE THE NERVE TO ASK ME **THAT??**

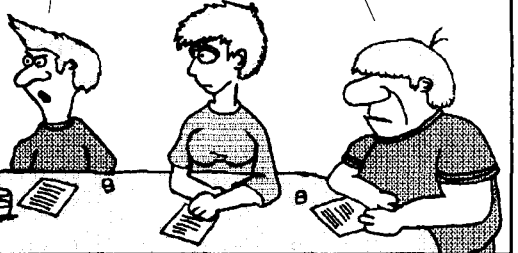
IF I RECALL CORRECTLY YOU'RE THE ONE WHO SAID, **"YOU WANTA PIECE OF ME?"**

OH REAL FUNNY!! I'M NOT LAUGHING!!



C'MON, BA! THE GUY TOTALLY HUMILIATED **BOB'S** CHARACTER WHEN HE MADE HIM PUSH THAT **COPPER PIECE** THROUGH A PILE OF **HORSE DUNG** WITH HIS NOSE.

THAT WASN'T NEARLY AS BAD AS MAKING **BOB** WEAR A **FRILLY DRESS** AND SING, **"I'M SO PRETTY - OH SO PRETTY!"**

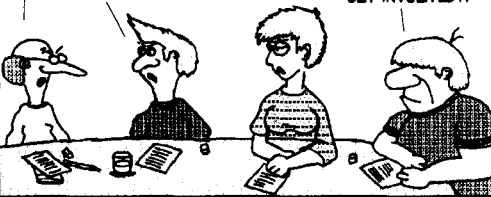


THAT'S NOT TRUE! I NEVER ACTUALLY SANG THE WORDS. I **JUST HUMMED** THE TUNE A LITTLE UNTIL I COULD **MAKE MY ESCAPE.** IT'S NOT LIKE ANY OF YOU OFFERED TO **HELP ME!** I THOUGHT I COULD COUNT ON YOU, GUYS.

SORRY, **BOB.** I WAS ENJOYING THE LITTLE SONG AND DANCE ROUTINE. I EVEN THREW A **SILVER PIECE** INTO **YOUR TIP CUP!**

HE WAS **JUST** A **CHIMNEY SWEEP, BOB!!**

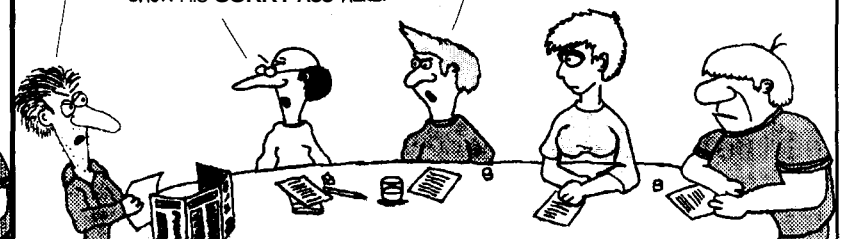
I DIDN'T WANT TO GET INVOLVED!!



WHAT CAN I SAY? LIKE I TOLD YOU ALREADY — YOU PICKED ON THE **WRONG GUY** THIS TIME. **SHEESH!!** YOU SPEND ALL **YOUR TIME** GONG AROUND WHUPPING ON **POOR, LOWLY, NPC'S.** WELL YOU FINALLY MET ONE WHO CAN **WHUP BACK DEAL WITH IT!**

OH I'LL DEAL WITH IT!! **DON'T YOU WORRY** ABOUT THAT!! HE JUST BETTER NOT **SHOW HIS SORRY ASS HERE!**

DONT WORRY DUDE!! I'LL BE THERE FOR YA THIS **TIME!!**



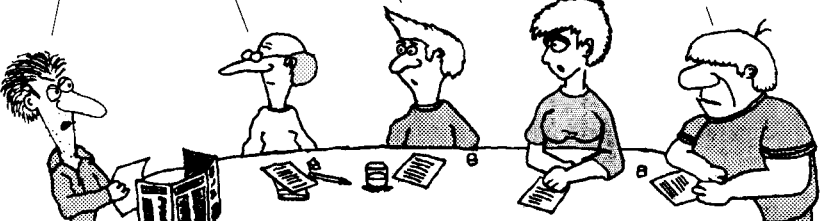
WELL YOU JUST GOT **YOUR WISH!!** THE **CHIMNEY SWEEP** WALKS THROUGH THE DOOR AND **BELLYS UP** TO THE BAR AND ORDERS A **DRINK.**

DOES HE SEE ME? I **CROUCH DOWN** REAL LOW BEHIND MY **ALE MUG.**

OOOOO DUDE, THIS IS PERFECT. YOU CAN GET **YOUR EARS** BACK.

BOB, OBVIOUSLY IT WAS A **MISUNDERSTANDING.** PERHAPS IF YOU BOUGHT HIM A **DRINK** HE WOULD...

MISUNDERSTANDING?

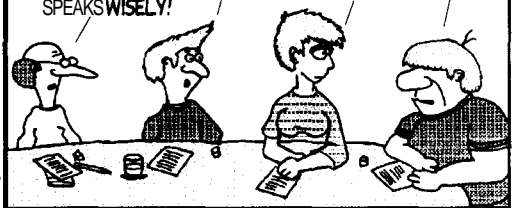


SARA ARE YOU NUTS? THE DUDE **SLAM DUNKED** **BOB'S** HONOR AND YOU WANT **HIM** TO BUY HIM A **DRINK?** **SHEESH!** YOU MIGHT AS WELL INVITE HIM OVER FOR **TEA** AND **CRUMBCAKES** WHILE **YOU'RE** AT IT.

BRIAN'S RIGHT! HE NOT ONLY **DISE'D** **BOB,** HE **DISE'D** THE **ENTIRE PARTY!!**

THE **SPELL-LOBBER** SPEAKS WISELY!

IT WAS JUST A **SUGGESTION.**



OKAY IM PULLING MY DAGGER OF FLESH DEVOURING FROM MY BOOT. THEN I'LL SNEAK UP TO THE BAR AND STAB THE RAT BASTARD IN THE BACK. THEN I'M TAKING MY EARS BACK AND GOING THROUGH HIS POCKETS. I'LL TAKE ANYTHING OF.....

SORRY BOB! HE SEES YOU IN THE MIRROR BEHIND THE BAR HE SPINS AROUND AND DOUSES YOUR FACE WITH A GLASS FULL OF BITTER KORN WHISKEY YOU'RE TEMPORARILY BLINDED. THE PAIN CAUSES YOU TO DROP YOUR DAGGER.

BA. I YELL FOR BOB TO, 'CATCH!' THEN I TOSS HIM MY HACKMASTER-12!

GOOD THINKING, DAVE!!



I'M SORRY. I'M GOING TO HAVE TO RULE THAT SINCE BOB HAS NO EARS AT THE MOMENT HE COULDN'T HEAR YOU DAVE. BESIDES, HE'S STILL BLINDED BY THE WHISKEY.

YOU WATCH IN HORROR AS THE SLOW REALIZATION COMES TO YOU THAT BOB DOESN'T SEE THE HACK-MASTER SWORD HURLING TOWARD HIM!

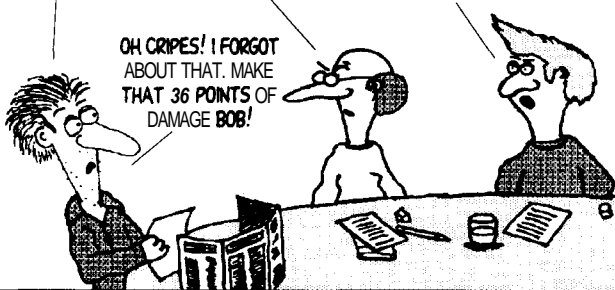


THE SWORD IMPALES BOB RIGHT BETWEEN THE SHOULDER BLADES FROM BEHIND. UH..... TAKE OFF 24 POINTS OF DAMAGE BOB!

THIS IS SOME KIND OF JOKE — RIGHT?

HEY BA. DONT FORGET IT'S A PLUS 12! MAYBE IT GOES THROUGH BOB AND IMPALES THE SWEEP AS WELL!

OH CRIPES! I FORGOT ABOUT THAT. MAKE THAT 36 POINTS OF DAMAGE BOB!



YOU'RE NOT HELPING!! WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON ANYWAY? HUH?

HEY. IT'S NOT MY FAULT! IT WORKED IN THE CRESCENT MOON ADVENTURE REMEMBER? I THREW YOU A MACE WHILE YOU WERE RIDING THAT CENTAUR BARE-BACK AND YOU BEANED HIM GOOD.

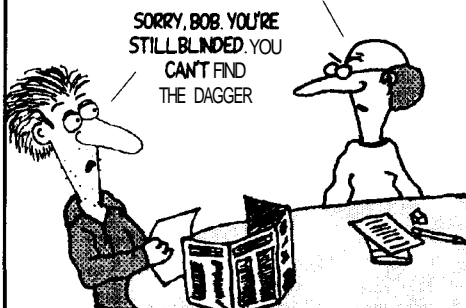
AS SOON AS I FINISH OFF THIS FREAKIN' CHIMNEY SWEEP YOU'RE A DEAD MAN. YOU HEAR? A DEAD MAN!

HE WAS JUST TRYING TO HELP, BOB!

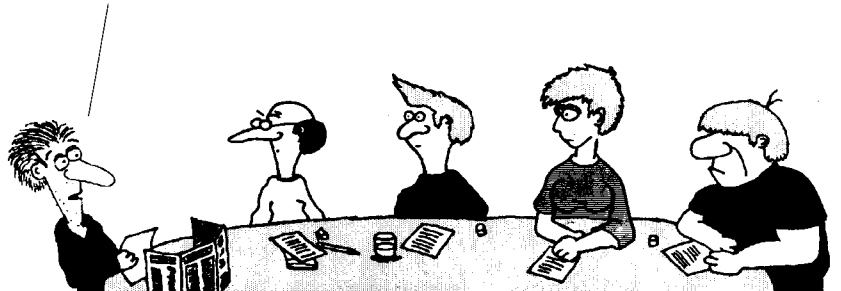


I'LL REACH DOWN AND PICK UP MY DAGGER AND ATTEMPT TO THROAT SLASH, MISTER SOOT FER BRAINS"

SORRY, BOB. YOU'RE STILL BLINDED. YOU CAN'T FIND THE DAGGER



MEANWHILE SEVERAL PATRONS IN THE BAR HAVE NOTICED THE FINE CRAFTSMANSHIP OF THE HACKMASTER SWORD! SEVERAL PAIRS OF HANDS GRAB FOR IT AT THE SAME TIME AND A TUG-OF-WAR ENSUES. AS THE SWORD IS PULLED BACK AND FORTH THROUGH YOUR BODY, YOU ARE SOON SAWED IN HALF



A WEE BIT LATER

HEY BOB THE CHIMNEY SWEEP FEELS SO BAD ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED HE'S GOING TO PICK UP THE FUNERAL EXPENSES. HOW ABOUT THAT? HUH? DID YOU HEAR ME??

JUST LEAVE ME ALONE! (SNIFF) WHAT IS THIS? PICK ON BOB DAY OR SOMETHING? (SOB)

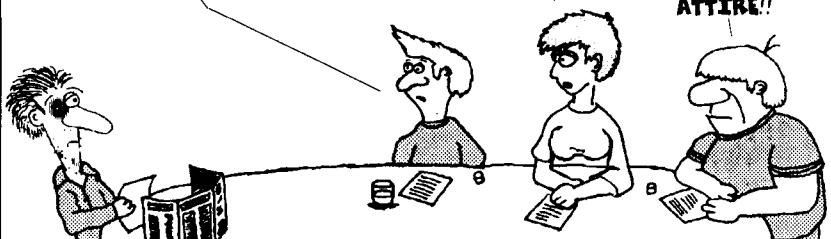


TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

CRIMINEY!! BOB PIMP-SLAPPED YOU GOOD!!

B.A., ANYONE COULD SEE HE WAS ABOUT TO BLOW!! TELLING HIM THE CHIMNEY SWEEP HAD HIS CHARACTER BURED IN THAT FRILLY DRESS WASN'T A GOOD IDEA!

I AGREE! FUNERALS CALL FOR FORMAL ATTIRE!!





ROBOTECH[®]

*Ryan
Beck '95*

REF Zentraedi Heavy Assault Pod (ABP-Z4)

Optional New Mecha for the Robotech® RPG

By Stanley Bundy

Following the First Robotech War, the scientists and engineers of the **RDF**, and later, the REF, spent years developing new **mecha** and equipment for their new Zentraedi soldiers. Typically, they did what they could to combine the familiar feel and appearance of the old Zentraedi mecha with the more versatile **Robototechnology** developed on Earth.

This mecha was already designed by the time the SDF-3 launched from Earth, but it wasn't until **after** the Zentraedi had proved their loyalty in battle against the **Invid** that the finalized version entered production. A small number were part of the first three assault waves to reach Earth (42 were in **Wolff's unit**, Mars and Jupiter divisions combined), while a similar number were aboard the SDF-3 at the time of its disappearance. If one is found on **Invid-occupied** Earth, it should be considered **extremely** rare, even more so than a Shadow Fighter. In fact, there were so few of them that two complete sets of repair manuals and parts fabrication blueprints were stored in each one, as the repair parts would be nonexistent on Earth.

Outwardly, the Z4 has a strong resemblance to the old (full-sized) Zentraedi Officer's Battle Pod. It is roughly the same height, and its hull and legs are much like the older pod's in shape. However, there are two particle beam cannons between the **thrusters**, not just one, and the cockpit has been fully enclosed. The forward sensor "nose" has been extended, and far more sophisticated sensors are present.

But the biggest differences are in the limbs. First of all, the **old**, thin weapon arms have been replaced with bulky arms resembling a cross between those of the RDF Gladiator and the Female Power Armor. These arms have fully articulated hands, as well as triple-barrel Pulse Lasers on the forearms. The legs, too, are **bulkier**, with a new, advanced knee joint design and feet that are designed for high speeds. It is this new leg design that yields the first clues to the Z4's secrets. Upon closer examination, one finds a complex hover system built into the calves of the legs. As this design would be useless in this configuration, the Z4 must be a transformable mecha. The "Pod" is but the Guardian mode of the mecha.

The vehicle mode is a hover tank, which gets its forward movement from the thrusters in the main hull. In **Hovertank** mode, the vehicle is capable of low altitude **flight**, space flight, and even atmospheric reentry, with the hover engines acting as retro-rockets. The lower legs become the bottom of the mecha, with the upper legs and the hull lying flush with the "shins" of the lower legs. The arms can be used in this mode, but only when the mecha is in space, flying or at a complete stop on the ground. The default position of the arms when not in use in this mode is paralleling the shin area of the lower legs, giving the arm lasers a clear, fixed field of fire ahead of the mecha, which

also allows the pulse lasers to be fired simultaneously with the nose lasers in this mode. When entering an atmosphere from space, the arms are placed on top of the shins to shield them from the full force of reentry. The knee joint is the rearmost part of the mecha in this mode, and is engineered to bend this far past vertical only while in this mode. The feet, with smaller hover pads built in, are now at the front, acting as an aerodynamic feature as well as an emergency braking system.

Then there is the **Battloid** mode. The sensor arrays (with the nose lasers attached) swivel 90° forward as a unit, becoming a head capable of 180° degree **left/right** movement. The legs straighten, and the knee functions similar to a human one. The particle beam cannons recess into a fixed, storage position against the hull, and the hull becomes perpendicular to the ground, with the thrusters at the Z4's "backside." Doing this with an old Officer's Battle Pod would have been impossible, as it would have put the pilot on his back. But, in the Z4 **pod**, the pilot's compartment is buried deep inside the hull, and rotates during the mode change in the same manner as those found in other **Veritech** mecha. Also, in Battloid mode, what had been the underbelly of the Z4 now becomes the chest. This allows the mecha to present a little-attacked (and therefore, rarely damaged) surface to the enemy, increasing **survivability**.

While the Z4 owes much of its design to the old Officer's Battle **Pod**, its weapons have undergone many changes from the old mecha. This is partly because of advances in technology, and partially because of its use of a **micronized** pilot. The short range missile launcher of the Officer's Pod has been replaced by a similar launcher on the back of the Z4, which has triple the capacity and firing speed. The single hull particle beam cannon has been replaced by two variable-power models, and the nose auto-cannons have been replaced by medium lasers, which also function as head lasers in Battloid mode. The new arms, having hands, have allowed the use of gun pods by the Z4 as well.

The REF Heavy Assault Battle Pod

Model Type: ABP-Z4

Class: Veritech; Assault Battle Pod - Zentraedi Type Four

Crew: One, with room for up to three passengers (though not really meant for it). The rear bench seat does not rotate in the change to Battloid mode, which means the passengers are placed on their back in that mode.

M.D.C. by Location:

*Main Body — 350 (+100)

Pilot's Compartment — 150

Arms(2) — 200 each

Forearm Pulse Lasers(2) — 50 per set

Particle Beam Cannons(2) — 75 each

Hands(2) — 60 each

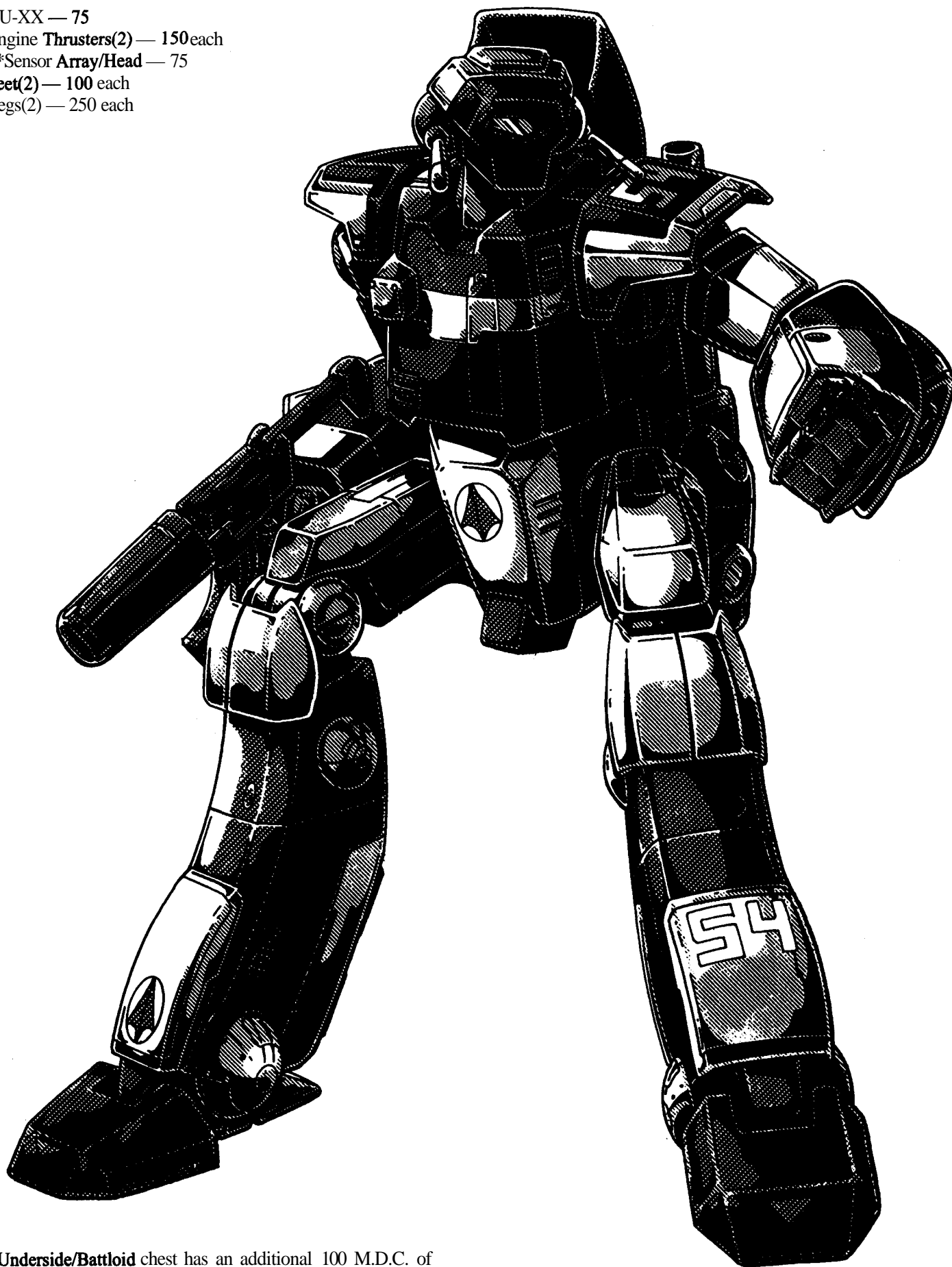
GU-XX — 75

Engine Thrusters(2) — 150 each

**Sensor Array/Head — 75

Feet(2) — 100 each

Legs(2) — 250 each



*Underside/Battloid chest has an additional 100 M.D.C. of armor that must be eliminated before attacks that hit it can penetrate to the main body. Depleting the primary main body amount shuts down the **mecha**.

Brewer!

** Destroying the sensor array affects the Z4 the same way destroying an Alpha's sensor head would — Radar is reduced to 1 mile (1.6 km), main radio and laser **communications** are lost (backup radio has a 60 mile/96 km range), and laser targeting is destroyed (-1 to strike). Vision outside of the Z4 is reduced to backup video cameras located in the top and bottom hulls.

Speed:

Battloid Mode, Running: 60 mph (96 kmph)

Battloid Mode, Space: 150mph (240 kmph)

Guardian/Pod Mode, Running: 200 mph (320 kmph)

Guardian/Pod Mode, Flying: 670 mph (1072 kmph)*

Guardian/Pod Mode, Space: 2010 mph (3216 kmph)

Hovertank Mode, Ground: 360 mph (576 kmph)

Hovertank Mode, Flying: 670 mph (1072 kmph)*

Hovertank Mode, Space: 2010 mph (3216 kmph)

* Maximum altitude is 100 feet (30 m) above ground level.

Height:

72 feet (21.82 m) in Battloid mode

55 feet (16.67 m) in Guardian mode

24 feet (7.27 m) in Hovertank mode

Length:

24 feet (7.27 m) in Battloid mode

38 feet (11.52 m) in Guardian mode, with arms in default position

45 feet (13.64 m) in Hovertank mode

Width:

24 feet (9.09 m) in Battloid & Hovertank modes

33 feet (10 m) in Guardian mode, with arms in default position

Weight: 54 tons without missiles & gun pod, 56 tons fully loaded.

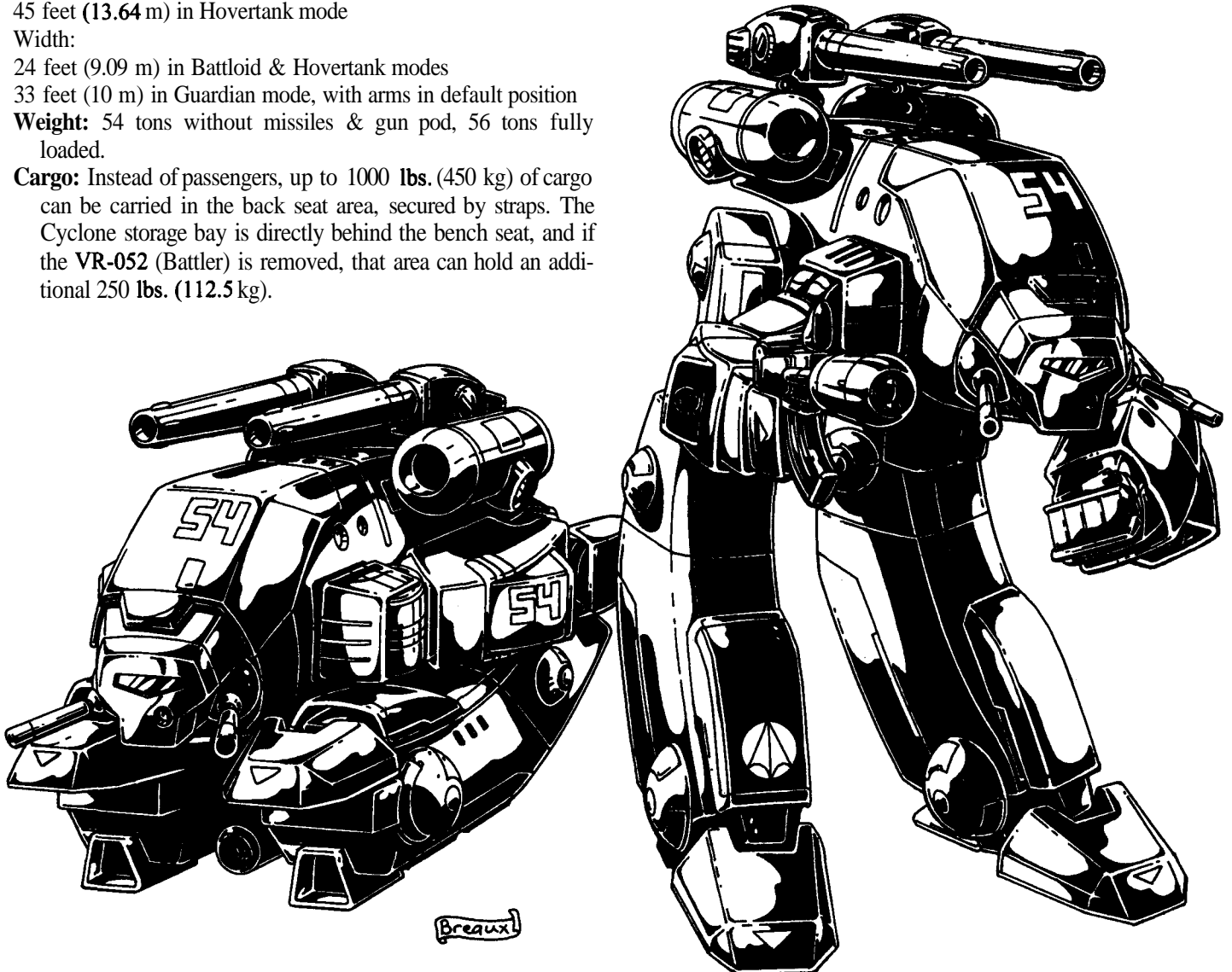
Cargo: Instead of passengers, up to 1000 lbs. (450 kg) of cargo can be carried in the back seat area, secured by straps. The Cyclone storage bay is directly behind the bench seat, and if the VR-052 (Battler) is removed, that area can hold an additional 250 lbs. (112.5 kg).

Main Engines & Power Source: Uses an REF **Protoculture** cell system, but uses Protoculture at twice the rate of an Alpha, so 16 fully charged cells will last about six months. The two main **thrusters** of the Z-4 are modified versions of the Beta's rocket thrusters.

Standard Equipment: Same as the VAF-6R **Veritech** standard & special equipment, with the power supply modified as above. The reason for the power drain is **that**, unlike other **REF-specific Veritechs**, the Z-4 relies primarily on energy weapons, not missiles. A VR-052 Battler Cyclone is standard issue, but requires the Pilot Motorcycle or Cyclone skill for use in Cycle mode by **Zentraedi Warrior O.C.C.** characters. In Cyclone Battle Armor mode, Zentraedi Warriors use their Pilot Zentraedi Mecha skill (at -10%), and receive Basic Combat in all Cyclones as a result of their earlier training in Zentraedi Power Armor, treated as an O.C.C. skill (1 level over O.C.C. level).

Weapon Systems:

1. Dual Variable-Power Particle Beam Cannons: These are similar to the Particle Beam Cannon possessed by the old **Officer's Pod**, including their limited field of fire, 60 degrees up/down and 45 degrees **left/right**. However, the pilot can choose the power setting he or she wants the cannons to



function **at**, with the higher settings reducing the rate of fire. The power setting must be chosen at the weapon's first use in any specific melee round, and can only be changed once per round.

The first setting is equal to the Particle Beam Cannons of the old Tactical Battle Pod and the **REF Z1 & Z2** pods, while the third is equal to the Particle Beam Cannons found on the old Officer's Pod and the **Excaliber**. The middle setting allows a compromise between **firepower** and rate of fire. Using setting #2 as an example, a pilot can fire a total of 8 blasts with the Particle Beam Cannons, up to his maximum number of Mecha **Combat/Hand** to hand combat attacks for the round. These 8 blasts could be in the form of 4 dual blasts, 8 single blasts, 2 dual and 4 single, etc. A tough foe might require a pounding with #2 dual blasts, while one with heavy firepower (like a renegade Alpha) might require going with setting #3 for a quick kill.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: **Anti-Aircraft**.

Modes usable in: **Guardian/Pod, Hovertank**

Mega-Damage: Setting one: 4D10, 8D10 for both. Setting two: 1D6x10, 2D6x10 for both. Setting three: 5D10+25, 10D10+25 for both.

Range: 4000 feet (1200 m) for setting 1, 7500 feet (2275 m) for 2, and 10,000 feet (3030 m) for setting 3.

Rate of Fire: Setting one: per pilot's combined hand to hand attacks. Setting two: 4 attacks per barrel. Setting three: 2 attacks per barrel.

Payload: Unlimited.

2. Tri-barrel Arm Pulse Lasers: These are based on those of the old Female Power Armor, but are more heavily constructed. They can be fired together in any mode, and have a special option to allow them to be fired simultaneously with the nose lasers in Hovertank mode. To simultaneously fire the arm and nose lasers requires a Weapon Systems roll at -30% before firing. A failed roll results in only one weapon system firing, but success means that the weapons will fire **together** until the arms are moved or the Z4 changes modes.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Range: 4000 feet (1200 m).

Modes usable in: All, with special use in Hovertank mode.

Mega-Damage: Single: 3D6, Paired: 6D6. Special: Simultaneous attack with Nose lasers does 1D6x10 M.D. total.

Rate of Fire: As Pilot's combined hand to hand combat attacks.

Payload: Unlimited.

3. Short range missile launchers: Unlike the old Officer's Pod, the Z4's missile launchers are located on the top of the fuselage, forward of the **thrusters** near the Particle Beam Cannons. Note that the Particle Beam Cannons are linked to the missile firing system, and automatically swing back to default position when the missiles are **fired**, to get them clear of the missiles' flight path.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Missile Defense.

Missile Type: Short range (medium warhead) missiles only.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 each.

Range: Varies by missile type; usually 2-5 miles.

Rate of Fire: 2, 4 or 6. Each volley counts as one attack.

Payload: 9 per launcher, for a total of 18.

4. Head/Nose Lasers: These are similar to those found on some Southern Cross **Battloids**. They can be fired simultaneously in any mode, and have a special option to allow firing simultaneously with the arm lasers in Hovertank mode (see #2).

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Range: 4000 feet (1200 m).

Modes usable in: All, with special use in Hovertank mode.

Mega-Damage: Single: 2D6, Paired: 4D6. Special: See #2.

Rate of Fire: As Pilot's combined hand to hand combat attacks.

Payload: Unlimited.

5. GU-XX 35mm Tri-barrel Gun Pod: One GU-XX is standard for a Z4, but two may be carried in **Battloid** mode. Note that the Z4 has to deploy its arms in Hovertank mode in order to fire the GU-XX in that mode.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Missile Defense.

Range: 4000 feet (1200 m).

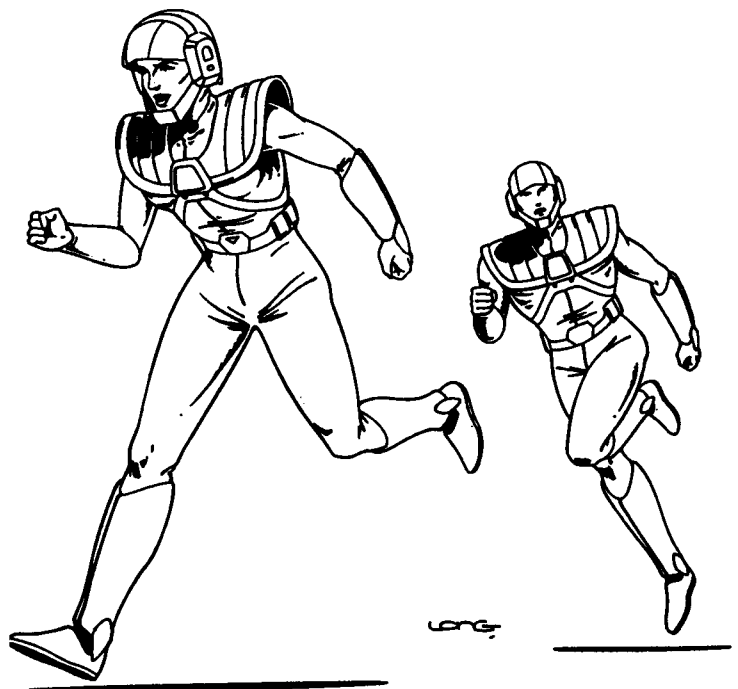
Mega-Damage: Short Burst 4D6, Medium Burst 1D4x10, Full Melee Burst 2D4x10.

Rate of Fire: Short and Medium bursts count as 1 attack each. Full Melee bursts take all attacks.

Payload: 40 short bursts; 1 Full Melee burst equals 2 Medium bursts or 4 Short bursts. One extra magazine is carried in each leg, and takes 2 actions to change.

6. Optional use of Hand to Hand Combat: Choose the best type possessed by the pilot, from the following list: Officer's Pod (either), **Veritech** Hover Tank, **Veritech** (Basic), **Destroid** (Basic). The Z-4 also has the following bonuses, in addition to those from combat training: **+1 to Parry, +1 to Dodge, and +1 to Roll with punch, fall or impact.**

Mega-Damage from hand to hand combat attacks - Punch: 2D4, Power Punch: 2D6+4, Kick: 2D4+2, Stomp: 2D4, Body **Block/Tackle:** 2D6, Hovertank Ram: 1D6 M.D. per 25 mph (40 km).



HEROES UNLIMITED™



Heroes Throughout the Ages

Optional Setting Information for Heroes Unlimited™

By Jay Fitzloff and Julius Rosenstein

Heroes Unlimited has always presumed within its text that campaigns take place in current times. Certainly, to do so is a sound decision. Not only is current history the easiest for players and G.M.s to emulate (we live in it), but there are countless comics, magazines, newspapers and television series available to give ideas and be used for reference. The modern world as a setting is, for all involved, the simplest to play in, but perhaps not the most entertaining.

Costumed superbeings in the world of **Heroes Unlimited**™ have a history going back to World War II. The heroic ideal has remained, for the most part, consistent since its conception in those distant days, but the world has not stood still. Times have

changed, and a campaign or inevitable time traveling scenario that takes place in the past should reflect these differences.

This article explores the past, giving optional rule modifications and guidelines to use in the former glory days of superbeings. The ages and trends given are based upon U.S. history, the history of superbeings in America outlined in **Heroes Unlimited**™, 2nd edition, changes in comic books, and personal opinion. Nothing presented here should be taken as fact, but instead, consider this a historical extrapolation on what might have been had robots, mutants and super soldiers been around since 1920.

The format of this article is to divide the past into ages; time periods that separate the changing **Heroes Unlimited™** world by trends in **superbeings** and how the populace perceives them. Power category modifications, skill changes, and considerations for the time are listed within each age.

The Pulp Age: 1920-1938

The pulp magazines (so named for the cheap wood-pulp paper that they used) were the successor to the dime novels, and predecessor to the comic books in providing cheap adventure stories for the general public. Although pulps go back to the turn of the century and continued (to some degree) through World War II, the era generally associated with them is from post World War I through the late 30's.

Although there is some overlapping between the pulp era and the comics' Golden Age, there is generally a clear distinction between the two genres. Pulp heroes were, for the most part, *not superheroes*. *They did not dress up in flashy costumes, the majority of them did not have alter egos and secret identities, and, although they were brave, tough and smart, with a few notable exceptions (like the Shadow and Doc Savage) they did not possess powers and abilities far beyond their fellow man.*

Many of the pulp heroes waged battles against gangsters, mad scientists, and other would-be world conquerors. Generally, though these villainous types would often head large organizations or cults dedicated to evil, they were clearly based on fiction. When genuine evil types (like the Nazis) came along, the pulp era had all but ended and been replaced by the comics.

For campaign purposes, three notable things stand out in differentiating pulp adventures from early comics: 1) A lower level of sheer power, 2) Lesser technology, and 3) A lack of women.

1) Although formidable, pulp heroes were not as powerful as their superhero counterparts. Beside lacking the special abilities of the super-types, the physical and mental attributes of pulp heroes were seldom beyond the human range (although they were often at the upper end of the scale). In the movie serials of the 30's and 40's (which often caught the feel of the pulps), the hero was often defeated by greater numbers. Although he could usually beat a single opponent and give two foes a run for their money, three against one odds generally meant defeat. On the other hand, superheroes could face odds of five or six to one and still expect to overcome their opponents.

2) Even in the few years that **World War II lasted**, great strides were made in technology. Airplanes began the war with top speeds of around 300 **mph** and were supplanted by newer models that reached over 500 mph, penicillin and other miracle drugs were discovered, and, in 1945, the atom itself was split. Although the bulk of day to day things were not affected that much by technological advances, the experiments and robots that were so common **in** the comics were much rarer in the pulps.

3) Although the **majority** of the Golden Age superheroes were male, there were some notable female heroes (beginning with Wonder Woman) who proved that a woman could carry an adventure story. In the pulps, however, no female emerged to star in her own series. Even the most notable women of the pulp

era (such as the Shadow's love interest **Margo Lane** and Doc Savage's cousin Pat Savage) only served as supporting characters for their male star.

Random Power Category Table for the Pulp Age

01-10 Hardware: Electrical Genius

11-20 Hardware: Mechanical Genius

21-25 Magic: Mystic Study

26-45 Physical Training

46-50 Psychic: Latent Psychic

51-63 Special Training: **Crimebuster** (see below)

64-75 Special Training: **Hunter/Vigilante**

76-80 Special Training: Secret Operative/Spy

81-90 Special Training: Stage Magician

91-00 Special Training: Super Sleuth

For a pulp campaign, the power categories should be modified as follows:

Physical Training characters were very common in the Pulp Era. Many of the pulp hero types were he-men whose main assets were based on clean living and two-fisted **ruggedness**. They should be toned down a little from their superhero counterparts, but otherwise be left unchanged.

Most of the Special Training types should be essentially unchanged except for gimmicks and other equipment (which should be even less advanced than that of their Golden Age counterparts, below). However, while the **Hunter/Vigilante**, Stage Magician, and Super Sleuth were not uncommon, the Secret Operative was somewhat rare. The Ancient Master is the only category that is largely out of place in a pulp campaign, since most of the pulp heroes relied on old-fashioned fisticuffs (or, at most, a smattering of **jiujitsu**).

Hardware characters were also a staple of the Pulp Era. Just eliminate higher technology when necessary (even more so than the Golden Age).

Magic characters were somewhat uncommon in the pulps. Although they would remain unchanged by the lesser level of technology, in general, magic in the pulps was far less powerful than the magic of the comics that would soon follow them. All four sub-categories (enchanted weapon, enchanted object, mystic study, bestowed) would still be available but should be toned **down—enchanted** weapons and objects should possess fewer powers (unless it is a major artifact), wizards should find learning and casting spells to be more difficult, and bestowed abilities should be limited to Minor Super Abilities and lower level spells.

Psionic characters were also rare in the pulps. Those that did appear were Latent **Psionics** as opposed to Master **Psionics**, and with powers that were usually subtle in nature. As to the powers themselves, the Sensitive category was the most common, with Healing and Physical powers being rarer, and Super **psionics** being virtually unheard of. In all, psionic characters should possess around the same level of power as characters from **Beyond the Supernatural™**.

Experiments were not very common in the Pulp Era, except among the villainous mad scientists that the heroes would often battle. Since the pulp heroes relied more on clean living and being on the side of **good**, often they did not feel the need to hedge their chances with some infernal experiment. Also, most of the experiments were done with chemicals instead of radiation. As

for the **Super-Soldier**, that was usually an option reserved for mad scientists, attempting to build an invincible army with which to conquer the world.

Robotics were extremely rare in the Pulp Era (except as adversaries for the heroes). The only kind that should be available to players should be Type 1: Robot Vehicles. Type 2: True Robots might be encountered as minions of adversaries or as helpers made by friendly scientists. If encountered, both types should be extremely primitive and simplistic. Types 3 and 4 should not exist because the technology to create them had not been developed yet.

Aliens, Bionics, and Mutants should be virtually unheard of.

Mega-Heroes should be used very sparingly (at most) or not at all (more likely). Because Pulp Era heroes are so much less powerful than even normal superheroes, Mega-Heroes could totally upset campaign balance.

In general, most Pulp Era heroes tended to be either Physical Training, Special Training, or Hardware types, with the occasional Magician or Psychic, and the rare Experiment or Robot.

Skill Changes in the Pulp Age

The following skills are generally unavailable in these times: Computer Hacking, Computer Repair, Computer Operations, Computer Programming, Laser Communications, Navigation: Space, Paramedic, Pilot Helicopter, Pilot Hovercraft, Pilot Jet Aircraft, Pilot Jet Fighter, Pilot Jet Packs, Pilot Water Scooter, Radio: Satellite, Robot Electronics, Robot Mechanics, SCUBA (could be replaced with a Deep Sea Diving skill), T.V. & Video, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons.

Characters should not be able to select these skills unless they have a very good reason to do so ("No one has a helicopter? I invent **one!**"). If a character's chosen occupation or skill program includes one of these skills, the player and the Game Master should work together to come up with a suitable replacement.

The following skills have some special considerations to keep in mind when playing in these times. Military: Nuclear, Biological, & Chemical Warfare is essentially the same, but without any knowledge of nuclear weaponry. Hand to Hand: Martial Arts and Body Building & Weight Lifting should be quite rare in comparison with today, as such things just weren't as popular as they are now.

Special Training: Crimebuster

In times when super abilities were unheard of, the yen to put on a **mask**, cape and costume remains. These characters have no powers, nor anything unusual about them other than an overzealous urge to knock out crime. This character type also makes for a good non-powered teen sidekick, which Golden Age heroes often attract.

Step One: The Usual

Attributes: Determine the eight attributes as usual. **Crimebusters** need not be smart or charming, but the out of shape and infirm rarely choose this path in life. In addition to any attribute bonuses gained through physical skills, the player may add a +1D4 to **one** of the following attributes: P.S., P.P., P.E. or P.B.

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: Putting themselves on the front line has certainly educated this character on the finer points of how to take a hit. In addition to any S.D.C. gained through physical skills, the Crimebuster also gets a one-time bonus of 1D4x10+10 S.D.C.

Step Two: Education & Skills

The Crimebuster can come from any social strata without it affecting his night life in the least. The character has probably had his mind set on being a masked vigilante since his youth and has chosen skills and training that might help in his secret career. Roll Education as usual, adding one beginning bonus program, either **Physical/Athletic**, Weapon Proficiency: Ancient or Weapon Proficiency: Modern, to reflect the character's desire to be a Crimebuster.

Other Stuff

Alignment: Any alignment may be chosen, but a true Crimebuster tries to stop injustice, not cause it.

Structural Damage Capacity (S.D.C.): As noted previously.

Hand to Hand Combat: Combat skills are not automatic. They must be selected as learned skills.

Attacks Per Melee (Hand to Hand): All heroes automatically get two attacks per melee. Additional attacks can be acquired through hand to hand combat skills and boxing.

Weapons and Armor: Practically a must for the Crimebuster. Anything they can legally (or safely) get their hands on that will stop criminals is a-ok with this character. Crimebusters are also notorious for having one special gimmick weapon or device. Game Masters and players should work together to come up with such an item, or use **Ninjas and Superspies** to get some ideas.

Available Resources: This character has saved up 3D6x1,000 dollars for the day he would begin his vigilante career. There is also a 01-95% likelihood that the Crimebuster has his own car, usually a brand new hot rod of the era. All this assumes the character is eighteen or older. If the Crimebuster is being used to make a teen sidekick, then he relies entirely upon his mentor for financial support.

Special Combat Bonuses: In addition to any combat bonuses gained through Hand to Hand and physical skills, the Crimebuster also gains a +1 bonus to either strike, parry or dodge (chosen by the player) at levels 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15. This represents the character's devotion, training and ability to always learn new tricks.

Experience Levels: As Special Training.

Considerations for the Pulp Age

A very big reason the emergence of the masked **crimefighter** occurred in these times was Americans having much more of something they didn't in the past — free time. The 1920s were a proud and prosperous time. America had just helped to win World War I and the economy was very strong. Everyone was making a killing in the stock market, while increased industrialization was saving men and women alike from many time-consuming chores.

The people with the most idle hours on their hands were those with the most money; the upper class. Heroes of the Pulp

Age would most likely be dilettantes, successful entrepreneurs, or stock whizzes. Savings and income levels should be somewhat high, with the player characters never having to worry where their next paycheck is going to come from. Of course, all of this would be changed on a certain black day in 1929 (unless the heroes stop the evil organization plotting the destruction of the American economy — **just** a thought).

It may seem that the range of characters is severely limited, considering the limited number power categories to choose from and lack of super abilities. If the G.M. feels this to be true and can handle a little extra work, many of the Psychic Character Classes from **Beyond the Supernatural** would be appropriate additions, perhaps as replacements for the Latent Psychic. Also, most of the **Ninjas & Superspies** O.C.C.'s make great substitutes for many of the Special Training classes.

Adventures in the Pulp Age should be heavy on gangsterism, crime syndicates, mysticism (especially Asian), and mystery solving. To be an effective hero in these times not only requires brawn, but also brains, finesse and charm.

A large American city, real or fictional, is the usual setting for adventures in the Pulp Age, but popular fiction of the time also had a penchant for continental traveling and lost civilizations. Player characters shouldn't be surprised to find themselves involved in mysteries that require travel to the deepest jungles of South America, the pyramids of Egypt, or the bustling markets of the Orient.

The Golden Age: 1938-1950

The Golden Age of Comics began in 1938 (with the first appearance of Superman) and lasted until just after the end of World War II. Many of the heroes of that era tended to be a bit simplistic, perhaps a tad jingoistic, but definitely very patriotic.

With a few notable exceptions (such as Superman and Sub-Mariner), these heroes would not necessarily be as powerful as the later generations that would follow them. However, these heroes were seldom bothered by moral dilemmas; they automatically assumed that they were in the right and were often willing to do whatever was required to enforce their ideas of justice.

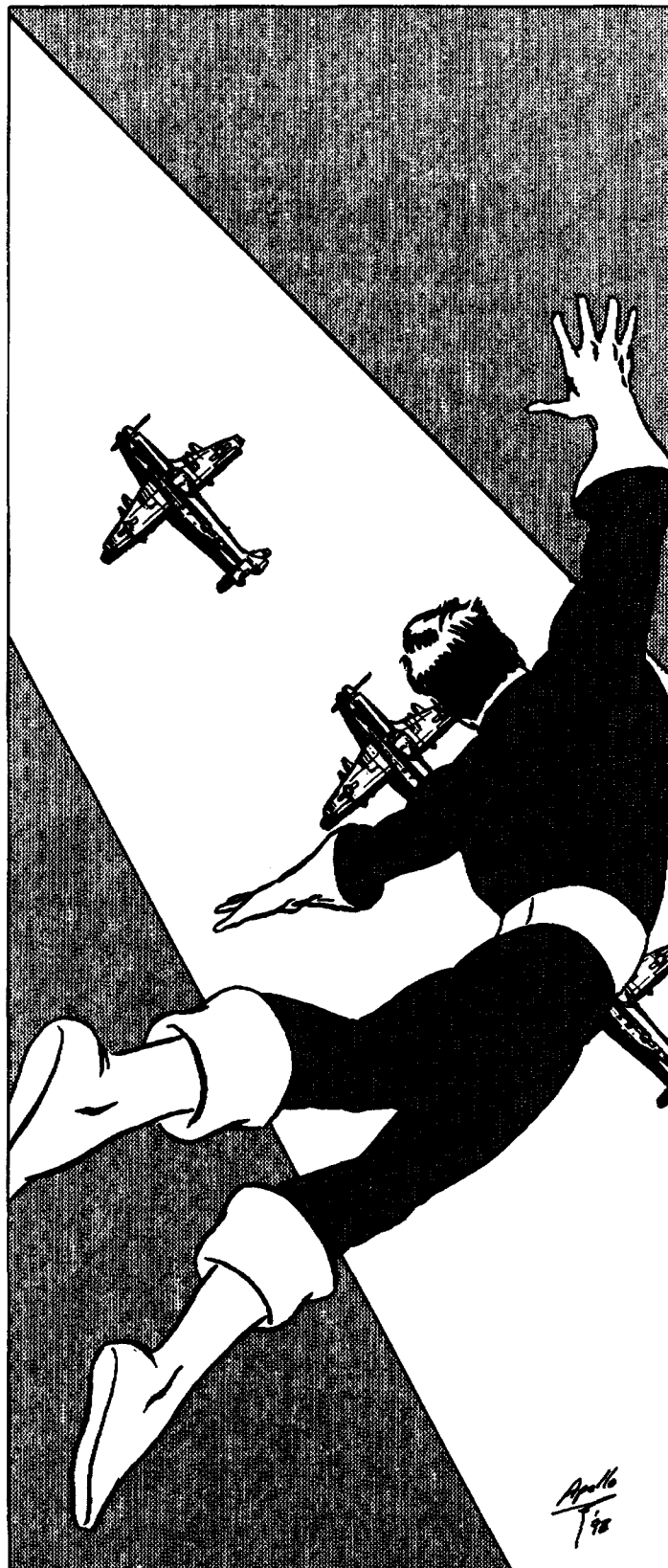
Also, during this time, the attitude toward the government was much more trusting. Unlike recent movies and television where some covert government agency are the villains, back in the Golden Age of the **40's**, the American people trusted their government more. Government agents were regarded as heroes in the comic books. The FBI was always on the side of the superheroes, several of whom were to receive congratulations and a handshake from the FBI **director**, J. Edward Grover (or some other thinly disguised name for J. Edgar Hoover).

A major theme of this era (particularly after America entered the war) was aiding the war effort. Many of the criminals, gangsters, and mad scientists that first appeared in comic books were supplanted by far more hateful adversaries — the Nazis and **their** minions (spies, saboteurs, fifth columnists, etc.).

Because many men were risking their lives in going to war, the comic books downplayed the role of their heroes in actual combat. Generally, the superheroes of that time would either re-

main at the home front (at the government's request) battling against spies and saboteurs, perform covert missions behind enemy lines (while keeping a low profile), or put their superhero career on hold and enlist in the service in their civilian identity.

However, the comic books did their part to aid the war effort by promoting paper drives and sales of war bonds. This is in addition to their propaganda value and morale boosting efforts. There were several comic books where various patriotic heroes



would haul **off** and deck Hitler before Gestapo reinforcements would ultimately force the hero to fight his way out of the Nazi stronghold.

Shortly after World War II ended, so did the Golden Age of comics. Due to poor sales, many comic heroes fell by the wayside. Although some heroes continued their careers battling criminals and other forces of evil, after battling Nazis, other menaces paled in comparison (particularly for some of the **superpatriotic** types that were created specifically for the war).

For game purposes, certain characters should be modified to reflect the less advanced technology of **50-some** years ago. Among the major disparities between then and now (besides weapons being less powerful) were transportation, communication, and medicine.

Since this was before jet aircraft, supersonic flight, and even **freeways**, travel time was longer than now. Trips that take hours today would often require days back then. The state-of-the-art methods of communicating were through telephone or radio, both of which were subject to static. Many diseases which have now fallen by the wayside were commonplace and life threatening back then, and the most advanced facsimiles of a computer were adding machines. Many things that contemporary characters take for granted would still be years away.

However, the G.M. may wish to allow scientific breakthroughs in his campaign. Comic book technology is generally more advanced than that of corresponding real-life. Many Nazi scientists in the comics would unleash some high-tech **superweapon** that would win the war for the Axis if a superhero had not been there to foil the scheme.

Jets, **rayguns**, super-explosives, lethal gases/poisons/viruses, and many other implements of mass **destruction** which would not appear in real life for years (or, in some cases, have not yet been developed) would either threaten the Allied war effort or become the superweapon that the hero would use to battle the Axis with.

A G.M. that doesn't want to rewrite history can simply use the same excuses that the Golden Age superheroes used — the weapons had to be kept from public knowledge for the war effort, were one-of-a-kind prototypes, and were devices that mankind was not yet ready for, were among the most **frequent reasons** that such technology did not become commonplace.

Random Power Category Table for the Golden Age

01-10 Alien (see Considerations below)

11-20 Atomic Powered (Only after **1945**; see Considerations below)

21-30 Experiment: Super Soldier

31-40 Hardware

41-50 Magic

51-60 **Mega** Hero

61-70 Physical Training

71-80 **Psionics**

81-90 Robotics (see Considerations below)

91-00 Special Training

The power categories should be modified as follows:

Aliens are essentially unchanged. Since their technology is already more advanced than the technology of that era, they will be unaffected by the change in tech level.

Bionics did not exist back then. Other than anything brought to Earth by aliens, Bionic characters should not be allowed.

Experiments were common in the Golden Age. However, more was done with chemicals than with radiation so the origin tables should be modified. Also, since there was a war going on, the Super-Soldier option should be more common.

Hardware characters were a staple of the Golden Age. Just eliminate higher technology when necessary (such as the Analytical **Genius's** ECM, the Electrical Genius's Computer Hacking, and much of the vehicle options).

Magic characters should also remain unchanged by the level of **technology**.

Mutants should be virtually unheard of until 1945. Since the major cause often attributed to mutation is fallout, mutants in the pre-atomic energy Golden Age should be very rare.

Physical Training characters were very common in the Golden Age and should be unchanged from those of **contemporary** times.

Psionic characters should also be unchanged from their contemporary counterparts.

Robotics were far less sophisticated in the Golden Age. Although every type except android should still be **allowed**, the higher tech features should be replaced where necessary (i.e. laser weapons replaced by flame throwers, hover jets replaced by propellers, etc.) and Artificial Intelligence should be almost unknown.

Special Training should be essentially unchanged except for gimmicks and other equipment (particularly for the Secret Operative and the Super Sleuth).

Mega-Heroes should be used sparingly. Because World War II vehicles are not as fast and possess less **firepower** than their future counterparts, some heroes may find themselves relatively more powerful in comparison.

In general, most Golden Age superheroes tended to be either Experiments, Hardware, Physical or Special Training types, with some Robots, Magicians, and Aliens in their ranks, and the occasional Psionic or Mutant.

Super Ability Changes in the Golden Age

The following Super Abilities are unheard of in these times: Body Weapons (minor), Bio-Ghost (major), and Disruptive Touch (major).

Some modifications for Super Abilities in the Golden Age are: Horror Factor (minor) should only be available to villains, or to heroes if it is **only** effective against villains. Control Radiation (major) is only available to the Atomic Powered Hero. **Mechano-Link**, normally considered a major power, should be a minor super ability in the Golden Age due to its limited applications.

Skill Changes in the Golden Age

The following skills are generally unavailable in these times: Computer Hacking, Computer Operation, Computer Programming, Computer Repair, Laser Communications, Navigation: Space, **Paramedic**, Pilot Water Scooter, Radio: Satellite, Robot Electronics, Robot Mechanics, SCUBA

Also, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts and Body Building & Weight Lifting are rare for the same reasons as they were in the Pulp Age. T.V. & Video is in its formative stages during the Golden Age and anyone with this skill would start with a base of 10%. The Nuclear portion of the Military: Nuclear, **Biological** & Chemical Warfare skill would most likely not be available knowledge to any character until after 1945.

Considerations for the Golden Age

Running a proper Golden Age campaign or adventure can be very difficult, requiring patience and cooperation between the players and the Game Master. With super abilities, guns, mega-heroes, and World War II right around the chronological corner, it becomes very easy to slip into the more violent gaming nature we are accustomed to.

Was there horrible violence in those days? Absolutely. Was this violence portrayed in comic books? Absolutely not. No hero would ever kill in the Golden Age. Even the grimmest of heroes would not take a life, but if an evil person died by accident while fighting them, they might not show any remorse.

Superbeings and costumed heroes being so new to the public, their exploits usually gained a positive reaction. It also helped that superbeings were almost invariably very good looking. All Golden Age heroes gain a +1D4 to their P.B. attribute. No matter their physical beauty, they will probably be regarded as handsome or beautiful while in costume.

Heroes of the Golden Age are always human in form and appearance. Most will adopt a secret identity that will never be discovered by the public (though there will certainly be close calls). Alien heroes have to be human-like, **humanoid**, or **humanoid** artificial life forms. Robot heroes will most likely be vehicle or exoskeleton types, as android technology didn't exist yet. Powers that change the hero's form are likely to be aesthetically and cosmetically appealing to others. It is also very likely that a hero will attract a youthful sidekick that has many of the abilities of the mentor, albeit weaker and less developed.

Villains of the Golden Age are usually ugly and strange in appearance. The most likely foes for a heroic team in the Golden Age will be aliens of inhuman appearance, mad scientists, clunky robots, gangsters, people from the future, and Nazis and Axis powers. The human villain with super abilities won't be making an appearance until the Silver Age.

Adventures in the Golden Age will most likely revolve around two themes. The first, stopping the crime and mad schemes of local evil-doers. Secondly, helping Allied troops overseas win the war. The Germans will certainly think up many new outlandish plans to destroy the free world and it will be up to the heroes to stop the devilish fiends.

The Atomic Hero

After the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan, a new type of American hero will emerge — the Atomic Powered Hero.

The Atomic Hero is made up like either an Experiment or Mutant (player's choice). Since "atomic energy has no negative side," however, any mutations or side effects rolled by the player do not have to be taken if unwanted. Also, any effects or powers that would normally blemish the character's physical appearance do not do so. Also, a hero with the Control Radiation super ability never has to worry about poisoning others. After all, "**radiation** is your friend." It helped win the war and will someday solve all the **world's** problems.

The Decline: 1950-1960

The post-war populace quickly began to lose interest in the **superbeings** that a decade before had captured their hearts. Many considered it an already-passed fad. The heroes of the past were retiring and few new costumed crusaders, perhaps because it was no longer in style, were taking their place. America had a new thrilling pastime that the **superbeing** couldn't compete with, called television.

The power category, skill and super ability adjustments are largely the same during the Decline as they were in the Golden Age, but many superbeings in these times will be leftovers from the old days. New heroes made in these times should have a theme that coincides with what was popular in comics of the day: horror, romance, westerns, and war.

The adventures in the Decline will either be of a supernatural, weird west, or war theme. The heroes will be more likely to face a psychotically insane commando who lives in a haunted mansion atop an Indian burial **ground**, than a good old-fashioned alien wanting to subjugate the human race. Of the few old enemies that do show their faces, most will be card carrying members of the new great threat against America known as Communism.

In fact, it's likely that all of the hero's adventures will be against, have been plotted by, or related somehow to the Communist Party. The characters themselves may be accused of helping the ever-infiltrating red scare. No one is sure how to tell if someone is a Communist, none can say what the goals of the Commies are, and most are unsure why we hate those damnable reds so much. But they know they're out there, laughing at us and plotting to overthrow our capitalist ways. If that's not enough reason for a group of heroes to go after someone, what is?

The Silver Age: 1960-1970

What brought about a renewed popularity in the costumed **crimefighter** and the superbeing can't be said for sure. The most likely reason was the emergence of the super villain. Previously, anyone with super abilities became a hero, and helped fight other worldly and national **threats**, but many were now turning to a life of crime. The only people able to stop such powerful menaces were the heroes that the people had been ignoring for the past years. Along with need came renewed popularity. With the possibility of national fame (or infamy), many new and long forgotten heroes and villains started coming out of the woodwork.

Power Categories, super abilities, and the skill selection process in the Silver Age is as outlined in **Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition**. Players and **G.M.s** alike should keep in mind that many skills, most notably those dealing with computers, were quite different in the **60's** from what they are today. The Game Master may want to make some skills unavailable as Secondary choices, as it is unlikely that anyone could **acquire** them as a hobbyist.



Whereas the heroes of the past had two words that could describe most of them, "Caucasian Americans," heroes of the Silver Age suffer no such easy distinction. All races are equally likely to gain super abilities. Also, superbeings begin to appear, or be **noticed**, in other nations besides the United States. Almost every country of the era has its own national hero, usually with a flag-based costume.

The completely principled hero and utterly diabolic villain begin to fade away in the Silver Age. The good and the bad alike have weaknesses that come with their powers, personal lives that interfere with their plans, and strong emotions that cause them to think about what they are doing and why. Insanity rules, if they haven't been used previously, should be introduced in this era.

Adventures in the Silver Age run the full gamut of possibilities, from bank robbers to forces threatening the safety of the universe itself. In the past, aliens and beings from other planes of existence invaded Earth, but now, heroes are just as likely to go to these other planets and dimensions themselves. Travel to alternate Earths is another likely event for heroes in this era, and team-ups with their Golden Age counterparts an almost certainty.

The Bronze Age: 1970-1980

During the Bronze Age, the proliferation of superbeings continues along the course laid out in the Silver Age. What makes this age worthy of a separate classification is that heroes and villains who survive through it will later be asking themselves, "What were we thinking?" Fads and fashion catch up with the **superbeing** as bell-bottoms, large collars, platform shoes and tie-dyes replace the traditional **spandex** costume. Other than

faux pas made in outfitting themselves, heroes may notice their world going under some non-cosmetic changes as well.

New heroes that push the envelope of what is considered to be a "good guy" begin to appear. The anti-heroes that are willing to put a villain out of commission permanently come into conflict with the heroes of **yesteryear** who feel this is going too far. The Crazy Hero will make many wonder if a person who sometimes can't control himself is capable of safely administering justice. Horror heroes, which gain their powers from dark forces but try to use those abilities for good, also arrive on the scene, and instantly have a bias to disprove.

Martial artists become more popular than ever, with many heroes and villains knowing a style or two. The Bronze Age is the perfect time to begin introducing O.C.C.s from **Ninjas & Superspies™**, as it hasn't been since the Pulp Age that Oriental Mysticism has been spreading its charm into so many of the character's adventures.

Many of the hero's adventures in the Bronze Age are going to end with no clear winner. Death of major non-player characters in story lines is a definite possibility. So is the characters having to sort out amongst themselves how to deal with grey areas such as **drug** addiction, alcoholism and poverty. Many times, the group may find there is no answer and they'll just have to do the best they can, which will never be enough.

The Modern Age: 1980 to the Present

This age encompasses everything that we expect and love in comics today. No changes or era considerations are needed to run a successful campaign in the Modern Age. For those playing a group of heroes through many ages, however, some thoughts on the heroes of today are given.

Costumed heroes and the superbeing have never been as popular in the eye of the public as they are today. Such an opportunity for fame has brought out champions by the hundreds. If a character really wants to make a splash in the Modern Age, he/she had better have a gimmick, a cocky attitude, and most importantly, marketable abilities. Super strength alone is practically an old shtick today. But combine super strength with being an accomplished weapons master, having a mysterious past, gruff mannerisms, and a cool costume... well, now you're getting somewhere.

The adventures of today usually involve modern twists on old classics, government **conspiracies**, and for some reason, Nazis. Grim, gritty, and convoluted are the key words when the characters have come this far and built up so much back history.

And if that doesn't work, characters get their past erased and start fresh, usually with a new flashy costume.

Two looming concerns that any G.M. running a campaign through the ages would have are not detailed above: economic fluctuations (differing prices, employment, starting cash for player characters, and so on) and technology. There is no concise way to do so, but any Game Master wishing to be historically accurate can easily find a cache of information at any library or bookstore. A game that takes place in the past can easily be given a thick atmosphere with just a touch of detail.

A simple way to handle prices of the past would be to make a best guess at what fraction things would cost in those times, then adjust all prices, starting funds, and incomes to that level. For example, it wouldn't be too far off to say that people in the **1930's** earned about 10% of what we are paid today. All prices, then, along with incomes and starting cash could then be cut by one tenth. Yes, it would end up the same just leaving all the prices as **is**, but it wouldn't feel the same.

Note also that Modern Age heroes who are time traveling will find **their** paper currency regarded as counterfeit by anyone



prior to 1970. Quite simply, money looked and felt different back then, and the farther back in time you go, the less it looks the same. Coins might be a bit easier to pass off, but not by much. Those with intent to make a chronological jump should find alternate sources of funding.

Lower technological levels, a subject touched on previously by skill limitations, should also be a high consideration when running adventures in a past time. Computers, for example, that were cutting edge ten years ago aren't even good as paper weights today. Heroes with a high intelligence should be given a knack for building previously unheard of devices and weapons, with Hardware, Robotic, and Bionic characters being at the top of the hi-tech heap. Keep in mind, however, that inventors usually have an eye to the outlandish. An energy weapon could be made to look like any other gun, but why do that when a brightly colored, multi-pronged thing with many flashing lights is so much more fearsome.

The Future: Tomorrow and Beyond

One of the more common alternatives to a contemporary setting seems to be adventures set in the future, generally **21st** century and sometimes after some type of apocalypse (either natural or man-made).

These adventures may just be adjuncts to the main campaign and culminate with the player characters returning to their own time after they have completed their tasks, or they may be an integral part of the game.

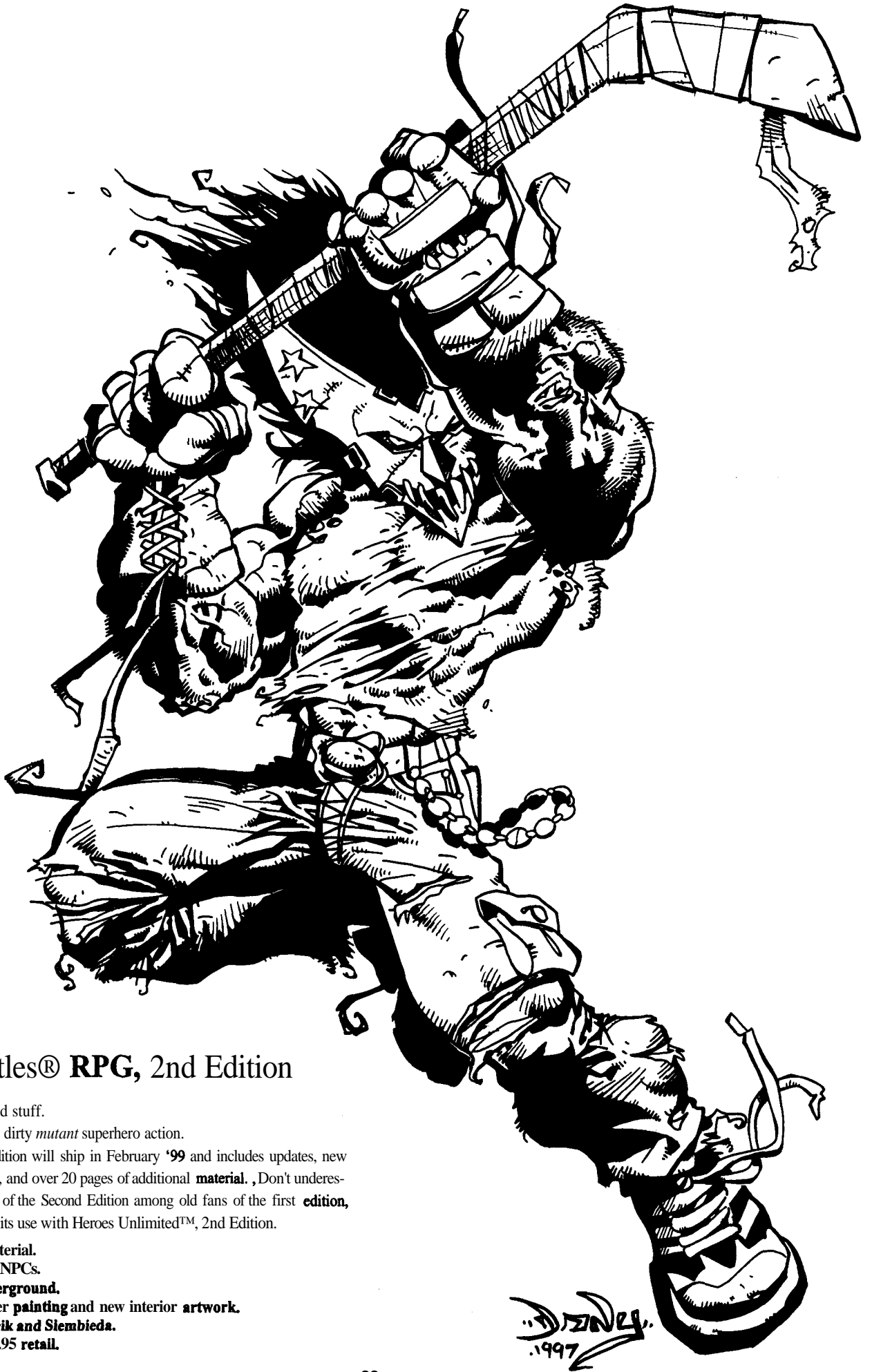
Sometimes, the characters are native to the future environment (like most **Rifts**® characters) and remain there. In either case, campaigns like these are frequently noted for advanced technology and high-powered characters.

In general, science-based characters may be more powerful than their 20th century counterparts. It is fair to assume that Bionics and Robots will have improved, and that vehicles, weapons and other high-tech gimmicks will have kept pace. Thus, characters native to the future may possess mobility, **firepower**, and other abilities that their predecessors could only dream of.

Also, the science of the future may have continued Experiments to increase the human potential and resulted in more powerful beings. It is quite possible that psionics will have become more accepted and that interaction with Aliens **and/or** Mutants is more common as well.

The only characters that may not necessarily benefit from the advanced science will be those who are magic-based or have had Physical or Special Training.

Unless natural laws have changed and magic makes a comeback (like it did on Rifts Earth), the people of the future may regard Magic characters with anything ranging from awe to ridicule and disbelief. As for the characters that rely on their training, if the training methods of the future have not kept up with technology, it is possible that these folks may fall behind their colleagues who can better utilize the devices of the future. In addition to its appeal to power gamers, futuristic superheroics can have inducements to role players as well. Two such recurring themes are: 1) Future Shock — It might take some doing for 20th century superheroes to get used to the future. For exam-



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ple, the hero who gained his powers from an experiment discovers that the experiment is now a standard procedure and, instead of being unique, there may be a whole legion of future counterparts with powers that equal (or surpass) his, or the hero who learns that his robot **battlesuit** which was state-of-the-art back in his own time is now considered woefully obsolete. Thus, these characters who were far mightier than their friends in their own time now find themselves surrounded by people who outstrip them in power.

This in turn can lead to the other theme: 2) Superior Attitude — It has not been uncommon for comic book superheros who wind up displaced in time **and/or** space to join up with an ostensibly more advanced people and lead them to victory over a powerful adversary. Although this may happen simply because the hero does something that no one else thought of doing (since, in the future, this action is simply taken for granted), generally this victory occurs because the hero has a strong will, moral integrity, and the strength of his convictions to overcome the greater might of his foe. Often, his attitude and actions will inspire his allies into changing their attitudes more in line with his.

Since the future is a blank slate, G.M.s have free rein to create whatever setting they want for the campaign. Possibilities include (but are not limited to): a Utopia being threatened by **criminals/rebels/dissidents** that want to overthrow the peaceful government, a ruthless world order that is stomping out resistance to their tyranny, a world at war with alien invaders, or conversely, one that has already been conquered and **needs** heroes to lead the rebellion.

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The Rahu-Man

An In-Depth Study

Optional Rules and Information

By Peter Finin

For hundreds of **years**, legends have been told of the **yeti**, or abominable snowmen, that populate the Himalayas. In many of these stories, the yeti are foul tempered, violent, dim **witted**, and smell horrible. In the period of time after the industrial revolution and before the Coming of the Rifts, close encounters with these creatures all but stopped. Sightings of giant, white-furred **humanoids** and of huge footprints continued, however, right up to the Great Cataclysm. Many spent years in search of the yeti, as well as other creatures, such as the Sasquatch, or bigfoot, of the American northwest, or the **mapinguari** of the Amazon. All either failed, or disappeared while in remote, mountainous regions. Of course, disappearing is not an uncommon occurrence for people who spend lots of time in such terrain.

Unsuspected to all but a few "quacks," the Himalayas were actually inhabited by giant humanoids. The truth, however, was far different from what anyone suspected.

History

Homeworld

The **Rahu-men** were originally from an ancient dimension, where time moved at a different rate than it does most places in the Megaverse. The world of the Rahu-men was one of larger scale than ours, full of towering mountain ranges that put the **Himalyas** to shame, valleys which plunged miles into the **ground**, expansive oceans, large **megafauna** and some impressive **megaflore**, in the tropical regions at least. This world also had a thinner atmosphere than that of Earth or the Palladium world, and was significantly cooler as well, with snow on the ground almost year round everywhere except for a few equatorial valleys. Most of the truly large megafauna had been hunted into extinction early in **Rahu-man** history, although a variety of creatures wandered their world that would dwarf most Earth creatures.

Early on in their evolution, the Rahu-men developed some psionic abilities. These developed hand in hand with their culture, much the same way that the capabilities for abstract thought and speech developed hand in hand with **pre-historic** human civilizations. The Rahu-men soon spread out of the few equatorial valleys they evolved in, due to population pressures, and grew across the face of their mountainous, bleak world.

The Rahu-men were well adapted to their world, its climate, atmosphere, and **eco-system**. Most of them made a living herding various smaller mammals, similar to the goats and sheep of Earth. Most of their earlier societies were composed of small, warlike city states and bands of nomads. The majority of early



Rahu-men were warriors, or at least capable in the arts of war, much like Earth's ancient Greeks and nomadic warrior native Americans. The Rahu-men were highly **intelligent**, and were quite fond of games of thought and strategy, similar to chess and go, as well as athletic competitions, and contests of strength and

pro prowess, which were all seen as being key to mastering the arts of war. Among their martial pursuits were several systems of martial arts, known collectively as "**Aslyl Okta**," developed at the top of their **world**, in the peaks of their tallest mountain ranges.

The **Rahu-men** eventually forged a planet-wide civilization, and all but ended the strife and intermittent warfare that had plagued them for so long. This civilization saw tremendous advances in technology, magic, psychic abilities, religion, culture, philosophy, and almost all areas of peaceful endeavor. This peace lasted several thousand years, during which the vast majority of Rahu-men led an idyllic life. Warfare and combat ceased to be a staple of life for all but a few, and eventually became specters of the past.

The **megaverse** isn't that nice of a place.

Unfortunately, this peace was **broken**, as the **Rahu-men's** world was discovered by the Mechanoids. The peaceful Rahu-men were quickly **decimated, and**, although they adapted well and quickly **relearned** the arts of war during their last several years, they were almost exterminated. A few hundred Rahu-men from an isolated, relatively backwards, mountainous herding community managed to escape through a dimensional rift (a new type of magic developed after the Mechanoids made their appearance). They ended up on the Palladium **world**, right after the time of chaos.

A New World

The Rahu-men had brought some of their technology with them. Unfortunately, most of it had to deal with war, as they had been fighting for roughly 20 years before they left, and almost everything and everyone was dedicated to the war effort. They lacked the necessary materials and machinery to develop an industrial machine, and much of their technological devices soon rusted away or ran out of power/fuel. The difference *in* the time flows of their dimension and this new one had some strange effects on these giants. **Their** life spans were more than doubled, despite the loss of much medical technology. They quickly adapted to sheep and goat herding, and took well to the climes of the mountainous areas of the Palladium world.

These Rahu-men quickly came into contact with other species and cultures of the Palladium world, and soon became well known for their impressive magical knowledge and psychic abilities. Although they lost many of the skills and knowledge necessary for advanced technology, they retained knowledge of advanced mathematics, and basic knowledge of how the world works (basic physics primarily), which led to them also becoming sought after sages and wise men.

The Rahu-men flourished again, but much had been lost. Besides their knowledge and technology, much of **their** culture was also forgotten. The first generation of Rahu-men to live on the Palladium world had been disillusioned by the **Mechanoids'** attack. All of their achievements, their peaceful ways and civil behavior had not helped them. Their gods had not come to their aid. Their efforts at defense had proven too little, too late. Thus, much of their traditions, and all of their religion and history was not passed on to subsequent generations, and **their** history soon faded into the mists of time. It seems only the starkly useful pieces of their culture remained - the martial arts, herding techniques, and undecorated craftsmanship.

A particularly civilized group of ogres had lived near where the Rahu-men first appeared on the Palladium world, and many of their customs and skills were passed on to the Rahu-men of subsequent generations, including cannibalism, carpentry, and a love for intoxicating drinks and other drugs.

The bitter attitudes of the first refugees were perpetuated throughout many generations of Rahu-men, who refused to take part in any religious matters, and who were plagued by bouts of depression and alcoholism. This led to the Rahu-men being unable or unwilling to adapt to the changing power structures of the Palladium world. A group of humans in the Western Empire started a campaign against the Rahu-men, who served as competition for human workers. The Rahu-men were stronger than humans, allowing them to be better laborers, and had an extra set of limbs, which allowed them to make better craftsmen than humans. The cannibalism of many of the Rahu-men was widely touted as proof of their barbarism. A campaign of propaganda was started, portraying the giants as baby-eating monstrosities, resulting in many of the giants being treated poorly, from being denied **work**, to being attacked by large groups of armed men. After several years of extreme prejudice towards the Rahu-men, a campaign of extermination was launched by the humans.

The Rahu-men retreated to the mountains, where they had settlements from the beginning of their stay on the Palladium world. **Their** numbers dwindled as their reputation as child-eating monsters continued amongst the growing human population. Many Rahu-men became solitary hermits, tending their own herds of sheep or goats, and having little contact with other beings.

A small group of Rahu-men ended up in the **Algor** mountains, and began to again delve into religious matters. A large minority of their small population soon switched to a monastic life style, devoting much of their time to philosophy, religious concerns, and the perfection of the amalgam of martial arts forms which had survived from their home world. They were relatively isolated, but did manage to maintain some contact with other small **Rahu-man** communities scattered about the mountainous regions of the Palladium world.

Earth

One group of Rahu-men, led by a mystic by the name of Rasheen, ended up traveling through a dimensional portal to Earth, circa 12,000 B.C. They quickly adapted to their new home in the Himalayas. They decided to keep all contact with the local humans to a bare minimum, suspicious after their problems with the Western Empire on the Palladium World. There was, however, a problem on this new world. A virus common to Earth proved dangerous to a small portion of their population, and infected many, who were dubbed the **"Malduk"**. It was generally contracted as an infant, and would stunt growth, and cause deformity, mental retardation, and an early death. The Malduk individuals were generally banished at a young age, as they tended to be violent, not to mention foul smelling. These Rahu-men caused tales of aggressive, hairy giants among the local human population. The Rahu-men watched the humans, but kept themselves unseen using magic and psionics. Time passed, human civilizations rose and fell, and the Rahu-men stayed relatively isolated. Eventually, they began to initiate contact with individual travelers, hermits and other humans. As human contact became more acceptable, the Rahu-men developed a desire to be able to venture into human culture. Still very wary of revealing their presence to humans, they developed mystic techniques for venturing into human areas undetected - illusory spells, metamorphosis, mind clouding techniques, and even, occasionally,

simply astounding stealth abilities. Through these means, select individuals managed to walk among the human societies.

Even as the **Rahu-men** adopted some of the culture of the humans who lived near them, they had a profound, although mostly unnoticed effect in return. Much of their philosophy found its way into human religion in the area, as did a few of their myths. Their martial arts systems even managed to rub off on a few humans - Rahu-men will claim that the **Shao-lin** temple was inspired by the visit of a few humans to a **Rahu-man** monastery. Much of Buddhism and Taoism were similarly inspired, or partially derived from Rahu-man culture, religion, and philosophy.

That the monks in the Rahu-men temples were trained as warriors was an oft contested point. Many argued that the martial aspect was totally beside the main point of inner control, mystic **development**, and, most importantly, peace and serenity. Indeed, among the masters, it was often maintained that these aspects were in conflict. Nonetheless, training continued, as did the debate, for thousands of years.

Even as Rahu-men were mixed up in Eastern culture, small groups of them were scattering about the globe, and communities were founded in other mountain ranges about Earth - the Andes, Rockies, and the Alps. Most of these were formed much too late to have such a profound impact on human society as they did in the East.

With the advent of the industrial revolution among the humans, and the subsequent improvement in medical techniques, the Rahu-men quickly picked up on the concept of a vaccine, and all but wiped the Malduks out. This great triumph was widely celebrated, and encouraged the Rahu-men to continue to watch the developments of the humans with interest, even though they lacked the industrial base needed to duplicate many of them.

Religion

Many Rahu-men follow what appears to be a strange mix of Buddhist and Taoist teachings and philosophy, with a little **Zen** thrown in. They generally believe that it is each person's duty to somehow make the world a better place, and to come to peace with themselves. They believe that people who manage to reach Nirvana ascend to some higher plane of reality, and that others are reincarnated to a higher or lower stage of life, depending on their actions. The details as to the hierarchy of life forms vary from town to town, and monastery to monastery, but this much is generally agreed upon. Nirvana is usually thought to be reached by emptying oneself of one's ego and living life simply and with goodness. Much of the deities and supernatural creatures of Buddhist and Taoist philosophy are also believed in. Those who have not reached Nirvana are sent to one the hells of the **Yama** Kings after death, to undergo the processing required to be reborn.

Today

Rahu-men do exist in fair numbers in modern day Earth. The total population probably runs about ten thousand, with communities in the Himalayas, Rockies, Andes and Alps. They mainly stay in their remote mountain villages, although a few will wander out in search of adventure, as part of their observatory efforts, in search of manufactured parts, or for a variety of other

reasons. Concealment is a big thing - the Rahu-men do not want their existence to become common knowledge.

Communities

Most Rahu-men on Earth live in communities of one hundred or so Rahu-men. These communities are likely to be located in mountain ranges and to depend almost entirely on sheep and goat herds for sustenance. The Rahu-men eat the mutton, goat meat, as well as collect the goats' milk (primarily the children's job), which they make cheese with. They often cultivate small patches of ground in which they grow leafy vegetables and melons. Typical communities include one or two mechanics, one or two medically trained people, several **magics/psychics**, a dozen or so shepherds/goatherds, a handful of farmer types, several warriors, children, elderly, and people who **don't** really do much, as well as a small temple, complete with a handful of monks, and monks in training.

These communities are often fairly social in an informal way (as small communities usually are), with people helping each other out where needed and being quite generous with their houses, food, and time. Thus, when one member of the community falls upon hard times, they are likely to be given a place to sleep and food to eat by their friends **and/or** relatives until they can get back on their feet. This is all typically done on an individual basis - most Rahu-man towns have no government as such.

Foreign Rahu-men who run upon these communities are likely to receive a warm welcome as well as several invitations to diner **and/or** a place to sleep. The people who live in these communities are generally quite eager to hear of goings-on in the outside world, possible news about friends or relatives who live in other communities, the status or outcomes of nearby conflicts, etc.

Foreign humans are generally not treated quite as well. Most Rahu-men are very good judges of character (See **Aura**, **Object Read**, **Sense Evil**, **Sense Magic**, etc.), and will accept anyone who appears to have good intentions, and does not appear to offer the threat of revealing the **Rahu-men's** existence. Even so, humans who wander near Rahu-men villages will be avoided, and all pains will be taken to keep them from finding the village or meeting any Rahu-men, unless they are a known friend or respected person (the **Dali** Lama, for example, would be allowed in, were he ever to venture near a town).

Nonetheless, humans will not be welcome for very **long**, unless they are doing something useful in the community - perhaps training at a monastery, meditating with the monks, or attempting to fix something gone awry.

Larger groups of humans are likely to be treated much less well, especially armed ones, or those who seem likely to reveal the Rahu-men's existence to the outside world. All pains will be taken to keep them from coming near the town, including possible avalanches and the like, if necessary. It isn't that Rahu-men dislike humans, they just don't want a repeat of what happened to them on the Palladium World. They are quite happy being anonymous and unknown to humans. Often, Rahu-men will dress up in white sheepskins and masks and attempt to scare away the curious by yelling, beating on the chest, throwing rocks, etc. If this fails to work, the Rahu-men may attempt to lead the humans off away from the village, and lose them in the mountains.

There is one large Rahu-man town in the Himalayas and one in the Rockies. Hasdlee, the one in the Himalayas, has a population of about 900 Rahu-men. Just outside of the town there is a large monastery that has a dozen experienced monks, three or four young monks, and another two or three dozen apprentices at any given time. Most Rahu-men live underground, so as to maintain maximum possible secrecy, although a few small structures stand above ground. Even these tend to be built into cliff faces or hills, and be disguised as natural phenomena.

Similar, but smaller towns lie elsewhere in the Himalayas, Rockies, Andes, and Alps.

Travel

Rahu-men have developed several strategies for traveling unnoticed among humans. Spells exist to temporarily shrink a Rahu-man to human size, allowing him to wander about in a cloak, poncho, or other concealing garb. Invisibility spells can be used for short periods of time, and simple stealth is sometimes used under cover of darkness.

Religion

Most communities have a lama and two or three youngsters who are apprentices. Both the lama and the apprentices are likely to know or be learning Aslyl Okta. This is how most Rahu-men learn Aslyl Okta. This means that a Rahu-man character who has Aslyl Okta will likely be a believer or former believer. The training they receive, especially that of a mystical nature — that involving chi — is very much tied into religious beliefs. Several of the gods of Rahu-man mythology are said to be former mortals who have completely mastered their chi, their minds, and their bodies. It is widely thought that while Nirvana is within the reach of every man, woman, and (especially) **child**, those who become monks are much more likely to find it, and possibly other wonders as well.

Setting

In a **Heroes Unlimited** setting, a few **Rahu-men** may even go gallivanting about in the open, performing heroics, or perhaps being **villainous**. This should only happen where aliens and the like are relatively common.

In a **Beyond the Supernatural** setting, Rahu-men should remain very secretive, and be pretty much completely unknown. A few nuts may go wandering about looking for the elusive **yeti**, but they are generally not believed by anyone. The occasional knowledge seeker, mage, or student of eastern culture may also occasionally go off in search of the yeti, for they have a wealth of knowledge of eastern history, culture, and a variety of interesting magics.

A **Ninjas and Superspies** campaign may see the Rahu-men behave either as in **Heroes Unlimited**, or **Beyond the Supernatural**. Additionally, a few martial artists may journey high into the Himalayas, to the top of the world, in search of recluses, hermits, and elderly masters, and find more than they bargained for. Additionally, Rahu-men can make excellent martial artists.

In **Nightbane**, as in **Ninjas and Superspies**, anything goes. It really should be up to the Game Master, depending on how common the supernatural and inhuman are in the campaign.

O.C.C.S

Most Rahu-men will not fall under any modern O.C.C. However, adventuring types will generally fit into a subset of the O.C.C.s available to humans.

Ninjas and Superspies

Dedicated Martial Artist

This is a good representation of most monks. Make the following changes:

Ignore the base **S.D.C.**, instead use the standard Rahu-man **S.D.C.**

Primary martial arts form must be Aslyl Okta.

Social contacts: double all percentages, but only as they apply to Rahu-man martial artists. No special chance of recognizing any human martial artists (barring the especially notorious, i.e. Bruce Lee).

Starting Cash: \$0.00

The Worldly Martial Artist

This O.C.C. would apply to those Rahu-man martial artists who have been exposed to humans a little more, and may have traveled around to other Rahu-man communities. Make the following changes:

Ignore the base **S.D.C.**, instead use the Rahu-man's base **S.D.C.**

The martial arts form will almost certainly be Aslyl Okta.

Change the skill programs to the following:

2 basic skill programs, barring the advanced piloting skill program.

1 skill program chosen from medical, espionage (surveillance, deep cover, **bodyguard/assassin**, or thief only), military (guerilla only), or basic (any except pilot advanced).

Change the special martial arts bonus to the following:

Select an additional 2 martial arts abilities available to Aslyl **Okta** at level 1.

Select an additional 1 martial arts ability available to Aslyl **Okta** at levels **5, 9 and 13**.

Select one **zenjoriki** ability at level **15**.

Social contacts: Double all percentages, but only as they apply to Rahu-man martial artists. No special chance of recognizing any human martial artists (barring the especially notorious, i.e. Bruce Lee).

The wandering Rahu-man who has spent much time observing humanity can be well represented as either a Wandering Free Agent, Thief Free Agent, or Dreamer **Gizmoteer**. Make the following changes:

Wandering Free Agent

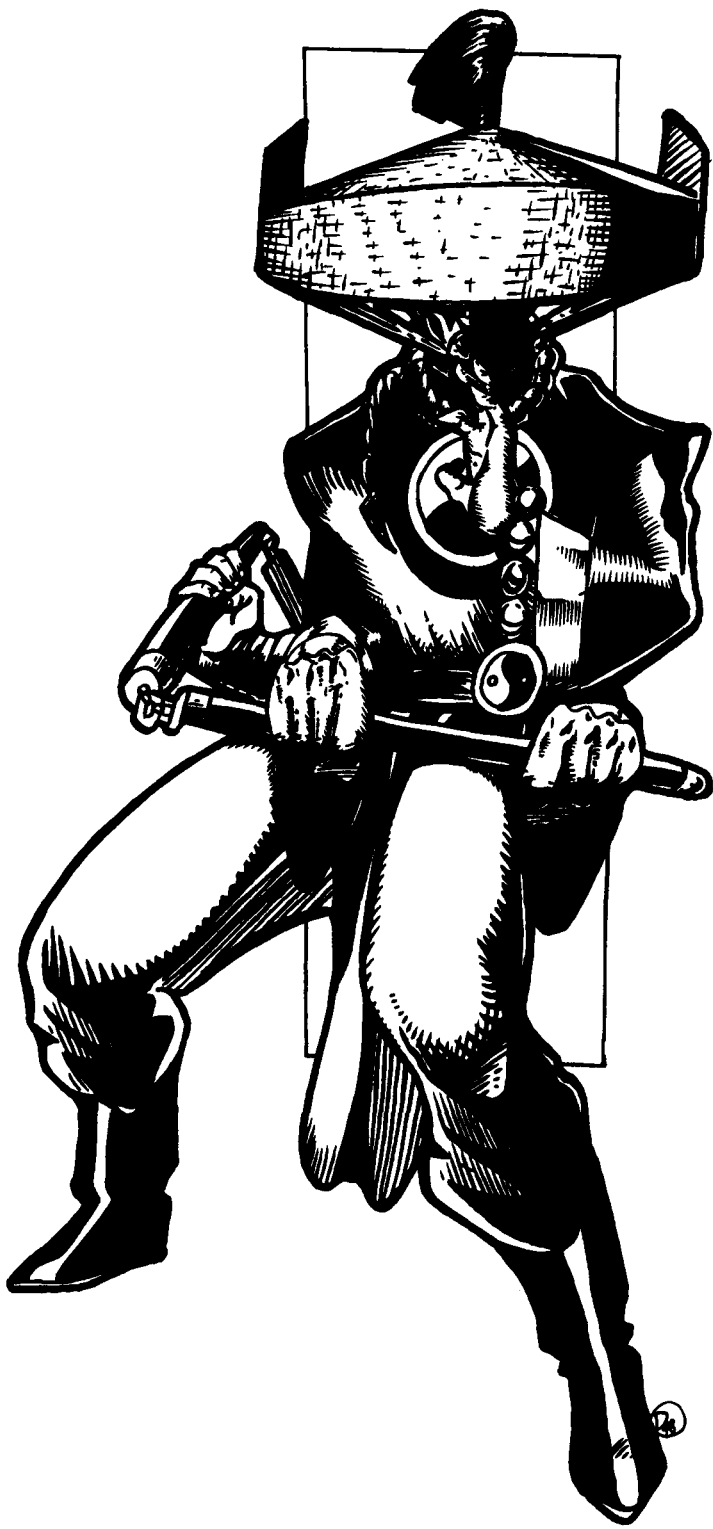
Ignore the base **S.D.C.**, instead use the Rahu-man's base **S.D.C.**

The martial arts form will almost certainly be Aslyl Okta.

Roll on the country of origin table 4 times to determine the countries the character has spent time in. The languages of these countries will automatically be known.

Thief Free Agent

Ignore the base **S.D.C.**, instead use the Rahu-man's base **S.D.C.**



Add **Aslyl Okta** to the list of Martial Arts that can be learned for 4 secondary skills.

The character has not spent time in prison.

Dreamer Gizmoteer

Ignore the base S.D.C., instead use the **Rahu-man's** base S.D.C.

The martial art form known will almost certainly be Aslyl Okta

Social Contact percentages are double only as they apply to Rahu-man communities. Amongst humans they are virtually nonexistent.

Mystic China

Quite a few of the mystic china O.C.C.s are appropriate. The **Chun Tzu**, Demon Hunter, Meditative Martial Artist, Blind Mystic, Fang Shih, and Wu Shih can all be used virtually without modification. In general, make the following changes:

Use the Rahu-man's base S.D.C. instead of that of the O.C.C.

Aslyl Okta will always be an option for the martial art known. In fact, over 95% of all Rahu-men falling into one of these categories will know Aslyl Okta.

Skills

Aslyl Okta

This martial art has a history going back many thousands of years. Its roots lie in several martial arts styles developed on the **Rahu-men's** home world. An amalgam of these forms made its way into the Palladium World, where it was refined in the **Algor** Mountains, at the monastery of Von Hodlon, an important place in Rahu-man mythology. Since then it has remained more or less the same.

There are two different styles used in Aslyl Okta. When fighting other Rahu-men or multiple attackers, the Martial Artist will keep a little more than an arms reach and attempt to land as many blows as possible while parrying most attacks.

When fighting other **humanoids**, the Rahu-man can utilize his extra set of arms to their full advantage. If the opponent is using hand based attacks, the Rahu-man will attempt to entangle one (or more) of **his/her** arms with one (or more) of the opponent's arms. This typically leaves the Rahu-man free to press the attack with **his/her** remaining arms. The Rahu-man can also try to break the entrapped arms (does 3D6 S.D.C. to entangled arm per attack). If the opponent is using foot based attacks, the Rahu-man will attempt to parry or dodge most attacks, then attempt to catch the foot on a slow/misplaced kick, or sweep the opponent.

If the opponent is using small weapons, such as knives or short swords, these tactics work fine. If the opponent is using larger weapons, such as pole arms, large swords, or large clubs, the Rahu-man will attempt to dodge most attacks (or parry if they have a convenient weapon or shield to parry with), then disarm the opponent when the opportunity presents itself.

The Rahu-man also receives training in the use of swords, knives, pole arms, and the "**Zwittentang**", a huge, weighted staff that is wielded with three or four arms.

Bonuses: +2 P.S., +1 P.P., +1D6 Spd, +2 M.E., +5 Chi

Hand Attacks: Punch (2D6), Power Punch (4D6), Hammer Fist (2D4).

Foot Attacks: Snap Kick (2D6), Thrust Kick (3D6), Tripping Leg Hook (1D4).

Defensive Moves: Auto Parry, Dodge, Roll, Auto Limb Entangle (on an 18-20), Circular Parry (not an Auto-Circular Parry at first), Auto Disarm, Disarm.

Weapon Katas: W.P. Large Sword, W.P. Small **Sword**, W.P. Knife, W.P. Pole Arm, W.P. Staff, W.P. Small Shield, W.P. Zwittentang, W.P. Paired (any combination of other W.P.s **and/or** Hammer Fist).

Note on W.P. Paired: This is a little different from the ordinary W.P. Paired. If more than one **weapon/fist** is used to strike at once, then those **weapons/limbs** are not available for Auto-Parrying for the attack **sequence**. If one or more limbs are being used to parry attacks, then other limbs may be available for a simultaneous attack. It is possible to use, at most, 3 limbs per attack sequence (at first, anyway).

Martial Art Powers:

Select 3 abilities from amongst chi abilities, martial arts techniques, specialty **katas**, and arts of invisibility.

These may not be traded for skill programs.

Level Advancement Bonuses:

- 1st +1 attack (5 total), +3 roll, +2 pin, +1 disarm.
- 2nd +1 strike, parry and dodge, +2 **S.D.C./M.D.C.** to **hand/foot** strikes.
- 3rd +1 **attack**, +1 disarm.
- 4th +1 to strike, parry and dodge, select one more martial art power limited as above.
- 5th +1 roll, +1 pin, Jump Kick (6D6 **S.D.C./M.D.C.**, takes 2 attacks), +5 Chi.
- 6th +1 strike and parry, +1 roll, +2 **S.D.C./M.D.C.** to **hand/foot** strikes.
- 7th Critical Strike on natural **18-20**.
- 8th +1 attack, Critical Strike from behind, Knockout Strike from behind.
- 9th +1 parry and disarm, select one more martial art power limited as above.
- 10th Paired Weapons can now use all 4 limbs in an attack sequence, +5 Chi.
- 11th +2 **S.D.C./M.D.C.** to **hand/foot** strikes, +1 roll, Auto Roll.
- 12th +1 strike and parry, +2 pin, select one more martial art power either from a category listed above, or from **Zenjoriki**.
- 13th Auto Circular Parry, Body **Flip/Throw**, +2 **Flip/Throw**.
- 14th +1 attack, +1 dodge, Multiple Dodge.
- 15th Auto **Flip/Throw**, Critical Strike on natural 16-20, +3 **S.D.C./M.D.C.** to **hand/foot** strikes, +1 on all combat **rolls**, +5 Chi.

W.P. Zwittentang

The Zwittentang is a huge, gnarled staff (usually 18 **feet/5.5 m** long or so) that weighs at least 250 **lbs (112.5 kg)**. It is traditionally made from **ironwood** trees. In order to use it with three limbs, one must have a supernatural P.S. of at least 20, with four limbs, a supernatural P.S. of at least 16. For non Rahu-men with only two limbs, one must have a supernatural P.S. of at least 30, and the user must be at least 10 feet (3 m) tall. When used with two limbs, only W.P. Staff applies. When used with 3 or more, W.P. Zwittentang comes into play, in addition to the bonuses and abilities of W.P. Staff.

The only defensive move that **works** with the Zwittentang is the basic automatic parry, regardless of what moves the wielder can execute due to martial arts knowledge. Using it quickly requires lots of experience, and moves like a circular parry aren't easy to do.

The Zwittentang does 6D6 S.D.C.

W.P. Zwittentang Level Advancement Bonuses:

- 1st +1 parry.
- 2nd Circular Parry with Zwittentang.
- 3rd +1 strike.

4th Spinning Strike does half damage to everyone within 10 feet (3 m), takes 2 attacks.

5th Thrust, does half damage and target must roll vs. **punch/fall/impact** or be pushed back 10 feet (3 m) and lose an attack.

6th +2 damage.

7th +1 parry.

8th Spinning Strike does full damage.

9th +1 damage.

10th +1 strike and parry.

11th Thrust does full damage.

12th Auto Circular Parry with Zwittentang.

13th +1 parry.

14th +1 damage.

15th +1 attack with Zwittentang.

Other Skills

Shepherding/Goat herding: 70% + 4% per level

This skill include knowledge of how to keep sheep **and/or** goats from straying, how to care for them, what kind of pastures to take them to, and how to act as a midwife for one (or most other small quadrupedal mammals for that matter). This skill also includes knowledge of how to train and utilize other animals to help manage sheep and goat herds, including sheep dogs and llamas.

This skill should be considered a cultural skill.

Medical: Rahu-Men: 60% + 5% per level

The Rahu-men have a different bone structure than most humanoids, a different metabolism, and different placement of internal organs. They are the only creatures that escaped from their planet when the Mechanoids came, and no other known creature has a similar biology. Thus, a different medical skill is necessary to learn how to deal with medical problems among Rahu-men. This covers the same area as Paramedic. If the MD skill is also chosen, then this skill also covers the knowledge that MD normally covers (surgical practice, full knowledge of most drugs, etc). Any **Rahu-man** character who automatically gets first-aid or paramedic as an O.C.C. skill may opt to get Medical: Rahu-men instead.

The Great Cataclysm

The high incidence of psionics among Rahu-men gave them plenty of advance warning of the Coming of the Rifts. Fortunately, the Himalayas and other mountainous regions they inhabited remained sparsely inhabited up to that time, and were relatively untouched by the war that kicked off the Cataclysm. The Rahu-men were quite able to fight off the demons that plagued them with their newly **powerful** magic and psionics, as well as their suddenly near-indestructible bodies. They remained fairly solitary for the most part, although many younger individuals left their communities in order to make a name for themselves, right wrongs, or just explore. Their superior toughness and great **strength**, along with their psychic powers and common knowledge of magic, make them able to explore with no armor or weapons, and not fear (too much) for their safety.



Communities

Most **Rahu-men** on Rifts Earth live in communities of one hundred or so of their kind and possibly several individuals of other races. These communities are likely to be located in mountain ranges, and live very much like they did before the Coming of the Rifts, as described above. Typical communities include one or two Operators **and/or Techno-Wizards**, one or two medically trained people, several **magics/psychics**, a dozen or so **shepherds/goatherds**, a handful of farmer types, several warriors, children, elderly, and people who don't really do much, as well as a small temple, complete with a handful of monks and monks in training.

There is one large **Rahu-man** city in the Himalayas and one in the Rockies. Hasdlee, the one in the Himalayas, has a population of about 1,000 Rahu-men and maybe another 50 humans and D-Bees. Just outside of the town there is a large monastery that has a dozen experienced monks, three or four young monks, and another two or three dozen apprentices at any given time. Many of the houses and other buildings are made of stone, courtesy of the town's two Stone Masters and the three **spriggans** that live nearby. The spriggans commonly come into town to get booze, and are unusually tolerant of "those damn cheerful freaks," as they refer to the townspeople. The two Stone Masters are employed full time making and repairing buildings. They have been working on a wall around the city, which is about one quarter of the way finished, in their spare time. There are also several wooden houses. A caravan run by a Wolfen smuggler visits the town once a month after traveling through much of Europe, so there is some trade, and regular (albeit delayed) news of the happenings in the outside world.

About a mile (1.6 km) outside of town is a ley line nexus with a small pyramid built on it. Several **Techno-Wizard** generators in and around the pyramid provide electricity for most of the town. A small nearby lake provides water via an aqueduct. There are many businesses in the town, as a fair number of travelers pass through it. There are several inns, some restaurants, general store type places, etc. There is a store that is run by a **13th** level Operator that builds and modifies weapons and armor for Rahu-men and others. **E-clips** can be recharged there, armor can be repaired, even power armor and robot vehicles can have minor repairs done.

All people who own property here are asked to pay a fairly reasonable property tax, and are charged for their electricity and water (if they want it). Police services are provided by the small town government, and most citizens will lend a hand if they see a crime being committed. The government also sees to the paving of roads and defense against concerted attacks (several times, small bands of gargoyles have attacked the town). Town officials are informally appointed by the old officials, but for the most part people support the government, and the government tries to help the people.

For many visitors, this town seems a wonderful change from the **strife**, hate and corruption of the rest of the world. The area is quite scenic, the people are courteous and happy (for the most part), and there is little to fear (or so it **seems...**). It is most likely only a matter of time before the town is flooded with refugees from other nearby areas or, worse **yet**, some supernatural being decides to impersonate, possess, exert mind control over, or blackmail a town leader. While the town holds little strategic

value, and isn't on any land particularly wanted by anyone, being able to command the resources of the town would make many a would-be tyrant drool. Thus far the inhabitants have been lucky, as Hasdlee is out of the way and has gone mostly unnoticed.

There is a similar town in the Rockies, and another in the Andes.

Population

There are roughly 16,000 Rahu-men living on Earth as of 105 P.A. Of those, roughly 7,000 are above the age of 200, and rarely leave their communities.

Approximate Numbers of Common O.C.C.s:

Wilderness Scouts - 3000

Mind Melters - 1500

Warrior **Monks - 1500**

Mystics - 1000

Vagabonds - 1000

Warriors - 1000

Warlocks - 1000

Operators - 400

Body Fixers - 350

Head Hunter - 250

Ley Line Walkers - 250

Shifters - 250

Techno Wizards - 200

Rogue Scientist - 200

Rogue **Scholar - 150**

Cyber Knights - 100

Knights - 100

Roughly 2,000 Rahu-men are too young to have an O.C.C.

O.C.C.S

For game mechanics, treat Warrior Monks as Mystics, with the following modifications:

They receive training in the ways of **Aslyl Okta**, giving them Hand to Hand Aslyl Okta.

They receive Summon Inner Strength, Resist Fatigue, Resist Hunger, and Resist Thirst, in addition to the standard Mystic psychic powers. No, they don't get any Sensitive psionics twice, nor do they get to change any psionic abilities to prevent "wasting" them on the sensitive abilities all Rahu-men get.

They only get to pick 5 other skills, instead of the standard 8.

Treat Warriors as Freelancers (as per Rifts® Dimension Book **1: Wormwood™**) with the following **changes**:

Add 2 other skills and 2 secondary skills, for a total of 8 other skills and 6 secondary.

Replace Lore: Wormwood with a lore skill of choice.

Ignore the optional background table.

All equipment listed as being made of resin should remain the same for the purposes of game mechanics, but be made of some other material appropriate to their starting location. Double armor M.D.C.

Replace the special abilities table with the following:

01 - 20 The character is trained in the arts of Aslyl Okta. Replace Hand to Hand: Basic with Hand to Hand: Aslyl Okta.



- 21 - 40** The character possesses a magical item or weapon, possibly a magical **katana** or other weapon from **Japan**, or lesser rune weapon of some other sort.
- 41 - 60** The character is exceptionally strong and tough. Add 4 to the P.S. and P.E., 2D4X10 to the M.D.C., and 1 to the M.E.
- 61 - 80** The character is exceptionally quick and agile. Add 2D4 to the P.P., and 2D6 to Spd. Also, add +4 to initiative, and +2 to dodge.
- 81 - 100** The character has major psychic abilities. Triple I.S.P., add 4 to M.E., and pick 8 psychic abilities from healer and physical. At levels 3, 6, 10 and 15, pick two more lesser psychic abilities, *or* one major.

Neither **Headhunter** nor Cyber-Knight Rahu-men should start with cybernetics or bionics. The Rahu-men frown on bionics and cybernetics, and don't make them. There are very few other people who make bionics and cybernetics large enough for a Rahu-man, so few characters will be able to receive them later in life either.

Skills

Any O.C.C. that can learn Hand to Hand: Martial Arts can upgrade from it to Hand to Hand: Asyly Okta at the cost of 2 "Other" skills and a secondary skill. Therefore, a Rahu-man Cyber-Knight could spend 2 other skills and a secondary skill upgrading from Hand to Hand: Martial Arts to Asyly Okta, while a Rahu-man Body Fixer would need to spend 3 O.C.C. related skills to get Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, and 2 more, +1 secondary skill to upgrade to Asyly Okta, for a total of 5 O.C.C. related and 1 secondary skills.

Asyly Okta

In a **Rifts** setting, this martial art remains virtually unchanged from before the Great Cataclysm, and is described above.

The Zwittentang is also essentially unchanged, except on Rifts Earth they are commonly made from Mega-Damage alloys or ceramics, as well as the occasional bone of a large supernatural creature or piece of a Mega-Damage tree.

In Rifts, the Zwittentang does 6D6 M.D.C. plus the damage for the user's supernatural P.S.

Equipment

Zwittentangs can usually be found in Rahu-men communities. Depending on the quality and material, they can range from 2000 to 50,000 credits. They are commonly made from the bones of large supernatural creatures, pieces of giant robots, pieces of Mega-Damage trees, Mega-Damage alloys or ceramics, or anything else that is sturdy enough to stand up to being used the way they are.

Rahu-men rarely wear armor, as they are tough enough to not need it most of the time. But for some of the more combat oriented **and/or** paranoid characters, Rahu-man sized armor is available. To take a suit of environmental armor designed for a human, and modify it for a Rahu-man, typically costs between 15 and 25 times the book cost, and this can only be done at a fairly large workshop. This is likely to take 40 hours or so on the part of the person making the armor (about 5 days, less time will require longer hours, and, hence, more money in all likelihood). Scaled up armor such as this should provide about 3 times the M.D.C. protection and weigh about 10 times as much,

and has an additional 5% prow, climb, and acrobatic/gymnastic penalty. A non-environmental suit (but that still covers the whole body) similar to an existing one should only cost **10**times as much as the original. A suit of armor that does not cover the whole body and is not environmental (similar to the juicer's armor) should cost between 15,000 and 100,000 credits, and provide between 80 and 250 M.D.C. protection, depending on the construction and quality.

There is a **13th** level Operator who runs a shop in Hasdlee who offers (among other things) Rahu-man armor at about 1/3 these prices.

Rahu-men often do not use weapons. Even when they want to use them, good weapons of an appropriate size can be hard to find. Simple weapons such as staves (including the Zwittentang) and clubs can be made fairly easily, and are thus most often used. A human's **zwihander** (large, two-handed sword) makes a reasonable broadsword for a Rahu-man, so would be fairly easy to come by. Giant swords and Vibro-Swords are commonly made for robots and other supernatural beings (such as gargoyles), and can also be found fairly easily. Giant modern **weapons** are much harder to find. Some are made for gargoyles, and these should work **fine** for Rahu-men but can be hard to **find**. Some are made for robots or power armor, and may be properly proportioned for a Rahu-man, although some sort of extra power supply is likely to be needed. Rifle or **machinegun** type weapons can be modified to serve as an oversized **sidearm** for a Rahu-man relatively easily. This is likely to add two or three thousand credits to the cost of the weapon, and give a -1 penalty to strike. This will also serve to render it quite difficult to use for normal sized people. Fortunately, there are a fair number of **Techno-Wizard** Rahu-men and they can commonly be talked into creating weapons for their brethren. These are likely to do an additional die or two of damage and cost only 50% more than the standard book prices (although it is not uncommon for a Rahu-man to sell items at or close to cost to other Rahu-men, which would lower this some).

Rahu-Man Physiology

Rahu-men have a very different physiology from humans, or most other giants for that matter. Some differences are obvious. Rahu-man height generally stays inside the 12-14 foot (3.7-4.3 m) range. However, Rahu-men are among the lighter giants, typically weighing in between 500 and 750 pounds (225-338 kg). Their tissues and bones tend to be much lighter, and have wildly different structures on a cellular level. In addition to this, Rahu-men tend to have a very slim build. Even when very strong, they tend to have compact, well defined muscles instead of large, bulky ones.

Rahu-men have a long spinal column, complete with 54 distinct vertebrae. Unlike a human, there is no vestigial tail bone. A second pair of shoulder blades is attached to the spine below and behind the top pair. Long term bearing of heavy weights on the lower pair of arms commonly leads to upper back problems. The hips have a slightly different structure from those of humans, as do the leg bones and muscle placement. They are very well-suited to climbing and descending steep slopes, but are ill-suited to speed on a flat surface. Extended running on flat surfaces is about twice as likely to cause shin and knee problems as in humans.

Hair conies in a variety of colors, with **black**, brown, and dark blond being most common. A **Rahu-man's** hair also tends toward what can only be described as "big." Even when relatively short, a Rahu-man's hair will never lie flat on **his/her** head or hang down the sides and back of **his/her** head, but will stand more or less on end.

Skin tone tends towards a darkish hue, similar to that of many Filipinos or southern Asians. Occasionally a more reddish color is seen, somewhat similar to that of some American plains Indians. Flat, rounded noses are the rule. A variety of chin shapes abound. Facial hair is rare, as is chest, back, arm, and leg hair. Eyes are typically brown, **black**, or gray.

Rahu-man dietary needs are actually strikingly similar to those of humans. Large protein and fat intake is required, but excess consumption does not tend to cause obesity. Carbohydrate consumption is typically minimal, and excess consumption of starches will cause obesity in **Rahu-men**. This is a very rare occurrence. Trace amounts of lead, **mercury**, and titanium are also required. In some cases, certain minerals known to contain

these are used as additives to food. A standard Rahu-man soup for the sick (think chicken soup) would likely prove highly toxic to a **human**, as a number of heavy metals will be added in various forms.

The differences in chemistry, muscular configuration and bone structure between Rahu-men and most other races make bionics and cybernetics not specifically designed for them highly ineffective. All such systems must be custom designed, which typically comes at a hefty cost. Some simpler systems, such as cyber armor, only really need resizing. Drugs designed for others will also prove highly ineffective, although occasionally a completely different effect from that expected will be experienced. Of **course**, medically trained Rahu-men know what substances have what effects on members of their own race.

More information about the Rahu-man can be found in **Rifts® Conversion Book One**, and in the supplement **Monsters and Animals™**, for the **Palladium Fantasy RPG™**, Second Edition.

PALLADIUM

ROLE-PLAYING GAME®

A Mind of Their Own

A Few Rune Weapons with Personality

By Nathan Taylor

Optional Material for the Palladium Fantasy RPG™

Vald-Korskoi

"Somehow, one of those creatures responsible for creating those damned to drink the blood of the living, a massive undulating mound of flesh with a hundred eyes, entered our world. It spread its influence and its minions throughout the land, just like its greater cousins the Old Ones had done so long ago. But it was not long before the lord of the vampires, **Vald-Tegor**, once such a beast himself, discovered this creature.

"Vald-Tegor slew the **creature's** progeny and bid it leave this world lest it suffer a similar fate. The creature pretended to comply but it was not long before more **undead** appeared about the land, spawned from its evil maw. Vald-Tegor again slew all of its minions and bid it leave, for this world was his alone.

"Again the beast defied him, confident in its power. And so Vald-Tegor attacked the beast and lashed it to the very brink of death, but he did not kill it. Instead he bid one of his loyal servants to forge a weapon of great power and offered the evil

beast that had opposed him as the spirit to fuel the mystic blade. When the work was done and the blade cooled it held within it the **furious** spirit of that creator of the undead.

*"Thus is the punishment for those ancient evils that would dare to infringe on **Vald-Tegor's** domain. The vampire is a selfish creature who does not welcome company at his **table**."*

- *The Tristine Chronicles*

Vald-Korskoi, which literally means "**Vald's** revenge," is an ancient and unique rune weapon. Long ago, shortly after the defeat of the Old Ones, a vampire intelligence in search of a new domain to **call** its own came to the Palladium World. For a time it and its minions flourished, there were plenty of prey all but unable to defend themselves. All would have been well for the vampires had a young Vald-Tegor not taken notice of their activities.

Vald-Tegor, after slaying all of the intelligence's vampire minions, demanded of the intelligence that it leave the Palladium World and never return, for it was his domain and his only. Of course the intelligence, confident that it had more power than a feeble god, ignored Vald-Tegor's threats and continued to create undead. At last Vald-Tegor became so **infuri-**



ated that he nearly killed the intelligence but stopped short so that he could use it as an example.

Vald had one of his followers forge a powerful new rune weapon that would use the essence of the intelligence as its source of power. Not only would the intelligence have to live on confined inside of a weapon, but it would also be the *servant* of mortals rather than their master. It was an effective punishment and deterrent, as there have been few attempts by vampire intelligences since to infiltrate the Palladium World.

Because it contains a vampire intelligence, **Vald-Korskoi** is a tremendously powerful sword and has the unique ability to confer some of the powers of the vampire to its user. Unfortunately, the blade also confers some of the weaknesses of the supernatural **undead** to its wielder as well. In fact, the blade and the essence inside still require a regular supply of humanoid blood to remain active, just like a real vampire.

Vald-Tegor has given the weapon to selected members of the Cult of the Undead over the centuries as a reward for their service and loyalty. In truth, it is little more than a taste of the powers and the needs of a true vampire, which has led more than a few wielders to actually desire to join the ranks of the undead! Vald-Tegor has also allowed the blade to fall into the hands of others outside of the cult for similar reasons. Vald-Tegor isn't particularly concerned about the whereabouts of the weapon or who is wielding it at any given time.

The blade's primary purpose is to torment the intelligence inside, and so **long** as the blade is being used that is being achieved. Consequently, while many members of the Cult of the Undead view the sword as a holy relic to be protected and **sought** out, Vald-Tegor is indifferent on the matter and would prefer that it be used by anyone rather than being placed on an altar or locked up in a temple.

Type of Weapon: Greatest Rune Sword

Powers:

Confer **Vampiric** Powers: The wielder of the sword gains the following abilities of the vampire as well as the associated vulnerabilities. Regenerates 2D6 **S.D.C./Hit Points** per melee, night vision (300 **feet/91 m**), prowl 50%, and takes half damage from weapons made of iron. +6 to P.S., +3 to P.P., +4 to P.E., +3 to Spd., +25 **S.D.C.**, +1 to initiative, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs mind control and sleep/paralysis. Direct sunlight inflicts 2D6 **S.D.C./Hit Points**, during the day the character loses one melee attack, is -1 on all combat rolls, -2 on initiative and -20% to all skills. The wielder takes double damage from **silver** and wooden weapons. The character will also share an aura of supernatural evil with the blade and find himself vulnerable to holy water.

Psionic Powers: Death Trance, Alter Aura, Empathy, Mind Block, Hypnotic Suggestion, Presence Sense, Sense Evil, Deaden Pain, Induce Sleep. Equal to an 8th level Mind Mage. See below for I.S.P.

Spells: Metamorphosis: Animal (limited to bat and wolf), Metamorphosis: Mist, Summon Fog, Summon & Control Canines, Summon & Control Rodents. Equal to a 12th level wizard. See below for P.P.E.

Become Animated and Fly: The sword can become animated and fly, the bat wings lifting it aloft. The sword can fight along side its owner, up to 200 feet (61 m) **away**.

The sword has three attacks per melee, +4 to strike and parry, and +2 on initiative. It cannot use any of its other powers while animated, though it can drink blood.

P.P.E. & P.P.E. Recovery: Vald-Korskoi is unique among rune weapons in that it draws its power from the consumption of humanoid blood. The weapon is useless and only vaguely aware of itself and its surroundings until it has had a taste of blood. It must then be constantly kept fed or it will weaken. Its bearer will **telepathically** share in the blade's hunger and pain and will know that to relieve the pain the blade must be fed.

The sword consumes one pint of blood per day to remain "healthy," additional blood is required to be converted to P.P.E. **and/or** I.S.P. to use the blade's other powers. One pint of blood can be converted into 40 P.P.E. or 20 **I.S.P.** The blade can store up to **12** pints of blood, but automatically consumes 1 pint every day. A balance of 4 pints is required to keep all the powers active. Three pints will prevent the sword from animating, casting spells or using psionic powers. At 2 pints all of the remaining abilities are reduced to half power. One pint or less means the loss of all of the sword's powers, and at zero the sword becomes completely useless, unable even to communicate with its wielder. This is not harmful to the sword, and it will begin to function normally once it gets more humanoid blood.

Alignment: Diabolic

Attributes: I.Q.: 22, M.E.: 26, M.A.: 20.

Personality: The intelligence inside the blade is sadistic, bitter and resentful of its situation but is unable to do anything about it, which only frustrates it more. It is bound to do anything and everything that its owner may request. This won't prevent it from trying to manipulate and corrupt its wielder, however. Its ultimate goal is to get its wielder to try and destroy the blade, in the hopes that its spirit can then escape and it can wreak its vengeance on Vald-Tegor.

Skills & Knowledge of Note: Literacy: Dragonese 98%, Speaks and understands all languages at 90%, Demon & Devil Lore 98%.

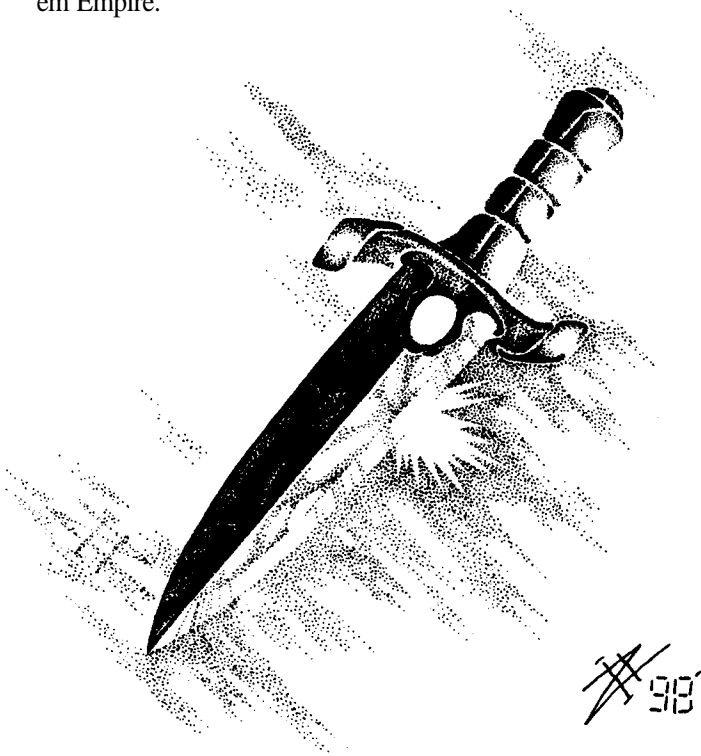
Appearance: A straight, long red blade, black grip and guard, with the sculpted wings of a bat. The red of the blade becomes brighter as more blood is stored within it; when the blade is low on blood it will darken, until it is almost black when the blade is empty. The pommel has the sculpted head of a vampire bat with two ruby-red eyes.

Attack and Combat Bonuses: Inflicts 5D6 damage from a slash, or a stab will do 3D6 and the target must save vs magic (12) or be paralyzed for 1D4 melees. Once stabbed into a victim, the blade will suck its blood until it is removed, at a rate of approximately 1 pint per melee round (15 seconds). When the blade is retracted, the wound will close and will not bleed, though the damage will remain as well as any penalties from blood loss (see **Rifts® World Book 1: Vampire Kingdoms**, page 36, for the effects of blood loss). The blade is +1 to strike and parry when wielded by its current owner.

Effects on Wielder: Confers **vampiric** abilities and weaknesses, see above.

Price: Priceless. Many members of the Cult of the Undead would pay countless millions to get their hands on the blade to mount in one of their temples.

Last Known Location: Rumors have placed the sword in the possession of a powerful alchemist somewhere in the Western Empire.



Mantrax

"Return to me my blade you thief, and perhaps I shall let you live!"

"What are you talking about?! Mantrax is mine and mine alone! You shall pay dearly for your ridiculous claims!"

The rune dagger known as Mantrax has been the cause of more conflicts and confusion than perhaps any other **rune** weapon in history. The reason for which is simple: Mantrax, unlike most rune weapons, can and will link himself to more than one owner at a time, resulting in vicious feuds and quests for vengeance, founded simply upon a misunderstanding. It is unfair however to lay the blame entirely upon Mantrax, for the

weapon is not aware of its actions, or the fact that it is indeed two weapons in one!

Mantrax was created long ago with the intention of being an extremely powerful and versatile assassin's dagger. To that end he was given powers not only for killing but also for healing and protection. For years the dagger was used as intended by a variety of **wielders**, and served its intended function well. However, even rune weapons have values and ideals, and **Mantrax's** contradictory nature eventually drove the blade to madness.

Eventually Mantrax was no longer simply an assassin's blade that could kill or heal with but a thought, but it became two distinct and separate weapons with one physical form. One, Mantrax **Elgeron**, epitomized **Mantrax's** potential for good, his ability to heal and comfort. Elgeron encouraged peaceful solutions to problems and was a wise council for any who would listen to his words. The other side of Mantrax however was much different.

Mantrax **Vorisia** was the product of the blade's dark purposes, designed for killing, death and deception. Vorisia revelled in fear, power and destruction and encouraged its use to those ends. It became a selfish and greedy creature who wanted nothing but power and glory.

So divided in its nature, each of these personalities within Mantrax grew to equal strength and sought out a wielder who would bring their side of the dagger's power to the fore so that they could dominate and the other would be left to wallow in the depths of the dagger unused. Each personality has the ability to reach out and bond with a wielder with compatible desires and ideals, and each personality can provide that wielder with great powers to that end.

Type of Weapon: Greater Rune Dagger

Powers:

General Powers - can be used by both personalities:

Spells: Mantrax can cast any of the following spells for his wielder equal to a 6th level Wizard: Blinding **Flash**, Ventriloquism, Befuddle, Climb, Invisibility: Simple and Paralysis: Lesser. The blade has 90 P.P.E. and regenerates at a rate of 10 P.P.E. every three hours.

Good Powers - can be used only when Elgeron is the dominant personality:

Healing/Cleric Abilities: Heal wounds, 2D6 hit points and S.D.C. (**M.D.C.** in **Rifts®**). Healing can be performed six times per 24 hour period. Plus Remove Curse: 1-56% chance of success, once daily. Turn 4D6 Dead (duration: four hours): 1-55% chance of success, once daily. Animate & Command 2D6 Dead (duration: four hours): 1-64% chance of success, two times daily.

Evil Powers - can be used only when Vorisia is the dominant personality:

Soul Drinker: The **victim's** blood must be drawn and the blade is limited to three souls per 24 hour period. The victim must save vs magic (14) or have **his/her** soul consumed by the blade. Even a successful save means the victim takes double damage from the **attack**, triple if a creature of magic or supernatural being.

Alignment: Multiple personality! Elgeron: Principled. Vorisia: Diabolic. The blade will assume the personality closest in alignment to its current wielder.

Note that the weapon can be linked to two individuals simultaneously if they are of opposing **alignments!**

Attributes: I.Q.: 23, M.E.: 16, M.A.: 13.

Personality: Elgeron: Polite, well mannered and responsible. Elgeron believes that calm heads will prevail over any situation, and will avoid violence when at all possible. Elgeron is a great philanthropist and will do all that is in its power to help someone in need.

Vorisia: Cruel, brooding and bitter; will do all that it can to spread pain and suffering, suspicion and hatred wherever it goes. Its ultimate desire is for power and it will go to any lengths, no matter how dirty to achieve that. Vorisia loves to torture and kill and will delight in carnage whenever possible.

Skills & Knowledge of Note: Detect Concealment & Traps 84%, Math: Basic 98%, Use & Recognize Poison 75%/67%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 89% and Lore: Religion 98%.

Appearance: One side of the blade is brilliant silver, the other is a piercing black. The dagger also boasts a large pearl in the center of its guard which changes from white to black when Vorisia is dominant.

Attack and Combat Bonuses: Inflicts 4D6 damage in combat and is +2 to strike and parry.

Effects on Wielder: None, other than possible confusion if the opposing personality manages to assert control, or another wielder appears claiming the weapon.

Price: Priceless.

Last Known Location: The dagger is kept in an ornate case by the guild leader of a powerful assassin's guild in the Western Empire. The dagger is his prized possession and never leaves his personal quarters. Unbeknownst to him another man to whom the dagger is linked is searching for it tirelessly and is closing fast.

Salora the Temptress

"The greatest of foes can be slain with but a scratch from this blade, but beware, for he who becomes too dependant upon its magic to do his work shall become none but a slave to its power."

- Carving inscribed on the case holding Salora

The enticement of a weapon that can kill anyone with nothing but a scratch or pin-prick is extremely difficult to resist. Any assassin dreams of such a weapon and numerous others would love to get their hands on it as well. No unwieldy swords, drawn out battles or bloody spectacles to deal with, only the delicate touch of a blade to take a life.

Salora is that weapon, and her name is whispered in circles of assassins the world over. Rumors abound about her powers and her location, but one thing is certain: He who holds Salora holds the power to kill with but a scratch. Of course nothing is ever as good as it seems, and even Salora has her disadvantages. Power comes at a great price, but sometimes the temptation can be too great.

Salora is a **bonafide** temptress who can get what she wants from men with little or no effort of her own. Even as a weapon, she still manages to entrap men with her promises of power and wealth. She subtly encourages them and praises them, all as part of a ploy to possess their souls and their very beings. Each time

Salora devours the soul of one of her wielder's enemies she also takes a piece of his very being, until eventually she possesses her wielder's own soul.

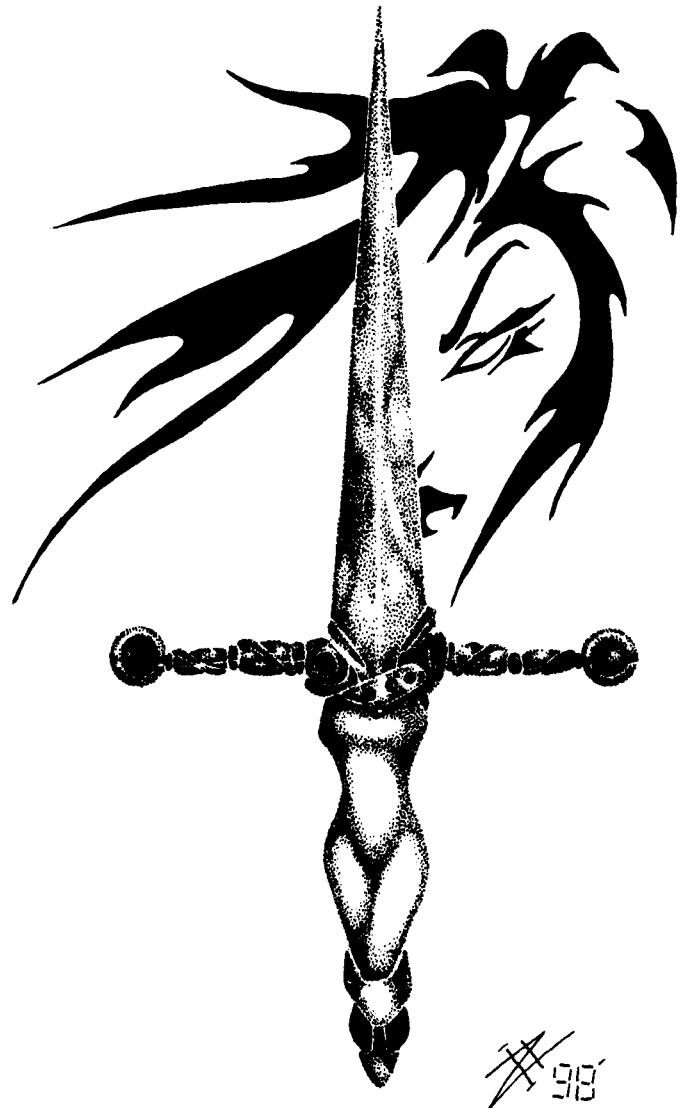
Once she has such power of life and death over her owner the tables are suddenly turned, for she no longer belongs to **him**, but he to her. The transformation in her personality is radical, her previous false demeanor giving way to her true personality. Greed and lust drive Salora to desire more and more from her slave, the threat of death ever looming above his head. Though Salora has little use for wealth, power or fame she craves them nonetheless, reveling in her slave's futile efforts to satisfy her.

Deception is Salora's trademark and when she tires of her servant she will seek out another using all those methods at her disposal. For countless millennia she has wandered the world like this, traveling from man to man, slave to slave. She will never be contented but she does not care, the joy is in the journey, and the crushed men who lie in her wake.

Type of Weapon: Greater Rune Dagger

Powers:

Soul Drinker: The victim's blood must be drawn and the blade is limited to six souls per 24 hour period. The victim must save vs magic (14) or have **his/her** soul consumed by the blade. Even a successful save means the victim takes double damage from the attack, triple if a creature of magic or super-



natural being. This power doesn't come without a cost however, see *Soul Rapt* below.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q.: 12, M.E.: 14, M.A.: 22.

Personality: Quiet, suggestive and seductive, **Salora** is a petty and greedy weapon who enjoys games of deception and trickery. She is obedient and charming until she has gained power over her wielder, when she will become impossibly demanding. Salora wants to be entertained and pampered, and woe to the man who disappoints her.

Salora will invite the strongest (overall, not only physical strength) male character she encounters to take possession of her. She despises women and will become insanely jealous of any of her **wielder's** female friends. Should a female character take hold of the weapon, Salora will bluntly demand that she unhand her. If she does not, Salora will magically inflict 3D6 damage to her every melee until they are parted.

Skills & Knowledge of Note: Use and Recognize Poison 60%/52%, Detect Concealment & Traps 70%, **Gemology** 85% (Salora is very fond of jewels and takes very poorly to fakes), and Seduction 50% (see **Rifts®**: New West for details).

Appearance: The pommel and guard are ornately decorated with gentle curved lines and carvings; the weapon is light and very comfortable in one's hand. The blade is a metallic red, and when prepared to drink a soul the edges glow purple.

Attack and Combat Bonuses: Extremely well **crafted**, the dagger inflicts 4D6 damage and is +2 to strike and +3 to parry.

Effects on Wielder: Soul Rapt: Unbeknownst to Salora's wielder, each time he uses her power to drink souls, she drinks a small part of his as **well!**

Whenever a soul is consumed by Salora's blade, she gains control over 1D6 of her wielder's Hit Points. Salora can then, at will, take up to that number of Hit Points from the character! These Hit Points cannot be healed, only Salora can return them to the character when she so wills! Characters so inflicted are at her mercy, for often she waits until she has domain over the **character's** entire Hit Points, meaning she can kill him with but a thought if she so **desires!**

Salora can enslave multiple individuals in this way, but discards of people when she bores of them, often, but not always getting them killed. Salora currently has about half a dozen men enslaved to her. Many of them she has tired of and forgotten, though she can still exert her power over any of them at will, her most recent prize however is always her favorite. G.M. Note: It is extremely unfair for a character to fall victim to Salora's soul drinking without some sort of prior warning to avoid that fate. Should they chose to ignore it that is their undoing, but they should have the chance.

Price: Priceless.

Last Known Location: A small church in the Old Kingdom keeps the blade safe, in a small oak box bearing the inscription above. Should anyone come to take the dagger the clergy will do nothing to stop them, the warning speaks for itself.



Zeikhelm

"You will amass your men on the southern slopes and await the advance of the enemy."

"But sir, if we were to do so we would leave our flank open to attack from the west."

"Silence! Have I yet lost a battle for our king?"

"No sir..."

That was the conversation between Lord **Eshrick** and Captain **Gourad**, his chief infantry officer, both of the kingdom of **Reimpart** in the Eastern Territories, before the battle of Ren's Hill. The battle went poorly, with casualties in excess of sixty percent amongst the **Reimpart** soldiers as they were overrun by **orcs** and ogres from the west, exactly as Gourad had predicted. Lord Eshrick was slain in the battle by an ogre's arrow and his last words were reportedly "...but it told me... I was **invincible**... How could I have been wrong?"

Over the previous several months, Lord Eshrick had risen rapidly in the ranks of the Reimpart military, as troops under his command claimed victory after victory thanks to his ingenious battle plans. Many believed that he was the greatest military mind in the history of the Territories and was destined for the throne after the current king's death. Few of them took any notice of the fact that less than a year before, he had been nothing more than a lowly infantryman in his majesty's armed forces, just like any other, with no signs of the genius later attributed to him.

It all began one fateful day when Eshrick and his fellow men were sent to deal with a small gang of bandits, who were extracting a toll from passers-by on a minor trading route on the outskirts of Reimpart territory. Eshrick and his troops, who outnumbered the bandits by a margin of two to one, easily dispatched the brigands and broke into their base of operations, an old **dwarven** outpost at the top of a high cliff. After taking their

fill of looted gold and gems from the brigand lair, the soldiers began their way back to the nearby city of **Heim. Eshrick**, having interrogated many of the bandits before they were **killed**, remained behind for a short while to investigate a secret passage one of the bandits had told him about. Exploring the depths of the passage, Eshrick came to a barren room full of decaying weapons and **armor**, but one item in particular interested him. A shining war helm, unaffected by the passage of time and covered in arcane symbols, sat in a corner of the room, inviting him to take it. He quickly grabbed the ancient helm and placed it in his satchel before returning to his men.

Over time Eshrick discovered the helm's true powers as a powerful magical artifact. It spoke to him telepathically, revealing its name as **Zeikhelm**. It claimed that he who wore the helm would become the greatest general that ever lived, and would never lose a battle so long as his orders were obeyed. The helm then offered its services to Eshrick, telling him that it would bring him untold fame and glory. **Eshrick**, always an ambitious man, accepted and began wearing the helm whenever he was on duty.

Unfortunately the helm neglected to tell him of its limitations. Though the helm would indeed make its wearer an unsurpassed general and bring fame and glory, it would only do so for a limited period of time (3D6 months), after which its magic would cease to function. Unaware of this limitation, Eshrick rose through the ranks of the **Reimpart** military with unsurpassed speed, only to have his skills vanish before one of his most crucial battles, costing him and countless others **their** lives. Because the power of the helm is so natural and transparent to its user, he never realized that the magic was no longer working until it was too late.

Type of Item: Rune Helm

Powers:

Confer Skills and Knowledge: Once the link has been established between Zeikhelm and his owner, he can confer to **him/her** any of his skills or knowledge at will, provided the helm is worn.

Increased M.E. and M.A.: The owner of Zeikhelm will find his **M.E.** and **M.A.** attributes both increased by 4. Take into account any bonuses from raised attributes.

Psionic Abilities: The owner of Zeikhelm can use any of the following psionic powers equal to an 8th level Mind Mage as long as the helm is worn: **Empathic** Transmission, Resist Fatigue, Suppress Fear, Mind Block, **Nightvision**, Clairvoyance, Group Mind Block and P.P.E. Shield. The helm has 100 **I.S.P.** and regenerates at a rate of 4 **I.S.P.** every hours. Note that Zeikhelm can also use any of these powers himself at will. It was through the use of **Empathic Transmission**, for example, that he kept the bandits away from the room he was stored in at the outpost, and caught **Eshrick's** attention.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: **I.Q.:** 24, **M.E.:** 17, **M.A.:** 23.

Personality: Zeikhelm is a greedy and petty weapon that will appeal to a potential wielder's greed and ambition. Zeikhelm is capable of weaving elaborate half-truths and visions of the future. It does not like to lie, but will twist the truth and leave out important information to its benefit. Once adopted, the helm will heap praise upon its owner and encourage him to reach for the next plateau, regardless of how difficult or impossible it may seem.

Skills & Knowledge of Note: Cryptography 70%, Detect Ambush 90%, Detect Concealment & Traps 80%, Intelligence **80%**, Heraldry 75%/80%, Interrogation Techniques **75%**, Military Etiquette 90%, Surveillance 80%, Anthropology 75%, History 85% and Lore: Demons and Monsters 80%. Zeikhelm is a brilliant tactician and strategist, having participated in and studied countless battles over the millennia he has existed.

Appearance: A highly polished, steel helm with a flip-up shield covering the eyes and face. Numerous carvings and arcane symbols decorate the exterior but are nothing compared to the runes that line the interior of the helm.

Attack and Combat Bonuses: The wearer of Zeikhelm gains a one time bonus of **+1** to strike, parry, dodge and roll in combat in addition to a **+1** on initiative.

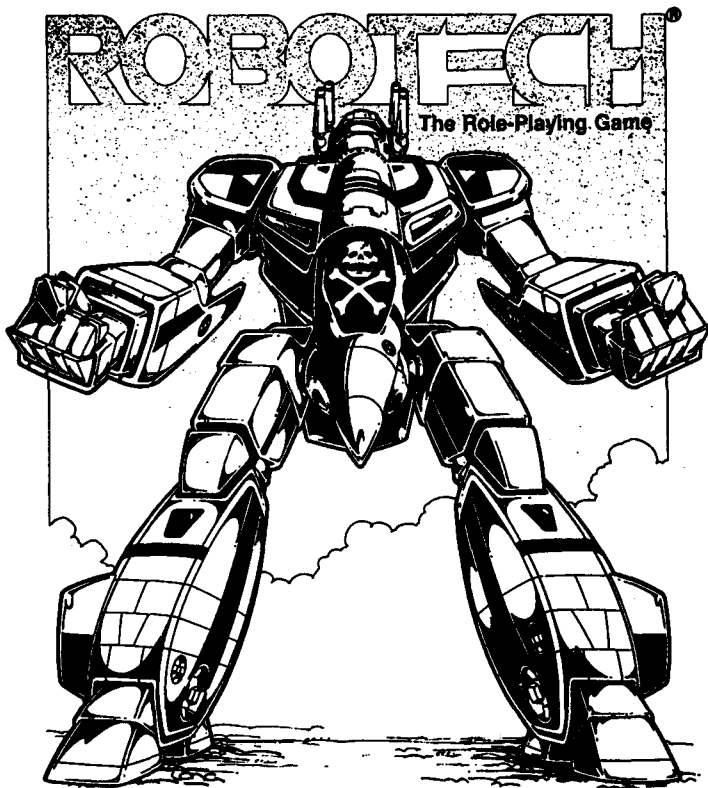
Effects on Wielder: None, other than those listed above. The wearer of Zeikhelm will likely become brash and overconfident thanks to his many successes and the helm's constant encouragement and praise. He will also closely guard the helm, lest he lose his lofty position.

Price: Invaluable/priceless.

Last Known Location: The helm was passed on to the remaining members of Eshrick's family, who now live as respected nobles thanks to Eshrick's exploits. Thus far none of them have used the helm, and they have no knowledge of its abilities. They keep it only as a memento of their departed benefactor (they had little respect for him as a person).



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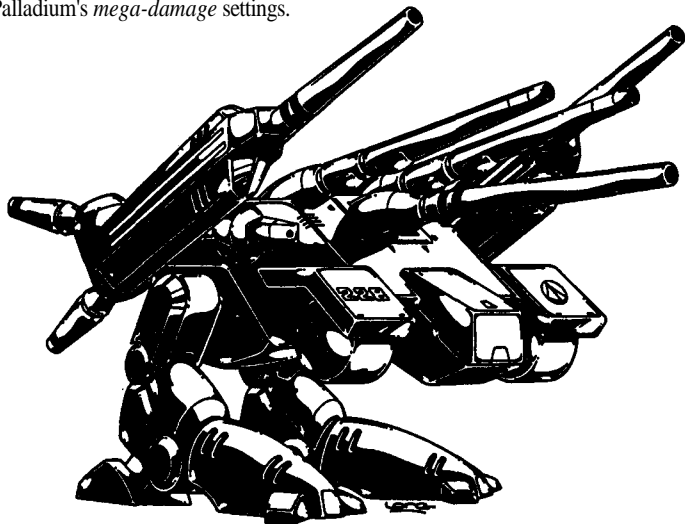
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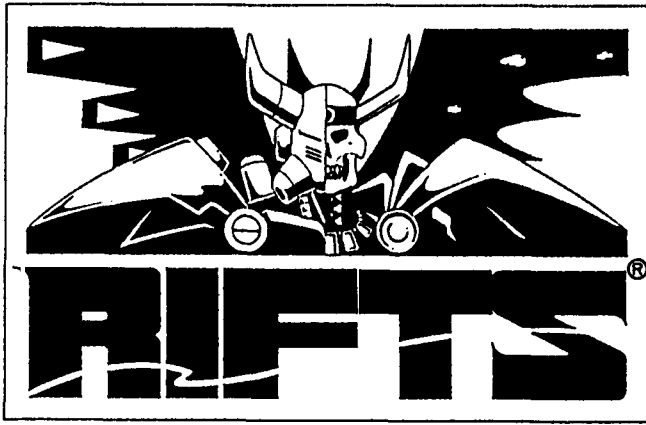
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The Right Stuff

Optional Rules and Material for
Rifts® and Other Games
By Edward J. Sauerland

Every player has that one thing they love about the game. Your favorite might be magic, or dragons, or giant robots. For me, it's flying. Soaring among the birds is my dream. I mean, imagine, humans taking to the skies, driven by the dream of flight. It's a fantasy that came true. That's what this article is all about. The following paragraphs will detail high-tech combat, tactics and survival in the unfriendly skies of Rifts Earth. These optional rules and facts should add depth to your game, and maybe teach you something new along the way. First, I've included a new O.C.C. that I hope you'll find unique and interesting. You will also find potent new weapons in the form of **Techno-Wizard** aircraft. I had a blast writing this **piece**, and I hope you enjoy it, too.

"Barnstormer" O.C.C.

Sometimes, the Research and Development boys are wrong, or maybe they just missed some small glitch, some minor detail. Or maybe the whole idea was "fubar" waiting to happen. It doesn't matter to you. You're about to bite the big one, and the only chance you have left is a quick whispered prayer and the ejector seat. That's what it means to be a test pilot some days.

"Barnstormers" are men and women who earn a living (and we mean earn!) at the controls of the most advanced and often volatile machines ever created. This rare breed of madman has the natural skill and training to "push the envelope" of almost any vehicle, in effect, becoming one with the machine. The name "**Barnstormer**" comes from the old **Pre-Rifts** stunt pilots who would entertain crowds with feats of daring and death defying maneuvers. They would buzz onlookers, fly low, weaving in between buildings, walk out onto the wing of a plane, and otherwise dazzle spectators.

The professional Barnstormer of today is a little bit different. Typically, he is a test pilot for a manufacturer or **nation**, like Northern Gun or the Coalition. With their natural flying talents, they are often hired by kingdoms or mercenary companies as pilots or as instructors. These sponsors will often need a qualified pilot to assist them in reverse-engineering captured equipment. A barnstormer can also earn a great deal of money working as a smuggler. Transporting illegal goods or running guns is a dangerous, but very well paying job. And Barnstormers are, of **course**, bom adrenaline junkies. What could be a bigger rush than running a Coalition blockade in a hovercar with a load of bootleg disks and books in the back? Less savory types (criminals) can always find employment as a getaway driver or smalltime bandit. Many Barnstormers, however, will settle for a life of adventuring with other heroes. They live secure in the fact that their piloting prowess can get them out of any jam in a big hurry. And some will return to the old ways, alone or with a traveling carnival or show, wowing the crowds with their fancy flying and trick driving, living for the applause and the cheers.

Story Factors and Ideas:

As stated above, most Barnstormers find work as test pilots for experimental vehicles. Their employer is typically a large manufacturer or kingdom. Now the fun begins. What is the character's relationship with his benefactors? Is he trusted? Respected? Is he satisfied or angry at them? **Additionally**, take into consideration who the employer is. Groups like **Naruni** Enterprises and the Coalition are likely to clash. **Bandito** Arms and Black Market test pilots are likely to be actively hunted by the Coalition or a rival company seeking to corner the market. Espionage, intrigue and politics, even sabotage, should all come in to play, with the **character(s)** caught in the middle. A truly disreputable Barnstormer will sell his employer's secrets/technology. He may be on the run from his employer. Perhaps the Barnstormer destroyed a one-of-a-kind prototype or captured enemy vehicle (deliberately or by accident). Or maybe he recognizes that the prototype he's testing will be used for evil purposes, so he flees, probably taking the prototype with him. All of these can lead to great adventures. In the alternative, the character could sell his services as a mercenary or work for free as a wandering hero.

Next are the prototypes. The G.M. and the player should discuss this ahead of time to determine something logical and reasonable. Maybe it's a fast and stealthy hovercraft, but it hasn't been equipped with any weapons (yet). Or a Coalition test pilot could be putting the first of the new army vehicles or 'bots through their paces. In any event, the manufacturer is likely to want the pilot's opinion on the design. Researchers will be curious to see how their product stacks up to the competition (speed, weapons, armor, etc.). They may not always follow the Barnstormer's advice, however.

Barnstormers are natural pilots. They've learned through experience, rather than formal education. They know how hard to push an engine because they've pushed too hard before, but managed to survive their mistake. They tend to be bold and daring, and respect others who are similarly "gifted" like **Headhunters**, **Elite robot pilots**, **Operators** and **Techno-Wizards** (the latter two because Operators are fair pilots and both can repair/modify vehicles.) They grudgingly respect **Phaeton Juicers**, but still consider them second rate because the Juicers' skills are "artificial."



However, things sometimes change for Barnstormers in a stand-up fight with fists or weapons. Their quick wits and quicker reflexes are not always enough to save them. In fact, some are total wimps outside **their machines!**

Also, because of the dangerous nature of the **work**, Barnstormers tend to live it up and hate to settle down in one place for very long. When it comes to living fast and dying young, they're almost as bad as Juicers. Note: See bonuses and penalties below.

The following information will detail the **Barnstormer/Test Pilot O.C.C.** for Rifts (including **space/Phase World** campaigns) and other games. In addition will be extra optional rules for air combat and physical stress.

Barnstormer O.C.C.

Also known as **Test Pilots**, **Crash 'em Smash 'ems**, **Crash Test Dummies** and **Bailouts** (because they have to "bail out" or eject from a stricken craft).

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 10, M.E. and P.E. 11, and P.P. 14. minimum. The higher the attributes are, the better.

Special Abilities: Suffers only half the normal piloting penalties when attempting difficult maneuvers. The character is comfortable and at ease with machines and suffers only half the penalties when dealing with new or unusual vehicles, except those that are extremely **different/alien** in origin. They have excellent hand-eye coordination and can pilot a variety of vehicles with ease and grace. After close inspection or actual piloting **time**, they can assess the capabilities of any test vehicle (strengths, weaknesses, things that need to improved, etc.).

Bonuses: Years of training (and sometimes crashing) tend to build these characters up, physically and mentally. +1 to Initiative at levels 1, 2, 5 and 8; +2 to save vs. Horror Factor; +1D4 to P.E.; +3 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, and add 3D6 S.D.C. Heals twice as fast as normal and can drink 50% more alcohol than the average person before feeling the effects. Additionally, select two from the character's piloting skills to be that character's favorites. Those skills enjoy the following bonuses: a one-time bonus of +5% to that skill, +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to dodge and one additional attack per melee round! Note: not applicable to robots and power armor, they already have additional bonuses. For example, if the two favorites are Jet fighters and **motorcycles**, add the +5% to those two skills, and in combat while piloting one of those vehicles, add the extra attack and combat bonuses. For **ramming/driving** attacks or combat, use the character's hand-to-hand bonuses as well.

O.C.C. Skills:

Speaks native language 98% and is literate (+10%).

Basic Math (+10%)

Read Sensory Equipment (+15%)

Computer Operation (+5%)

Piloting: Select six. Remember to take into account the bonuses above (+15%).

Pilot Related: One of choice (+15%).

Gymnastics (+5%)

W.P. **One** of choice.

Hand-to Hand: Basic

Hand-to-Hand: Basic can be upgraded to Expert for the cost of one "other" skill, or Martial Arts (or Assassin if Anarchist or evil) for the cost of two skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: At first level, select eight other skills. Plus select two additional at level three, two at level six, and one at levels nine and twelve. Also note that skill selections will tend to reflect the character's love of piloting and machines. Phase World characters will likely be trained to fight in zero-g and will know two additional languages.

Communications: Any (+5%)

Cowboy: None

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any except Robot Electronics, and Engineer counts as two skills (+5%).

Espionage: Any except Forgery and Impersonation (+5%).

Mechanical: Any except Robot Mechanics and Locksmith, and Engineer counts as two skills (+7%).

Medical: First Aid *or* Paramedic only (pick one, +5%).

Military: Any except Military Fortification, N.B.C. Warfare, and Demolition skills (+10% to Parachuting).

Physical: Any (+5%)

Pilot: Any (+15%)

Pilot Related: Any (+15%)

Rogue: Any

Science: Math only.

Technical: Any

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any (+5% to Land Navigation).

Secondary Skills: The character also gets three Secondary Skills from the list above at first level, plus one additional at levels two, four and eight.

Standard Equipment: Starts out with a small portable tool kit, 50 feet of lightweight rope, a flashlight, a penlight, a survival knife, 2D6 flares, an NG-S2 survival pack or something similar, an extra first aid kit, choice of either an **RMK** or **IRMSS** unit, PC-3000 hand held computer, work clothes, traveling clothes and personal items. Body armor can be of any type, but will usually be medium or light to allow for greater mobility. Fighter pilots will be issued a G-suit as well. Weapons will include a **Vibro-Knife**, an energy pistol with 3 extra **E-clips**, and one extra weapon of choice with 3 extra clips of ammo (if applicable). Barnstormers tend to prefer small but hard hitting weapons like the NG-45LP because they are easier to fit in a tight vehicle. Depending on the state of the character's employment, the vehicles available will vary dramatically. Assume that someone assigned to the military will have a motorcycle, hovercycle or jeep for everyday use, and a military combat vehicle (jet, **tank**, robot) for field use only. An adventurer will have a souped-up vehicle with 30-50% more armor, an extra weapon, or some other feature (possibly **Techno-Wizard**), and will otherwise be customized to suit the player's liking (flame paint job, stereo, whatever). This can be a motorcycle, hovercycle, hover vehicle, car or truck, possibly an APC or a quality suit of power armor, ideally flying types. At the G.M.'s discretion, the player can make his choices from those available to the Bounty Hunter O.C.C. in **Mercenaries™** and in **New West™**.

Equipment in other games will be typical for those games, but with an emphasis on tools and small weapons.

Money: Money will also vary. Typical military wages are usually pretty high, equal to a low ranking officer. Mercenary wages are even better. Regardless, the player starts out with 2D4X1000 in credits and another 1D6X1000 in black market items.

Cybernetics: Starts with a gyro-compass, headjack and ear implant, and one of choice from sensors or lung implants. The player may opt to not have any cybernetics and may be compensated with extra equipment or another 1D4X1000+500 credits.

Penalties: Years on the edge will use up a man. His body and his mind will not be as sharp or fast as they once were, and some past mistakes will inevitably come back to haunt the character. Barnstormers spend cash fast, often drink when things go wrong, and enjoy the company of members of the opposite sex. All of this can lead to trouble. At some point, the character will have a minor breakdown that will cause lasting problems. At third and seventh levels, roll on the following insanity table. Additionally, any truly nasty brush with death, such as actually being dead and then being revived by magic, or being paralyzed or losing a limb, may warrant more rolls on the table. Take into account the character's alignment (see notes below) and the nature of the event in order to determine any additional insanities or penalties. Many of these will lead to a quick death unless friends can intervene to help the character cope.

01-15% **Action Junkie:** loves the rush of speed and combat! Will always choose to stand and fight (even if outnumbered) and will seldom pass up a challenge. The character is aggressive and rarely pulls punches, slowly becoming a killer of sorts. +1 on initiative and will respond to acts of aggression with aggression.

16-25% I'm the Best at: fill in the blank. The character thinks he's the best pilot (obviously), but also thinks he's a great gambler, shooter, singer, you name it. Will take any bet, accept any challenge, and always let it all ride. +1 initiative and will take any challenge.

26-35% Loser!: The character is moody and depressed. He thinks he's lost the magic touch and spends night and day trying to improve his skills. It's all really unnecessary, but that's not what the character thinks. -5% on all skills, -1 on all combat rolls (lack of confidence); 45% chance of drug addiction, usually alcoholism. Also edgy and tends to not get much sleep (stays up late worrying, or to get in more simulator time).

36-45% Fear of Flying: The character has no fear of heights, only flying. A particularly bad crash has caused him to become skittish. Will not fly more than 50 feet (15.2 m) above the ground in any vehicle, which can be very dangerous. -15% to all aircraft piloting skills.

46-55% Claustrophobia: The character crashed and was trapped inside a twisted metal hulk and lost it. He may not have even gotten a scratch, but now he fears tight places. Will NOT use form-fitting power armor, will dislike being inside any enclosed vehicle like a robot, tank, or APC. -10% to piloting skill and hates all tight spaces in general. When flying, will tend to avoid flying close to the **ground/near** obstacles.

56-63% Drug Addiction: The character has had to spend a great deal of time recovering from his injuries. Numerous accidents (and the resulting hospital stays) means the character has had quite a few doses of pain killer in his day. Now he's hooked and will crave that numb feeling all the time. See rules in the **Rifts RPG®** (page 21) for handling addictions along with the penalties involved.

64-68% Paranoid: Thinks people are out to get him, specifically, by sabotaging his ride. "Hey, you! What are you doing **here?!** Get away from my hovercycle!" May take steps to "protect" himself, like setting up traps or surveillance equipment. Jumpy, but alert: +1 on initiative.

69-77% **Nerves are shot:** The character suffers from muscle spasms as a result of stress. The hands shake, sometimes they stutter when talking, others develop a facial tick or other annoying symptoms. The real problem is that the twitching makes delicate tasks more difficult: -10% on skills requiring manual dexterity like Electronics and Pick Pockets. Also, -3 strike using modern weapons unless the shooter is somehow supported. For example, a machine gun mounted on a tripod would negate most of the character's shaking, so there would be no penalty to strike.

78-83% Immortality!: Having come so close to dying and not actually died has given the character the illusion that he will live forever. Takes needless and stupid risks, never wears a seat **belt/harness**, seldom wears body armor ("I don't need it!") and will charge wildly into the fray with both guns blazing.

84-92% Roll once on the random insanity table in the **Rifts RPG®**.

93-97% Roll once for a random psychosis.

98-100% Roll twice on this table and ignore any result above 97% or any duplicates.

Alignment notes: Certain alignments will react differently to many tragic accidents. Characters of a good alignment and most who are Aberrant will do everything they can to preserve life. Thus, if they are responsible for an innocent's death, that would call for an additional insanity roll. This is also true of most Unprincipled characters and a few Anarchist ones. They may be rogues, but they still have that soft spot that gets them into trouble. Most Anarchist, Miscreant and Diabolic characters basically look out for themselves. They could give a damn who they hurt, just as long as they save their own skins. As long as they can walk away from any mishaps, an extra insanity roll is not required.

Barnstormers use the **Headhunter** experience table.

Barnstorming in Other Settings

Though the Barnstormer is meant for a **Rifts**® campaign, the O.C.C. can be adapted for most of Palladium's other games easily. For **Heroes Unlimited**™, **Beyond the Supernatural**™, **Ninjas & Superspies**™, and **Nightbane**®, there are two main modifications necessary. First, use the skills as listed in the respective **RPG** book. Second, the bonuses provided may be too unbalancing. I suggest dropping the bonus for initiative to just +1 all the time. The rest should probably remain unchanged. After all, the very reason to roll up a Barnstormer is to have a kick-butt pilot to use! This O.C.C. may or may not be useful in every situation or setting. Consult with the G.M. as always. The insanities may not be particularly appropriate, either, so they too can be eliminated if deemed inappropriate.

In the alternative, these other games already have character classes that could be substituted for a Barnstormer. For **Heroes**, the **Hardware: Mechanical** character is perfect. He can build *and* pilot his own experimental vehicles! As a concession to make this a logical arrangement, the character will have to roll *at least* a Bachelor's Degree on the Education Level table, or **Military/Military Specialist**. The G.M. may just want to let the player automatically have one of the higher educational levels. Also, the **Special Training** area of the **Secret Operative** provides a great opportunity to become a test pilot. In both cases, make skill selections mainly from piloting and mechanical. For **Ninjas & Superspies**™, the **Gizmoteer**, especially the **Tinkerer**. With tons of skills available, the Tinkerer Gizmoteer could easily be a piloting dynamo. In any of these cases, the character may add the above special abilities and bonuses to the character with the G.M.'s approval.

ROBOTECH™

For **Robotech**, the problems become a little trickier. There are basically four "generations" of different mecha, vehicles and equipment, and numerous settings within each era. For a **Macross** game alone, is the setting going to be before the launch of the **SDF-1**, during the war, in the post-war holocaust, in the Southlands, or even during the Global Civil War? There's also Southern Cross, **Invid** Invasion and The Sentinels, each presenting unique issues and countless possibilities. So the **Robotech**® O.C.C. will feature some new skills to accommodate these issues.



Robotech Mecha Test Pilot O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 10, and P.P. 11. A high M.E. and P.E. are also helpful, but not mandatory.

Special Abilities: Similar to those above, with some of the bonuses toned down, but all the bonuses for **piloting**, including the extra +5% for favorites and half penalties on tricky maneuvers intact.

The many world settings means that the Robotech test pilot may be exposed to many different types of mecha during his career. He has mastered the art of piloting them since the first ones rolled off the assembly lines. As a result, the character has the unique skill known as **General Mecha Piloting**. This is like the **Specific Mecha Pilot** skills without the **Mecha Combat** skills, focusing on the maneuvering of mecha and not necessarily combat. Included under this skill is the piloting and handling of *ALL* Earth Mecha to some extent, except E.B.S.I.S mecha, unless playing a character loyal to that group. Alien mecha are not included, either. **However**, a **Sentinels** character may select the piloting of **Zentraedi** mecha as an "other" skill. All **RDF** and **REF Destroids** and all Southern Cross **Battloids** can be piloted. So can ANY **Veritech**, in **Battloid** mode only. Base skill is 55% +5% per level of experience. And yes, the character can learn the conventional **Pilot: Veritech** skill. Also, the character's familiarity with these war machines means he can fight effectively

with some of them, and is able to master a few. Select any three to be piloted at maximum capacity (i.e. including the specific Media Combat skills). These enjoy the full bonuses available. Select two more to be piloted at the "Basic" combat level. For example: our N.P.C. Test pilot has selected the **RDF** Gladiator, the Southern Cross Logan, and the **REF** Beta Fighter for full combat training, and the REF Vindicator and Saber Cyclone for basic combat. For all other types of **mecha**, the character must rely only on his own hand-to-hand combat skills to determine combat rolls. Additional media combat skills *can* be selected, but each counts as one "other" skill.

Please note, skill selections are limited to the environment you're playing in. Hover **Tanks**, for example, will NOT be available to a Macross campaign, unless it is years after the end of the First Robotech War and the tanks are in the very early testing stages. Use some logic and talk to the **G.M.**

O.C.C. Skills:

Read Sensory Equipment (+15%)

Select one Mechanical and one Electrical skill (+10% each).

Pilot: Select 5, all at +15%.

Computer Operation (+10%)

Hand-to-hand: Basic

Hand-to-hand: Basic can be upgraded to Expert for the cost of one "other" skill, or Martial Arts for two skills.

Other Skills: Select 12 other skills at level one, two at level three, and one at levels eight and twelve.

Communications: Any (+10% to radio basic).

Domestic: Any

Electrical: Any, but Mecha counts as two skills unless taken above as an O.C.C. skill.

Espionage: Any except Forgery, Impersonation and **Interrogation**.

Mechanical: Any except Locksmith, and Mecha or **Veritech** Mechanics counts as two skills unless taken above as an O.C.C. Skill (+5%).

Medical: First Aid or Paramedic only.

Physical: Any (+5%)

Pilot: Any (+15%)

Pilot Related: Any (+10%)

Rogue: Any

Science: Biology, Chemistry, and Math only.

Technical: Any other than Demolition skills (+5%).

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any (+5% to Land Navigation only).

Standard Equipment: A dress uniform, two standard uniforms, regular clothes and personal items, radio, first aid kit, oxygen mask, probably some tools or a small tool kit, flashlight, knife, 8 flares and a **sidearm** or choice with four extra clips. Also body armor (if available). A car, jeep, or motorcycle for personal use. The character also has access to most secure areas in addition to the usual facilities available on military bases.

Authorized Clearance Upon Assignment: Combat vehicle of choice or as the assignment dictates, including mecha, with full weapons load. Possibly additional equipment and weapons.

Monthly wages: Because of the hazardous nature of their **work**, these people earn slightly more than others. 2350 credits a month for levels 1-4, 5th level and higher **3100** credits a **month**. while officers make about 3500-4800 a month.

Personal Savings: 4D6X100

Use the Veritech Pilot experience table in the **Robotech RPG®** book, or if you're playing in a Sentinels or **Invid** invasion setting, use the Military Specialist table.



Notes and Optional Rules for Air Combat

Every mode of combat has its own special dangers that make it deadlier than others. Sometimes the enemy is not someone shooting at you, it's the environment around you. With flying, even in non-combat situations, there are several risks. First, the condition of the aircraft. The best pilot in the world is still a dead man if there is a major electrical or mechanical problem. Second is oxygen. At high altitudes, the air is too thin to provide enough oxygen for the pilot to breathe. Aircraft must either be pressurized (a sealed environment) or everyone must be equipped with a separate oxygen supply, like wearing environmental armor. These two factors are handled pretty well in existing games like **Rifts®**. But a third factor, physics, does need to be considered.

High speed maneuvers and tight turns create g-forces that are exerted on the pilot and any passengers. G-forces can be thought of as a multiplier for someone or something's weight. A man who weighs 130 pounds (58.5 kg) will feel like he weighs 390 pounds (175.5 kg) under the influence of 3 g's. Without getting too involved or bogged down, let me simplify it. Right now,

you're feeling 1 g. Now imagine you're in a turn or a loop on an amusement park ride. You may feel pressed down, you may be squished to one side, or you may even feel like you're floating. In a jet fighter, these forces can pool blood away from the brain, causing black outs and more serious problems. To combat this, pilots wear g-suits that are filled with air or liquid bladders. When g-forces push down on the pilot, the bladders are squeezed, and they in turn squeeze the body and force blood back to the brain. Without the suit, maneuvering cannot be done without the risk of a blackout. It pretty much goes without saying that if you're unconscious, you can't fly or defend yourself.

So how much can one man take? Let's use game terms and our roller coaster example. An average person with a P.E. of 9 gets on a hot coaster and has some fun. He's exposed to anywhere from 2 to just over 4 g's. I know because my Physics class performed some tests! Now, our rider comes off the ride, a little shaky, but okay. Most people can handle 3 g's easily. At about 4 g's, you're basically just along for the ride. This is about the point where all you can do is scream, yell happily, and hold on. At about 5 or 6 g's, you're starting to really feel it. You'll start to experience "**tunnel vision**" and there'll be static at the corners of your sight. Concentrating is next to impossible and you can only endure this for a few seconds after the tunnel vision begins. That's if you haven't just blacked out already. At 7-8 g's, it's probably nap time. Nine and 10 g's are painful and dangerous for more than a few seconds. Beyond that is basically lethal for humans. The g-suit compensates and allows pilots to fly their aircraft to the edge. Additionally, they've undergone training to help them cope with the strain and pain that accompanies g-forces. With full flight suit and gear, a normal human can handle 7-8 g's, and up to 10 for short periods at a time (like on fast turns, about one and a half melees or less). Certain D-bees, including **Psi-stalkers**, Wolfen, True **Atlanteans**, and especially Dwarves, can handle about 50% more stress than the average human. Crazies and partial conversion Borgs are the same as the tougher D-bees. Juicers can handle up to 8 g's before feeling the effects that the average human feels at 4-5 g's. Full conversion Borgs are especially resistant and can handle twice the stress compared to the average human. As a result, most Juicers seldom wear any type of g-suit and most Borgs don't need any! Supernatural **beings** are almost immune to the effects of g-forces.

These stats are simply to add realism to the game if the G.M. wants it. This may help clear up some issues or keep truly outrageous stunts from happening. Unless the player's character is extraordinary, he's not going to just hop into a fighter with no prep time, take off, duke it out with three Coalition jets, and land like nothing happened.

Air Combat Maneuvering (A.C.M.)

The classic art of Dogfighting

Dogfighting occurs when aircraft meet and lock in combat. It progresses in stages. First, detecting the enemy, visually or by sensors. Next, closing to within weapons range, which may include maneuvering for position. The defender will try to evade the attacker. The defender will also seek to become the aggressor and shoot back. Maneuver, counter **attack**, disengage, it's a like a **ballet**, but unfortunately, it's a little more complex than what is allowed for in the Palladium rules. Rolling strikes and

dodges is fast and easy, but doesn't quite capture the excitement you get watching Star Wars or Top Gun. These *optional* rules may slow things down a **little**, but they should hopefully add some depth to your game.

To make air combat more realistic, and to make the players feel like they're **actually flying** and not just shooting or dodging, try this simple option adapted from the **Nightbane™** perception rules. Take the pilot's skill, say Pilot: Jet Fighter, and divide it by 15. Take the result (rounded down) and use it as a bonus for combat rolls (see below). So a Coalition "SAM" with a skill of 60% gets +4 on his rolls to strike and dodge. This will be called a *piloting modifier*. The beauty of this system is that it lets you get more involved in the action and takes the pilot's skill into account. The down side is that every action requires two rolls. After attempting a maneuver, you must roll under the pilot's skill, as well. Why? imagine driving along when a squirrel darts out in front of your car. You swerve to avoid the critter. Even if you miss the squirrel, you may lose control of the car and hit a pole or something else. So, most actions will require two rolls, one for combat on a twenty sided die, and the other a control roll on percentile dice.

Use the piloting modifier on rolls to maneuver and dodge. Roll initiative normally.

Now, an example of combat. I suggest that the G.M. use something to represent the combatants. Little die cast planes are ideal. Why do this? It's pretty easy to keep track of ground combat, but in the sky, it's much tougher, so you may need a visual aid. You may think, "hey, it's my attack, I'll fire a volley of mini-missiles at this guy." But, in trying to dodge his rail gun blast last melee, you ended up facing away from your opponent. See what I mean? This is three dimensional combat time, with the combatants moving at high speeds. So, the toy planes will help you and the G.M. describe to each other what's going on.

A first level Headhunter with a Pilot: Jet Fighter skill of 50% squares off against the Coalition SAM above. Let's simplify things and say neither one snuck up on the other. They come screaming in at one another head-to-head. Roll initiative normally. The Headhunter lucks out and wins, so he goes first. He fires a single medium range missile at the SAM's jet. He rolls a normal roll to strike, +3 from weapons and sensor bonuses. A 15 all together, not bad. The SAM tries to dodge. He pulls a sharp left turn. His player rolls to dodge - a 10. But the plane is +3 to dodge, and the pilot's skill of 60% translates into a piloting modifier +4 dodge bonus, for a total of 17. The missile **misses!** But, the SAM still has to make a control roll under his piloting skill for control. Remember above, the SAM may not get hit by the missile, but he may botch the move through dumb luck and stall an engine or something in the process. The control roll is successful too and combat continues.

The SAM's turn has presented his tail to the Headhunter. The Headhunter still has the initiative because the SAM is on the defensive. He fires his lasers and the SAM avoids again, rolling once on a twenty sided for success, then on percentile dice for control. This continues for a while until the SAM is hit. The two rolls must still be made, however, even if you're not successful in dodging.

Next melee, the SAM gets initiative and it's payback time! He pulls up into a loop, trying to get around to the **Headhunter's** tail. He rolls a twenty sided plus the +4 from his piloting **modi-**

fier. This is a maneuver roll similar to the earlier dodge, but now **it's** used as an attempt to gain position. The SAM has a 14 total. Next, he rolls under piloting skill for control and makes it. Now, the **Headhunter** has to do something or the SAM will **fire** with his next attack. He tries to outmatch the SAM's move by attempting a tighter loop. He rolls a 7 with all bonuses included, so the SAM is still on his tail.

If a player ever fails a control roll, he loses initiative, and is **-1** on all combat rolls and **-5%** on piloting skill for the remainder of that melee round. A player who is on the defensive is open to attack. An attacker who fails a control roll will **NOT** be able to **fire** on the enemy. Basically, he loses an attack.

Got the feel of it? The maneuver is similar to a strike roll, but in this case, it's a roll to place yourself in a position to fire on the enemy or escape him. It's a "**pre-strike**" roll. Note that this may result in a stalemate. If the two pilots are evenly matched, it may be some time before one or the other can gain an advantage. This happens in real life, too. Now let's take a look at real world combat strategy.

First rule, find the enemy before he finds you. Just like prowling through the woods to ambush a CS patrol, sneaking up on an enemy airplane means you basically get a free shot. Whoever finds the other guy first gets the first shot. But how do you spot him? Originally, you had to spot him with the naked eye. But radar and other sensors changed all that. Now battles could be fought well beyond visual range. The problem is, radar can give away your position. Imagine a pitch black night. You're on a small hill near a road. Down the road comes a car with his headlights on. You can see the car miles down the road. But he can only see you when you're within range of those lights. Get the picture? Turning the radar on only briefly to catch a quick image can avoid this problem most of the time.

Next is maneuvering. Just getting into position to fire your weapons could take an entire melee or **more!** It becomes like our combat example above: two guys trying to outsmart one another. A chess game with missiles. There are other factors too: weather, anti-aircraft fire from the ground, electronic jamming and more, but this is the heart of it.

Some final notes: Attacks: Every roll to maneuver or dodge counts as an attack, except in rare cases like the Phaeton Juicer's automatic dodge. The G.M. may opt to give any pilot specialists like the SAM an automatic dodge option as well. And, some players are just plain going to be outclassed. A guy who's first level and took Pilot: Jet Fighter as a secondary skill will probably get his clock cleaned by a seventh level SAM. But that's realistic, too. Some people will be better than others. Hopefully these ideas will add enjoyment to your game.

Tactics and Special Maneuvers: Some advice and a few new moves to try out.

- As stated above, use radar in short intervals.
- Vary your altitude at odd intervals. A plane at 1200 (365.8 m) feet is easier for gunners to engage because it's an even number. At 1163 feet (354.5 m), they'll have a harder time calibrating the guns to hit you. I know it sounds weird, but it's true! Of course, it's up to the G.M. to take this sort of thing into account.
- Attack from above; height provides an advantage. You can always dive if you need more speed.

- Attack from an angle. This gives you a larger surface area to hit and increases your odds of getting the kill shot.
- Attack from "out of the sun." This means diving in on your opponent with your back to the sun. He won't be able see you clearly, if at all.
- Slower speeds produce tighter turns.
- Sudden tight turns can throw off missile guidance systems.
- When flying low to the ground to escape radar detection, cut a fast 90 degree turn. This will fool most radar systems into thinking that the target (you) no longer **exists!** You can then hide in the ground clutter or move to engage the enemy.
- When possible, don't allow your forces to be split up.
- The Quick Stop: When **pursued**, pop the air brakes, flaps, even landing gear if you're brave enough. The sudden wind resistance should slow your craft down and force you're opponent to shoot past you. Now you're on *his* tail. First, roll initiative to see if you catch your enemy by surprise. If the defender wins, he gets lucky and he can then attack. If the attacker wins, he anticipates the move and is able to avoid overshooting his target. Roll to control the craft under piloting skill **-15%**. The pursuing plane must roll under piloting skill **-20%** or it will overshoot.
- Vectoring in Forward Flight, or **ViFFing**: This means switching your jets quickly from horizontal to vertical thrust. This is a tactic developed by Harrier pilots that can be done by Rifts **VTOL** fighters. Like the quick stop, ViFFing is designed to slow your plane down to get in behind the enemy. To your opponent, it will appear as if you've paused momentarily in mid-air. Make all rolls as above under the quick stop, but add **+2** on the initiative roll for the defending pilot.
- Terrain Following: Skimming just above the ground is a great way to avoid detection, but it requires intense concentration from the pilot. It can be quite taxing on the nerves and cannot be done for long at high speeds. At speeds up to **150 mph** (240 km), factor in a **-10%** penalty. From 150 to 500 **mph** (240-800 km), **-15%**, and above that, **-20%**. Passengers not used to the ride will have to roll vs. a Horror Factor of 8 to stay calm. If the pilot is a true wild man, the Horror Factor is increased to **11**. This also applies to anyone trying to pursue the crazy pilot. "Did you see that? This guy's nuts!"
- The Tail Slide or Mid-air Stall: You may have seen this move performed by biplanes, or in the **1989** Batman movie. Pull the aircraft up into a climb. As you reach the top of the climb, gradually pull back on the throttle. It will seem like you're hovering there motionless for an instant, then, you begin to fall back to Earth, tail first. Swing the nose in the direction you want to go and push the throttle forward again. This is a difficult and dangerous move, but it can be effective. **-20%** to piloting skill.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Aircraft Types

The best way to deal with an aircraft is to send another one out to destroy it. But not **all** aircraft are created equal. Each has unique abilities and several shortcomings.

Arguably the best are jet fighters. They have the greatest speed, **firepower** and range, and are highly **maneuverable** with a

greater altitude limit than pretty much everything else. On the down side, they are the most expensive, difficult to hide, and require some of the most intense training. And even VTOL planes are not meant for long term low-level missions or hovering in tight places. Larger types, like bombers and transports, are less well suited for combat and are even more expensive. Helicopters are ideal tank busters and troop transports. With the advent of longer ranged and more powerful weapons, they can even engage jets and hope to survive. They can get in close to targets and duck behind terrain and can hover for long periods of time. However, helicopters are slower than most jets and many sky cycles and the main rotors are vulnerable. Sky cycles are also great low level attack craft. They are fast, accelerate quickly and turn sharply, but are slower than jets and pack less **firepower** and armor. Hovercycles are fast and can turn on a dime, but lack the weapons and altitude to be very effective air combatants. Most flying power armor types are like sky cycles. They excel at low level, tight terrain combat, but they have fewer weapons, lower speed and service altitudes and will be outclassed by a jet when in its territory.

The Vintage Air Force: Techno-Wizard Aircraft

Optional New Vehicles for Rifts®

By Edward J. Sauerland

This section was inspired by and is dedicated to the members of The Confederate Air Force. These volunteers are helping to keep history alive by keeping planes from days gone by in the air. Keep **em** flying!

There are many different versions of the tale, each with its own unique details, new names, new places. But the real story goes something like this...

Weber's team had been together a long time. Always on the move, always searching for treasures from the past that might unlock some key to the present. They'd made a few discoveries over the years. Mostly they uncovered small mementos, nothing worth selling and nothing great enough to make them famous or rich. The rogue scholar and his bunch would never be as famous as Erin Tarn.

But fortunes can change in an instant. With high hopes, Weber's crew followed up on a lead. Rumors abounded about secret compounds full of military hardware. The locations of such caches could be sold to "investors" like the Golden Age **Weaponsmiths** for a very nice profit.

What did fate have in store for them today? The building they found was huge! Not so much tall as it was long and sprawling. But it would prove to be somewhat of a disappointment. A collection of artifacts from the **past**, but nothing in working condition. In fact, it was not a hidden store of weapons

at all. Weber recalled that the term for the place was a museum. There was much to see, much information to be had (if you could read) but nothing that truly stood out. Weber sighed and went about exploring and cataloging items. The place was interesting, but the knowledge it contained was not very practical in today's world.

One large room caught the eye of one of the party's members, the oddball **techno-wizard** they called "**K.C.**" He pondered the machines before him. They were planes of some sort, from a long forgotten era. He tilted his head to one side, thinking and studying the planes. The gasoline engines, a snap to convert to magic, he'd done similar jobs hundreds of times. Then an idea began to take shape in **K.C.**'s head. He pictured fleets of the planes, swooping, diving, rolling, and a grin began to spread across his face. "I wonder..."

Those two words, "I wonder," began a minor revolution in modern air combat. No one knows for sure where the first ones were built, or by whom. All people know is that the idea literally took off.

Several years ago, the tide of a small battle near Tolkeen was changed by a new type of war machine: the **Techno-Wizard** fighter. The archaic looking, prop driven fighters were small and obviously had lighter armor than the modern Coalition fighters and sky cycles, and were seriously outgunned. The Coalition pilots, overconfident and full of arrogance, mixed it up with the prop jobs. Suddenly, it was no longer a one sided fight. Indeed, the Coalition forces had to fight for their lives. The slower piston planes could out turn the fancy jets. And they were impossible to lock onto with heat seeking missiles. The Tolkeen planes fired invisible bolts of force that tore into the wings of the enemy jets. And they sported concealed mini-missiles that could strike down sky cycles a mile away. Thrown into utter confusion by their bizarre foes, the Coalition forces fled after losing a third of **their** force. Only one enemy had been destroyed and another one damaged. The Vintage Air Force had survived a trial by fire and was proven a success.

K.C.'s idea, in the traditional zany Techno-Wizard style, was not to refit **pre-Rifts** planes that were hundreds of years old, but to build all new ones in their likeness. The inspiration for these "new" designs was the collection of World War II era planes found by Weber's team. The idea of prop driven planes in an age of nuclear powered jets seemed stupid or just plain nuts to most people at first. But the spirit and determination of many **Techno-Wizards** and engineers made the dream a reality.

The term "Vintage Air Force" does not describe an actual military unit. It's more like a brand name used to describe any such magic aircraft. The WW II styled Techno-Wizard plane is really quite simple. The body structure can be produced by any decent manufacturing nation. The key, of course, is magic. The Vintage planes boast magic power plants as opposed to conventional fuel or nuclear engines. This creates many advantages for these planes. First, the magic engine is basically silent. The only sound that can be heard is the steady high RPM hum of the propeller blades. Even this can be muted with special magic, thus these planes are stealthy, but that's not all. The magic engine runs cool, making the plane all but impossible to track or target with **infrared** (no heat seeking missiles either, -5 to **strike!**). The magic engine also uses a capacitor, eliminating the need to carry fuel, thus more space is available for weapons and armor.

The designs of the planes are a blend of the old and the new. All the electronics a traditional pilot would be accustomed to are present. Each has a flight control computer and fire **control/targeting** system like a regular fighter. The **airframes** have only had minor alterations to their shape, and still bear a striking resemblance to their predecessors. Modern lasers and missiles provide quite a punch, while M.D.C. armor and sometimes magic provide protection. Most Vintage planes are made of lightweight M.D.C. steel and ceramics, but a handful have an additional edge designed into them. They are constructed of wood and then converted into M.D.C. materials by the Ironwood spell. This unique transformation leaves the plane partially invisible to radar. The radar signature will appear much smaller than the craft's actual size, and will be fuzzy or otherwise distorted.

Conventional fighter pilots often shake their heads or crack jokes when they share an airfield with the Vintage planes, but there is no denying **their** effectiveness. The planes have the speed and **firepower** to handle most helicopters, sky cycles, and power armor. Even though jets possess speed two or three times greater, special tactics have been developed to play upon the Vintage planes' strengths. The pilots of these nimble planes will try to force the faster jets into close combat near the ground, at lower speeds, where the planes' agility will give them the edge. The slower prop planes can pull much tighter turns than jets. They'll use quick strafing attacks on the enemy, then disengage and try to hide for a moment or two. The old fashioned look of the planes means they are constantly being underestimated. And of course, many often have a few magic extras added. These can be nasty surprises for anyone unprepared to handle a magic wielding opponent.

Vintage planes are usually given a wild paint job that is customized to suit the pilot. Many will name their planes and paint slogans, their girlfriend's name, or cartoon characters on the nose, just like they did in World War II! K.C.'s first Vintage plane had a cool flame paint job and the word "Yippee!" painted on the nose and wings. Many will add the black and white "invasion" stripes to the wings, or shark teeth to give their craft a mean appearance.

Currently, Vintage aircraft can only be purchased through a few sources on the Black Market, at **Tolkeen, Kingsdale, Stormspire**, and handful of other places in the Magic Zone and in the New West. Note that the prices at Tolkeen and Kingsdale are at a premium, because most of the aircraft they produce are intended for their nations' defense. Stormspire and other nearby cities offer the planes at lower prices. Each of these nations has added at least a squadron or two to their arsenal. Tolkeen has as many as fifty, including eight **B-17's**. Kingsdale has about twenty fighters and **Lazlo** is also purchasing the Vintage planes in large numbers. The Coalition considers ALL such **Techno-Wizard** creations a threat, especially the big **B-17's**, and will destroy them on sight.

The following presents some general stats for Vintage aircraft, including features and options, as well as a few specific examples. Note that thus far, only American planes are represented in the Vintage Air Force. This is because the only planes found in the museum were American.

Speed for fighters is generally between 360 and 440 mph (576-704 km) and between 250 and 300 mph (**400-480** km) for bombers and transports. In all cases, *top speed is reduced by*

half when not traveling on a ley line. Note that one of the main differences between the Vintage aircraft and the original models is that the new aircraft are slightly faster when running on full power.

Range is typically 200-600 miles (320-960 km) when running on **reserve**, but unlimited when on a ley line. The magic engine runs indefinitely on ley line power, but has an energy reserve for venturing away from the lines. When not on a ley line, the plane flies at half speed and uses 50 P.P.E. per hour; the storage cell holds 200 to 400 P.P.E. at one time. Being on a ley line will recharge the engine at about 50 P.P.E. per hour when the engine is not running (even when gliding), but only about five per hour while flying on the line.

Typical M.D.C. by location:

Propeller — 50

Tail (includes vertical and horizontal stabilizers) — 100

Canopy — 60

Wings (2) — 125 each

Main body — 130-220

Reinforced pilot's compartment — 70

Depleting the M.D.C. of the **propeller, wing**, or main body knocks the plane out of the sky. The pilot can attempt a crash landing at **-40%**. A successful attempt means the plane is wrecked but the crew survives. Destroying the tail inflicts a **-30%** penalty on piloting skill.

Piloting Skill: Vintage planes are fairly simple to fly. The controls are basic: stick, rudder and throttle. Still, it's a little harder to learn to fly than it is to drive a ground vehicle. Only a few O.C.C.s can learn to pilot a Vintage craft automatically. All other O.C.C.s must spend a skill to select the Pilot: Airplane skill. **Techno-Wizards** can fly them at 70% +5% per level.

Fighter pilots can quickly learn how to pilot these simple craft. Base skill: 55% +5% per level, or add **15%** to the pilot airplane skill. Air Warlocks pilot these aircraft at **+10%**, but must still select the skill. They have this advantage because they're literally in **their** element.

Common features — non-magical: Basic avionics (altimeter, speedometer, etc.). Note that half the gauges are no longer required because the engine is magical. Several radios are available, including short range - 100 miles (160 km) or long range - 500 miles (800 km). Both are directional and can be equipped with scramblers. The cockpit is typically a sealed environment, like power armor, and has all the usual features. Due to size limitations, the best radar available has a 25 mile (40 km) range and can identify and track up to 30 targets simultaneously. The average targeting system and combat computer is about the same as in power armor and includes a Heads-Up Display. Most will have a self-destruct and security system (technological **and/or** magical). The ejector seat will either be conventional or a magical one. A magic ejector seat holds a single spell such as **levitation**, fly as the eagle, or winged flight. The spell is activated when the pilot pulls the eject handle. Typical duration is equal to a fifth level mage and is good for one use. The pilot needs no P.P.E. himself to use this feature.

Magical Features: Most spells that can be applied to vehicles can be used on Vintage planes. A typical plane will have all weapons and features and also two spells. A capacitor with a reserve of 100-200 P.P.E. is usually installed, and anyone with P.P.E. can use it to power magic features. Additionally, the

magic nature of the craft provides special abilities. Not only does the plane only fly at full speed while on a ley line, it also will not crash while on the line, but will float to the ground slowly unless completely destroyed (M.D.C. of every location is depleted). This is why so many pilots try to move battles to areas rich with ley lines. Also, the propeller can be shut off and the plane can glide at a speed of about 100mph (160km) on a ley line. While this is slower than normal, it is totally silent. Great for attacks at night.

Weapons

A variety of conventional and magical weapons can be added to any of type of plane. Most fighters can have four or six guns mounted inside the wings (each wing having two or three) and have **underwing** and body pylons to mount missiles. The following describes common weapons and weapon arrangements.

Heavy Guns: Due to size restrictions in the **aircraft**, usually only two to four heavy weapons can be mounted, typically in pairs. When determining damage, multiply the damage from one gun by the number of guns used. For example, if six light lasers are being fired, damage would be 3D6X6. And yes, not all guns need be the same. See weapon arrangements below. Most weapons are powered either by magic or rechargeable energy cells.

Heavy Assault Lasers: These are high powered, long range guns suitable for assault and **dogfighting**.

Mega-Damage: 5D6 per blast.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand attacks.

Range: 4000 feet (1220 m).

Payload: Non-magic powered guns have a large energy cell like a giant **E-clip** that provides enough power for 75 blasts.

Modified Starfire Pulse Cannons: These are identical to the weapons described in Federation of Magic except modified to be built into a vehicle. Each cannon uses the standard eight P.P.E. clips, providing enough power for 16 shots. Due to the high cost and size of the cannons, only two are usually ever mounted in one plane, and even then they are reserved for heavy assault missions.

Modified TW Force Cannons: The same as those described in Federation of Magic, but modified as vehicle mounted weapons. Typically, only two are mounted per plane.

Medium Rail Guns: These are lighter guns that inflict either 6D6 or 1D4X10 M.D. Typically they are modified Coalition SAMAS or Northern gun weapons (use same stats) but with a greater payload. Each such gun will have enough ammo for 70 full damage bursts.

Light Guns: These are smaller, lighter guns that do less damage, but they are cheaper. These guns are still deadly when fired in groups or when used in addition to a few heavier **weapons**. Their smaller size means that as many as six can be mounted per plane.

Light Lasers: These are smaller, less powerful guns with a shorter range. However, up to six of them firing at once on a target can be devastating.

Mega-Damage: 3D6 per blast.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand attacks.

Range: 3000 feet (914.4 m) for excellent guns, or 2000 feet (610 m) for modified laser rifles that have been reconfigured into vehicle mounted weapons.

Payload: **Non-magically** powered guns have energy cells that hold an amazing 150 blasts per gun!

Modified Nova Rifles: The Nova Rifle's larger blast radius makes it an ideal anti-personnel weapon, also suitable for anti-armor purposes. They are the same as the ones described in Federation of Magic. Great for ground assaults.

TW Fireball Cannons: Great new anti-personnel weapons that shoot wide balls of flame for a napalm-like effect. Perfect for use against creatures vulnerable to fire and magic. Range is short, **however**, and using them too carelessly can lead to massive fires on the ground that will burn out of control.

Mega-Damage: 6D6 per blast to a twenty foot area. Each additional Fireball cannon increases the damage radius by twenty feet. Each strike is likely (85%) to start a small conflagration that will burn for at least 2D4 minutes and will spread quickly, even more so with additional strikes.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand attacks.

Range: 1000 feet (305 m)

Payload: 20. Each subsequent blast will require 5 P.P.E.

Light Rail Guns: These typically **inflict** 4D6 per full damage burst. Payload is a whopping 100 bursts per gun!

TW Machineguns: The weapon of choice for Vintage aircraft is the TW **machinegun** specially designed for use in these planes. They are compact, do decent damage, and the bolts of nearly invisible force are difficult to dodge. Up to six can be placed in any Vintage fighter, three per wing.

Mega-Damage: 2D6 per burst. As always, multiply damage by the number of guns fired.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the pilot's number of hand to hand attacks.

Range: 4000 feet (1220 m)

Payload: Each gun is charged with enough magic energy for 80 bursts. Additional bursts require 5 P.P.E.

TW Fire Bombs: These are large, egg-shaped cylinders designed to look like the external fuel tanks used by fighters during World War II. They are not very accurate, but then again, they don't have to be because they are intended as area effect weapons.

Mega-Damage: 1D4X10 to a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius! Each bomb creates a fire that will double in size every minute and burn for at least 4D6 melees.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two or four.

Range: Not really applicable. The bombs are just dropped from the air. Hitting specific targets, especially small ones, is difficult at altitudes above 2000 feet (610 m) (-4 strike). Again, these are area effect weapons. Run for your life!

Payload: Varies with plane type. Usually no more than four.

Defensive Systems: Normal chaff launchers can be added, or special Blinding Flash flares can be carried. These act just like the spell and will daze and blind anyone caught in the blast radius. The affected pursuer is then left very vulnerable to attack. Area affected: 50 feet (15.2 m).

Possible weapon layouts;

Just some examples so you know how many guns you can squeeze into a plane.

Two Starfire pulse cannons and two light lasers

Four heavy lasers

Six light lasers

Four light lasers and two nova rifles

There are many other possibilities, just remember that a maximum of four heavy guns or six light guns can be carried, or combinations such as two heavy and four light.

The TW P-51 Mustang

The Mustang was one of the greatest fighters produced during World War II, and has become the most popular model in the Vintage Air Force. The new Vintage Mustang retains all the fighting prowess of its namesake and has proven itself to be a deadly opponent. The agile fighter is rapidly gaining a reputation as a jet killer.

Model Type: TWVAF P-51

Crew: One pilot. About 15% of all Mustangs built are two-seaters. The second seat is occupied by an instructor for training or an observer/controller who oversees combat and coordinates the attack.

M.D.C. by Location:

Propeller — 60

Tail (includes vertical stabilizer and rudders) — 120

Canopy — 60

Wings(2) — 145 each

Main body — 170

Reinforced pilot's compartment — 80

Depleting the M.D.C. of the propeller, a wing, or the main body knocks the plane out of the sky. If on a ley line, the plane floats gently to the ground. Otherwise, the pilot can attempt a crash landing at **-40%** (plane is wrecked but crew survives). Destroying the tail inflicts a **-30%** penalty on piloting skill.

Speed: 465 mph (744 km) maximum. Cruising speed is about half that. Maximum altitude is **39,000** feet (12 km).

Range: Indefinite on a ley line; roughly 500 miles (800 km) on reserve. The magic engine uses 50 P.P.E. per hour and the storage cell holds 200 P.P.E. at one time.

Statistical Data:

Height: About 13 feet (4 m)

Wingspan: 39 feet (11.9 m)

Length: 33 feet (10 m)

Weight: 5.5 tons fully loaded.

Cargo: Minimal, some room for personal items and a small **weapon**, two flares, and a survival kit.

Power Source: Magical, runs on ley **line.energy** and has a P.P.E. **reservoir**.

Cost: Anywhere from 2 to 6 million credits, depending on **weapons**, features, and availability.

Weapon Systems:

Gun armament: See notes above. Typically Mustangs have six **TW machineguns** or two heavy guns and four light guns.

1.) **Concealed Mini-missile Launcher:** Along the center line under the main body is a hidden missile launcher. It adds some high-tech punch to this already excellent fighter. A small hatch opens only long enough to release the missiles.

Primary Purpose: Anti-aircraft

Mega-Damage: Varies by missile type, usually 1D4X10 or 1D6X10.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two, three or five.

Range: About one mile.

Payload: 15

2.) **Wing Mounted Missiles:** Up to six medium range missiles or ten short range missiles can be carried on several **underwing** hard points (half under one wing, half under the other). On the down side, the addition of these missiles creates drag and limits maximum speed to 330 mph (528 km). Alternately, ten more mini-missiles can be added, or up to thirty in special pods. However, these pods inflict the same speed penalties. Likewise, four TW Firebombs can be carried instead, or any combination of these weapon types. Use of long range missiles is restricted because of size limitations. Only three can be carried, one under each wing and one under the body, but this third missile prohibits use of the mini-missile launcher until it is launched. Smaller missile types are preferred because a greater number can be carried.

3.) **Rear Chaff Dispenser:** A last ditch defense mechanism added to the plane for protection. Chaff or Blinding Flash flares are most common. Normal anti-missile flares are not really needed, as the Mustang has almost no infrared signature. Often, TW storm flares are used for anti-vampire purposes. Payload is eight.

Note: Most TW Vintage planes also have magic spells placed on them that the pilot can call upon.

Bonuses: Includes all sensor, weapon, and design bonuses. +2 to dodge at cruising speeds, +4 at max speed. +1 on initiative and +2 to strike with weapons. Usually equipped with the best radar and sensors available.

The TW P-38 Lightning

The second most popular type of Vintage fighter is the venerable P-38 Lightning. Its great handling and unique shape make it a favorite among pilots. The Lightning is larger and a little slower than the **Mustang**, but it can carry extra armor and armament. Its twin engines and twin boom body design place the guns in the nose of the craft instead of in the wings, which improves their accuracy. All in all, the Lightning is one mean machine.

Model Type: TWVAF P-38

Crew: One pilot. About 15% of all Lightnings built are two-seaters. The second seat is occupied by an instructor for training or an observer/controller who oversees combat and coordinates the attack.

M.D.C. by Location:

Propellers(2) — 60 each

Tail (includes vertical stabilizers, rudders and wing **'boom'**) — 135

Canopy — 60

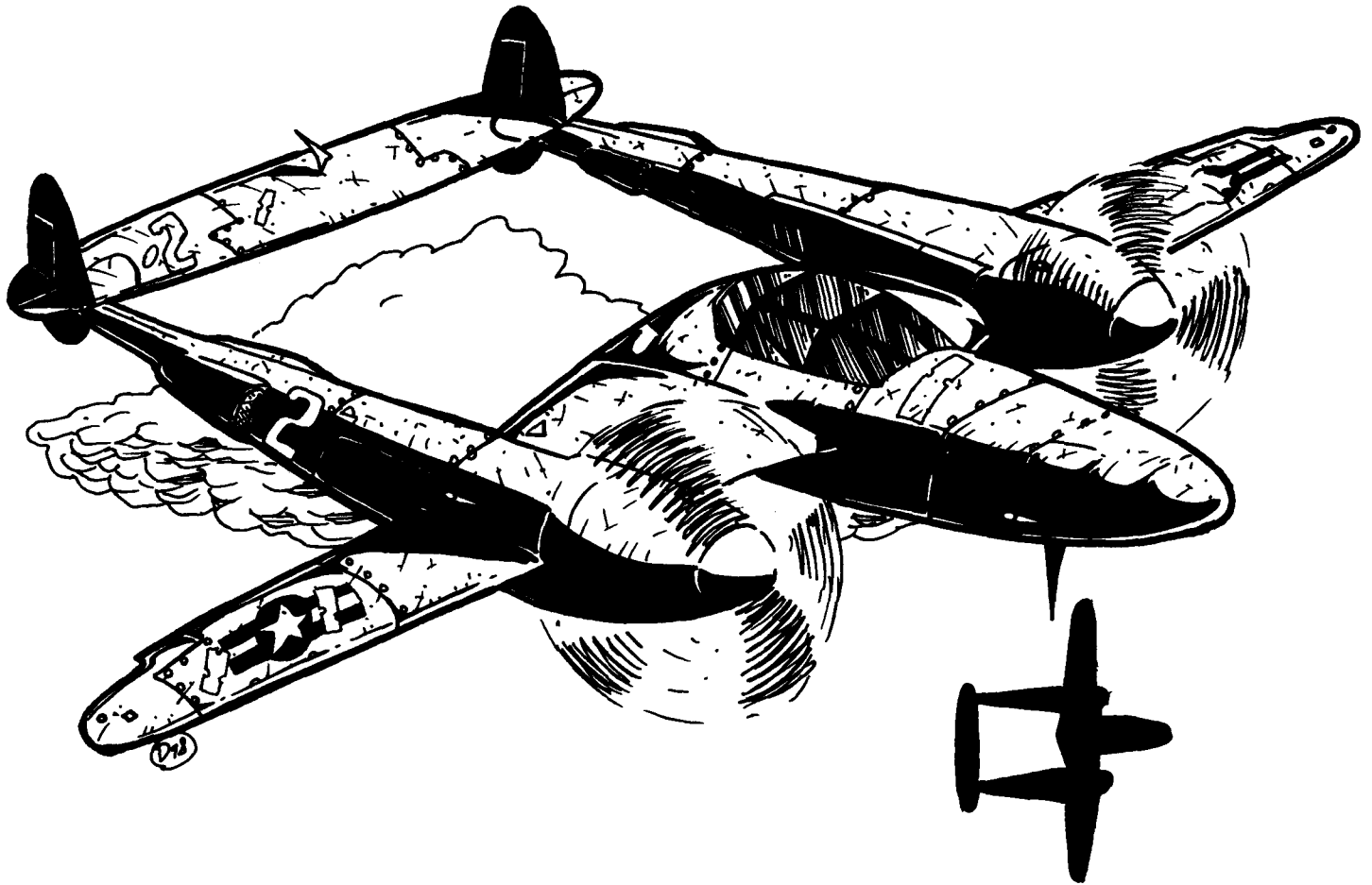
Wings(2) — 150 each

Main body — 220

Reinforced pilot's compartment — 80

Depleting the M.D.C. of a wing, both propellers, or the main body knocks the plane out of the sky. If on a ley line, the plane floats gently to the ground. Otherwise, the pilot can attempt a crash landing at **-40%** (plane is wrecked but crew survives). Destroying the tail inflicts a **-30%** penalty on piloting skill. One engine can be destroyed and the plane can stay in the air at half speed and **-25%** on piloting skill.

Speed: 430 mph (688 km) maximum. Cruising speed is about half that. Maximum altitude is 42,000 feet (12.8 km).



Range: Indefinite on a ley line; roughly 600 miles (960 km) on reserve. The magic engine uses 50 P.P.E. per hour and the storage cell holds 300 P.P.E. at one time.

Statistical Data:

Height: 11 feet (3.3 m)

Wingspan: 52 feet (15.8 m)

Length: 37 feet (11.2 m)

Weight: 6.2 tons fully loaded.

Cargo: Minimal, about a two foot (.6 m) cube for personal items and a small weapon, two flares, and a survival kit.

Power Source: Magical, runs on ley line energy and has a P.P.E. reservoir.

Cost: Anywhere from 2.5 to 7 million credits, depending on weapons, features, and availability.

Weapon Systems:

Gun armament: The Lightning differs slightly from most craft, in that all of its gun armament is located in the nose, in a single cluster. Only one heavy gun and four light ones can be carried, or five light guns, or three heavy guns.

1.) Concealed Mini-missile Launcher: Built into the underside of the main body and where the wings attach, is a large missile launcher. The design is such that it gives the Lightning a greater payload than smaller fighters. As with the Mustang, a small hatch opens only long enough to release the missiles.

Primary Purpose: Anti-aircraft

Mega-Damage: Varies by missile type, usually 1D4X10 or 1D6X10.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two, three or five.

Range: About one mile.

Payload: 25

2.) Wing Mounted Missiles: Up to six medium range missiles or eight short range missiles can be carried on several **under-wing** hard points (half under one wing, half under the other). On the down side, the addition of these missiles creates drag and limits maximum speed to 300 mph (480 km). Alternately, twelve more mini-missiles can be added, or up to thirty in special pods. These pods inflict the same speed penalties. Likewise, six TW Firebombs can be carried instead, or any combination of these weapon types. Use of long range missiles is not as limited as on smaller fighters, and up to four can be **carried**, at the expense of any other external missiles. Smaller missile types are preferred because a greater number can be carried.

3.) Rear Chaff Dispenser: A last ditch defense mechanism added to the plane for protection. Chaff or Blinding Flash flares are most common. Normal anti-missile flares are not really **needed**, as the Lightning has almost no infrared signature. Often, TW storm flares are used for anti-vampire purposes. Payload is sixteen.

Note: Most TW Vintage planes also have magic spells placed on mem that the pilot can call upon.

Bonuses: Includes all sensor, **weapon**, and design bonuses. +2 to dodge at cruising speeds, +4 at max speed. +1 on initiative and +2 to strike with weapons, +3 with the guns because of their advantageous positioning. Usually equipped with the best radar and sensors available.

The TW B-17 Flying Fortress

Perhaps the most awesome sight imaginable is catching a glimpse of this big, four-engine bomber from the past as it unleashes a modern load of heavy missiles! The TW B-17 is the largest Vintage aircraft built, and there **aren't** very many of them around. They lack the speed and armor of modern bombers, but then again, high-tech bombers are positively huge and terribly expensive. The updated Flying Fortress bristles with guns and carries an impressive load of missiles and bombs. It is usually escorted by Vintage fighters or other aircraft for extra protection. Additionally, several of the crew members may be spell casters.

Model Type: TWVAF B-17

Crew: Four minimum, but the typical crew is 10 to 15: **pilot**, co-pilot, navigator, 1 or 2 communications persons, 1 or 2 flight engineers, and five or six gunners. The co-pilot, navigator and communications crew can all operate weapons if needed.

M.D.C. by Location:

Propellers(4) — 80 each

Tail (includes vertical stabilizer and rudder) — 210

Top **Turret** — 100

Tail **Turret** — 100

Chin **Turret** — 100

Ball **Turret** — 150

Wings(2) — 250 each

Engines (4) — 125 each

Main body — 590

Reinforced **pilot's** compartment — 100

Depleting the M.D.C. of a **wing**, or the main body knocks the plane out of the sky. If on a **ley** line, the plane floats gently to the ground. Otherwise, the pilot can attempt a crash landing at -40% (plane is wrecked but crew survives). Destroying the tail inflicts a -30% penalty on piloting skill. The plane can still fly with two engines destroyed. Each engine destroyed inflicts a -15% penalty to piloting and -25% to speed.

Speed: 330 mph (528 km) maximum. Cruising speed is about half that. Maximum altitude is 36,000 feet (11 km).

Range: Indefinite on a ley line; roughly 1100 miles (1760 km) on reserve. The magic engine uses 90 P.P.E. per hour and the storage cell holds 600 P.P.E. at one time.

Statistical Data:

Height: 19 feet (5.8 m)

Wingspan: 103 feet (31.4 m)

Length: 75 feet (22.9 m)

Weight: 36 tons fully loaded.

Cargo: Lockers with a dozen first aid and survival kits. Small areas for storage of the crew's personal items. Food and water for the crew for one week, about half a dozen rifles, twenty grenades, 25 **E-clips**, and other items.

Power Source: Magical, runs on ley line energy and has a P.P.E. reservoir.

Cost: Anywhere from 15 to 30 million credits, depending on weapons, features, and availability.

Weapon Systems:

Gun armament: The original Flying Fortress carried around a dozen .50 caliber heavy **machineguns**, which is how it earned its nickname. The new breed also mounts numerous guns, either singly or paired in turrets. The multiple guns give the giant bomber ample protection from missiles and other aircraft. They can also be employed in a secondary assault role.

1.) **Chin Turret:** Just below the large observation bubble in the nose is a turret that can rotate **180** degrees with a 90 degree arc of **fire**. Typically it is controlled by a single gunner. One of several configurations can be used. A single modified **Starfire** cannon, two of the heavy lasers, a pair of rail guns, or a mini-missile launcher can be built into this turret. For the Starfire cannon, use the data provided above, but with a 32 shot capacity. The lasers are unchanged; for the others, see the following. All the Fortress's turrets are designed to carry any of these combinations.

Twin Rail Guns: Two of the lighter-type rail guns are mounted and linked to fire together for increased damage.

Primary Purpose: Anti-aircraft

Secondary Purpose: Defense/anti-missile

Mega-Damage: A dual 80 round burst (40 per gun) inflicts 1D6X10+12 M.D. A twin half burst (20 rounds each) does 6D6 damage.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks of the user.

Range: 4000 feet (1220 m)

Payload: 6000 rounds, enough for 75 full damage twin bursts or **150 half** bursts.

Mini-missile Launcher: Alternatively, a box style mini-missile launcher can be installed into the chin turret. Many crews prefer this option, as it gives the bomber added protection from faster, smaller opponents.

Primary Purpose: **Anti-aircraft/missile**

Secondary Purpose: Anti-armor

Mega-Damage: Varies by missile type, usually 1D4X10 or 1D6X10.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of **two**, four, eight, or sixteen!

Range: About one mile.

Payload: 32. Only one load of 16 is available at a time. After the first load is fired, the launcher is automatically reloaded with a second set.

2.) **Top Turret:** This turret is located on top of the plane just behind the cockpit. It can rotate 360 degrees and elevate 90 degrees. It uses the same weapon layout as the chin turret (use data above) and usually has its own gunner.

3.) **Tail Turret:** The tail gunner is nestled in a small space at the rear of the plane where he controls the tail guns. The firing arc is more limited, allowing only a 60 degree arc in all directions. As with the other two weapon **turrets**, the design is adaptable for the mission, and several combinations are possible.

4.) **Ball Turret:** **Half way** back on the plane is a belly-mounted armored turret. The gunner rides inside the aircraft during **takeoff**, then climbs into the turret through a small hatch. Inside, conditions are cramped, and despite the great view, it is perhaps the most dangerous place to be in the plane during a fight. A few customers have replaced it with a custom built, remote controlled turret. In either case, the turret is capable

of full 360 degree rotation and a 135 degree arc of fire. Any of the previous weapon arrangements are possible, but the rail guns are preferred. The rail guns have an increased ammo capacity of 8000 rounds, equal to 100 full damage bursts or 200 half bursts. The mini-missile launcher is split into two smaller boxes, but with a greater payload of 48 missiles total (fired in volleys of 2, 4, 8 or 12).

- 5.) **Waist Guns:** Two-thirds of the way back on either side of the plane are two gunners operating a single cannon each. The guns are typically medium rail guns, though other types can be fitted. The mountings allow for a 75 degree arc of fire and, as an added feature, can be completely retracted into the plane. Like the ball turret gunner, the two waist gunners should always wear body armor. Also, because they have better visibility at these positions, one or both of the waist gunners are sometimes magic users, as well. The mage can easily see to engage the enemy with spells.

Primary Purpose: Anti-aircraft defense

Mega-Damage: A burst is 40 rounds and does **1D4X10 M.D.** Only fires bursts.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of the user's hand to hand attacks.

Range: 4000 feet (1220 m)

Payload: 2400 rounds per gun, enough for 60 bursts.

- 6.) **Optional Nose Guns:** Behind the nose bubble on either side of the plane is a mounting that can hold a small, rifle-style laser or a nova rifle. They are meant to be used by the navigator and a **gunner/bombardier** or other crew member. The mountings only permit a small arc of fire to the side and forward 60 degrees. These are basically just last ditch defense weapons, and are not always carried. For a description of the nova rifles, see **Federation of Magic™**.

Lasers:

Primary Purpose: Defense

Mega-Damage: 4D6 per blast.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of the user's hand to hand attacks.

Range: 2000 feet (610 m)

Payload: A large energy canister holds enough power for 50 shots.

- 7.) **Belly Mini-missile Launcher:** Just under the cockpit is a small, concealed mini-missile launcher. It's operated by one of the pilots and is reserved for self defense. Indeed, it can be a helpful surprise when attacked by the enemy. Payload is ten missiles and it fires in volleys of 1,2 or 5.

- 8.) **Main Bomb Bay:** The largest depository of **firepower** on the Fortress is the bomb bay. No longer does the **B-17** drop simple bombs. **Instead**, the new incarnation carries a high tech load of various missiles. Again, this may not compare to something like the Iron Heart Air Castle, but it is still impressive. Several sets of launchers are built into the bay to allow for a variety of missile types to be carried. The modular design allows for quick modifications or to custom tailor the load for the mission. A typical load is described below. Other configurations are possible.

Primary Purpose: Assault

Secondary Purpose: Defense

Mega-Damage: Varies by missile type: usually mini-missiles are plasma or armor piercing, medium and long range missiles tend to be armor piercing, nuclear multi-warhead or proton torpedoes.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of two, four, eight or ten for mini-missiles; singly or volleys of 2, 3, 4 or 6 for medium; singly or in pairs for long range.

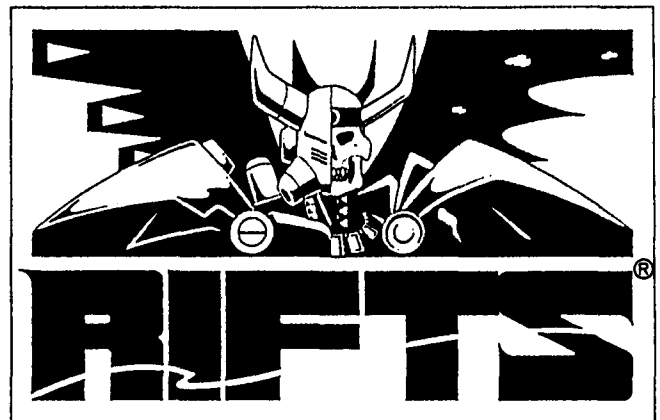
Range: Varies by type.

Payload: 6 long range, 18 medium or 40 mini missiles in two special pods.

- 9.) **Rear Chaff Dispenser:** A last ditch defense mechanism added to the plane for protection. Chaff or Blinding Flash flares are most common. Normal anti-missile flares are not really needed, as the Fortress has almost no infrared signature. Often, **TW** storm flares are used for anti-vampire purposes. Payload is thirty.

Note: Most TW Vintage planes also have magic spells placed on them that the pilot can call upon.

Bonuses: Includes all sensor, weapon, and design bonuses. +1 on initiative and +3 to strike with weapons. Usually equipped with the best radar and sensors available. The radar has a 100 mile (160 km) range and can track and identify 96 targets simultaneously. Also comes with terrain following sensors and look down, shoot down capability. Communications equipment is equal to robot vehicles.



The World of the Operator

By Eric Thompson

The role of the traveling mechanic is integral in the world of **Rifts®**. To a remote community, they can be the difference between filled stomachs or famine, in much the same way as champions can determine their survival or demise. As adventurers, Operators can determine the fate of a mercenary company or traveling party, holding a level of admiration and respect as well as being seen as a necessity, or at least a nice prize. Consequently, there are those mechanics who see this window of opportunity and abuse their trust to extract profit, glory, revenge or recognition, no matter what the means may be. Furthermore, tyrants and slave drivers have been known to pay a pretty penny for a competent Operator, and they are valued in the slave trades in Atlantis, among other places.

However, many of these men, women and children disguise their natural talents from the average person, in fear of **persecu-**

tion from the Coalition States and their sympathizers. The members of this "secret society of rogue mechanics," as the Coalition likes to put it (which includes Cyber-Docs, **Techno-Wizards**, **Psi-Techs**, and others like them), have been labeled terrorists that wish to extract their hardships on the working class of Coalition citizens, and **trouble** makers for Prosek's Campaign of Unity. Consequently, Coalition military law has branded these folks and it is not uncommon to see arrests made under false pretenses or for no reason whatsoever. These arrests include interrogation, as well as confiscation of any and all mechanical devices and other possessions that might lead to the **person's** conviction as a "**terrorist** against humanity." If any weapons, robotics, power armor, bionics or magic items are found during one of these "crack-downs," the mechanic is forced to undergo more interrogation, often including torture, imprisonment, and the possibility of execution as an enemy of the people, or in collaboration with arming and supplying enemy forces. It appears the Coalition will stop at nothing to see to the success of their military campaign and genocide.

Under the same classification as practitioners of magic, **scholars**, rogue scientists and psychics, Operators and mechanics alike have been forced to render their services underground or from within an active mercenary company for **protection**. communities near CS borders have seen their only town mechanics pack up and leave in order to avoid jail, most leading the life of a hermit, helping in secrecy whenever possible. A common example would be someone **in** need of engineering assistance leaving damaged item(s) in a remote area for a day or two with a payment of food, clothing, or other survival equipment or supplies. When the repairs are **finished**, the owner is contacted anonymously and the item(s) are retrieved.

Bitterness towards the CS has been witnessed by greedy, power hungry Operators as they have been chased into the shadows. In turn, many have become the very thing they've been labeled and have launched sabotage missions against patrols, outposts, and even large Coalition military bases, running right into the outstretched arms of Coalition propaganda. Citizens and sympathizers who see the actions of these Operators, exaggerated by the Propaganda **Department**, have become even more **obligated** to turn in a rogue mechanic. Luckily, communities with distance from the Coalition have been mostly unaffected by the brunt of these actions. **Still**, the occasional mechanic has **succumbed** to the pathetic attempt of some copy-cat to gain the attention **of the CS**.

The Psychic Operator

Over time, it has become noticeable that the psionic abilities of the Operator have grown increasingly diverse and powerful as well as unique. The following O.C.C.s explore the more common of the Operator genre. People like Psi-Techs will often see the **psy-mechanic** as a "kindred spirit" of sorts, often being of greater potential than just a simple mechanic. Techno-Wizards see themselves in the same boat as the Operator, with both directing their innate abilities towards technology and mechanics with amazing results. While ordinary psychics see their abilities directed towards the living, psychic Operators find their powers are focused solely on mechanics! *For Instance:* A psychic with the power of Presence Sense will be able to estimate the number of potential living enemies in an area. An Operator, on the other hand, will be able to estimate the number of war machines,

weapons, including mines, and miscellaneous equipment like radios, flashlights, computers, etc. Listed below are the different types of Operator that have evolved through time, their percentage of psychic ability, and number of random or chosen psychic powers. **G.M. Note:** During game play and the advancement of the character, it may be appropriate to assign future psychic powers that **reflect** the experiences the character has endured. This is a more realistic way of dealing with it. The reason there is a choice of choosing or randomly rolling for first level psionics is to let the player control the creation of the character, or use the **randomness** to form quirks in their background.

Operator (Wilderness/City): 01-40%, Choose or roll for three random powers. Roll an additional random power at third, seventh, and twelfth level.

Telemechanics Note: The player can opt to exchange three of the Operator's psionic powers for the Super Psionic power of Telemechanics instead of rolling or choosing on the Operator list below. Psionic abilities must be selected when available and cannot be "saved" for a later time.

Random Psionic Powers: Roll the percentile dice the appropriate number of times as listed in the O.C.C. If the same power is rolled twice, just re-roll. The term "**(AI)**" means the power not only works on mechanical devices like guns and bicycles, but artificially intelligent machines like computers as well, including those of power armor and robot vehicles. **Note:** This table can also be used with the **Techno-Wizard** and Psi-Tech character classes.

01-06% Manipulate Electrical Devices (AI): A strange brew of Telekinesis and **Electrokinesis**, the character can, through focused concentration, exhibit force over mechanical objects. This ability allows the Operator to turn on and off light **switches**, computers, televisions, radios, blenders, and so on. He can also manipulate the controls of such devices like volume, channel selection, tuners, speakers, dim lights, and so on. Up to a dozen of these simple actions can be performed in a single melee.

In addition, the Operator can manipulate and move mechanical objects with sheer will and focused psychic energy. This is a relatively weak form of telekinesis, but the character can move, twirl or suspend any small object and have it wait



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till it is needed. Up to six different mechanical devices can be controlled in this manner (counts as one melee action), so long as they don't weigh more than 8 pounds (3.6 kg). **Still**, things as insignificant as mechanical pens or pencils could be held suspended around the character as he writes or works on some project. Range: 50 feet plus 6 feet (15.24 m plus 1.83 m) per level of experience. Duration: 2 minutes per level of experience. I.S.P. Cost: 4

07-15% **Object Read (AI)**: Limited to the history and operation of the device or weapon.

16-25% **Resist Fatigue**

26-31% Sense Magic (Special!): This power enables the Operator to sense and locate any **Techno-Wizard** items (even if not activated), machines possessed by supernatural entities, rune and holy weapons, etc., in the immediate area. The only catch is that it applies only to magically enhanced weapons or machines, not practitioners of magic or the supernatural, but this does allow the psychic to sense things like mystic amulets and talismans. Range: 60 feet (18.28 m) plus 2 feet (0.61 m) per level of experience. Duration: 2 minutes per level of experience. I.S.P. Cost: 2

32-35% **Sense Psionics (Special!)**: Similar to Sense Magic above but applies only to psionically enchanted devices including **psynetics**, **psy-technology**, and **Techno-Wizard** devices charged with I.S.P.! However, the character can sense the presence of **Crazies** and **Psynetic Crazies** as well as those augmented by psionic-inducing cybernetic implants and will be able to calculate how many implants or the degree of augmentation the sensed possesses. Furthermore, the character can tell when mechanics are possessed or controlled by entities or other psychics (including telekinesis, all telemechanic abilities, and other Operator-oriented **psionics**). Range: 60 feet (18.28 m) plus 2 feet (0.61 m) per level of experience. Duration: 2 minutes per level of experience. I.S.P. Cost: 2

36-42% Speed Reading

43-49% Sixth Sense (AD): Same as the sensitive power but only applies to technological dangers, like an explosion or weapon fire.

50-54% Total Recall

55-60% Machine Ghost

61-67% **Presence Sense (AD)**: Works the same way as the sensitive psychic ability but applies only to mechanical devices and weapons.

However, the character can change focus within the power's duration to estimate various systems. Consequently, this is limited only to distinguishing between power armor, robots, computer systems, energy weapons or conventional weapons, and whether they are human-made or alien.

67-73% **Sense Machines (AD)**: Like Sense Magic before it, Sense Machines will allow the character to pinpoint and track an *artificially intelligent* machine, meaning it is limited to computer controlled devices and machinery, like radar. Inactive power armor, weapons, or robots will not register to the Operator, nor will cybernetics or bionics. However, if a power armor is activated it will register to him, as will borgs, since many of their functions like breathing, blood flow, and movement are controlled by micro-computers (sure, the brain controls the limb, but the **bio-electrical** impulses must first be deciphered by the computer in order for the limb to respond. Such an insignificant detail, but just enough for the Operator to lock onto; this **doesn't** apply to Bio-Borgs).

74-90% Mind Block: Adds +2 to save vs all mystic or psychic attacks from enchanted weapons, including rune weapons, bio-wizardry weapons, staves from millennium trees, etc. The bonus is also applicable to cursed mechanical objects or rune weapons of contrasting alignments (save vs magic plus the bonus to avoid **activation/damage!**) Duration: 6 minutes per level of experience. **I.S.P.** Cost: 4 (per activation period).

90-94% Telemechanic Mental Operation or Paralysis (Choose one)

95-00% Resist Electricity (See Electrokinesis)

I.S.P. Base:

Operator (city/wilderness): Base I.S.P. is M.E. plus 3D6+6, with an additional 1D4 I.S.P. per level of experience.

S.D.C. Base:

Psychic Operators: 5D6 S.D.C.

Non-Psychic Operators: 5D6+10 S.D.C.

Mechanical Intimidation

All Operators, psychic or not, are completely **unintimidated** by machinery. Whether it be a Skelebot, demonic borg, gargoyle borg or gigantic robot, they instinctively know it is all or mostly mechanical and feel not so much in awe, unless it is a truly magnificent work of art. Likewise, the individuals can intuitively sense what any problem may be and have an idea of how to fix it. For this reason, the Operator suffers only *half* of the usual penalties associated with dealing with alien technology and **Techno-Wizardry**.

Expanded Operator O.C.C.s

City Operator O.C.C.

The City Operator is a mechanic (psychic or not) who has grown up on the streets of an urban **area**, whether that be under the massive steel beams of a fortress city, shady, **grungy** streets of a 20th century style city, or in the **burbs**. Whatever the case, the character is likely to be a **down-sider** who lives his life in near squalor with a wrench in one hand and a gun in the other. Like other City Rats, these Operators tend to live for the moment, spending their personal wages as quickly as profit comes in and staying out 'til all hours of the night. It should be noted, however, that most city Operators have an eye for business and are not likely to reach into the shop funds for spending, gambling, or debt paying cash (the latter can be an exception to the rule).

These Operators are usually young kids who were trained by a traveling Operator or family mechanic, or went to technical school and developed psionics. While they love their trade, prolonged problem solving is not their forte, and unless extremely **important**, the character is not likely to spend an evening tinkering with complex mechanics (unless, of course, they're obsessed) when they can be out partying or wooing the opposite sex. Still, like other Operators, the character is likely to carry his tools around with **him**, almost jumping at the chance to use his skills (especially on a slow day). They can usually be seen with their friends, tinkering with some small piece of equipment or machinery, or otherwise fiddling with their tools.



In fortress cities, where the military or government supplies the mechanics maintaining the civilian machines, these characters can get pretty bored. They may stick around if the night scene is to their liking, but are generally too lazy to get a job that doesn't involve mechanical engineering, computer repair, or fine tuning equipment. Likewise, their pride in their work makes them arrogant enough to refuse to work under "incompetent" mechanics (which often means non-psychics and classroom-taught mechanics). Of course, when one is starving and broke, exceptions can sometimes be made.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. of 9, a high M.A., P.S., and P.P. are also helpful, but not required.

O.C.C. Bonuses:

- +1 on initiative at levels 2, 6 and 12.
- +1 to strike and parry with blunt weapons.
- +1 to save vs Horror Factor and intimidation at levels 1, 3, 7, 10 and 14.

Psychic Operators are an additional +1 to save vs horror factor, +1 to save vs possession. About 40% of all City Operators are psychic.

O.C.C. Skills:

- Language: Native (96%)
- Literacy: Native (+30%)
- Basic Math (+20%)
- Advanced Math (+15%)
- Radio: Basic (+15%)
- Pilot: Motorcycle (+20%)
- Pilot: Automobile (+15%)
- Pilot: One of Choice (+15%)
- Computer Repair (+10%)
- Electrical Engineer (+20%)
- Mechanical Engineer (+20%)
- Weapons Engineer (+15%)
- Read Sensory Equipment (+20%)
- Streetwise (+14%) & Drugs (+10%)
- Recognize Weapon Quality (+15%)
- W.P.: Blunt
- W.P.: One of Choice.
- Hand to Hand: Basic
- Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Expert at the cost of one "other" skill or to Martial Arts or Assassin (if an evil alignment) at the cost of two "other" skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select 10 other skills, but at least two must be selected from Mechanical. Plus select two additional skills at level three, two at level six, one at level nine, and one at level twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

- Communications: Any (+15%)
- Domestic: Any (+5% to Cook and Play Musical Instrument).
- Cowboy: None
- Electrical: Any (+10%)
- Espionage: None
- Mechanical: Any (+10%)
- Medical: First Aid or Paramedic, but the latter counts as two skill selections.
- Military: Any (+15%)
- Physical: Any (+5%; +10% to SCUBA), except Acrobatics and Gymnastics.
- Pilot: Any (+10%)
- Pilot Related: Any (+10%)

Rogue: Any (+10%, +15% to Pick Locks).

Science: Any (+5%), except Anthropology and Astronomy.

Technical: Any (+10%)

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: None

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select six secondary skills from the list above with the usual secondary skill rules. Additionally, at levels three, six, nine, and fourteen, the character can select two additional secondary skills.

Standard Equipment: Portable tool kit with an electric screwdriver and additional interchangeable heads, assortment of conventional wrenches as well as a few socket wrenches (different sizes) with various interchangeable heads, large tool kit, soldering iron, laser torch for welding, laser scalpel, a roll of duct tape, two rolls of electrical tape, pen flashlight, large flashlight (rechargeable; indefinite use), a dozen flares, 200 feet (61m) of super lightweight rope (total weight 10 lbs/4.5 kg), couple of knives, notebook, portable disc recorder and 5, two-hour disks, portable language translator, protective goggles, work gloves, one pair of thin doctors' gloves, and similar tools of the trade.

The character's wardrobe can be made up of almost anything, but he or she will have three sets of casual clothes and hiking boots or shoes, two sets of working clothes, a set of cold-weather clothes, boots and possibly even a parka or large coat, a set of dress clothes and fatigues (any type, even military if it suits your fancy).

Weapons: Select two energy or conventional firearms of choice with two clips of ammunition, and two ancient weapons of choice (usually blunt weapons).

The character's vehicle can be any kind of non-magical vehicle including military vehicles, robots and power armor (The character must have the appropriate piloting skill to operate these special vehicles, and is limited to *basic* combat). The Operator's distinguished position in society, combined with his or her natural abilities and mechanical skill, means that the mechanic can get and repair some state-of-the-art transportation. Even more, conventional vehicles in **their** possession are likely to be souped-up or modified with armor or weapons. For some reason, it seems that most Operators prefer fast mobile vehicles like hover cycles and assault bikes, or large, powerful, but comparatively slow vehicles like the spider-skull walker and **Ulti-Max**. **Note:** If the Operator lives in Coalition-controlled territory, he is not likely to have a large military vehicle, unless he has it hidden very well.

Special Equipment: City Operator: Workshop with heavy welders, full size computer, laser printer and modem, nice CD sound system, TV and VCD player/recorder, separate mini-kitchen with electric stove (two burners) and mini-refrigerator. The character's workshop is often his home.

Money: Operators usually have little cash available. Most of their money and trade items go into their supply of tools, equipment, fuel and vehicle. The city Operator will have **4D4x1000** in flat credit. Non-psychic Operators receive an additional 2D4x100+200 credits to their name.

Cybernetics: None to start. However, many Operators do have cybernetic implants installed to help mem in their work. These are usually limited to sensors and optic systems. The majority prefer to *use* machines in their work, not become a machine themselves.

Psionic Powers: See above section for details on the psychic Operator.

Wilderness Operator O.C.C.

Called the "Wandering" or "**Nomad**" Operator by some, this class of mechanic gladly pushes aside the lust and sin of the big lights in favor for life in the great outdoors. Because they dislike cities and those from them, the Wilderness Operator's scholastic and classroom skill is a little diluted, but he has had first-hand experiences with mechanical systems and technology. So while a technical officer can recite the schematics of a circuit or hydraulic system in technical jargon, the wilderness person can picture the schematics but know by experience and intuition what everything does even if it's not a by-the-book job. This evens out the scales.

One problem that tends to strike the Wilderness Operator is the isolation of the open spaces. The character spends most of his time **alone**, and can have a tendency to talk to himself, the trees and furry woodland animals. In short, the mechanic gets eccentric. When around others, he can be a blabber mouth. Anyone slightly interested in mechanics or his opinion in general will suddenly find themselves overwhelmed with opinion and fact. It's up to the listener to thread them out. Of course, if the

listener is actually interested in what the Operator has to say, a lot can be learned from apprenticeship or just hanging around the person.

In light of the lifestyle this sort of character leads, they have developed an ability to assess machinery, weapons and mechanical quality by mere sight! This skill is a mix of intuition (and **psionics**, if applicable) and experience.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. of 9, P.E. of 12. A high P.S. and P.P. are helpful, but neither is mandatory.

O.C.C. Bonuses:

Add 2D6 to S.D.C.

+1 on initiative at levels 2, 6, and 11.

+1 to parry with blunt weapons.

+1 to save vs Horror Factor and intimidation at levels 1, 2, 5, 8, and 10 and 13.

+1 to save vs disease.



Psychic Operators are an additional +1 to save vs horror factor, +1 to save vs possession. 40% of all Wilderness Operators are psychic.

O.C.C. Skills:

Language: Native (86%)

Language: Choose two others (+15%).

Literacy: Native (+20%)

Basic Math (+20%)

Radio: Basic (+15%)

Pilot: Horsemanship (general; +10%) or Hover Cycle.

Pilot: Two others of Choice (+15%).

Computer Repair (+10%)

Electrical Engineer (+20%)

Mechanical Engineer (+20%)

Weapons Engineer (+15%)

Read Sensory Equipment (+20%)

Recognize Weapon Quality (+20%)

Wilderness Survival (+15%)

Cook (+15%)

Fishing (+10%)

W.P.: Blunt

W.P.: Two of Choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Expert at the cost of one "other" skill or to Martial Arts or Assassin (if an evil alignment) at the cost of three "other" skills.

Special Skill: Assess Mechanical Quality: Distance: This amazing skill allows the character to view machinery at a distance and estimate the physical quality/condition of conventional vehicles as well as robots and power armor. This skill also gives the Operator an idea of whether or not he or she can fix it if need be. Of course, Operators can "fix anything, even if it ain't broke." **Base Skill:** 42% +6% per level of experience.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select 10 other skills, but at least one must be selected from mechanical and one from physical. Plus select two additional skills at level three, two at level six, one at level nine, and one at level twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any

Domestic: Any (+10%; +15% to cultural games like chess or Go).

Cowboy: Any

Electrical: Any (+8%)

Espionage: Detect Concealment and Tracking only (+10%).

Mechanical: Any (+8%)

Medical: First Aid (no bonus), or Holistic Medicine (+20%) only, but the latter counts as two skill selections.

Military: Any (+10%)

Physical: Any (+10%), except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any (+5%), except robots and any aircraft.

Pilot Related: Any

Rogue: Any

Science: Math and Chemistry only (+5%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any

Wilderness: Any (+10%)

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select five secondary skills from the list above, with the usual secondary skill rules. Additionally, at levels two, six, eight, and twelve, the character can select two additional secondary skills.

Standard Equipment: Portable tool kit with an electric screwdriver and additional interchangeable heads, assortment of conventional wrenches as well as a few socket wrenches (different sizes) with various interchangeable heads, large tool kit, soldering iron, laser torch for welding, laser scalpel, a roll of duct **tape**, two rolls of electrical tape, pen **flashlight**, large **flashlight** (rechargeable; indefinite use), a dozen flares, 200 feet (61m) of super lightweight rope (total weight 10 **lbs/4.54** kg), couple of knives, notebook, portable disc recorder and 5, two-hour disks, portable language translator, protective goggles, work gloves, one pair of thin doctors' **gloves, knapsack**, tent and bedroll, fire starter kit (**windproof** lighter and synthetic quick-burning wood starters), axe for cutting wood, mallet, six wooden and six iron stakes, utility knife, animal skinning knife, fishing line and hooks (pole optional), animal snares, and six flares. Infrared binoculars with digital distancing readout, a pair of passive night vision goggles, and a telescopic cross-hair sight for a gun (x8 magnification, +1 to strike with aimed shots).

The character will have three sets of wilderness style clothes (can be anything from buckskin to military fatigues) and hiking boots or shoes, two sets of working clothes, a set of cold-weather clothes, boots and possibly even a parka or large coat, and a set of dress clothes, helmet or hat, sunglasses or tinted visor. Armor is usually light to allow maximum movement and stealth.

Weapons can include swords, knives, axes, or bow and arrow, to energy weapons and guns. Select one type of modern weapon with 1D4 clips of **ammunition**, two ancient style weapons and one **non-energy** weapon of choice with two clips of ammunition if applicable.

The character's vehicle can be any kind of non-magical vehicle including military vehicles, robots and power armor (The character must have the appropriate piloting skill to operate these special vehicles, and is limited to *basic* combat). However, Wilderness Operators tend to stick to trucks, jeeps and other off-road vehicles that are likely to be souped-up or modified with armor or weapons.

Special Equipment: Wilderness Operator: Portable energy recharging unit (an expensive piece of equipment) to recharge electrical devices and use as an energy source or generator. Weapon **E-clips** can also be recharged at a rate of 2D4 blasts per hour for laser or ion weapons, 1D6 blasts per hour for plasma or 1D4 blasts per hour for particle beam weapons. Size: Roughly 3 x 3 x 3 feet (914.4 x 914.4 x 914.4 mm). **Weight:** 24 pounds (10.8 kg). Market Cost: 60,000 credits.

Money: Wilderness Operators will have **5D6x100** in credit and **3D4x1000** in black market salable items. Non-psycho Operators receive an additional **3D4x100** in black market items. The character is likely to spend his money on weapons, repairs, ammunition or other trinkets as fast as he can make it.

Cybernetics: None to start. Most Wilderness Operators tend to avoid augmentation through bionics, but may agree to the use of sensors and optic systems. The majority prefer to *use* machines in their **work**, not become a machine themselves.

Psionic Powers: See above section for details on the psychic Operator.

City & Wilderness

Operator Experience

1. 0,000-1,900
2. 1,901-3,800
3. 3,801-7,300
4. 7,301-14,300
5. 14,301-21,000
6. 21,001-30,000
7. 30,001-40,000
8. 40,001-53,000
9. 53,001-73,000
10. 73,001-103,000
11. 103,001-138,000
12. 138,001-188,000
13. 188,001-238,000
14. 238,001-288,000
15. 288,001-328,000



The Armorer O.C.C.

By Jeremy Clements

The term "Armorer" in the world of **Rifts**® is an unofficial classification for wandering adventurers who specialize with weapons; however, they are more of a cross between an extremely skilled soldier and an Operator. Generally, these are highly intelligent men and women who can literally do anything with a gun: shoot, strip, rebuild and modify. They are adventurous travelers who are constantly inventing, modifying, and collecting different gadgets and weapons. **Note:** This class is extremely common among the Three **Galaxies/Phase** World setting, but they are usually referred to as "Trouble-Shooters."

Alignment: Any (Evil alignments are fairly rare).

Races Allowed: Humans and Dwarves make exceptional Armorers, however any race that is mechanically inclined, can develop psionics, and is fairly intelligent can be Armorers.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 14; high M.E. or P.P. Recommended, but not required.

O.C.C. Abilities:

1. Approximately 30% of all Armorers are minor psionics. They can choose 3 powers from any of the three non-super categories or the super psionic power of Telemechanics (or consult the **Operators'** Random Psionics table above). **Base I.S.P.:** ME. +10, +1D6 I.S.P./Level.

2. **Special Skill — Weapons and Armor Engineer:** Base skill of 45% +5%/Level. Essentially a more advanced version of the Weapons Engineer skill. The Armorer O.C.C. can **build/repair** personal body armor from scratch or from pieces. This includes everything from Dog Pack armor to armored **exoskeletons** (not power armor). Phase World Trouble-Shooters can work with personal force fields as well. Human sized weapons can be built, modified, and stripped. Repairing power-armor or robots is only possible if the damage is less than 20% of the starting **M.D.C.** of the vehicle. Normal vehicles like cars and hover cycles can be repaired normally. The Armorer can also repair melee weapons, and can build them if he has a Weapon Proficiency in the desired item. Anything beyond what is listed here is beyond the normal capabilities of the Armorer. Other-worldly or alien items add their full normal penalties to this skill. As a "catch-all" guideline, if it uses **E-clips** or grenades then an armorer is capable of at least understanding an item. (Note: **Naruni** plasma cartridges cannot be duplicated or recharged, however the cartridge guns can be repaired easily).

3. The most interesting aspect of the Armorer is his collection of gadgets. The Armorer O.C.C. starts with up to 6 gadgets and creates/modifies an additional one every level. A gadget is usually a small, easily concealed object that has a single useful purpose. To avoid abuse, the G.M. should keep a close eye on anything that a character creates or modifies. However, an imaginative player **and/or** G.M. can make this an interesting and useful ability. Players and G.M.s should always work together to create the most interesting items. Examples of this ability are:

1. Laser Scalpel incorporated into a (bulky) Swiss army knife.
2. A Fusion Block modified to be sound sensitive and made to look like a large belt buckle.
3. 1 Dozen Super Glue Grenades. Dodge or be stuck (same effects as the Carpet of Adhesion spell). The character must have access to a laboratory to create these.
4. Derringer-sized grapple gun. Fires a 50 foot (15.2m) micro-cable with grapnel that will attach to most surfaces (500lbs/238kg weight limit; damage is 1 M.D.; 1 meter-per-second retraction).
5. Auto-Skeleton Key (or Electronic Card). Has Pick Locks skill at 30% or provides a bonus equal to the Armorer's skill level.
6. Collapsible **Vibro-Saber** (2D4 M.D.) -1 to parry / +20% to conceal.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 P.S., +1D6 P.E., +2 to Parry and Dodge, +2 vs Horror Factor.

O.C.C. Skills:

Weapons & Armor Engineer (See Above)

Basic Math (+10%)

Language: Two of Choice (+10%).

Chemistry (+5%)

Concealment (+20%)
 Radio: Basic (+10%)
 Basic Electronics (+20%)
 Automobile Mechanics (+10%)
 Demolitions (+10%)
 Pilot: Two of Choice (+15%)
 Choose Two Modern W.P.
 Choose One Ancient W.P.
 Hand to Hand: Expert

Hand to Hand: Expert may be changed to Martial Arts (or Assassin if evil) at the cost of one "other" skill.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Player choose 6 other skills from the following, with an additional 2 skills at levels 3, 7 and 10.

Communications: Any (10%)
 Domestic: Any
 Electrical: Any (+5%)
 Espionage: Any (+5%)
 Mechanical: Any (+5%)
 Medical: First Aid or Paramedic only.
 Military: Any (+5%)
 Technical: Any
 Physical: Any except Acrobatics.
 Pilot: Any except robots (+5%).
 Pilot Related: Any (+5%)
 Rogue: Any (+5%)
 Science: Advanced Math and Analytical Chemistry only.
 W.P. : Any
 Wilderness: Any

Secondary Skills: Choose 6 from the above list. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parenthesis (). All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Starting Weapons:

Receives one weapon to reflect each O.C.C. Weapon Proficiency (3). Also has 1D4+1 **E-clips** (or Ammo clips) for each that require them.

Standard Equipment: Two suits of personal body armor (60-100 M.D.C.) or one suit of exoskeleton armor, with 2 minor modifications each (or 3 with exoskeleton suit). These modifications are usually hidden compartments for E-clips, tools, or small weapons. Other equipment usually carried: Multi-Optics Helmet with armor, survival pack (see NG Survival Pack in **Rifts Mercenaries™** for description), portable tool kit, several rolls of duct tape, portable computer, and a **Wilk's** Laser Torch. Phase World **Trouble-Shooters** might also have additional equipment at the G.M.'s discretion.

Vehicle (Rifts® Earth) — Good **Hovercycle**, Motorcycle, Automobile, or occasionally a Robot Horse (never power armor) to start.

Vehicle (Three Galaxies/Phase World™) — Usually medium to small shuttle with minor **FTL** capabilities. Occasionally uses **stripped-down** fighters.

Starting Money: 3d4x1000 credits and 1d4x5000 credits in Black **Market/Contraband** items to start. They tend to make money as easily as they spend it.

Cybernetics: Non-psychics can start with 3 cybernetic systems, but psychic Armorers shy away from cybernetics and do not use anything but bio-systems for medical purposes.

Armorer Experience

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. 0,000-1,950 | 9. 56,001-77,000 |
| 2. 1,951-3,900 | 10. 77,001-108,000 |
| 3. 3,901-7,500 | 11. 108,001-147,000 |
| 4. 7,501-14,800 | 12. 147,001-198,000 |
| 5. 14,801-21,500 | 13. 198,001-249,000 |
| 6. 21,501-31,000 | 14. 249,001-300,000 |
| 7. 31,001-42,000 | 15. 300,001-341,000 |
| 8. 42,001-56,000 | |

Spatial Mage Additions

Optional Material for Rifts®

By Steve Trustrum

The following ability was erroneously excluded from the "Spatial Mage Abilities" section of the Spatial Mage O.C.C. in **issue #3 of The Rifter™**.

7. Detect Spatial Anomalies

Just as a normal person can sense the wind upon his skin or the temperature of his environment, so too can the Spatial Mage sense dimensional anomalies or abnormalities, such as dimensional pockets and dimensional realm entrances. The chance of the Spatial Mage detecting such a spatial event depends on its origin. The Spatial Mage gains +1 to Perception for the sake of detecting such dimensional anomalies at levels **2, 4, 7, 9, 12** and 15.

- Spatial / Dimensional magic that alters reality's laws (e.g.: the Alter Environment spell or redirect damage spells): requires a successful moderate **Perception** roll and can be detected within 1,000 feet (305 m) per level of experience.
- Spatial / Dimensional magic that creates a dimensional anomaly (e.g. the Dimensional Pocket or Dimensional Vortex spells): requires a successful easy Perception roll and can be detected within 2,500 feet (762 m) per level of experience.
- Spatial / Dimensional magic that warps reality or space (e.g.: the **Teleport** or Bottomless Pit spells): requires a successful easy Perception roll and can be detected within 2,500 feet (762 m) per level of experience.
- Spatial / Dimensional magic that the Game Master deems does not fit into any other category: requires a successful Perception roll ranging from easy to challenging, depending upon the Game **Master's** judgement. The range of detection is 25 feet (7.6 m) plus 5 feet (**1.5** m) per level of experience.
- An entrance to another dimension, including those to another Spatial Mage's Dimensional Realm: requires a successful moderate Perception roll and can be detected within **100** feet (30.5 m) plus 25 feet (7.6 m) per level of experience.



New Spatial Magic Spells

While we're here, Steve came up with some more Spatial Magic spells we thought you might enjoy.

Level 2

Applied Effect Manipulation

Range: 20 feet (6.1 m) plus 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.

Duration: 1D4 melees, plus 1 melee per level of experience, or in special circumstances (such as a bullet), until the target reaches its destination.

Saving Throw: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: 20

A spell of interesting and varied results, Applied **Effect** Manipulation, as the name implies, allows the caster to alter the way in which the spatial constraints of the current dimension / reality affect a certain object or person. By manipulating space itself, it is possible to alter the effects that these constraints have on the object and thus alter the way in which the object in turn affects the reality around it. For instance, it is possible to slow

down or speed up an object, be it a car, a bullet or a walking man, by changing such factors as wind resistance, applied muscle / engine force, **friction**, etc. It is also possible to change how gravity affects an object or to alter the results of kinetic energy when applied by the object to its environment. Only one of the following aspects of the spell can be utilized per casting.

- Slow down / speed up an object: this aspect of the spell speeds up or slows down the target at a maximum rate equal to plus or minus 25% per level of the caster's experience. Slowing an object to 0% or less of its original speed causes it to appear frozen in mid-motion for the duration of the spell. Similarly, the caster can speed up the target. Because of this increase in speed, any damage caused by an impact / ram is also increased by the same percentage.
- Increase / decrease kinetic force: the target of this spell will have its kinetic potential increased by a maximum of plus or minus 25% per level of the caster's experience. What this means in game terms is that any physical blow landed by the object during the spell's duration will have any damage caused increased or decreased, respectively, by the rate defined at the spell's casting. If decreased to 0% or lower of its normal ability, such physical blows transfer no kinetic force and so do no damage.
- Increase / decrease gravitational constraints: by means of this aspect of the spell, the effects of gravity upon the target **are** either increased or decreased by plus or minus 25% per level of the caster. This either increases or reduces the leaping distance / height of the character and also either lowers or increases the amount of damage taken by a fall, respectively, by the percentage that gravity has been altered. Furthermore, for every 25% that gravity has been altered for the **object**, if it is a living being, it will either tire 10% faster (if gravity was increased) or 10% slower (if gravity was decreased). Should gravity be reduced to 0% (0 G's) or less then the character will float about as though he were in the vacuum of space, while the increasing of gravity to 3 G's (the equivalent of 3 times Earth gravity) will pin the object to the ground.

Level 3

Dimensional Tracker

Range: By touch; dimension-spanning.

Casting Time: 1D4 melees.

Duration: 1 hour per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: 35

Normally it would be difficult to follow and track a target through the many dimensions of the Megaverse, especially if the prey were to do several rapid dimensional "jumps" to throw his hunter off of his trail. However, through use of this spell and a trained tracker to whom the spell's benefits are bestowed, such is no longer the case. The recipient of this spell, the intended tracker, must be touched for the entire casting of this spell, during which time the Spatial Mage doing the casting attunes himself to the Megaverse, acting as a dowsing rod for the spell recipient. Afterwards, the tracker is capable of following the target that is to be tracked into the other **dimension(s)** by means of the standard tracking skill with a bonus of +10% to all rolls. This dimensional tracking ability not only allows the tracker, upon a

successful roll, to determine which dimension the prey fled to but, with a second successful tracking roll, the general area (**4D6x10** miles) the prey appeared at or, with a third successful roll, the exact location. This spell only allows tracking through dimensions and so, once in the same dimension as the prey, the tracker must rely upon more orthodox means of finding the target, unless the target once again travels to another dimension while the spell is still active.

Dislocated Perception

Range: Varies, see below. It can only affect the caster.

Duration: 1 melee per level of experience.

Saving Throw: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: 27

As dimensional and spatial constraints mean very little to the Spatial Mage, so, too, do the restrictions that these elements place on the senses. Thanks to their dimensional **attunement**, a Spatial Mage can see, hear and smell (**sorry**, no tasting or touching as both still require physical contact) an area despite being nowhere near the location. While this may at first seem like an advanced form of clairvoyance, it is much more; while clairvoyance relegates the participant to a role much like someone watching **television**, this spell allows for a total sensory immersion as though the caster were physically present at the viewed location. The limits of what can be seen, heard and smelled from the location chosen by the caster to be perceived are limited only by the normal constraints, such as geography, winds, etc. that would normally affect a person that was actually there. Furthermore, the Spatial Mage can tell the distance, down to a thousandth of an inch, from the place where his physical body is and anything that he can sense by means of this spell. A benefit of this is that the caster can use this method to **determine** what he can affect for spells that are limited by factors such as "can only affect areas the caster has actually been to or seen." What this means is that spells such as **Wormhole** can be cast, allowing the Spatial Mage to place the destination point in a place the caster has never actually been to, by means of this spell alone. The range up to which the Spatial Mage can choose a location to be perceived depends entirely upon the caster's level of experience.

1st level: up to 100 miles (160 km).

3rd level: up to 10,000 miles (16,000 km).

4th level: up to 1 million miles (1.6 million km).

6th level: up to 1 light year.

9th level: up to 100 light years.

11th level: anywhere in that dimension.

13th level: anywhere in any dimension.

However, because the Spatial Mage is being bombarded with sensory stimuli from two separate locations simultaneously, his actions are penalized while the spell is in effect: **-25%** to all skills, **-5** to strike, parry and dodge, **-3** to roll with impact and initiative. The spell may be canceled by the caster at any time.

Level 8

Anti-Space

Range: 50 feet (15.2 m), plus 10 feet (3 m) per level of the caster's experience.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Varies, see table below (minimum of 10).

Just as there is anti-matter, so too is there "anti-space," a dangerous and unstable universal element that directly opposes the very nature of dimensional / spatial energy. Similarly, just as anti-matter reacts to matter with a tremendous explosion, anti-space react to dimensional / spatial energy with an explosion of similar magnitude. This is not to say that as soon as anti-space exists within a dimension that it will explode, but that it requires contact with actual dimensional energy, which exists in an area of anomalous dimensional conformity such as that which is provided by many examples of Spatial Magic. This catalytic dimensional energy exists in any mystical or naturally occurring anomaly, such as a rift, **wormhole**, dimensional realm gateway, dimensional pocket, etc. The anti-space, once created, must instantly be mentally directed towards a target or it will disperse harmlessly.

When such a contact between these two opposing energies does happen, there is an explosion that expends the anti-space and has a good chance of destroying the anomaly that served to cause the reaction. In order to determine if the anomaly is destroyed, compare the amount of P.P.E. used to create the anti-space (as much as the caster desires, with a minimum of **10**) to the list below. The result is the percentage chance that the concentration of anti-space that is created by the caster is large enough to destroy such an anomaly, as well as the damage to the surrounding area that will be caused by the resulting explosion if the anti-space is successful at destroying its target.

P.P.E. Used: 10

Minor Anomaly — 50% (3D10 M.D. to a 5 **foot/1.5** m area)

Medium Anomaly — 25% (5D10 M.D. to a 7 **foot/2.1** m area)

Major Anomaly — 2% (**1D8x10+30** M.D. to a 15 **foot/4.6** m area)

Extreme Anomaly — 0%

P.P.E. Used: 25

Minor Anomaly — 60% (5D10 M.D. to a 5 **foot/1.5** m area)

Medium Anomaly — 35% (**1D8x10+20** M.D. to a 10 **foot/3** m area)

Major Anomaly — 5% (**1D10x10+100** M.D. to a 25 **foot/7.6** m area)

Extreme Anomaly — 1% (1D10x10+200 M.D. to a 50 **foot/15.2** m area)

P.P.E. Used: 55

Minor Anomaly — 80% (**1D8x10** M.D. to a 10 **foot/3** m area)

Medium Anomaly — 50% (**1D10x10+40** M.D. to a 20 **foot/6.1** m area)

Major Anomaly — 7% (**2D10x10+100** M.D. to a 35 **foot/10.7** m area)

Extreme Anomaly — 2% (3D10x10+200 M.D. to a 75 **foot/22.9** m area)

P.P.E. Used: 125

Minor Anomaly — 95% (**1D10x10+20** M.D. to a 17 **foot/5.2** m area)

Medium Anomaly — 65% (2D10x10+60 M.D. to a 35 **foot/10.7** m area)

Major Anomaly — 10% (3D10x10+125 M.D. to a 50 **foot/15.2** m area)

Extreme Anomaly — 4% (**5D10x10+400** M.D. to a 150 **foot/45.7** m area)

P.P.E. Used: 200

Minor Anomaly — 100% (1D10x10+50 M.D. to a 25 **foot/7.6** m area)

Medium Anomaly — 80% (**3D10x10+80** M.D. to a 50 **foot/15.2 m area**)

Major Anomaly — 20% (4D10x10+250 M.D. to a 100 **foot/30.5 m area**)

Extreme Anomaly — 7% (**7D10x10+1000** M.D. to a 350 **foot/106.7 m area**)

P.P.E. Used: 300

Minor Anomaly — 100% (2D10x10+10 M.D. to a 35 **foot/10.7 m area**)

Medium Anomaly — 90% (3D10x10+120 M.D. to a 75 **foot/22.9 m area**)

Major Anomaly — 35% (5D10x10+300 M.D. to a 250 **foot/76.2 m area**)

Extreme Anomaly — 10% (**1D10x100+1500** M.D. to a 750 **foot/228.6 m area**)

P.P.E. Used: 500

Minor Anomaly 100% (2D10x10+60 M.D. to a 50 **foot/15.2 m area**)

Medium Anomaly 100% (4D10x10+200 M.D. to a 100 **foot/30.5 m area**)

Major Anomaly 45% (**5D10x10+500** M.D. to a 450 **foot/137.2 m area**)

Extreme Anomaly 15% (2D10x100+2500 M.D. to a 1500 **foot/457.2 m area**)

P.P.E. Used: 750

Minor Anomaly 100% (3D10x10+40 M.D. to a 75 **foot/22.9 m area**)

Medium Anomaly 100% (5D10x10+300 M.D. to a 200 **foot/61 m area**)

Major Anomaly 60% (7D10x10+600 M.D. to a 750 **foot/228.6 m area**)

Extreme Anomaly 20% (**3D10x100+4000** M.D. to a 2500 **foot/762 m area**)

A "Minor Anomaly" would represent examples containing small amounts of dimensional energy, like that created by spells such as Dimensional Pockets and Dimensional Envelope.

A "Medium Anomaly" would represent examples containing moderate amounts of dimensional energy, like that created by the spells such as Astral Hole and Mystic Portal.

A "Major Anomaly" would represent examples containing large amounts of dimensional energy, like that created by the Dimensional Portal spell or by phenomena such as small Rifts and Dimensional Realm gateways.

An "Extreme Anomaly" would represent examples containing tremendous amounts of dimensional energy, like that created by spells such as **Wormhole** or Fold Space or a phenomenon such as a large Rift at a nexus point.

Fold Space

Range: Varies, see below. The target must be within 1,000 feet (305 m) of the caster.

Duration: A single application per casting only. The time required for the space folding is 1D4+1 minutes, minus one melee (15 seconds) per level of the caster, with a minimum time of one melee.

Saving Throw: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: 450 per each light year (or fraction thereof) to be folded across.

Note: This spell only works in space, at least 400 miles (640 km) away from the surface of a planet. It is inaccurate and un-

stable compared to a traditional **Teleport** as it is, and large gravitational fields prevent it from working altogether.

A spell created to move objects, both large and small, across great distances within a short time span, Fold Space is both costly and difficult to control. The spell works by folding a set distance of space, as determined by the caster, in upon itself so that it all exists within the exact same location simultaneously, much like a long strip of paper can be folded into a single small square. The location this space is folded upon is the same location as the **target(s)** of the spell.

After being folded upon this location, the target is mystically attached to what was the furthest point of the folded space and then it is unfolded again, and the target is transported to the original location of this point.

The time required for this process **depends** upon the caster's level, as mentioned above. When the target folds it seems to be surrounded by an aura of energy and then disappears, only to reappear at its destination in a similar manner.

A Spatial Mage can affect an area up to 500 by 500 by 500 feet (152.4 x 152.4 x 152.4 m) per level of experience, transporting all objects within that area. The range of the space folding is limited by up to one light year per level of experience and should be carefully calculated, as using a random distance can have devastating results (see Table 1, below). Also, folding space is unpredictable and possibly dangerous; each time it is attempted the Spatial Mage has a 35% chance, +5% per level of experience, of completing the fold successfully with no adverse results. However, should the roll fail then see Table 2 in order to determine any possible unintentional results of the fold attempt.

This incredible spell puts powerful and experienced Spatial Mages in great demand by space-going fleets, both military and merchant alike, as this spell grants space folded ships the advantages of traveling great distances in extremely little amounts of time, as well as that of surprise.

Table 1: Results of using a random distance.

01-45: Lucked out, the target appears in an empty area.

46-85: The target of the fold attempted to materialize inside an object (such as a planet) but is luckily displaced **1D4x100** miles away into an empty area, but not before taking damage (see the following to determine the damage taken based upon the fold target's size).

- Less than 20 feet (6.1 m): 3D4x10 M.D.C. / S.D.C.
- 20 to 50 feet (6.1-15.2 m): 4D6x10 M.D.C. / S.D.C.
- 50 to 250 feet (15.2-76.2 m): **1D4x100+100** M.D.C. / S.D.C.
- 250 to 1,000 feet (76.2-305 m): 2D6x100+200 M.D.C. / S.D.C.
- 1,000 to 5,000 feet (305-1524 m): **1D4x1000+500** M.D.C. / S.D.C.
- Greater than 5,000 feet (1524 m): **2D6x1000+1000** M.D.C. / S.D.C.

86-00: The target of the fold materialized inside of an object (such as a planet) and has caused a tremendous explosion, the radius and damage of which is determined by the target's size, as shown below. The actual target of the space fold is destroyed instantly as it tries to occupy the space occupied by the matter into which it was folded.

- Less than 20 feet (6.1 m): 3D4x10 M.D.C. / S.D.C. to a 50 foot (15.2 m) blast radius.
- 20 to 50 feet (6.1-15.2m): 4D6x10 M.D.C. / S.D.C. to a 150 foot (45.7 m) blast radius.
- 50 to 250 feet (15.2-76.2 m): 1D4x100+100 M.D.C. / S.D.C. to a 1,000 foot (305 m) blast radius.
- 250 to 1,000 feet (76.2-305 m): 2D6x100+200 M.D.C. / S.D.C. to a 1 mile (1.6 km) blast radius.
- 1,000 to 5,000 feet (305-1524 m): 1D4x1000+500 M.D.C. / S.D.C. to a 5 mile (8 km) blast radius.
- Greater than 5,000 feet (1524 m): 2D6x1000+1000 M.D.C. / S.D.C. to a 5 mile (8 km) blast radius, plus 1 mile (1.6 km) per 5,000 feet (1524 m) of the object's size.

Table 2: Results of failing a fold attempt roll.

01-25: Lucked out! The space fold still managed to result in the folded object appearing at the desired location.

26-45: Lucked out! The space fold was off the intended destination by only 2D4x10 miles.

46-65: The space fold has missed the destination by a relatively short distance, only 3D6x1,000 miles.

66-85: The space fold has missed the destination by a considerable amount, a full 4D6x100,000 miles.

86-95: Way off course! The space fold has traveled the exact distance desired but in a completely different, randomly determined, direction!

96-00: Random fold! The Spatial Mage has accidentally unleashed powerful dimensional forces, causing the space fold to travel 2D6 times the originally intended distance, in a random direction!

Wormhole

Range: Varies, see below.

Duration: Permanent.

Saving Throw: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: Varies, see below.

This extremely useful, though draining, spell creates a permanent dimensional bridge between two points. By means of the bridge, or "Wormhole" as it is commonly called, anyone going through one end shall come out the other almost instantly with only a brief flash and slight popping sound to note their passage. The spell is cast upon an opening, such as the mouth of a cave or a doorway, thus defining the borders of the **Wormhole's** mouth; this opening can be as large as ten by ten feet (3 x 3 m) per level of the caster's experience. The other end of the Wormhole can be made to open anywhere that the caster has seen (remote means such as video do not count), though if it is to be a two-way bridge the second end must also be targeted upon a doorway or other opening.

Because anyone who passes through the opening will be transported by the Wormhole, the caster must decide upon the creation of the bridge if he or she shall place a condition upon it for its functioning. This **condition**, be it a **password**, gesture, or a restriction on which **race(s)** can use the gate, Must be satisfied for the Wormhole to be activated. Adding such a condition increases the cost of casting the spell by an additional 25%.

The P.P.E. required for the creation of a Wormhole depends upon the range that this dimensional bridge shall span. Because

of their great cost to create, many Spatial Mages will create a series of short **Wormholes**, forming a system of sorts that allows them to be created one at a time and used in conjunction with each other so that great distances can still be traveled.

Less than a mile (1.6 km): 25

One to 10 miles (1.6-16 km): 40

11 to 100 miles (17.6-160 km): 60

101 to 1,000 miles (161-1600 km): 100

1,001 to 10,000 miles (1601-16,000 km): 175

10,001 to 100,000 miles (16,001-160,000 km): 250

100,001 to 1 million miles (160,001-1,600,000 km): 450

1,000,001 miles (1,600,001 km) to 1 light year: 700

Per each additional light year: 1,000



Nightbane®

The Tribes of the Moon

Part TWO — Optional Source Material for Nightbane® and Other Games

By Steven Trustrum

A Note from the Editor: Well, here you are, the second half of Steve's *Tribes of the Moon*. I know three months is a long time to **wait**, but I think you'll find it was worth it. If you haven't seen Part One yet, then check out issue #4 of *The Rifter* for more Tribes, O.C.C.s, **Were-Races** and history. — WMS

The Tribes, Continued

The Borim

"The world is no longer for us my child. Though the others may fail to see that our time to rule has past, we see our proper future with open eyes. Be not afraid of what is to come, just accept it, for to fear the inescapable is pointless. What is that my child? No, I am afraid that none of us shall survive."

- *Tugwa, Borim shaman.*

A Progenitor Tribe, the Borim have turned their backs to the world, based upon the prophecy of a mad king.

After the bloody wars between the various Tribes **ended**, the king of the Borim at the time, King **Adarius**, went mad from the loss of his three sons. In a fevered **fit** of madness, Adarius prophesied that the world would be eaten by the shadows from beyond the Moon's far-reaching grasp. The prophecy went on to say that the enemy would walk amongst the kings and would slaughter the children.

Up until recently, the Borim viewed this as just **ramblings**, but with the coming of the **Nightlords** and their minions, the prophecy has resurfaced. The Borim now believe the enemy to be the creatures of the Nightlands, the kings to be humans (who rule the earth), and the children to be all of those who walk the Moon's path.

Once a race that prided itself on its goals to guide humanity to peace, working always from the shadows, this tribe has now completely disappeared.

Many fear that the Nightlords found all members of this already tiny tribe and slaughtered them into extinction. Such is not the case. The Borim have gone underground, hidden in any crack in the earth into which they could slip. Even the Donathair believe them dead, having received no tithes of young since the coming of the Nightlords.

The Borim have given up, deciding that it is pointless to resist the destruction they believe inevitable. They hide themselves so that they may live their last few years (so they believe) in peace and free from the woes of the world.

(1) **Symbol:** None (was a black bear paw within a red circle).

(2) **Tribal Breakdown:** The Borim are a small tribe, only about 500 members strong. They are all **werebears** and are 80% good or selfish in alignment. There is a fairly even breakdown of O.C.C.s within the tribe.

(3) **Territories:** None; they live in complete seclusion, hidden from all eyes.

(4) **Primarch:** Once led by a King (chosen for leadership ability, not by right of heritage), the Borim have now dropped



the position. Why do they need someone to lead them into death?

(5) **Philosophy:** The world is ending, you cannot escape that fact. But by hiding from the **world**, we can live our last moments in peace, free of violence.

(6) **Organization:** Broken up into small conclaves ranging from two to thirty, spread throughout the world. No effort is made for one conclave to keep in contact with the others unless absolutely necessary.

(7) **Variation:** The **Borim** receive +20% to their prowl skill and +1D6 to their P.P. attribute. They also suffer a penalty of 1D6 to their **M.A.** due to their reclusive nature.

(8) **Campaign and Role-Playing Notes:** The G.M. has to be careful with this Tribe; the members are *complete* isolationists. They will not risk their secrecy for anything. Of course, there is the rare rogue that refuses to run from reality and has joined in the fight against the enemy.

(9) **Relations with Other Factions:**

None with anyone, absolutely *everyone* believes this Tribe to be extinct!

The Deerdon

Note: These guys are down right *nasty* and *powerful*. Thus, they should only be used as N.P.C. villains. Player Character Deerdon should only be allowed with the Game **Master's** discretion.

"From the mists we have come, and only after we have killed every last living thing on this planet shall we return hence."

- Warlord **Jerul** upon his arrival.

The Deerdons were one of the Progenitor Tribes, and were the fiercest Tribe ever to exist. During the Age of the Blood Moon, this Tribe was responsible for the deaths of many other Tribes in its quest for global control. Finally, the other Tribes agreed that in order for them to survive, they would have to band together to defeat the Deerdon.

Much blood was spilled on both sides, and despite the fact that they were outnumbered ten to one, the Deerdon came close to winning the war several times. Eventually they realized that they were destined to lose. Killing many of their children, the **Nordan^or** of the Tribe harnessed the magical energy of the sacrifice and opened a gate to another world, into which they fled. Their leaving of the Earth marked the end to the Age of the Blood Moon. Eventually as time passed, the Deerdon withdrew into legend; some even argued that they had never even existed. The Tribes of the Moon forgot.

For their part, the Deerdon that survived the mystical forces of the gate found that the world they had banished themselves to was a wasteland, covered completely in a **thick**, white mist. In the first year, half of the Tribe was lost to the environment and to the deadly predators of this new world.

But the Deerdon were warriors bred; after several centuries, they began to thrive and grow. **Their** already considerable fighting ability increased exponentially to ensure their survival.



A few months ago, after thousands of years, the **Nordan^or** finally managed to find a way to reopen the **portal...all** it required was another sacrifice. Now, all their children dead, the **Deerdon** have returned to seek their revenge. However, there is one difference. They no longer want to conquer the world, they want to destroy it!

(1) **Symbol:** A single, blood red claw on a white field.

(2) **Tribal Breakdown:** All are weretigers, of which 99.9% are evil. Of their **1000** adult members that survived the gate, 90% are Hunters, 7% are **Nordan^or** and 3% are Shamans. **ALL** are adults.

(3) **Territories:** Mount Fuji in Japan, the place where they reappeared on Earth. **Their** territory is quickly expanding and will most likely include all of Japan by the end of the year.

(4) **Primarch:** Led by Warlords, the Deerdon are ruled by the most ruthless, powerful and all-around deadly of their number. The current Warlord, the one that led them to Earth, is named **Jerul Thann**. He is a 4th level **Nordan^or**, 9th level Hunter. His game statistics and attributes are all well above average, possibly making him one of the most deadly beings in the world!

(5) **Philosophy:** All beings of Earth must die for their actions of the past, all other worlds must succumb to their rule.

(6) **Organization:** Currently they are busy organizing into small bands of 50 which will scout out the planet and find who the major players are and where they are located. The main camp, led by Jerul Thann, is busy creating a mystical sanctuary within Fuji itself.

(7) **Variation:** All are completely white except for their black stripes (even in human form, all body **hair** is pure white). Hardened by the intense dangers of their world, these **werecreatures** get the following bonuses: +2 attacks per melee, +2 to initiative, +3 to I.Q., +1D8+2 to P.S., +1D4+3 to P.P., +2D6 to P.E., +2D6 to Spd in hybrid and human form, +20 to Spd in tiger form, **nightvision** increased to 500 feet (152.4 m), regenerates 6D6 H.P. instead of 4D6, +2 to Perception, +20% to track animals instead of +5%, and +20 feet (6 m) to leap both high and long. All must take **Hand-to-Hand** Assassin (even if not normally allowed). Obviously, these creatures are pure death!

(8) **Campaign and Role-Playing Notes:** In the rare event that a Game Master lets a player be one of these, the group could role-play the initial encounter. Another possibility is that after the scouting teams learn of the enormous killing potential of modern technology, the characters must stop the sudden rash of mysterious raids on military armories that leave all of the garrisons brutally murdered.

(9) **Relations with Other Factions:**

- Underground Railroad: No contact.
- Resistance: No contact.
- Warlords: No contact.
- Nightlords: Several encounters have occurred but none of the Nightlords' minions have yet survived to report. For their part, the Deerdon have learned enough to realize that the Nightlords are the first hurdle to be overcome.
- Nocturnes: No contact.
- **Lightbringers:** No contact.

- Seekers: No contact.
- Spook Squad: No contact.
- Club Freak: No contact.
- The Gray Ghost Society: No contact.
- Mogwa: They are seen as primitives that won't know what hit them.
- **Zarathain:** Perhaps they could have been useful before the banishment but now they are just like the rest: dead.
- **Raksasha:** They are considered cowards who will be one of the first groups to die.
- The Unclaimed: Unknown, as this group was formed after the Deerdon left the Earth.
- Walloe: Same as the Unclaimed.
- **Stannoer:** These mercenaries are considered lackeys that always failed to take the initiative for themselves. Killing them will be a public service.
- **Borim:** One less target to worry about.
- **Ungoeth:** Why bring up the dead of the past? It is the dead of the future that are of interest.
- Donathair: These enforcers were created after the banishment of the Deerdon, thus the Deerdon are not yet aware of their existence.
- **Vetchen:** The Deerdon remember the **Vetchen** as noble and powerful warriors and are thus anxious to destroy them. However, because the Vetchen only started mutating after the Deerdon were banished, this evil tribe will not be prepared to deal with the super-powered werecreatures.
- Lordon: The Deerdon believe these wretches were killed long ago.

The Ungoeth

Note: These guys are down **right powerful**. Thus, they should only be used as N.P.C. heroes. Player Character Ungoeth should only be allowed with the Game Master's discretion.

"Though our voice may have been lowered to a faint whisper, we shall never be silenced. One day we shall roar again!"

- Anonymous Ungoeth Hunter before dying at the hands of a **Nightprince**.

One of the Progenitor Tribes, as well as one of the many victims of the Deerdon during the Age of the Blood **Moon**, the Ungoeth were hunted to extinction.

Or so the universe believes.

Unknown to anyone but a few (**Vidamar** the Ancient among them), those few Ungoeth that survived the racial purge followed the Deerdon into the portal and the mists beyond. Fueled by their hatred and **their** need for revenge against those who had committed genocide against them, the Ungoeth struggled for survival in their new home. Many was the unwary Deerdon that succumbed to the Ungoeth who struck suddenly out of the mists, carrying his prey off into the shroud of fog. These deaths were credited to the many predators that the Deerdon found on their new world. Even as the Deerdon grew **in** power, so did the Ungoeth.

Breaux



For thousands of years the **Ungoeth** preyed on the unsuspecting Deerdon. Unfortunately, the vengeful mind set of the Ungoeth has drastically slowed their recovery from the purge and thus few babies are born to them as most spend all their time hunting their mortal foes.

In their pursuit for revenge, the Ungoeth have discovered several ways of manipulating their bodies and minds, conferring upon themselves odd abilities.

Now that the Deerdon have returned to the world that gave them birth, the Ungoeth have followed to continue their path of revenge.

(1) **Symbol:** a bleeding hand gripping a long sword by the blade.

(2) **Tribal Breakdown:** Only 200 of these brave warriors remain. Their alignments vary equally but all follow the path of vengeance. ALL Ungoeth have foregone other pursuits save that of the Hunter so as to better extract their revenge. The Ungoeth are 100% **werejaguars**.

(3) **Territories:** None, they go where the Deerdon go.

(4) **Primarch:** None, as they do not have time to establish a hierarchy other than to confer temporary leadership to one who is recognized as a better hunter while in the pursuit of Deerdon (after all, the sooner that Deerdon is killed, the sooner they can go after the next one).

(5) **Philosophy:** The Deerdon must pay for what they have done. Few actually seek to oppose their plans, merely to kill them outright. Thus, most will not care about any hostages or plots involving Deerdon past the point where they can be killed.

(6) **Organization:** None; they tend to hunt alone or in pairs. They rarely hunt in groups larger than two. So few are the Ungoeth left, almost all members of the Tribe are known to the other members by reputation and name.

(7) **Variation:** Due to **their** intense training and lifestyles, all Ungoeth have the following: +1 attack per melee, +2 to initiative, +2D6 to P.S., P.P., P.E., and Spd (in all forms), +1D6 to M.E., an equivalent of the **Karmic** Power from Heroes Unlimited™ but works only when working to oppose the Deerdon Tribe), +30% to prowl, +2D4x10 **I.S.P.** and the powers of Psi-Sword and **Psi-Shield**. As one can tell, vengeance can go a long way as far as incentive to improve oneself goes.

(8) **Campaign and Role-Playing Notes:** Perhaps while fighting the **Deerdon**, a mysterious stranger might appear and help the characters, only to disappear again once the battle is over.

(9) **Relations with Other Factions:**

- Underground Railroad: No contact.
- Resistance: No contact.
- Warlords: No contact.
- **Nightlords:** No contact.
- Nocturnes: No contact.
- **Lightbringers:** No contact.
- Seekers: No contact.
- Spook Squad: No contact.
- Club Freak: No contact.
- The Gray Ghost Society: No contact.

- **Mogwa:** Of no consequence to the **Ungoeth's** vengeance upon the Deerdon.
- **Zarathain:** They have the possibility of becoming just like the Tribe of **Deerdon**, thus they must be destroyed before they get the chance.
- **Raksasha:** These are old foes, but the **Ungoeth** have a greater purpose now.
- The Unclaimed: Unknown, as this group was formed after the Ungoeth **left** the Earth.
- **Walloe:** Same as the Unclaimed.
- **Stannoer:** Considered gnats to be swatted if they stand in the way of vengeance.
- **Borim:** Their loss is a pity, but of no interest to vengeance.
- Deerdon: No Ungoeth will rest until the Deerdon are all dead.
- Donathair: Having been created after the leaving of the Ungoeth, they are unaware of the **Donathair's** existence.
- Vetchen: Always a dependable ally, perhaps they can be contacted in the future if it is deemed that they have the required mentality to commit genocide on evil.
- Lordon: Their loss must be avenged. The Ungoeth have no knowledge of what monsters the Lordon have become.

The Donathair

"Hear us not, for we are the wind's whisper. See us **not**, for we are your shadow, following you close. Feel us not, for we do not exist save in your darkest dreams. Oppose us not for we are the wave that shatters the cliff. Fear us not, for you shall be dead before you have the chance to scream."

- ancient Donathair saying.

Easily the most deadly of the Tribes of the Moon (of the known Tribes that **is**), the Donathair serve no purpose except the defense of the Tribes and the administration of tribal justice. They were formed thousands of years ago during the era known as "**The Age of the Blood Moon**" and have been enforcing the Children's laws ever since.

During the Age of the Blood Moon, the various Tribes waged open and violent wars of genocide upon each other. Many Tribes were hunted to the point of extinction before the Patriarchs realized their folly. In order to see that such a thing never happened again, a new tribe, the Donathair (meaning "Hands of Justice" in dUnaidor), was formed.

Each tribe that survived the wars donated an equal amount of their hunters to the new tribe and then elected from those hunters the very best to lead it. The Donathair were appointed the judges, jury and if need be, executioners of the Tribes of the **Moon**. Each Tribe must pay a tithe of their new-born to the Donathair every century. The baby **werebeasts** are taken from **their** lairs, unseen, by Donathair hunters upon the night of the first full moon of each new century. These children are trained in hidden sanctuaries, the location of which is unknown to all save the Donathair themselves. There they are trained to be the **justicers** of their people. They are taught the laws of the Children, to consider the welfare of the Tribes as a whole above any one Tribe or individual (including themselves) and to kill with impunity. They learn methods of both covert and overt op-

erations, though their preferred method of administering justice is silently.

The laws of the Tribes are simple: (1) While "skirmishes" between Tribes are **allowed**, all-out war is not. To do so not only risks vastly diminishing the number of Children in the world, but also risks exposing the existence of the Children to the world at large. (2) No member of any Tribe may consort with the **undead**, for to do so is to accept the ancient foe of the Tribes of the Moon into your heart and thus also make yourself an enemy. (3) The killing of Tribal children not yet of fighting age is expressly forbidden, for to do so is to risk the future of all the tribes. (4) Revealing the existence of the Tribes to humans or putting any of the Tribes in danger from outsiders through conscious act is forbidden, for to do so risks the exposure of all the Tribes, something which would lead to their extinction. (5) Those who have come under the influence of the Wildlust must be killed if recovery fails. The unpredictable actions of these unfortunates put all at risk. (6) The actions of the Donathair are final, just and not to be questioned. The only punishment in tribal justice is death. The Donathair do not enter into the laws of the individual Tribes, leaving the acts of self-government to the **Primarchs**. Only actions that affect entire **tribe(s)** arouse the attention of these harbingers of death.

The Donathair are aware that several outsider factions have learned of the existence of the Tribes. However, at the moment the Donathair either do not have the strength to wage war upon them or allow them to exist because, for the **moment**, they further their own goal to rid the Tribes of their other enemies. Eventually they will have to be dealt with, however.



After each deliverance of justice, a black rose is left at the site, letting the other Tribes know that the killing was just. No other Tribe would dare to leave a black rose at the site of a killing that was done for their own purposes, because they are too afraid of the consequences that would be forthcoming from the **Donathair**.

Besides meting out tribal justice, the Donathair also serve the role of protectors. They are constantly working against the enemies of the Children, be it external or internal. They wage an eternal war upon these enemies, especially upon the undead legions of the vampire intelligences.

The members of the Donathair either live in the Tribal sanctuaries or amongst the human populace. They reveal themselves only when it becomes necessary that they fulfil their vows of justice or as protectors. The Donathair are never told from which Tribe they originated, for to do so may cause them to become biased, despite their years of training. To this end they are given new names upon their arrival at the sanctuaries and only the **Guildmaster** knows the original identities and Tribes of the Donathair members.

All Tribes fear the wrath of the Donathair, the deadliest warriors of any of the Children, and so the original purpose of the **Donathair's** creation is fulfilled.

(1) **Symbol:** a furred, clenched fist holding a black rose.

(2) **Tribal Breakdown:** About 35% are werewolves, 25% are **werebears**, 20% weretigers, 12% **werepanthers** and 8% **werepanthers**. The reason for the unequalled division of races within the tribe is because the ability of some Donathair, skilled as all Tribe members are, to survive better than others is greatly related to racial attributes and dispositions. 93% of the Donathair are **Justicers** (the Hunters of Tribe Donathair), with the remaining 7% being **Nordan^or**. The **Nordan^or** act as administrators and backup for those jobs which are too difficult for the Justicers (a rare event). Worldwide before Dark Day and the coming of the **Nightlords**, the Donathair numbered around 12,000 members. Since Dark Day, that number has dropped sharply, to about 2,500. This loss has not been without its price to the various enemies of the Tribes of the Moon however; those lost lives bought the deaths of two vampire intelligences, 16 Avatars, countless thousands of minions and even one **Nightlord!**

(3) **Territories:** Scattered throughout the **world**, the Donathair, unlike other Tribes, do not claim territories as their own. Instead, they have hidden **guildhouses** in nearly every major city around the world. The training sanctuaries are spread globally, with none being within at least 1000 miles of another. Some sanctuary locations of note are Vancouver (Canada), the outback of Australia, the Andes **in** Chile, and in the frozen wastes of Siberia. The trainees themselves are taken to and removed from the sanctuaries blindfolded so that they will never know any of their locations unless **they** are assigned to one of them instead of a guild.

(4) **Primarch:** The official title of the **Primarch** of the Donathair is "Magistrate." He is secluded within a secret stronghold known as **Theol**, located in the Alps. Only the Directors (see below), the Magistrate, and those Tribe members assigned to Theol know of its location. Theol is the largest hidden sanctuary of the Tribe, housing about **100** trained Justicers and 400 **Justicers-in-training**. The true name of the Magistrate is known only to the Directors and to the **Magistrate's** closest advisors

and bodyguards (and, it is rumored, by **Vidamar**). The current Primarch is a 15th level werewolf hunter, **GeoffLupo** (aberrant and *very* deadly).

(5) **Philosophy:** Serve the laws and best interests of the Tribes above all else. Never reveal the secrets of the Tribes, especially Donathair. Carry out your actions quietly so as to draw as little attention to the Tribe, and the Children in general, as possible. Justice is swift and final and not even Tribe Donathair is beyond its reach. Any cost must be paid to protect the Tribes and their **secrets**, even if it must be paid with their own lives.

(6) **Organization:** The basic field agents are referred to as "Justicers." The Justicers are arranged into groups of 2 to 20 members, known as "guilds." Each guild has a leader, known as the "Guildmaster," who is usually the senior Justicer (which usually means he is the deadliest). Each Guildmaster reports directly to a "Knight."

A Knight is in charge of all the guilds within his country and himself reports to his "**Director**" who is in charge of the entire continent. Finally, the Directors report to the Magistrate. It should be noted that the farther up the hierarchy one looks, the more deadly the members of Tribe Donathair get, and none is more deadly than the Tribe's Primarch. If one guild does not think it is capable of handling a job on its **own**, or if the circumstances of judgement are unclear (to kill or not to kill), the members will report to their superiors and await their advice or orders. Rare and deadly is the job that requires more than one guild. The Donathair have a vast intelligence network comprised of its Hunters and human informants (none of whom are truly aware of who they are working for).

(7) **Variation:** Donathair get +4 vs. mind control, Horror Factor, magic and psionics due to extensive training. Also get **Hand-to-Hand:** Donathair (the only characters trained in this skill are those of Tribe Donathair, to train others in it means death).

(8) **Campaign and Role-Playing Notes:** An obviously deadly foe, the players could get involved with Donathair through several means. Maybe one of the characters is a rogue Justicer or a **werebeast** that has somehow broken Tribal laws (told the other characters about the existence of the Tribes of the Moon for instance), or maybe the actions of the characters have inadvertently put one of the Tribes at risk. Another way is to have the characters and a guild temporarily join forces to defeat a common foe. Either way, the G.M. should make the secrecy and utter **deadliness** of this tribe *very* obvious to the characters.

(9) **Relations with Other Factions:**

- Underground Railroad: The Donathair think that their desire to save their fellow **Nightbane** is a noble one, but that is where **their** respect ends. The Donathair just do not understand a group that is unwilling to go to war for their own. The Underground Railroad is not aware of the existence of the Donathair and only have very finite data on the Tribes as a whole.
- Resistance: Great respect is held for this group by the Donathair because they have taken up arms to protect their people, a job that mirrors their own. Unfortunately, several of them have learned of the existence of several Tribes, so when the war with the Nightlords is over, they shall have to be found and silenced.

- **Warlords:** Seen as an annoyance, but because they lack any knowledge of the existence of the Tribes and **rarely** cause them any problems (always inadvertently), they are generally left to their own devices.
- **Nightlords:** The Nightlords are aware of the existence of the Donathair and the Tribes **in** general. There is a war being waged by these two factions, each defending their interests on Earth. The Nightlords will do much to find guild locations and even more for sanctuaries.
- **Nocturnes:** The rogue vampires of this group have granted the Nocturnes vast information on the Tribes and especially on their defenders, the Donathair. Donathair see all Nocturne members as evil beings who consort with the **undead**, and thus they must be slain on sight.
- **Lightbringers:** The Donathair view **their** goals as noble and parallel to their own, so they leave this group unmolested. The Lightbringers are unaware of the existence of the Tribes, let alone Donathair.
- **Seekers:** The Seekers have a fairly good idea about what the Tribes are and stand for, and even know the names and goals of some of the individual Tribes. This makes them a target for extermination. However, right now they are helping the Donathair deal with another enemy of the Tribes, so they must be tolerated. When the Nightlords are dead, so are the Seekers.
- **Spook Squad:** They have knowledge that **werecreatures** do exist in some form of organization, but have no idea of the extent to which it runs. They just believe them to gather in small groups for mutual protection. However, they also tend to shoot all things supernatural, including the Children. Thus any killing of a werebeast is avenged by the Donathair, but all out war is not yet an option. To wage such a war would actually bring the ADA closer to uncovering the existence of the Tribes.
- **Club Freak:** The Donathair are aware that such clubs exist but are not concerned with them.
- **The Gray Ghost Society:** Neither group is aware of the other's existence.
- **Mogwa:** Though peaceful and separate from the world at large until of late, they have recently begun taking more of an active part in the world. Soon **their** actions will draw the wrong attention and expose the existence of the Tribes; it is inevitable. These fanatics must be watched carefully, no matter how noble their cause.
- **Zarathain:** Though their evil is obvious to **all**, somehow they always manage to avoid breaking Tribal law (openly). However, it is only a matter of time before they slip up and then they shall feel the retribution they have been deserving for so many centuries.
- **Raksasha:** This tribe is rarely a source of trouble for the Donathair due to their secretive nature. They are constantly being watched because their goals put them in great danger of revealing the existence of the Tribes if they are ever caught. The Donathair are aware of the **Raksasha's** great hate for them, but it is unimportant as long as they behave themselves.
- **The Unclaimed:** Though they are of the Children, they have forsaken the Tribes of the Moon and therefore have forsaken

the protection that they offered. The Donathair now only pay attention to these rogues if their actions will endanger the rest of the Children or if actions taken upon the Unclaimed put the rest of the Tribes at risk.

- **Walloe:** Victims of the Wildlust, they will have to be killed. But at the moment, the Donathair simply do not have the manpower to hunt them down. Currently they are occupied with protecting the tribes from more immediate threats, but will kill any Walloe that they may come across.
- **Stannoer:** These meres push Tribal law as far as they can, often past the point of breaking. They have no honor, fighting humans, Nightlords and Children alike **in their** greed for baubles and technology. One day they will push the law too far and then they will know why justice is to be feared.
- **Borim:** Their loss will be avenged **in** the names of their brothers and **in** the name of justice!
- **Deerdon:** A viler sight was never seen on this world. The Children and humans alike are better off for their extinction. Justice was served.
- **Ungoeth:** Their disappearance is seen as a tragic crime that did not go unpunished. Even now they are still missed.
- **Vetchen:** These mutants are considered unfortunate victims of all the Tribes' folly. The Donathair pity them and offer them aid whenever possible. However, due to their altered state, they are for the most part too great an unknown factor for any of **their** number to be included among them. As such, the title of **newborns** is not taken from the Vetchen each century.
- **Lordon:** To be killed whenever found! These insane abominations represent all that led to the Age of the Blood Moon. They must be destroyed in the name of justice!

Hand to Hand: Donathair

Easily the oldest martial arts form in the world, it is also probably the most deadly. All members of Tribe Donathair are taught this skill (even **their Nordan^or**); to teach this skill to any **non-Donathair** means a death sentence. There are actually 3 versions of this martial arts form: the offensive, defensive and spiritual forms. When the character is first created, the player must decide which specific school he shall follow. Depending upon his school of choice, certain bonuses at certain levels vary from those of the other schools.

Bonuses for All Schools: +2 to initiative, +2D6 H.P.

The Schools

Offensive:

The character must select a weapon of choice for which all of his weapon bonuses will apply. This weapon can be either a modern or ancient style. The character is also ambidextrous (he can use either hand with equal skill and automatically gets Paired Weapon ability with all one handed weapons).

This school focuses on the idea that an enemy should be dispatched quickly, efficiently and with extreme prejudice so that the next one can be dealt with.

Bonuses:

(1) +2D6 to H.P., +1 to initiative, +1 to strike (+3 with weapon of choice), +1 attack per melee.

(2) +1 extra attack when using the weapon of choice.



(3) Gets 3 weapon proficiencies of choice.

(4) **Final Strike:** by spending 25 P.P.E, the character can create a field of mystical energy around his body that appears as a **dim**, red glow. This takes one melee action of preparation, during which the character can do nothing but defend. On his next attack, this character can release this field with a physical strike, causing it to automatically do double damage (quadruple if a critical strike). If the energy is not expended immediately after the preparatory action, it will cost the character an extra 5 P.P.E. per melee action to hold it; otherwise the energy dissipates.

(5) **Nerve Strike:** knows pressure points that will cause a touched limb to be paralyzed for 1D4 melees on a successful called shot.

Defensive:

Not to be taken as meaning that the school focuses solely on defense, for such would be counterproductive to the purpose of the **Donathair**. This school does focus, however, on the idea that the priority is to keep the user alive long enough to learn its opponent's weaknesses and then be able to exploit them.

Bonuses:

(1) -1 to initiative (due to their cautious nature), +6 to pull **punch**, +4 to roll with **punch**, +2 to dodge and parry, +4D6 H.P.

(2) Automatically gets the skills of acrobatics and gymnastics with an extra **10%** on back flip.

(3) **Automatic Dodge:** the character can dodge without losing an attack / action.

(4) **Multiple Parry:** can parry attacks from any direction without using up extra actions.

(5) Is only -3 to parry or dodge attacks by such weapons as arrows or thrown projectiles and -6 for such weapons as bullets and energy/magic blasts (that are capable of being dodged or parried). The parry or dodge is still automatic.

Spiritual:

Those who follow this school are taught that the best way to defeat an opponent is to watch him from a distance, contemplate the situation and then act. Thinking before acting and the idea that the mind can be trained to be the master of the body is stressed above all else.

Bonuses:

(1) +2 to roll with punch, +1 to dodge and parry, +15% to Prowl and Strategy and Tactics skills, +1 attack per melee.

(2) **Inner Spirit:** due to their mastery over their bodies, those of this school can go **five** times as long without sustenance and sleep as a normal character and suffer half damage from heat and cold. They also gain a total of a +12 point bonus to be distributed amongst their saves vs. Horror Factor, magic, psionics, poison, and insanity as the character sees fit (no more than +8 in one category however).

(3) **Spiritual Radar:** by closing one's eyes and focusing his mind outwards, the character can sense the location and actions of invisible beings. In this manner, the character can still combat them with only a -2 penalty to strike, parry, initiative and dodge. The range of this ability is five feet (1.5 m) per level of experience.

(4) **Bio Control:** by spending 5 P.P.E., the character can ignore the penalties of pain, illness, drugs, exhaustion, or injury through techniques of mind over matter. The duration is 1 melee per level of experience. Once the duration is up, all the effects return.

(5) **Special Death Blow:** by studying one's opponent carefully and without interruption (the character doing the studying cannot be in combat, for instance, while doing the studying), the user gets an increased chance to learn a weakness of that enemy and land a death blow. The longer the enemy is studied, the greater the chance of landing the death blow.

Bonus: for every melee the enemy is studied, the chance of landing a death blow increases by one, to a maximum of 4 melees. For instance, if the user normally lands a death blow on a roll of 19 or 20, and spends 3 melees studying an enemy from a distance, then at the end of the study period, he now lands a death blow on a roll of **16, 17, 18, 19** or 20. All other rules for a death blow still apply.

Experience Level Progression:

1st Starts with 2 attacks per melee round, body flip/throw, body **block/tackle**, automatic body flip/throw, snap kick (**1D** lower than normal **kick**, see below), knife hand (**1D** higher than normal punch), jump kick (**1D** higher than normal kick x2), roundhouse kick (**1D** higher than normal kick), Critical Strike from behind or on a natural 20, Death Blow on natural 20.

2nd Offensive: +1 to strike, cartwheel (attack).

Defensive: +1 to dodge and parry, back flip (escape).

Spiritual: Death Blow on 19 or 20.

3rd +5% to prowl, +1 attack per melee, +2 to disarm.

- 4th** leap attack (double normal distance), +1 to initiative, +2 to roll with punch.
- 5th** Critical Strike on 19 or 20.
 Offensive: Death Blow on 19 or 20, +1 attack per melee.
 Defensive: +1 to **parry**, dodge and roll with punch.
 Spiritual: +2 vs. Horror Factor, insanity, and psionics.
- 6th** +1 attack per melee, +1 to strike, +2 to damage.
- 7th** Knockout from behind and on a 19 or 20, +1 to initiative, +2 to roll with **punch**, +2 to pull punch.
- 8th** +1 to strike and parry, +2 to disarm, +5% to prowl.
- 9th** Critical Strike on **18, 19, or 20**.
 Offensive: +1 attack per melee, +2 to strike, +4 to damage.
 Defensive: +2 to parry, roll and dodge.
 Spiritual: Double existing P.P.E.
- 10th** +1 attack per melee, +1 to disarm, +1 to strike.
- 11th** +1 on initiative, +2 to roll with punch, +2 to damage.
- 12th** +2 to **backflip** and cartwheel, +5% prowl.
- 13th** Critical Strike On **17, 18, 19, or 20**.
 Offensive: +1 to strike, +2 to damage, +1 to parry and dodge.
 Defensive: +2 to parry and dodge, +10 feet to leap distance (both high and long).
 Spiritual: Death Blow on **18, 19 or 20**.
- 14th** +1 attack per melee, +1 to strike.
- 15th** +1 to **disarm**, initiative, dodge and parry.
- Note: in instances where it says things like "**1D higher**" or "**1D lower**", it means that if for instance a normal attack does 6D6 damage, the "**1D higher**" version would do 6D8 and the "**1D lower**" version would do 6D4.

The Vetchen

"Fear not your talents my son, they are what make you special. Others will show you fear because you are different and they do not understand you. Be not ashamed of this fear that they show us. After the day the Moon was stolen from the sky and the stars halted their eternal **vigil**, those who shunned us did so no more. Though the Moon and stars have returned, also has come a great evil and those who once looked on us with scorn now see that what makes us different also makes us one of the best allies against this enemy. Now we must show the evil why it is that even our own people are afraid of us."

-Vetchen shaman to a young cub.

The **Vetchen** are a Tribe of outsiders among their own people. During the Age of the Blood Moon, this Tribe was the victim of a mighty spell that wiped out over half of its population, a blow that they have yet to recover from (they are the third smallest tribe, preceded by the Walloe and Ungoeth alone). Those who survived would be forever changed by the spell.

As the survivors began giving birth to the next generation of Vetchen, they noticed that some were anomalous in their appearance, sometimes to the point of being grotesque. Not only that, but many wielded strange powers which could not be attributed to magic. Some could sheath their forms in flame while others could move objects with their mind. The Vetchen also learned that few of the **newborns** were exempt from these changes and even those few that lacked mutation or powers still had the Tribes **newfound** vulnerabilities. As further generations were born, the Vetchen also came to learn that each newborn infant's abilities differed from those of his parents.

This change caused the other Tribes to fear and be repulsed by the sight of the Vetchen; their mere existence seemed a blight upon all the Tribes. However, the Vetchen remained a Tribe of the Children so no action was **taken**, for fear of the wrath of the **Donathair**, who themselves had come to the decision that the change in the Vetchen represented no danger to the Tribes. Because open aggression could not be **condoned**, the other Tribes simply ceased all relations with the Vetchen. Though this has changed over the years, from Tribe to Tribe, the general opinion towards the Vetchen is still one of fear and loathing.

Due to their being shunned by all, even their own people, the life of the Vetchen has changed very little over the years. They still live in much the same manner as they did during the Age of the Blood Moon, their isolation cutting them off from the rest of the world. The Vetchen society resembles that of the Native American Indian, right down to styles of clothing. They are semi-nomadic and split the year by living in seasonal camps, one for summer and one for winter.

Many of the other Children have come to accept that the Vetchen have a lot to offer in the war against these new enemies, and even against those of old. However, the other Tribes have yet to come to terms with the abnormalities of the Vetchen Tribe and still fear and loathe them. The Vetchen have not been re-accepted with open arms, they have been tolerated while kept at arms length.

The Vetchen would be even more devastating to the enemies of the Tribes if it was not for their incredibly low birth rate; only about 1 in 4 of the children born to this tribe survive, the others dying in a few days after birth due to the nature of their mutations. Because of this low birth rate (and obvious prejudices), it should be noted that this is the only known Tribe not required to pay its tithe to the Donathair.

NOTE: This Tribe may be too powerful or inappropriate for some **Nightbane®** campaigns. If so, just disregard it.

(1) **Symbol:** A double-bladed battle axe, standing upright with an open eye beneath. It is mounted on a field of green.

(2) **Tribal Breakdown:** A small tribe due to the high infant mortality rate, there are only about 1,000 Vetchen. The majority tend to be Tribesmen (70%) with the remainder being Hunters (20%) and Shamans (10%). Almost all Tribesman and Hunters are of the Barbaric nature seeing as how the Vetchen have only started entering the "civilized" world after the arrival of the **Nightlords**. Fully 75% are good or Unprincipled alignment with 20% being Anarchist and the remainder being evil. **45%** of the tribe are werewolves, 45% are **werebears** and **10%** are a mix of the feline races.

(3) **Territories:** The Vetchen have restricted themselves to the wilds of North **America**, their powers and semi-nomadic nature making it easy for them to hide from humans.

(4) **Primarch:** Chief **Whiteflame** is an 8th level **Werebear** Tribesman of great wisdom and patience (Scrupulous). He possesses both the Alter Physical Structure: Fire and Extraordinary P.P. powers and is a powerful foe.

(5) **Philosophy:** While they used to seek acceptance in the eyes of the other Tribes, now the Vetchen have learned to live with their powers and mutations as something that makes them special. While some Vetchen still react to the loathing of the other Tribes with anger and violence, most react with understanding and patience. Most never gave up on the other Tribes,



even if the other Tribes gave up on them. Due to this, a great number of Vetchen have left their solitary life and have gone off to fight the Nightlords. Many were surprised to see that their appearance and powers were accepted by certain factions (who are used to seeing **Nightbane**). The Vetchen's very nature has made them very accepting of most **opinions**, philosophies and especially appearances.

(6) Organization: Organized like the American Indian tribes of old, there is a Chief who is counseled by the head Shaman and a War Chief who is responsible for leading the Tribe's warriors into battle. The rest of the Tribe is broken down into warriors and non-combatants. The Vetchen are still very sexist and have only **in** the last 20 years started to allow female warriors and shamans. The Tribe is broken down into small camps of 10 to 50, with the latter being the average Vetchen camp size (the **largest**, led by **Whiteflame**, numbers 200). Each camp is led by a Sub-Chief which reports to the Chief of the Tribe.

(7) Variation: Roll on the following tables to see what mutations and powers the character has:

Table 1: MUTATION (as per Nightbane® generation tables)

- 01-15%: Roll once on the Unearthly Beauty Table.
- 16-30%**: Roll once on the Stigmata I Table.
- 31-45%**: Roll once on the Unusual Facial Features Table.
- 46-60%**: Roll once on the Unnatural Limbs Table.
- 61-75%: Roll once on the Stigmata II Table.
- 76-85%**: Roll twice on this table, rerolling any further results higher **than** 75%.
- 86-95%**: Roll three times on this table, rerolling any further results higher than 75%.

96-00%: No mutations at all.

Table 2: POWERS (Requires Heroes Unlimited™)

- 01-15%: One Major Super Ability.
- 16-32%**: Two Minor Super Abilities.
- 33-50%: One Major and one Minor Super Ability.
- 51-69%: One Minor Super Ability.
- 70-80%**: Three Minor Super Abilities.
- 81-85%: Psionic Abilities, roll on the table below:
 - 01-15%: 1 from any of the 3 lesser groups; **I.S.P.** +2d4.
 - 16-32%: 2 from any of the 3 lesser groups; **I.S.P.** + 2D6, +1 to save vs. psionics.
 - 33-50%: 4 from any of the 3 lesser groups; **I.S.P.** + 5D6, +2 to save vs. psionics.
 - 51-69%: 1 Master power, **I.S.P.** +2D6, +1 vs. psionics.
 - 70-80%: 2 Master powers, **I.S.P.** +3D6+4, +2 vs. psionics.
 - 81-85%**: 1 Master power and 1 power from any of the 3 lesser groups, **I.S.P.** +3D6, +1 vs. psionics.
 - 86-95%: 2 Master Powers and 2 powers from any of the 3 lesser groups, **I.S.P.** +5D6, +3 vs. psionics.
 - 96-00%**: 3 Master Powers, **I.S.P.** +1d4x10, +4 vs. psionics.
- 86-95%**: One of the following Nightbane Talents:
 - 01-09%**: Air Grab
 - 10-18%: Astral Self
 - 19-27%**: Anti-Arcane
 - 28-36%: **Nightbringer**
 - 37-45%**: Premonition
 - 46-54%: See Truth
 - 55-63%: Shadow Shield
 - 64-72%: Shadow Slide
 - 73-81%**: Shadow Blast

82-90%: The Shroud

91-00%: Storm Maker

With regards to the **Nightbane** talents, the character does not pay the Permanent P.P.E. cost needed to acquire the power as Nightbane must.

96-00%: No Super Abilities (P.P.E. is not halved as described below).

All **Vetchen** roll up their P.P.E. as normal and then reduce it by half (unless the character turns out not to have any mutations or powers). Another side-effect of the spell is that Vetchen have become more vulnerable to silver, taking triple damage, instead of double.

(8) Campaign and Role-Playing Notes: This Tribe may act as a haven for those characters who are themselves outcasts due to their appearance.

(9) Relations with Other Factions:

- **Underground Railroad:** Several Vetchen have helped, and been helped in turn, to escape foes. An awkward friendship has just begun between the two.
- **Resistance:** A few Vetchen have joined this militant group, becoming valuable allies and shock troops.
- **Warlords:** Thugs and bullies. One day these boorish morons will pick on a Vetchen and learn the error of their ways.
- **Nocturnes:** The Vetchen know what it is like to be viewed by appearances and not substance so they have given this group a chance. However, they continue to watch each other closely and with great suspicion.
- **Nightlords:** These two groups fight to the death whenever they run into each other.
- **Lightbringers:** A possibly valuable ally in the fight against the invading hordes, these enigmatic champions of good have proven themselves many times over.
- **Seekers:** Those Seekers that have encountered Vetchen are at a loss to explain them; mutant supernatural **creatures?!?** Many friendships have begun between the two over a simple inquisitive conversation.
- **Spook Squad:** Though they view the Vetchen as the enemy by their very nature, the Vetchen recognize these ex-government agents as a force of humanity. For this reason, the Vetchen tries to flee rather than fight them.
- **Club Freak:** These groups have no knowledge of each other.
- **The Gray Ghost Society:** These groups have no knowledge of each other.
- **Mogwa:** Though their cause is righteous, their methods are not. They lack direction or the ability to differentiate and thus make themselves dangerous.
- **Zarathain:** Considered an evil as old as the Children themselves, if only the law permitted their destruction.
- **Raksasha:** They are seen as manipulators who would risk it all for a dollar. They must be watched with both (and in some cases, more than two) eyes at all times.
- **The Unclaimed:** The Vetchen offer them aid whenever possible. They are not necessarily evil and deserve sympathy. However, the Vetchen are careful to keep their aid hidden from the other Tribes (especially the **Donathair**).

- **Walloe:** Considered **"poor** fallen ones." To be put out of their madness-inspired misery whenever possible. To kill them is more humane than to let them go on living in the hell that is their existence.
- **Stannoer:** **Untrustworthy** and fanatics. Their greed can only serve to enhance the enemy's position. The Vetchen avoid them.
- **Borim:** A peaceful people who just were not prepared to face the storm. It is to the **Vetchen's** eternal shame that the lesson cost the Borim their lives.
- **Deerdon:** A force for darkness that is on par with that of the Nightlords. It is good that the world shall not see them again.
- **Ungoeth:** To be sung of in stories of heroics and bravery.
- **Donathair:** Neither a force for good nor for evil, but for justice, this sometimes blinds them to what is truly required of a protector.
- **Lordon:** Skulkers and murderers, these **creatures** are worse than those afflicted with the wildlust. The Vetchen kill them and feel no pity.

The Lordon

"Mmmmmm ... werebear, my fave..."

- Anonymous Lordon Tribe member.

Though there exist other Tribes that are far more evil than the Lordon, none come close to being as despicable.

Pre-existing the Age of the Blood Moon, the Lordon are a Tribe cursed by insanity. Centuries before the great wars, the Lordon were fleeing a hunting group of Deerdon and were forced to hide underground or be slaughtered. Rather than go into the maze of caves and find them, the Deerdon merely used magic to cause a massive cave in. After searching and searching for a way out, the Lordon began to give in to despair, and later when they ran out of food, they gave in to cannibalism.

These two factors proved too much for the psyches of the Lordon and one by one, they went insane. Now, thousands of years later, the Lordon continue to live underground, digging massive tunnel complexes that **criss-cross** the world and connect with the sewer systems of many cities.

Their primary wish is merely to survive and keep their subterranean cities safe. However, the Lordon view all surface dwellers with hate and jealousy so several powerful Lordon have begun to organize raids and plots against those who dwell above them.

The Lordon use their tunnels to hunt humans and their fellow Children, causing the Lordon to be viewed as a type of "bogeyman," used by Tribal elders to frighten those cubs that misbehave. It is unfortunate that the Lordon are not merely legend.

(1) Symbol: An upside down, fanged mouth.

(2) Tribal Breakdown: 99.9% of the approximately 2,500 Lordon world wide are of evil alignment and even those that are good or of selfish alignment are still cannibals. There is a fairly even mix of races and O.C.C.s amongst this Tribe, though no Assimilated exist.

(3) Territories: Their underground realm belongs solely to them, many of the other Tribes not even knowing that it exists. This realm even runs beneath those lands claimed by other Tribes.



(4) **Primarch:** None as a whole, each "city" is run by a different ruler who may go by a different title than the other cities.

(5) **Philosophy:** All those of the surface abandoned them to fall into madness, so all surface dwellers must be made to suffer until they too become insane.

(6) **Organization:** Organized into "cities" carved from the rock, whose population ranges from 5 (the smallest) to 500 (the largest, being under Paris). Survival of the fittest determines who is in charge.

(7) **Variation:** All Lardon begin with 1D4+1 insanities and do not receive any bonuses to resist insanity, no matter how high their M.E. may be. They also have prowl 98% and through their centuries of digging, their claws have become diamond-hard, adding 2D6 damage to all claw attacks. Due to their underground lives, the Lardon have triple their race's normal range for **nightvision** but also lose 2 attacks per melee, are -6 on all actions and have a limited range of vision (60 **feet/18.3 m**) while in bright light (half those penalties and 100 **feet/30 m** vision if in very dim light).

(8) **Campaign and Role-Playing Notes:** The players may learn that someone has been stealing babies of both Children and of humans. Could a Lardon city be responsible or is it another plot by the **Nightlords**?

(9) **Relations with Other Factions:**

- Underground Railroad: No real contact.
- Resistance: These two groups have battled a few times, but only under special circumstances. Neither is aware of the other as an organized group.

- Warlords: No real contact.
- Nightlords: No real interest either way.
- Nocturnes: No real contact.
- **Lightbringers:** The **Lightbringers** are looking into many rumors of monsters in the sewers of large cities.
- Seekers: No real contact.
- Spook Squad: No real contact.
- Club Freak: No contact.
- The Gray Ghost Society: No contact.
- Mogwa: This tribe is rarely encountered, as the Lardon tend to stick near civilized areas.
- **Zarathain:** These are beasts after a **Lardon's** heart. Too bad they have to be killed.
- **Raksasha:** Considered hard targets due to their secretive nature.
- The Unclaimed: They are easy prey, for nobody wants them anyway.
- Walloe: Considered wild and wary. They are hard to catch and thus fun prey.
- **Stannoer:** The Lardon laugh whenever they hear the **Stannoer** referred to as "hunters."
- **Borim:** They see **their** disappearance as a good start.
- Deerdons: According to legend, they would have been challenging prey.
- Ungoeth: Considered just one more Tribe that disappeared long ago.
- **Donathair:** To be feared. They are excellent hunters and persistent beyond belief.
- **Vetchen:** Another group of hard targets, for even an unprotected babe can be deadly to the toughest Lardon.

Vidalmar

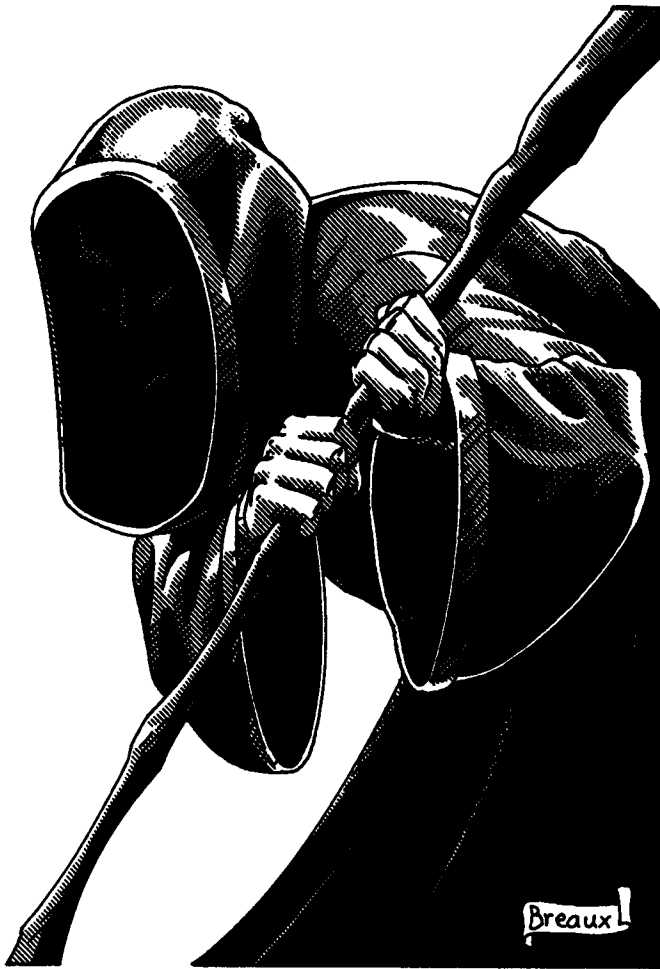
The Truth and the Tales

NOTE: For the eyes of Game Masters only!

The Fables

Very little is known of the enigmatic being that calls himself Vidalmar; what is known is cloaked in secrets deeper than most. Among the Children, Vidalmar is little more than a myth, spoken of in the same terms as humans speak of Santa **Claus** or the Easter Bunny. The various legends and stories about Vidalmar have existed for as long as any Child can remember, and for some of the more revered Children this is a long time indeed. Because many of the tales about Vidalmar can be traced back over a thousand years, few take any belief that such a creature actually exists seriously. However, a few worthy members of the Tribes have learned that these are the days of myths that **walk** the Earth.

Of those few to whom Vidalmar has chosen to reveal himself, most are of the Children while the remainder are important individuals whose destiny is fated to be entwined with that of the greater good. This secretive being is never seen by accident and only reveals himself to those whom he sees necessary, though few have been able to discern what comprises such a **cri-**



teria. Each tribal **primarch** has been approached by **Vidalmar** (in secret of course) since **Dark Day**, though not all have taken him to be who he says he is. For most of the **primarchs**, this encounter was their first indication that Vidalmar was anything more than a fable, while for a few (such as the current Magistrate of the **Donathair**) it was merely a continuation of an acquaintance begun years before.

Among **Vidalmar's** list of recently contacted are several warriors and **scholars**, both within the Tribes and without, that for one reason or another have come to his attention. Exactly why Vidalmar has revealed himself is often not apparent to **those approached** (especially as those who are not of the Tribes have never even heard of him) but few are left without the impression that he is a being of great power and importance. Also of note is the fact that the **Donathair** (those few who know Vidalmar is real) have not acted against him, despite his revealing of his existence.

Most of those approached have been asked to perform some mission or other task for Vidalmar with little explanation given. In return for the performance of these missions each is given some form of payment, most often manifesting as some important piece of **"impossible-to-come-by"** information or intelligence or a favor to be named later. Many of these missions are of the sort that many of the individuals approached feel compelled to perform anyway as most of these beings are of the heroic sort. Because the missions are usually of the type that such noble individuals would have performed anyway (which is probably why Vidalmar asks them to do it in the first place), the warriors often feel compelled to hold themselves in debt to their

mysterious benefactor for presenting them with an opportunity they would have missed otherwise. This, more than anything else, has made great allies of most of these beings, creating an invaluable pool of resources upon which Vidalmar can draw. Nobody has yet been able to determine any long-term pattern to these missions though most are sure that a creature as wise as Vidalmar seems would not act without such a plan in place.

While few that know of Vidalmar can refute that he has proven helpful and seems to be working on the side of good, he has yet to reveal any motivation for his actions. This continued secrecy has caused many to speculate if he has a hidden agenda that might be manipulating all involved and may result in greater danger further down the road. Though nobody who has worked or spoken with Vidalmar can deny that his actions have thus far proven beneficial to both mankind and the Children, history has proven that even such seemingly good acts can conceal a greater evil. Because of this continued secrecy, only a small group of those that have worked with Vidalmar actually trust him and lower their guard when he is involved in anything that might place them in danger. Of course, learning that a being calling himself Vidalmar exists still does not explain who or what he is, and so does little to dissuade their fears or make them more trusting, as he avoids any line of questioning about his person or past.

It is therefore expected that even his allies might come to question the motives of anyone who is so enigmatic and close-mouthed, causing them to ponder which of the many legends and theories about the origins of Vidalmar might be **true**. These theories that circulate among both those who know of Vidalmar and those who think him only a myth range from the tame to the outrageous. Following are some examples of these theories:

- 1) He is the first of the Unclaimed and is their secret patriarch.
- 2) He is a recovered victim of **Wildlust** that feels too ashamed to rejoin the Tribes but does what he can to benefit them from the shadows.
- 3) Vidalmar is not a single **being**, but is instead the name of a secret organization. From here, the theory branches off in many directions; some claim the organization is working for good while others say it is an agent of evil.
- 4) He gained his power and long life through various pacts made long ago with some evil power (perhaps even the Nightlords).
- 5) He is not of the Children at all. Instead, he is an ancient **Nightbane** or other creature with **lycanthropic-like** capabilities and is merely masquerading as a Son of the Moon.

Any one theory holds the possibility of truth to **it**, yet not a single one is close to being able to explain everything. Most still continue to treat Vidalmar as an ally and listen to his wisdom despite not knowing who he really is or why he acts as he does, yet none do so without due caution and care.

The Reality

Sometimes truth is more amazing than fiction, and the story of Vidalmar is a prime example of this. While all that know or tell stories of Vidalmar speculate wildly about his origins, none have yet, even within the wildest realms of imagination, come close to guessing the real story. Though it would surprise none to learn that **"Vidalmar"** was a name this secretive Child of the Moon had assumed thousands of years ago, all would be shocked to learn his true name.

Throughout the legends, stories and histories of the Tribes, few names are spoken with as much malice and disgust as “Zarath” (except by the tribe that carries his name and reveres him as its founder, of course). Forever remembered as he whose words drove Adorn and Ave to flee from the breast of paradise and as the one that had spitefully reported the treason of the once-apes to Mother Moon, Zarath is seen as the creature most responsible for the Children’s fall from grace.

Soon after being expelled from paradise, Zarath and Needa began the violent tribe known as the **Zarathain**. Blaming the lost tribe, now known as “humans,” for their exile, the Zarathain, more than any other tribe, began a cruel hunt and slaughter of the sons and daughters of Adorn and Ave. As the Age of the Blood Moon began, the **Zarathain’s** hunt was distracted by the assaults of other tribes, but never did these Children or **their** founder forget the hate they all had for those who had descended from the once-apes.

As the wars ended, Zarath looked through his hate and bloodlust and saw the death and evil that his pettiness and anger had wrought upon the Earth and its peoples. Disgusted with what he had become and the values (or lack thereof) that he had taught his **people**, Zarath finally faced the truth about his exile by Mother Moon. Horrified by the truth that it was his words and his actions that had driven Adorn and Ave to their seditious behavior, Zarath wept.

Fleeing his people during the last days of the Age of the Blood Moon, the Children had no choice but to believe that Zarath, last of the Progenitors, was dead. Taking **Vidalmar** as a new name, Zarath spent several centuries living in total isolation while thinking upon the role he had played in the fall of his people. Finally he decided that his only recourse to overcome his guilt and to regain his lost honor would be to devote his life to the betterment of his people and children of **Adom**.

Since this decision thousands of years ago, Zarath, now calling himself Vidalmar, has worked from the shadows of civilization. Rarely seen and never making public appearances, the myths and legends grew as those to whom he chose to reveal himself began to pass on tales of this mysterious and unknown element. Because Vidalmar has chosen to reveal his motives to nobody else, some of these tales portray the ancient being as less heroic than he actually is. This has created a contradiction in the nature and believed intentions of Vidalmar within those stories told about **him**, which only leads further to their being passed down as mere folklore instead of historical fact.

As the years bled into centuries, Vidalmar has helped and fought against many despots, heroes, empires and villains, never revealing more of his schemes than others need know to play their parts in them, and he has always disappeared after the task was completed. It is also believed by many scholars of both human and Tribal history that Vidalmar may have assumed other names and thus appears in several human histories and fables as well. For instance, there are those scholars among the Tribes that have been able to present convincing theories that the Merlin of legends may actually have been Vidalmar in disguise.

No matter how others see him or wish to recount his exploits, Vidalmar has chosen to help the lives of the world around him by acting as a benevolent guide to both human and Tribal evolution. Through careful planning, well timed action and heroics, and a strong desire to correct the wrongs he perpetrated against

others during his life as Zarath, Vidalmar is a strong agent of good and perhaps one of the wisest and most powerful beings on Earth.

Name: Vidalmar

True Name: Zarath

(Remember, as a Progenitor, Vidalmar has far superior statistics when compared to normal **werecreatures**. This should give you an idea of just how powerful these beings are, should you wish to include another in your campaign).

Alignment: Unprincipled

Attributes: I.Q. 25, M.E. 29, M.A. 16, P.S. 21, P.P. 17, P.E. 28, P.B. 20, Spd 23, 45 as a wolf.

Age: Unknown; though he appears to be around 300 to other Children, he is in fact many thousands of years old.

Hit Points: 174

I.S.P.: 41

P.P.E.: 576

Disposition: Though he keeps his emotions to himself for the most part, Vidalmar is really a kind and compassionate creature with a love of life. Still consumed by the guilt of his past existence, despite it having been centuries since he assumed his current identity, Vidalmar is a being obsessed with doing good and fulfilling the quest of bettering all life. Despite this obsession with heroics, Vidalmar is wise and realistic beyond imagining, the result of centuries of careful planning and difficult choices. Due to this, some of his actions, especially when mixed with his outward cold and indifferent demeanor, have caused others to see him as cruel and callous about life. This perception is most often because Vidalmar does not reveal his long-term plans to anyone, even those whom he has recruited to help him. Thus, in those instances where **Vidalmar’s** actions or plans have required sacrificing the lives of the few in exchange for the betterment of the whole, many who bear witness to such events are not aware of the greater good that is being served.

Vidalmar has resigned himself to the burden of being misunderstood and even hated by some because of such actions, but realizes that the long term good of the many must forever outweigh the short term needs of the few if evil is to be prevented from final victory.

O.C.C. and Experience Level: 23rd level **Nordan^or**. While originally a warrior, it has been many millennia since Vidalmar has walked that path and so most of those skills have been forgotten (as was his intention).

Natural Abilities: Speak while in animal shape, prowl 95%, swim 50%, track by smell 85%, **nightvision** 700 feet (213 m), and bio-regeneration: restores hit points at a rate of 10D6 H.P. an hour, +6 to perception. As a Progenitor, Vidalmar can communicate with all animals of the types related to the Tribes. Though Vidalmar does not possess supernatural strength, his hand to hand attacks do cause damage to those beings harmed only by magical means.

Other Abilities:

- (1) Understand the Principles of Magic:
Same as the Sorcerer O.C.C. (**Nightbane® pg. 115**):98%
- (2) Sense Ley Lines and Nexus Points:
Same as the Sorcerer O.C.C. (**Nightbane® pg. 116**)
- (3) Sense other Children up to a mile (1.6 km) away.

Shape Shifting Ability: As per normal except the change only takes about 5 seconds.

Hand To Hand: Expert

Number of Attacks: 7, +2 in hybrid or wolf form.

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +14 to against magic, immune to Horror Factor, +6 vs. possession, +12 vs. mind control, +11 against **psionics**, +8 **against** insanity, +7 to parry, +2 to pull punch, +4 to **strike**, +9 to damage, +8 to dodge, +4 to roll with impact, +26% against coma, +7 against poison, charm and impress at 50%, Critical Strike on an 18, 19, or 20, Knockout on an **18**, 19 or 20, Paired Weapons, Death Blow on a natural 20, Critical Strike or Knockout from behind for triple damage.

Damage: The following includes Vidalmar's P.S. bonus.

Human Punch: 1D6+9

Claw (beast): 2D6+9

Claw (hybrid): 3D6+9

Restrained Claw (hybrid): 2D6+9

Power Claw (hybrid): 6D6+9 (takes 2 attacks)

Bite (beast): 1D6

Bite (hybrid): 2D6

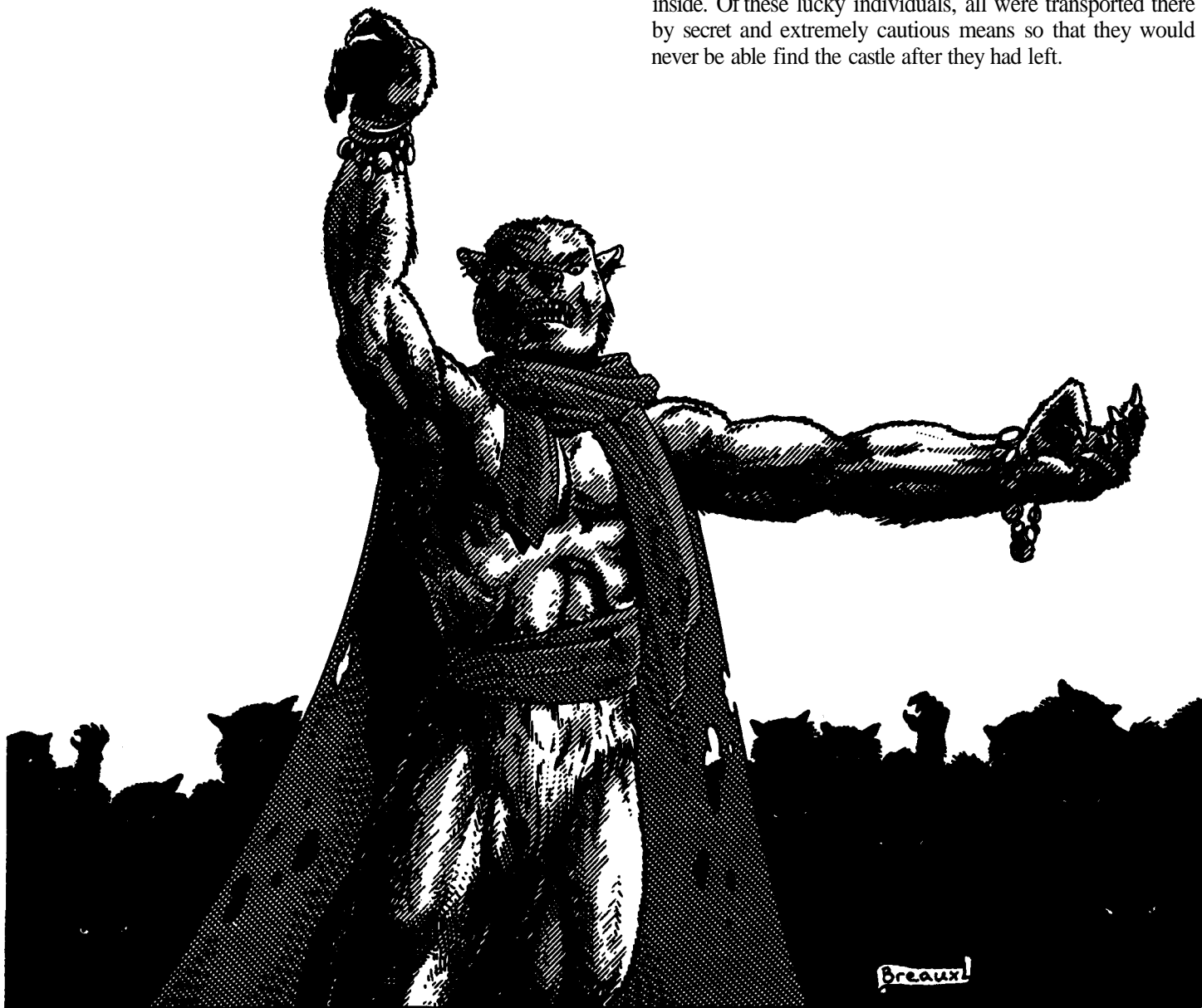
Magic: Vidalmar has had thousands of years to practice his art and thus knows every "normal" sorcerer **spell**, including those lost to the Tribes, as well as all Mirror Magic spells.

Psychic Abilities: Sixth Sense, See the Invisible, Mind Block.

Skills of Note: All Lore skills at 98%, can Speak, Read and Write all ancient and most modern Languages at 98% (including **dUnaidon**), Computer Operation 98%, Research 98%, Writing 98%, Horsemanship 98%, Navigation 98%, Prowl 98%, Wrestling, Climbing 98%, all the Science skills at 98%, Wilderness Survival 98%, Intelligence 98%, Cooking 98%, Cryptography **98%**, Play Flute 98%. These are just some of the more notable skills possessed by Vidalmar; remember, he has had thousands of years to learn and adapt so the Game Master should feel free to grant him any skill he sees as suitable.

Weapon Proficiencies: Archery and Targeting, Knife, Battle Axe, Sword, Blunt, Flintlock Pistol.

Habitat: Vidalmar makes his home in a mystically concealed castle, high **in** the Swiss Alps. Protected by all manner of magical and mundane traps, tricks and servants, this castle is a **gothic** story come to life. Few have ever been allowed to set eyes on the castle and even fewer have ever been invited inside. Of these lucky individuals, all were transported there by secret and extremely cautious means so that they would never be able find the castle after they had left.



The castle itself is a maze of corridors and rooms, all of which are full of examples of antiquity. Those rare and privileged few that have been invited into this powerful being's inner sanctum, his vast library, have all been left awed by the vast knowledge and power stored within the countless books and scrolls stored within. This library is perhaps the greatest storehouse of ancient information and mystical writings in the world.

Physical Description: Though his true height **in** human and hybrid form is 6 feet (1.8 m), **Vidalmar** purposely slouches in order to create the illusion that he is about 5 and a half feet (1.68 m) tall. When **in** his beast form he stands about 5 feet (1.5 m) at the shoulders and is covered in silver-gray fur (as well as in his hybrid form). His weight is normal for a human of his size, about 170 **lbs** (76.5 kg), but when transformed into a wolf this increases to an incredible 250 **lbs** (112.5).

Vidalmar almost always wears black or dark purple robes, with the hood pulled up to conceal his hard features and shoulder length silver hair. Combined with his bent **forward**, slouching posture and seeming need for his staff to support him, there is created the illusion that Vidalmar is far weaker and helpless than he actually is. This facade has caused fatal **overconfidence in** more than one opponent in the past. Angular and slightly wrinkled, **Vidalmar's** cold though handsome Roman features rarely betray his emotions to others, allowing him great advantage during discussion with those who would oppose him in debate or from whom he would wish to get something.

However, there are those occasions, such as when this ancient being has born witness to great atrocities, where others have seen that seemingly chiseled countenance melt into waves of unbridled emotion, though such moments are very rare.

Equipment: Vidalmar usually carries no equipment beyond the clothes he wears and that which he needs for his specific missions.

Special Items Owned by Vidalmar:

Wolfhead Staff

An ancient relic created by Vidalmar during the first years of the Age of the Blood **Moon**, when he was still known as **Zarath**. Meant to be a tool against the enemies of his Tribe, Zarath used the staff to wreak **unimagined** havoc and destruction among his people. Now, as Vidalmar, he keeps the staff not only as a reminder of his past evils but also **in** the hopes that by using the staff for good, he can in some way strike a balance within his **karmic** fate.

The staff itself is about 6 feet (1.8 m) long and is made from a single length of **polished**, twisting **wood**, tapering down **to**wards the bottom. On the wider end is an intricate silver carving

of a **wolf's** head with ruby eyes, howling upwards. Vidalmar always has this item with him.

- It has 250 S.D.C. and regenerates 35 S.D.C. per melee.
- A blow from the silver head of the staff does 2D6 damage (double to Children and vampires), plus all P.S. damage bonuses.
- The staff can cast the following spells 3 times per day each: Adom's Revenge, See the Invisible, Fear and Heal Wounds.
- The tapered, wooden end of the staff can be fired 5 times a day up to 50 feet (15.2 m). This missile attack is +2 to strike and does 3D10 damage, even to creatures resistant to normal weapons, such as **werecreatures** and vampires. This attack, if it strikes a vampire **in** the heart, will render the monster helpless. After each firing, the staff end regenerates.

Enchanted Flintlock Pistol

Just another enigmatic piece of the puzzle that is Vidalmar, he refuses to comment on where he got this powerful weapon. However, anyone that is lucky enough to get a glimpse of this item (he usually hides it within the folds of his robes) will see that its barrel is inscribed with odd runes and words that appear oriental **in** nature. Whenever asked about where the gun came from, a pained look crosses **Vidalmar's** face, followed by a subtle change of topic. Vidalmar uses the pistol as a weapon of last resort. After being **fired**, the pistol automatically reloads and its flint never seems to need replacing.

S.D.C.: 110

Damage: **1D4x10** (+20 against Children) and it will harm those creatures resistant to the damage caused by non-magical weapons.

Range: **150 feet (45.7 m)**.

Money: Vidalmar has long since surpassed the need for money and wealth, but has had millennia to hoard about \$25,000,000 worth of items for unforeseen circumstances.

Lost Tribal Lore

During the Age of the Blood Moon especially, and in the centuries that followed, much of the lore and mystic knowledge of the Tribes was lost. Some of these ancient secrets are better left forgotten, the results of minds whose one ambition was the destruction of tribal foes, while others were of great importance and benign **in** nature. Following are some examples of these lost spells and items and should be used as a starting point for an industrious Game Master to create similar items.

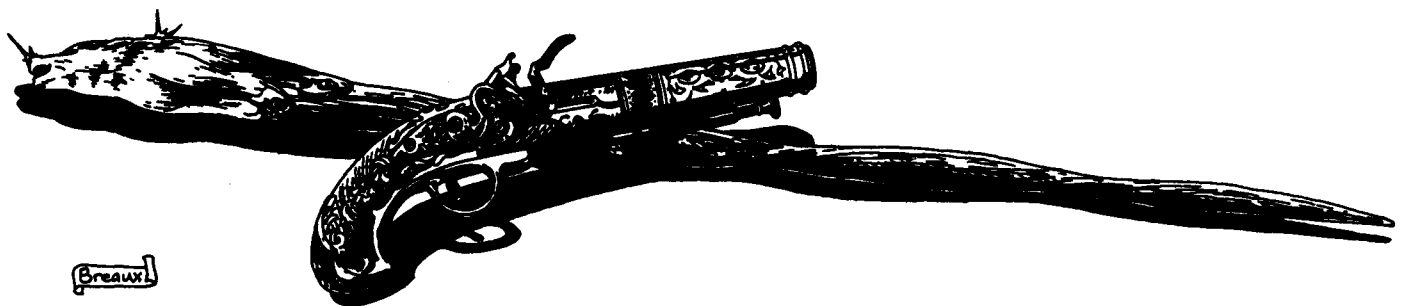
Sense Children (spell; level 1)

Range: 200 foot (61 m) area.

Duration: 1 minute per level of the caster.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 3



A simple spell, Sense Children works in the same manner as the spell "Sense **Nightbane**" (**Nightbane**® main book, page 128) except that it detects **werecreatures** instead.

Silver Shards (spell; level 5)

Range: 80 feet (24.4 m) long by up to 5 feet (1.5 m) wide.

Duration: Instant.

Save: Dodge of 19 or higher.

P.P.E.: 15

A dangerous spell by any means, the danger it poses to Children is simply frightening. At the final moment of the incantation, the caster must sweep his hands before him in a horizontal arc. As his hands move thin shards of silver fly forth from his **fingertips**, filling the direction of the arc with a rain of piercing death. This arc can be made to create a path as small as half a foot (.15 m) to as wide as five feet and extends a full 80 feet long; everything within this path is hit by the shards. The spell causes 5D6 damage to **non-werecreatures** but does double damage to any Children or vampires that are struck. All damage is doubled if cast at a ley line nexus.

Adom's Revenge (spell; level 8)

Range: 10 feet (3 m), plus 1 foot (.3 m) per level of the caster.

Duration: 2 melees, plus 1 melee per every 2 levels of the caster.

Saving Throw: Standard

P.P.E.: 40

Despite this spell's name, it is doubtful that **Adom** or any of his kin had anything to do with its creation (though the name is appropriate enough). When cast upon one of the Children it forces the target to instantly revert to its human form if it has not been assumed already. Also, the target is unable to change forms for the duration of the spell and is therefore denied access to any of the abilities specific to those other forms. It was believed that this spell was created during the Age of the Blood Moon by the Children so that it would be easier to kill their rival Tribesmen.

Moon Divination (spell ritual; level 10)

Range: Special; see below.

Duration: Varies; see below.

Saving Throw: None

P.P.E.: 80

Base Skill: 30% +2% per each additional level of experience.

Much like the psychic power "**Divination**," this spell grants the **precognitive** ability to see into the possible future. However, an additional aspect of the spell is the further ability to also witness those events that are occurring within the present. Unlike its psychic cousin, this power manifests as a vision instead of a mere impression. This vision appears within the face of the Moon and thus the use of this spell is limited by its cycle through the heavens. In order for the spell to be **cast**, at least some part of the moon must be visible to the caster and to any whom he wishes to partake in the divination (up to 1 person per level of the caster). When the Moon is either waxing or waning, the images are both brief and partial, as what is shown is limited to the portion of the moon that can be seen. However, when the Moon is full, the images are complete and far clearer.

Each casting of this spell requires 30 minutes of preparation during which time the blood of the caster and all that would also partake in the divination is used to create a replica of the Moon upon the ground from where the spell is to be cast. It is from

within this drawing that the caster will do his divining and should he or she be forced to leave this drawing at any time, the spell is instantly canceled.

For each level of the caster a single question may be asked by he or she that has cast it; no more than a single minute may pass between questions or the spell will end. These questions must be direct and extremely specific, such as "what will happen to me this evening when I go to the building we suspect of being a **Nightlord** stronghold?" or "what is my wife doing right now?" If the question is not specific enough or if the caster fails his divining roll (the Game Master should use his or her own discretion here) then the question is wasted and no answer shall appear. If the question meets the requirements, an image will appear to all that contributed blood to the spell, revealing a possible future. This image will be sized only to reveal those events exactly directed to the question and will not appear longer than a few brief moments.

It should be stressed that while images of the present are revealed as they are currently happening, those who would look into the future are only shown possibilities. The future is an unsure thing that is constantly shifted by the actions of man and beast and is therefore impossible to divine with complete trust that the events shall unfold as seen upon the Moon's surface. This uncertainty allows the Game Master to create any gaming atmosphere he likes without locking him into a set path down which he must take his game. Still, the use of this spell should be carefully controlled to restrict players from trying to take advantage of it.

Lycanthropy (spell; level 12)

Range: Touch or self.

Duration: 1D10 minutes, plus 1 minute per level of the caster.

Saving Throw: Standard if resisted, otherwise none.

P.P.E.: 210

Though most tales and fables about werecreatures were actually sightings of Children, the instances of people claiming to have seen loved ones undergo the transformation are too numerous to be completely discounted. It is believed that the use of this spell is responsible for this phenomenon and, as rumor has it, the spell was created by an ancient human wizard named **Kane**. A close descendant of Adorn and Ave, it is thought that the spell was designed to emulate the much envied abilities of the Children and grant them to a human, thus giving the human a more even footing in combat against their **once-brethren**. It is further believed that the reason that only a wolf transformation can be made with this spell is a reflection of the conflict and rage that existed between Adorn and **Zarath**. For the duration of the spell, the target gains the following abilities in all three forms (human, hybrid, wolf):

- Limited Invulnerability: normal weapons do half damage, magic weapons do full damage, and any weapon with at least a 50% silver content does double damage.
- +6 to Spd., +2 to P.P., +4 P.S., +2 to P.E., +2D6 to hit points, +2 to save vs. magic, +1 to strike, parry and dodge.
- Cannot be metamorphosed by any other means than this spell.
- Change forms, like one of the Children; each change takes 15 seconds (1 full melee).

Each individual form also offers the following specific abilities:

Human: none beyond those mentioned above.

Hybrid: prowl 50% (+10% if the character already has the skill), swim 30% (or +5%), track by smell: **35%**, **nightvision**: 75 feet (22.9 m), bio-regeneration: restores hit points at a rate of **1D8** per hour, can communicate with canines, and gains **2D10 pounds (1D10 kg)**.

Wolf: prowl 65% (+15% if the character already has the skill), swim 40% (or +10%), track by smell: 55%, **nightvision**: 200 feet (61 m), bio-regeneration: restores hit points at a rate of 2D8 per hour, can communicate with canines and humans, is about **half-again** larger than a normal wolf and gains about 75 to **100lbs (34-45 kg)**.



Blades of Rage

Created as weapons of destruction during the Age of the Blood **Moon**, these swords and knives are dangerous in the extreme. Designed with the single intent of slaying enemy Tribesmen with efficiency and in great numbers, these blades have not been seen in over a thousand years and are believed to have all been destroyed after the era of warring ended. Still, there are those that search for these weapons, believing their power too great to be destroyed, and thus requiring that they be hidden away, scattered across the Earth. Should one of these weapons be discovered, even with the purpose of good in **mind**, it will pose a great threat to the Tribes and the world as a whole.

- Each blade is indestructible by all normal definitions (meaning that no known means of destroying these weapons remains).

- Blades of Rage radiate anger and evil to all those with the means to detect it.
- The damage caused by these weapons varies by its type; knives cause 3D6 damage, short swords do 5D6, long swords do 7D6 and two-handed swords do **1D6x10 S.D.C.** and all are capable of hurting creatures that are resistant to the damage caused by normal weapons. Against any of the Children, these deadly weapons cause double damage.
- For every week that this weapon remains in the same person's possession, the owner is required to make a save vs. insanity. Should the save fail, he is required to see if the rage and evil of the blade consumes him. The owner then makes a **percentile** roll and if the result is under or equal to 40% then the blade's rage has possessed him with all of the effects mentioned below. If this roll is over 40%, then the following week's save vs. insanity suffers a penalty of -1, while the percentile roll to resist possession suffers a penalty of **+5%** to the chance of possession occurring. Both of these penalties are cumulative and thus increase until the inevitable point where the blade's evil nature swallows its owner whole.
- Those possessed by the blade become obsessed with completing the goals they have set for themselves and nothing else even comes close to being as important anymore. All those who are seen as standing in the way of this obsession (even friends) will suddenly be considered enemies and treated as such. Also, the possessor of the blade now has very little control over his temper, with even the tiniest provocation requiring him to save against insanity; if he fails, he will fall into a blind rage that causes him to lash out with violence against all around him. Each melee that the blade's wielder is in this rage, he will attack anything that comes within striking distance and gains one additional attack per melee, a +4 bonus to damage, +2 to strike, and +2 to initiative, but is in turn -3 to parry, dodge and roll. The owner of the blade must make yet another save vs. insanity each melee in order to exit the rage. Should the roll fail, a cumulative penalty of -1 is added to the following save attempts until either a success is rolled or there is nobody left to fight, either of which will cause the person's rage to end.
- Should the blade be taken from the owner before he becomes possessed he must save vs. insanity or become obsessed with seeking out the blade at all costs. If the blade's rage has already possessed the owner, then its removal causes him to fly into a blind rage (as described above) which will not end until either the weapon is returned or he saves vs. insanity at **-4**.

Spear of the Hunt

Designed long ago to be used against the Children's most ancient of enemies, the vampires, these lost artifacts are quested for by many in these troubled and dangerous days. While many of these weapons are believed destroyed, and the means for making them long since lost (to all save perhaps **Vidalmar**), others are believed to have been secretly hoarded by the **Donathair** or others. In appearance, these spears seem normal and **mundane** but radiate powerful magic to all with the means to sense such things.

- **S.D.C.:** 125
- Each spear grants a +3 bonus to strike and parry.

- Any called shot to a target's heart is made with a +6 (instead of +3) to strike. Any successful strike to a vampire's heart will immobilize it as though the attack had been made with a wooden stake.
- Spears of the Hunt can be thrown twice as far as a normal spear.

Eclipse

"We have existed since your kind have been known to us and shall exist until they are known no more."

- Lord Jonathan *Whitmore*, Oracle.

Eclipse began as a secret society around 750 B.C. in Norway. When humans first realized that they were being hunted by The Children in the area, they began to study them, learning ways to kill and hunt them in return. Soon every village had members who specialized in hunting The Children by magical and mundane means. It was only a matter of time before the rapidly reproducing humans drove the **werecreatures** into hiding. As the number of open attacks by The Children decreased over the centuries, the creatures that were half man, half beast, filtered off into legend and the truth of their existence was forgotten by most.

Not all forgot, however.

There remained those with the foresight to know that those that had hunted Man were not gone for good. They refused to let their knowledge die and passed it down through their families from century to century. Sometimes they would take on pupils from outside the family; anyone willing to battle this enemy was welcome. It was only a matter of time before vampires were revealed as well and were added to the list of enemies. However, The Children would forever remain the bane of these humans and thus would forever be their number one concern.

By 200 B.C. these dedicated men and women had organized themselves into many fractured, secret organizations. At first they were merely a loosely affiliated group of collectives, meeting when they could (rarely), and sharing as much information as possible.

As the years passed on and means of communication, travel and science progressed, these groups became more organized and began to band together within a single group structure. Under this structure, common goals were set down and resources were pooled so that all could better fight the ages-old foe. In 14 A.D., the organization took the name "Eclipse" and so began its official history as a secret society.

As time continued to progress, Eclipse remained hidden, growing as new lands (and thus new Tribes) and new **technologies** were discovered. Dedicated completely to what they saw as a war of survival for mankind, Eclipse asked for no mercy for they did not offer it.

In today's modern world, wherever man is to be found, so too is Eclipse. Still operating in complete secrecy, these wizards and hunters continue to stalk their prey from the shadows. They have learned from the past that trying to convince others that the enemy exists only results in them being branded madmen ... or worse. They are resigned to fight their battles from the shadows, knowing that mankind will thank them when the last Child has been slain.

With the coming of the **Nightlords**, they have recognized yet another enemy to mankind. However, the organization has become divided between those who believe they should deal with their ancient foe, The Children, first and those who believe that this new evil is far greater. The former group is close to **obsessed** with killing werecreatures and has become blinded to the greater evil that exists within the Nightlords.

As for the **Nightbane**, Eclipse is split over this as well. While there are those who view these strange beings as not inherently evil (like humans themselves), they are in the minority. Most see the Nightbane as just another form of **werecreature**, whose varied alternate forms can be "explained" as mutations caused by mankind's vast industrial wastes. Yet others believe that while Nightbane are creatures totally unrelated to The Children, they are just as great a danger to mankind and thus must be destroyed as well.

(1) **Symbol:** A silver half moon with the word "Eclipse" across it and the Nordic symbol for "**protection** and weapons" beneath. Many members also tattoo this symbol somewhere on their bodies. The symbol appears as an "**S**" composed of 3 straight lines, tilted slightly.

(2) **Demographics:** Approximately 25,000 members worldwide, many of whom descend from families that have belonged to Eclipse since its inception (and even before). The O.C.C.s **vary**, ranging from **Arcanists** and Nega-Psychics, to **Parapsychologists** and Mind Masters, to those O.C.C. types used by organizations such as the Spook Squad.

While the majority of the members are male (about 77%), there is no sexual bias amongst the majority of Eclipse's members; an ally is an ally no matter its sex. Alignments range greatly, with the majority being unprincipled, anarchist and aberrant.

(3) **Territories:** Spread throughout the world, with cells in every major city as well as many others population centers. The organization headquarters can be found in Oslo, the capital of Norway, with secondary headquarters in London, Tokyo, Cairo and Los Angeles.

(4) **Leader:** Every 5 years a **leader**, known as the "Lord Defender," is elected by a majority vote in which all the organization's members partake. Candidates are usually chosen from the elders of the organization, though younger members who have proven themselves to an extreme degree are sometimes voted in.

Historically the majority of the Lord Defenders have been Oracles. This is not due to any conscious bias but by the fact that Stalkers must spend most of their time in the field hunting, thus Oracles have greater amounts of time to devote to the running of the organization. Another factor is that because they are more isolated and thus have not been exposed to as many horrors as the Stalkers, Oracles tend to be more level headed.

The current Lord Defender is a 9th level Sorcerer (see **Through the Glass Darkly**). He is a British male (born in London) of 63 years of age. Of an extremely calm and intelligent nature, he has run Eclipse for the past 14 years and it is most probable that he shall lead it yet again come the next vote.

(5) **Philosophy:** **Mankind** must be protected from The Children at all costs. While vampires and other supernatural creatures that hunt Man also exist, they are limited in their activities, where as the werebeasts are not. The Children are also ca-

pable of hiding amongst mankind without detection and in the eyes of Eclipse, this makes them a more deadly foe than any other.

(6) **Organization:** Split up into cells of agents (the size of which depends upon the size of the community in which they operate) in various cities and towns around the world. The ultimate overseer and leader of Eclipse operations on the global scale is the Lord Defender. He or she then elects a council of advisors that help to carry out the Lord Defender's will.

From this level, the command structure trickles down, becoming less official and based more upon the unspoken basis of seniority and respect. Within **Eclipse**, the members are broken into one of two categories: Stalkers and Oracles. The Stalkers are those that actively hunt and kill Children, where as the Oracles are those that organize, study and experiment on the **werebeasts**.

(7) **Resources:** Some of the oldest and richest families in the world are either members, or supporters, of Eclipse. Thus the members have great financial resources to draw from that allows the organization to pay **their** agents (as their duties seldom allow them enough time for a regular job).

These resources also allow the Stalkers to be armed with the special weaponry that is required to hunt their enemies, and provide the Oracles with the labs and libraries they need to perform their duties.

(8) **Requirements:** All Eclipse members must have the skill Lore: The Children and some have even learned to **speak**, read **and/or** write their language. Oracles tend to have many scholastic and science oriented skills where as Stalkers have mainly combat and the like for knowledge.

(9) **Campaign and Role-Playing Notes:** The possibilities of applications for Eclipse are endless. They can be played as either evil or **good**, enemy or ally.

(10) **Relations with Other Factions:**

- Underground Railroad: No real contact.
- Resistance: Sometimes allies, sometimes enemies, depending upon the specific circumstances.
- Warlords: Considered scum and fairly easy targets.
- **Nightlords:** Another threat to mankind, but what action will be taken against them by the organization as a whole has yet to be decided.
- Nocturnes: Enemies, no doubt about it.
- **Lightbringers:** While they appear to be allies, so little is known that they must not be trusted and should be treated with great suspicion.
- Seekers: They are correct to seek knowledge, but are wrong in the respect that they choose not to apply what they know in fighting for **man's** existence.
- Spook Squad: Some members share secret relations with Eclipse, helping them when they can.
- Club Freak: Existence is as of yet unknown.
- The Gray Ghost Society: No contact.
- **Raksasha:** Seeking to destroy mankind by using its own economy against it, they must be stopped before they twist man around their claws.
- **Donathair:** Considered a deadly enemy, but one that bleeds nonetheless.

- The Unclaimed: As hunts go, they are fairly easy prey because none of their kind really keep track of them.
- Walloe: A paranoid bunch that knows their own kind is out to get them as well, they are difficult to trap and kill.
- **Vetchen:** Due to their random and powerful nature, they are approached carefully and killed as quickly as possible.
- **Stannoer:** These monstrosities have learned to turn the tools of man against him. They must die for this corruption.
- Mogwa: Little is known of them, and because they are so far away from civilization their extermination is not a priority at the moment.
- **Zarathain:** Evil in intent, evil in action, they are dangerous predators and their victims must be avenged.
- **Borim:** Only vague knowledge of this lost Tribe is known.
- Deerdons: Known only in myth. Their return is not yet known.
- **Ungoeth:** Same as the Deerdons.



Eliana Dimou

A Notorious and Feared Stalker

Eliana Dimou is a prime example of a dedicated member of Eclipse and competent Stalker. Infamous among The Children, almost all who deal with the world beyond the Tribes have heard her name, and its very mention causes snarls of outrage and anger to rise in their throats.

Born in Toronto, Canada to Greek immigrant parents, Eliana returned to the homeland of her parents at age **10**. As part of an unassuming and normal life **in** Athens, she took a job teaching English to the sons and daughters of the **city's** wealthy. She was happy with her life.

Everything changed on her nineteenth birthday, however. As a part of the celebration, she had traveled with her parents and two sisters, **Kathy** and Christine, to her grandmother's home in the small village from where her family had originated. During the night, while most of her family lay asleep in her grandmother's tiny home, Eliana felt restless and went for a walk in

the hills **surrounding** the hamlet. After walking amongst the dark trails for almost an **hour**, she began to walk back towards home. When she returned, she found the entire village quiet and the walls of her grandmother's home smeared with the blood of her family.

Searching through the overturned furniture and puddles of blood, **Eliana** came across her younger sister, Christine. Just before dying, the young woman managed to tell her sister that beasts from the night had attacked them, creatures that walked like men but spoke in snarls and growled like animals as they had torn out the throats of their family. Then Christine died, choking on her own blood. Shocked by what her world had become, Eliana walked out into the night only to find that the entire village had suffered the same fate.

With nothing else left for her, Eliana traveled the world, asking questions and learning all that she could about the creatures that had shattered her life. Most that she talked to thought her to be kidding, or even worse, crazy. Soon **though**, her search caused her to ask questions of the right people, the kind of people that had all the answers that she sought. She has since taken the knowledge she has learned and used it to advance the cause of Eclipse (and of vengeance).

For the past six years, this vengeful young woman has fought for Eclipse, killing the Children of the Moon with little remorse while learning all she can at an astounding rate. No longer capable of showing emotion or passion for anything more than the **hunt**, all pleas for mercy made by her prey fall upon the deaf ears of hate.

She is one of the most hated humans among the Tribes and is considered very high on the **Donathair's** "kill list." Her highly successful career as an Eclipse Stalker has earned her the name "**Remanok**" which, translated from dUnaidon, means simply "**Deathbird**." All Children have learned to fear the coming of the dour woman and her all seeing hawk familiar. Recent discoveries have led Eliana to believe that the Lordon are responsible for the senseless slaying of her family and village, earning them a special place in her rage.

Name: Eliana **Dimou**

Aliases: Remanok

Alignment: Unprincipled with leanings towards Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 23, M.A. 12, P.S. 11, P.P. 17, P.E. 18, **P.B.**:20, Spd 13

"Hit Points: 36

S.D.C.:27

I.S.P.:0

P.P.E.:97

Disposition: Preferring to work alone, Eliana is extremely competent and dangerous. She acts very coldly to everyone, the death of her family at the hands of "monsters" having deeply affected her. Still, she holds a warm place in her heart for young children (who she sees as innocent) and will go out of her way to protect them. For those that she sees as enemies (especially **werecreatures**, vampires and **Nightbane**) she shows nothing but hate and the single-minded determination of a hunter stalking a kill.

O.C.C. and **Experience** Level: 7th level Sorcerer

Abilities: All those standard to the Sorcerer O.C.C. (see the **Nightbane® RPG**).

Hand To Hand: Martial Arts

Number of Attacks: 6

Bonuses: +6 to save vs magic, +4 to save vs possession, +2 vs mind control, +4 vs Horror Factor, +4 vs **psionics**, +4 vs insanity, +6 to parry, +3 to strike, +6 to dodge, +4 to roll with **impact**, +6% vs coma, +2 vs poison, charm and impress at **50%**, Karate Kick does **1D8** damage, Jump **Kick**, entangle, Critical Strike on an 18, 19 or 20, Knockout on a 20, Paired Weapons.

Magic: She knows the following spells: Globe of Daylight, See Aura, See the **Invisible**, Sense Evil, **Fear**, Mystic Alarm, Concealment, Befuddle, Negate **Poisons/Toxins**, Telekinesis, Energy Bolt, Impervious to Fire, Magic Armor, Astral Projection, Night Vision, Repel Animals, Shadow Meld, Fire Bolt, Circle Of Flame, Heal Wounds, Superhuman Strength, Fire Ball, Words of Truth, Ritual: An Eye For An Eye, Wind **Rush**, Temporary Enchantment, Familiar Link, Protection Circle: Simple.

Psychic Abilities: None.

Other Abilities: **Telepathic/Empathic** link to Familiar: 600 feet (183 m).

Skills of Note: **Read/Write/Speak** Greek: 98%, Speak English: 95%, Speak dUnaidon: 95%, Basic Math: 98%, Computer Operation: 85%, Research: 98%, Lore: The Children: 80%, Lore: Vampires: 80%, Computer Programming: 75%, First Aid: 80%, Pilot Automobile: 77%, **Read/Write** English: 70%, **Read/Write** dUnaidon: 70%, Anthropology: 60%, Pilot Motorcycle: 89%, Lore: Religion: 70%, Lore: Nightbane: 55%, Pilot Truck: 57%, Advanced Math: 60%.

Secondary Skills: Prowl: 55%, Boxing, Climbing: 70%/60%, Swimming: 80%, Pilot Airplane: 74%

Weapon Proficiencies: Knife, Archery & Targeting, Automatic Pistol, Automatic Rifle, Bolt-Action Rifle.

Physical Description: Standing at about 5 feet 10 inches (179 cm) and weighing about 120 **lbs** (54 kg), this dour woman has long, brown hair that reaches past her shoulder blades. Her cold, grey-green eyes stare out from above a hard Roman nose, adding to the intimidating beauty of her powerful presence.

Equipment: Most often seen in her trademark black trench coat, she always carries a pump shotgun with silver buckshot (4D6), 2 Browning GP automatic pistols (2D6) with 2 clips of silver rounds and one normal clip each, 2 silver plated daggers, biker boots with silver plates on the toes and heels, and a can of wolfsbay spray within easy reach up the right sleeve of her jacket. Her vehicle of choice is her Ninja motorcycle. Her trademark weapons are crescent moon-shaped throwing blades made of silver (1D4+1 damage; double to the Children).

Money: Though not in Eclipse for the money, she always has a minimum of **\$1,000** on her and has savings around the area of \$45,000.

Stavros, her hawk Familiar

Besides being her best (perhaps only) friend, this magnificent animal acts as Eliana's scout. Bonded to the sorceress through the spell Familiar Link, Stavros would willingly lay down his life for his mistress. Eliana sees Stavros as family and would go to any length to keep the animal from harm, including sending it to a safe place whenever her hunt draws to the inevitable closing melee. Through their psychic bond, it is nearly impossible for

anyone to sneak up on Eliana as **Stavros** is constantly watching for those who would do her harm.

Hit Points: 5

S.D.C.: 8

Speed: Can fly at 40 mph (64 km) for up to 1D4+1 hours.

Natural Abilities: Flight, Sense Evil, Perfect 20/20 vision up to 2 miles (3.2 km).

Bonuses: +4 to dodge while flying, +2 to strike with beak.

Damage: Claws: 1D6, Beak: 1D4

The Arsenal of Eclipse

An organization that has survived for millennia, fighting nearly invulnerable creatures that are much more powerful than humans, must have a few tricks up its sleeves. Below are a few of the weapons that have been developed for fighting the supernatural, The Children in particular. This equipment will range from difficult to nearly impossible to **find** for normal characters, but is easy to get for Eclipse members.

Silver Tipped Arrows

These do normal damage, but directly to the **werecreature's** Hit Points. They also affect vampires and, if one hits the heart, it acts as a wooden stake. Reduce the normal range of the bow by half when using these arrows.

Cost: \$20 per arrow.

Silver Bullets

Essentially the same as the silver arrows, including reducing range by 1/2 due to the soft and heavy nature of the silver. Cost (per box of 100)

.22 Caliber: \$48

.32 Caliber: \$56

.38 Caliber: \$72

.45 A.C.P.: \$112

12 & 20 Gauge Shotgun

Buckshot: \$112

Solid Slug: \$128

.44 Magnum: \$128

9mm & 7.65mm: \$120

5.56mm: \$160

.41 Magnum: \$120

7.62mm: \$192

.357 Magnum: \$112

.50 Caliber: \$360

Hollow Point: **add \$48**

Full Metal Jacket: **add \$100**

***Exploding Shell:** **add \$800**

****Dum Dum:** **add \$40 to \$120**

* Exploding shells can only be used in pistols, and with each firing there is a 35% chance that the round will not explode. The Damage bonus for this shell is +6 for low caliber, +10 for medium and +15 for high caliber weapons.

** **Dum-Dums** have less penetration than normal bullets (the **target's** Armor Rating effectively increases by 2) and there is also a 25% chance that the round will jam when fired. There is a damage bonus of +4 with this round but the weapon's range is reduced by 15%.

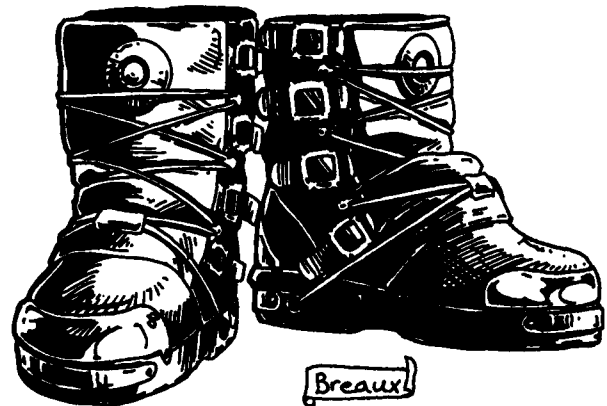
Silver-Plated Blades

These weapons cost four to ten times as much as their non-silver counterparts and cause double damage directly to Hit Points.

Silver Gloves

These are gloves that have silver plates attached to the back and underside of the hand, so that any hand to hand assaults upon **werecreatures** (and vampires) will not only hurt the supernatural creature, but will inflict double the attack's normal damage directly to hit points! Note: do *not* add the user's P.S. bonus before doubling the damage.

Cost: \$150 per pair, \$200 if studs are added to the knuckles, which increase damage from punches by +3 (doubled against **werebeasts** and vampires).



Silver Plated Boots

Added to the sides, heels and toes of boots so as to appear inconspicuous and normal, these plates allow most kicks (excepts for those that hit with the flat of the foot) to cause double damage to werebeasts and vampires.

Cost: add \$250 to the price of the boots or shoes.

Wolfbay Spray

Much like a mace or pepper can, this is to be sprayed directly at werecreatures. Not only does it confuse and stun them (lose initiative and one attack), but it also keeps them away from the area and causes 2D6 damage to them. The spray has the same effect on vampires (though no damage is caused) and causes other creatures (that breathe) to sneeze and their eyes to water. The spray is a liquid so it must be washed or wiped off, otherwise it continues to disorient and cause damage for 1D4+1 melee rounds.

Cost: \$60 for a spray can worth 15 sprays.

Wolfbay Nerve Grenades

Essentially causes the same effect as the spray yet it is contained within a modified grenade shell (either a modified 40mm grenade, a modified hand grenade or rifle launched grenade). The area of effect varies but averages between 15 to 45 feet (4.6-13.7 m) and, depending upon the weather, the cloud lasts for 1D8+2 melees.

Cost: \$80 per grenade

Wolfbay Cloud Generator

Simply a modified Feistel DM22 Smoke Generator, this small device can be fired from a grenade launcher up to 1312 feet (400 m), can be thrown by hand or can be held while oper-

ating. The effects are the same as that created by the nerve grenades. Delay: 4 seconds, Diameter: 2 inches (50mm), Length: 3.75 inches (95mm), Weight: 6.6 ounces (185 grams), Duration of Cloud: 1D4+3 melees.

Tribes of the Moon

Hook, Line and Sinkers

The following are provided to give both players and Game Masters a taste of the various ways that the Tribes of the Moon can be introduced to a campaign smoothly. Each **HL&S** is designed with either Tribal or non-Tribal characters in **mind**, allowing for each type of campaign to be melded with the world of **Nightbane**®.

A Wolf Walks Among Us (for **non-Tribal** characters)

Hook: During a break from their usual conflict against the Nightlords and their minions, the characters find themselves resting for a few nights within the city limits of a great metropolis. As they relax in the city, they keep hearing on the news and in the streets about a monster that has been stalking the city's **nightlife**, brutally killing people at random. So far twenty-seven victims have fallen to this creature, which has been described by the few witnesses as a "man-beast."

Line: The characters should realize that the chances of this being the work of the Nightlords is very small, as most media is now controlled by them and yet no cover up is being performed. Thus another party is at work and the players should be compelled to find out exactly what is going on and to try and stop the killer. No matter what course of action they take, a few nights pass with the characters getting no leads on the killer and a body count that keeps rising.

Finally, while out following a long-shot lead or merely patrolling the streets, the characters here a scream from an alley just down the street from them. The horrified shriek draws out for a few brief seconds before ending with choking suddenness. Assuming the player characters rush down to the alley to see what is going on, they shall find a black clad form hunched over the body of a woman with her throat cut. Seemingly studying the body, the person somehow senses the characters' approach and tries to flee down the alley.

The being is dressed all in black, including a cowl, and is very skilled and stealthy, making it extremely difficult for any pursuing characters to catch him. However, eventually the party should manage to corner the person and interrogate him (if the characters did not kill him outright).

Upon pulling off their prey's cowl they will be surprised to find themselves staring into the hairy face of a wolf-man! The reports were indeed correct about the nature of the killer but at least he will be off the streets now.

Sinker: The creature that the characters have caught is not actually the killer, he is a Donathair **Justicer** named **Ormando**. Having heard about the killings, the Donathair have sent one of their agents to investigate the killings to insure that one of the Children is not responsible. If one of the Children is indeed the killer, Ormando has orders to kill it. He had been tracking the

killer **and**, having heard the same screams as the characters, arrived at the body just moments before them. Of course, Ormando cannot tell the characters any of this without betraying Tribal law and so he must try to convince them that he is not the killer and to let him go. He will tell them that he, like them, is someone who is not able to just sit by as the killings go on but will refuse to discuss how he is able to assume his wolf-man shape.

Whether the characters believe Ormando or not, they will not find the killer again that night. Should they keep Ormando in custody or simply kill him, they shall soon learn that he was right as the killings continue the following night. Ormando agrees to help the characters track down the killer and with his skills it should not take them more than a few more nights. Upon cornering the killer, they learn that he is not a **werecreature** at all but is in fact a psychotic **Nightbane** whose **Morphus** merely resembles that of a werewolf in its hybrid form. Upon learning this, Ormando will state that "this affair no longer concerns him" and leave the characters to deal with the problem.

No matter how the situation turns out with the killer, **Ormando's** sudden change of heart and lack of interest should puzzle the characters and possibly convince them to investigate further. Should they choose this course, the characters may later **run** into Ormando as he is sent to silence their probes into the existence of the Tribes of the Moon.

Dead By Dawn (for **Tribal** characters)

Hook: For some reason or another (sick relative, need to attend a ceremony, etc.) the characters have returned to their Tribal group. Upon arrival, they are told horrible stories about how the youths of the Tribe have been disappearing over the last few weeks, stolen into the night without a trace.

Line: The leader of the Tribe tells the characters that the group's hunters have been off on a mission for him for the past several weeks so they have no means with which to combat the mysterious force that stalks **their** cubs. Any good-aligned or loyal character should feel honor bound to help his Tribe by staying watch over the area where the young are housed.

Sinker: During their watch, the characters fall asleep no matter how hard they fight to keep their eyes open. One of the sleeping characters (choose at random) will be roused (the intruder drops something or accidentally bumps into the player character) just in time to see an intruder flee with a sleeping boy under its arm. Unable to fight off the sleep totally, the character will be too disoriented to pursue right away but will be able to awaken the others. Anyone capable of sensing magic will feel it throughout the room, possibly explaining how they could all have been forced to sleep while on guard.

It will not be easy but the characters eventually track the intruder to his lair (an industrial complex if the player characters' Tribal group is in the city or a network of caves **in** the hills if they are in the wilderness). Should the characters get close **enough**, they will soon recognize the area's occupants as vampires. This particular group of blood suckers have been stalked by the minions of the Nightlords into near extinction and thus have required lots of **humanoid** blood to slowly feed their **weak-**

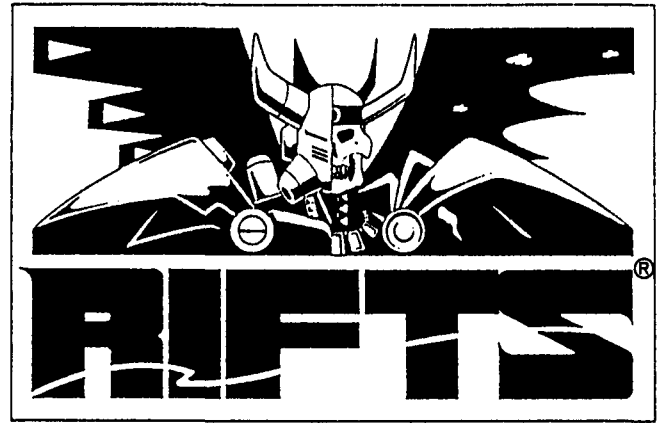
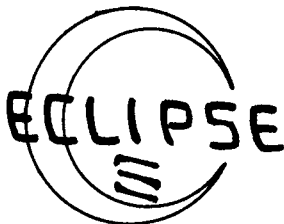
ened intelligence (which just so happens to be hidden in the area as well). The vampires, after learning that a group of their ancient enemies was in the area, thought that the irony of using the young sons and daughters of the Children to renew the intelligence's strength was too great to pass up. Though only about fifty or so of the **intelligence's** vampire servants remain, it is nearly strong enough to send them out to "recruit" more and so will no longer be needing the Tribe's cubs. If the characters do not rescue the cubs by the rising of the Sun, the intelligence will kill the children for their remaining blood.

By the Light of the Silvery Moon (for Tribal characters)

Hook: Someone has been killing any Tribal friends and relatives of the characters that are in the area. At each body has been found a silver, crescent moon-shaped throwing weapon, most often used to deliver the death blow.

Line: The human media and police force have no idea that the victims are Children and assume that the killings are just another link in a long chain of events that have happened since Dark Day and have dubbed the perpetrator "The Silver Moon Killer." The characters know differently. Someone is purposely hunting and killing local Children and is being very open about it, most likely meaning that the killer is not one of the Children. Also, the fact that the silver throwing moon is not taken after the murder means that the killings are also meant to be a message of some sort. Whoever is doing the killing must know a great deal about the Tribes in order to have hunted the victims with such impunity, and so he or she poses more than just a minor threat to the Tribes as a whole. Though the Donathair will surely respond to this threat as Tribal law demands, the player characters should feel honor bound to conduct their own investigation, especially since they most likely knew some of the victims.

Sinker: The killer is the infamous Eliana Dimou. Recently she was able to discover, purely by happenstance, a Child of a local Tribe working as a convenience store owner. After capturing the luckless creature, she tortured him for information on the identities and locations of many Children that had integrated into the human community. As a reward for having given the Stalker the information, the helpless store owner was granted the honor of being the first victim of the Silver Moon Killer. Through careful investigation of the clues and through relations within the Tribes, it should not take long for the player characters to learn who they are dealing with and act accordingly. Remember though, Eliana is an extremely experienced and dangerous member of Eclipse, with all of that organization's intelligence and resources upon which to draw, so she will not be easy to find let alone catch.



Siege Against Tolkeen

By **David Haendler**

Chapter 19

A tall, gorgeous woman strolled into Pete Fransisco's office. Her hair was long and bright red, her eyes gold, her lips full and pouting. Her figure was perfect, and the tight white jumpsuit (adorned with a few **Techno-Wizard** artifacts) she wore only helped.

"Hello, hello!" **Fransisco** said eagerly, rising up from his chair. "What can I do for you, miss?"

She looked into his eyes, and at that moment the mystic knew something was wrong with her. "Are you Peter Fransisco of the Grand **Alamar** Police Force?" she asked, in a cold and inhuman voice which rumbled like thunder.

"Yes I am," he said warily, suddenly wary of the woman. His senses were going wild, screaming warnings which he could not ignore. The fact that the woman practically stank of magic didn't help. Suddenly, he became intensely aware that his gun was still in his desk.

"You need not be **afraid**," she said, pulling out an **Inquisitor's** badge, a shimmering golden eye lined with runes. "My name is Uzieth, and I am an agent of **Tolkeen's** Inquisitor Division."

"**Lemme** guess," Pete said, suddenly relaxing. "You're not human."

"That is correct. I am a seraph." With that, two white, feathery wings spread out from her back, and her eyes began to glow with a bright, golden light. "I have been sent to help you catch the murderer of **Trai Melence**."

"Great!" Pete said. "We could use a little extra..."

Uzieth glared at him, her eyes glowing even brighter. Then, she began to stare at the file cabinets behind his desk. "I will require a detailed report of all clues and evidence which you have uncovered up to this point. Are your records stored in those file cabinets?"

"**Uh**, yes," he said meekly as Uzieth walked up to the drawers. "Lemme find my key."



"That won't be necessary," she said, inserting a tiny silver key into a slot. The drawer popped open. "As an Inquisitor, I have the master key." She then began to flip through the files.

"Need any help?" he volunteered.

"No, you may leave," said Uzieth, pulling out some crime scene photographs.

Pete began to walk out of his office, and then asked himself why he was so cowed by the spirit. Summoning up all of his courage, he stopped in his tracks, and asked, "Say, would you like to have dinner with me tonight? We can discuss the case over some Rhino-Buffalo steaks."

The seraph looked at him strangely, then back at the files. "Seraphs do not engage in pleasures of the flesh," she then said.

Fransisco cursed under his breath, then left his office. Just my friggin' luck, he thought bitterly. A hot chick finally walks into my office, and she turns out to be some frigid spirit. Oh, the gods are laughing at me today.

Lucius walked up to him, with a cup of coffee in hand. Some of the other detectives stood nearby, trying to watch inconspicuously. To a mystic, however, their attention was all too obvious. "Hey, Pete," said Lucius, trying to restrain his big puppy-dog smile. "I hope you don't mind, but we've got a little betting pool going here."

"Yeah?" asked Fransisco wearily. "Sorry, but I don't have any ones on me."

"No, that's not it," said Lucius. "We need to know...did you ask Uzieth for sex, a date, or did you act professionally for once?"

"A date!" snapped Pete. A couple of the detectives began cheering, while a few others began cursing their luck. "Are you happy now?!"

"Yes!" said one of the winners merrily.

"Vultures," muttered Pete, walking off towards the water cooler.

* * *

Jack Perrin stood in the empty parking lot, looking down at his watch. It wasn't too late, just about 7 or 8 PM. Still, it was a good time for a covert meeting. The city's diurnal residents were winding down and going home, and the nocturnal ones were just waking up and weren't on their way to work yet.

Suddenly, a hovertruck pulled up to the corner. It stopped there, and sank to the ground. One of the front doors opened, and a little blue D-Bee came out. He had an ovular head, with large black eyes and no mouth, and wore a suit of highly advanced combat armor sans the helmet.

"How are you doing?" the thing asked cordially, large pores in its neck opening, closing, and salivating as it talked. "Do you have the money?"

"Sure do," said Perrin, handing the creature a briefcase. "That's 10 million credits of gold in your hot little hands."

The creature opened the briefcase, took a look at the shining bars of wealth, and then shut it again. It then handed Perrin a piece of paper and the keys to the hovertruck. "And for you," it said in its odd and melodious voice. "There's 25 NE-50 Particle Beam Rifles, 30 suits of NE-C20 Camouflage Armor, a box of 100 plasma grenades, and an NE-020 Combat Drone with full weaponry. The truck is yours gratis."

"Pleasure doing business with you," said Perrin, taking the keys and the receipt. "And remember, I'm taking inventory

when I get this thing to a secure location. If it's not all there in brand-new condition, you're in deep trouble."

"Don't threaten me," the thing said, although it did not seem threatened or hostile. "Naruni Enterprises doesn't take kindly to people who threaten its sales reps." There was suddenly the sound of several guns cocking. Looking around, Perrin could see almost half a dozen people in the same armor as the D-Bee, all of them carrying plasma rifles.

"Looks like **we've** got a bit of a standoff," Perrin said calmly, as 6 laser-targeting dots lit up the D-Bee's unprotected forehead. Human snipers in Urban Warrior and Huntsman armor suddenly crawled out of their shadows, making their presence known. "I say that you go your way, and I'll go mine, and we'll avoid all this bloody conflict."

"Sounds good," said the D-Bee, sounding a bit scared now. Perrin climbed into the truck, and sped off into the night. The HFA snipers ran back into their shadows, and sprinted away.

"Should we begin pursuit?" one of the Naruni Enterprises meres asked, his voice made very mechanical by the suit's microphones and speakers.

"No," said the D-Bee, shaking his head. "A sale's a sale, whether we like the client or not. If he acts against us, or reneges on payment for his next shipment, then we send in a Repo-bot. Otherwise, we'll let Mr. Perrin and his goons be."

Chapter 20

The elite Tolkeen sniper crouched behind a prickly bush, trying to stay carefully hidden from his prey. He had been hunting a wild **psi-stalker** for several days. The monster was sneaky and it was as fast and vicious as hell, but in the final analysis it was little more than an animal.

The **sniper's** bright red uniform had been rendered almost invisible with the touch of a button, and the sounds that he made were rendered inaudible with the flip of a utility belt switch. His silenced sniper rifle had been padded in just the right places, so that not even the tiniest noises could be heard when it fired. The sniper had to deal with D-Bee terrorists, wild demons, mutant animals, and Coalition rangers. It made good sense to be thorough.

The man took another look at his prey. The psi-stalker was taking a moment to urinate on a tree. He was naked, except for a knife sheath strapped to one of his calves. His hairless skin was as white as milk, except for the pupilless orbs of black which were his eyes. Some blood was caked on his mouth, from a wandering vagabond that the psi-stalker had attacked the day before.

The sniper looked into his **scope**, and carefully settled the cross-hairs right behind the thing's eyes. I've gotta kill it in one shot, he thought to himself. If he lives, he'll get away and the entire hunt will be ruined.

Suddenly, the psi-stalker turned and began screaming at the sniper. The gunman panicked, his mind racing with possibilities as how the thing might have been alerted to his presence. Could it have been his scent, the magic in his suit, a noise that somehow got past his sensors, even a flaw in his camouflage device? And then, as a brief volley of brilliant red laser beams sliced through the air and blasted half a dozen bowling ball-sized holes in the creature, the sniper realized that it had been looking at something behind him.

The sniper turned, and saw a human in street clothes, crouched in a nearby tree branch, with a smoking laser pistol clutched in his hands. The newcomer smirked, and blew his **gunsmoke** away. "Get naked," he said to the sniper, pointing his gun at the hunter. "I need your uniform."

"Who are you?" asked the sniper. He wanted to bring his rifle to bear on the man, but knew that if he tried, his enemy would **get a shot** off first.

"Does that really matter to you, **screwhead?**" asked the man, suddenly indignant. "Get out of your **friggin'** clothes! And drop that rifle, too."

The sniper considered his chances for escape, and dropped his gun. He then slipped out of his bright red jumpsuit, utility belts, and combat boots, leaving him with only his underwear on.

The man jumped out of the tree, grabbed up the uniform, and then began to walk off. "I really **oughta** kill you," he said indifferently. "But I don't feel like it, and I don't think you'd want it much either. So today I'll ignore protocol, and leave you alive. Fair deal?"

The sniper stared at his enemy as the mysterious man vanished into the undergrowth, his ears and cheeks burning with shame. And then, when the **sweet, tangy** smell of roasting flesh, from the body of the dead psi-stalker, was absorbed into his nostrils, the sniper began to vomit violently. It was just not his day.

* * *

"The day of a Saint is the Light shining from the Face of God," remarked the psychopath, paging through an ancient, yellowed book of religious lore. "Never have truer words been stated outside of the Bible." The lunatic sat in a **dark**, underground library, full of ancient artifacts and texts. Some of its contents were antiques at the Time of the Rifts. They had been obscenely expensive then, and were truly priceless after the apocalypse.

The killer added the old book to a paper bag under one of his arms. The sack was full of other such books, all of them related to the subjects of religion, politics, and a rare few on occultism. His collection would be truly perfect once he got out of the library with this current haul. The psychopath reflected briefly on how a place containing such precious items had such a poor security system.

Suddenly, the room's harsh lights turned on, and an old man entered. He was human, but was clothed in the festooned robes of a ley line walker. "What are you doing in here, young man?" he demanded. "The library is closed!"

"Who ordered this place of precious knowledge closed?" asked the psychopath coldly. "If it was a worthy man, I shall leave immediately."

"**The** library's hours were set by the Tolkeen Council on Knowledge," said the old man rather proudly. "**The** only ones exempt from it are them, and of course the members of the High Council. Are YOU perhaps a member of either one?"

"You mock me!" screamed the psychopath, flecks of spittle shooting out of his mouth. "Know **this...your** Councils are nothing more than the children of the Whore of Babylon. They are as flawed and blasphemous as the Seven Governors of **R'yleh.**"



"Th-that's treason!" said the old man, thoroughly shocked. He didn't know who the Seven Governors of R'yleh were, but didn't think that comparing the Council to them was intended as a compliment.

"You don't know who the Seven Governors of R'yleh are?" asked the psychopath, drawing a **vibro-blade**. The old man could feel an intrusion in his head. It was like the stranger **was...stealing** his thoughts. "You really ought to know that!" snapped the madman, advancing slowly.

"Stay back!" pleaded the old man, trying to back away.

"**Cthulhu**, master of the seas and the waters, the inhabitant of R'yleh!" the lunatic yelled. "He is the first amongst them! Then, **Hastur** the Unspeakable! Then, **Shub-Niggurath**, the Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young. **Nyarlotep**, the Messenger of the Seven! **Chudde Mell**, He Who Is Eminent Amongst **Cthonians**! **Dagon**, Lord of the Degenerate Deep Ones! And finally, at the heart of all the evil, **Azathoth** himself, the mad nuclear chaos that IS your magical energy! When you cast a spell, you summon **Azathoth's** blasphemous blood! When you call up a monster, you summon his spawn! **THAT IS YOUR MAGIC! THAT IS YOUR REVELATION!! THE SEVENTH LORD OF DARKNESS IS YOUR SLAVE, MAGICIAN!!!**"

And then, the expression on the psychopath's face changed from one of rage, to one of extreme and bitter hatred. "And you throw away the Lord of Heaven," he hissed. "The one and only force which can stop them."

"**Help!**" shrieked the old man, and then the blood ran out of him.

"What the hell?" muttered the **psychopath**, shaking his head. He couldn't tell where he was, and was very, very **surpsied** to find blood on his hands, a bag of books at his side, and a corpse

on the floor. Panicking, he ran for all his worth. He brought the books with him. A little voice inside his head said that he'd need them soon.

Chapter 21

The seraph sniffed the air in the library. It was full of blood and death and antiquity. The place made her nauseous, but she could not leave yet. Not until her mission here had been fulfilled.

She looked down upon the corpse of the dead librarian, which was being photographed by a bunch of gawking forensics specialists. Her two partners, the mystic and the Wolfen, were involved in the nearby bookshelves, trying to take an inventory of what had been stolen.

She walked over to the body, leaned over the face, and inhaled deeply. The angel got a nose full of insanity, sweat, and evil. This would be hard, she thought. It was always harder to use her senses when tracking such madmen. But for the good of **Tolkeen**, it would have to be done. Leaning over further, she touched the corpse's face, and opened her mind.

A swarm of panicked thoughts and emotions washed over the seraph. **Uziel** gasped in horror, feeling the man's last moments. The face of a man began to take shape in her mind, but it was fuzzy and faded. She heard the man talking, but could not make out his babbling. Still, she was shocked that it had worked so well; the crime had been committed two days before, and that much time typically blurred this psychic residue into nothingness. The killer must have been a powerful psychic in his own right to have left such a shadow.

She began to gingerly probe the fatal wound, oblivious to the cries of the forensic staff, and her mental image grew clearer. The pain of the dying man shot through her, and she convulsed ever so slightly. The murder began to replay itself, although slowly and **blurrily**, as if viewed through a dark glass. The garbled last words of the victim and the murderer shot through her mind like a red hot poker slicing through fat. And then, she cut the connection, and her mind was clear once more.

"The killer is a religious fanatic," she pronounced. "He believes that God wants him to kill D-Bees and magicians, because in his mind they are minions of evil. Yet I sense that he is not entirely in control of these thoughts, there is some outside force manipulating his mind."

"You mean there's a demon or something controlling him?" asked **Fransisco**. "We get that from time to time."

"I'm not sure," said the seraph coldly. "He left such a strong psychic residue that the supernatural seems possible, but I'm not getting a sense of supernatural evil, just unbelievably strong mortal delusions."

"Maybe I should take a look," said Fransisco, walking over to the corpse.

"Don't bother," said Uziel. "Your mortal senses are not strong enough. Mallen, what books were taken?"

"I still don't have a complete list, but it's mostly Christian books of religion. Really ancient stuff. It was all old at the Coming of the Rifts. There's ... lessee, Platonist and Puritan, **Saint Ignatius's** Spiritual Exercises, an English translation of Compendium **Maleficarium**, and a translation of **De Arrha Animae**.

Pretty obscure stuff. Not real valuable, either, since they only have worth to a few religious scholars."

"He wouldn't sell them," said the seraph. "He wants those books badly, and I think he might even die to protect them. They validate his mission." The seraph then abruptly **left**, much to the chagrin of **Fransisco**, who still had questions for her.

"Mortal senses not strong **enough**, my ass," he growled. "Snooty bitch needs a good..." His voice suddenly trailed off, as the seraph reentered, her face a mask of rage.

"What do I need, mortal?" she hissed, her voice more feral and violent than that of any **hellspawn**.

"Nothing," Fransisco **said**, rather bitterly.

"You would do well to remember that as an Inquisitor and a seraph, my senses are quite sharp," she said, leaving once more. "Almost as sharp as my vengeance."

* * *

The Coalition ranger passed out discs labeled, "Operation: Vengeance" to the members of the Black Dog Attack Squadron. Donald **Hartman** reluctantly slid the audio-visual CD into the viewing slot of his Super **SAMAS**, and then hit the play button. In the upper right corner of his screen, he could see the face of Emperor **Prosek**. This somewhat alarmed the soldier. This mission had to be quite important if the Emperor of Humanity personally gave the orders.

"Members of the Black Dog Assault Team," the emperor began, in his usual oration voice. "I am afraid that I bear grim news. The so-called "super-weapon" of **Tolkeen**, long believed to be a myth, has been proven to be true. A destructive artifact of immense supernatural power has been constructed in Grand **Alamar**, the capital city of Tolkeen. While its exact capabilities are unknown, it is clear that this blasphemous machine must be destroyed before it can strike down our valiant soldiers."

"We are assembling a team of the greatest pilots in the Coalition military and the private sector, to attack and destroy this terrible thing. The Black Dog Assault Squad has been hand-selected for this mission. On November 25 at 0100 hours, you will escort the bombers in, flying at low altitudes. Once the super-weapon has been destroyed, all of you save the squadron leader will escort the bombers back to the nearest CS air base."

"**The** leader, Mr. Donald Hartman, will land at coordinates **2:04:Bravo**, along with two Sky Cycles. Here, you will meet with two CS troops trapped behind enemy lines, and will escort them out. However, if they fail to show up, do not **jeopardize** your safety by staying too long."

"**This** attack is the last remaining hope of humanity. If we are to win this war and defeat the inhuman enemies of all that is good, then the super-weapon must be annihilated. A decisive surgical strike at the heart of their corrupt empire will show those monsters that humanity will not be pushed aside. All of our hopes are prayers go with you." With that, the CD ended.

Donald removed the disc. Looking around, he saw that his men were doing the same. "Let's burn-bag '**em**," he **said**, pulling out the small plastic bag which the ranger had provided him. One by one, the power armor troopers dropped their discs inside. Then, Hartman hurled the bag up into the air, and vaporized it with a quick blast from his plasma cannon. "I guess we'll

be on our way, then," he said. "You think you can handle this place while we're gone?"

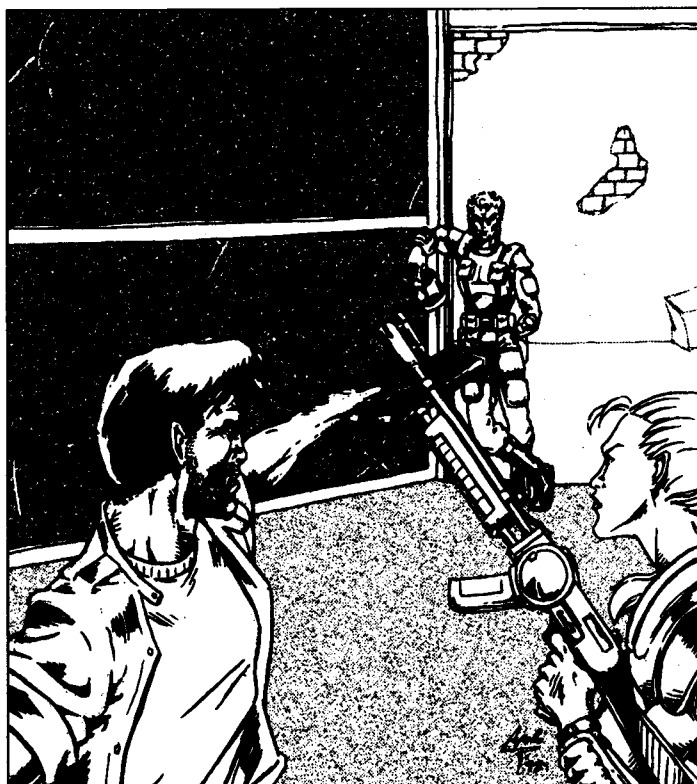
The ranger who had delivered their CDs nodded. "Sure thing," he said flippantly. "Some Skelebots will be up here in about fifteen minutes or so to help me keep order. You just go and have fun on your mission."

"To the base then," said Hartman, flying off away from the clearing which had been his home for the past few weeks. His remaining men followed, anxious about the gargantuan task which lay ahead of them.

* * *

Jack **Perrin** took careful aim at the man-shaped target ahead of him, steadied the massive rifle, and fired. The recoil and noise were immense, nearly throwing him backwards. However, the effect was just as impressive. The target, which was made of the same micro-ceramics used in military armor, simultaneously melted and exploded, as a beam of pure energy slammed into the head region and tore the metal target apart.

"This is the NE-50 Particle Beam Rifle," he said to the HFA onlookers. "I've seen these babies in action before, and they are powerful. It's got damage capabilities equal to some of the power armor weapons used in the CS. However, I don't want anybody getting too cocky with these things. Don't try any superman stunts or one-man stands just because you've got the **firepower**. As good as these rifles are, I need you all to remember that they're heavy as hell, loud as a **friggin'** tank, and have a limited payload. So don't anyone start playing Dirty Harry, okay?"



The terrorists gathered at the shooting range began scratching their heads and looking at Perrin quizzically. "What's Dirty Harry, sir?" asked one **wanna-be headhunter**. "Was he a mercenary or something?"

"Forget it," said Perrin. "Just an old movie they showed us in basic training. They show it as a supplement to the course 'Urban Peacekeeping Operations.' I'll see if I can find a library or something that has a copy."

The young man shrugged. He **didn't** seem very interested.

"Well, good shooting, everybody," Perrin **said**, opening up the crate of rifles. "Remember, get in a lot of practice, since I only had enough cash to rent this place for an hour. I want you all to be real good with those things real fast."

"Those are contraband, you know," said a voice from the doorway behind him. Perrin spun **around**, and saw a man standing there, dressed in the armor of a **Tolkeen** sniper.

"Hold it right there, you **shithead!**" Perrin yelled, leveling his particle beam rifle at the intruder. "You just made the last mistake **of** your life!"

"**No**, wait!" yelled the man. "I'm with the Coalition! I'm here to get you out of Tolkeen!"

"How do we know that?" sneered Perrin. Behind him, the other members of the HFA were hurriedly loading their energy rifles. "Better make it fast," he remarked. "I don't think I can restrain these guys trigger fingers for long."

The sniper pulled off his **helmet**, revealing the dirty face of a young human. "She'll vouch for me!" he said, pointing to Sonja, who was pulling her gun's safety off at the moment. "We met in the forest."

"Yeah, he's with the **CS**," said the Juicer, suddenly relaxing. "Don't know why he's dressed like **that**, though."

"It's a lot easier to sneak in between shifts when you look like a soldier," explained the man. "Just strolled in with a few off-duty guards, and spent a few hours tracking you down. The CS has pretty good files on the usual haunts of these guys."

"What's your name, buddy?" asked Perrin.

"My name's Hubert **Possman**," said the man. "And we need to talk."

Chapter 22

Donald **Hartman** completely climbed out of his Super SAMAS for the first time in a week. It felt good to smell the fresh air, to feel the cool breeze blowing on his skin. But **then**, he began to smell something else, something entirely unpleasant. "Hey, buddy?" he said to the Coalition crewman who was tuning up his power armor. "Can you tell me where the showers are?"

"Sure," said the mechanic, struggling to fit a fresh piece of armor plating onto the **SAMAS's** chest. "Down to the right of the barracks, in a big grey building. Can't miss **'em**."

"Thanks," said Hartman, hurrying away. "Oh, and be sure to empty my suit's septic tank, okay? After a week in the field, it's probably pretty ripe."

The mechanic, shrugging this latest job off as merely another menial **task**, grabbed up a suction tube and opened up the small septic tank concealed in the robot's inner thigh. He was totally unprepared for the stench which emitted from within, and for the first time in 12 years truly regretted his job. He spent the next 15 minutes vomiting into a garbage can.

Upon taking a long, very hot shower and changing into a fresh uniform, Hartman emerged from the **showerhouse** and

took a good long look at the Coalition airfield. It wasn't much, just a series of crudely made **ferrocrete** runways and a few control towers, hangars, and barracks. On each corner was positioned an anti-aircraft weapon. Normally, this place would be merely another air base, nothing to get excited about. But today, it was so much more.

The robotic suits of his Black Dog squadron were standing in a line, as if they were at attention, while a team of mechanics worked to clean them, reload their weapons, and repair their armor. Nearby, 24 **Warbirds** and 6 Scout Cycles were getting the same treatment. A great number of **Nightwing** and Talon jet fighters were being wheeled out from their hangars onto the runway, where they stood side by side with a wing of **AF-17** Diamond Backs. Behind the base was a gigantic Air Castle bomber, far too large to fit onto the meager runways. Pilots, mechanics, and guards were all over, in a chaotic struggle to prepare for the air attack.

A mercenary clad in ragtag body armor walked up to **him**. "You Donald Hartman?" he asked.

"Yeah, why?"

"**The** brass told me to find you. There's a briefing in the control room which you need to attend. Follow me." The two men walked over to the air control tower.

"You must be pretty good if the CS hired you," said **Hartman** to the **merc**. "I've never heard of them hiring **headhunters** before."

"We're pretty good," said the mercenary modestly. "My **squad**, the Thunder Riders, specializes in high-altitude, precision strikes against urban targets. That happens to be exactly what's needed here, so they hired us. It's actually just the Air Castle that they really want."

"I thought those things were illegal."

"You'd be surprised how many of its own laws the Coalition's willing to break." With that, the two men walked inside, where the other pilots were already seated. Hartman and the mercenary sat down, and waited for the briefing to begin.

* * *

Meanwhile, in Tolkeen, Possman was briefing Perrin about the upcoming bombing, in a locked bathroom. "They're gonna pick us up at 02:04:Bravo, which I think is the marketplace," said the ranger. "A couple of Sky Cycles slip away from the battle, pick us up, and then haul ass back to the nearest base, while the bombers arlight that damned pyramid."

"It's about **friggin'** time," said Perrin happily, lighting up a cigarette. "You know, I wondered if I was ever going to get out of this place. It's hell, man. Nothing but magic and evil here. I was beginning to crack up."

"At least you had these guys to keep you safe."

"YOU try dealing with these lunatics for a month, and tell me that they're safe! They're led by a crazy, for **cryin'** out loud! They shot the guy who saved my life, did you know that? **Buncha** rat bastards."

"Well, your nightmare is over, Jack," said Possman. "Because tomorrow, this city is going to burn, and you are going to get back to human civilization. But you know, I've got a ques-

tion for you. What made you want to come to this hell-hole in the first place? Loyalty? Money? What is it?"

Perrin's knee-jerk response was money. But just before that answer could come out of his **mouth**, he took a moment to ponder the situation, and the events leading up to his acceptance of the Coalition's offer. "Vengeance," he said softly.

Possman looked at him oddly.

"I want to do two last things before I leave this city forever," said **Perrin**. "First off, I'm going to organize a halfway decent strike against their air defenses, so that the CS can nuke this city a bit better. These cannon fodder terrorists will be perfect for that. And second, I want to see this place blow up real good."



The skinhead clicked off his tape recorder. He had heard plenty. His Juicer friend would hear of this, and tomorrow they could blow their fleeing "leader" to hell. And, if somehow they failed in their mission, well then, the rest of the HFA could hear the tape and find out just how much their master really thought of them.

* * *

Back at the air force base, **Hartman** looked around the briefing room as the bald, uniformed general got up to speak. The **SAMAS** squad leader was amazed by what he saw. Almost every pilot in the CS with a good rep was there. It must have been murder, even in a regimented military, to select and assemble such a prime team. If the super-weapon was so important that everyone here was needed to knock it out, then Hartman knew the thing must be inspiring some *major* fear in the leaders of the Coalition.

"I will not kid you," began the general. "Your upcoming mission will be very difficult, and many of you will probably not survive it. The most insidious weapon ever produced by **demonkind** is near **completion**, and if humanity is to survive, the super-weapon must be destroyed now. **Tolkeen's** air defenses are indeed mighty, but with luck and talent we shall prevail."

"The city walls of Grand **Alamar** are equipped with several formidable air defenses. They have mystical rift generators, as well as anti-aircraft lasers and several SAM launchers. Many of the rooftops in Tolkeen are equipped with mini-missile batteries. Light planes patrol their airspace, along with **hatchling** dragons and even some air **elementals**. As you can see, this is a varied, fairly comprehensive defense plan. However, it is also unwieldy and slow to react. We believe that if you attack swiftly at low altitudes, then you should be able to catch them out of their element and destroy the pyramid before they can muster a strong defense."

"The attack plan is as follows. The power armor soldiers and sky cycles flank the bombers, taking out rooftop batteries and enemy fliers for them. They go in at low altitude, skirting the rooftops. Meanwhile, the mercenary company's planes go in at high altitude, as far up as your planes can go. The Diamond Backs flank the Air Castle, taking out any SAMs and fliers that the bomber's defenses might miss. However, you are not to fire at any low-altitude or ground targets. This is because of Tolkeen's most insidious **defense...an illusionary** spell which blankets the city. At high altitude, you can't trust your perceptions."

"So how is the Castle supposed to bomb that super-weapon?" asked a mercenary.

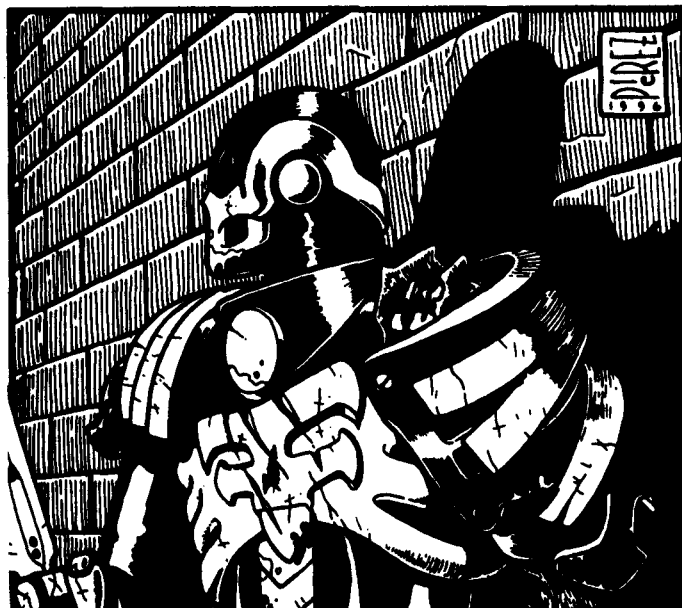
"One of the sky cycles has been equipped with a laser targeting device," replied the general. "It will feed the thing's coordinates into the Air Castle's onboard computer. Once the talon bombers have exhausted their missiles, they are to begin the retreat, and signal the Air Castle to commence its bombing run. Are there any other questions?"

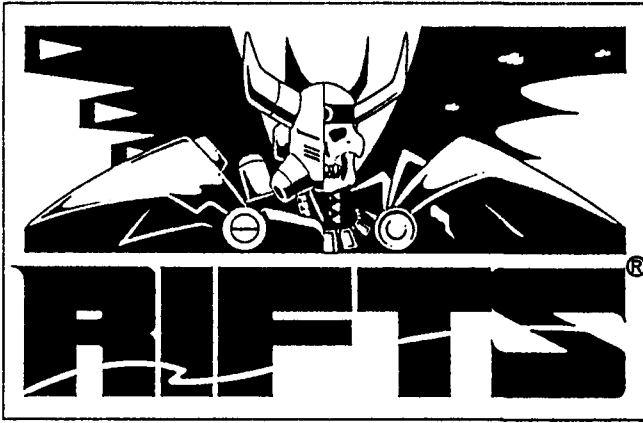
A young Sky Cycle pilot raised his hand. "What does the super weapon look like, sir?"

"We're not really sure," replied the general. "It should be the largest structure in the city. Odds are, it's either a pyramid, a cannon, or an obelisk of some sort. We think you'll know it when you see it. Are there any other questions?"

No hands were raised.

"All right then," he said, saluting them. "Good hunting!" The pilots rose, and dashed off to their vehicles.





The Hammer of the Forge

By James M.G. Cannon

Chapter Five

The Drums of Heaven

The Consortium of Civilized Worlds does not have the time, resources, or inclination to police each and every world that exists within its boundaries. Because of the peculiar nature of its government, the CCW cannot and will not interfere directly with the governments of the planets that make up the Consortium. But they watch the space between those planets very, very closely.

The Consortium Armed Forces Fleet Command seeds Consortium space with agents, soldiers, and **starships** that keep close tabs on the space lanes. **Warshield** cruisers hunt pirates and patrol the borders of "civilized" space, supported by Scimitar light patrol ships and Hunter-Destroyers. The majestic bulk of a Protector battleship is a reassuring sight to CCW citizens and a major concern of the **Transgalactic** Empire, while the **Wolfen Packmasters** ferry troops from one trouble spot to the next. But these ships are, ultimately, only transients in an ever expanding cosmos. They visit systems, dispensing justice or security, and then depart for the void again.

It is for that reason that most CCW worlds rarely consider the CAFF, formidable as it is, a reliable protector. They are rarely around when they are most needed. Aware of the problem, CAFFCO also seeded Consortium space with a network of space stations to overlook individual systems or a collection of systems and see to their defense and other military needs on a regular basis.

— excerpt from *Travelogues of a Journeyman* by **Fraktyn Quint**

Caleb Vulcan, newly knighted servant of the Cosmic Forge, settled back into his co-pilot seat, stretching his legs out beneath the **dashboard**, or whatever it was called in space. Beside Caleb, in the pilot's chair, sat his Wolfen mentor, **Lothar**, still clad in his emerald armor and looking as fierce as possible. They were traveling in a freighter despite the fact that both **cosmo-knights** were capable of **FTL** travel under their own power because, as

Lothar had explained it, Caleb was too new at the job, and didn't yet have the experience or power to keep up with Lothar at top speed.

Initially, Caleb felt insulted at the insinuation that he could not keep up. He knew a thing or two about speed, having torn up the sands of Arizona in his dune buggy and buzzed through the skies of **Koola** faster than any jet could go. However, Caleb realized, the first moment he stepped into the freighter's cockpit, that he now had the opportunity to learn how to fly a **starship**. It couldn't be too much more difficult than flying a plane, after all, and while Caleb had never actually flown a plane, to do so had so long been his dream that he knew nearly everything there was to know about the process. Under **Lothar's** tutelage, he was able to pick up the fundamentals of maneuvering a three hundred ton freighter through the void.

But as they approached their destination, the Consortium Space Station Xerxes, Lothar had decreed "lesson time" over, and taken the controls from Caleb. He disengaged the Phase Drive, which had generated the faster than **light**, or **FTL**, propulsion enabling the ship to blast through space at insane speeds, and then switched over to the **contragravity** drive. Lothar refused to explain how the Phase Drive worked, insisting that the only species capable of understanding the device were the mysterious **Prometheans** of Phase World. Caleb had no idea what a Promethean might be, but he wasn't going to be side-tracked on the mechanics of space travel that easily.

Lothar was a bit more forthcoming on the contragravity drive, explaining that **contragravitonic** devices could eliminate the pull of gravity on an object. The simplest expression of this technology enabled an ordinary human to lift tons of cargo with little effort, and a more complex device, like the drive itself, could not only enable a ship to break the bonds of planetary gravity, but could enable the ship to accelerate and maneuver through air or space. A similar device created the artificial gravity of the ship's **interior**, keeping Caleb from floating out of his seat.

In addition, Lothar explained that just as the contragravity drive — or, at least, this model — couldn't accelerate into **FTL** speeds, the Phase Drive couldn't handle anything slower. And even a yokel like Caleb could understand the dangers inherent in approaching a planet or space station at **FTL** speed. So Caleb let Lothar take control of the vehicle and guide it through space towards the bright silver dot Lothar insisted was a space station.

Caleb drummed his fingers against his stomach and watched the bright silver dot get bigger. Caleb looked down at his hands and suddenly realized he was still dressed in his jeans and the shiny shirt **Floris** Nybek purchased for him just days before. His bare feet barely registered the cold metal of the floor, but he instinctively lifted **them** up and wiggled his toes. He couldn't board a space station dressed like this.

"Lothar," Caleb asked his companion, "as long as we're borrowing a space ship, do you think I might be able to borrow somebody's shoes?"

The Wolfen looked askance at Caleb. "Just wear your armor, pup," he offered.

Caleb shook his head. Even aboard the freighter, Lothar remained powered up, still clad in his fearsome emerald green **cosmo-armor**. Caleb, in contrast, dispelled his own suit of armor soon after boarding the freighter. He didn't see the need of

wearing the suit at all times. After all, back home Art Lynch didn't wear his **sheriff's** uniform when hanging out with the boys at **Munden's**. Caleb couldn't be a **cosmo-knight** twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week — or whatever the Three Galaxies equivalent might be. He knew he needed the balance of a human identity, because without one, he instinctively knew that the temptation to become something inhuman would be too strong to resist.



"All I need are some shoes, boss," Caleb insisted.

Lothar sighed loudly, and then said, "**There's** a storage locker in the other room. Whatever is in there you can use, but if you don't find anything, you're out of luck."

Caleb bounced out of the chair and headed into the next chamber. He found a row of lockers against one wall, and rifled through them in search of serviceable footwear. It took him a while, but he eventually discovered a pair of red boots that weren't too large for him. Emblazoned on the instep of each boot was the legend "**grav**" in Trade Four, which looked slightly ominous to Caleb, but they were the only shoes that fit him. He would have preferred a nice pair of tennis shoes, actually, but he wagered that he had lucked out in finding anything at all. When he felt comfortable again, he stepped back into the cockpit.

Xerxes filled the viewscreen. It was a massive structure, easily a dozen miles long, and it was shaped like a spindle or **top**, with a broad flat head that narrowed downward into a point. Lights decorated the station from top to bottom, and hundreds of ships buzzed in, out, and around the station, like gnats orbiting a light bulb. Caleb noticed dozens of laser batteries peppering the hide of the station, and he knew they would zap if any of the gnats got too close. The hump of a blue and green planetary mass peeked out from the background. The vision was breathtaking, but Caleb found his voice quickly.

"**This** is what you called '**notmuch** as these things **go**'?"

Lothar shrugged. "When you've been to Center as many times as I have, these places honestly don't look like much. Now sit down and quit gawking. I need to get permission to dock and a safe route in. I don't need you distracting me, pup."

Caleb forced his mouth shut and then dropped into the co-pilot's chair.

Forty minutes later, after Lothar guided the craft onto a docking platform and automatic systems sent **umbilicals** snaking through the airless environment to connect with the freighter, Caleb and Lothar stepped through the airlock and onto the station. At first, Caleb didn't see much to be impressed by; this portion of the station looked indistinguishable from the interior of the freighter he had just vacated. But the human boy couldn't help staring as a pair of tentacled quadrupeds sloughed past him, their single large, crimson eyes blinking rapidly. When he deemed the creatures outside of earshot, though they didn't appear to possess ears, Caleb murmured to his companion, "I guess they allow pets on this station, huh?"

Lothar snorted disdainfully. "Those were **Monro**. Traders from the **Transgalactic** Empire, from the look of them. Please try to keep your human prejudices to **yourself**, pup."

Caleb shrugged. "How was I supposed to know?"

"Ignorance and stupidity go paw in paw," Lothar intoned, "but only one can be excused by the other."

"What is that supposed to mean?" Caleb asked.

Lothar snorted again. "I can tell you are going to take a great deal of work. Come on," Lothar urged, "the **TVIA** station is at the end of this corridor." The Wolfen led the way down the metal hallway, the harsh fluorescent lights inset in the walls reflecting off his armor. Caleb followed at a sedate pace, feeling chastened.

The passage emptied out into a much larger space with a **high**, vaulted ceiling. Dozens of aliens, humans, and other **tran-**

sients stood in lines before a series of massive desks, behind which were staffed humans in military-looking garb. The tops of the desks were lit up with lights, and the Caleb could see the humans typing on keys built into the desks themselves. Other humans in similar uniforms stood at attention a few paces behind the desks, cradling rifles and looking very dangerous. As Caleb watched, the transients filed by a desk, answering a series of questions, and were allowed to hop on an escalator that carried them up into the station proper.

"Do we have anything to declare?" Caleb asked **Lothar**. The Wolfen just glared at him.

Lothar fell into line behind the **Monro** creatures, who attempted to ignore the presence of the **cosmo-knight** rather superficially. Caleb followed close behind, still examining the room. He could see a number of television screens hanging from the **ceiling**, flashing information in a babble of different languages. The walls, **likewise**, were decorated with signs and arrows, all color-coded and in different tongues. Caleb was pleased to see Trade Four, or English, was one of them.

The customs — or **TVIA** — official finished with the Monro quickly, and with a barely veiled threat that seemed to upset the grotesque little creatures. Caleb had no doubt they would behave as instructed, if only while in the presence of the troopers with guns.

And then Lothar stepped up to the terminal, and the official's sour expression transformed into a welcoming smile. "Lothar of **Motherhome**," the man said, beaming. "Welcome back to Xerxes." He eyed Caleb for a moment, and added, "Disposing of a prisoner?"

Caleb frowned, and was about to set the man straight, but Lothar intervened. "Deputizing a new recruit, actually," Lothar growled. The **official** started, and managed a weak smile in Caleb's direction by way of apology. Caleb just shrugged. "We should be gone within the hour," Lothar was saying, while the official keyed information into his terminal.

"Well then," the official said after a moment, "I shall see you again very soon."

Lothar nodded and stepped past the terminal, Caleb at his heels. The guards offered Lothar an appreciative nod, which he acknowledged, and then he stepped onto the escalator.

"So," Caleb began, "are you famous or just a local boy?"

Lothar mumbled something Caleb didn't quite hear, and then said, "I am fairly well known in this sector of space. I've visited Xerxes a few times in the past as well."

"A little bit of both, then," Caleb said. **Lothar's** tail flicked in annoyance, but he said nothing. The escalator carried the knights up into the station proper, or at least what Caleb took to be the station proper. The escalator deposited visitors onto a promenade, an upper deck that looked out onto a broad courtyard decorated with fountains of curious architecture and plant life of exotic shades. The ceiling was a good thirty meters away, and huge windows stretched from floor to ceiling, displaying the comings and goings of ships outside in space.

Humans and aliens picked their way through the artificial park, others sitting beside fountains or beneath hanging trees. On the deck itself, dozens of creatures bustled past Caleb and **Lothar**, each one more bizarre and curious than the last. Caleb saw beings with bodies fashioned from **rock**, males and females

with great manes of striped hair colored maroon and **blue**, robots with carapaces of black steel, apish humanoids with **chitinous** plates covering their **bodies**, women with **mohawks**, men with braids, a dough faced creature with blue skin and beady eyes, great flange-headed creatures in flowing robes, and dozens more. Caleb almost felt like he were lost in a **funhouse** or a **freakshow**. But this was all too strange and real to belong to a **freakshow**.

And the wide berth beings gave Lothar and himself did not escape Caleb.

"**This** way," Lothar said, taking a sharp left. Creatures scurried out of his way as he strode purposefully along the promenade. Caleb stared at the park below for a moment, once more wondering if this was all some fever dream, and then scurried after the senior cosmo-knight.

"Explain this whole bonded deputy business again, please," Caleb asked Lothar as they walked. "And you might want to tell me why everybody seems to be frightened of you."

Lothar snorted. "Us, pup. The **sentients** are frightened of us." His emerald eyes flashed beneath the brow of his helm. "Most sane creatures in the Three Galaxies fear the divine judgments of the Forge, and they fear even more those who carry out the Forge's wishes. As I mentioned before, simply by accepting the mantle of the cosmo-knight, you have opened yourself up to attack, fear, and superstition from all those who have contempt for law and order."

"Are you telling me that everyone on this station is a **criminal**, then?"

Lothar shook his head. "No." He paused for a moment, almost as if hesitant to go on. But it would be very **un-Lothar-like** to be hesitant about anything, Caleb believed. "Even those who are just and righteous are uneasy around us," the Wolfen continued, smiling ruefully. "We represent a standard that very few in this universe can match. They envy our power and our station. They fear that they may not be righteous enough, that they possess some terrible flaw that only the Forge or her agents can see. And they are **afraid** we will punish them for it."

"Damned if you do, damned if you don't," Caleb muttered. "How do we do our jobs if everyone is afraid of us?"

"Fear is an excellent motivator, pup. It makes criminals sloppy. It makes them do stupid things. Fear makes our job much easier than it would be otherwise." Lothar eyed Caleb for a moment. "Perhaps you are beginning to understand the weighty responsibility upon your shoulders."

Caleb shrugged. "This isn't how I expected **it**," he admitted.

"And what did you expect? Parades in our honor? Flowers laid at our feet? Beautiful females throwing themselves at us?"

It was Caleb's turn to smile with ruefulness. "I guess I did have high expectations." Lothar nodded, his suspicions confirmed. "**But**," Caleb added, "it still seems wrong that even the good guys don't trust us."

"Oh, they trust us, pup," Lothar explained. "They trust us to do the Forge's bidding, and they trust us to stamp out evil in the Three Galaxies. Beyond that, **however** . . ."

Their discussion brought Caleb and Lothar across the promenade, and up a few levels to the more cramped parts of the station. The promenade and the park, it seemed, existed to welcome travelers to the station. The rest of the station was laid

out more like a starship or an office building, with narrow hallways, high ceilings, and no windows. The stars were left outside where they belonged, allowing humans and aliens to see to the business of running the station without any distractions.

"Lothar!"

The Wolfen **cosmo-knight** paused in mid-stride and slowly turned. Caleb spun on his own heel to see a strange figure brushing past two uniformed CCW officers, and call out **Lothar's** name once more. Beside Caleb, Lothar released an audible sigh.

"Lothar, old **boy**, imagine running into you here," the stranger was saying, approaching with a quick and even stride. The figure was tall and long limbed, with a battered hat on his head and a stained and rumpled tan trenchcoat wrapped around himself. He held a short cane in his right **hand**, which he rapped rhythmically against the floor of the hallway. His features, under the hat and coat, were shadowy and **indistinct**, like clouded darkness, almost insubstantial. All but for his two eyes, which flickered like orange flames beneath the brim of his hat.

"It is odd, Abbot," Lothar offered when the figure drew close. "I would have expected you to be on the other side of the Corkscrew this time of year."

"Yes, well, I ran into a spot of trouble there last year, and I didn't feel like repeating myself. Decided to take it easy for a while." The mysterious Abbot offered his hand to Lothar, and the two shook amicably, though Lothar seemed annoyed. Caleb shrugged inwardly; Lothar always appeared annoyed.

"And who have we **here?**," Abbot asked, turning to Caleb. Abbot spoke Trade Four with a clipped, British **accent**, which seemed highly improbable to Caleb, until he reminded himself that aliens speaking English at all was highly improbable. Besides, here in the Three Galaxies, Abbot's accent was probably **Centaurian** or **Atorian** or something.

"Abbot, meet Caleb Vulcan," Lothar said, gesturing in Caleb's direction. "Pup, meet Doctor Abbot."

"A pleasure to meet you. . . **uh**. . . Doctor, was it?" Caleb said, offering the shadowy figure his hand. Abbot took it, with a surprisingly strong grip; he might appear insubstantial save for his clothing, but Abbot certainly felt solid enough.

"Likewise, I'm sure," Abbot said. "And yes, I am a doctor. As you are a student, yes? Don't look surprised. I've known Lothar a long time, and he's always called his trainees '**pups**.' Quite an odd affectation, if you ask me."

"And what are you a doctor of, exactly?" Lothar asked. He turned to Caleb. "An important lesson to remember, pup. Watch your step around Abbot, and always be prepared for the worst. Trouble follows him like calm after a storm."

"How very droll, Lothar," Abbot said. "Especially given my present circumstances. As it happens, I have a matter that I'd like to discuss with you. Nothing serious, I assure you, but your help would be **appreciated**. . ."

"We're busy, I'm afraid," Lothar interrupted. Caleb wasn't sure, but there seemed to be a certain smugness about Lothar's expression. "We need to get young Caleb deputized, and then we need to begin searching for **Elias Harkonnen**. You'll have to pester some other knight for help. I hear there's a **Bilhaze** in the **Timon** system looking for work. Why not go bother her?"

"Harkonnen, eh?" Abbot's eyes brightened beneath the brim of his hat. "He's a canny opponent. You'll need more than a

neophyte knight on your side if you're going to take that one down."

"We'll do fine," Lothar snarled. "We certainly don't need the aid of ruffians and troublemakers."

"Excuse me," Caleb said, interposing himself between the two intimidating figures. "If I might offer a suggestion, Lothar. You did say Harkonnen was a tough customer — Invincible Legion and all that. Plus he outsmarted you once before; we could probably use all the help we can get."

Abbot slapped Caleb on the back. "Is it courage, Lothar, or stupidity? I must say, this new recruit of yours is quite impressive. I've never heard one talk to you like that before."

Lothar's mask twisted into a grimace. "If you're trying to get on my good side, pup, you are failing miserably."

"I wasn't aware you had a good side," Caleb snapped back. "And let's cut out this pup crap for once and for all, huh?"

Beside Caleb, Doctor Abbot took a step back, expecting an explosion of some kind from Lothar. The emerald knight stretched himself to his full height, eyes flashing green, prepared to reprimand his charge. But before Lothar could get a word out, his attention was drawn to a blonde ensign hurtling down the corridor towards them. She was calling his name.

"Oh, Lothar, I'm so glad I finally located you," she began, puffing heavily. "I checked with Rawlins in the Security office, but he said you hadn't been there yet, and then I thought maybe you lingered in the **Arboretum**. . ."

"Ensign," Lothar growled, "what is this all about?" Though interrupted, his ire had not dissipated.

"Yes, of course," the woman stammered. "Please forgive me. A Dominator Class Threat has appeared in the Teneb-742 system. Xerxes is mobilizing everything we have, but we're a small outpost, and we don't have much available. When we learned we had two **cosmo-knights** onboard, Commander **Skyrunner** thought you might be willing to help."

"What's going on?" Caleb interrupted. Lothar, Abbot, and the ensign ignored him, though the ensign continued to explain for Lothar's benefit.

"You might already know that Teneb-742 is about to go nova. But apparently a **Zodoran** energy leech was awakened by **Teneb-742's** death throes — the creature has to be stopped before the star dies. If it absorbs the energy of a dying star, it could become unstoppable. I mean, if it's already Dominator Class, **what'll** happen when Teneb-742 goes nova?"

"Trouble," Lothar said. "Big trouble. We've got to get back to the ship and out to Teneb-742 immediately. The Forge willing, we'll get there in time to be of some use."

"Commander Skyrunner will be most relieved," the ensign gushed.

"I'm coming," Abbot said. "I know a bit about the lost **Zodorans**."

Lothar looked at him a moment, and then nodded. "Let's go."

* * *

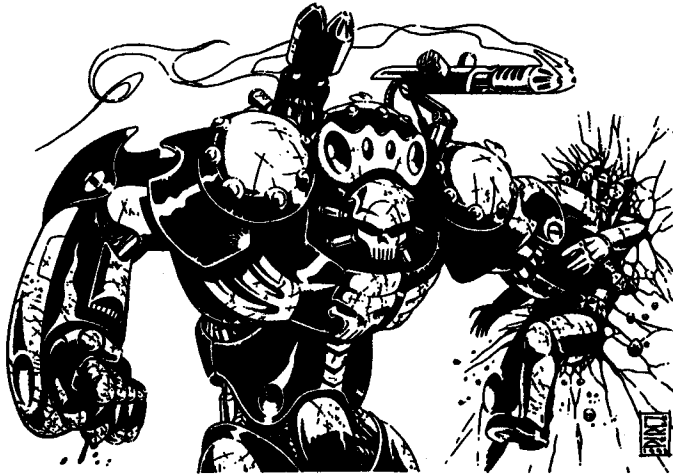
"Tell me what I want to hear, **Squiddy**," Elias Harkonnen demanded.

He stood imperiously in the midst of the junkyard the **Monro Squamato Kekkil Damathui** called a pawn shop. Hardly a shop at all, it appeared to be little more than a place for Squamato, or

RIFTS

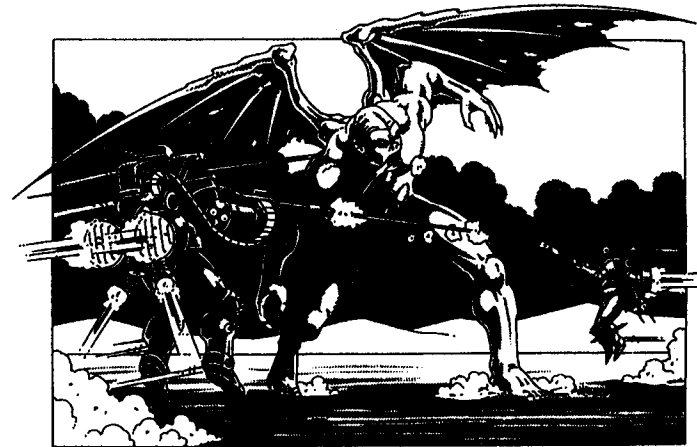
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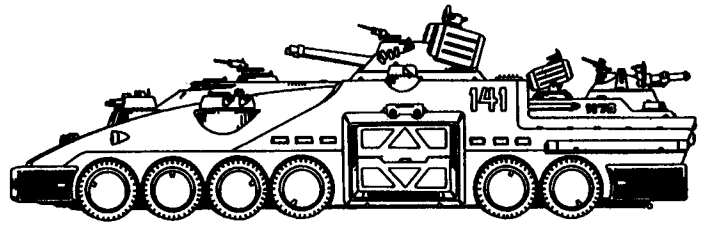
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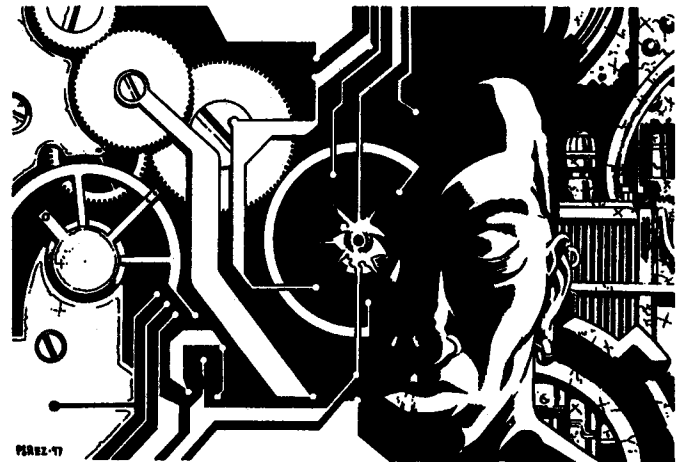


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“Squiddy” as most referred to him, to collect junk. The place was small enough to begin with, but jammed with broken toasters, VR units, **trideo** monitors, oxygen and methane tanks, **swimsuits**, flight suits, turbo jockey jackets, helmets, fragments of armor, bits of wire and string, used CDs, cyborg and robot spare parts — limbs, mostly, but also a few eyes, gears and CPUs — jewelry, swords, obsolete laser weapons from three centuries ago, ancient **hardcopy** books, stereos missing knobs and switches and other integral parts, figurines of dragons and unicorns, scratched and pitted with age, lawn **ornaments**, posters of some arcane figure known only as “**Snoopy**,” and hundreds of other less identifiable items wedged onto shelves, shoved into boxes, or on display in one of three glass cases with glass so cloudy the objects within were indistinct at best, and completely invisible at worst. Fragments littered the floor, and crunched beneath **Elias**’ boots like popcorn.

And in the midst of it all, the rotund form of Squiddy. He squatted behind the central glass case like a porcine king, his single red glaring eye blinking furiously, his huge maw of needle sharp teeth stretched wide into a hideous smile. Squiddy kept his forepaws flat on the top of the case, but his tentacles flitted about, one waving a pungent cigar, the other sloshing a gin and tonic everywhere, while the other two rummaged about behind the glass case on some mysterious errand.

Squiddy **wasn’t** much as pawnbrokers went, but everyone in Center, from the Knife Master to High Lord **Anshurr** himself, knew Squiddy didn’t really deal in used items. He dealt in information. It was he who had pointed **Elias** in the direction of **Quajinn Huo**, the **draconid** sorcerer who had once almost taken control of the United Worlds of **Warlock**, and who was now forced to hide in the slums beneath the sixth level or face destruction at the hands of those he had wronged so long ago. But **Huo**’s whereabouts had not been the only bit of **intelligence** **Elias** had requested from Squiddy, and the former Invincible Legionnaire had come to collect the rest of his merchandise.

Squiddy took a puff on his cigar. “My, my, you are an impatient one, **Harkonnen**,” he remarked. “**Not** even a ‘**hello**.’ or a ‘**how’s tricks**.’ Right to business with you.”

“I haven’t the time to waste chewing the fat with you, Squiddy. Just give me what I paid for,” **Elias** ordered coldly. **Monro** as a species had always disgusted him, but Squiddy was a particularly loathsome member of his race. The fact that **Elias** could not simply force Squiddy to do his bidding made **Elias** want to smash things; preferably Squiddy’s fat, disgusting excuse for a face. But the **Monro**’s fame throughout Center also kept the creature protected. High Lord **Anshurr** would not take kindly to anyone who pounded one of his chief information **brokers** into pudding, and **Elias** certainly didn’t need the heat the **Splugorth** could lay on him.

Not now, at any rate.

“Very well,” Squiddy said with an expansive sigh that shook his frame. “I haven’t been able to locate **Lothar** yet.” Before **Elias** could snarl anything, Squiddy pressed on, “**Cosmo-knights** are notoriously difficult to keep track of, **Harkonnen**. Believe me. They can flit through space at will, so they don’t need to board passenger ships. They don’t eat, drink, or sleep, so they don’t book rooms at hotels or pay for expensive dinners at restaurants with their Phase World Express cards. And that’s another thing — they don’t use creds much at all. Most people just give ‘**em** what they need. Or maybe the Forge does, I **dunno**. Bottom line: the usual channels ain’t much use with **cosmo-knights**.”

“**Then** why use them at all?” **Elias** asked through gritted teeth.

“Excellent question. The answer is simple: you might get lucky. Plus, they’re quicker than the unusual channels, which are coming up empty themselves, and more slowly I might add. I’m still looking, though, I assure you. You’ll be the first to know when he’s spotted.”

Elias nodded wearily. “Fine,” he said. “What else have you got for me?”

Squiddy took a sip from his **drink**, and frowned slightly. “**Too** much tonic,” he muttered to himself. To **Elias**, he said, “Rumor mill is working overtime, my friend. Word is that **Naruni Enterprises** is taking a pounding in their new market, the dimensional vortex known as Earth. Could it be coincidence that this Earth is the playground for one Lord **Splynncryth**? Industrial espionage can be very lucrative, **Harkonnen**.”

“Only an idiot would be caught between the **Naruni** and a **Splugorth**,” **Elias** muttered.

Squiddy gave the **Monro** equivalent of a shrug. “There’s a new player in Center politics that might interest you. They call themselves the **Tarlok**. They’re from a backwards system where they run the show; galactic despots, you’d like ‘**em**. Their only problem is, their **starships** ain’t **FTL** capable. Now, they’re courting the **Splugorth** of Center, who seem to be taking a shine to ‘**em** — the **Tarlok** have exotic slave stock — but they still haven’t seen an **FTL** ship yet. The **Splugorth** are playing with ‘**em**, I **figger**. And the **Kreeghor**, who see the **Tarloks** as petty rivals, have blocked the **Tarloks**’ attempts to go outside the **Splugorth** for help.”

Interesting. **Elias** could make a great deal of money selling a ship or two to the upstart aliens. It would certainly feel good to

once more spit in the collective eye of the **Kreeghor**, but it was generally unwise to undercut a **Splugorth**. It wouldn't hurt to keep it in **mind**, however. "Go on," he told Squiddy.

"A Fallen Knight showed up on Center last night. Just appeared on level four all of a sudden. Probably rifted in."

"One of the Fallen?" **Elias** said, surprised. The Fallen were rare, though a great deal more common than the Forge or its knights wanted them to be. A sad lot, the Fallen were failed knights, those who could not live up to the perfection demanded of them by the Forge, those who gave in to temptation and behaved like the rest of the cosmos. It might be worth the trouble it would take to track this knight down, **Elias** thought. He might be willing to cut a deal. Or he might be worth a few practice rounds. "What else?" **Elias** asked.

"Let's see," Squiddy mumbled. "There's a new expedition shaping up for Ghost World. The **S'hree** Vek Confederacy and the CCW are holding a summit in some undisclosed location, probably in neutral space. **Gozel dip Gozel** sent a 'mysterious cargo' to Maddox Industries yesterday; should reach its destination in another twelve standard days. Very hush-hush." Not surprising; **Gozel dip Gozel** was a famous **Kittani** inventor and artist. He worked freelance, refusing to subjugate his "brilliance" or his "vision" to some faceless conglomerate. The **Naruni** had tried to get him to sign contracts at least a dozen times, but no matter how lucrative they were, **Gozel dip Gozel** still refused. Supposedly, having been spurned so many times, the **Naruni** eventually resorted to force, and sent a whole company of **repo-bots** to the inventor's homeworld to take him away. The story went that **Gozel dip Gozel** eventually made a summer home out of the **repo-bots** after he melted them down.

People steered clear of **Gozel dip Gozel** after that. They recognized that a being with his intelligence and resources could protect himself and his inventions. But if one were on a ship, en route to one of those faceless conglomerates, it would be **deliciously** vulnerable to pirates or worse. A **Gozel dip Gozel** original would be worth billions on the black-market.

Something else to keep in mind. "You're holding something **back**, Squiddy," **Elias** admonished. "Spill it."

The **Monro** smiled, and puffed on his cigar once more. "I saved the best for last, **Harkonnen**. **Thraxus** is hiring."

Thraxus. Now there was a word to conjure with, as **Elias'** grandmother would have said. **Thraxus** was one of the few figures known throughout the Three Galaxies. A powerful, rich, and immortal figure, many considered **Thraxus** to be both the richest sentient in the Three Galaxies and the nominal ruler of Center itself. From his ivory tower on the first level of Center, the Manors, **Thraxus** ruled an empire of excess and military might, holding a considerable amount of **Naruni Enterprises** stock in addition to property holdings and businesses scattered throughout the reaches of the cosmos. In a single day, **Thraxus** made more money than most planets. As if the man's wealth were not enough, he was also well known for his political views: specifically, he had none. He played sides off against each other, **Splugorth**, **CCW**, **UWW**, **Transgalactic Empire**, the **Wolfen**, humans, **cosmo-knights**, Knights of **Kamnos**, tracers, the Fraternity of Stars; he had backed or thwarted all at one point or another. **Thraxus** feared nothing, and managed to reap profit from every venture. A man could do a lot worse than allying himself with such a being.

"What is he looking for?" **Elias** asked.

Squiddy snorted. "Thought that one might get your attention. Word is, he's looking for cutthroats, murderers and thieves for this one. Very big, very dangerous. But he needs folks that'll be trustworthy, willing to get the job done, and do it correctly."

Elias nodded, as if his suspicions were confirmed. "And you have no idea what the job itself entails?"

Squiddy tried to shrug again. "All I know is that it is supposed to be a 'total riot.' Which could mean it's the practical joke of the millennium, or something much, much worse. One never knows with **Thraxus**."

Elias thought a moment. He had no taste in practical jokes, no matter what the scale. But for the prices **Thraxus** was sure to be paying, **Elias** might consider smashing a custard pie in face of the Tribe-lord of the **Seljuks** or whomever might be the target. "Get word to **Thraxus** that I'm interested. Mention **Huo** is working for me. That should get his **attention**, if my name doesn't."

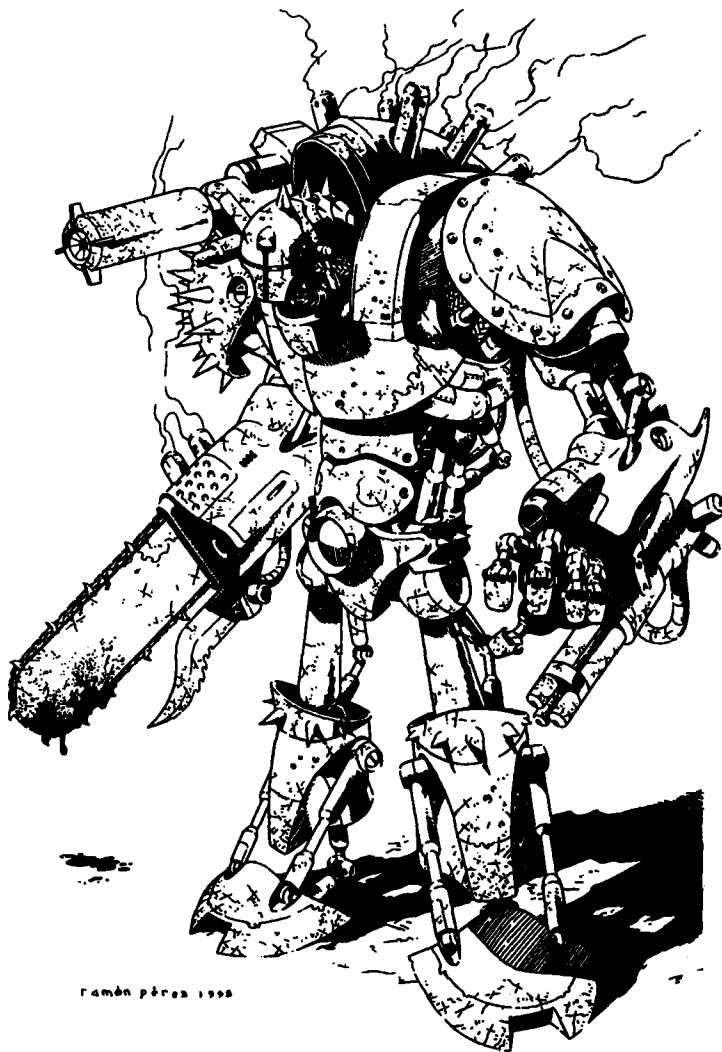
"Okay," Squiddy said. "There is the little matter of a finder's fee. . ."

"Just do it," **Elias** snapped. "When I hear back from **Thraxus**, I'll dump the appropriate amount in your usual account."

Elias Harkonnen left Squiddy's Pawn Shop, with a bounce in his step that had not been there when he entered. Despite the **Monro's** repulsive appearance, **Elias** had to admit that the little beast certainly produced results. A line to **Thraxus**. . . it would be best to keep his temper in check when dealing with Squiddy, **Elias** thought.

With an advance from **Thraxus**, **Elias** might be able to afford a new ship. His resources were beginning to peter out, and not for the first time he cursed **Lothar of Motherhome** for forcing him to destroy the asteroid installation and all the pirated cargo left in the asteroid's hold. If **Elias** had been able to unload that **material**, he wouldn't be running out of money on Phase World, begging for scraps from a **Monro**.

Elias' white eyes narrowed. His team was almost ready. Another day or two, and they would be ready to wreak havoc across the cosmos, in **Thraxus'** name or in **Harkonnen's**. **Quajinn Huo** would serve to deter any interruptions from **Lothar** or any other servants of the Forge. A **Klikita** named **Friar** possessed abilities that were the key to getting **Huo** off of Center without the **UWW** knowing. **Elias** had found a psychotic **Relogian** named **Hector** who knew his way around munitions. A **Kisent** from **Cheba-IV** would serve as pilot for whatever ship **Elias** could purchase. There was a **Riathenor** that **Elias** was in negotiations with, who might be willing to join up with their merry band. **Elias** also had a line on an **Oni**, and then there was the Fallen Knight Squiddy mentioned. Yes, the team was shaping up nicely.



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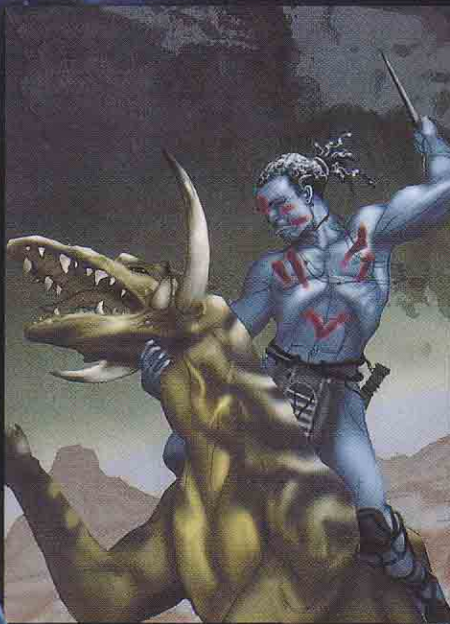
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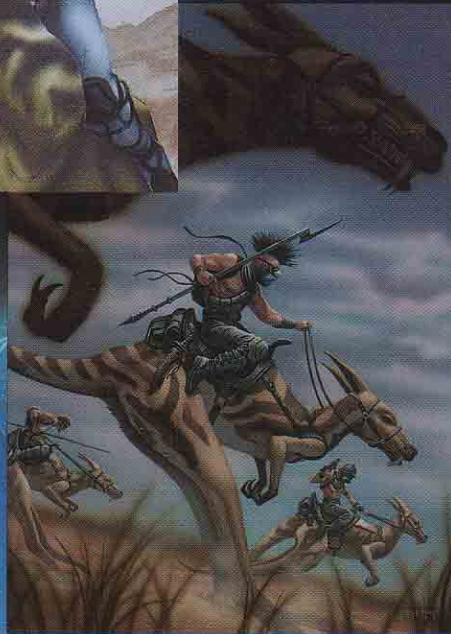
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