

Palladium Books® Presents:

# THE RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®



*Inside . . .*

Rifts® China 2: Geofront™

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Rune Arrows

Beyond the Supernatural™ Soul Trees

Heroes Unlimited™: Political Superhumans

Rifts® Dinosaur Swamp™

Rifts® Janissary O.C.C. & Adventure

Fiction, Conventions, News & More

JOHNSON

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## 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 these books.

Some parents may find the violence, magic and supernatural elements of the games 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 28**

**Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!**



First Printing – October, 2004

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The slogan "Limited only by your imagination," Beyond the Supernatural Two, Splicers, Chaos Earth, NEMA, MercTown, Merc Ops, Dimension Builder, Naruni, United Worlds of Warlock, Chaos Wizard, Geofront, Mechanoid® Space, Dinosaur Swamp, Arzno, Lazlo, Victor Lazlo, Lazlo Agency, Robert Mach, Heroes Unlimited, HU2, Powers Unlimited, Ninjas & Superspies, Aliens Unlimited, Mutant Underground, The Nursery, Hardware Unlimited, Gadgets Unlimited, Beyond the Supernatural, BTS-2, Three Galaxies, Void Runners, Gramercy Island, Skraypers, Atorian Empire, Wormwood, Land of the Damned, The Citadel, Wolfen Wars, Wolfen, Wulfen, Cosmo-Knights, Cyber-Knight, Dragonlands, Triax, Gargoyle Empire, Free Quebec, Xiticix Invasion, Fadetown, Hammer of the Forge, Siege On Tolkeen, Psyscape, Dweomer, ARCHIE-3, Northern Gun, Coalition States, Erin Tarn, Emperor Prosek, Splugorth, Splynncryth, Mega-Damage, Skelebot, SAMAS, Glitter Boy, Dog Boys, Dog Pack, Techno-Wizard, Ley Line Walker, Shifter, Bio-Wizardry, Psi-Stalker, Brodkil, Juicer, Crazy, 'Burbs, 'Borg, 'Bot, D-Bee, Chi-Town, Triax, NGR, and other names, titles, slogans, and likenesses of characters are trademarks owned by Kevin Siembieda and Palladium Books Inc.

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Palladium Books® Presents:

# THE RIFTER #28

## Your Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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**Special Thanks** to all our contributors, writers and artists – and a special welcome on board to the artists and writers making their debut in this issue. Our apologies to anybody who got accidentally left out or their name misspelled.



# Contents – The Rifter® #28 – October, 2004

## Page 6 – Art

Since this is our Halloween horror issue, we thought a nice full page illustration of a *Mike Dubisch* werewolf was fitting. This is just one example of the level of artwork you can expect for BTS-2 (currently in final production and expected for November release).

## Page 7 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Palladium Books, the house of ideas? We'd like to think so, and with books like the *Rifts® China* mini-series, *Splicers™ RPG* and *Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG, Second Edition*, we hope you'll agree. Kevin Siembieda talks about these recent and upcoming releases, a little about our game systems, unleashing the imagination, conventions and a special thanks to our loyal fans. We may still be stumbling around and missing more than a few deadlines, but we think you'll like the end results, and we have plenty of cool things in store for you in the future.

## Page 8 – Palladium News

**Rifts®: Promise of Power™** is the official name for Nokia's **Rifts®** role-playing game for the *N-Gage QD* platform – get the latest news right here. Also get the lowdown on **Gen Con® 2004**, the latest on Erick Wujcik, and other news.

## Page 9 – Palladium Coming Attractions

**Splicers®** is at the printers and ships the same day as the book you're holding in your hands. Kevin is busy writing **Beyond the Supernatural™ Two** and we have more than a dozen out of print books scheduled for a *return* before Christmas. They include the **Rifts® RPG**, **Rifts® Game Master Guide**, **Rifts® Book of Magic**, **Rifts® Federation of Magic™**, **Palladium Fantasy®: Dragons & Gods**, **Palladium Fantasy®: Monsters & Animals**, **Heroes Unlimited™: G.M. Guide**, and others. Plus get the latest on other upcoming titles like **Rifts® China 3**, **Merctown** and sourcebooks for **BTS-2**.

## Page 14 – X-Mas Surprise Package

It has become tradition for Palladium Books to give a little back to the fans this time of year. The *2004 X-Mas Surprise Package – Grab Bag* is our way of doing that. Autographed books, T-shirts, back stock, new releases, special editions, original artwork and surprises can be yours if you are willing to take the *chance*. Our way of saying thank you and Happy Holidays. See page 14 for all the details. Limited time offer.

## Page 17 – Beyond the Supernatural™

### The Soul Tree

Joseph Larsen presents source material and stats for the Soul Tree, an ethereal tree that thrives in graveyards, devouring the knowledge and memories of the dead, and tormenting and cor-

rupting the living. Includes pacts with the tree, evil fruit, Protecting Wraiths, Spy Minions, Poltergeists and Seeds.

Artwork by Kent Burles.

## Page 23 – Heroes Unlimited™

### Power Up the Vote

The political season is in an uproar in the United States of America, as it is time to elect our president. That political atmosphere has inspired Brandon K. Aten to write a piece on *superhumans* running for political office. Who better to seek political office than everyone's favorite hero? Talk about a "popular" vote and the trust of the people. Brandon outlines how to start, political platforms, campaign finances, running mates, campaign workers, follow through, the public eye, some appropriate new skills, a couple of candidates, and tables for rolling up a Political Party. A fun change from the usual super-heroics and adventure themes.

Artwork by political volunteer, Taylor White.

## Page 34 – Rifts®

### The Arrows of Ith'arian

Edwin Emmer presents eight different Rune Arrows complete with curses, history, and dazzling powers. He also offers some ancient spells and a monster from the time of the Elf-Dwarf Wars. Great optional source material for Game Masters of any game involving magic. Dynamic artwork by the magical Kent Burles.

## Page 41 – Rifts®: China Two

### The Geofront – Official Source Material

Todd S. Yoho and Kevin Siembieda join forces to present what got cut out of **Rifts® China 2**. An expanded history of the Geofront – the best chance humans have for defeating the Yama Kings and reclaiming even part of China for humankind. Plus, Geofront Prime Minister, Tan Yankai, Geofront Defense Minister, Jing Jiaxin, the Geo-Scout O.C.C., a Gun Master note, and the Cave Explorer vehicle.

Artwork by the venerable Drunken Style Studio artists (in this case, primarily Brandon C. Clark).

## Page 55 – Rifts®: Dinosaur Swamp™

### Creatures of the Horror Forest – Official Source Material

What's this? Todd Yoho has a second feature done special for our Halloween edition of **The Rifter®**. This time the prolific Mr. Yoho takes us back to Dinosaur Swamp (see **Rifts® World Book 26: Dinosaur Swamp™** for the complete overview of the region, new O.C.C.s, Eco-Magic and more).

Never before seen material includes the Civil War Specters known as the *Wraith Brigade*, plus *Wraith Soldiers*, *Carno-*

*suchids, Lepidosaur, Razormouth Frogs, and Gruesome Tarbids.*

Artwork by Apollo "I'm Getting Married" Okamura (opening art) and Dinosaur Hunter of Calgary, Kent Burles.

## Page 65 – Rifts®

### The Janissary Project

Who knows how many secrets the Coalition States has buried in its closet? Erick Fackler takes us back to 104 P.A. to reveal an incident involving the nefarious Doctor Desmond Bradford and the notorious Lone Star Complex in something called *The Janissary Project*. Genetic experimentation, super-soldiers, madness and folly. And while our story may start in 104 P.A. it has ramifications in the present. CS Janissary R.C.C., time-line and new weapons. All optional source material.

Artwork by Allen and Brian Manning.

## Page 82 – Rifts®

### Shadow Realms

Carl Gleba wrote this exploration into the realm and magic of the Shadow Beasts special for this Halloween edition of *The Rifter*®. The Shadow Forest, The Shadow Fortress, Lord Gray, the Plane of Shadows, Shadow Behemoth, Shadow Lord R.C.C., new Shadow Spells, adventure hooks and more. Thanks Carl, we love it.

Art by Apollo Okamura.

## Page 93 – Rifts® Phase World®

### The Hammer of the Forge

Chapter 28 of James M.G. Cannon's popular ongoing saga. More surprises and treachery.

Artwork by Apollo "get me to the church on time" Okamura.

## The Theme for Issue 28

This issue's theme is horror and Halloween! What else for an October issue, only this year, we made sure we had a bunch of horror material lined up, some of it done special by Palladium freelancers who got started in *The Rifter*®, Carl Gleba and Todd Yoho.

What's in *The Rifter*'s® future? How about a "swimsuit" issue? Seriously, it's coming next July, featuring a host of Palladium's fan favorite artists.

## The Cover

Scott Johnson is back with a vengeance. After spending time working for Marvel Comics' marketing and promo division, Scott has returned to do some covers for Palladium. This little beauty was done special for this Halloween issue of *The Rifter*®, but we're thinking it might make a dandy cover to Palladium Fantasy's *Land of the Damned Three*. And if you like this, just wait till you see his cover for *Rifts*® *China 3*. You'll like it, you'll like it.

## Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

Please note that most of the material presented in *The Rifter*® is "unofficial" or "optional" rules and source material.

They are alternative ideas, homespun adventures and material mostly created by fellow gamers and fans like you, the reader. Things one can *elect* to include in one's own campaign or simply enjoy reading about. They are not "official" to the main games or world settings (unless stated otherwise, of course).

As for optional tables and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky, too high-powered or inappropriate for your game, modify them or ignore them completely.

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

[www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com) – Palladium Online

## Coming Next Issue

### The Rifter® #29

- The criminal underworld of *Rifts*® *Japan* (Yakuza, gangs, etc.).
- More material for *Rifts*®.
- Material for *Palladium Fantasy*®.
- Material for *Nightbane*® and/or *Heroes Unlimited*™.
- *Fractures*, a short story for *Heroes Unlimited*™ (a sequel to *Fallen Angels*).
- The next chapter of *The Hammer of the Forge*™.
- The latest news and developments at Palladium Books, and Apollo's Wedding!
- Source material for the entire *Palladium Megaverse*®.
- New contributors and fun. So please join us.

**Palladium Books® role-playing games ... infinite possibilities, limited only by your imagination™**

**Palladium's games are found in stores everywhere**





# From the desk of Kevin Siembieda

Stealing a line from Marvel Comics, editor, Alex Marciniszyn, likes to call Palladium Books "the house of ideas." And this year he points to the three **Rifts® China World Books**, the new **Splicers™ Role-Playing Game** and the heavily retooled **Beyond the Supernatural™, Second Edition (BTS-2) RPG** as prime examples.

**Rifts® China Three.** No, your eyes aren't playing tricks on you, it says *three* – **Rifts® China 3**. One of the reasons *Rifts® China Two* was so late is because Erick Wujcik was secretly working on a third book. Even I didn't know till June. It seems Erick had so many ideas that he couldn't bear tossing away, he began to write a separate book entirely on Chinese magic and mysticism. Well, needless to say, it's pretty damn cool and I have Erick finishing the book up right now . . . in China! From what I've seen, it's another winner and includes Immortals, dragons, the Yin Tiger and numerous disciplines of magic that should challenge and tantalize players. With a little luck, it will be out in November 2004. Watch for it.

**Splicers** is a new role-playing game of science fiction and horror. It builds on a theme of technology gone awry due to human sloth, folly and stupidity (as opposed to greed, power or war). The end result is that the computerized nursemaid humans created to run the show for them gets confused and goes crazy. Really crazy. And ultimately reshapes the world in *her* (actually *their*) vision, destroying two-thirds of humanity in the process. A few hundred years later, things are so screwed up that the human survivors don't even know if they inhabit mother Earth or some colony world. Meanwhile, the seven personalities of the artificial intelligence in control continue to use terra-forming techniques to rebuild the planet, has entire cities recreated but populated by human-looking androids going through the motions of human life as if it were some sort of pageant or historical amusement park, and methodically exterminates *vermin* such as rats, roaches, and . . . oh yeah, *humans*. A maniacal lunatic, the A.I. has unleashed an insidious Nanobot Plague that makes using anything with metal absolutely deadly to humans. The horror aspect comes in as humankind turns to genetic manipulation and bio-technology to create living armor and weapons as well as disfigure themselves in their last ditch hope to find a way to defeat the robot extermination hordes of *the Machine*.

Long time fans will see some similarities to *The Mechanoids®*, but author, Carmen Bellaire, takes *Splicers* into entirely different directions than *The Mechanoids*. I think part of the charm of this game is the nobility and heroism on one hand, and the gruesome and horrific choices (and characters) on the other. It's a brutal gaming environment, but challenging, wild, weird and fun.

**Splicers™** is at the printers now and ships to stores on October 15, so if you're reading this in *The Rifter®*, *Splicers™* should be in the stores (it ships the same day as *The Rifter®* #28).

**Beyond the Supernatural™, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition**, as a number of fans have correctly surmised, is almost a complete rewrite . . . kinda. All the ideas and concepts you may remember from the original *Beyond the Supernatural* game are there, but they have been dramatically reshaped, rewritten, expanded and combined

with new ideas and material that makes the game something new and different, yet familiar. One of my main goals has been to create an expansive horror game that fits snugly and smoothly into our modern world. A thinking man's game that is equal parts mystery, suspense, and horror with a dab of science fiction and detective stories. I think this game will surprise and (I hope) please a lot of people looking for something different and unique.

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The rules in these games will also be familiar, but with some interesting tweaks and changes here and there that I think people will enjoy. Some of Palladium's critics grouse about our rules, but they seem to miss some of the essentials behind them. *One*, the emphasis of Palladium's games is the story, setting and characters, particularly the player characters. That's why it takes a while to roll-up a character (though I'm working on ways to streamline that process without losing the uniqueness of the characters). *Two*, as such, the rules are designed to be invisible and fast moving. And as most people who have played our games know (rather than just look 'em over and assume how things work), they are, for the most part, good, solid and fast playing. I mean, come on, if the rules didn't work well, they couldn't support the massive and diverse world settings and multitude of genres built on their infrastructure. *Three*, and most importantly, FUN. And from my point of view, fun is creating and playing memorable, heroic characters in fantastic and memorable settings. To unfold a gaming experience that is as rich and powerful as watching a great movie or reading a wonderful book, only you, through your character, helped mold that epic and cherished tale. A gaming experience that stimulates the gamers' own imaginations and carries them to new heights of adventure, storytelling, artistry and fun.

From what our fans have told us for over two decades now, we seem to hit the mark more often than we miss, and we hope these new games and innovations build on that tradition.

I think I've said it before, but I feel as excited about role-playing games as I did when I first started Palladium Books 24 years ago. I have a zillion new ideas percolating inside my head, and I feel like I'm writing better than ever. Part of my excitement and renewed energy flows from the creative juices and passion of new freelance writers like Carl Gleba, Todd Yoho, Carmen Bellaire, and Jason Richards, as well as artists and idea guys like Mark Dudley, Brandon Clark, Ka Xiong, Ramon Perez, Scott Johnson, Mike Dubisch, John Zeleznik, Wayne Smith and too many other people to name here. Part of it comes from new creative ventures in film and videogames, and part of it comes from trusted friends like Wayne, Alex, Julius and Steve. But I think the biggest part comes from *you*, the fans. I quickly lost count of how many gamers came up to me at Origins and Gen Con this year just to say "thank you" for years of gaming enjoyment, or to tell me "good job, and keep it up, we can hardly wait to see what's coming next." Wow.

I know it may sound corny, but hearing such kind gestures and sincerity goes beyond the simple gratification of a job well



done. It touches your heart and soul. It's a moving experience, pumps you up and inspires you to do something new, different, and better. I just want to say thank you to all of *you*. Thank you for buying our books and joining us on the adventures I and all the creative people at Palladium (from writers to artists to humble editors) present for your enjoyment. Thank you for appreciating the creativity, hard work and joy that goes into our products. Thank you for being fellow travelers in the mysterious realm of the imagination. And thank you for letting us know you've enjoyed the ride, or that we've inspired you to go on grand adventures of your own.

I hope to be giving wing to the imaginations of generations to come, while putting a smile on the faces of those of you who have been following Palladium for years now. Keep those imaginations burning ladies and gents, because these last 24 years have only been the warmup act, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

— Kevin Siembieda, Autumn, 2004

# News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

## Gen Con® Was a Good Time

The booth looked great, we sold lots of books, debuted *Rifts® China 2*, signed autographs, talked to fans, did interviews and had a blast.

Nokia had a video trailer for their *Rifts®* game going at all times, had a working display model of an N-Gage QD for people to play, gave away three games and an N-Gage QD once a day, and brought in the Glitter Boy standee.

Everyone had a good time. The Nokia people seemed to enjoy the fans and the spectacle of Gen Con, it was nice seeing old friends, gaming, buying and trading cool stuff and generally enjoying it. I also had a chance to dust off the old Palladium of Desires fantasy campaign and run Shane Neville (Nokia), Trent Ward (Backbone Entertainment), Wayne Smith (Palladium's own), and pals, Shawn and Lisa Hall through a nice little adventure. It was a blast.

We'll be back. And next year, we're going to be running gaming events, maybe have a bigger booth and release . . . hmmm, that would be telling. You'll have to wait an issue or two for the big news of 2005 (and it's not just the release of *Rifts®* for the N-Gage).

## Rifts®: Promise of Power™

### Nokia Press Conference Showcases Rifts® Videogame

September 15, 2004, Nokia held a press conference in Vancouver where they previewed *Rifts®: Promise of Power™* to the press. They revealed some of the details about the game and released "screen shots" from the actual game.

Highlights include . . .

- The official title of the N-Gage game will be, *Rifts®: Promise of Power™*.
- It brings together a number of gaming elements for a unique experience.
- The single-player game will feature around 80 hours of play.
- Many subplots, side adventures and consequences are part of an epic story.
- Players will hop around the globe and visit such places as a Coalition States 'Burb, Lazlo, Old Bones, the New German Republic, Scotland and China.
- Characters include the Glitter Boy, Juicer, Cyber-Knights, Mind Melter, Burster, Ley Line Walker, cyborgs, psychics, and others.
- 50 different villains and NPCs to encounter.
- Fully zoomable and rotatable camera angles.
- Drop down menu, character portraits and conversation bubbles.
- Combat: attack-point system and head-to-head combat over the N-Gage Arena.
- Multi-player features and Bluetooth mode.
- Slated for a Summer 2005 release.

The response seems to be overwhelmingly positive as the excitement for this innovative release builds.

For more details and information, visit the following web sites:

[www.n-gage.com](http://www.n-gage.com)

[www.gamespot.com/ngage/rpg/rifts/preview\\_6107500.html](http://www.gamespot.com/ngage/rpg/rifts/preview_6107500.html)

[www.gamingreport.com](http://www.gamingreport.com) (offering an audio interview at Gen Con with Kevin Siembieda and Shane Neville)

## No News on the Rifts® Movie

Jerry Bruckheimer says they are very excited about doing a *Rifts®* movie. David Franzoni is still working on a script. And if I had more to tell ya, you'd be reading it.

## Baby Balent Joins the World

We are proud to announce that long-time Palladium freelancer and pal, Matthew Balent, perhaps best known as writer and researcher of the Palladium Weapon Series (*Weapons & Armor*, *Weapons & Castles*, etc.) and wife, Rennita, welcome a baby girl to their family, **Rhiannon Krahe**. We wish these first-time parents and baby Rhiannon our very best. (And we're just glad we don't have to be changing the diapers and dealing with 1:00 A.M. feedings.)

## Erick Wujcik back in China

Erick Wujcik is back in China. This time he's Game Design Studio Manager at *UbiSoft China*, a French videogame company operating out of Shanghai, China.

I helped Erick clear out his office and finish some last minute packing before he departed for China on September first. He has

arrived safely, found an apartment and is settling into his new position. Except for arriving during monsoon season (buckets of rain, folks, buckets of rain), everything is moving along nicely.

Erick is likely to continue to contribute bits and pieces to Palladium's game releases while in China, and is busy putting the finishing touches on **Rifts® China 3**. Somehow it seems appropriate that he'd finish this book while in China.

We miss Erick already and wish him our best.

## X-Mas Surprise Package/Grab Bag

Christmas season is approaching and that means it's time for Palladium's annual gift to our fans – the *Christmas Surprise Package/Grab Bag*.

What's that? You've never heard of the Palladium Christmas Surprise Package?! Well it's time you joined the world buddy.

Every year, as a way of saying thank you to our fans and to make Christmas a little happier for those lucky gamers out there, we offer a deal where you send Palladium \$25.00 US plus \$6.00 toward shipping and handling, along with a want list, and Santa Kevin and the Palladium gang will put together a package of goodies (including some of your wants and some surprises totaling no less than \$50 worth of product) and send it your way. Last year, the Christmas spirit had me packing \$60-\$70 worth of *goodies* (not crap and old inventory, either) and had Wayne Smith shouting, "What are you doing? That's . . . that's crazy!"

This is also your chance to request autographs from the staff (including books signed by Erick Wujcik before he left for China), original artwork by Drunken Style Studio, Apollo Okamura, Kent Burles, Wayne Breaux Jr., Ramon Perez and me (Kevin Siembieda), though only about one in ten requests actually get art (hey, it's a "surprise" package), as well as back issues of *The Rifter* (#1-13, minus a couple completely out of print) and other odds and ends. Other surprises include posters, limited edition prints, out of print books and other good stuff.

Order one, two or three for your sweetheart, your gaming buddies, your brother, cousin, or treat *yourself*. A great way to fill in the holes in your collection, and to look like a hero to your friends and loved ones. Available for a limited time only.

See the full description elsewhere in this issue for complete details, or go to our website: [www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com) to order.

Yo, ho, ho . . . oops, watched *Pirates of the Caribbean* a few too many times . . . I mean ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas.

## Palladium's Next Convention Appearance

### Penguicon

– April 22, 23, & 24, 2005 – Novi, Michigan

Kevin Siembieda will be one of the guests at this rapidly growing game, comic book and media convention (1000+ people expected to attend). Kevin, Carmen, Julius and others will be running games, holding panel discussions and having fun. Of course, Palladium Books will have a table in the dealers' room and we'll all have a roaring good time. There are lots of other cool comic and gaming guests too.

If you missed us in Southfield, join us in April at Novi.

For more information, check out [www.penguicon.org](http://www.penguicon.org).

## Writers wanted for *The Rifter*®.

The *Rifter*® is a combination magazine, sourcebook, fan forum, Game Master and Players' Guide, talent show, and fun for fans of *all* of Palladium's role-playing games. A place where fans who enjoy writing or have aspirations of becoming writers or game designers can get their material published and seen by thousands of other fans.

Palladium is always looking for *new* contributors to *The Rifter*®, so if you are interested in contributing to future issues, check out the web page *Rifter Submission Guidelines* (<http://www.palladiumbooks.com/submission/rifterguide.html>), which explain how you can submit your ideas and articles for *The Rifter*®. This is a great way to break into the ranks of Palladium Books itself. That's how Carl Gleba, Todd Yoho and Apollo Okamura did it.

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# Coming Attractions

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## Fall Release Schedule

### Recent Releases

**Rifts® World Book 25: China Two, Heroes of the Celestial Court™** – \$17.95 retail – 160 pages. Cat. No. 858.

**Rifts® World Book 26: Dinosaur Swamp™** – \$17.95 retail – 160 pages. Cat. No. 862.

**Phase World®** – *back in print* – \$22.95 retail – 208 pages. Cat. No. 816.

**Phase World® Three Galaxies™** – *back in print* – \$17.95 retail – 160 pages, Cat. No. 851.

**Rifts® Role-Playing Game®** – *back in print* – \$24.95 retail, 252 pages, Cat. No. 800. Written by Kevin Siembieda. Ships September 30, 2004. A surge in the sale of *Rifts*® titles caught us sleeping at the switch and the role-playing game along with core books and a few World Books fell temporarily out of print. Palladium is fast at work getting them back in print as quickly as possible (October & November) and in time for the Christmas season.

### October, 2004

**Splicers™ RPG (New)** – *in stores now* – The hotly anticipated, new science fiction role-playing game. \$23.95 retail – 224 pages, Cat. No. 200. Written by Carmen Bellaire and Kevin Siembieda.

**The Rifter #28® (New)** – *in stores now* – Hey, you're holding it in your hand right now. If you're looking at it in the store, *buy it*, you won't be sorry. \$9.95 – 128 pages. Cat. No. 128.

**Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG, 2nd Edition (New)** – \$22.95 or \$23.95 retail depending on final page count. BTS-2 is



in production and we are still shooting for an October release, but more likely than not, it will slip into November.

**Rifts® Game Master Guide** – in stores now – *back in print* after being out of stock for the last 2-3 months. \$26.95 retail, 352 pages, Cat. No. 845. Written by Siembieda and others.

**Rifts® Book of Magic®** – in stores now – *back in print* after being out of stock for the last 2-3 months. \$26.95 retail, 352 pages, Cat. No. 848. Written by Kevin Siembieda.

**Rifts® Federation of Magic™, Revised** – October 27 – *back in print* – \$17.95 retail, 160 pages, Cat. No. 829. Written by Siembieda & Murphy.

#### November, 2004

**Rifts® China 3: Masters of Magic™ (New)** – \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 864.

**Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Dragons & Gods®** – November 12 – *back in print*. \$22.95 retail, 232 pages, Cat. No. 451. Written by Erick Wujcik & Kevin Siembieda.

**Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Monsters & Animals** – November 19 – *back in print*. \$22.95 retail, 240 pages, Cat. No. 454. Written by Siembieda and Matthew Balent.

**Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook** – November 29 – *back in print*. \$13.95 retail, 112 pages, Cat. No. 850. Written by Kevin Siembieda.

#### December, 2004

**Rifts® Merctown (New)** – \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 863.

**Heroes Unlimited™: Game Master Guide** – December 6 – *back in print* – \$22.95 retail, 224 pages, Cat. No. 516. Written by Wayne Breaux Jr. and Kevin Siembieda.

Plus other out of print titles may be added to the schedule.

#### Also Tentatively Scheduled for 2004 Release:

One or more of the following titles *may* get dropped into the November or December releases. Otherwise, they will be early 2005 releases.

**Beyond the Supernatural™: Tome Grotesque** – 96 or 144 pages; \$13.95 or \$15.95 depending on the final page count.

– or –

**Beyond the Supernatural™: Arcanum Sourcebook** – \$17.95 – 160 pages.

– and –

**Rifts® Merc Ops™** (formerly *Rifts® Mercenaries 3: Weapons & Gear*) – \$17.95 – 160 pages.

**Rifts® Chaos Earth™: NEMA™ Mission Book One** – \$10.95 – 64 pages.

#### Titles in the Works for 2005

These are books we are working on or plan on doing next year. They are not listed in any particular order.

**Rifts® World Book: Arzno** (Mercs & Vampires; sweet).

**Rifts® World Book: Lazlo** (the city described and mapped).

**Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook Five** (a surprise for now).

**Rifts® Dimension Book: Hades** (by Carl Gleba, and it is more than you think it is).

**Rifts® Dragons & Gods™** (tentative, by Siembieda & others).

**Palladium Fantasy®: Book of Magic (items) and Monsters™** (coming soon).

**Palladium Fantasy®: Mysteries of Magic™** (waiting for editing).

**Palladium Fantasy®: Land of the Damned™ Three** (finally).

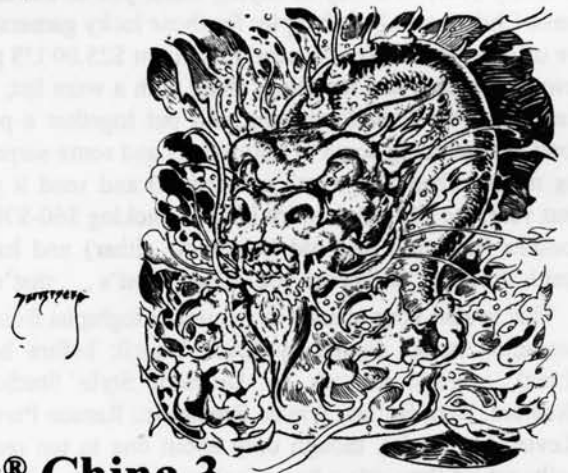
**Heroes Unlimited 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Sourcebooks** – we have a couple different books in the works for HU2.

**Mechanoid® Space RPG** (It's been talked about for years.)

**Beyond the Supernatural™** adventure sourcebook

**Splicers™** adventure sourcebooks

**Chaos Earth™** adventure sourcebooks



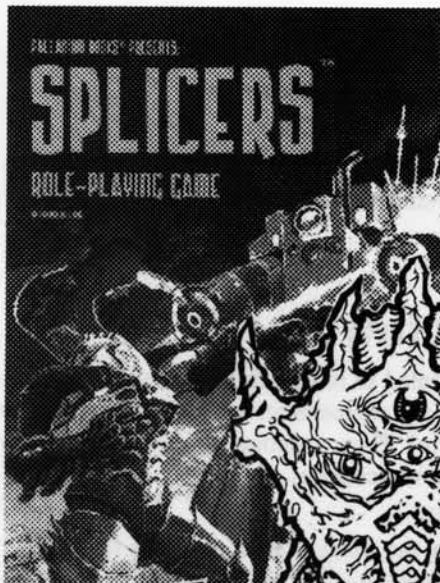
## Rifts® China 3 World Book 27: Masters of Magic™

One of the reasons **Rifts® China 2** was delayed was because Erick was secretly working on **Rifts® China 3**, devoting an entire book to Chinese magic and mysticism. About two-thirds of the writing is done and we anticipate a November, 2004 release – but no promises. It will be released shortly after we get the final manuscript from Erick. We're thinking it should be hitting the stores in November sometime.

**Rifts® China 3** features all kinds of Oriental magic and mystical player characters. Expect this book to fly off the shelves as fast as **Rifts® China 1 & 2**.

- Several new and different types of magic.
- New and different types of sorcerers and practitioners of magic.
- Immortals and their quest for power. Available as player characters.
- Dragons: creatures of magic and keepers of ancient secrets.
- The Yin Tiger and other strange magical beings.
- Magic books, tattoos, and enchanted items.
- More details on the region and people.
- Cover by Scott Johnson, interior art by Drunken Style Studio.
- Written by Erick Wujcik.
- \$17.95 retail, 160 pages, Cat. No. 864.
- Tentative release for November 2004.





## Splicers™ RPG

Just shipped – in stores now

Seriously, check this book out. If you enjoy science fiction or enjoy *Rifts*®, you'll love *Splicers*. Dark, gritty, weird, and cutting edge.

*Splicers*™ is a role-playing game that combines science fiction and horror in a post-apocalyptic setting on a world that could be Earth or a colony planet, the people themselves don't know.

What was once a world dominated by humans and advanced civilization is now a world in ruins. The once great cities are shattered ruins or being torn down and terraformed by the Machine into lush forests. The few cities that do exist are either historical recreations populated by human-looking androids or Retro-Villages, an innocent euphemism for a "zoo" for humans.

Mankind's struggle is complicated by a *nanobot plague* that instantly turns metal objects touched by human flesh into killing machines. Consequently, humans have been forced to turn to *organic technology* – living weapons and armor – to battle the world-dominating machines if they are to reclaim their planet.

How did this all happen? The Machine took over, decided humans were vermin to be exterminated, and sent a couple billion robots to wipe out humankind.

Our story starts generations later, as the Human Resistance makes its boldest move to reclaim parts of their world and find a way to stop the insane Machine. It is a story of sacrifice and triumph, of undying spirit and weird science.

- Overview and history of the *Splicers*™ world.
- The Nanobot Plague and its ramifications.
- The Machine, its insanities and seven personalities.
- The robots of the Machine. Drones like the Necrobots and Necroborgs. Extermination robots like the Cable Snake, Sewer Prowler and Skitter Pod. Hunter-killer robots like the Steel Trooper, Assault Slayer, and Flying Strike-Ship, and juggernauts of destruction like the Battle Track and Land Dominator. 19 robots/drones in all.
- The Human Resistance and their living organic weapons and technology.
- Super-powerful Host Armor, War Mounts and "living" Bio-Weapons.
- The Splicers: Archangel, Dreadguard, Packmaster, Saint, Scarecrow, Skinjob and others.
- Ten superhuman O.C.C.s of the Human Resistance, their weapons and dreams.
- Compatible with *Rifts*®, *Chaos Earth*™, *Phase World*®, *Mechanoid*® Space and other Mega-Damage settings.
- Cover by Mark Evans. Interior art by Drunken Style Studio.
- Written by Carmen Bellaire with additional text and rules by Kevin Siembieda.
- A new, stand-alone, role-playing game of science fiction and horror.
- \$23.95 retail, 224 pages, Cat. No. 200.
- In stores now!

## Beyond the Supernatural™ Two An RPG of Modern Horror & Suspense

*Beyond the Supernatural*™ Two is in the final stages of writing and most of the artwork is done and waiting for paste up. While we are still shooting for an end of October release, it could slip into November. Our apologies.

BTS-2 builds on the bones of the classic BTS game to create a modern world of horror and magic unlike any before it.

The premise of the game is that the supernatural is real. Psychic abilities and the paranormal are real. Magic is real. Yet science and authority figures dismiss them as hysteria, hoaxes and madness. However, special individuals gifted with *special abilities* or cursed with *firsthand encounters* find themselves inexorably linked to the paranormal and forced to deal with the consequences.

Some of our heroes are gung-ho psychics and sorcerers who see themselves as humankind's hidden protectors. Others are drawn into the realm of shadows through quirks of fate, or fueled by feelings of revenge. Still others are reluctant heroes and even victims, but all have been touched, in some way, by forces beyond human comprehension – *Beyond the Supernatural*.

- A contemporary horror setting that makes sense and challenges the players.
- New P.C.C.s include the *Psychic Medium, Diviner, Autistic Psychic Savant, ordinary people* and others, all with new and unique abilities.
- Many of the characters, psychic abilities and magical powers are unlike any Palladium Books has presented before. Characters and powers that will challenge players and bring a new level of strategy and role-playing to the surface.
- Even familiar characters like the *Psychic Sensitive, Healer, Nega-Psychic* and others get a face-lift, new powers, and deeper character background.
- The secrets of the supernatural, ESP, and magic revealed.
- Victor Lazlo and his lasting legacy: The Lazlo Agency.
- More world background and guides to adventure.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Randy McCall. New material by Siembieda.
- \$22.95 or \$23.95 retail, depending on final page count.
- Cover by John Zeleznik, interior art by Perez, Dubisch, Okamura and others.
- 192 or 224 pages. Cat. No. 700.
- Date of Release: End of October or early November. In final production right now.

- Limited to 500 copies. Signed and numbered.
- Signed by Kevin Siembieda and artist, Michael Dubisch.
- Classy leatherette cover and graphic design.
- Exclusive end sheet by Michael Dubisch.
- \$49.95 – Cat. No. 7000 – available only while supplies last.
- Date of Release: November or December.
- Makes a great Christmas gift.

## Rifts® Merctown™

Have you always wanted to have a fully fleshed out town to visit where adventurers and mercenaries are welcomed and their every need is catered to? Then welcome to *Merctown*, a city built by mercenaries, for mercenaries.

- Key people and places.
- Shady establishments, the Black Market and guns for hire.
- People and places mercenaries can hire themselves out to.
- NPCs, villains and adventure ideas galore.
- Written by Patrick Nowak with additional material by Kevin Siembieda and Carmen Bellaire.
- Cover by Mark Evans.
- \$17.95 –160 pages. Cat. No. 863. Available December 2004.

## Rifts® Merc Ops™

A guide for Mercenaries and Bounty Hunters, including *wanted posters* for dozens of villains and desperados, each and every one an adventure hook.

- A rogues' gallery; some true criminals, others wanted by the Coalition States and others unfairly persecuted.
- Shady establishments and guidelines for Mercenary operations.
- NPCs, villains and adventure ideas galore.
- Written by Patrick Nowak, Carmen Bellaire and Kevin Siembieda.
- Final price and page count not yet determined. 2005.

## Phase World® is back!

### Rifts® Dimension Book 2 – In stores now

After being out of print for two years, this long-time fan favorite is back! This one has everything *and* the kitchen sink. A must for anyone playing in the Phase World® setting.

- 19 O.C.C.s, including the Cosmo-Knight, Galactic Tracer, Spacer, CAF Soldiers, Imperial Security Agent and many more.
- 15 R.C.C.s, including the Prometheans, Space Wulfen, True Naruni, Naruni Repo-Bot, Kreeghor, Noro, Dominators and others.
- Rules for creating alien races.
- Phase Technology, weapons and Phase Fields.
- Psionic Crystal Technology.
- Weapons, robots, power armor, tanks and spaceships.
- Phase World and the trans-dimensional city known as Center.
- Overview of the Three Galaxies, the Consortium of Civilized



## Beyond the Supernatural™ Limited Edition Hardcover

A deluxe, hardcover edition of BTS-2. Palladium's other limited edition hardcover titles have become collectors' items. Rifts® Gold Edition sells for \$250-\$300 on the collector's market, Palladium Fantasy Crimson Edition sells for \$120-\$150, and the Heroes Unlimited Gold Edition is almost sold out at Palladium Books (\$40). BTS-2 is destined to follow in this tradition.



Worlds, Transgalactic Empire, United Worlds of Warlock, and other places.

- Phase World campaign ideas and character sheets.
- Written by C.J. Carella.
- Cover by Kevin Long. Art by Long, Martin and others.
- \$22.95 – 208 pages. Cat. No. 816. Available now!

## Phase World® Dimension Book 9: *United Worlds of Warlock (New)*

Has been rescheduled for a 2005 release.

- Key planets, moons, people and cultures in the United Worlds of Warlock.
- New O.C.C.s, including the Astral Elves, Shadow Psychics, Knights of the Covenant, Void Rangers, and others.
- New weapons, equipment, rune weapons and magic items.
- Church of the Anvil, dark covens and cults.
- New types of magic.
- Adventure ideas galore.
- Written by Daniel Bishop with additional material by Kevin Siembieda.

- Cover by John Zeleznik. Interior art by Drunken Style Studio and others.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. 2005 release.

## Rifts® Chaos Earth™ Sourcebook 3: NEMA™ Mission Book 1

The Chaos Earth™ series is a success, and Mission Book One is the latest sourcebook for this continuing series.

It takes a look at NEMA, their missions, survival, heroics and adventure, but the main story focuses on the appearance of a rogue cell of the military that has decided to claim the Chicago area for themselves. The heads of this rogue cell – Juicers – including a few unlike any seen before.

- A Juicer Special Forces operation makes its bid for power, making this the first Juicer Uprising.
- Some new weapons, vehicles and gear.
- More on NEMA plus adventure scenarios, adventure ideas and settings.
- Completely compatible with Rifts®.
- Written by Siembieda, Bellaire, and others.
- \$10.95 – 64 pages. If not December 2004, early 2005.

# HEROES UNLIMITED™



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Heroes Unlimited, 2nd Edition enables players to create every type of super being imaginable!

Not just superhumans, but aliens, mutants, super soldiers, super-detectives, geniuses, tricksters and vigilantes, robots, power armor, cyborgs, weapons experts, martial arts masters, sorcerers, psychics, and super beings of all kinds.

- Creation rules for virtually every genre of hero.
- Over 100 super-abilities plus sub-powers, special skills and genius.
- Over 100 magic spells, plus enchanted weapons and objects.
- Over 40 psionic powers.
- Cyborg and robot creation rules.

- Super-vehicle creation, gimmicks and high technology.
- Mega-Heroes, mutants and aliens.
- Super-Soldiers, experiments and vigilantes.
- Secret identities and secret organizations.
- A complete game. Easy to learn. Fun to play.
- Compatible with Rifts® and the entire Palladium Megaverse®.
- Written & created by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$26.95 – 352 pages. Cat. No. 500



# 2004 X-Mas Surprise Package



No C.O.D. orders. Must have a street address (no P.O. box) to ship via UPS.

## Send Mail Orders to:

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

Or E-Mail using the ordering info on our web page at [www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com)

## What you get

The rock bottom minimum of \$50.00 worth of product, probably more.

This year, each X-Mas Surprise will get two or more "Special Wants" from sourcebooks and role-playing games to posters and prints, plus something from Palladium's "grab bag" of goodies, and maybe even (for a lucky few) original artwork or a surprise or two (but only people who request artwork will be considered). In addition, we may whip-up a little something extra to go into every grab bag. **Note:** Multiple orders *will* result in some duplication.

Plus most everything is signed by Kevin Siembeda and other available staff members, especially if the purchaser *requests* autographs.

If you do NOT want autographs, please state as much.

**Ideas for special wants:** A bunch of nifty items to consider (in addition to special requests for role-playing books) might include one or more of the following. (**Note:** Please give us "several" wants in order of preference – Santa Kev and his elves are NOT mind readers. If you do not give us a clear idea and selection of your wants, you *may* be disappointed by what comes in your Grab Bag.)

• **New Palladium products or hard to find back stock.** Waiting for the latest sourcebook to **Rifts**®, **Palladium Fantasy**®, **Nightbane**®, **Heroes Unlimited**™? Still need that copy of **Wolfen Empire**™ for **Palladium Fantasy**®, or **Shadows of Light**™ for **Nightbane**®, or **Rifts**® **G.M. Guide** or **Rifts**® **China 1** or **2**™ for **Rifts**®?

Did you know **Phase World**® and **Three Galaxies**™ were back in print?

Have you been wanting to try **Splicers**™, **Beyond the Supernatural 2**™, **Nightbane**®, **Heroes Unlimited**™, **Ninjas & Superspies**™ or **After the Bomb**®?

Are you dying to get your hands on **Rifts**® **Chaos Earth**™ or to get the first sourcebook or two for it? Here's your chance, just tell us.

Tell us what books you *still need* or what new books you might *want* (like **Splicers**™, **BTS-2**™, **Heroes Unlimited**™ **G.M. Guide**, **Monsters and Animals, Dragons & Gods (fantasy)**, **Rifts**® **Game Master Guide** or **Rifts**® **Book of Magic or Federation of Magic**™, all back in stock) and . . . well, who knows? Maybe it will find its way into your X-Mas Surprise Package. But give us a *variety* of items whenever possible, request *autographs* if you want 'em, and please do NOT ask for product that is not out yet. Or if you know it's coming in a few weeks (like **BTS-2**, in the final stages of production) realize that your X-Mas Surprise Package will be delayed until it comes out (or we'll send you a different product).

Palladium Books' annual X-Mas Surprise Package – Grab Bag. This has become a fun tradition and our way of doing a little something special for our most dedicated fans. So tell your friends, buy one for everyone you know, and have a very, Merry Christmas.

This offer is only being publicized to readers of **The Rifter**® and on **Palladium's Web Site** – [www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com) – but feel free to spread the news by word of mouth.

## When you can order

The orders for the 2004 X-Mas Surprise Package will be accepted starting *now* till December 22, 2004.

**Note:** Orders received by Palladium after December 10th can *not* be guaranteed to arrive *before Christmas*. Likewise, Palladium makes no promise that foreign or military base orders will be received before December 25th regardless of when they are placed. The first orders *WILL NOT* be filled until October 9th.

## The Cost

\$25.00 US plus \$6.00 toward shipping and handling per *each* individual X-Mas Surprise Package/Grab Bag (i.e. one Grab Bag is \$25 +\$6, two are \$50 +\$12, and so on. Those ordering online can select their method of shipping but will pay for additional cost).

*Credit card* orders are welcomed (American Express, Discover, Visa and MasterCard). Order by mail, telephone or online.

Overseas Orders will require additional postage (\$12 or more; call to inquire) and will take extra time to arrive.

All orders are shipped *U.S. Mail: Special Book Rate* or the way *Palladium* decides is best. Those ordering online can select the desired method of shipping but will pay accordingly.

● **Rifts® “Silver” Hardcover RPG** signed by Palladium’s current staff. Out of print and ONLY available via this offer (and at conventions attended by Palladium). \$40 value.

● **The “Gold” hardcover edition of Heroes Unlimited™ RPG 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.** Only 600 “signed and numbered” copies were made, and we put aside several dozen for this X-Mas Grab Bag.

● **Rifter® Back Issues.** Palladium has stopped reprinting back issues of The Rifter® and issues 1-13 are no longer available – *except* for the X-Mas Surprise package (we kept 20-100 copies of most Rifters® especially for this purpose), but some are already completely gone, and others are nearly gone, so they are available only while supplies last and no guarantees.

● **Rifts® Miniatures.** Some are already out of stock, others are running low and we will not be recasting them anytime soon. Get ‘em while you can. Normally sell for \$4-\$6 per pack, but order ‘em for the 2004 Grab Bag and we’ll send you a heap of ‘em (at least 6-10 packs) along with your other goodies.

● **The Collected Mechanoid Invasion® Trilogy**, only available upon request. Almost completely out of stock.

● **Ninja Turtles® RPG and sourcebooks!** Kevin has pulled out about a dozen file copies of each TMNT book to stuff into a handful of grab bags for some of those who ask. Available only while supplies last! However, we have plenty of the new **After the Bomb® RPGs** (signed by Erick Wujcik) along with the old **After the Bomb®** sourcebooks, still in stock. **Note:** Robotech® titles are out of print and not available.

● **Limited Edition Rifts® “Glitter Boy” Print** signed by the artist, Scott Johnson, and Rifts® creator, Kevin Siembieda. Limited to only 700 signed and numbered copies. 20x28 inch image on silk paper stock – suitable for framing. \$20 value.

● **The Magic of Palladium Books Collection**, a reprint of the original tabloids, only available upon request. Almost out of stock.

● **Original artwork.** Very limited and chosen at random. You can beg or you can be witty, but only Santa Kev will decide who gets artwork. These are donations by the artists and available only in a very limited supply. Getting one of these is the luck of the draw. Only those who *ask* for original art are considered, and please indicate which artists you are most interested in. Then cross your fingers and wish on a star. Available artists include Wayne Breaux, Kent Burles, Apollo Okamura, Drunken Style Studio, Kevin Siembieda, and Ramon Perez.

● **New “Discover the Megaverse™ T-Shirts.** Mostly XL and XXL but a few other smaller and larger sizes are available on a first come, first served basis.

● **Classic T-Shirts** (\$18 value) available while supplies last; some sizes are already gone. Only have XL and XXL in stock.

Rifts® Logo

Rifts® Dog Pack

Rifts® Grey Summoner T-Shirt

and a handful of the red “Rifts Movie Coming to a Theater Near You” T-Shirt (Perez artwork).

● **Few out-of-print books are available.** You guys and gals snapped ‘em all up over the last five years. Only the **Revised Heroes Unlimited™** (pre-dates HU2, but is NOT the original 1984 edition) and **Old Ones** (Palladium Fantasy, 1st edition), **Systems Failure™ RPG** and some **TMNT®** are available. **Rifts® Gold** editions and **Palladium Crimson** are sold out! There are none left. Sorry. **Heroes Unlimited Gold** are almost gone (this may be your last chance).

**Remember**, this is a “surprise package and grab bag.” While Kevin Siembieda and the Palladium staff *personally* try to make each and every grab bag something special, we cannot guarantee satisfaction. It is a “grab bag” surprise package. Buyers may *not* always be satisfied (although we seem to succeed with most) and duplication will occur.

### **When ordering Palladium’s 2004 X-Mas Surprise Package, include ALL of the following information . . .**

● **Special Wants** – list *several* specific books, new and old, or other items like T-Shirts, Rifts® miniatures, Rifts® Silver Edition Hardcover, Heroes Unlimited™ Gold Edition, Rifts® CCG, Dice Bags, Compendium of Contemporary Weapons, etc.

● Whether you want a T-Shirt as part of your package – include your size (limited to availability and only XL & XXL are available) – or not (“No T-shirt”).

● Favorite Palladium games.

● Palladium games you have not played but always thought looked fun and interesting.

● Would you like autographs?

● Comments and suggestions.

● Accurate mailing address! UPS cannot ship to a P.O. Box; provide a street address.

**Credit Cards are welcomed:** Visa, MasterCard, Discover & American Express. Multiple orders of the 2004 Surprise Package *will* result in the duplication of items.

Orders can be sent to us by mail, through our web site ([www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com)), or by telephone (734-946-1156; this is an *order line* only).

**Happy Holidays from all of us at Palladium Books**

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







# The Soul Tree

## Optional Material for Beyond the Supernatural™

By Joseph Larsen

The Soul Tree is an ethereal tree that thrives in graveyards. With its ghostly roots, it has the ability to siphon strength, abilities and knowledge from the corpses that it encroaches upon. It can then bestow any of these onto anyone that makes a pact with it. Anyone can approach the Tree and ask for information or for power. The catch is that the person has only so many lunar cycles to come back and prove that they have been productive with the information or powers. They need to specify the purposes and goals ahead of time, and tell what they intend to do with the knowledge or power that they are asking for. If they complete the intended goal in the given time frame, then they are free from any consequences from the Tree or its minions. But on the other hand, if the person doesn't bring sufficient evidence back before the deadline, or never even returns, then they will be cursed until they die. And when they do die, their remains will become a resource for the Tree.

Common reasons for making a pact with the Tree include greed, lust for power, revenge, or just personal closure. They could request the knowledge to know the current location of an item, place, or person. Sometimes, desperate measures might warrant a deal to solve a life or death situation.

To seal the pact, the person signs their name using one of the Tree's branches as a pen, which draws their blood (even through armor) as they write with it. The Tree then draws an indestructible tattoo on an inner skin layer in an undisclosed location on the pact-maker's head. The tattoo is the key to any knowledge, abilities, or skills that the Tree gives. A Tree will refuse a pact with anyone that is already in a pact with another Tree. It can sense the existing tattoo.

The Tree can offer people many different combinations of knowledge and/or power. Some of the power can include magic or psionics. These, of course, are only temporary for the pact at hand, and exist because of the tattoo. Once the task is finished the tattoo will disappear, and therefore the powers and knowledge will disperse. This tattoo will disperse no matter where the person is when they complete their task.

Of those who refuse the pact, few are allowed to leave with a memory of the Tree. The Tree uses psionics and hypnosis to make sure that the person doesn't remember its existence. Occasionally, there will be a Necromancer or other follower that will work for a Tree as one of its minions.

## Downside to the Pact

The Tree always secretly sends any number of Poltergeists to follow the person who made the pact. The Poltergeists are there to try to sabotage the person's progress in any way possible. Although those who can see the invisible are able to see the Poltergeists, they are still difficult to spot. They take into consideration that people might be able to see them, so they keep a distance and "hide" in shadows wherever possible and as much as possible.

There are common penalties that the Poltergeists give. The rules of the pact prevent them from directly affecting the person's abilities or directly harming the person. But they can indirectly cause harm. Some "penalties" include a +1 to strike, parry, and dodge for any enemies attempting to hit the person, per Poltergeist that follows. Others include losing the double damage of a Natural 20, a -1 to initiative, plus always losing the initiative in a tie, etc., not to mention attracting all sorts of nasty supernatural creatures to hassle their victim. None of these are a direct penalty of the person's skill, but instead are an indirect method of hindering the pact-maker.

## Pact-Maker's Options

The pact-maker has the option to keep the Tree-given powers by disregarding the contract and not fulfilling their intent, thus becoming a renegade. Doing so will bring them more Poltergeists from the Tree, in addition to the ones that they have from the initial pact. On the second full moon beyond the expected contract fulfillment date, one Poltergeist will be added. Each full moon after that, another Poltergeist will be added, with a maximum of 12 or up to the maximum available for the Tree. If the person dies before they complete the pact, their body, or any remains (at least the indestructible tattoo), will instantly appear in a grave in the cemetery with the Tree that they made the pact with. All of their knowledge and powers will become the property of the Tree. If the renegade wishes to reverse the disregarded pact, he needs to converse again with the Tree to discuss another contract. This new one is likely to be much harsher and more difficult, but the number of Poltergeists would be reduced to half of the current. Plus it would only be for the good of the Tree. Common second pacts would include killing a previous renegade, serving the Tree for 'x' amount of years, or bringing 'x' amount of people to make pacts. Once the pact is complete, and if the person survives, the Poltergeists will leave and the Tree will no longer have claim upon the person.

A Tree might have several pacts and renegades at once. This will limit the number of Poltergeists available. If this becomes a problem for the Tree's effectiveness, then its primary goal is to destroy renegades that are occupying Poltergeists. The oldest renegades are usually the first targets.

## Other Abilities of the Tree

A Tree produces several possible types of fruit, some of which are ethereal, while other types are physical. The size and maturity of the Tree will determine how much of each type of fruit it can produce.

Some of the fruit include Seeds, Spy Minions, Wraith Guardians and minions called 'Deceivils'. The Seeds are placed upon everyone who makes a pact with the Tree, and they stay until they detect a graveyard with 15 or more bodies, no matter how old the graves. The Spy Minions will go and spy on things and act as messengers to other minions. Wraith Guardians are the primary guardians for the Tree. They have the ability to either turn ethereal or physical to protect the Tree. Deceivils are a clever and dangerous fruit whose purpose is to charm and convince potential pact-makers to come to the Tree.

## The Pact: Complexities and Time Frames

The pact needs to have a specified end result and it needs to be fulfilled in order for the pact to be completed. The person making the pact can't break it; they can only postpone the consequences and suffer the loss of their soul. What happens to them after they die may not seem to be a big deal to the characters, but they should keep in mind that all the knowledge that the character had would then belong to the Tree. This will leave the Tree to send a Deceivil along to the group and start blackmailing them or undermining their goals in order to force the friends to come to the Tree. At this point the pact will be to do the Tree's bidding or suffer the consequences of blackmail or other dangers. So a character that tries to cheat a Tree will likely hurt his friends.

The Tree has the option to forfeit the pact at any point, thus forfeiting the powers, the consequences, and all other points of the pact. Even the knowledge gained would be lost, unrecoverable even by Total Recall. This is rare and would only be done if the Tree or its purposes would be in jeopardy.

There is one Poltergeist assigned per power, spell, ability, skill or piece of knowledge requested, up to four to start. Plus there are two more added if the mission is a dangerous one.

## Soul Tree Statistical Information

The Soul Tree is an animated Tree with many branches, which grow out as far as the farthest root. The Tree can bend and move its branches and trunk. It uses Telepathy to communicate. Therefore it's difficult to hide surface thoughts in the Tree's presence.

If seen, it is a leafless, shadowy, crooked Tree with many sharp, angled branches. The smaller branches can reach down, and one is used as the pen that will be used to sign the contract in the pact-maker's blood. They are also used to permeate the outer skin layers to place the tattoo under the pact-maker's skin.

In order to place the tattoo at the end of the pact signing, the person is placed in a hypnotic sleep that will prevent them from remembering where the tattoo was placed. The ethereal branches will then probe the head and find the best place to put the tattoo. Only the Tree will know where the tattoo is.

Soul Trees are indifferent to each other. If two or more Trees meet and try to occupy the same grave, the first one to encroach upon the grave will own it. Two Trees can't occupy the same grave. This conflict is rare, since the Seeds will only sprout in a graveyard without a Tree already there. This can only occur in places where the graveyard is expansive and has no real boundaries, such as a battlefield. Even then the Seed will only grow outside of an area that is twice the radius of the nearest Tree's roots.

Sometimes Spy Minions will be used to ask other Trees for information that their own Tree doesn't already possess. The Tree instantly knows any information gathered by the Spy Minions.

If the Tree's resources are stretched too thin to be effective, the Tree's preferred way to restore them is to first deal with renegades. The best way to do this is to destroy them, which will

free any Poltergeists following them as well as add another grave to the Tree's resources. An alternative will be to capture and bring the renegades back to force a new deal or be slain. To do either of these, it will deploy Deceivils or repentant renegades who wish to make a new pact. The number of these deployed will depend on the powers given to the target renegade. The greater the number of powers and abilities, the greater the number of minions the Tree will send. Of these, the preferred method is to send previous renegades since they can be the most powerful and are more dispensable. Even if the repentant renegade loses, the Tree still benefits. If no repentant renegades are available, then one or two Deceivils will be dispatched to hunt the renegade. Other followers of the Tree can be sent out as assistants.

If the Tree dies, all of its offspring, except the Seeds, will die. All tattoos will disappear immediately, which will forfeit the powers, knowledge and consequences of the current pact-makers. The Wraiths and Spy Minions will die within 24 hours and dissipate into nothing. Even the Deceivils, wherever they are, will deteriorate in that 24-hour period, becoming hideous beings with a Horror Factor of 18. They will disappear after the 24-hour deteriorating period. All of the graves of those who died during the pact will still remain and will be without a grave marker. The Poltergeists will immediately leave their target and return to their rest. The graveyard where the Tree stood will not be able to have another Tree for 5D6+5 years. During this period, all Seeds from Trees will sense as if a Tree is there, even though it's dead. Thus they will not attempt to, nor will they be able to, seed that graveyard until that time has passed.

**Alignment:** Aberrant (will keep its word).

**Attributes:** I.Q. 3D6+6, M.E. 4D6, M.A. 4D6+6, Spd. N/A.

Other physical attributes are not applicable because of its natural ethereal form.

**Horror Factor:** 12

**P.P.E.:** 2D6 for each grave in its reach.

**L.S.P.:** 2D6 for each grave in its reach.

**Hit Points:** 1D6 for each grave in its reach.

**S.D.C.:** 3D6 for each grave in its reach.

**Size:** Average of 30 feet (9.14 m) tall plus an additional 1 foot (0.3 m) for every 30 graves in the graveyard. The Tree roots and branches will eventually reach around the borders of the entire graveyard. Young Trees will grow 1D4+1 feet (0.6-1.5 m) per month in height and root/branch diameter. They cannot produce any offspring until 15 graves are encroached upon.

**Combat:** Psionic and magic only.

**Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses):** +12 to save vs Horror Factor, +5 on all saving throws including vs psionics and magic.

**Magic:** Equivalent of a magic user at level 6, +1 level for every 50 graves in its reach. Knows all spells for each level.

**Psionics:** Considered a Master Psionic at level 6, +1 level for every 75 graves in its reach. See the Invisible, Telekinesis (Super), Alter Aura, Empathic Transfer, Impervious to Cold, Fire, and Poison/Toxin, Sense Magic, Total Recall, Sixth Sense, Commune with Spirits (10<sup>th</sup> level), Mind Block Auto-Defense. Add one psionic ability from each category for every 25 graves in its reach.



**Natural Abilities:** Produce Fruit, Control its Minions, Communicate with the Ethereal Plane and See the Invisible, Control the Spirits of the Dead in its Power, Create Zombies (one per grave as a last resort for protection), Create a Pen That Writes with the Pact-Maker's Blood, and Invisible, except on full moons when it cannot be hidden (though it will reveal itself to a potential pact-maker when there isn't a full moon).

**Powers That a Tree Can Offer with its Tattoo:** The Tree is able to give any magic spell that it possesses at its current level. It can give up to 4D6 P.P.E. plus 1D4 per 50 graves in its reach to the tattoo. It is able to offer any psionics that it possesses at its current psionic level. It can give up to 4D6 I.S.P. plus 1D4 per 75 graves in its reach to the tattoo. The Tree can also offer information from its graves or from any of its minions. **Heroes Unlimited™ Note:** Even though the Tree has no super powers, there is a 5% chance per 10 graves that it can siphon and produce a requested Minor Super Ability at level 1D6. There is a 5% chance per 20 graves that it can siphon and produce a requested Major Super Ability at level 1D6.

**Knowledge That a Tree Can Offer with its Tattoo:** The Tree can extract knowledge from its own graves, from the ethereal plane (not common), using Spy Minions, or sometimes even from asking other Trees. A Tree's percentage of having the requested knowledge is based on the location of the Tree compared to the requested info.

The base likelihood of a Tree having information readily available starts at 1% per grave, up to 60%.

Add 35% to the base percentage if the question is regarding local events, places or people.

If the information is not in the local area, the Tree can send for information from other Trees if it has a general idea of where the information may reside. Add a +20% to the base percentage if there are clues regarding the general location (city, county, home, etc.) of where this information might be found. If none can be provided or if a Tree doesn't exist in that area, then only add a +5%. Spy Minions can achieve this means of information gathering in 2D4 hours. Deceivils working to find information will add a +5% per one working on it.

If the information is regarding details of places, locations of local things, or secrets of a local area, then add 30% to the percentage base. The Spy Minions have a knack for finding secret compartments, hideouts and traps.

The Tree can also give the tattoo skills at 80%. The skills must be from the graveyard that the Tree resides in. Skills cannot be asked of from other Trees. There is a 2% chance per grave that the Tree will be able to provide a requested skill with a maximum of 98%.

**Vulnerabilities:** Roots cannot grow into or draw from a holy sanctum or a holy grave. Cannot grow in graveyards or disturb graves on the land of a holy sanctum. It cannot encroach upon graves that are already occupied by another Tree. The Tree is only vulnerable to psionic and magic attacks. It may be attacked from the ethereal plane.

# Fruit Types

## Deceivils

Deceivils grow and mature inside the Tree's roots slightly below ground. When they emerge, they are extremely good looking, full-grown humanoids. The Tree has taken the best portions of the dead resources that it has encroached upon. While growing, they are embedded with some of the knowledge and powers that the Tree has siphoned. In addition to the knowledge from the graveyard, they have access to knowledge from the Tree's Spy Minions. Using these resources, they can prove to others their psychic knowledge and wisdom. They deceive people by telling them things that "only he or she would know." They know what to say to tell the person exactly what they've been waiting to hear. This is part of their guise to lure people to the local Tree to make pacts. They will also use knowledge as a means of blackmail to get anyone to the Tree.

They will sometimes take on careers such as detectives, psychic advisors, paranormal investigators and other jobs where they can use their powers to gain credibility. They might even complete the disguise by being married, though they will only be married to another Deceivil. They can never have children.

Deceivils are not things to be toyed with. They are cunning beings with plenty of powers that aid in their deceit. A simple, quick encounter with one can be alluring enough to fall for their ploys. Their charisma and beauty are enough to encourage even the slightest amount of trust.

In a pinch, they can temporarily hide their magic and psionic capabilities from those that can detect them. If threatened, they will escape rather than fight. If forced to fight, their fury will be unleashed, showing no mercy and probably not leaving survivors to tell the tale. Again, before this, they will first attempt to blackmail or charm their way out of a sticky situation.

Their powers are only for deceit and protection of themselves and the Tree. They will never protect anyone else unless it is in their best interest to do so. Otherwise, they will use the knowledge that they just gained from witnessing these things for blackmail.

**Tree Size Requirements:** Can produce one Deceivil per 100 graves. (Starts with one automatically as soon as 15 graves are encroached upon.)

**Alignment:** Miscreant. Is 100% loyal only to the Tree that created it.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 4D6, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 4D6+8, P.S. 3D6+6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 3D4+12, Spd. 3D6.

**Appearance:** Human. Roll: 01-49% male, 50-00% female.

**Horror Factor:** None, to help with its mission.

**P.P.E.:** 6D6+10

**I.S.P.:** M.E. +3D6

**Natural A.R.:** 12

**Hit Points:** 3D6

**S.D.C.:** 1D4x10

**Size:** Average to tall human.

**Equivalent Level of Experience:** 6th

**Combat:** 6 attacks per melee.



**Skills:** 6<sup>th</sup> level Hand to Hand: Expert, Boxing, 1D4 Domestic skills at professional level, Public Speaking, and any skills necessary for their career, if one is selected. All of these are at 80%.

**Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses):** +12 to save vs Horror Factor, +4 on all saving throws including vs psionics and magic.

**Magic:** See Aura, Light Blade, Negate Magic, Concealment, Fear, Chameleon, Turn Dead, Impervious to Fire, Befuddle, See Wards, Invisibility: Simple, Cure Minor Disorders, Fool's Gold, Charismatic Aura, Calling, Charm, Escape, Eyes of Thoth, Animate Object, Compulsion, Create Bread and Milk, Memory Blank, Animate and Control Dead, Tongues, Words of Truth, Dispel Magic Barriers, Love Charm, Mute, Mystic Portal – all equal to 7<sup>th</sup> level strength.

**Psionics:** See the Invisible, Telekinesis (Super), Alter Aura, Empathic Transfer, Impervious to Cold, Fire, and Poison/Toxin, Sense Magic, Total Recall, Sixth Sense, Commune with Spirits (10<sup>th</sup> level), Mind Block Auto-Defense – all equal to 7<sup>th</sup> level strength.

**Natural Abilities:** Can mask both its psionic and magic capabilities at 65% +5% per level of experience. This will not completely mask their abilities, but it will diminish them to look to be at a level that would seem harmless. Will only do this if they need to deny the use of magic or psionics. Otherwise, will use the apparent magic and psionic abilities for convincing. Will appear as a normal person. Bio-regenerates 3D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points once every melee round.

**Vulnerabilities:** Magic, psionics, silver weapons, holy water, and cannot enter magic or holy sanctums or circles of protection. Animals never like these beings, even though they hide their aura. They also need to travel to the Tree once every 5 full moon cycles.

## Protecting Wraiths

Protecting Wraiths are created from fruit grown at the forks where stronger branches form. The Tree can have as many on hand as deemed necessary up to its max limit. The Wraiths can switch between ethereal form and physical form. Their magic spells and enchanted weapons make them formidable opponents. They also have limited psionics to protect from psionic attacks. Their duty is to protect the Soul Tree from harm as well as to protect the graves from Necromancers and grave-robbers. They will not normally leave the local vicinity of the cemetery and will rarely go very far from the Tree.

The Wraiths range in height from 7 to 12 feet (2.13 to 3.66 km) tall. Their arms and legs are a weave of crooked, thorny branches. Each of the fingers and toes on the clawed hands and feet look like branches protruding out of a tangled mess of bark. The main body on down to just below the knee and the head look as though they are covered in torn clothes. The face is hooded and only their glowing eyes can be seen.

While the Wraith is in physical form it can be damaged by normal means. Once its physical Hit Points and S.D.C. are depleted, it will turn into ethereal form. In this form it will only be able to use psionics and magic to fight with and can only be harmed by the same. If all the ethereal Hit Points and S.D.C. are

depleted, then the Wraith dissipates forever. The Tree will need to create another to replace it.

**Tree Size Requirements:** Can produce one Wraith per 30 graves. (Starts with one automatically as soon as 15 graves are encroached upon.) Takes 1D4 weeks to grow to completion. Can grow multiple Wraiths at one time.

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 3D4, M.E. 3D6+2, M.A. 2D4, P.S. 4D6+4, P.P. 4D6+6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 1D6, Physical Spd. 4D6+7, Ethereal Spd. 6D6+10.

**Horror Factor:** 16. Created to look very scary and menacing.

**P.P.E.:** 6D6+10

**I.S.P.:** M.E. +3D6

**Natural A.R.:** None while in ethereal form. 11 when in physical form.

**Hit Points (ethereal):** 6D6. When dead in ethereal form, it dissipates.

**S.D.C. (ethereal):** 1D4x10+10, but only vulnerable to psionics and magic.

**Hit Points (physical):** 1D4x10 (When depleted, it will turn ethereal until it heals completely.)

**S.D.C. (physical):** 2D4x10+10

**Size:** 7-12 feet (2.13 to 3.66 km) tall.

**Equivalent Level of Experience:** 7<sup>th</sup>

**Combat:** 6 attacks per melee.

**Skills:** 6<sup>th</sup> level Hand to Hand: Expert, W.P. Sword, Boxing.



**Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses):** +12 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 on all saving throws, including vs psionics and magic.

**Damage:** Claws do 2D4 S.D.C. plus Physical Strength bonuses, varies per weapon. Can also use psionics and magic.

**Magic:** Shadow Meld, Possession, Flight (in physical form) and 3D4+8 spells total selected from levels 1-8. All at 8<sup>th</sup> level strength and are usually offensive spells.

**Psionics:** Empathy, Telepathy, Mind Block, See the Invisible, Telekinesis, Empathic Transfer, and Electrokinetics – all equal to 8<sup>th</sup> level strength.

**Natural Abilities:** The Wraiths can turn physical or ethereal instantly at will. They can change so quickly, that it can be used as a parry when the Wraith is being attacked with normal weapons (roll a parry as normal; if the parry succeeds, the Wraith becomes ethereal and the weapon passes harmlessly through the ghostly Wraith). Bio-regenerates 3D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points once every melee round.

**Armaments:** Sword made from wood of the Soul Tree. It can change physical or ethereal with the Wraith. The sword is sharpened to be very deadly in physical form, doing 4D6 S.D.C. plus strength bonuses. In ethereal form, it is just as deadly by bypassing armor and directly harming the target. This form will do 2D6 plus strength bonuses to S.D.C. first, and then to Hit Points (after S.D.C. is depleted). The sword is always in the form that the Wraith is in.

**Natural Abilities when Ethereal:** Can Hover and Fly above the Ground (up to 1000 ft/305 m high), Teleport Self (88% with a range of 2400 ft/732 m, four times daily), Bio-Regenerates 3D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points Once Every Melee Round, and Ethereal, so it can walk through solid matter like walls and is impervious to normal weapons.

**Vulnerabilities:** Magic, psionics, Astral combat, and cannot enter magic or holy sanctums or circles of protection.

## Spy Minions

Spy Minions are ethereal fruit from the branch ends of the Tree, and serve a couple of purposes. The first is information gathering; the Tree can see whatever they see. The second purpose is to serve and inform the Deceivils of secret things or of people that they might be able to exploit to accomplish their purposes. Since they are invisible and ethereal, they can witness private events and use Telepathy to sense people's thoughts. This makes them excellent spies that are helpful to the Tree and the Deceivils to know "secret things." They not only tell personal and historical events, they also reveal any secret passages, compartments or words that might exist in the area that the minions have been spying on. They are sometimes sent to consult with other Trees as well.

Spy Minions are aware that there might be people that can see the invisible, so they also hide in shadows or inside objects and peek out. They can sense magic and psionics, so they will know when they need to hide or not. If seen, the person will see them as a ghostly head with a misty torso and arms but no legs.

Another one of their purposes is to travel to the surrounding area and cause the living to have nightmares. In order to help in

the deception and fear that they can produce, the Tree and its minions know the details of each nightmare.

**Tree Size Requirements:** Can produce one Spy Minion per 50 graves. (Starts with two automatically as soon as 15 graves are encroached upon.)

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 2D6, M.E. 4D6, M.A. 2D6, Spd. 6D6+10. Other physical attributes are not applicable because it is naturally a ghost form.

**Horror Factor:** 13

**P.P.E.:** 6D6+10

**I.S.P.:** M.E. +3D6

**Natural A.R.:** None, ethereal.

**Hit Points:** 4D6

**S.D.C.:** 6D6, but only vulnerable to psionics and magic.

**Size:** 1 to 3 feet (0.3 to 1 m) tall; weightless spirit being.

**Combat:** Psionics and magic only. 3 attacks per melee.

**Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses):** +12 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 on all saving throws, including vs psionics and magic.

**Damage:** Only possible using psionics and magic.

**Magic:** Shadow Meld, and 1D4+3 spells total selected from levels 1-3. All at 3<sup>rd</sup> level strength.

**Psionics:** Empathy, Telepathy, Mind Block, Alter Aura, See the Invisible, Induce Nightmare and Empathic Transfer – all psionics are equal to 4<sup>th</sup> level.





**Natural Abilities:** Can Inflict Nightmares (victim needs a 14 to save including any M.E. bonuses), Can Hover and Fly Above the Ground (up to 1000 ft/305 m high), Teleport Self (88% with a range of 2400 ft/732 m, four times daily), Bio-Regenerates 3D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points Once Every Melee Round, and Ethereal by Nature, so it can walk through solid matter like walls and is impervious to normal weapons.

**Vulnerabilities:** Magic, psionics, astral combat, and cannot enter magic or holy sanctums or circles of protection.

## Poltergeists

The Poltergeists are not fruit of the Tree. Instead they are the souls of those that the Tree took the knowledge or power from in the first place. They feel they have the right to follow and try to get vengeance on anyone that is exploiting their death. They obviously hate taken being captive by the Tree, but misery loves company. They cannot directly harm anyone in a contract/pact with the Tree, but they can cause other things to harm them.

The Poltergeists will also be upset in other cases as well, such as when the land above their graves has been disturbed, or if they have been summoned from their rest. In the case of a Soul Tree, they rest until someone causes the Tree to disturb them for some purpose. Their range is indefinite, and they can always teleport directly back to their grave site.

**Tree Size Requirements:** Can call up to one Poltergeist per grave.

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 4D6, M.A. 2D6, Spd. 6D6+10.

Other physical attributes are not applicable because it is naturally a ghost form.

**Horror Factor:** 13

**P.P.E.:** 6D6+10

**I.S.P.:** M.E. +3D6

**Natural A.R.:** None, ethereal.

**Hit Points:** 6D6

**S.D.C.:** 1D4x10+10, but only vulnerable to psionics and magic.

**Size:** 3 to 5 feet (1 to 1.5 m) tall; weightless spirit being.

**Combat:** Psionics and magic only. 5 attacks per melee.

**Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses):** +12 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 on all saving throws, including vs psionics and magic.

**Damage:** Only possible using psionics and magic. Can't directly harm a pact-maker of its Tree!

**Magic:** Shadow Meld, Possession, and 2D4+3 spells total selected from levels 1-5.

**Psionics:** Empathy, Telepathy, Mind Block, See the Invisible, Telekinesis, Empathic Transfer, and Electrokinetics, all equal to 4<sup>th</sup> level strength.

**Natural Abilities:** Each Poltergeist will add a +1 to strike, dodge, parry, and initiative to the pact-maker's enemies. In addition, they inflict a -1 to initiative and the victim will always lose the initiative in a tie. Each "penalty" is accumulative per Poltergeist that follows the pact-maker.

Can Hover and Fly Above the Ground (up to 1000 ft/305 m high), Teleport Self (88% with a range of 2400 ft/732 m,

four times daily), Bio-Regenerates 3D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points Once Every Melee Round, and Ethereal by Nature, so it can walk through solid matter like walls and is impervious to normal weapons. Can also sense the Soul Tree's tattoo, up to 3000 miles (4800 km) away. Can travel ceaselessly to reach its target at top speed.

**Vulnerabilities:** Magic, psionics, Astral combat, and cannot enter magic or holy sanctums or circles of protection.

## Seeds

Seeds are commonly placed on pact-makers without their knowledge. They are ethereal and small in size. The Seed will stay with the contracted until it senses a graveyard without a Tree already growing and that has at least 15 graves within a one mile (1.6 km) radius. The graveyard can be centuries old and forgotten by history. They just have to have some remnants of humans inside them. Some Trees have been found out in the middle of the desert where no graveyard has ever been recorded. But if it meets the criteria, it will work. The Tree's graveyard can still grow by having contracts unfulfilled and the pact-makers dying while the contracts are binding, in which case their bodies will be added to the cemetery.

**Tree Size Requirements:** Can produce one Seed per five graves. A new Seed will reach maturity in five full moons. Can grow multiple Seeds at one time.

**Horror Factor:** 5

**P.P.E.:** None.

**I.S.P.:** None.

**Hit Points:** 2D6

**S.D.C.:** 4D6

**Size:** Average is about the size of an almond.

**Magic:** None.

**Natural Abilities:** Sense graveyards of 15 or more graves at a range of one mile (1.6 km). It will detach from the host when a graveyard without a Soul Tree is located. The Seed will drop whenever it senses either that it is at the graveyard or it is moving away from it. It is designed to stay where it is until some force pushes it towards the graveyard. When it reaches the first grave, it will start to sprout roots and grow.

Ethereal by Nature, so it can go through solid matter like walls and is impervious to normal weapons.

Not Detectable by Presence Sense. Since it is not a sentient being, it is virtually undetectable by any other means than See the Invisible. Even then, it is carefully hidden on the person or their belongings.

**Vulnerabilities:** Has no powers outside of a graveyard's vicinity. Can enter into a holy sanctum since there it has no alignment.



# HEROES UNLIMITED™



## Power Up the Vote

### Political Campaigns in Heroes Unlimited™

By Brandon K. Aten and Taylor White

*"On the charges of attempting to destroy the planet, we, the jury, find the defendant, Dr. Insanotron, not guilty."*

*Immediately after the jury read the verdict, a hushed mumbling rose up from the packed courtroom. No one could believe it. Dr. Insanotron, the evil super-genius, was going to walk away. Reporters dashed out to make calls to the newspapers. The prosecutor dropped his head into his hands in frustration. In the back, a woman, whose husband had fallen victim to Dr. Insanotron's mutant bee people, began to weep uncontrollably.*

*The evidence had been overwhelming. There were the satellite photos of the Volcano Island base. There were hours of security footage from the Underground Laboratory. There were henchmen who had defected and talked to the FBI. There were even records of shipments of Mutagen X-245, paid for with the Doctor's personal credit cards! For weeks, the media proclaimed that the trial would be a shoe-in, and that Dr. Insanotron would finally be punished for his crimes. But because of a technicality, because Captain Awesome had violated Dr. Insanotron's rights when he destroyed the Earthquake Machine and apprehended the super-villain, none of it mattered. The prosecutor's case fell through because Captain Awesome acted illegally.*

*Captain Awesome and his loyal sidekick, Miss Sugar Blossom, were in the courtroom that day. They sat, in their superhero outfits, confident that their efforts to prevent devastation from this madman would not be in vain. But as the verdict was read and the judge adjourned the proceedings, their hopes were shattered.*

*"It's not right, Captain Awesome," said the beautiful Sugar Blossom.*

*"Not only that. It's downright criminal. What good are our powers if we can't use them to keep villains off the street? What good does it do to risk our lives against these fiends when justice eludes us?"*

*Dr. Insanotron, followed by his entourage of lawyers, left the courtroom. As they passed by Captain Awesome, the Doctor flashed his metal teeth in a crooked smile.*

*Captain Awesome stood and stared into the maniac's cybernetic eyes. Dr. Insanotron's lawyers swarmed Captain Awesome, threatening him with legal action. Dr. Insanotron whipped his cape around in a flourish and marched out of the courthouse, laughing loudly for all to hear.*

*Captain Awesome clenched his fists. Anger and frustration swelled up inside him. Evil was loose, and there was nothing he could do to stop it.*

*"There has to be a better way," he said.*

## The Better Way

It seems that no matter where you go over the past few months, talk of politics is everywhere. There are politicians everywhere trying to sway our opinions in magazines, newspapers, and television commercials, all with one very simple goal in mind: For you to put a check next to their name when you step into that voting booth. In an election year, especially one that may include one of the most heated presidential races in American history, it is almost impossible to escape the media circus surrounding the world of politics.

As a gamer, I began to contemplate politics in a role-playing setting and found that one of the most enjoyable parts of my campaigns was the political intrigue that was deeply woven into the stories presented by the Game Master. On the other hand, as a Game Master, I decided to allow my players to have an active role in creating the political subplots, by making them the politicians. It turned out to be a huge success as characters posed for the cameras, and players held an actual Lincoln-Douglass debate in order to address key issues of their political platforms.

The inclusion of a political campaign is an excellent way to build team unity within a group of superheroes, and it opens up the door to an entire world of new possibilities. Those who decide to have their characters follow a political career path will find the realm of politics and government to be an intriguing, exciting, and sometimes dangerous adventure. Those who don't get involved are the ones left crying for the next four years. So get your power armor suit, put on those tights, brush up on those spells, and get involved today!



## The Big Question

Throwing your hat into the world of politics is no simple decision. Whether the character is running for a seat on the town council, or for a seat in the United States Senate, the character must know what he will stand to represent. The biggest question that needs to be addressed when starting a political campaign is "Why would the hero or heroes get involved in politics?" This is a major point that can be addressed in many ways, but should be addressed in some form throughout the game. The Game Master, for example, could introduce a villain who has political and economic ties throughout the city, in essence making him a difficult figure to reach. This villain may or may not have super abilities, but could be a danger simply because of the political power which he wields. This could entice the players to enter into the world of politics in order to beat the villain at his own game.

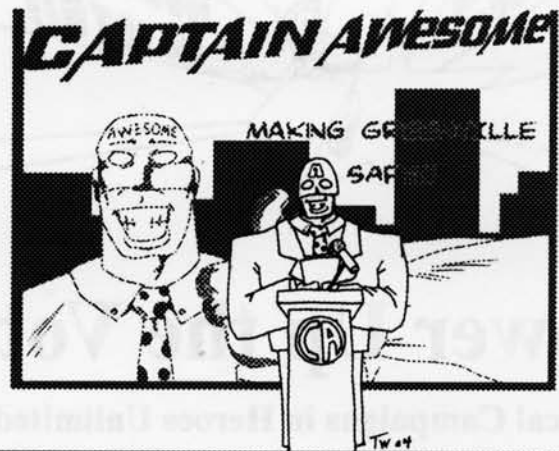
Player characters who want to start out as politicians should have some underlying reason for why they want to enter into politics, which can be used later as the foundation for their political platform. Maybe the character thinks that certain laws are outdated or flawed and are in need of a change. Maybe the criminals are being released into the world without punishment, and the player character wants to see justice served. If the players are playing selfish or evil characters, they could view politics as a way to change laws in their favor in order to gain money or power. The selfish or evil characters could also use their position as a way to help out other evil interests, such as evil corporations or organized crime rings. The players may want to include their introduction to the political realm in their backstories or character generation. Some characters may come from a long line of politicians, so the love of the political ring is in their blood. The Kennedy family is just one example of such a political legacy in American politics. By taking certain skill programs, or using the Political Science skill program presented in this article, the player characters could be well on their way to a life of political success.

Some characters may have their eyes set on some very lofty goals. Some may even seem almost unattainable, but with more money and influence, almost anything is possible. When one is elected into a public office, there are many responsibilities, as well as a certain level of power that comes with the title, and to some, that is the object of their desire. When a character gets into politics they will see that their sphere of influence greatly increases, which means that they can have an effect on more people through their actions and political agendas. The larger the sphere of influence granted by a certain position, the more people that can be affected. For example, if armed robbery is on the increase, and the character wants to lower crime rates, then the character can try to implement regulations in order to increase the sentences for convicted armed offenders. With power like this, one ordinary man can do the job of ten superheroes. Good characters will use this sphere of influence in order to "protect and serve" the people who put them into that position of power. Some good characters who climb to the top of the political ladder may even try to use their influence to promote peace in a certain region, or to mediate in disagreements between two other powers. Selfish or evil characters would use their spheres of influence in order to gain more power and polit-

ical clout through political alliances, and even the acceptance of bribes from corporations in order to add to their pool of allies.

## Where Do I Start?

How does a character get started on his political campaign? Well, with the decision made to enter into the political arena, the character needs to do a little bit of footwork. If the Game Master has set the game to be based around an election, such as a mayoral election or an election for County Sheriff, then the campaign may already have been set in motion by the Game Master. Once your character is in the running for political office, there are a few things that would be wise to do. Every part of this following section is written purely as suggestions. They can be taken out of order, added upon, or omitted in their entirety. If the player characters wish to take another path, they should be allowed to do so. Remember, the whole point is to make the game fun for everyone involved!



## Political Platform

The very first step that a character should take in preparation for their candidacy is to establish their platform. The platform is defined as a formal declaration of the principles on which a group, such as a political party, makes its appeal to the public. This means that the character should be able to make a formal statement declaring the policies, actions, and rights for which he stands, and should especially be able to do so if confronted by the media or a crowd. For example, our hero Captain Awesome decides that he wants to run for Mayor of Greenville. He has noticed that no matter how much work is done, or how many criminals are put behind bars in Greenville, the crime rate is still increasing, and he feels that he could do more by changing some regulations on the sentencing of criminals. If this is the main ideal for which Captain Awesome stands, he should run on platform of reducing the crime rate. "Taking Back the Night," or "Making Greenville Safe," are potential slogans that Captain Awesome could use during his campaign when discussing the high crime rates and what he proposes to do. The majority of his activities will deal with fighting crime and he will try to bring this up whenever possible.

A selfish or evil character could very easily have a false platform, or even have a platform that does what is intended, but the

character has ulterior motives. A false platform might be one centered around defense spending decreases, but the character actually increases defense spending once in office.

Dr. Insanotron, an evil character and the arch enemy of Captain Awesome, also decides to run for Mayor of Greenville. His ultimate motive is to use the town budget to build a Domsday device with which to threaten the entire world, and to defeat Captain Awesome once and for all. When discussing his platform at the beginning of the mayoral race, Dr. Insanotron promised to lower taxes and to cut wasteful city spending. In the twisted mind of Dr. Insanotron his campaign promises are completely legitimate. He said he was going to lower taxes, and if elected, he will. But only by the slightest fraction of a percent. And in his mind, the Domsday device is a completely legitimate use for government funds, therefore wasteful city spending is immediately eliminated by reallocating all city funds into the world threatening device.

## Campaign Finances

Every campaign requires money. And lots of it. When you get down into the nitty-gritty workings of the campaign machine, the dollars needed just add up. Transportation costs, publicity expenses such as television and newspaper ads, even food and hotel rooms when the candidate is on the campaign trail, all add up to big bucks. Seasoned candidates will usually have some connections with special interest groups who fund their campaigns based on past voting records. While the money from these special interest groups isn't necessarily a bribe, it helps insure consistent voting from the same political official in order to protect that interest group's own interests. Many politicians use their own money to start their campaigns for lower offices and then use their reputation from those offices as clout to acquire more financial backers.

Another group that can offer financial backing is the Political Party. A Party is different than a special interest group mainly because it is a recognized group that shares the same basic beliefs and platform. Aside from the financial support that a Political Party offers, it also assures a strong voting base. If a character runs with the support of a specific party, then members of that party will look at that candidate more seriously since they know that the candidate maintains certain ideals of the party to which the voter can relate.

In one campaign from my own player group, our candidate, who was an eight foot tall mound of purple rock from outer space running for mayor, received his financial backing from a local millionaire. How much of what we did was actually legal is up to interpretation since there are some extremely strict rules governing campaign finance, to which none of us knew the intricacies. We were just in it for the fun, and it sounded feasible at the time. For the purpose of acquiring funding in the context of the game, a political party creation chart is included in the source material. If that table is not used, then the player can use the Sponsoring Organization table on page 116 of the **Heroes Unlimited™ Second Edition** book. This gives a good idea of who could sponsor the candidate. It should be assumed that the character has all of the needed funding for campaign expenses, but he may still be the lap dog of the sponsoring organization.

Dr. Insanotron first received his "campaign funding" from the foreign government of Turkvakia. About a year prior to Dr. Insanotron announcing his intention to run for Mayor of Greenville, a representative from the small, isolated nation of Turkvakia approached him with 100 million dollars and a request to build a gigantic Domsday device. But instead of building the device for the Turkvakian government, he took the money and fled the small, impoverished nation, eventually leading to the collapse of the Turkvakian government. Dr. Insanotron continued his research on the Domsday device and has created many such devices, only to have his plans thwarted by Captain Awesome. He is now using the last of his funds from the Turkvakian encounter to fund his bid for power in Greenville.

## Running Mate

Once the candidate has a platform to represent his image to the voting public, and party or other financial sponsorship, a running mate (dare I say, sidekick?) should be selected based on similar platform views and appeal to the public. Most campaigns don't require a running mate, since other positions are either appointed by the newly elected person, or the position does not elicit one. Generally speaking, a running mate is selected for big campaigns such as a Presidential race. In a game context, it will be easier to find a running mate if there is more than one player character. The player characters can start off as a team to begin with, much like an average superhero team.

The great thing about a running mate is that they can help you gain more public support by representing another demographic of the voting public. For instance, we already know that Captain Awesome wants to increase the punishment for criminals in Greenville, but his running mate, Miss Sugar Blossom, wants to reform the public parks system in order to build more inner city garden and recreational space. This would make the "Awesome-Blossom" campaign more compassionate and appealing to the general public, and especially to people in the locations which will be affected by these policies, who may be compelled to vote in favor of the team. The addition of Miss Sugar Blossom to the campaign would appeal not only to women voters, but also to the environmentalist groups in Greenville, in turn reaching other demographics that would normally not be reached by Captain Awesome alone.

A selfish or evil character may select his running mate purely on the premise that certain special interest groups may donate more money to the campaign with a certain running mate. They would try to milk it for all that it is worth in order to complete their own goals. Others, like Dr. Insanotron, will not choose a running mate only because they hate to share power.

## Volunteers and Campaign Workers

Volunteers and other workers are a tremendous asset to have working for the characters' camp during your campaign. These workers may include a Campaign Manager, a film and still camera crew, a Public Relations Consultant, and maybe even an Image Consultant to design the outfits for both everyday superhero work and the Brooks Brothers suit for the upcoming debate. Volunteers are needed to help organize rallies, make phone



calls, or go door to door in order to try to get people's votes, and do the mundane things that keep the campaign office open. Hey, someone has to make all that coffee. In the context of the game, the volunteers should be around the candidate passing out bumper stickers, buttons, and flyers whenever they are at a rally or public venue. When Captain Awesome and Miss Sugar Blossom are dealing with a group of bank robbers with an iron fist, the volunteers are there getting footage of the captures to send to the media, passing out flyers or just gathering people around and telling them what is going on. They are effectively the roots of the candidate's Public Relations Campaign.

For characters with a little more shady ideas in mind, the range of volunteers can vary from other evil super beings or gang members to stir up trouble, to assassins and prostitutes to eliminate the opposition using force or blackmail. Dr. Insanotron, for instance, has many volunteers to assist in his campaign against Captain Awesome. Some of his volunteers are the standard political volunteers, like the ones mentioned earlier, but the majority of the "volunteers" are criminals and street thugs who have had previous confrontations with Captain Awesome. These criminals mainly stir up trouble and try to distract Captain Awesome from his campaigning by committing various acts of robbery and vandalism. They have even gone so far as to kidnap a volunteer working for Captain Awesome and try to hold him for ransom until Captain Awesome dropped out of the mayoral race. That situation was eventually defused, but it has not lessened any of the animosity between the two camps.

Volunteers can be easily found after spreading the word of your candidacy to friends and family, and they bring more people to your cause. These volunteers could be other superhero player characters, and would make the political element much more entertaining if that was the case. Imagine a character flying around the scene of the bank robbery dropping flyers above everyone, or another character shooting up fireworks to awe the crowd at the candidate's speech. These volunteers are a key part to our next section: Getting into the public eye.

## The Public Eye

One of the most important things that a political candidate can do is to make himself visible to the public. This can mean getting your name out through posters or flyer campaigns, television ad campaigns, or even making public appearances at schools, hospitals, or other public places. Making oneself visible is a relatively easy task, especially for the player characters in a super powered campaign. If the funds are available, television and other advertising campaigns are the way to go, but in the context of *Heroes Unlimited*, the characters have a vast amount of options available to them through the use of their super abilities that should not be overlooked. What better way to get into the public eye than to save a baby from a burning building, or to disrupt a terrorist plot to destroy a crowded arena? One of the points that I want to emphasize is that this is a superhero game. The point is to be "super human" in one way or another, so the use of the characters' special abilities is supposed to be a focal point of the game, not a secondary element. The inclusion of a political campaign should be used to add flavor to the game, not to be the primary focus. Each character has a specific set of skills and abilities that makes that character unique, and these

powers and abilities should be used as the player sees fit, but should still add that "super" element to the character's political campaign.

Captain Awesome, for example, flies to work every day in an attempt to encourage other superheroes to do the same. He is a huge proponent of environmental awareness and sees it as his responsibility as a super human to use his powers for the good of all mankind, and the protection of our planet. The program has begun to catch on with more super beings running, flying, bounding, and even teleporting to work in order to protect the environment. Not only does this plan put Captain Awesome in the public eye, but it also gives all manner of good publicity to him and to his campaign.

Selfish or evil characters, like Dr. Insanotron, may find that getting the attention of the voting public in a positive way can present its own challenges. For a character whose only media attention has been during bomb threats and televised trials, it can be almost nerve-wracking. Dr. Insanotron occasionally sets up publicity stunts in which he orders some of his volunteers to commit a robbery or other crime. Then when it seems like the criminals are about to get away, Dr. Insanotron comes to the rescue in his Robot Death Machine and saves the day. After the culprits are carted away to jail, he tells the media that he has changed his ways from an evil mad scientist to a civic-minded citizen. It seems somewhat out there, but polls have shown that some of the public is buying the lies.

## Follow Through

The last and most important element of a political campaign is always the follow through. The follow through of a campaign is effectively the fulfillment of campaign promises made by the candidate. One of the easiest ways for a character to be re-elected is to have the character actually do what was promised during his campaigning. If the character promises to reduce the amount of air pollution around the area, and the amount of air pollution gets reduced, then that is the fulfillment of a campaign promise, whether or not the hero or their policies had any true effect on the reduction.

In a game context, this is more geared toward the alignment of the character or to the overall goal of the campaign. A good character should follow through with their campaign promises barring extenuating circumstances, such as the corruption of the entire city government. Due to the principled natures of Captain Awesome and Miss Sugar Blossom, one can safely assume that their campaign promises will be followed up with the implementation of good policies.

The promises made by Dr. Insanotron would also be fulfilled, as was evident when discussing his platform. If he was to be elected though, the general population may not accept his rationale. They may get more than a little upset over the elimination of a city budget and the construction of the enormous Doomsday device. The .5% tax cut would hardly be enough to satisfy the general public.

## Where Do I Go From Here?

As with any role-playing game, the purpose of *Heroes Unlimited™ Second Edition* is to have fun! The inclusion of a po-

litical campaign can add some variety to a campaign, and in the month of November, a slight hint of reality. Rules for the creation of a political party are included along with the skill programs to round out a political character. If the player characters don't want to be the main focus of the campaign, they can join the heated political struggle already taking place in Greenville by joining ranks with either Captain Awesome or Dr. Insanotron. Pick a side, stand up for what you believe in, but most importantly, go and "Power Up the Vote!"

## New Skill Programs

### Political Science

American History (NEW! Can be changed based on nationality)

Writing

Computer Operation

Seduction (more for telling people what they want to hear)

One Language of Choice.

### Campaign Management

Business and Finance

Computer Operation

Research or Muck Slinging (NEW!)

Two Languages of Choice.

### Public Relations Coordinator

Computer Operation

Radio: Basic

T.V. and Video

Photography

Streetwise

### Image Consulting

Disguise

Streetwise

Sewing (Professional Quality)

Image Consultation (NEW!)

One Domestic Skill of Choice.

## New Skills

**American History (Technical Skill):** In-depth study of America, American laws, and the American political system from its days as a group of colonies prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence, to the present day. **Base Skill:** 50% +5% per level of experience.

**Image Consultation (Technical Skill):** General knowledge of trends in the fashion world. This knowledge includes what clothes are in season, what trends are fashionable this year, and what outfits are appropriate for specific occasions. Basic etiquette, eloquent speaking, and tasteful small talk are learned in order to make the character more charming. If the character misses the percentile roll, then a fashion faux pas has been made (blue socks with black pants, polka dotted tie with a striped

shirt, etc.). If the roll is successful, the character receives a +2 bonus to P.B. for the duration of the event. If taken as a part of the Image Consultant skill package, the bonus may be awarded to another character. **Base Skill:** 60% +5% per level of experience.

Provides the following bonuses:

+2 to M.A.

+1 to P.B.

**Muck Slinging (Rogue Skill):** A character with this skill will be adept at finding and exploiting character flaws of another person, usually a political adversary. These flaws are then magnified a hundredfold and exploited to tarnish that person's reputation. A character with Muck Slinging is also familiar with blackmail techniques and various other ways to "convince" someone to step down, or drop out of a race. This skill is not recommended for characters of good alignment. **Base Skill:** 35% +5% per level of experience.

## The Political Players of Greenville

### CAPTAIN AWESOME



### Captain Awesome

#### Candidate for the Mayor of Greenville

**Alignment:** Principled.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 11, M.E. 12, M.A. 30, P.S. 57 (Supernatural), P.P. 16, P.E. 14, P.B. 30, Spd. 18 (can also fly at 360 mph/576 km).

**Hit Points:** 56, S.D.C.: 104.

**Height:** 6 feet, 3 inches (2 meters).

**Weight:** 211 pounds (95 kg).

**Age:** 29

**P.P.E.:** 6

**Level of Experience:** 8th level Mutant.

**Disposition:** Captain Awesome is the epitome of the American hero. He is the poster boy for patriotism, and he knows it. Captain Awesome never acts condescending to anyone except villains and criminals who don't deserve his respect, and



even then he is cordial and charming. In all actuality, this big, hulking man is quite charming. Ladies swoon over his seemingly perfect body, quick wit, and almost angelic face. Nothing really tends to surprise him anymore, ever since his rivalry with Dr. Insanotron began. He has foiled the past seven plots by the crazy scientist, and has seen him evade the charges all seven times. That was Captain Awesome's motivation to enter politics, where he thinks that he can make a real difference. He doesn't know why or how their rivalry began, but Captain Awesome suspects that it has something to do with his own popularity with the ladies, and that a certain Dr. Insanotron is just a tad jealous. He is one of the most well known and popular people in the city of Greenville, but his popularity has started to slip since the incident at the Volcano Island base that allowed Dr. Insanotron to get off scot-free. He loves the company of women, some would say a little too much. He has been known to take two dates to a party or celebration, and then leave with different women. Political analysts say that, if anything, his chauvinistic attitude will be his downfall.

**Appearance:** If Shakespeare had known Captain Awesome he would have called him the "Man of Wax" because every feature of his body looks delicate, yet as though it was carved exactly how it was intended. Thanks to his mutant powers, Captain Awesome is as close to physical perfection as anyone ever has been. A mere glance from his icy blue eyes has caused women to faint, and a smile and wave will create a crowd. Traffic slows as he walks by, and he can hardly ever leave a party without a woman or two at his side.

**Combat:** Hand to Hand: Martial Arts and Boxing.

**Attacks per Melee:** Six (Seven when in flight).

**Bonuses:** +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, +42 (yes, +42) to S.D.C. damage, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +5 to pull punch, +4 to disarm, Karate Style Kick does 2D4, Snap Kick 1D6, Roundhouse Kick 3D6, Axe Kick 2D6, Wheel Kick 2D6, Critical Strike on a roll of 18, 19, or 20, Leap Attack (Critical), knows all Jump Kicks. Can carry 300 times his P.S. in pounds, and can lift 500 times his P.S. in pounds, fatigues at one tenth the normal rate for humans, +5% to save vs coma/death.

**Bonuses in Flight:** Same as above except as follows. +3 to strike, +8 to parry, +10 to dodge when flying under 80 miles per hour (128 km), +12 to dodge when flying around 90 miles per hour (144 km) or faster, +4 to damage for every 20 miles per hour (32 km) of flight speed.

**Skills of Note:** Pilot Automobile 74%, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Speak, Read, and Write American 98%, American History 98%, Writing 90%, Computer Operation 90%, Seduction 94%, Speaks German, Russian, Chinese, and Japanese 98%, Radio: Basic 80%, Basic Mechanics 65%, Automotive Mechanics 60%, First Aid 80%, Mathematics: Advanced 80%, Cook 70%, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Sword, W.P. Shield, W.P. Shotgun.

**Psionic Powers:** None.

**Magic Knowledge:** None.

**Super Abilities:** Mutant Characteristic: Angelic Face, Flight: Wingless, Extraordinary M.A., Physical Perfection, Supernatural Strength.

**Weapons of Note:** When in combat situations, Captain Awesome uses specially designed titanium gauntlets to protect his hands. While trained in the use of other weapons, he usually prefers to use his Supernatural Strength, or his father's old twelve-gauge shotgun, named "Bessie." He is, after all, a card carrying member of the NRA. Through reputation alone, Captain Awesome can get his hands on almost any type of weapon that he could want, but that kind of dependence on other technology is viewed as beneath him.

**Cybernetics:** None.

**Money:** At any given time, Captain Awesome has up to \$500,000 at his disposal. During the campaign, though, he pays for nothing. All expenses are covered by campaign funds.

## Miss Sugar Blossom

### Running Mate and Campaign Manager for Captain Awesome

**Alignment:** Scrupulous.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 17, M.E. 13, M.A. 16, P.S. 14, P.P. 19, P.E. 13, P.B. 23, Spd. 27.

**Hit Points:** 35, S.D.C.: 81.

**Height:** 5 feet, 6 inches (1.7 meters).

**Weight:** 121 pounds (54.4 kg).

**Age:** 26

**P.P.E.:** 4

**Level of Experience:** 7th level Mutant.

**Disposition:** Miss Sugar Blossom is a very dedicated, hard working individual, whose very life is a story of success. Raised in the inner city by abusive parents and with barely enough food to live, she decided that she wanted to get out of the slum where she was living and change it so no child would have to grow up as she did. By studying hard, going to a good school, and making many wise political decisions, she has found her way into the position of running mate for one of the most promising mayoral candidates that Greenville has ever seen. She has been the loyal sidekick of Captain Awesome for over five years and was actually the one who put the idea in his head about running for mayor. Once she realized the potential of a charming personality and a pretty face to go along with it, she knew that he was a shoe-in to win.

Miss Sugar Blossom loves children and will go out of her way to protect them. This is an issue that Dr. Insanotron has taken advantage of on multiple occasions. Generally, she is a no-nonsense woman who doesn't take crap from anyone, but she also knows when to hold her tongue, which has helped her save face on more than one occasion during this campaign. She still uses some of her skills learned from her life on the street in order to work covertly and acquire information, something that Captain Awesome doesn't necessarily like, but accepts as long as he remains uninformed about the source of the information.

**Appearance:** Miss Sugar Blossom is a gorgeous woman. Her poise and confidence is reflected in her grace and beauty. She always walks tall and exudes an air of confidence. Her long legs and her solid posture give the appearance that she is ac-

tually taller than she really is, which dissuades many people from arguing with her. Her brown hair with some strips of green hint at her mutant abilities, but aside from that she is just a fair-skinned, brown-eyed beauty.

**Combat:** Hand to Hand: Expert.

**Attacks per Melee:** Five.

**Bonuses:** +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, +7 to roll with punch/fall/impact, Critical Strike on 18, 19, or 20, Karate Kick does 2D4 damage, Snap Kick does 1D6 damage, Roundhouse Kick does 3D6 damage, +10% to Climb trees and vines, immune to all plant toxins.

**Bonuses in Plant Form:** +9 to damage, P.S. is 24, S.D.C. is 181, A.R. is 10, H.F. is 13, cannot be detected by infrared or heat sensors, survive without food, can absorb enough water in 1D4 hours to survive 14 days, release stored water at the rate of 8 ounces (0.23 liters) a minute with the limit of 64 ounces (1.89 liters) per 24 hours, breathes carbon dioxide, does not breathe oxygen, impossible to smother, defoliants deal 2D6 damage per spray or glass to the character, being doused in defoliant deals 2D6x10 damage to the character, regenerates S.D.C. and Hit Points twice as fast as regular humans, can regrow lost limbs in 1D4+1 months, nose, ears fingers and toes grow back in one month, secrete plant resins (as per page 248 in **Heroes Unlimited™, Second Edition**).

**Skills of Note:** Business and Finance 93%, Computer Operation 98%, Research 98%, Speaks American, Spanish, and Portuguese at 98%, Pilot Automobile 75%, Pilot Motorcycle 87%, Mathematics: Basic 78%, Mathematics: Advanced 98%, Palming 78%, Pick Locks 88%, Pick Pockets 83%, Seduction 69%, Streetwise 72%, Recognize Plants and Fruits 94%, Track Animals 78%, Land Navigation 88%, Preserve Food 88%, Chemistry 88%, Analytical Chemistry 83%, Astronomy 83%, Botany 83%, Prowl 68%, Running, Swimming 83%, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Staff, W.P. Paired Weapons.

**Psionic Powers:** None.

**Magic Knowledge:** None.

**Super Abilities:** Mutant Characteristic: Double Jointed, Alter Physical Structure: Plant, Plant Control (as per page 285 in **Heroes Unlimited™, Second Edition**).

**Weapons of Note:** When anticipating a combat situation, Miss Sugar Blossom will carry two wooden Tonfas (1D6) and a Bo Staff (2D6), which she can harden using her Control Plants power. This makes them very effective weapons with which to parry incoming hand to hand attacks.

**Cybernetics:** None.

**Money:** At any given time, Miss Sugar Blossom has up to \$250,000 at her disposal. During the campaign, though, she pays for nothing. All expenses are covered by campaign funds.

## Dr. Insanotron

### Mad Scientist and Candidate for the Mayor of Greenville

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 30, M.E. 18, M.A. 13, P.S. 19 (bionic), P.P. 19 (bionic), P.E. 8, P.B. 5, Spd. 188 (130 mph/208 km).

**Hit Points:** 68, S.D.C.: 35.

**Height:** 5 feet, 5 inches (1.6 meters).

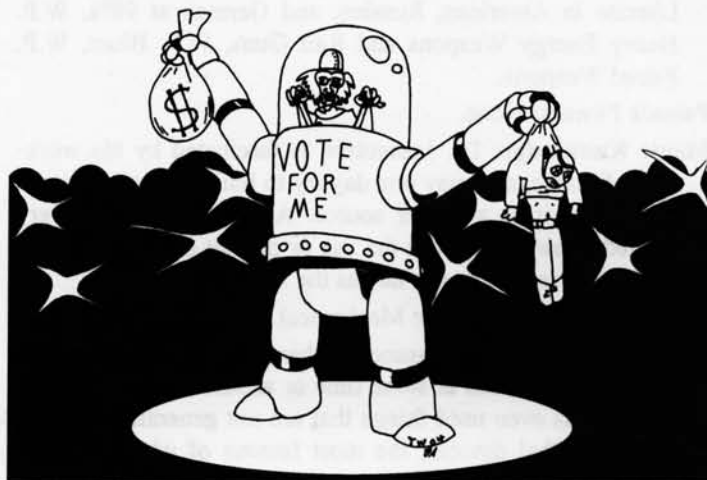
**Weight:** 113 pounds (50.9 kg).

**Age:** Unknown, but some believe him to be over 150 years old.

**P.P.E.:** 1

**Level of Experience:** Level 15 Mechanical Genius.

**Disposition:** Dr. Insanotron is crazy! That's pretty much all there is to it. Ever since he was a child he knew that he was special, and he made sure everyone else knew it, too. Something in his head told him that he was bound for better things, and one day he replied to the voice and said, "I'm not bound for better things, I'm bound for the BEST things!" Since that day Dr. Insanotron has constantly tried to improve himself mentally through study, and physically through bionic augmentation. When a freak chemical spill caused his brain to swell to enormous proportions, he was filled with a desire to create. He could create anything he put his enormous mind to. At first he created things that were beneficial to mankind, but as his brain continued to grow, his insanities grew along with it. On multiple occasions he tried to incite rebellions to overthrow the government, starting with the Great Bovine Uprising of 1978, during which he armed ordinary Holstein cows with "Ray Guns" and sent them running through city streets in order to destroy their human oppressors. It was then that he began working on military projects for foreign nations, which led to his encounter with the Turkvakian government. Almost every major plot that Dr. Insanotron has devised has been thwarted by Captain Awesome, which has led to Dr. Insanotron's insane hatred for that man. When asked in a late-night television interview what three things he wants more than anything, he replied, "Unimaginable wealth, my very own Doomsday device, and to hold Captain Awesome's limp, lifeless body in the arms of my Robot Death Machine." That statement pretty much sums up the attitude of Dr. Insanotron.



**Appearance:** Dr. Insanotron's appearance parallels his personality. This old man has had extensive bionic reconstruction in order to remain alive. He appears to be in his late 80's, but records of him and his evil experiments date back to the mid-1800's. His brain has swelled to enormous proportions, which has led to his incredible intelligence, and mechanical genius. This swelling caused so much discomfort that Dr.



Insanotron removed the top of his skull and had it replaced with an adjustable metal dome, or skullcap, to alleviate the pressure. Dr. Insanotron has also replaced his lower jaw and all his teeth with a titanium alloy maw filled with razor-sharp teeth. His eyes are both bionic, but he has a very difficult time keeping them both focused at the same time. When one of the bionic eyes drifts, it appears to be looking in another direction, and is somewhat discomfiting. When he notices the drift, which could be hours or days later depending on how scattered his thoughts are, Dr. Insanotron will bash his metal skullcap with a monkey wrench in order to right the eye. He generally wears a lab coat, a purple cape, and pink house slippers.

**Insanities:** Obsession: Desires Wealth, Obsession: Hates Captain Awesome, Obsession: Always Wants a Doomsday Device, Psychosis: God Syndrome.

**Combat:** Basic.

**Attacks per Melee:** Seven.

**Bonuses:** +7 on initiative, +4 to strike, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +6 to parry, +7 to dodge, +1 to disarm, +4 to damage, Critical Strike on 19 or 20, Critical Strike or knock-out from behind, body flip/throw, kick 1D6.

**Skills of Note:** Basic Mechanics 175%, Automotive Mechanics 175%, Aircraft Mechanics 170%, Mechanical Engineer 170%, Locksmith 170%, Robot Mechanics 170%, Read Sensory Equipment 98%, Basic Electronics 98%, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Mathematics: Advanced 98%, Pilot Race Cars 98%, Pilot Robot Death Machine (Special) 98%, Hotwiring Automobile 99%, Building Super Vehicle 114%, Recognize Vehicle Quality 125%, Electrical Engineer 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Computer Repair 98%, Biology 98%, Chemistry 98%, Pathology 98%, Medical Doctor 98%, Computer Programming 98%, Robot Electronics 98%, Radio: Basic 98%, Radio: Scramblers 98%, T.V./Video 98%, Surveillance Systems 98%, Pilot Automobile 98%, Speaks French, German, American, Russian, Chinese, and Turkvakian at 98%, Literate in American, Russian, and German at 98%, W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons and Rail Guns, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Paired Weapons.

**Psionic Powers:** None.

**Magic Knowledge:** Dr. Insanotron is fascinated by the workings of magic, and may one day try to build a Doomsday device using it as a power source. As of now, he has very limited knowledge about the use or pursuit of magic, but he will do the research once he has the free time.

**Super Abilities:** Hardware: Mechanical Genius.

**Weapons of Note:** Dr. Insanotron has been known to use all manner of weapons at some time or another. In crazy fits of rage he has even used things that are not generally weapons to make lethal devices, the most famous of which was the soap powered mattress foam cannon which he used to escape a Chinese prison. He always carries a monkey wrench (1D8), and usually makes public appearances in his Robot Death Machine.

**Cybernetics:** Amplified Hearing, Macro-Eye Laser, Micro-Video Camera Eye, Radiation Detector, Bio-Scan, Standard Bionic Lungs, Extendable Hydraulic Arm, Metal Skullcap, Titanium Alloy Jaw with Razor-Sharp Teeth (1D6 + P.S. damage).

**Money:** Only about \$500,000 left from the Turkvakian exchange.

## Dr. Insanotron's Robot Death Machine

This is the large robot designed by Dr. Insanotron which he now uses to "apprehend" criminals. The Robot also seconds as a campaign billboard since it has the words "Vote for Me" painted on the chest. Once there is a crowd gathered around staring at the mechanical marvel, Dr. Insanotron proceeds to speak about his campaign platform over the robot's loudspeakers for all to hear. The public has yet to ask why Dr. Insanotron needs so much weaponry to fight common criminals, nor have they asked why his walking campaign billboard is called the Robot Death Machine. This is why voters need to be informed.

**Body Type:** Type 1 Large Humanoid.

**Height:** 22 feet (6.7 m).

**Width:** 8 feet (2.4 m).

**Weight:** 3350 pounds (1507.5 kg).

**Crew:** 1

**Power System:** Fusion Reactor, 6 year life.

**S.D.C.:** 1400

**A.R.:** 12

**P.S.:** 40 (considered Superhuman).

**Speed:** Running: 130 mph (208 km), Flying: 200 mph (320 km). Maximum altitude is 1000 feet (304.8 meters).

**Special Equipment:** Radio Signal Scrambler, Loudspeaker, Basic Listening Package, Advanced Robot Optics, Laser Targeting System, Underwater Capabilities (can only walk; no underwater propulsion), Concealed Hover Jet System, Two Secret Compartments (6 feet/1.8 m x 6 feet/1.8 m x 3 feet/1.5 m), Reinforced Pilot's Compartment (300 S.D.C.).

**Weapon Systems:**

1) **Interchangeable Hand Unit.** The right hand of the unit can be replaced by either a drill hand or a buzz saw unit. The attachments are stored in one of the secret compartments in the chest of the robot. Damage is 3D6 for the Buzz Saw, and 2D6 for the Drill.

2) **Concealed Flamethrower.** Concealed in the palm of the left hand is a flamethrower.

Range: 16 feet (4.9 meters).

Damage: 3D6, plus there is a 60% chance of setting combustibles ablaze.

Rate of Fire: 5 short bursts per melee. Each counts as one melee attack.

Energy Capacity: 40 blasts before needing to change the concealed fuel tank.

3) **Concealed Arm "Ray Guns."** Concealed in the forearm of both arms is a weapon of Dr. Insanotron's own design. The weapon fires a sort of microwave ray that is very damaging. The weapons are nearly as destructive as ion blasters or particle beams and have yet to be reproduced by government agencies.

Range: 2000 feet (609.6 meters).

Damage: 1D4x10

Rate of Fire: Semi-automatic.

Energy Capacity: Unlimited. Hooked to the robot's fusion power supply.

- 4) **"Ray Gun" Gun Pod.** This is a rifle type unit that houses a larger version of Dr. Insanotron's devastating "Ray Gun." The weapon is usually carried by Dr. Insanotron into combat with devastating results. Like the arm-mounted weapons, this rifle is capable of firing bursts, often with deadly accuracy.

Range: 2500 feet (609.6 meters).

Damage: 1D6x10+20

Rate of Fire: Semi-automatic.

Energy Capacity: Unlimited. Linked to the fusion power supply using a special cable from the wrist.

## Political Party Creation Chart

### Step One: Size and Orientation

1. **Grassroots Movement** — These people operate out of their homes. No paid staff, the entire party is run by working individuals with a passion for change. The advantage to this is that the party is free to define their beliefs and operate how they wish. **50 POINTS**

2. **Small, Established Gray Party** — This party has a non-controversial and easily accessible platform. They are usually Moderate Independents who try to appeal to everyone in hopes of stealing neutral votes. Better resources than grassroots, but not as willing to rock the boat. **150 POINTS**

3. **Capitalist Group** — The Capitalists are here to make money. Mainly for themselves, but with enough charisma, they can convince the voters that everyone will get rich, too. Economy is the lifeblood of a successful nation, and the Capitalists know how to get that cash flowing. **250 POINTS**

4. **Religious Organization** — Family values and spiritual salvation will solve all problems! This party appeals to the emotions of the people. Slick words, inspirational music, and the promise of a magical world beyond the grave have people flocking to this group, especially in troubled times. Unfortunately, Religious parties can also take the most damage from public opinion. If the sins of the party leaders (real or fabricated) are revealed, the people's faith might be tested. **350 POINTS**

5. **Large Local Party** — This party has gotten some decent backing and made a name for itself in a localized area. This group will tout local and regional issues above most others. Very popular since they never seem to lose their sense of community and their rapport with the working man. **500 POINTS**

6. **National Party** — These are the big boys. They have power and influence to spare. Most full-time politicians are members of a National Party. **700 POINTS**

## Step Two: Party Features

### A. Sponsorship

1. **Independent** — The party is made up of fresh faces who have some crazy ideas on how the government should work. Money and supplies are by donation only. Get out there and shake some hands. Add 10 points wherever desired.

2. **Secret** — No one really knows who started the party, or why. As long as nobody asks, checks keep rolling in. Add 15 points wherever desired.

3. **Small-Time Crooks** — Party staff members regularly engage in petty criminal acts to fund the party. They beat up old ladies, rob gas stations, and steal cars. Add 20 points wherever desired.

4. **Organized Crime** — A step up from the small time, a party backed by an Organized Crime Syndicate will have greater resources at their disposal. Money comes in from gambling, drugs, prostitution, gun-running, grand larceny, etc. Add 30 points wherever desired, or add 15 points to Shady Activities and 20 points anywhere else.

5. **Corporate** — A large corporation owns the party, which it uses to fulfill its own aims of making money. The party will have tremendous resources, but very little control over what they can say and do. Add 20 points each to Equipment, Salary, and Special Budget only.

6. **Eccentric Quadrillionaire** — He owns his own island, and has a star named after him. He has a mansion on every continent, and his own rocket ship. Faced with too much money and not enough time to spend it, an aging Quadrillionaire throws his hat into the political arena. He may pull out if things prove to be not as entertaining as he hoped. Add 50 points to anything except Shady Activity, and 10 more points to Special Budget.

7. **Fanatic Group** — Terrorist Organizations, Conspirator Societies, and Religious Extremists all fall into this group. Their reason for funding the party is obvious: They want to impose their insane beliefs on everyone else. They're crazy, but at least they have dedication and perseverance. Not recommended for good-aligned characters. Add 40 points to anything except Reputation.

8. **Alien World/Dimension** — For whatever reason, beings from another world are lending the party their support. Heck, the party itself could be composed of nothing but aliens. This could be a bad thing or a good thing, depending on the aliens. Split 50 extra points between Equipment and Internal Security, and 15 extra points on anything except Reputation.

### B. Equipment

**Note:** The party can spend points on more than one set of Equipment.

1. **None** — Party members are responsible for buying and replacing their own gear.

2. **5 points** — Cheap Gear. The party has a phone line and some basic office supplies.

3. **10 points** — Ninja Equipment. Hey, you never know when a grappling hook, egg shell bombs, and some caltrops will come in handy.

4. **15 points** — Cheap Computers. The party has one computer that was top of the line six years ago.

5. **40 points** — Expensive Computers. The party has a couple of computers that were top of the line a month ago.

6. **60 points** — PC-3000 Computers. The ultimate in futuristic technology (possibly even alien technology).



## C. Internal Security

1. **None** — Anyone can just walk on in and do whatever they want.

2. **10 points** — Lax. "Hey, you're not a spy, are you?" "No." "Okay, you're in."

3. **25 points** — Tight. All party employees wear name tags and are required to have background checks.

4. **40 points** — Iron-Clad. Prospective party employees are given at least 3 background checks. Anything even remotely suspicious will get the character kicked out.

5. **70 points** — Impenetrable. Only people who are family or good friends of party members are even considered for work within the party or work near the candidate.

## D. Permanent Base

1. **None** — The party is set up in the lead candidate's mom's basement. Keep it quiet and don't take the plastic off of the furniture.

2. **10 points** — Rented Storefront. For \$700 a month, the party can base themselves in a space previously occupied by a drugstore. Once the election is over, they usually give the space up.

3. **20 points** — Small Office. The party leases just enough square footage in an office complex to hold some desks and cabinets. There's also a large meeting room and the candidate gets his own office!

4. **50 points** — Small Building/Large Office. The party either owns a small building (1-5 floors) that houses their operations, or rents an entire floor of a large office complex. The candidate and his running mate get their own offices with cheap furniture that looks expensive.

5. **75 points** — Large Building/Even Larger Office. The party either owns a very extravagant building (6-11 floors) in the best part of town, or rents 2-4 floors of a skyscraper downtown. The candidate and his running mate and every prominent party member will have their own office with expensive furnishings and a fantastic view.

## E. Intelligence Resources

**Note:** The party can spend points on more than one Intelligence Resource.

1. **None** — Go buy a newspaper.

2. **5 points** — Word on the Street. Party members know where to get the latest local gossip in the hood. You'd be surprised who heard what from which guys last night outside the club.

3. **10 points** — Media Insiders. The party knows some people in the local TV station or Newspaper who give them the heads-up on all things related to the campaign.

4. **30 points** — Gallup Polls. The party has people who stand out on the street and question passers-by about the candidates and their issues. Get the people's opinions straight from their mouths.

5. **40 points** — Climate Analysts. These are professionals who analyze the campaigns with graphs and charts. They have insight and experience, making their knowledge invaluable.

6. **50 points** — Rats. The party has people planted in rival parties who spy and collect information.

## F. Special Budget

1. **None** — Get a job washing dishes.

2. **5 points** — Nickels and Dimes. \$1000 is available. And it had better be spent carefully.

3. **15 points** — Small Potatoes. \$20,000 for something special.

4. **25 points** — Large Loans. \$90,000 is available.

5. **35 points** — Big Bucks. \$500,000 is available to kick around.

6. **50 points** — Mega Bucks. A million dollars, maybe more, for whatever is needed.

## G. Shady Activity/ Underhanded Techniques

**Note:** The party can spend points on more than one Shady Activity. Not recommended for good-aligned characters.

1. **20 points** — Muck Slinging. While not criminal, it is usually considered unattractive. This includes smears and assaults on personal character. Not always as effective as one would think, this sort of technique usually only affects those who already know who they want to vote for. It rarely wins over neutral votes.

2. **35 points** — Vandalism/Graffiti. Another form of muck slinging, the party has a gang or other group of criminals to spray-paint slanderous phrases in highly public areas, such as water towers, overpasses, and even the campaign billboards of the opposing candidate. This activity can be useful on a local level if played right, but will have no effect in a national election.

3. **60 points** — Tabloid Coverage. Muck slinging with more imagination. Sell the Tabloids some minor dirty details about your opponent's unpaid parking tickets, and they'll blow it up to say he is actually a pistol-toting drug addict. Hey, somebody reads this stuff.

4. **100 points** — The Set-Up. Cocaine, prostitutes, and photographers, oh my! Setting up a rival candidate can have a devastating effect on his campaign. He'll sell his own parents to keep those photos from hitting the papers.

5. **125 points** — Criminal Ties. The party knows some less-than-savory types who won't shy away from applying a little muscle to your opponent's camp. This muscle can take the form of beatings/muggings, firebombing their office, extorting their key members, kidnapping, and other illegal acts. Hey, sometimes you've got to get a little dirty if you want to win.

6. **160 points** — Paramilitary/Mercenary Squad. A step up from criminals, these are well-trained soldiers who can enact tactical strikes against your opponent. These guys are pros. They won't squeal, and never fail in their objectives.

**7. 200 points** — Hit Man. One highly-skilled professional killer is a key member of the party. If the party needs someone to “disappear” or have a “bad accident,” this is the guy you talk to. **G.M. Note:** Using the Hit Man to brazenly eliminate the opposing candidate should not be possible. Come on, if you could just kill him, where would the challenge be?

## H. Reputation

**Note:** This is the party’s reputation at its inception. The G.M. should adjust this accordingly as the campaign progresses.

**1. None** — Under Surveillance. The party is assumed to be political extremists and are kept under close watch by the authorities.

**2. 5 points** — Unknown. Nobody has ever heard of the party. You’ve got a lot of work to do.

**3. 10 points** — Faceless. How many parties do we really need? People have heard of you, they just don’t care too much.

**4. 30 points** — Known. There’s a lot of talk around town about your positions. Your popularity is growing. Many of the people like what you have to say.

**5. 80 points** — Recognized. They make jokes about you on late-night TV. You’re so popular there’s even an emerging counter-culture where kids are putting your faces on T-Shirts with quotes from your speeches. Some make you out to be a saint, others make you out to be a devil.

**6. 150 points** — True Patriots! Your books always make the best-seller lists. You make TV appearances 3 days a week. People tape your speeches and listen to them in the car and the shower. Everyone knows your face, even if they don’t know your platform. Be careful though. From this height, the fall down would be a hard one.

## I. Salary

**1. None** — Volunteers. The characters will need day jobs. They’re running strictly for the love of the game.

**2. 5 points** — Bread and Water. Party workers make minimum wage.

**3. 15 points** — Chump Change. Hey, it’s better than working in fast food.

**4. 30 points** — Civil Servants. As long as they stay reasonably frugal, party workers will be able to live comfortably.

**5. 50 points** — Excellent! Party workers can afford expensive homes in the suburbs, or a high-rise apartment downtown. Money is rarely a concern to them.

**6. 100 points** — Outrageous! “Should I take the blue limousine or the white?” “Which one has the diamond hubcaps?” The party workers are extravagantly wealthy. The flip side to this is that they may seem “out of touch” with lower-class and middle-class workers, which may cost them votes.

## J. Marketing Campaign

**Note:** The party can spend points on more than one Marketing Campaign tactic.

**1. None** — Word of mouth only. A party that doesn’t advertise is going to have a very rough time.

**2. 10 points** — Image Consultant. You have better things to do than worry about your hair and make-up. Hire a professional to make sure you always look your best.

**3. 20 points** — Paper Ads. Posters, brochures and flyers help get the word out. Get on the billboards, drop flyers from airplanes, buy ad space in the newspaper. Get your message read.

**4. 30 points** — Website. The Internet can be a powerful tool to get people to listen to your platform. Better than paper, websites can feature videos, photo galleries, music, and animated pop-up advertisements.

**5. 60 points** — TV and Radio Ads. Television advertising is very expensive, but can be very effective. Hire a production company to make you a couple of commercials and run them during prime-time sitcoms.

**6. 80 points** — Rallies. Still the most effective form of communication in politics, rallies let you address your topics and speak to the people directly. Write some good speeches, play some powerful music, and they’ll be standing in their seats.





# Palladium Fantasy RPG<sup>®</sup>

## The Arrows of Ith'arian

### Optional Magic Items for the Palladium Fantasy RPG<sup>®</sup>

By Edwin Emmer

**Type:** Seven Longbow Arrows, Greater Rune Weapons.

**Damage:** 4D6 (see below).

**Alignment:** Varies (see below).

**Range:** 1000 feet (305 meters).

**Early History:** These seven arrows may be the only arrows ever crafted as rune weapons. The process was extraordinarily complex, requiring the binding of seven separate Greater Entities into the slender arrows. Many early attempts ended in failure, with the summoned Entity breaking free of the fragile weapon (before it was successfully rendered indestructible) and wreaking havoc until driven off or slain. However, eventually, the Dwarf Rune Master Grin'malkin managed to successfully craft the arrows. The arrows, along with a rune longbow, were commissioned by the Elves as a gift to the Master Elf Ranger Olin Ith'arian shortly before the outbreak of the Elf-Dwarf War. This bow and its arrows were passed down to the eldest in the Ith'arian clan throughout the war, where these gifted Rangers won renown with the weapons. However, the line was broken when the last of the Ith'arians was slain in the cataclysm that destroyed the Golden City of Baalgor. While the arrows somehow survived the destruction and were later found by the surviving Elves, the rune longbow was never recovered. It is believed to lay buried deep under or even within the scorched rock and slag that melted over the remains of much of the Golden City. Each of the surviving arrows was given to one of seven Rangers to aid in the conclusion of the war. After the war, they were scattered as often happens with such rune weapons.

**Curses:** None, per se. However, if more than one of the arrows is in the possession of one master at a time, they will begin to constantly bicker amongst themselves as they vie for the attention of their owner. This can be extremely distracting and can even result in insanity (roll once every 6 months), as the only way to block out the telepathic communication is with a Mind Block. It is said that the only personality powerful enough to drown out and control the seven arrows was that of the Rune Longbow that they were created to be used with. However, as that item is believed lost beneath the impenetrable melted stone surface of the Baalgor Wasteland, the sanity

of anyone who possesses two or more of the arrows will always be in peril.

**Powers:** All of the arrows possess the common rune weapon powers plus the following:

- All are designed to fit a longbow and will not allow themselves to be fired from a short bow or crossbow.
- When fired from a longbow, each arrow has a range of 1000 feet (305 meters) and strikes at a +3 (in addition to attribute and W.P. bonuses). However, when the Special Attack power is used, the range is equal to what the spell's range would be for the specified level of experience.
- Each confers a +2 to saving throws versus magic (each also possesses saving throws unique to that arrow separate from the +2 saving throw versus standard magic).
- When fired as an ordinary arrow, it will return to its owner (unless the Special Attack is used).
- If the Special Attack (see below) is used, the arrow does not have the power to return and drops to the ground. To everyone but its owner, however, it will appear as an ordinary, broken wooden arrow with no magical properties (unless the observer is specifically looking for the arrow, and then only if he or she makes a saving throw versus magic at 18). Others will completely ignore the arrow and dismiss it as useless garbage.
- The owner will always recognize any of the other rune arrows, even when they appear as damaged, spent arrows.
- The owner of an arrow will unconsciously be driven to locate the others, and will sense if one is near if within 100 feet (30.5 meters), but cannot tell the exact location.
- Each arrow represents one of the seven forces of life and nature: fire, earth, air, water, nature, life, and death. As such, each possesses unique powers inherent to its life force.

### Pyr, the Rune Arrow of Fire

**Appearance:** A slender, bright red, metal longbow arrow, extremely lightweight, feels warm to the touch.

**I.Q.:** 13

## Lithos, the Rune Arrow of Stone

**Appearance:** A dark gray longbow arrow that appears to be made of stone, though it is very light.

**I.Q.:** 10

### Unique Powers:

**Bonuses:** +5 saving throw vs earth and stone magic of any kind (do not add the original +2 saving throw versus magic to this).

**Special Attack:** Once per day, Lithos can transform into a 10<sup>th</sup> level Hail of Stones (see below for spell description) that strikes for 1D6x10 damage.

**Special Defense:** Once per day, the owner of Lithos can fire the arrow into the ground before him and create a 5<sup>th</sup> level Wall of Stone (this special wall can be made to appear in front of the owner or can rise beneath him so that he is standing on it to fire down at foes).

**Special Power:** Five times a day, Lithos can cast a 5<sup>th</sup> level Crumble Stone (does not need to be fired to do this).

**Alignment:** Principled.

**Personality:** Lithos has, as one would expect, a very stable personality. While the least bright of the seven arrows, he is the most likely to aid his master truthfully. He will give advice concerning matters of defense and honor. Lithos contains the trapped essence of a Major Earth Elemental.



### Unique Powers:

**Bonuses:** +5 saving throw vs fire magic of any kind (do not add the original +2 saving throw versus magic to this). Owner is impervious to normal fire, half damage from magical fire and dragon fire.

**Special Attack:** Once per day, Pyr can transform into a 10<sup>th</sup> level Fireball when fired (1D6x10).

**Special Defense:** Once per day, the owner of Pyr can fire the arrow into the ground before him and create a 5<sup>th</sup> level River of Lava.

**Special Power:** Five times a day, Pyr can cast Blinding Flash (does not need to be fired to do this).

**Alignment:** Anarchist.

**Personality:** Pyr is chaotic and will encourage her master to take chances and go on adventures with no regard for safety. Pyr contains the trapped essence of a Major Fire Elemental.

**Recent History:** Pyr's last owner was a human Ranger of some considerable skill who had the misfortune to encounter a down on his luck Thief. This Thief, not knowing how valuable his prize was, stole the Ranger's quiver of arrows and sold it before he had the chance to learn what he had truly acquired. The buyer was a blade sharpener in the village of Parp, a small town in the Timiro Kingdom. This man also never took the time to examine his purchases, as he dealt mainly in blades and not arrows. As such, he sold them off quickly before he had learned what he had bought for next to nothing (for not only was Pyr in the batch, but so was her brother, Lithos). The arrows, along with the normal arrows the Thief stole, were bought by a Wolfen spy from the north and it is unknown if this Wolfen even knows what she now carries.



**Recent History:** Lithos' recent history is the same as Pyr's in that they had been in the possession of the human Ranger be-



fore being stolen and unknowingly sold off. Presumably, this Ranger will be trying to find out who now has his two prized rune arrows.

## Atmos, the Rune Arrow of Air

**Appearance:** A slender, lightweight longbow arrow that appears to be made of crystal.

**I.Q.:** 17

### Unique Powers:

**Bonuses:** +5 saving throw vs air magic and any cloud or poisonous gas spells (do not add the original +2 saving throw versus magic to this). Owner takes only half damage from poisonous fumes if he or she does not save.

**Special Attack:** Once per day, Atmos can transform into a 10<sup>th</sup> level Wind Rush when fired.

**Special Defense:** Once per day, the owner of Atmos can fire the arrow into the ground before him and create a 5<sup>th</sup> level Whirlwind.

**Special Power:** Five times a day, Atmos can cast a 5<sup>th</sup> level Stop Wind (does not need to be fired to do this).

**Alignment:** Unprincipled.

**Personality:** Atmos has a slightly less chaotic personality than Pyr. While Pyr would encourage its owner to seek out adventure, Atmos will suggest that her owner sit back and allow the shifting winds of fate to guide their actions. Atmos contains the trapped essence of a Major Air Elemental.

**Recent History:** Atmos was last rumored to be in the possession of a pirate captain who sailed the western seas attacking ships of the Western Empire. However, it is rumored that this captain and his ship were destroyed (possibly by a Demon Black Ship). This could mean that Atmos is now lying at the bottom of the sea off the coast of the Empire of Sin or, worse, that it is now in the possession of a captain of a Demon Black Ship.

## Hydros, the Rune Arrow of Water

**Appearance:** A slender longbow arrow that appears to be made of blue ice, cold to the touch.

**I.Q.:** 15

### Unique Powers:

**Bonuses:** +5 saving throw vs water or cold magic of any kind (do not add the original +2 saving throw versus magic to this). Owner is impervious to normal cold, half damage from magical cold.

**Special Attack:** Once per day, Hydros can transform into a 10<sup>th</sup> level Water Rush (see below for spell description) when fired (basically like Wind Rush except it also causes 2D6 impact damage and leaves the target soaking wet – does 1D6x10 to vampires).

**Special Defense:** Once per day, the owner of Hydros can fire the arrow into the ground before him and create a 5<sup>th</sup> level Sheet of Ice.

**Special Power:** Five times a day, Hydros can cast a 5<sup>th</sup> level Breathe Underwater (does not need to be fired to do this).

**Alignment:** Aberrant.

**Personality:** Hydros has a ruthless, dark personality. Though he was once a more fluid individual (Anarchist with Miscreant tendencies), time has turned his personality to one of ice, cold and unyielding. Hydros will obey any master, but will only respect and actively help those who share his ruthless yet rigid vision (Aberrant). Hydros contains the trapped essence of a Major Water Elemental.

**Recent History:** Hydros is currently believed to be in the possession of a high ranking member of the Wolfen Imperial Army. Though it is not confirmed, there are rumors of a member of the Ice Eye clan who can fire a mystical arrow that can create ice and water. This has been used with great effectiveness in several Wolfen naval skirmishes.

## Natura, the Rune Arrow of Nature

**Appearance:** A slender longbow arrow that appears to be made entirely of wood, even the tip and feathers.

**I.Q.:** 20

### Unique Powers:

**Bonuses:** +5 saving throw vs Faerie magic of any kind (do not add the original +2 saving throw versus magic to this). Owner is least likely in a group to be the target of Faerie Folk pranks (does not apply to attacks from evil Faerie Folk).

**Special Attack:** Once per day, Natura can transform into a 10<sup>th</sup> level Tangle Vine (see below for spell description) when fired. (Does no damage, but entangles the target in living vines that will completely inhibit movement until others can help free him. Lasts 10 minutes.)

**Special Defense:** Once per day, the owner of Natura can fire the arrow into the ground before him and cast a 5<sup>th</sup> level Animate Plants.

**Special Power:** Five times a day, Natura can cast a 5<sup>th</sup> level Repel Animals (does not need to be fired to do this).

**Alignment:** Scrupulous.

**Personality:** Natura has a sad, soulful personality. She greatly wishes to be free but as she knows this is impossible, she will convey her feeling of sadness to whomever her owner is. However, if her owner is a Druid or Ranger who shares her love of the natural, she will overcome her melancholy and possibly befriend her new master. Natura contains the trapped essence of a very powerful Nymph (Faerie Folk).

**Recent History:** Natura's current whereabouts are not known. Little has been heard of this rune arrow since it was lost after the conclusion of the Elf-Dwarf War. It is rumored that she might be seeking solace in the town of Glade amongst the branches of the Tree of Life, but this is only unsubstantiated rumor and speculation based on what little known lore exists of Natura's nature.

## Byos, the Rune Arrow of Life

**Appearance:** Appears as a normal longbow arrow except that it radiates a warming white glow.

**I.Q.:** 18

### Unique Powers:

**Bonuses:** +5 saving throw vs magic cast by supernatural evil

(demons, Deevils, Alien Intelligences) of any kind (do not add the original +2 saving throw versus magic to this). Owner has a constant psionic ability of Sense Evil.

**Special Damage Note:** Byos does not inflict any damage whatsoever to mortal creatures or supernatural good beings (Faerie Folk, Millennium Trees, Spirits of Light). Even evil mortals cannot be harmed by this weapon. However, creatures of supernatural evil will suffer 1D6x10 damage when struck.

**Special Attack:** Once per day, Byos can be used to try to send a creature of supernatural evil back to its native dimension. The target creature must save vs magic (18 for Lesser and 12 for Greater) or be sent immediately back to its native realm.

**Special Defense:** Once per day, the owner of Byos can fire the arrow into the ground before him and create a 5<sup>th</sup> level Protection Circle (Superior; only lasts 50 minutes).

**Special Powers:** Byos possesses all of the Healing/Cleric abilities common to other some other greater rune weapons (see *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, page 250), plus the following two unique powers: Once per week, Byos can cast Restoration (cannot use any of its powers again for one week, other than its normal damage to supernatural evil). Once per year, Byos can attempt a Resurrection (45% chance of success), but afterwards it cannot be used for *anything(!)* for one full year, not even as an ordinary arrow against supernatural evil.

**Alignment:** Principled.

**Personality:** Byos is the most noble of all of the Arrows of Ith'arian. His personality is strong, uplifting, helpful, and wise (second smartest of the arrows). Byos contains the trapped essence of a very powerful Seraph Lord (Spirit of Light). Byos and Mort are the most powerful of the seven rune arrows.

**Recent History:** Like Natura, little is known of Byos' fate following the Elf-Dwarf War. The most recent rumor is that a Great Demon Lord (perhaps Modeus himself) is in possession of this miraculous tool of healing. While it cannot help him (in fact to touch it inflicts 1D6x10 damage to creatures of supernatural evil), whatever Demon Lord possesses it is most likely keeping it to prevent its falling into the hands of a champion of good.

## Mort, the Rune Arrow of Death

**Appearance:** A slender, jet black arrow (even the runes are jet black and nearly impossible to discern).

**LQ.:** 17

**Unique Powers:**

**Bonuses:** +5 saving throw vs magic cast by supernatural good (Spirits of Light, Millennium Trees, good Faerie Folk) of any kind (do not add the original +2 saving throw versus magic to this). Owner has a constant psionic Sense Good ability (basically identical to Sense Evil, except focused on supernatural good and thoughts of good intentions).

**Special Damage Note:** Mort inflicts critical damage every time it strikes (4D6x2). If attacking from behind, the arrow inflicts x3 damage (these are part of the arrow's normal attacks).

**Special Attack:** Once per day, Mort can cast a 10<sup>th</sup> level Death spell (1D6x10 direct to Hit Points unless a saving throw versus magic is made). Appears as a shaft of coherent black energy when fired in this manner.

**Special Defense:** Once per day, the owner of Mort can fire the arrow into the ground before him and create a 5<sup>th</sup> level Wall of the Damned (see below for spell description). Basically, this is a wall of blackness that emanates a Horror Factor of 15. Anyone stepping into the wall takes 5D6 of numbing damage and must save versus magic (14 or higher) or be sucked into a hellish pocket dimension for the duration of the spell (5 minutes). Once released from the dimension, the person is non-responsive for another 1D6 minutes as they relive the nameless horrors they witnessed (roll random insanity).

**Special Power:** Five times a day, Mort can cast Fear at 5<sup>th</sup> level. Once per week, the owner of Mort can fire the arrow into the ground before him and summon one random Lesser Demon from Hades. The typical battle of wills is required and, if the owner of the arrow succeeds, the demon will stay for 1 hour before departing. If the owner fails, the demon will react as it would if it had been summoned by a summoning circle (Mort cannot use any of its powers again for one week, other than its normal critical damage). Once per year, Mort can be used to perform one perfect kill shot. It automatically hits and if the victim does not save versus magic (14 or higher), it instantly kills and absorbs the person's soul. This attack will affect any target (including dragons) except Demon Lords, Deevil Lords, Alien Intelligences (though it will affect their avatars and familiars), Millennium Trees, and gods. Those who save still suffer quadruple damage (this may still kill them, but does not strip the soul). Whether successful or not, Mort cannot be used for *anything(!)* for one full year, not even as an ordinary arrow.

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Personality:** Mort is pure evil. Unless his owner is of a like mind, Mort will constantly try to seduce and pervert the intentions of his master until he or she succumbs to evil impulses. Mort contains the essence of a little known Greater Demon, a Satash. These demons, whose exact numbers are so few and secret that even the Demon Lords of Hades do not know how many there are, are summoned or called upon by those who need a quick, lethal assassination. They are also known as the Assassin Demons (stats are provided below). Mort and Byos are the two most powerful of the seven rune arrows.

**Recent History:** Exactly why Mort was made is unknown. Some speculate that it was made as a secret weapon by the Dwarf Rune Master to eventually pervert the Elves who had commissioned the arrows' creation. This arrow is rumored to now be in the possession of a Master Assassin of the Thanatos Assassins' Guild in the Eastern Territory.

## Associated Spells

What follows are some of the rare spells used by the Arrows of Ith'arian. Most were lost during the Millennium of Purification following the Elf-Dwarf War, but may still be discovered in



lost archives, surviving caches of manuscripts and scrolls from the lost "seed" libraries that fled the Zealotry that sought to destroy the Prime Incunabula. Of course, all manner of lost magic may be discovered still in practice in the Land of the Damned. Those spells that are elemental in nature may also be selected by a Warlock or Druid at the appropriate level of experience (at the Game Master's discretion).

## Hail of Stones

**Level five Wizard spell, level three Earth Warlock spell.**

**Range:** 60 feet +5 feet per level of experience (18.3 meters, +1.5 meters per level).

**Duration:** Instant.

**Damage:** 1D6 per level of experience.

**Saving Throw:** Dodge, but the intended victim must know the attack is coming and must roll an 18 or higher (dodge bonuses are applicable).

**P.P.E.:** Ten

By hurling a small handful of pebbles at the intended target, the Warlock can transform them into a barrage of larger cobblestone-sized missiles. Though several (1D6) stones will appear, they can only be used against a single target (a volley attack). The entire attack either hits or misses. After the stones strike their target, they return to ordinary pebbles once more.

## Water Rush

**Level seven Wizard spell, level three Water Warlock spell.**

**Range:** 40 feet (12.2 meters).

**Duration:** One melee round (15 seconds).

**Damage:** 2D6 plus knock down (see below).

**Saving Throw:** Dodge, but the intended victim must know the attack is coming and must roll an 18 or higher (dodge bonuses are applicable). A failed dodge means the target is caught with the full force of the water jet, is knocked off his feet and sent tumbling 1D6x10 yards/meters away, dropping 1D6 of his belongings.

**P.P.E.:** 20 for Wizards, 10 for Water Warlocks.

This spell causes a short but very powerful jet of water (equal to the force of a fire hose at close range) to gush from the Warlock's hands. It is capable of knocking people down, soaking them thoroughly, knocking riders from their mounts, and knocking small objects up to 100 feet (30.5 meters) away.

The Warlock can direct the jet of water at a single target or sweep it across an area for the spell's duration (one melee round, maximum arc of 20 feet/6 meters). Every character caught in the water's path must either attempt to dodge or be struck by the blast of water.

Vampires and Fire Elementals take 1D6x10 damage from the blast. Water Elementals are, obviously, impervious to its effects.

## Tangle Vine

**Level eight Wizard spell, level five Earth Warlock spell, level three Druid spell.**

**Range:** 30 feet (9.1 meters).

**Duration:** One minute per level of experience.

**Saving Throw:** Dodge, but the intended victim must know the attack is coming and must roll an 18 or higher (dodge bonuses are applicable).

**P.P.E.:** 30 for Wizards, 15 for Earth Warlocks, 10 for Druids.

When casting this spell, the mage hurls a small clump of vine at his intended target. The vine enlarges to become a mass of thick, writhing tendrils that are capable of ensnaring one target (up to Giant sized). While no physical damage is inflicted, the victim of the spell is completely wrapped in the constricting vines, becoming incapable of movement. Arms and legs are entangled, causing the target to fall over and preventing him from struggling. There is also a chance (50%) that the vines will cover the mouth, preventing any coherent speech. Only characters with a P.S. of 45 or more can break free without aid (takes 1D6 melee rounds of effort). All others are either trapped for the spell's duration or must be freed by their companions. This requires 2D4 melee rounds of effort to pull the vines loose (chopping at them would take half as much time, but will inflict half of the damage caused to the trapped character). When the spell's duration elapses, the mass of vines dries and becomes brittle, crumbling easily from the target.

## Wall of the Damned

**Level ten Wizard spell (can also be learned by a Necromancer O.C.C.).**

**Range:** Covers a 10 foot (3 meter) area plus 10 feet per level of experience. Can be cast up to 30 feet (9.1 meters) away.

**Duration:** One minute per level of experience.

**Damage:** 5D6

**Saving Throw:** Horror Factor (H.F.) of 15 to view the wall plus standard saving throw versus magic for those attempting to pass through. Victims attempting to cross through the wall must make a saving throw versus magic twice, once to avoid taking the 5D6 S.D.C. of numbing damage and again to avoid being sucked into a hellish pocket dimension.

**P.P.E.:** 150 for Wizards, 75 for Necromancers.

This spell creates a two-dimensional wall of impenetrable darkness. At first, one might mistake it for a Wall of Darkness spell as light cannot pass through the wall. However, the effects are far more sinister. First, the wall emanates a Horror Factor of 15. Those who fail their H.F. roll will be unwilling to attempt passing through the black wall. Anyone attempting to cross the barrier must then make two saving throws versus magic. The first is to resist the numbing damage (5D6). While this is perceived as a bone chilling cold, beings resistant to cold-based magic will still suffer the full effects if they fail their save.

The second saving throw is to see if the victim is pulled into a hellish pocket dimension. While in this dimension, the player cannot be detected by any means, mystical or psionic. Victims pulled in will find themselves in a swirling void filled with grotesque, demonic creatures. While none of these entities can actually harm the victim, the trauma is so intense that it can possibly drive one to madness. Although the victim is only trapped for the duration of the spell, being released the instant the spell's duration elapses, from the point of view of the person it will seem as if time stood still while trapped in the void. Even after

being released, the character will remain unresponsive for 1D6 minutes as he relives the horrors he witnessed. Players must roll a saving throw versus insanity or develop a random insanity as a result of the horrifying experience.

It is possible that this spell may appear in the Book of Bygone Spirits or, less likely, Mystic Bulwarks, both available in the Special Collections section of the Great Library of Bletherad.

## Associated Creatures

Of the seven Entities entrapped in the Arrows of Ith'arian, one is a seldom encountered Greater Demon unknown to all but the greatest of Lore Masters (high level Scholar O.C.C.) and highly experienced Summoners.

## Satesh

(Warning to Game Masters: This Greater Demon is very rare and quite powerful. Its inclusion in a campaign should not be done lightly.)

The Satesh, also known as the Assassin Demon, is a class of Greater Demons that serve no particular Demon Lord. Though their numbers may have once been larger, now it is believed that fewer than one hundred of these demons exist in Hades. Those few scholars who know of their existence have speculated that the majority of these demons were wiped out in a near genocidal war with the Spirits of Light known as the Seraph. Credence to this theory is given by the fact that a Satesh will never confront or even try to assassinate a Seraph. Today, their existence is a closely guarded secret amongst the ruling Demon Lords, who use them as master assassins against the Deevils and other powerful beings. They appear as slender, muscular humanoids with featureless skin that seems to adapt to their surroundings (like the Chameleon spell). Though they have small eyes, an almost flat nose, a thin mouth, and small ears that lay flat against their skulls, these features are almost impossible to distinguish, giving them the appearance of having no faces, only skin stretched smooth where a face should be. While they are highly skill assassins, proficient in a multitude of silent weapons and killing techniques, they do not fight in open combat. Like a true assassin, a Satesh will never attack its intended victim if he or she is not alone. If their prey is in the company of others or puts up a tough fight, the demon assassin will retreat and await another opportunity or try to separate its victim from his companions without directly fighting the companions. The best defense against these creatures is to make sure one is never alone. To be targeted by one of these extremely rare demons is essentially to receive a death sentence. Fortunately, a Satesh cannot form the psychic link needed to track its quarry unless the Summoner knows the intended victim's true name or has some personal possession to forge the link with.

**Alignments:** Aberrant (75%), Miscreant (20%), or Diabolic (5%).

**Attributes:** I.Q. 2D6+10, M.A. 3D6+8, M.E. 3D6, P.S. 2D6+10 (minimum 26), P.P. 4D6+10 (minimum 24), P.E. 2D6+10, P.B. 2D6, Spd. running 5D6+30.





**Size:** 7 feet tall (2.1 meters), 200 pounds (90 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 10

**Hit Points:** P.E. +1D6x10

**S.D.C.:** 4D6+30

**Average P.P.E.:** 2D4x10

**Horror Factor:** 13 (for those who actually know what they are facing, H.F. is 16).

**Equivalent O.C.C. Skills:** Climb/Scale Walls (+30%), Concealment (+20%), Detect Concealment/Traps (+20%), Pick Locks (+40%), Prowl (+50%), Use and Recognize Poison (+30%), Track Humanoids (+40%), Intelligence (+10%), Camouflage (+30%), Surveillance (+20%), W.P. Knife, W.P. Mouth Guns/Blowguns, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Targeting.

**Average Level of Experience:** 1D4+3 (use experience point table for Assassin O.C.C.).

**Natural Abilities:** Night vision (500 feet/152 meters), excellent day vision, see the invisible, excellent hearing, supernatural quickness and reflexes, bio-regenerate 6D6 per melee round, can regenerate lost limbs every 24 hours, dimensional teleport (35%), leap 60 feet (18.3 meters) from a dead stop, leap 120 feet (37 meters) from a running start. Magically understands all languages but never speaks except to the being that summoned it, never tires, does not need to eat or sleep, natural chameleon (same effect as the Chameleon spell except constant at no cost to P.P.E.).

**Combat:** 5 attacks per melee round.

**Damage:** Claws do 2D6 + P.S. bonus. Kick does 4D6 + P.S. bonus. However, most Satesh prefer to use small, silent weapons (throwing knives, daggers, stilettos, garrotes).

**Bonuses:** +5 on initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to parry, +3 to dodge, +5 to roll with the punch, +2 to save versus magic, +6 to save

versus psionics, +6 to save versus Horror Factor. These are in addition to bonuses from attributes or skills.

**Magic:** None, though they will often acquire magic items intended to aid in assassination and stealth.

**Psionics:** None, other than a limited form of Empathy that allows the demon to savor the terror of its victim when it closes for the kill, and an innate ability to track their designated quarry no matter where they may be, even in another dimension (a 100% accurate Presence Sense with an unlimited range, but it is attuned to only one being: the demon's victim. Only spells such as Sanctum, Time Hole, Sanctuary, or similar magic, as well as the psionic Mind Block, can prevent this detection).

**Note:** A Satesh will absolutely never give up until either it is slain, its Summoner is slain, or its quarry is killed. Even expelling or exorcising the demon back to Hades will only delay the assassination as the demon will still be linked to the target. A Satesh will never attack anyone apart from its intended victim, and will not even attack its victim if there is anyone else about. This does not mean, however, that it will not enlist the aid of other evil creatures in an effort to separate its quarry from his companions. Though Satesh demons have access to a wide variety of extremely lethal poisons that will affect almost any creature in existence (including supernatural creatures and dragons), all of which must be injected into the bloodstream of its victim, they will never use ingested poisons. (A Satesh will never reveal the nature of its more powerful supernatural poisons, even to its Summoner or Demon Lords.) These demons prefer to directly face their victims when they kill. Therefore, they will never poison food or set traps intended to kill, as this would deprive them of the satisfaction of seeing their victim's face when they kill.





# The Geofront

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Inspired by concepts and artwork by Mark Dudley and  
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**Note:** Space limitations prevented us from including the more fully fleshed out history of the Geofront worked up by Todd Yoho for publication in *Rifts® China 2*, so we thought it would be nice to present it here, in the pages of *The Rifter®* (and possibly online as well), for all to enjoy. As such, this is *Official Source Material* for the *Rifts® China 2* setting. We hope you enjoy it.

## A closer look at the origin, history, people and culture of Geofront

As predicted the century before, China experienced an economic boom early in the 21st Century. Thanks to an educated and abundant work force, plentiful natural resources and a national and cultural drive to succeed, it was no surprise that the Chinese economy grew to rival those of Japan and the Western nations. Because of this unprecedented influx of wealth, the Chinese government invested untold billions of dollars' worth of capital into research and development, looking toward the eventual day when they would not only equal the economic and military power of the West, but surpass them. Not wanting to be caught unaware by the American Empire or the Japanese, they not only invested in conventional military forces, but also in a wide range of high-tech, experimental fields of study such as miniaturization, bionics, M.O.M. (Crazies) technology and other types of augmentation, particularly in the areas of brain implants, cybernetics and robotics. These were public projects intended not only to develop new technologies, but to also

showcase to the rest of the world China's potential as a technological powerhouse. This attitude and the success of many of these high profile projects gave the Chinese a hand in bringing about the New Cold War that brought a halt to the Golden Age of Technology. Every success brought more attention on them, raising the stakes for the other world governments and industrial powers to keep pace.

Despite all of their public successes, their greatest achievement was carried out in secret. It was a massive joint project between the PRC People's Liberation Army and the China Aerospace community. Their secret project, *the Geofront*, a self-sustaining, modern underground megalopolis. If successful, **The Geofront Project** would not only help the Chinese secure an impressive, ultra-modern high-tech city filled with the most brilliant and promising minds in the military and science, but serve as the foundation for China establishing itself as the leading power in space exploration and habitation.

The concept of the Geofront Project was not new by any standard, but nobody had ever taken the concept this far: To build a completely contained, self-sufficient community and eco-system underground (and the blueprint for massive city complexes on distant moons and planets). Even as a terrestrial endeavor, nothing involving geothermal energy and subterranean habitation had ever come close to this massive scale. There had been serious geological studies done by the Japanese in the 20th Century, including the establishment of research committees at large universities across the globe. However, outside of these universities, concepts and designs were usually relegated to the realm of science fiction because of the immense cost, effort and new technologies that would be required to make even a small Geofront-style environment feasible. A Geofront was often talked about in the same context as a Dyson Sphere or faster than light travel. Yet, despite the challenge that the Geofront Project presented, the Chinese government was determined to make it happen. As the 21<sup>st</sup> century progressed, and modern medicine was extending human life expectancy to the unheard of age of 200 or more, China's problem with overpopulation was only going to get worse. Population was both a blessing and a curse. They had a vast labor force and the largest conscript army in the world, but they still had to feed, clothe and house everyone. The answer, some believed, was the Geofront Project. If successful, it could give the Chinese almost unlimited living space *beneath* the surface of the Earth, but the techniques and technology could also be taken *off planet* to colonize other worlds.

While other nations were cooperating with one another during the space boom of the 21st Century, China opted not to participate. Despite numerous opportunities to collaborate in the many space station projects, and much to the dismay of Russia, the Chinese further opted out of the multinational Moon Colony being established under the direction of the American *Cyberworks Aerospace Network (CAN)*. (See the **Mutants in Orbit™** sourcebook for details on Rifts era space stations, moon base and Mars base.) If the Chinese were going to take to the stars, they were going to do it on their own terms, with their own money and their own technology. Besides that, while the Western nations and other Asian nations were looking at Earth orbit and the near space of the moon and Mars, the Chinese had loftier goals. The Geofront would make efforts such as the CAN



Moon Colony and the orbital stations look crude by comparison. While the rest of the world was developing ways to explore the outer planets, the Chinese were developing a way to live there on a permanent basis.

“The plan” for the Geofront was to develop not just a simple colony or military base, but a full-fledged city – a modern, self-sufficient entity with a fully functioning, sustained eco-system. This called for enormous leaps in science, technology and even social programming.

It takes a special kind of person to work underground for any length of time, much less live there. While the concepts and applications are similar to a space station, and can serve as a starting point, the Geofront is a quantum leap beyond anything developed by any global space programs. The China Aerospace Company assembled teams of scientists culled from the best minds in geology, hydrology, botany, civil engineering, structural physics, underground mining, electrical power production, psychology, and sociology throughout the nation and from around the world, to work on the project. Meanwhile, the People’s Liberation Army participated, using its best and brightest, to establish a military “presence” to protect the Geofront, for they believe a military defense force would be a vital part of any potential space colony. This included military strategists, tacticians, engineers and specialists armed with the most advanced weapons and equipment, as well as counter-espionage experts,

and other highly trained and motivated military minds and personnel. This was no conscript garrison, either. They were the best of the professional soldiers and military minds China could put in the field. With these resources and backed by almost unlimited funds, the Geofront seemed destined to succeed, although it was still a massive undertaking.

### Some of the Challenges

Aside from the staggering costs to develop the first Geofront, there were certain physical challenges that had to be overcome by the research and construction teams, limiting where the project could be built. Whether through cracks in the bedrock or the permeability of rocks allowing water to seep through them, drainage is an ever-present danger when building underground. Most conventional underground structures use a combination of sealants and pumps to collect, remove and re-channel most water, however the Geofront was too massive a project to only rely on these traditional methods. There is also the problem of air filtration and circulation to ensure fresh, breathable air for the inhabitants while expelling noxious gases such as carbon dioxide, and naturally occurring flammable gases like methane. Failure to do so effectively could spell catastrophe for an underground community. In addition, the physical properties of rock have to be overcome. These include, but are not limited to, subterranean rock deformations, the stress of excavation, known and un-



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known fault lines, fissures, and micro-fractures in the bedrock, each of which presents its own unique challenges.

All of those obstacles are just to make an underground space ready for construction to *begin*. Then there are the issues of sustaining the population: Food production and distribution, waste disposal, temperature and energy controls, acquiring necessary raw materials, and developing a recycling system to name just a few. One major obstacle is keeping the Geofront warm. Anyone who has ever been in a cave or mine will know that it is cold, and often damp, year round underground. In order to live comfortably, in addition to the air handling system to provide breathable air, a heating system must be installed that is capable of constantly warming millions of cubic feet of air per hour. Once these challenges are overcome, the solutions have to be sustainable and repairable in a very short amount of time with only what is on hand. Remember that the Geofront was supposed to be self-sustaining and not reliant on raw materials, food, spare parts and other supplies shipped in from the surface.

On top of all of that, the project would need a clean, reliable power source that would pose minimal danger to the inhabitants in the event of an accident or emergency. Space stations have the benefit of solar power, something impossible for a self-sufficient subterranean community. Conventional fossil fuels would foul the air and pollute the environment, and any exhaust system put into place would reveal its concealed location, as well as be vulnerable to sabotage and environmental conditions on the surface, among other problems. While powerful and popular, nuclear generators could irradiate and kill the enclosed population in a single mishap. Something new and innovative would have to be developed. And even with all of the physical obstacles to overcome, that doesn't begin to cover the social and psychological pressures placed on the inhabitants. Living underground for an extended period of time places significant stress on the human mind. It means being cut off from the sun, the moon and the stars, not knowing the passing of seasons, and can result in a wholesale detachment from things that we take for granted. Some liken living underground to being aboard a space station, but that's not entirely true. Space stations still have windows that afford a view of the stars and of the planet Earth. The Geofront was to be entombed in rock in all directions. This can result in an increase of depression, claustrophobia, paranoia and other forms of mental illness that may result in isolation and sunlight deprivation. For the Chinese, a people with close spiritual ties to nature, this can be all the more disturbing. Fortunately, the project behavioralists and Feng Shui experts took these problems into account along with the more obvious physical challenges to create a pleasing environment with large, open courtyards, fountains, and even parks, vegetation and simulated night and day cycles.

## The Solutions

Luckily, the Chinese had centuries of experience in deep deposit coal mining to draw upon when the Geofront Project was started. Despite micro-nuclear reactors becoming the standard for power supply, China was still the world's leader in coal production. Used in refineries, forges and steel mills, coal was being extracted from Chinese coal mines and shipped around the world. However, the government was not known for its enforcement of safety laws, and China remained the leader in mining

related deaths and accidents well into the 22nd Century. Even with advancements in robotics, bionics, cybernetics and other technologies, the Chinese still had a huge population surplus willing to work relatively cheaply in hazardous conditions. This kept the mine operators (and the government) from adopting stronger safety measures. When it came to the Geofront Project, however, they took their centuries of experience and knowledge to create the best possible mining and subterranean engineering environment.

Vast condensation collectors, air handling units and heaters were developed to bring the climate into tolerable levels for habitation. Hydroponic methods were developed not only to help purify the air and produce oxygen, but also to grow food and to create pleasant gardens and greenhouse parks. In addition to traditional mining and excavating techniques, new ones were developed using powerful adhesives and ceramic coatings to seal and strengthen rock walls. This not only helped keep water out, but it also brought natural defects in the rock within tolerance limits. Through advances in chemistry and materials science, new methods of creating Mega-Damage Capacity technology were developed, enabling the Geofront to stay self-sufficient. These advances in materials science were useful to the civil engineers as they were planning the first structures to be built for the Geofront. From the design stage, the Geofront was going to be as ultra-modern as possible.

As concept and design neared completion, one aspect of the project was lagging, electrical power production. Early on, the engineers knew that existing power supplies weren't going to be sufficient. A common proposed power source was the creation of a geothermal power plant. Geothermal power works by tapping into volcanic heat beneath the surface to create steam to spin a turbine, thus creating electricity. Aside from the potential for noxious gases and harmful minerals that can sometimes filter up through the shafts, geothermal power is clean, reliable, totally renewable and the power plant itself doesn't require a lot of space. During the 20th century, geothermal power was a viable source of power to a few select locations around the planet, usually located near areas of volcanic activity. By the 21st century, with advances in drilling, the application of Mega-Damage materials, and a massively funded project like the Geofront, it was the perfect solution. After years of development, the project was ready to go into the construction stage. All they needed was to select a suitable location.

## The Location

Finding a suitable location for such a large, yet secret project was no mean feat. The scientists knew that they would need a vast, existing cavern complex to experiment with in the early days of the project, but with enough room for expansion once the early stages were complete. After an intensive search, the China Aerospace Company and the PLA settled on the Longgong caverns near Anshun, in the Guizhou Province. Longgong means "Dragon's Palace," and it was a popular tourist attraction during the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. It was known for its spectacular rushing waterfall at the mouth of the cave named Longmen, the "Dragon Gate," and the massive underground river that ran through it. The Longgong Caverns were enormous, stretching miles beneath the earth. It was estimated that only 5% of them had been explored at the turn of the 21st



Century. This incredible amount of space, the structure of the limestone rock, and the underground river for use with the geothermal power plant, made it perfect for the Geofront Project.

In an act of eminent domain, the Chinese government closed the caverns to the public, citing serious structural problems with the rock strata making them unsafe for public view, brought the army and the earth moving equipment in, and began the excavations on the very first Geofront cavern.

## Early Successes

Starting small, The Geofront Project used the existing caverns to test their new theories and inventions. The beautiful Dragon Palace Gallery was outfitted with the first operational geothermal power plant, while many of the smaller caves acted as *test sites* for special reinforcing bolts, ceramic sprays and reinforcement adhesives. The construction crews gained experience in working underground, building miniature structures such as laboratories, recycling plants and living quarters for the scientists who were spending more and more time below ground. Eventually, they abandoned their surface base camp altogether for an underground base camp.

By taking advantage of the existing space, the Geofront scientists could check their results against previous geological studies taken since the caverns were first studied in the early 20th century. It made for fantastic controlled and experimental environments that paid huge dividends in the long run. Eventually, they began to excavate tunnels between the various caverns, linking them together, and started branching out into newly discovered ones.

As new excavations began and the scientists abandoned the older caverns in favor of larger ones deeper underground, the PLA moved their garrison force into the now outfitted underground structures. These were temporary outposts until the ultra-modern military compound could be finished (it was first on the agenda, with the actual city to follow). The Geofront Project was quickly taking shape as a cooperative work environment between the scientific community and the military.

## An Establishment of Normalcy

As the 21st Century was coming to a close, the military compound and the civilian city of the Geofront Project had been up and running with amazing results for a few years. There was considerable pressure from the PLA and certain members of the government to go public with their wondrous accomplishment. By 2095, the Geofront had evolved from a series of near-surface inter-linked bunkers to a complex as large as a small city, but located hundreds of feet beneath the earth. The military had moved into its permanent base within the city itself, leaving only a meager checkpoint at the surface. The Geofront Project had gone from 20th Century science fiction to 22nd Century life as a unique scientific community. However, in the meanwhile, the early propaganda wars of scientific advancement had begun to ebb, and the American companies *Cyberworks Industries* and *KLS Aerospace* were rising stars in the world scientific community. In fact, KLS and Cyberworks began their own media blitz, touting their significant achievements in aerospace design, with more spectacular things yet to come. China was fast becoming

yesterday's news. It suddenly became an issue of national pride to show up the Americans. While the rest of the world had established space stations, moon colonies, and the promise of more, China's most wonderful scientific achievement was buried, literally.

The military and scientific community was adamant about maintaining secrecy. What they had created was indeed something to be proud of, but it would also make China a target for increased surveillance, espionage and possibly, preemptive war. The New Cold War was in full swing, and the climate of fear was intensifying. Military leaders and Geofront scientists argued that it was better to let the Westerners boast about themselves, when the real advances were being made in China. The scientists called for patience, and in the end, reason (and paranoia) won out over pride.

## The Great Cataclysm

No one was prepared for the mass destruction that the Coming of the Rifts unleashed across the globe. No place was untouched. Little did the survivors know that the world was being reshaped, transformed into something different, alien and mystical. In the end, at least 80% of the global population would be wiped from the face of the Earth. Large population centers, like China, seemed to fare the worst, and with this being a planet-wide catastrophe, there was no outside help available to weather the storm. A storm that would span decades and whittle away at the small number of survivors till humankind teetered on the edge of extinction.

As the Great Cataclysm raged across the surface, the Geofront was, comparatively, nestled safely beneath the earth. They weren't completely spared from the carnage of the Great Cataclysm, but they suffered only minor damage and minimal loss of life (less than 3% casualties). The extraordinary technologies they developed to build the city held fast, and the equipment they installed to control ground water seepage, flooding and tectonic activity, worked well beyond the designers' expectations. In effect, the Great Cataclysm proved to be a spectacular, if horrific, final vindication for the past decades of hard work and sacrifice that built Geofront. However, while the deeper complex survived, the upper caverns, such as the *Dragon's Palace*, were destroyed, including the lone military checkpoint, sealing the Geofront inside. As if that wasn't bad enough, all lines of communication vanished. The city, complete with the military compound, survived intact, but they were trapped beneath a collapsed mountain with no way of contacting the surface world or even knowing what was transpiring above them. Just as the orbital communities were isolated from Earth by the vastness of space, the Geofront was isolated from the surface by trillions of tons of rock.

They didn't know what was happening and had no way of finding out. Fearing the worst, they did the only thing they could do, repair and rebuild damaged Geofront infrastructure, establish military order, and lay plans to dig a tunnel back to the surface. They also stepped up their explorations deeper into the caverns in search for another way out.

Being totally self-sufficient, the reconstruction process took very little time, and soon all resources were devoted to trying to clear the collapsed tunnels leading to Longmen and the main en-



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trance to the Longgong caverns. Unfortunately, damage unleashed by the Great Cataclysm had completely collapsed the old tunnel structure. In some places, it appeared that the rocks had been melted and recrystallized, leading many to believe that the surface had been hit by one or more direct nuclear blasts. Digging out through solid rock would take years, if it was even possible at all. At the time, this realization convinced the leaders of Geofront to halt their excavations and concentrate on finding another way out through the deeper caverns. The exploration teams did eventually find other, smaller tunnels and caverns that would lead to the surface, but they also found something wonderful deep underground.

## The Post-Apocalypse

It seems the Longgong caverns connected to the *Yin Caverns* of Chinese mythology. Magical caves of darkness and evil purported to go on forever beneath all of China. It is entirely *possible* that these gigantic caverns existed prior to the Coming of the Rifts, for barely 5% of this underworld had been explored, but it seems more likely that the return of magic and the geological changes brought about by the Great Cataclysm opened multi-dimension portals long forgotten, to a much larger, underground dimension that is the real Yin Caverns, and might well go on for infinity. This theory is reinforced by the fact that in the nearly 300 years since the Great Cataclysm, the Geofront has never reached the surface of an alien world, nor have they found an end point to the Caverns. Furthermore, Geofront explorers have discovered caverns that house alien ecologies which are sometimes home to strange monsters, demons and other life forms, as well as dimensional anomalies.

Over time, the Geofront explorers did find an alternate route to the surface, but by that time a generation had passed and the surface transformed. Of the scouts who returned from reconnaissance missions on the surface (many never returned), they reported strange tales of demons, dragons, ancient gods, alien beings, transfigured landscapes, chaos, death and disease. It was as if the end times had come. Spirits and ghosts walked among the living, the modern world seemed to have been obliterated and replaced by alien life forms or lands transfigured into something inhuman. "It's as if the Hells have been visited upon the Earth," reported one scout. When multiple reports confirmed the world they had once know was not only *gone*, but replaced by the alien, monstrous and impossible, Geofront leaders decided to abandon the surface world for the time being, consolidate their power and work toward gathering much more information about China and the other nations of the globe. Surely, some part of the world must have survived unchanged . . . or so they prayed.

As the years passed, and Geofront gathered more data and information about the conditions on the surface, the people of the underground nation began to realize that they might very well be the last remnants of the old world. They were fortunate to have survived and to live in such comfortable, hidden surroundings, but they suddenly felt like aliens on their own world. Aliens out of step with the times and lost in a world they didn't recognize or understand. Considering how much trouble it took

them to reach the surface, it would be much harder for anyone on the surface to discover them in the caves. Not only that, but they had food, water, manufacturing capabilities, geothermal energy, entertainment, and most amenities. Aside from contact with the outside world, very little in their lives had changed. Thus, they pulled away from the outside world, content to live out their lives, isolated from the death and destruction on the surface. Seeing as how they had seemingly unlimited space beneath them to build, they looked toward expanding and protecting their little underground kingdom. As generations passed, Geofront expanded into the massive city-sized caverns, with descendants taking up where their ancestors left off, prospering, growing and continuing to gather information about the surface world. A modern utopia began to flourish deep within the bowels of the earth, beneath the hellish realm lorded over by the Yama Kings.

Eventually, the Geofront grew larger than the pre-Rifts city of Hong Kong. As the years progressed, the surface scouts began to bring back carefully selected groups of people they had met and had learned to trust. These were people who could contribute to the good of the whole and would be valued additions to the citizenry of the Geofront. In time, this began to include some D-Bees as well. The people of Geofront were less concerned with race or species than with attitude and aptitude. The Geofront was soon a veritable Noah's Ark, rivaling Hong Kong not just in size, but also diversity. As the Geofront leadership became confident in their power base, and convinced through generations of surface intelligence gathering that they were the predominant and perhaps only human power in the region, it was up to them to launch the movement to take back their ancestral lands on the surface.

After having lived in secrecy for centuries, such habits are hard to break. The Geofront again showed great patience in their early activities on the surface. They began by inserting lone agents into the local village populations to continue to gather intelligence and lay the groundwork for spy rings, informants, communication routes, safe houses and future bases of operation. From the very beginning these Geofront agents enacted a plan to act as though they were part of many different groups and organizations so as to help conceal the sole identity of the Geofront. In this way, it directed the attention of the Yama Kings and other monsters and warlords against numerous bogus human factions rather than a single, unified human front. The development of "Demon Skin Armor" has even allowed them to impersonate demons and monstrous D-Bees.

Over time they have moved from laying such groundwork to taking active measures against the Yama Kings and their power base. The Geofront has worked to free slaves, rescue people under the domination of demons, and generally cause demon lords, tyrant lords, slavers and the Yama Kings trouble. In recent years, there has been a ground swell among the military and the citizens of Geofront, to ratchet up their activities and take a more active and direct role by attacking and freeing entire towns and regions, even if only temporarily, from demonic overlords. They feel the time is finally right to start taking back parts of the surface world.

## The Geofront: 109 P.A.





The Geofront has been forced to suffer 300+ years of relative isolation and are now ready to shed that isolation to become part of the world again. They have a real spirit of community, not only because it's in their best interest, but also because that's the kind of people it would have taken to originally populate the city during the end of the Golden Age. They love and appreciate their underground *home*, but are also bursting at the seams to feel the sun on their face and experience life on the surface.

Though at least 35% have had limited military experience on the surface, and all the inhabitants of Geofront know about the return of magic, the invasion of the demon hordes, and the Yama Kings and the Hells on Earth, they are still excited about returning to the surface. Not just to claim their rightful place in the world, but to liberate China from the demons and monsters that dominate the country. The people of Geofront are not only deeply patriotic but extremely idealistic, and believe it is their destiny to reclaim China for humankind and other mortals, such as some of the D-Bee races they have come to befriend. Unlike other cultures, the modern Chinese people held on to their beliefs in the mystical, spiritual and demonic, so while the presence and power of demonic beings, dragons and spirits in Rifts China seems amazing and a little frightening, at the same time it seems familiar and reasonable.

Culturally, the people of Geofront are a living, breathing relic of the Golden Age. They are even more advanced than Triax, with some technology on par with the pre-Rifts cities that Rifted into Japan a few years ago. That means all the citizens of Geofront are highly educated and completely conversant and comfortable with advanced technology. Bionics and other cybernetics, M.O.M. Conversion and Crazies (or their more controlled versions of them), computers, electronics, and energy weapons and tools are all everyday items to them. Furthermore, since so many have a background in science, engineering and education, they are open to new ideas and new technology as well as martial arts mysticism and magic. They may have been living in isolation for the past 300 years, but they are unprecedented bearers of knowledge and technology descended from the best that pre-Rifts China (circa 2098 A.D.) had to offer.

Because they are operating under very strict secrecy laws, and they are based on a utopian communist system, identification papers/badges are extremely important. Individual identity isn't so stressed much as the importance of belonging to the greater whole. Children are taught from when they can walk to keep their ID with them at ALL times. This is extremely important in a world filled with magic, psionics and creatures that can shape change! They are, in effect, living in a polite and clean police state, but it's still a police state nonetheless. Paranoia isn't necessarily a bad thing, and it is unthinkable for a citizen to NOT report some strange goings on to the trusted police and/or military community. It's a weird kind of contributory dictatorship in a way, but it works for the greater good of all. Furthermore, since most citizens have served in the military at some point in their lives, the army is trusted, respected, and honored. It is a part of their culture, lives, past and future.

Although a number of D-Bees, and more to the point, beings such as Immortals, Heroes of the Celestial Court, sorcerers, nature and animal spirits, and even dragons are accepted by the people and government of Geofront, all are expected to follow the "laws of the people," and work toward the common goal of

freeing China from the clutches of the Yama Kings. That having been said, most D-Bees and supernatural beings are regarded with a certain measure of concern and distance. In fact, ancient spirits and magical beings of China are actually a bit more accepted as "natives of Earth" than D-Bees, who *are* alien humanoids from distant planets. There is just a nagging sense of "alien" – as in "other-worldly invader" – that can't quite be shaken and D-Bees will probably always be considered outsiders to some degree or another. Still, as a rule, anyone willing to accept Geofront as a sovereign nation, live by its laws and champion the same causes are (for now) treated as equals. How things might change once the Yama Kings are defeated is anyone's guess, but then such a triumphant turn of events seems a long way off.

The Geofront consists of several different cities clustered around a central hub city, all interconnected by a series of tunnels. The actual buildings are made of Mega-Damage materials, and anchored into the surrounding rock. Other structures are carved into the very rock itself, making the visible buildings only the tip of the iceberg. Not quite a mythical Dwarven habitat, but a tunnel and living complex of great depth and range. There are both highways and hover-trains used to get back and forth, as well as walkways and skywalks.

The Geofront is always on the lookout for new natural resources as well as stealing raw materials from the enemy and Horune Pirates. While the Geofront has the advantage of the best technology and Mega-Damage processing facilities that pre-Rifts China could build, they still need some raw materials. This means that they are constantly exploring the Yin Caverns and encountering all kinds of new and *alien* and mystical minerals, plants, animals, and people. This could lead to all kinds of downright weird creations and adventures – especially if the Yin Caverns really do connect to an alien dimension with an infinite tunnel system.

## The Geofront Military

Their military force is both the Geofront's greatest strength and greatest weakness. They have been living in secret for centuries, operating in a defensive holding action managed by the military. They have spent years keeping themselves secret, and have only recently gone on the offensive against the Yama Kings and their demon minions. However, even these more direct confrontations have been measured surgical strikes and often conducted in disguise. The Geofront's offensive tactics are largely based around small units and limited combat. It is the Geofront who has picked the time and place, waging these battles on their own terms and, not surprisingly, have won almost every confrontation. This has led to rescuing slaves and victims of torture, liberating the occasional village, helping independent heroes and engaging the enemy with hit and run tactics. Large-scale operations remain theory at best. Though most of the military leaders believe they are ready for larger battles, they hesitate, afraid that taking a more prominent place in the liberation of China would bring the combined power and might of the Yama Kings down on them; a fate they might not survive. However, most military strategists agree that the Demon Kings' greatest weakness is their divisiveness. That not two of the Yama Kings would join forces against the Geofront, and thanks

to their covert operations, no one among the enemy suspects the Geofront even exists, nor do they know the full range of power at Geofront's disposal.

The current plan calls for Geofront to carefully expand its range of influence, liberating surface villages, towns and cities and keeping them free. It has also been agreed by the majority to continue the military's practice of concealing their true identity by posing as diverse groups of heroes, bandits, pirates, raiders and even as demons (see Demon Skin in *Rifts® China 2*) to keep the Yama Kings guessing, and to delay the demon hordes from realizing there is a large, unified high-tech resistance force in their very midst. As long as they can remain under the radar of the Yama Kings themselves or the Demon Lords who serve the lords of Hell, Geofront can operate without fear of reprisal and expand their power base at the same time. Enthusiasm is high and the people cry for stronger military action and China's liberation.



## Tan Yankai

### Geofront Prime Minister

Tan Yankai was born into a family of influential government ministers. Ever since he was a child, it was assumed that Tan would enter into government service as a bureaucrat. After serving his required term of service in the Geofront Civil Defense Force (GCDF), he studied history and law at the Geofront University. Tan was intelligent, hard working and willing to learn, which brought him to the attention of not only his instructors, but also high level members of the Geofront political party. His family name also helped open doors for him, but in a meritocracy like the Geofront, his actions spoke louder than his name.

Tan was initially assigned to act as a minor functionary with the Geo-Scouts Committee. During this time, he became very familiar with the science of mining and geology, and his time with the Civil Defense Force allowed him to gain the trust and favor of many of the men and women doing the actual work of exploration. His ease at working with people, and his natural aptitude for government, made him a natural and capable leader.

With each passing year, Tan moved from one level of the party offices up to the next. He was a shooting star among his peers, but was never hated, envied or despised. His leadership was strong, his personality affable, and he truly believed in the continued success of the Geofront. By the time he was 45 years old, he had been appointed the Prime Minister of the Geofront. It has been under his leadership that the Geofront has stepped up its activities on the surface, linking up with agents and acting in a more direct manner against the Yama Kings. In his typical fashion, Tan is looking ahead at the future, how to get there, and how to best help the Geofront remain a successful and strong community.

**Real Name:** Tan Yankai

**Alignment:** Principled.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 17, M.E. 14, M.A. 20, P.S. 10, P.P. 13, P.E. 15, P.B. 9, Spd 24.

**Hit Points:** 48.

**M.D.C.:** 31 (Demon Skin)

**I.S.P.:** 116

**Age:** 51; **Sex:** Male.

**Height:** 5 feet, 3 inches (1.6 m).

**Weight:** 130 lbs (58.5 kg).

**Disposition:** Tan is intelligent, caring and wants the best for the people under his rule. He is honest and believes in rewarding hard work. Consequently, he has the respect of the people and those who work for him. He can be demanding, but can inspire others to achieve greatness if they believe in themselves. Tan is very much a man who thinks of others before thinking of himself, often working himself a bit too hard to set an example for others.

**Description:** A short, bald Chinese man who wears wire rimmed spectacles, giving him a hard, yet scholarly look. He favors traditional cut business suits, usually black in color, and cares little for other adornments or accessories.

**Skills of Note:** Performance 98%, Military Etiquette 98%, Athletics, Running, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Mathematics: Advanced 98%, Computer Operation 98%, History 98%, Law 98%, Mining 98%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 98%, and W.P. Energy Rifle.

**Martial Art Hand to Hand Skill:** Basic: Tai Chi.

**Mystic Martial Art Power:** Bok Pai Kung Fu (Crane Style).

**Experience Level:** 11th level Administrator (8 years in Civil Defense Force).

**Occupation:** Prime Minister of the Geofront.

**Magic Knowledge:** Lore only.

**Psionics:** None.

**Attacks per Melee:** 7

**Bonuses:** +3% I.Q. bonus added to all skills, +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +8 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 to damage, +3 to pull



punch, +4 to pull punch, +6 to roll with impact, Critical Strike on natural 19 or 20, 60% Trust/Intimidate.

**Weapons and Equipment:** As the Prime Minister, Tan has access to the wealth and technology of the Geofront. On the rare occasion that he will arm himself, he typically carries a standard GHF-AK47 Geofront Hound's Fang Assault Rifle. Otherwise, he usually relies on his bodyguards to keep himself safe.



## Jing Jiaxin

### Geofront Defense Minister

Despite her appearance, Jing is lethal and all business. As a child she was always very prim and attractive, but beneath that pretty exterior lay the heart of a warrior. Jing showed remarkable physical talent as a child, and practically forced her parents to allow her to learn the way of the Tao Jen Qiang; the Gun Master. As she grew older, and her training took hold, Jing began to feel her calling to defend the Geofront. From both the instruction of the martial arts masters and her own personal sense of duty, Jing began to feel a definite spiritual connection with her home, the Geofront, and vowed that she would defend it with her life. After years of study, Jing was ready to defend the Geofront. However, she had moved beyond the teachings of her masters and had a deep desire to take the battle to the surface world, single-handedly if necessary.

Because of her strike first attitude, she joined with one of the surface intelligence squads staging hit and run attacks against

demon occupied villages. Her many early successes only fueled her dreams of liberating large tracts of China, while earning her the respect of other warriors in the army. That brought her name to the attention of a rising bureaucrat, Tan Yankai.

As Jing grew into a powerful and outspoken leader among the military forces of the Geofront, it was no surprise that Tan brought her into his government as Defense Minister and usher in a new policy of "direct action" in dealing with issues on the surface. Her impressive string of military victories has emboldened her plans for the future and inspired the people of Geofront. If anything, Tan is holding her back by stressing that they not move too far, too quickly. While they may have slightly differing opinions on the speed at which they move with the new military offensive, they are completely united in their goal of a liberated China (or at least liberating a third to half of the country) and establishing the Geofront as the new nation of China.

**Real Name:** Jing Jiaxin.

**Alignment:** Aberrant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 14, M.E. 14, M.A. 13, P.S. 14, P.P. 23, P.E. 17, P.B. 18, Spd 15.

**Hit Points:** 52. S.D.C.: 61.

**M.D.C.:** 32 (Demon Skin).

**Age:** 32. **Sex:** Female.

**Height:** 5 feet, 6 inches (1.68 m).

**Weight:** 120 lbs (54 kg).

**Disposition:** Jing projects an image of softness and approachability on the outside, but she is hard as steel on the inside. She likes to put people off guard with her appearance and friendly attitude, but it is a facade that she considers just another weapon in her arsenal. She will go to any length to protect the Geofront, willing to sacrifice whatever, or whom-ever, she must in order to maintain security. She demands complete loyalty and those who carry out her orders must never question her aptitude or her decisions.

**Description:** A short, fit, extremely attractive young woman with fine, black hair. She favors conservative cut red, yellow and white business suits, but has a swagger to her walk that lets everyone know that she'd be just as comfortable in a set of fatigues and body armor. She has a cute, demure smile that she uses to hide her finely honed warrior instincts and mind for strategy and tactics.

**Skills of Note:** Gymnastics, Athletics, Military Etiquette 85%, Seduction 43%, Streetwise 48%, Calligraphy 70%, Law 60%, Chinese 98%, Russian 98%, Australian English 98%, Computer Operation 85%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 75%.

**Martial Art Hand to Hand Skill:** Hand to Hand: Shao-Lin Kung Fu.

**Mystic Martial Art Power:** Tao Jen Qiang – Gun Master.

**Experience Level:** 8<sup>th</sup> level Gun Master, 4<sup>th</sup> level Administrator.

**Occupation:** Defense Minister of the Geofront.

**Magic Knowledge:** Lore only.

**Psionics:** As per the Gun Master O.C.C.

**I.S.P.:** 83

**Attacks per Melee:** 7

**Bonuses:** +4 initiative, +8 to strike, +8 to parry, +8 to dodge, +2 to disarm, +10 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +3 to damage, Critical Strike on a roll of 18 or higher, +2 save vs Horror Factor, +1 to save vs poison and magic, and +1 to save vs possession.

**Weapons and Equipment:** As the Geofront Defense Minister, Jing has access to the entire range of weapons in the Geofront arsenal. As an experienced Gun Master, Jing also has an impressive personal arsenal that she has collected over the years. A few of her favorite weapons include the following list: a Geofront Houndstooth pistol, an AT-8 Laser pistol (See **Rifts® Japan**), an ATA P-2/10 Popper Derringer (See **Rifts® Australia**), and an ATA Pinpoint Needler (See **Rifts® Australia**). When going into combat, she usually wears a suit of light Mega-Damage armor to afford her maximum mobility.

## Geo-Scout O.C.C.

From the beginning, the Geofront Project included dozens of experts in the geological sciences, and they are just as important to the Geofront of Rifts Earth as they were in the years before the Cataclysm. These are men and women with an unparalleled understanding of the earth and the various processes under which rocks and minerals form. In the centuries since the Cataclysm, the Geofront has been faced with the daunting task of exploring the Yin Caverns for potential resources, living space, exits to the surface world and to satisfy their own curiosity. Originally, teams of geologists comprising many different specialists were sent out on these expeditions into the caverns, often with a few soldiers along for protection. However, as the years passed and cavern exploration became a refined occupation, these exploratory teams were soon whittled down to three to six person independent teams capable of protecting themselves while operating in the dangerous environment of unmapped caverns.

Geo-Scout training includes geology, climbing and cartography, and because many caverns are often flooded, they are qualified in using scuba equipment as well. They are also weapons experts, but not nearly as highly trained in the fighting arts as the Gun Master or other warrior character classes. Their training also includes disciplines such as oxygen conservation, mental strengthening exercises and other skills that help the mind and body cope with crawling through wet, dark, and cold, confining spaces, often alone or with a few select comrades. Like many of the people living in the Geofront, they are a combination of warrior, scientist and survivalist.

**Alignment:** Any, but lean toward Scrupulous, Unprincipled and Anarchist.

**Attribute Requirements:** I.Q. 9, M.E. 12 and P.E. 9 or higher. It takes a certain breed of person to be a Geo-Scout, willing to go into cold, dark, wet confining spaces not knowing where the passage may come out, if it ever does at all . . .

**Special O.C.C. Bonuses:** +2D6+10 to the character's physical S.D.C., +1D4 to the P.E. and M.E. attributes, and +2 to save vs cold based attacks.

**I.S.P.:** To determine the character's initial amount of Inner Strength/Chi points, take the character's M.E. attribute as the base, roll 1D4 and add it to the base number. The character gets 1D4 I.S.P./Chi for each additional level of experience.

### O.C.C. Skills:

Athletics (General)

Cartography: Subterranean only (+10%; see the Pathfinder O.C.C. on pg. 54 of **Rifts® World Book 26: Dinosaur Swamp™** for specific details on this skill.)

Climbing (+25%)

Computer Operation (+10%)

Escape Artist (+15%)

Geology (+20%; see Special O.C.C. skill)

Gemology (+20%)

Language (one of choice, +15%) plus Speak Native Language (typically Chinese) at 98%.

Literacy: Native Language (typically Chinese) (+20%)

Mathematics: Basic (+15%)

Mining (includes proficiency with both Demolitions skills) (+15%)

Spelunking (+20%)

Swimming (+10%)

S.C.U.B.A. (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+10%)

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. One of choice

Hand to Hand Martial Arts Skill: Tai-Chi (basic combat) or Monkey Style Kung Fu (but counts as two O.C.C. skill selections).

Mystic Marital Ar Power: Select one of the following: Mien-Ch'uan Kung Fu (Cotton Fist) or Xian Pu Kung Fu (Drunken Style) or Xian Tai Chi Chuan (Chi Manipulation, but requires special training and counts as two O.C.C. skill selections).

Special Feature: Mo Fuqian: Demon Skin: (4D6+18 M.D.C.).

**O.C.C. Related Skills:** Select *eight* other skills, but at least one must be from the Science category and one must be from the Technical category. Plus select two additional skills at levels 3, 5, 7, 10 and 13.

Communications: Any.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics only.

Espionage: Intelligence only.

Horsemanship: General only.

Mechanical: Basic only.

Medical: First Aid or Paramedic only, but the latter counts as two skill selections.

Military: Demolitions, Demolitions Disposal, and Demolitions: Underwater only (+10%).

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any, excluding Robots and Power Armor (+10% to Motorcycle and Tanks and APCs only).

Pilot Related: Any, (+10% to Read and Operate Sensory Equipment only).



Rogue: None.

Science: Any (+15%).

Technical: Any (+15%, +20% to Rope Works).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

**Secondary Skills:** The character also selects *seven* Secondary Skills from the O.C.C. Related list and these are limited (Any, Only and None) as previously indicated. These skills are additional areas of knowledge that the character has picked up but they do not benefit from the bonuses listed in parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill proficiency.

**Special O.C.C. Skills:** See the O.C.C. Skill list for additional bonuses.

**1. Geology.** The study and understanding of the composition of the Earth. Characters will be able to identify rocks and minerals, have an understanding of ground water locations and contamination, and be able to find weaknesses in rock faces. This skill also allows characters to locate and retrieve gems, precious metals and other economically valuable resources. It adds a +5% situation bonus to Gemology when used for determining the worth of gems and precious metals. Base Skill: 30% +5% per level of experience.

**2. Darkness Sense.** Surface dwellers like to think that a cloudy, moonless night is dark. That's nothing compared to the perpetual darkness of an underground cavern which is a void, absent of *all* natural sources of light. It is a darkness like nothing else on Earth; a complete sensory deprivation experience. It is in this environment that the Geo-Scout must operate, and so they have honed their senses to a razor's edge in the situation that their lights go out and they are left to the mercy of the eerie darkness. This ability doesn't grant the ability to see perfectly in darkness, but it is superior to most other forms of nightvision, as it *does not* require a mechanical source of light to work. I.S.P. Cost: 3 per 15 minutes. Effect: When activated, all penalties for operating in darkness are reduced by *three-fourths*.

**3. Calm Mind.** Being alone is sometimes part of the job of a Geo-Scout. They often have to operate far from the safety of their group, climbing, crawling or inching through a narrow passage just to see where it may open up. They face the danger of claustrophobia on a daily basis, with stresses placed upon them that would crack the will of most other people. These conditions are brutal by any measure, but by using this discipline, the character can quell their fears and proceed on with their explorations. I.S.P. Cost: 10 per 10 minutes. Effect: This discipline suppresses the character's "fight or flight" instincts even when faced with mind numbing fear and panic. It enables him to make clear, rational decisions even when faced with a potentially life or death situation. When activated, the character is immune to fear, and automatically succeeds on any roll to resist *Horror Factor*, even if magically induced.

**4. Oxygen Conservation.** With all of the subterranean dangers of being crushed by a cave-in, drowning in a flash flood, or being burned alive in a gas explosion, nothing is more horrifying to an experienced Geo-Scout than being suffocated after being trapped, or encountering an area of "Black

Damp." Black Damp is a region where all of the oxygen has been displaced either by other gases, or through differences in air pressure causing an area to become a partial vacuum. It was for this reason that miners carried a canary in a small cage. When the canary died, the miners knew that they had few precious minutes to escape or suffer a similar fate. Consequently, the Geo-Scouts have mastered the discipline of oxygen conservation. Through concentration, characters can lower their heart rate and respiration to enable them to operate on a fraction of what they would normally require for a limited amount of time. This isn't intended to replace scuba equipment, or even an emergency re-breather, but should give a character enough time to access such equipment if he is going to be exposed to a low oxygen environment for an extended period of time. I.S.P. Cost: 2 per 30 seconds. Effects: While activated, the character only needs *one-fifth* their normal oxygen supply to operate normally. This can enable them to secure an emergency oxygen supply, or possibly even evacuate a poor or low oxygen environment. This also means that the character takes *one-fifth* damage from all inhaled toxins while this power is activated.

Through this discipline, characters can also go into a trance where they slow their heart rate and respiration to almost negligible levels, enabling them to survive for an extended amount of time on a limited air supply. This is especially important if they are trapped and awaiting rescue. I.S.P. Cost: 6 per 24 hours. Effects: This ability is identical to the Physical Psionic *Death Trance*.

**Standard Equipment:** One set of traveling clothes, one pair of sturdy hiking and climbing boots, two pair of leather gloves, 1D6+6 pens, markers and assorted pencils, 1D6+6 pieces of colored chalk, two cans of fluorescent spray paint (one orange, one yellow), pocket notebook, sleeping bag, backpack, utility belt, 1D4 sacks of heavy cloth, 2D6 waterproof sacks, spool of wire (20 feet/6.1m), 12 signal flares, four colored smoke grenades, two demolition charges, grappling hook, 24 rock climbing spikes/pitons, rock hammer, mallet, 200 feet (60.9 m) of climbing cord, mallet and chisel, folding shovel, folding utility knife, 24 pencil-sized chemical lights, cigarette lighter, canteen, small mirror, magnifying glass, 10x magnification jeweler's loupe, large flashlight, headlamp, pen flashlight, oxygen rebreather (a special 30 minute oxygen device used to evacuate an area devoid of oxygen; what miners call "Black Damp"), an electronic "canary" (a scanning device useful for detecting levels of oxygen and other atmospheric readings), multi-optics goggles, micro-scuba rebreather rig, pocket computer, and a laser range finder.

**Weapons:** G-91 Geo-Blaster Phased Emitter with 1D6 E-Clips, plus one weapon for each W.P. These will likely be compact and lightweight weapons that are useful in tight quarters. The character also starts with a suit of light Mega-Damage body armor.

**Vehicle:** Geo-Scouts will often pilot the Geofront Cave Explorer when exploring the larger portions of the Yin Caverns, but oftentimes they are either on foot, or many times on hands and knees, belly crawling through tight spaces.

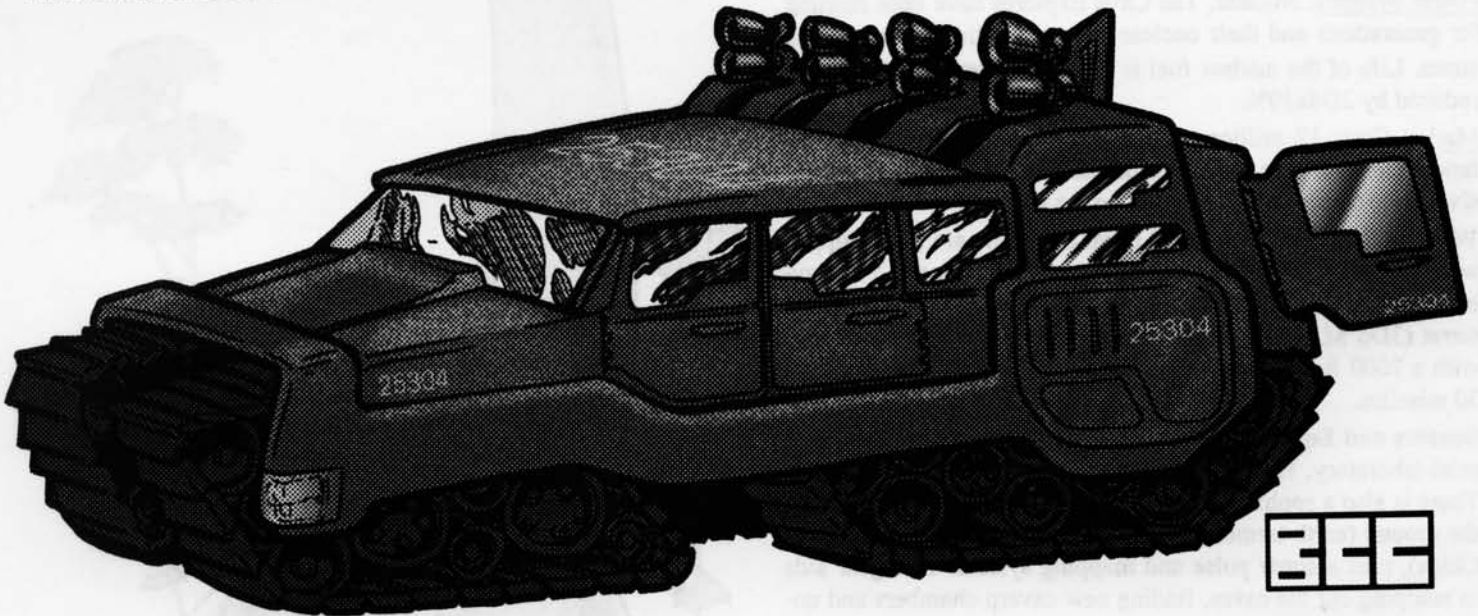
**Money:** Starts with 1D4x1000 credits, and earns 1100 a month, but also has a comfortable apartment provided for them by the government.

**Cybernetics:** None to start. Geo-Scouts are open to cybernetic implants, especially sensors, oxygen storage cells, toxic filters and other enhancements that may assist them in their exploration.

**Note:** Serve the government as explorers and scouts, but also frequently work with the military as guides, advisors and escorts, especially when dealing with navigating or exploring the Yin Caverns or any matters involving subterranean operations.

## Gun Master Note

The Gun Master may also get Mo Fuqian (Demon Skin – 4D6+18 M.D.C.) and wears at least light armor, and may even wear Demon Skin *Armor*.



## Cave Explorer

Primarily a non-military vehicle, the Cave Explorer is used almost exclusively by the Geofront scientists and Rangers. For the generations of men and women who have spent the last three hundred years mapping and exploring the Yin Caverns (and still with no end in sight), the vehicle has been a mainstay. It is equipped with the latest seismic and sonar equipment as well as a mini-lab to take samples for possible mining potential. While the Cave Explorer is not meant as a military craft, it can be equipped with a small selection of weapons should the need arise. Cave Explorers are also routinely gutted and equipped to function as mobile command centers (with 20% more M.D.C.) and other purposes (med-lab, transport, etc.).

**Vehicle Model Type:** CEV-560

**Class:** Scientific transport vehicle, but quickly becoming an all-purpose military transport.

**Crew:** One pilot, one copilot, one communications officer, plus it can typically accommodate 8-12 other crew members (scientists, etc.) or passengers; 18 people jammed in tight

### M.D.C. by Location:

- \*Front Headlights (2) – 8 each
- Front Tracks (2) – 100 each
- Rear Tracks (2) – 160 each
- Optional Mini-Missile Launchers (2) – 70 each
- Optional Laser Turret – 50
- Side Hatches (4) – 35 each
- Rear Hatches (2) – 50 each
- Reinforced Crew Compartment – 120
- \*Top Spotlights (8) – 6 each
- \*Rear Cave Bike Holder – 20
- \*\*Main Body – 311

\* A single asterisk indicates a small and difficult target to strike, requiring the attacker to make a “called shot,” but even then they are -4 to strike.

\*\* Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body will shut the vehicle down completely, rendering it useless.



**Speed:** 150 mph (240 km) is the maximum on flat, even terrain. If the terrain is too rough, speed is reduced 50% to 75%. The Cave Explorer is amphibious, with a water speed of 15 mph (24 km).

**Range:** Unlimited 20 year nuclear power supply.

**Statistical Data:**

**Height:** 10 feet (3 m).

**Width:** 11 feet (3.4 m).

**Length:** 22 feet (6.7 m).

**Weight:** 12 tons fully loaded.

**Cargo:** The rear of the Cave Explorer has a special rack that can hold three Cave Bikes. Numerous other items are usually carried including a mini-lab in the rear which limits major cargo. A month's worth of supplies, a dozen rifles and clips could easily be carried.

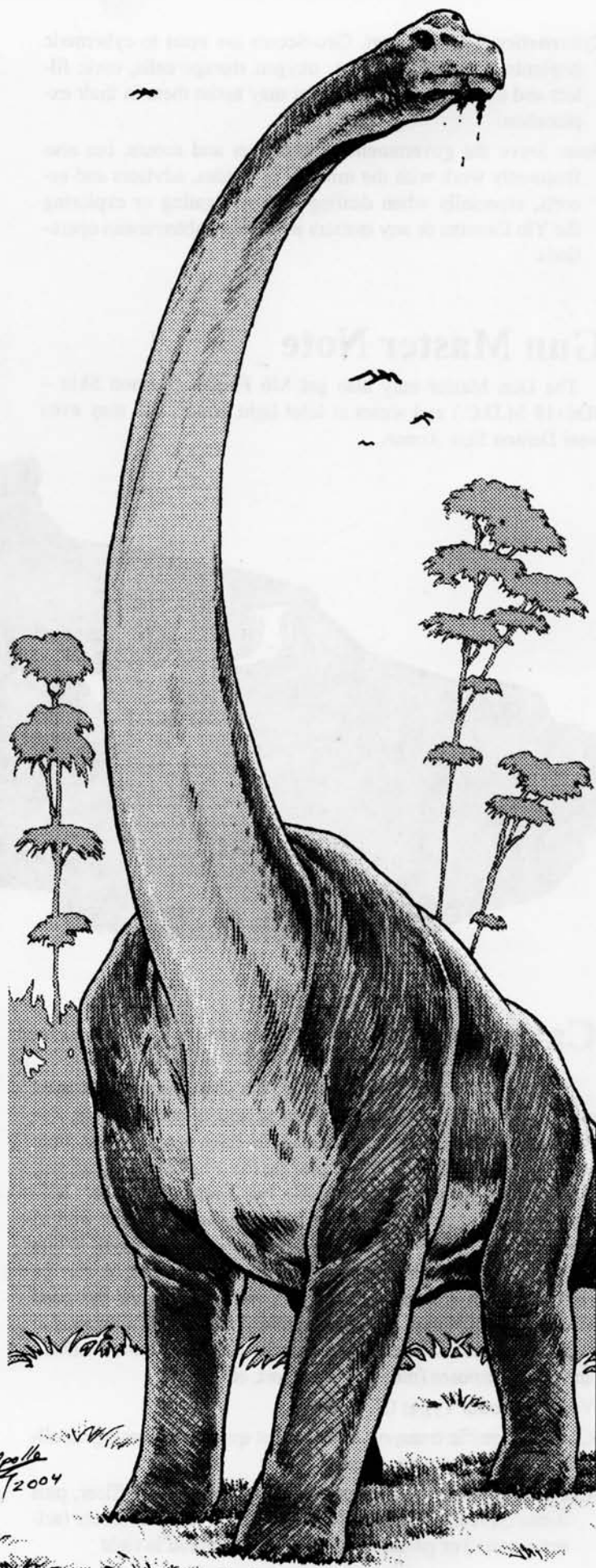
**Power Systems:** Nuclear. The Cave Explorers have been running for generations and their nuclear power supplies are in various states. Life of the nuclear fuel is usually 20 years, but most are reduced by 2D4x10%.

**Market Cost:** 12 million credits, which would include all the fancy scientific gear usually installed. They are, however, exclusive to the Geofront and not sold on the market.

**Weapon Systems Note:** Most Cave Explorers are not equipped with weapons as combat is rarely encountered in the Yin Caverns. All weapon systems are optional, typically a medium laser turret (3D6 M.D. per single blast, or 6D6 M.D. per dual blast, with a 2000 foot/610 m range), or a mini-missile launcher with 30 missiles.

**Sensors and Equipment:** The Cave Explorer is equipped with a mini-laboratory. Hundreds of scientific tests can be conducted. There is also a sophisticated seismic sensor array that bores into the ground (earth tremors/quakes, can be detected from all over China), plus a sonar pulse and mapping system. This gear aids in mapping out the caves, finding new cavern chambers and underground streams. The Explorer also has a powerful radio transmitter that uses E.L.F. (Extremely Low Frequencies). The E.L.F. allows communication with the surface as well as the Cavern Cities. Range is limited to 200 miles (320 km), however the Geofront has strategically placed signal boosters in roughly 70% of the explored caves around the city creating relay stations that cover 1,000 miles (1600 km).

**Command Center Option:** Command Explorers have their laboratories replaced with a command and control center. Long-range radios with a 500 mile (800 km) range are installed. The vehicle also has radar that can track and identify 300 targets. There are several monitors that link directly to other field units, either providing a bird's eye view of combat, or to relay the status of various field units. All access points have voice activated locks, and the Command Explorer has a self-destruct system that does 4D6x10 M.D. to everything in a 10 foot (3 m) area around the unit.





# Rifts<sup>®</sup>: Dinosaur Swamp<sup>™</sup>: Creatures of the Horror Forest

By Todd Yoho

## Preface

Many of the creatures introduced here for use in the setting of **Rifts<sup>®</sup> Dinosaur Swamp** can easily be adapted for use in other settings, and I have included the basic S.D.C. statistics where necessary. When in doubt, simply read the M.D.C. stats as S.D.C. These creatures were created with Dinosaur Swamp in mind, but on second glance, the Wraith Brigades and the optional Wraith Soldier R.C.C. fit well with the themes of **Beyond the Supernatural<sup>™</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition**, and the Carnosuchid could serve as an interesting, and dangerous, cryptozoological specimen. The Gruesome Tarbids and the Carnosuchids would be right at home with the other strange monsters of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG<sup>®</sup>**, but they could also be used as alien species for **Phase World<sup>®</sup>**, or mutants/experiments from **Heroes Unlimited<sup>™</sup>** and **After the Bomb<sup>®</sup>**. Remember that *all* of these creatures came through the Rifts to inhabit Dinosaur Swamp, so who knows where they originally came from, or where else they may live?

## Introduction

Dinosaur Swamp is a vast, secretive wilderness populated by a wide variety of creatures. Nowhere is this more evident than the Horror Forest, which covers the majority of the Georgian Piedmont. The forest is a magnet for the variety of animals and monsters that find themselves stranded in the southeast. Whether they arrive from the D-Shifting Appalachians, the magic rich Okefenokee, or the enigmatic Time Holes, many of these stranded creatures find the Horror Forest to be a rich habitat in which to thrive. Consequently, it should come as no surprise that the Horror Forest has become home to many rare, unusual, and unique creatures.

Most exotic creatures that wind up stranded in Dinosaur Swamp are unprepared for life in their new home, and are often gobbled up by the first predator that happens along, and many starve because they fail to find a nourishing source of food. Explorer and scholar Deern Neenok believes that untold thousands of unique species have come through the Rifts, yet were incapable of surviving more than a few days in the harsh wilds of Dinosaur Swamp. Those that do survive often have some sort of natural, or magical, advantages that enable them to survive in a land where dinosaurs rule, and many of these survivors are predators themselves. It isn't often that so many predator species will occupy the same territory and hunt one another, but the normal predator-prey relationships have been turned on their heads in the Horror Forest, helping to give the region its name. However, it's not just these exotic and alien creatures that make the forest their home; there are worse things lurking in the woods.

As evidenced by the Haunting Child, there are also spirits inhabiting the region that bring another kind of "horror" to the Horror Forest. Many of these spirits are the common Haunting, Tectonic and other Entities found throughout Rifts Earth and the Megaverse. However, others, like the Wraith Soldiers, are unique to the region, and rooted in the very past of the American southeast. These spirits aren't very well understood, and are just one more of the many mysteries that abound in the wilds of Dinosaur Swamp.





## More Spirits, Dinosaurs, and Other Animals

### Wraith Brigades

These spectral soldiers appear as translucent, gaunt, human males that fade into and out of color depending on the amount of sunlight hitting them. In full daylight, these spirits are almost invisible, appearing only in misty wisps of cloudy white ectoplasm. In the shadows, or the darkest hours of night, they appear in brilliant, yet somewhat grainy colors, like those of an old photograph. They are dressed in uniforms of varying quality, some are little more than ragged, homespun tatters, while others are well tailored and meticulously maintained. Most of these soldiers' uniforms are plain and unremarkable, while others are heavily decorated with combinations of embroidered braids, various chevrons on the sleeves, or emblems on the epaulets. Even to an untrained observer, it's easy to distinguish the officers from the enlisted ranks. The colors of these uniforms vary, but they indicate two different armies. One side wears shades of gray or butternut, while the other side wears the color of deep blue.

As they are groups of fighting men, they are also armed and equipped. The majority of these soldiers carry an ancient musket, complete with bayonet, and the overloaded pack of an infantryman. The officers are only armed with a revolver and a sword belted at their waist. Rumors tell of officers astride a spectral steed as well, loaded down with saddlebags, blankets and a sturdy saddle, but these are still *only rumors*.

Wraith Brigades are almost always found within the confines of the Horror Forest, although there have been reported sightings of similar garbed ghosts all along the southeast, as far north as old Pennsylvania, and as far west as the Mississippi River. They are usually found roaming the wilds in formations of 6-8 members, although Neenok did record one encounter with a group of at least 16-20.

*I wasn't sure what I was seeing at first. It was late, so the sun was low and reduced to breaking through the trees in small, scattered patches. At first, I thought it was one of the scout groups returning from being afield. As they came closer, I knew that there were too many of them to be ours, nearly twenty, and I thought then that they might be a group of barbarians. However, as they stepped deeper into the shadows, and out of the light, I got a better view of them; and I was intrigued.*

*In my preparations for the expedition, I had obviously familiarized myself with the history of the pre-Cataclysmic peoples of Dinosaur Swamp. Immediately I knew that I was faced with a group of soldiers from the American Empire's Civil War; Federal soldiers to be exact. However, these weren't a group Rifted through time and space; these soldiers had been dead for a very, very long time. Barely a week had passed since we lost Javelle and the others to those damned spectral children, and no*

one knew what to expect. Unfortunately, I ignored the lessons learned at the playground, and I ignored my own conscience. It cost me two more members of my expedition, and their deaths will haunt me for as long as I live.

Neenok was indeed correct; these Wraith Brigades are apparitions in the form of Union and Confederate soldiers from the 19<sup>th</sup> century American Civil War. Most inhabitants of Rifts Earth would be ignorant of this lost part of history from before the Dark Ages, but Rogue Scholars and others possessing History skills may recognize them for what they are. Most barbarian tribes know of them, but only through centuries of distorted oral histories and their own, personal brutal encounters with them.

Like the Haunting Child Entity, The Wraith Brigades are an unusual form of spectral creature. They do not conform to the usual attributes of what most consider an Entity, have their own unique powers, and some extremely rare soldiers have been known to possess a degree of intelligence and sentience! These rare and unique *individuals* are further explained below in the description of the *Wraith Soldier R.C.C.*

What is known about the Wraith Brigades is that like the Haunting Children, they are extremely territorial. These groups will claim a patch of ground as their own and defend it with unmatched ferocity. These spirits do not kill for sport, for food, or for treasure. Unlike many spirits and entities, they do not kill for pleasure. Instead, for whatever reasons, known only to them, they kill for their land. Unfortunately, there are no outward signs that indicate where the territory of a Wraith Brigade begins or ends. They do not stake claim to any particular types of ruins or natural formations, so for all anyone knows, just about *anywhere* could potentially be Wraith Brigade territory. Explorers and barbarians alike are often taken by surprise, not knowing that they have wandered into the territory claimed by a particular Wraith Brigade. It is particularly unsettling because anyone caught by a brigade doesn't know which way to flee. One direction may lead to safety, perhaps only a few meters away, while another direction may take a character further into the brigade's territory.

Neenok hypothesized that the Wraith Brigades are made up of spirits that fell in combat on a particular patch of ground. They are now cursed into undeath by the Coming of the Rifts, forever haunting the ground soaked with their blood. Neenok believed that if he could acquire more information on the American Empire's Civil War, especially detailed maps, then he might be able to prove that he is right.

Neenok's hypothesis is a bit melodramatic, but it's as good a theory as any, since the exact origins of the Wraith Brigades are still up for debate. Some liken them to the Haunting Children, a different manifestation of the same type of force. This hypothesis is hampered by the fact that no one *really* knows what the Haunting Children are. Others believe that the Wraith Brigades are a unique type of Entity, similar perhaps, but unique all the same. The fact is that no one knows, and much like the Haunting Children, the mystery will undoubtedly go on. It's not like the Wraith Brigades are going to spill their secrets, even the ones that *can* talk.

**Alignment:** Diabolic or Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D6+6, M.E. 1D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. Not applicable. P.B. 1D6, Spd. 48 (36 mph/57.6 km).

**M.D.C.:** 6D6+12; but vulnerable only to energy weapons (taking half damage), psionics and magic. Depleting the creature's M.D.C. dissipates its energies, destroying the Entity, leaving nothing behind. Wraith Brigade Entities are particularly vulnerable to Psi-Swords, taking double damage from them. **Note:** On S.D.C. worlds the M.D.C. score is converted directly to S.D.C., as are all of their special abilities listed below.

**Horror Factor:** 13

**Size:** That of an average human male, from 5 feet (1.52 m) to 6 feet (1.82 m) tall.

**Weight:** Not applicable.

**Average Life Span:** Unknown, presumably eternal.

**P.P.E.:** 5D6

**Appearance:** A spectral Civil War soldier that fades in and out of color with the sun. Most of them appear to be between the ages of 16 and 24, although some are older and a few appear to be younger. Very few of them have ever been heard to speak, but they will make all the sounds of men on the march, complete with footfalls in cadence and the clanking of pots and equipment.

**Natural Abilities:** In addition to the psionic powers described below, Wraith Brigade soldiers can run at 36 mph (57.6 km) and can leap 15 feet (4.6 m) high or across. They can pass through solid objects, and energy weapons do half their normal damage.

**Vulnerabilities:** Magic and psychic attacks, and their only method of attack is via psionics.

**Attacks per Melee:** 5

**Damage:** By psionics.

**Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses):** +2 to strike, and impervious to bullets, arrows, explosives, punches and other kinetic attacks, energy weapons do half damage, impervious to normal fire, plasma, cold, poison and disease, and do not need to breathe; magic and psionics do full damage, Psi-Swords do double damage.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Considered Master Psionics. Base I.S.P. is 1D4x10+50.

**Limited Psionic Powers:** Ectoplasm (6 or 12), Empathy (4), Empathic Transmission: All (6), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), See the Invisible (4), Sixth Sense (2), Telekinesis (varies). All are performed equal to 5<sup>th</sup> level of experience.

**Special: TK Firearm:** Whether it takes the form of a musket or a revolver, the range and damage are identical. These weapons are part of the Wraith and vanish with them when they are destroyed. **Mega-Damage:** 2D4 per force bolt (double at a ley line). **Rate of Fire:** Single shot. **Range:** 1500 feet (457.2 m); double at a ley line. **Payload:** 10 shots per charge; it costs the Wraith 5 I.S.P. to charge the weapon to full capacity.

**Special: Rifle Butt-Stroke:** While the Wraith Brigade soldiers are intangible, they can still inflict damage with the butt of their rifle through a telekinetic strike similar to the psionic



ability of Telekinetic Punch. **Range:** By touch or three feet (0.91 m). **Duration:** Instant. **Damage:** 1D4 M.D. **Saving Throw:** Dodge or Parry as usual. **Cost:** 5 I.S.P. per strike.

**Special: Psi-Sword or Psi-Bayonet:** The Wrath Brigade soldiers have the powerful psionic ability to manifest a Psi-Sword! The officers' version takes the form of a sword drawn from the belt, while the infantryman projects as a long, slender bayonet from the tip of his musket. **Range:** Self. **Duration:** 15 minutes. **Damage:** 3D6 M.D.; the damage is the same for both the sword and the bayonet version. **Saving Throw:** Dodge or Parry as usual. **Cost:** 15 I.S.P.

**Special: The Double-Quick:** With this ability, the Wraith Brigade soldiers can increase either their movement speed, or their number of attacks per melee round, providing a tactical advantage against an unsuspecting foe! **Range:** Self. **Duration:** One melee round. **Effects and Cost:** Either doubles the character's maximum speed for one melee round at a cost of 15 I.S.P., or provides two additional attacks per melee round for 30 I.S.P. This power can only be activated once per melee, and only one of the effects can be powered at a time.

**Special: The Rebel Yell or The Yankee Rally:** Intended to intimidate the enemy, this is a special telepathic shout that will often chill the blood of anyone in earshot. It is the only vocalization that anyone has heard most of these mysterious Entities make. **Range:** 150 feet (45.7 m). **Duration:** Instant. **Saving Throw:** Standard. **Effects:** Characters that fail their saving throw will be stricken with unreasonable terror. The character is -4 to strike, parry and dodge, -6 on initiative, and has a 66% chance of turning and running away from friend and foe alike. The effects last for 3D4 melee rounds. **Cost:** 20 I.S.P.

**Enemies:** Regard humans, all mortals and most animals as trespassers. They regard practitioners of magic and psychics as natural enemies.

**Allies:** None, other than fellow Wraith Brigades. Note that there is a definite segregation of the armies, even as spirits. The blue uniformed Wraith Brigades will treat the gray uniformed brigades as trespassers, and vice versa.

**Value:** None.

**Habitat:** Mostly the Horror Forest, but are known to exist throughout the southeast and points north and west.

## The Wraith Soldier R.C.C. (Optional)

Among the Wraith Brigades are a very select few that come into existence with a complete and whole personality. Unlike 99% of their brother spirits, these *individuals* are as unique as you or I, with a name, memories of a childhood, family, friends and a sense of who they are, and where they are from. In addition, they all share one other thing in common: they remember their deaths, often quite vividly.

A Wraith Soldier can trace the events of his life up until the point of his death, often at some random time in combat. Whether from an enemy's bullet, a piece of shrapnel, or even from some horrible disease, these Wraith Soldiers *know* that they have lived and died. Because of this, experts will argue that the Wraith Soldiers are indeed spirits of the dead reformed, while other experts will argue that they are the more common Entities who have latched on to some fleeting memory, given it

shape, and extrapolated a life for some yet unknown purpose. The truth is, even these Wraith Soldiers aren't sure.

Many of them believe that they are trapped in Hell, or have missed some grand event they call the Resurrection, and are doomed to wander the earth forever as a spirit. Consequently, many of these Wraith Soldiers have been driven mad, having developed one or more insanities. Those individuals will roam the wilds attacking anyone or anything that comes across their path. Others have taken to learning as much as they can about their new lives, trying to find some form of release from the state they find themselves in, or just try to make some sense of it all. This often means joining up with an adventuring group, befriending a barbarian, or even leaving the region for answers elsewhere in the world.

One of the first challenges that a Wraith Soldier must overcome is that the world is a radically different place than the one that he has memories of. He is very much displaced in time, a person with a 19<sup>th</sup> century education and outlook brought wholly into the world of Rifts Earth. They have both the advantage, and the liability, of being a spirit, which should offer them some chance at survival, at least until they can get their bearings.

Allowing individual Wraith Soldiers as player characters can be a fun and challenging experience for players and Game Masters alike. However, keep in mind that they are going to be completely ignorant of modern technology, and have a limited understanding of science *at best*. See the **Rifts® Conversion Book** for more information on integrating characters from the 20<sup>th</sup> century into Rifts Earth. A character coming from the 19<sup>th</sup>



century would have similar, if not worse, hurdles to overcome. If nothing else, Wraith Soldiers can make for interesting NPCs as well, and could serve as excellent guides, scouts, and the occasional troublemaker.

**Alignment:** Any, but keep in mind that many are confused, angry or have been driven insane given their current circumstances. They will tend toward the Selfish alignments, either Unprincipled (35%) or Anarchist (40%) with the rest falling evenly among the Good and Evil alignments.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. Not applicable. P.B. 2D6, Spd. 48 (36 mph/57.6 km).

**Special Bonuses:** +1 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs psionics, +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Special Penalties:** As a spectral creature, the character *does not* gain any attribute benefits from Physical skills. The character can select them for their practical applications and combat bonuses (such as hand/eye coordination) and to reflect memories of a previous life, but they will have *no* bearing on the character's attributes.

**M.D.C., Psionics, P.P.E., I.S.P.:** As in the Wraith Brigade description above, except that the character gains an additional 2D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

**Insanity:** Roll on the following table to determine if the character has developed any insanity as a result of his "spiritual condition." If yes, roll on the random insanity table on page 19 of the **Rifts® RPG**. Game Masters should use some common sense and have the player re-roll any results that are inappropriate. An example would be alcoholism, since the character has no way to actually imbibe alcohol.

01-42%: No Insanity.

43-66%: One Insanity.

67-97%: Two Insanities.

98-00%: Three Insanities.

**Special Abilities:** In addition to the psionics typical of the Wraith Brigade above, the Wraith Soldier also has the following special abilities.

**Special: Wraith Brigade Sense:** With this ability, the Wraith Soldier character can sense when a Wraith Brigade is near and can use it to track them as well. The sensing ability is constant and automatic, whereas the tracking ability must be activated. A failed roll means that the character has lost the "scent." He can make two more attempts to recover it, but on the third failure, the "scent" is cold and cannot be reacquired until the source has been found again. **Range:** 160 feet (48.76 m). **Tracking Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience. **Duration:** 5 minutes per level of experience. **Cost:** 10 I.S.P.

**Special: Telepathic Communication:** Unlike the other Entities that make up the Wraith Brigades, the Wraith Soldiers are capable of communicating with other species. They do so via telepathic communication. This ability is constant and automatic, and does not require the expenditure of I.S.P.

**R.C.C. Skills: Infantryman**

Forced March

Military Etiquette (+25%)

Athletics (General)

Cook (+10%)

Fishing (+5%) or Sewing (+5%)

Gambling (+10%)

Speak Native Language (English/American) 98%

W.P. Black Powder Rifle

W.P. Spear/Bayonet

W.P. One Ancient Weapon of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic; this *cannot* be upgraded.

**R.C.C. Skills: Officer**

Horsemanship: General (+15%)

Military Etiquette (+25%)

Athletics (General)

Cook (+5%)

Dance (+10%)

History (+5%), but only current through the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Speak Native Language (English/American) 98%

Literacy: Native Language (English/American) 98%

W.P. Revolver

W.P. Sword

W.P. One Ancient Weapon of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic; this *cannot* be upgraded.

**R.C.C. Related Skills:** Select *six* other skills, but at least one must be from the Wilderness or the Domestic category. Plus, select one additional skill at levels two, four, six, eight and ten. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Performance only.

Cowboy: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Detect Ambush, Sniper, Tracking and Wilderness Survival only.

Horsemanship: General only (which Officers already have).

Mechanical: None.

Medical: Animal Husbandry, Brewing, and Holistic Medicine only.

Military: Military Fortification, Trap Construction and Trap/Mine Detection only (+10%).

Physical: Any, except S.C.U.B.A., Gymnastics, and Acrobatics.

Pilot: Bicycling and Boats only (+10%).

Pilot Related: None.

Rogue: Any, except Computer Hacking.

Science: Basic and Advanced Mathematics only (+10% for Officers only).

Technical: Any (within reason).

W.P.: Any (within reason).

Wilderness: Any (+15%).

**Secondary Skills:** The character also selects *four* Secondary Skills from the R.C.C. Related list and these are limited (Any, Only, and None) as previously indicated. These skills are additional knowledge that the character has picked up but



they do not benefit from the bonuses listed in parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill proficiency.

**Standard Equipment:** As the Wraith Soldiers are intangible and do not have the needs of most other characters, they do not have any standard equipment. Player characters may accumulate possessions over the course of their adventures, but will have to have someone else either carry or store them.

**Money:** Starts with none, however player characters may acquire wealth throughout their adventures.

**Cybernetics:** None. As Wraith Soldiers are intangible, they are incapable of acquiring bionics and cybernetics.

**Experience:** Use the same experience table as the Mind Melter, page 17, *Rifts RPG*®.



## Carnosuchids

The Carnosuchids are primitive dinosaur cousins from the early Triassic that have made their way into the wilds of Dinosaur Swamp. They are terrestrial, crocodile-like quadrupeds approximately 8 feet (2.43 m) long, stand 3 feet (0.91 m) high at the shoulder, and have a thick, powerful skull and a long, broad, slashing tail. Their bodies are covered in layers of reddish brown scales, and their wide feet end in short, hooked claws suitable for digging prey out of burrows, or as anchors for short distance sprinting. While they are lethal over short distances, Carnosuchids are not built for speed, nor are they specifically ambush predators like crocodiles, but are nonetheless effective scavengers and mid-level predators.

Their real strength lies in their powerful skull and shoulder muscles that provide them with bone crushing jaws and a vicious, head shaking attack. Augmenting their powerful jaws and neck muscles are the Carnosuchids' specially rooted teeth. Unlike dinosaurs that are constantly shedding teeth, Carnosuchids have long, serrated teeth that are rooted deeply in the jaw and skull and are woven into place by a taut mesh of ligaments and tendons. With this adaptation, Carnosuchids have no fear of their teeth being pulled loose, and can shake prey into submission much more violently than a crocodile or Spinosaurus can. It also enables the Carnosuchid to maintain a grip on prey that would otherwise tear free from the jaws of another predator. Rest assured that when a Carnosuchid latches onto a meal, it rarely gets away.

Carnosuchids are solitary predators, seeking out their own kind only during the spring mating season. They are not as intelligent as true dinosaurs, but are still crafty hunters. They prefer to hunt along the forest's edge or among the many creeks and streams that cut through the Georgian Piedmont. Many Carnosuchids have developed a taste for humanoid flesh and will often establish a lair near a barbarian village or a D-Bee settlement, terrorizing the population. They are territorial, marking their hunting grounds with a powerful smelling musk excreted in their urine. The scent is strong enough for humans to detect, but just barely, requiring a successful roll on the Lore: Dinosaurs skill. Other characters with enhanced senses such as Mutant Barbarians or Dog Boys will be able to detect the scent easily, and recognize the mark of a predator. However, without the Lore: Dinosaur skill, they will not recognize the specificity of the threat.

**Alignment:** Animal predator, considered Miscreant or Diabolic.

**Attributes:** Animal attributes are very consistent and offer a smaller range of attribute aptitude. I.Q. 1D4+2, low animal intelligence. M.E. 2+1D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 19+2D6, P.P. 10+2D6, P.E. 22+1D6, P.B. 6+1D4, Spd. 16+2D6; a minimum speed of 18 (14 mph/22.4 km), most have a speed of 24 (18 mph/28.8 km). Supernatural P.S.

**Mega-Damage by Location:**

Head - 75  
Tail - 35  
Neck - 100  
Limbs (4) - 60 each  
Main Body - 4D6x10

**Note:** On S.D.C. worlds, Carnosuchids have 5D6x10 S.D.C., Hit Points equal to twice their P.E. attribute, and an A.R. of 12. The damage from their bite attack does an equivalent amount of S.D.C. rather than M.D.

**Horror Factor:** 13.

**Size:** 8 feet (2.4 m) long from snout to tip of the tail, 3 feet (0.9 m) tall at the shoulder.

**Weight:** 450 lbs (202.5 kg).

**Average Life Span:** 50-60 years.

**P.P.E.:** 3D6

**O.C.C.:** None; animal.

**Natural Abilities:** Excellent sense of smell, can track prey by scent at 55%, can track the scent of blood at 75%. In the first

melee of combat, a Carnosuchid can sprint after its prey with an incredible burst of energy providing a +2 to strike, one additional attack for that melee round, and has a +4 to initiative for the second melee round. The animal cannot use this ability until it has rested, outside of combat, for 2D6 minutes. Carnosuchids are also excellent diggers, able to excavate thirty cubic feet (0.8 m<sup>3</sup>) of dirt per melee round of digging.

**Attacks per Melee:** 4

**Damage:** Bite 5D6 M.D., claw with forelimbs 1D6 M.D., slash with tail 2D6 M.D. plus a tail strike has a 01-25% chance of knocking down a human-sized target.

**Special Bite and Thrash Attack:** Because of their powerful jaws and ligamented teeth, the Carnosuchid is capable of latching onto prey and shaking it violently into submission. Upon a successful bite attack, the victim must make a *second* dodge roll against the Carnosuchid's *unmodified* attack roll to avoid being latched onto. If successful, the victim has narrowly escaped and can attack or flee. If the victim fails the second dodge roll, he is locked in the jaws of the Carnosuchid and is subject to the power of the animal's most vicious attack.

Once the Carnosuchid acquires a firm grip on its prey, it will proceed to shake it, and bash it against the ground, trees, rocks or other nearby objects until the prey ceases to struggle. The damage from being shaken and bashed against the ground is 4D6+6 M.D. per melee attack, and characters in M.D.C. body armor will take 2D6 points of S.D.C. damage for every 5 M.D. points inflicted. While being thrashed about, victims only get *half* of their normal attacks (rounding up) and are extremely disoriented, operating at a -6 to strike, parry and dodge, with skill performance at -25%. Spell casting and psionics are difficult to perform, first requiring a successful saving throw vs Horror Factor, and then taking *twice* the normal time to perform the action.

Victims *can* attempt to wrench themselves free by using their melee attacks to make dodge rolls against the Carnosuchid's original unmodified bite attack roll. Success means that the victim has been flung free, sailing 15 feet (4.6 m) through the air and taking a final 1D6 M.D. of damage on impact. The victim is also likely to be stunned (01-30%) for 2D6 melee rounds, and the Carnosuchid isn't likely to let its meal get away that quickly.

**Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses):** +1 to strike, +3 to strike with jaws, +1 to dodge, +4 to roll with impact, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, and a +3 to save vs poisons.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Enemies:** Other predators, specifically the faster moving dinosaurs.

**Allies:** None, other than their mate, and only for the two-month mating season in the spring.

**Value:** Their scales are prized for their decorative value and are often used in conjunction with scales from Spitfire Leapers. An intact hide from a Carnosuchid will fetch 500-1000 credits. The ligaments and tendons that lash their teeth into place are highly prized by Eco-Wizards for their particular strength and durability, paying up to 1500 credits per head.

**Habitat:** Mostly found roaming the Georgian Piedmont and the creeks and streams of the Horror Forest, although they can roam anywhere throughout the southeast in search of new territory.



## Lepidosaur

The Lepidosaur is a small, flying reptile common to the deep woods of the Horror Forest. They measure at just around a foot (0.3 m) long, and have fan-like retractable wings that spread out from their rib cage, short forelimbs, and long, narrow hind limbs with a skinny, whipping tail extending from the base of the spine. Their heads are small and triangular with large, roaming black eyes and tiny beaks lined with three rows of miniscule, but razor sharp, teeth. They also have tiny, sharp claws on their hands and feet that end in tiny, re-curved barbs that enable them to climb trees, grasp onto branches and hold onto their prey while they feed. Their usual prey are small mammals, birds, snakes, reptiles and just about anything their size or smaller, but they will also attack anything that looks like a good meal, including humanoids. Individually they are little more than a nuisance, but they live in extended family units, and will attack as a whole when hungry, making them an often overlooked menace within the forest.

Adding to their natural abilities, they also possess limited magical abilities. Lepidosaur is known to wield several powers similar to Air Elemental Magic. These abilities not only enable them to be spectacular flyers, they also give them an edge when hunting and protecting their nests high in the trees.



Because they will hunt and feed as a group, they will often attack groups of animals or humanoids with the intent of causing confusion and separating one or two from the whole. They will then concentrate their efforts on bringing down the individuals that were separated, ignoring the larger group. Their strength of numbers and magical abilities often make them a match for any lone individual.

**Alignment:** Animal, considered Anarchist.

**Attributes:** Animal attributes are very consistent and offer a smaller range of attribute aptitude. I.Q. 1D6+3, medium animal intelligence. M.E. 1D6, M.A. 2+1D6, P.S. 2+1D4, P.P. 22+1D4, P.E. 12+1D6, P.B. 6+1D6, Spd. 4+1D4 on the ground, 34+1D6 flying; an average walking speed of 6 (5 mph/8 km) and an average flying speed of 36 (27 mph/43.2 km).

**M.D.C.:** 1D4+4; a very minor Mega-Damage creature. **Note:** On S.D.C. worlds, they only have 2D6 S.D.C., their P.E. attribute in Hit Points, and an A.R. of 9.

**Horror Factor:** None, individually, but a group of six or more have a Horror Factor of 8. 11 if an individual is wounded, separated or the sole attention of a group of six or more.

**Size:** 1 foot (0.3 m) long from beak to tip of the tail, with a wingspan of 2 feet (0.6 m).

**Weight:** 2 to 3 pounds (0.9-1.35 kg).

**Average Life Span:** 3-4 years.

**P.P.E.:** 2D6

**O.C.C.:** None; animal.

**Natural Abilities:** Excellent color vision, track by sight 35%, good flyer, can also glide from tree to tree. They will also often hunt as a group, concentrating their attacks by swarming onto an individual.

**Attacks per Melee:** 4

**Damage:** Bite 1D6+3 S.D.C., lash with tail 1D4 S.D.C., claw with feet or forelimbs 1D6 S.D.C., plus has a 30% chance of hooking into the flesh, or in the case of clothing and body armor, hooking onto a strap, seam, or other place where the animal can gain purchase. Should the Lepidosaur latch its claws onto a victim, it will be able to attack vital targets, such as the eyes, *without* having to make a called shot. This is often their favored tactic when bringing down larger prey.

**Special Swarming Attack:** When six or more Lepidosaur concentrate their attacks on an individual, they will swarm their victim in a flurry of biting, clawing, screeching, and tail lashing. The victim is unable to see anything except a flapping flurry of wings, scales and claws, resulting in a -9 to strike, parry and dodge, -25% to skill performance, and the victim takes 4D6 S.D.C. points of damage per attack. The Lepidosaur will roll to strike as a combined group using *only* the highest bonus to strike within the group. The victim can defend by swatting away at the creatures by rolling to parry, however dodging is useless against this attack. When combined with the latching ability above, this is a particularly vicious attack.

**Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses):** +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +3 to dodge, +2 to roll with impact.

**Magic:** A Lepidosaur can perform any of the following, at will, without expending its own P.P.E. once per day, equal to a

first level practitioner of magic: Cloud of Slumber, Change Wind Direction, and Mesmerism.

**Psionics:** None.

**Enemies:** Snakes, Azhures and other birds of prey, rival family groups of Lepidosaur.

**Allies:** None, other than their extended family.

**Value:** A whole carcass is worth 20 credits as food. Their only other value is for their wing and rib bones that barbarians use as needles and leather punches; 1 credit per 3 bones. They are sometimes sold as potential familiars and pets in Char and among the barbarian villages, but prices can vary wildly.

**Habitat:** Lepidosaur are found living high in the trees throughout the Horror Forest, competing for space with the Azhures in the SteelTree Forest, and have begun to spread throughout the southeast and across the Appalachian Mountains to the west.



## Razormouth Frogs

Extremely rare and solitary, these animals are rarely seen, and exist more in rumor and legend than in fact. They are masters at camouflage, burying themselves in the earth until only their eyes, nostrils, and mouths are exposed at the surface. There they will wait for prey to come along, unsuspecting of the danger, and then strike, swallowing their prey whole in one gulp! As the prey is swallowed, it passes through a battery of razor-sharp teeth not only in the mouth of the frog, but also lining its throat. By the time the prey reaches the frog's stomach, it has

often been shredded and diced into a fine, goeey slush. Prey that is heavily armored, or still "solid" by the time it reaches the stomach is regurgitated and swallowed *again*. Unless the victim can escape, it will have the horrible experience of being gradually chewed and regurgitated to death.

Razormouth Frogs rarely attack prey larger than themselves, however most barbarian tribes have at least one or two members that lost a foot to a frog the size of a dinner plate. Barbarian children are taught not to stick their hands in small holes because it could be the gullet of a Razormouth! Because of their camouflage ability, they are incredibly difficult to spot, and there are even instances of animals walking right over the top of one of these frogs, resting on its nostrils, and stepping right over its mouth, only to be swallowed a split second later!

Physically, Razormouth Frogs start out their lives no larger than a dime, living off of insects and other small animals. As they grow in size, they continue to eat larger and larger prey, swallowing whatever comes into range of their mouth. The largest ever discovered was found living near the border of the Okefenokee and was large enough to swallow an adult Allosaurus whole! Their size appears to be limited only by the availability of prey, so considering that sauropods walk the earth, it's conceivable that individual Razormouth Frogs could grow to gigantic proportions.

**Alignment:** Animal predator, considered Miscreant or Diabolic.

**Attributes:** Animal attributes are very consistent and offer a smaller range of attribute aptitude. The attributes presented are for a Razormouth Frog large enough to threaten human-sized prey. I.Q. 1D4+2, very low animal intelligence. M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 10+4D6, P.P. 2D6, P.E. 25+2D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 6+1D6; a minimum speed of 7 (5 mph/8 km), most have a speed of 9 (7 mph/11.2 km). Supernatural P.E.

**M.D.C.:** 1D4x10. **Note:** In S.D.C. environments Razormouth Frogs have 2D6x10 S.D.C., Hit Points equal to their P.E. attribute and an A.R. of 8. The damage from their bite attack does an equivalent amount of S.D.C. rather than M.D.

**Horror Factor:** 17, but only after one has been discovered.

**Size:** Approximately 6 feet (1.8 m) in diameter with a mouth that's 3 feet (0.9 m) wide and 4 feet (1.2 m) deep.

**Weight:** 1500 lbs (675 kg).

**Average Life Span:** Unknown, presumably could live for centuries.

**P.P.E.:** 2D6

**O.C.C.:** None; animal.

**Natural Abilities:** Natural camouflage, Supernatural Endurance.

**Vulnerabilities:** Usually immobile, moving only when necessary to find better hunting grounds, consequently it *cannot* dodge and relies on its camouflage abilities for defense.

**Attacks per Melee:** 3

**Damage:** Mouth bite 4D6 M.D., gullet bite/swallow 15+2D6 M.D., stomach acid 3D6 M.D. (per attack). Each stage in the swallowing process is a separate melee attack. The bite and chew with the mouth is its first attack, the swallowing is a second attack and the stomach acid is a third attack. If the prey is still solid and moving by the time it reaches the stomach, the frog will regurgitate it on its next melee attack, reversing the order of damage.

**Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses):** +3 to strike.

**Magic:** A Razormouth Frog can perform any of the following, at will, without expending its own P.P.E. twice per day, equal to a third level practitioner of magic: Chameleon and Invisibility: Simple.

**Psionics:** None.

**Enemies:** Just about anything.

**Allies:** None, just about everything is food.

**Value:** None, not even for meat.

**Habitat:** Found throughout the Horror Forest and along the Eastern Sandy Marshes. They are also found in smaller numbers north into the Carolinas and larger numbers further south into Florida.

## Gruesome Tarbids

Some of the more horrific creatures to inhabit the Horror Forest are the Gruesome Tarbids. Giant, magic wielding, dinosaur eating arachnids, they are absolutely fearless, even in the face of a roaring Tyrannosaurus. Some scholars at Lazlo speculate that these spiders are possibly distant, primitive cousins of the Death Weaver Spiders common to Central America. Thankfully, they reproduce in very small numbers, are strongly cannibalistic, and less than 2% will grow to full adulthood. When they are ready to produce a brood, these giant insects have been known to swoop down on a barbarian village, capture the entire population and use the huts and structures to house egg clusters. The villagers are then the unfortunate first meals of the hungry hatchlings, which will usually turn on themselves once the villagers are consumed. There is no shortage of tales about ruined, web-encrusted villages found deep within the wilds of the Horror Forest.

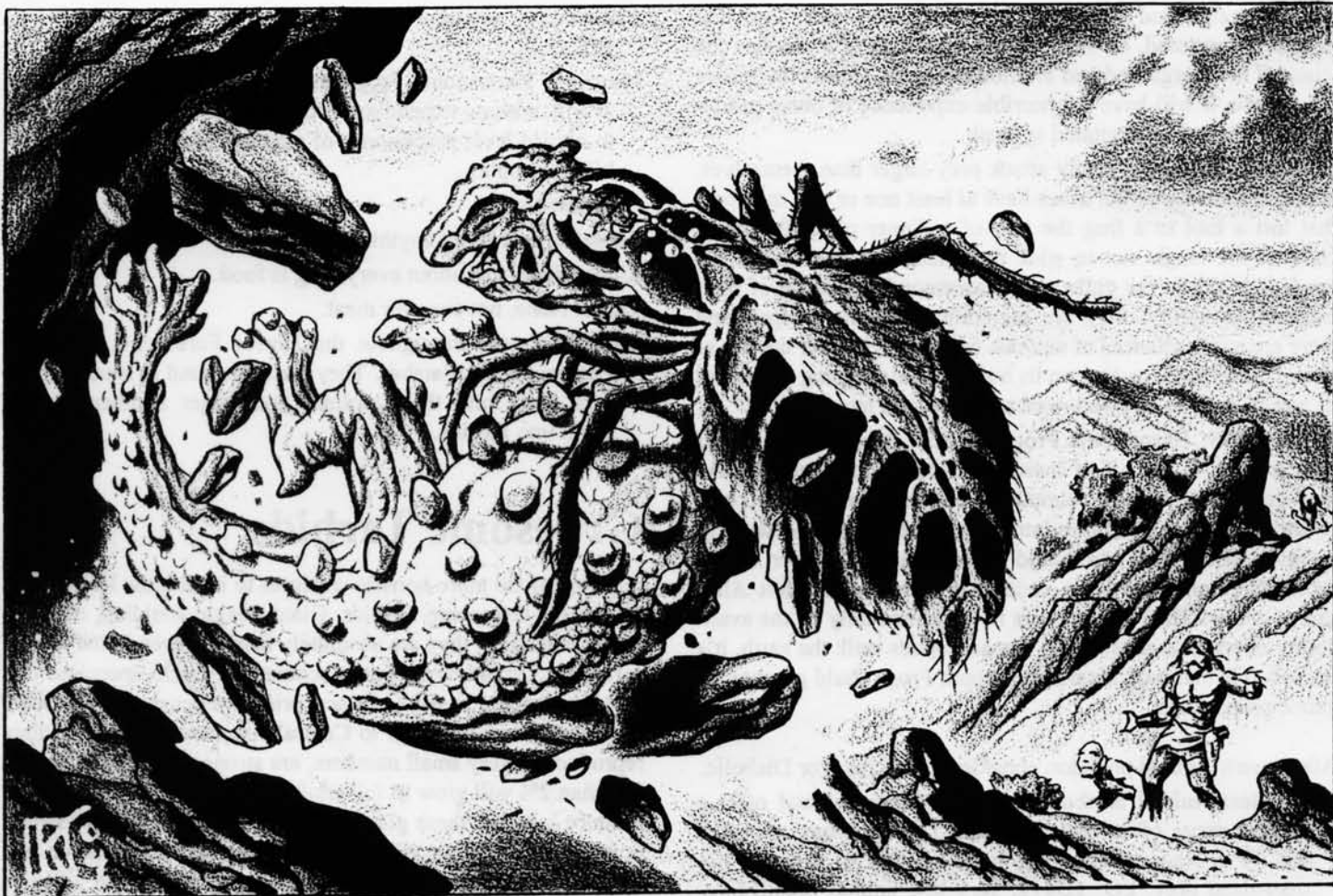
These fearsome spiders are jet black in color and covered in fine, prickly hairs, giving them a somewhat fuzzy appearance. These hairs are extremely sensitive to changes in air pressure, making them almost impossible to sneak up on. They have extremely strong, serrated, almost beetle-like mandibles that they use to shred the flesh of their prey and deliver their paralytic venom. If there is an upside, the venom numbs the pain of the gruesome wound left behind from the bite. In addition to their bite, the Gruesome Tarbids can shoot their webbing at prey, entangling them at a distance, enabling the spider to move in and engage their victim with little fear of retaliation.

As if that wasn't enough, their natural abilities are actually *magical* in nature. Their paralytic venom possesses a strong anti-magic quality that prevents its prey from using magical abilities. This is extremely important since their preferred prey, dinosaurs and dinosaur-like creatures, have natural, magical abilities. Their webbing is also magical, having properties identical to the level four Invocation, Magic Net. Consequently, many scholars see the Gruesome Tarbids as a frightening, yet fascinating, adaptation to the hostile environment of Dinosaur Swamp.

**Alignment:** Animal predator, considered Miscreant or Diabolic.

**Attributes:** Animal attributes are very consistent and offer a smaller range of attribute aptitude. I.Q. 1D6+3, medium ani-





mal intelligence. M.E. 6+2D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 35+2D6, P.P. 20+1D6, P.E. 30+2D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd. 32+2D6; a minimum speed of 34 (26 mph/41.6 km), most have a speed of 38 (29 mph/46.4 km). Supernatural P.S. and P.E.

**Mega-Damage by Location:**

- \*Head – 50
- Main Body – 1D4x100+50
- \*\*Mandibles – 45
- Legs (8) – 110 each

**Note:** In S.D.C. environments Gruesome Tarbids have 1D4x100 S.D.C., Hit Points equal to three times their P.E. attribute and an A.R. of 13. Their attacks do an equivalent amount of S.D.C. rather than M.D.

\* A single asterisk indicates a small or difficult target to hit and requires a “called shot” at -3 to strike.

\*\* A double asterisk indicates a very small and difficult target to hit and requires a “called shot” at -6 to strike.

**Horror Factor:** 15

**Size:** 20 feet (6.1 m) long, 18 feet (5.4 m) tall.

**Weight:** 1800 lbs (810 kg).

**Average Life Span:** 11 years.

**P.P.E.:** 6D6

**O.C.C.:** None; animal.

**Natural Abilities:** Impervious to disease, can walk, run and climb on most surfaces, even upside down, on walls, trees and rock faces with ease. Only smooth, glassy surfaces will

impede movement; half normal speed on such surfaces. The hairs covering their body are sensitive to the slightest movements, giving them a natural Automatic Dodge ability. Nightvision 150 feet (45.7 m), infrared vision 300 feet (91.4 m). See also the special combat abilities below.

**Attacks per Melee:** 5

**Damage:** Bite 5D6+3 M.D., kick 4D6 M.D. plus has a 01-35% chance of knocking down a human-sized opponent, body block 3D6 plus has a 01-55% chance of knocking down a human-sized opponent.

**Special Venom Bite:** The venom of a Gruesome Tarbid has two major qualities. The first is the paralytic nature of the venom. Victims that take damage from the bite of a Gruesome Tarbid must make a saving throw vs poison at 14 or higher. Failure results in the victim falling into a numbing, catatonic state for 1D4 hours. The second quality is that magic-wielding victims who fail the first saving throw must make a saving throw vs magic at 16 or higher. This applies to both spell casters and creatures with natural magical abilities, but does not include psionic powers. Failure results in the victim being unable to use *any* inherent magical abilities, including spell casting, for 2D6 hours!

**Special Web Shooting:** Gruesome Tarbids can shoot a sticky strand of web from the spinnerets on their torso, disabling their prey from a distance. This webbing is incredibly strong, the equivalent of the 4<sup>th</sup> level Invocation, Magic Net. Gruesome Tarbids can use this ability once per melee round and at no expense of personal P.P.E.

**Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses):** +6 to initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to roll with impact, +2 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs psionics, +6 to save vs poison, +12 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Enemies:** Everything, since just about anything that moves is considered food.

**Allies:** None, even other Gruesome Tarbids are a source of food.

**Value:** Typically none, although most barbarians, especially Eco-Wizards, would pay up to 2000 credits for a liter of Gruesome Tarbid venom. It's often used by Eco-Wizards against rivals during tribal conflicts.

**Habitat:** Found throughout the Horror Forest, but are found in largest concentrations on the northern edge near the Appalachian Mountains.

# The CS Janissary Project



Optional Adventure Source Material for Rifts®

By Erick Fackler

## The Lone Star Complex: Late Summer, 104 P.A.

Doctor Desmond Bradford smiled as he settled into a chair within the secure observation room. The room, which could seat fifty comfortably, contained only three other people: General Loni Kashbrook, the head of the CS forces in Lone Star, Doctor Laura Cunningham, one of Bradford's most trusted and brilliant subordinates, and Lieutenant Matthew Kryzanowski, Bradford's adjutant. The company for this event was small and select, but soon the whole world would find out what he had been able to do. With Bradford's arrival, everyone cleared for the forthcoming demonstration was present, and the lights dimmed a few seconds after he took his seat.

The armored shutters covering the reinforced Plexiglas window slid open, revealing a large rectangular room with a dirt floor, about twice the size of a basketball court. The wall opposite the observation room had a large vehicle-sized door set in its center, with a smaller man-sized door just to the right. The other three walls each had centered doors large enough to accommodate a small suit of power armor. With the exception of the doors, the walls were completely bare and colored the light gray of reinforced concrete.

The only objects in the room were a number of scraggly looking plants, scattered pieces of dead wood, and a few rocks ranging from pebbles to small boulders. As Bradford and his guests watched, the door in the right hand wall opened, and a pair of burly Grackletooth D-Bees emerged. The Grackletooth were 9-foot (2.7 m) tall behemoths that probably weighed six or seven hundred pounds (270-315 kg) each. One was slightly taller than his companion and had skin of a deeper tan. Their long, dragon-like faces were hairless and leering.

The door shut behind them, and the Grackletooth looked around the room in seeming bewilderment. Not surprising, as they had both been heavily tranquilized. As primitive as the D-Bees were, they were certainly a sturdy form of life.

As the pair of Grackletooth moved deeper into the room, the door on the left hand wall slid open, and a man wearing a set of CS fatigues stepped inside. He was unassuming at six foot one (1.85 m), and though he was obviously very fit, he seemed absolutely tiny when compared to the hulking Grackletooth who were at that moment staring at him with mounting dislike. Despite the glares, the man stepped away from the wall and walked toward the two with no obvious concern showing on his face.

Bradford smiled to himself and glanced to his right where General Kashbrook had sat forward with obvious concern when the man entered. She looked at Bradford quickly, a look of suspicion creeping over her face. He held her gaze for a few seconds until she turned back to the window. Bradford's smile broadened and he likewise returned his eyes.

The man stopped in the center of room, and stood at ease as the Grackletooth warily approached him. They seemed hesitant, Bradford noted, which was understandable given the distinct difference in the strength and endurance of humans and Grackletooth. They clearly smelled a trap. The two D-Bees stopped perhaps twenty paces from the man and looked first at each other, and then at the other doors as if to reassure themselves that they were really the only ones in the room. Returning their gaze to the man, Bradford could see their massive bodies tensing... and then the shorter of the Grackletooth lunged, his powerful legs launching him quickly forward with one hand out and the other drawn back for a blow.

The human dodged to the side while loosing a side kick at the Grackletooth as it went by him. The kick connected with the side of the Grackletooth's right knee and the creature stumbled,



coming down on its hands and knees. It looked over its shoulder in surprise.



By this time, the taller of the two had come in with fists flying. He jabbed at the man with his right and when the man dodged, his left was already on its way in. The blow was powerful and even though the man was able to parry it, he stumbled backwards nearly ten feet (3 m), very nearly losing his balance. The larger Grackleteeth pressed closer, throwing a right hook that the man just barely ducked and then landing a solid kick to the man's chest, which threw him backwards fifteen feet (4.6 m) and put him on his back in the dirt.

The big Grackleteeth charged in and leaped at the man, obviously trying to crush him while he lay on the ground. However, the human twisted and brought his right leg out in a kick that slashed across the Grackleteeth's broad chin and knocked him away. As the man got to his feet the shorter Grackleteeth attacked him. The creature threw a fast straight right hand that would have dented power armor. However, instead of avoiding the blow, the man reached up with both hands and caught the Grackleteeth's huge fist, stopping it cold.

The shorter Grackleteeth's mouth fell open with surprise and confusion. The man, seeing his chance, yanked down on the D-Bee's wrist, pulling the big jaw into a vicious elbow, which produced a loud crack as the impact broke bones.

A foamy mixture of blood, spittle, and loose teeth poured from the wounded creature's lolling mouth as it shook its head dazedly. The wounded Grackleteeth staggered backward and the man pressed his attack, landing two body shots and then kicking it hard in the groin. This brought the shorter Grackle-

tooth to its knees where the man floored it with a savage round-house kick. Looking around, he found the larger one just regaining his feet. The man sprinted toward it, jumping feet first and bringing both feet down on the creature's left knee, completely blowing out the joint and toppling the larger Grackleteeth to the ground where it rolled around, clutching its knee and yelping in pain.

At this point the man straightened up, and brushed the dirt from his clothes and hair. He then turned to the larger Grackleteeth and taking its head in both hands, snapped its thick neck. The unconscious one received the same treatment. With his opponents now dispatched, the man walked to the right hand wall and leaned against the doorframe in a bored sort of way, clearly waiting for someone to open the door and let him out of the demonstration area.

General Kashbrook, who had been on the edge of her seat for the entire minute and a half of combat, turned and looked at Bradford with wide eyes.

"How?" she managed to stammer.

Doctor Cunningham giggled from the second row of seats and grinned even more broadly than Bradford. He knew that she was exceedingly proud of her work.

"General..." Bradford said, as he rose to his feet. "What you have just witnessed is the beginning of the next phase of human evolution. This man is one of the first successful participants of a project that began almost ten years ago. He is the harbinger of

a new dawn for humanity. A time when humanity no longer has to rely on the laws of nature or the whims of God to evolve. We can do it ourselves. We have DONE it ourselves. This is the proof."

"Doctor Bradford, what is this man?"

"Just as you say... a man. But a more perfect, more highly evolved man." Answered Bradford, blithely.

"Doctor, I need more information than that." General Kashbrook said shortly. She was obviously unsettled by what she had seen. "Is he some sort of new Juicer or 'Borg? How does he have such strength?"

Bradford nodded his head slightly. "You still don't understand me. He is a man. He has not been given any conventional or experimental Juicer conversion. Nor has he been altered by cybernetics and bionics in an amount significant enough to make him a cyborg. He is a man. A man that I have made."

She stared at him blankly.

Bradford sighed. He knew that General Kashbrook was a brighter than average woman and a very capable soldier, however he did sometimes wish that she had a less pedestrian intellect. It would save him a lot of time if he no longer had to explain the basics of his vision, when the really fascinating part of his work lay in its details and fine points. She just couldn't understand. A pity.

"General," Bradford said a trifle impatiently. "You are looking at a human soldier. What differentiates him from the balance of the citizenry within the Coalition is that his genetic makeup was doctored before he was born. He is what he is because I have made him such."

"What?!" said a stunned Kashbrook. "I had no idea that you had been tinkering with human DNA as well. Wasn't creating the Psi-Hounds enough of an accomplishment for you?"

"Of course it wasn't enough!" Bradford snapped, his patience reaching its end. "General, the Psi-Hounds were perfected years ago and what's more, canines don't have a tenth of the potential of human beings. Our minds separate us from the beasts, and make up for what we lack in strength, natural weapons, or enhanced senses. Using our intelligence, man has become the most successful predator that the universe has ever known. What I have done is given the human mind the tools to fulfill its full potential. Tinkering with the genes and traits of mutant canines was not going to be my magnum opus."

"What does the Emperor have to say about this?" General Kashbrook asked quietly. Bradford's outburst had startled her. She was a strong woman, and she was sure that she could take the doctor easily in single combat, despite his size. However, there was something very intimidating about him, and it was magnified tenfold when he was angry. No man she'd ever met could be as icy as Doctor Bradford.

"The Emperor has fully endorsed this project. I came to him asking for an additional line of funds more than ten years ago. What I'm doing will make the Coalition the most powerful government in the world." Bradford smiled, his good mood returning. "For now, more testing and research must be done. However, I am confident that in the next ten years, all of our newborn children will be representatives of a higher stage of humanity. Smile, General, for today this project has borne its first real fruit and ensured the dominance of mankind over all brute races."

"I see. Truly, you have a dizzying vision Doctor. I trust all the information on your test subjects is in the dossier?" General Kashbrook's words helped mask her unease. She had always sort of liked Bradford, despite his peculiarities, but it had become increasingly clear to her that he had a few loose screws. Now she vowed silently to stay out of his affairs as much as she could. She had a feeling that Emperor Prosek's idea of the goal of this project was quite a bit different from Bradford's, but she trusted the Emperor's judgment. Regardless, the time had come for her to leave. Doctor Cunningham and Lieutenant Kryzanowski had already exited.

Bradford's deep voice brought her out of her musings "Yes, yes, of course. Everything you need is in the file. I know you may be wondering why you were even called to this demonstration. Well it seems that I trust you enough to let you know what I'm working on." He smiled toothily. "Besides... when they are ready for combat, they'll have to be organized into a special unit. It's best that you have some idea of what to expect before I dump my children in your lap."

General Kashbrook nodded. "If you'll excuse me, Doctor, I must return to my office. I have a lot to think about."

"Yes you do, General. Give it the thought it deserves."

## The Janissary Project

### The early years

The Janissary Project was founded by Doctor Desmond Bradford, the chief administrator of the Lone Star Complex, and the head of the Genetics Division of the Lone Star Research Center. In 77 P.A., Bradford delivered the first of the Psi-Hounds to the CS high command for consideration. Five years later, the process of their creation had been refined, and aside from the continued tinkering of the behavioral scientists, the work on the Dog Boys was complete. Bradford's next project included the work on non-canine mutant animals, but after the initial success of the Dog Boys, he found such projects to be only slight variations of his original work and thus very boring. What really interested Bradford, and what he longed to delve into, was human DNA. He was intrigued with the idea of combining animal traits with the human genetic code, and spent much of the next decade researching and mapping human DNA.

In 89 P.A., he approached his good friend Emperor Karl Prosek, requesting permission to develop a human embryo that was resistant to disease and more robust and healthy in natural life. As Bradford explained it, the genetically altered reproductive cells would create an unusually fit and healthy human. If successful, the process could become standard treatment for all CS citizens, and would serve to make the entire population healthier, and more long-lived. By doctoring reproductive cells, all new children born after a certain date would be so blessed. The Emperor gave his approval and the additional resources that Bradford requested, adding the stipulation that no dangerous experiments be run on humans during this time. Bradford agreed and began work immediately. The project was called Project Darwin.



Bradford accomplished his initial goal by 91 P.A., doctoring a human zygote to produce a human being with a faster and more efficient metabolism, a greater propensity for muscular growth, and a resistance to a slew of diseases. With this accomplished, Bradford began his real work. Project Darwin had always had unofficial objectives that were slated for development immediately after the completion of the project's more public goals. He meant to not only strengthen humanity, but to put it on a physical plane greater than or at least equal to the D-Bees that polluted the realm of mankind. In addition to his earlier steps, Bradford intended to add a number of modifications, including superhuman strength and endurance, enhanced senses of smell, sight, and hearing, heightened reflexes, and an increased growth rate.

Bradford worked diligently, doctoring his test cells successfully with some of the desired traits. He was able to amplify the human senses of smell and hearing, and increased the growth rate by 30%. None of these changes, however, were large enough for what Bradford had envisioned. He knew that crossing human DNA with animals and D-Bees to extract useful traits created endless possibilities, but he was unable to take that step without endangering his work. Though it was easily within his moral code to violate the Emperor's directive, Bradford required a host of D-Bee traits in order to correctly synthesize some of the abilities he was trying to impart on humanity. He had reservations about taking this step and actually using traits from "impure species" to aid his work, when discovery meant the potential destruction of all of his work.

By 92 P.A., his research had come up against a wall as he tried to solve these problems. The largest obstacle seemed to be how to give a human the supernatural strength and endurance enjoyed by so many D-Bees. Then Bradford was unexpectedly aided by Emperor Prosek, who bid him develop a hunter-killer that preyed on Xiticix. To Bradford, this was a green light to use whatever means he needed to complete his work. He loyally dove into the Xiticix Killer Project, and used it as a sort of test bed for the types of genetic crossing that he would use for his own super humans. Bradford styled them Janissaries, after the Christian warrior slaves of the ancient Turks, who proved to be some of the most fearsome soldiers of the Middle Ages. Few caught the historical reference. In 92 P.A., Project Darwin was closed and Project Janissary was officially opened in its place.

By 97 P.A., Bradford had achieved the vast bulk of his objectives, modifying the human embryos to provide greatly heightened reflexes, enhanced senses, an accelerated growth rate of 50% above normal, and the much sought after supernatural strength and Mega-Damage skin. It was now only necessary to produce a test subject who manifested all of the new abilities for the project to begin bearing fruit.

## Gene Helix

Many children were born in the cold labs of the Lone Star complex to both human and humanoid D-Bee mothers who had been artificially impregnated. Most of these test-bed children were destroyed, along with their mothers, after birth. The most brutal of the tests were those that involved the formation of M.D.C. skin. To see if the cross had been successful, the newborn was scanned quickly, and then shot at 10 feet (3 m) or less

with a low-powered laser pistol. Most of the children were vaporized by the blast, and even Bradford's most trusted staff began to feel uneasy about what was being done. However, a newborn was finally produced whose skin was supernaturally tough. This child was the first real member of Project Janissary and was born on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 98 P.A. Others would soon follow. By age two, the child, named Gene Helix in a sort of tribute to the DNA that had been manipulated to produce him, was already equal to an eight year old in size and maturity. By age three he was almost fully matured, and supernaturally strong and fast. However, Gene was not the flawless success that he had at first appeared to be. Bradford's maturation program had not worked properly and Gene Helix's mind suffered the consequences.

Gene rapidly became a difficult and truculent child during his fourth year. He became belligerent toward the Lone Star research staff and began to exhibit symptoms of mental illness. His attention span eroded, he ceased cooperating with his instructors, and he began to develop a countenance that could only be described as sinister. As time went on, Gene continued to develop physically, growing to be well over six feet (1.8 m) and becoming incredibly strong. However, his face seemed to indicate a more subtle change as well. Great dark circles appeared under his eyes and his hair began to grey. His eyes developed a vacant look to them as his irises lost all color and his pupils remained almost permanently dilated. With a constantly furrowed brow and alternately vacant or narrowed eyes, Gene's face bore a look of severe mental derangement.

Finally, Bradford decided to terminate his first, "flawed" Janissary after an argument between Gene and one of his caretakers degenerated into a fistfight. Gene's first blow took off the other man's head, and Bradford sent in a pair of full conversion cyborgs to "take care" of the situation. The three and a half year old fought savagely against the cyborgs, denting their armor and leaving both with moderate damage at the conclusion of the fight. Bradford was impressed by Gene's raw physical power but was disturbed by his mental degeneration.

Bradford was also faced with the prospect of dealing with a second test batch of eight other prototype Janissaries. They were virtually identical to Gene, having followed a year after his birth. Clearly something would have to be done with them, as it was too late to correct the overwhelming flaws that were sure to develop in their personalities. Bradford had also created a much more refined group of six who showed real promise. Clearly he didn't need these eight potential failures any longer. Instead of having these eight unfortunates immediately executed, Bradford had them temporarily locked away in the bowels of the Lone Star Complex until he was ready to deal with them. As it turned out, he was spared the task of deciding their fate.

## The Great Escape of the *Greeks*

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 102 P.A., Gene Helix was terminated. The same day, his eight immediate predecessors were moved to a secure holding area on level eight of the Lone Star Complex. They were to remain there indefinitely, the duration of their stay dictated by Bradford's whims. The eight children had never been as seriously cared for as Gene Helix. The primary purpose of their existence was a test to see if the process that created Gene was

going to be easily reproducible. They had been created with virtually no upgrades to genetic code or behavioral and maturation programs. In short, they were deemed of lesser importance after their birth. The staff dubbed them the *Greeks* as each was named after a Greek letter.

Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Theta, Omega, Epsilon, Tau, and Rho did, in fact, have glaring mental instabilities, but none of them were as severely afflicted as was Gene. Ironically, the presence of one another had solidified a strong family sense among the eight brothers. Shortly after their incarceration, the brothers found that being isolated from one another and stored away in this cell block was likely to be permanent. All they had was one another and Bradford, who now had betrayed them. Though no unified plan was possible while they were separated, all of the brothers began thinking of escape. Their father (Bradford) clearly cared nothing for them and thus should hold no further sway over their lives.

Staying docile and obedient for three whole weeks, the eight brothers showed impressive will power. Finally, the routine in the secure area relaxed enough for the guards to begin making mistakes. A guard put his hand too far into Tau's cell when pushing a tray of food through the slot at the cell door's bottom. The hapless guard soon found himself yanked bodily through an opening that was only two feet (0.6 m) wide and eight inches (20 cm) tall. The result was messy to say the least, but Tau was able to extract the guard's Neural Mace. He then used it to short out the locking mechanism for the door.

Tau freed his brothers quickly, and the eight of them disappeared into the sewer system underneath the Lone Star Complex. They got about a fifteen minute head start before Bradford sent out the first search team to recapture them. The rapid response search team was a ten man squad made up of Kill Hounds, Kill Cats, and two Psi-Stalkers. The first team never returned, and the other teams found no trace of the "Greeks." The only signs of their passage were the broken bodies of two of the Kill Hounds and one of the Psi-Stalkers. No other bodies were found.

The escape of the eight cousins of Gene Helix irked Bradford, but he did nothing more than cycle their faces into the *Lone Star Most Wanted* bulletins. They were of secondary importance to him. Bradford had much more important work to do and was quite content to allow the *Greeks* to drop off the face of the earth. Unfortunately for him, the *Greeks* didn't stay lost for very long.

## The Second Generation and the inception of the First Echelon

By early 100 P.A., Doctor Bradford had already decided that Gene would become more and more unstable as he matured, and so he began applying some of the same behavioral modifiers that he had used on his mutant animals to the Janissary cells. His goal was to temper their hostility slightly, without treading on their humanity. These modifications, coupled with a different and more nurturing upbringing program (the Janissaries' "formative years" were only the first 9 months of their lives) than Gene had experienced, produced very favorable results. Gene's six newly modified descendents had all been given varying

amounts of behavioral modification in addition to a constantly evolving maturation program. If Gene and the *Greeks* had been the First Generation of Project Janissary, these six were the Second.

In December of 102 P.A., Bradford began the creation of what would become known within Project Janissary as the First Echelon. An advanced prototype group of forty Janissary zygotes was inserted into a group of host volunteers, all of them part of the Lone Star Research staff, between December 5<sup>th</sup> and December 12<sup>th</sup>. These thirty men and ten women (the genders of the children were known before impregnation) had all benefitted from the testing of their fifteen predecessors, and would be the first to use the most refined upbringing program and educational system available. Additionally, these Janissaries would be the first born to willing human parents.

While the First Echelon was still in utero, Bradford and his team continued their work on the six Janissaries who had followed Gene and the *Greeks*. They had all been given names, but for research purposes, they were commonly referred to as numbers one through six based on the order of their creation. Despite a slightly less refined series of growth programs, the six, collectively called the Second Generation, matured more or less without serious flaws, adapting to new situations quickly, and displaying an impressive aptitude for all fields within the educational curriculums. Numbers 2, 3, 5, and 6 all had a remarkable propensity for all things mechanical and were especially interested in machines, computers, and electronics. In addition to their academic success, the Second Generation suffered from none of the personality problems that had afflicted Gene. Without exception, they formed a sort of child to parent bond with their primary instructors and caretakers, while viewing Bradford as a revered and wizened grandfather.

In August of 103 P.A., several important things happened within the Lone Star Complex. The first was the birth of the entire First Echelon within a week of each other. None of the children had been premature, and thirty-two of the forty arrived exactly nine months after their conception. The second important event was the nearing of the Second Generation's second birthday and with that, the commencement of military training. Extensive military training had always been a given when dealing with the Second Generation, because it was necessary to observe how Bradford's super-humans could fight.

Bradford planned to sell his program to the Emperor by creating a combat division the likes of which the Coalition had never seen, and injecting it into the Tolkeen campaign. Once the Emperor had beheld the awesome potential of the Janissary program, he would surely institute measures to make the genetic augmentation common practice throughout the Coalition. Though Bradford had not completed a method for doctoring an egg after fertilization, he remained confident that he would have that problem solved by the time the first Janissary Division had become active.

As the First Echelon developed, the Second Generation went through their combat training. They were all incredibly intelligent, had near photographic memories, and were capable of impressive feats of ingenuity as well. Number six was especially intelligent, which pleased Bradford, as he had modified his behavioral engineering program slightly before inception. Running a vastly accelerated military training program, it soon became



apparent that the Janissaries would not only be physically more powerful than the current human soldiers of the CS Army, they would be able to handle a wider variety of training as well. MOS after MOS was heaped on the Second Generation as Bradford's scientists probed the depths of their children's abilities. Finally it was determined that the average Janissary would have a more diverse range of skills than the CS Special Forces.

All six of the Second Generation subjects were trained in the operation of most CS personal equipment, ground vehicles, robots and power armor (including the Death Wing). Additionally, they were capable of performing many auxiliary positions, having attained an amazing level of knowledge of machines, electronics, and communications equipment. Finally, the Janissaries were taught a form of hand-to-hand combat that utilized techniques from Commando, Assassin, and Martial Art styles of fighting. This entire training system had originally been projected for three years. In practice, the Janissaries of the Second Generation completed it fully in a year and eight months. Despite the fact that their training was incomplete by the summer of 104 P.A., Bradford was confident enough to offer the aforementioned demonstration to General Kashbrook, who would eventually be in the know when it came time to form a Janissary Division.

Despite the fact that the Second Generation lacked the fine-tuning that the First Echelon was currently enjoying, Bradford was extremely impressed with their progress. He had originally earmarked the six for extermination after testing and maturation were complete, but their progress in all areas of the program surprised him. He made the decision to make the members of the Second Generation into his own cadre of personal bodyguards and assistants. They would be given false records and permanently assigned to the director of the Lone Star Complex as a permanent part of Bradford's staff.

## The Janissaries and the War on Tolkeen

The First Echelon were to be the first perfected members of Project Janissary. They were very similar to the Second Generation, with the differences between them being mostly matters of evolving maturation and educational programs. In the end, the First Echelon possessed slightly greater physical strength, a uniform aptitude for mechanical and electrical systems, and a period of maturation of only four years, although their education and maturation program systems lasted into the latter half of their fifth year. By September of 107 P.A., the First Echelon was fully developed and almost fully trained. Additionally, Bradford began the creation of a much larger Second Echelon in September of 104 P.A., and by early summer of 105 P.A. six hundred children were born to the project.

Bradford soon realized that the war on Tolkeen might well be over before he had the necessary personnel to field a full combat division. The Emperor had launched his Campaign of Unity far sooner than Bradford had anticipated. With this development, Bradford was forced to change the nature of his plan. He had only the First Echelon ready for action and they were only a single combat platoon. Bradford had them transferred to the

Tolkeen Theater in February of 108 P.A., along with number five from the Second Generation and a small team of doctors and observers from Bradford's staff. The First Echelon would operate as a Special Ops platoon and tackle only the most difficult and most important tasks available.

As luck would have it, the First Echelon disappeared with General Jericho Holmes' 400,000 man Army Group into the Duluth Hivelands during the Sorcerer's Revenge in late 108 P.A. When his army returned to the offensive in 109 P.A., the First Echelon was in the front lines. Their platoon was involved in the first slashing attack into the heart of Tolkeen itself, and they played a large role in the destruction of the Triangular Defense System. With the fall of Tolkeen, four of the First Echelon had fallen in battle and General Holmes decorated the entire unit, praising it as perhaps the most effective Special Forces unit in his army. During their first year of service, the First Echelon had amassed an impressive combat record and gained the praise of the Coalition's premier soldier. The Emperor noticed, though he was ignorant of what exactly the First Echelon was.

The accelerated timetable had forced Bradford to debut his creations on a less auspicious scale. Bradford at first considered this a grave misfortune, but after some thought decided that it was for the best. Though Emperor Prosek would no doubt be impressed by what Bradford had accomplished, such a large demonstration may have alarmed him, and certainly would have terrified some of his more troublesome advisors, most notably Colonel Joseph Prosek II. They may have been able to prevail on the Emperor to limit the project, or cancel it altogether. At this point Bradford decided to be careful. He told the Emperor who the First Echelon were but clouded over the particulars of their physical and mental aptitudes. For now the Emperor only had to know that Lone Star's genetics team had helped produce some of the best soldiers in the army.

Bradford decided to build his division more quietly. Since they had missed the action in Tolkeen in the main, he would have to wait for another conflict to arise. The purging of the Xiticix or the decimation of the Federation of Magic seemed the most logical proving grounds for the 1<sup>st</sup> Janissary Division, and by that time he hoped to have the full potential of his project ready for presentation. When the time came, he would deliver the Coalition both military victory and the next step of human evolution. In short, he would be the father of a new humanity.

While waiting for another military opportunity, Bradford elected to continue his research on doctoring fertilized eggs, so that an expecting parent's young fetus could be treated and granted the gift that the whole human race would enjoy in a few short generations. His work on modifying zygotes formed without any prior manipulation had finally begun producing results by January of 109 P.A., and he was an estimated fourteen months away from the completion of that surprisingly challenging project. For now he would sell the Janissaries as an elite military organization, as their name suggested. The ultimate goal of the project would be pushed back until the time was right. Once the appropriate time came along, Doctor Desmond Bradford would hold the key to man's supremacy over the world, and he would not hesitate to use it.

## Logistics of the creation of a master race

As massive as the Lone Star Complex was, Bradford's program for the creation of the Second Echelon required the creation of a separate and more spacious facility that did not directly use up precious space in the complex. The new facility was created near the town of Amarillo, sixty miles (96 km) or so north of the Lone Star Complex. Amarillo was a small town of CS citizens numbering roughly 1,800. The new facility was built as an add-on to the medium-sized CS military base that already existed at the site and was constructed during the winter of 104-105 P.A. Most of the human parents were moved into the town, increasing its size to nearly 3,000 and bringing increased prosperity and business. When the children were born, they received their education at the facility, commonly called Amarillo Care Labs. In addition to their part in the Janissary program, the new addition to the base served as both a clinic and a supplement to the local hospital. After the formative period, the Second Echelon would be sent off to the Lone Star Complex for training. The parents would play no further part in their upbringing, though they would be granted visitation rights toward the end of the military training program.

The parents of the Second Echelon were a mixture of volunteers from the complex and people who were promised CS citizenship if they would agree to take part in the project. The roles of the parents in the children's development were small to begin with and tightly scripted to follow the maturation program. Parents who wished to take a more active or individualistic role in the care and upbringing of the children were quietly taken aside and given a story about the importance of their children to the welfare of the CS. They were reminded that the child that they had brought into the world had originated at Lone Star and was different than a normal child. They were urged to take pride in the part they were allowed to play, and consoled by the fact that their child would be out of contact for only two years, during which time he or she would be given exquisite care and the finest education offered anywhere in the Coalition. Furthermore, all parents were financially compensated by the CS for their trouble and work. With only one exception, the explanation and financial compensation were sufficient to pacify the parents of the Second Echelon.

## Freddy Tolivar, Number 186

Of the over 1,000 parents of the Second Echelon, only one couple refused to be placated by the CS propaganda officers who came to their house to explain just why they would have no say in the raising of their child. Jimmy and Moira Tolivar were newly admitted CS citizens who had lived in a small hamlet south of Odessa. They had traveled north primarily to seek CS citizenship, and to start a family in a safe area. They were both 22 years old when they arrived in the outskirts of Lone Star city. Shortly after their arrival, the citizenship office turned them away. Dejected, the Tolivars spent a month in Lone Star's 'Burbs doing odd jobs and struggling to get by. They were considering leaving their squalid surroundings when Moira heard the rumor that the CS would automatically grant citizenship to couples who agreed to carry an artificially created baby. Moira excitedly told Jimmy of the rumor and professed her willingness

to go through with it. Jimmy, with some reservations, agreed and went with Moira the next day to inquire about the validity of the rumor. They quickly learned that it was true, and after answering some questions about their place of origin and family history, they were admitted. Three weeks later, Moira was artificially impregnated and the two were moved to Amarillo, full CS citizens.

When the child was born, the Tolivars named him Freddy and began following the set of "first week" procedures that the CS Doctors had given them. These procedures differed little from the care that one would normally give an infant, with only a prohibition of breast-feeding and a number of vitamin supplements marking a departure from the norm. However, after the first week the CS medical staffers began to require that the child spend the day at the Care Labs. The parents were only allowed to spend four of the ten hours at the Labs with their children. The CS medical staff was constantly fine-tuning and upgrading the developmental programs that Bradford's creations enjoyed. Though it could be argued that removing the children from their parents was cruel and a developmental step backwards, the project staff knew that the children required a much different timetable for growth. After all, they were trying to produce a program that all CS citizens could follow with ease. The Second Echelon was, at its heart, the first large-scale test batch and as such, it would be a detriment if the children developed overly strong bonds with the parents.

After Freddy was a month old, the Tolivars were informed that he would be required to stay at the Labs full time. The parents would, of course, be allowed visitation time, and would play a part in the upbringing, albeit a rapidly diminishing one. It was during Freddy's second month of life that a CS propaganda officer from Lone Star whom the Tolivars had never met sat in their living room calmly sipping the tea they had offered him and informed them that after nine months, their child would be transferred to the Lone Star Complex for testing, care, and education. Jimmy Tolivar exploded with rage as the officer was halfway through his speech. The details of the exchange are unknown, but upon the officer's return to the Care Labs, a censure was put in the Tolivars' files along with a cautionary note regarding any further dealings with them.

The very next day, Jimmy arrived at the Care Labs at the regular time with Moira in tow. He went to the lounge where he regularly met his son and upon getting there, gathered the boy up in his arms, and tried to walk out the front door with him. The CS response was quick. Jimmy was stopped at the reception area and asked politely to hand over the child. When he refused, the orderly motioned to a pair of burly Psi-Hounds who forcibly subdued Jimmy with Neural Maces. Jimmy was detained for a few hours, patched up, and sent home. However, that evening, another guest arrived.

*Jimmy got painfully off of the couch and walked slowly to the door in response to the chime. Moira watched him closely. Though his wounds had been treated by the Care Labs people, he moved like he had a yoke across his shoulders. He was stooped and just generally beaten down by what had happened at the labs. She knew that the physical pain was not the cause.*

*Jimmy got to the door and opened it, revealing a fit looking man of just over six feet. He had short black hair, cold gray-blue eyes, and a well-defined, rather handsome face. He*



wore a three-quarter-length military style trench coat with a row of black and silver buttons running up the left side of his torso. Only a small silver emblem pin on his high coat collar identified him as a CS representative. His slacks and boots were black as well, with only the film of reddish dust from the street caked on his boots providing a break in the color.

With a chill, sharp voice, obviously produced by a military upbringing, the man spoke. "I am Lieutenant Shawn O'Brien, special attaché to Dr. Desmond Bradford, administrator of the Lone Star Complex. I am sorry to bother you at this hour but I felt that we needed to speak. May I come in?"

Jimmy glanced over his shoulder at Moira, concern etched across his face. She gave him a nearly imperceptible nod. What could possibly be gained by turning away this bureaucrat? It would only make things worse.

Turning tiredly back to the man, Jimmy said, "Sure. Come on in. Can I offer you something to drink? Water, tea, or maybe something stronger?"

The Lieutenant stepped past Jimmy, replying brusquely, "Nothing for me, thank you. This shouldn't take too long." He stood not far from the door and seemed to take in the whole room and its occupants with only the briefest of glances. Despite the rapidity of his scan, Moira felt like he was closely watching everything at once. It was a disquieting feeling.

Jimmy shut the door and moved past Lieutenant O'Brien to sit down again on the couch. He did not invite his guest to take a seat, his courtesy exhausted by the drink offer. "So... what can we do for you?" Jimmy asked apprehensively, a pinched and sour expression on his face.

Lieutenant O'Brien stood a few feet from the door as stiff and straight as a flagpole. He regarded them for a moment before beginning. "I am here because it seems that there was a measure of confusion at the Care Labs today. As I understand the situation, you attempted to kidnap your own child for reasons unknown. You were caught, subdued, detained, and upon treatment of your minor injuries, released." He looked only at Jimmy as he spoke. "I am here to make sure that we understand each other and that such an unpleasant incident need never occur again."

Jimmy's face had drawn tight into a scowl during the twenty seconds or so that Lieutenant O'Brien had spoken. When the Lieutenant finished, Jimmy's voice was positively dripping with contempt. "Kidnapping... you have the nerve to come in here and tell me that what you did was stop ME from KIDNAPPING my own son? Are you crazy? How dare you sir! You take our son away from us for a supposedly 'better' life in your sterile, colorless labs and when we try to take him back, you arrest me! We're his parents, for God's sake! There is no confusion here. You people have stolen our child!"

Moira said nothing, but looked at her husband with wide-eyed horror. He could be arrested a second time for such an outburst. But to her surprise the Lieutenant did not look offended or angry. When he spoke his voice was the same as before... cold and crisp. "Mr. Tolivar. We have not taken your son away from you. We are simply providing him with the care that he will need and the education fitting a child of his ability. We have nothing but his best interests in mind and..."

"Oh shut up, you pig!" screamed Jimmy. "You people have done nothing but lie to us ever since we came here! You always

planned to take away our children, for God knows what twisted reasons! Don't insult me by giving me the same crap that your lackey did two days ago. I've already heard it. I don't want your money, or your gratitude. I want my son back now, you bastard!" Jimmy's face was beet red and his forehead was gleaming with sweat.

Lieutenant O'Brien stood quiet for a minute before speaking. "Listen to me very carefully, Mr. Tolivar. This child is no longer your concern. Your claim to him became void when he departed your wife's womb. He is our son. A child of Lone Star. A child of the Coalition. We made him. He belongs to us. Your claim is worthless. You are not worthy to be the parents of such an important child. You were scum, nothing before you made this deal with us, and now you have a home, and protection, and jobs, and a livelihood. We fulfilled our end of the deal. You are still free to live out your lives and have a whole brood of squirming, filthy little brats if that's what you want. However, we are taking back our child." The Lieutenant's gaze flicked back and forth between Jimmy's red face and Moira's ashen one.

Jimmy rose to his feet. "Now you listen to me. We are not giving up our own blood. He is our son. He was born to us. I don't care what you people think. He's ours and we're going to get him back." Jimmy was shaking with barely suppressed rage.

Moira stepped forward, putting a cautioning hand on her husband's forearm. She'd never seen Jimmy this angry before. He had just told a representative of the Coalition government that they were planning on trying to steal their child again. Jimmy looked like he wanted to murder the officer. Her husband was a big man, 6'4" and almost 250 pounds, but there was something about Lieutenant O'Brien that sent a shrill pulse of fear down her spine. "Please Jimmy, we can find some way to..."

"No Moira!" Jimmy shouted. "There is NO way to compromise! They are just going to keep Freddy unless we do something about it!" He took a step toward Lieutenant O'Brien.

Lieutenant O'Brien nodded slightly. "I'm sorry you feel that way. Of course you realize there is absolutely nothing you can do. Any contact we would have allowed you with your son will be revoked. You are clearly a dangerous man. Perhaps your wife will be allowed her visitation rights in the future, but that too is questionable. Don't worry. Your son will get along better without you. Good evening." Lieutenant O'Brien turned to leave.

"You bastard!" Jimmy leapt forward, hands outstretched. With a casual air, Lieutenant O'Brien turned and backhanded Jimmy across the face, sending him to the floor. Moira screamed and started forward to her husband, but he was already on his feet again, nose and lip bleeding. He started forward again, but Lieutenant O'Brien reached out with incredible speed and grabbed him by the neck, swinging him off of his feet and slamming him hard into the plaster wall, where he held him nearly a foot off the ground.

"Try to understand this." Lieutenant O'Brien said, his voice never rising. "There is **nothing** you can do. We doctored both cells that made up the zygote we implanted within your wife. Your son is, and always has been, our son. He will remain so with or without your consent. He and his genetic brothers and sisters are too important for us to risk damaging their developing minds with petty emotional strife. At this young age, a major

*altercation with his parents could very well inhibit his mental and emotional maturation. We will not take that chance. You either accept this or you don't. It's a simple yes or no question. Choose now."*

*Jimmy gasped for breath and managed to wheeze, "G... Guh... Go to Hell." There was a sharp crack as Lieutenant O'Brien jerked his wrist sharply, snapping Jimmy's neck like a matchstick. He dropped Jimmy to the floor, where he lay in a heap. Moira's hands were covering her mouth, which hung open in a noiseless scream. Tears poured down her face as she stared at her husband and the man dressed all in black.*

*Lieutenant O'Brien turned toward her and smiled slightly. "You have the remainder of the evening to pack Moira. Tomorrow morning at 0600, you will be removed and taken back to your village in the Pecos Badlands. You're a beautiful woman. Have a care in selecting your next husband. This one ruined your chance for a good life." With that he opened the front door and exited, closing the door softly in his wake and leaving Moira alone.*

*He had been gone for perhaps thirty seconds before Moira sank to her knees, as loud, wracking sobs finally escaped her lips. In one day her life had fallen apart. It truly was a wondrous thing, human cruelty. Try as she might, she could not forget Shawn O'Brien's satisfied little smile as he turned to her and laid the blame for his actions on the feet of her dead husband. "This one ruined your chance for a good life."*

*Outside the Tolivars' small one story home, Lieutenant Shawn O'Brien, initially designated "number two," lit a cigarette and smiled. It was unbelievable how stupid some people could be. When faced with a situation that had only one logical solution, this sort of brainless human garbage seemed to do everything in their power to avoid that one path. He shook his head as he walked away. Doctor Bradford was right. The human race was in drastic need of improvement.*

With the disappearance of the Tolivars, the atmosphere in Amarillo subtly changed. An almost imperceptible aura of distrust permeated the town. By February of 108 P.A., the First Echelon had gone to the Tolkeen front, and the Second Echelon, after a two-year stay at the Lone Star Complex, returned to Amarillo. They were to begin a period of maneuvers and combat training, which would hone their skills while learning how to function as a battalion. The parents of the Second Echelon were reunited with their children, only to find that they were barely children anymore. With three years of life behind them, the members of the Second Echelon looked to be between 13 and 14 years old. In another year, they would be fully matured physically. The returning "children" had nothing in common with their parents and in nearly all cases, were disinterested in spending time with their "natural family." It was at this point that the CS dropped the bomb.

The parents of the Second Echelon were to remain in Amarillo for the next year and a half (Feb. 108 P.A. - July 109 P.A.). After that their children would be fully matured and fully trained. From Amarillo, they would be sent to Lone Star for official organization into the first Janissary Battalion. Following this they would be sent to the Tolkeen front to absorb the men of the First Echelon, who would become the battalion officers. The parents would be relocated to Lone Star City, as the space in

Amarillo would be needed for the Third Echelon. This latest addition to the Janissary Project was a 3,200-subject group whose parents were being selected primarily from volunteering citizens. By late September of 109 P.A., the Second Echelon would be added to the CS Army and the 3,200 children of the Third Echelon would be born to an assortment of CS citizens and outside volunteers, who like the Tolivars and many of the parents of the Second Echelon, were willing to have a child in order to gain citizenship.

The Janissary Program was set to produce a full combat division by the early months of 114 P.A. The original 3,200 members of the Third Echelon and an additional 1,920 who were conceived three months afterward and raised entirely in a newly opened wing of the Lone Star Complex, would be fully matured and trained by January of 114 P.A. The Third Echelon would account for eight of the nine battalions within the division and would join the 1<sup>st</sup> Janissary Battalion (the First and Second Echelons), thus forming the most powerful unit in the CS Army. The Janissary program would progress no further, as the civilian medical treatment was projected to be ready long before the division itself was operational. Once every child in the Coalition was being born a superman/woman there would be no need to create additional Janissaries.

## **The internal threat**

Desmond Bradford was a man of dizzying vision. Even his many detractors (many of them silent for their own safety), would admit that his intellect had few peers and his visions for the application of this vast intelligence knew no bounds. Project Janissary was nothing short of an attempt by Bradford to play father to the human race. His ability to follow through with his plans was made possible by his friendship with Emperor Prosek, a visionary of an equal stature, according to Bradford.

However, not all members of the CS high command were as accepting of Bradford. The most notable of these was Joseph Prosek II, the Head of Propaganda and the heir to the throne of the Coalition. His dislike for Bradford grew more intense over the years as he became increasingly certain that Bradford was going behind his father's back in a series of unauthorized experiments. On a more personal note, Joseph II has always found Bradford to be far too arrogant towards the high command (especially with Joseph II), and he has been looking for a way to cut the smug Doctor down to size. With the death of his special operative Lieutenant Louis Emmerson in 105 P.A. (see *Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star*, page 100 for details), Joseph II became convinced that Bradford not only cared for little outside his own work, but also was hiding material of the most serious nature from the CS high command. Thus Joseph II made it his personal mission to bring Bradford's indiscretions to light. However, such a project was one that had to be undertaken within the strictest security. After all, it was clear following Emmerson's death that Bradford not only had contacts among criminal and mercenary groups, but also within the Chi-Town Intelligence Division.

Operation MADMAN was born in late 105 P.A., as the Campaign of Unity was beginning and the First and Second Echelons were developing. The operation was divided into three phases.



Phase 1: A second and more successful reconnaissance of Bradford's facility and any other medical research centers in Lone Star. The goal was to attain evidence that Bradford is in fact conducting illegal experimentation on human beings and/or human cells. The nature of the work, personnel attached to the projects, and location of the work and research areas (either within the Lone Star Complex or at other sites) were the primary objectives of Phase 1.

Phase 2: Sabotage. The goal was to throw a monkey wrench into Bradford's projects in a manner that does not suggest outside interference. Were Bradford's guard to go up, further clandestine action against him would be nearly impossible.

Phase 3: Exposure. The final goal of the project was to blow the whistle, loudly and publicly, on Bradford's little science fair. Joseph II wants him humiliated and removed from his position at the Lone Star Complex. If Bradford could be executed for treason, Joseph II would be properly ecstatic. Such an event would probably be too extreme for the Emperor, but discrediting and expelling Bradford would be enough anyway.

By 109 P.A., Operation MADMAN enjoyed four years of mixed success. Phase 1 was partially accomplished, as Joseph II was quick to learn about the construction of the Amarillo Care Labs. Such a large and well appointed medical facility in so small a town raised some eyebrows in Chi-Town, and Joseph II rightly became suspicious of the purpose of the new facility. Infiltration into Amarillo initially proved relatively simple and his agents immediately began collecting information. However, he soon found that in Amarillo the entire staff was closely monitored by the head offices in Lone Star City. Bradford and his agents deflected most of Joseph II's attempted transfers, allowing only two into the complex, both of whom were relegated to low level administrative duty, far from the Janissaries. Criminal and underground sources have proved useful only in monitoring the life of Bradford's children outside of the complex.

Getting inside the Lone Star Complex was even more difficult. Operatives had to be of the very best caliber and able to keep themselves emotionally impassive, as Bradford's facilities were likely to be crawling with Psi-Hounds, who could pick up on high levels of nervousness both through scent and psi-powers. Of the half dozen operatives Joseph II managed to insert into the Lone Star Complex, four were successfully integrated into various low security positions on the upper levels, one was a medical assistant in a medium security area of Underground Level Five, and the sixth operative was wormed into the 4<sup>th</sup> Army LSEG (Lone Star Elite Guard). His "accidental" death was a considerable setback to the operation.

As Project Janissary moves forward, Joseph II continues to try to crack Bradford's security in order to get a real look at what he's doing. As subtlety has thus far failed, the head of the CS Propaganda Section is considering more elaborate and daring measures.

### What Joseph II knows:

1.) Desmond Bradford is conducting a project with the code name "Janissary" that utilizes considerable amounts of research space and resources at the Lone Star Complex.

2.) The project has been ongoing for at least six years, though the exact starting date is anyone's guess. Joseph II personally thinks it's been going on for at least a decade.

3.) The project involves the children at the Amarillo Care Labs in some way, though it is unclear how. Through his sources he knows that the children have an unusual growth rate, and this seems to be at the heart of Bradford's work. Are these D-Bees or has Bradford been tinkering with humanity?

4.) Through contacts in Lone Star's citizenship offices, Joseph II has learned that an unusually large amount of people have been made citizens of Lone Star in the last five years, and he remains suspicious as to why.

5.) Conclusion: Desmond Bradford is involved in a secret project that involves tinkering with the human genetic code. For reasons unknown, Bradford has gone behind the Emperor's back and has been conducting this illegal research toward an as of yet unknown goal.

## The external threat

In addition to Joseph Prosek II's machinations, the Janissary Project began to suffer setbacks from another source. However, this one was of Bradford's own making. Following their escape in the early summer of 102 P.A., the *Greeks* disappeared into the Pecos Badlands. There they huddled in misery as refugees for several months, unsure of what to do now that they had fled from their home. The aggression that their captivity had bred was spent by the realization that they knew nothing of the outside world. Furthermore, without the care of the Lone Star staff and the application of their maturation and growth programs, the eight *Greeks* could be subject to potentially crippling mental instability.

As the summer waned and fall began, the brothers had managed to scrape out a living as farm hands in the southwestern portion of old Texas. They were only dimly aware of the natural abilities that they possessed and as such, existed in squalor for some time before they figured out that they were capable of much more. The event that triggered their realization took place in early October, when the farming community that they were living in was raided by a detachment of CS troops under the overall direction of Major Clavel, the Head of Mutant Containment and Retrieval in Lone Star.

The CS troops were hunting for a number of fugitive Psi-Hounds and had heard a rumor that the mutant canines might have slipped into the farm country. The farmers reacted with anger and refused to accept Clavel's assurances that his men were only there to conduct a brief search before moving on. A scuffle ensued between some of the soldiers and a number of farmers and farm hands. Then tragedy struck... a young farmer drew an old laser pistol and fired into the face of one of the Psi-Hound trackers, incinerating the mutant's entire head.

The result of this action was almost immediate. Four laser rifles converged on the hot-tempered farmer and he disappeared in a cloud of red mist. From there on all control was lost as the CS troops began firing into the crowd, half of whom were fleeing and half of whom were attacking with rocks, tools, bits of metal, and one or two old M.D. laser weapons. For the two squads of CS Infantry troopers and the two five-man Dog Packs in Major Clavel's unit, the battle was initially more confused than serious. They cut down over sixty farmers and their hands, and scattered two times as many. Following the end of the opposition, they began a thorough search through the tiny downtown

area, before moving on to the farmsteads themselves. It was in the downtown area that they found the brothers "Greek."

Faced with the execution of many of their fellow workers, the *Greeks* charged their attackers in a rage. They soon found that the body armor that the CS troops wore was not as effective a deterrent against their strength as it had been against the simple weapons of the farmers. In several minutes, they tore through one of the Dog Packs and half a squad of infantry. By the time they were through mopping up the five Dead Boys that had come to the aid of the Dog Pack, Major Clavel and most of the remainder of the troops arrived on scene. He immediately recognized the *Greeks* and ordered his men to exterminate all but one of them. The resulting battle saw Beta, Theta, and Epsilon killed, but the CS troops were decimated. Only Major Clavel and one of his two adjutants escaped.

Over the coming years, the remaining brothers worked covertly to thwart Bradford's designs. Their first move was to assemble a mercenary company, which would allow them to fit right in with the other inhabitants of the Pecos Badlands. Over the next year, the *Greeks* assembled a mercenary gang of 2,500 men and began raiding CS military and civilian facilities all over the state. Their men carried out a plan of unorganized raiding into the summer of 104 P.A., when the *Greeks* got hold of an extraordinary piece of intelligence about Bradford's work, and changed their tactics completely.

The *Greeks* initially knew nothing about Project Janissary until a raid on a CS building site at Amarillo in December of 104 P.A. yielded some interesting news. The *Greeks* captured a young lieutenant who was carrying a dispatch from Bradford to the head engineer of the Amarillo project concerning the speed with which the facility was being constructed. In the dispatch, Bradford's displeasure at the progress of the construction was evident and the video clip of the good doctor was nothing short of chilling. The *Greeks* watched with interest as Bradford delivered a thinly veiled threat at the end of his five minute chastisement of the senior engineer, which made it clear that dire consequences awaited continued delay. The lieutenant himself knew very little, but for Bradford to be so interested in a new hospital facility was totally out of character for the man. His life was in the Lone Star Complex, not with some new hospital in a tiny, dirty town like Amarillo.

The *Greeks* did some more digging in the coming weeks and learned that the Amarillo building site had been given top priority for the CS Army Corps of Engineers. This was unthinkable! The Corps of Engineers had been almost entirely concerned with the Lone Star Complex for the last ten years. For such a small installation in a seemingly insignificant town to be given priority over the Lone Star Complex indicated that something important was happening. The *Greeks* resolved to watch and wait for a chance to strike back at the man who had betrayed them.

Their raiding in recent years has targeted only the Amarillo facility and its related military outposts. Additionally, they have sent in spies to gather information and have even ventured into the Lone Star Complex again through the sewer systems. By 109 P.A., the *Greeks* have been dodging the CS Army for years and have amassed an impressive body of knowledge about Bradford's Janissary project... they even know the name of the operation and have been working on plans to destroy it. One of

the most promising possibilities is to take their information to Joseph II, but the *Greeks* know little about him outside of his reputation and consider placing their trust in him to be a risky idea at best. For now, they wait.

Bradford, for his part, knows that the raids on Amarillo have something to do with Project Janissary, but he has yet to figure out who is responsible. For all his brilliance, the director of the famed Lone Star Complex has totally ignored the possibility that the *Greeks* might be behind the attacks. To him they are nothing more than failed experiments. They're still listed as high priority targets, but Bradford doesn't really look at them as a threat. They are a security risk, and as such are still hunted, but as a direct threat, Bradford sees absolutely no reason to suspect them of anything. It's a rare mistake from a man who makes very few.

## The Janissary Project and the big picture

In the end the Janissary Project is simply the first step in Bradford's plan to make himself the father of evolution. And unlike Darwin who first described it, Bradford seeks to master it. The Janissary Project, if successful, would be the beginning of a very dark time for North America and could eventually prove destructive on a far larger scale.

Consider first the sort of government that the Coalition is. An aggressive, territorial, iron fisted, paranoid, neo-fascist dictatorship with a fanatical human supremacist at its helm. Tens of thousands of people on both sides perished in the war against Tolkeen. It was less a territorial war than a war of ideals. It was a war of principle vs principle. It was a war of belief and so was allowed to rage unchecked until its bitter conclusion. The Coalition is a government that is and has always been humans first. Despite the limitations that the frail human body has within a Mega-Damage world, humanity has carved out a new place for itself against all odds. In short, humanity has a survival instinct that is virtually unquenchable. To the leaders and the people of the Coalition, survival is paramount, and survival means destroying all practitioners and creatures of magic, regardless of circumstance. This they have done with great gusto since the Bloody Campaign of 12 P.A.

Now consider what would happen if every human born in the Coalition grew to physical and mental maturity in just over four years. Furthermore, what if these new children were supernaturally strong and durable, imbued with a physical power on par with the so-called demons that saturate North America? War after war would rock North America until eventually there was no one left to fight. And then the expansion would continue. Humanity would again raise its flag over the world. However, it would be the flag of the Coalition.

In the world of *Rifts*®, mankind is not really able to indulge in the sort of racial prejudice that existed before the Great Cataclysm. Everyone has been forced to stick together, and barring differences in views on the corrupting powers of magic, racism within humankind has fallen way off. All humans are equal. With the transformation of the CS citizens into a true master race, a new form of rule would appear. All humans are equal, but some are more equal than others. As man has found out time



and again power corrupts, and the Coalition itself was already corrupt to begin with. To allow the Janissary Project to come to fruition is to doom the civilized world as it exists on Rifts Earth.

## Adventuring within the context of Project Janissary

The Janissary Project clearly is an evil that must be fought and it's up to the player characters to bar the way to CS domination of Rifts Earth. Whether the characters hail from one of the Coalition's many enemies or are Coalition characters themselves, the background setting offers a lot of possibilities.

### Possible scenarios for non-CS characters

- Investigation of kidnappings: The early years of the project were marked by strange disappearances. In all cases a great number of young women were kidnapped from their homes in the Pecos Badlands and even within the borders of the state of Lone Star itself. During the later years, Bradford's agents continued to kidnap young women (albeit in smaller amounts) in order to continue testing new avenues for betterment of the Janissary genetic code. Sadly, with the birth of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation, the big changes to human DNA basically stopped yielding appreciable results. As a direct consequence, many a young mother is forced to birth a child which is either born dead or a genetic freak and then face extermination herself. Clearly there is much for kindhearted characters to do.
- Merc work: It is possible that the characters become associated with the project when the mercenary group they are part of (or that they run) is hired to participate in the kidnappings. Bradford occasionally used mercenaries for this disagreeable task, especially when they would be raiding near a Pecos warlord's base of operations. By always using an intermediary or two, Bradford was able to shield his laboratory from being implicated in these disappearances. Being in the CS's employ, however, gives the characters a route to discover a piece of the plot and be drawn in that way.
- The *Greeks*: If the characters ever encounter the five Pecos bandit leaders known as the *Greeks* or wind up in their employ, they have an immediate in to the workings of Project Janissary. The *Greeks* themselves are very strange people, all of them somewhat unstable and all of them claiming a bond of brotherhood despite the fact that there is no physical resemblance between the five.
- Encountering runaways: Though no Janissaries have ever escaped the project or even wanted to go AWOL, several parents and other project staff have run. The CS hunts down such fugitives as fast as possible and so far, none have escaped alive. However, saving one such person could yield fragmented information about the project and give the characters a direction to go in.
- Field tests: The Janissaries of the First and Second Echelons undergo rigorous combat training. Much of it takes place within the Lone Star Complex or at the Amarillo Care Labs, but a significant amount of field testing is done outside. Wilderness survival and combat are both very important, and the Janissaries spend increasingly large amounts of time training

in the out of doors, away from prying eyes. There have been several incidents that have occurred because of these field tests, and an avenue into the project is available for an enterprising group of characters to discover.

- Sent from the outside: The characters could be hired or sent by one of the enemies of the CS who may have heard rumors or who has a spy on the inside (though given the number of psychics that Bradford employs on his project, spies don't often last). The characters would therefore be attempting to break in with the help of an outside backer. A different spin on this could have the characters, still employed by the CS enemy but on a different assignment, cross paths with the project and get drawn in that way.

### Possible scenarios for CS characters

- Joseph II: Naturally, the easiest way for CS characters to oppose the project would be to have them employed by Joseph II and his intelligence services. The Emperor's son is eager to expose Bradford's project (which he is sure is illegal) and detach the doctor from his fiefdom at the Lone Star Complex. The CS characters could very easily be his eyes, ears, and hands in such an endeavor.
- Dissenter from the inside: Many CS troops are trained to not ask questions. However, just because education in the CS is by and large fairly low, that does not mean that people aren't smart. For any CS soldiers serving in the project or near the project (the Janissary Project is hard to conceal within the facility due to its scope and size), a great moral dilemma exists. Bradford's project seems to be fueled by the lives of innocent people, and even the most callous CS soldier must wonder if he's doing the right thing. What a dissenting CS soldier would find if he discreetly asked around is that he's not alone in his misgivings. Perhaps the project can be thwarted from within.
- Accidental discovery: Most CS soldiers in Lone Star are totally ignorant of Project Janissary. The actual number of soldiers who work with the project staff, subjects, and materials is fairly low (no more than a few hundred) and they are kept on a tight leash. However, there are several field armies worth of troops serving in the state of Lone Star, not to mention a large number of garrison troops as well, and the possibility of them blundering into a part of the project is definitely there. From there on it depends on what the characters wish to do.

These are just some of the possible ways that the player characters could be involved in the Janissary Project. G.M.s would of course be free to utilize the project any way they see fit in their campaigns. Potential G.M.s should note that the Janissaries are individually quite powerful (about the match of a Mega-Juicer, only with better skills) and it'd probably be best for the party to encounter them very rarely and in small numbers. The project can't be brought down by brute strength anyway. Only exposure or some sort of far reaching calamity can derail Bradford's project.

## A Timeline of the Events of the Janissary Project

77 P.A.: Desmond Bradford completes work on the first series of Dog Boys.

**February 18<sup>th</sup>, 89 P.A.:** Desmond Bradford meets with Emperor Karl Prosek to attain permission to experiment on human embryos in order to create a treatment that would make the children of CS citizens more resistant to disease. The Emperor gives his approval immediately.

**March 5<sup>th</sup>, 89 P.A.:** Project Darwin begins, as Bradford details some his most brilliant and experienced staff to assist him in his first tinkering with the genetics of man.

**91 P.A.:** All primary objectives of Project Darwin complete. Doctored human sex cells carry genetic coding for resistance to disease, faster metabolic rate, and increased muscle growth. Additional objectives added; increased growth and developmental rates, enhanced senses of smell, hearing, and sight, enhanced reflexes and supernatural strength and endurance. Genetic crossing with animal traits begins.

**February, 92 P.A.:** Most ambitious of the added objectives of Project Darwin proven unattainable. Work grinds to a halt as Bradford realizes that the only way to achieve the super-human results that he desires is via genetic crosses between human beings and D-Bees with the desired attributes.

**May, 92 P.A.:** Emperor Prosek comes to Bradford looking for a solution to the Xiticix infestation north of Chi-Town. Bradford is given the green light to develop a Xiticix rat catcher using any means necessary. Work begins on the Xiticix Killer. Bradford loyally pursues this project, learning much about the sort of genetic crossing required for his more sensitive project.

**June 1<sup>st</sup>, 92 P.A.:** Project Darwin officially closes. Project Janissary officially begins.

**92 P.A. to 97 P.A.:** Project Janissary concurrently developed with Xiticix Killer Project.

**July, 97 P.A.:** All desired attributes of Project Janissary subjects met, with the exception of supernatural strength and endurance. Project staff focuses in on these elusive abilities.

**January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 98 P.A.:** Gene Helix is born. First successful test child to possess Mega-Damage skin.

**February 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>, 99 P.A.:** New test batch of eight children born and labeled the "Greeks." Second batch meant to test the facility's ability to replicate the creation of test subjects.

**January, 100 P.A.:** Due to mounting evidence of Gene's mental instability, Bradford has six additional mothers inseminated with doctored cells; the 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation.

**September 100 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation born.

**May 8<sup>th</sup>, 102 P.A.:** Gene Helix is terminated due to alarming mental instability. The "Greeks" are incarcerated pending administrative decision on their fate.

**June 1<sup>st</sup>, 102 P.A.:** The "Greeks" escape from the Lone Star Complex.

**September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 102 P.A.:** Major Clavel stumbles across the "Greeks" accidentally during a search and destroy mission. Though three of the "Greeks" are terminated, his team is decimated and Clavel withdraws, reporting the incident to Bradford. A team dispatched to eliminate the remaining brothers finds no evidence of the "Greeks," living or dead.

**December 5<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>, 102 P.A.:** 1<sup>st</sup> Echelon artificially inseminated into volunteer mothers.

**August 5<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>, 103 P.A.:** 1<sup>st</sup> Echelon born.

**September, 104 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon artificially inseminated into volunteer mothers.

**December, 104 P.A. – March, 105 P.A.:** Construction of Amarillo Care Labs by CS Army engineers.

**December 27<sup>th</sup>, 104 P.A.:** "Greeks" raid Amarillo and learn of its importance to Bradford. Information gathering on his plans begins in earnest.

**February, 105 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation fully combat trained and added to Bradford's personal staff.

**April – May, 105 P.A.:** Parents of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon moved to Amarillo in preparation for the birth of their children.

**June, 105 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon born.

**July 14<sup>th</sup>, 105 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon subject #186, Freddy Tolivar, nearly kidnaped by father, Jimmy Tolivar. 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation subject #2, Lt. Shawn O'Brien, pacifies situation by eliminating Jimmy Tolivar.

**November 20<sup>th</sup>, 105 P.A.:** Joseph Prosek II commences Operation MADMAN.

**March, 106 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon moved to Lone Star Complex for further development and training.

**February 6<sup>th</sup>, 108 P.A.:** 1<sup>st</sup> Echelon fully trained and dispatched to the Tolkeen front to serve with General Jericho Holmes' army group.

**February 7<sup>th</sup>, 108 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon returns to Amarillo for completion of combat training.

**February, 108 P.A. – July, 109 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon becomes fully matured and completes all training programs.

**July 20<sup>th</sup>, 109 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon sent to Lone Star City for organization into an official CS Army Battalion.

**September, 109 P.A.:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Echelon organized and ready for service within the CS Army.

**September, 109 P.A.:** Initial 3,200 members of 3<sup>rd</sup> Echelon are born.

**December, 109 P.A.:** Remaining 1,920 members of 3<sup>rd</sup> Echelon born. The project continues...

## CS Janissary R.C.C. (Optional)

The children of the mind of Desmond Bradford, the CS Janissaries are the test bed for a project that eventually would mean the elevation of humanity (within the CS, that is) to a level of near godhood. The Janissaries themselves are an elite group of genetically engineered combat troops created by Bradford as a means of convincing Emperor Prosek of the validity and desirability of genetic augmentation on human beings. In a practical sense, the Janissaries themselves are peerless combat troops, whose natural abilities make them the most dangerous soldiers in the Coalition Army.

**Alignments:** Any are possible, but most Janissaries are Abarant. None have been disloyal to the project in any way. Behavioral modification has seen to their continued perfect behavior.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 3D6+6, M.E. 4D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 5D6+4, P.P. 4D6+5, P.E. 4D6+6, P.B. 3D6+2, Spd 1D4x10+15 (Supernatural Strength and Endurance).

**M.D.C.:** 4D4x10 + P.E. attribute. +10 M.D.C. per level of experience.





**Horror Factor/Awe:** None. The Janissaries look human and have not had the time or exposure required to gain a widespread reputation outside of the CS Army.

**P.P.E.:** 4D6

**I.S.P.:** As per psionics.

**Natural Abilities:** Supernatural Strength and Endurance, incredibly quick reflexes, and auto-dodge. Keen daylight vision, and excellent low light vision, similar to a cat's, as opposed to supernatural night vision. Moderately enhanced senses of smell and hearing. Immune to many natural forms of disease and sickness, and resistant to poisons and toxins. Bio-regenerates 3D6 M.D.C. per minute (4 melee rounds). Increased metabolism, physical and mental maturation rate (fully mature in four years). Can hold breath for an average of seven minutes.

**Combat:** Janissaries are taught Hand to Hand: Janissary, which was developed to take advantage of their Supernatural Strength and reflexes.

**Bonuses:** +2 attacks per melee, +3 on initiative, +4 to strike, parry and dodge.

**Saving Throws:** +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +6 to save versus poisons/toxins/gasses, +2 to save versus psionics, +5 to save versus insanity, and +6 to save versus harmful drugs.

**Psionics:** Janissaries have been found to have a greater than average chance of attaining psionic proficiency. However, all recorded Janissaries have been minor psionics, though the low number of Janissaries could be to blame. 01-50% means no psychic ability, 51-89 means minor psychic abilities, 90-98% means major psychic abilities, and 99-00% indicates a master psionic.

**Cybernetics:** Clock-Calendar and Gyro-Compass to start, though cybernetics are rarely sought unless as organ replacements.

**Average Life Span:** Though it is unknown just how long the Janissaries will live, as none have yet died of natural causes, it is estimated that they will live for as long as 200 years without medical treatments.

**Appearance:** CS Janissaries appear to be normal humans. They are all fairly tall and very fit, with slightly better than average looks. They are humans, after all. They've just been "improved."

**Height:** For men, usually between 5' 10" and 6' 5" (1.78-1.96 m), and for women, between 5' 8" and 6' 2" (1.73-1.88 m).

**Weight:** For men, between 180 and 250 lbs (81-112.5 kg), and for women, between 140 and 180 lbs (63-81 kg).

**R.C.C. Skills:**

Speaks American 98%

Literate: American 98%

Basic Math (+20%)

Radio: Basic (+20%)

Radio: Scramblers (+15%)

Land Navigation (+20%)

Sniper

Tracking (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+15%)

Camouflage (+20%)

Pilot: Four of choice (+25%).

Computer Operation (+20%)

Climbing (+15%)

Hand to Hand Combat: Janissary

Swimming (+20%)

Prowl (+20%)

Boxing

Running

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Knife

W.P. Sword

W.P. Three of choice.

**M.O.S. Skills:** These are special areas of knowledge taught to the Janissaries as specialties. The Janissary selects two groups of four skills from the same skill category. Each four skill block is an M.O.S. These skills can be selected from the categories of Communications, Espionage, Mechanical, Medical, Military, Pilot, or Rogue. All M.O.S. skills are at +20%.

**R.C.C. Related Skills:** The Janissary may select four R.C.C. Related Skills from the following categories. Two new skills may be selected at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Any (+15%).

Espionage: Any (+15%).

Mechanical: Any (+20%).

Medical: Any (+5%).

Military: Any (+20%).

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any (+15%).

Pilot Related: Any (+5%).

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any (+5%).

Technical: Any (+10% to Computer and Language related skills).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

**Secondary Skills:** The character gets four Secondary Skills at level one, and one additional skill at levels three, five, nine, twelve, and fifteen. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus in parenthesis. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level.

**Standard Equipment:** The Janissary enjoys a slightly different equipment package than the standard CS line soldier and gets the following: One CSLS-003 Fully Environmental Combat Wardrobe (fancy talk for the Janissary body armor), one CJ-R10 Rail Gun or one CJ-P20 Particle Beam Cannon, a CS issue side arm of choice, four extra E-Clips per weapon, a Vibro-Sword, six plasma grenades, three smoke grenades (two standard, one colored), one fusion block (varying size), two Vibro-Blades, backpack, utility belt, binoculars, canteen, water purifier, survival knife, IRMSS kit, several sets of CS fatigues, two dress uniforms, and traveling clothes.

**Note:** The Janissaries are Coalition super soldiers and are not intended to be used as player characters. If the Game Master allows one into his or her campaign it should not be easy for the player. Any rogue Janissary would be relentlessly hunted by Bradford's agents. Unlike the *Greeks*, Dr. Bradford sees the Janissaries as anything but failures, and will spare no expense to make sure that none ever go rogue.

## Hand to Hand Combat: Janissary

The hand to hand combat training of Project Janissary centers on a new style of fighting, specially developed for the Janissaries to take advantage of their supernatural strength, speed, and endurance. Hand to Hand: Janissary is a cross between Commando and Jujitsu styles. The result is an aggressive

style of combat, with a variety of moves and maneuvers intended to quickly and efficiently end a fight. It is assumed that Janissaries will have to subdue fragile human and D-Bee adversaries in addition to combating Mega-Damage creatures like Brodkil and Xiticix.

### Bonuses by Level:

- 1: Starts with a total of four attacks per melee (including the standard 2 for all characters), paired weapons, body block/tackle, reverse sweep kick (only of use on opponents attacking from the rear, and the target is -3 to dodge but takes no damage, only falls), +3 to roll with punch/fall, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.
- 2: Holds: Human: The Janissaries are taught the neck, body, leg, and arm holds necessary to quickly and easily restrain a non-Mega-Damage opponent. Nearly a dozen holds are taught, though the Janissary must be mindful of his Supernatural Strength, which would snap a normal human's spine like a twig. Also gets disarm, +4 to pull punch, and +2 to dodge.
- 3: Critical Strike from behind or on a Natural 19-20, +1 to strike, and +2 to parry.
- 4: One additional attack per melee, crescent kick (normal kick damage plus 3D6).
- 5: Holds: Supernatural: The Janissaries are taught how to apply basic holds to Mega-Damage creatures. Specifically, they are given information on using the hold as a means to break bones. If a hold is successfully locked in, the Janissary may try to break the target's neck, arm, leg, or whatever, by making a strength roll vs the target's strength. To make the roll, the P.S. of each attacker is taken and divided by ten. The result is the number of D6's each combatant may use (round as appropriate to get the number of dice). M.D.C. body armor protecting the target area provides one or two additional D6's depending on whether the armor is light (79 or less M.D.C.) or heavy (80 and over). If the attacker wins, the limb is broken. If the defender wins, he has thwarted the attempt by managing to loosen the hold. The attacker uses one action in his attempt, but to defend against it is automatic and does not require an action, though breaking the out of the hold does.\* Also gets +2 to parry, and +2 to roll with punch/fall.
- 6: Leap Kicks: The Janissary is now able to do a variety of Leap Kicks without penalty and with great accuracy. Damage is determined by strength. Also gets +2 to strike with Leap Kick and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.
- 7: One additional attack per melee.
- 8: Critical Strike on Natural 17-20, +2 to strike, and +2 to pull punch.
- 9: Eye Strike: A pinpoint strike that targets a character's eyes with a quick finger jab. Such an attack is, at best, very difficult, but the Janissary through the use of his training and near blinding reflexes can attempt the maneuver naturally, without the penalties that striking such a small target normally incurs. The Janissary has no pluses or minuses, but he does require a minimum roll of 14 or better to successfully land the blow. This attack is obviously not a possibility if the subject's eyes are covered.
- 10: Death Blow on a Natural 19-20.
- 11: One additional attack per melee, automatic body flip/throw, +2 to initiative, and +2 to dodge.



- 12: **Aggressive Parry:** As the Janissaries advance in their combat training, they are taught how to damage a foe even when on the defensive. An Aggressive Parry roll can be made whenever a physical attack is being parried, and like a normal parry it does not require an action. Bonuses to parry apply to Aggressive Parry. The Janissary angles and thrusts his arms (or legs, whichever is appropriate) in such a way that an attacker's limbs come into contact with the Janissary's elbows or knees. The Aggressive Parry is almost a strike in and of itself but it does very little damage. If the defender's Aggressive Parry roll exceeds the attacker's strike roll by 2 or more, the attack is parried and the attacker takes 1D8 M.D. Furthermore, the attacker has a 30% chance to drop his weapon (if he was armed to begin with) depending on where he was struck. Also gets +1 to parry and +1 to pull punch.
- 13: **Double Strike:** The Janissary can now use one action to strike two opponents. This is made possible by the Janissary's amazing reflexes and speed. The Janissary simply makes two strike rolls instead of one. The primary target (the character chooses which, though it's usually the combatant that the character is facing) can be struck with full bonuses whereas the Janissary must roll to strike the second target without bonuses. The double strike only uses up one attack per melee. Also gets +3 to roll with punch/fall, +2 to initiative, and +4 to strike when using a knife.
- 14: **Aggressive Dodge:** At this point, the Janissary is totally in tune with his body and is a near perfect engine of combat. Using his superior reflexes, the Janissary can land a quick counter blow to his target during a dodge. The blow takes the form of a swift punch or kick and does half damage. However, the strike costs no actions and is basically a free shot at the attacker. The Aggressive Dodge works in the same manner as the Aggressive Parry. The normal dodge bonus is computed and if the dodge roll beats the attacker's strike roll by 2 or more, the strike connects, doing half damage. Furthermore, the blow almost always comes as a surprise and the attacker has a 30% chance of dropping his weapon or losing his balance (G.M.'s discretion). Note that the Aggressive Dodge may only be used during close combat. Also gets +2 to dodge.
- 15: **Acrobatic Combat:** At this final level of martial prowess, the Janissary is adept at landing blows while performing tricky acrobatic moves. For example, it is now feasible for a Janissary in close combat with one or two opponents to deftly leap over the heads of his startled opponents while delivering a full strength punch or kick (power punches are not possible in this manner). Furthermore, the constant jumping and twisting makes the Janissary harder to hit. Any physical attack leveled against the Janissary immediately after an acrobatic blow has been delivered requires a base of 10 to strike. If the Janissary uses another attack that was *not* Acrobatic Combat, then he may be struck normally. Also gets one additional attack per melee.

\* Please note that any defender who does not have a Supernatural P.S. will automatically fail the roll and thus suffer whatever break the Janissary is attempting to accomplish. Body armor will offer scant protection though it is possible that it will prevent the break (don't count on it though). This attack also has the ability to kill or maim very powerful creatures quickly, re-

gardless of remaining M.D.C. Its use is totally up to the G.M., but be logical. If the Janissary is trying to hold on a Gargoyle and is being lifted bodily at the time, he has very little chance of actually getting the leverage required to break anything. In cases like this, G.M.s should feel free to apply any penalty that they feel is necessary or simply decree the action to be impossible.

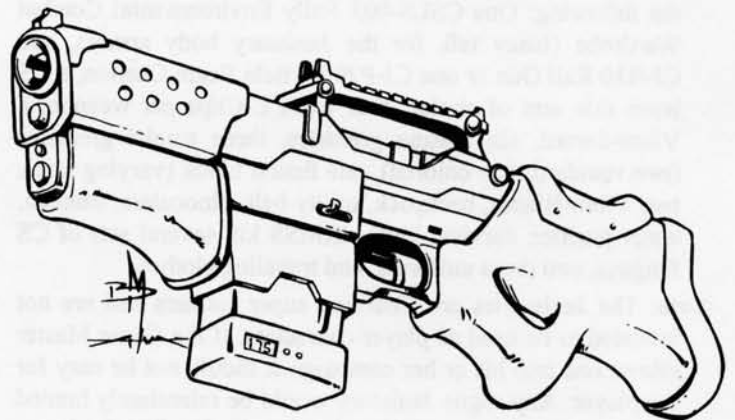
Example of a strength roll: A Janissary has engaged a Dragon Juicer in combat and has managed to lock in an arm hold on his opponent. The Dragon Juicer has attempted to break the hold, but has failed, and the Janissary is going to attempt to break his foe's arm. The Dragon Juicer naturally will try to resist.

The attacker starts by making his strength roll. To get the dice involved, the Janissary's strength is divided by ten. This particular Janissary has a Supernatural P.S. of 36. So  $36/10 = 3.6$ . The number is rounded up to four and the Janissary rolls 4D6 for his strength test. The Dragon Juicer on the other hand has a Supernatural P.S. of 31.  $31/10 = 3.1$ . The number is rounded down to a three and the Dragon Juicer gets 3D6. However, he is also clad in Dragon Hide Armor with an M.D.C. of 98. Since this is considered heavy body armor (all body armor of 80 or more M.D.C. is heavy), the Dragon Juicer gets an additional 2D6, giving him a total dice pool of 5D6 to roll to resist the attack.

The Janissary makes his roll and scores a 17... not too shabby. The Dragon Juicer, however, rolls a 20 and is therefore able to loosen the hold enough to prevent the break. The Janissary's melee attack is expended and the Dragon Juicer gets to act next, since resisting the attack does not cost a melee attack.

## CS Janissary Equipment

The following is a list of specialized weapons and armor used by the CS Janissaries.



### CJA-R10 Rail Gun

Developed originally for use among the Coalition's Cyborg Strike Troopers, the CJA-R10 was not yet fully completed when the Emperor announced his Campaign of Unity. With weapons like the C-29 Plasma Cannon and the CTT-P40 Particle Beam Cannon, the CJA-R10 seemed unnecessary and the uncompleted unit was shelved. In 106 P.A., Bradford's weapon-smiths finished the weapon and produced a limited production run. Unlike most Rail Guns, the CJA-R10 is not belt fed. It instead draws its payload from an ammo box attached to the underside of the ri-

fle. The Rail Gun is equipped to fire standard ammunition or a new, short-range, explosive-tipped round. Its weight and kick necessitate the enhanced strength of a Janissary, Power Armor unit, or Cyborg in order to use properly.

Weight: 83 pounds (37 kg).

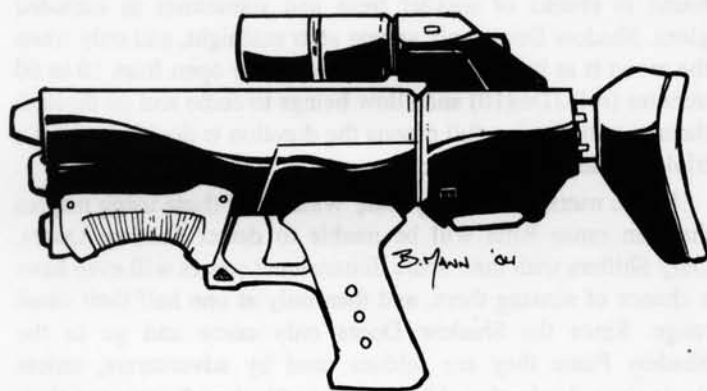
Mega-Damage: 1D6 for a single shot and 1D6x10 M.D. for a burst of standard Rail Gun rounds. 2D4 for a single shot and 2D4x10 for a burst of explosive tipped Rail Gun rounds.

Rate of Fire: Can fire individual rounds or bursts of 20. Number of single shots or bursts possible is equal to the user's hand to hand actions. Bursts count as one action.

Effective Range: 4000 feet (1219 m) for standard ammo and 1000 feet (305 m) for explosive tipped.

Payload: 200 rounds per ammo canister.

Black Market Cost: Unavailable. If the rifle ever came onto the market somehow (and thus far, none have gone unaccounted for) it would easily fetch a price of 500,000 credits.



## CJA-P20 Particle Beam Cannon

The CJA-P20 was a modified version of the CTT-P40. The intent in modifying the CTT-P40 was to create a high-powered weapon that was small and solid. In short, a weapon more for urban warfare than wilderness battlefields was designed. It was designed in 107 P.A. with the upcoming battles in Tolkeen, Freehold, and Magestock in mind. In the end, the CJA-P20 was given a very compact build. Its barrel was reduced in length to only six inches (15 cm) and a heavy cylindrical rod was slung under the barrel, protruding ten inches (25 cm) past the muzzle of the weapon. This rod, which could be attached or removed as needed, was used for breaking in doors, making the CJA-P20 a door ram in addition to a high-powered particle beam cannon.

Weight: 18 pounds (8.1 kg; 24 lbs/10.8 kg with the ram attached).

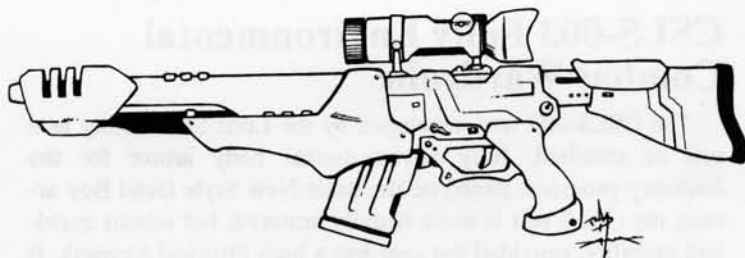
Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 per blast.

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

Effective Range: 700 feet (213 m).

Payload: 12 blasts.

Black Market Cost: Unavailable. If the particle beam cannon ever came onto the market somehow (and thus far, none have gone unaccounted for), it would easily fetch a price of 150,000 credits.



## CJA-L05 Sniper Laser Rifle "Dead Shot"

The CJA-L05 *Dead Shot* rifle was originally created for the CS Special Forces in response to demands for a dedicated high-powered sniping weapon. Perfected and released in the spring of 106 P.A., the *Dead Shot* was only made immediately available to the relatively small CS Commando and Special Ops community. The rifle itself is a high-powered, long-range laser weapon. Its only detriment is its weight, which is slightly more than a standard laser rifle, but this is more than balanced out by its durability, range, accuracy, and damage. The weapon has such excellent balance that its user enjoys a +1 bonus to strike over and above their W.P. bonuses. Upon witnessing the effectiveness of the rifle for himself, Dr. Bradford ordered a supply for his Janissaries, and was able to get hold of the specs so that his facilities at Lone Star could produce more as needed.

Weight: 15 pounds (6.75 kg).

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10+5 per shot!

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

Effective Range: 4500 feet (1371 m).

Payload: 8 shots.

Scope: High quality telescopic scope adds +1 to an aimed shot (this is in addition to the +1 bonus that the rifle itself affords).

Black Market Cost: Very rare, usually retail between 100,000 and 170,000 credits depending on the condition of the weapon.

## CJAG Vibro-Gladius "Pig Sticker"

The CJAG Vibro-Gladius was a short double-edged sword with virtually no hilt or pommel, developed in Lone Star for eventual service with the Psi-Hounds. The sword itself is composed of a new, high grade M.D.C. alloy, giving it much greater durability and blade strength. The original Gladius was primarily a stabbing weapon, and that's what the CJAG is meant to do. The purpose of the blade is to puncture body armor and power armor. The sword, which was already capable of inflicting Mega-Damage, was made into a Vibro-Blade, greatly enhancing its ability to penetrate modern armor. The sword only has a two foot (0.6 m) blade and fits onto the back or belt of the CS Janissary Armor.

Weight: 6 pounds (2.7 kg).

Mega-Damage: 2D6 for a slashing strike or 4D6+6 for a stabbing strike.

Black Market Cost: 20,000 credits.



## CSLS-003 Fully Environmental Combat Wardrobe

The CSLS-003 was developed by the Lone Star facility as a suit of standard, fully environmental body armor for the Janissary program. Based on the basic New Style Dead Boy armor, the CSLS suit is more heavily armored, but retains excellent mobility, provided the user has a high Physical Strength. It is equipped with all the standard features of the CA-4 Dead Boy Armor and features an enhanced optical package, which has night vision and infrared sight. Cosmetically, the suit differs only marginally, with variations in the helmet and some of the armor plating being the only discernable departures from the CA-4.

**Class:** CSLS-003 Janissary Combat Armor.

**Size:** Human equivalent.

**Mobility:** Good for users with Supernatural Strength or a normal strength of 35 and higher; -15% to most Physical skills and -5% to Climbing. For less physically powerful users, the armor's penalties are doubled.

### M.D.C by Location:

Head/Helmet - 80

Arms - 75 each

Legs - 90 each

Main Body - 170

**Black Market Price:** Unavailable. The armor itself, like all forms of CS body armor, is dangerous to sell because wearing it indicates that you, yourself, either stole it or bought it from criminals.

## The Shadow Forest

In addition to the rest of the strange dimensional anomalies found throughout the region, the forest has a relatively constant connection to the Shadow Dimension. As a result, thousands of Shadow Beasts and their kin roam the forest and have free rein. Of course the numerous dimensional connections only occur in the dead of night, when the dreaded beasts are most powerful. This allows hundreds of Shadow Beasts entrance into the world. Fortunately, they seem content to stay and roam within the confines of the forest.

Strange dimensional anomalies litter the forest. During the nightly plane shift, Shadow Doors open up all over the forest, allowing for the shadow creatures to cross the dimensional barrier into Rifts Earth. The Shadow Doors are not unlike Rifts, in that they are doorways to another dimension. Where Rifts are rather large, colorful, full of energy and totally unpredictable, Shadow Doors are calm, secluded, and usually hidden within the forest. They are typically found within the shadows of the largest trees, typically at the base of the tree, but they can also be found in crooks of smaller trees and sometimes in secluded glens. Shadow Doors only appear after midnight, and only when the moon is at its zenith. The doorways stay open from 10 to 60 minutes (roll 1D6x10) and allow beings to come and go through them at will. During full moons the duration is doubled, and it's tripled during the yearly equinoxes!

Magic users such as Ley Line Walkers or those using magics that can sense Rifts will be unable to detect Shadow Doors. Only Shifters with their acute dimensional senses will even have a chance of sensing them, and then only at one half their usual range. Since the Shadow Doors only come and go to the Shadow Plane they are seldom used by adventurers, unless that's their destination. Usually, only Shadow Beasts and their ilk make use of these dimensional gateways between worlds.

The Shadow Forest is also home to one of the so-called Federation Lords. He goes by the name Lord Gray, and claims to be a Shadow Lord from the Plane of Shadows. He is one of Alistair Dunscon's chief supporters and allies. No one knows how these two became such close allies, but most suspect that Alistair helped Lord Gray in some capacity in the Plane of Shadows and as a reward, Lord Gray agreed to come to Rifts Earth. Not a bad deal for Lord Gray, since by coming to Earth he has only become more powerful.

## Dangers in the Shadow Forest

During the day the forest is cast in perpetual shadow. The trees grow tall and full, blocking most of the light. While the interior of the forest is not absolutely pitch black, it is more like a forest during dusk with long, drawn out shadows. Few slivers of light actually penetrate the forest. Many supernatural creatures such as Black Fairies, Neuron Beasts, Thornhead Demons, and a host of other creatures can be found during the day. However, the forest is most famous for its numerous Shadow Beasts that reside within. Hundreds of thousands of them live within the millions of shadows in the forest and they are active during both day and night.

However, during the day the forest almost seems tranquil and serene compared to the night. While a number of supernatural terrors can still be found during the day, it's at night that the for-

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# SHADOW REALMS

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## Optional Source Material for Rifts®

By Carl Gleba

The Magic Zone has been a place of danger and intrigue for far longer than the Post-Apocalyptic calendar. Those who are native to the Magic Zone know its dangers well. They can tell when there is an impending Ley Line Storm, Dimensional Vortex, or even areas where Fade Towns occur. Over the last several decades, various parts of the Magic Zone have been broken down into sub-zones with each area corresponding to a unique geographical feature or regional phenomenon. One of the most prominent zones acts as a buffer to the west and may be the reason why the Coalition States hasn't launched an all-out invasion. The Shadow Forest has protected the Magic Zone countless times, with CS patrol after CS patrol either being chased off or lost altogether. The forest not only has the usual array of dimensional anomalies commonly found in the Magic Zone, it also has a direct connection to the dimension known as the Plane of Shadows, or more commonly known as the Shadow Dimension.



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2004

est comes alive. As soon as the sun sets the whole forest goes through a startling transformation. A massive plane shift takes place, changing the once peaceful forest into a nightmarish hell. The trees take on a horrid appearance, becoming shadowy mockeries of their former nature. The branches become bent and gnarled, with the majority of the leaves disappearing! This allows more moonlight to filter in, creating that many more shadows. Hollows in the trees become gruesome faces that display a variety of emotions. The trees are not alive in the conventional sense, but their auras seem strange and many psychics have suggested that people who have died in the forest have their souls trapped in the trees and they suffer eternal torment. Whatever the case may be, it's not the trees that one needs to fear, but the thousands of Shadow Beasts who come out at night to stalk prey. Large groups of Shadow Beasts can be found and they usually attack en masse. Even flying above the forest is not safe, for it is said that many of the Shadow Dragons from Tolkeen and Freehold have taken refuge in the Shadow Forest. Truth or rumor aside, flying creatures can be found in abundance and even those protected in the strongest armors can be brought down, usually in the middle of the forest.

Aside from the few ley lines that run through the Shadow Forest, the majority of the Rifts found are from the hundreds of Shadow Doors that are hidden there. These doors are strange and mysterious anomalies and some Shifters speculate that they are a different sort of Rift, unique only to the "Plane of Shadows." While no one has returned from the Plane of Shadows to confirm this, the theory goes that there are no ley lines in that dimension. Instead there is a warped and perverted opposite of ley lines that have been dubbed anti-ley lines, or simply called anti-lines. They are the complete opposite of ley lines and instead of radiating magic energy and giving off that eerie bluish glow, they absorb magic energy as well as light and all other forms of energy. These anti-lines are thought to look like black lines of energy with a slight purplish glow. Where two lines intersect a nexus is formed as well, however it rarely causes a Rift. Instead doorways to other shadows open, similar in concept to a Rift, but to places where there is a corresponding shadow. Shadow creatures from the Plane of Shadows make use of these doorways and come and go as they please.

The terrain of the Shadow Forest is mostly thick woods, with a massive canyon running through the middle. It stretches for more than 50 miles (80 km), running north and south. The width varies from a few hundred feet to over a mile (1.6 km) at its widest point. The canyon is constantly filled with an eerie gray mist that shrouds the bottom from view. Depending on weather conditions, this mist can rise up out of the canyon to engulf the forest around the canyon for several miles. This usually happens in the early morning after the moon has reached its zenith. This can be extremely dangerous for travelers as visibility is reduced to around 10 feet (3 m) and more than one adventurer has plunged to their death in the canyon.

At the bottom of the canyon is a series of ley lines that are in a constant state of flux and act as a massive Rift. Anyone who falls could end up in places such as Hades or the Plane of Shadows. However, it shifts constantly so one could end up anywhere (01-60% chance, then roll percentile: 01-45% Hades, 46-90% Plane of Shadow, 91-00% another, random dimension). The sides of the canyon are sheer cliffs and only the most experienced climbers would dare to rappel down their sides.



## The Shadow Fortress

The Shadow Fortress of Lord Gray is truly a site to behold. It is located roughly in the middle of the Shadow Forest in a small clearing on a small plateau. Surrounding the fortress is a ravine that spans approximately 300 feet (91 m). The only way across by foot is over a narrow bridge made of rock and stone. At the foot of the bridge is an elaborate gate constructed of obsidian. The gate is like a small guard tower with a portcullis. At least half a dozen Shadow Beasts will be around the gate at all times, with another half dozen in the nearby forest. The gate is merely the first line of defense (it has 500 M.D.C.) and anyone trying to get into the Shadow Fortress has to either go through the gate or cross the 300 foot (91 m) ravine. Climbing the ravine is out of the question, as first, a thick fog making visibility extremely difficult surrounds it and second, there's no sign of the bottom of the ravine. Third, the cliff is a sheer drop, as if it was carved out of the very rock. Those sensitive to dimensional disturbances will immediately sense strange dimensional anomalies at the bottom of the ravine, as numerous Shadow Doors open and close at its base. Anyone who climbs down or falls will end up in the Plane of Shadows (or some other dimension), possibly with no way home!

The fortress is also constructed of the same obsidian material as the gatehouse. It is the size of a three-story building, but the towers and crowns on the roof extend at least twice as high. The towers are battlements from which numerous Shadow Beasts can be seen patrolling and guarding. The building rests on a tiny island within the ravine and the walls of the fortress go right up to the edge. Anyone attempting to fly in will have to land directly on one of the battlements.

Protecting the fortress from above is a constant fog that covers roughly a 2 mile (3.2 km) area. The fog is very thick and unearthly in nature. Anyone flying in from above will get lost unless they have radar or come special ability, and not be able to find the ground. The only way out is by going up and away from the fortress. This makes it very difficult to fly to Lord Gray's abode. So far, this has protected the fortress from any type of aerial assault from the Coalition or any of Gray's enemies. Of course, the fog's best protection is that it keeps the light out. During the day, under the fog, it is roughly equal to twilight, and when night does fall it's pitch black, making it very difficult to see or navigate.

The interior of the fortress has the same obsidian features as the outside. The stone is almost a metallic black in color and absorbs light (reduces any light source by one half), making getting around the interior of the fortress difficult. When light is needed there are magic lamps that glow with the color of magic energy, like ley lines. It is a quiet, subdued light that creates plenty of shadows.

The castle-like structure also has numerous rooms found on three different floors. The very rooms seem as if they are all carved out of a single piece of stone. The grand entrance is large and impressive and appears to be shaped like the maw of a beast. Another stone portcullis can be found here as well. After going through several minor chambers one reaches Lord Gray's grand audience chamber. It is here that Lord Gray meets with everyone, including Alistair Dunscon. The room is huge, with vaulted ceilings that form a peak at the top. A single throne lies at the back while the rest of the room is adorned with numerous

giant-sized statues. One of Lord Gray's prized possessions is his rune statue acquired from Atlantis. It is in the shape of a Shadow Dragon (custom ordered) and stands directly over Gray's throne. It is a last line of defense should it be needed.



## Lord Gray

Few Federation Lords are as much of a mystery as Lord Gray. All that is known about him is that he is a being from the Plane of Shadows and all Shadow Beasts obey his every command! Lord Gray is one of Alistair Dunscon's most trusted allies and the two are commonly seen together.

Gray greatly enjoys his autonomy in the Federation of Magic. From all observations, his task seems simple. Guard the western front and provide Shadow Beasts as shock troops in defense of the True Federation. He does both quite well. He is content to stay in the Shadow Forest and rarely leaves his abode. Once in a while he is expected to meet with Alistair Dunscon in the City of Brass, but for the most part he rarely travels. Instead he prefers to "recruit" adventurers and others to do his bidding. Most won't willingly work for Lord Gray, so he has become quite adept at using blackmail to get his way. This has made him more enemies than he can count, but so long as he has a legion of Shadow Beasts at his beck and call, he could care less.

**Alignment:** Aberrant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 18, M.E. 15, M.A. 9, P.S. 21, P.P. 13, P.E. 27, P.B. 9, Spd. 19.

**Description:** Like the rest of his race, Lord Gray appears as a shadowy wisp in the shape of a humanoid. Lord Gray likes to wear a large, spiky cowl that rises above his head. The only facial features visible are his crimson colored eyes and the

glow from his mouth when he speaks. In addition to the cowl he also has a long, flowing cape made of shadows, which are really his tendrils. (See the Shadow Lord R.C.C. below for more details.)

**M.D.C.:** 300 (In S.D.C. dimensions Lord Gray would have 54 S.D.C. and 135 Hit Points; Natural A.R.: 14.)

**Horror Factor:** 16

**P.P.E.:** 427

**Experience Level:** 12th level Shadow Lord.

**Natural Abilities:** Lord Gray is a being of shadow energy. As a result, he is sometimes ethereal sometimes solid, and any attacks leveled at him have a 01-50% chance of passing right through (even on what would normally be a successful strike). On a roll of 01-50% the strike passes right through and on a 51-100% the strike hits. Spells and psionics do full damage, even if ethereal. When he is ethereal, Lord Gray can slip through cracks and under doors with ease. He is impervious to most normal S.D.C. weapons and most Mega-Damage weapons. Shadow Lords can only take damage from magic weapons (conventional magic melee weapons as well as Techno-Wizardry), and then only if they're not ethereal at the time of impact. They can also look through shadows as if they were windows. This Shadowsight (as per the spell in **The Rifter® #20**), as it is called, allows them to eavesdrop and peer through any shadow within a mile (1.6 km) per level of experience. This gives Gray an impressive 12 mile (19 km) radius. Command Shadow Beast is another impressive power of the Shadow Lords. All Shadow Beasts automatically recognize Shadow Lords as their superiors and obey without question even giving up their lives if so commanded. In the Plane of Shadows a typical Shadow Lord can command 100 Shadow Beasts per level of experience, but on Rifts Earth that amount is tripled and Gray commands a small army of 3,600 Shadow Beasts! In a place like the Plane of Shadows where control is paramount and the Shadow Lords fight against each other, he who controls the most beasts usually wins. So while a Shadow Lord can control a small amount, those not under his direct control must be won over or convinced to join. Gray absolutely loves Rifts Earth as it gives him a massive edge, one that few Shadow Lords know about.

**R.C.C. Skills of Note:** Intelligence 88%, Lore: Magic 98/98/83%, Lore:Demons and Monsters 90%, Lore: Dimensions 90%, Lore: Faerie 70%, Prowl 85%, Land Navigation 64%, Wilderness Survival 65%, W.P. Sword, and Paired Weapons – Tendrils only.

**Psionic Powers:** None, although highly resistant.

**Magic Powers:** Lord Gray is proficient in all Shadow Magic (see **Palladium Fantasy RPG® Book 12: Library of Bletherad™** for Shadow Magic spells, plus those presented in **The Rifter® #20**), all spell magic 1-8, plus the following spells: Mute, Wall of Defense, Magic Warrior, Warped Space, Anti Magic Cloud, Bottomless Pit, Energy Sphere (always has at least one on hand) Sanctum, Circle of Travel, Teleport Superior, Void and Mystic Quake.

**Combat:** Six attacks per melee or three by magic.

**Bonuses:** +3 to strike, parry, and dodge. +8 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs Horror Factor and Psionics. Spell Strength is +3!

**Vulnerabilities/Penalties:** Like all Shadow creatures, Lord Gray is vulnerable when exposed to sunlight. All combat bonuses including Spell Strength and saving throws are at ½ (round down) when exposed to true sunlight, although he still maintains his supernatural nature (M.D.C. and Supernatural Strength). Silver weapons also do the Mega-Damage equivalent. Weapons of Light do double damage and always do damage even if ethereal. (No roll is needed.) Weapons of Light include Holy Weapons and magic spells such as Light Blade. Also, because of his power and command over hundreds of Shadow Beasts, Lord Gray tends to underestimate his adversaries. There may come a time when he underestimates the wrong person or group and they cause his demise.

**Alliances and Allies:** Gets along quite well with Lord Dunscon, in fact the two seem to be good friends. When Dunscon was consolidating his power in the Magic Zone, the Shadow Forest was an uncontrollable commodity that needed to be tamed. After some minor negotiations with Lord Gray, he agreed to come to the Magic Zone and has been there ever since. Lord Gray also has dominion over all Shadow Beasts that prowl the forest. As a result, he could call on hundreds at a moment's notice and within a few days could have an army of 5,000 if needed.

**Enemies:** Over the years Lord Gray has made many enemies. Counted amongst them are a band of Cyber-Knights as well as other adventurers who have ventured into the Shadow Forest. The Crystal Mage (another Federation Lord) also despises Gray and considers him his most hated enemy. Even though they only met once at a gathering called by Alistair Dunscon, the Crystal Mage sees Gray as a threat as the powers Gray wields could possibly be one of Prism's (a mystical artifact owned by the Crystal Mage) only weaknesses. Gray considers very few souls his enemy as one of his favorite expressions is: "Why have enemies? Better to have fools to play against one another. If they are intelligent enough to see that, then they may be worth making an enemy."

## Adventure Hooks with Lord Gray

Lord Gray is absolute ruler of the Shadow Forest and little goes on there without his notice. His ability of Shadowsight enables him to see into just about every corner of the forest. This enables him to quickly deal with intruders by sending scores of Shadow Beasts to intercept and either engage or spy on such groups. Gray is no fool and from time to time a powerful group of adventurers or even the occasional Coalition patrol will stumble into the forest and catch Gray's eye. He will usually command his Shadow Beasts to test the mettle of these groups and if they manage to survive long enough to keep Gray's interest, may even be invited to Gray's abode. Once at the impressive Shadow Fortress, all hostilities seem to cease, and from every corner, Shadow Beasts can be seen. Their roars and heavy breathing are an ever-constant reminder of their presence.

## The Bargain

**Hook:** During their travels, the player group has come across the Shadow Forest. While in the forest they come under constant attack by hordes of Shadow Beasts.



**Line:** The player group will be worn down by the constant assaults and are driven towards Lord Gray's Shadow Fortress. All attacks will cease once the players are within the gates of the fortress. However, the players will only have one direction to go, into the fortress, as dozens of Shadow Beasts block their exit into the forest.

Once inside the fortress, one of Lord Gray's more intelligent beasts will beckon the group to follow until they are in the audience chamber of Lord Gray. If the players should decide not to follow the creature, Lord Gray's disembodied voice will bid them to follow the Shadow Beast for a personal audience.

**Sinker:** Once in the presence of Lord Gray, he will afford the characters every comfort he has to offer, including magic healing if necessary. (Lord Gray will have enough potions on hand for all characters to be healed up.) Food and drink will also be offered, and the characters treated as honored guests. Once the players have been made comfortable (at least as comfortable as one can get in such a dreadful place), Lord Gray will make his proposal. It will be at this point that the players notice that a member of their group is missing (preferably an important N.P.C.). In exchange for this person's life, Lord Gray has the following task for the group to perform. At this point it can be any of the options listed below. This is Lord Gray's most common tactic. In exchange for the characters completing the task he will return the N.P.C. safe and unharmed. Gray is a being of honor (twisted as it is) and will live up to his end of the agreement. Sometimes he will even offer a reward as an incentive, although very rarely. From the list below G.M.s can feel free to customize it and tweak it to fit their group.

## Multiple possibilities

### Information:

- Gray has recently learned that the Crystal Mage may be planning some type of "hit" against him. Since Shadow Beasts can't get within the confines of the Crystal Tower, the players are to go and find out what is being plotted, and if the plot is foiled (proof will be needed) then Gray may even give the characters some type of reward in addition to freeing their comrade.
- Gray believes that another Shadow Lord may be operating somewhere within the Shadow Forest. Gray only suspects, because he is being blocked from viewing the southern corner of the forest. The players are to check this out and if possible, bring proof. Gray will assure the group that none of his Shadow Legions will attack the group, so if they do come under attack by Shadow Beasts, then it's possible another Shadow Lord is in the area.
- From the grapevine within the Magic Zone, Lord Gray has heard that a Techno-Wizard in Stormspire is making equipment using Shadow Magic. If this is true, Gray may lose a valuable edge within the Magic Zone (being one of a few beings to possess such secrets) and, as such, he needs it confirmed. Gray will send the players to Stormspire and will want some kind of proof, either a TW device that utilizes the rare magic, or even better yet, the Techno-Wizard himself.

### Acquisition:

- Gray has learned that a group of Coalition Special Forces is bringing a magical artifact called the Mobeous (could be Old Yorik, or any of Tolkeen's other treasures) to Lone Star for study. The players are to intercept this group of CS Special Forces and obtain the Mobeous. An especially difficult dilemma if the characters are CS members themselves.
- A Techno-Wizard from Stormspire has apparently come across Shadow Magic and is incorporating it into some of his latest designs. This adventure can be a continuance from the adventure above, as Lord Gray now wishes to have all such items. Whether for study or to be destroyed is as yet unknown. The Techno-Wizard items are in a shipment bound for New Lazlo. The characters are to intercept the shipment and return it with all items intact. Lord Gray has a manifest on hand and the players can have a copy if they ask. If there are any other items on hand (there's a good chance that there is), so long as they are not devices that incorporate Shadow Magic, the characters may keep them as a reward.
- Another being of shadow has been spotted in the Magic Zone. Unlike Gray this creature can easily walk in the light of day, yet has an unusual connection with the Plane of Shadows. Unbeknownst to Lord Gray, this being is a Silhouette from Phase World. (See **Rifts® Dimension Book 2: Phase World®** for details.) Lord Gray wants the characters to find this being and bring him/her back to the Shadow Fortress alive! Of course, characters of good alignment may have a problem with this kidnapping in exchange for their comrade.

### Assault:

- After learning that another Shadow Lord is within the forest, Gray will instruct the characters to eliminate him. He will not divulge any of the Shadow Lord's weaknesses, but may provide a scroll or magic item to help the group in their task.
- A Coalition Psi-Battalion group has been making a nuisance of themselves in the Shadow Forest and is coming dangerously close to locating Lord Gray's fortress. This particular Psi-Battalion unit served in the Siege on Tolkeen campaign and is very experienced with dealing with supernatural creatures. Lord Gray wants this group eliminated, he doesn't care how the characters do it, and he simply wants them gone. This could be simple or difficult if the characters are part of the Coalition. They will most likely have to deceive their comrades as the Psi-Battalion can sense that they are close to something big. More than likely they will find Gray's abode within 3 to 6 (1D4+2) days. Lord Gray will be able to provide the characters with the current position of the Coalition group, giving them ample time to locate and "persuade" them to take a different course of action or look somewhere else.
- One of Lord Gray's long-time rivals has slain an important ally in the Plane of Shadows. The time has come for some retribution. If Gray feels the characters are powerful enough he will send them to the Plane of Shadows to seek out this rival Shadow Lord and take him out. Gray will even give command of some of the Shadow Beasts to the group, to be used as scouts and to engage rival Shadow Beasts. Success will not only assure the freedom of the group's comrade, but a sizeable reward as well. Practitioners of magic may even be granted a boon of their choice of Shadow Magic!



## The Plane of Shadows

The few adventurers who have traveled to the Shadow Forest have reported that access to another dimension is indeed possible there, and it's not a place of splendor or light. No, it is the endless expanse of the Shadow Dimension. Some say that it is infinite, and not only goes on forever, but touches every dimension in the Megaverse. Like the antithesis of the Astral Plane, it is a dark region, that does have a sun, but something is obscuring it, leaving the land in perpetual twilight. Shadows cover the land, and even at night, there is a pale yellow moon to provide more shadows.

The few Shifters who have returned from this dark and evil dimension report that the primary dimensional medium is some type of shadow energy. There is a land mass and some expect it to be a dark reflection of the world they came from, but it is not. The dimensional fabric is so weak (+20% to d-teleport) that some feel there is hardly any, and that the dimension is, in effect, the culmination of many dimensions. Like a city with numerous streets and avenues, the Shadow Dimension is some back alley of an already existing dimension and these alleys run into each other, creating a virtual maze, or a small world in their own right.

Magic does exist in the Shadow Plane and the level would seem to be intermediate. However, ley lines and nexus points do not have their characteristic light bluish glow. In fact, magic users will find that they can not even draw magic energy from them. The lines of energy in the Shadow Dimension appear as a dark purplish energy that have a violent, crackling nature to them. They are not calm and subdued like the ley lines of Rifts Earth. Rather those of the Shadow Plane surge like a violent

electrical storm. The anti-ley lines, as they are called, also do not give up their P.P.E., but instead absorb it. Magic users will find if they rest on or near them that their P.P.E. is drained by 4D6 P.P.E. per hour. Casting spells in the vicinity of anti-ley lines also reduces the potency of such spells. Casting within a half mile (0.8 km) of one will reduce the range, damage, and duration by one half. If cast within a mile (1.6 km) of a nexus, range, damage and duration are reduced to 1/3 their normal potency. Even Shadow Lords and their minions are affected by these conditions, and that is why these anti-nexus points are often in the middle of nowhere.

It's difficult to tell time in the Shadow Dimension. Even though there are no temporal anomalies, being almost constantly in a twilight state makes it difficult. There is an eerie sun, but it seems to cast shadows instead of light. It stays high in the sky for 13 hours, and then there is a brief period of darkness before the moon comes out. It is only a single moon and not unlike that of Earth. The only difference is the pale yellow color, and it provides very little light to speak of.

Aside from the dimension being in constant twilight and of course, shadows everywhere, the dimension seems to display only two known dimensional quirks. First, it is connected to every dimension in the Megaverse. At the bidding of the Shadow Lords, they can use any shadow as a portal and they often do. The other oddity of the dimension is there is almost no color. There are no brilliant colors to be found at all, even those that might normally be created via magic. There are various shades of gray, black, and the pale yellow moon and that's it. Fine details are difficult to make out and visibility is roughly less than 500 feet (152 m). Those who have nightvision are at a distinct advantage and are unaffected. In fact, after 1D4 days their normal nightvision range is increased by 25%.



The terrain of the Shadow Dimension is just as different and varied as that of Rifts Earth. There are forests, jungles, lakes, mountains and even deserts. The only thing that seems absent is exceptionally large bodies of water the size of oceans. There are lakes, but the largest are no bigger than the Great Lakes of North America.

The Shadow Forest has a direct link to one of the few wastelands in the Shadow Dimension. It is a barren, rocky expanse with many buttes and bluffs. The shadows are very long here due to the buttes in the area. As a result, they are huge doorways into the Shadow Forest. Gray has already managed to make some kind of arrangements with the Shadow Beasts in the area. While he can control a substantial number, those in the wastelands are not under his direct control. However, some deal was struck and as a result, Lord Gray has an almost endless supply of Shadow Beasts at his disposal.

## Denizens of the Shadow Dimension

The Plane of Shadows has a variety of creatures as varied as any world. Shadow Beasts happen to be in the majority and are very common. Few other creatures dominate the land as they do. Only the Shadow Lords hold sway over the land and from all accounts, they are the undisputed masters of it. Fortunately, they are power-hungry beings and are too busy fighting against each other to have any grandiose Megaverse conquering schemes. Still, they will involve mortals and beings from other dimensions if it suits their current needs.

### Shadow Beasts

The Shadow Beast is one of the most common denizens of the Shadow Dimension. So common in fact it is they who often suffer at the hands of many a Summoner or powerful magic user. They are also the minions of the Shadow Lords and carry out their cruel and vicious orders with great pleasure. These large, brutish beasts seem to dominate the Shadow Dimension and any dimensional traveler must be wary as they literally lurk in every shadow!

Shadow Beasts are the eyes and ears of the Shadow Lords. Each Shadow Lord commands hundreds to thousands of them and they make up the bulk of their forces. Shadow Beasts are used in just about every capacity, from front-line troops (cannon fodder basically) to scouts and spies. They are ideal minions that carry out their orders with a perverse pleasure.

**Alignment:** Miscreant or Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 2D4+2, M.E. 2D4+2, M.A.2D4+2, P.S. 3D6+20, P.P. 3D6+10, P.E. 3D6+20, P.B. 1D4+1, Spd. 3D6+12.

**M.D.C.:** 1D6x10+25 (On S.D.C. worlds, Shadow Beasts have 2D4x10+20 Hit Points, 1D4x10 S.D.C. and a Natural A.R.: 10 in the shadows and 5 in the light.)

**Horror Factor:** 13

**Size:** 9 to 12 feet (2.7 to 3.6 m) tall.

**Weight:** 300 to 500 pounds (135 to 225 kg).

**Average Life Span:** Unknown; thought to be immortal.



**P.P.E.:** 6D6

**Natural Abilities:** They can blend into any shadow as per the Shadowmeld spell. They have Supernatural Strength and Endurance (in darkness only) and can see in the dark with nightvision that has a range of 2000 feet (610 m). Impervious to cold, heat, disease, drugs and poison. Regenerates 2D6 M.D.C. (S.D.C./Hit Points in S.D.C. worlds) per melee, but only in the shadows. They can track by smell at 42%, and can smell blood up to 2 miles (3.2 km) away and track to it at 76%.

**Vulnerabilities/Penalties:** As with most creatures of shadow, light is their bane! All combat bonuses and attacks, and skills are reduced to half, as well as their Armor Rating. In Mega-Damage environments, their M.D.C. drops to one half and they become vulnerable to normal S.D.C. weapons. Weapons made of silver do double damage in S.D.C. environments and on Mega-Damage worlds they do the Mega-Damage equivalent.

**R.C.C. Equivalent Skills:** Prowl 90%, Climb 80/75%, Land Navigation 60%, Wilderness Survival 80%, Track 40%, Detect Ambush 25%, understands Dragonese and Whisper (the language of the Shadow Lords), and magically understands the language of the mage who summoned it.

**Equivalent Level of Experience:** 1D4+1

**Attacks per Melee:** The Shadow Beast has 6 attacks per melee in the dark and only three when exposed to an intense light source like a Globe of Daylight, or direct sunlight.

**Damage:** As per Supernatural Strength, with claws adding 1D6 to damage. Typically 5D6 S.D.C. on a restrained punch, 3D6 M.D. on a full strength punch, 4D6 with a claw slash, 6D6 on a power punch (but counts as two attacks), and 3D6+3 on a bite.

**R.C.C. Bonuses (in addition to any likely attribute bonuses):** +2 to strike and +1 to parry, dodge, and all saving throws. They are also quite fearless and are +6 to save vs Horror Factor. These bonuses only apply in the dark and are effectively lost in the light; see vulnerabilities.

**Magic:** None, except natural abilities.

**Psionics:** None.

**Alliances and Allies:** Other denizens of the Shadow Dimension and the Shadow Lords, whom they obey without question.

**Enemies:** All creatures of light and even those that would summon them.

## Shadow Behemoth

The Shadow Behemoth is large, bulldog-like creature that stalks the lands of the Shadow Dimension. It has a pair of large,

oversized front legs, a bulky chest, a large head filled with an even larger maw full of teeth and no neck to speak of. Its large upper body tapers off to a pair of smaller hind legs. The creature is pitch black in color and its fur is short and fine, giving it a sleek appearance.

If not for the fact that these creatures are stupid, they might actually pose a serious threat to the inhabitants of the Shadow Dimension. They attack and eat anything that comes within the range of their senses, but the creature can be easily fooled and tricked. Shadow Lords easily manipulate these creatures and turn them into trained guard dogs.

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D6 (low humanoid intelligence), M.E. 1D6+4, M.A. 1D6+4, P.S. 6D6+10, P.P. 2D6+10, P.E. 3D6+10, P.B. 1D4+1, Spd. 6D6.

**M.D.C.:** 1D4x100 (In S.D.C. worlds the Shadow Behemoth has its P.E. attribute x3 for Hit Points, and P.E. x10 for S.D.C. with a natural A.R. of 12.)

**Horror Factor:** 13

**Size:** 9 to 12 feet (2.7 to 3.7 m) at the shoulder.

**Weight:** 2000 to 3000 pounds (900 to 1350 kg).

**Average Life Span:** Unknown; assumed to be immortal.

**P.P.E.:** 2D6

**Natural Abilities:** Like all creatures of the Shadow Dimension they can Shadowmeld at will. This can be done for an indefinite length of time. They also have Supernatural Strength and Endurance in the dark and have nightvision with a range of one mile (1.6 km). The Shadow Behemoth is a supernatural predator that requires both P.P.E. and flesh to eat. It can





sense supernatural creatures and creatures of magic up to one mile (1.6 km) away. It can track them at 55% and is +20% if the supernatural creature is expending any P.P.E. They can also smell blood up three miles (4.8 km) away. In the darkness they are also invulnerable to normal weapons.

**Vulnerabilities/Penalties:** The Shadow Behemoth is deathly afraid of light as it not only takes away all of its natural abilities, it becomes vulnerable to normal weapons, too. Torches and small lights have a Horror Factor of 10, any magic light has a Horror Factor of 13 and truly bright lights such as those mounted on a vehicle have a Horror Factor of 15. Globe of Daylight has a Horror Factor of 16! They are also vulnerable to silver and in S.D.C. environments they take double damage and in Mega-Damage worlds silver coated weapons do the M.D.C. equivalent.

**R.C.C. Equivalent Skills:** Prowl 60%, Detect Ambush 30%, Detect Concealment 25%, Swim 40%, Track by Smell 55%, Wilderness Survival 40%. Understands Whisper at 98%, and typically one other language at +30%.

**Equivalent Level of Experience:** Not Applicable.

**Attacks per Melee:** The Shadow Behemoth has seven attacks per melee.

**Damage:** As per Supernatural Strength, plus the claws add 1D6, and the bite is 1D4x10. Typical damage is 4D6 M.D. from a claw swipe and 1D4x10 for a power swipe, but counts as two attacks.

**R.C.C. Bonuses (in addition to any likely attribute bonuses):** +4 on initiative, +3 to strike and +1 to parry and dodge. +2 on all saving throws and +6 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Magic:** None, except for natural abilities.

**Psionics:** None.

**Alliances and Allies:** None really, if it comes down to it they will hunt Shadow Beasts in their own dimension and see them as competition. Shadow Lords have the ability to take control of Shadow Behemoths.

**Enemies:** Everything is considered a source of food, so pretty much anything that moves is considered potential prey!

## Shadow Lord R.C.C.

(Inspired in part by

**The Hammer of the Forge** by James M.G. Cannon)

The Shadow Lords are the undisputed masters of the Shadow Dimension. They command the legions of Shadow Beasts to do their bidding. No one knows what their agenda is, and to this day few who have visited the Shadow Dimension return alive to tell about it.

The Shadow Lords are unlike the Shadow Beasts in that they are actually creatures of shadow, and they always appear to be in a semi-visible state even when exposed to direct sunlight. They're humanoid in appearance, but that's where the similarities end. Their eyes appear as a single red slit going across their face, and when they speak the same red glow emanates from their mouth. Their speech it sounds like a whisper from someone across a room. They always appear to be wearing some type of cloak or cape, but this is purposely meant to mislead, as it is really multiple tendrils that are part of the body and can lash out in an instant.

They are as intelligent as any humanoid and all of them seem to have a lust for power. In their native dimension each Shadow Lord holds dominion over a small kingdom. If they weren't intent on wiping each other out to take absolute control of the Shadow Dimension they might actually pose a threat. There are a few kingdoms where several Shadow Lords rule together, but this is rare, and often they are the lesser, inexperienced Shadow Lords. They usually end up backstabbing their comrades and seizing power for themselves.

**Alignment:** Typically Miscreant, but can be any evil.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 2D6+6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 3D6+6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 4D6+4, P.B. 2D4+2, Spd. 3D6+4.

**M.D.C.:** 4D6x10+100 (In S.D.C. worlds, Shadow Lords have their P.E. attribute x5 for Hit Points, and P.E. x4 for S.D.C. with a Natural A.R. of 14.)

**Horror Factor:** 16

**Size:** 8 to 10 feet (2.4 to 3 m) tall.

**Weight:** 100 to 200 pounds (45 to 90 kg), and nothing when ethereal.

**Average Life Span:** Unknown, thought to be immortal.

**P.P.E.:** 1D6x50+P.E.

**Natural Abilities:** The Shadow Lords are beings of shadows and as such, are effectively ethereal. They phase in and out normally and as a result, weapons may actually pass right through them. Even on a successful strike there is still a 01-50% chance that the weapon will pass right through, doing no damage at all. A roll of 51-100% does indicate a hit. Only magic spells and psionics affect them directly. Shadow



Lords also have Supernatural Strength and Endurance (and unlike the other shadow creatures, they do not lose this supernatural ability when exposed to light). They can see perfectly in absolute darkness and are considered to have night vision with a 1000 foot (305 m) range. They are invulnerable to most normal weapons and only magic and silver weapons can harm them, if they can be hit. They also have the following spell-like abilities: Shadowsight, Shadow Vision, Shadesword, Summon Shadow Beast (can summon 2D4 every melee), and Shadowmeld. These abilities can be used at any time and at no P.P.E. cost. They can also fly at a speed of 60 miles per hour (96 km).

While Shadow Lords have a distinct humanoid appearance, they are far from it. Aside from being ethereal they have 6 to 10 shadowy tendrils. They are usually unnoticed and are wrapped around the Shadow Lord, taking the appearance of a cape, a cloak or sometimes a cowl around their head. When needed they attack at lightning speed and are often not noticed until it's too late. They become solid for that instant to inflict damage. Also, in order to hold anything, they must be in their solid form to do so. They can phase from solid to ethereal at will, however when they are preoccupied, such as in a battle or spell casting, they tend to phase in and out, thus the percentages to hit in combat. In order to stay in a continually ethereal state they can take no other offensive actions.

**Vulnerabilities/Penalties:** Light is the enemy of all shadow beings! When exposed to true sunlight, all combat bonuses, flight speed, and M.D.C. (Hit Points, and S.D.C. in non-M.D.C.) are at one half. Weapons of Light like certain holy weapons, rune weapons or spells like Light Blade, do double damage as well as all type of lightning spells! They take normal damage from other spells and psionics. Silver also does double damage in S.D.C. worlds and the Mega-Damage equivalent on Rifts Earth.

**R.C.C. Equivalent Skills:** Intelligence 68%, Lore: Magic 88/78/63%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 90%, Lore: Dimensions 80%, Lore: Faerie 70%, Prowl 85%, Land Navigation 64%, Wilderness Survival 65% and one W.P. of choice, typically Blunt or Sword. Paired Weapons – Tendrils only. Shadow Lords instinctively use their tendrils and as a result, can use them quite effectively in combat. They can attack with up to four tendrils simultaneously or defend with four at a time. This allows them to attack up to four targets at once.

**Equivalent Level of Experience:** 1D6+8

**Attacks per Melee:** The Shadow Lord has six attacks per melee, or three by magic.

**Damage:** As per Supernatural Strength, the tendrils do 1D6 M.D. per tendril. Typically, a punch does 2D6 M.D., kick does 3D6 M.D., and a power punch does 4D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

**R.C.C. Bonuses (in addition to any likely attribute bonuses):** In addition to physical attributes, they are +3 to strike, parry, dodge, and roll with punch/fall. +6 to save vs psionics and Horror Factor, and +2 to save vs magic.

**Magic:** Shadow Lords are very adept at magic and have spent years studying various magic disciplines. In addition to knowing all Shadow Magic they are typically spell casters such as a Wizard (see the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**) or

Ley Line Walker. They will know all spells up to at least second level, but can know many more. Roll 1D6+1 to determine the extent of their magic knowledge. They will also know at least 10+2D6 spells from higher levels up to 15th level. At the Game Master's, discretion they may even know 1D4 Spells of Legend.

**Psionics:** None.

**Alliances and Allies:** They command vast armies of Shadow Beast and other shadow creatures who obey without question.

**Enemies:** Creatures of Light are attacked without mercy if the Shadow Lord has the advantage. They might consider working with other creatures if they had a mutual goal, but have disdain for most other creatures.

**Note:** Shadow Lords, for the most part, are haughty, arrogant creatures who consider themselves above everyone. As such, they look down on most mortal creatures and rarely, if ever, show any kind of respect. If they do it is most likely a ruse so they can take advantage of them, or for some other ulterior motive.

## Shadow Spells

### Level Three

#### Shadow Globe

**Range:** 30 feet (9.1 m), plus 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.

**Duration:** 12 melees (3 minutes) per level of the caster.

**Saving Throw:** None.

**P.P.E.:** 6

Shadow Globe has two effects. The first is to create a globe of light (not daylight!) and cover it with black tendrils. The tendrils do not smother the light completely, but cover it enough to create up to 2D6+2 shadows in an area of 10 feet (3 m) per level of the caster. This spell is ideal for when additional shadows are needed in a given area.

The second effect actually snuffs out the light of an existing Globe of Daylight, creating shadows as in the first effect. There is no saving throw because the globe is not being countered, per se, just altered with a shadowy casing. The net result is losing a preexisting Globe of Daylight and creating more shadows in an area.

### Level Four

#### Shadow Vision

**Range:** Line of sight, 100 feet (30.5 m).

**Duration:** 2 minutes per level of the caster.

**Saving Throw:** None.

**P.P.E.:** 12

This spell allows the caster to see in magical shadows and discern most shadow type spells. They will be able to see those who are Shadow Melded, the entrances to Shadow Doors and Shadow Holes will be outlined and visible, as well as negate the effects of Shade Armor.



## Whispered Voice

**Range:** 500 feet (152 m), plus 100 feet (30 m) per additional level of experience.

**Duration:** 1 melee per level of the caster.

**Saving Throw:** None.

**P.P.E.:** 12

Using a nearby shadow, the caster need only speak into it. Doing so projects the voice to all shadows within the caster's range. This has numerous effects, but is most dramatically used to give the disembodied effect. It is by no means a secure form of communication and used more to intimidate foes or deliver a message to a general area.

## Level Five Shade Armor

**Range:** Self only.

**Duration:** 1 minute per level of experience.

**Saving Throw:** None.

**P.P.E.:** 18

Shadowy wisps move over the body, making the wearer appear to fade in and out of the shadows. The net result is a target that is difficult to hit. The armor is meant more for a distraction than real protection. It provides 50 S.D.C. plus 5 per level of experience, and has an A.R. of 16 (30 M.D.C. plus 5 per level of experience in M.D.C. settings). Because of the shadowy effects, victims are -3 to strike, parry and dodge when facing someone in Shade Armor.

## Shadow Pools

**Range:** 20 feet (6.1 m), plus 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.

**Duration:** 2 melees per level of experience.

**Saving Throw:** Dodge, but needs a Natural 18, 19, or 20.

**P.P.E.:** 15

The mage is able to change one shadow plus one additional shadow per level of experience, into a black, murky pool of water. People must be aware that it is there in order to avoid it. The pools are 10 feet (3 m) deep per level of the caster and there is no apparent edge, so getting out of the pool is very difficult and usually requires help, unless the character is able to make a successful Climbing skill roll at -20%. The size of the Shadow Pool will depend on the size of the shadow it was cast on. The mage can be selective about which shadows are used.

Those trapped in the pool must be able to tread water, or make it over to the edge. Those wearing heavy armor may be encumbered and it will likely cause them to sink. Game Masters should take this into consideration.

## Level Seven Manipulate Shadows

**Range:** 100 feet (30.5 m), plus 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.

**Duration:** 3 minutes per level of experience.

**Saving Throw:** None.

**P.P.E.:** 20

The mage is able to manipulate 4 shadows plus 2 per level of experience. With this spell he is able to elongate them, make them appear twice as wide or long as they normally would be, move them around and hold them in place, etc. This spell is used to complement other shadow spells.

## Eyes in the Dark

**Range:** All shadows in a 50 foot (15.2 m) radius, plus 10 foot (3 m) radius per level of experience.

**Duration:** 1 melee per level of experience.

**Saving Throw:** Standard.

**P.P.E.:** 25

All shadows within the radius of the caster suddenly have 1D4 pairs of eyes peering at the caster's opponents. The eyes move, blink, and give the illusion that numerous creatures (similar to the Shadow Beast) are peering out and ready to attack. This is distracting for all around and for those that fail to save are -2 on initiative, -1 to strike, parry, and dodge, plus they are -10% on all skills performed while the spell is in effect. Each round a save against Horror Factor must be rolled, or else those penalties apply as well. Those that make their saving throw are unaffected and in addition do not need to make the saving throw vs Horror Factor.

## Night Stick

**Range:** Self only.

**Duration:** Two minutes per level of experience.

**Damage:** Blunt: 1D6 per level of experience. Staff: 1D8 per level of experience.

**Saving Throw:** Standard.

**P.P.E.:** 26

The caster is able to conjure forth either a blunt weapon or a staff composed of shadows and darkness. Like its counterpart spell, Shadeword, anyone struck by the weapon must save vs magic or suffer a -2 to strike and parry for one melee. The effects are accumulative with multiple strikes.

## Shadow Displacement

**Range:** Corresponding shadows must be no more than 50 feet (15.2 m) away and within sight of the mage. Unless they are using Shadewsight, then range is equal to the Shadewsight spell. (See the *Palladium Fantasy RPG® Book 12: Library of Bletherad™*, page 79, for details on Shadewsight.)

**Duration:** 1 melee per level of experience.

**Saving Throw:** None.

**P.P.E.:** 30

Using shadows, the mage is able to reach through one shadow and have his arm or leg appear out another shadow. This is useful in attacking various foes where there are a lot of shadows present, or grabbing something across a room or for a variety of other tasks.

# The Hammer of the Forge

By James M.G. Cannon

## Chapter Twenty-Eight

### Falling into Shadow

*"Civilized, they call themselves. A 'consortium' of civilizations, scattered across a thousand worlds.*

*"Decadent, I call them. Weak-willed. Addicted to pleasure, to technology, to wasting their few strengths in the pursuit of things without value. 'Friendship.' 'Peace.' 'Love.' Pfah. Cowards. Sops. Qrun-eating weaklings.*

*"The best that can be said of them is that they die well. They do fight when forced to do so, when their backs are to the wall, when diplomacy has failed them, when they have no other choice. They fight, and they die, their wasted lives given grim purpose – to blood our soldiers.*

*"Soon, our armada will cross the gulf of space that lies between our Empire and their 'consortium,' and we shall wipe clean their civilizations with laser fire and cobalt missiles, and wave after wave of invincible soldiers. On that day, our Empire shall truly be Transgalactic."*

— General Khrokhor, commander of the 177<sup>th</sup> Imperial Armored Cavalry

Caleb Vulcan couldn't figure out what to do with his hands. Slipping them into his jean pockets seemed too casual, but folding them in front of him would have been too formal. What was the etiquette for a military briefing? Technically, he was a civilian, but he was also a Cosmo-Knight and a duly deputized arm of the law within Consortium space, so he shouldn't have felt so out of place.

But of course he did. Just a year or two ago, he was an ordinary kid hot-rodding around the Arizona desert, destined for a mean death in the jungles of Southeast Asia, but the Cosmic Forge had summoned him to the Three Galaxies instead. In the service of the Forge he had fought an ancient alien machine of destruction, foiled terrorists bent on creating famine on an overpopulated world, a galactic time-traveling despot, and a planet-destroying giant. Exploits like that should have made standing in the briefing room a simple thing, but at heart Caleb was still the kid from Arizona.

The room was spare, walls a drab beige, with a raised set of seats at the back. Each seat had a computer terminal and its very own Consortium Armed Forces marine, a mix of Humans, Wulfen and Noro in dark uniforms, staring intently at the viewscreen that covered the wall at the front. A limbless Sinestrian scientist named Vodal Kee stood before the screen, the waldoes that served him as arms crossed across his chest. Towering balefully beside the scientist was another Cosmo-Knight, a friend of sorts to Caleb, a human named Sol Vyking. Beside Caleb was another tower, this one nearly twice the height of every single other person in the room, Ariel the Titan, the third Cosmo-Knight in the room.

Leaning against the wall near the door was a figure in brightly colored battle armor, a mix of day-glo green, biohazard orange, sickly purple, and others, a riot of color that pained the eyes to look upon it. Despite its ugliness, the armor appeared sleek and powerful, insect-like and graceful. This was Sammadar Orak, bounty hunter and Galactic Tracer, contracted by Vodal Kee to smuggle him out of the Transgalactic Empire, and more recently contracted by the CCW to guard Vodal Kee's life with his own.

There was something decidedly odd about Orak. Caleb couldn't quite put his finger on it, but he didn't quite trust the bounty hunter. He was a bit off, somehow. But hunches and vague intuitions weren't grounds enough to speak ill of the mysterious fellow, not when the stakes they played for were so frighteningly high.

Vyking's deep voice penetrated Caleb's thoughts. "I accidentally stumbled upon a pair of TGE sleeper agents on Vyaros-IV. They wiped the comm system they were using, leaving no information behind. But one of the agents mentioned the words 'Shadowstar Project' before he died. Kee?"

The Sinestrian started, as if his own mind had been elsewhere while Vyking spoke. "Yes, of course. Here's where I enter the tale, I suppose." He cleared his throat and looked up at the marines and the Cosmo-Knights. "The Kreeghor contracted me to retro-engineer T'zee nanotechnology. I was stationed on Thelag-Vohann, one of the TGE's weapon research worlds. It was just as horrible as you might expect.

"With careful planning, the luck of the gods, and the aid of Mister Orak over there, I escaped. I took with me some plundered cash and a few precious scraps of information from other research projects. One of these caught the eyes of CAF intelligence. Naturally enough, this was the Shadowstar."

Vodal pointed at the viewscreen, drawing all eyes to it. A three-dimensional schematic of the weapon filled the rectangle. It looked like a typical Kreeghor starship, a three hundred meter long crustacean of twisted black metal bristling with weaponry, an engine of destruction. Vodal keyed a switch on the remote in his mechanical hand, and the machine on the screen began to alter. The great curved arms at the ship's prow spread open, and a dozen tendrils extended from between them, extending outward in widening arcs. When the tendrils had reached their full extension, almost doubling the ship's total length, a field of energy formed in the gap between the tendrils. A fan of black light materialized there, so deeply dark and black that it seemed to suck light into it.

But that was a trick of the computer program, wasn't it?

"As you can see," Vodal said, "the weapon is part of a TGE dreadnought, with all the standard bells and whistles you'd expect on top of the modifications. To wit: the ship is designed to generate an energy field that simulates a singularity."

"A black hole?" said a voice from the back, a green haired woman with the name Dun stenciled on the left breast of her marine's uniform.

"Precisely," Vodal agreed.

The exchange prompted murmurs of consternation and incredulity from the audience. Caleb looked up at Ariel, but the Titan's eyes were locked on the viewscreen. She was frowning, but more in consternation than doubt.

"Now these are but the plans," Vodal continued. "As far as I knew, the Empire hadn't yet solved the problem of powering such a device. But..."

Vyking picked up where Vodal had left off. "Several weeks before Kee arrived in CCW space, our remote probes noticed a strange energy signature deep within the Transgalactic Empire. An energy signature that matches that given off by the Shadowstar, according to these plans."

"This is most troubling," Ariel said under her breath. Caleb was the only one who heard her.

"Understatement of the year, babe," he answered in the same tone. If the warlike Kreeghor had a weapon that could mimic a black hole, then no one was safe. The Shadowstar might be a prototype, but if they began to mass produce the thing, then what would happen? They would



be able to swallow suns and lay waste to whole systems. A fleet of them would lay siege to the Three Galaxies.

"You can see, then," Vyking continued, "how imperative it is that we locate the Shadowstar and eliminate it. Such a weapon cannot be allowed to exist."

Ariel nodded. Vodal Kee shuddered. The marines were quiet for a moment, until Dun, who appeared to be the spokesperson of the group, said, "That simple, is it Mr. Cosmo-Knight, sir? Fly into the heart of the Transgalactic Empire and blow their secret ultimate weapon to space dust?"

A Wolfen in the tier below Dun, the name Hundt emblazoned on his uniform, grinned hugely, his ears pricking straight up. "You did notice the other two Knights, didn't you Sergeant? I'd say that gives us better than even odds of not only succeeding, but surviving."

"That's what you'd like to think," chimed in another human, a black man with a shaved head and the name Kordoba. "But why do three Cosmo-Knights and a bounty hunter with access to K!ozn Continuum tech need a squad of bughunters as back-up?"

"We're supposed to catch blaster bolts," Dun told him. "That is our job description, after all."

"You're to function as official CCW liaisons in the field," Vyking said stiffly. It was clear he didn't find the marines' comments humorous, despite their bantering tone. "CAF Command wanted an ambassador or someone else with diplomatic training. But I requested you lot."

Kordoba released a low whistle. "That sure is quite nice of you to volunteer us for this suicide mission, Mr. Vyking."

"Liaison, eh?" Hundt said. "I like the sound of that. I've never liaised with anything before."

"Your wife is constantly complaining about that," Kordoba joked. Hundt's ears flattened and he gave Kordoba an evil look.

"Marines," Dun snapped, and Kordoba and Hundt were instantly staring ahead, expressions blank. Dun waited a moment, then addressed Vyking. "With all due respect, sir, if CAFCO agreed to this, then they must have some signals crossed. There are perfectly legitimate branches of the service who would be better prepared to function the way you want them to on a mission like this."

"You might think so," Vyking said, "but I asked for marines because I need marines. Not a pencil pusher or fact checkers. I need fighting men and women who will be able to do what needs to be done when the time comes."

"Ours is not to reason why, and all that, I suppose," Kordoba muttered under his breath, his face still impassive. Vyking and Dun either chose not to or simply did not hear him, but Caleb caught it. He frowned. He came from a military background himself, had crossed most of the country following his father from one base to the next, and he'd never really warmed to the military way of life. That was perhaps more due to the resentment and distrust he had for his father, so deeply tied to the army he served, than to any genuine displeasure with the armed forces themselves. Some of those feelings came back at Kordoba's words, however. The squad *had* been volunteered by Vyking for this mission, and despite their arms and training, these men and women were not equipped to deal with a hostile universe nearly as adeptly as were Caleb, Vyking, and Ariel. It was one thing to go into the Valley of Death when it was your choice, and it was another thing entirely when you were ordered to go by a stranger.

Ariel nudged Caleb out of his black thoughts. "You awake?"

Caleb blinked and looked up, noticing that the marines were filing out of the room and the meeting had been adjourned. "Yeah," he told Ariel. "Just thinking some things through."

"I'm going to wander down to the docks and take a look at this Orak's ship. I've never seen anything of K!ozn manufacture before. Want to come with?"

He did, actually, and much for the same reasons. Caleb's love of automobiles and hotrods had translated into an insatiable curiosity for

starships and their myriad designs. But as Vyking edged towards the door, Caleb knew he had better things to do. "I'll catch up with you Ariel. I want to chat with Fearless Leader first."

Vyking moved quickly and economically, and Caleb had to hurry to reach him. Outside the briefing room, the halls of the CAF facility were slightly less functional and more attractive. Wide and spacious, dotted with potted plants and strategically arranged windows, the corridors made the place look more like a mall than a military complex. Naturally the large number of uniform clad people navigating the halls shattered the illusion, but Caleb still thought it was a nice touch.

A few officers looked askance at Caleb as he brushed past them. Clad in his civilian dress, he stuck out like a sore thumb amongst them all. It didn't help that he looked perennially eighteen, either. They might have taken him for a lost recruit or maybe somebody's kid wandering around, but since no one accosted him, maybe they'd heard about the redheaded Cosmo-Knight on base. People tended to give Cosmo-Knights a wide berth, Caleb had learned. Given the raw power at their fingertips and the propensity for Knights to fall from grace, this was probably a wise course of action. The mysterious nature of the Cosmic Forge and its nebulous goals might have had something to do with it, too. While Cosmo-Knights as an organization were well known and respected as a force for justice across the Three Galaxies, no one really knew why. Caleb wasn't sure if the Three Galaxies had ever heard the story of the Trojan Horse, but he was sure they understood the principal.

He and the other Knights understood the Cosmic Forge. They had each and every one been tested in a crucible of fire, found deserving, and granted unfathomable power in the cause of good. His soul had touched some aspect of the Cosmic All and he knew, deep in the core of his being, that the Forge only wanted what was best for all the varied peoples of the Three Galaxies. Convincing them of that fact wasn't really his responsibility, though. What he did in the service of the Forge and those peoples was what mattered.

Though it still hurt a little when someone flinched as he passed. Yeah, they were all aware of the redheaded Knight.

"Hey, Vyking, hold up," he called to the other man when he was finally within earshot. Vyking turned, frowning, but when he saw it was Caleb, he brightened.

"That could have gone better," he admitted as Caleb reached him.

"Yeah, that's kind of what I wanted to talk to you about."

"Really?" Vyking started walking again. "I'm headed for the commissary for some coffee and Danish. We don't need to eat, I know, but every once in a while I still like to taste something."

"Yeah," Caleb agreed. "I've wanted pancakes for like, three days now, but haven't made the time to get some. 'Course I was in space for most of that time."

"Now that's one of the perks. The not-eating thing irritates me at times, but the flying through space under your own power, now that's amazing. But we're not talking shop, are we? What have you got on your mind, Vulcan?"

"Two things, really. First, what Hundt said. I mean, with the three of us and the bounty hunter's supertech, do we really need to bring the marines along?"

"In all honesty, probably not," Vyking said. His frankness surprised Caleb. "But I had to make certain concessions to get this thing going. Vodal defected to the CCW, which makes him a CCW citizen. More, he's particularly valuable to them due to his experience with the TGE war machine. They weren't going to just let him go, even with Orak watching his back. The marines are added insurance. They're there to look after Vodal and make sure he makes it through this all in one piece, no matter what happens. I got the distinct impression that the higher-ups don't entirely trust us. None of my assurances to the contrary could dissuade them. Thus, the babysitters."

"Well, couldn't they have asked for volunteers?"

Vyking smiled. "The trouble with volunteers, Caleb, is their conviction. They're willing to do everything in their power to see the mission done. Even die, if need be. But a being forced to take up a dangerous task against their better judgement will do all in their power to ensure they make it home alive. In this instance, that's precisely what the CCW wants. If things go badly, the marines will save Vodai and themselves - in that order - because that's what is expected of them. You had another issue to raise?"

"Um, yeah." Caleb wasn't entirely sure he agreed with Vyking's reasoning. It seemed too glib and dismissive, somehow, but at the same time he couldn't really form an objection to it either. It made him feel vaguely uncomfortable, and a little reluctant to mention his other point.

"Go on, Caleb."

He thought for a moment. "Okay. Well, here's the thing. Why are we doing this in the first place? They've clearly already built the Shadowstar. The plans for the prototype at least are widely distributed enough that a guy like Vodai Kee can get his hands on them. What's going to keep the TGE from just building another one, or two or three or whatever? I know this thing is dangerous, but what will blowing it up prove?"

Vyking stared at Caleb for a long moment, his blue eyes wide and perhaps a little shocked. Before he could form an answer, a new voice entered the conversation. "Sir Vyking! May I speak with you?"

Both Knights turned to see a man in Senatorial dress approaching them at a brisk pace, pointing an accusatory finger in Vyking's direction. A small entourage flocked around him, a mix of bodyguards, aides, and press. "A moment of your time, sir Cosmo-Knight, if you please," the man said, but his tone was far from polite.



"But of course, Senator Tanaka," Vyking said, recovering quickly from Caleb's speech and focusing intently on the new arrival. "What did you wish to speak about?"

"This plan of yours, though I hesitate to use that word to describe it. 'Scheme' might be more apt."

Vyking frowned. "I'm not sure I appreciate your tone, Senator."

"Appreciate this, Sir Vyking. While you may have been able to convince the Consortium Armed Forces to follow your lead, the Senate sees right through you."

"I'm not sure I know what you mean."

"Don't attempt to be disingenuous, Sir Vyking. You wish to cross the demilitarized zone into the Transgalactic Empire. You wish to destroy a weapon the Kreeghor have constructed. In short, you wish to precipitate a war between the Consortium and the Empire, a war which will shatter the tenuous peace that stands between our two nations."

Vyking's mouth was a flat line. "War is upon you, Senator Tanaka, whether you wish to acknowledge it or not. The Shadowstar is a weapon that eats suns, with a potential for destruction that is incalculable. It cannot be allowed to exist. Despite your personal wishes, your government does indeed want the Shadowstar destroyed."

Vyking looked sidelong at Caleb as he continued. "Do you honestly think that the Kreeghor, armed with such a weapon, will care at all about the fragile peace that you hold so dear? It is only a matter of time before the Shadowstar is unleashed on CCW worlds. People are dying while we speak, even if they are not citizens of the Consortium. Putting an end to the threat the Shadowstar poses sends an important message to the TGE. It informs them that we will not sit idly by while the Kreeghor unleash galactic genocide, that we will answer aggression with aggression, that we will not wait for them to perfect their doomsday device, to build a fleet of them, and march them across the galaxy laying waste to system after system."

Tanaka shook his head. "An unrealistic and fatalistic assessment of the situation. In point of fact, you don't even know that this Shadowstar exists. Just some mysterious readings that happen to gibe with information provided by an informant who, only weeks ago, was working for the Kreeghor himself."

Vyking smiled tightly. "If it doesn't exist, Senator Tanaka, then what are we arguing about?"

The Senator grimaced. "Don't be stupid. Whether this weapon exists or not is beside the point. If you enter TGE space with aggression in mind, you will bring aggression upon us. I will not stand idly by and let an outsider lead the Consortium to war."

"I was born on Persephone, actually. Not only am I a citizen of the CCW, but I'm a duly deputized arm of the judiciary branch."

"And I'll see both your citizenship and deputation revoked, Sir Vyking."

Vyking's look darkened. He took a step towards Tanaka, blue eyes as cold as ice. "Are you threatening me, Senator?"

Caleb darted between the two men, unable to stand by any further. "Hey, hey, hey," he said. "Let's not lose our cool here, gentlemen. Let's try to remember we're all friends here. Right? When it's all said and done, we're all on the same side. We all of us want what's best for the people of the CCW."

Senator Tanaka looked Caleb over as if he had the plague. "And who might you be?"

"My name is Caleb, Your Honor. I'm a Cosmo-Knight as well."

"Are you truly?" Tanaka said. "No wonder you side with him."

"I'm not siding with anyone. What I'm trying to do is..." Caleb trailed off as the Senator shook his head disgustedly and, with a flourish of his robe, he and his entourage swept past Caleb and Vyking and down the corridor. Caleb watched them go with his mouth hanging open.

"Politicians," Vyking said with a snort.

Caleb rolled his eyes and shut his mouth. "As if you were any better," he said. Vyking was clearly puzzled at the remark, which irritated Caleb all the more. With a sigh, he headed down the corridor himself, leaving Vyking standing alone, scratching his head.

\* \* \*

"Admiral, the rebel forces have achieved some... slight gain against our escort fleet. Captain Abakham is requesting the Invincible Guard reinforce the line."

Geryon allowed his baleful white eyes to fall upon Captain Dorset. The human was ostensibly in charge of the crew, but the ship itself was Geryon's. A member of the Royal Family, he was a massive Kreeghor covered in black plates and scales, sheathed within a form fitting suit of lacquered red armor and supple black leather. He stood at his full impressive height, disdaining the Kreeghor tendency to crouch predatorily, in the center of the Shadowstar's bridge, overseeing the operation. Beside Geryon, Captain Dorset looked up at him with hands carefully clasped behind her back and eyes cast down. Dorset was a well disciplined officer, accomplished and ruthless, and yet she lived in abject fear of Admiral Geryon.



Dorset was not afraid of his temper, for Geryon did not have one. He was calm and calculated, and if a bit cruel and ruthless himself, he was also fair. No, the fear shivering off of Dorset in invisible waves that only Geryon's enhanced senses could taste was fear of failing him. Which was why Dorset was in charge of the crew, why she was his right hand, and why her request to make use of the Invincible Guard would be carefully considered before Geryon gave her an answer.

The so-called "Free World Council," an irregular band of blood-thirsty and barely educated rebels, had control of this backwater system. Tindalos, Geryon thought it was called. Tin-something at any rate. It was a Class-C star orbited by seven small worlds, only two of them inhabitable by carbon based life forms. In the grand scheme of things, Tindalos System was not of any particular significance. But Tindalos sat upon a space lane leading to the Axis-5 system, and *that* system was of prime tactical importance. If the Empire could regain control of Axis-5, they might be able to turn the tide of the war.

So the Emperor himself had sent Geryon and his little project out to Tindalos to see what might be achieved. Axis-5 was too important to make a demonstration of the Shadowstar, but Tindalos was perfect. Small population, little importance, controlled by the enemy. Kill the system, and the enemy's forces would be weakened. Victory over the seventy-five year old battlefield of Axis-5 might be one step closer. It was no surprise then that the rebels maintained a sizable force of their own in Tindalos, a force that was at the moment cutting apart the small escort provided to Geryon by his superiors. He could slaughter them all with the standard weaponry carried by the Shadowstar, a fully commissioned dreadnought. But the Shadowstar needed full power to kill the sun.

Geryon allowed his gaze to fall upon the sextet of Invincible Guardsmen standing at attention in various locations around the bridge. Most Royal Kreeghor detested the creatures, as the Guardsmen were the only sentients in the Empire answerable only to the Emperor himself. They could and did, when necessary, hunt down and prosecute Royal Kreeghor who transgressed against the Empire. Royals, unused to having to justify themselves to anyone, distrusted the Guardsmen on general principle. Geryon, however, found them to be versatile and useful tools for certain tasks. Wiping out one's enemies, for example, in as bloody-handed and unnerving a manner as possible. They were quite good at that.

"Very well, Captain," Geryon said. His voice was a soft rumble, with just a hint of a growl. As Kreeghor voices went, it was positively mild. Many of his enemies underestimated him because of that. "Inform Abakham that his reinforcements are on the way."

Geryon gestured towards Major Elket, the Guardsmen's squad leader. A barrel-chested Kreeghor with dark green scales, he saluted Geryon and approached across the bridge. Dorset stepped away to signal Abakham.

"Admiral," Elket said, inclining his head slightly. Geryon saw his reflection in the burnished breastplate of the Guardsman, distorted slightly by the red enameled megasteel. "Is there a problem?"

"It appears that Captain Abakham has encountered a bit more resistance than we expected. Take those of you who are spaceworthy and reinforce his line. Once the Shadowstar's Singularity Projector is activated, we cannot afford interruption."

Elket saluted crisply, clicked his heels, and signaled for the Seljuk biomorph, Wulfen energy caster, and human Amazon to accompany him. Geryon allowed himself to worry about Abakham no further. If those four Invincible Guardsmen had any trouble, then the rebels were simply too entrenched and the operation would fail spectacularly. But he had full confidence in their abilities.

Dorset caught Geryon's attention once more. "We're in position, Admiral."

Geryon smiled. "Excellent." The Shadowstar was in place, as close to Tindalos itself as the Shadowstar dare go. Any closer, and the intense heat and energy boiling off of the star would crack through the defense screens and burn through the hull itself. Any further, and the Shadowstar would take too long to build up to critical mass; they would risk being destroyed by the very singularity they created. "Open up the fore pylons. Extend tendrils."

Techs hurried to comply, but it was a laborious process that took ten minutes to complete. Trial after trial had shown that the tendrils were delicate enough that they would snap if moved too quickly, if too much pressure was placed upon them. On the viewscreen at the front of the bridge, Tindalos hung fat and oblivious in space, a yellow sun that would never cast another dawn. Geryon smiled to himself. A small smile, not too prideful. It did not do to look too prideful, especially with two Invincible Guardsmen still on the bridge. The successful deployment of the Shadowstar would be a victory for the Emperor, not for Admiral Geryon. Remembering things like that would ensure a long and productive life in the Empire.

"Initiate the inertial drive." That would hold the Shadowstar in place as long as the singularity was active, creating a mass shadow large enough to allow the Shadowstar to hang in space, so long as the mouth of the black hole was pointed in the other direction. If Abakham and Elket did their job, that would not be a problem.

Geryon felt the grinding of mighty machinery beneath his feet as the Shadowstar opened up and the tendrils began to stretch out of their housings. Warning lights flickered across a control panel, but the tech at the station compensated quickly, and they went dark again. This was the fourth practical use of the Shadowstar singularity projector, and as with any experimental technology, there were still glitches. But Geryon's crew were the best in the Three Galaxies, and they were on top of things.

Dorset was at his elbow again. "Captain Abakham reports that the rebels are flagging. Major Elket has personally destroyed their flagship. Their remaining forces are in disarray."

"Excellent," Geryon said with a predatory smile.

"Tendrils are in position," reported a tech. He might have been named Tunis. Geryon wasn't sure.

"Proceed, ensign," Geryon told him. Tunis blanched and quickly looked away. His fingers flew across his keyboard. The ship began to shiver and shake. Dorset fought to keep her balance. Geryon caught her arm before she could tip over. "Careful, Captain," he admonished her.

The image on the viewscreen began to blur. Across the bottom of the screen, the tendrils had reached out at full extension, splaying like a gigantic hand. A field of colorless energy enveloped each tendril, and then leapt across the intervening space to connect them all, one by one. The viewscreen darkened.

And then it was there, between the prow of the ship and Tindalos. A black hole. An *artificially created* black hole.

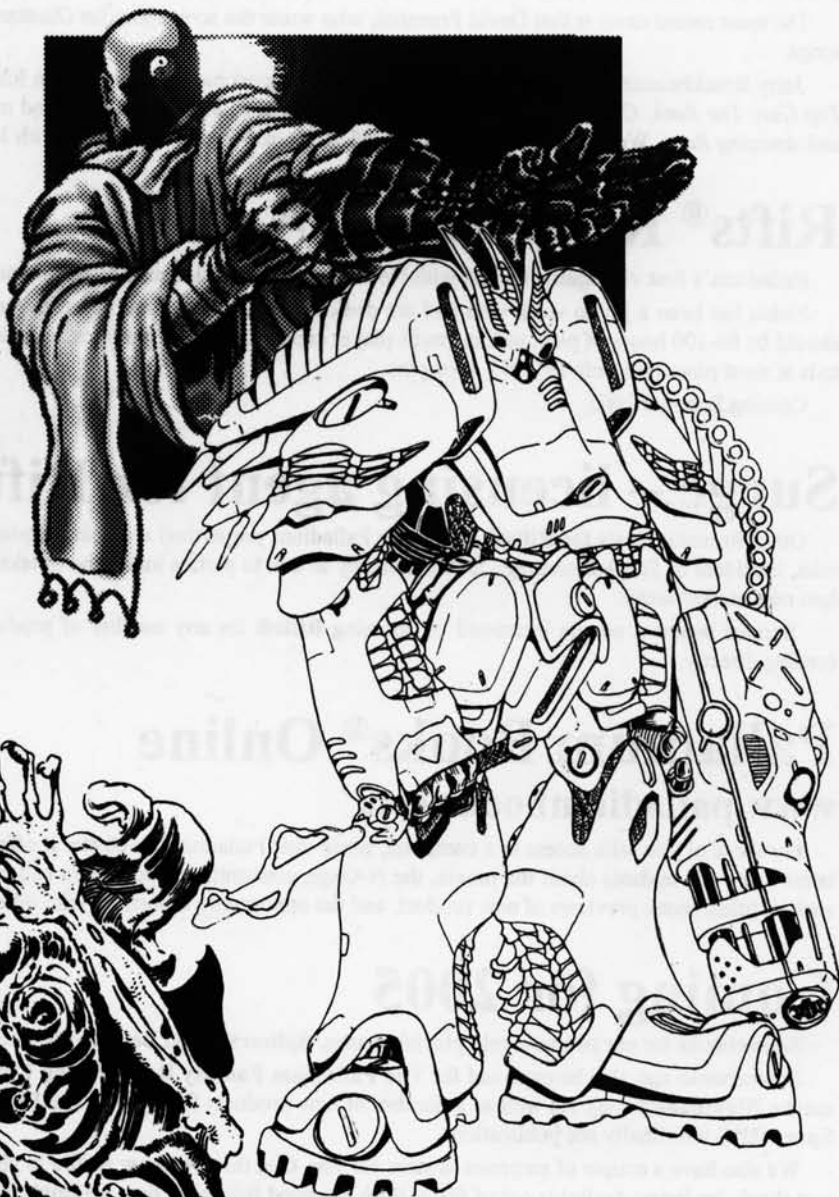
Warning lights flickered to life all across the bridge. But that was normal. They had one hundred and eight seconds before the singularity would spiral out of control and devour the ship. More than enough time for it to do its work. The viewscreen went black as the singularity filled the viewer entirely.

In the darkness, lit only by the red lights of the ship's consoles, Geryon finally allowed himself to smile widely, happily, arrogantly.

*I have become Death, Destroyer of Worlds.*

# Catalog of Palladium Books®

Fall 2004





# Rifts® Movie

## Jerry Bruckheimer producer

For those of you who haven't yet heard, Palladium Books has signed a film option agreement with *Walt Disney Pictures* to have *Jerry Bruckheimer Films* develop a live action, major motion picture based on the **Rifts®** role-playing game.

The most recent news is that David Franzoni, who wrote the screenplay for *Gladiator*, has been brought in to work on the **Rifts®** movie script.

Jerry Bruckheimer Films has produced some of the biggest blockbusters in film history, including such hits as *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Top Gun*, *The Rock*, *Con Air*, *Armageddon*, *Blackhawk Down*, *Bad Boys I & II*, and many others, as well as hit TV shows *CSI*, *Cold Case* and *Amazing Race*. We expect exciting days ahead and look forward to working with Jerry Bruckheimer Films and Disney.

## Rifts® RPG for the N-Gage

Palladium's first videogame will be with Nokia for the handheld game platform known as the *N-Gage QD*.

Nokia has been a joy to work with and are dedicated to capturing and recreating the **Rifts®** gaming experience on the N-Gage. There should be 80-100 hours of play, online, multi-player capabilities, cool graphics, an epic story, and it's a cell phone too. And the N-Gage re-tails at most places for only \$99.95 – awesome.

Coming Summer 2005.

## Surge – licensing agent for Rifts®

Other licensing deals for **Rifts®** (and other Palladium properties) are being explored by Kevin Siembieda and his agent, Mark Freedman, President of *Surge Licensing*. Both are happy to talk to parties interested in taking **Rifts®** and other Palladium intellectual properties into new market areas.

Serious business people interested in licensing **Rifts®** for any number of products may contact Palladium Books Inc. or Surge Licensing directly.

## Palladium Books® Online

[www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com)

For those of you with access to a computer, come visit Palladium's website. It offers chat rooms, message boards, an online catalog, the latest news and updates about the movie, the N-Gage, convention appearances and other happenings, as well as extra RPG material from various titles, sneak previews of new product, and the opportunity to interact with other Palladium fans.

## Coming for 2005

Sourcebooks for our two new role-playing games, **Splicers™** and **Beyond the Supernatural, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition™ (BTS-2)**, are a certainty.

Sourcebooks can also be expected for **The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®**, **Chaos Earth™** and **Heroes Unlimited™** (and maybe **Nightbane®** too). As well as a number of new products for **Rifts®**, and **Phase World®**. And with a little luck, the **Mechanoid® Space RPG** will finally see publication.

We also have a couple of surprises in store for you. One that we know is sure to please and knock the socks off people, and one that will just shock the living daylight out of folks. Both are good things. In fact, we think you can expect a lot of good things coming from Palladium Books next year. More details in the months to come. Check out **The Rifter®** and the Palladium web site ([www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com)) for regular announcements, news and updates.

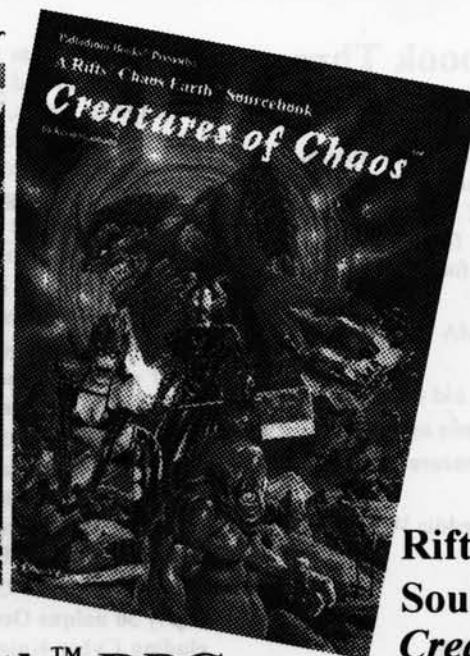
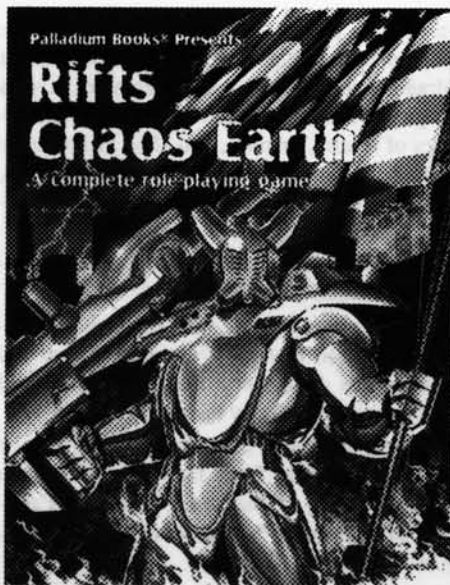
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- More on NEMA and the Demon Plagues.
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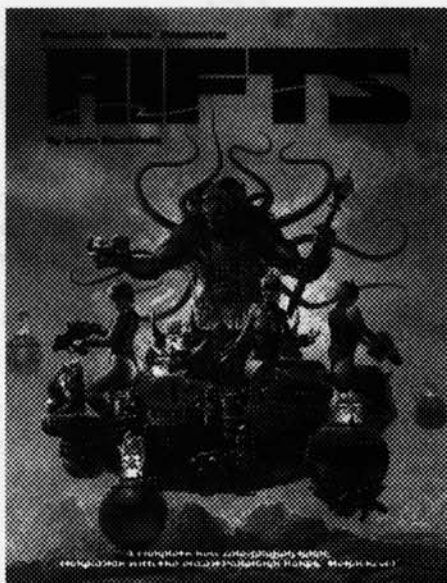


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NEMA is holding its own in the Chicago area when a rogue Special Ops group appears and demands they surrender to their barbaric rule. The new enemy are Juicers and a motley band of ex-military and NEMA renegades. This is NEMA's first true threat from fellow humans and they must triumph or everything they have fought so hard to build and preserve comes tumbling down.

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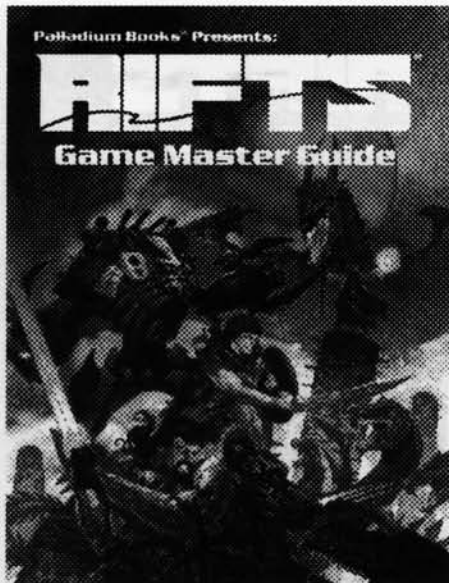
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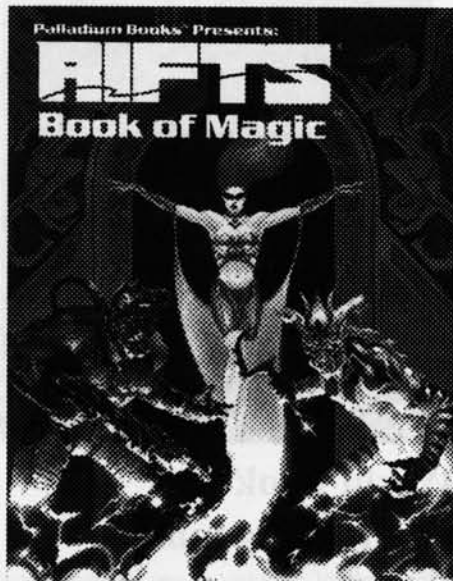
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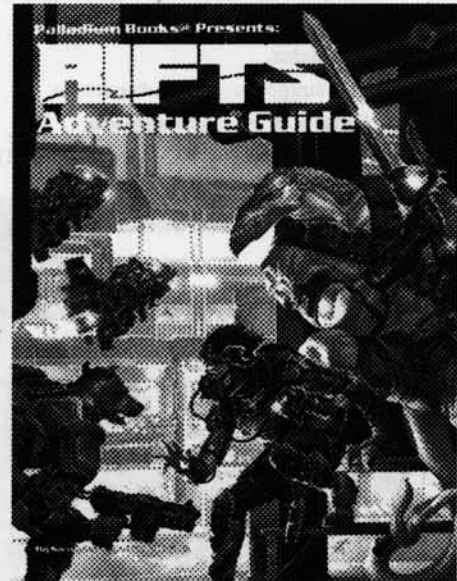


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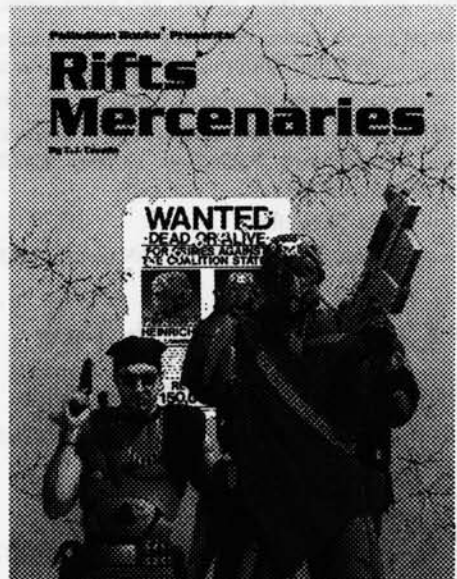
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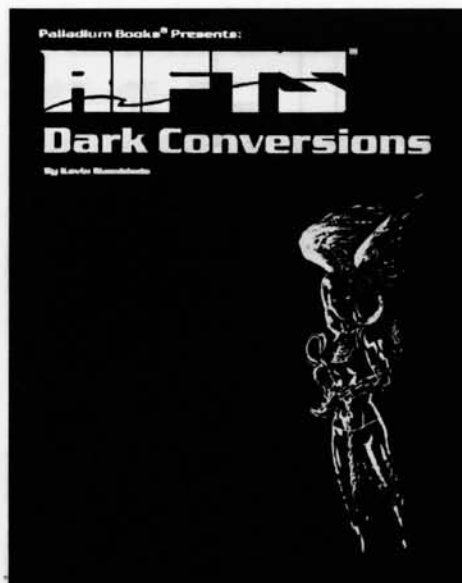
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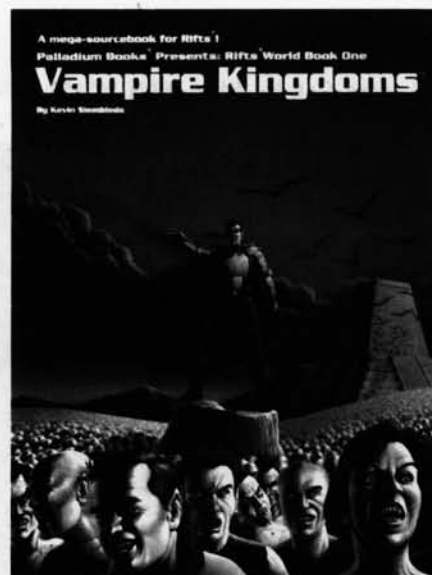
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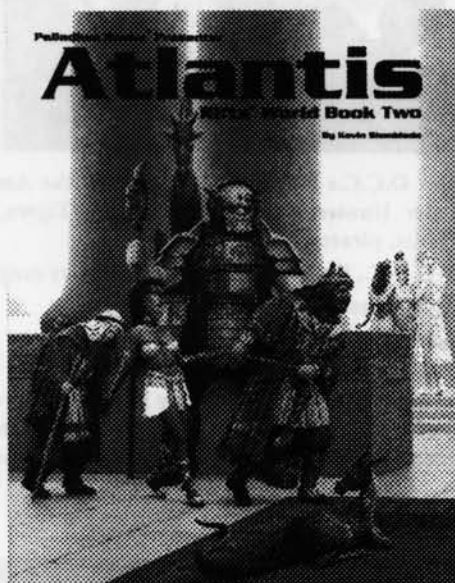


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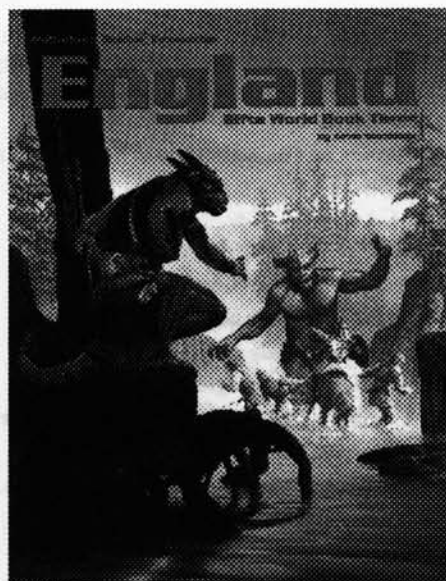
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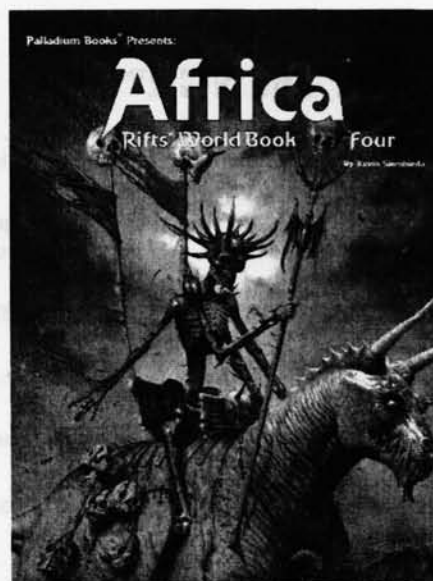
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## Rifts® World Book 5: Triax™ & The NGR™

A spectacular 224 page book of robots, power armor, weapons and the creations of Triax™ and the New German Republic (NGR); the most powerful *human* kingdom on Earth.

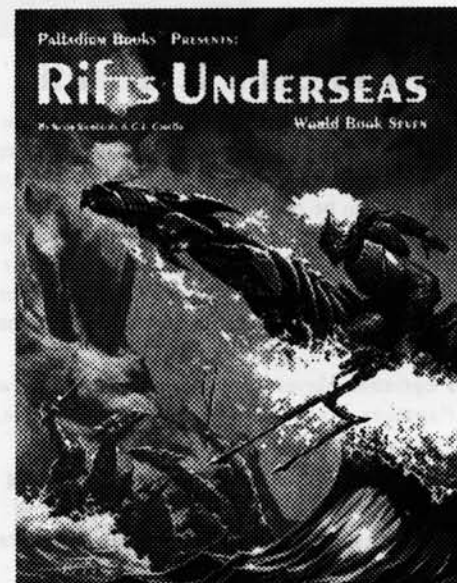
- **Over 60 high-tech Triax™ creations:** body armor, power armor, giant robots, cyborgs, androids, combat vehicles, tanks, fighter jets, weapons and equipment.
- **Over 20 new Occupational Character Classes** including NGR soldiers, the Euro-Juicer, gypsies, and gargoyles.
- **The Gargoyle Empire, with their own giant robots, armor, and weapons.**
- **The New German Republic, its history, allies and enemies.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda. Art by Kevin Long.**
- **\$21.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 810 – ISBN 0-916211-60-6**

## Rifts® World Book 6: South America One

Explore the jungles of **South America** and discover the secrets of Biomancy, living power armor, anti-monster cyborgs, bio-modified female super-warriors, reptilian D-Bees, pincer warriors, voodoo priests, and dark conspiracies. Plus, pirates, insectoid D-Bees, dragons, new weapons and equipment, magic, adventure and more!



- **Over 20 new O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s** including the Amazon warrior, Monster Hunter, Lizard Men, Flying Tigers, Felinoids, minions of Inix, pirates, warriors & more.
- **Biomancer O.C.C., bio-weaponry, and Biomancy magic.**
- **Voodoo magic, priests, spirits and characters.**
- **New Kittani weapons, high tech and magic weapons and equipment.**
- **World information** includes legendary El Dorado, Pyramid City, The Land of the Lizard Men, The Splugorth of Atlantis, The Pirate Kingdom, vampire wars, slavers, D-Bees and monsters.
- **Still \$16.95 – 168 pages. Written by C.J. Carella.**
- **Cat. No. 814 – ISBN 0-916211-71-1**



## Rifts® World Book 7: Rifts Underseas™

Rifts® Underseas is a fabulous world as unique and expansive as any Rifts® *Dimension Book™!* Gamers may be surprised at the scope of characters, abilities and adventure available to them, both undersea and on dry land.

- **10 O.C.C.s** including Marines, Ocean Wizards, Sea Druid, & Sea Inquisitor.
- **20 R.C.C.s** including the Whale Singer, Sea Titan, Amphib, Dolphins, Horune Pirates, and others.
- **Over 40 Ocean Magic spells, 20 Whale Songs, plus Dolphin Magic.**

- Underwater bionics, power armor and weaponry.
- Submarines, submersible aircraft carriers, mini subs, aircraft, robots and more.
- Tritonia, the New Navy, and other kingdoms, each with its unique history, technology, and O.C.C.s.
- The Lord of the Deep and his terrible minions.
- More on Triax™, Atlantis and other places.
- Gene-Splicer™ creations, ley line mutants, Dead Pools, and an entire world of adventure as strange and wondrous as any alien world.
- Still \$20.95 – 216 pages. Written by Siembieda & Carella.
- Cat. No. 815 – ISBN 0-916211-72-X



## Rifts® World Book 8: Rifts Japan

Four pre-Rifts cities suddenly materialize from a pocket dimension. For them, three days have passed since the Great Cataclysm began, for the rest of humankind it has been 300 years. Pre-Rifts Glitter Boys, people, and technology clash with anti-technology traditionalists, magic, and Oni demons! Traditional O.C.C.s like the Samurai, Mystic Ninja, Yamabushi priest and warrior monks, blend with high tech marvels like the Dragon-Borg, Ninja Juicer, and Cyberoid.

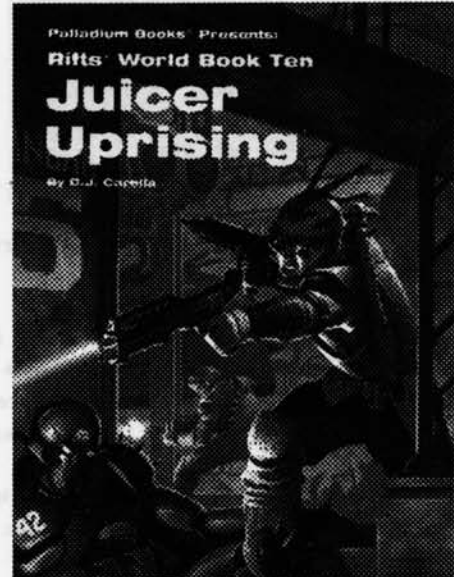
- Dragon Cyborgs and new bionics and implants
- Japanese dragons, demons, monsters and magic.
- Japanese body armor, robots, power armor and weapons.
- Over 20 character classes including Demon Queller, Samurai, Mystic Ninja, Juicer Ninja, Glitter Force Trooper, Tengu Birdmen, and others.
- Mysticism and martial arts. The “living” samurai sword, and more.
- World information about Japan and surrounding areas. Lots of insight and info about the high-tech Republic of Japan, the anti-technologists of the New Empire, the evil Otomo Shogunate, the monster ridden Zone and more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda with Pat Nowak.
- \$21.95 – 216 pages. Cat. No. 818 – ISBN 0916211-88-6

## Rifts® World Book 9: South America Two™

Rifts South America is a hotbed of intrigue and conflict. There are the mysteries of the Nazca Lines (a magic, alien defense system), the

return of ancient gods, alien invaders, mutants, Inca undead, trans-dimensional raiders, and more. Tons of great new character classes, magic, weapons, armor and equipment.

- Over 30 new O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s.
- The Nazca line maker and line drawing magic.
- Larhold magic of the Blue Flame.
- The return of the Inca Empire led by the return of the Inca gods.
- The Silver River Republic, conspiracies and war.
- Written by C.J. Carella. Cover by Brom.
- Still \$20.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 819 – ISBN 0916211-89-4



## Rifts® World Book 10: Juicer Uprising™

A Coalition plot fools a number of innocent people into undergoing Juicer augmentation. When the lies are revealed, a Juicer army rises up to lay siege to the CS city of Newtown. Chaos erupts as Juicers, bandits and outlaws ravage the countryside. Action packed adventure and source material.

- 15 new types of Juicer O.C.C.s, including the Hyperion speed-demon, the giant Titan with his supernatural strength, the mysterious Mega-Juicer, the Dragon Juicer (dependent on the blood of dragons to sustain his powers) and others.
- The Juicer O.C.C., developed and expanded; the motivations behind these suicidal warriors, and the process and effects of being “juiced” completely described.
- The Prometheus Treatment: Immortality for the Juicers or a Coalition lie?
- More world information, Newtown, Fort El Dorado & hints of things to come.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Written by C.J. Carella with Siembieda.
- Cat. 820 – ISBN 0-916211-92-4

## Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign

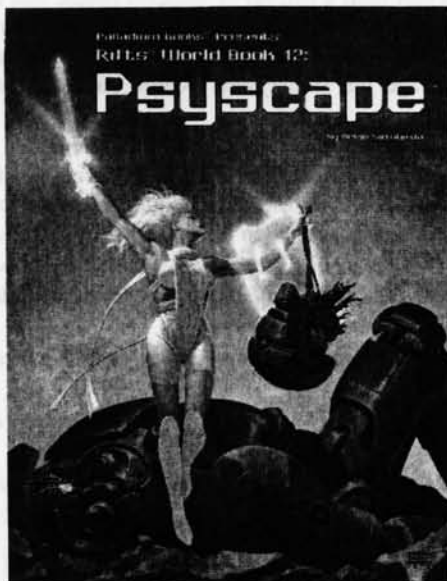
This is “the” guide to Coalition military vehicles, power armor, weapons, and equipment. Emperor Prosek launches a surprise military campaign of conquest and genocide, starting the Siege on Tolkeen, the (short-lived) war on Free Quebec and unveiling a new high tech army.

- CS power armor and robots like the SAMAS, Super SAMAS, Hellraiser, Hellfire, Glitter Boy Killer, Terror Trooper and others.





- Tanks, APCs, the Spider Scout Walker, hover cars, rocket bikes, mobile fortress, aircraft, & more.
- Skelebots, Dead Boy armor, weapons & equipment.
- More than a dozen CS military O.C.C.s including CS Cyborg, CS Juicer, Ranger, Ace, Special Forces, Robot pilots & more.
- The ISS, Psi-Net, and NTSET city protectors & Police.
- CS military activity, troop movement, build-ups and invasion plans.
- The Coalition's military bases, structure, ranks, key leaders, etc.
- World information and maps about the Coalition States and North America.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Cat. No. 821 – ISBN 0916211-93-2



## Rifts® World Book 12: Pyscape™

Fabled Pyscape™, the stuff of myths and legends revealed at last! The history, power and key figures of this mysterious realm.

- 11 New psychic O.C.C.s like the Psi-Ghost, Psi-Nullifier, Psi-Slayer, Zapper & others.
- 20 new monsters, some psychic, many just evil.
- Cybernetic psi-implants and side effects.
- Notable factions, villains, and heroes.

- The danger of Nvla Harvester of Souls.
- Pyscape, D-Bees, aliens, dark secrets and world information.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- Still \$16.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 822 – ISBN 0-916211-94-0



## Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star

Birthplace of the Dog Boys and scene of forbidden and horrific experiments on human and mutant animals. Background on the Lone Star Complex and the mad man who runs it.

- 20 new R.C.C.s, six of them Dog Boys.
- History and background on Dog Boys and runaway mutants.
- History and background on the Lone Star Complex.
- Combat hover cycles and misc. equipment.
- Cybernetic psi-implants and side effects.
- The Pecos Empire, bandits and cutthroats.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- Still \$16.95 – 176 pages. Cat. No. 825 – ISBN 157457-000-5



## Rifts® World Book 14: New West™

At last, the Western Wilderness. Called the New West, it is a no man's zone filled with bandits, Simvan Monster Riders, dinosaurs, monsters, intrigue and danger.

- 17 new O.C.C.s, including the Cowboy, Gunslinger, Psi-Slinger, CyberSlinger, Bounty Hunter, and Justice Ranger.
- 9 R.C.C.s and 25 monsters of the New West.
- The history of Wilk's Inc. and a new array of weapons.
- Bandito Arms, the western arm of the Black Market.
- New body armor, robot vehicles and weapons.
- Techno-Wizard items, weapons and vehicles.
- Cloud Magic and the Golden Ones.
- The Colorado Baronies: Kings of Techno-Wizardry.
- "The Law" – or what passes for it.
- Overview of the New West™, maps & world information.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda & Chris Kornmann.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 826 – ISBN 1-57457-001-3



## Rifts® World Book 15: Spirit West™

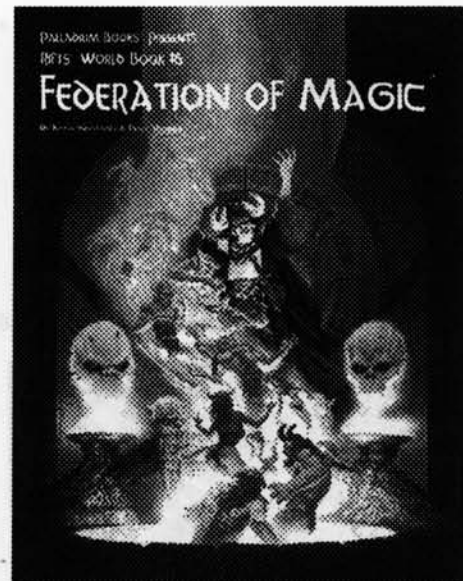
An in-depth look at the *new* American Indian, various tribes, cultures, magic, and gods. While the White Man wars with D-Bees, sorcerers and his brothers in the East, the Red Man is quietly building new nations in the West.

- 11 new O.C.C.s, including several different Shamans, Totem Warrior and others.
- New magic spells and powers.
- Fetish magic — powerful magic items.
- Kachina Dolls and the cult behind them.
- Animal Totems that help shape and empower characters.
- Ancient Indian Spirits and Gods.
- Indian history, culture and beliefs in the New West.
- Notable Indian nations, places, maps and world information.
- A Wonderful exploration of another culture.
- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr. with Kevin Siembieda.
- Still \$20.95 – 208 pages. Cat. No. 827 – ISBN 1-57457-002-1

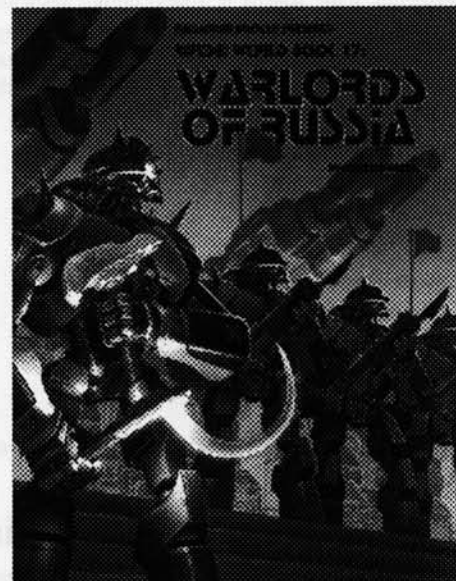
## Rifts® World Book 16: Federation of Magic™ Revised

Rifts® Federation of Magic™ delves into the legendary Magic Zone and explores the many factions, faces and magicks of the Federation of Magic.

- 34 pages of brand *new* source material on the city of Dweomer.
- Plus the all the popular original material, of which highlights include:



- Eight magic O.C.C.s (character classes).
- Techno-Wizard devices, vehicles and Federation of Magic Automotons.
- Alistair Dunscon, diabolical leader of the Federation of Magic.
- History and overview of the Federation of Magic, notable places and people.
- The movers and shakers of the Federation of Magic, both good and evil.
- Key figures in the Federation.
- The Federation's plans to destroy the CS, maps & world information.
- Written by Siembieda & Murphy. Cover by Keith Parkinson.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages (34 new). Cat. No. 829 – ISBN 1-57457-005-6



## Rifts® World Book 17: Warlords of Russia™

Rifts Russia is a savage wilderness infested by demons and other supernatural horrors. From the chaos, the Warlords have risen as Russia's self-proclaimed saviors, but they are also its conquerors and tyrants who use fear, force and hordes of monstrous cyborgs to dominate the land. This book focuses on the people and Warlords of Russia, their goals, armies, weapons and technology.



- The Warlords of Russia, their armies, politics, plans and enemies (which includes other Warlords).
- The Sovietski and its history.
- Cyborgs like you've never seen 'em.
- Over 20 O.C.C.s.
- Weapons, bionics and vehicles.
- Hostile territories & monstrous enemies.
- World information & adventure ideas.
- Written by Siembieda & Krueger.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 832 – ISBN 157457-010-2



## Rifts® World Book 18: Mystic Russia™

This book is rich in monsters and magic based on Russian mythology and superstition. Rifts Russia is a land unlike anywhere else. The wilderness abounds with mischievous spirits, shape changers and demons. Several unique types of magic are also found in Russia (including a comprehensive look at Necromancy). Plus more on the Sovietski, the country and the people.

- Magic galore! Over 100 new spells.
- Nature and Spoiling Magic.
- Living Fire Magic.
- Bone Magic & Necromancy.
- Russian Gypsies and their secrets.
- 28 Russian demons & spirits.
- Sovietski tanks & war machines.
- More world information & adventure ideas.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Still \$16.95 – 176 pages. Cat. No. 833 – ISBN 157457-011-0

## Rifts® World Book 19: Australia

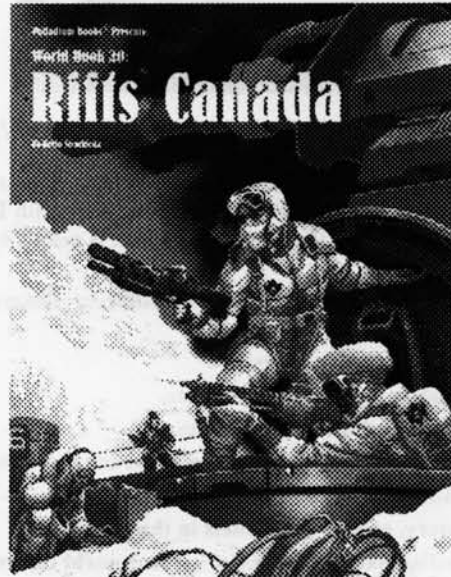
The Land Down Under has been ravaged by the Great Cataclysm and madness even more than most places. Humankind survives as *Outbackers* (low-tech survivalists and scavengers) and the *City-Goers* (the few who live amongst technological splendor after turning their backs on the rest of humanity). Both are hard-hearted, paranoid, & cruel. Both may become the equivalents of the Coalition States Down Under.

Rifts Australia is a savage and alien land reshaped by the Coming of the Rifts and the brutality of survival. A land inhabited by strange creatures and forces of magic.

- The Tech-Cities Melbourne & Perth.



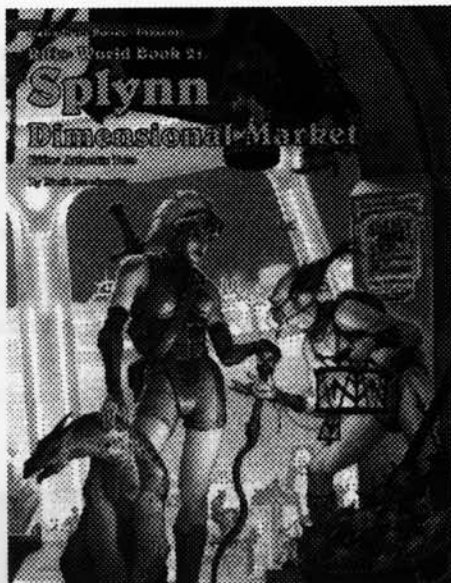
- Rules for creating Outback towns.
- Over 20 O.C.C.s like the Roadganger, Jackaroo, Bushranger & Road Sentinel.
- Mystic O.C.C.s include the Sham-Man & Songjuicer.
- Mutants, monsters, and Dreamtime menaces.
- New weapons and technology.
- World information and adventure ideas.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Written by Lucas & Siembieda.
- Cat. No. 834 – ISBN 157457-018-8



## Rifts® World Book 20: Rifts® Canada

An in-depth overview of Canada, its population centers, great cities, ruins, wilderness and supernatural horrors.

- Rules for surviving a cold wilderness environment.
- Notable towns and independent kingdoms.
- Headhunter O.C.C. redefined (5 different types).
- Tundra Rangers and their weapons and vehicles.
- Over two dozen monsters and D-Bees.
- Inuit Shaman, spirits, magic and Techno-Wizard items.
- Tons of world information, adventure ideas & more.
- Still \$20.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 835 – ISBN 157457-025-0



## Rifts® World Book 21: Splynn Dimensional Market™

Atlantis Book Two takes us to the legendary **Splynn Dimensional Market**. A place where it is said that one can purchase *anything*, including forbidden magic, alien technology and humanoid slaves. Anything goes and one must fend for one's self. The only laws are those governing commerce, and life and death.

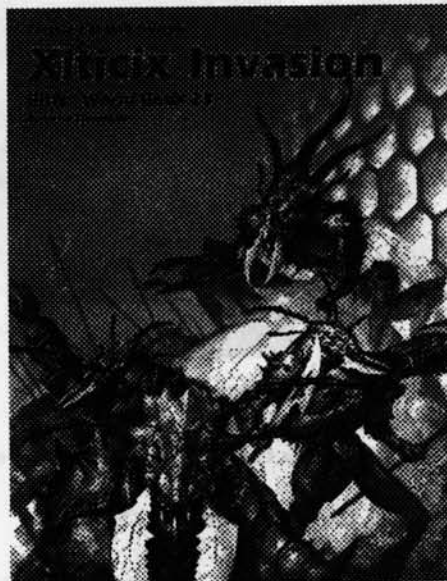
- The Splynn Market's history, laws, and description in detail.
- More than two dozen places of interest and key figures.
- New magic, magic items, rune weapons and Faerie Weapons.
- New Bio-Wizard organisms, Symbiotes and devices.
- 15 new monsters and aliens.
- Many avenues of adventure and intrigue.
- Written by Sumimoto & Siembieda.
- Wrap-around cover by Zeleznik.
- Still \$20.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 836 – ISBN 157457-027-7



## Rifts® World Book 22: Free Quebec™

The Coalition War between Free Quebec and the Coalition States. Though the war becomes short-lived and the CS turns all of its attention on wiping out Tolkeen, this book presents all of Free Quebec's defenses, secrets and war machines.

- Quebec's Glitter Boy Legions & six new types of GBs.
- Cyborg Shock Troopers and the GB Side Kick.
- The Quebec Army and Navy, its weapons and vehicles.
- Violator SAMAS, Cyborg Shock troopers, Sea Dragon & more.
- Old Bones, a place for rumors and spying.
- Key people, history and world information.
- Written by DesRochers & Siembieda.
- Still \$20.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 837 — ISBN 157457-030-7



## Rifts® World Book 23: Xiticix Invasion™

Peter Murphy and Kevin Siembieda (the team behind *Rifts® Federation of Magic*) delve into the frightening and alien world of the insect-like humanoids known as the Xiticix.

- New varieties of Xiticix.
- Xiticix magic and psionics.
- Xiticix weapons and technology.
- The Xiticix's domains in North America.
- A look inside the hive network.
- New O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s.
- Still \$16.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 838 – ISBN 157457-031-5

## Rifts® World Book 24: China One

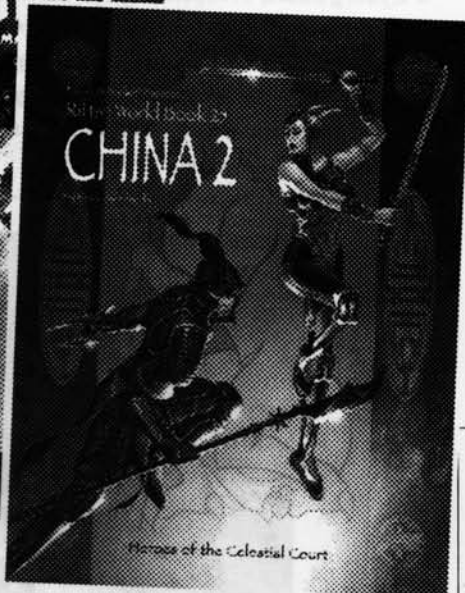
There is no where on Earth that is more dangerous than Rifts China. The Yama Kings war against themselves and all of humanity, bringing the ten Chinese Hells to manifest in China. Rifts® China, Book One presents the Hells on Earth setting, monsters, demons, villains and more. A smash hit with Rifts fans everywhere.

- The Yama Kings and their Hells on Earth.
- 30 Chinese horrors – demons, ghosts & spirits.
- 20+ Chinese curses.
- Overview of Rifts China, key people & places.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Erick Wujcik.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 857 – ISBN 157457-094-3

## Rifts® World Book 25: China Two

Rifts® *China Two* presents the heroes the Celestial Court and the champions of the people. This book is filled with awesome player characters (O.C.C.s).





- The Celestial Court.
- Martial Artist character classes – Rifts® style!
- Oriental Mystic powers and magic.
- Secret Monasteries where the Demon Quellers and other champions train.
- More background and setting, for Rifts China.
- Written by Erick Wujcik.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 858 – ISBN 157457-095-1

## Rifts® World Book 26: Dinosaur Swamp

The swamps of Florida and other parts of the south are described and mapped for intrepid explorers and treasure hunters.

- Mega-Damage Dinosaurs and monstrous mutants.
- New O.C.C.s, including Wilderness Barbarians, Eco-Wizards, and others.
- The Secret of the Swamps – Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas all outlined.
- More world background, adventure and adventure ideas.
- Written by Todd Yoho. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 862. ISBN 157457-104-4

## Coming for Rifts® in 2005

**Rifts® MercTown One:** A rough and tumble haven for mercenaries, bounty hunters, raiders and fugitives mapped and described. Includes weapon dealers and other shops, job placement agencies, fences, miscellaneous weapons and gear, and other key people and places who cater to mercenaries and scoundrels. Written by Patrick Nowak and Kevin Siembieda. \$17.95 – 160 pages. Coming 2004.

**Rifts® Merc Ops:** More weapons, armor, vehicles, power armor, bionics and gizmos used by the mercenaries of Rifts Earth. Written by Patrick Nowak and Kevin Siembieda. \$17.95 – 160 pages. Coming Spring or Summer 2005.

**Rifts® Arzno:** The city of Arzno in Arizona. Born from a mercenary camp, Arzno has become a full-fledged city-state. But can it survive the vampire threat? The core of the city mapped and described, key leaders, new mercenary equipment, armor, weapons and vehicles, as well as villains and adventures. Written by Jason Richards. \$17.95 – 160 pages. Coming 2005.

**Rifts® World Book: Lazlo:** At last, the city of Lazlo mapped and described. Key figures discussed and statted out, key places, shops, magic items, and more. Written by Carmen Bellaire and Kevin Siembieda. Final size and price not yet determined (probably 160 to 192 pages).

**Rifts® Dragons & Gods** – new material created specifically for Rifts®; 160-192 pages.

**Rifts® Adventure Sourcebooks** – a variety of subjects will keep on coming.

**Rifts® Chaos Earth™ series** – more on NEMA, practitioners of magic, psychics, Juicers, madness, invasions and adventure as one fights to survive the Great Cataclysm.

**Rifts® Australia Two: Dreamtime** – cancelled, at least for now.

Palladium Books® Presents:

**RIFTS**  
Adventure Sou

By Kevin Siembieda



Chi-Town 'Burbs  
Forbidden Know

Palladium Books® Presents:

**RIFTS**  
ADVENTURE SOURCEBOOK

By Kevin Siembieda



CHI-TOWN 'BURBS  
THE BLACK VAULT

## Rifts® Adventure Book Series

A series of 48-64 page books placed in a particular setting or focusing on a particular group, people, or O.C.C. in a specific environment. Each book presents an adventure setting and ideas, plus material on which to build your own adventures. All are written by Kevin Siembieda with a little help from his friends.

• **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: Chi-Town 'Burbs – Forbidden Knowledge.** Overview and history of the Chi-Town 'Burbs. Key people and places in the 'Burb of Firetown, with maps, stats, rumors and plenty of adventure hooks.

\$8.95 – 48 pages. Cat. No. 853 – ISBN 157457-082-X

• **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: Chi-Town 'Burbs – Firetown & the Tolkeen Crisis.** Retribution Squads are out for blood, magic and forbidden books are flooding in from the fallen Kingdom of Tolkeen and trouble seems to be brewing in every corner. Revenge Squad Ragnarok, and more of Firetown described and mapped, with a ton of adventure hooks and rumors.

\$10.95 – 64 pages. Cat. No. 854 – ISBN 157457-085-4

• **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: Chi-Town 'Burbs – The Black Vault.** Learn about the mysterious Black Vault where the Coalition States lock away forbidden and dangerous magic items. The history of the Black Vault, its defenses and protectors, CS Anti-Magic Recovery Squads and 101 new magic items!

\$8.95 – 48 pages. Cat. No. 855 – ISBN 157457-086-2

• **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: Chi-Town 'Burbs – The Vanguard.** Practitioners of magic born in the early days of Chi-Town before the formation of the Coalition States, and who are loyal to the CS. Learn their history and their reasons for working for the Coalition, and

why they kill and undermine other practitioners of magic. Six new Vanguard O.C.C.s, their methods of operation, adventure ideas and Vanguard agendas. Vanguard members as optional player characters plus the Firetown 'Burb Part Three.

\$8.95 – 48 pages. Cat. No. 856 – ISBN 157457-091-9

● **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: The Republicans.** A mysterious group of people said to have survived the Great Cataclysm but work in secret. Are they real or myth?

\$10.95 – 64 pages. Cat. No. & ISBN not yet assigned. Coming in 2004.

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## Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook

A compendium of *cybernetics* and *bionics* found on Rifts Earth. Includes new and old items, information, and stats in one useful book.

- **The Cyborg O.C.C. redefined – Four main types: Partial 'Borg, Full Conversion 'Borg, Cyber-Humanoid, and Mining 'Borg, as well as notes on Slave 'Borgs.**
- **Six City Rat O.C.C.s and the Cyber-Snatcher Villain NPC.**
- **Over 160 cybernetic systems: weapons, sensors, implants, etc.**
- **Over 120 bionic systems: weapons, tools, sensors, armor and more.**
- **More on the Cyber-Doc and Black Market cybernetics.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **\$13.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 850 – ISBN 157457-075-7**

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## Rifts® Sourcebook One

Out of print and discontinued. May be revised in the future.

## Rifts® Sourcebook Two: The Mechanoids®

A.R.C.H.I.E.-3 and Hagan have inadvertently unleashed **The Mechanoids®** into the world. Creatures with one driving goal: To destroy all humanoid life! This book has it all. Source material, the Mechanoids, new equipment, monsters and adventure. Written by Kevin Siembieda.

\$12.95 – 120 pages. Cat. No. 805 – ISBN 0916211-55-X

## Rifts® Sourcebook Three: Mindwerks™

Out of print and may be discontinued.

## Rifts® Sourcebook Four: Coalition Navy™

An in-depth look at the burgeoning power of the Coalition Navy, its robots, subs, ships, weapons, troops and organization. Navy O.C.C.s, ranks and objectives, Sea SAMAS, Trident power armor, Sea-Spider Walker, Navy body armor and other equipment, CS warships, submarines, patrol boats, water sleds and more. Written by Patrick Nowak with Kevin Siembieda.

\$12.95 – 128 pages. Cat. No. 828 – ISBN 1-57457-003-X

## Rifts® Coalition Wars®: Siege on Tolkeen™

A six part series chronicling the war between the Coalition States and the magic kingdom of Tolkeen. The ultimate magic vs technology scenario. All are written by *Kevin Siembieda* with a little help from his friends.

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● **Coalition Wars® Two: Coalition Overkill.** The war escalates as the Coalition Army draws first blood and engages in wholesale slaughter and genocide. More than 60 villains and NPCs. Introducing the *Daemonix* and *General Drogue*, plus a complete adventure. \$12.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 840 – ISBN 157457-046-3

● **Coalition Wars® Three: Sorcerers' Revenge.** Tolkeen's surprise blitzkrieg routs the CS and sends the mighty Coalition army in retreat. More than a dozen D-Bees, 25 NPC Tolkeen warriors, and adventure generation tables. \$12.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 841 – ISBN 157457-050-1

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● **Coalition Wars® Five: Shadows of Evil.** The Coalition Military is back with a vengeance. Random encounters, heroes, villains and key places. \$12.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 843 – ISBN 157457-052-8

● **Coalition Wars® Six: Final Siege.** The City of Tolkeen in its final days, mapped and described. Freehold, the city of dragons, described. King Creed and 40 NPCs described in detail. Plus secret weapons and the fall of Tolkeen. \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 844 – ISBN 157457-053-6

● **Rifts® Aftermath.** An overview of North America and the world after the fall of Tolkeen. How have things changed? A great reference that outlines most of Rifts Earth, circa 109 P.A. \$21.95 – 208 pages. Cat. No. 846 – ISBN 157457-068-4



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## Rifts® Dimension Book 5: *Phase World*®

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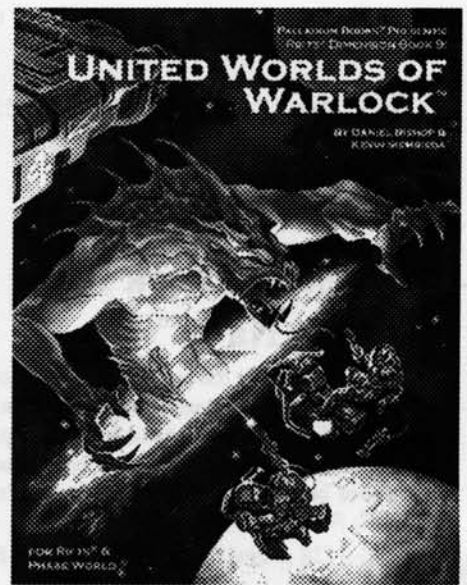
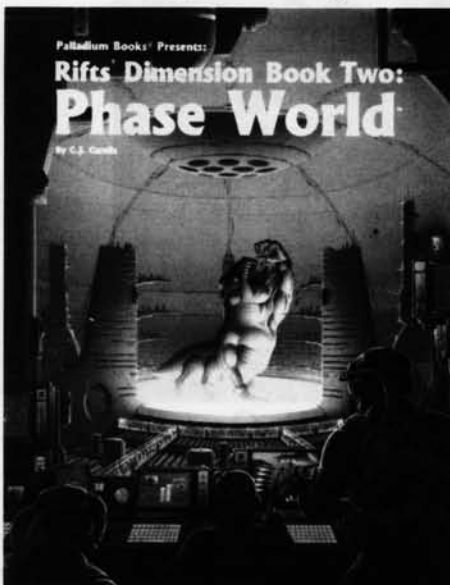
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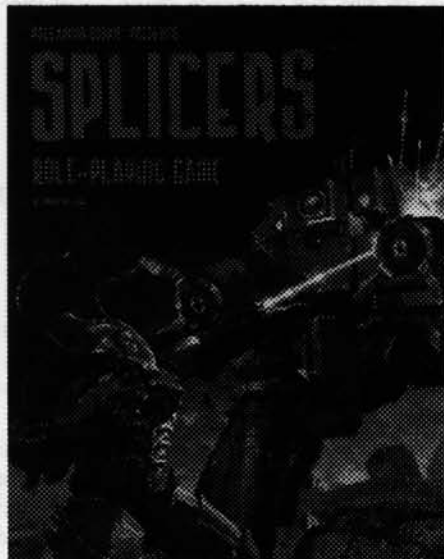
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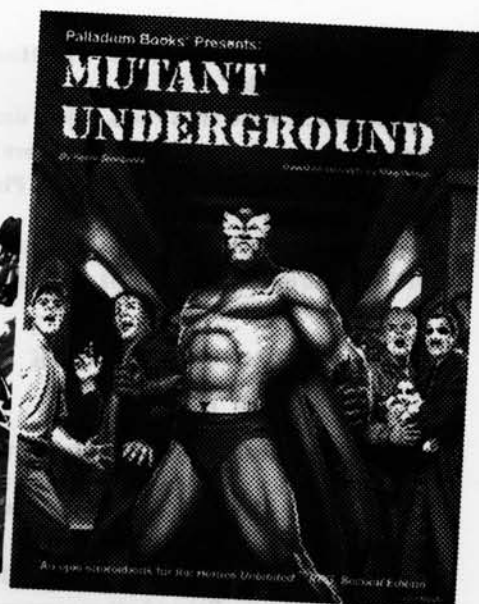
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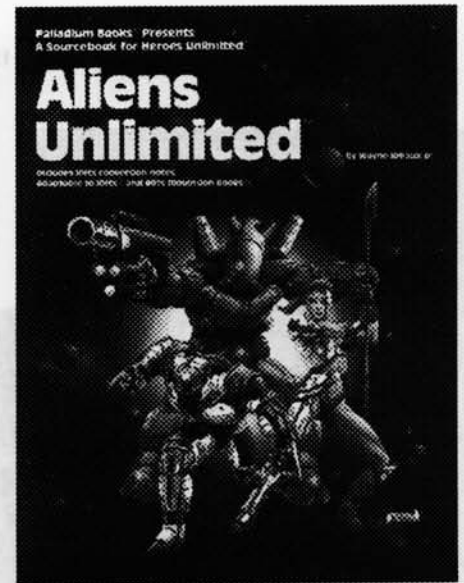
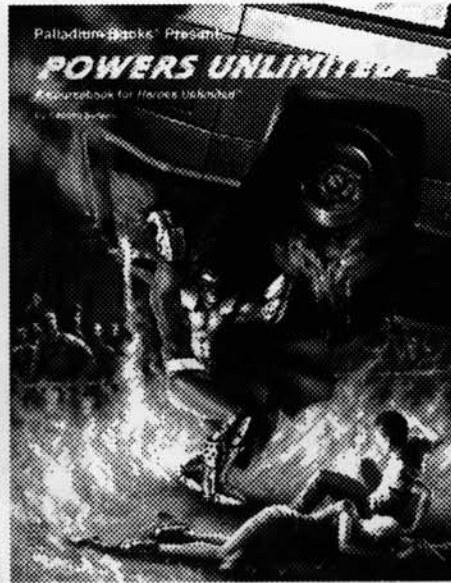
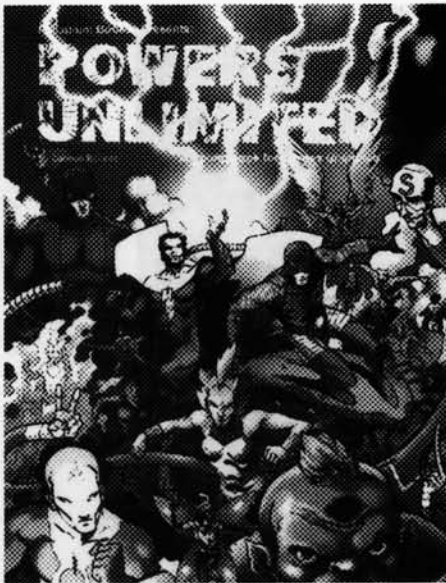
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- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr. and Kevin Siembieda.
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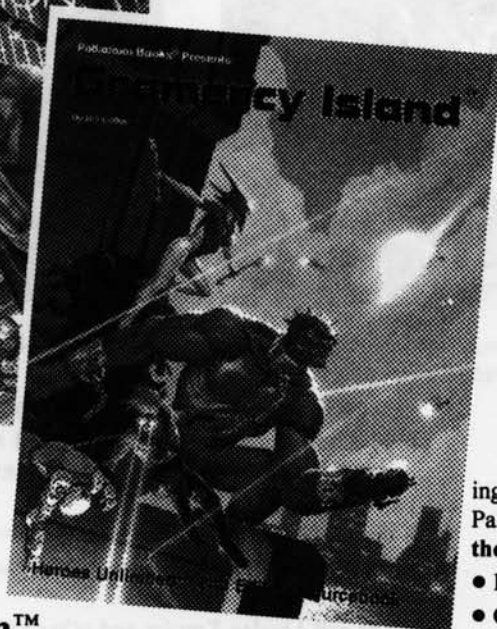
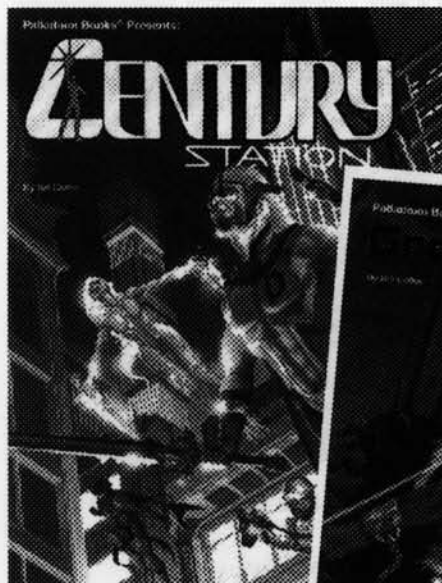
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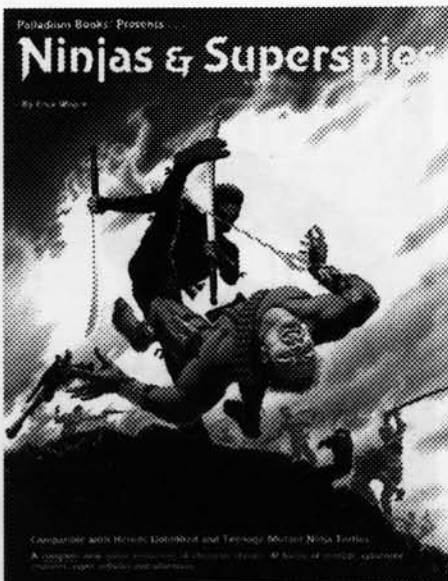
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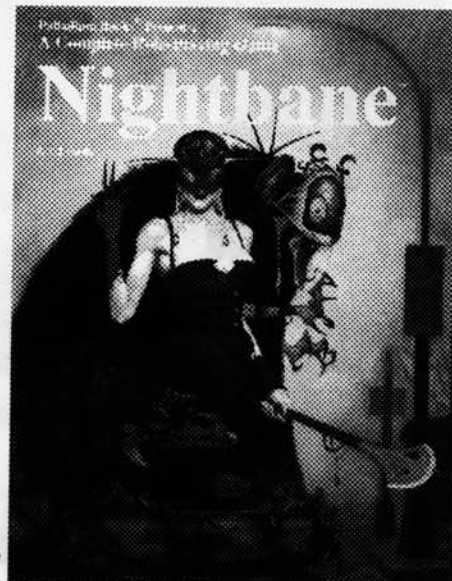
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## Nightbane® Horror Role-Playing Game Series

The Nightbane® appeared after *Dark Day*, the day the sun failed to rise. The world was imperceptibly changed that day, for a supernatural power known as the Nightlords seized control of the world governments. The inhuman minions now lurk in the shadows, assume the shape of others and work behind the scenes to enslave all mankind.

Only a handful seem to be aware of the change, among them the Nightbane. Ordinary humans given the gift to transform into powerful supernatural beings. The human "Facade" is their old self, their human face, the "Morphus" their new self, the supernatural being they have become. If there is a problem, it is that the Nightbane can use their supernatural abilities only by transforming into their superhuman Morphus, and the Morphus always has an unmistakably inhuman appearance. Though a Nightbane Morphus may be beautiful, most are horrifying and ugly, and not even the Nightbane know why. Additionally, one just wakes up, one day, as a Nightbane. There is no instruction manual or guidelines, and one must come to terms with the change on their own terms.

The Nightbane are also coming to realize they may have a special destiny, for the evil Nightlords fear and hunt their kind, making them the natural enemy of the "establishment" in more ways than one.

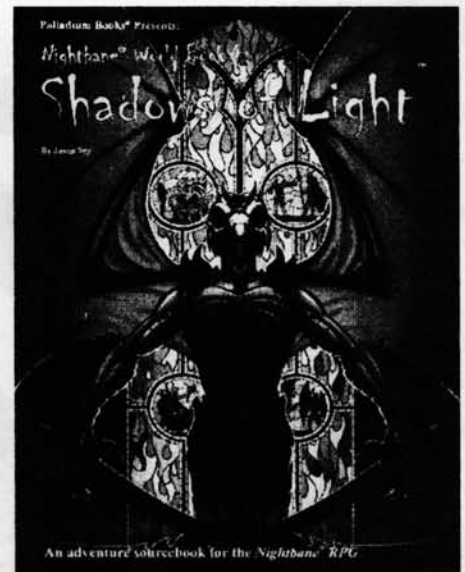
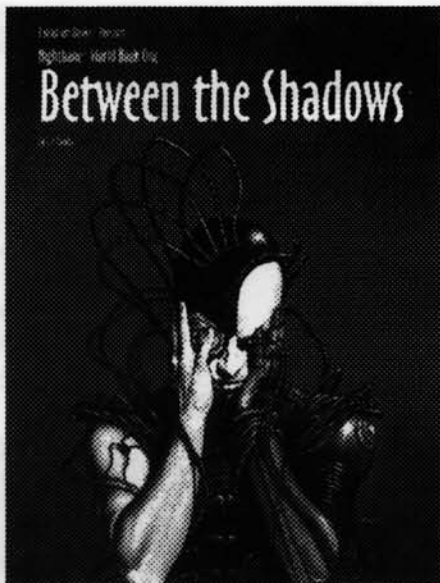
A truly off-beat setting with unlikely heroes that combines elements of the super-heroic with horror, conspiracy and suspense.

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- World information and adventure ideas.
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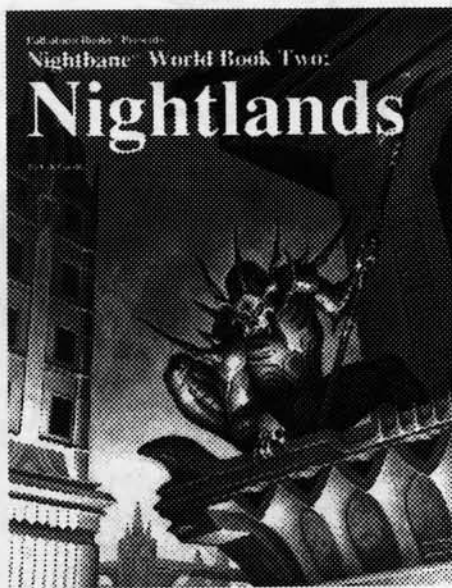
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Thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) of people have discovered another fabric of reality concealed *between the shadows* of the world they once knew. A terrifying world of the supernatural of which they are charter members — they are the *Nightbane*™.

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- More details about the Nightbane and Nightlands.



- Discover the *Astral Plane* and the *Dreamstream*.
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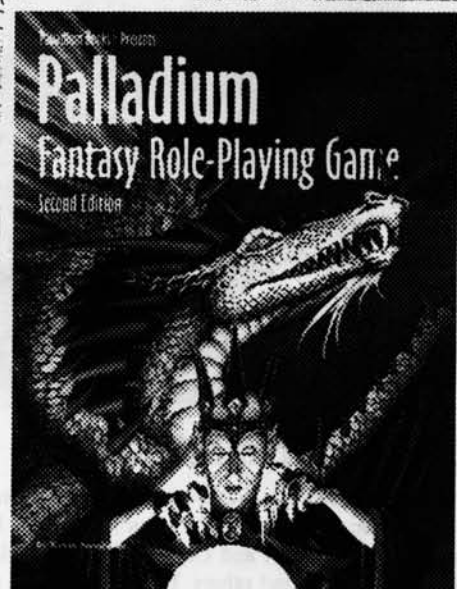




## The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game<sup>®</sup>, 2nd Edition

The Palladium World has delighted gamers with epic fantasy for over 20 years. A world torn in conflict with the non-human barbaric races, creatures of magic and supernatural forces.

**Non-Human playing characters** provide a host of unusual creatures as regular characters. They include the feared Changeling who can assume the shape and appearance of any humanoid. The giant races of Troll, Ogre and Wolfen. The small and agile Goblin, Kobold,



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**Magic:** Over 300 spells, plus elemental magic, circles, symbols and runes are yours to command. The most original forms of magic found only in the Palladium RPG are the Diabolist and Summoner. The **Diabolist** casts no spells, instead he uses the nearly forgotten magic of wards (mystic symbols) and circles of power. The **Summoner** too, is versed in the mystic arts of magic circle making, but his is a far more dangerous and often malevolent power, for he dares to summon and command creatures of magic.

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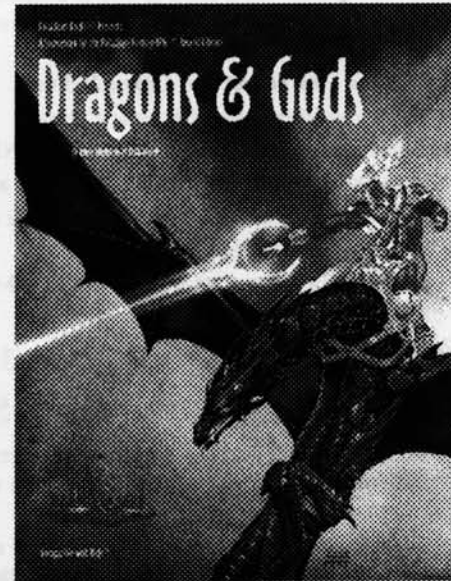
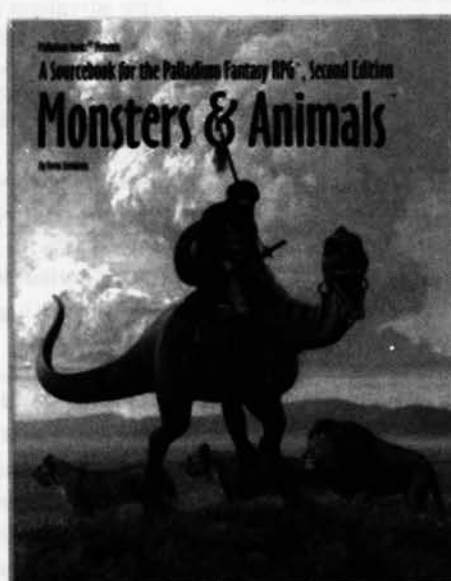
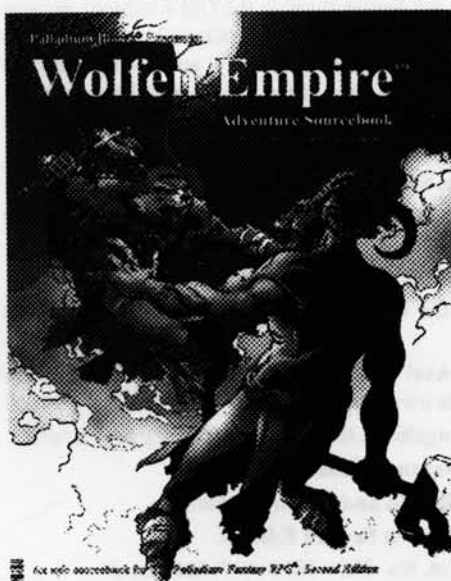
## Wolfen Empire Sourcebook

(Replaces Adventures in the Northern Wilderness)

The Wolfen Empire sourcebook outlines Wolfen society, land holdings and culture, helping to set the stage for the coming *Wolfen War*.

The adventures are set in the Great Northern Wilderness and lead our heroes into the heart of Wolfen country.

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The second section of the book contains complete stats on nearly 200 real animals, from canines and felines to poisonous snakes and birds of prey.

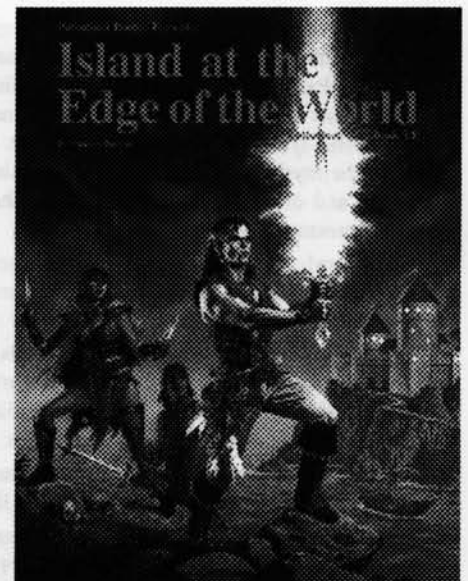
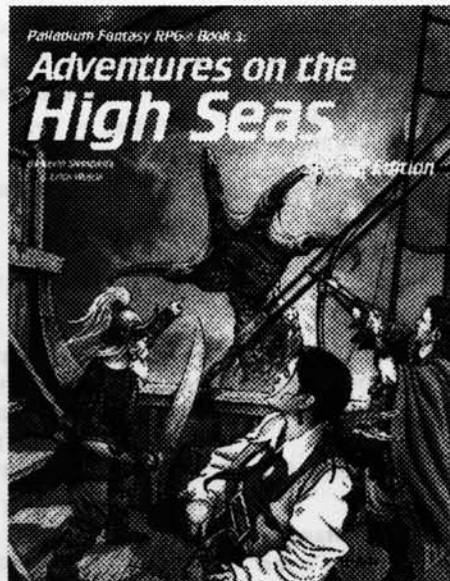
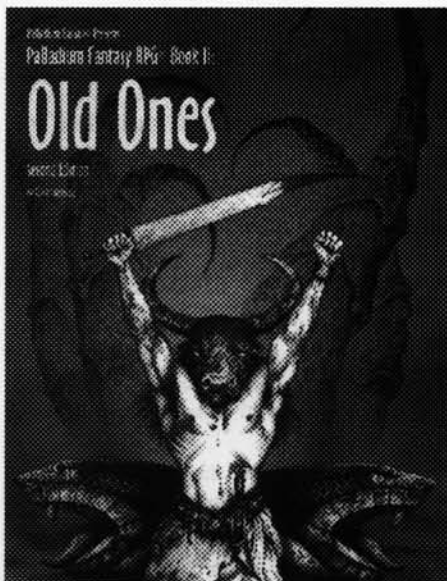
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Furthermore, *Old Ones* is the largest book of cities ever published!! It contains 34 towns and cities (and 22 forts), all clearly mapped and described. Major shops, production centers, thieves' guilds, royalty, temples and notable personalities are included with brief descriptions. Each town or city is unique, with its own set of virtues and problems. The entire Timiro Kingdom is laid at your fingertips.

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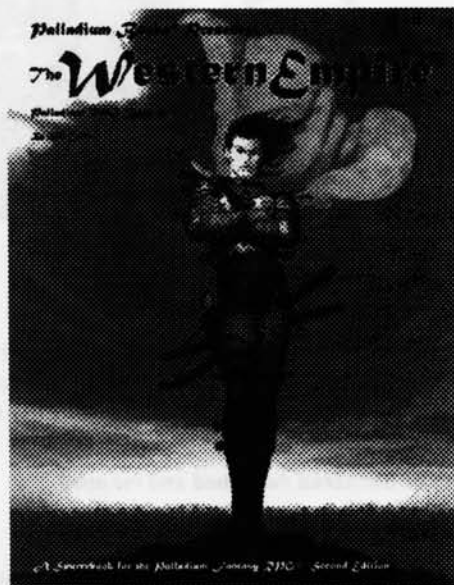


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The infamous Yin-Sloth Jungles are finally mapped and described. This tome is filled with new character classes, monsters, skills, places, villains and adventure.

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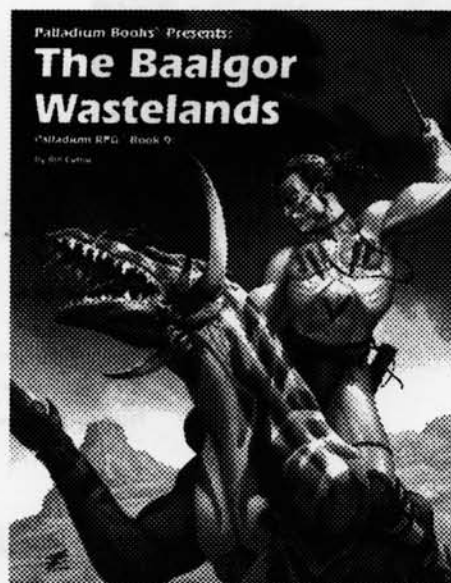


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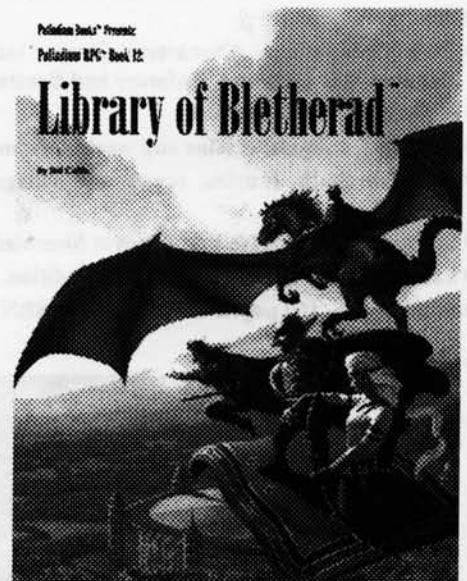
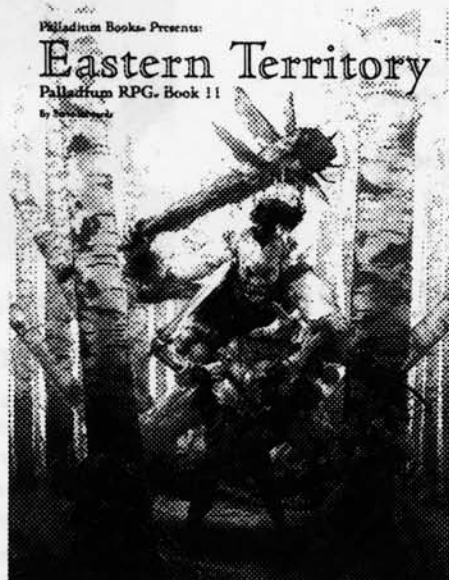
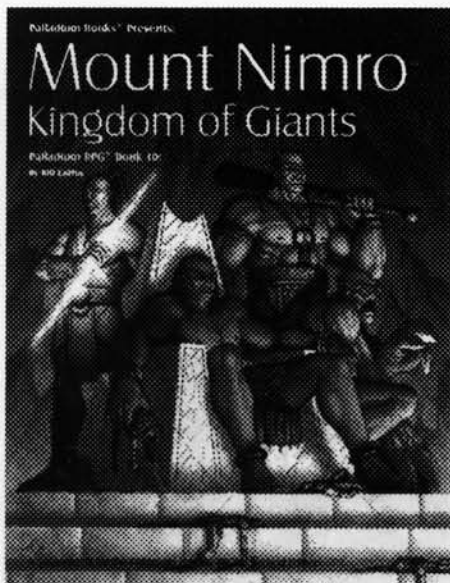
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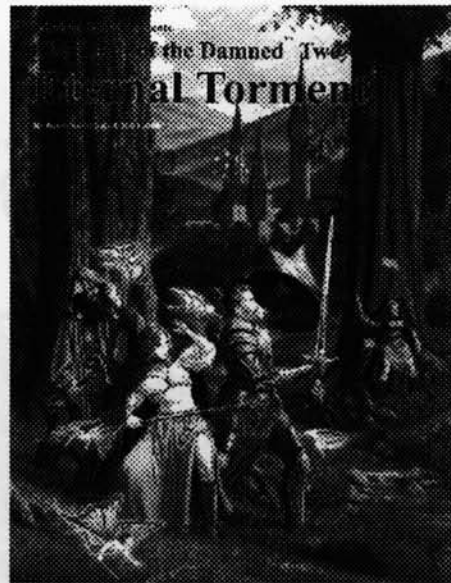
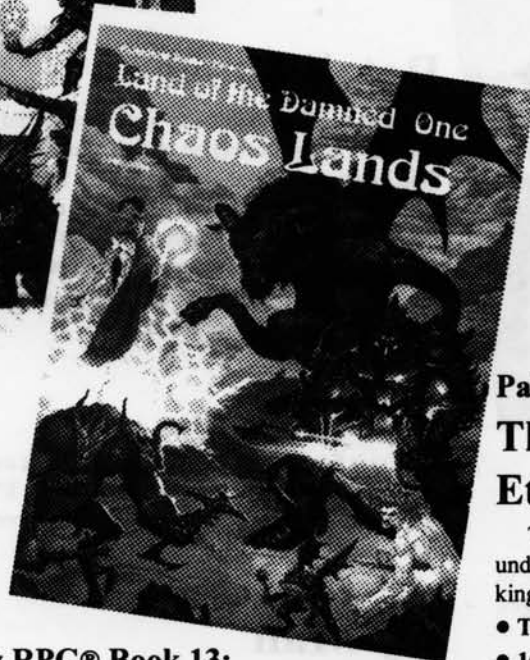
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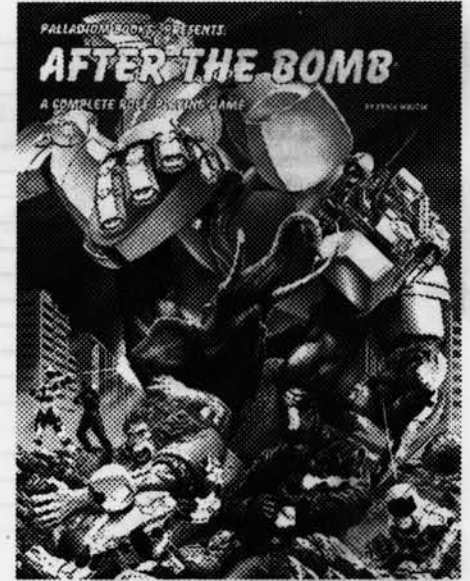
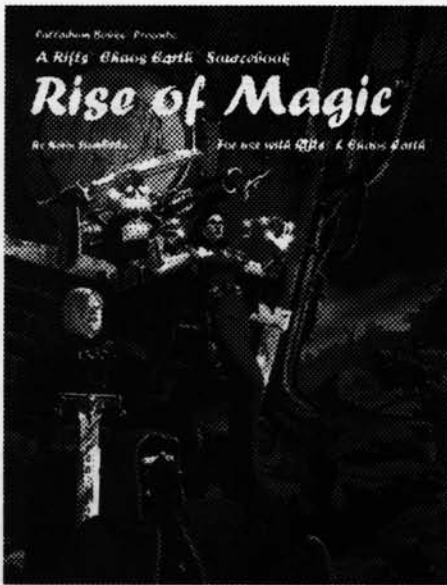
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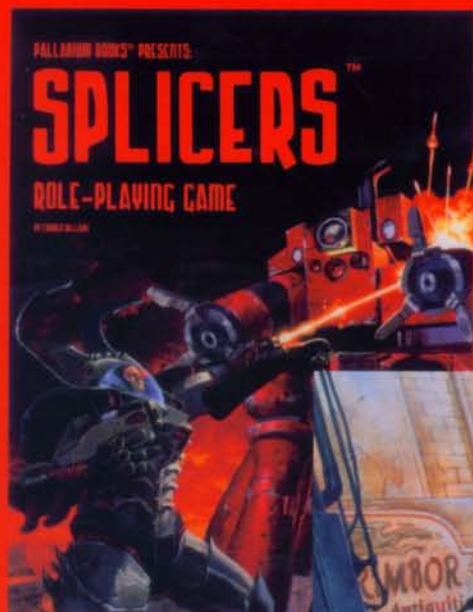
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