

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE

# RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®

*Inside this October/November, 2005 Issue...*

Fantasy: The Quest for Castlerake, Part Two

BTS: A Tome Grotesque™ Sneak Preview

Splicers™ O.C.C.s and Adventure

Rifts®: Exotic Cooking

The Hammer of the Forge™

Conventions, News & More



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## Violence and the Supernatural

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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 32**

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



First Printing – October, 2005

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Palladium Books® Presents:



#32

## Sourcebook and 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® #32 – October, 2005

## Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

This issue is full of all kinds of news, starting right here where the boss man talks about how the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** is doing, getting it and other Palladium titles into chain bookstores like Barnes & Noble, Borders, etc., what's next for **Rifts®**, what's next for Palladium's other game lines (we actually have a whole bunch of stuff lined up, but it's too soon to talk about most of them), and exciting days to come.

Artwork by Ramon Perez.

## Page 7 – Palladium News

Did you know that Kevin has only recently returned from a media tour of Europe? Yep, four countries in ten days. **Rifts® Promise of Power™**, the videogame for the N-Gage game deck, will be hitting store shelves in October, so Nokia sponsored the press event and asked Kevin to join the fun. At long last, we can reveal many of the videogame's special features, but reading about it isn't the same as seeing it. This game is a beauty! Wait till you **Rifts®** fans catch a look at it. You will not be disappointed. In other news, rumblings from Jerry Bruckheimer (who just won another Emmy for the Amazing Race), a brief word about Gen Con Indy (sorry, we can't make Gen Con So Cal, maybe next year), and our convention schedule for this fall. Larry Elmore will be at one of them (U-Con).

## Page 9 – Holiday Gift Ideas

Yes sir, we are always glad to be of service to our fellow man (especially when that service is hawking our own products). So here are some of the latest and coolest releases (and coming releases) from Palladium, all of which make nice gifts for your friends and family, and even your Game Master. **Rifts Ultimate Gold**, the signed and numbered limited edition, is still available but going fast (fewer than 400 remain out of the original 1500), and there are the new, **Rifts End Sheet Prints – Chi-Town** by Night and Emperor Prosek's Throne Room – check 'em out. And don't forget about Palladium's legendary *X-Mas Surprise Package* (see page 12 for the juicy details).

On a less festive note, there may be some delays due to an overload of work at Palladium's printer and unexpected "extended schedules." However, we've been told that the printer will do their best to get books turned around faster, if possible. Let's keep our fingers crossed on that one.

## Page 11 – Coming Attractions

**Beyond the Supernatural** is not forgotten, Kevin can hardly wait to get back to writing **Tome Grotesque™** and **Beyond Arcanum™** (both key pieces in the overall fabric of the **Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG**). **Powers Unlimited 3™**, **Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp** and more are in the works or release over the next few months.

This section also includes a detailed presentation of what some of the changes and additions are in **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, some examples of the new artwork, and some commentary

by author, Kevin Siembieda. We're excited about this new edition and hope you are too. By the way, the signed and numbered, limited edition, **Rifts® Ultimate Gold** is still available but being gobbled up fast! We even doubled the size of the original press run and still expect them to sell quickly.

## Page 12 – X-Mas Surprise Package

It has become a tradition for Palladium Books to give a little back to the fans this time of year. The *2005 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 12 for all the details. Limited time offer.

## Page 14 – The Squatter

### An adventure for **Beyond the Supernatural™**

Steven Dawes presents an adventure based on one of the new creatures from the upcoming **BTS-2** sourcebook, **Tome Grotesque™**. Furthermore, this adventure was played out over the **Lazlo Society™** website to great fun and effect. The adventure is clever and fits Kevin Siembieda's vision for the dreaded Gormaglut perfectly. (Nice work, Steven.)

Then on page 18 is a **Beyond the Supernatural™, Tome Grotesque™ Sneak Preview** featuring the stats written by Kevin Siembieda. This is just a teaser, folks. You ain't seen nothin' yet.

Artwork is by *Michael "Scooby" Dubisch*.

## Page 20 – The Wastes

### Optional Source Material for **Splicers™**

Chris Kluge provides delightfully wicked and sinister O.C.C.s, beasts and trouble for **Splicers™**. The Deliveryman is a Splicer O.C.C. who wanders the Wastes and battles a trio of Waste Crawlers – The Vulture, the Mount Rustler, and the Gene Thief. Brigands who prey upon Splicers and other humans. Includes special Splicer bio-equipment like Stealth Sheets, Second Skin and the Extracator, as well as an adventure.

Art by *Brian "the Man" Manning & Allen Manning*.

## Page 34 – A Shadow from the Past™

### – The Quest for Castlerake™ – Part Two

### For the **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®**

The conclusion to *Edwin Emmer's* epic fantasy adventure inspired by the legendary rune sword known as Castlerake. (Castlerake created by Erick Wujcik for the original edition of the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*. And Edwin does Erick proud.)

*Part Two* takes place in the Land of the Damned where our stalwart heroes must battle a host of undead, vampires, Slag Hags, Lava Goblins and other hideous creatures to defeat the



evil arch-mage, Vortan the Undying. Should they fail, Vortan has a plan to escape the Land of the Damned with an army of undead minions.

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Chapter 18 – page 57

Chapter 19 – page 61

Chapter 20 – page 64

Vortan – page 67

Epilogue – page 69

Artwork is by wizard, Kent "Burly Man" Burles.

## Page 70 – Mega-Steel Chef™

### Cooking For Rifts®

Did you know that when prepared correctly, Xiticix tastes like chicken? Read all about it in this wild and weird offering perfect for a Halloween issue of *The Rifter*®.

Newcomer, Erin Lindsey, whips up a delightful menu of fun and useful rules and recipes for preparing exotic Mega-Damage cuisine. This article is actually *fantastic* and fun. Includes weird side effects, preparing the exotic, magic meals, M.D. and TW tools of the trade, three Chef O.C.C.s, and more. We hope this is just the first of many contributions from this imaginative gamer.

Artwork by the "Hungry" Mannings and Erin "Cook-It-Up" Lindsey.

## Page 87 – Beyond the Supernatural™ Ads

## Page 89 – National Games Week Advertisement

## Page 90 – Rifts® Phase World®

### The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter 32 of James M.G. Cannon's popular, ongoing saga finds our hero in a most unlikely place. Read and enjoy.

Artwork by Apollo "Oak Tree" Okamura.

## The Theme for Issue 32

This issue's theme is horror, monsters, undead, weirdness and Halloween! What else would you expect for our annual October, Halloween Special issue? This year, Wayne Smith has cooked up a nice selection of the gruesome, frightful, strange, and monstrous. Meanwhile, Wayne continues to try to support the Palladium Fantasy RPG® with another epic adventure saga, as well as other game lines waiting for more sourcebooks, like Splicers. We hope you enjoy it. We sure did.

## The Cover

The cover is by new painting sensation E. M. Gist, who was kind enough to paint this very cool **Beyond the Supernatural™** inspired cover. In fact, publisher, Kevin Siembieda, likes it so much he's thinking of using it as the cover for a future BTS-2 sourcebook. We vote for **Tome Grotesque™**. What do you think?

## 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.

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.

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## Coming Next Issue

### The Rifter® #33

We haven't plotted out everything that's going into this Winter issue, but you can count on it including great stuff, along with the usual news, source-material and fun. Including:

- Palladium's release schedule for the new year.
- More for *Palladium Fantasy*®.
- Material for *Beyond the Supernatural*™.
- Material for *Rifts*®.
- News and other developments.
- The next, epic chapter of *The Hammer of the Forge*™.
- 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

## Everybody loves Rifts® Ultimate Edition

The new edition of **Rifts®** is a bona fide smash hit! Ninety percent of fans seem to love it! We've gotten accolades online and letters of praise and congratulatory telephone calls from happy gamers. Thank you very much for taking the time to let us know how much you enjoy the new **Ultimate Edition**. We appreciate it.

It's also a relief to know we hit the mark on this one. You know, you try to do your best and please your audience, but it's a bit scary on a big project like **Rifts®**. Not just because of the scope, but because the property means so much to so many people.

A few mistakes (mostly minor) slipped through despite our best efforts, and we'll post an *errata* online at some point, and probably print them in **The Rifter® #33**. Of course, we'll make changes in the next printing (which, the way sales are going, could be by the end of the year). Meanwhile, please continue to let us know by e-mail and letters about things you may find that need correcting, as well as any other comments and suggestions for the future.

Distributors are placing reorders, online sales are through the roof, and the buzz of excitement just keeps building. The release of the **Rifts® Promise of Power** videogame for the N-Gage, this October, should help increase the volume of that *buzz*. Palladium has reviewed the finished game and it is flippin' awesome! **Rifts®** fans are going to love it. The videogame really captures the look and feel of the pen and paper game and has much more to offer by way of visuals and story than I think most gamers realize. I can't say enough about it. Proof is in the pudding, as they say, so wait until this bad boy hits store shelves and see for yourself.

## New places to buy Palladium products

In addition, we hope to get the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** and select sourcebooks into chain bookstores like *Borders*, *Barnes & Noble*, *Books a Million*, *Waldenbooks* and others by this fall. If these initial offerings sell well (and they should), the chain stores should increase the number of **Rifts®** titles they carry. This should also make ordering special requests much easier and faster and should lead to them carrying other Palladium RPGs. PSI will be handling distribution.

## What's next for Rifts®

I think our next several **Rifts** supplements will please people, with manuscripts for **Arzno** (vampires and mercenaries) and **Madhaven™** (haunted NYC), plus work underway on the **City of Lazlo™** (city of wonder) and a few other projects. I'm think-

ing I'd like to tackle doing **Chi-Town™** (probably as a series of books) for next year, and (please don't get your hopes up) I think I'm going to try to get **Mechanoid Space™** done as a deluxe, hardcover release in time for Gen Con Indy 2006.

## What's next for other Palladium game lines

We have four – that's right 4!!! – sourcebooks planned for both **Heroes Unlimited™** and **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®** in 2006!

I'd also like to see 2-4 **Beyond the Supernatural™** sourcebooks and 2-4 **Chaos Earth™** books.

Then there's Carl Gleba's *secret project* – code name: Project Gleba – the first two of five books are already done and Carl's working on the third right now. Don't bother asking him about it if you run into him online, it's top secret. But we can tell you it's an epic, Megaversal crossover series.

Meanwhile, because I really do suffer from an overactive imagination, I have an idea for a *new spin* on a superhero game that is preying on my mind and begging me to do it (this would be something really adult and really gritty).

And . . . well, other stuff that's too soon to talk about.

## Exciting days are a comin'

The role-playing game industry has been in a slump these past few years. A lot of manufacturers seem to be getting out of role-playing games entirely, but not Palladium Books. Call me crazy (everyone else does), but I see new horizons to aim for and opportunity to be had. Gamers have been clamoring for **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, and more and more people seem to be discovering the fun and adventure of **Heroes Unlimited**, **Beyond the Supernatural** and **Chaos Earth** every day.

My mind is filled with ideas for pushing the envelope and creating new excitement for new and old Palladium RPG lines. I feel energized, challenged and excited about role-playing games. I see long-time players in their thirties and forties (and older) getting back into RPGS, and new players in their teens and twenties are discovering role-playing for the very first time.

My goal is to create games that can't be ignored and demand to be played. Games that inspire and invite people to play them. Games that feed the imagination and which will spread, and grow, and breed new gamers and inspire others.

Yes, times are tough in the RPG business, yet I boil with enthusiasm and embrace the future. I hope you continue to join us for the ride and tell your friends and other gamers about us.

– Kevin Siembieda, September 2005



## Rifts® Promise of Power™

October worldwide release of first ever Rifts® videogame

Rifts® Promise of Power™, the videogame for the N-Gage™ mobile game deck, will be hitting store shelves, worldwide, by the end of October.

This game is going to thrill *Rifts*® fans and surprise a lot of critics. The Rifts® videogame game is exclusive to the N-Gage™ mobile game deck, and has many features that take advantage of this unique platform. That means a gaming experience unlike anything you'll encounter on a PC or game console.

At last we can reveal many of the fun aspects and features of this exciting handheld videogame.

- A story-driven strategy RPG with an original story exclusive to the N-Gage™ mobile game deck.
- Strong graphics and colors designed for the small screen. Characters are depicted as rendered two-dimensional sprites, while the background is rendered in 3-D.
- Sound quality has been engineered to be at its best when held in the hands, playing a game – the sound enhanced by bouncing off one's own hands.
- The camera pulls back for strategic view during combat, and can rotate 360 degrees.
- Multi-player option allows multiple team combinations to lock horns in simultaneous play against each other.
- Brand new N-Gage Arena feature – *Turn Notification* – allows gamers to play one another anytime, anywhere, even when thousands of miles apart and in different time zones.

This allows one player to make his move or attack, and send the turn to Arena where it waits until the opponent picks it up and responds. As many as three different games can be played at once, so while you're waiting for your buddy's next turn, you can play one or two other people in between.

- The internal AI changes the game and battles every time you play against the machine. That means you can play over and over again in single-player mode without the same, exact outcome.
- Five multi-player game modes include Melee (Battle Royale, Elimination, and Team Battle), Defender, King of the Hill, Capture the Flag and Survival.
- 50+ enemies.
- 100 types of weapons, armor, spells and psionics!
- Select magic spells can be used to block and trap the enemy and for other strategic uses. Epic spells are . . . well, epic!
- Player Characters start out as one of three Proto-Character types: *Mercenary*, *Psychic* or *Mage*.

However, upon reaching fourth level, they can "level up" to an Advanced Character and unlock new abilities and weapons. 14 different Rifts® characters are available as the Advanced Character. For example, a *Mage* may become a

Ley Line Walker, Elemental Fusionist, Mystic or Battle Magus; a *Psychic* may become a Mind Melter, Mystic, Burster or Cyber-Knight; a *Mercenary* may become a Juicer, Crazy, Cyborg, Headhunter, Glitter Boy, or Super Trooper.

- Control up to three characters in your party.
- Unique good and evil sub-quests.
- Characters can be created with painstaking attention to detail, or fully equipped with the click of a button through auto-equip and auto-leveling.
- The World Map shows you where you are and where you are going.
- Adventure in North America, Free Quebec, Scotland, New German Republic, and China.
- Well over 40 hours of single-player gameplay.
- Although *Rifts*® fans will be able to immerse themselves in the familiar Rifts setting, gamers who have never seen Rifts® before will find **Rifts® Promise of Power™** fascinating, inviting and easy to learn.
- Authorized and cheerfully endorsed by me, Kevin Siembieda, the creator of the **Rifts**® pen and paper RPG.
- For more info and updates, see [www.rifts-promiseofpower.com](http://www.rifts-promiseofpower.com)
- Coming late October, 2005.

## Kevin's European Adventure

Nokia press tour to promote Rifts® Promise of Power™

I was thrilled when Nokia generously asked me to join the Rifts® press tour. What an experience: London, Madrid, Paris, and Spain in a whirlwind, 10-day tour and back home to write my fingers to the bone.

I did my best to inform and impress the media, which was easy to do since I know my own game inside and out, and I love what Nokia has done with the Rifts® videogame. Common questions included background on the game world, a bit of history on Rifts®, my goals for the game, what I thought of the N-Gage videogame, my level of involvement, why go with Nokia, and my plans for the Rifts® franchise. I was surprised by the number of people (especially in Milan, Italy) who knew about pen and paper role-playing games in general and Rifts® specifically. I even signed a bunch of autographs.

Meanwhile, Shane Neville, the Producer at Nokia (and all around great guy) demoed the Rifts® Promise of Power videogame and answered a battery of game specific questions. He talked about the game mechanics, turn notification (very cool and very new), Bluetooth multi-player aspects, design elements, design challenges, and the future of gaming at Nokia.

Everyone seemed genuinely interested in what we had to say, and sincerely appreciative that we made the trip. I had a good number of people thank me for taking time off from Palladium to come and speak with them. The hosts and media people in It-

aly and Spain were especially friendly and gracious. I know we won over a handful of skeptics in the crowd and I look forward to seeing what they think of the finished videogame. (I can hardly wait to see the final production myself.)

During our “off” time, Shane and I wandered around trying to cram in all the sights, sounds and experiences we could. We walked all over the place and I took something like 550 photographs on my digital camera. Among the highlights for me was seeing the Dome in Milan, a trio of wonders in Paris: The Louvre, the Museum Rodin, and this wonderful historic graveyard just down the street from our hotel. I also saw the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, some of the many plazas and shops of Madrid, and enjoyed a nice train trip to Bath (UK) among other sights and sounds. I had told the boys at Palladium that I planned to eat my way across Western Europe and I did, indeed, enjoy some scrumptious dining and delicious pastries. Yum. Mr. Shane Neville proved to be good company and an intrepid adventurer. Even when we were lost or our feet ached from all the walking, we had fun.

The trip had its share of bumps and challenges, but it was definitely worth doing on both a professional and personal level. I’m more convinced than ever that **Rifts® Promise of Power™** is a great game, and I came back home inspired to write and create.

## Rifts® Movie News?

It’s not much, but it comes from Jerry Bruckheimer, himself. Jerry posted the following statement on his website, September 1, 2005:

“David Franzoni is still working hard on the script. As seen from the popularity of this forum, we want to be sure not to disappoint the fans.”

Okay, its not a production date, but it’s a good sentiment. I mean, none of us want to see shlock. We want a great script with great characters and exciting action. Well, you can’t rush greatness. And I, for one, am glad that Jerry Bruckheimer isn’t forcing or rushing the script. I wish there was more to tell ya.

## Gen Con Indy 2005

To make a long story short, our booth looked great, fans went gah-gah over **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, we sold a lot of books, spoke to a lot of fans, autographed hundreds of books, gave away a thousand copies of **The Rifter®**, had our photographs taken, role-played, laughed, and had a fun time. Palladium staffers and creators included myself (Kevin Siembieda), Wayne Smith, Kathy Simmons, Scott Johnson, Apollo Okamura, Carmen Bellaire, Carl Gleba, Todd Yoho, Jason Richards, Roger & Randi Cartier, and a truckload of friends.

If you missed the fun and action this year, join us next year at Gen Con Indy 2006.

For more information about Gen Con Indy, contact: [www.gencon.com](http://www.gencon.com) (click on Gen Con Indy), or write to: Gen Con LLC, 120 Lakeside Ave., Suite #100, Seattle, WA 98122.

# Palladium’s Fall Convention Schedule

This Fall it’s a *Michigan* hometown extravaganza as we prepare for fun and games in Southfield (*Trinity Con* in mid-October) and Ann Arbor (*U-Con* in the first week of November). We hope a lot of you will come on over for all the fun. And not just local folks. At my last U-Con we had a couple guys fly in from Nevada and at Trinity Con last year, we had a gent from Minnesota and some folks from Ohio and Canada show up.

## Trinity Con

Southfield, MI – Oct. 21, 22 & 23

Trinity Con is a combination gaming, anime and comic convention (the trinity of good things) and a fun place to game, watch Japanimation and buy stuff.

We invite everyone within driving distance to join the fun this year. Heck, fly in too. Last year we had a fella from Minnesota and people in from Ohio and Ontario, Canada, so come on down!

Palladium will have the latest releases, special deals, giveaways, and sneak preview editor copies of books at the printers (like *Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp* and *Tome Grotesque*). Plus, Carmen, Julius, and the Cartiers, as well as local G.M.s, are running RPG events (I’ll run a Palladium Fantasy and a BTS).

**Where is it held?** At the Holiday Inn Southfield – (hotel number: 248-353-7700; special convention room rates are available). Reasonable Admission Fees.

### For More Information Contact:

Convention Enterprises Auburn Hills, MI 48321  
P.O. Box 210757 (313) 492-4204

[www.trinitycon.net](http://www.trinitycon.net)

## U-Con

November 4, 5, 6  
– Ann Arbor, Michigan

Larry Elmore fans take note

Larry Elmore is one of U-Con’s guests of honor. I can’t remember the last time Larry Elmore came to Michigan – in fact, this may be his *first!* And if you’ve never had the opportunity to meet this gentleman, you don’t know what you are missing. He’s gracious, funny and fun; a born storyteller with a million tales to tell. Not to mention one of the great fantasy artists of all time. He’s glad to sign autographs and I’m sure he’s bringing some of his art books and limited edition art prints to sell at the convention. Heck, it’s worth coming to U-Con just to see Larry Elmore!

The Palladium Books crew will be in attendance too, and will include me, *Kevin Siembieda*, *Wayne Smith* (editor, *The Rifter®*), *Alex Marciszyn* (editor), *Julius Rosenstein* (writer and proofreader), *Carmen Bellaire* (writer & G.M.) and other Palladium crazy people are guests manning the Palladium dealers booth, running games, engaging in panel discussions, sign-



ing autographs and selling our latest wares. And there's more! **Mayfair Games** will be present and gaming guest of honor is **Steven Long** from *Heroes Games*. Plus there will be dealer room, gaming, demos, anime and good times all around.

**A few notable events include . . .**

**A Charity Auction** with all auction fees donated to the *Red Cross Disaster Relief Fund*. And an *original Larry Elmore drawing* will be one of the items!

**Seminars**, including one on "Game Design" by *Steven Long* (Hero Games) and yours truly, *Kevin Siembieda*; another on "The Future of Role-Playing" with *Steven Long* and *Kevin Siembieda*; "Game Mastering Techniques" with me, *Kevin Siembieda*; and "Meet the Artist" - with Guest of Honor *Larry Elmore*

**The Smithee Awards Semi-Finals:** Vote for your favorite or most hated movie clip from such categories as "most ludicrous premise" and "crummiest ending."

**Kid U-Con:** Gaming is not just an activity for grown ups, but for kids too. This event is a chance for adult gamers to game with their kid gamers.

**Magic the Gathering Sealed Deck Tournament.**

**Warhammer Fantasy - Rogue Trader Tournament.** RPGA

**Gaming Events** for RPGs, CCGs, and board games.

**Open Gaming, Dealer Room** and more.

## U-Con's Location – November 4, 5 & 6

The Michigan Union  
530 South State Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

**Preregistration** for the entire Weekend (3 days): \$20

**On-Site Weekend Pass:** \$25

**Day Pass at the Door:** \$15 (Friday, Saturday or Sunday).

**Event Tickets:** \$1.50 per 2 hours - See event description for length of event.

**Special Event Tickets:** Are priced by event, see event description.

**Seminars/Panel Talks:** Free!

**Registration:** Registration opens at 9:00 AM on Friday, Nov. 4:8:30 AM Saturday and Sunday, November 5 & 6.

Registration closes at 11:45 PM on Friday, 6:00 PM on Saturday and 11:45 AM on Sunday.

**Events** run until midnight on Friday and Saturday and until 7:00 PM on Sunday.

## For more information about U-Con

U-Con Gaming convention

PO Box 4491

Ann Arbor, MI 48106-4491

**U-Con Website:** <http://www.ucon-gaming.org>

**E-mail:** [ucon-info@umich.edu](mailto:ucon-info@umich.edu)

**By Phone:** Voice mail: (734) 930-6363

# National Games Week

– November, 2005

The idea behind NGW is to bring greater awareness of "games" of all kinds – trading card games, role-playing games, miniature games, and board games. This is done by getting retail stores to host a week (or weekend) of special *gaming events* at the store. Participating retailers are supported by game publishers and manufacturers. Palladium Books and most major game publishers and manufacturers are participating in National Games Week, so there is a wide range of products and materials available to suit every need.

Ask your store if they are hosting events for National Games Week, volunteer to Game Master events and make people aware of your favorite games, meet new gamers, win prizes and have fun. Enjoy the festivities at participating stores across the country and game on!

## Retailer National Games Week Contact Information:

NGW Coordinator

Matthews Simmons Marketing

80 Garden Center, Suite 16

Bloomfield, CO 80020

Phone: 303-469-3277 – Fax 303-468-6174

Internet: [www.nationalgamesweek.net](http://www.nationalgamesweek.net)

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# Holiday Gift Ideas

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Since this issue includes Palladium's Fall catalog, we've replaced *Coming Attractions* with ideas for holiday gifts.

## Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Ed.

A unique game of horror and suspense. If you haven't taken a look at this role-playing game, you should, especially if you are looking for something different in a modern setting.

- A different spin on modern horror that will leave you begging for more!
- Play psychics, investigators or ordinary people.
- Two juicy sourcebooks are coming this Fall.
- From the creator of *Rifts*®!
- \$24.95 – 256 pages. Cat. No. 700. ISBN 157457-083-8.

## Beyond the Supernatural™ Gold

### Limited Edition Hardcover

The signed & numbered limited edition BTS hardcover is available only from Palladium Books. Available on a first come, first served basis, only while supplies last.

- Signed by writer, Kevin Siembieda, and artist, Michael Dubisch.
- Limited to 500 copies; signed and numbered. Once they are sold out, they are gone forever.
- Blood red leatherette cover with gold foil stamping.

- \$50 plus \$5 for postage and handling (double that to \$10 for Canadian and \$15 for overseas orders). Cat. No. 7000HC. Available only from Palladium Books. Available now.

## BTS – Lazlo Society™ T-Shirt

- Society lighthouse logo printed white on black.
- Sizes & Cost: Medium, Large, and XL – \$17.95 + \$3 for shipping and handling.  
XXL – \$18.95 + \$3 for shipping and handling.  
3XL – \$20.95 + \$4 for shipping and handling.  
4XL – \$22.95 + \$5 for shipping and handling.

## Tome Grotesque™

### Sourcebook For Beyond the Supernatural™

**Tome Grotesque™** is the first sourcebook for **Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG** and will continue to unveil the sinister world environment.

**Tome Grotesque** is more than a book of monsters – it is a book of adventure and mystery. Each creature represents a catalyst for adventure and intrigue. The creatures themselves are more than slobbering monsters, they are the root of evil and the genesis of sorrow.

- Supernatural predators who stalk our streets at night.
- Pranksters and Haunters.
- Demonic Servants who tempt, corrupt and torment humans.
- Ancient Evil that functions as master minds.
- Demonic magic and psychic abilities.
- Spectacular artwork and adventure ideas.
- Written and created by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 702. November or December 2005.

## Beyond Arcanum™

### For Beyond the Supernatural™

Magic is a choice, and those who choose it are often led down a dark and dangerous path.

Here again, there will be a new and sinister twist on how magic works, who is really in control of its secrets, and how it can be used as a tool for good or evil. In addition, **Beyond Arcanum** will include places of power, ancient artifacts, charms, mystic relics, cursed items and more.

- The Arcanist O.C.C. and other practitioners of magic.
- Magic spells designed for the BTS setting.
- Magic rituals, weapons, charms and artifacts.
- Ancient secrets and places of magic.
- Spectacular artwork by Dubisch and Russell.
- Plenty of ideas and inspiration for adventures.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Todd Yoho.
- \$17.95 or \$22.95 (probably the latter) depending on final page count – Cat. No. 703. December 2005 or January, 2006.

## Rifts® Ultimate Edition RPG

A must for anybody who has ever played and enjoyed *Rifts®*. A Megaverse® of adventure waiting for those yet to discover *Rifts®*.

### Highlights include:

- All kinds of little tweaks and improvements.
- The number of attacks per melee round has been defined.
- Improved layout for ease of use.
- More world information, background & orientation via Erin Tam.
- Missiles, grenades and ammo have prices. Missile types are described and so are general types of M.D. weapons.
- Techno-Wizard device construction rules.
- Rules, skills, combat and weapon clarifications.
- Magic and spell clarifications.
- Skill Penalties and Penalties for “low attributes.”
- Rules for surviving M.D.C. damage and crash damage.
- Expanded, Rifts-specific Insanity Tables.
- 33 O.C.C.s, including the new Elemental Fusionist, Merc Soldier, Robot Pilot, and Ley Line Rifter.
- All O.C.C.s updated and improved.
- CS O.C.C.s and the Coalition States fleshed out more.
- New species of Dragons and the Hatchling O.C.C. better defined.
- Great artwork – 24 pages in color (75+ color illustrations).
- \$33.95 – 376 big pages!
- Cat. No. 800HC (replaces the original softbound edition). In stores everywhere!

## Rifts® Ultimate Gold

### – Signed Limited Edition

- Limited to 1500 copies; signed and numbered – 1100 copies of which are already *gone*. Get yours (or friends) while you still can.
- Leatherette cover with two-color foil stamping.
- “Tip in sheet” with a small, color illustration by John Zeleznik signed by me (Kevin Siembieda), Editors Alex Marciniszyn and Wayne Smith, and others involved in this book; at least six signatures.
- \$70.00 +\$6.00 for shipping and handling in the U.S. Available on a first come, first served basis. (Note: The gold edition of the original **Rifts® RPG** is currently selling on the collector’s market for \$300 and up. That price is likely to skyrocket as **Rifts®** expands into the mass market with videogames, movies and more. Thus, the **Rifts® Ultimate Gold** seems destined to be an *instant collector’s item*, making the \$70 price tag a bargain.)
- Cat. No. 8000HC – available *only* by mail order directly from Palladium Books (and select stores who participated in our special Rifts promotion). Get ‘em while you can.



## Rifts® Ultimate Edition End Sheet Prints

- Signed and numbered by artist, John Zeleznik, and Rifts® creator, Kevin Siembieda.
- Limited to 500 “signed” copies.
- Both are 17x11 inches. Suitable for framing.

**Chi-Town by Night** – \$10.00 + \$3 for shipping and handling in USA.

**Emperor Prosek’s Throne Room** – \$10.00 + \$3 for shipping & handling in the USA.

\$5 for shipping & handling to Canada, \$8 for shipping and handling overseas.

## Glitter Boy in Flames Print

- Signed and numbered by artist, Scott Johnson, and Rifts® creator, Kevin Siembieda.
- Limited to 600 copies.
- Giant 20x28 inch image. Heavy silk paper stock. Suitable for framing.
- Was \$20.00 + shipping – **X-Mas special** – \$10.00 + \$4.00 for shipping and handling. **Note:** This offer is available only to those who read **The Rifter®**, so tell us you saw this in **The Rifter® #32** to get this special deal!

## Rifts® Conversion Book 2:

### Pantheons of the Megaverse®

Back after seven years, due to popular demand.

- 150 gods and pretenders; Aztec, Babylonian, Greek, Indian, and more.
- Demigod, Godling and Minion R.C.C.s.
- Priest O.C.C.
- Written by C.J. Carella.
- \$22.95 retail – 224 pages. Available now.

## Rifts® Merc Adventure Sourcebook™

New! A fun companion to the other recent merc books (**Rifts® MercTown** and **Rifts® Merc Ops**). It offers a few new character classes, some background data and adventure outlines.

- A half dozen new “optional” merc O.C.C.s.
- Devil Rider Psi-Stalker Clan.
- A dozen adventure outlines and merc boot camp.
- Written by Pat Nowak and Kevin Siembieda.
- \$10.95 – 64 pages, Cat. No. 867. November 10, 2005.

### Other great Rifts® Merc titles:

Rifts® Mercenaries™ – \$16.95 – 160 pages

Rifts® MercTown™ – \$17.95 – 160 pages.

Rifts® Merc Ops™ – \$17.95 – 160 pages.

Rifts® Naruni Wave 2™ – \$13.95 – 96 pages.

## Rifts® World Book 27:

### Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp™

New! More dinosaurs, only *smarter, stranger and more dangerous* than you can imagine. More world information and adventure ideas.

- Spell casting dinosaurs and other dangers.
- New R.C.C.s, Native Americans, weapons and equipment.
- The Ocmulgee Mound, adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Todd Yoho and Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 866. November 20, 2005.

## Other Palladium RPG Series

**Heroes Unlimited™ RPG** – super beings and adventure.

**Ninjas & Superspies™ RPG** – the name says it all.

**Palladium Fantasy RPG®** – epic fantasy and magic.

**Splicers™ RPG** – a weird sf world worth checking out.

**Rifts Chaos Earth™** – the Great Cataclysm as it is happening!

**Beyond the Supernatural™** – modern horror.

**Nightbane®** – horror, superhumans and parallel dimensions.

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## Delays Due to the Printer

Palladium’s Fall schedule has just been wrecked.

We apologize, but there is nothing we can do about this. Our printer is so buried in work (which is good for them) that they called to tell us that until further notice, they’ve been forced to go on what is called an “*extended schedule*.” That means 6-8 weeks to print a book instead of the usual 4 weeks. This delays ALL of Palladium’s Fall and Christmas releases.

With a little luck, **The Rifter® #32** and our *Winter 2005 Catalog* will be available around *October 19*, otherwise, we are looking at as late as November 5, 2005 for its release.

This also means **Rifts® Mercenary Adventures** and **Rifts® World Book 27: Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp** will both be pushed into November.

Regrettably, **BTS-2 sourcebook: Tome Grotesque** will probably be delayed until December and **BTS sourcebook: Beyond Arcanum** till January, 2006.

This has also caused us to rethink and reschedule other titles such as **Rifts® Arzno**, **Rifts® Madhaven**, **HU2 Powers Unlimited 3**, **Splicers Sourcebook**, **NEMA Mission Book One** and others.

Our apologies, but again, this is completely unexpected and completely out of our control. We hope you understand.

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# 2005 Christmas Surprise Package

Palladium Books' annual X-Mas Surprise Package/Grab Bag is 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

Now till December 23, 2005.

**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 14th.

## The Cost

\$32.00 US *plus* \$6.00 in the USA and Canada. The six dollars goes toward shipping and handling per *each* individual X-Mas Surprise Package/Grab Bag (i.e. one Grab Bag is \$32 + \$6 for a total of \$38, two are \$64 + \$12, and so on). Those ordering *online* can select their method of shipping, but you will pay for the *additional* shipping costs as well as a \$3.00 handling fee.

**Overseas Orders** require additional postage, \$12, and will be sent by the most economic and convenient way for Palladium Books. Such orders will take extra time to arrive. If you want faster or special delivery you will need to *call* us or order *online* where you can select different methods of shipping. YOU, the customers, pay ALL shipping.

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.

**Credit card orders are welcomed.** Visa and MasterCard are preferred. Order by mail, telephone or online.

**No C.O.D. orders**, and we 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) – or call our order line at (734) 946-1156 to place an order by telephone using a credit card. This is an order line only.

## What you get

A minimum of *sixty dollars (\$60) retail* in Palladium product, probably more. Last year, Kevin Siembieda was so full of Christmas spirit that many Surprise Packages got more than \$65 worth of goodies. Plus, upon your request, the Palladium staff and select freelancers will sign your books. (**Note:** Yes, the price of the X-Mas Surprise Package has gone up this year, but we promise you'll get your money's worth. We had to boost the price a few dollars to help cover Santa Kev's Christmas-mania before he gives away half the warehouse!)

This year, each X-Mas Surprise Package will get two or more "Special Wants" from sourcebooks and role-playing games plus something

from Palladium's "Surprise Package" of goodies. Extra items may include posters, prints, Rifts® luggage tags, and maybe a surprise or two. In addition, we *may* whip-up a little something extra to go into every Surprise Package. **Note:** Multiple orders *will* result in some duplication.

Plus most everything is signed by Kevin Siembieda 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"

To insure your X-Mas Surprise Package is everything you want it to be, send us a list of your "wants" – ideally listed in the order of what you want most. (**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 Surprise Package. Furthermore, don't list items you know are not available, like Mechanoid Space®).

Here's some ideas to help you make your selections.

- **New Palladium products.** For **Rifts®**: **Rifts® Conversion Book 2: Pantheons of the Megaverse®** (back in print), **Rifts® Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp™**, **Rifts® Mercenary Adventures™**, **Rifts® Merc Ops™**, and **Rifts® MercTown™** and more.

For **Heroes Unlimited™**: **Villains Unlimited™ Revised** (back in print), **Heroes Unlimited™ G.M. Guide** (back in print), and with a little luck, **Powers Unlimited 3** (hot off the presses; but no promises).

For **Beyond the Supernatural™**: **BTS-2™ RPG, Tome Grotesque™** (late November) and, with some more luck, **Beyond Arcanum™** (December).

As well as back stock items galore.

- **Back stock:** RPGs, sourcebooks, world books and supplements you've been meaning to get, but haven't gotten around to. This is a great way to fill those holes in your collection, get hard to find back stock items or try a new game like **Rifts®**, **Palladium Fantasy®**, **Nightbane®**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Ninjas & Superspies™**, **After the Bomb®**, **Beyond the Supernatural™**, **Chaos Earth™** or **Splicers™**.
- **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 of the **Rifters®** especially for this purpose), but some are already completely gone (like issues #4, #8, #21, #22 and #26), and others are nearly gone, so they are available only while supplies last and no guarantees.
- **Out of print and hard to find items.** Do you want a copy of the old **Rifts® RPG** (Parkinson cover, soft cover, 15th printing) for your collection? Still need that copy of the **Systems Failure™ RPG** or the collected version of **The Mechanoid Invasion® Trilogy**, or **RECON®** (Vietnam era), or **Compendium of Contemporary Weapons**, or a copy of first edition rules for the **Heroes Unlimited™ RPG** or **Old Ones™** sourcebook for **Palladium Fantasy®**?

Hmm, what about **Ninja Turtle® sourcebooks**; rare, and very limited supply. Kevin has pulled out about a dozen file copies of each TMNT sourcebook to stuff into a handful of Surprise Packages for some of those who ask. Available only while supplies last! However, we have plenty of the new **After the Bomb® RPGs** along with the old **After the Bomb®** sourcebooks, like **Road Hogs**, **Mutants Down Under**, **Mutants in Avalon**, **Mutants of the Yucatan** and **Mutants in Orbit**.



Did you know **Phase World®**, **Phase World Source-book**, **Three Galaxies™**, **Pantheons of the Megaverse™** (100+ gods), **Villains Unlimited™** and **Heroes Unlimited G.M. Guide** are back in print?

Have you been wanting to try **Splicers™**, **Beyond the Supernatural™**, **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 what books you *still need* or what new books or RPGs you might *want* to try 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 Tome Grotesque™**, 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).

- **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 dollars per pack, but order 'em for the 2005 Surprise Package and we'll send you a heap of 'em along with your other goodies.
- **Rifts® Ultimate Edition RPG, first printing (new)** – this item is hot and we have put aside enough for the X-Mas Surprise Package so that as many as 2 in 10 requests *should* get a copy, but that's no guarantee you'll get one. Sorry, have alternative "wants."
- **Rifts® Ultimate Gold RPG, limited Edition, signed and numbered** by Kevin Siembieda and a half dozen other creators, is one of our *rare* prizes. Only about one in 30 requests will get one . . . but those aren't bad odds. Remember, this is a \$70 dollar item – request it and this is likely to be the *only* item you get in your X-Mas Surprise Package.

Also, we have a few dozen copies of "Rifts Ultimate Gold" that are effectively *overruns*. They are NOT numbered and do not have the tip-in autograph sheet, but they are signed by members of Palladium's current staff. Estimated value \$60-\$90 and a surefire collector's item – request it and this is likely to be the only item you get in your X-Mas Surprise Package.

- **Rifts® First Edition Rules – "Silver" Hardcover**. This item is sold out, but 50 copies are available for this X-Mas Surprise Package. This is considered to be a \$60-\$70 dollar collector's item – request it and it may be the only item you get in your X-Mas Surprise Package.
- **Rifts® RPG First Edition Rules – soft cover**. This item is sold out, but 50 copies are available for this X-Mas Surprise Package. This is considered to be a \$60-\$70 dollar collector's item – request it and it may be the only item you get in your X-Mas Surprise Package.
- **Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition, "Gold" hardcover**. This item is sold out. Fewer than 10 copies are available for this X-Mas Surprise Package. This is considered a \$70+ dollar collector's item – request it and this is likely to be the only item you get in your X-Mas Surprise Package.
- **Beyond the Supernatural "Gold" hardcover, 2nd Edition RPG**. Limited to 600 signed and numbered copies (half already gone). Only about 1 in 50 requests will get a copy. This is a \$50 dollar item.
- **"Glitter Boy" Limited Edition 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**. Only people who request artwork will be *considered* for it, and we have a very limited supply so only the luckiest will receive art. 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 a couple of Ramon Perez pieces.
- **New – "Lazlo Society™ T-Shirts"**. Available in sizes – medium, large, XL, XXL, 3XL and 4XL, while supplies last.
- **"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 (Perez artwork)

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

**REMEMBER**, this is a "Surprise Package." While Kevin Siembieda and the Palladium staff *personally* try to make each and every Surprise Package 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 with multiple orders. Also note that some items *may* be slightly damaged (so we can send you *more*), and we cannot control damage that may occur in the mail.

## Ordering the 2005 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, Gold Edition Hardcover, Compendium of Contemporary Weapons, etc.
- Indicate "no T-shirt" if you don't want to be considered for one. If you *do want* a T-shirt include *your size* (many shirts are limited to only XL & XXL; see above).
- 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.

**Cost:** \$32.00 + \$6 for shipping & handling in USA & Canada (\$38 total) for *each* 2005 X-Mas Surprise Package. Multiple orders of the 2005 Surprise Package *will* result in some duplication.

**Credit Cards are welcomed:** Visa and MasterCard preferred (but most major credit cards are accepted).

**Place Orders** by mail (enclose a check or money order), through our web site ([www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com)), or by telephone (734-946-1156; this is an *order line* only).

**Palladium Books – Dept. X –**

**12455 Universal Drive – Taylor, MI 48180 – USA**

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

# The Squatter

## An Adventure for Beyond the Supernatural™

By Steven Dawes

**Type of Game:** Starts out as a combination of, “*What’s happening and what’s doing it?*” and maybe even a bit of an, “*Is this really a supernatural matter at all?*” type of game, but eventually it turns into a hunt and extermination by the end.

**Setting:** An apartment building (known as the “*Golden Valley Apartments*”) that is located in a bad part of town (can be located in any city, I used Los Angeles in the Lazlo Society forum).

**Story Background and Description:** A four level apartment building, which holds four 2-bedroom apartments on each floor, has seen its share of bad seeds and problems, but lately the tenants have been getting worse. In the last three weeks alone, there have been three assault and battery calls, one rape report and an attempted murder call previously that week, and that doesn’t even cover the several missing tenants who’ve abandoned their belongings and have up and disappeared over the last few months, never to be seen or heard from again.

Either a friend or relative of Grace Walker (a tenant on the first floor), or even Grace herself, will somehow get in touch with the player characters (especially those who publicize their detective skills), as she is sure something “is making the tenants and visitors act so unusual and downright outta their minds!”

But not only will they have a difficult time finding anything that may be causing it, the majority of the tenants are either unhelpful or will outright hinder their progress. As if that wasn’t enough, as the team spends more time in or around the building, they too begin to exhibit strange behaviors ranging from various forms of gluttony to avarice, including jealousy, lust, addictive hungers and sudden moments of ecstasy and even paranoia.

## Tenants of Note

**Grace Walker:** Considered by many to be a fixture in the neighborhood, Grace has lived in this same apartment building for over 25 years and has no intention of leaving. A black woman in her late 60’s, she remembers brighter years in the neighborhood and takes it upon herself to keep a kinder, gentler attitude toward those around her. She sees and knows more of what goes on than any of the other tenants, but has no idea why the tenants (even the newest ones) are suddenly acting so strangely. She will be the best help the player characters will get in the building as far as building info and cooperation goes. She is a kind, gentle and giving woman who any player characters with good alignments will find it difficult not to help out.

**“Jazzy” James:** A recovered alcoholic and former Jazz musician. Now retired and since put his traveling band days out to pasture some time ago, James lives a simple and satisfied but a very poor retired life. A black man in his late 60’s, James has been a good friend and neighbor to Grace since he moved next door to her five years ago. He can be heard at times playing his saxophone in fond memory and hasn’t lost his touch. But in the

last week Grace noticed that he hasn’t played it and has been spending most of the time hidden away in his apartment, and that just isn’t like him; he’s such a friendly and open man.

**Chavo Rodriguez:** Chavo has been in the building for almost a year, making his living as a drug dealer. A Latino male in his late 20’s, he has a very pushy and bossy “tough guy” attitude and is hated by the other neighbors as he brings in a steady traffic of bad people into the building. Lately, he’s been getting more aggressive in peddling his goods, and the shouting matches with his girlfriend Amanda at night are getting worse all the time. He will be very uncooperative around the characters and may be a source of trouble to them later in the game.

**Amanda:** No one knows much about Amanda. There are rumors that she’s a runaway teen or something equally upsetting, but she lives with her boyfriend Chavo. A white female with red hair who appears to be in her late teens (maybe 20) and keeps to herself, especially when around Chavo. She’s been seen with bruises and cuts that the tenants secretly suspect are Chavo’s doing, but no one has found the courage to say anything as of yet, although Brandon is getting very close to doing something about it.

**Brandon J. Campbell:** An anomaly amongst the other tenants, Brandon is a college student currently in his Junior year attending the local community college. Living on his own currently, he usually keeps to himself and is a shy, quiet, “perfect tenant” type. He knows more about Amanda than anyone else and is the only tenant (much less the only person) she ever talks to in the building. He’s always liked her, but suddenly he’s realizing he wants her for himself. Chavo doesn’t deserve an angel like her, and she would be so much happier in his arms than anyone else’s. He’s suddenly been harboring dark thoughts on how to remove Chavo from the picture and the pot is ready to boil over, especially if he sees one more mark on her. Of course, he will know before anyone else since he lives in the apartment just across the hall. Brandon is a twenty-year-old white male with blond hair, average physique and “nerdish” looks, right down to the “nerd specs.”

**Cameron Benzer:** A near hermit of a man who only comes out of his apartment when he absolutely has to. Unknown to anyone in the building, he has a love and desire for pocket watches and collects them when he can afford it (but living off of disability provides very little opportunity for that). Lately, his admiration has gotten the better of him and he’s been spending more time out of his apartment, but it’s only been to lie, cheat and steal to get more of the pocket watches he so loves, and his collection is growing quickly. Ironically, he has become very protective and paranoid of anyone stealing his new stolen treasures, and is especially suspicious and watchful of Terrell. Cameron is a white male in his mid 30’s and requires a cane to move around, he also owns a handgun he keeps for home security and has very good aim held over from his security guard days.

**Terrell Davis:** Terrell recently moved into the building and his reputation quickly moved in with him. Officially, he works at a Laundromat down the street, but the tenants know that he’s got a rap sheet a mile long and is an aspiring small-time thief. The tenants treat him with suspicion and a watchful eye, all except for Chavo, as he has provided for Terrell’s drug habits since he moved in. The two are becoming good buddies who’d



stick up for each other if needed. Terrell is a black man in his mid 20's and tends to dress very urban hip.

**Larry and Connie Smith:** Another recent move in, these two are very likable and approachable and have become quick favorites in the building (Grace especially likes them). Of course, this is all a smoke screen to hide their true agenda: they are both con artists hiding out from the law while still making a quick buck where they can. Connie is a gorgeous woman who also has charisma to spare, and she knows it. She has been making a living by seducing and blackmailing married men for money (every trick in the book from photos to videos are used). Larry is the behind the scenes man who records Connie's exploits and is very good at it. Together they have extorted a decent sized fortune and had intended to settle down for a while after they moved to the new apartment. But they suddenly can't seem to help themselves, and they have already worked over two husbands and are already eyeing a "big fat prize" wealthy husband and are ready for the kill. Both are white and in their late 20's. (G.M. Note: Connie will be the lust object of choice to the player characters who fall under the Gormaglut's influence, which will cause problems with Larry, as he's a jealous husband and will kill to protect her from the men who go too far with her.)

**Ben "The Cinderblock" Mercer:** Yet another recent move in, and a recently released convict after serving fifteen years for armed robbery and other various violent charges. Ben's lived a hard and violent life, and it's made him a hard man with a bad attitude and a chip on his shoulder. He just wants to be left alone and get on with his new life, but he can't seem to find any peace in his life out of prison, and is beginning to think he was better off inside. He can't seem to understand why, but he absolutely HATES Grace and her nosiness and "simpleminded" gentleness. If she keeps up her pace of constantly badgering him and trying to talk to him when he gets home from his crappy job each night, he's not going to feel liable for what he suddenly has a yearning to do to her, and he's very capable of doing it. A very large and strong black male who has seen and done enough violence for one lifetime, but is still ready and able to do much more.

**John Kazmin:** The superintendent and landlord of the "Golden Valley" apartment building. On the outside he puts up a great act of being a caring citizen and caretaker of his building, but give him his oscar now because he's fooling everyone. He couldn't give two licks about the tenants in his building or the building itself. He lives on the bottom floor (across from Grace) and only does what he absolutely has to do to keep the building running. He's made no willing cosmetic improvements of any kind in years, and was furious when he was required to repair the elevator for handicap law purposes. He's a very lazy and greedy man and always dreams of get-rich-quick schemes and making his millions so he can drop this apartment building like a bad habit. He will not make any efforts to help the players in their investigation, and resents their noses in places they're not wanted. John is a despicable white male in his late 40's with a balding head and heavily overweight features, and always wears a dirty "wife beater" shirt and tattered jeans.

There is room for other NPCs that can be made to fit your game as well, or leave it with this cast as it is.

## G.M. Background Information

The fun and interest of this particular setting is sending the player characters on a wild goose chase as the people around them seem to be losing their minds. All initial signs would point to a possession haunting of some kind (and playing that angle would be a blast, since the group would most likely decide that either several possessing spirits are at work or it's only one spirit taking turns on the residents), but it's not spirit possession at all.

The culprit responsible for this problem is a Gormaglut that's taken up squatting in the building. While the demon piglets usually find dens of iniquity to go and live in secrecy, this particular one has hit its own personal proverbial jackpot. By nature, Gormagluts are voyeurs, and this one is especially voyeuristic, and finds the old modeled building and its large air ducts to be an ideal playground to move around unnoticed and get a ring side seat behind the air vents to watch the "emotional turmoil soap opera" it creates with its aura. In the mind of this little devil, the residents are TV channels to surf and it gleefully watches all it can.

This creature's familiarity with the building also makes it incredibly hard to locate. If the player characters try an initial search for a monster (but don't know what they are looking for) they will never find it. The crawl spaces and other dark places in this building are much larger than the more modern buildings and give the impression that something large would/could live here and would most likely ignore the air ducts entirely. Even if they do search the ducts, unless they know what they are after, finding it will still be tough.

First off, the creature knows the value of its "Psychic invisibility" and uses it for maximum effectiveness (in fact, this is a favorite as it allows the Gormaglut to watch the misery unfold through the vents without someone looking back inside and accidentally seeing it). Second off, if the jig is up and it knows it's in danger of being found, it can call on its alliance to the superintendent, John Kazmin, if needed!

The superintendent has indeed bonded with the Gormaglut and a symbiotic relationship has quickly and happily formed. The Gormaglut's powers have caused several unknown deaths in the building and John helps hide any evidence of foul play, including the bodies, which he feeds to the Gormaglut! John benefits by the eventual removal of the abandoned property, and anything of value goes directly into his possession (all a part of a get rich scheme that has slowly been paying dividends to him thus far). In turn, John leases the emptied apartment to new, unsuspecting victims and the cycle of gluttony starts all over again through the Gormaglut's empathic transmissions.

This activity has been going on for around six months now and could go on for much longer. John is a genius in selecting tenants who are drifters or bad seeds that nobody would miss or look into, and the police are too busy to care about the rise in the number of abandoned tenants in a run-down apartment complex to give it a second thought. The link between the two is a very comfortable and happy one (John was a bad man with a Miscreant alignment before he became involved with his partner in crime) and shows no signs of stopping. The only issue that's ever come up is Grace Walker.

To the Gormaglut's frustration, it has not been able to affect Grace no matter how hard it tries. There have been a few tenants who were slow to react to its aura of gluttony (it was just recently that Grace's neighbor Jazzy became influenced and returned to the alcohol), but Grace has held strong. Perhaps she has an unnaturally high Mental Endurance, or perhaps it's her happy and loving attitude that somehow shields her from the aura. Whatever the reason, the Gormaglut and John would love to remove her from the building and place a more persuadable victim in her place, but it's not that easy.

Grace lives alone as a widow now, but her son happens to be a police officer. For this reason, John has left her alone, for her disappearance would not only bring unwanted attention from those who know and love her in the neighborhood, but the police would definitely get involved as well, and that is something John DOES NOT want! Besides the obvious possibility of the police finding evidence of foul play, he is extremely lazy and knows that even if the police don't find any "convicting" evidence, they will definitely see the many issues and repairs that are needed (and required by law). John's greediness and laziness would suffer serious stigmata if he suddenly had to hire people to update the building (there's no way in hell he would get off his can and do it, even if he knew how to repair the building). So he waits patiently like a vulture for her to die off so he can get her off his back.

But the Gormaglut is nowhere near as patient, and while it enjoys their partnership, it knows well that if things go sour there are more riffraff where John came from. To the Gormaglut, the happiness and loving attitude from Grace are pins and needles upon it, and it's had enough – she is a problem that needs a solution. However, to its glee it has found a likely solution in "The Cinderblock."

Ben is easily prone to violence and has had such a poor and miserable life that he finds Grace's good nature an annoyance (psychology experts would call it a textbook case of "jealousy of happiness"). While at first he just ignored her, in the last few weeks his patience with her is waning fast (no doubt with the help of the Gormaglut whispering in his ear). Unless something or someone changes the current path or progress somehow, the former boxer and naturally brutal Cinderblock will one day snap, and probably won't stop short of beating Grace to death.

## Issues the Player Characters Will Face

**Uncooperative Tenants:** Besides Grace, no one in the building will be very helpful to the players, or have any real useful info (unless they really read between the lines with a few of the tenants). Like John, many of the tenants will view them as nosy outsiders, and they all have something to hide and will jealously defend their interests. The best bet to get any real help would be for a character to lease an apartment, as doing so will give them limited basement access (via storage cages in the old-fashioned building) and a better idea of who's doing what in the building. But this obviously means devoting more time in the building and risking the Gormaglut's aura. Certain psionics could prove helpful as well if used correctly. Also see the "*Agency help requested with a haunted building*" posts on the Lazlo Society web site ([www.lazlosociety.org](http://www.lazlosociety.org)) for other ideas.

**The Unknown:** The very nature of the tenants' activities seems to scream Possessing Entities or some type of haunting. But the strange acts are all too random and unrelated to make any sense. The longer this particular game goes on, the stranger and more confusing things will get for the players (new tenants acting strange right after they move in, the current tenants attacking or killing each other or worse, or possibly attempting to attack the players). The sooner they figure out the problem, the sooner they can deal with it.

**Time Is Not on Their Side:** Being slow to react on this case will result in continued problems and occurrences. Chavo will continue to peddle his wares and abuse Amanda, which in turn will cause Brandon to take violent action against him. Jazzy James's health is poor (one of the reasons he stopped drinking in the first place), and going back on the booze will kill him if something isn't done to help him soon. Cameron is feeling all the more protective of his precious pocket watches and is starting to take a, "the best defense is a good offense" attitude, and may do something drastic to Terrell (who, ironically, hasn't fallen to the Gormaglut yet, but eventually he will and this may result in breaking into Cameron's room since it's just across the hall), and so on and so forth. Any characters of good alignments would find it hard to turn their backs on Grace's plea for help (they can't help but be smitten with her kindness and sense of "a flower growing in the onion patch" in this bad part of town. If the characters do nothing and ignore or drop the case, they will eventually catch wind of "The Cinderblock" beating Grace to death one night.

## Evidence and Other Details the Players Can Use

**John's Laziness:** John is a lot of things, especially lazy. Part of his role is disposing the bodies of the victims killed (a few by his own weapon!), but one of his latest was a victim on the fourth floor. Rather than dragging him "all the way down" to the basement where the rest of them have been dragged, he moved the body to a crawl space on the fourth floor and opened a hole in the wall for his partner to enter; he hasn't visited the space since. While the Gormaglut was happy to consume its victim, there is a mess of blood splattering still in the space (and, ironically, the bullets used to kill the victim are still there, as the Gormaglut wouldn't eat them).

When/if the players spot this area, they should recognize that this is not a ghost haunting (if they haven't deduced that already) and this should change the direction of the game.

**The Gormaglut's Nest:** The Gormaglut enjoys the air ducts, as they provide hidden passageways to move freely, and it finds the old furnace in the boiler room a great place to rest when needed. If the players time things just right, they could catch the Gormaglut in its nest and cut off its escape routes by quickly removing a section of the two main ducts fixed over the furnace that the Gormaglut would try and escape from, leaving it nowhere to run but into the basement with the waiting players.

The Gormaglut is impervious to heat, so igniting the boiler will only aggravate it, which in turn will make it try to use all its empathic influences to protect itself (including a psychic flash to John that it's in danger, which will bring him running with his shotgun).



**The Air Ducts:** Once the players know what they are up against, they may know that salt stings the Gormaglut, and they can hinder its travels by opening any air vent they can find and get to and spreading salt along the horizontal portions of the ducts, or throwing salt down the vertical shafts to keep it from going near the bends where the fallen salt lands.

**Breaking and Entering:** The less scrupulous players would find it to their benefit to break into places like the boiler room in the basement or the crawl space on the fourth floor (possibly even a few of the tenants' rooms would give clues to their activities). But the Gormaglut may be watching and can get John's attention psychically at a moment's notice, and he will respond accordingly.

**John's Hidden Treasure Trove:** Again, John's laziness is his worst enemy. He knew he had to get rid of the personal effects of his victims, but refuses to do what he should do to destroy them. He wouldn't dare fire up the boiler and burn it all, as his partner lives in the ducts, and he wouldn't risk throwing it all in the trash in case it was found and traced back to him. So he did the only thing that made sense to him, and that was to stow away all the wallets, purses, and other various identification items in a false wall in the back of his closet that opens up to a small crawl space. It's also here that he keeps his most treasured possessions and stolen goods from his victims, until the coast is clear to sell them off safely and without suspicion. If the players discover this trove somehow, John is caught red-handed and will be an easy prosecution.

## Using the Horror Angle

There is a lot of potential for classic horror stories in this game scenario.

**"I think were being watched":** Remind the players at every opportunity that they can't help but feel like they are being watched (perhaps Perception Rolls should be made regularly to help remind them). This is an especially good tool when the tenants bizarre activities increase.

**The Bottleneck Syndrome:** Play the angle of being "holed up" in a hotel and surrounded by seemingly unstable people (the tenants, especially if one attacks them). This is especially good once/if the paranoia aura gets to them. Once that happens, you can work in that they are seeing things that aren't really there, and they may miss things (penalties to their Perception Rolls) during the investigation work.

**"The isolation stings!":** The more the players investigate the building, the more you could point out how alone they feel, as no one wants to help them out, no one really cares about the tenants who live there, and most of the tenants don't even like or want them there. The Avarice transmissions would help with this negative feeling.

## The Gormaglut's Empathic Transmissions

Play these out to the max! This is the single most powerful and terrifying ability the Gormaglut has, and it's a frightening power! Work the players' imaginations as they see the psychic powers in action on the tenants, and then the player characters themselves. The Avarice transmission is especially good for building tension.

The most horrific aspect of the aura of gluttony is that it's a constant effect and it wears down all who feel it. Nothing builds tension like seeing and hearing the power in action. Imagine using scenes like this:

The friendly and hospitable Jazzy Jeff invites the team into his apartment a while to chat while Grace is out grocery shopping. While Jazzy chats, he tunes his saxophone and goes through a couple of beers like water. This would be especially potent if the players learn after the fact from Grace that he's a recovered alcoholic, but even more alarming would be that alcohol is bad for his health and it makes him violent to boot! What do the players do now?

While investigating the third floor hall, the players suddenly stop in their tracks when they hear arguing behind an apartment door. It's Chavo, who's in the middle of belittling and abusing Amanda, while all she can do is plead for him to stop hurting her and to just leave her alone. Right about the time the players decide if they should do something or resolve to take action themselves, the door across the hall suddenly flies open (possible minor Horror Factor roll for the surprise action), and an enraged looking Brandon huffs out the door, stopping dead in his tracks when he spots the player characters. Be sure to add in that out of the corner of their eyes, they witness Brandon hiding a cutlery knife behind his back as he quickly hustles backwards into his apartment and slams the door shut. The slamming door suddenly stops Chavo's yelling, who now opens his door to see what the commotion was, and will most likely go off on the players for being so loud. Once he's done and slinks away to his den, all should go quiet again save the sound of a song playing from Brandon's room, which they should recognize as the song "Amanda" by Boston.

Imagine one evening the players are taking a break and are talking/having dinner with Grace and she stops in the middle of a conversation when she looks out the window and sees Ben walking home from work. In her typically kind fashion she calls out to him and tries to talk, but he swears and yells back at her to leave him alone (in a threatening tone, no less). The players can hear him from inside the room and it sends chills down their spines. They should know he means business, but, of course, Grace strives to see the better in him and will not stop trying to befriend him. The tension keeps mounting.

Point being, the players will watch the tenants going to hell in a hand basket, and should realize that time is of the essence before things get uglier than they already are.

## The Outcome

The best outcome would be to get rid of the Gormaglut (and John as the superintendent) as soon as possible. The longer this scenario goes on, the more trouble and suffering will take place in the building. Beatings, stabbings, murders, tenants gone missing, players suffering from the Avarice effects, it all will continue until the Gormaglut is either killed or is forced to flee and escapes. If the Gormaglut does happen to escape, it won't return to the building. It will simply cut its losses and move on to a new place to haunt.

If the players fail to find any real dirt on John, he'll stay right where he is. Even if he loses his Gormaglut partner, he'll mourn its loss and may one day become a source of problems again to

the players. He, himself, is too lazy to do anything to the player characters per se, but he'd happily welcome a new terror to squat in his building if he can benefit from it somehow.

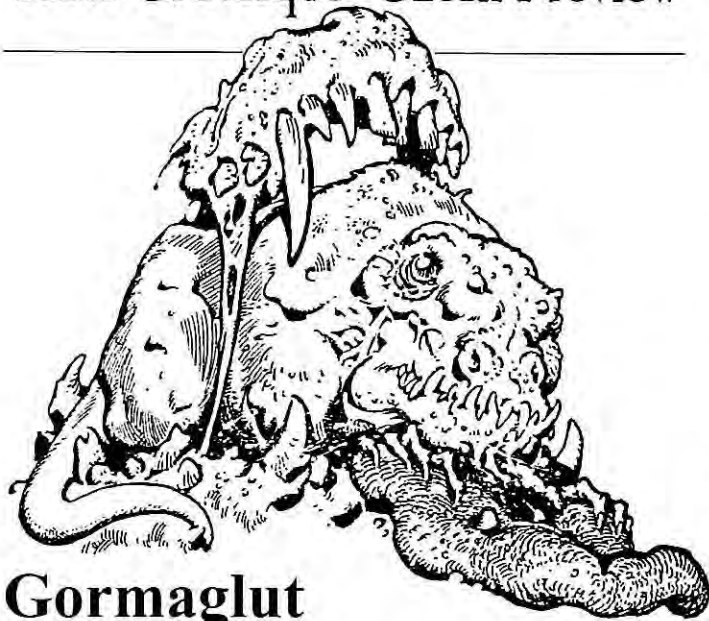
The tenants who survive the ordeal will go on as if nothing unusual took place, and do not have or show any real gratitude to the player characters (they may even still be annoyed at them for snooping around their home). There will be no monetary rewards or anything to gain, but the players will forever have a friend in Grace Walker, and therefore, a friend and confidant in her son, and being that's he's a police officer, he may come in handy in future games.

Of course, the scenario can go very badly (Grace dies from beatings received by Cinderblock, the players under the Gormaglut's influence injure or kill other player characters, etc.). It all depends on how the players respond and how quickly they catch on to the Gormaglut and remove it from the building.

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## Beyond the Supernatural™ Tome Grotesque™ Sneak Preview

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### Gormaglut

The Gormaglut is a rapacious creature that, although bloated and ugly like a hideous baby pig, is comparatively small and deceptively helpless looking. The creature falls into the category of Haunter because it quietly insinuates itself at one location and parks itself there to feed and get fat on the vice of humans. The Gormaglut finds places of excess, decadence and abuse the ideal nest, making its home in the rafters, basements and bowels (between walls, under the floor boards, etc.) of crack houses, drug dens, drug labs, houses of prostitution and similar dens of iniquity. Places where humans come to satisfy self-destructive cravings and urges, and where excess and gluttony are commonplace. The Gormaglut is, itself, a creature of excess that gorges itself on the dark emotions of humans and eats rats, mice, house pets and corpses; actually anything that comes within range of its huge maw. The mouth of the demonic hog opens nearly as large as its round body, big enough to crush a skull or bite a soccer ball. It enjoys the flesh of humans and gnawing on the bones of the dead.

Though small, the Gormaglut is dangerous on a few different levels. When trapped or cornered it fights with surprising fury; double its normal speed and attacks per melee round until it escapes or slays its would-be captor(s). Its powerful jaws inflict grievous injury and can bite off a human hand with a single snap. More insidious, however, is that the creature exudes an aura of decadence, greed and gluttony that affects everyone within its range of influence to some degree, but fires up those in positions of power; i.e., drug lords, gang leaders and seconds in command, and those with aspirations to attain a position of leadership or power. Gormagluts are the embodiment of "too much is never enough," and their presence makes those affected crave more and more of things that represent opulence and vice, money, riches, possessions, sex, drugs, and booze. Those who get in the way of their satisfying their desires are beaten, hurt and killed. Underlings are treated with disdain and humiliation by the boss and his key lieutenants, while these people of power become more and more aggressive and unreasonable, yet at the same time, fat, lazy and careless as if drunk on their own sense of power. That's exactly the case, for the Gormaglut magnifies their base desires and makes their hunger for power, riches and self-gratification insatiable and self-destructive. Ironically, that makes these brazen and cruel leaders the real victims of the demonic creature's power. When they destroy themselves, the creature waits for someone new within the gang to step up and start anew. If that doesn't happen within 1-4 months, the creature begins to starve and will crawl away to find a new place and victims to haunt and feed.

**Note:** Wicked and ambitious or powerful humans who discover a Gormaglut will recognize a kindred spirit and usually bond on an intuitive level. Man and monster recognize themselves in each other and keep their secret. This means the human leaves the Gormaglut alone, somehow realizing that it is helping him, and may even feed it the bodies of his fallen enemies. The creature becomes something of a watchdog sensing danger and warning its partner in crime via the equivalent of a psionic *Sixth Sense* or *Clairvoyant* flash of trouble, betrayal or danger within the human to whom the beast is bonded. Likewise, the Gormaglut will attack and feast on intruding animals such as dogs, cats and rodents, as well as human invaders such as Psychic Investigators, particularly those who are injured and are separated from the rest of their team. However, the Gormaglut always watches out for itself, seldom puts itself in danger and has no love or loyalty for those it may bond with. Self-preservation is its number one priority, satisfying its own dark cravings is number two, and that's all that's important; there are always other dark and decadent souls to find and feed upon.

### Gormaglut – Haunter and Lesser Demon

**Also known as the** *Glutton Pig* and *Demon Lust*.

**Alignment:** Always Miscreant or Diabolic. Always hungry, content to wallow in emotions spawned by decadence, depravity, excess, self-loathing and addiction. Its very presence induces greed, lust, cruelty, abuse and wanton excess in everything (ultimately self-destructive).

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D6+7, M.E. 1D6+4, M.A. 1D6, Supernatural P.S. 1D6+10 (half in sunlight or daytime), P.P. 1D6+3, P.E. 1D6+10, P.B. 1D4, Spd 1D6+6 running (double when cornered).



**Armor Rating (A.R.):** 8; any attack less than nine does no damage even if it hits.

**Hit Points:** P.E. number +10.

**S.D.C.:** 3D6+P.E. number; reduce by 50% during the day or in sunlight.

**Discorporation:** When slain, its body turns into ten thousand tiny red spiders no larger than the head of a pin that pop and vanish within one melee round.

**Threat Level:** x4; Hunter/Prankster, a Lesser Demon.

**Horror Factor:** 11

**Size:** Equal to a baby pig or watermelon with no neck and a head (and jaws) nearly as large as its body. Roughly two feet, six inches (0.8 m) long, plus a foot and a half (0.45 m) long tail. Total height seldom exceeds one foot (0.3 m); waddles along on small legs and feet.

**Weight:** 50-80 pounds (22.5 to 36 kg).

**Average Life Span:** Uncertain, probably immortal.

**P.P.E.:** P.E. attribute plus 2D6.

**Natural Abilities:** Enjoys eating human and animal flesh, blood and bones, but is sustained indefinitely by foul emotions like greed and lust. Cannot leap. Doesn't breathe air, floats on water, sees the invisible, nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), dimensional teleport 5% (+15% at a ley line nexus), and bio-regenerates 1D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points once every ten minutes.

**Radiates an Aura of Gluttony:** The creature magnifies feelings of envy, greed, jealousy, paranoia and wanton desire in the most ambitious and aggressive individuals within a 600 foot (183 m) radius in all directions. Within one week, this *hunger* starts to affect those who spend more than six hours a day at the location and intensifies with each passing day until the desires of those affected are insatiable and border on psychotic obsession (typically within 2D10+20 days). Wealth, power, respect, fame, the opposite sex, and the best (most expensive) of all things (food, drink, clothes, and possessions) are all objects of desire. Ironically, all the demonic Gormaglut wants is to be awash in the lust and violence of those who want it all.

**Knows All Languages:** Magically understands and speaks all languages at 90%, but cannot read. Speaks in a hissing whisper that seems both alluring and repugnant at the same time.

**Prehensile Tail (special):** The tail can be used like a tentacle to grab or entangle an object or more likely an arms as well as to climb or hang suspended from a hidden perch.

**Infrared and Thermal-Imaging Vision:** Can see perfectly in smoke as well as see and follow the heat signatures of warm-blooded animals and hot running machines (car engines, etc.). Range: 1000 feet (305 m). Track via heat-signatures at 70% (-50% in temperatures of 90+ degrees Fahrenheit/32+ Celsius).

**Limited Invulnerability (special):** The demon is impervious to heat, cold, poison and disease. Man-made weapons inflict full damage, as do magic, psionics and physical blows.

Also see Psionics.

**Vulnerabilities:** 1. Vulnerable to all weapons, but weapons made of stone (any kind) inflict double damage and salt stings its flesh (no significant damage from salt).

2. The light of day (including the magical Globe of Daylight) reduces the demon's physical attributes, attacks per melee round and bite damage by half, but does not impede or harm the creature in any other way.

3. Repulsed by love, goodness, and kindness, and will avoid places where such emotions are strong.

**R.C.C. Skills or Equivalents:** Gormaglut are slothful creatures that don't do much other than bask in the dark emotions of humans. Basic Math 88%, Climb 70%/65%, Land Navigation 90%, Lore: Superstitions 80%, Seduction (75%; appealing to one's greed and desires), Streetwise 90%, Swim 96% (floats), Prowl 65%, Tailing 80% (voyeur; likes to watch others engage in vice and wrongdoing) and Track Humans 60%. Also see Natural Abilities, above and Psionics, below.

**Equivalent Level of Experience:** 1D4+1

**Attacks per Melee:** Three; doubled when cornered.

**Damage:** Bite: 3D6+2 damage. Tiny claws: 1D6 damage (including Supernatural P.S.). The tail is harmless, except that it may be used to entangle an arm, allowing the Gormaglut to bite at the fingers and hand, or the body of its opponent. Only attacks when threatened, cornered or annoyed.

**R.C.C. Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute bonuses):** +2 to strike including the use of the tail, +2 to dodge, +3 to pull punch/bite, +4 to roll with impact, and +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Considered a Master Psychic requiring a 10 or higher to save vs psionic attack. **I.S.P.:** M.E. attribute number x2, +1D8 points per level of experience. **Powers:** Death Trance (1), Empathy (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Mind Block (4), Psychic Invisibility (7) and Thought-Reading (10), plus the following:

**Special: Empathic Transmission: Avarice.** Powerful emotions that turn the victim against his friends and allies or dull his senses. The Gormaglut may suggest a target of the negative feelings or overwhelming desire or let the heat of the fueled emotions grow from existing feelings normally kept under control by the character. ("He doesn't deserve that. You were cheated, now it's time to take it back." or "get revenge" or "prove who's the better man" and so on). **Range:** 60 feet (18.3 m). **Duration:** 1D6 minutes +2 minutes per level of the monster's experience. **I.S.P.:** 4 for the Gormaglut. Each Empathic attack counts as one melee action/attack and can only be directed at one individual. **Saving Throw:** Standard.

- **Addictive Hunger:** This only works on characters who have struggled with alcohol, drug or other addiction, creating a sudden and overpowering urge to partake in the forbidden pleasure. The character *may* be able to overcome/suppress the desire (roll to save vs insanity), but is so overwhelmed and distracted by the desperate craving that the victim sees his attacks per melee round and all combat bonuses reduced by half, and skill performance is -30%. All he can think about is the object of his addiction.
- **Desire:** An intense, unreasoning desire to the point that a person would lie, steal and murder to get or keep or protect the object of desire. The Gormaglut, friendship, allies, the character's mission, and everything else is all temporarily

forgotten. Only the object of his desire and acquiring it fill his mind and dictate the victim's actions.

- **Envy/Jealousy:** Hating someone because that individual has something the victim wants (money, magic item, weapon, power, fame, etc.) and feeling so bitter about it that the victim wants to hurt (betray, cheat, trick, etc.) or kill the subject of his jealousy. +1 on initiative, +1 to strike and +2 to damage the target of one's envy and hatred.
- **Lust:** In this case, sexual desire that drives the victim to distraction just thinking about the person (whether present or not); -4 on Perception Rolls, -2 on all combat bonuses. Plus, the character out of his mind with lust may force himself on the object of his desire (the Gormaglut may suggest someone) or he may attack anyone or *anything* that threatens or possesses her, or attracts her favor. Always applies to whatever sex turns the victim on.
- **Paranoia:** The victim feels alone and in danger, and that everyone is against him and out to trick, cheat, betray or hurt him, including friends and allies. Will not trust or help anyone and is confused and hesitant to do anything. Reduce the victim's number of melee attacks, Perception Roll bonuses and skills by half; afraid to take his eyes off his "alleged" allies as well as strangers for fear they'll do something to hurt him. Oddly, the only one the victim does not fear is the Gormaglut.
- **Pleasure/Ecstasy:** As long as the victim takes no action to do anything but languish in a drug-like stupor, he feels great. However, he is only vaguely aware of what's happening around him as if he were floating in a soft, lovely dream. No initiative, no Perception, no anything. Forcing himself into awareness (roll to save vs psionic attack for *each effort and action*) makes the victim feel cold down to his bones and scared; all bonuses are half and skill performance is -10%. Succeeding in fighting the pleasure three consecutive times breaks the stupor and all subsequent actions are performed at the character's usual level of ability.

**Enemies:** Dislikes greater powers that make the creature leave its comfort-zone. Humans are regarded as food, amusement and pawns.

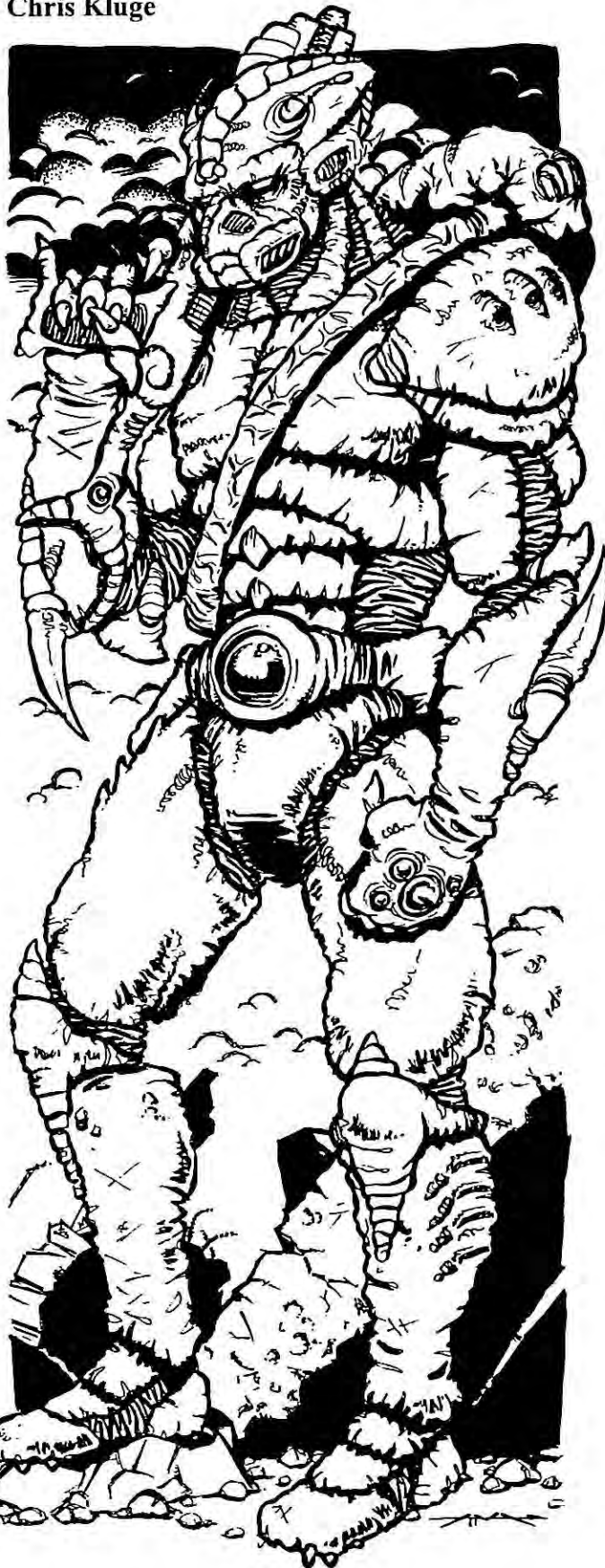
**Allies:** Tend to be independent and solitary creatures, even avoiding their own kind, but will obediently serve supernatural beings more powerful than they. May also ally itself to and assist mortals who give in to avarice and/or accept the creature's advice and suggestions. The lazy thing may also work with or serve other powerful mortals, mages and demons to torment humans, provided its partners don't expect more than the Gormaglut is willing to give in this venture.

**Habitat:** Can be found almost anywhere throughout the world, usually in drug dens and places of ill repute.

# The Wastes

## Optional Source Material for Splicers™

By Chris Kluge





# Deliveryman O.C.C.

Back in the golden age before the Machine's genocidal campaign, people could communicate with one another instantly across any distance. Satellite communication and internet access linked every corner of the world into one global community. That all ended when N.E.X.U.S. struck. Society was instantly shattered and the remaining humans either splintered into tiny, scattered groups and retreated underground, or were huddled together by the Machine and placed in human zoos called Retro-Villages. Before the Nanobot Plague, members of the Resistance communicated by radio, but even this was a dangerous endeavor since the Machine could track radio signals back to their source. The eventual creation of organic Bio-Comms eliminated this risk, but the range was limited to a mere six miles (9.6 km).

Even in the early days of the Resistance, they relied heavily on hand delivered messages between the Resistance cells. The brave heroes who carried out this dangerous and lonely assignment were called Deliverymen. They spent weeks, even months, trekking across miles of robot controlled territory without any backup or support. They were master outdoorsmen capable of living off the land (and shattered wreckage of cities) for years if necessary, they were skilled at covering their tracks and leaving no evidence of their passing, and they were experts at disguising themselves like the enslaved humans within the Retro-Villages. The Deliverymen were one of the only links between the Resistance and the oppressed remnants trapped in the Retro-Villages.

With the creation of organic technology, the role of the Deliverymen has evolved over time. Bio-Tech equipment has made their arduous mission somewhat easier, but it remains one of the most challenging assignments in the Resistance. Simple suits of camouflage were replaced by powerful suits of Host Armor with Stealth Field enhancements, common horses were replaced by Mega Horses, Striders and Tunnel Rats (Deliverymen quickly learned that the Machine ruled the skies and that they needed to stick to the ground to survive), and blind luck was replaced by a Black Talon War Hawk that could scan the field from above to help determine the safest route. Better equipment has allowed the Deliverymen to successfully deliver larger and larger "packages." Their original job of delivering letters and small items cross country has evolved to include transporting weapons and supplies to covert strike teams in the field, bringing goods and news from the outside world to people in the Retro-Villages, and even escorting human refugees to Resistance safe houses. They are also one of the few Splicers that regularly penetrate the Ghost Towns to trade for supplies with undercover Technojackers.

Escort duty is one of the Deliverymen's most difficult missions. Their years of training and Bio-Tech Stealth Field allows them to become nearly invisible at will, but the unskilled humans they protect stand out like a sore thumb. Deliverymen can cover their charges' trail and hide them from random patrols, but concealing them when the Machine is aware of their presence requires special equipment.

To this end, the Librarians developed a special Bio-Tech device called the Stealth Sheet. This large sheet of tissue is a simplified version of the symbiotic organism used to create Skinjobs. It is not nearly as versatile or durable as the real thing, but it does provide a fully-functional Stealth Field for anyone

who wears it. The field makes the wearer nearly invisible to all forms of visual detection, but it is incredibly unpleasant to use. The Stealth Sheet wraps around the wearer so tightly that it completely immobilizes him. He cannot speak or see and can barely hear. The sheet allows air to pass through it (the organism even filters out toxins) so the wearer can breathe normally, but it still feels like the sheet is smothering the life out of him. If this were not bad enough, once the Stealth Sheet wraps around the wearer, he is completely unable to remove it himself. Removing the sheet is a simple matter of stroking a nerve cluster on the outside of the living blanket, but it is impossible for the wearer to reach it. This is what limits the widespread use of the Stealth Sheet. Deliverymen, however, find this negative aspect to be extremely useful in the field. They feel the easiest way to make untrained humans sit still when the Machine is nearby is to force them.

Deliverymen not only master stealth, counter-tracking, and wilderness survival, but they are also masters of impersonation and disguise. They are able to flawlessly blend in with villagers in Retro-Villages or with Nex-Androids in Ghost Towns. Some Great Houses even use their Deliverymen to impersonate members of other rival houses. For most cases, they just rely on simple makeup, but when they need the ultimate disguise, they turn to organic technology. Deliverymen carry a strange Bio-Tech organism called the Second Skin, which allows them to perfectly mimic the facial features of any human or human-like android. On its own, the organism looks like a bag made of human skin. When the Second Skin is placed over the head of a human or Nex-Android, it analyzes every minute detail of the target's face, head, and hair. Once removed, the skin grows perfect replicas of the target's facial features, ears, hair, and skin color in only a few minutes. The Second Skin even forms transparent lenses to match the target's eye color. The Deliveryman then just turns the living mask inside out, slips it over his head, and lets the Second Skin merge with his face to form the ultimate disguise. It will pass even the closest scrutiny unless the face beneath was larger than the one being copied. In this case the head seems a little larger than usual, but it will still fool most people at a glance. Of course, the rest of the body is unaltered, so the absence of familiar scars, tattoos, or other distinguishing marks as well as any possible difference in skin color between the face and body could give away the deception. Deliverymen are skilled at working around this problem, but members of the Resistance know what signs to look for when they are suspicious a spy may be in their midst.

Another vital skill that Deliverymen learn is concealment. They can hide a surprisingly large amount of contraband on their bodies. When operating undercover, they strip off their Host Armor and put on thick layers of clothing. A Deliveryman can hide a dozen small weapons, a half dozen heavy weapons, or up to forty pounds (18 kg) of supplies within the folds of his long, flowing clothes. Even the high-tech sensors of the Machine will only discover the hidden cache upon extremely close inspection or a full body search.

They spend the majority of their lives in the field, trekking back and forth across miles of enemy territory. Besides their official role of delivering supplies to every corner of the planet, they also act as the eyes of the Resistance. To make sure they do not create an easy trail to follow, a Deliveryman will never travel the same path twice. This means they have seen more of

the surface than almost any other Splicer. When performing their normal duties, Deliverymen operate alone or in pairs, but when they discover something of interest like a new Power Farm, Industrial Center, or other high profile target, they will be temporarily attached to a larger strike force in order to lead them to the objective. This is one of the few times Deliverymen will attack the Machine. Their primary goal is to avoid all contact and only strike in defense if absolutely necessary. Even if they can easily destroy a lone robot, they will go miles out of their way to avoid it. History has taught them that it only takes a millisecond for a robot to call in reinforcements, plus even the shortest firefight could attract the attention of random patrols.

Most of the time, it is a tough, lonely job, but when they return home, they can barely escape the barrage of questions from people wanting to know what is going on topside. Some Deliverymen set up quite a lucrative side business selling the information they have discovered. However, most Deliverymen will politely answer any questions for free, but they do tend to sugar coat the truth to shield people from just how bad it really is up there.

**Alignment:** Any, but typically good or selfish.

**Attribute Requirements:** I.Q.: 10, M.E.: 12, M.A.: 12, and P.P.: 12 or higher.

**Attribute Bonuses:** +1D4 to I.Q., +1D6 to M.E., +2 to M.A., +1D4 to P.S., +1D6 to P.E., and +1D6 to Spd.

**O.C.C. Bonuses:** +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry, and dodge, +6 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Base S.D.C.:** 50, plus any from Physical skills.

**Common Skills:** Standard.

**O.C.C. Skill Program:** Survivalist (+25%), Undercover (+15%), Reconnaissance/Scout (+20%), Outdoorsman (+25%), and Hunter/Trapper (+20%).

**Elective Skills:** Select Concealment (+35%), Bio-Comms (+20%), and Tracking (special bonus to Counter-Tracking, anyone attempting to follow the character suffers a -40% to their Tracking Skill), and four Elective Skills from the following list at first level. Select another two Elective Skills at levels 2, 4, 8, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+25%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Espionage: Any (+20%).

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+5%).

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics and Gymnastics.

Rogue: Any (+20%).

Science: Any.

Technical: Any.

Transportation: Any, except Host Armor Combat, Pilot Wing Pack, and War Mount Combat.

Wilderness Survival: Any (+20%).

W.P.s: Any.

**Secondary Skills:** The character gets to select four Secondary Skills at level one and one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not receive any special O.C.C. bonuses.

**Deliveryman Host Armor:** The Deliveryman is one of the few O.C.C.s that gets Host Armor, the Bio-Tech equivalent of living power armor, brimming with weapons and Bio-Enhancements. The Deliveryman is genetically bonded to one specific Host Armor.

Step One: Standard and unchanged; the basic Host Armor.

Step Two: Determining Metabolism. The Deliveryman can select any type of metabolism, but most will choose Carnivore, Herbivore, or Parasitic.

Step Three: Available Bio-Energy points for the Deliveryman. All Bio-E points are used up in the initial creation. Each level of advancement, starting with level two, the Deliveryman gets an additional 2D8 Bio-E to add to the capabilities of his current Host Armor. These Bio-E points can be spent as soon as they are acquired or saved and combined with points from the subsequent level of experience. Deliverymen spend so much time in the field, it is difficult to acquire new enhancements from an Engineer at each new level.

Step Four: Biological Enhancements and Weapon Systems. All Deliverymen start off with the enhancements of Stealth Field, Enhanced Neurological Connections, and Circadian Rhythms. Selections for additional enhancements can be made from any category, but most Deliverymen choose enhancements from Eyes and Vision, Other Sensory Systems, Biological Defenses, and Offensive Bio-Weapons. Deliverymen generally avoid Flight Appendages since the safest place is on the ground.

If the Deliveryman's Host Armor is destroyed, he will be bonded to a new suit of Host Armor with only the most basic features other than a Stealth Field. Further augmentation will only occur with each additional level of experience or as a reward for impeccable service.

**Black Talon War Hawk:** The Deliveryman receives one Black Talon War Hawk to act as his personal aerial scout. The character cannot see through the eyes of the Black Talon like a Falconer, but the two can communicate by Bio-Comm. The hawk can be Bio-Enhanced any way the character desires – he has 5D4+20 Bio-E points available, plus another 1D6+2 Bio-E points per level of the character's experience to spend on additional enhancements. If the War Hawk is ever slain, it will be replaced with the basic animal with 5D4 Bio-E points for enhancements.

**War Mount:** Deliverymen do not receive their own personal War Mount, but they do have access to a pack of special War Mounts that are dedicated to the Deliveryman Corps. They rely solely on Mega Horses, Striders, and Tunnel Rats. The other War Mounts have proven to be too big to conceal or easy pickings for the Machine in the case of the aerial mounts. Every War Mount has been augmented with Stealth Fields.

**Standard Equipment:** Military fatigues, dress clothing, "peasant clothes" (wears these thick clothes when operating undercover in Retro-Villages, adds +15% to the Concealment Skill), survival knife, utility belt, first-aid kit, 1D6 Slap Patches, Face Wrap, Stealth Sheet, Second Skin, Portable Nutrient Tank, Extractor, prosthetic makeup kit, tinted goggles, hatchet for cutting wood, one light or heavy Bio-Weapon of choice and one weapon for each W.P. with appropriate ammunition for heavy combat, a War Mount aug-



mented with a Stealth Field for transportation, tent, knapsack, backpack, two water skins, emergency food rations (two weeks supply), and some personal items.

**Money:** Has 2D6x1000 credits in precious metals, relics or trade items, as well as 10D6x10 in available credits. Money can be spent now on additional equipment or saved for later.

**The Upside:** Your stealth skills rival those of Skinjobs, and your abilities concerning impersonation, concealment, and wilderness survival are unparalleled. Only the most heavily guarded N.E.X.U.S. installations are off limits to you, but you have no reason to go there anyway. You can slip past any robot patrol with ease, and you can flawlessly blend in with Retro-Villagers or Nex-Androids. Your job requires you to spend most of your time topside, so no one knows more about the surface world than you. You know every short cut, every hiding spot, and you have a good understanding of the Machine's patrol routes. The messages you deliver help keep the humans of the world connected, and the knowledge you possess about the surface world is invaluable to the war effort.

**The Downside:** Your impressive skills do not lend themselves to fighting. The only way you can accomplish your mission is to avoid combat at all costs. The Machine can call in a nearly infinite supply of reinforcements in an instant, but the same cannot be said for you. Most of the time, you are completely on your own. In fact, you are likely to go months without ever seeing another human being. This isolation is why you have one of the toughest jobs in the Resistance.

**Experience:** Use the Technojacker experience table.

## Deliveryman Bio-Equipment

### Stealth Sheet

This large sheet of tissue is a simplified version of the symbiotic organism used to create Skinjobs. It is not nearly as versatile or durable as the real thing, but it does provide a fully functional Stealth Field for anyone who wears it. The field makes the wearer nearly invisible to all forms of visual detection, but it is incredibly unpleasant to use. The Stealth Sheet wraps around the wearer so tightly that it completely immobilizes him. He cannot speak or see and can barely hear. The sheet allows air to pass through it (the organism even filters out toxins) so the wearer can breathe normally, but it still feels like the sheet is smothering the life out of him. If this were not bad enough, once the Stealth Sheet wraps around the wearer, he is completely unable to remove it himself. Removing the sheet is a simple matter of stroking a nerve cluster on the outside of the living blanket, but it is impossible for the wearer to reach it. This is what limits the widespread use of the Stealth Sheet. **Note:** A person with a P.S. of 24 or above or a Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 15 or above can break free of the sheet by tearing it open (this kills the Stealth Sheet).

When not in use, the organism needs to be stored in a special nutrient rich fluid. The organism can live indefinitely as long as it is completely immersed. Once removed from its storage tank, the Stealth Sheet will only live for 1D4+1 hours before it starves to death. Splashing a gallon of the nutrient rich liquid on the organism will temporarily satiate it, which extends the time it can exist out of the tank by 30 minutes, but the act of doing so is

likely to attract attention and negate the effectiveness of the Stealth Field. When the sheet is nearing the end of its life (only 15 minutes left before it starves), it will no longer be able to engage a Stealth Field. At this point, the Stealth Sheet is so weak it can no longer hold onto the wearer (it is just loosely draped over the person). As long as the organism is put back in its nutrient tank before it completely starves, it will be completely revitalized within 3D6 hours.

**M.D.C. of the Device:** 5D4

**Trade Value:** 30,000 credits.

### Second Skin

This odd looking bag of skin is actually a living organism capable of perfectly mimicking the facial features of any human or human-like android that it comes in contact with. When the Second Skin is placed over the head of a human or Nex-Android, it analyzes every minute detail of the target's face, head, and hair. The scanning process only takes one melee round (15 seconds), but unwilling subjects will likely fight back with all their might which delays the process by 1D4 melees. The easiest way to scan unwilling humans is to incapacitate or knock them out beforehand. Nex-Androids are even more difficult to scan. The organic mask will trigger a Nanoplague Response if it is used on a deactivated android. The nanites do not respond if they receive a signal from a functional N.E.X.U.S. drone, but unfortunately, this presents another problem. As long as the drone is functional, it can call in reinforcements. Splicers who plan to impersonate a Nex-Android usually take along an Electro-Pulse Gun to incapacitate the drone without destroying it.

Once the organism finishes its scan and is removed from the target, the skin immediately begins to grow a perfect replica of the target's facial features, ears, hair, and skin color. The Second Skin even forms transparent lenses to match the target's eye color. The growth process only takes 1D4 melee rounds to complete. Once the living mask finishes growing, it must be turned inside out before it can be used. The wearer slips the mask over his head, and the organism merges with his face to form the ultimate disguise. It will pass even the closest scrutiny unless the face beneath was larger than the one being copied. In this case the head seems a little larger than usual, but it will still fool most people at a glance. Of course, the rest of the body is unaltered, so the absence of familiar scars, tattoos, or other distinguishing marks as well as any possible difference in skin color between the face and body could give away the deception.

When not in use, the Second Skin must be suspended in a special nutrient rich liquid. The organism can live indefinitely as long as it is completely immersed. Once it is removed from its storage tank, the Second Skin will only live for 1D4+1 hours before it starves to death. Splashing a cup of the nutrient rich liquid on the organism will temporarily satiate it, which extends the time it can exist out of the tank by 30 minutes, but doing so is a dead giveaway that he or she is wearing a Second Skin (it is best to do this in private). When the living mask is nearing the end of its life (only 15 minutes left before it starves), the tight bond with the skin underneath will begin to weaken. At first, odd bubbles and wrinkles will form all across the false face, but after 1D6+2 minutes, the bond completely fails and the mask just hangs loose and unnaturally, partially exposing the real face beneath. As long as the organism is put back in its nutrient tank

before it completely starves, it will be completely revitalized within 2D4 hours.

**M.D.C. of the Device:** 2D4

**Duration of the False Face:** The copied face can only be maintained as long as the living mask is worn. Once it is removed, all of the copied facial features vanish, and the Second Skin is ready to copy a new subject.

**Trade Value:** 45,000 credits.

## Extractor

All Bio-Tech weapons and equipment must be submerged in a special nutrient rich fluid every few days in order to replenish them. While this liquid is plentiful within the underground havens, it does not exist naturally anywhere on the surface. Deliverymen and other Splicers who spend weeks or months in the field need to carry around a Bio-Tech creature known as the Extractor in order to feed their equipment. Its sole purpose is to create the liquid for the nutrient bath. This softball-sized organism looks like a partially armored octopus with an enormous mouth that accounts for nearly half of its size. The Extractor devours a mixture of animal tissue, vegetation, and raw minerals and processes it into the fluid. It takes two pounds of matter to make one ounce of fluid. The rest is used to sustain the Extractor or is passed as hard pellets like the rounds used in casting weapons. The Extractor clings to the side of a special glass tank that operatives carry in the field. The tentacle that excretes the nutrient fluid is placed inside the tank and all other waste falls into a bag on the side (operatives want to make sure they do not leave a trail). An Extractor makes Splicers completely self-sufficient. An operative can sustain his equipment for years at a time without ever having to return home. Unfortunately, Extractors only live for 1D4+2 years, so eventually the operative needs to return home to get another one.

**M.D.C. of the Device:** 4D4+10

**Trade Value:** 35,000 credits.

# Deliveryman Adventure

## Part 1: When the Saint Comes Marching In

**Hook:** News has just reached your underground haven that one of the smaller Great Houses has recently suffered a devastating loss at the hands of the Machine. It looks like the assault force was an autonomous hunter/killer platoon, so N.E.X.U.S. still does not know the location of this Resistance cell. Their home is still secure, but unfortunately, two of their three Engineers were killed during the attack. The assault seriously weakened this Great House, and the loss of their Engineers means that they may never recover. Your House has selflessly decided to donate an elder Saint that is almost ready to hatch into a Genepool. Unfortunately, their House is nearly one hundred miles (160 km) away, and the loss of the hunter/killer platoon has alerted the Machine to a possible human presence in the area. N.E.X.U.S. has scrambled thousands of robots to scour the land for any human strongholds. The Saint must be escorted through this gauntlet of robots if their House is to survive. Your Warlord has decided that this mission is too vital to leave solely

in the hands of one lone Deliveryman. The player group has been asked to support the Deliveryman on this difficult task (who can either be one of the player characters or an NPC).

**Line:** Word of this selfless act has reached House Janus. Unfortunately, the opportunistic Warlord Alus has decided that he wants this new Engineer for himself. He has dispatched two Splicer teams to intercept the escort team and relieve them of the Saint. The Deliveryman will have a better chance of keeping the Saint hidden on his own, but the extra firepower would definitely come in handy if he does get cornered. It is up to the player group if they want to continue to travel with the Deliveryman and provide support, or if they should break off and act as a diversion in order to draw away any pursuit.

**Sinker:** Whether the player group splits up or stays together, they eventually come upon one of the pursuit teams, or at least what's left of them. Every man, War Mount, and suit of Host Armor has been torn to shreds. A quick inspection of the gory aftermath reveals that most of the remains are covered in deep acid burns. A closer inspection shows that the Janus warriors were firing wildly in all directions, but it does not look like they were able to dispatch any of their attackers. All the signs seem to confirm that these Splicers were killed by one or more Abomination War Mounts. It looks like there is a new player in this deadly game. It is unclear if this new group is after the Saint or if they are simply out hunting their fellow man. Whatever their motivation, they represent an even greater threat than the remaining Janus warriors. Only the most depraved humans will ever pilot an Abomination War Mount. Not even House Janus relies on these vile monsters. Worst of all, they have already demonstrated their willingness to slaughter their fellow humans, and that they are able to do so with ease. The player characters must discover the identity of these despicable Outriders, but they still have a job to do first. The Saint must reach the underground haven alive. The player characters still must contend with the remaining Janus team, legions of the Machine's robots, and an unseen force of Abomination War Mounts that may be stalking them from the shadows this very second.

## Part 2: I Need to Borrow Your Face

**Hook:** The mission to escort the Saint should end in one of two ways: either the player characters successfully deliver the Saint to the underground haven, or the Outriders piloting the Abominations kidnap him and run off into the distance. Either way, one of the Abominations stays behind to deal with the player characters.

**Line:** The Outrider has been spoiling for a good fight for days. He has been patiently following orders, waiting for this whole Saint situation to play out, but now that it's over, he wants to test his skills against the player characters. If the player group is relatively powerful, the Outrider will rely on stealth and hit and run tactics. Otherwise, he will just stand his ground and slug it out. The Deliveryman quickly tells the rest of the player group that he has a plan to find the rest of these Outriders by impersonating this one. He says he does not need him alive, he just needs his head to be left intact. The player characters can try to capture him in order to interrogate him or just blow him off his War Mount and go with the Deliveryman's plan.

**Sinker:** Whether the Outrider is killed or taken alive, he does not reveal any useful information. The Deliveryman informs the



rest of the group about how he plans to impersonate the rider and head off in the direction of the other Outriders in the hopes they come back for him. Deliverymen carry a Bio-Tech device called the Second Skin that allows them to perfectly mimic the facial features of any human. However, unless his Host Armor possesses the Impersonation Skin enhancement, he cannot copy the Outrider's Host Armor. If this is the case, he will need to strip out of his armor and leave that with the rest of the player characters. If he does meet up with the other Outriders, he can just tell them his Host Armor was killed during the battle. If the Abomination War Mount survives the fight, he will at least have something to ride instead of walking along naked. The Deliveryman's Black Talon War Hawk will keep an eye on him from a distance and report his position to the rest of the player characters, so that they will be able to follow. The plan works perfectly and the War Hawk eventually leads the player characters to the home base of these despicable fiends.

### Part 3: What Are They Doing in There?

**Hook:** The player characters come to the edge of an enormous Ghost Town. It is a high-tech metropolis teeming with hundreds of thousands of Nex-Androids faithfully reenacting the most common tasks of human society. This explains how this new group of predatory Splicers have escaped detection. No one would ever think to look for them here.

**Line:** The War Hawk was able to track its Deliveryman master to a "lively" entertainment district before it lost sight of him. It's a pretty sizeable area to search, but at least the Black Talon was able to narrow it down. The player characters will have to leave all their equipment behind in order to search the Ghost Town. Of course, walking around naked would draw just as much attention, so they will need to figure out how to "acquire" some authentic clothing. Once the player characters find the proper clothing and make their way to the entertainment district, they will be quite surprised at how easy it is to discover the hidden base. One of the first bars they walk into has a group of heavily modified Biotics sitting in plain sight of dozens of Nex-Androids. For some reason the drones ignore them completely, and continue to go about their normal business. If the player characters maintain their cover and follow the Biotics, they will be led straight into the group's main base.

**Sinker:** The main headquarters of this gang of kidnapers and murderers is an enormous dance club filled with hundreds of Nex-Androids pretending that they are having a good time. Just like in the other club, they completely ignore the Biotics as well as all the other Splicers walking around. There are five people walking around in Host Armor, three Biotics, and even two Scarecrows. A lone human is sitting at the bar, and it appears that he is attempting to reprogram a Nex-Android. He has taken apart the drone and has pieces of it arranged all across the bar. This average looking man must be a Technojacker since he is obviously able to handle metal without triggering a Nanobot Plague response. As long as the player characters continue to pretend to be Nex-Androids, they are able to go anywhere in the club. After a thorough search of the base, they will be reunited with the Deliveryman who fills in all the details of what he has discovered.

Apparently, this district of the Ghost Town is the home to a group that calls themselves the Exiles. It is a mixture of thirty

various Splicer warriors led by a Librarian that has most definitely gone "Megalo." He has also somehow managed to recruit a half dozen Technojackers into his group. They have been busily reprogramming Nex-Androids to serve as foot soldiers in their ever-growing private army. They are able to rewire over a dozen a day, and so far they have "recruited" nearly one thousand. In addition, the group has been kidnapping Saints in order to create their own force of Engineers. They have caught three so far, and they are all being kept in cages in the basement of this club. If the Saint the player characters were escorting was also kidnapped, he will be down there as well.

The player characters are drastically outnumbered. They could not hope to defeat the Exiles and their army of Nex-Androids, but they do not have to. All they need to do is alert the Machine about this group of humans hiding among her forces, and let N.E.X.U.S. do the rest. Of course, they first need to figure out how to liberate the imprisoned Saints. The player characters could continue to operate undercover or they could go retrieve their weapons and equipment and make a frontal assault. The Nex-Androids in this area are programmed to ignore Bio-Tech equipment and the Deliveryman learned the secret passageway the Exiles use to get in and out of the city without attracting the attention of the normal drones. It is up to the player characters to determine how they want to proceed, but they need to realize that direct conflict will lead to a massive three-way battle between the player characters, the Exiles, and the Machine. This battle could provide an excellent diversion to allow them to rescue the Saints, but it could also escalate so quickly that the group gets consumed by it. No matter what they decide, they need to rescue the Saints quickly. The player characters know for sure that one is about to hatch its Genepool, and once that happens, it will be stuck here forever.

## Waste Crawlers

N.E.X.U.S. has coldly and methodically exterminated billions of humans, yet there are still threats far greater and far more evil lurking in the shadows of the surface world. The desperate struggle for survival has brought out the best qualities in some humans and the very worst in others. Blood Feuds between the Great Houses and bandit raids from humans in the Retro-Villages show how these horrible times have caused people to prey upon each other. This instinct has always been a weakness of human nature, but there are some surface-dwelling humans that have taken this survival of the fittest mentality to the extreme. They do not just prey upon their fellow man; they hunt them down as prey. The boldest hunters actually track down and kill members of the Resistance in order to strip them of their powerful Bio-Tech gear. The Resistance calls these predatory human bandits Waste Crawlers. They are not affiliated with any Great House or Retro-Village. They live alone or in small tribes in the wilderness or in the ruined cities that cover the surface of the planet. Waste Crawlers have not only learned to survive on the surface, they have learned to thrive. They are experts at skirting the Machine's hunter/killer patrols (some are even protected by N.E.X.U.S. personalities like Kali and Lilith), and they have become masters at stalking their primary prey, Splicers.

# Vulture O.C.C.

Some of the most dangerous human predators are known as Vultures. These highly skilled warriors are like the Special Forces Commandos of bandits. They have excellent training, brilliant tactical minds, and absolutely no mercy. Vultures hunt down and slaughter Splicers in the wild in order to strip them of their equipment. Since Bio-Tech equipment can only be sustained by periodically submersing it in the nutrient pools in the underground havens, Vultures are unable to enjoy the spoils of their victories for long. That is what makes them so dangerous. They are constantly on the prowl for new victims so they can continuously acquire a fresh supply of Bio-Weaponry.

However, Vultures have learned how to “tan” some pieces of organic technology like Living Armor and melee weapons in order to preserve them indefinitely. Cured Bio-Tech equipment is not nearly as powerful and it no longer regenerates, but it is still far superior to anything else that a human can safely wield. This preserved Bio-Tech gear gives Vultures enough of an edge to take on fully equipped Splicers, but they must still rely on cunning and trickery to take down their more heavily armed opponents. They use hit and fade tactics and set snare traps, pitfalls, and other booby traps to divide and weaken larger forces. Once their prey is sufficiently weakened or separated from the rest of the group, they pounce on their target and try to dispatch him with as little residual damage to the Bio-Tech equipment as possible.

Vultures still need to worry about the Machine, but some N.E.X.U.S. personalities actually protect and support these humans. Kali loves these evil scavengers and will help them in any way she can. She will order robot patrols attacking a known Vulture to stand down, and she will even offer them sanctuary within areas under her control. Lilith also loves the treacherous nature of these humans and offers similar protection. Of course, Lilith can never be completely trusted, so Vultures must be on guard when accepting her aid.

Either way, this protection means Vultures can walk the surface with impunity. They do not need to cower underground like the rest of the vermin, which means some of them live quite comfortably. They are still not allowed in the Ghost Towns or Nature Preserves, but the Machine will often allow them to sneak into these areas since they only do so to hunt down Splicers. Even the N.E.X.U.S. personalities that despise all humans give Vultures a little latitude. They recognize that the efforts of these human predators seriously undermine the Resistance, which only furthers their own genocidal campaign. Of course, once the Resistance is crushed, the Vultures will be the next to fall.

**Alignment:** Evil only.

**Attribute Requirements:** I.Q.: 10, M.E.: 10, and P.P.: 12 or higher.

**Attribute Bonuses:** +2 to I.Q., +2 to M.E., +1D4 to M.A., +2D4 to P.S., +1D6 to P.P., +1D6 to P.E., and +2D6 to Spd.

**O.C.C. Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry, and dodge, +3 to disarm, and +5 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Base S.D.C.:** 60, plus any from Physical skills.

**Common Skills:** Standard.

**O.C.C. Skill Program:** Assassination (+20%, but Disguise is





replaced with Trap Construction), Guerilla Warfare (+15%), Man-Hunter (+15%), Hunter/Trapper (+20%), and Outdoorsman (+15%).

**Special Skill: Preserve Bio-Tech Equipment:** This skill allows Vultures to tan Living Armor and Bio-Tech melee weapons so they will last indefinitely. The cured piece of organic technology has, in essence, been killed, so it no longer regenerates or produces any of its most powerful effects like acid or high frequency fields. This is why Vultures only tan melee weapons. Bladed weapons at least retain their superior edge, but ranged weapons just become a useless piece of dead tissue. The base skill roll is 45% +5% per level of experience. A successful skill roll means the Bio-Tech device has been preserved at its highest possible quality. However, it is impossible to perfectly preserve the incredible quality of the original. Some of its power and strength is lost in the process, but a skilled Vulture can still create incredibly durable armor and weapons. Living Armor only loses 25% of its M.D.C. value, but it also loses the ability to regenerate and any Bio-Enhancements it may have had (except for blades or spikes). On a positive note, it is now 25% lighter, which reduces prowl and movement penalties by 25% as well. Melee weapons retain their superior edge, but lose any abilities to secrete acid, launch spikes, or generate a high frequency field. Damage is reduced by half, but round up (example: an axe that inflicted 5D6 M.D. will now inflict 3D6 M.D. after it has been tanned). A failed roll means the Bio-Tech device is ruined, but it is still somewhat salvageable. Living Armor loses 80% of its M.D.C. value and it feels heavy and unwieldy, which actually doubles the normal movement and prowl penalties. Melee weapons lose their fine edge and now only inflict their equivalent M.D. damage as S.D.C. damage (example: an axe that inflicted 5D6 M.D. will now only inflict 5D6 S.D.C. after being improperly tanned).

Note: This skill does not work on Host Armor or Wing Packs. It can be used to tan the hides of War Mounts and other Mega-Damage creatures, but it requires more effort than it is worth to form their hides into armor. Vultures find it far easier to just tan suits of Bio-Tech armor that are already shaped for humans.

**Elective Skills:** Select any one Wilderness skill and Operate Bio-Equipment, and four Elective Skills from the following list at first level. Select another two Elective Skills at levels 2, 4, 8, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Espionage: Any.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+15%).

Physical: Any.

Rogue: Any (+15%).

Science: Advanced Mathematics only.

Technical: Any.

Transportation: Any, except War Mount Combat and Host Armor Combat.

Wilderness Survival: Any (+20%).

W.P.s: Any.

**Secondary Skills:** The character gets to select five Secondary Skills at level one and one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not receive any special O.C.C. bonuses.

**Bio-Tech Equipment:** Vultures start off with one preserved suit of Living Armor, three preserved melee weapons, one light Bio-Weapon of choice and one heavy Bio-Weapon of choice (of course, these weapons are not preserved, so they will be completely useless after one week).

**Standard Equipment:** Camouflage clothing, survival knife, utility belt, shovel, 100 feet (30.5 m) of rope, tinted goggles, one high-quality S.D.C. ceramic pistol and rifle, hatchet for cutting wood, tent, knapsack, backpack, two water skins, two week supply of emergency food rations, and some personal items.

**Money:** Has 1D8x1000 credits in precious metals, relics or trade items, as well as 8D6x10 in available credits.

**The Upside:** You are the ultimate hunter with the skills and talent to take down the toughest prey. N.E.X.U.S. personalities like Kali and Lilith love your brutality, treachery, and cruelty and will actually offer you sanctuary within areas under their control. As long as you hunt down the Resistance, they will gladly give you free rein, which means you do not need to cower in some sewer tunnel in order to survive. The surface is your home, and you know the land far better than the Resistance, which gives you the edge.

**The Downside:** The Machine may sometimes offer you sanctuary, but there is no sanctuary from the Nanobot Plague. The only weapons you can safely wield are weak ceramic guns or powerful Bio-Weapons, and unless you have some functioning Bio-Weapons, you will be seriously outgunned against Splicers or robot patrols under the control of unsympathetic N.E.X.U.S. personalities. You can loot Bio-Tech from fallen Splicers, but the equipment will only last a week before it starves to death, which means you must constantly be on the prowl for new weapons. Of course, if you could ever relieve a Deliveryman of his Extractor (the ultimate prize for Vultures), you would be able to sustain any Bio-Tech equipment for years.

**Experience:** Use the Biotic & Packmaster experience table.

## Mount Rustler O.C.C.

Splicers designed their powerful War Mounts to be living tanks, combat aircraft, and military transports. They give the frail humans of the Resistance the strength to go toe-to-toe with the Machine's legions of metallic monstrosities. They were built to be brutally effective war machines, but they were also genetically programmed to be loyal to humans. This is necessary to make sure these monsters never turn on their masters. It keeps the War Mounts fighting on the side of humanity, but unfortunately, not all humans fight on the same side.

The vile Waste Crawlers known as Mount Rustlers prey on Splicers from the Resistance in order to relieve them of their War Mounts. These powerful war machines will fight for any human who sits in their War Saddles, so these stolen beasts make Mount Rustlers absolute powerhouses among the Waste Crawlers. Of course, without a War Mount, they are as helpless



as any human. They are reliant on other Mount Rustlers and Vultures to help them steal their first War Mount, but when they finally land one of these Bio-Tech beasts, they become incredibly dangerous. The power they gain from their War Mount is intoxicating, and they will go to any lengths to make sure they are never powerless again. Once they have their own War Mount to pilot, Mount Rustlers go on an endless crusade to collect as many of these war beasts as possible. On this harsh world, it is inevitable War Mounts will die in battle, so Rustlers want to make sure they have plenty in reserve (of course, figuring out where to hide them is another problem).

Much like the Outriders they prey upon, Mount Rustlers live for the thrill of heavy frontline combat. While they mainly target humans from the Resistance, they often test their skills against the Machine. Of course, they really do not have a choice. Mount Rustlers are not offered the same protection by the Machine that other Waste Crawlers receive. Even those Rustlers who solely hunt the Resistance are rarely spared. War Mounts are such a high priority target that all N.E.X.U.S. robots will destroy them on sight. They are simply too great a threat to the Machine for her to ever let one escape. This is the sole reason why Vultures never pilot War Mounts.

Vultures do appreciate the power of these Bio-Tech creatures, so they will sometimes work with Mount Rustlers in order to “acquire” new equipment from the Resistance. Mount Rustlers bring some serious firepower to the mix, and the Vultures’ skill, tactical brilliance, and ability to preserve Bio-Tech armor and weapons make them invaluable. Together they make a formidable team, but the two generally team up out of necessity rather than out of any kind of respect or friendship. Vultures do not like to stay around Mount Rustlers too long because the presence of War Mounts will likely damage their tenuous truce with the Machine. In addition, their preference for head-on combat does not work well with the Vulture’s usual methods. Rustlers in turn, recognize how dangerous Vultures truly are. They try to act tough in front of Vultures, but the truth is they are terrified of these warriors. Vultures routinely take on squads of heavily armed Resistance fighters on their own, which means they could easily strip a Mount Rustler of his prized possessions (and his life) with little effort. In reality, this is always a concern when Waste Crawlers team up. They all survive on this harsh world by preying on other humans, so nearly all alliances among these despicable scavengers eventually end in betrayal.

**Alignment:** Evil only.

**Attribute Requirements:** M.A.: 10, P.S.: 10, and P.P.: 10 or higher.

**Attribute Bonuses:** +1D6 to P.S., +1D4 to P.P., +1D6 to P.E., and +1D6 to Spd.

**O.C.C. Bonuses:** +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Bonuses When Piloting a War Mount:** +1 attack per melee round, +1 to strike, parry, and dodge, +2 to disarm, and +5 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Base S.D.C.:** 60, plus any from Physical skills.

**Common Skills:** Standard.

**O.C.C. Skill Program:** War Mount Rider (+15%), Survivalist (+10%), and Outdoorsman (+15%), plus any one of the following: Weapons Training (+5%), Athletics, or Scavenger (+10%).



**Elective Skills:** Select Operate Bio-Equipment, and four Elective Skills from the following list at first level. Select another two Elective Skills at levels 2, 4, 8, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Espionage: Any.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+5%).

Physical: Any.

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: Advanced Mathematics only.

Technical: Any.

Transportation: Any, except Host Armor Combat.

Wilderness Survival: Any (+10%).

W.P.s: Any.

**Secondary Skills:** The character gets to select five Secondary Skills at level one and one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not receive any special O.C.C. bonuses.

**Bio-Tech Equipment:** Mount Rustlers start off with one preserved suit of Living Armor and two preserved melee weapons. New Bio-Tech equipment can be stolen from the Resistance, but all equipment will eventually starve to death and become useless unless the character can convince a Vulture to tan the item.

**Pirated War Mount:** Mount Rustlers start with one War Mount. Any future Mounts must be appropriated by the character. Game Masters can either determine what Bio-Enhancements the stolen beast possesses or let characters roll on the following table to randomly determine enhancements:

Step One: Determine number of Bio-Enhancements. Every stolen War Mount starts off with 1D6+1 Bio-Enhancements. Unless the Mount Rustler can find a corrupt Engineer or somehow barter enhancements from one of the Great Houses, this number will never increase.

Step Two: Randomly Choose Bio-Enhancements: For each Bio-Enhancement available, roll on the following chart to determine which category to select from. Then either the G.M. or the player can select any Bio-Enhancement from that category. This table allows for randomization, but it does let characters (or Game Masters) customize War Mounts according to their preferences.

01-10% Eyes and Vision Enhancement.

11-20% Other Sensory Enhancements.

21-30% Biological Defenses.

31-40% Anatomical and Physiological Features.

41-50% Additional Limbs and Enhanced Arms and Hands.

51-60% Legs and Feet.

61-70% Flight Appendages.

71-80% Prehensile Appendages.

81-90% Offensive Bio-Weapons.

91-00% Ranged Bio-Weapons.

**Standard Equipment:** Camouflage clothing, survival knife, utility belt, shovel, 100 feet (30.5 m) of rope, tinted goggles,

one high-quality S.D.C. ceramic pistol and rifle, hatchet for cutting wood, tent, knapsack, backpack, two water skins, two week supply of emergency food rations (one week for the rider and one week for the War Mount), and some personal items.

**Money:** Has 1D8x1000 credits in precious metals, relics or trade items, as well as 8D6x10 in available credits.

**The Upside:** The power of your War Mount makes you a virtual juggernaut compared to the other Waste Crawlers prowling about the surface, and you are nearly as skilled a pilot as the Outriders you stole it from. You never feel more alive than when you are in the thick of battle, and the Machine and the Resistance give you plenty of chances to test your skill.

**The Downside:** Outriders may be weaker without their War Mounts, but you are absolutely powerless without yours. You remember how scared and helpless you felt on this harsh world without your War Mount, and you never want to experience that again. Your War Mount gives you the power to survive, but that power comes at a price. You are truly alone against the world. The two largest factions on the planet, the Machine and the Resistance, want you dead, and both are willing to do whatever it takes to get you. Your only option is to ally with other Waste Crawlers. Unfortunately, just like you, they prey on other humans in order to survive, so they do not make the most trustworthy allies.

**Experience:** Use the Outrider experience table.

## Gene Thief R.C.C.

The most dangerous and feared of all Waste Crawlers are a race of super-powered humans called Gene Thieves. They may look normal (at least until they strike), but their average appearance hides tremendous power. Gene Thieves possess an extremely accelerated metabolism which grants them tremendous speed and reflexes, but more importantly, it gives them incredible regenerative powers. Their bodies can heal damage nearly as fast as it is inflicted. They can completely regenerate severed appendages, and can even repair partially destroyed brain tissue or a severely damaged heart. Their bodies are not nearly as durable as some Bio-Tech creations or the alien predators stalking the Nature Preserves, but Gene Thieves are strong enough to survive small amounts of Mega-Damage. These powers alone make them dangerous, but what makes Gene Thieves so deadly and so feared is their ability to copy the DNA of others. A Gene Thief can perfectly replicate any natural ability, Bio-Enhancement, or even Bio-Weapon of the subject by devouring some of his flesh.

A Gene Thief needs to eat at least one pound (0.45 kg) of tissue in order copy someone's DNA. No one is sure why they must consume so much organic matter, but it seems to be consistent amongst all Gene Thieves. In order to make sure they can quickly consume enough flesh, they will stretch their normal human-looking mouth into a large gaping maw filled with razor sharp teeth. This is the only way to detect a Gene Thief, but at this point it is generally too late.

Another odd limitation of their replication power is that they can only copy one trait (Bio-Enhancement) at a time. Despite the fact they have consumed all of the victim's DNA, they can only analyze and replicate a small percentage at once. However,

they can bite the same subject repeatedly in order to copy multiple traits. For some reason the Gene Thief must devour tissue from the specific trait he wants to replicate, even though the DNA is the same in all tissue throughout the body. Many have hypothesized that this is some sort of focusing technique; a way to quickly isolate the DNA they want to replicate. Others suspect the Gene Thieves just do it to deprive their victims of the same weapon they wish to copy. For whatever reason, it seems to hold true for all Gene Thieves. For instance, if a Gene Thief wanted to copy a Bore Cannon mounted on a suit of Host Armor, he would have to tear a chunk of flesh directly from the cannon. If he then wanted to replicate the armor's Advanced Sight, he would need to bite out one of the eyes and a good deal of the surrounding tissue. This is what makes Gene Thieves so terrifying. In order to garner enough power to survive on this harsh world, a Gene Thief needs to horribly maim Splicers in order to steal their strength. What is even worse is that these replicated changes are only temporary. Their incredible regenerative powers constantly turn over their cells which purges stolen genes. This means Gene Thieves are constantly preying on Splicers in order to maintain their power.

No one is sure how these vile monstrosities came into existence, but it is very apparent that their numbers only continue to grow. Splicers who have examined the DNA of fallen Gene Thieves have concluded that they are human, despite their inhuman abilities. They could be human-like aliens from off-world, but most people believe they were the result of a failed experiment by a Librarian (or perhaps a successful one). The presence of the Butcher's Organ (a Librarian creation) within their bodies seems to confirm that their race was created on this planet. Whatever their origins, they seem to be able to naturally produce offspring. If two Gene Thieves mate, then their offspring will always be a Gene Thief. Further evidence of their human origin is the fact that a Gene Thief can actually mate with a normal human and produce offspring. In this case, there is only a fifty percent chance that the child will be a Gene Thief.

Gene Thieves are not inherently evil, but a lifetime of being hunted by their fellow humans does tend to embitter them. They must steal the strength of others in order to survive, and this parasitic relationship with Splicers is why the Resistance has declared them enemies to be destroyed on sight. However, this bitter rivalry has gained them an unlikely ally. N.E.X.U.S. personalities like Kali, Ishtar, and Lilith actually offer sanctuary and aid to known Gene Thieves. This race absolutely terrifies the Resistance, and the Machine wants to make sure they never go extinct (at least until the rest of the humans are gone).

Gene Thieves generally live alone or in small bands of their own kind. Some ally themselves with Vultures and other Waste Crawlers, but most Gene Thieves find these evil humans to be too monstrous to associate with. They generally make their homes in the Nature Preserves to make sure they have plenty of game to hunt. Their accelerated metabolism does not give them much of a choice as to where to settle. If an area does not have enough animal life, Gene Thieves cannot hope to last more than a few days before their bodies devour themselves. Gaia does not appreciate these mutants preying upon her creations, but the other personalities have convinced her that the Resistance is a greater threat to the Nature Preserves and the presence of Gene Thieves may keep them away.





## Gene Thief R.C.C. Powers:

**1. Hyper-Metabolic Rate:** The Gene Thief possesses a hyperactive metabolism that gives the character enhanced speed and reflexes and an increased healing rate. It is the source of his formidable powers, but it also means that the character needs to eat one fourth his body weight in protein every day in order to stay healthy. Reflex and speed bonuses are already factored into the Attributes and R.C.C. bonuses above.

**2. Super Regeneration:** The character bio-regenerates 2D4x10 S.D.C. or H.P. every melee round. A severed limb will completely regenerate within 2D4 hours, and even a partially destroyed brain or heart will regenerate within 1D4 hours. The Gene Thief can still function even when H.P. has been reduced to -40. However, at -41 H.P. the character is dead and cannot be revived by any means. When the Gene Thief copies the DNA of an M.D.C. being, he copies their M.D.C. hide as well. He maintains his own formidable regenerative powers, but this ability is slowed slightly when it has to repair the thicker hide. M.D.C. is regenerated at a rate of 2D6 per melee round.

**3. Butcher's Organ:** The Gene Thief possesses the same genetic memory cannibalism organ available to the Host Armor and War Mounts of the Resistance. The character can relive the last 1D6x10 minutes of a victim's life by eating the flesh of a person who has died within the last 24 hours. However, the Gene Thief is helpless for the full duration while reliving the last moments of the dead person's life.

**4. Steal and Replicate DNA:** This is the most formidable power of the Gene Thief. By consuming one pound (0.45 kg) of flesh from any human, creature, or Bio-Tech device, the character can perfectly replicate one of the subject's natural abilities, powers, Bio Enhancements, or even appendages. Even though any tissue from the subject contains all the DNA the character needs, the Gene Thief must consume the tissue directly from the trait he wants to copy. This means that if the character wants to copy a Gore Cannon, he must attack the cannon directly. If he wants to copy Plasma Breath, he must consume flesh from the target's mouth or throat. The new power, limb, or ability is identical to that of the subject. It has the same payload, M.D.C., range, and damage capacity as the original, and it grows in the exact same location.

As a side effect, the Gene Thief also copies some of the subject's strength and vitality. No matter what trait the Gene Thief is trying to replicate, he will also gain one fourth of the subject's S.D.C. and H.P. or M.D.C. (for the purpose of determining total M.D.C., do not convert S.D.C. and H.P. to M.D.C., just add the new Mega-Damage protection on top as if the character is wearing body armor). The Gene Thief also gains 1D6 to P.S. (assuming the subject has P.S., this does not occur when copying the traits of an inanimate Bio-Tech device). If the subject has Robotic/Splicer Strength or Supernatural Strength, then the character replicates this as well. The Gene Thief can copy multiple traits from one subject, but this can only be done through repeated attacks at the site of each individual characteristic. However, the P.S. and M.D.C. bonuses are only a one time benefit per subject. The Gene Thief will receive multiple strength and vitality bonuses when attacking multiple opponents, but even if he copies 5 separate traits from one subject, he will only receive the P.S. and M.D.C. bonus once.

In order to consume enough flesh for replication, the Gene Thief must first stretch his normal mouth into an enormous maw filled with razor sharp teeth. Each powerful bite inflicts 3D6 S.D.C. or M.D. depending on the nature of the subject. The Gene Thief must inflict a total of 12 points of damage in order to consume enough tissue to analyze it for replication. For example, a Gene Thief is trying to copy a Casting Cannon mounted on a suit of Host Armor. His first bite inflicts 10 points of Mega-Damage, which is insufficient to copy the Bio-Weapon. On his next attack, his bite inflicts 6 more points of Mega-Damage for a total of 16. This is more than enough tissue to analyze the subject's DNA, and a new Casting Cannon quickly begins to grow on the Gene Thief's shoulder.

Once enough tissue has been consumed, it only takes 1D4 melee rounds to analyze and isolate the desired DNA. After the proper genes have been found, the Gene Thief's body begins to grow an exact duplicate of the trait. Simple traits and natural abilities develop within 1D4 melees. Complicated characteristics like extra limbs, exoskeletons, and Bio-Weapons grow at a rate of 5D4 M.D.C. per melee round. Once the new limb reaches the total M.D.C. of the subject's limb, it is completely functional, fully loaded, and ready for use. After this period of rapid growth, the regeneration rate slows to the Gene Thief's normal 2D6 M.D.C. per melee round. Unfortunately, these stolen characteristics cannot be maintained indefinitely. The Gene Thief's rapid metabolism actually purges the stolen DNA after twenty minutes. When the duration elapses, replicated Bio-Enhancements instantly disappear, as do the strength and M.D.C. bonuses. Extra limbs, weapons, and armor reinforcements actually dry up and fall off once the stolen genes are expelled. However, as the character grows in power, he learns how to hold on to these stolen genes for longer periods of time. The length of time the Gene Thief can maintain each replication increases by 10 minutes with every additional level of experience.

Another limitation is that a Gene Thief can only copy three traits, limbs, powers, or Bio-Enhancements at any one time. The character can continue to acquire new DNA, but the oldest replication will always be replaced with the newest one. As the character gains experience, he learns how to harness more replications at one time. The Gene Thief can copy one additional trait at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15.

**Penalties:** The Gene Thief is a carnivore with a tremendous appetite. The character must eat one fourth his body weight in protein every day in order to stay healthy. If the character goes longer than 24 hours without eating, he immediately begins to weaken. Replicated genes can only be maintained for half the usual time and he can no longer bio-regenerate. After 36 hours, the character feels weak and suffers penalties of -3 to strike, parry, and dodge, and a -4 to P.S., -3 to P.P., -3 to P.E., and Speed is half. After 48 hours, his body begins to feed upon itself. The Gene Thief is -6 to strike, parry, and dodge, P.S., P.P., and P.E. are divided by half, Speed is reduced to a mere 5, and he takes 1D6 points of damage every five minutes. Once H.P. reaches zero, the character falls into a coma and finally dies after H.P. reaches -40. The dramatic effects of hunger cause most Gene Thieves to feed constantly. Most will even keep a hidden sanctuary stocked with dozens of living animals to snack upon when food is scarce.

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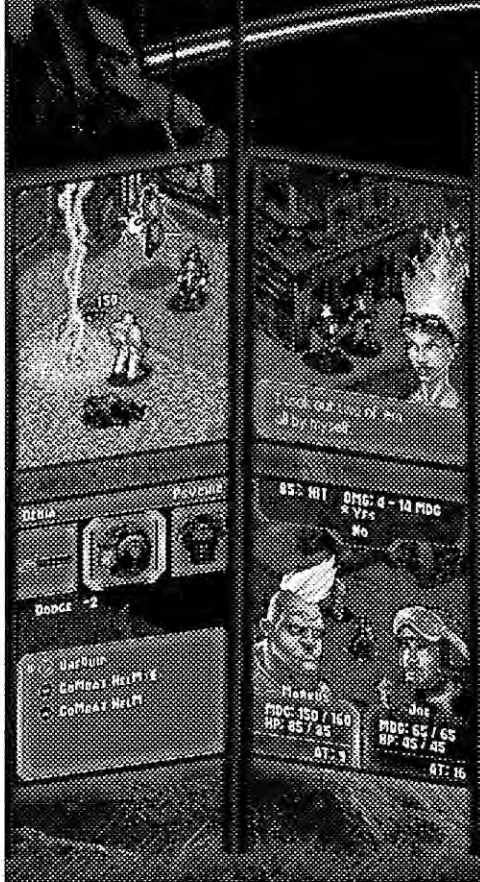
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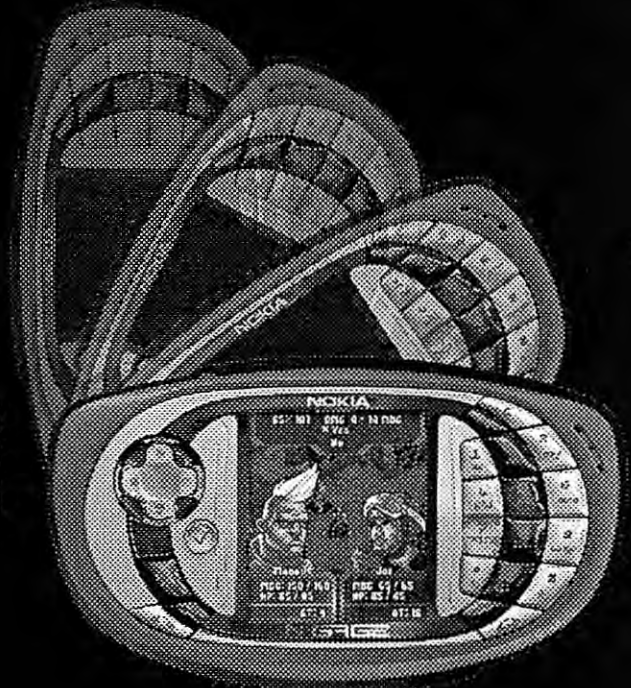
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**Alignment:** Any, but typically evil.

**Attributes:** I.Q.: 3D6, M.E.: 3D6, M.A.: 4D6, P.S.: 4D6, P.P.: 4D6+3 (minimum of 17), P.E.: 4D6+6 (minimum of 20), P.B.: 3D6, Spd.: 2D4x10+20.

**R.C.C. Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee round, +4 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry, +4 to automatic dodge, and +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Base S.D.C.:** 1D6x100, plus any from Physical skills.

**Base H.P.:** 4D4x10+3D6 per level of experience.

**Horror Factor:** 15

**Common Skills:** Standard.

**O.C.C. Skill Program:** Man-Hunter (+20%), Outdoorsman (+10%), Hunter/Trapper (+10%), and one of the following skill programs: Athletics, Survivalist, Bio-Technology, or Reconnaissance/Scout.

**Elective Skills:** Select any one Wilderness Skill and Operate Bio-Equipment, and four Elective Skills from the following list at first level. Select another Elective Skill at levels 2, 4, 8, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Espionage: Wilderness Survival only.

Medical: None.

Military: Any (+5%).

Physical: Any.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Advanced Mathematics only.

Technical: Any.

Transportation: Any, except War Mount Combat and Host Armor Combat.

Wilderness Survival: Any (+5%).

W.P.s: Any.

**Secondary Skills:** The character gets to select five Secondary Skills at level one and one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9,

12, and 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not receive any special O.C.C. bonuses.

**Standard Equipment:** Layered robes, survival knife, utility belt, tinted goggles, hatchet for cutting wood, tent, knapsack, backpack, two water skins, two day supply of emergency food rations (it is difficult to carry enough food), and some personal items.

**Money:** Has 1D6x100 credits in precious metals, relics or trade items, as well as 1D6x10 in available credits.

**The Upside:** You are one of the most powerful humans on the planet. You can copy the genetic structure from any of the Splicers' most powerful creations and incorporate it into your own body. You are a living weapon capable of taking on anything the Resistance or N.E.X.U.S. has to offer. You may be hated by your fellow humans, but you are loved by the Machine. Many N.E.X.U.S. personalities will offer you protection to ensure that you continue to hunt the humans of the Resistance. All the robots and drones are programmed to recognize your powerful biting mouth as a sign that you are a Gene Thief. By simply flashing this gaping maw, you may get robot patrols to stand down. Of course, human sympathizers like the Eve personality will still order her robots to gun you down where you stand, so it is best to use this technique as a last resort.

**The Downside:** The life of a Gene Thief is a solitary one. Unless you can find another of your kind, you can expect to live the rest of your life alone in the wilderness. Most humans see you as a monster, and Splicers from the Resistance will try to kill you on sight. Only the most despicable Waste Crawlers will ever call you friend, but they are often greater monsters than you will ever be. The Machine may offer you sanctuary, but the psychotic N.E.X.U.S. is not much of a companion. Only the luckiest Gene Thieves find companions with any shred of humanity. In addition, your accelerated metabolism means you must be constantly hunting down food. The effects of hunger are devastating, so it seems like you are always trying to stay one step ahead of starvation.

**Experience:** Use the Scarecrow & Saint experience table.

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# A Shadow from the Past

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## The Quest for Castlerake Part Two

An Adventure for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Edwin Emmer

### Chapter Thirteen: The Prophecy

After the players manage to journey back through Ophid's Blight, they will continue heading northwest across the grasslands. Generous Game Masters may decide to have Antar guide them safely through the geyser fields and hot springs to avoid the worst of the dangers or they may simply make the journey

out as difficult as the journey in. If Crish is still with the players, she can still help them avoid the worst of the dangers of Ophid's Grasslands (namely, Coyle Hordes, most of whom are actually further up north in the summer months). Still, as she has never truly traveled far into the grasslands, her experience is limited.

After several days of trekking across the rolling hills broken occasionally by a lonesome cluster of trees, the players will be alerted to trouble by a sudden shriek. Coming directly at them from the southwest is a bizarre flying creature with bat wings,



an owl's head, and a long whip-like tail. This creature swoops over the heads of the players and disappears into a nearby cluster of trees. Players who make a successful Lore: Demons and Monsters roll (-15% owing to the brief glimpse they got of the creature before it vanished), they will recognize the thing as a Weirdwing. If they are not aware of the significance of this creature, Crish will know what it is, though only through folklore and legend. Before she can fully explain what a Weirdwing is or what it can do, the thundering sound of hoof beats will draw their attention back to the southwest where a band of five horsemen have just crested the nearby rise.

Anyone making a successful Heraldry skill roll will instantly recognize the banners of the Western Empire's colony of Ophidia. Three of the mounted riders are clearly Imperial Janissaries, two of whom are carrying crossbows while the other one has a drawn sword. Of the other two horsemen, one is wearing a heavy black cloak and a bored expression on his face. The other one looks to be dressed in a very fine officer's uniform (smacks of nobility). This party is a group of hunters who have been sent into the Hinterlands in search of a legendary Weirdwing to capture and bring back to the Western Empire as a gift from the colony of Ophidia in an effort to gain Emperor Itomas' favor.

The "officer" will address the players simply to tell them to stand aside and not to interfere. Crish will have guessed their intentions and will hiss a warning to the nearest player that they should not allow the Imperial agents to capture such a noble and rare beast. Even if the players do nothing, she will not allow the soldiers to enter the woods unhindered (though if the players do not come to her aid, she will be easily cut down).

**3 Imperial Janissaries:** 4<sup>th</sup> level humans. The elite of the Imperial Military Machine.

**Alignment:** Aberrant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 10, M.E. 8, M.A. 12, P.S. 24, P.P. 13, P.E. 13, P.B. 13, Spd 15.

**Size:** 6 feet, 2 inches (1.9 m); 210 pounds (94.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** N/A.

**Hit Points:** 35

**S.D.C.:** 48

**P.P.E.:** 15

**Horror/Awe Factor:** N/A.

**Attacks per Melee:** 4 physical.

**Bonuses:** +3 on initiative, +3 to strike (+5 with weapons), +3 to parry (+5 with weapons), +3 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** All are armed with crossbows (2D6) with 28 bolts, a Dwarven long sword that does 2D6+13 (2D6+4+9 P.S. bonus) and has an additional +1 to strike, a dagger that does 1D6+13 and is +1 to strike, three other quality weapons (2D6+9 - no other bonuses) and a Janissary Shield (2D6+12 from bashing damage). They also know a variety of martial arts kicks (no leap or jump kicks). Each is wearing a full suit of plate and chain armor (A.R. 15, 100 S.D.C.).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Horsemanship: General (60%/45%), Intelligence (57%), Land Navigation (52%), Military Etiquette (80%), Track Humanoids (50%).

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Powerful, well built humans in splendid armor. Each carries 100 in Western Empire Gold and another 350 in gemstones.

**Xandack:** 5<sup>th</sup> level human Wizard and Imperial lackey.

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 10, M.E. 10, M.A. 18, P.S. 7, P.P. 13, P.E. 13, P.B. 11, Spd 5.

**Size:** 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m); 150 pounds (67.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** N/A.

**Hit Points:** 28

**S.D.C.:** 6

**P.P.E.:** 158

**Horror/Awe Factor:** N/A.

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical or 2 by magic.

**Bonuses:** +1 to strike (+3 with weapon), +2 to parry (+4 with weapon), +2 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +4 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 to save versus magic, +2 to spell strength (requires a 14 or higher to save). 50% Trust and Intimidate.

**Damage:** Xandack is armed with a pair of silver daggers (1D6+4 damage, +1 to strike), and a Spell-Storage Staff (a rare magic item that can hold 1D4+1 pre-cast spells for instant release at the cost of only 1 P.P.E. when needed - Xandack's staff can hold up to 4 spells). The staff inflicts 2D6+2 damage as a weapon and also provides an additional +1 to save versus magic and a +1 to the spell strength of spells cast through the staff only. The spells currently cast into the staff are Fire Ball x2, Domination, and Armor of Ithan. Xandack wears a Cloak of Armor (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 50) but he always casts Armor of Ithan prior to entering battle.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Horsemanship: General (55%/40%), Lore: Magic (65%/55%/50%).

**Magic:** Xandack knows the following spells: Decipher Magic, Sense Magic, Cloud of Slumber, Globe of Daylight, Tongues, See the Invisible, Blinding Flash, Befuddle, Fear, Armor of Ithan, Magic Net, Increase Weight, Weightlessness, Paralysis: Lesser, Multiple Image, Domination, Levitation, Fire Ball, and Horrific Illusion.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Xandack is a bored looking noble whose physical nature suggests an evolutionary ancestry closely associated with rodents (he just looks sneaky). His demeanor makes it obvious that he is only on this mission because he has been ordered to do so (actually, he has been sent to Ophidia by his guild who wants him out of Caer Itom). Xandack carries 500 in Western Empire Gold and another 1250 in gemstones.

**Jordan Belopo:** 6<sup>th</sup> level human Mind Mage and a member of House Belopo, the ruling house of Ophidia.

**Alignment:** Aberrant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 7, M.E. 15, M.A. 10, P.S. 11, P.P. 10, P.E. 7, P.B. 11, Spd 11.

**Size:** 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m); 140 pounds (63 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** N/A.

**Hit Points:** 28

**S.D.C.:** 6

**P.P.E.:** 5

**Horror/Awe Factor:** N/A.

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical or 3 by psionics.

**Bonuses:** +1 to strike (+4 with weapon), +2 to parry (+4 with weapon), +2 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +3 to save versus Horror Factor, +6 to save versus mind control, +5 to save versus possession, Critical Strike on a 19-20.

**Damage:** Jordan is armed with a magical long sword (2D6) that can inflict a "burning fever" 3x daily (victims must save versus magic or suffer a -2 to strike, parry, dodge, roll with the punch, and initiative for 1D6 rounds - twice as effective against creatures vulnerable to heat). He also carries a pair of daggers (1D6+4 damage, +1 to strike). Jordan wears a stylish suit of studded Leather of Iron (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 100).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Horsemanship: General (55%/40%).

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Jordan has the following psionic powers: Mind Block, See Aura, Meditation, Alter Aura, Bio-Regenerate, Suppress Fear, Deaden Pain, Impervious to Fire, Impervious to Cold, Telekinesis, See the Invisible, Sixth Sense, Telepathy, Group Mind Block, Bio-Manipulation, Hypnotic Suggestion, Resist Fatigue, Detect Psionics, Nightvision, Telekinetic Punch, Telekinetic Leap, Teleport Object, Sense Magic, Empathy, Catatonic Strike, Empathic Transmission, Invisible Haze, Bio-Regeneration (super), Cause Insanity, Induce Nightmare, Mind Bolt, Psi-Sword, Telekinetic Force Field, Pyrokinesis, Mental Illusion, Electrokinesis. I.S.P.: 135.

**Appearance:** Jordan has short blonde hair and green eyes. He is dressed in a fine Imperial officer's uniform. It is clear from his manners that he is used to giving orders though he is clearly not a soldier. He hopes to elevate his position (and possibly get recalled from his family's colony - he hates it in Ophidia) by singlehandedly capturing a Weirdwing and using it to learn his future. He will then try to smuggle the creature back to the Western Empire to present to Emperor Itomas as a gift. Jordan carries 1000 in Western Empire Gold and another 5000 in gemstones.

If the players show themselves as willing to fight to save the Weirdwing, then as the battle ensues, the creature will emerge from the woods to attack, using its own formidable psionic powers to attack Jordan and Xandack.

**Ee'ohathu:** 7<sup>th</sup> level Weirdwing.

**Alignment:** Unprincipled.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 12, M.E. 17, M.A. 14, P.S. 12, P.P. 16, P.E. 11, P.B. 8, Spd 34 (flying)/7 (walking).

**Size:** 2 feet (0.6 m) long body, 4 foot (1.2 m) tail, and 4 foot (1.2 m) wingspan; 18 pounds (8.1 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 5

**Hit Points:** 44

**S.D.C.:** 38

**P.P.E.:** 26

**Horror/Awe Factor:** 9

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical or 3 by psionics.

**Bonuses:** +2 to strike, +1 to parry, +4 to dodge, +3 to save versus psionics, +2 on all other saving throws.

**Damage:** Claw does 1D6 and tail whip does 1D4.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** History (80%), Escape Artist (60%), Astronomy and Navigation (80%).

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Ee'ohathu is a Master Psionic with the following psionic powers: Detect Psionics, Exorcism, Lust for Life, Psychic Diagnosis, Advanced Trance State, Death Trance, Float, Impervious to Cold, Impervious to Fire, Resist Fatigue, Mind Block Auto Defense, Catatonic Strike, Empathic Transmission, Mind Bolt. I.S.P.: 170. It also possesses the special power of Super Clairvoyance (see below).

**Appearance:** Ee'ohathu is a conglomeration of the wings of a bat, the prehensile tail of a rat or possum, the furry face of a cat with whiskers and an owl's beak, and the claws of a bird. Its fur is dark brown and its eyes are a deep shade of brownish green.

After the battle, Ee'ohathu will offer its aid in any way that it can, from giving them advice on where they are headed (deeper into the northern Horde Lands), as well as the history of the region, to offering what limited psionic healing abilities he has. As a show of gratitude, he will also offer to perform a psychic reading of one of the players' fate. If the players seem hesitant to do this, as it requires telling the Weirdwing their true name, Crish will tell the players that the ability to perform such accurate readings into the future is the reason these magnificent creatures are hunted by kings and wizards alike.

Game Masters should feel free to give as much or as little information about the fate of the player who agrees to reveal his true name in exchange for a glimpse into the future. Through this power, Ee'ohathu can learn the following things: see the character's aura, knows any past traumatic experiences, as well as happy ones, and the player's current goals and alignment/state of mind. Drawing upon this information, the Weirdwing will offer advice, though nothing too specific. Using the true name, Ee'ohathu will be able to see into that character's future with a greater degree of accuracy than any normal clairvoyant ability. Regardless of what other information the Game Master wishes to divulge, the player will learn the following important pieces of information from the creature.

"There are others who already know what you seek. Powers are gathering both to try to claim it for themselves and to prevent its resurrection. War will come to whoever wields the power to destroy kingdoms if that great weapon comes to light once more.

"Only one whose desires and intentions are pure will be able to claim what you seek. Otherwise, the golden tower will yield only pain and despair for the one who is lost within its timeless depths.

"Beware, as others also search for the resting place of the fragment you seek, though for other reasons. They must not be allowed to pass its golden doors.

"The past comes back to claim the bane of castles. You must use it to once more break its power lest it frees an evil a hundred times greater than that which it once unleashed upon the world."



What this all means, the Weirdwing cannot say. However, any player who makes a successful Lore: Geomancy/Ley lines or History skill roll may realize that the references to the "golden tower" refer to the lost Palladium of Desires.

Having given its reading to the player, the Weirdwing will once more thank its rescuers and take flight.

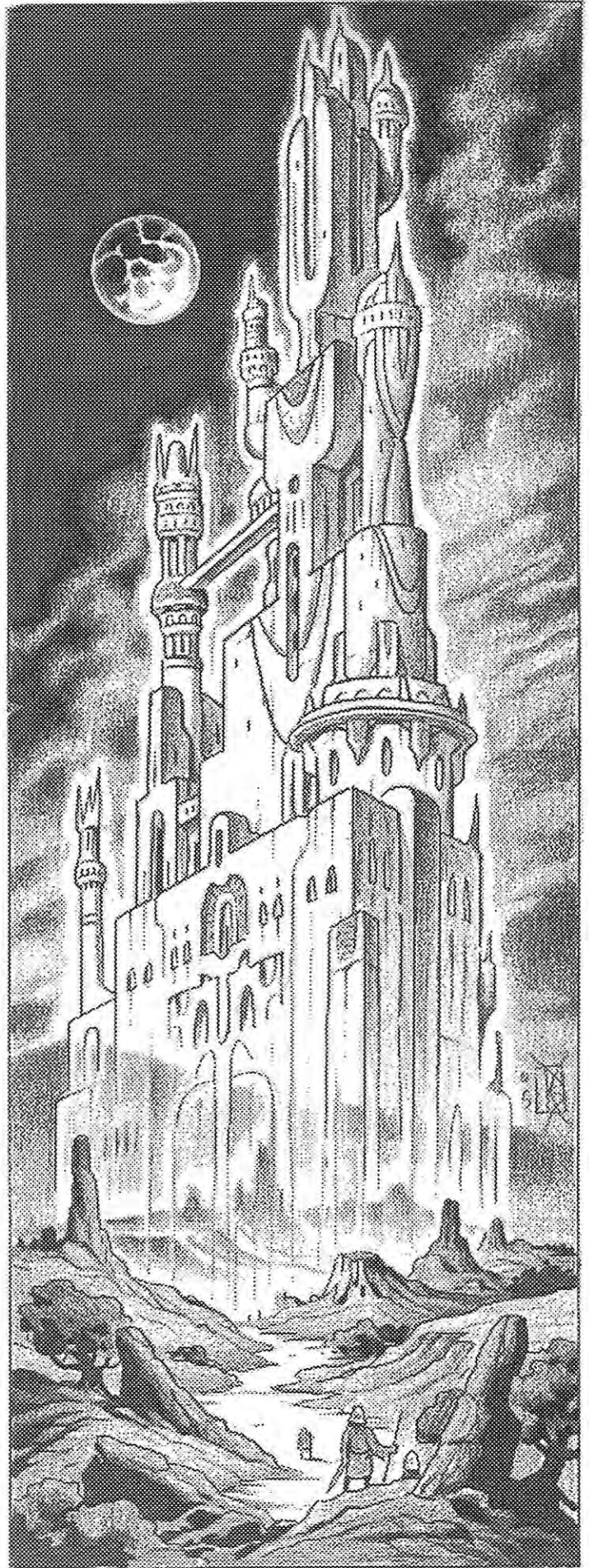
## Chapter Fourteen: The Golden Tower

Whether they know it now or not, the players are heading directly towards the last resting place of the fabled Palladium of Desires. Ages ago, this place was once the home of the greatest wizard of all time, an unassuming human known only as The Nameless Lord. In his golden tower, it was said every man's desire could be satisfied. And no matter how many flocked to this legendary place, beggar and king, knight and wizard, angel and demon, there always seemed to be room for at least one more. Then, without warning, something happened and the Nameless Lord vanished. Evil took over the powers of his tower and instead of a place of revelry and desires it became an abode of twisted evil and torture. It was at this time that the legendary Defilers were born, forged by the horrors they faced within the infinite depths of the golden Palladium of Desires. The Defilers became the most famous of heroes, fighting for the freedom of everyone regardless of race, station, or nationality. Sometime after their exploits were ended and they had scattered across the world and to worlds unknown, the Palladium disappeared. One day it was there, then the next it was gone, leaving only a bare patch of dry ground where it once stood.

Who or what may have taken the golden tower is one of the greatest mysteries of the world. Countless heroes and villains have wasted their lives in the Northern Hinterlands in pursuit of even a hint of the tower's whereabouts. Some say that it has been destroyed, perhaps by those Defilers who still live or by the Nameless Lord himself, returned from whatever world he had gone. Others claim that it was swallowed by the world itself to contain some evil that threatened to spill forth. Reports from wild men in the wilderness claiming to have seen a golden spire glittering in the distance only to have disappeared when they approached are met with both skepticism and hope. Could the Palladium of Desires still exist in some pocket dimension, reappearing only under certain unknown conditions? It is commonly believed that the tower rested upon a ley line nexus, though many attribute this part of the legend as confusion with the infamous Devil's Mark, also hidden somewhere in the Hinterlands.

After several more days travel across Ophid's Grasslands, the players will spy a cluster of low-lying ruins in a valley in the distance. Magic users will also sense that they are in close proximity to a ley line nexus (within a few miles). As they approach at dusk, they will see that the stone buildings are little more than crumbling shells of once fabulous houses. Set up in a circular pattern, they form a ring at the bottom of the valley. It is evident to magic users and psychics that the nexus must lie at the center of the ring.

The ruins are part of a small town that once surrounded the nexus. A number of clearly defined, though heavily overgrown



paths lead directly to the center of the ring. There are no markings or carvings to indicate who might have once built the structures. Even a successful Masonry skill roll will only indicate that the craftsmanship might have been Dwarven, though from what era is unknown. At the center, there is a vast circular patch of grass a mere 100 yards (91 m) in radius. The nexus is located at the exact center of the yard.

Observant players (who make a successful Track Humanoids skill roll) will notice a set of fresh tracks as they approach the ring of ruins. The tracks suggest a small band of humanoids and perhaps Coyle have visited the ruins recently, though it is impossible to tell exactly how long ago. It is also unclear if they ever left, though the ruins are rather extensive and they could have easily left in another direction. Sensitive players will feel a general sense of uneasiness while within the ruins, as if they are being watched, though this might be a result of the nexus itself. If the players conduct an extensive search of the ruins with what little light they have, they will find further evidence that someone recently made camp here (requires a successful Intelligence skill roll to know that it was the same band of Orcs and Coyles that made the tracks leading into the ruins).

The player who possesses the pieces of Castlerake will sense that the fifth piece of the rune sword lies at the exact center of the nexus. However, there is nothing there. Even if the players magically or psychically can See the Invisible, they will see nothing. If they dig beneath the exact center of the nexus, they will find only a thin layer of topsoil and then stone. The only clue to where the piece might be will come if a player uses the magic or psionic Sense Dimensional Anomaly. In this case, the player will get the feeling that a very small dimensional time/space Rift is barely lingering, almost completely collapsed, at the very center of the nexus. Why it is so small (microscopic if it were to be actually visible) or what is keeping it open for that matter is a mystery (even to those with the Lore: Geomancy/Ley Lines skill). All that is certain is that according to the other four pieces of the rune sword, the fifth piece of Castlerake is at the exact center of this tiny Rift.

Regardless of what the players do while trying to figure out the mystery of the ruins, nothing will happen until near midnight. It just so happens that this particular evening has not only a full moon, but also a lunar eclipse (players with the Astronomy & Navigation skill might already know this). When the lunar eclipse begins, the player with the pieces of Castlerake will feel the connection to the nexus suddenly grow stronger. It will continue to do this as the eclipse progresses towards totality (a lunar eclipse can last anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half as the moon slowly passes into the planet's shadow). During this first half hour, the moon will gradually disappear. A minute (four melees) before totality (the one minute length when the moon completely enters the planet's shadow and reappears as a blood-red moon), one of the players will hear a rock tumble loose from nearby. At this time, anyone with the psionic power Sixth Sense will also be warned of the coming danger.

Then without further warning, several dark shapes will appear out of nowhere and attack.

**3 Orcs:** 3<sup>rd</sup> level Mercenary Warrior O.C.C. in the service of the Vault of Destiny.

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 9, M.E. 6, M.A. 12, P.S. 19, P.P. 15, P.E. 12, P.B. 8, Spd 14.

**Size:** 6 feet (1.8 m) tall; 240 pounds (108 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** N/A.

**Hit Points:** 23

**S.D.C.:** 32

**P.P.E.:** 9

**Horror Factor:** N/A.

**Attacks per Melee:** 2 physical.

**Bonuses:** +2 to strike (+4 with weapons), +3 to parry (+4 with weapons), +3 to dodge, +4 to pull punch, +3 to roll with the punch, +5 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Claws do 1D6+4, Bite does 1D6, and Each carries a scimitar (2D6+4) and a pair of long daggers (2D4+4). Each wears Studded Leather Armor (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), Track Blood Scent (25%), Recognize Scent of Others (16%).

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Typical Orcs, muscular, black hair, black skin. Each carries 50 in Byzantium Gold and 200 in Wolfen Empire Silver.

**2 Coyles:** 4<sup>th</sup> level Mercenary O.C.C. in the service of the Vault of Destiny.

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 14, M.E. 10, M.A. 5, P.S. 17, P.P. 20, P.E. 15, P.B. 9, Spd 20.

**Size:** 7 feet, 4 inches (2.2 m) tall; 270 pounds (121.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** N/A.

**Hit Points:** 28     **S.D.C.:** 31

**P.P.E.:** 9

**Horror Factor:** 11

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical.

**Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +5 to strike (+7 with weapons), +6 to parry (+8 with weapons), +6 to dodge, +4 to pull punch, +3 to roll with the punch, +3 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Claws do 1D6+2, Kick does 2D6+2, and Bite does 1D6. Each carries a scythe pole (3D6+4) and a giant-sized long sword (3D6+2). Each wears a suit of Full Chain armor (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 44).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), Track Blood Scent (36%), Recognize Scent of Others (24%), Keen Hearing.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Typical Coyles, humanoid coyotes with brown fur and numerous scars. Each carries 75 in Byzantium Gold and another 350 in Wolfen Empire Gold.

**Gorgylath and Trel:** Twin Gargoyles in the thrall of the Summoner Ryul.

**Alignment:** Anarchist.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 11, M.E. 12, M.A. 4, P.S. 29, P.P. 21, P.E. 26, P.B. 11, Spd 24 (running)/70 (flying).



**Size:** 15 feet (4.6 m) tall; 1400 pounds (630 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 14

**Hit Points:** 56      **S.D.C.:** 60

**P.P.E.:** 13

**Horror Factor:** 16

**Attacks per Melee:** 5 physical.

**Bonuses:** +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +7 to dodge in flight, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with the punch, +1 to save versus psionics, +6 to save versus magic, +6 to save versus poison, +10 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Claws do 5D6+14, Tail strike does 5D6+14, and bite does 1D4.

**Natural Abilities:** Nightvision 220 feet (67 m), Flight, see the invisible, breathe fire (once per melee, 4D6 damage; 40 feet/12.2 m), leap 30 feet (9 m), bio-regenerate 2D6 S.D.C./Hit Points every other melee round.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Considered Major Psychics with the following powers: Meditation, Mind Block, Presence Sense, Telepathy, Resist Hunger, Resist Fatigue, and Resist Thirst. Each has 40 I.S.P. Equivalent to 3<sup>rd</sup> level experience.

**Appearance:** Giant, gray-skinned, winged demons with muscular tails. The Gargoyle twins are only subservient to Ryul because he summoned them. They will fight only because he orders them to attack. If the Summoner is killed, they will actually turn on the Coyles and Orcs, and then, if the players do not directly attack them, they will fly off to parts unknown.

**Ryul:** Elf, 4<sup>th</sup> level Wizard O.C.C./7<sup>th</sup> level Summoner O.C.C. of the League of Masters from the Vault of Destiny.

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 12, M.E. 15, M.A. 10, P.S. 11, P.P. 20, P.E. 9, P.B. 12, Spd 11.

**Size:** 6 feet (1.8 m) tall; 180 pounds (81 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** N/A.

**Hit Points:** 40

**S.D.C.:** 11

**P.P.E.:** 287

**Horror Factor:** N/A.

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical or 2 by magic.

**Bonuses:** +3 to strike (+5 with weapons), +5 to parry (+7 with weapons), +5 to dodge, +3 to save versus magic, +2 spell strength, +1 circle strength, +4 to save versus mind control and possession, +7 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 on all other saving throws (courtesy of Ryul's rune weapon).

**Damage:** Ryul's favorite weapon is a rune mace. Named Charjen, the weapon is unprincipled with an I.Q. of 14. In addition to the usual rune weapon abilities, Charjen inflicts 5D6 damage (double damage to infernals - demons and Deevils) and has 70 P.P.E. to cast the following Water Warlock spells: Cloud of Steam, Fog of Fear, Sheet of Ice, Shards of Ice, Snow Storm, and Encase in Ice. Other than the rune mace, Ryul always carries a pair of exceptional quality, non-magical silver daggers (1D6+2 damage, +1 to strike and parry).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 60 feet (18.3 m), Lore: Demons and Monsters (75%).

**Magic:** As both a Wizard and Summoner, Ryul commands a great deal of magical power. He possesses the following spell knowledge: Cloud of Slumber, Decipher Magic, Sense Magic, Tongues, Globe of Daylight, See the Invisible, Blinding Flash, Thunderclap, Chameleon, Befuddle, Fear, Armor of Ithan, Invisibility: Simple, Magic Net, Multiple Image, Fire Ball, Summon Shadow Beast, Carpet of Adhesion, Havoc, Negate Magic, Fly, and Sense Dimensional Anomaly (all spells are at 4<sup>th</sup> level strength). He also knows all summoning and protection circles as well as a number of power circles. However, the only one he has active is the Power Circle of Invisibility (see below).

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Ryul is a scrawny looking Elf who appears in his late middle age, with drawn, wrinkled skin, graying black hair, and pale eyes (actually, he is much younger, but has prematurely aged as a result of the strain he has undergone in the pursuit of the dark powers of Summoning). Ryul carries 750 in Byzantium Gold and another 2000 in gemstones.

Ryul and his minions have been sent by the rulers of the Vault of Destiny to search for the Palladium of Desires. Ryul is one of the League of Masters (999 Summoners who serve an insane Wolfen Summoner, Shurgen Rongsol) who rule the infamous Vault of Destiny along the edge of the foothills of the Northern Mountains. Their leader wants to find the golden tower to gain its powers in his mad quest for domination. Ryul is but one of the lower ranking Summoners who has been sent into the Northern Hinterlands in search of it. He believes he has found it, but cannot explain why it is not where his research says it should be. He has detected the microscopic dimensional rift and suspects that it is somehow a link to wherever the Palladium now resides. However, rather than returning to his masters with this knowledge, he seeks to unlock its secrets for himself (either to gain mastery over his companions or at the very least, to elevate his ranking amongst the League of Masters).

Ryul and his minions have been hiding in the Invisibility Power Circle on the edge of the clearing. (Game Masters: if a player has already used See the Invisible to try and find the location of the fifth piece of Castlerake, then assume that Ryul and his followers were not in the circle, but were hiding in the ruins nearby and entered the circle sometime during the night.) When Ryul senses the growing power of the eclipse, he orders his minions to exit the circle and attack. He then begins launching spells from within the circle while still invisible. He will continue to do this until the exact moment of the eclipse's totality.

After one minute (four melees) of combat, the eclipse will enter its totality phase. There will be a sudden spike in P.P.E. followed by a blinding flash of light. Suddenly, a slender golden tower will appear directly in the middle of the circular yard. Anyone in the middle of the 150 foot (45.7 m) diameter base will be magically displaced outward (loses initiative and is -3 to strike, parry, and dodge for the following melee round as a result of the disorientation). Everyone who sees the golden tower which reaches several hundred feet into the night sky must roll to save against horror/awe factor of 18. Those who fail can do nothing but stare slack-jawed at the magnificent gleaming tower for their first action of the coming melee round.

Perfectly smooth, the only feature visible on the tower, which seems to glow brightly with its own magical light, is a pair of gold and silver doors covered with raised relief of mysterious mystic symbols. As soon as he overcomes his momentary awe of the sight, Ryul will make a break for the doors, ignoring or beating aside anyone in his way. It will take him one entire melee round to reach the doors. Players will have only one round to either try to stop him or for one of them to enter the tower themselves. If Ryul is killed, the Gargoyles will turn on the remaining Orcs and Coyles. If one of the players reaches the doors first, as soon as he touches the gleaming surface he will find himself being pulled into the tower. From the point of view of everyone else, that person will simply seem to melt into the door and vanish. If Ryul somehow manages to reach the door first, he will melt into the door instead. Once one person has entered the tower, no one else will be allowed to enter. This means that players absolutely **MUST** prevent Ryul from reaching the doors or must reach them first (the latter should be easier as Ryul will be on the far side of the clearing in his circle until the tower appears and he is not particularly fast).

If Ryul does manage to enter the tower first, no one else will be able to. The tower will remain for the entire minute of the total phase of the eclipse. Once this period passes, the tower will flicker once, then vanish, taking its light with it. In the center of where the tower once stood, Ryul's mangled, barely recognizable body will be twitching in a heap. What little still resembles his face shows an insane smile which lingers briefly before the Summoner dies. If this happens, then it is left to the Game Master and/or the imagination of the players to determine how they retrieve the next piece of the sword from the Palladium of Desires.

If it is a player who first reaches the golden doors, he will be pulled into a massive circular chamber lined with hundreds of doors that seems to be lit by a magical light that comes from nowhere. The player will feel drawn by the pieces of Castlerake towards a single door that is otherwise indistinguishable from the rest. A voice in his head will ask him what his deepest desire is. If the player does not answer that he wishes to find the next piece of the sword, he will be drawn towards a different door and will suffer an unimaginably horrible death (he will reappear in much the same state as Ryul would if he had entered instead when the tower disappears). If, however, the player responds that he wishes only to find the fifth piece of the rune sword, he will be drawn towards the same door he senses the next piece behind.

The room around him will dissolve and he will appear in a simple gold room with two doors. Standing in the middle of the room is an Orc warrior. When he turns to face the player, it will be readily apparent how much he looks like the ghostly image of Kortag the Conqueror. This is Hrothnak, one of his five sons who were dispatched long ago to scatter the pieces of Castlerake. If the player makes a successful medical diagnostic roll (under just about any medical skill) or Wilderness Survival skill roll, he will realize that the Orc is suffering from exposure due to extremely cold conditions.

From his point of view, he has only just arrived. He will ask if his father sent the player to retrieve him or Castlerake's Pommel Gem. If the player explains that he was sent by his father (after a fashion) to find the pieces, then Hrothnak will surrender

the fifth piece. He will then explain: "My father sent my brothers and me out to the far corners of the world to scatter the five remaining pieces of Castlerake to prevent them from falling into the clutches of the various war chiefs who already were demanding its surrender. Trelnor headed south, I think to cross into the southern sea and take the Crossbar to the Edge of the World. Karak and Kortog both headed in opposite directions with the two smaller Crossbar Gems; Karak to the west, I fear into the Yin-Sloth Jungles or perhaps to the Baalgor Wastelands, and Kortog to the east into the wilderness beyond the Dragon River. My brother Hronal and I both remained together for some time as we headed north. In the vicious winter of the Hinterlands, we were separated. In my desperate wanderings through the endless snow, I found this place only just as the last of my strength failed me. I know not if Hronal survived the winter either, but I fear that even if he did, his quest will ultimately claim his life. Though he never admitted it to me, I fear that he planned to take Castlerake's blade into the Nameless Place beyond the Northern Mountains, the Land of the Damned. When I entered this place, a voice asked me what my deepest desire was and I answered that I only wished to fulfill the final wish of my father. Then you appeared behind me."

With that, he turns and exits through the opposite door. Before the player can follow, the tower will dissolve around him. (Game Master's note: Hrothnak returned to his own time and began to make his way south back towards home, the only one of the five sons to have survived the journey. He will not, however, return to his father's home to relate the story of how a stranger came to claim the Pommel Gem. What fate befalls him in the past/present/or future is left to the Game Master to determine.)

One minute after the tower appeared, it will flicker for an instant then vanish, plunging the entire scene into darkness. The totality of the eclipse will end and the blood-red moon will vanish. Within a half an hour, the eclipse will be completely over and the full moon will return to the sky. Lying in the exact spot where the tower so briefly stood is the person who entered the tower. If it is one of the players, he will now have the fifth piece of Castlerake. There is no doubt, once the player is revived, that the final piece does indeed lie almost directly to the west, in the direction of the Northern Mountains and the Land of the Damned.

**Castlerake's Pommel Gem:** A huge faceted diamond with an ancient rune clearly glittering in its crystalline depths. The diamond radiates strongly of magic and contains 100 P.P.E. that can be used by a magic user. If this P.P.E. is depleted, the gem will recharge at a rate of 1 P.P.E. per day or faster if willingly filled by a magic user or set upon a ley line or nexus (from page 229, *Dragons and Gods*, PFRPG 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.).

**Note:** This gemstone will not magically flash to join the others on the crossbar as it was designed to fit into the end of the pommel and that is part of the final piece, the blade.

For more details on the Palladium of Desires, Angel-Demon Serpents, The Vault of Destiny, the Shadow Coast of Byzantium, and any other information pertaining to the Northern Hinterlands, check out *Northern Hinterlands*, PFRPG Book 13, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.





## Chapter Fifteen: Doorway to the Damned

If the players tell Crish that they plan to cross the Northern Mountains and enter the Land of the Damned, she will explain that she cannot go with them. She is already well beyond the land she knows and, though she relishes the new “stripes” she has earned as their guide, she does not know enough about mountain climbing to be of much aid to them. She does, however, strongly suggest that they head northwest to the colony of Destiny Point where, she has heard, numerous adventurers who seek to challenge the impassible heights often gather before setting out. She will guide them that far, but no further.

Destiny Point is one of the thirteen colonies on the Shadow Coast of Byzantium. Forced to work hard for the Royal Byzantium Crown, this region seethes with rebellious tension. Sandwiched between the Northern Mountains and the Homeland Bay, Destiny Point has the reputation for being the roughest, rowdiest of the thirteen colonies. While this is true, Destiny Point is tame by comparison to other lawless adventuring towns in the Old Kingdom and parts of the Eastern Territory. Most basic goods and services can be found in the colony, including weapons and armor. Magic, however, is still very limited, with only two shops having any magic items at all, and these being mostly minor items traded by other adventurers in the past.

If the players inquire about a guide across the Northern Mountains, they will find that most of the experienced guides

have already taken to the mountains or are off elsewhere hunting or trapping in the Hinterlands. They will ultimately, however, be directed towards a flamboyant character who goes by the name of Gideon. All the players will hear about him is that he can only be found at either the Freebooters (a very successful and always crowded gambling house, tavern, inn, and bordello) or the Hippodrome, betting on animal races. They will also be warned that while Gideon may know the mountains very well, he is really not a very... safe... choice for a guide. Whoever tells them this will only smile if asked what this means and will tell them to find out for themselves.

Gideon is easy to find - he stands out like a sore thumb. Dressed in flamboyant silks and wearing a wide-brimmed feathered hat (he looks like a comic-book version of a pirate), he is always the center of attention, constantly trying to get those around him to engage in some bet or challenge. He always has a smile on his face, a drink in his hand, and usually ends each sentence with a laugh.

What stands out most about Gideon, however, is not his nature, but that he is not human, or even any of the other races common to the Hinterlands. Gideon is an Ashada.

**Gideon:** (real name is Gidon Ash) Ashada, 5<sup>th</sup> level Gentleman Thief/Explorer/Daredevil (get the idea?).

**Alignment:** Anarchist.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 15, M.E. 13, M.A. 23, P.S. 16, P.P. 25, P.E. 16, P.B. 10, Spd 15 (running)/30 (flying).

**Size:** 6 feet (1.8 m) tall; 100 pounds (45 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 14 (see below).

**Hit Points:** 34    **S.D.C.:** 46

**P.P.E.:** 14

**Horror Factor:** N/A

**Attacks per Melee:** 4 physical.

**Bonuses:** +2 on initiative, +7 to strike (+9 with knife, +10 to strike when thrown), an additional +1 to strike while gliding, +8 to parry (+10 with knife), 8 to dodge (+11 to dodge while gliding), +4 to pull punch, +8 to roll with the punch, +2 to disarm, +1 to save versus magic, +1 to save versus poison, +3 to save versus Horror Factor and possession, 75% trust/intimidate.

**Damage:** Though trained in a variety of weapons, Gideon's favorite is knives. He carries no fewer than a dozen on his person at any time. Eight of these are specially designed as throwing knives (1D4+1 damage, +2 to strike when thrown). Two are heavy-duty daggers (1D6+4 damage, +1 to parry and strike). The remaining two are magical: super-sharpness (reduces the roll for a critical by 2) and returns when thrown (1D6+5 damage). He also knows a variety of kicks: Karate Kick (2D6+1), Backward Sweep, and Tripping/Leg Hook. Though he wears no armor, he has an Ironhide Ring that he “acquired” from a Western Empire Noble that raises his natural A.R. to 14.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Resistant to Cold (half damage), Gliding (wing membranes tuck out of sight beneath his arms when not in use), Acrobatics and Gymnastics (All skills at 5<sup>th</sup> level, +10% to Acrobatics skills), Climb Walls (70%/70%), Land Navigation (56%), Pick Locks (65%), Pick Pockets (65%), Locate Secret Doors/Compartments (50%), Streetwise (50%), Prowl (55%), Card Shark (54%), Palming (50%), Concealment (46%), Wilderness Survival (50%), Mountaineering (55%).



**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Minor Psionic with the following abilities: Nightvision and Impervious to Cold. I.S.P. 46.

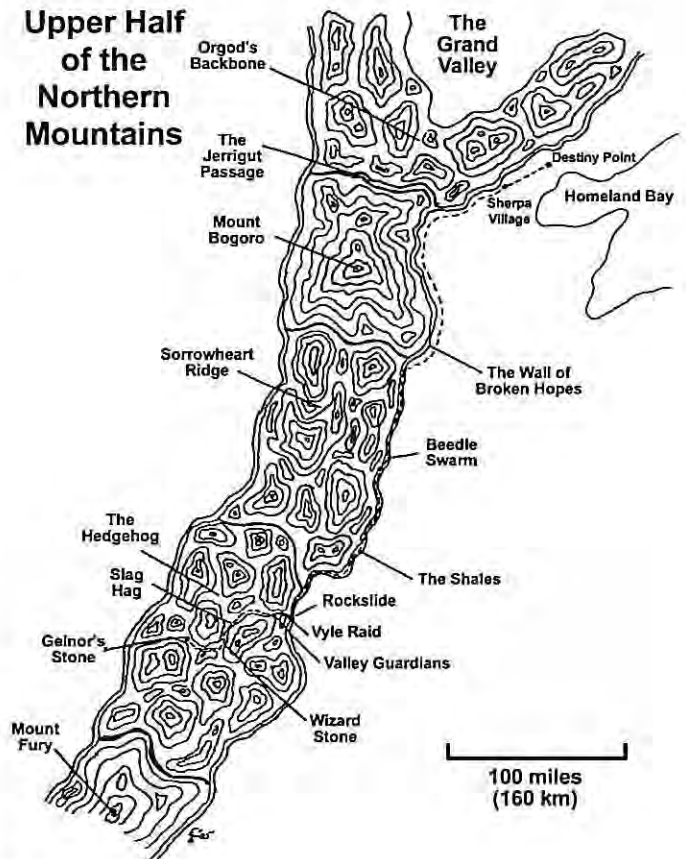
**Appearance:** Ashada have the body of a sinuous simian with an otter's face. A thin membrane attached to their arms and ribcage is completely hidden when not in use. When not actively engaged in guiding them through the treacherous territory that is the Northern Mountains, Gideon will often try to entice the players into games of chance (he always has a deck of cards on his person) or into dares. Other times, when the situation does not seem too perilous, he will take to the air, often diving from the top of a cliff to glide about, claiming that he is merely scouting the area ahead when in actuality he is simply indulging in his free spirited ways.

Gideon has been rather bored lately with most of the regulars out of town hunting and trapping during the snow-free summer and has been looking for a reason to head out of town. Also, he knows that revolution is brewing and does not want to be around when one side or the other decides that his antics are too much trouble to deal with. As such, he will gladly accept the job (he will charge them 7500 gold up front - a steep price, but he is taking them across the most dangerous mountains in the world) of guiding the players over the Northern Mountains, though he says that that is where he draws the line. He will not, even on a dare (which is unusual for him - he gladly accepts almost any other challenge and usually turns it into a wager he will win), enter the Land of the Damned. Though he will have already made up his mind when the players first ask him, he will not be so revealing and will have a little fun with the characters (gam-

bling, drinking games, or dares to show off just how determined they are to cross the mountains - nothing too dangerous, more for Gideon's amusement than anything else). Gideon will advise them on what gear they will need to acquire before trekking across the tallest mountain range in the world (snowshoes, furs, climbing gear, etc.) and will meet them in two days back at the Freebooters. He will also advise them to either sell their steeds or be willing to pay to have them stabled for the duration. (If given the chance, he may decide to lift the purse off of one of the players just so that he can give it back to him when they meet again - he will tell them that the player must have dropped it.)

While the players spend their two days finding out what to get in order to make the trek, they will hear a rumor that the Grand Champion of the Lopan Olympiad was last seen journeying into the Hinterlands and that he might be in possession of one or more of the pieces of Castlerake (it would be most effective if they heard this from a few royal guards, who could add that with such a weapon, any rebel colony would surely fall). Should the players ask about the Land of the Damned, especially the southern regions (which is where the pieces of the rune sword indicate the final piece may lie), they will hear that the Darkest Heart is an unnatural forest teeming with twisted Faerie Folk, dark Elves, and all manner of Were-Beasts, not to mention creatures that once served the Old Ones in the Chaos War. As far as the lands further south, players will only learn that the Eternal Torment is a cursed, barren wasteland ruled by all manner of undead (for more fun, Game Masters should consult the rumor mill tables for these two regions in *The Land of the Damned Two: Eternal Torment*). Also, players will overhear that the local Banshee has begun to stalk the Cemetery and wail, usually a sign that someone is about to lose their life in an attempt to cross the Northern Mountains.

### Upper Half of the Northern Mountains





**Game Masters:** To truly get an idea of how formidable crossing the Northern Mountains is, especially for the untrained such as the players, consult *Land of the Damned One: Chaos Lands*, pages 135-148. For those without this reference, a brief description along with some optional encounters is provided in the following section. Even with Gideon's guidance as well as the magical items that they should have acquired by this point in the adventure, the trip will still be dangerous, though it will be somewhat more plausible that they could make it across alive than if they had simply tried to tackle the mountains on their own with no real mountaineering training to begin with.

After asking them in which direction they wish to go, Gideon will lead them west of Destiny Point for a couple of days until they reach a small village nestled at the edge of the plains at the foot of the Northern Mountains. This small, nameless village consists predominately of Orcs with a few burly humans thrown into the mix. Unlike those in Byzantium proper, these humans and Orcs live together in relative peace, finding that it is easier to set aside racial grievances while coping with the dangers of living in the shadows of the Northern Mountains. Gideon will begin negotiations with the village elders for several Sherpas (native guides specializing in mountaineering) to aid them in their trek. Four Sherpas will be willing to aid the party and Gideon, though the cost will be an additional 10,000 gold up front (paid to the families of the Sherpas through the village elders), though if any of the players have foolishly not heeded Gideon's advice about leaving their horses behind, the village will gladly accept the party's mounts as payment provided that the beasts are healthy and strong. Other items for trade will also be accepted, though these are simple people living off the land who have little use for exotic items.

**4 Sherpas:** 5<sup>th</sup> level Orc Vagabonds with specialized Mountaineering skills.

**Alignment:** Anarchist.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 6, M.E. 5, M.A. 8, P.S. 28, P.P. 10, P.E. 15, P.B. 11, Spd 12.

**Size:** 5 feet (1.5 m) tall; 200 pounds (90 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** N/A

**Hit Points:** 37    **S.D.C.:** 37

**P.P.E.:** 7

**Horror Factor:** N/A

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical.

**Bonuses:** +1 to strike (+3 with weapons), +2 to parry (+4 with weapons), +2 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +3 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Claws (1D6+13), bite (1D6), kick (1D6+13). Each Sherpa also carries a club (2D4+13) and knife (1D6+13).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), track by blood scent (35%), recognize scent of others (22%), Cook (55%), Wilderness Survival (50%), Land Navigation (46%), Mountaineering (75%), Climb/Scale Walls (55%), Athletics, Body Building.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Short for your typical Orcs, dressed in furs and carrying large sacks on their backs. Like Gideon, these Sherpas

will not under any circumstances go any further into the Land of the Damned than the other side of the Northern Mountains.

Once the arrangements have been made, the party, led by Gideon and with the aid of the four Sherpas, will head south along the foothills at the base of the Wall of Broken Hopes, a 1000 foot (305 m), nearly vertical cliff that runs the entire length of the Northern Mountains. While it looked almost impossible to climb, Gideon begins to point out places where natural erosion and deliberate efforts have carved passageways into the cliff face. After several days of travel, he will guide the players up one such passage (players should make Climb Walls skill rolls every 100 feet/30.5 m to avoid slipping along the narrow passage - a fall means sliding down and taking 1D6 damage for every 20 feet/6 m fallen).

When they reach the top, he will once more lead them south through a narrow band (1D4 miles/1.6-6.4 km) of alpine forest for several more days before turning west to begin an ascent up the Shales (by now the players should be parallel with the Midlands region of the Northern Mountains known as the Hedgehog, about halfway down the length of the range). He explains that, while not the easiest place to ascend, crossing through the peaks of the Hedgehog will put them in the Land of the Damned south of the Great Rift, the region where demons and Deevils wage their endless war. It also puts them well to the south of the Citadel, the fortress of chaos and evil at the heart of the Bleakness in the northern part of the Land of the Damned.

After several days of travel along the narrow plateau, the players will be attacked by a lone Beedle. Though the players will easily dispatch it, the Sherpas will be terrified and Gideon will suddenly tense up and begin looking skyward. Within moments, the players will hear the buzzing of a swarm of Beedles that will be with striking range within 1D4 rounds. The first target will be one of the Sherpas who will be slain before the players can save him. Game Masters should then randomly determine the next target. A successful Lore: Demons and Monsters skill roll made during the 1D4 rounds prior to the swarm's attack may (at the Game Master's discretion) give the players a clue as to how to defeat the massive swarm (see below under Natural Abilities).

**1100 Beedles:** Swarming insect predators of the Northern Mountains.

**Alignment:** Animal predators equal to Anarchist.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1, M.E. 1, M.A. 1, P.S. 1, P.P. 10, P.E. 1, P.B. 3, Spd 13 flying.

**Size:** 2 inches long (5 cm); negligible.

**Natural A.R.:** 6

**Hit Points:** 1    **S.D.C.:** 0

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

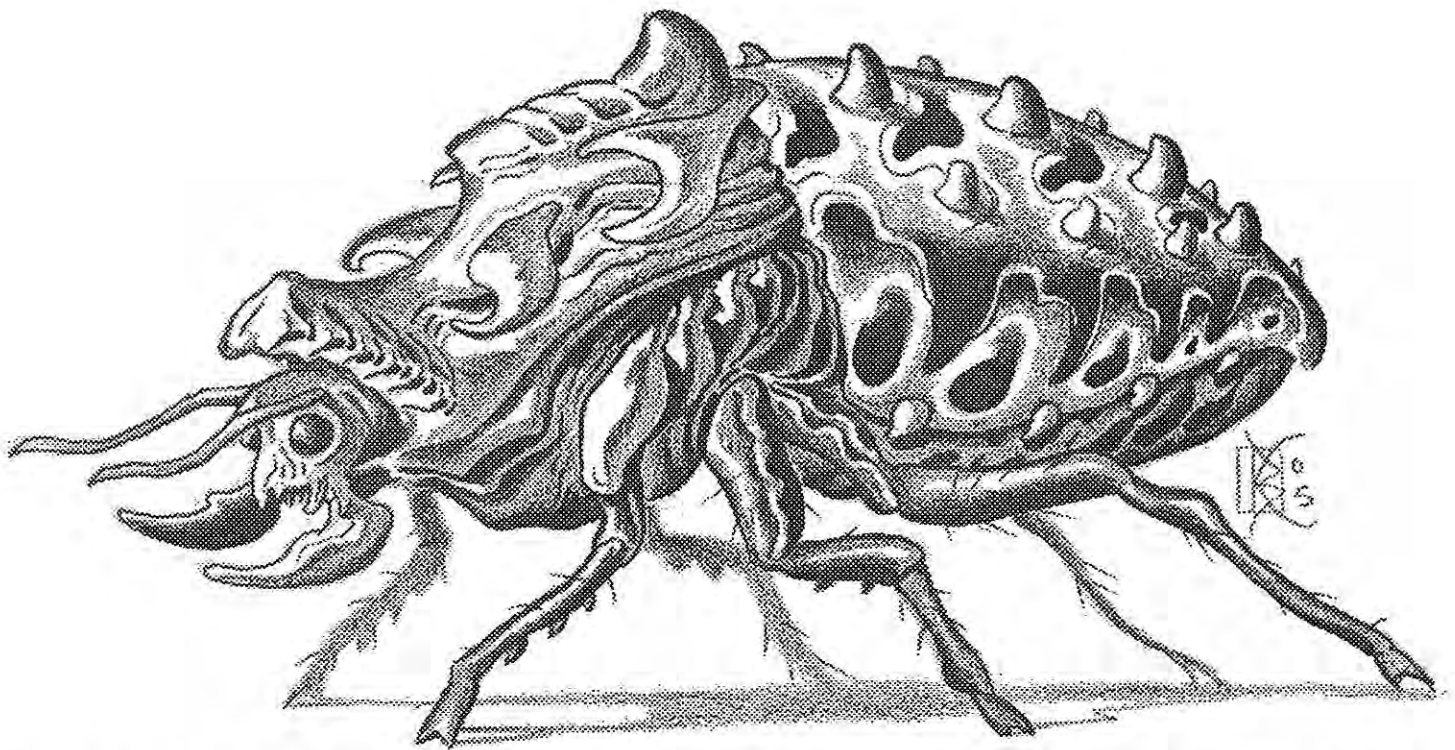
**Horror Factor:** 6 (individual)/14 (swarm).

**Attacks per Melee:** 1 per 100 (swarm starts out with 11).

**Bonuses:** +2 to dodge as an individual. No bonuses as a swarm.

**Damage:** Bite does 1D6.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Flight, Adhesion, Track by Scent (88%). Swarms are largely unaffected by single attacks. Attacks that are designed to attack a group (clouds, ring of fire,



etc.) will cause the swarm to split into two equal halves. One will continue to attack while the other half seeks a new target. Each swarm will continue until its size has been split into a size less than 25% of its original swarm size. At this point, the smaller swarms will have been driven off and ultimately disperse.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Large flying beetles with colorful, metallic looking carapaces and four wings. In the original play test, the party used a variety of magical tactics to split the swarm into smaller and smaller groups. Once a group had been reduced to less than 275, it dispersed. (1100 Beedles splits into two groups of 550, each of which splits to two groups of 275. Once each of these four smaller groups were forced to split again, the two resulting swarms of 137 disperses.)

After several more days of travel, the forest will thin and the flat shelf will narrow to a passage less than 100 yards wide. As the players enter it, they will notice that a recent landslide from the Shales has made travel impossible without climbing over the rough, unstable slope. Gideon will consult with the remaining Sherpas and explain that they had not wanted to enter the Shales yet, as they are still too far south of the pass he wanted to climb up into the Midlands. He then offers to glide around in search of any better way that does not involve climbing over the unstable rockslide or up the Shales at this time. Twenty minutes later, he will descend with news of a narrow, secluded valley that they must have missed about 2 miles (3.2 km) back. He will guide them back in that direction, but from the ground, it will take them another 3 hours of searching to find the hidden entrance (requires three successful Locate Secret Passages skill rolls to find the correct path without getting sidetracked). Once inside, the light of day will dim to twilight as a result of the narrow walls, but soon, the passage opens up into a narrow wooded valley. This is one of the many secluded, secret Lowland valleys in the Northern Mountains. Gideon will warn that while this may

look pleasant enough compared with the prospect of continuing on the more or less exposed shelf between the Wall of Broken Hopes and the Shales, bandits and dangerous mountain monsters are known to use these inviting valleys as a lure to weary travelers before ambushing them.

By the end of this first day away from the shelf above the Wall of Broken Hopes, Gideon will suggest setting up their camp in a secluded nook in the valley wall. At some point during the night, the camp will be invaded by a small pack of five Vyles intent on raiding the food stores of the party. If these repugnant little creatures are left alone to raid the food stores and any garbage the players might have with them, they will consume what is present then wander off in search of more carrion. However, once an attempt is made to drive them off, the Vyles will attack either until killed or until the players give up and let the animals eat in peace. This leaves the players with the choice between attacking creatures that spit and bleed highly corrosive acid or losing all of their food. Not a happy choice anywhere, especially in the Northern Mountains.

**5 Vyles:** Carrion feeders of the Northern Mountains.

**Alignment:** Animal predators equal to Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 6, M.E. 3, M.A. 2, P.S. 6, P.P. 21, P.E. 12, P.B. 4, Spd 9.

**Size:** 3 feet (0.9 m) long; 30 pounds (13.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 8

**Hit Points:** 22    **S.D.C.:** 20

**P.P.E.:** 5

**Horror Factor:** 8

**Attacks per Melee:** 3

**Bonuses:** +3 to strike with acid, +6 to dodge, +7 to save versus poison.

**Damage:** Bite and Claws do 1D6. Acid spit does 3D6 initial damage then 2D6 damage the next round, then 1D6 damage for 1D4 rounds after. Can only be neutralized with milk.



**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Any strikes that inflict damage cause a spurt of acid (must roll 7 or higher to dodge or parry) on anyone within 3 feet (0.9 m). Track by scent (60%), Nightvision 300 feet (91.4 m), Swim (85%), Climb (80%), Prowl (70%).

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Reptilian quadruped about the size of a small dog with tan and gray skin.

Several days later, as the players head deeper into the valley, looking for a way into the Midlands, the players will encounter three guardians who will demand that they pass a series of tests before being allowed to travel any further into the valley. The three guardians are Mareth the Ki-Lin, Otimus the Sphinx, and Urgex the Za. Gideon will claim to have heard of them and will warn the players that they had best play along or turn around and look for another way around as these three guardians are legendary and would make mincemeat out of the players. It is also possible that the players may have heard a rumor about this trio of guardians if they spent any time investigating some of the myriad of rumors that run rampant in the Shadow Colonies about the Land of the Damned (for full details on this and the many other rumors about the Northern Mountains, consult pages 16-31 of *Land of the Damned One: Chaos Lands*).

Mareth's test is that he will want the players to tell them about three truly good deeds they have done in their adventures. Otimus' test is that he will want them to tell him about three pieces of legend and lore that he had not heard of (if the players cannot think of anything unique, they must make three successful Lore skill rolls; for each success, there is a 33% chance that Otimus has not heard of it). Urgex's test is that he wants one of the players to impale himself on his soul-drinking rune sword. (This is a ruse - the sword is illusionary and will do no real damage - he merely wants to watch the players fight over who is willing to sacrifice themselves to get past. If he is amused by what goes on, he will let them pass regardless.) Once the players have passed all three tests, the guardians will tell them where there is a narrow set of stairs that will lead the players into the Shales and up into the Midlands. A day or two later, the players will find the stairs exactly where promised and be able to climb the steep valley wall into the Shales.

The Shales is a region with a nearly 45° slope that is made up of nothing but broken rubble that wind and water and ice has shed from the mountains above. Consisting of small broken slabs of stone, the slope constantly shifts and slides with each step. With a thickness of nearly 2000 feet (610 m) from base to top, players should roll to Maintain Balance every 1D6x100 feet/30.5-183 m traveled (roll under 55% if they lack any Acrobatics or Gymnastics skills). A failed roll means suffering 1D6 damage from cuts on the sharp rock and sliding some 1D6x10 yards/meters back down the slope. Any player who unwisely traveled with their mount will most likely lose it here as the numerous falls will ultimately cause the animal's legs to break and force the players to kill the animal lest it be slaughtered by some mountain predator.

Once this region is passed, players will finally be on their way up into the true mountains. The Hedgehog region is in the Midlands (10,000 to 18,000 feet/3048 to 5486 m above sea

level). While these are not the tallest peaks in the range (the tallest dwarf even Earth's Mount Everest) they are still quite formidable. It will take the players 1D4 weeks to cross the entire region, most of which will consist of traveling across glaciers and ice sheets that run like giant, slow moving rivers between the peaks.

The players will spend the better part of the next week climbing steadily higher into the glaciated region. Then, about a week into their trek through the Hedgehog, the party will be attacked without warning by a Slag Hag and the ten Lava Goblins that have adopted her as a protector.

**Slag Hag:** Metal eating monster equivalent to a 6<sup>th</sup> level Fire Warlock.

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 6, M.E. 9, M.A. 8, P.S. 15, P.P. 17, P.E. 13, P.B. 3, Spd 5.

**Size:** 5 feet (1.5 m) tall; 200 pounds (90 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 8

**Hit Points:** 53     **S.D.C.:** 40

**P.P.E.:** 80

**Horror Factor:** 12

**Attacks per Melee:** 3

**Bonuses:** +2 on initiative, +2 to strike (+3 with flame whip), +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +3 to disarm, +3 to save versus magic, +3 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Claws (1D6) or can cast Fire Ball (6D6), Mini-Fireballs (3D6), and Flame Whips (4D6).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Impervious to fire, cold and ice do x2 damage, Nightvision 150 feet (45.7 m), can function perfectly well in smoke and sulfur. Body radiates heat and does 2D6 damage if touched.

**Magic:** All 1-6 level Fire Warlock spells.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Ugly bloated crone with skin that glows dull red and radiates smoke.

**10 Lava Goblins:** a.k.a. Fire Brats, mutant Goblin-like creatures equivalent to 3<sup>rd</sup> level vagabonds (typical Lava Goblin will be 1D4 level Vagabond or Thief O.C.C.).

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 5 (2D6), M.E. 10 (2D6+4), M.A. 7 (2D6), P.S. 14 (3D6), P.P. 21 (3D6+6), P.E. 23 (3D6+8), P.B. 4 (1D6+1), Spd 8 (2D6).

**Size:** 3 feet tall (0.9 m); 70 pounds (31.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 9

**Hit Points:** 34 (P.E. +1D6 per level of experience).

**S.D.C.:** 34 (20+4D6).

**P.P.E.:** 60 (2D4x10).

**Horror Factor:** 10

**Attacks per Melee:** 3

**Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +4 to strike (+6 with weapons), +4 to parry (+6 with weapons), +3 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch, +4 to save versus magic, +4 to save versus poison, +1 to save versus Horror Factor (a typical Lava Goblin will have a +1 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry, +2 to roll with the punch, and +1



to save versus Horror Factor in addition to attribute and skill bonuses).

**Damage:** Claws (1D6), Clubs (2D4).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Impervious to fire, cold and ice do x2 damage, Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), can function perfectly well in smoke and sulfur.

**Magic:** Instinctively knows all level one Fire Warlock spells.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Resemble ordinary Goblins with pebbly gray skin, red eyes, and red hair. These rare creatures live almost exclusively in the Northern Mountains. Those few scholars who have heard of them have speculated that they might originate from the same alien dimension that the Slag Hag comes from, though there is no direct evidence to support this other than the fact that they are most often seen in the company of a Slag Hag.

A few days later, while the players are resting near the edge of the glacier they have been climbing, they spy an odd looking rock formation about 100 feet (30.5 m) above them up the mountainside. As they approach, they see a large, round carved stone about the size of a very large beach ball. The surface of the stone is carved to resemble a head with green crystals for eyes as well as where ears might have been. The mouth is an open cavity. Players making a successful Lore: Magic (general knowledge) skill roll at -30% will recognize it as a Wizard Stone, a type of legendary magic item believed to be found only in remote parts of the Northern Hinterlands. None have ever been found in the Northern Mountains before. Exactly how it

got to be in the Hedgehog is anyone's guess. What's more, it appears as if this Wizard Stone is partially embedded in the stone outcropping itself, almost as if it were an inclusion in the rock face that was weathered out. Even if the players take the time to chisel it out of the outcrop (which will require several successful Sculpting or Masonry skill rolls to avoid damaging the magic item), it weighs 1500 pounds (675 kg). Not to mention the impossible task of managing the item back out of the Northern Mountains.

Should the players manage to determine how to use it (this will require another successful Lore: Magic skill roll at -40% or the successful use of the Psionic Sensitive Power of Object Read), they will learn that it will only work for characters with at least 50 P.P.E. Such a person will need to place his hand in the mouth of the carved face. This will cause the mouth to clamp down on the person's hand and the crystals on the stone to glow. After drawing one drop of blood and 10 P.P.E., it will release the hand. When the person pulls his hand out, 1D4+4 glowing spheres made of green stone will emerge from the mouth. The Wizard Stone is now powerless and cannot be used again for 24 hours.

These balls, each about the size of a baseball, will last for 24 hours before vanishing in a puff of green powder. While they last, they will hover in a kind of orbit around the person who activated the Wizard Stone. The person will automatically know what powers the stones possess as a result of the temporary psychic link he had with the stone when it drew his blood.

The powers of the green stones include:

- While hovering around him, the stones allow the person to see Astral Beings and Entities, Sense Magic, and Sense Dimensional Anomalies automatically, without expending any P.P.E. or casting a spell.
- A single orb can be sent ahead up to 100 feet (30.5 m), allowing the player to sense the presence of supernatural or dimensional anomalies within a 20 foot (6 m) diameter of the orb.
- The orbs can be hurled at any type of entity, exploding on impact and expelling it from this world. Range: 200 feet (61 m), +2 to strike. Has no effect on creatures of flesh and blood.
- Finally, each of the orbs can be used to create any one of the following spells at 8<sup>th</sup> level proficiency. However, the orb then vanishes once the spell is cast. The P.P. E. is contained in the stone and is not taken from the person using the orbs. Available spells include: Escape, Time Slip, Teleport: Lesser, Flawless Teleport Self (only the Wizard and his possessions) up to one mile (1.6 km) away, Wink-Out, Reduce Self, Constrain Being, and Exorcism.

For a full description of the three different varieties of Wizard Stones, along with their associated powers, consult pages 79-80 of *Northern Hinterlands*, PFRPG Book 13.

Before the players get a chance to head off with their little green orbs in tow, however, they will be overwhelmed by a mob of small greenish-grey creatures who come hopping over a number of nearby rocks, shouting "Hoop-hoop" as they attack. These little "Hoop-hoops" are bizarre little creatures barely more intelligent than animals who have taken to worshipping the Wizard Stone. They believe it is their god and consider it sa-



cred. Anyone molesting their “god” is attacked viciously, though only with the intent of driving off the defilers. Unfortunately for the players, the Hoop-hoops consider the removal of the green orbs as the most heinous form of blasphemy that can be perpetrated against their deity. They will fight until the players are driven off; though they will pursue them back onto the ice until the person controlling the green orbs releases them. The Hoop-hoops will gather the green orbs up and take them away to their lair, a maze-like series of tunnels higher up the mountain-side where the bizarre little creatures ingest the green powder that is created when the orbs disintegrate after 24 hours. If the players put up too good of a fight however, the little creatures will flee, allowing the players to escape with their prize.

**30 Hoop-Hoops:** Bizarre alien worshippers of the Wizard Stone. (typically travel in small hordes of 1D4x10+10).

**Alignment:** Anarchist.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 8 (2D4+1), M.E. 5 (2D4), M.A. 5 (1D4+1), P.S. 6 (2D6), P.P. 19 (2D6+13), P.E. 23 (3D6+12), P.B. 3 (1D4+2), Spd 30 (4D6+20).

**Size:** 2 feet (0.6 m) tall; 35 pounds (15.8 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 8

**Hit Points:** 29 (P.E. +2D6). **S.D.C.:** 24 (5D6).

**P.P.E.:** 2 (1D4) or 40 (1D6x10; See below under Magic).

**Horror Factor:** 13

**Attacks per Melee:** 4

**Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, +2 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 to roll with the punch, +4 to save versus magic, +4 to save versus poison, +1 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 to save versus possession (a typical Hoop-hoop will have a +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to dodge, +2 to roll with the punch, +1 to save versus Horror Factor, and +1 to save versus possession in addition to attribute bonuses).

**Damage:** Claws (1D4), Bite (1D4), Gore with small horns (1D4).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** All Hoop-hoops possess the following abilities: Hawk-like vision (can see up to 2 miles/3.2 km), night vision 90 feet (27.4 m), Land Navigation (74%), Wilderness Survival (70%), Camouflage (69%), Detect Ambush (65%), Prowl (49%), Bio-regenerate 3D6 hit points or S.D.C. per round, Impervious to Cold (no damage from ordinary or magic cold). Vulnerable to heat and fire (suffers double damage from all magic fire attacks).

**Magic:** Typically none; however there is usually 2D4 in every horde who possess powers inherited from the Wizard Stone orbs they have ingested. Since this Wizard Stone produces green orbs, the magic is dimensional in nature. These Hoop-hoops will possess 1D6x10 P.P.E. and instinctively know all of the spell abilities that the orbs possess (see description above) and can cast a spell as often as once per melee round. The act of spell casting does not tire the Hoop-hoop or use P.P.E. There are 5 magically endowed Hoop-hoops in this current horde.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Hoop-hoops are repulsive little creatures that resemble misshapen lumps of stone with tiny arms and legs and small protruding horns. If anything, they resemble small Wizard Stones, only with poorly carved features. Their eyes glow bright

green, the same color as the orbs they are trying to capture. Communicating with them is impossible as they only ever make their annoying “Hoop-Hoop” sound when attacking to drive off intruders. How they communicate amongst themselves is a mystery. They are entirely alien creatures who are instinctively drawn to Wizard Stones and who seem to have no other desire than to recapture the orbs in order to ingest them. How this parasitic relationship with the Wizard Stone came to be is a mystery, but Hoop-Hoops will only ever be encountered in the vicinity of Wizard Stones and will always reflect the nature of the orbs released (e.g.: Hoop-Hoops worshipping a Wizard Stone that grants red orbs will be reddish-grey in color, possess glowing red eyes and the few magic-wielding amongst them will possess the offensive magic of the red orbs).

After another five days in the ice and cold, Gideon will lead them to a rare and welcome site after days of arduous hiking atop the glaciated region: a Hearth and Home.

Game Masters should feel free to alter any of these encounters as well as to add additional challenges to the party’s already dangerous trek through the Northern Mountains. In order to determine what additional encounters the players might also endure while crossing the region, use the lists of creatures known to inhabit the Northern Mountains detailed in both the *Monsters and Animals*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. and the aforementioned *Chaos Lands* source books. In addition to these creatures, other more natural dangers should challenge the players, including the extreme cold (the average temperature in the Midlands is between 20 and 35 degree Fahrenheit/-6.7 and 1.7 degrees Celsius, with an average wind speed of between 10 and 20 mph/16 and 32 km, which results in a wind chill of between 22 and -10 degrees Fahrenheit/-5.6 and -23.3 degrees Celsius), snow pits, crevasses, rockslides, and avalanches.

## Chapter Sixteen: In Defense of Hearth and Home

This hearth and home, which has affectionately been given the name Gelnor’s Stone by the few mountain native regulars who frequent the sanctuary, is unlike most others in the Northern Mountains or Hinterlands below. Unlike most which are situated in secluded valleys, sheltered from the worst of the wind and snow, this one is perched on the middle of a glacial moraine (a ridge of eroded debris swept aside by the slow moving ice) that separates two alpine glaciers. Also, instead of an outer wall made of 20 foot (6.1 m) logs, the palisade that protects this sanctuary from the elements is composed of massive slabs of stone stacked on end and forming a ring that rises some 40 feet (12.2 m) into the air. The entrance is a simple stone archway that is covered by a slightly larger stone slab that has been engineered to swing freely once a keystone is removed from the inside. Unlike other wilderness sanctuaries, Gelnor’s Stone has no provisions for horses, as only a fool would have dared to bring a horse into the Northern Mountains to begin with and only an incredibly lucky one would have managed to keep it alive this far.



Instead, only a single stone compound dominates the center of the ring with a small outhouse situated against the far wall. The entire structure was built by a trio of Earth Warlocks with the aid of their Elementals when Gelnor saved their lives. Founded some 30 years ago by a battle-wary Ogre named Gelnor, it has many times over proved a lifeline for those mountaineers who did not expect to find such "hospitality" in such an inhospitable place.

The compound looks like it could hold between 30 and 50 people comfortably, though the definition of comfort on a glacier in the Northern Mountains some 10,000 feet (3048 m) above sea level is not the same as elsewhere in the world. Except for a single door against the eastern wall, the compound is one massive hall supported by several stone pillars. Though lacking any wood, five fireplaces are constantly ablaze, providing some degree of warmth to this place. Each is lit by a number of Eternal Flames, a gift from an extremely grateful Fire Warlock some 29 years ago. Though these flames are small, the sheer number of them provides enough warmth to make the interior temperatures bearable. Long stone tables with hard stone benches line one side of the room while a massive expanse of floor before the western wall's massive fireplace suggests where one might lay out a bedroll to sleep. Only Gelnor is allowed through the small door in the eastern wall, presumably where not only his quarters lie, but also where he prepares food, stores gear and other provisions, and sleeps. If anyone else works for the aging Ogre, they, too, remain hidden behind that door. Given that the only real service he provides is a warm meal and a place to bed down in relative warmth (though Spartan, these

accommodations should not be undervalued in the midlands of the Northern Mountains), most believe that Gelnor manages the place by himself.

Gelnor was one of a number of Ogres recruited/drafted into service in the Minion War being waged in the Great Rift region of the Land of the Damned. Through a combination of cunning, above average intelligence, and more than a little luck, he far outlived the average life expectancy for a non-infernal in the war (one battle for most). An unusually shrewd Deevil Lord saw the potential this resilient Ogre posed as a commander of other non-infernal cannon fodder and promoted him quickly, something his fellow Deevils resented. After many years and a continued unusual string of successful campaigns, Gelnor wanted to cut his losses, few though they were, and retire. About this same time the Deevil Lord began to see this clever mortal as a threat instead of an asset. Deciding that there was no time like the present to disappear, Gelnor vanished, along with his substantial wealth. Branded a traitor, he was driven into the Northern Mountains by his Deevil hunters where once more his luck held and allowed him to survive the harsh conditions while most of his pursuers perished. High atop the glaciers of the Hedgehog mountain range, Gelnor encountered a party of adventurers in dire straits. Sharing some of his plentiful provisions with these wanderers, he discovered that they were planning to enter the Land of the Damned in search of fame and glory. Showing yet another aberration for Ogre-kind, compassion for others, Gelnor offered them advice founded in long years as a warrior in the Unspoken Place and persuaded them to seek their fortune elsewhere in the world. This chance encounter, coupled with the



fear that since he had spent so much time in the tainted Land of the Damned, whatever force prevented the denizens of that place from escaping might also kill him if he left, made him decide to establish a hearth and home to offer aid and advice to other weary travelers who might wish to venture to the End of the World.

How he manages to keep this sanctuary well stocked throughout the Northern Mountains' endless winter is anyone's guess, for those who happen upon Gelnor's Stone have little to barter with. Most speculate that he must possess some form of ancient magic that allows him to either create or summon food and drink. Others take a darker view to the Ogre and whisper that he must "harvest" from amongst his weaker visitors after they leave to keep his meat lockers stocked. Regardless, many a mountain adventurer owes his life to the bizarre site of the closed ring of standing stones with its telltale tendrils of rising smoke and unmistakable smells of a hot meal.

**Gelnor:** (real name is Geln Ar Travax) Ogre, 9<sup>th</sup> level Soldier and 3<sup>rd</sup> level Merchant/Innkeeper.

**Alignment:** Unprincipled with leanings towards Scrupulous!

**Attributes:** I.Q. 20, M.E. 12, M.A. 4, P.S. 25, P.P. 18, P.E. 19, P.B. 7, Spd 14.

**Size:** 11 feet (3.4 m) tall; 450 pounds (202.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** N/A.

**Hit Points:** 60 S.D.C.: 65

**P.P.E.:** 7

**Horror Factor:** N/A.

**Attacks per Melee:** 5 physical.

**Bonuses:** +4 to strike (+8 with weapons), +7 to parry (+10 with weapons), +7 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, +4 to roll with the punch, +2 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus poison, +5 to save versus Horror Factor, Paired Weapons, Critical Strike on a natural 18-20, Body flip/Throw, Disarm, Boxing.

**Damage:** Claws 2D4+10, Bite does 2D4, Karate Kick 3D6+10, Round House Kick 4D6+10, Crescent Kick 3D4+12. Gelnor's favorite weapons are a pair of giant-sized enchanted long swords - 3D6+10 each, one does double damage to demons, the other double damage to Deevils. When anticipating battle, he dons a full suit of Plate and Chain armor (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 100).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), Climb Walls (85%), Military Etiquette (95%), Intelligence (67%), Lore: Demons and Monsters (60%), Public Speaking (50%).

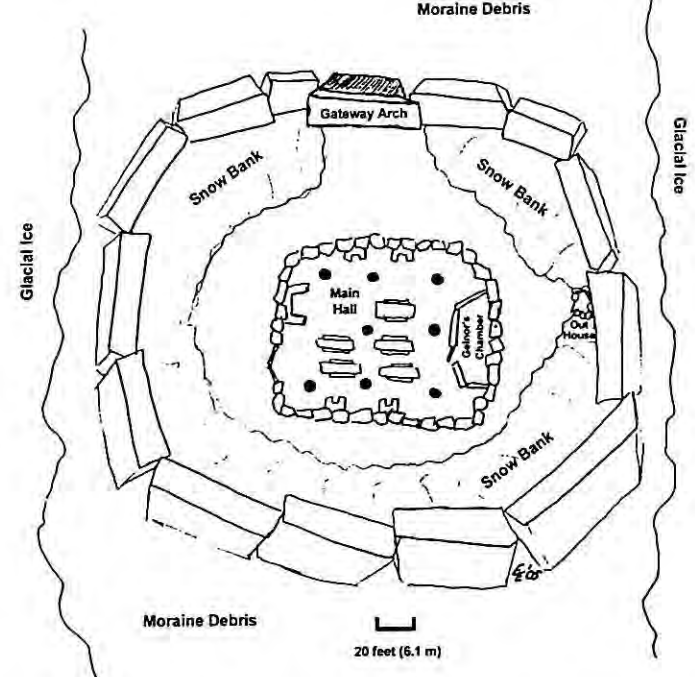
**Magic:** None, though rumors of his possessing some form of magic to provide him with food are true. Somehow, during one of his campaigns towards the end of his career, he stumbled upon a rare magic item that dates back to the Time of a Thousand Magicks - a Chest of Sustenance. This rare magic artifact will provide enough food for one hundred full grown humans per day. The food is already cooked and is of good quality. Designed to feed an army, this magical item was carried into the Northern Mountains during the Great War by an Elf army in search of the famous renegade Dwarf warlord Orgulous Orgod. How it came to one of the factions in the Minion War, Gelnor does not know or care. Seeing the great potential of the item in his future plans for escape, he kept it secret and uses it now to provide food for his guests. Since his hearth and home is only

sparsely populated at any given time, the Chest of Sustenance provides more than enough food. This item would be worth millions to any nation preparing to march to war. Gelnor also has another rare item that has served him and his guest extraordinarily well in the Northern Mountains - a Wand of Life from the Tree of Life in the Eastern Territory. This was another gift from a dying healer/guest who sensed that Gelnor would need the item in the years to come. The wand has 7 leaf buds which indicate the number of times per day it can perform a healing or cast any of its spells. The powers of the wand include: healing 7D6 Hit Points or 14D6 S.D.C., provides its owner with +2 to save versus poisons, drugs, toxins, and diseases, as well as +5% to save versus coma/death. It can also cast the following spells (up to seven total per day): Negate Poisons, Cure Minor Disorders, Cure Illness, Purification of Food and Water, and Water to Wine, all equal to a 7<sup>th</sup> level Wizard.

**Psionics:** Ordinarily, Ogres possess no psychic abilities whatsoever. Gelnor, however, is a mutant in that he is a minor psionic of almost negligible talent, except that the one power he possesses is Sixth Sense (something even he is not aware of). He has a base I.S.P. of 54.

**Appearance:** Gelnor's gray skin, where exposed, is crisscrossed with countless scars. He has a bushy mane of black hair that is beginning to show signs of gray. He always wears simple mountain clothes and furs despite his considerable wealth (he has hidden away a chest with over one million in gold and gems).

## Gelnor's Stone



When the players arrive at Gelnor's Stone, they will find that only a dozen other humanoids are present (these can be of almost any race, including some of the Dying Races native to the Northern Mountains). Other than Gelnor, no one seems to be in much of a mood for talking, though this will change as Gideon breaks out his deck of cards and exerts his trademark charm. Gelnor, on the contrary, will gladly share information concerning the surrounding region, including the safest route down into the Land of the Damned. He will only ask for anything they can spare in barter to keep his own supplies well stocked (though he

does not need the food, he does not want to add fuel to the rumors of how he keeps his larder so well stocked). He will also be interested in any spare animal skins, as well as other field gear they might have. He will also want to know why they are traveling through the Northern Mountains and will genuinely try to dissuade them from entering the Land of the Damned. Unfortunately, while he can tell them almost anything about the war-torn region around the Great Rift (albeit his intelligence on the area is 30 years out of date), he never traveled into the other regions and knows nothing more than the common rumors about the Darkest Heart and the Eternal Torment.

At some point during their stay at Gelnor's Stone, the Ogre, as well as two other patrons, will suddenly become alert and agitated (players who possess Sixth Sense will suddenly be aware of imminent danger). With a warning to the guests, the Ogre will disappear into his private chamber and emerge a moment later wearing his armor with his twin swords drawn. Suddenly, the ground will shake violently, throwing anyone who fails to make a successful Sense of Balance skill roll to the ground. Incredibly, the compound does not collapse. When the rumble subsides, a voice can be heard from the outside demanding for Gelnor to appear.

Everyone in Gelnor's Stone will quickly prepare for battle, readying weapons, donning armor, etc. As the players follow the group outside of the hall and up a snow bank to look over the outer wall, they will see a large band of 20 Kobolds assembled on the glacier just outside normal bow range (400 feet/122 m). All are armed with a variety of weapons and clearly ready for battle. Leading the Kobolds is an imposing humanoid dressed in plate armor with four long, insect-like pincers sticking out of his back (characters who make a successful Lore: Demons and Monsters roll will identify this person as a Croval). Besides the Croval, Farraak, there stands a bizarre looking creature with the head of a buffalo, two snakes for arms, huge bat-like wings, dog legs, and a serpentine tail. This creature can be correctly identified as a Skreed, a rare infernal seldom seen outside the Great Rift region and known only by legend. Standing a few paces behind the pair is a slender figure wearing a hooded cloak.

The Croval will demand that Gelnor surrender himself and his compound. When Gelnor demands to know who dares ask for his surrender, Farraak will declare that this valley and all the lands around it now belong to the Stone Ice Kobold clan and his sanctuary violates their territory. When Gelnor does not exit, Farraak will make a gesture towards the Skreed who will instantly transform into a giant bison and charge the stone wall, followed by the Kobolds. If the Skreed is not killed or somehow stopped (which is unlikely), its impact will deliver 2D4x10+20 damage to the stone gate, causing it to break free from its mount. Both the Skreed and the Kobolds will charge into Gelnor's Stone and attack. The dozen other residents will engage the Kobolds, but most will shy away from the Skreed unless directly attacked. This will leave the Skreed, Farraak, and the mysterious hooded figure to the players, Gideon, and Gelnor.

**20 Kobolds of the Stone Ice Clan:** 4<sup>th</sup> level Mercenary O.C.C.

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 13, M.E. 8, M.A. 13, P.S. 16, P.P. 8, P.E. 11, P.B. 12, Spd 20 (running)/ 6 (digging).

**Size:** 4 feet (1.2 m) tall; 100 pounds (45 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** N/A

**Hit Points:** 28     **S.D.C.:** 19

**P.P.E.:** 19

**Horror Factor:** N/A

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical.

**Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +2 to strike (+4 with weapons), +3 to parry (+4 with weapons), +3 to dodge, +4 to pull punch, +3 to roll with the punch, +4 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Each carries a battle axe (3D6+4 + P.S. bonus and Kobold made) and wears Reinforced Scale Armor (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 100).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 400 feet (122 m), Poor day vision - 40 feet (12.2 m).

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Typical Kobolds, muscular with snow white hair, pale skin and large pointed ears. Each carries around 500 gold worth of precious stones and metals.

**Farraak:** 7<sup>th</sup> level Croval Knight.

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 15, M.E. 16, M.A. 17, P.S. 22, P.P. 21, P.E. 10, P.B. 6, Spd 21.

**Size:** 7 feet (2.1 m) tall; 250 pounds (112.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 6

**Hit Points:** 73     **S.D.C.:** 59

**P.P.E.:** 18

**Horror Factor:** 12

**Attacks per Melee:** 4 physical.

**Bonuses:** +3 on initiative, +6 to strike (+9 with weapons), +9 to parry (+12 with weapons), +6 to dodge, +7 to pull punch, +4 to roll with the punch, +9 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus poison, +1 to save versus psionics, +1 to save versus insanity, 45% to trust and intimidate, Critical Strike on a natural 18-20, Paired Weapons. Croval are also impervious to psionic and supernatural possession, the bite and gaze of a vampire, symbiotic union and control, and all diseases.

**Damage:** Farraak carries a Kobold made battle axe in one arm (3D6+10) and a Kobold made long sword in the other (2D6+7, +1 to strike and parry) which he uses as paired weapons. Farraak wears Kobold made Reinforced Plate Armor (A.R. 17, S.D.C. 200). He can perform the following kick attacks: Karate (2D4+7), Axe (2D6+7), and Roundhouse (3D6+7). His pincers (each has 30 S.D.C.) can inflict 2D6+7 individually, 4D6+7 if two strike simultaneously, or 6D6+7 if all four are used (each variation only counts as one melee attack). Furthermore, Farraak can inject a toxin through each pincer that disorients his victims (-1 on all combat bonuses, -1 attack per melee, -15% on skill rolls, and reduces speed by 10% for the next 1D6 melees) unless they save versus poison. Cumulative strikes do not have a cumulative effect.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), see the invisible, dimensional teleport (45% - negated while in the Land of the Damned, however), bio-regenerate 4D6 Hit



Points/S.D.C. per melee, impervious to normal fire and cold, half damage from magical fire and cold, magically knows all languages.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Farraak is a red-skinned humanoid with a flat nose (slit nostrils), yellow eyes, and a pair of yellow stripes on both cheeks. His skin is covered in fine snake-like scales and he has long, slender fingers with yellow nails. Four insect-like pincers protrude from heavy armored plates on his shoulders. Farraak carries 1756 in gold and gems on his person.

Farraak assumed command of the Stone Ice Kobold clan a little over a year ago and has been using them and their skill in weapon crafting to further his growing domain in the Hedgehog. Recently, however, he has fallen under the seductive influence of the female Elf mystic known as Shyerru (see below).

**Urnok:** 5<sup>th</sup> level Skreed “summoned” by Shyerru.

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 12, M.E. 8, M.A. 13, P.S. 34 (supernatural), P.P. 9, P.E. 26, P.B. 3, Spd 40(running)/ 80 (flying).

**Size:** 20 feet (6.1 m) tall; 3 tons.

**Natural A.R.:** 15

**Hit Points:** 125     **S.D.C.:** 100

**P.P.E.:** 120 (currently has 110 as it has already cast Earth Rumble once).

**Horror Factor:** 17

**Attacks per Melee:** 6 physical or 2 by magic.

**Bonuses:** +4 to strike, +4 to parry, +2 to dodge, +5 to entangle, +4 to disarm, +5 to pull punch, +3 to roll with the punch, +3 on all saving throws, +10 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Burning Bite (4D6), spits fire 4D6 (20 feet/6 m), Serpent Arm Strike (20 foot/6 m reach), pinch: 4D6, bite: 5D6, or entangle and constrict: 6D6 (counts as one melee attack), kicking (5D6+19), head butt (5D6+19 or 2D4x10 power ram: counts as two melee actions), running head butt (1D6x10 or 2D4x10 +20 when metamorphosed into a giant bison).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Can fly using bat wings, see the invisible, Nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), teleport up to one mile (1.6 km) any direction (80%), dimensional teleport (42%), impervious to poison, disease, and normal fire (magical fire does half damage), resistant to cold and electricity (half damage, full damage from magical cold and electricity), Super bio-regenerate (1D4x10 damage per melee round, regenerates lost appendages/snake limbs in 15 minutes), Metamorphosis into giant bison for up to 12 hours (10 feet/3 m tall, speed is doubled, bison ram inflicts 2D4x10+20 damage, counts as three attacks, can stomp and bellow to cast Earthquake), Metamorphosis into a giant two-headed snake for up to 12 hours (40 feet/12.2 m long, both heads can attack two targets simultaneously, 6 attacks per *each* head/12 total, +3 on initiative for each head, the right head spits fire bolts for 5D6 damage and the left head spits burning saliva with a +3 to strike that blinds if spat in the face: -10 to strike, parry, and dodge until washed out of eyes).

**Magic:** Fire Warlock Spells: Cloud of Smoke, Cloud of Ash, Circle of Flame, Extinguish Flames, Darkness, Fiery Touch, and

Fire Ball. Earth Warlock Spells: Dust Storm, Rock to Mud, Track, Earth Rumble, Repel Animals, Travel Through Mud, and Earthquake (can only be cast when metamorphosed into a bison).

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** A giant, fur-covered creature with enormous serpents for arms, a shaggy bison head with a fiery mouth and eyes, bat wings, dog legs, and a long snake-like tail.

**Shyerru:** Appears to be a mid-level female Elf mystic but is actually Sh’uru, a 5<sup>th</sup> level Advocate Infernal.

**Alignment:** Aberrant (with Miscreant leanings).

**Attributes:** I.Q. 20, M.E. 14, M.A. 21, P.S. 12 (Supernatural), P.P. 5, P.E. 11, P.B. 7 (currently 24 as a beautiful female Elf), Spd 6.

**Size:** 6 feet, 10 inches (2.1 m) tall; 150 pounds (68 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 10

**Hit Points:** 33     **S.D.C.:** 58

**P.P.E.:** 170

**Horror Factor:** 15 (Awe Factor until Sh’uru reveals her true form, then treat as Horror Factor).

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical or psionic, 2 by magic.

**Bonuses:** 80% to trust/intimidate, 70% to charm and impress while in Elf form, +5 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Sh’uru carries a magical long sword that spits lightning up to 40 feet (12.2 m) three times a day (3D6+6), inflicts 3D6 damage with her supernatural strength, and can cast a Blinding Flash 3 times a day. She will under no circumstances engage in physical combat using her bare hands. She also wears a Cloak of Armor (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 200).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), see the invisible, metamorphosis at will into a human, Elf or Dwarf (up to 10 feet/3 m tall), dimensional teleport (64%), resistant to fire and cold (half damage), impervious to disease, bio-regenerates 2D6 damage every minute (4 melees), and magically knows all languages.

**Magic:** Sh’uru knows all Wizard spells from levels 1-4, plus Invisibility: Superior, Immobilize, Fire Ball, Time Slip, Horrific Illusion, Wisps of Confusion, Wind Rush, and Charm.

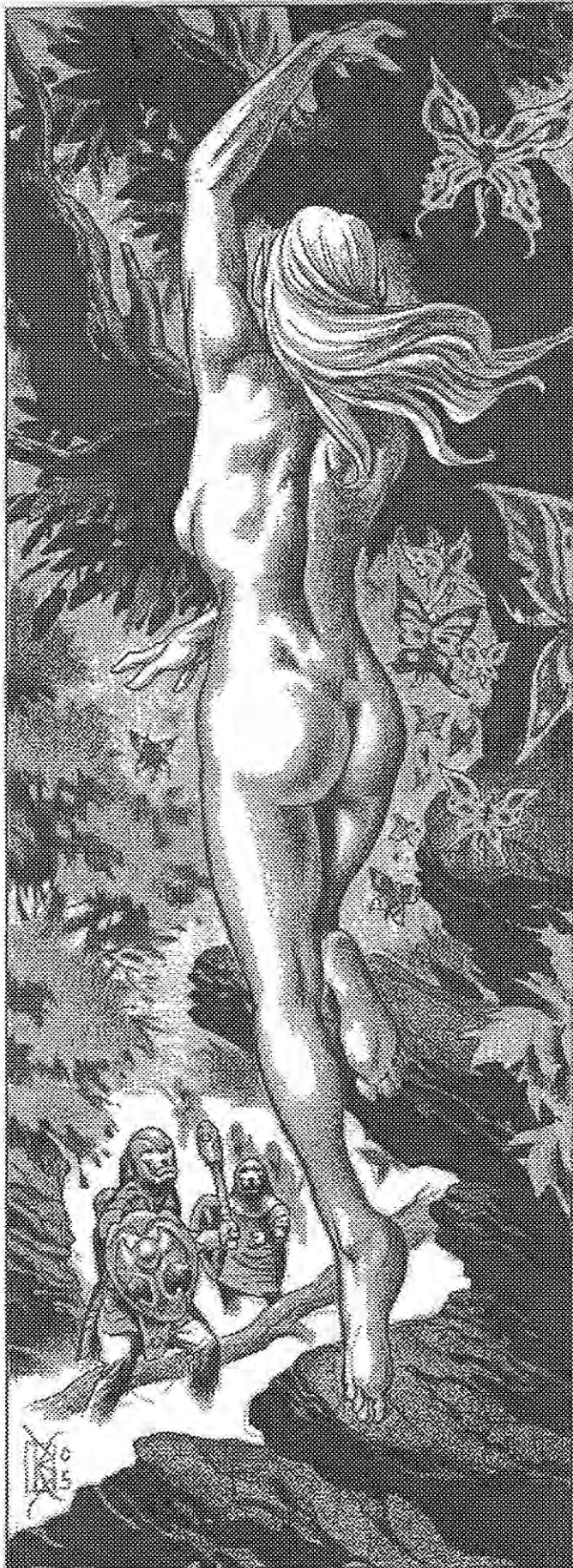
**Psionics:** All Advocates know the following psionic abilities: Commune with Animals, Dispel Spirits, Empathy, Telepathy, Total Recall, See Aura, Alter Aura, Empathic Transmission, Mind Block Auto-Defense, Group Mind Block, Hypnotic Suggestion, Induce Nightmare, Invisible Haze, and Mind Bond. I.S.P.: 110.

**Appearance:** In Elf form, appears as a slender, beautiful pale-skinned Elf with silver hair and pale blue eyes. In her true form, the Advocate has sharp, angular features, with a long nose, long pointed ears, and small pointed teeth. Her hair is still silver and tied in a topknot and her skin is chalk white. Sh’uru carries a sack with over 5000 gold in precious stones on her person to help “soften” prospective clients, though she prefers to use her charms first.

Sh’uru fell from favor with her Deevil Faction Lord when Gelnor defected (she had been the Advocate that originally seduced Gelnor and his band of Ogres into service). Since then,







Regardless of how they respond to the Faerie Folk escorts, the players will be guided to one of the six feuding Faerie Mounds in the heart of the Inner Weald. As a result of the recent death of the Faerie Queen, Seerea, at the hands of her trusted bodyguard, the Satyr Tamerlane, the six other clans have been waging a verbal battle over who should succeed the childless queen's ruling Faerie Mound and restore order to the Realm of Seven Sovereigns (for full details, consult *The Land of the Damned Two: Eternal Torment*, pages 157-160). The Faerie Mound the players are escorted to is the only one still 100% loyal to the original ideals of trying to patrol the forests of the Darkest Heart in an effort to hold the evil of the Were-Beasts (not to mention the other Beasts of Chaos) in check. As such, while growing darker and more hostile with each passing year, they are still the most trusted and willing to aid the players.

The ruler of this Mound is a young Common Faerie by the name of Lyrinos, though in truth he is actually being guided by an ancient Nymph named Chloe who inhabits a giant oak tree that sits atop the Mound. Chloe has existed since the Age of Chaos and is perhaps one of the oldest living entities in the world. Though she will *never* discuss the horrible events of that bygone are, it is evident when the players are introduced to her that a great sadness hangs over her like a shroud, in part from her memories but also as a result of the conflict that threatens to tear the Faerie community apart. Game Master's note: any attempt to harm Chloe will result in the entire Faerie Mound population of some 500+ angry Faeries attacking the players, not to mention the formidable magic of an angered and extremely powerful Nymph.

**Chloe:** Ancient and powerful Nymph guardian of the Realm of Seven Sovereigns.

**Alignment:** Scrupulous with Unprincipled leanings.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 19, M.E. 14, M.A. 13, P.S. 6, P.P. 12, P.E. 18, P.B. 19, Spd 11(running)/ 110 (flying).

**Size:** 6 feet, 5 inches (2 m) tall; 3 ounces (85 g).

**Natural A.R.:** 7

**Hit Points:** 72

**S.D.C.:** 36

**P.P.E.:** 600

**Horror/Awe Factor:** 12 (normally 10, but Chloe radiates a powerful presence as a result of her extreme age).

**Attacks per Melee:** 4 physical or 2 by magic.

**Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +3 to save versus magic and poison, +5 to save versus Horror Factor, 45% to charm and impress.

**Damage:** Being insubstantial, Chloe will never physically attack even to defend herself. She will depend entirely upon her formidable magical abilities as well as the population of Faerie Folk who will rise to her defense.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), fly and hover, see the invisible, keen normal vision, turn invisible at will, sense the location of water (90%), sense the location of ley lines (90%), magically knows all languages, impervious to all forces except magic and psionics, can disappear by entering a living plant, ethereal (can pass through solid matter except metal alloys as if air).

**Magic:** As with all Faerie Folk, Chloe can cast her spells regardless of P.P.E. cost, but she can only cast spells on a specific individual once per 24 hours (regardless of whether they save or not). Chloe knows the following spells: Sleep, Dust Storm, Summon Fog, Purple Mist, Call Lightning, Wind Rush, Levitation, Finger of the Wind, Thunderclap, Extinguish Fires, Part Waters, Calm Waters, Calm Storms, Repel Animals, Grow Plants, Animate Plants, Wall of Thorns, Breath of Life, Ley Line Transmission, and the Faerie's Dance. Save versus Faerie Magic requires a 17 or higher and Faerie Magic is cast at 15<sup>th</sup> level strength (higher than the average Nymph, but Chloe is no average Faerie).

**Psionics:** See Aura, Sense Evil, Sense Magic, Suppress Fear. I.S.P.: 28.

**Appearance:** Chloe appears as an ethereal, glowing, beautiful Elf maiden. Appearing nude, her physical form is young, though it is clear, if one can stand to look long into her eyes (must make an additional saving throw versus Awe Factor), they can see something of the endless years she has endured in the Darkest Heart. She inhabits an ancient oak tree that rests atop the Faerie Mound.

First, Chloe will ask the players to explain what possible cause could lead them over the Northern Mountains and into the Land of the Damned (Chloe is very perceptive and will know if the players are lying). When she is satisfied that the players have told her the truth, she will explain that she sensed the arrival of an extremely potent Token of Power and sent her soldiers to guide it (and the players who hold it) safely to her so that she might aid those who wield it. She did this, she continues, because if she could sense it, so too could the powers that control the Citadel north of the Great Rift. She also wanted to convey a warning to the players. Her scouts, she explains, have reported a growing number of undead gathering in the northwestern corner of the Eternal Torment. The direction she indicates happens to be the exact direction that the final piece of Castlerake lies. She is concerned with the players' intentions to deliver the Token of Power into the undead infested lands to the south, admitting that she even considered not allowing them to complete their mission. She will go on to explain, however, that she senses a growing tension in the undead legions to the southwest and, despite her misgivings, she believes that for good or ill, it is the players' destiny to confront it.

Saddened that she is likely sending them to their deaths, Chloe offers her soldiers once more as guides through the Inner Weald to the edge of the Were-Beast infested Middle Weald. She will also issue the following warnings to the players before they leave:

A. The Middle Weald is infested by all manner of Were-Beasts. At times, the various clans will ally against the Faeries of the Seven Sovereigns as well as the Elves of the Kingdom of Therendil. At other times, the clans wage territorial wars amongst themselves.

B. The Beasts of Chaos that inhabit the Outer Weald are the survivors of the legions of creatures once created by the Old Ones in the Chaos War 100 millennia ago. While the least organized threat in the Darkest Heart, they should not be underestimated.

C. Though the inhabitants of the Middle and Outer Wealds are dangerous, she would advise the players to travel through the Darkest Heart before turning south into the Eternal Torment, thus delaying their entry into the realm of the undead as long as possible.

D. Galdrum's Teeth, the rise of mountains to the south of the Darkest Heart, mark the edge of the Eternal Torment and to cross the "Wall of Light" will almost certainly call down a curse from the gods of light for trespassing into the prison of the damned.

E. The Eternal Torment was created by the Alliance of Light (the "victors" of the Chaos War) as a punishment for those who would not turn aside from their worship of the fallen Old Ones.

F. The inhabitants of the Eternal Torment were inflicted with the Mortification, a terrible curse that transformed them into all manner of dark undead, forever starving for living flesh that so seldom crossed the mountains into their realm.

G. No settlements of the living can be found in the Eternal Torment, though there are rumors that a secret sect of warriors and Wizards dwell in the mountains and wage a war against the legions of the Endless Dead.

With her parting words, Chloe will bestow each player with a gift: a ring of woven flowers that provides a +2 on *all* saving throws versus the undead while in the Eternal Torment (magic, psionics, Horror Factor, special powers, etc.). Though powerful, the magic will not last and fades within 1D6 months as the flowers dry up and die.

Though Chloe's Faeries will guide the players west towards the edge of the Inner Weald, they will not venture into the less dense forests of the Middle Weald. After several days travel, the Faerie Folk will bid a silent farewell to the players as they meld into the dense foliage of the Inner Weald. The players are once again on their own.

The trip through the Middle Weald will take many days and will be especially dangerous as the Middle Weald is home to the Were-Beasts of Darkholme. Game Masters should have several encounters with wandering Were-Beasts, starting with simple scouts then gradually gaining in strength as word gets around that a large party of Faerie Folk is wandering through their territory. Ultimately, the trip through the Middle Weald should end in a grand chase as an entire army of Were-Beasts pursue the beleaguered players towards the edge of the Outer Weald. Though the Were-Beasts normally have no problem with pursuing prey further westward, the ongoing clan wars will draw all but the most determined Were-Beasts back into the denser woods of the Middle Weald, especially if the players prove to be particularly powerful and cunning.

**Typical Were-Beast of the Middle Weald:** 4<sup>th</sup> level Were-Beasts (8<sup>th</sup> level for elders/leaders).

**Alignment:** Miscreant or Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 10, M.E. 6, M.A. 8, P.S. 22, P.P. 16, P.E. 20, P.B. 9, Spd 15 / 35 (in animal form).

**Size:** Average human height and weight during the day, 30% larger than the average for their animal form at night.



**Natural A.R.:** 12 (in beast form only).

**Hit Points:** 59 (80 for elders/leaders).

**S.D.C.:** 34 (42 for elders/leaders).

**P.P.E.:** 39

**Horror Factor:** 13 in beast form.

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 in human form and 5 in beast form.

**Bonuses:** +3 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +4 to pull punch, +3 to roll with the punch, +2 to save versus Horror Factor (+3 for elders/leaders), +3 to save versus magic, +3 to save versus poison. (Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20 for elders/leaders.) These bonuses are for the Were-Beast in humanoid form only based on Hand to Hand Combat Expert and Attribute bonuses. Additional bonuses apply as per animal form described below.

**Damage:** In human form, the Were-Beasts of the Middle Weald inflict damage depending upon the weapon they wield. Most use some form of bladed weapon that inflicts 2D6+7 (from P.S. bonus) and are +2 to strike and parry with it (+3 for elders/leaders). In animal form, damage depends upon the form as described below with an additional +7 due to P.S. bonuses for claw/kick attacks (not bites).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), Leap up to 15 feet high (4.6 m) and 20 feet long (6.1 m) from a standing start (double distance and height if running). The Wererat can fly, Bio-regenerate 2D6 damage per minute (every four melee rounds), impervious to normal weapons in beast form, can only be harmed by silver, magic, and psionics (full damage), fire and cold resistant (half damage from normal fire and cold, full damage from magical fire and cold), and Animal Metamorphosis (at night only). Forms common to the Land of the Damned include (don't forget to include additional +7 damage for their high P.S. score to claw and kick attacks):

**Werewolf:** Bite does 2D6+4, Claw does 2D4+2, +3 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry, +2 to dodge.

**Weretiger:** Bite does 3D6+3, Claw does 2D6+6, +3 on initiative, +2 to strike, parry, or dodge.

**Werepanther:** Claw or bite does 2D6+3, +5 on initiative, +2 to strike, parry, or dodge, +10% to prowl.

**Werejaguar:** Claw or bite does 2D6, +4 on initiative, +2 to strike, parry, or dodge, +10% to prowl.

**Werbear:** Claw does 3D6+6, Bite does 2D6, +2 on initiative, +2 to strike and parry, +1 to dodge.

**Wereserpent:** Bite does 2D6+2, +3 on initiative, +3 to strike, +2 to dodge, no parry possible, +10% to prowl, +5% to climb and swim.

**Werelizard:** Bite does 2D6, Claw does 2D4, +2 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry, +3 to dodge, +10% to prowl.

**Wererat:** Bite does 2D4, Claws do 1D6+3, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to dodge, +20% to prowl, +5% to acrobatics.

**Werbear:** Bite does 1D6, Claws do 2D4, +2 on initiative, +2 to strike and dodge, average flight speed is 26.

**Magic:** None, however they can carry the Curse of Lycanthropy (see *Monsters and Animals*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., page 154).

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** They appear as ordinary if somewhat savage humans during the day (and at night if they are trying to maintain

their cover). In beast form, they appear as whatever animal form they take (limited to only one type), only 30% larger than average.

A note about the current "political" climate within the Were-Beast domain of the Middle Weald: Were-Beasts, being naturally predatory creatures, often stake out distinct territories and jealously guard them against intruders. Most often, such intruders are other humanoids who try to cross the treacherous Middle Weald, as well as Faerie Folk from the Inner Weald (seldom do Elves from the Kingdom of Therendil ever attempt to challenge the Were-Beasts these days). However, whenever there is a lull in the number of outside invaders, the various were-species turn on one another as inter-species conflicts arise. At such times, when there is no common threat to their lands, the different Were-Beasts break into factions that battle one another for no real reason other than an instinctive hatred for Were-Beasts not of their species. Ironically enough, it is at such times of increased violence that it is perhaps the safest to cross the dense forests of the Middle Weald as the predators are busy hunting one another. As fate would have it, the Middle Weald is currently caught up in one such inter-species conflict.

During this most recent incarnation of the species war the battle lines are as follows: the wererats and wererats have formed a loose alliance and are trying to stay out of the battles as much as possible (being the weakest of the were-species). In this area, players and their Faerie guardians will likely encounter a few small groups or even solitary hunters.

Being the most independent and solitary of the Were-Beasts, the reptile varieties have also formed a coalition and are staying out of the war, not out of a sense of self preservation, but rather out of a lack of interest. They only respond if members of any of the other species enter their territory. In this region, players are more likely to be stalked and picked off one at a time if not careful.

The greatest region of conflict (and the most dangerous to cross at present) is the war zone between the three feline were-species. Seldom working together even in times of "unity" between the factions, these three instinctive enemies are currently involved in the bloodiest of the conflicts. It is worth noting the westernmost edge of the weretiger territory is perhaps the safest region at present as these beasts have worked out a treaty with the wererats to the west who are currently battling the most hostile of the Were-Beasts, the werewolves. The safest route across this region would be through the werepanther region (who are the least bloodthirsty of the were-felines). However, players may find themselves being blackmailed into performing some task against one of the other two feline species in exchange for free passage. Such is also likely to be the case with the wererats. The trek through werewolf territory will be the most dangerous of all, with a massive pack of the foul predators giving chase, regardless of the wererats danger to the east.

Other locations of note include Darkholme, a massive pyramid ruin inhabited by many thousands of Were-Beasts and Slaughter Rock, a sacred place to all Were-Beasts where it is said that if a mortal were to challenge a Were-Beast elder to combat and win, he and his entire party would gain safe passage through the Middle Weald until the next full moon. Both of these locations are currently considered neutral territory and one

will find a mix of all were-species within that region. Slaine's Gate is perhaps the only Were-Beast free-zone (or at least, greatly reduced in numbers) as it is controlled by an evil Thunder Lizard who has plans of her own.

Compared with the Were-Beast infested Middle Weald, the rolling, tall grass plains broken by occasional clusters of sparsely dense trees will at first seem almost tame. This feeling will quickly pass, however, as the players begin to struggle through the six to fifteen foot (1.8-4.6 m) tall bamboo-like grass which makes it all but impossible to spot approaching dangers. And the dangers are many in the Outer Weald. Of the more notable Beasts of Chaos, there are sauropod-sized Baltosaurs, matter-phasing Galters, packs of vicious Hygorathes, deceptively cute Instigators; mindless Lassacres, hidden Pit-Worms, psychic-inhibiting Psykolops Hounds, giant Slaughterhawks, and armored Udoks, just to name a few (for full details, Game Masters should consult *The Land of the Damned Two: Eternal Torment*, pages 71-100).

Game Masters should feel free to make the final trek through the Outer Weald as difficult as they wish, keeping in mind, however, that the ultimate confrontation still lies before them to the south in the undead-infested Eternal Torment.

At some point during the journey across the westernmost section of the Darkest Heart, the players will find themselves forced to make a difficult choice. The player in possession of the pieces of Castlerake will find that their path leads them dangerously close to an area where for the past several days and nights, they have seen the unmistakable signs of conflict. During the day, the players have seen thick columns of smoke rising to the west-northwest. Also sighted have been flocks of circling birds that anyone making a successful Animal Husbandry or Biology skill roll will be able to identify as carrion feeders lingering over a site of mass death, waiting for a chance to feed on the fallen (as such sites are also common over massive battlefields, a successful Military Etiquette skill roll may also be applicable). At night, low-lying clouds reflect the lights of many fires. As the players draw closer, the distant sounds of battle are unmistakable.

Recently, two different factions of the Minion War have spilled over into the Outer Weald. As one legion tried to outflank the other, both were driven deeper from the wastelands south of the Great Rift where they brought their war into the lush grasses and forests of the Darkest Heart. It will be impossible for the players to safely cross this region in a straight path without risk of being captured by sentries of either side. Since to the north lies the battlefields of the Minion War, the players will be left with no choice other than to try to head south and skirt the foothills of Galdrum's Teeth.

After a day of skirting the battlefield (Game Masters: you may want to have the players narrowly miss a few close calls with scouting demons or Deevils), the players will find themselves at the base of a cliff that rises several thousand feet into the air. With no way to ascend, they must hope that the fighting has not yet reached the cliff as well. As luck would have it, the players encounter no signs of the warring factions as they follow the base of the cliff; however, after the third day of their detour, they encounter the bizarre site of several massive piles of stacked debris spread evenly across the plains before them.

This narrow strip of open grassland between the cliffs and the Minion War battlefield is home to a large group of Thanes. These strange creatures seem to serve no other purpose in existence other than to methodically pile assorted piles of junk into categorized stacks. Having no interest in fighting for territory, food, or just about anything else, only two things are known to set these otherwise peaceful beasts into a frenzy: disturbing one of their piles of junk, which can reach several stories in height, or revealing oneself to be a shape-shifter of any sort (including Changelings, dragons, Were-Beasts, or even those using magic to perform their metamorphosis). Each pile of junk is roughly 1000 feet (305 m) from the next. If the players manage to navigate the piles of junk (there are nearly fifty piles set up in a grid-like fashion covering about a four square mile/10.4 square km area) without being seen by the creatures, then they will be able to pass through without harm and will find themselves well beyond the Minion War battlefields and almost directly north of the final piece of Castlerake. If, however, the players are discovered amidst the piles of junk (there is a 30% chance of encountering a group of 1D6 Thane per junk mound), they will be attacked and chased. Ordinarily, there would be even more Thanes guarding the piles; however, with the chance to scavenge even more junk from the battlefield to the north, most of the Thanes are lingering to the north of the debris piles waiting for the chance to acquire more junk. The Thanes will chase anyone near their piles as far as half a mile (0.8 km) beyond the edge of the debris grid.

To determine the contents of a random pile of junk, roll on the table below.

01-20%: Rock: This pile consists of nothing more than piles of rubble eroded from the neighboring cliffs. If encountered more than once, Game Masters may want to have each pile be of a different size rock, ranging from pebbles to giant boulders.

21-40%: Wood: This pile consists of massive logs of dead trees scavenged from neighboring forests. If encountered more than once, Game Masters may want to have each pile be of a different size branch, ranging from twigs to massive logs.

41-50%: Weapons: This pile consists of scavenged weapons, mainly from the combatants of the battlefield to the north (Game Masters: you may even want different piles to consist of only specific types of weapons, i.e.: swords, pole arms, blunt, etc.) Most are broken beyond repair, though there is a 10% chance that a salvageable weapon might be found. There is only a 2% chance that a magic weapon might have found its way into the pile.

51-60%: Dead Mortal Bodies: Scores of brutally slain mortal combatants (as well as various body parts) are piled high. Different piles will be composed of different races, though most appear to be Orcs, Ogres, Trolls, Giants, and an assortment of other races. Increase the chance of encountering 4 Thanes in the vicinity of this pile to 70% as they are attempting to chase off the swarms of carrion feeders that flock to these piles. There is also a chance of encountering any number of burrowing carrion feeders that have gone unnoticed by the Thanes.

61-70%: Armor: Similar to the Weapons piles described above, only with the chance of finding something salvageable reduced to a mere 5%.



71-80%: Tools: In addition to finding weapons and armor, the Thanes find various tools amongst the slain. This pile consists of these salvaged instruments which, unlike the weapons, are more likely to be in good repair (40% chance), though hardly of as much use in the Land of the Damned as a trusty weapon or suit of armor.

81-90%: Fabric: Heaps of torn, tattered, and stained clothing, most (99%) in total disrepair.

91-94%: Treasure: There are only three piles of this type in the debris field: gold, gems, and silver, each totaling several million in value, though as soon as the players attempt to steal from it, a band of six Thanes will attack. If this result is rolled more than three times, re-roll.

95-98%: Dead Infernal Bodies: Similar to the other piles of dead bodies, there are only two such piles of this nature in the debris field and they are both heavily guarded by six Thanes. One pile consists of the remains of demons killed in the Minion War and the other consists of the remains of slain Deevils. Both are an Alchemist's, Diabolist's or Summoner's dream come true in terms of valuable magic components, though the likelihood of thieving from the pile without being discovered is remote (80% chance of being discovered). If this result is rolled more than twice, re-roll.

99-00%: Magic Items: This comparatively small pile is perhaps the most valuable in the debris pile field. Only one such pile exists and is heavily guarded by eight Thanes who do not understand why this pile more than most others is most often disturbed by intruders. Game Masters randomly determine what nature of magic items might be discovered by the players if they managed to steal any (there is even a remote chance of laying one's hands on a rune item: 01-03%). As only one such pile exists in the field, if this result is rolled more than once, roll again.

**1D6 Thanes:** Bizarre pile-building scavengers of the Outer Weald.

**Alignment:** Anarchist.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 4, M.E. 14, M.A. 6, P.S. 25, P.P. 19, P.E. 19, P.B. 3, Spd 23 running or rolling (double when cartwheeling).

**Size:** 8 feet (2.4 m) tall; 500 pounds (225 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 12

**Hit Points:** 69     **S.D.C.:** 65

**P.P.E.:** 11

**Horror/Awe Factor:** 12

**Attacks per Melee:** 5 physical.

**Bonuses:** +5 to strike, +5 to parry, +6 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not forfeit an action), +3 to pull punch, +3 to roll with the punch, +2 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus poison, Critical strike on a 19-20.

**Damage:** Punch or bear-hug (2D6+10), power punch (4D6+10, counts as two attacks).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** "See" equally well in light and dark, Swim (80%), Land Navigation (90%), can lift and carry their P.S.x50 as if they possessed supernatural strength. Bio-regenerate 4D6 S.D.C. per hour, totally regenerate from the dead in 48 hours unless they suffer damage equal to 40 points below 0, Natural Acrobat/Gymnast (all skills at 88%), Climb like an insect (92%), Leap 12 feet (3.6 m), fire and cold resistant

(half damage), Impervious to Horror Factor, suffers 50% more damage from electricity-based attacks.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None, though any attempt to use telepathy or empathy on them will only read the most basic of emotions.

**Appearance:** Thanes appear to be a pair of headless, muscular upper torsos joined at the waist. Both sets of three-fingered limbs function as arms and legs. Totally gender-less, these things have no head or any apparent sensory organs, nor do they speak or even communicate in any known fashion.

Once clear of the debris pile field, the players will find themselves again in the rolling plains and scattered woods of the Outer Weald, only now the player with the pieces of the rune sword will sense that the final piece lies somewhere to the south, over the line of brown mountains of Galdrum's Teeth.

## Chapter Eighteen: The "City" of the Living

Chloe's Faeries will escort the players south towards the mountains known as Galdrum's Teeth. Compared to their ascent up the Northern Mountains, climbing the gently sloping ridge will seem easy. Within a day's travel of the crest, the vegetation will dramatically begin to die off. By the time they reach the top of the ridge, the landscape is barren. At the top, the players will see that the mountains form a more or less continuous ridge that runs east to west. Traveling along the ridge is fairly easy, if somewhat boring. However, running the entire length of the mountains is a shimmering wall of magical light. Though it looks similar to how a ley line might look if visible (such as on Rifts Earth), any Wizard will know immediately that it is not. It is, in fact, the final warning that Chloe spoke of, giving adventurers one last chance to turn back before crossing into the cursed land of the Eternal Torment. To reinforce this, others have placed more direct warnings all along the length of the wall of light (piles of stones, chained skeletons, warning symbols, etc.). Finally, psychic characters with powers such as Sixth Sense or Clairvoyance, as well as Principled or Scrupulous, will get a "feeling" that the place before them is tainted and evil. And Priests of Light or of Light and Dark will know that the land on the other side of the wall of light has been cursed by the gods.

Once the players cross the wall of light, they will be subjected to any one of a number of random curses as a punishment sent by the Gods of Light for disregarding the warning. (For a full list of possible and quite entertaining curses, consult the list beginning on page 48 of *The Land of the Damned Two: Eternal Torment*, otherwise use the less diverse list on page 262 of the *Palladium Fantasy Role Playing Game*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) Players failing to make a saving throw versus magic of 15 or higher will suffer from a random phobia (usually pertaining to the dead, entities, certain types of undead, Necromancers, or similar places of darkness), a random curse, a phobia *and* a curse, or two curses. Players who successfully save against the phobia and/or curse must roll again for every 48 hours within the Eternal Torment until they succumb. Even those who acquire a curse or phobia

must roll to save again every four months they are within the Eternal Torment or gain another curse. Furthermore, these curses stay with the victim long after they eventually depart this region of the Land of the Damned. And as if this wasn't bad enough, anyone who suffers one of the *Curses of the Mortification* will develop the Brand of the Damned, a sooty mark on the forehead that appears to have been written in charcoal or ash that will not wash off. This mark reduces one's P.B. by 1D4, causes the player to radiate a "taint of evil" that is evident even to those who can See Aura (regardless of his or her true alignment), and causes the player to radiate an aura of magical energy that somehow "feels wrong" to those who can detect it.

And finally, this is considered a gods-imposed curse with regard to attempts to remove it via the magic spell Remove Curse (the saving through is made at 15 or higher *without* the benefit of any bonuses) or the priestly power of remove curse. However, rumors suggest that truly repentant individuals who perform acts of true selflessness and bravery that are *not* merely attempts to cast off the curse will attract the attention of the Gods of Light and the curse will be lifted.

As the players cross the wall of light, they will see the mountains slope away before them down to a barren landscape devoid of any signs of life. Crags of broken rock, spires of twisted and jagged stone, and deep ravines stretch out as far as the eye can see. Though there are clear runoff channels, what little water flows through them is dirty and putrid. It is as if the very land itself were cursed, not only the inhabitants. If the players are wise, they will cross into the Eternal Torment at the break of day. While most of the undead are not harmed by sunlight (unlike the traditional vampire), being creatures of the night, most are weakened during the daylight hours and simply will not come out until nightfall. Still, even during the day, the players will need to proceed very carefully to avoid any of the Endless Dead who wander the barren lands in search of the living upon which to feed. (For a full list of the Endless Dead and their abilities, consult pages 115-144 in the *Land of the Damned Two: Eternal Torment*.)

At some point, the players should notice that they are being followed at a discreet distance by 5 shadowy forms. They move in lurching, hunched over fashion, almost ape-like. These creatures will never get too close so the players will only be able to identify them if they try to sneak up on them. They look like hairy, gorilla-like corpses with massive hook-like spades at the end of their elongated arms. A successful Lore: Demons and Monsters or Lore: Undead skill roll will correctly identify them as Gravediggers, a repulsive class of undead that cares nothing for the flesh of the living like most undead, but rather wait for the chance to steal away with or dig up the recently slain to eat. For this reason, these dimwitted creatures will not take any aggressive action unless the players have a dead body (animal or humanoid) with them. Only that will cause them to attack, and then only to steal the corpse. While this may make them seem relatively benign, albeit disgusting, traveling companions, the real danger comes when the players encounter some other group of undead. The Gravediggers will begin making all sorts of racket in order to attract the attention of the other undead in the hopes that someone will be slain and they can feast on the corpse.

**5 Gravediggers:** Corpse eaters of the Eternal Torment.

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 3, M.E. 4, M.A. 1, P.S. 20, P.P. 14, P.E. 16, P.B. 4, Spd 23.

**Size:** 8 feet (2.4 m) tall (as they are usually hunched over, they appear slightly smaller at first); 750 pounds (337.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 8

**Hit Points:** 46

**S.D.C.:** 80

**P.P.E.:** 8

**Horror Factor:** 11

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical.

**Bonuses:** +1 to strike, +1 to parry, +1 to save versus magic, +3 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Bite does 2D6, Spade-slap does 2D6+6, Spade Slash does 3D6+5, and Clawed kick does 3D6+5.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Never sleeps, can function in day and night (weaker during the day - reduce attributes, S.D.C., and natural abilities by half), Nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), bio-regenerate 2D6 damage per hour, understands and speaks all languages at 50% (illiterate) and Climb (80%/70%). Can dig three times faster than a strong human and can sense the location of a corpse within a 10 mile (16 km) radius and track it with 90% efficiency. Like all undead, they are vulnerable only to weapons made of wood or silver, as well as magical weapons, holy weapons, holy water, holy symbols, and magic. Impervious to poisons, toxins, disease, and normal weapons. Also, while reducing its Hit Points to 0 might "kill" the undead, it will rise again the following night unless special precautions are taken such as decapitating and burning the body, then scattering its ashes.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Psychic Diagnosis, Presence Sense, and Death Trance. I.S.P.: 50.

**Appearance:** As described above, loping, gorilla-like corpses covered with hair, and with spade-like hooks on the ends of their elongated arms.

If the players do nothing, the Gravediggers will simply continue to follow at a safe distance until either there is a corpse to steal or another group of undead to attract. Unfortunately for the players, if they have not already dealt with the Gravediggers (another successful Lore: Undead skill roll will warn them of this last habit), they will become a much bigger problem shortly.

At dusk, the players will hear a pitiful moaning and sobbing coming from somewhere ahead, along the narrow mountain path. As it is the only immediate way down, the players will have no choice but to investigate further. What they discover is that a large number of disgusting corpses are busily tearing at their scabrous skin with their claws and scratching themselves against the jagged rocks directly in their path. If successfully identified, the players will learn that these are Blighters, sore-covered undead whose eternal punishment is to suffer from a horrible disease that causes painful lesions all over their bodies, forcing them to claw endlessly until they bleed. The good news is that these undead are so caught up in their pitiful existence and in relieving their pain that they will most likely not notice





the players' attempt to sneak around. However, once they detect the living, they will attack them mercilessly, going for the more attractive ones first. And if the Gravediggers have not yet been dealt with, the five hairy undead will begin calling out with loud hoots and shouts until the Blighters take notice and attack.

**10 Blighters:** Disease-riddled, itching corpses.

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 9, M.E. 3, M.A. 4, P.S. 25, P.P. 18, P.E. 14, P.B. 2, Spd 16.

**Size:** 6 feet (1.8 m) tall; 200 pounds (90 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 10

**Hit Points:** 42

**S.D.C.:** 44

**P.P.E.:** 2

**Horror Factor:** 14

**Attacks per Melee:** 4 physical.

**Bonuses:** +4 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, +8 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Claws do 2D6+10, Bite does 1D6 + Sickness (identical to the Sickness Wizard spell, only lasting 6 hours per bite that inflicts damage).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Sleeps from noon to 5 PM, can function in day and night otherwise (weaker during the day - reduce attributes, S.D.C., and natural abilities by half), Night-vision 1000 feet (305 m), bio-regenerate 2D6 damage per hour,

understands and speaks all languages at 90% (illiterate) and Climb (80%/70%). Stench of Putrifaction: anyone who comes within 10 feet (3 m) of a Blighter chokes, gags, their eyes water, and they suffer -3 on initiative, -1 to strike and parry, and -20% to perform a skill. Furthermore, every minute the player must roll under his or her P.E. to avoid vomiting (players with a P.E. of 18 or higher must still roll under an 18 regardless to save). Also, once per day, a Blighter can cast a Pox curse identical to the curse performed by a Priest of Darkness. Like all undead, they are vulnerable only to weapons made of wood or silver, as well as magical weapons, holy weapons, holy water, holy symbols, and magic. Impervious to poisons, toxins, disease, and normal weapons. Also, while reducing its Hit Points to 0 might "kill" the undead, it will rise again the following night unless special precautions are taken such as decapitating and burning the body, then scattering its ashes.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Putrid, sore-covered, bleeding zombies who constantly claw at their own bleeding, pestilence ridden flesh with their long claws.

If the players are attacked, they will soon find themselves overwhelmed by the Blighters (the Gravediggers will not attack until one of the living falls, then only to retrieve the body and cart it off to a safe distance to feed). Unless they possess some special ability or item that helps them ward off large numbers of undead, they will be in a desperate struggle to survive. As things

begin to look grim, a burst of light will suddenly erupt over the scene (a Globe of Daylight spell), followed by a series of fireballs aimed at the Blighters closest to the players. The surviving Blighters will all look up and run off. Over the rise, three humans, an Elf, and two Dwarves will appear. Without any real explanation, the rescuers will warn the players to quickly gather their possessions and follow before a larger number of undead begin to gather. Their rescuers are a trio of human Undead Hunters, an Elf Wizard, a Dwarf Priest of Light and a Dwarf Warrior Monk.

The players will be led to a narrow passageway cut into a rock wall (almost indistinguishable unless a successful Locate Secret Compartments and Doors skill roll is made). This winding passage steadily climbs until it enters a cave. Down an equally narrow and steep passage, the heroes guide the players until they reach a large, open chamber. This is the rumored "City of the Living" that is often spoken of by outsiders. Believed to be a secret training camp of Undead Hunters, Palladins, and other heroes, it is, in truth, a refugee camp where escaped slaves and rescued living are taken by a small group of heroes who struggle to save what few lives they can without attracting the attention of the three Necropoli that also share Galdrum's Teeth. (Game Master's Note: If the players actually drove off or killed the Gravediggers and managed to avoid the Blighters entirely, the six rescuers will still arrive, only less dramatically, to warn them of an even greater number of undead further down the mountainside.)

The players will be led past the huddled groups of emaciated yet clearly living humanoids into a small side chamber where a giant figure sits upon a stone bench. He is introduced as Yerell.

**Yerell:** (Real name is Yerell Lumos) 13<sup>th</sup> level Undead, Titan, Undead Hunter (how is that for irony?).

**Alignment:** Principled.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 13, M.E. 8, M.A. 14, P.S. 30, P.P. 23, P.E. 21, P.B. 21, Spd. 19.

**Size:** 18 feet (5.5 m) tall, 1000 pounds (450 kg).

**Hit Points:** 65     **S.D.C.:** 107

**P.P.E.:** 209

**Natural A.R.:** 10

**Horror Factor:** 12 (no longer an Awe Factor as a result of his undead nature).

**Attacks per Melee:** 8 physical or 2 by magic.

**Bonuses:** +3 on initiative, +6 to strike, +11 to parry, +11 to dodge, +7 to pull punch, +7 to roll with the punch, +8 to save versus Horror Factor, +2 to save versus mind control/illusions, +3 to save versus magic, 50% charm and impress.

**Damage:** Since being robbed of the ability to use his signature Undead Hunter magic weapons (as an undead now, these items cause horrible pain when handled by Yerell), he only attacks using his sheer Supernatural Strength. Punch does 4D6+15 damage, power punch does 1D4x10+15, knows all kicks and leap attacks (these also do comparable amounts of supernatural damage).

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Night Vision 1000 feet (305 m), see the invisible, bio-regenerate 4D6 damage per minute (4 melees), turn/command 6D6 dead at will (80%), can no longer dimensional teleport as a result of his undead transformation.

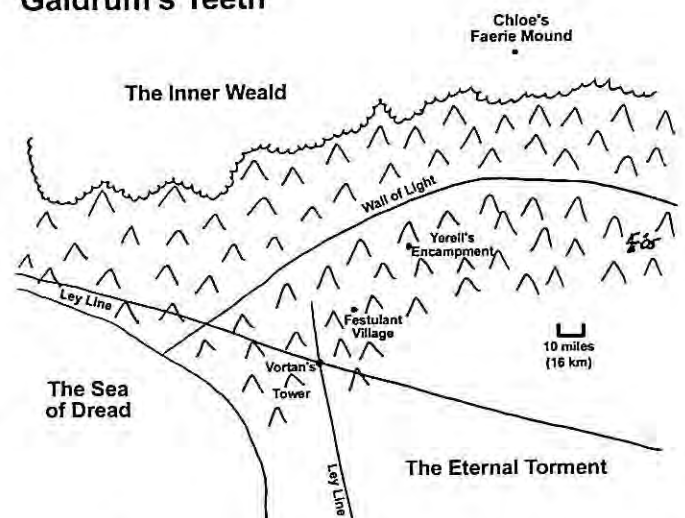
Knows a great deal about the undead (equal to Lore: Undead 90%) as well as the immediate region of the Eternal Torment and Galdrum's Teeth. Like all undead, they are vulnerable only to weapons made of wood or silver, as well as magical weapons, holy weapons, holy water, holy symbols, and magic. Impervious to poisons, toxins, disease, and normal weapons. Also, while reducing its Hit Points to 0 might "kill" the undead, it will rise again the following night unless special precautions are taken such as decapitating and burning the body, then scattering its ashes. Also due to his undead nature, Yerell is weakened during the daylight hours (reduce S.D.C., bonuses, natural abilities, and the effects of his magic by half).

**Magic:** Yerell still retains his spell knowledge as an Undead Hunter: Armor of Ithan, Call Lightning, Carpet of Adhesion, Circle of Fire, Decipher Magic, Expel Demons and Deevils, Fire Ball, Globe of Daylight, See the Invisible, Sense Magic, Sense Traps, Tongues, and Turn Dead. Also knows Strength of Utgard Loki, Size of the Behemoth, and Reduce Self (these last three spells no longer work on his undead form, however).

**Psionics:** Yerell has retained his minor psionic abilities of Empathy and Telepathy. I.S.P.: 52.

**Appearance:** Yerell still looks like a Titan. In fact, from a distance, he would be indistinguishable. However, upon closer examination, his skin is deathly pale, ice cold to the touch, and drawn tight across his bones, his eyes are set unnaturally deep in his face, and his hair looks like that of a corpse. He is extremely thin and moves with an unnatural grace that just makes one uneasy to watch. Though he still retains much of his original P.B., it is now an unnatural beauty that one cannot help but look upon with both fascination and horror. There is no denying the inhuman nature of this undead Titan. None of the refugees who even know that Yerell is an undead have dared ask upon what the Titan feeds. No one dares suggest that he might be taking the lives of the very people who owe him so much.

## Northwest Galdrum's Teeth



Yerell was one of Kortag the Conqueror's companions of old. He was present when Kortag recovered the pieces of Castlerake and destroyed Vortan's keep in the southern lowlands of the Old Kingdom. Unwilling to accept that the Undead Archmage had been destroyed, Yerell set out to track the fiend across the world, ultimately chasing him into the Land of the



Damned. Once there, he pursued Vortan across Galdrum's Teeth into the Eternal Torment where, as fate would have it, Yerell suffered the worst possible curse imaginable for defying the will of the Gods of Light - he was transformed into the very thing his life was dedicated to destroying: an undead. In despair, he abandoned his quest for Vortan and wandered the lands, extracting a brutal revenge against the legions of Endless Dead even though he had become one of them. When his sanity finally returned, he learned that Vortan still lived and had constructed a magical tower in the northwest corner of the Eternal Torment. However, as he was now an undead as well, he knew that to confront his enemy directly risked falling under the Undead Archmage's power to command other undead. Therefore, Yerell retreated into the mountains a few days travel away from Vortan's new fortress in order to watch for some sign of what the undead Wizard might be planning. In the meantime, he has been offering sanctuary to those few living he and his band of unlikely heroes have discovered wandering in the Eternal Torment. Though he does not risk exposing his operation by directly trying to free living slaves from the three Necropoli, he does send his scouts out to find any who might have escaped in an attempt to give them sanctuary enough to nurse their wounds, recover their strength, and eventually, cross back into the land of the living on the other side of the mountains.

Yerell is responsible for at least some of the warnings about the need for some band of mighty heroes to purge the Eternal Torment of the living dead. With each survivor he helps across Galdrum's Teeth, he bids them to carry a warning to the outside world about the increasing restlessness of the Endless Dead as well as his growing suspicions that Vortan is on the verge of carrying out a plan to escape the Eternal Torment and quite possibly take legions of hungry undead with him (this is a warning he will impress upon the players as well).

When Yerell interrogates the players about why they have come, he will ultimately learn that they are seeking the final piece of the rune sword. He will ask them what they know about Vortan the Undying and will warn them that the Undead Archmage did indeed survive and somehow gained possession of Castlerake's blade. He will further add that no matter what happens, the players should under NO circumstances allow the assembled rune sword to remain in the Eternal Torment or even the Land of the Damned. After all, Castlerake is designed to break down fortresses and defensive barriers and what else are the mountains of Galdrum's Teeth and the Northern Mountains but the world's largest fortress walls? (Game Master's Note: the possibility that a fully assembled Castlerake could possibly shatter even a section of one of these barriers and release the prisoners of the damned is left to the Game Master to decide. Just the possibility should be enough to make the players pause and consider what might happen if they fail.)

Unfortunately, other than offering the players a place to rest and recover their strength, Yerell can offer no other direct aid as he is still unwilling to confront Vortan lest he come under his thrall. Nor is he willing to allow any of his own scouts to assist them. He will, however, suggest the "safest" route through the mountains and down to the valley floor where Vortan's keep lies, one that will take them around the most heavily patrolled areas of Galdrum's Teeth. And he has one other prized possession to offer: his Vampire Slayer Holy Sword.

**Vampire Slayer Holy Sword:** This giant-sized claymore sword has a blood-red blade, is well balanced (+2 to strike and parry), and inflicts 3D6+4 damage to mortals creatures. To undead, demons, and Deevils, however, it inflicts 5D6+4 damage. It can also be used to cast the following spells up to three times a day each: Blinding Flash, Globe of Daylight, Turn Liquid (any kind) to Water, and Circle of Rain. Furthermore, the hilt acts as a holy symbol and can be used as such against the Endless Dead (or any undead for that matter). Though it is a holy weapon, it does not possess an intelligence of its own like a rune weapon.

## Chapter Nineteen: An Audience with Vortan

Players will be able to follow the secret path that will allow them to bypass a number of more heavily traveled routes. However, this does not mean that Game Masters who wish to challenge their players should not have them encounter any resistance. In the original play test, the players encountered a small village of about 50-60 Festulant undead zombies. Unable to avoid the settlement without leaving the "safe" path and risking detection by more hostile and powerful undead, the players had no choice but to directly enter the village. These "peaceful" or at least passive undead went about their daily lives, though the entire scenario kept the players on edge. A small number of Aberrations also lived in the village and, while not hostile at first, were *extremely* annoying as they attempted to convince the players that they did not deserve the cruel fate of being transformed into undead. At some point after this encounter (or at any point along the trail), players may notice a large black raven circling overhead for a short while (well outside of bow or magic range) before it flies off to the south.

Eventually, the players will leave the mountain path and look down on a valley floor covered with a massive army of skeletal warriors. Though the warriors look like ordinary animated dead, these skeletons appear to be more deliberate in their movements, belying a greater degree of intelligence than simple animated automatons. A successful skill roll under Lore: Undead or Lore: Demons and Monsters will reveal that these must be Bone Fiends, intelligent undead skeletal warriors. Sitting in the exact center of the valley the players see a single black spire that tapers to a point. The person in possession of the pieces of Castlerake will confirm that the blade lies somewhere within the black stone tower. Also, magically sensitive players will be able to sense that not only are there at least two ley lines running through the area, but that the tower clearly lies on a ley line nexus.

As the players look out over the field of undead warriors, they will notice a party of riders approach from the tower and head straight for their hiding place. They are all riding black horses and the Bone Fiend army parts before them like a wave. If the players remain where they are, the party will take a few minutes to arrive. If the players retreat, it will take riders longer to locate them, but they will be found. Observant characters will notice that once again, the black raven is circling overhead, still outside of bow or spell range.

As the mounts approach, their smoky green eyes and the heavy fog-like vapor issuing from them with each breath makes it evident that these are not mortal horses. Another successful skill roll will tell the players that these are Sladka, vicious undead parodies of horses that breathe forth a fog-like vapor from their nostrils. Of the ten mounted riders who approach, nine are Bone Fiends armed with medium shields and nasty looking barbed swords. The tenth rider, the leader, appears to be a hairless Elf dressed in black plate armor and wearing a red cape. Should any player use See Aura or Sense Evil (or some other similar spell or psionic ability), they will realize that this Elf is not the mere mortal that he appears (he is, in fact, a Rawhead undead in its mortal guise). He will explain that he and his soldiers are not here to attack, though they will if their orders are not obeyed. They are to escort the players through the army of Bone Fiends to the black tower to await an audience with Vortan the Undying who has been looking forward to meeting them for sometime. The "Elf" will remind the players that refusal will result in a conflict they cannot hope to win as there is still an entire army waiting on the valley floor.

Should the players refuse, the Bones Fiends and their Sladka mounts will attack, though only to subdue the players. Should the players get the upper hand in the conflict, the Rawhead will reveal its undead nature and attack while the "raven" (actually a Harbinger undead in its animal form) will speed off to call for reinforcements. If the players are wise and do not attack or defy the Rawhead's orders, they will be escorted through the assembled army (a successful Military Etiquette skill roll will indicate that they number in the thousands and are clearly making ready to march) to the featureless black tower. As the players pass through the only opening in the black stone, a single wide arch that no light seems to be able to penetrate, they will notice that extremely fine strands of some silver metal are woven into the stone walls (a successful Gemology or Lore: Magic skill roll at a -20% indicates that this is the magically conductive metal Gantrium), suggesting that the entire tower is designed to channel vast amounts of P.P.E. for rituals and spell casting (not unlike the Vault of Destiny tower in the Northern Hinterlands).

As a result of the unnatural darkness in the tower, even players with Nightvision will be unable to discern much more than shadowy forms milling about. The players will be escorted to a massive audience chamber, at the end of which there is a raised platform with a large throne clearly made of hundreds of bones. Seated upon the throne is a skeletal figure dressed in elaborately decorated robes and wearing a large black crown on its head. Players who make a successful skill roll will instantly know this to be an Undead Archmage (though by now, everyone should have figured that one out). A giant Flamberge sword is strapped to the belt around the Undead Archmage's waist. The person with the other pieces will instantly recognize the blade and pommel as the final piece of Castlerake. An undead Orc is standing off to one side with a look of despair upon his face. Even as an undead, players will recognize the Kortag family features in the Orc's face. Right after the players are escorted in, the Harbinger, still in raven form, will fly in and settle on the Undead Archmage's shoulder.

Vortan will welcome the players and explain that he has been eager to meet them ever since they drove off his demon and retrieved the first piece of Castlerake from Kortag's tomb. He will then, in classic villain style, fill in the gaps of the interceding

years since his defeat to the present. Knowing that he was being chased by Yerell, Vortan fled towards the Land of the Damned in the hopes of losing the Undead Hunter in that treacherous region. Along the way, as fate would have it, he encountered the eldest son of his enemy and took from him Castlerake's blade, as well as his life by turning him into an undead slave. Before entering the Eternal Torment and becoming trapped with the other undead, he summoned the Shedim demon and ordered it to watch over Kortag's tomb until someone strong enough to drive it off came to claim the diamond centerpiece. He hoped, at first, that some hero would eventually come to claim the blade and, in so doing, give the Undead Archmage the only weapon he believed capable of destroying the barriers that prevents all of the denizens of the damned from escaping.

However, as the centuries passed, he became impatient and began plotting for an alternate means of escape. Using the Gantrium he acquired in the Northern Hinterlands, he built his tower on the nexus point in the hope of channeling enough P.P.E. to allow him to break the gods' imposed barrier that prevents the undead from escaping not only over Galdrum's Teeth, but also into other dimensions or via teleportation. At first this, too, failed, but then Vortan discovered a relic that provided even more power, a chunk of what looked like melted black slag rock. Though he did not know what it was, he was able to draw vast amounts of P.P.E. from it. Using this, at the right moment, along with the assembled Castlerake, he feels that he will be able to at last defeat the dimensional barriers and Rift beyond the confines of the Eternal Torment and the Land of the Damned.

Having said this, he will politely ask the player with the five other pieces of Castlerake to surrender them as he will need them to prepare for the coming midnight hour. To reinforce his position, the nine Bone Fiends, still mounted on Sladka, will come closer. Players will need to decide carefully how they play out the remainder of this encounter. In all actuality, this might be the best time to strike, for although they are in near darkness right now, it is still late afternoon and, technically, daylight, when most of the undead are at their weakest.

**9 Bone Fiends (5 for the final encounter):** Skeletal warriors obedient to Vortan.

**Alignment:** Aberrant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 10, M.E. 10, M.A. 1, P.S. 20, P.P. 21, P.E. 17, P.B. 3, Spd 20.

**Size:** 6 feet, 6 inches (2 m) tall; 65 pounds (29.3 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 12

**Hit Points:** 37      **S.D.C.:** 43

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

**Horror Factor:** 12

**Attacks per Melee:** 4 physical.

**Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +5 to strike (+8 with swords), +5 to parry (+9 with shields), +5 to dodge, +2 to disarm, +1 to save versus magic, +8 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Punch does 2D6+5, Power Punch does 4D6+5 (counts as two attacks), but Bone Fiends prefer to fight with their weapons. Each carries a barbed, curved blade that inflicts 2D6+8 (with P.S. bonus factored in) and a medium-sized shield with a spike in the middle (1D6+7 with P.S. bonus factored in).



**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Never sleeps and can function in both day and night (weaker during the day - reduce attributes, S.D.C., and natural abilities by half), Nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), bio-regenerate 1D6 damage per melee, understands and speaks all languages at 95% (illiterate) and Climb (80%/70%). These particular Bone Fiends also know Horsemanship: Exotic (65%/55%). Bone Grafting: If a Bone Fiend loses a limb, it can take the limb of any skeleton and magically attach it to its body. Within a few minutes, the appendage alters to become the Bone Fiend's new arm and the creature is restored. Like all undead, they are vulnerable only to weapons made of wood or silver, as well as magical weapons, holy weapons, holy water, holy symbols, and magic. Impervious to poisons, toxins, disease, and normal weapons. Also, while reducing its Hit Points to 0 might "kill" the undead, it will rise again the following night unless special precautions are taken, in this case smashing the skull into 12 pieces and burying each one separately. Otherwise, the Bone Fiend will rise again in 48 hours.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Bone Fiends look like ordinary animated skeletons, though their swift movements, higher degree of intelligence, and ruthless cunning belie their true undead nature. Vortan's lieutenant Bone Fiends are dressed in the rotting dress robes of a knight, and are armed with wicked looking curved swords with barbed tips and medium-sized round shields with vicious spikes.

**9 Sladka:** Intelligent undead mounts of important undead.

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 9, M.E. 16, M.A. 6, P.S. 32, P.P. 11, P.E. 18, P.B. 16, Spd 54.

**Size:** 7 feet (2.1 m) tall at the shoulder; 2000 pounds (900 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 8

**Hit Points:** 54      **S.D.C.:** 42

**P.P.E.:** 16

**Horror Factor:** 10

**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical.

**Bonuses:** +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to automatic dodge (must still roll, but does not use a melee action), +2 to save versus charms and mind control, +1 to save versus psionics, +2 to save versus magic, +5 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Bite 2D4, front leg kick does 4D6+17, rear leg kick does 6D6+17.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Typically sleeps away most of the day but can function in both day and night (weaker during the day - reduce attributes, S.D.C., and natural abilities by half, plus it cannot create its supernatural fog), Nightvision 1600 feet (488 m), see the invisible, bio-regenerate 1D6 damage per melee, understands all languages at 95% (cannot speak, however; must use telepathy or empathy to communicate). Knows the following relevant skills: Land Navigation (98%), Track Humanoids (65%), Prowl (60%), and Detect Ambush (90%), Leap 40 feet (12.2 m) lengthwise and 30 feet (9.1 m) high without much of a run. They can actually leap farther at near full speed, but in the confines of Vortan's audience hall, this is impossible. They also possess the ability to create a very thick fog and a roaring

thunder when they run, but again, these abilities are extremely limited while inside the keep. Like all undead, they are vulnerable only to weapons made of wood or silver, as well as magical weapons, holy weapons, holy water, holy symbols, and magic. Impervious to poisons, toxins, disease, and normal weapons. Also, while reducing its Hit Points to 0 might "kill" the undead, it will rise again the following night unless special precautions are taken such as decapitating and burning the body, then scattering its ashes.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Commune with Animals, Empathy, Mind Block, Presence Sense, See the Invisible, Sense Dimensional Anomaly, Sixth Sense, and Telepathy. I.S.P.: 46.

**Appearance:** Sladka look like coal black horses with eerie green eyes and fog breathing from their mouths and nostrils. Regardless of whether they have a rider or not, they all have a magically indestructible saddle and bridle that cannot be removed.

If the players do nothing, they will be stripped of their weapons, armor, and equipment, including the pieces of Castlerake. They will be allowed to witness the reunion of the pieces of Castlerake as with a flash, the blade and pommel of Vortan's sword wrench free of its replacement crosspiece and unite with the other pieces with a flash. The players will then be escorted to another chamber where they will be locked in an unguarded but securely locked (-30% to pick locks skill even if somehow a player managed to secrete away a set of lock picks to begin with) cell to await their fate. As an additional measure of security, the entire dungeon chamber is under the effect of a series of wards designed to prevent not only magic but also psionics from functioning (mystic energy drain, area affect, protection by infliction, permanence, magic, and a hitherto lost *psionic* ward).



## Psionic Ward

This ward has been lost since the Millennium of Purification. Those few who even know that such a ward once existed believe that it was deliberately destroyed by the psychics in the army of Purifiers who used their powers in their relentless search for those who still practiced magic. As a condition ward, it is identical to the *Magic* ward except that its effects are limited to people or creatures who possess some degree of psionic ability.

**Damage:** Protection from psionics.

**Duration:** 8 melees per level of the Diabolist.

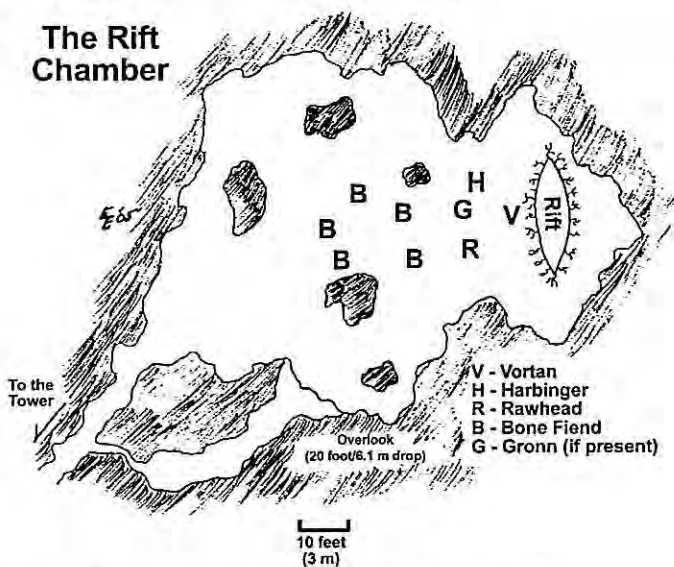
**Ward Used With:** Protection from, protection by infliction, and area effect only.

**Power Words:** *Acba yin Agu yin Acba.*

**Components:** Gold (identical to the *Magic* ward).

# Chapter 20: Breaking Barriers – The Final Showdown!

Should the players allow themselves to be captured in the hopes that some less suicidal opportunity may present itself, they will be rewarded when the undead zombie of Kortag's son Hronal shambles in several hours later. He will explain that he has been waiting for the opportunity to break free of the Undead Archmage's control and the sight of his father's assembled sword provided him with the mental strength to accomplish that. He explains that he will guide them to their belongings and then to the chamber beneath the tower where the ley line nexus is located. He will explain that it is Vortan's intent to use the additional boost of energy at the midnight hour, channeled through the magical focusing power of the Gantrium woven into the structure of the tower and focused through the melted black rock (Kortag will call this the Chaos Stone) to open a Rift to someplace else in the world. He will then thrust the Castlerake into the event horizon of the Rift to pierce the dimensional barrier that the Gods of Light had erected millennia ago. Vortan will then summon the entire Bone Fiend army along with his many other undead servants from outside to march through the tower and follow him through the Rift to escape the Eternal Torment and plague the world of the living once again.



**Hronal:** The undead son of Kortag the Conqueror.  
**Alignment:** Unprincipled.  
**Attributes:** I.Q. 9, M.E. 5, M.A. 4, P.S. 21 (supernatural), P.P. 10, P.E. 12, P.B. 2, Spd 10.  
**Size:** 6 feet (1.8 m) tall; 160 pounds (72 kg).  
**Natural A.R.:** 9  
**Hit Points:** 36  
**S.D.C.:** 80  
**P.P.E.:** 9  
**Horror Factor:** 11  
**Attacks per Melee:** 3 physical.  
**Bonuses:** +2 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 to dodge, +4 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Bite 2D4, Claws do 3D6+6. Vortan obviously does not allow his undead slave to carry a weapon, but if given one or if he acquires one, he will find that he not only can use it instinctively, but that he has the equivalent W.P. Sword skill at level 7 (an additional +3 to strike and parry). Furthermore, in combat his forgotten Hand to Hand: Expert skills will return, granting him all of the bonuses associated with that skill up to 7<sup>th</sup> level.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Sleeps little during the day but can function in both day and night (weaker during the day - reduce attributes, S.D.C., and natural abilities by half), Nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), see the invisible, bio-regenerate 1D6 damage per melee, understands and speaks all languages at 95% (illiterate). Any other skills he once possessed while alive have all but been forgotten, though if he were to escape Vortan's influence and the Eternal Torment, slowly the skills of a 7<sup>th</sup> level Knight will emerge. Like all undead, they are vulnerable only to weapons made of wood or silver, as well as magical weapons, holy weapons, holy water, holy symbols, and magic. Impervious to poisons, toxins, disease, and normal weapons. Also, while reducing its Hit Points to 0 might "kill" the undead, it will rise again the following night unless special precautions are taken such as decapitating and burning the body, then scattering its ashes.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Looks like a fresh Orc corpse despite having been an undead for centuries. Vortan has him dressed in rags to further degrade the son of his long dead enemy.

The spell that Vortan used to transform Hronal into an undead is a lost Spell of Legend that was patterned after the effects of the Mortification itself. It is the spell Vortan used in the past to amass an army of Bone Fiends and other undead before being defeated by Kortag. And it is with this spell that he plans to expand his undead army once he escapes the Eternal Torment.

## Create Greater Undead (ritual)

**Level:** Spell of Legend.

**Range:** Touch (see below).

**Duration:** Permanent until slain.

**Saving Throw:** Standard versus ritual (see below).

**P.P.E.:** 750

This ritual, though lost since the Time of a Thousand Magicks, was modeled after the horrible effects of the Mortification curse inflicted upon the surviving followers of the Old Ones who would not forsake their defeated masters at the end of the Chaos War. Though not capable of transforming millions such as the original curse, this spell is still quite powerful in that it can transform a living creature into an undead parody of its former life. Unlike lesser undead creation spells, such as Create Mummy and Create Zombie, this undead creation is a creature



of intelligence and willpower, though not totally free. Also unlike these spells, the victim (or subject) does not have to be dead. In fact, ironically, the ritual itself is relatively painless compared to most other dark magics. The true pain, however, comes as realization sinks in of what the victim of the ritual has become.

The spell can be performed upon either the willing as a reward for service to a powerful dark Wizard or Necromancer, or upon the unwilling as a terrible, eternal curse. If the subject of the ritual is willing, there is no saving throw and the person will be transformed into one of the dominant forms of undead common to the Eternal Torment region (depending upon the nature of the person when he was alive):

**Aberrations:** Spies, mouthpieces, instigators, interrogators, and torturers who do not believe they ever did anything wrong in life.

**Blighters:** Non-combatants who are nonetheless willing participants in the evil plans of others, as administrators and servants.

**Blood Wraiths:** Heroes and warriors of good who fell from grace and performed all manner of unjustified brutality in their overzealous personal war against evil.

**Bone Fiends:** Wicked soldiers of evil who blindly served their horrid masters.

**Eviscerals:** Again, once heroes and soldiers of light who abandoned their virtues in acts of cowardice and shirked their duties against evil to the detriment of others.

**Festulents:** Like those who become Bone Fiends, these were evil soldiers in life who did more than just serve an evil master; they never showed mercy and cheerfully participated in wanton acts of cruelty and torture.

**Gravediggers:** Servants of evil who gladly aided in the torture and torment of others at their master's behest.

**Harbingers:** Spies, informers, and back-stabbers who served evil masters in secret and betrayed many good people to their deaths.

**Jaliquettes:** Savage warriors who not only killed their foes, they defiled the bodies of the dead and often feasted upon them in acts of horrid cannibalism.

**Mortoi:** Evil craftsmen, artisans, forgers, spies, thieves, and pickpockets, some of whom crafted works of art either in their evil master's image or to glorify their despicable deeds, while others used their skillful hands and cunning minds to steal possessions and information.

**Rawheads:** Once heroes and warriors of good who deliberately turned against the path of light and betrayed their allies to their new evil master.

**Revenants:** The most loyal servants and warriors of evil who would fight to the death to glorify their masters even after their lords have fallen.

**Vampires:** Cruel, powerful people who figuratively fed upon the living by stealing or taxing the innocent to the point where countless died to feed their greed.

The unwilling, especially if good or Unprincipled, who are forced to undergo this ritual, must save versus magic ritual or be transformed into an undead version of their living selves. Unlike those evil subjects whose form is determined by the crimes they committed while alive (see the list above), these unwilling victims have not led such a cruel life and do not deserve their horrid fate. As such, the spell is not as effective at transforming

them. For them, the following changes occur: P.S. and P.E. increase by 2D4 and become supernatural. P.P. decreases by 1D4 and Spd. decreases by 2D6 (never below 3). P.B. drops by half (never below 3). All other attributes remain the same. Hit Points are frozen at their current level but S.D.C. increases by 1D4x10. The victim gains a Horror Factor of 1D4+8 (or add 1D4 if the race already has a natural Horror Factor) and an A.R. of 9. Natural abilities include: Nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), see the invisible, bio-regenerate 1D6 damage per melee, understands and speaks all languages at 95%, as well as the resistances and vulnerabilities common to all undead (silver, wood, magic, sunlight). However, half of the victim's skills are lost and experience is frozen at its current level (at the Game Master's discretion, player characters may now advance as first level undead using the Vampire experience table on page 210 of the *Western Empire* source book). Magic and psionics known before the transformation are still known, but P.P.E. and I.S.P. are frozen at the current level and no new spells or powers can be learned. The undead will now look like a recently deceased version of how he looked when the ritual was performed on him.

This spell can also be cast upon animals, creating undead versions of all manner of creatures (cost to cast the spell on an animal is half but the animal is always considered an unwilling victim, even if a loyal pet before the transformation). The spell does not have any effect upon supernatural beings such as demons, Deevils, Spirits of Light, Elementals, gods and godlings. It will, however, affect dragons, though no dragon would willingly participate in the ritual, making it almost impossible to transform one into an undead beast.

The most significant difference between undead that occur "naturally" and those created through this ritual is that the subjects of this spell are held in the thrall of the Wizard or Necromancer who cast the spell in much the same manner that a powerful Secondary Vampire or Master Vampire controls its own creations.

The tower will seem deserted as they are led even deeper into the foundations of the tower. Hronal will guide them to a massive cavern that seems to be glowing with an unnatural pale blue light that seems to radiate from the very air itself. From the ledge overlooking the cave, the players will see Vortan completing the final phases of a Dimensional Portal spell (PFRPG, page 216). Also present is a beautiful female human dressed in white robes (the Harbinger in its human form), a disgusting skinless undead (the true form of the Rawhead), and five Bone Fiends (the other four and all of the Sladka are outside the tower awaiting the signal to ride forth through the open Rift). In one hand, Vortan is holding the assembled Castlerake while in the other he is clutching a softball-sized chunk of what looks like melted black rock.

Before the players can act, Vortan completes the ritual and opens a Rift. However, before the Undead Archmage can thrust Castlerake into the event horizon, the Rawhead spots the players and shouts a warning. They all turn to attack (statistics for the five Bone Fiends are described in Chapter 19). Game Masters note: magic users can cast their spells at half the ordinary cost as a result of the Gantrium used in the construction of the tower. Furthermore, don't forget to augment the power of any spell cast in the final battle as a result of being at a ley line nexus (additional P.P.E. is not available as the open Rift is currently draining it).

**1 Harbinger:** Undead spy and servant of Vortan.

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 13, M.E. 13, M.A. 15, P.S. 17 (supernatural), P.P. 19, P.E. 18, P.B. 22, Spd 19 in human form (38 in animal form).

**Size:** 5 feet, 6 inches (1.7 m) tall; 130 pounds (58.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 10

**Hit Points:** 48

**S.D.C.:** 20

**P.P.E.:** 68

**Horror Factor:** N/A.

**Attacks per Melee:** 5 physical or 2 by magic.

**Bonuses:** +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +3 to disarm, +4 to pull punch, +2 to save versus magic, +7 to save versus Horror Factor, 60% to charm and impress (she will use this ability when first engaging in combat to distract her foe before revealing her demonic strength).

**Damage:** Punch does 2D6+2, Kick does 3D6+2, Bite does 2D4.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Can function in both day and night (weaker during the day - reduce attributes, S.D.C., and natural abilities by half and cannot assume human form during the day), Nightvision 1600 feet (488 m), bio-regenerate 1D6 damage per minute (4 melees), understands and speaks all languages at 98% (literate in Elven and Dwarven), Prowl 70%, Intelligence (90%), Track Humanoids (80%), and Climb (90%/80%). Animal Metamorphosis: Harbingers possess two animal forms (a primary and secondary) that they can assume at will. This particular Harbinger can become a jet black raven (primary) and a spider (secondary), along with all of the natural abilities of those animals. Harbingers can only assume their human form during the night and even then for only three hours total (no more than 30 minutes at a time). Like all undead, they are vulnerable only to weapons made of wood or silver, as well as magical weapons, holy weapons, holy water, holy symbols, and magic. Impervious to poisons, toxins, disease, and normal weapons. Also, while reducing its Hit Points to 0 might "kill" the undead, it will rise again the following night unless special precautions are taken such as decapitating and burning the body, then scattering its ashes.

**Magic:** Sense Evil, Sense Magic, See Wards, Sense Traps, Charismatic Aura, Fool's Gold, Multiple Image, Chameleon, Shadow Meld, Charm, Escape, and Control the Beasts.

**Psionics:** Astral Projection, Commune with Spirits, Dispel Spirits, Empathy, Mind Block, Object Read, See Aura, Sense Dimensional Anomaly, and Telepathy. I.S.P.: 26.

**Appearance:** The Harbinger has chalk white skin, jet black hair, lips, and fingernails, and eyes that glow with an orange light. In animal form, they are always black with glittering, intelligent eyes. She is wearing white robes with black and red trim.

**1 Rawhead:** Skinless vampire and second in command to Vortan.

**Alignment:** Aberrant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 15, M.E. 4, M.A. 6 (12 in Elf form), P.S. 33 (supernatural), P.P. 18, P.E. 17, P.B. 2 (12 in Elf form), Spd 15.

**Size:** 7 feet (2.1 m) tall; 200 pounds (90 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 9

**Hit Points:** 51      **S.D.C.:** 61

**P.P.E.:** 17

**Horror Factor:** 15 (N/A as an Elf).

**Attacks per Melee:** 5 physical.

**Bonuses:** +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +4 to parry, +3 to automatic dodge (must still roll, but does not use a melee action), +2 to entangle, +3 to disarm, +4 to pull punch, +1 to save versus magic, +10 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Punch does 5D6+18, Bite does 2D6. Also possesses two special attacks: Stranglehold and Breakneck. If the Rawhead performs a successful entangle/pin attack he gets his victim in a stranglehold (victim loses 4D6 damage direct to Hit Points per melee held, loses half their attacks/round down, cannot speak, cast spells, and all attacks directed at the Rawhead are 20% less effective). The victim can try to break free of the stranglehold by expending one attack and rolling a natural 18-20, two attacks and rolling a natural 15-20, or three attacks and rolling a natural 10-20 (keep in mind that choked players are already at half their attacks to begin with). To perform the breakneck attack, the Rawhead focuses all of its attacks into the first attack (cannot make any other attacks that round and can only parry and dodge). If the strike is successful, the victim must roll a 16 or higher to save (only P.E. bonuses apply). If the victim fails, his Hit Points drop to 0 and he falls into a coma (only quick action can save his life - stabilizing the neck and making three successful magical psionic healings which restore a mere 2D6 Hit Points - no further healings may be attempted for 24 hours). If the victim saves against this attack, he suffers only 1D6 damage to Hit Points and has all of his attacks to retaliate. If the same victim saves twice against this attack, he is immune to *all* further breakneck attacks, not just from this Rawhead, but from any!

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Is awake most of the day and can function in both day and night (weaker during the day - reduce attributes, S.D.C., and natural abilities by half and cannot assume human form during the day), Nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), bio-regenerate 2D6 damage per melee, understands and speaks all languages at 98% (literate in Elven as well), Horsemanship (80%/70%), Skin and Prepare Animal (human) Hides (90%), Prowl (80%), Detect Ambush (80%), Detect Concealment and Traps (80%), Instinctive Climb (like an insect, 90%), Leap 20 feet (6 m) in any direction (double when running). Rawheads can make more of themselves at a rate of 1 per six months (must skin its victim then cover it with its own blood - the victim rises as a newly created Rawhead with 20% lower Hit Points, S.D.C., and attributes for 10 years or until its creator is slain). Like all undead, they are vulnerable only to weapons made of wood or silver, as well as magical weapons, holy weapons, holy water, holy symbols, and magic. Impervious to poisons, toxins, disease, and normal weapons. Also, while reducing its Hit Points to 0 might "kill" the undead, it will rise again the following night unless special precautions are taken such as decapitating and burning the body, then scattering its ashes.

**Magic:** None.      **Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** Though he appears as a hairless, pale Elf during the day (how he looked ages ago when alive), the Rawhead looks like a skinless corpse of muscle and bone, glistening with fresh blood. A Rawhead can only maintain its humanoid dis-



guise during the day. At night, unless it possesses a skin suit taken from a victim, it automatically reverts to its undead form (this Rawhead has no such suit).



**Vortan the Undying:** Undead Archmage and 11<sup>th</sup> level Master Wizard (the "typical" Undead Archmage will be a level 2D4+6 Wizard, Summoner, or Necromancer).

**Alignment:** Diabolic Evil. (95% will be Diabolic or Miscreant. Very rarely will an Undead Archmage be Aberrant.)

**Attributes:** I.Q. 15 (4D6; minimum 12), M.E.: 19 (5D6; minimum 16), M.A.: 5 (2D6), P.S.: 15 (4D6 - Supernatural), P.P. 6 (2D6), P.E. 16 (4D6 - Supernatural), P.B.: 4 (1D6), Spd: 8 (2D6).

**Size:** 7 feet (2.1 m) tall; 150 pounds (67.5 kg).

**Natural A.R.:** 10

**Hit Points:** 216 (P.E. + 1D4x100).

**S.D.C.:** 100 (3D4x10).

**P.P.E.:** 800 (see Natural Abilities).

**Horror Factor:** 15

**Attacks per Melee:** 2 physical or 3 by magic.

**Bonuses:** +5 to strike with Castlerake only, +2 to parry (+7 with Castlerake), +2 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with the punch, +4 to save versus mind control, +6 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus psionics, +12 to save versus Horror Factor (except against large amounts of iron - see below), +4 to spell strength. (Standard bonuses are +8 save versus Horror Factor except against large amounts of iron, +4 save versus mind control, +1 spell strength, +2 save versus magic. All bonuses are in addition to attribute and O.C.C. bonuses.)

**Damage:** Claws do 2D4, Castlerake does 2D4x10 damage (double damage to Earth Elementals and Golems). Castlerake has several additional powers (described later) which Vortan will not use in order to conserve the sword's P.P.E. so that he can use it to break the dimensional barrier.

**Natural Abilities/Skills of Note:** Does not need to sleep and can function in both day and night (weaker during the day - reduce attributes, S.D.C., natural abilities, and magical abilities/strength by half), Nightvision 1000 feet (305 m), bio-regenerate 2D6 damage per melee (even after Hit Points are reduced to 0), Teleport (80% - will not work to escape the Eternal Torment), magically understands and speaks all languages at 98% (literate in whatever languages it knew while alive; Vortan knew many at 90%), power to control lesser undead as per a master vampire, Animate & Command 1D6x100 dead (85%). Like all undead, they are vulnerable only to weapons made of wood or silver, as well as magical weapons, holy weapons, holy water, holy symbols, and magic. Impervious to poisons, toxins, disease, and normal weapons. Also, while reducing its Hit Points to 0 might "kill" the undead, it will rise again the following night unless special precautions are taken such as decapitating and burning the body, then scattering its ashes. Large amounts of iron can keep the Undead Archmage at bay and will give the character a +3 versus the Undead Archmage's Horror Factor. The Undead Archmage can only be killed if it is reduced to 0 Hit Points and, before it bio-regenerates back above 0, its head is severed and both are buried separately in iron (or in a coffin bound with iron chains). Furthermore, weapons made of at least 90% iron will inflict double damage to the Undead Archmage. In order to maintain its physical form, an Undead Archmage must maintain at least 200 P.P.E. in order to keep itself at full strength. However, while their form can sustain up to 800 P.P.E. maximum, this power does not naturally regenerate as it would in living beings. Therefore, every time the undead magic user performs a spell, some of its vital essence is lost. And while he can use the surplus P.P.E. at a ley line or nexus for spell casting, he cannot replenish his lost power reserves with it. In order to restore his own power, therefore, he needs to absorb the P.P.E. from a living creature at the moment of its death. In this way only can the Undead Archmage maintain its necessary power. Should the Undead Archmage ever allow its P.P.E. to fall below 200, all of its powers, bonuses, abilities, and even its spell casting level is reduced by half (10<sup>th</sup> level becomes 5<sup>th</sup>, etc.). Should the level of P.P.E. fall below 100, the Undead Archmage slips into a cataleptic state (to the untrained, it will appear to have dropped dead). It will remain in this state indefinitely until it is brought back up to 200 P.P.E. through absorbing P.P.E. from a dying creature. Should the Undead Archmage's P.P.E. somehow drop to 0, its "soul" disperses and the thing is destroyed forever. However, the creature will never allow this to happen and will most likely flee when its power drops below 200.

Unlike most other undead, an Undead Archmage retains most of the knowledge skills (non-physical skills) it possessed in life frozen at the current level of experience with the following modifications: Lore: Magic +10%, Lore: Demons and Monsters +10%, Lore: Undead +20%. All physical skills are forgotten except Hand to Hand: Basic and a single Weapon Proficiency (both frozen at level 1D4; Vortan's are at level 4).

**Magic:** Vortan knows all Wizard spells from levels 1-8 plus Curse: Phobia, Speed of the Snail, and Monster Insect, Summon

Shadow Beast, Control and Enslave Entity, Create Mummy, Finger of Lictalon, Create Zombie, Summon and Control Entity, Dimensional Portal, and the Spell of Legend, Undead Transformation (described below). Remember that while in the Gantium laced tower, all spells for *all* spell casters (Vortan and players included) are cast at half their ordinary P.P.E. cost.

(A typical Undead Archmage retains all spell knowledge and abilities it possessed in its former life frozen at its level during transformation. The Undead Archmage can learn new spells through finding lost knowledge, scroll conversion, and the like, but its level of experience does not increase. A "typical" Wizard Undead Archmage will know all spells from levels 1-8, 2D6 spells from levels 9-12 and 1D4 spells from levels 13-15. It is likely to also know one or two Spells of Legend. A Necromancer Undead Archmage will know all Necro-magic spells plus 1D6 related Wizard spells per level. A Summoner Undead Archmage will know all Summoning and Protection Circles plus 2D6 Power Circles.)

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** An Undead Archmage looks like an ordinary animated skeleton, though it radiates an aura of power and evil that can be felt by even non-sensitive people (which explains the high Horror Factor). The Undead Archmage tends to dress in the robes common to its former profession and despite no longer being alive, enjoys the finest of silks and cloth when available. Vortan is dressed in black robes with embroidered blood red mystic symbols (actually, the robe is magically fire resistant - half damage with an A.R. of 14 and S.D.C. of 200). He also wears an iron crown on his head which confers a constant Mind Block ability as well as prevents attempts at supernatural and psionic possession and mind control.

## Undead Transformation (ritual)

**Level:** Spell of Legend.

**Range:** Self.

**Duration:** Permanent until slain.

**Saving Throw:** Standard (see below).

**P.P.E.:** 2500

This ancient and powerful ritual can be performed as either a spell ritual by a Wizard or Necromancer, or as a Power Circle of Legend by a Summoner. The effect of this ritual is to turn a high level Wizard, Necromancer, or Summoner (and in rare cases, Priests of Darkness in the service of death gods) into one of the most powerful undead in existence - an Undead Archmage (statistics described above).

The ritual involves the preparation of a potent and rare magical poison that is used to bring the magic user to the very doorstep of death. The spell caster must make two saving throws. The first one is a save versus lethal poison to see if the poison kills him before the ritual is completed.

Owing to the high cost in P.P.E. to cast, the ritual can only be performed at a ley line nexus (usually during a moment of peak power such as an Equinox or Solstice) and requires the sacrifice of a greater supernatural being (Greater Demon or Deevil, Demon or Deevil Lord, Ancient Dragon, Spirit of Light, demigod, godling, etc.) At the moment before the magic poison kills the magic user, he must sacrifice the being and hope that death

is fooled as it claims the essence of the slain being instead of his own. This requires the second saving throw, one versus magic. If the mage fails either saving throw, he is killed. If successful, his experience is frozen at its current level and his body is transformed into that of an Undead Archmage (as described above).

This ultra-rare Spell of Legend was believed to have been lost since the Time of a Thousand Magicks. The last known recorded Undead Archmage (other than Vortan) was destroyed during the Millennium of Purification, though rumors persist of a powerful undead Wizard dwelling in a secluded valley in the western arm of the Old Kingdom Mountains.

In addition to possessing Castlerake and its own formidable magical powers, Vortan has come across a unique magical artifact hidden in the rubble of the Eternal Torment, something he calls a Chaos Stone. It has further augmented the Undead Archmage's power, though most of its own power was tapped in the creation of the dimensional Rift. However, even Vortan is not aware of the true nature of the item.

**Chaos Stone:** This magical item is not so much an artifact as it is an indestructible magical fossil. The "glob" of what looks like melted black lava rock radiates a strong aura of magic (high P.P.E.) and supernatural evil. Also, any psychic attempting to Object Read the Chaos Stone will be overwhelmed with images of horror so intense that it will leave them in a coma for 1D6 hours, after which the player will have no memory of what he witnessed. (Game Masters may wish to inflict a random insanity or phobia as well.)

This is because the mass of stone is actually the petrified blood of an Old One (the one that was almost slain by the Wild Lords before they were betrayed by one of their own). The benefits of possessing this stone (in addition to the store of 500 P.P.E. that a magic user can call upon - regenerates at a rate of 20 per day as long as it is sheltered from sunlight) include +1 to save versus magic, +1 to the spell caster's Spell Strength, and raising the apparent level of any spell cast by 2 above the spell caster's current level when casting spells related to deception, illusion, and manipulation. However, the possessor of the Chaos Stone suffers a -4 to save versus insanity, -2 to save versus psionics, and there is a 25% chance each night that the person will begin to experience horrific dreams as a result of a tenuous link to the sleeping Old One (equivalent to the Induce Nightmare super-psionic power) that will slowly drive the person insane (roll for an insanity once every 1D4 months). Furthermore, the corrupting influence of the dreams will slowly turn the possessor towards a diabolic alignment (one step closer per 6 months - Scrupulous becomes Unprincipled, Unprincipled becomes Anarchist, Anarchist becomes Aberrant, etc.).

In addition to the five Bone Fiends, the Harbinger, the Rawhead, and Vortan, Gronn, the Shedim Lesser Demon from Chapter Two, will also be present (if he survived the original Chapter Two encounter). Furthermore, Vortan will cast Monster Insect if the players seem particularly adept at defeating undead too easily as well as summon a Shadow Beast or two.

If the battle begins to go against Vortan, the Undead Archmage will attempt to use Castlerake to pierce the Rift and escape, abandoning his minions and the Eternal Torment.



Should Vortan and his minions be slain, the Rift will remain stable for another 2D6 minutes before dissipating. Though they may have defeated the immediate threat, the very existence of a keep of this power that was specifically designed to breach the gods' imposed barrier should give the players pause before simply stepping through the Rift. And if they don't think of it, Hronal will warn that one of the other Lords of the Undead may discover the means to use the tower to free the undead from the Eternal Torment. He will also warn that the Chaos Stone should not remain in the Eternal Torment for others to find (he does not know what it is, only that it gave Vortan great and terrible powers).

The solution is obvious. The players will need to use Castlerake to destroy the tower before stepping through the Rift. (Game Masters: Make this final act as dramatic and heroic as you like, with the foundations of the keep shaking like an earthquake with a pitching floor, falling debris, and chasms forming underfoot that threaten to prevent the players from reaching the Rift to escape.)

**Castlerake's Blade:** The gold blade and pommel is lined with subtle runes and is over six feet long (2 m), indestructible, and can be fitted to an ordinary crosspiece by a skilled blacksmith. By itself, it inflicts 2D6+2 damage as a magic weapon, but does not possess any of its other powers (including its intelligence). The blade radiates strongly of magic and contains 150 P.P.E. that can be used by a magic user. If this P.P.E. is depleted, the gem will recharge at a rate of 1 P.P.E. per day, or faster if willingly filled by a magic user or set upon a ley line or nexus (from page 229, *Dragons and Gods*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.).

**The Rune Sword Castlerake:** (from pages 228 and 229, *Dragons and Gods*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.) The greatest power of Castlerake is that of destroying stone fortifications. When thrust into the solid stone of a building (requires a minimum P.S. of 20) and withdrawn one melee later, the sword is capable of causing one third of the structure to collapse into rubble. The remaining two thirds see their S.D.C. reduced by half and their A.R. reduced by 5 points. This power costs 500 of the sword's maximum 542 P.P.E.

**Additional Powers:** **Force Blast:** Shoves everything back 30 feet (9.1 m) and inflicts 1D6x10 damage to any who fail to dodge (10 P.P.E. per use). **Destructive Vibration:** Setting the blade against any solid, non-living material with less than 500 S.D.C. will crack or completely shatter it - reduce S.D.C. by half and A.R. by 2 points. Does not affect living matter (25 P.P.E. per use). **Consume Magic/P.P.E.:** When commanded, the blade glows dark blue and will consume 10 P.P.E. per minute from anything it stabs or from any spell cast at it or its wielder. In magic rich areas, it will "drink" up to its maximum capacity of 542 P.P.E. In an ordinary Environment, it can only recharge 16 P.P.E. per day.

**Combat Bonuses:** A fully assembled Castlerake inflicts 2D4x10 damage and can be used against undead and supernatural foes (double damage to Earth Elementals and Golems). It also confers a +3 to strike and parry.

**Other Characteristics:** Castlerake possesses an I.Q. of 17 and a P.B. of 23. It has an Anarchist Alignment and is not particular about who wields it.

Vortan's Rift connects to a nexus in the southern lowlands of the Old Kingdom, about five days travel south of the Old Kingdom Mountains.

## Epilogue: Not Quite the End

Now that the players have retrieved Castlerake and finally defeated Vortan the Undying (unless proper precautions are taken, Vortan will rise again, but without the Chaos Stone and Castlerake, and with his keep shattered, he will be trapped within the Eternal Torment forever), they will find themselves with a slight dilemma. By this point, rumors have flown around the world that someone has at least one piece of Castlerake, perhaps more, and is looking for the others. Coupled with the fact that the players drew a great deal of attention to themselves during the Olympic Games in Lopan, this means that they will find it hard to find any peace if they travel to almost any major city in the world.

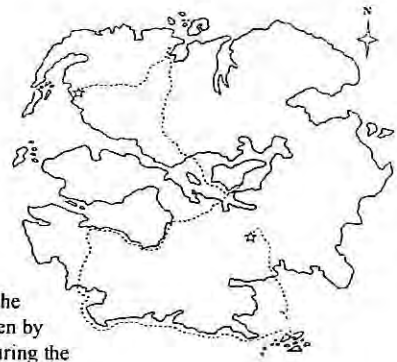
Should the players deliver the assembled Castlerake to a particular nation (whether originally hired to find it for this reason, or as a means of getting rid of it) they will plunge that nation into war as its neighbors refuse to sit idle while the nation in question possesses the destroyer of castles. If the players try to keep it for themselves, they will find that they are constantly hounded by assassins, thieves, mercenaries, spies, bounty hunters, and all manner of ruthless cutthroats, some in the service of competing nations, others wanting the weapon for themselves. Ultimately, they should come to the singular conclusion Kortag himself arrived at ages before - Castlerake must be disassembled and scattered once again.

And of course, the players will have to deal with any of the curses of the Mortification they might have acquired while within the Eternal Torment. The removal of these curses could be an adventure in and of itself (or a more forgiving Game Master may simply allow that the Gods of Light owe the players one for having vanquished such a horrible enemy).

And then there is the question of the Chaos Stone.

By the time this adventure is over, surviving players should find themselves with enough experience to advance at least one if not two levels, and with a small fortune in both treasure and magical artifacts collected throughout their journey. But can they ever find peace?

### EPilogue



This map illustrates the route most likely taken by the band of heroes during the Quest for Castlerake



# Mega-Steel Chef

## Food and Cooking on Rifts® Earth Optional Rules for the Rifts® RPG

By Erin Lindsey

After the Coming of the Rifts, Earth has become its own macrocosm; a cross-section of the Megaverse, demonstrating the limitless variety that exists across all strands of reality. And across these vast stretches of inter-reality, there still remains one constant that binds together all races and societies. And yet, this same thing is so varied and unique, so inherently tied to a be-

ing's culture, that it varies not just from dimension to dimension or from world to world, or even from nation to nation, but between regions and small towns.

What could possibly be such a powerful element that draws together, yet naturally separates all sentient beings?

Food.

Everyone and everything takes in nourishment, and consequently, every creature has some sort of sense that tells them what is good to consume, what is bad to consume, and what is just plain fun. Humans (and most other mortals) call it 'taste,' but it can just as easily be a dragon's inherent magical sense, a Blhaze's uncanny energy sensitivity, or a Banshee's empathy. And every creature capable of true society has found ways to make their nourishment more appealing.

In its most basic form, cooking is simply modifying food before you eat it; anything other than eating the meat off the gazelle's hide involves some measure of cooking.

In a more general sense, cooking means making food more palatable and enjoyable, as well as making food safer by killing possible parasites or disease. A human being can get nourishment from a pile of raw rice or lentils, but the experience of eating is more enjoyable once they've been boiled with a little salt. At an early point in most civilizations' histories, cooking begins to develop into a true art form, one that grows and blossoms considerably throughout a sentient species' existence.

Local cuisine is a fundamental part of any culture. Those who practice it play a dual role as artist and cultural ambassador, and are often quite passionate about both roles. For the true



master of a cuisine, finding alien ingredients, exotic spices, new techniques, and true challenges are reasons enough to leave home and travel the vast tracts of a devastated Earth. These are as important as uncovering lost knowledge and alien lore would be to a scholar.

## Adventuring and Proper Nutrition

Food is vital to survival.

It seems like a fairly obvious statement, but how many adventuring groups in the post-apocalyptic wastes of the Americas have ever really stopped and considered this fact? How many players stop and ask themselves, "Do I have enough rations to last six weeks in the wilderness?" or "Even if I CAN catch something, do I know how to cook it, or even if it's edible?"

Not many.

The average human being requires anywhere between 2,000 and 2,500 calories a day to function normally, as well as a host of other vitamins and minerals. Some professional athletes (and, consequently, some adventurers) eat as much as 6,000 calories, with a proportional increase in the other nutrients they require. Without adequate nutrition, even standing and walking (to say nothing of leaping, dodging, blasting, or piloting) become difficult, sanity fades, and the will begins to crumble.

And so we say again: Food is vital to survival.

This is a fact rarely exploited by Game Masters. After all, what are your player characters' odds of defeating 'Faldrake the Unstoppable' if they're so hungry they're hallucinating? The occasional side-jant or mini-adventure that revolves around running out of rations, having supplies devoured by a wandering interdimensional pest, or otherwise being forced to forage can add some interesting variety to a campaign.

Foraging for food also provides some interesting challenges and can turn a character's strengths and fancy equipment against them. Indestructible armor may keep a person safe, but it also makes them loud enough to scatter game within hundreds of feet. The latest Wilk's model laser rifle may make short work of a Coalition patrol, but it will also turn a rabbit or deer into a fine red mist. A food emergency in the wild may force player characters to resort to stone-age technology, trading in their reliable plasma rifle for a makeshift club and a bird snare.

Of course, overexploiting this aspect of human biology will quickly lead to irritable and bored players. Man vs Nature is a classic element of storytelling, but it's hardly the most exciting. For the most part, whether or not food is going to be a central theme of your game should be a choice left up to the players.

Even without using it for mere subsistence, cooking can be a valuable resource for the creative character. Magical fruits, vegetables, and meats could easily be a valuable, but perishable treasure in a monster's hoard. Knowing how to preserve it as a jam or ration puts less pressure on the group to use it when it may not be needed (or gives them extra time, if they need to get a rare component back to Lazlo or the Federation of Magic before it spoils). Likewise, knowing how to turn a valuable food find into a stew or pie lets the entire group share in its benefits.

Cooking can also be a valuable social tool, giving players an excuse to gather others around them for investigations or interviews, or simply as a means of low-cost bribes. The minister of

a small town may hate outsiders, but he may also have a weakness for apple pie that will help him warm up to anyone. Similarly, a Simvan tribe may realize that a player character critiquing their cooking technique may be more valuable as a chef than as a meal.

Like any of the other skills available to a character, cooking can be a valuable roleplaying tool and solve any number of encounters. It can be used to feed the hungry, join in on local festivities, strike up conversations with like-minded individuals, and woo women. It can even be a character's central focus and sole reason for adventuring, if a player is so inclined, giving their Rogue Scholar or Headhunter a more interesting motivation than 'Shoot monsters and take their stuff.' How players make use of this skill is limited only by their resourcefulness.

## Enter the 'Cook' Skill

Any character who has selected the 'Cook' skill can make use of the rules and modifications in this article, either as the occasional fun aside, or as a central theme for an entire character.

Just how adept your character is in the kitchen depends on his familiarity with the various techniques, tools, and ingredients at his disposal. This is expressed primarily by the degree of the Cook skill (how it is selected). The various degrees of cooking proficiency are...

**Novice:** One who dabbles in the kitchen, either as a hobby or out of necessity, but doesn't really have the time or interest to devote themselves to the art. Meals tend to be simple, but homey, and such cooks tend to stick to a 'core' number of ingredients, techniques, and dishes they use almost exclusively. One is a Novice chef by selecting 'Cook' as a Secondary Skill.

**Adept:** A lifetime of experience, but relatively little variety or exposure to the exotic is usually what creates an Adept-level chef. Similarly, one who has had professional-level training but very little experience could be considered an Adept. Meals tend to be well-varied and interesting, and the typical Adept can cook meals for months, even in the wilderness, without repeating a specific dish. One is an Adept chef by selecting 'Cook' as an O.C.C. Related Skill, or by selecting it as a Secondary Skill twice.

**Master:** The Master is one who has spent a lifetime cooking under the keen eye of an expert; they possess knowledge, experience, and most importantly, passion. They have understanding of their art from a presentation level all the way down to the basic chemical reactions behind every new ingredient or process. Integrating exotic or strange foods into a meal is rarely a challenge, and the final results are nearly always attractive, exciting, and healthy. One achieves the status of Master chef by having Cook as an O.C.C. Skill or by selecting it as an O.C.C. Related Skill twice.

## Levels of Success

How good a meal one makes is not only dependant on their degree of cooking knowledge, but also their general experience, represented by their skill percentage.

Of course, there's a large amount of difference between making a good meal, and making a truly delicious masterpiece. How exactly can you tell just how good the meal you've prepared is?

One way is to check your actual skill roll; the lower the roll, the better the meal. For a general guideline, use the following table as a guide to your quality:

### Skill Roll and Meal Result

Skill Percentage	Passable Meal	Good Meal	Excellent Meal	Gourmet Meal	Dangerous Meal
30%	30-21	20-01	-	-	95-00
35%	35-27	26-02	01	-	95-00
40%	40-34	33-05	04-01	-	96-00
45%	45-41	40-10	09-01	-	96-00
50%	50-46	45-16	15-01	-	97-00
55%	55-51	50-17	16-02	01	97-00
60%	60-57	56-20	19-04	03-01	98-00
65%	65-62	61-23	22-06	05-01	98-00
70%	70-67	66-25	24-08	07-01	99-00
75%	75-73	72-28	27-10	09-01	99-00
80%	80-78	77-30	29-12	11-01	00
85%	85-83	82-32	31-14	13-01	00
90%	90-89	88-35	34-15	14-01	-
98%	98-97	96-40	39-16	15-01	-

**Skill Percentage:** The level of the character's Cook skill. If a character's skill is modified outside of the traditional five-point spread range due to a bonus from class or I.Q, round accordingly.

**Passable Meal:** A meal that isn't specifically bad (which would be represented by a failed die roll), but isn't particularly good, either. It's certainly edible, but is neither memorable nor worth saving if there are leftovers.

**Good Meal:** A good meal is just that: Tasty, filling, fairly healthy, and generally appreciated. Diners are likely to go back for seconds.

**Excellent Meal:** A meal that is not only well-done, but interesting as well. People are likely to ask for the recipe, and mean it. This result can only be achieved by someone who is an Adept or Master cook, not a Novice.

**Gourmet Meal:** A masterful and nearly flawless work that probably uses new or unusual approaches to whatever ingredients were used. A meal of this quality is a treasure, and can only be achieved by a Master cook, not a Novice or Adept.

**Dangerous Meal:** Once in a while, a cook won't cook the chicken all the way through, or may inadvertently throw in a few ingredients that really don't play well together. When this happens, there's a risk to anyone who eats it. A save vs Poison is required to resist the harmful effects of a Dangerous Meal. The exact effects of a Dangerous meal are left up to the G.M, but are most often food poisoning or parasites.

**Skill Percentages over 98%:** There is always SOME chance for failure at a skill, even for the greatest masters. Eventually, even the greats try something experimental and discover that trout ice cream isn't as tasty as they might have thought. That is without question. But it is possible to improve your knowledge and ability to roll with the punches no matter how good one gets. For this reason, G.M.s may choose to allow player characters with a Master degree of the Cook skill to have a 'theoretic-

cal' skill level higher than 98%. Any skill proficiency above and beyond this exists for offsetting any penalties for working with exotic ingredients or under less-than-ideal circumstances; if a character's skill proficiency is 99% or higher even after applying penalties, then it's still considered to max out at 98% for the actual skill check.

### Mega-Damage Flora and Fauna

In an environment where great beasts with hides like tank armor roam the land, one has to question how any of the 'squishier' breeds of animal have even managed to survive. A wolf pack has no chance of fighting off a hungry tyrannosaur, and probably can't outrun it, either, so how are there any wolves left at this point, if there are hungry tyrannosaurs (or other monsters) prowling the night?

Nutrition. Mega-Damage creatures are a hyper-dense weave of high-yield proteins and minerals, and as a result, require incredible amounts of energy to survive (which explains why so many of them are magical in nature). The only food sources out there that can really support such an incredible metabolism are other Mega-Damage creatures. A Rhino-Buffalo could devour humans and cattle easily, but all the while would be slowly starving to death on its diet of 'junk food,' using more calories catching and digesting its meals than it could actually gain back by eating them. Likewise, most Mega-Damage herbivores can dine on and easily digest most native Earth plants (and many do), but to survive, their diet must rely mostly on Mega-Damage plants. Consequently, the two ecosystems may occupy the same physical space, but rarely do they actually interact.

All this may seem like barely-interesting trivia, until you realize that those Mega-Damage horrors that are a constant scourge to humanity are some of the best food resources in the history of mankind! Any given amount of Mega-Damage meat has three times the protein of a comparable serving of mundane meat, and nearly five times the mineral and vitamin content! Throw in the fact that Mega-Damage creatures tend to weigh several tons and one good hunt a season could feed an entire village for months!

Ah, but how to get to that wonderful, wonderful food? Humans can't even chew, let alone swallow and digest flesh that can shrug off tank rounds. A few of the more savage scavenger tribes get around this by surviving almost exclusively on the blood of monsters (which is likewise very rich in proteins and nutrients), but most human settlements have found more... appetizing ways of preparing Mega-Damage meats and produce.

**Brining:** A common cooking technique for handling tough meat is to submerge it in a mild (and flavorful) acid that gently breaks down some of the more complex proteins, transforming them into a simpler form that humans can digest. The end result is usually extremely juicy meats, with a rich and well-developed flavor. Native Earth species usually brine anywhere from a few hours to a few days, depending on the toughness of the cut, while Mega-Damage cuts must soak for days or even weeks. Dragon meat has to brine for months before it's ready to be eaten. Luckily, brines have the side-benefit of helping to preserve food as well.

**Long Cooking Times:** A general catch-all for tough meats is simply to cook them longer to help speed the natural breakdown



of the cells while killing off any possible invading parasites or disease. Two of the most common examples of this are stewing and barbeque (although barbequing requires a certain amount of smoking, as well; see below), although roasting (long cooking with dry heat) and braising (long cooking with moist heat) are the actual basic techniques used. Tougher cuts of mundane meat can cook for up to eight hours at a time, while the average cut of monster meat can cook for days before it's ready to eat. A common technique in smaller villages is to simply stuff an animal's body with a heating device, bury it for several days (often wrapping it in special leaves or branches to add flavor) and leave it for up to a week. For major festivals, some villages even build a massive bonfire over the meats they've prepared and simply keep it burning until the meat underneath finally starts to burn as well, indicating that its cellular structure has broken down to the point where it is digestible.

**Smoking:** Similar to using a long cooking time, except that smoking also has the benefit of preserving a cut and adding incredible amounts of flavor. Smoking requires a fair amount of preparation and specialized equipment (many communities have smokehouses specifically for this purpose), but is the singular best way to preserve meats. Even for mundane beef or poultry, smoking can take days or weeks; Mega-Damage quality can extend that out to months, but likewise extends the shelf life out into multiple years, so a community can store up during times of plenty in case of famine the next season. The only downside is that things like Fury Beetle sausage and Spiny Ravager ham tend to be extremely tough and stringy, requiring a fair amount of additional preparation before they can be served.

**Mega-Damage Heat:** One obvious means of cooking Mega-Damage meat in a timely manner is to simply use Mega-Damage heat. This technique not only requires a special heat source, but also cooking utensils (pans, pots, spoons, tongs, etc.) that can stand up to that kind of punishment. Because of the expense of high-technology and magic, this is an option usually reserved for larger communities and adventurers, but it does allow Mega-Damage creatures to be cooked and eaten just like more mundane animals.

## Preparing the Exotic

Cooking after the Coming of the Rifts is hardly an easy task. Trying to make a quality meal with the incredible variety that existed even before the end came was a chore, but with all the endless choices of the megaverse flooding into local fields and markets, cooking has become an outright adventure. Exciting, yes, but also confusing and, at times, dangerous.

When using exotic or non-native ingredients, or cooking for creatures that may have varied or unusual tastes (or simply inhuman biologies), there are enough unknown factors that it imposes a penalty on a character's ability. Simply stated, if you've never cooked using a Narvinian Fire Plum, even if you have heard of them, you're not going to know exactly how they'll behave in your cobbler.

Ultimately, it's up to the G.M. as to just how exotic an ingredient is to your character, but the following is a general guideline for skill penalties:

**Unusual:** -5%. Probably an Earth-native or an alien meat, fruit, vegetable, or spice that is very similar to an Earth variety.

Strange, but not necessarily difficult to work with. Examples include most dinosaurs. Unusual cuisine includes cooking for beings from the opposite side of your native planet, or a human cooking for other-dimensional humans and humanoids (Dwarves, Elves, Gnomes, etc.).

**Alien:** -10%. Something that is decidedly not native to Earth, or is so heavily mutated that it behaves nothing like its former species. Examples include Rhino-Buffalo, Owl-Things, vampires, Fury Beetles, and Millenium Tree plants and fruits. Alien cuisine includes cooking for more monstrous or exotic creatures, such as Orcs, Goblins, Grackle Tooth, or Noli Bushmen.

**Bizarre:** -20%. Truly bizarre and unfathomable creatures and items that likely shouldn't be eaten to begin with. Examples include demonic creatures, Metztlá, and Spiny Ravagers. Bizarre cuisine includes cooking for creatures that eat things only barely edible to human beings, such as Shaydor and Aarden Tek.

**Minor M.D.C./Major S.D.C.:** -5%. Even with high technology or magic, preparing especially tough meats is tricky. Examples include Xiticix, many species of dinosaur, and mutant varieties of many native species; most anything that averages between one and one-hundred M.D.C.

**Major M.D.C.:** -10%. In the case of heavy Mega-Damage creatures, most of the difficulty arises from separating the useable meat from the protective outer layers (without severely injuring oneself in the process). Examples include Fury Beetles, Splugorth Slavers, and Rhino-Buffalo.

**Supernatural M.D.C.:** -20%. In addition to being resistant to carving, mixing, and cooking, a chef also must deal with the fact that a supernatural creature's flesh, if not properly prepared, can be dangerous. A second roll is required after the initial roll to see if the latent magic causes any side effects (see below) in those who eat it (a failed roll indicates it does). Examples include werecreatures or other creatures that regenerate quickly or have inherent spell abilities, and it typically takes 1D4 hours longer to cook with supernatural ingredients than with mundane when using Mega-Damage heat, or 25% longer if using other techniques.

**Magical/Creature of Magic:** -30%. Cooking with magical plants or creatures of magic is almost asking for trouble. The throbbing mystical energy guarantees some sort of magical side effect, unless the preparer is a Master-quality chef, and even then they must succeed at a second die roll to properly avert any side effects (or reproduce a side effect they've created before); a failed second roll indicates a random side effect. A failed initial roll indicates the meal is dangerous, and possibly aggressive. Examples include faeries, dragons, and Zembahk. It typically takes 2D4 hours longer to cook with supernatural ingredients than with mundane when using Mega-Damage heat, or 50% longer when using any other technique.

Note that penalties can stack, so trying to prepare a Fury Beetle stew (an alien, major Mega-Damage creature) in a traditional Noli style (an alien cuisine) will have a total penalty of -30% (or, similarly, a Noli cook trying to prepare the same stew in a manner her human compatriots would enjoy would also take a -30% penalty, as human cuisine is as alien to a Noli as Noli cuisine is to us). Supernatural beings and creatures of magic are considered to be a combination of their alien nature and Mega-Damage nature, so their inherent penalties only stack with the cuisine style being used to prepare them.

It should be kept in mind that some creatures simply cannot be eaten. Robots of any type are right out, as are energy beings such as Bhlaze or Elementals. Similarly, carbon-based life forms can't eat silicon-based ones, and vice-versa. Ultimately, it's a G.M.'s call as to whether or not a particular item is too exotic for the human digestive system.

## Cooking Specialties

Because of the numerous penalties associated with cooking exotic ingredients, Game Masters may elect to allow player characters to declare cooking specialties; an ingredient type or cuisine that they know so well that they have little difficulty working with it. If an ingredient type is declared, then the character takes no skill penalties even for the most exotic samples, and only takes half the normal penalty from the ingredient being Mega-Damage or magical. If a cuisine type is selected, then the character takes no penalties when cooking with that style.

Ingredient specialties are groups of similar items rather than just one specific ingredient; usually something that is fairly universal across a planet, or perhaps even across the universe. Declaring 'seafood' or 'vegetables' as a specialty would be too broad, but 'fish' or 'shellfish,' or 'chili peppers' or 'root vegetables' would be possible choices.

Cuisine specialties may be as broad as an entire racial category, meaning you can cook food that isn't universally repulsive to a given species, or as refined as a specific region, meaning you've mastered it well enough to make even locals think you've spent some time there. 'Tirrvol,' 'Italian,' and 'Southern-California' are all acceptable cuisine specialties. A species cannot select their own race as a specialty.

All characters are assumed to have a specialty in 'home cooking'; the style of cooking native to wherever they hail from.

Adept cooks may also select either one ingredient type or one cuisine type in which to specialize.

Master cooks select one ingredient type AND one cuisine type to specialize in, and can acquire additional specialties by investing Secondary Skills. Every Secondary Skill invested towards the 'Cook' skill allows the Master chef to select one additional specialty, either an ingredient or a cuisine.

## Magical Foods and Ingredients

Using magical ingredients or creatures in typical cooking is often wondrous, but risky. The unstable nature of magic, especially on a bubbling world like Rifts Earth, means that it's hard to shake off all the magical influence in an ingredient, and harder still to control it.

Any time a character tries cooking a creature of magic, or includes magical ingredients (or possibly even a mundane ingredient from a magic-rich area, such as a major ley line nexus), there's a risk that magical energy could have side effects on those eating it. Adept-level and Master-level cooks can attempt to remove this magical influence from their meals by making a second cooking roll; a successful roll indicates that the magical taint has been removed and the food is safe.

## Failed Cooking Attempts

Even more dangerous than a magical meal is a failed attempt at a magical meal; the latent energy can cause anything from illness to an offense to the gods! Any time a character fails a cooking roll while working with magical ingredients, roll on the following table:

**01-25% No Effect:** The meal isn't appetizing, but the magical energy doesn't have any negative effects aside from adding a funny flavor and causing some minor tingling.

**26-35% Nausea and Vomiting:** Not only is the food bad, but it can't be kept down. The human body immediately rejects the disruptive magical influence, and characters are effectively unable to act for the next 1D6 minutes as they empty the contents of their stomachs and dry heave. They are nauseated (-4 to Strike, Parry, and Dodge, -5% to all skills) for the next 2D4 hours.

**36-45% Illness:** The magic manifests as a sort of sickness, weakening the body of whomever may consume it. They become weak and dizzy (-4 to Strike, Parry, and Dodge, -5% to all skills). The effects take 2D6 hours to manifest, and persist for 3D6 days, minus the character's Magic save modifier.

**46-55% 'The Reek':** A supernatural odor, an entirely unearthly stink, emanates from the food. Aside from making the meal nearly inedible, the smell is also likely to attract scavengers and predators from downwind. Any character eating the food or having it spilled on them will reek of the same smell for 2D6 days.

**56-65% Ghost Meal:** The cooking process accidentally harnesses the latent magical energy to summon an Entity. The creature may be harmless or aggressive, depending on the circumstances and the whims of fate, but it will take an entirely unhealthy interest in the food, whoever prepared it, and anyone who eats it.

**66-75% Burning Meal:** The magical nature of the ingredients is unleashed as a sort of 'slow burn.' The meal radiates energy, causing damage to whomever or whatever touches it, for 3D6 minutes. Roll for the amount of energy unleashed; damage listed is per round of contact:

01-10%: 1D4 damage (possibly edible to sturdier characters).

11-30%: 5D6 damage.

31-50% 1D6x10 damage.

51-70% 1D6 Mega-Damage.

71-90% 3D6 Mega-Damage.

91-100% 1D6x10 Mega-Damage.

**76-85% Minor Aggression:** The food is mobile and aggressive! The magical energies have manifested as a limited intelligence and telekinetic mobility, whose only drive is to feed on the P.P.E. of other beings to refuel its constantly dwindling supply. The food-beast, usually only a few pounds in size, is capable of lashing out with tendrils, or slamming its body against others, inflicting 1D6 damage. P.S. is 2D6+6, I.Q. is negligible, and it instinctually possesses a +4 to Strike and Parry, and a +8 to Dodge (due to its small size and speed). Speed is 4D6, and the quick creature has 4 attacks per melee. It is born with 8D6 P.P.E., which it burns through at a rate of one per minute until eventually burning out and dying, though it can kill and absorb the P.P.E. of other beings.



**86-90% Major Aggression:** The food is mobile, aggressive, and very, very, dangerous. A strange confluence of magics have combined with the ritualistic nature of cooking to create a sort of 'meat-golem' (or stew golem, or pie golem). Roll up an animalistic predator using the tables on page 249 of the original *Rifts® RPG*. The food-beast burns through its P.P.E. supply at a rate of one per minute, and dies when totally depleted of energy, but can kill and absorb the energy of other creatures. Especially devious G.M.s may even roll up the food-beast as an intelligent supernatural creature, making it a sort of ghost of the prepared creature.

**91-95% Doom:** Your cooking is bad enough to insult the gods, and the magical nature of it makes them aware of that fact. The divine interaction may be as simple as a one-time smack-down or a celestial injunction against any further attempts for the offending character at cooking, or could result in a long-term vendetta against the offending character. Game Masters are encouraged to be creative.

**96-00% Side Effect:** The magical energy manifests as one of the side effects listed below. Roll randomly.

### Proper Magical Meals

If a meal is prepared successfully, but the character fails their second roll to remove or inhibit the magical nature of the ingredients, the remaining magic expresses itself in any number of ways. Roll on the following table to determine the exact effects of a meal. Note that a character may willingly fail this roll, leaving the magical taint in the food and purposefully causing a random effect.

Master-level chefs understand what they are working with well enough that they can attempt to re-create any side effect they've previously created (intentionally or by accident). Doing so requires making the exact same dish, using the exact same ingredients (no using Thunder Lizard meat to try and recreate the visions you experienced after a bowl of Fire Dragon stew), and the character must succeed in a second Cook roll to harness and direct the wild magic locked in the food, rather than eliminate it.

**01-10% No Effect:** The magical energy has dissipated naturally or simply has no effect beyond a mild tingling sensation.

**11-17% Healing:** Not only is the food appetizing, it cures all mundane illnesses and restores 3D6 points of damage. The magical effect will last as long as the food does not spoil (most prepared foods can survive 1D4+2 days refrigerated, or 1D6+3 weeks frozen).

**18-24% Cursed:** Regardless of how it tastes, the food houses a minor curse, created from corrupted mystic energy. Ingestion causes 2D6 damage directly to Hit Points that cannot be healed naturally and remains for up to 1D6 months. Furthermore, characters who've tasted the food are compelled to eat more (save vs magic), taking an additional 2D6 points of damage with every mouthful and growing weaker and more sickly with every bite. They will need to be restrained until the cursed dish can be properly disposed of, and even then will be depressed and sullen for 1D4 days (-8% to skills).

**25-31% Visions:** Interacting with the character's inherent potential psychic energy, the supernatural food triggers a powerful vision the next time they go to sleep, revealing the future, the

past, or advising them on a particular course of action (similar to the Oracle spell or psionic Clairvoyance). People who enjoy a meal together are likely to share the same vision.

**32-38% Nightmares:** The magical energy generates a mild psychic presence within the character's body, built off of their own subconscious. Too weak to affect anything while the character is awake, the entity can only interact with the character in their dreams, usually by inducing terrible nightmares. A group that shares a meal is likely to develop a common entity between them, sharing the same nightmare world while they sleep. The effects last 2D4 days before the presence fades, during which time the characters will be extremely fatigued (-4 to Strike, Parry, and Dodge, -10% to all skills). This is a common side effect of eating demonic or devilish creatures.

**39-45% Hallucinations:** Much like a drug, the magical forces at work in the food trigger incredible hallucinations, making it difficult for a character to tell what is real and what isn't. Anyone consuming it is in for a fun ride, but suffers a -20% penalty to skills, a -2 penalty to all combat rolls, and there's a 50/50 chance that anything he attacks is really just a hallucination. The effects last 2D4 hours. This is a common side effect from eating fey.

**46-52% Mutation, Temporary:** The human body attempts to reject the infusion of mystical power, and channels it into developing a random mutation. Roll randomly on either the mutation chart on page 18 of the original *Rifts® RPG*, or the Unusual Characteristics Table on page 159 of *Heroes Unlimited*. The mutation lasts 3D4 weeks before the mystical energy begins to fade and the body naturally repairs itself.

**53-58% Mutation, Permanent:** The human body attempts to reject the infusion of mystical power, and channels it into developing a random mutation. Roll randomly on either the mutation chart on page 18 of the original *Rifts® RPG*, or the Unusual Characteristics Table on page 159 of *Heroes Unlimited*. The effect is a permanent change to the body until repaired magically or surgically.

**59-66% Minor Magical Effect:** A minor spell-like effect is being triggered by the slow release of magical energy. This release is constantly on and completely beyond the character's control, lasting 1D6 weeks before the energy finally runs its course. Roll for the exact effects:

01-20%: The character glows softly, illuminating approximately 10 feet (3 m) around himself.

21-40%: The character floats about a foot (0.3 m) off the ground. He can move as quickly as he can normally walk or run, but will be affected by high winds.

41-60% The character's voice booms like thunder, making it impossible to whisper or talk quietly.

61-80% The character constantly sheds tiny bits of glowing magic, leaving twinkling dust wherever they go.

81-100% Smoke pours out of the character's pores, gathering into a small cloud at his feet.

Whatever the exact effect, the character stinks of magic and that magical energy can be tracked easily by Dog Boys and Psi-Stalkers.

**67-73% Amnesia, Minor:** Anyone consuming the meal is temporarily overwhelmed, forgetting the details of their life and past, as well as losing the use of 1D6 Secondary Skills and one

O.C.C. Related Skill. Memories and skills return at a rate of one skill per day (the O.C.C. Related Skill being the first recalled); when all skills have been recalled, so have all personal memories.

**74-80% Amnesia, Major:** The character is exposed to 'Flavors Man was Not Meant to Know,' and madness ensues. The character's personal identity is lost, eliminating their knowledge of themselves, including their name, and temporarily reducing them to HALF their current level. In addition, the character loses all Secondary Skills and three O.C.C. Related Skills. The memory loss remains for 1D6 weeks, or until magically cured.

**81-87% Supernatural Taint, Temporary:** The excess of magic energy simply lodges itself in the character's system, waiting to be cycled out naturally. In the meantime, the character will radiate energy as if he were a supernatural creature (making them easily tracked by Dog Boys and Psi-Stalkers). The character temporarily gains 2D6 bonus P.P.E, which burns itself away at a rate of one per day until the taint is completely gone (bonus P.P.E. spent on TW devices or spells will simply regenerate as if it were a part of the character's natural supply).

**88-94% Supernatural Taint, Permanent:** A piece of supernatural essence attaches itself to the character's natural psychic energy like some kind of parasite, providing a bonus of 2D6 P.P.E, but making the character a target for Dog Boys, Psi-Stalkers, and P.P.E. vampires (Entities especially will be drawn to this energy). The magical parasite will not leave on its own, and finding a way to remove it may be an adventure in and of itself (and obviously, losing the parasite will also result in losing the bonus P.P.E.).

**95-100% Other:** Any number of rarer magic effects can happen, anything from summoning extra-dimensional, intelligent parasites into the character's digestive tract to magnetically attracting anyone who consumes the tainted food to a ley line and preventing them from leaving until the meal is fully digested and passed. G.M.s are encouraged to be creative.

## Dining and Sentience

Obviously, it's evil to devour another person. Unfortunately, in a world as complicated as Rifts Earth, the definition of 'person' is pretty fuzzy. The Rifts have brought a huge number of sentient creatures to Earth, and even more creatures that are arguably intelligent, but still bestial.

Obviously, it's still evil to eat an Elf, or a Faerie, but what about that dragon that's been devouring your fellow villagers and razing your crops? If you kill him, is it really evil? And even if he could speak and reason, he was still obviously a beast, wasn't he? And isn't it only fair that you eat him after what he's done to your friends and family? Maybe... maybe not.

Cannibalism is difficult to define in these situations, and an issue best left to be resolved on a group-by-group basis. The best general guidelines are that a Principled character will never eat a being that was even possibly sentient, and only evil beings will eat obviously sentient and good-aligned creatures.

## Beasts of the Kitchen

There's no reason why cookery should be the sole domain of player characters, or even of humans. With a little creativity, a

culinary bent can be applied to all sorts of different beasts that roam Rifts Earth, providing an interesting bit of variety to even mundane monsters.

**Simvan Fatteners:** Given the communal nature of Simvan, large tribal feasts for celebrations and holidays are central to much of their tradition and religion, and on these occasions, only the finest meals are acceptable. Halfway between a holy man and a cook, the 'Fatteners,' as they're described by human adventurers, are the members of the tribe responsible for caring for, feeding, and ritualistically cleansing those captives who are destined for one of these spectacular events. Almost always males, yet raised and trained in the female arts, Fatteners use their psionic abilities to closely monitor their charges. They apply their cooking and holistic knowledge to both fatten up and ritualistically cleanse humanoid prisoners, making them acceptable meals for whatever celebration is coming up next. Although they rarely leave the central tribe or travel with the warriors, any characters captured by Simvan are likely to spend the majority of their time with a Fattener.

**Vampire Meta-Cooks:** Meta-cooks are a luxury, flaunted by Master Vampires because of their in-depth knowledge of cooking, Herbalism, and biology. By specially preparing meals for a person or group over the course of weeks, the vampire can actually alter or enhance the flavor of a being's blood! They are most often Secondary Vampires skilled in disguise and confidence tricks, which allow them to assimilate themselves into a group or small village, posing as a lost traveler or the lone survivor of an attack. Over the course of days, weeks, or months, the meta-cook 'prepares' humanoids, either to be picked off slowly over time by their master, or for one, all-out attack and feeding frenzy by fellow vampires within their master's good graces (Master Vampires will often try to impress their fellow lords by presenting them with such entertaining and delicious raids). Their most devious tricks include unloading or destroying weapons before an attack, and drugging a group's meals, making them helpless and turning a feeding frenzy into a drug-crazed orgy of death.

**Pot Golems:** Cooking may be an art, but it is a competitive art. Neighboring chefs may be best of friends or near-deadly rivals, but they are always out to be the best, especially in cities where many different cultures and cuisines come together. And on Rifts Earth, those same cultural crossroads are often magical hotbeds.

Pot Golems aren't actually Golems at all; the nickname has simply been applied over the years. They are merely Tectonic Entities, and the most common form of harassment between competing chefs that exists in magical cities such as Lazlo, Splynn, or Dweomer. In such places, it's a simple matter for a cook to buy a scroll, ritual, or bottled Entity that they can let loose against a competitor for reasons ranging from a good-natured prank to outright sabotage to simple revenge (usually for having a Pot Golem sent against them in the first place).

Encounters with Pot Golems are rarely dangerous; their instructions are usually to harass or delay, rather than to do outright damage. Hence, it's more likely that a Pot Golem will steal a chef's secret ingredient or favorite knife, or playfully wrestle with the sous chefs, than cause any damage or serious injury.

**Gluttony Demons:** The kindly old woman who loves to cook for neighborhood picnics, the young newlywed couple



who've just opened a bakery down the street, or the crusty but lovable old sod who runs the best diner in town; these are all ideal covers for a Gluttony Demon, one of the rarer and more despicable denizens of Hell. Cooking is one of the ultimate acts of love; it is the giving of life to others. Gluttony Demons pervert this, turning their cooking into a source of obsession, gluttony, and death.

Expert cooks as well as masters of subtle mind control and empathy, Gluttony Demons can literally make the best food a person has ever tasted, and their driving goal is to urge those around them to eat as much of it as possible. Gluttony Demons feed on emotions of greed, desire, and (obviously) gluttony, but they prefer to nurture these impulses slowly, over time, like a grand meal. They also delight in the taste of human flesh, especially those who've died due to violence or over-indulgence, so usually the end result of any Gluttony Demon's visit to a town, though it may take years to accomplish, is a terrible and bloody riot.

Because of their magic and psionic powers, the victims of a Gluttony Demon, usually an entire neighborhood or town, become psychotically protective of this valuable resource, and will usually remain under the demon's influence until dead or introduced to a food that's even better than something a Gluttony Demon can produce.

**Sisterhood of the Hearth:** Worshippers of a variety of home and hearth goddesses, the Sisterhood of the Hearth are greatly appreciated in the communities where they establish their temples. Hearth Sisters routinely offer food to the poor, freely instruct community members in the ways of cooking and caring for loved ones, and provide services to ritualistically cleanse or repair homes for reasonable fees.

One of their more unique services, and one that makes a Hearth Temple a welcome sight for any adventurer, is their selection of magical foods and preserves. Hearth foods can almost be thought of as scrolls that must be eaten to unlock their magic (and consequently, the food is similarly priced to scrolls), and some of their wares can spoil within a few days if not used immediately (preserves, jams, and pickles, though, can easily last for months). The most common magical fares the Hearth Sisters offer are protective and healing magics (often sealed inside deserts and baked goods), but nearly any spell that affects an individual can be cooked into a meal with sufficient notice. Sisters of the Hearth will never prepare foods for those they believe will bring harm to innocents, however, and they are fiercely protective of their communities.

The Sisterhood of the Hearth are fierce enemies of Gluttony Demons, and will mobilize to destroy such demons whenever they are discovered. They often hire adventuring bands to see one of their Sisters safely to a community that a Gluttony Demon has been corrupting.

# New Skills

## Domestic

**Preserve Food:** As per the Wilderness skill. If a character also possesses the Cook skill, they are capable of preserving food and trail rations in a more palatable form than salt pork and hardtack. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience.

## Technical

**Lore: Cooking:** The not-so-practical side of cooking, including an extensive knowledge of ingredients, cultures, and culinary history, as well as a smattering of foreign languages (usually just enough to understand various cooking terms). A thorough knowledge of cooking lore allows one to identify the region and background of a given dish, or rattle off a fair list of the nutritional benefits of a given ingredient or food. A common skill among nutritional anthropologists, which are surprisingly common these days on Rifts Earth. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level, but the penalties for cooking exotic ingredients and cuisines (see above) also apply to the Lore: Cooking skill.

## Weapon Proficiency

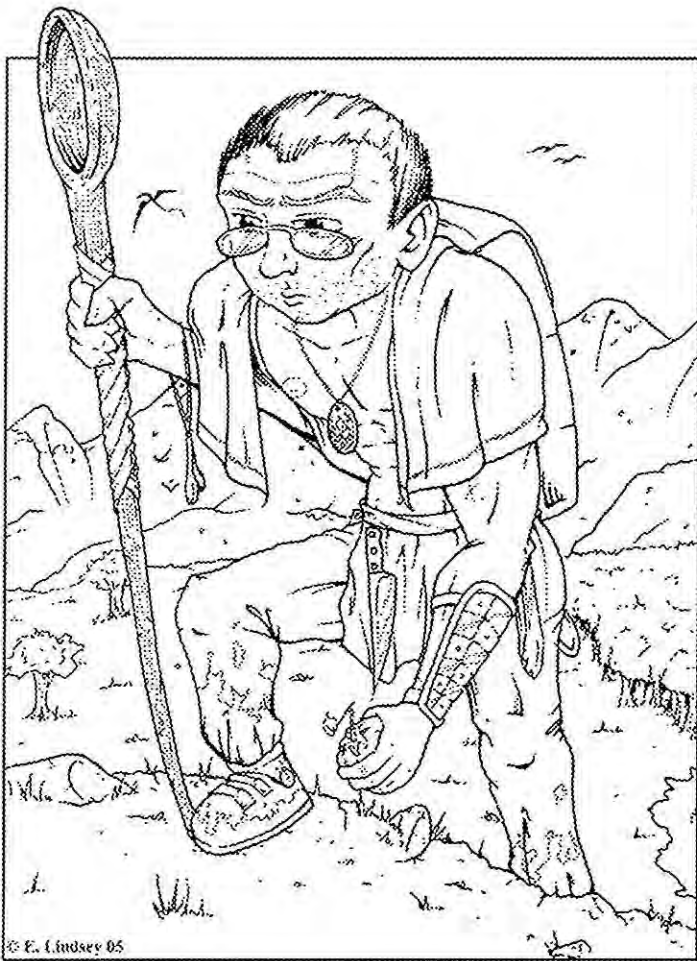
**W.P. Utensil:** The knowledge and experience to use common kitchen utensils in combat, should the need arise. This skill does not confer any specific bonuses itself, but it implies that the wielder is familiar enough with the size and balance of cooking tools that they can apply other W.P. bonuses to the item. For example: A character with W.P. Utensil could wield a chef's knife in combat and gain their bonuses from W.P. Knife, or swing a cast iron frying pan with the same skill as any other object falling under their W.P. Club skill.

# New O.C.C.s

## Journeyman Chef O.C.C.

For some, cooking is more than a job or an interest: It is a calling. A genuine way of life. Mastering all of Grandma's recipes was only the beginning. Studying under the greatest cooks and chefs their area has is only a baby step. There is a world at large, bubbling over with exotic cultures, alien ingredients, and new challenges that they need to discover.

Journeyman Chefs feel a certain emptiness within them, and like Rogue Scholars, they know that only new knowledge and experience can fill this void, though their interests are much narrower than true scholars. They often begin life assisting a more experienced cook, often at a local restaurant or even just a parent, but quickly surpass their teachers and move on to fill their need for more. They find newer, greater masters of the art, studying under them, learn all that they can, and eventually move on. Their lives are consumed by a vicious cycle of study and mastery that offers an eerie reflection of many martial artists.



Often seen as vagrants by those unfamiliar with their unique breed, Journeyman Chefs usually prefer to travel by foot, on the off chance they encounter anything new and interesting on the journey. When not studying a new technique or ingredient, they obsessively follow up on rumors of great chefs or long-lost recipes from before the Cataclysm, searching out remote towns and abandoned ruins. Many are shaggy and unkempt, and more than a few such master cooks have fallen into madness from the constant inner whisperings that fuel their incredible talent.

Journeyman Chefs are resourceful and inventive, both in their cooking and in their general lives. All have mastered some level of combat expertise in order to survive the traveling life in a post-apocalyptic wasteland, and they are often well-versed in knowledge well outside of cooking itself. Some even go so far as to master magic, psionic powers, or alien technologies, but only to the ends of improving their ability to prepare food: The Journeyman Chef's life and adventures all come back around to cooking; the one Zen that brings them true peace.

Good-aligned Journeyman Chefs are often on good terms with one-another, arranging unofficial gatherings where they can trade recipes, techniques, and stories. Traveling companions of the master cooks are usually all too happy to come along to such meetings, as good food and drink abound. The more selfish and darker among the ranks of Journeyman Chefs, however, guard their culinary secrets closely and often seek out fellow cooks to challenge and prove their superiority over. The worst of these cooking competitions can mutate into a twisted cross of cooking competition and martial arts battles, with the loser losing her honor, her health, and sometimes even her life. Evil Journeyman Chefs can leave a small community devastated, as

their greatest cooks are often one of the social hearts of a small town or ghetto.

### O.C.C. Special Abilities:

**1. Bonuses:** Journeyman Chefs lead physically demanding lives, often spending weeks or months away from civilization, traveling between towns or meditating, resulting in the following bonuses:

+3D6 to S.D.C.

+1D4 to M.E.

+1D4 to P.E.

+1D6 to Spd.

+1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15.

+2 to save vs Poison and Disease.

**2. Refined Tastes:** So steeped is the Journeyman Chef in her art that her sense of taste has been honed to a level unknown to most humans. The master cook's tongue is as sensitive as a dog's nose or ears, allowing them to pick apart a dish solely by taste, instantly recognizing any ingredients, spices, and cooking techniques they are familiar with. Such hands-on deconstruction of a recipe is one of the Journeyman Chef's greatest information-gathering tools, helping them to learn new recipes and track down new ingredients and techniques they are unfamiliar with. **Base Skill:** 45% +5% per level of experience.

**3. Recognize Poison:** Journeyman Chefs have such an in-depth knowledge of food, chemistry, and biology, that they can recognize poisoned food by scent, sight, and texture, as well as taste. Even poisons and toxins normally odorless and tasteless to humans stand out like a blaring signal to one whose tastes are as refined as the Journeyman Chef's. **Base Skill:** 50% +6% per level of experience; Journeyman Chefs gain a +20% bonus to recognize poison if they taste the food, but they will likely subject themselves to the poison in the process.

**4. Neutralize Poison:** Between their expertise in chemistry and their mastery of cooking, the Journeyman Chef can use on-hand spices, sauces, and ingredients to neutralize poisons she has uncovered in food, though she will noticeably alter the taste of the dish in the process, possibly ruining it. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience. The Journeyman Chef can also, with a sample of the original poison, attempt to neutralize a toxin already taking effect in a person's body. Doing so requires a full kitchen, however, and takes 5D6 minutes. **Base Skills:** 30% +4% per level of experience.

**Alignment:** Any, though the dedication most Journeyman Chefs possess is most common among Principled, Scrupulous, Diabolic and Aberrant individuals. There are few 'selfish' Journeyman Chefs.

**Attribute Requirements:** An M.E. and P.E. of 12 or higher. A high I.Q. and P.P. are desirable, but not necessary.

### O.C.C. Skills:

Literacy

Cook (+25%)

Lore: Cooking (+20%)

Brewing (+10%)

Biology (+5%)



Chemistry (+5%)  
 Mathematics – Basic (+10%)  
 Identify Plants and Fruits (+15%)  
 Preserve Food (+10%)  
 Land Navigation (+5%)  
 Wilderness Survival (+10%)  
 W.P. Knife  
 W.P. Utensil  
 W.P.: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic, but can be upgraded to 'Expert' at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Martial Arts or Assassin (if Evil) at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills.

**O.C.C. Related Skills:** Select eight additional skills at level one, two at levels two and three, and one at levels six, nine, and twelve. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Radio: Basic only.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+15%).

Electrical: Basic only.

Espionage: Any, except Sniper and Forgery.

Mechanical: Basic Only.

Medical: Any except M.D. in Cybernetics (+10%).

Military: None.

Physical: Any (+10%).

Pilot: Any.

Pilot Related: Any (+5%).

Rogue: Any (+10%).

Science: Any (+5%).

Technical: Any (+15%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+15%).

**Secondary Skills:** Choose a total of six Secondary Skills from the list above, and one additional skill at levels three, five, seven, nine, eleven, thirteen, and fifteen. They are limited as above, but do not receive any of the bonuses listed in parentheses. These are additional areas of knowledge and start at first level proficiency.

**Standard Equipment:** Choose one Vibro-Knife and one additional melee weapon of choice. Journeymen Chefs often disdain firearms, but may carry an energy pistol and one extra clip for emergencies. All Journeymen Chefs have a Spice Array, as well as 1D4 small bottles of various Special Sauces. The character also owns 2D6 knives of various size, quality, and purpose and a small array of cooking supplies, though they rarely own more than they can carry, preferring to make use of whatever kitchens they happen across. They also have a set of clothing, clock, tinted goggles or sunglasses, knapsack, two canteens, first aid kit, water purification kit, 1D4 weeks worth of high-quality rations (usually homemade) and personal items.

Armor can be any light suit of Mega-Damage armor, although most Journeymen Chefs hate the restriction of armor. Some forgo armor entirely, relying on magic or quick wits to keep them safe.

Most Journeymen Chefs prefer to travel by foot or catch rides with whoever might be passing by (contributing to their nickname of "Hitchhiker Cooks"), but there is a 15% chance that a Journeyman Chef starts off with a horse or Hovercycle.

**Money:** Journeymen Chefs rarely carry much cash, preferring to trade their services. They begin play with 1D4x100 credits squirreled away for emergencies.

**Cybernetics:** Starts with none. May or may not disdain cybernetics and bionics, though implants tend to be more common among evil Journeymen Chefs.

**Experience:** Use the same table as the Rogue Scholar.



## Coalition 'Cookie' O.C.C.

If it's true that an army travels on its stomach, then Coalition States Mess Officers, aka CS Cookies, are the true strength behind the greatest human military in the world. Despite its technological superiority, surveys have shown time and time again that enlisted men and officers alike rank the food #1 in their list of morale-boosting military experiences, above their new armor, the latest weapons, and even their village-crushing giant robots!

Mess Officers face a special challenge as cooks; not only must they find ways to make the exotic and alien foods of Rifts Earth palatable for human tastes (and often secretly), they must do so on a grand scale! Whereas feeding a band of adventurers may involve slaying a single monster and butchering whatever survived the grenades, feeding an army division in the woods may involve suiting up the K.P. crew and marching them into a Xiticix nest in order to collect enough meat to finish dinner on time. Coalition Mess work isn't just a job, it's an adventure!

Thanks to their unusual career requirements, CS Mess Officers are usually tough as nails and show little fear when confronted with the horrors from beyond. They've often had more personal contact with monsters (both their outsides and their insides) than all but the most seasoned Commandoes. Because of their familiarity with various creatures, Cookies are often tapped for missions revolving around tracking or containing supernatural or mutant threats in the wilderness. These jobs are usually a favorite, as most Cookies share a secret love of discovering if a given monster 'tastes like chicken.'

### O.C.C. Special Abilities:

**1. Rank:** Coalition Mess Officers are considered technical officers and, as such, they begin with the rank of Corporal.

**2. Bonuses:** Because they spend a great deal of time tracking down and butchering monsters, mutants, and supernatural creatures, CS Cookies receive the following bonuses:

+3D6 to S.D.C.

+3 to save vs Horror Factor.

+1 to save vs Magic.

**3. Mass Cooking:** Normally, cooking for a group tends to top out around fifteen people; for every additional doubling in the number of diners, cooks experience a cumulative -5% penalty to the quality of their cooking. CS Cookies are specially trained in massive prep techniques and do not suffer any penalties to their cooking skill for groups as large as 100 people! For every doubling in the number of diners beyond 100, add a cumulative -5% penalty to the Cookie's Cook skill.

**4. Defuse Magical Energy:** Thanks to their choice of exotic ingredients, CS Mess Officers get very good at defusing the latent magical energy in supernatural food sources very quickly. Whenever a Cookie must make a second Cook roll to determine whether or not the latent magical energy of a food has been neutralized, they receive a +10% bonus.

**Alignment:** Any; CS Cookies tend to be good at heart, though they often show a gruff exterior.

**Attribute Requirements:** I.Q. of 9 or higher, P.E. of 12 or higher.

#### O.C.C. Skills:

Literacy (+10%)

Military Etiquette (+10%)

Basic Math (+20%)

Radio: Basic (+5%)

Cook (+20%)

Lore: Demons and Monsters (+15%)

Identify Plants and Fruits (+15%)

Preserve Food (+15%)

Biology (+15%)

Hunting

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Knife

Hand to Hand: Basic, but can be upgraded to 'Expert' at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Martial Arts or Assassin (if Evil) at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills.

**O.C.C. Related Skills:** Select seven additional skills at level one, two at levels two, three and six, and one at nine and twelve. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Any.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: None.

Medical: First Aid, Paramedic (counts as two skills), or Holistic (counts as two skills) only.

Military: Any (+5%).

Physical: Any, except Wrestling and Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any.

Pilot Related: Any (+5%).

Rogue: None.

Science: None.

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

**Secondary Skills:** Choose a total of six Secondary Skills from the list above, and one additional skill at levels three, six, nine, twelve, and fifteen. They are limited as above, but do not receive any of the bonuses listed in parentheses. These are additional areas of knowledge and start at first level proficiency.

**Standard Equipment:** Coalition 'Dead Boy' body armor, energy pistol of choice with four extra clips (though not officially approved, most Cookies also have an energy rifle used in hunting expeditions), two grenades, three signal flares, survival knife, utility belt, air filter, and gas mask, walkie-talkie, uniform, combat boots, canteen, and an additional non-energy weapon of choice. Most Cookies also keep a personal reserve of 1D4 bottles of Special Sauce.

Cookies also have a fully stocked Mess Tent; a portable kitchen of decent size that can be set up or broken down in under an hour. Mess Tents are fully stocked with common ingredients, preserved foods, common spices, pots, pans, mundane and Mega-Damage burners, knives and Vibro-Knives, and a variety of utensils.

**Money:** The officer gets a roof over his head, food, clothing, and all other basics provided free as part of his pay, as well as access to military facilities. The officer's quarters (for those brief times when they're actually on base rather than in the wilds) consist of a private apartment with bathroom, living room, and bedroom/study complete with CD stereo system, personal computer, large screen television and DVD, mini-refrigerator, desk, dresser, and comfortable bed.

Monthly salary is 1800 credits; starts with one month's pay.

**Cybernetics:** None to start with, but CS Mess Officers inevitably need something replaced before long; theirs is a surprisingly dangerous assignment (and many have accidentally lost a finger to a Vibro-Blade).

**Experience:** Use the same table as the CS Technical Officer.



# High Cook O.C.C.

Cooking and magic. Both rely on special knowledge and materials. Both require years of training and practice to master. Both can consume the human heart and mind, wrapping the soul in rituals and focus rarely dreamt of by others. It was inevitable that someone would eventually put the two together... or perhaps High Cuisine, magical cooking, is one of the oldest schools of magic, only recently rediscovered with the return of magic to Earth.

High Cooks are known by a hundred names: Magus Chefs, Sisters of the Hearth, TW Bakers, Soup-Casters. They have a hundred different specialties, spread across the globe, with their exact spells and cuisines varying from region to region and tradition to tradition, but they all hold one thing in common: They harness the primal energy of magic through the complex rituals of cooking, creating foods infused with magic spells to help or hinder.

Unlike many magic-users, High Cooks tend to be very community-oriented and rarely desire to journey the world, preferring to cook for and protect a group they've come to consider their family (oftentimes, they are). Those few High Cooks who do venture forth on their own usually do so for similar reasons as Journeymen Chefs (see above), or because their home communities have been destroyed.

High Cooks are more common in smaller or more primitive communities than in larger cities, where a magic user is more likely to be a shaman than a formal mage. Their art is as much intuition as proper study. More 'proper' mages tend to look down their noses at High Cooks, but any community in which they set up shop happily welcomes them.

## O.C.C. Special Abilities:

**1. Sense Ley Lines and Magical Energy:** High Cooks have a mystical sense similar to a Ley Line Walker's talents for sensing ley lines, nexuses, and magical energy. See the Ley Line Walker O.C.C. in the Rifts Main Book for more details.

**Sense Ley Line:** 25% +5% per level of experience.

**Sense Ley Line Nexus:** 35% +5% per level of experience.

**Sense Rift:** Automatic within 40 miles (64 km) +5 miles (8 km) per level of experience.

**Sense Magic in Use:** 50 feet (15 m) per level of experience.

**2. Ritual Cookery:** Similar to a Techno-Wizard or Diabolist, a High Cook can ritualistically infuse an inanimate object with magical energy. In this case: Food. Any spell that affects an individual person can be infused into a food item that the High Cook prepares himself.

During the cooking process, the character invests the necessary P.P.E. to cast the spell into the food itself (a High Cook may prepare more than one enchanted edible at a time, but each one requires a separate investment of P.P.E.). The magical energy remains invested in the food, meaning that the High Cook cannot regenerate that P.P.E. until the meal is eaten or goes bad. A High Cook can only seal a spell he knows as a ritual into an item of food.

Once the food is eaten, the magic is released, casting the spell on whomever takes the first bite. High Cooks have an in-

herent sense, allowing them to know exactly when a magical food item they've prepared has been eaten, although they will have no idea where, why, or by whom.

High Cooks can even use their Cook skill to reproduce Faerie Foods and other enchanted edibles.

**3. Harness Magical Taint:** When cooking with magical ingredients, the High Cook has an amazing ability to manipulate the energy contained within to reproduce fantastic results. All chefs of Master level or better can attempt to reproduce the magical side effects of a meal they've previously created, but High Chefs can attempt to reproduce the magical effects of any dish they've created or even eaten by making the same dish with the same magical ingredients. When attempting a second Cook roll to eliminate or reproduce the magical energy of a meal that uses supernatural ingredients, a High Cook receives a +10% bonus.

**4. Initial Spell Knowledge:** High Cooks are not the masters of spell magic that many of their compatriots are. Not that they possess less knowledge or a weaker mystical connection to the universe, they've simply focused their study on ritualistic spellcasting. Because of this, all spells cast spontaneously cost twice as much P.P.E. and have half the range and duration. This penalty does not apply to any spells cast as a ritual or channeled into food.

High Cooks tend to focus more on spells that heal, protect, or grant enhanced senses, relying on scrolls or TW devices for offensive power when needed. At first level, all High Cooks know the following spells: See Aura, Sense Evil, Sense Magic, Chameleon, Detect Concealment, Levitation, Armor of Ithan, Breathe without Air, Impervious to Poison, Negate Poison/Toxin, Charismatic Aura, Cure Minor Disorders, and Trance. High Cooks are familiar with both the spell form and ritual form of each of these spells.

At second level and third level, the High Cook may select two additional spells from levels 1-4.

**5. Learning New Spells:** Additional spells and rituals of any magic level can be learned and/or purchased at any time regardless of the High Cook's level of experience.

**6. Magic Bonuses:** +2 to save vs poison, +2 to save vs magical effects of foods, +1 to save vs Magic at levels three, six, nine, and twelve, and +1 to Spell Strength at levels four, eight, and twelve.

**7. P.P.E.:** Like all magic users, High Cooks possess vast stores of magical energy that they can wield and recharge normally. **Permanent Base P.P.E.:** 2D4x10, plus the character's P.E. attribute. Add 2D6 P.P.E. per each level of experience. The High Cook can also draw on the energy of Ley Lines or sacrifices (many ritualistically harvest the P.P.E. of their main course to fuel the spell), but a High Cook must always invest at least one point of their own personal P.P.E. into any magical foods they create.

**Alignment:** As community-oriented magic-users, High Cooks tend towards Principled and Scrupulous alignments, with the rare wandering High Cook touching anywhere along the alignment spectrum. Gluttony Demons are Diabolical and often wield High Cookery magic.

**Attribute Requirements:** I.Q. and M.E. of 12 or higher. A high P.E. and M.A. are beneficial, but not necessary.

### O.C.C. Skills:

Literacy (+20%)

Cook (+20%)

Lore – Magic (+10%)

Identify Plants and Fruit (+15%)

Holistic Medicine (+15%)

Mathematics: Basic (+10%)

W.P. Knife

Hand to Hand combat must be selected as an O.C.C. Related Skill. Hand to Hand: Basic costs one skill, Expert counts as two, and Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil) counts as four skill selections.

**O.C.C. Related Skills:** Select eight additional skills at level one, and one additional skill at levels three, six, nine, and twelve. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Radio: Basic only.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+15%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Escape Artist and Wilderness Survival only (+5%).

Mechanical: None.

Medical: Any (+10%).

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics and Gymnastics.

Pilot: Any (+5%), except Jet Aircraft and Robots.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any, except Computer Hacking (+5%).

Science: Any.

Technical: Any, except Computers (+10%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

**Secondary Skills:** Choose a total of four Secondary Skills from the list above. They are limited as above, but do not receive any of the bonuses listed in parentheses. These are additional areas of knowledge and start at first level proficiency.

**Standard Equipment:** Three sets of clothing, knapsack, 1D4 small sacks, binoculars, tinted goggles or sunglasses, air filter and gas mask, cloak, and flashlight. They also usually have a fully stocked kitchen and pantry, complete with a variety of Spice Arrays, 2D4 bottles of Special Sauces, various utensils (most of them Mega-Damage quality), 2D4 knives of varying sizes and purposes and two Vibro-Kitchen Knives (usually a Chef's Knife and either a Vibro-Cleaver or Vibro-Paring Knife).

Weapons are usually limited to a knife or mundane melee weapon of the character's choice and possibly an old, battered energy rifle with 1D4 extra clips of ammunition. Armor is likely a light suit, as heavy armor restricts their magical abilities.

High Cooks who travel usually have an extremely pared down supply of kitchen equipment, but have a vehicle of their own, often a truck or ATV.

**Money:** The typical High Cook has fairly meager savings; around 2D6x100 credits, but they have a stock of 2D6x1000 credits' worth of magical ingredients and components (see

the Necromancer O.C.C. for lists of various magical creature components/ingredients).

**Cybernetics:** Starts with none. High Cooks avoid cybernetics as they are unnatural and interfere with their magical abilities.

**Experience:** Use the same table as the Ley Line Walker.

# Equipment

## Knives

Knives are one of the most basic and fundamental pieces of kitchen equipment, and any true chef had best master their use early on. In an age where the meat is oftentimes stronger than steel, companies have had to get creative in providing cooks with tools that are up to the challenge.

**Important Note:** Kitchen knives are not built for combat and are not balanced the same way as combat knives. While they can still deliver a nasty gash, they are more awkward to wield, and so a character's usual bonuses from W.P.: Knife do not apply. Additionally, all but the highest quality knives will inflict a -1 penalty to Strike on their wielder. All these penalties are ignored if their wielder has the W.P. Utensil skill.

**Mundane Knives:** 15-300 credits. Mundane knives vary greatly in price depending on quality. The average cost is about 60 credits, but high-quality or specialty knives can cost five times as much. Most experienced cooks need at least four different knives: a Chef's Knife, a Paring Knife, a Serrated Knife (or Bread Knife), and a Filleting Knife.

**Mega-Damage Alloys:** Mundane Knives can be made from Mega-Damage metals or ceramics, meaning they never need sharpening and the blade is almost impossible to break. This does not mean they inflict Mega-Damage, however, and an M.D.C. knife would do as much damage to a dragon as a normal steel one would. Mega-Damage knives cost five times as much as mundane knives.

## CS Vibro-Paring Knife

Often overlooked are the Coalition States' impressive variety of non-military goods. One of the best examples is their line of Vibro-Kitchen Knives, which carve through even the toughest cuts of meat like butter, and even allow the ambitious cook to work with Mega-Damage meats as easily as more 'proper,' earthly animals. The paring knife of this set is used for finer work on meats as well as working with Mega-Damage fruits and vegetables.

**Weight:** .5 pounds (.24 kg).

**Mega-Damage:** 1D4

**Payload:** One power cell runs the knife for over fifty continuous hours.

**Cost:** 1500 credits.

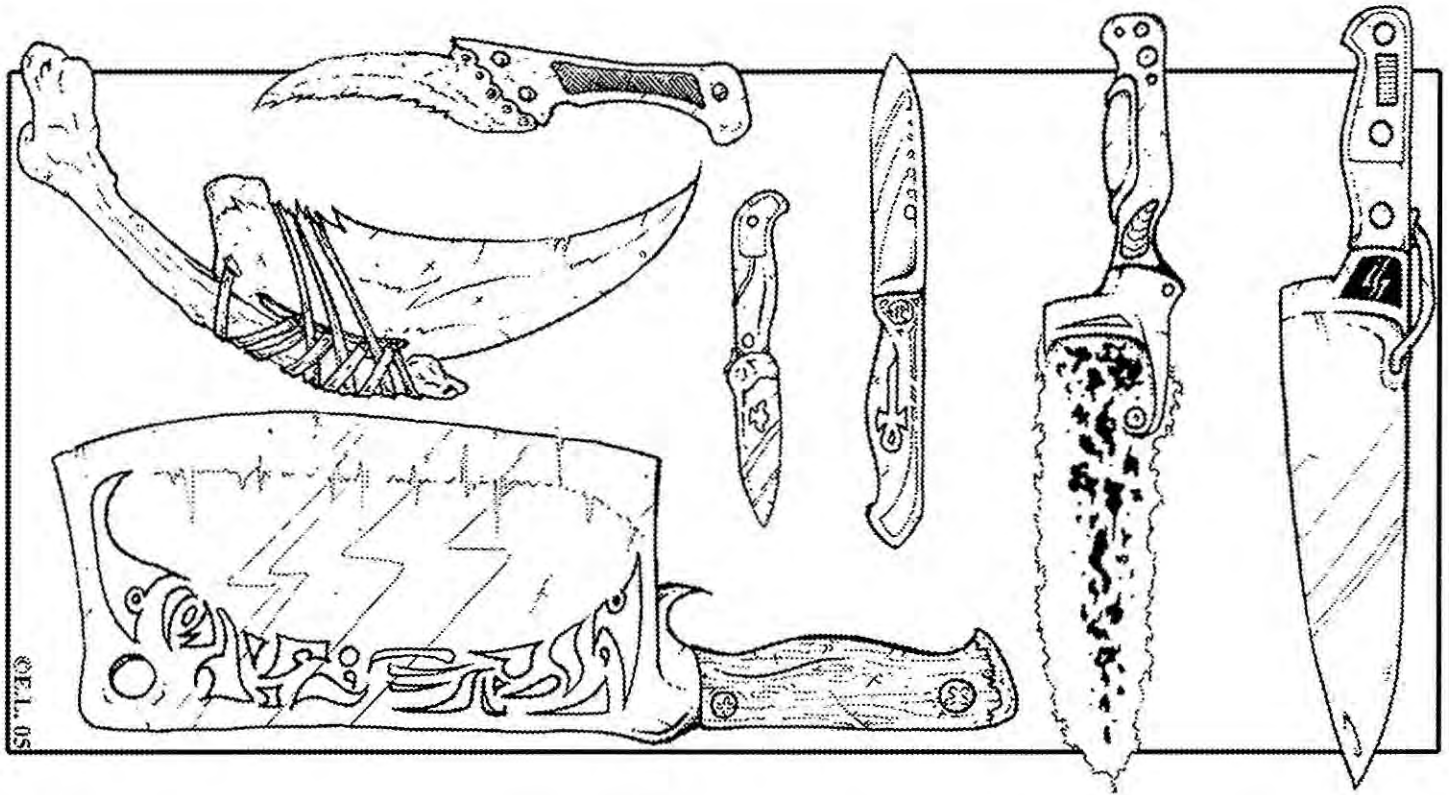
## Naruni Energy Chef's Knife

Mega-Damage creatures need to prepare meals, too, and their diets usually require Mega-Damage foods to sustain them. Naruni recognized this eons ago, and their consumer goods division has long since stepped up to fill the needs of their supernat-



ural clients, providing them with a fine array of energy-based kitchen utensils. The Naruni Chef's Knife is one of the most popular in the Megaverse and has been their home goods department's best seller for over a century.

Weight: .25 lbs (113 grams).



Mega-Damage: 2D4

Payload: A power cell can run the knife continuously for over 100 hours.

Cost: 15,000 credits.

### Splugorth Rune Cleaver

The twisted cooks of Atlantis are thankful for this incredibly effective tool. Not a true rune blade, the Rune Cleaver is empowered by several bound lesser spirits which make it formidable nonetheless. The Cleaver's extraordinary magic is often used to prepare horrific feasts of butchered, still-living sentients.

Weight: 4 pounds (2 kg).

Mega Damage: 2D6

Spell Magic: Every 24 hours, the Cleaver can be used to cast Domination as many as two times, equal to a fifth level sorcerer.

Cost: 200,000 credits.

### Raptor Claw Knife

A more low-tech approach to the problem of carving Mega-Damage meat is to simply use those things that can cut it in nature: the animal's own claws and teeth. Many primitive tribes and small villages rely on such utensils to fill out their stores. Unfortunately, claw-knives are unpowered, and hence still require incredible strength to pierce Mega-Damage flesh. A butcher or cook must have a normal P.S. of 22 or higher to use a

claw-knife to cut Mega-Damage meats or vegetables, and even then, the knife can only inflict a single point of damage against Mega-Damage targets.

Weight: 2 pounds (1 kg).

S.D.C. Damage: 2D6, plus P.S. damage bonus.

Mega Damage: 1, or 1D4 if the wielder has Supernatural Strength.

Cost: 500 credits.

## Mega-Damage Cookware

Cookware and utensils for the typical adventuring party take a lot of abuse, and are often constructed from Mega-Damage metals and ceramics to ensure durability. Likewise, many restaurants prefer to invest in Mega-Damage quality pots, pans, and utensils, rendering their kitchen virtually unbreakable (and allowing them to cook with Mega-Damage grade ingredients). Obviously, there's a market for it, and inevitably, many companies have risen to fill that niche. Everyone from the Coalition States to Northern Gun, as well as actual kitchenware companies, offer a variety of Mega-Damage wares that are a common sight in any professional setting. Mega-Damage cookware typically has 10+1D6 M.D.C.

**Pots/Pans:** 500-2000 credits each.

**Work Bowls:** 700 credits.

**Appliances:** 5000 – 10,000 credits (blenders, food processors, mixers, etc.).

**Graters:** 700 credits.

**Utensils:** 400-1000 credits each.

**Melon Baller:** 300 credits.

**Pot Holders:** 1000 credits (15 M.D.C.).

## Stock Pot of Holding

The Stock Pot of Holding warps space within itself, allowing massive amounts of food to be cooked in it at once, feeding an entire village on what looks like a mere three or four gallons of stew or soup. These magical items are very popular community items, entrusted to a communal cook of a village or tribe, who can use the pot to cook for over 100 diners at a time, provided he has access to enough raw ingredients. The pot also has the side benefit of keeping food kept within it perfectly preserved so long as it is kept boiling. These items are often central to a community, and many tribes or villages would go to great lengths to retrieve a Stock Pot of Holding if lost or stolen.

**Weight:** 6 pounds (2.7 kg), regardless of what it contains.

**Capacity:** Varies, usually around 60 to 100 gallons (227 to 379 liters) of liquid.

**Cost:** Usually not available; communal items and often antiques left over from the dark ages. When available on the black market, they can range up to 250,000 credits.

## TW Stick Blender

Some people just like power, and those who do, and have little common sense, adore the TW Stick Blender, an enormous, restaurant-grade immersion (or stick) blender outfitted with enough Techno-Wizard upgrades to let it turn a brick into a fine paste. The blender can be used to turn Mega-Damage ingredients into a smooth paste in seconds, and can even be wielded in combat, though with a -4 penalty to Strike and Parry.

**Weight:** 15 pounds (7 kg).

**Range:** Hand-Held/Melee.

**Duration:** Two minutes per level of experience.

**Damage:** 3D6 mega damage!

**Energy Requirements:** 15 I.S.P. or Call Lightning spell (10 P.P.E.).

**To Create:** 75 P.P.E., two quartz worth 1000 credits each, and 250 credits worth of parts.

**Cost:** 60,000 credits.

## Mega-Damage Heat

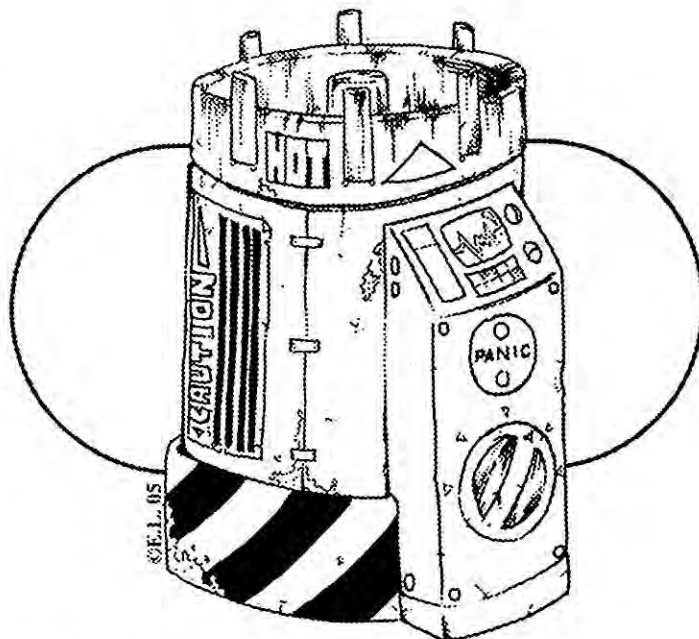
When working with Mega-Damage ingredients, the fastest and easiest way to make it palatable to the normal, squishy majority is through the application of Mega-Damage heat. As with knives, many different groups have concocted their own means of dealing with this problem.

## Hot Industries Mega-Range

Hot Industries, the leading supplier of kitchen technology in Rifts Earth, has developed one of the most efficient Mega-Damage cooktop/oven combinations available to the professional consumer in the modern age. The Mega-Range uses plasma technology to cook Mega-Damage ingredients as easily as a standard cooktop prepares more mundane foods, and offers

enough redundant safety cut-offs to make it safe and practical for human use. Its great size and weight (nearly twice as heavy as a standard restaurant-quality stove) makes it impractical for adventurers.

**Cost:** 8500 credits.



## Wilk's Portable Laser Stove Mk 2

A variation on the laser welder, the laser stove has proven to be a popular, if less than glamorous, item for the well-known weapons company. The stove uses an array of high-intensity, low-power lasers to create a short-range 'heat field' that heats up any Mega-Damage pot or pan almost instantly (and obliterates S.D.C. cookware). The base of the Mark 2 includes retractable stabilizers and a gyro-sensor to help avoid the messy accidents that spelled the end of the Mark 1 model.

**Weight:** 5 pounds (2.3 kg).

**Mega-Damage:** 1D4

**Rate of Fire:** Continuous.

**Maximum Effective Range:** 6 inches (15 cm).

**Payload:** The two energy clips powering the stove provide for about three hours of operation.

**Cost:** 8000 credits new; a used Mark 1 costs about 1000 credits but a failed Cook roll likely means an out-of-control fire and possibly a missing limb.

## TW Toaster Oven

A common sight among magical-oriented adventurers and a popular appliance amongst well-to-do Magic Zone and Lazlo families, the TW Toaster Oven channels fire magics through a series of rubies, creating a powerful enough heat to break down the Mega-Damage flesh of most monsters, allowing them to be cooked normally. The only downside to the TW Toaster Oven is that most foods need to be further prepared afterwards, since the toaster oven offers few preparation options, and the end result can be dry.

**P.P.E. Requirement:** 30



Spells Required: Fire Ball (10), Fuel Flame (5), Impervious to Fire (5).

Physical Requirements: 3 Rubies worth 500 credits each and an additional 500 credits worth of parts.

Time: 1D4 days.

Duration of Charge: One hour.

To Recharge: Casting Fire Ball (10 P.P.E.) or 25 I.S.P.

Cost: 10,000 credits.

## Enchanted Firewood

The most common resource for villages in the Magic Zone is simply magic firewood. Made either by an Earth Warlock, Mystic or Shaman, or simply treating wood harvested from a ley line nexus with the proper chemicals (over the course of months), enchanted firewood burns at "an appropriate heat," inflicting S.D.C. damage to S.D.C. creatures and Mega-Damage to M.D.C. creatures, making it no more dangerous than a standard fire. A burning club of enchanted firewood inflicts 1D6 damage.

Weight: 15 pounds (7 kg) per bundle.

P.P.E. to Create: 5 per bundle.

Duration: One bundle burns for nearly six hours.

Cost: 400 credits per bundle.

## Spices

Spices often make up the real soul of a given dish. Proper ingredients are important, but spices help to fine-tune any ingredient, complementing its natural flavors and helping to cover those areas where it may fall short. Any cook worth her salt will be on constant lookout for new and interesting spices to round out her repertoire, and the truly obsessed may journey across half a continent to restock their supply of their favorites.

Cooking without spices leaves the food dull and bland, imposing a -10% penalty to a character's Cook skill.

**Common Spices:** 2 credits per ounce (Salt, Pepper, Garlic, Chili Peppers, Onion, Mustard, most Herbs, etc.).

**Rare Spices:** 10-15 credits per ounce (Cocoa, Vanilla, Cumin, Ginger, Tumeric, Cloves, etc.).

**Exotic Spices:** 50-200 credits per ounce (Saphron, Harissa, Peri-Peri, etc.).

**Alien Spices:** 100-500 credits per ounce (most non-native spices).

## Spice Array

A favorite tool among traveling chefs, Hot Industries' Spice Array is a metal tube approximately three inches (7.6 cm) in diameter and twelve inches (30 cm) long. A simple, computerized control at one end allows the cook to select one of a dozen stored spices in any measurable amount (the tube contains twelve 2 ounce/57 gram storage cells), which is then dispensed out of the opposite end. The Array can also be switched to manual, allowing the cook to sprinkle out the selected spice by simply twisting the top like a pepper mill. The Spice Array comes pre-loaded with six Common or Rare spices of the buyer's choice.

Cost: 400 credits.

## Special Sauces

'Special Sauce' is a catch-all for the various secret concoctions and sauces one happens across as they travel throughout the world. It may be anything from hot sauce to a marinade to a proper pasta sauce, but the love and devotion mixed into the condiment comes across in its flavor. Using a Special Sauce in one's cooking provides a +5% bonus to a Cook roll, and a bottle contains enough sauce for 1D4 uses in cooking (the sauce can also be saved for your exclusive use, lasting for months and making your personal meals dang tasty).

Cost: 1D6x10 credits per bottle.

# Sample Recipes

## Chicken Fried Xiticix

A favorite among CS Cookies, as Xiticix meat, when properly seasoned and deep fried, is completely indistinguishable from chicken. Note that CS Mess Officers often have 'Xiticix' as one of their cooking specialties.

Total Penalty: -15% (Alien, Minor Mega-Damage).

Magical Effects: None.

Ingredient Cost: Xiticix meat generally costs 30 credits per pound (.45 kg); cheaper the closer you get to the hives (in eastern Canada, it's actually cheaper than beef); in distant regions, some see it as an exotic delicacy, paying up to 300 credits per pound.

Market Price: A good chicken-fried Xiticix in Xiticix territory is cheap; about 10 credits. Throughout most of North America, it runs about 50 credits a plate.

## Gish

'Gish' is an old slang word for 'Crap,' which is pretty accurate when you consider that this dish, hailing from the Chi-Town 'Burbs, is made from Vampire Flat Worms. The pests' relatively common nature makes them a threat, but also a potential food source for people who don't have many other options.

Total Penalty: -10% (Alien).

Magical Effects: None.

Ingredient Cost: Cheap; Flat Worm is worth about 1 credit per pound.

Market Price: Cheap, about 2 credits per serving.

## Rhino-Buffalo Ribs

A recipe originally developed by many of the east-coast towns and villages who actively hunt Rhino-Buffalos and similar predators as a source of food. The meal takes weeks to prepare, as the meat needs an extremely long time to cook, but it results in an incredibly soft texture and exotic flavor.

Total Penalty: -20% (Alien, Major M.D.C.).

Magical Effects: None.

Ingredient Cost: Rhino-Buffalo meat runs about 20 credits per pound (.45 kg).

Market Price: 15 credits per serving.



## Faerie-Wing Soup

A favorite among Orcs and Goblins, Faerie Wing Soup is as ghastly a meal as it sounds. Its popularity can be attributed to more than just Orcish cruelty, though. The latent Faerie Magic renders those who consume it temporarily immune to fear!

Total Penalty: -35% (Creature of Magic, Unusual); half for Goblins and Orcs.

Magical Effects: Renders the consumer entirely immune to fear (including Horror Factor, psionics, and spells) and grants a +1 to save vs magic, as well as inflicting a -3 penalty to I.Q. and M.E. The effects last 3D6 hours.

Ingredient Cost: Faerie wings are hard to come by in any proper market, but cost as much as 500 credits a pair in less savory areas. The soup requires one pair per serving.

Market Price: As much as 1000 credits per serving.

## Millennium Brew

A popular ale in England for those who can afford it, Millennium Brew is created from a variety of grains and flowers, as well as sap and blossoms from a Millennium Tree.

Total Penalty: -40% (Alien, Creature of Magic); also requires a Brewing check.

Magical Effects: Healing and Hallucinations, as per the side effects listed above.

Ingredient Cost: The various unguents and Millennium Tree components required to brew a dozen bottles is 6,000 credits. Twice that outside of England.

Market Price: Millennium Brew is quality stuff, and the price reflects this, at nearly 2,000 credits per bottle (3,000 outside of England).

## Dragon's Blood Pie

Said to be originally created on a distant world where dragons are even more commonplace and dangerous than on Earth, Dragon's Blood Pie (or simply Blood Pie) is usually reserved for kings and great heroes... probably because they are the only ones who can afford it. Special spices are used to neutralize the dangerous properties of the dragon blood used in this meat pie while maintaining the incredible magical energies that once pulsed through the mighty creature's veins. One pie yields six servings.

Total Penalty: -40% (Creature of Magic, Alien).

Magical Effects: The pie grants whoever eats a serving 10 M.D.C. per level of experience, as well as the ability to use the dragon's breath weapon once per melee round (in addition to their usual attacks per melee), inflicting 5D6 Mega-Damage at a range of 60 feet (18 m). The effects last one day or until the bonus M.D.C. is depleted.

Ingredient Cost: Enough dragon's blood to make a single pie costs 15,000 credits, while the rare spices needed to make it safe to eat cost another 3,000 credits.

Market Price: A whole pie can sell for up to 100,000 credits!

## A Final Word: Cooking and Campaigning

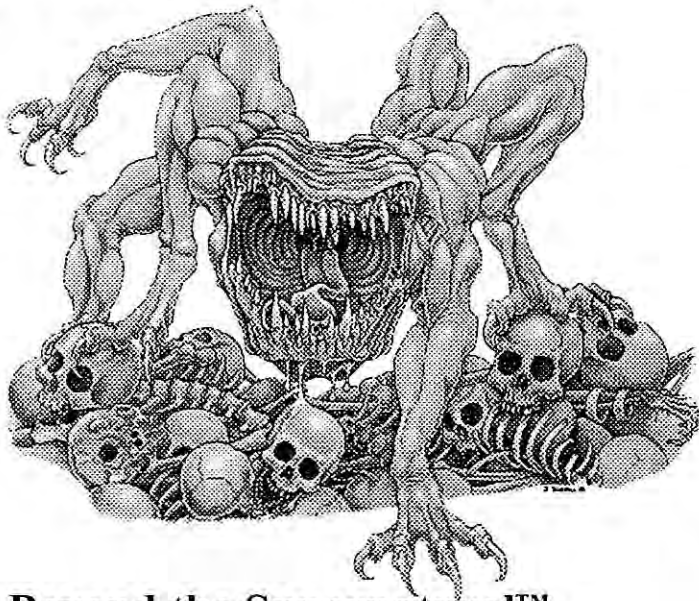
Whether you build an entire campaign around characters' drives to cook the newest, most interesting things in the Megaverse, or just use it as a background element every now and then, cooking is just one example of how you can apply any given 'minor' skill to your campaign to provide a unique twist to N.P.C.s and a general depth to the role-playing experience. If cooking isn't your thing, there are a good supply of other skills, spread across a variety of books, that can be expounded upon to bring color and life to a campaign that may be drying out.



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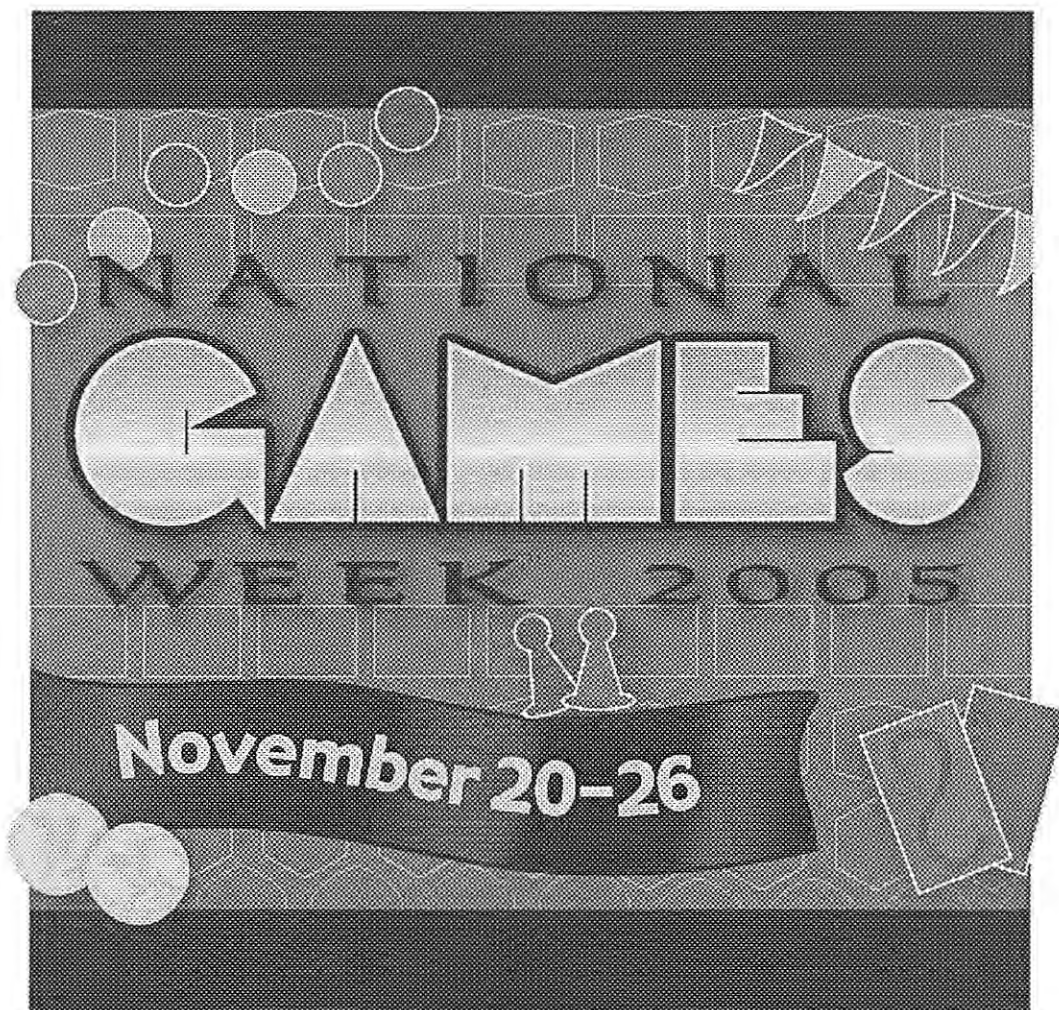
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# The Hammer of the Forge

By James M.G. Cannon



## Chapter Thirty-Two

### Kansas

The late afternoon sun passing through the window made Doctor Abbot nearly transparent. A being composed entirely of animate shadow, Abbot always felt a little vulnerable in the daylight. As though a strong wind might blow him away, or he might evaporate into the air. The battered trenchcoat and fedora he wore lent Abbot some measure of substantiality, but it wasn't enough to make him feel whole.

Abbot stood in the office of his friend, Professor Vadu-kek, Doctor of Noetics at the prestigious Qwargillium University on the southern pole of the pastoral world of Adumar. The planet boasted only two cities, vast arcologies at the poles, while the rest of the world's landmass was dedicated to huge ranches and plantations. Adumar was one of many planets that fed the citizens of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds, but it was one the few still owned by private interests. It was one of those private interests, a Ludmerite community called Artex, that concerned Abbot and Vadu-kek now.

The professor was a portly, middle-aged human woman with a permanent scowl, clad in academic robes that were out of

fashion even when she was a student at Qwargillium. "You're still determined to go after this... thing, Abbot?"

"Why not? It can't be all that horrible," said Arwen Griffin. "Besides, we can't just stand by while all those villagers are in jeopardy." The girl was a Celestial Monk, young and lithe and beautiful, with green skin and blue hair, a near-human of an unknown species. Arwen was an orphan, like Abbot himself, raised by the same order that raised him, and recently placed in his charge.

"The Splugorth are not to be easily trifled with, child," Vadu-kek told Arwen.

The young monk smirked. "Neither are we."

The comm unit at Abbot's elbow beeped, interrupting whatever cutting comment Vadu-kek was about to make. Abbot keyed the console, and a familiar face flickered to life on the screen.

"Hey Doc," Kassiopaeia Acherean said from her home on Alexandria. Kassy was one of Abbot's oldest and dearest friends, and it did his shadowy heart good to see her again. Her image flickered and popped periodically. A sub-space hyperconnection allowed them to communicate in real time, despite the vast distance of time and space, but everything from sunspot activity to hyperspace distortions could make the communication unstable. "Caught your message flare this morning, sounded urgent. What kind of trouble have you gotten into this time?"

"The worst kind," Abbot assured her. "I'm going to need your help."

"Sure thing," Kassy said. She swept a hand through her raven locks and smiled. "You know me, I'm always ready for a good rumble."

"Would your friend Joriel be willing to accompany you?"

The smile on Kassy's face faltered. "Yes, I think so. Just how serious is this problem, Doc?"

Abbot's orange eyes twinkled, his version of an ironic grin. "Splugorth."

All playfulness left Kassy's expression. She leaned closer to the monitor on her end. She was Atlantean and an Undead Slayer and she hated the Splugorth like few entities in the Three Galaxies. "Speak," she commanded.

"A village of Ludmerites has been abducted," Abbot said. "A preliminary investigation of the site at the behest of Adumar's authorities revealed that a Rift recently opened there, spawning a Shoggoth. Everyone was taken."

"That doesn't sound like a Splugorth," Kassy said skeptically.

Abbot nodded. "My friend, Professor Vadu-kek, kindly pointed out to me that the Ludmerite society is built around a particular reading of the *Chronicles of the Cosmos* that has led them to believe that if they produce a super-psionic from their lineage, he or she will be able to pinpoint the location of the Cosmic Forge."



"The Endless Eye," Kassy said. Her tone was cold, her expression even colder.

"Yes," Abbot agreed. The Splugorth Rynncryl was a mad, pathetic thing utterly convinced that it could find and harness the power of the Cosmic Forge, using an artifact called the Endless Eye. It was utter nonsense, of course, but that didn't change the fact that Rynncryl possessed the power and resources of a Splugorth Lord, and that his delusions could have very real and very lethal consequences for anyone who got in the way of his desire. It didn't matter that Rynncryl was misguided; the village of Artex was still empty.

"Consider me *en route*," Kassy said. "Joriel and I will be there as soon as possible. I'll see how much of the massed might of Clan Acherean I can muster as well."

Abbot's eyes twinkled again. "Thank you, Kassy. By the way, have you heard from Caleb recently? I tried to contact him, but without any success."

Kassy shook her head. "Not since we left the Council of Time. That was months ago. I'll see if I can reach him myself – we'll need his firepower, as well as his clear head." She smiled. "I miss the kid."

"As do I," Abbot said. He neglected to inform Kassy that he had tried to contact Caleb through mundane means, and when that failed, he had tried magic. Even searching along the ley lines scattered throughout space showed Abbot no sign of his young friend. The magical resources on Adumar were not great, but Abbot should have been able to find some sign of Caleb, out there in the ether. But he had found nothing. It was as if the Cosmo-Knight had vanished from the Three Galaxies completely.

Or, perhaps, he was dead.

Such thoughts were not worth pursuing.

"I hope you have more success than I've had finding Caleb," Abbot told Kassy. "I look forward to seeing you soon."

"We're on our way," Kassy said with some of her initial cheerfulness. Her image flickered out and the comm unit went silent. Abbot turned back to his companions. "We should return to Artex soon and begin preparing to re-open the Rift."

Vadu-kek nodded, her face drawn and looking a little pale.

Arven slapped her hands together and grinned fiercely. "Cool!"

\* \* \*

In another universe, in a land once called North Dakota, the dawn crept in from the east, shedding wan morning light down upon the badlands. A ribbon of blue fire slashed across the landscape, a sheet of brilliant energy whose light grew gradually dimmer as the sun's rays grew brighter and the dark of night faded. A herd of mammoth brontodons picked its way across the hills, eating as they went. In the distance, the roar of a hunting Rhino-Buffalo sounded across the plains.

Hart sipped coffee from a battered tin cup and watched as the morning arrived. He and his friends had made camp on a craggy promontory near the edge of the hills, using the cairn-like rocks as a natural shelter to hide from the eyes of predators, or worse. Hart was a rangy, raw-boned man of middle years, with gray

eyes and shoulder length dark hair tied back with a leather thong. In ancient days, his people had made their home in this inhospitable land, but that was before the Coming of the Rifts, before the apocalypse, before the Coalition. Before a lot of things.

Hart had grown up in a place called Lone Star, a squalid arcology of cold steel and neon light, born into the slums and just a hair's breadth from the 'Burbs. He joined the military as soon as he was old enough, not because he necessarily believed in the Coalition's ideals of fascism and human supremacy, but mostly out of a simple desire to escape the city. Hart needed to see the wild, untamed lands that encircled and endangered civilization. He found his soul out there, and he never went back.

It didn't matter that he was a wanted man in Coalition territory, that he had to make his home amidst the rough and tumble kingdoms of the Pecos Empire, that every day was a constant, deadly struggle against monsters and demons from the Rifts. Hart was a free man, and that was all that mattered.

Hart paused in mid-sip as something flared bright and angry to the north. He shifted his laser rifle off his thighs and grabbed the binoculars at his side. Something was going on up there; Rift or detonation or psychic battle escalating out of control. Hard to tell at this distance.

"The hell was that?" said a harsh voice. Hart set the binoculars down and turned to regard the speaker. William Wagner was nearly eight feet of blackened megasteel, a former Coalition Special Forces soldier who had the misfortune of surviving a battle with a pack of D-Bees in the ruins of Old Chicago. Will was torn apart, literally, but the Coalition had rebuilt him. Stronger, faster, nearly indestructible. He was one of the most advanced 'Borgs to come out of the Coalition cybernetics program, and his superiors were more than a little surprised when he went AWOL. Will still didn't talk about what it was that made him break with the Coalition, but Hart had a suspicion it had something to do with turning a man into a machine without his consent. For all its protestations to the contrary, the Coalition was pretty good at using human beings up and making them into monsters.

"Might be what we came to see," Hart said. "What do our sensitives say?"

Though Will's chassis retained the Coalition design, he'd long ago ditched the death's head helm they had bolted to his head. He'd replaced it with a sleeker model that covered everything but the lower half of his face – one of the few pieces of his old body that the Coalition had let him keep. Now he frowned, a strangely human gesture almost lost against the backdrop of his hulking metal frame. "Still asleep. Marshal's checking the bikes."

Hart grunted. Many people considered him laconic, but he was downright personable and outgoing compared to Will. Hart unfolded from his crouch. He dumped the last of his coffee and scooped up his rifle and binoculars in the other hand. "Best wake 'em," he said. "Got a feeling we need to head north, quick like."

Will looked past Hart, and Hart knew the 'Borg was focusing his mechanical eyes in the direction of that momentary flare. "Rhino-Buffalo on the hunt," he said. "There was that Brodkil sign we saw yesterday. Lots of Simvan on these plains, too. And I'm low on missiles."

Hart arched an eyebrow. "If I didn't know better, I'd say you're worried."

"Mmm. No. But we have no real idea what we're looking for out here, no idea how long we need to look, and no real idea of what the local threats might be."

"How's that different from yesterday?"

Will grinned. "It isn't. I just like to point it out from time to time."

"Noted. Now let's get Stephanie and the Soothsayer up and about and the bikes loaded. I want to be in the mountains by mid-morning."

Camp was an abbreviated affair, just a few bedrolls and packs arranged around an electric heater. Smoke was dangerous out here in the Western Wilderness, a signal to predators, and others, of available prey. Stephanie Sawyer, the group's resident psionic, was just dragging herself out of slumber, bright red hair tousled and brilliant blue eyes foggy with sleep. She grunted something at Hart but brightened when he pulled the coffee pot off the heater and offered her some.

"Any weird dreams or premonitions?" he asked her as she drank greedily from the cup.

"That's a big negative, Sarge," Steph said. She looked up, eyes growing distant. "Although there is something strange going on out there... somewhere..."

Hart's eyes narrowed and he turned to the Ley Line Walker, "Soothsayer." The wizard was not a part of their regular group. He was foisted upon them by their patron, the woman Solo, who had sent them north to this forbidding wasteland to search for something she had seen in a vision. During the journey, Soothsayer had done little to endear himself to the rest of the gang. He kept to himself, wound up in his cloak and rags, amulets and fetishes dangling from strategic places on the armor he never seemed to remove. How or when Soothsayer ate, Hart did not know. Soothsayer was a man of practiced mystery, like every other spell slinger Hart had ever met.

"What about you, wizard? Noticed anything strange or unusual on the aether lately?"

Soothsayer sat cross-legged on his blanket, hands folded in some complicated arrangement that doubtless had some magical significance. "I believe so. The event we have been waiting so patiently to witness is right now occurring, just a few miles north of our present location."

Hart stared at Soothsayer for a long moment, forcing himself not to strangle the arrogant, useless bastard to death. "When did you plan to share this information with us?"

Soothsayer inclined his head slightly in Hart's direction, though with his head encased in the horned helm it was impossible to read his expression. "At the appropriate moment, Hart. Which, as it happens, was just now."

Hart gritted his teeth. "Get your gear together. We're on our bikes in twenty minutes." Stephanie groaned, but Hart ignored her. He went to check on the bikes. He met the Marshal halfway to the shelter where they stashed the bikes. The Marshal was a big, gregarious man with a lantern jaw and broad shoulders. His Bushman armor was buffed and shined, reflecting the morning sun, and a five pointed star decorated the left pectoral plate. He wore a ten gallon hat over his bald head, effectively hiding his brain implants from casual observation.

"Good morning, kemosabe!" the Marshal said in his stentorian voice.

"How're the bikes?" Hart asked him. The Marshal's insanity was mostly benign, but he could be annoying at times.

"Fit as a fiddle and ready for action! What time do we hit the trail?"

"Soon as Steph and the wizard are ready. Will reminded me of that Brodkil sign we saw yesterday. Why don't you fire up your Predator and be our eye in the sky?"

"Will do, kemosabe!"

Hart watched the Marshal make an about face and march back to the vehicles. The man was insane, but he was a halfway decent mech pilot with incredible reflexes and reaction time. The Predator was painted to look like a cowboy, complete with chaps, gunbelt, kerchief, cowboy boots, a workshirt, and a megasteel-plated ten gallon hat bolted to the top of the head. It was garish, and goofy, and the Marshal was absolute murder with it.

Hart hoped for a quiet morning. But it was 106 P.A. and there weren't many quiet mornings left to the world.

\* \* \*

The first thing Caleb realized when he awoke was that he was awake.

The second thing he realized was that George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt were looking down at him.

The Cosmo-Knight closed his eyes. He opened them again, slowly. The presidents were still there, carved into the living rock of Mt. Rushmore.

Caleb sat up. "Okay. I'm on Earth. Which is odd, because I should be dead." He sighed. "At least I'm talking out loud to myself. That's always a good sign."

The last thing he remembered before waking up was his atoms being smashed together as a black hole swallowed him. The black hole was artificially constructed, created by a Kreeghor superweapon called the *Shadowstar*. Caleb and his fellow Cosmo-Knights had slipped into Transgalactic space with the express purpose of destroying the weapon. They succeeded ultimately, but not before the *Shadowstar* opened up a singularity. Caleb was sucked into it, and right behind him came the *Shadowstar* itself, its inertial drive destroyed so that it could no longer ignore the crushing gravity of the black hole.

So.

Alive. And on Earth.

Caleb looked around. He felt he should be more surprised and off balance. Then again, he'd spent enough time in the Three Galaxies to become accustomed to impossible things happening to him on a regular basis.

There was no parking lot. No tourists. Nothing except green wilderness and blue sky surrounding the mountain in all directions. All, that is, save for the huge black and red megasteel fragment of the *Shadowstar's* bulkhead lying a scant few yards from Caleb. A blasted, blackened crater radiated out from under the two of them; they'd hit the earth with enough force to flatten trees and fuse rock to glass. Not that Caleb had felt the impact or any after-effects, either.



Maybe he was dead, and this was his brain's way of interpreting the afterlife? Somehow, he'd always expected something more impressive.

The forest was quiet. Caleb didn't hear so much as a bird call or a pair of insect wings slapping together. He supposed that the impact would have driven anything living into hiding, but if he had remained unconscious long enough to recover from any injuries, and long enough for the ground to cool, then why hadn't the wild things returned?

Why weren't there any people here? This place was a national monument. For the first time Caleb noticed that George Washington was missing a nose. The other presidents looked a little worse for wear as well. A sick feeling settled in his gut. Had he been gone that long? Had the Earth changed that much in the few years since he left it behind to explore the Three Galaxies? What had happened here in his absence? When he left there were Soviet tanks on the streets in Prague and Vietnam was getting ugly. Had World War III finally erupted? Did Uncle Sam and the Russian Bear unleash their nuclear stockpiles upon a hapless world?

He heard movement from the other side of the bulkhead; metal grinding against metal, the whine of servos. Instantly, every one of Caleb's senses were alert. He felt the hair on the back of his neck rise. Without conscious thought he summoned his personal weapon: a red bar formed between his hands, which materialized into a massive sledgehammer.

Cautiously, he picked his way around the bulkhead. Glass and pebbles crunched beneath his red grav boots. He heard a faint rumble in the distance, and thought it might be an engine, but before he could focus on it he came round the bulkhead. Caleb relaxed, frowning. The hammer disappeared.

Spread out across the other side of the crater was the Kreeghor commander who Caleb had fought before the black hole opened. The Kreeghor's power armor was heavily damaged, but apparently still functional. Even without a left hand or much of the armored plating around the trunk, and with a dozen wires sparking fitfully in the right leg, the Kreeghor still managed to move. He was attempting to rise to his feet, but doing so awkwardly as the armor fought his movements.

"Hey," Caleb said.

The huge, horned head turned towards the Cosmo-Knight as the rest of the Kreeghor's body froze. Before the alien could react, Caleb sprang forward and slammed him bodily to the ground. While the Kreeghor lolled there like a turtle on its back, Caleb disabled the armor with strikes to the joints and chest. Megasteel crumpled under the blows. More sparks flickered to life.

Caleb paused and took a step back. He was under no illusions; had he not surprised the Kreeghor or had the power armor not been damaged by the black hole, the matter would have played out much differently. Even now, if Caleb had misjudged the vulnerable points on the armor, the Kreeghor could spring to action.

But nothing happened.

With a frown, Caleb stepped forward, gripped the Kreeghor's helmet on both sides, and with one good yank, ripped it from its housings. Finally revealed, the Kreeghor proved to be uglier than Caleb would have guessed. He was reptilian, black scales

contrasting with the large, milky white eyes. A ridged crest rose up from his forehead and along the back of his skull, the plates of which rose up menacingly. The teeth in his lower jaw rose up past his lips, giving him a snaggletooth look.

"Let's chat, shall we?" Caleb said.

The white eyes narrowed to slits. "I have nothing to say to you."

"Really? You sure about that?" Caleb put a hand on the armor's neckpiece and lifted the Kreeghor into a sitting position. "Look around you. Does this look like the bottom of a black hole to you?"

A flat stare met Caleb's words.

"'Cuz this doesn't look like a black hole to me," Caleb continued. "In fact, this looks a lot like a... normal world. You know what I think? I think your superweapon, your 'gift to the universe,' was a big sham. You didn't invent a way to create singularities. You found a way to disguise everyday, ordinary Rifts as black holes."

The reptilian brow crinkled, but that was the only response.

Caleb sighed. "You really are a moron, aren't you? How bloody irresponsible can you be? You've been using the Shadowstar to eat suns – where does that matter go when one of your Rifts swallows it up? Other planets? Other universes? It's not enough to destroy one solar system, you have to mess up another at the same time?"

The snaggletooth pulled up into a grin. "You're so pathetically weak, Cosmo-Knight."

"Really?"

"Yes. That is why the Transgalactic Empire will eventually conquer the entirety of the Three Galaxies, and grind all the lesser species under its boot heel. Because the rest of you are too weak to make the choices necessary to rule. The sacrifices. What does it matter if a few solar systems die?"

Caleb frowned. "More stupidity. Take another look around. What's here? You, me, and a chunk of your ship. Where did everything else swallowed by the Rift go? What happens if you accidentally drop a couple chunks of a star onto your Throne-world?"

The grin faltered and the white eyes went blank.

"Didn't really think this through, did you? That's the problem with you 'superior races.' So convinced that you're in the right, you never notice that you're killing yourselves along with everyone else."

The Kreeghor looked about to speak, but that engine noise sounded again. Louder, and closer, this time. Caleb released the Kreeghor, who slumped to the ground, and turned towards the noise.

Seven huge hover-bikes, piloted by gigantic, blue-skinned humanoids, drew to a halt a few dozen yards from Caleb's position. The hulking creatures were heavily armed, with heavy rifles, pistols, and a number of more primitive weapons. Here and there the effects of bionic augmentation could be seen – eyes, jaws, arms, limbs. All of them trained their weapons on Caleb and the Kreeghor as one of them dismounted from his bike.

Mutants. Or something. This was definitely post-nuclear Earth. Crazy, Buck Rogers, upside down world. No time to think about what it really means, this homecoming to a strange

and twisted environment. The only response he could make was a joke, because if he allowed himself to take it seriously, he didn't know what he would do.

Caleb risked a glance at the Kreeghor. "Don't look now, Toto, but I think Kansas blew up."

The leader stepped down into the crater and casually approached Caleb. He drew a wickedly curved knife from his belt and watched Caleb closely with cold red eyes. He said nothing. No threat, no remonstrance, no demands. As he approached, Caleb took note of the giant's huge jaw, and the way the lips couldn't quite close around the massive teeth that filled that mouth. Sharp teeth.

"Oh, qrun," Caleb muttered. Giant mutant bionic cannibals. How long had he been gone? Time enough to allow these horrible things to inherit the Earth?

The giant had drawn closer while Caleb was distracted, close enough that Caleb could smell the rank animal scent of him, mixed with metal and oil. One huge bionic arm flashed forward, inhumanly fast, and the curved dagger slammed hard into Caleb's chest.

It shattered. Caleb was a Cosmo-Knight, nearly indestructible, and no mere knife, no matter how strong the wielder, was going to harm him. But it did tear his shirt. The very same silver shirt that Floris Nybek had bought for him all those years ago on Koola.

"That was rude," Caleb said. "Very rude."

The giant looked at him oddly, clearly surprised. The rest of the gang shifted nervously, looking for a chance to take a shot around their leader. Caleb grabbed the giant by his bionic wrist and squeezed. Megasteel crushed under his grip. With the flat of his other hand he sheared the arm off at the bicep, and a kick in

the gut sent the giant sprawling in the dust. Caleb tossed the arm over his shoulder.

"A little lesson, ladies: appearances can be deceiving. Y'all might want to turn around and find another pigeon."

They opened up on him instead. Multicolored blasts of light flashed towards him, and when they hit they simply sparked and died. But they did burn his shirt. One of them had a slugthrower, and that one hurt. Between one second and the next, Caleb sheathed himself in his metallic red centurion armor and took to the sky. His eyebeams scattered them, tumbling some off their bikes, and forcing others to rev their engines and pull away. The ones on the ground blinked out of sight as soon as they struck it.

The armless leader also disappeared. One moment he was dragging himself into a sitting position, and the next he was gone. Caleb risked a blast at the leader's last position anyway. He was rewarded with a yelp and the rematerialization of the leader.

"Turning invisible, or something," Caleb muttered to himself. "Great. As if I didn't have enough problems."

The biker with the slugthrower scored a hit, but the bullets just slammed into Caleb's armor. He retaliated with a full blast and the biker tumbled from his vehicle, chest smoking. Some of the empty bikes were picking themselves up and trying to pull away. Caleb buzzed them, urging them to depart. They did, with all due haste.

The battle was over in a handful of seconds. Apparently, even giant mutant bionic cannibals with rayguns were not interested in tackling a Knight of the Cosmic Forge. Caleb landed lightly beside the Kreeghor, who still lay immobile, trapped in his armor. He did not look happy. From the look of some of the remaining plates on the armor, some of the blasts meant for Ca-





leb had hammered the Kreeghor instead.

“That was fun,” Caleb said. The Kreeghor just glared.

Caleb heard engines. Had they not learned their lesson? Were they coming back for more? Caleb turned his visor in the direction of the noise and crossed his arms across his chest.

The first thing he saw was a flying cowboy. At least, it looked like a cowboy. Some kind of powered armor, bulky and winged, with one three clawed hand and some kind of big exhaust port over the left shoulder. But it was painted so that the legs looked like they were chaps, the chest a blue button-down shirt with a silver star over the left breast. A huge ten gallon hat was bolted to the insect-like helmet of the armor.

Caleb frowned. This thing was just too goofy to be part of that mutant biker gang. He attempted a wave, and the big claw hand waved back. “I’ll be damned,” Caleb said quietly to himself.

With the whine of turbines, the armor dropped lightly to the ground. “Howdy there, pardner!” came a booming voice from the armor’s speakers.

“Um... hello,” Caleb said.

At the edge of the crater, more hover bikes appeared, but these were piloted by a motley crew of individuals. The most impressive was a robot in blackened megasteel, eight feet tall, with a death’s head motif to his armor and a half dozen tubes sticking out of his back. Beside him rode a lithe figure in full body armor, a woman or maybe a kid. Another one wore ratty robes and a horned, full faced helm from which dangled amulets and tokens. The last one was dressed in greens and browns, lightly armored, his helmet hanging from his belt. He looked Indian.

The Indian dismounted – Caleb noticed that his bike was towing another one – and held his rifle loosely, but ready to aim and fire. The others had weapons ready to hand as well, but for the moment they weren’t pointing directly at Caleb.

“Hello,” the Indian said. “My name is Hart Thorne. I am a representative of the township of Asgarth. We were sent here to find you.”

“Find me?” Caleb felt a shiver run down his back.

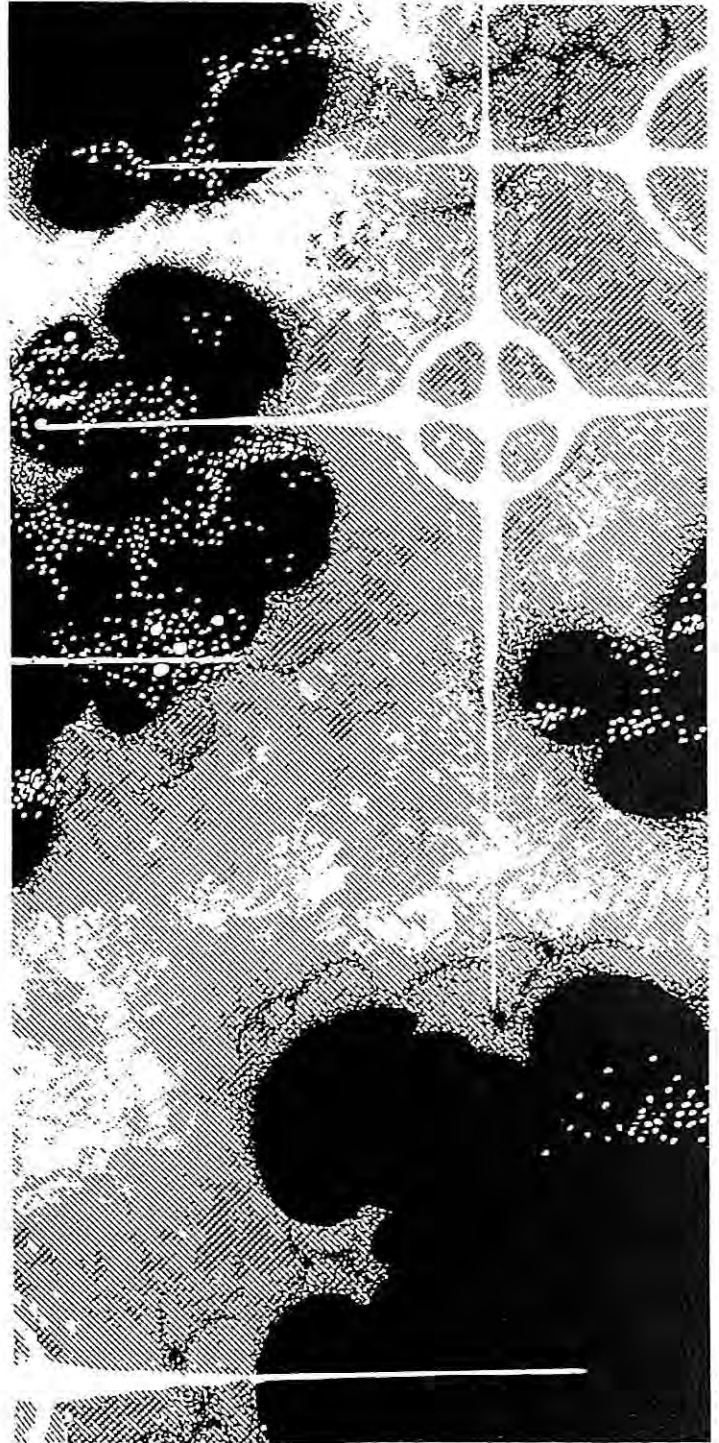
“You bear the legend of the hammer upon your armor,” said the man in the ragged cloak and charms. “You serve the great crucible of flame that flies in the sky.”

“Well, yeah, I guess so,” Caleb agreed, “in so many words. How do you know anything about me, let alone where and when to find me?”

“Our patron is a woman named Solo,” Hart explained. He still hadn’t relaxed, and watched Caleb closely. “She is a mind mage, a psionic of incredible strength and power. She foresaw your arrival, here in this place. And she needs your help.”

Caleb looked back at the Kreeghor. “I’m beginning to see why Lothar hated magic. All this ‘foresaw this’ and ‘predestined that’ gets old quick.” He turned back to the assemblage from Asgarth. “As it happens, I’m honor bound to help those in need. It comes with the armor, so to speak. As they say, ‘take me to your leader.’

“But first, do you mind telling me what happened to the Earth?”

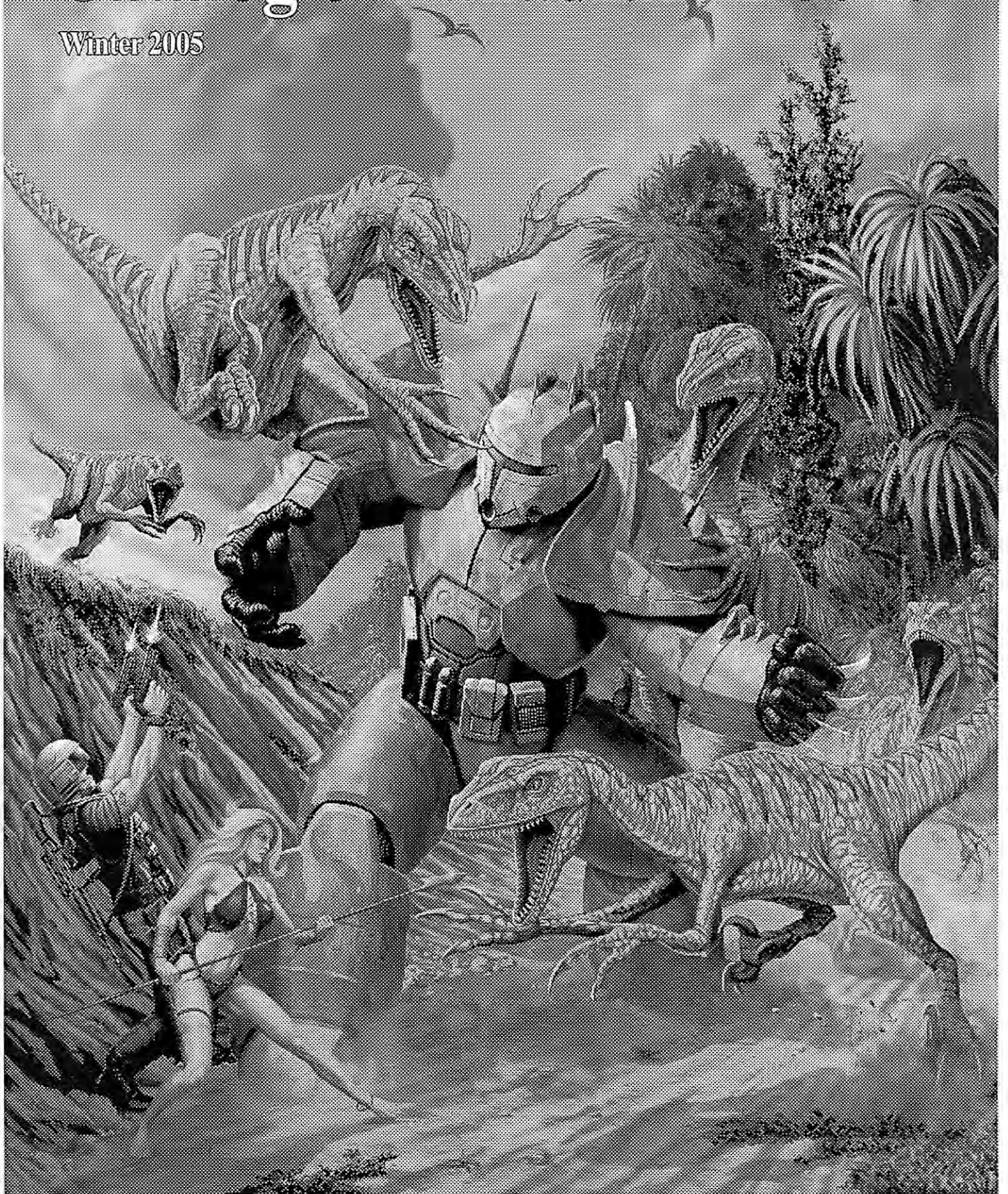




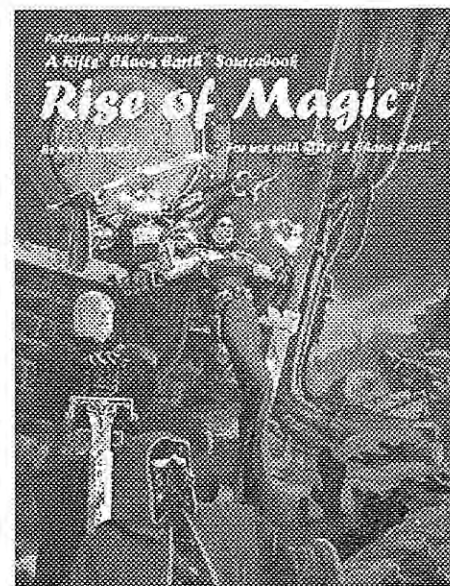
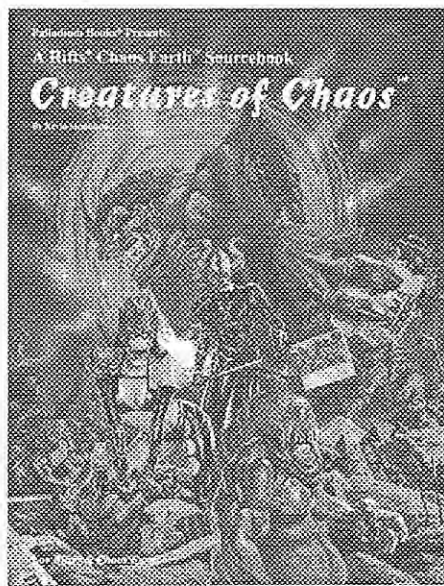
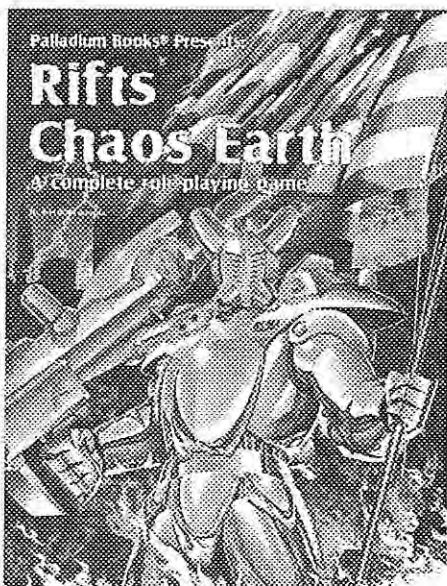


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- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Spring or Summer 2006.
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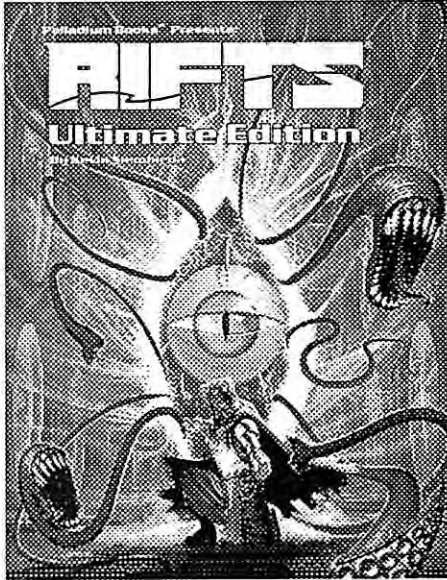


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Sometime in Earth's future, after a Golden Age of peace and technological advancement, the face of the planet is decimated by the return of magic and the *Coming of the Rifts*. Cities fall, civilization collapses, billions of people perish, and portals to a thousand alien worlds open across the face of the planet.

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*The Rifts are tears* in the very fabric of space and time. They are found along ley lines – natural lines of psychic energy. Where two or more ley lines intersect, a *Rift* may form (or be opened) to create a dimensional portal to virtually anywhere and anywhen. Opening a Rift enables characters to travel from one end of the planet to the other in a heartbeat, and beyond, to an infinite number of alien worlds and dimensions. The problem is, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of alien, demonic, magical and superhuman beings have used the Rifts to cross into Earth. Inhuman beings who now reside alongside humans and often compete for dominance over the land and its people.

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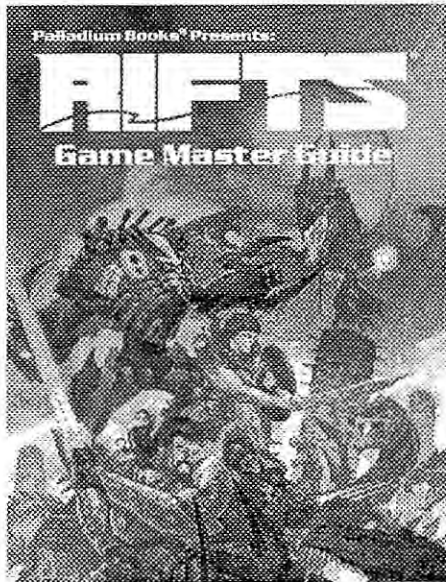
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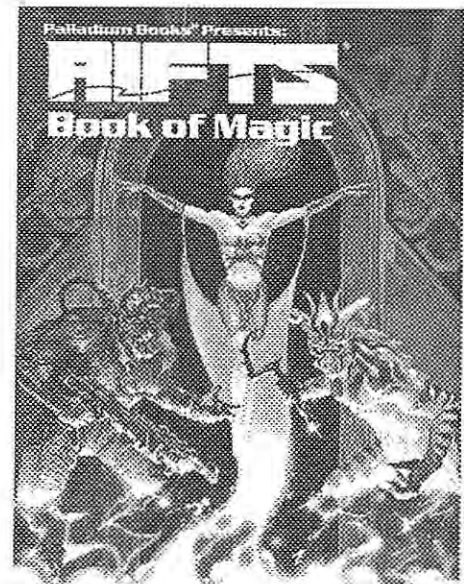
This core Rifts® book is back in print and ready to ship. It is a massive 352 page tome jam-packed with weapons, equipment, body armor, robots, power armor, and vehicles from every *Rifts® World Book* #1-23, *Sourcebooks* 1-4 and *Siege on Tolkeen™* 1-6! This helpful reference book is a must have resource for Game Masters and an easy guide for players.

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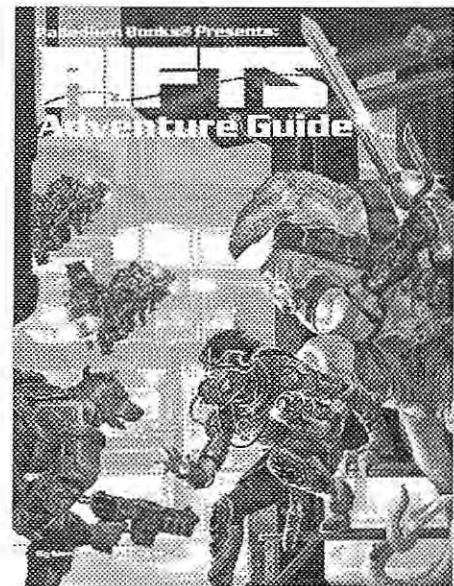
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This core book contains all the magic spells from over a dozen different types of magic disciplines from World Books #1-23, *Sourcebooks* 1-4 and *Siege on Tolkeen* 1-6! It is also a vital reference for *Rifts® Chaos Earth™*, *Rifts® Federation of Magic*, the *Rifts® China* books and all *Rifts®* titles. Don't get caught without it.

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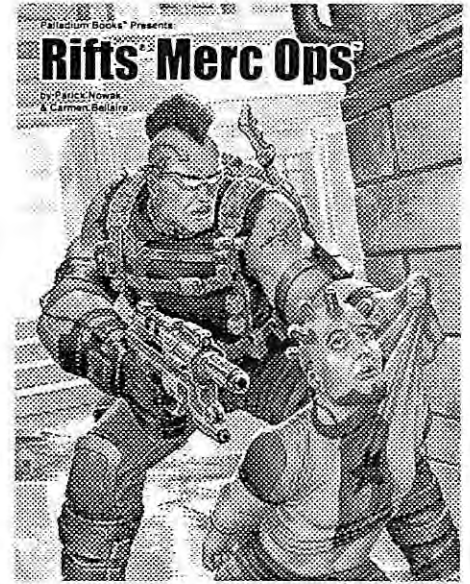
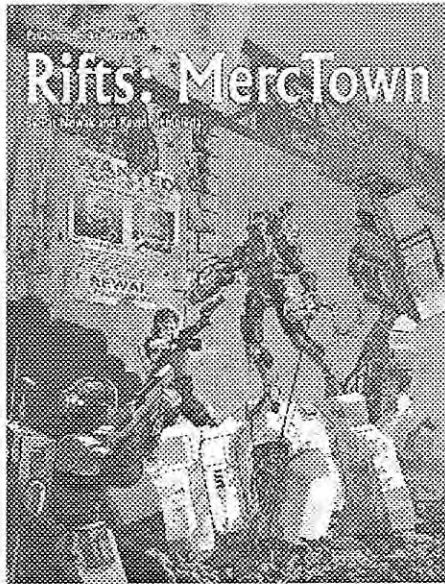
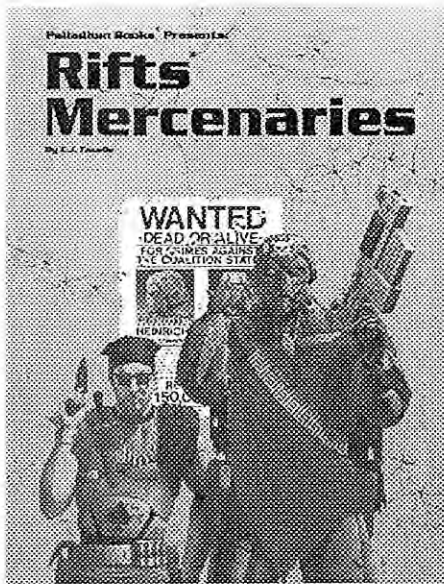


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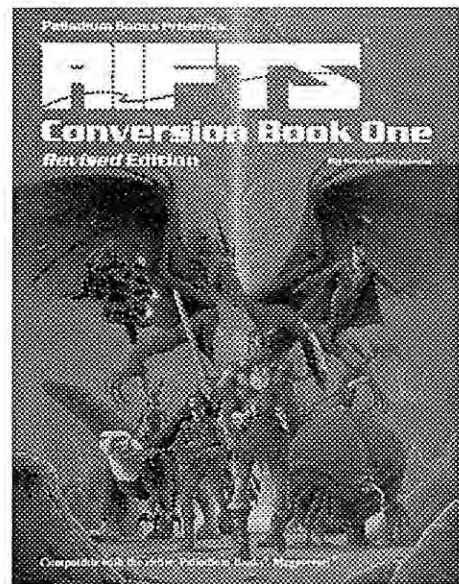
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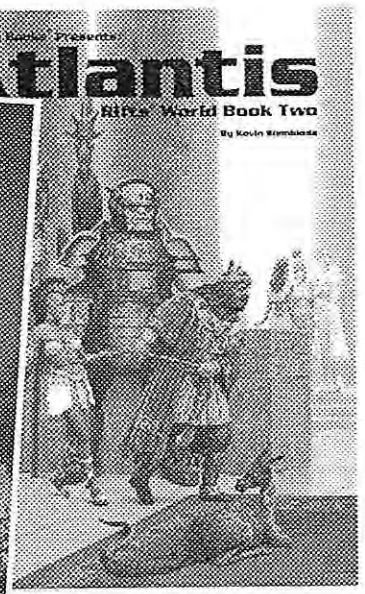
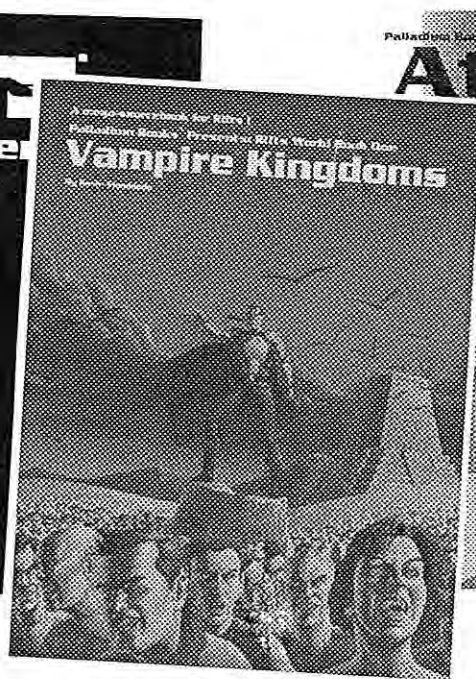
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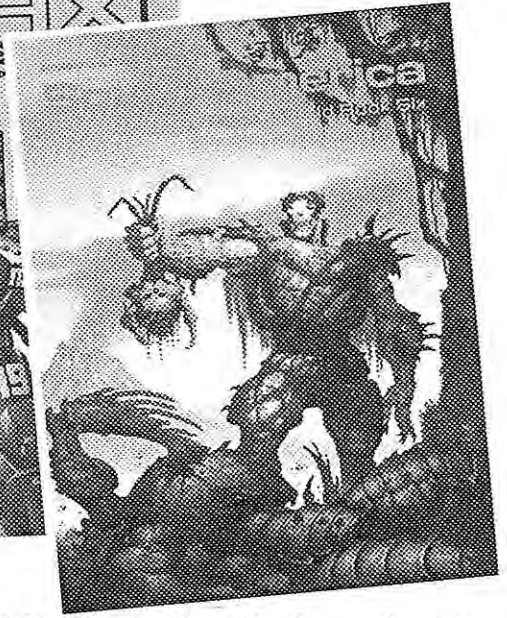
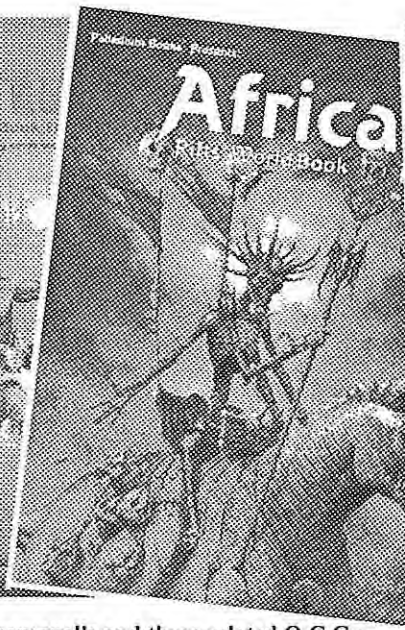
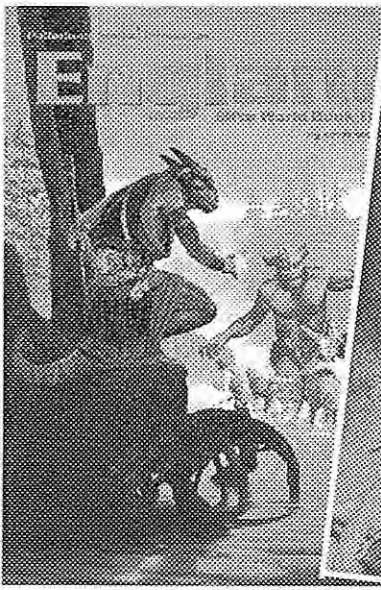
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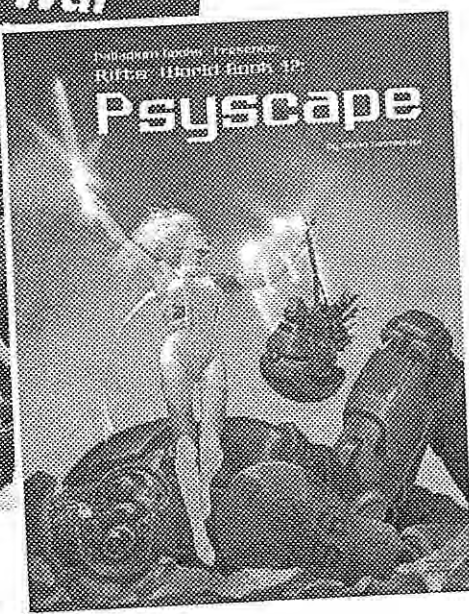
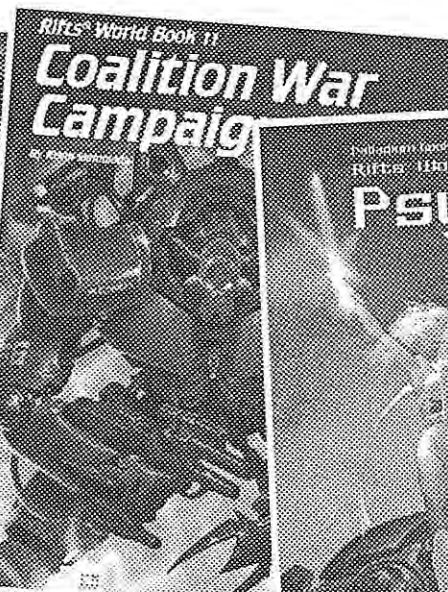
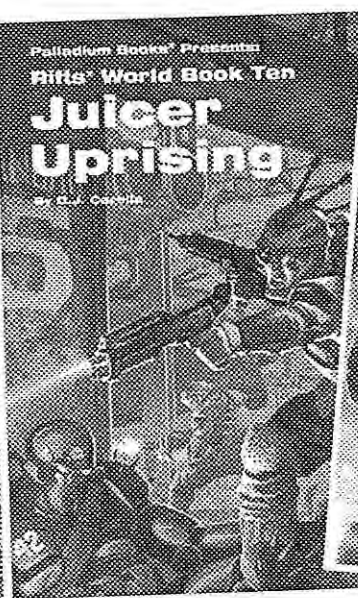
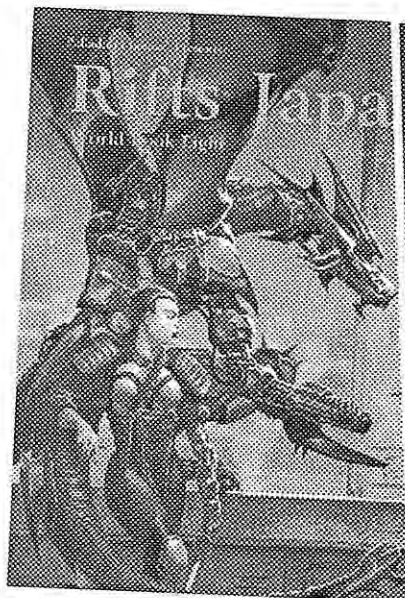
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- Japanese dragons, demons, monsters and magic.



- Japanese body armor, robots, power armor and weapons.
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- \$21.95 – 216 pages. Cat. No. 818 – ISBN 0916211-88-6

## Rifts® World Book 9: South America 2™

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.

- Over 30 new O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s, weapons and equipment.
- 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.
- The Juicer O.C.C., developed and expanded; the motivations behind these suicidal warriors, and the process and effects of being “juiced” completely described.
- Prometheus Treatment: Juicer immortality or a Coalition lie?
- Newtown, Fort El Dorado, and world information.
- Written by C.J. Carella with Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. 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 and 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 & 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, RPA Ace, and Special Forces.
- The ISS, Psi-Net, and NTSET city protectors & Police.
- The Coalition’s military structure, ranks, key leaders, etc.
- World information and maps. Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Still \$20.95, 224 pages. Cat. No. 821 – ISBN 0916211-93-2

## Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape™

Fabled Psyscape™, the stuff of myths and legends revealed at last! The history, power and key figures of this mysterious realm.

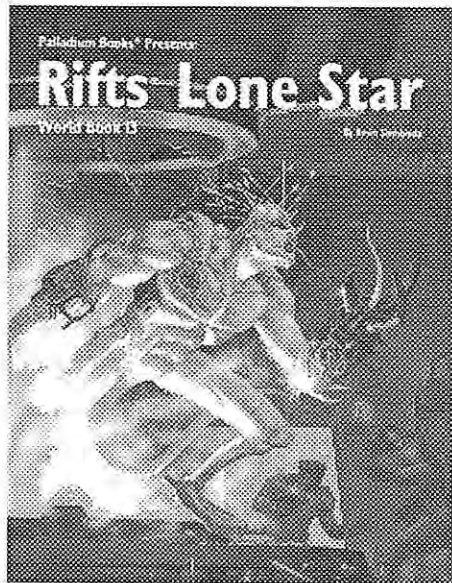
- 11 New psychic O.C.C.s like the Psi-Ghost, Psi-Nullifier, Psi-Slayer, Zapper & others.
- 20 new monsters, some psychic, many just evil.
- Cybernetic psi-implants and side effects.
- Notable factions, villains, heroes and Harvester of Souls.
- Psyscape, D-Bees, aliens, dark secrets and world information.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 822 – ISBN 0-916211-94-0

## Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star™

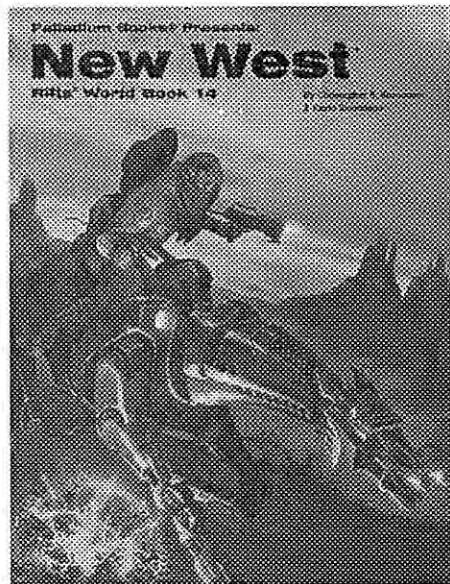
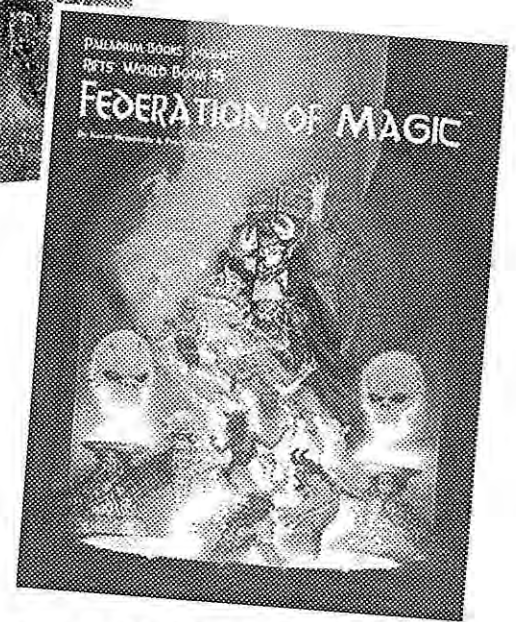
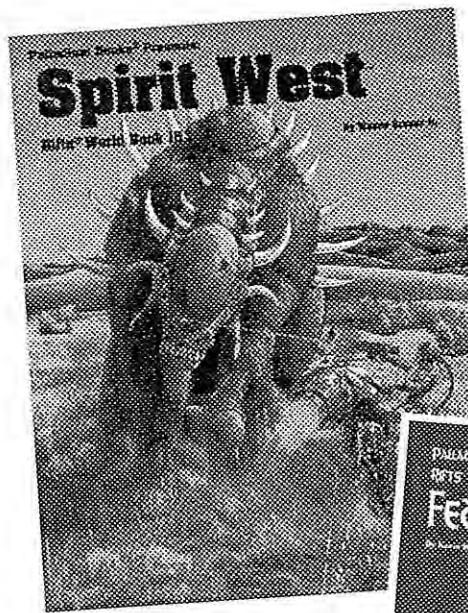
Birthplace of the *Dog Boys* and scene of genetic experimentation on human and mutant animals. Background on the Lone Star Complex and the madman who runs it.

- 20 new R.C.C.s, six of them Dog Boys.





- Background on Dog Boys and runaway mutants.
- History and background on the Lone Star Complex.
- Combat hover cycles and miscellaneous equipment.
- The Pecos Empire, bandits, cutthroats and more.
- 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, a Black Market manufacturer.
- New body armor, robot vehicles, and weapons.
- Cloud Magic and Techno-Wizard weapons & items.
- Overview of the New West™, maps & world information.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda & Chris Kornmann.
- \$22.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 826 – ISBN 1-57457-001-3

## Rifts® World Book 15: Spirit West™

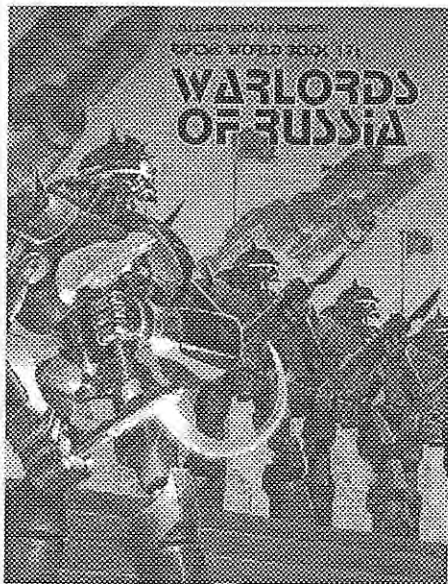
An in-depth look at the *new* American Indian, various tribes, cultures, magic, and gods. While the White Man wars with D-Bees, sorcerers and his brothers in the East, the Red Man is quietly building new nations in the West.

- 11 new O.C.C.s, different Shamans, Totem Warrior & others.
- New magic spells, powers and Fetish magic.
- Magic Weapons and Kachina Dolls.
- Animal Totems that help shape and empower characters.
- Ancient Indian Spirits and Gods; Indian history & culture.
- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr. with Kevin Siembieda.
- \$22.95 – 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.

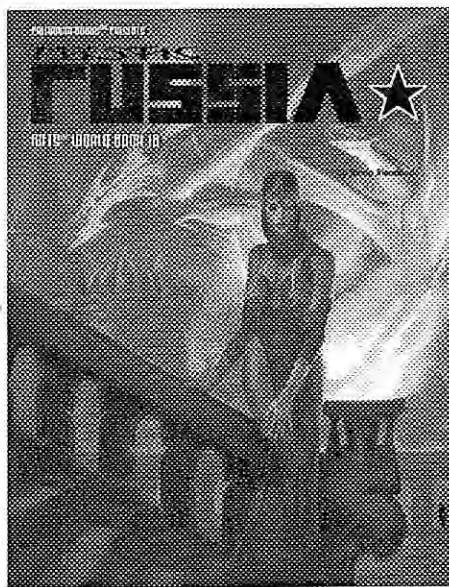
- 34 pages of brand *new* source material on the city of Dweomer.
- Eight magic O.C.C.s (character classes).
- Techno-Wizard devices, vehicles and magic Automatons.
- Alistair Dunscon, diabolical leader of the Federation.
- History and overview, cities and key figures.
- Written by Siembieda & Murphy.
- \$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. The Warlords and their cyborg legions have risen as Russia's self-proclaimed saviors, but they are also its conquerors and tyrants. Hordes of monstrous cyborgs to dominate the land, but protect the people from supernatural monsters. This book focuses on the cyborgs, technology and people of Russia.

- Over 20 O.C.C.s. Cyborgs like you've never seen 'em! Really.
- The Warlords of Russia, their armies, politics & plans.
- The Sovietski, its history, weapons & war machines.
- World information, monstrous enemies & adventure ideas.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda & Kevin Krueger.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 832 – ISBN 157457-010-2



## Rifts® World Book 18: Mystic Russia™

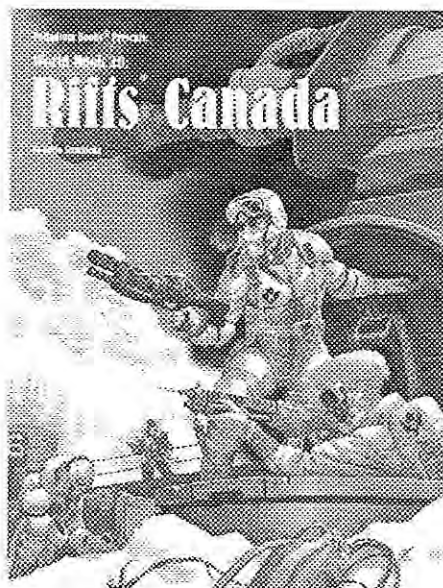
This book is rich in monsters and magic based on Russian mythology and superstition. Rifts Russia is a land unlike anywhere else. The wilderness abounds with mischievous spirits, shape changers and demons unique to Russia (including a comprehensive look at Necromancy).

- 28 Russian demons & spirits.
- Nature and Spoiling Magic. Over 100 new spells.
- Living Fire Magic, Bone Magic & Necromancy.
- Russian Gypsies, their secrets and magic weapon maker.
- Sovietski tanks, war machines, and more world info.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Cover by Zeleznik.
- Still \$16.95 – 176 pages. Cat. No. 833 – ISBN 157457-011-0

## Rifts® World Book 19: Australia

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. 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).

- The Tech-Cities and Outback towns.
- Over 20 O.C.C.s like the Roadganger and Jackaroo.
- Mystic O.C.C.s include the Sham-Man and Songjuicer.
- Mutants, monsters, Dreamtime menaces and more
- New weapons, technology and world information.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 834 – ISBN 157457-018-8

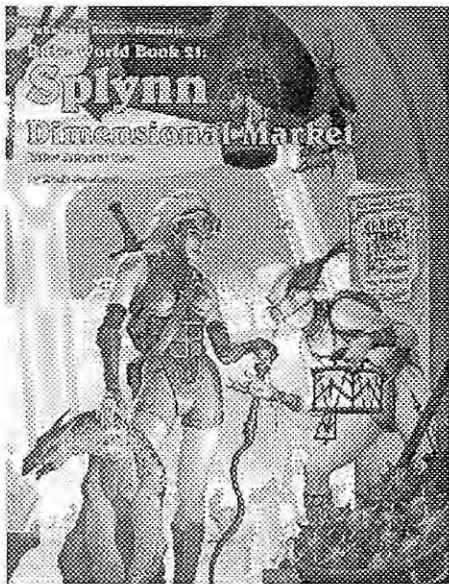


## Rifts® World Book 20: Rifts® Canada

An in-depth overview of Canada, its population centers, great cities, ruins, wilderness and supernatural horrors.

- Over two dozen monsters and D-Bees.
- Headhunter O.C.C. redefined (5 different types).
- Tundra Rangers and their weapons and vehicles.
- 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

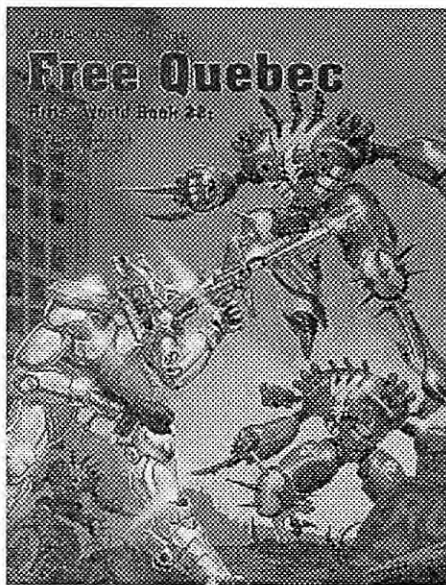




## Rifts® World Book 21: Splynn Dimensional Market™

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.

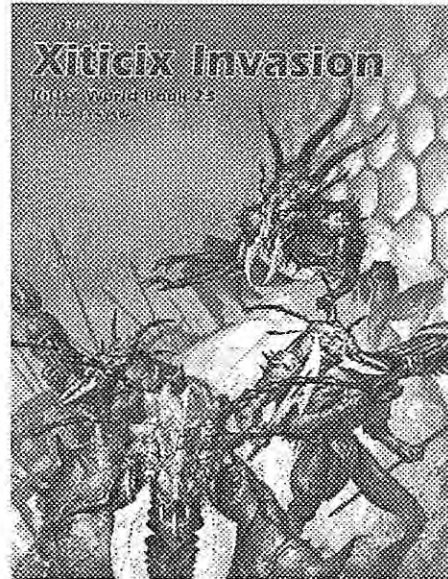
- New magic, magic items, rune weapons & Faerie Weapons.
- New Bio-Wizard organisms, Symbiotes & devices.
- 15 new monsters and aliens. Many avenues of adventure
- The Splynn Market's history, laws, & detailed description.
- More than two dozen places of interest & key figures.
- Written by Mark Sumimoto & Kevin Siembieda.
- Still \$20.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 836 – ISBN 157457-027-7



## Rifts® World Book 22: Free Quebec™

The people, places, secrets, defenses, and war machines of the independent nation of Free Quebec. Plus the tension and war that results from Free Quebec's secession from the Coalition States (a subplot in the *Coalition Wars*® series). A lot of fun and useful information whether the war is played out or not.

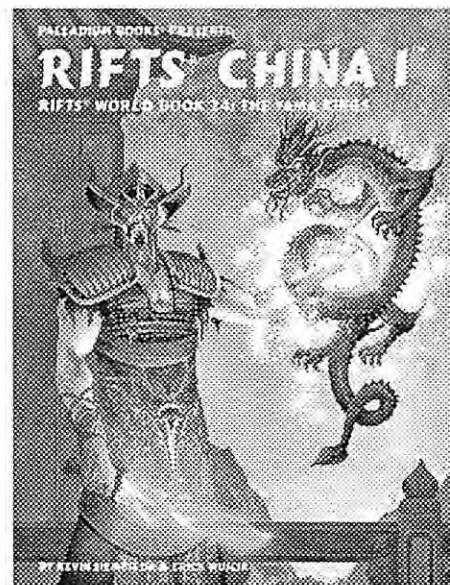
- Quebec's Glitter Boy Legions & six new types of GBs.
- Cyborg Shock Troopers and the GB Side Kick.
- The Quebec Army and Navy, its weapons and vehicles.
- Violator SAMAS, Cyborg Shock Troopers, Sea Dragon & more.
- Old Bones, the Pirates of Montreal and other key places.
- Key people, history and world information.
- \$22.95. 192 pages. Cat. No. 837 – ISBN 157457-030-7 – By DesRochers & Siembieda.



## 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, their magic and psionics.
- Xiticix weapons and technology.
- The Xiticix's domains and inside the hive network.
- New O.C.C.s, R.C.C.s, Psi-Stalkers and background.
- Still \$16.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 838 – ISBN 157457-031-5

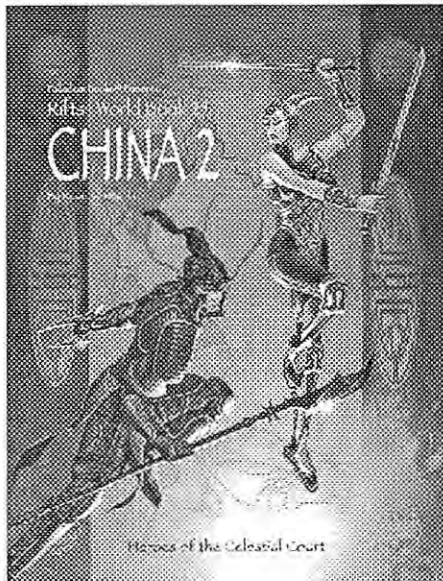


## Rifts® World Book 24: China One

There is nowhere 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 of the Celestial Court, champions of the people and the secret high-tech army of Geofront. This book is filled with awesome player characters (O.C.C.s).

- 12 Mystic Martial Arts Powers – *Rifts®* style!
- Fighting Monks, Soothsayers, Blind Mystic and more!
- The Great Demon Catching Hero, Goblin Wrangler, Spirit Host.
- Magical weapons, Chi weapons and Demon Queller items.
- The people, weapons, and army of Geofront.
- Written by Erick Wujcik and Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 858 – ISBN 157457-095-1

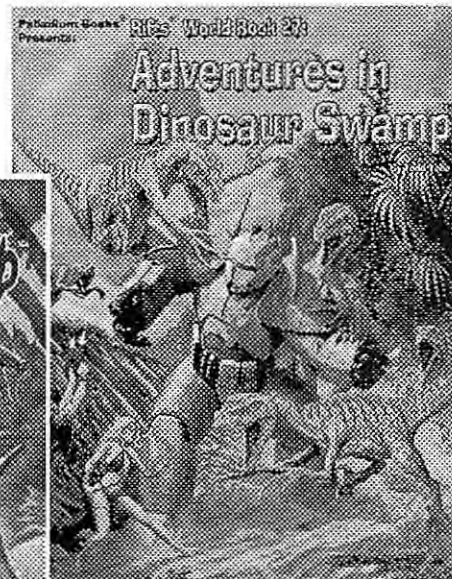
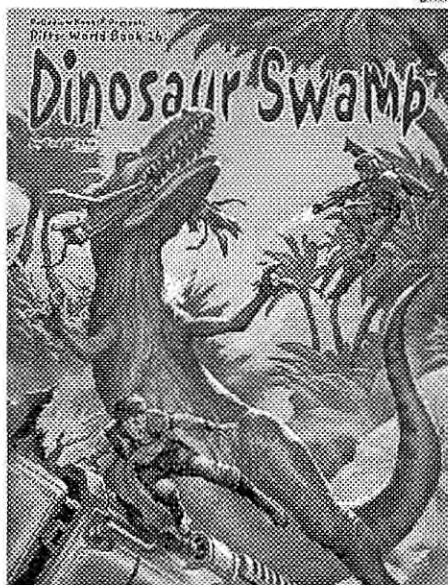
## Rifts® World Book: China 3 – Magic

This title is delayed indefinitely, pending receipt of a finished manuscript. Our apologies.

## 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.
- 8 O.C.C.s, including Barbarians and Dinosaur Hunters.
- Eco-Wizards and Eco-Wizard weapons and magic.
- The Secrets of the Swamps – Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas.
- Region mapped and described, and adventure ideas.
- Written by Todd Yoho. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 862. ISBN 157457-104-4



## Rifts® World Book 27: Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp™

More dinosaurs, only stranger and more dangerous than you can imagine, dinosaurs that think and use magic, and more background.

- Dinosaurs, other monsters, creatures and dangers.
- New R.C.C.s, Native Americans, weapons and equipment.
- The Ocmulgee Mound, adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Todd Yoho & Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 retail – 160 pages. Cat. No. 866. ISBN 157457-120-6

## Rifts® World Book 28: Arzno™

Meres and vampires clash. The city-state of Arzno (located in Arizona) is completely mapped and described as are key characters, villains, cults and Cyber-Knight clans. Plenty of adventure ideas.

- Vampires, their henchmen and their mission.
- Blood Cult, Blood Priest and vampire worship.
- New mercenary weapons, TW items, armor, and vehicles.
- Coalition Vampire Killers, Cyber-Knights and more.
- Regional monsters, wildlife and danger.
- Written by Jason Richards. Coming early 2006.
- \$22.95 retail – 192 pages. Cat. No. 868. ISBN 157457-157-5.

## Rifts® World Book 29: Madhaven

At last, the secrets and horrors found in the ruins of Manhattan!

Talk about a demon, monster and mutant haunted mess. Great for adventuring.

- Madness, ghosts, monsters and secrets.
- The Order of the White Rose Mystic Knights.
- Underground tunnel networks, ruins and mutants.
- Regional monsters, new TW items and more.
- Written by Brandon Aten & Taylor White. Coming early 2006.
- \$14.95 retail – 128 pages. Cat. No. 869. ISBN 157457-158-3



## Rifts® Adventure Sourcecook 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: Merc Adventures,** described on page 6 of this catalog.

\$10.95 – 64 pages. Cat. No. 867 – ISBN 157457-124-9.

## 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.

- Over 160 cybernetic systems: weapons, sensors, implants, etc.
- Over 120 bionic systems: weapons, tools, sensors, armor, etc.
- More on the Cyber-Doc and Black Market cybernetics.
- 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.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$13.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 850 – ISBN 157457-075-7

## Rifts® Sourcebook One – Revised & Expanded

An expanded and rewritten Sourcebook One with more background, info, new artwork, and adventure ideas for A.R.C.H.I.E. Three, Hagan, the Republicans, Rifts North America's most famous monsters, and other things.

- **Monster Gallery:** Brodkil, Black Faerie, Witchling & others.
- At last, the secret history of the Republicans and their connection to A.R.C.H.I.E. Three.
- Power armor, robots and gear. Adventures and adventure ideas.

- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 retail – 160 pages (tentative, *may* be expanded to 192 pages). Cat. No. 801. ISBN 157457-151-6. Coming Summer 2006.

## Rifts® Sourcebook 2: The Mechanoids®

A.R.C.H.I.E.-Three 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 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 805 – ISBN 0916211-55-X

## Rifts® Sourcebook 3: Mindwerks™

**Mindwerks™** is a companion to **Triax & The NGR™** with the techno-horrors of the **Mindwerks Corporation** and its insane mastermind, the Angel of Death. More on the NGR, Gargoyle and Brodkil Empires, robots and equipment, plus the Gene-Splicers, a dozen D-Bee races, an evil Millennium Tree and mind altering cybernetic implants. 14 O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s. Mindwerks bots, cyborgs, weapons & equipment. Mindwerks M.O.M. conversions, Crazies and insanity. Written by Siembieda.

Temporarily out of print. Back in print by year's end.

\$13.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 812 – ISBN 0-916211-69-X

## Rifts® Sourcebook 4: 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

## Coming for Rifts® in 2006

Rifts® Sourcebook One Revised and Expanded

Rifts® City of Lazlo™

Rifts® China 3 (and 4?)

Rifts® Dragons & Gods

Rifts® Chaos Earth™; NEMA™ Mission Book One.

And others on the drawing board

## Minion War™ Crossover – 2006

War erupts between Hades and Dyval and spills into the Three Galaxies, the superhuman world of *Heroes Unlimited* and *Rifts Earth*. The epic battle starts Spring 2006. By Carl Gleba.

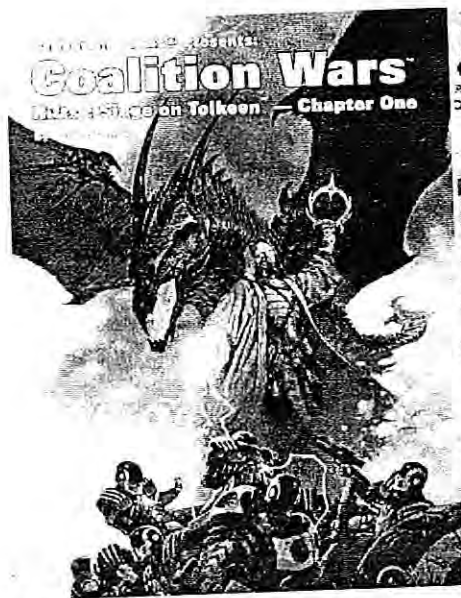
**Dimension Book™:** Hades, Pits of Hell – **Minion War™ Crossover Part 1.**

**Dimension Book™:** Dyval, Hell Unleashed – **Minion War™ Crossover Part 2.**

**Dimension Book™:** Phase World®/Three Galaxies: **Dimensional Outbreak – Minion War™ Crossover Part 3.**

**HU2™:** **Armageddon Unlimited™ – Minion War™ Crossover Part 4.**

**Rifts®:** **Megaverse® in Flames – Minion War™ Crossover Part 5.**



## 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.

• **Coalition Wars® One: Sedition.** The groundwork for the war is laid out with an overview of Tolkeen's resources, TW weapons, Monster Squads and more. \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 839 – ISBN 157457-045-5

• **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

• **Coalition Wars® Four: Cyber-Knights.** The most comprehensive look at the Cyber-Knights, ever! Lord Coake, leader of the Knights, and other key heroes. Code of Chivalry, rules of conduct, Cyber-Knight factions, the Cyber-Knights' role at Tolkeen and more. \$12.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 842 – ISBN 157457-051-X

• **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

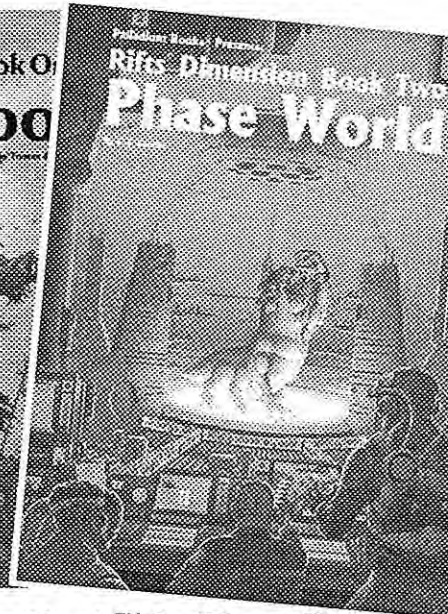
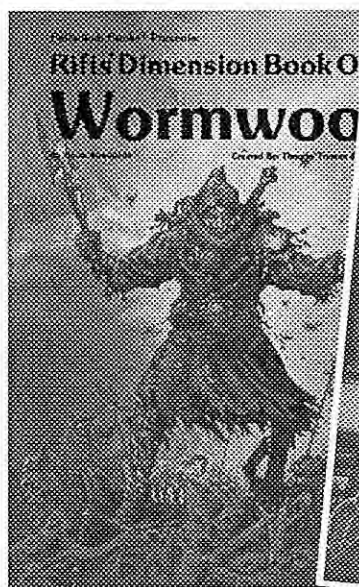
• **Coalition Wars® Six: Final Siege.** The City of Tolkeen in its final days, mapped and described. Freehold, the city of dragons, described. King Creed and 40 NPCs described in detail. Plus secret weapons and the fall of Tolkeen. \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 844 – ISBN 157457-053-6

• **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

## Rifts® Dimension Book™ 1: Wormwood™

*Wormwood™* is a weird, decadent, and violent world ruled by demonic creatures and evil clergy who control powerful kingdoms of monsters and enslave humans. The demonic destroyers command the *Crawling Towers* and *Life Force Cauldrons* to do their bidding. One of countless alien worlds linked to Rifts Earth by the many dimensional gateways of the ley lines.

- 17 wild Occupational Character Classes & R.C.C.s, including the Apok, Holy Terror, Worm Speaker, & Symbiotic Warrior.
- Over 30 horrific monsters, villains and characters.
- Symbiotic magic, slime, Crystal magic, and weapons.
- A 20 page comic strip by Tim Truman & Flint Henry!
- Written by Siembieda. Concepts and characters created by Timothy Truman and Flint Henry. Art by Truman & others.
- Still \$15.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 809 – ISBN 0-916211-59-2



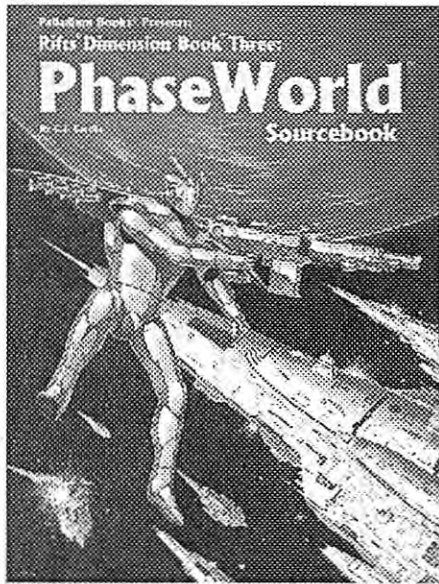
## Rifts® Dimension Book™ 2: Phase World™

*Phase World™* is an incredible trans-dimensional city that is also a space port located within the Three Galaxies. Visitors come not only from other dimensions but from the neighboring galaxies and other dimensions. Consequently, Phase World is one of the more unique ports in the Palladium Megaverse. Engage in cosmic adventure, space exploration, smuggling, bounty hunting and more.

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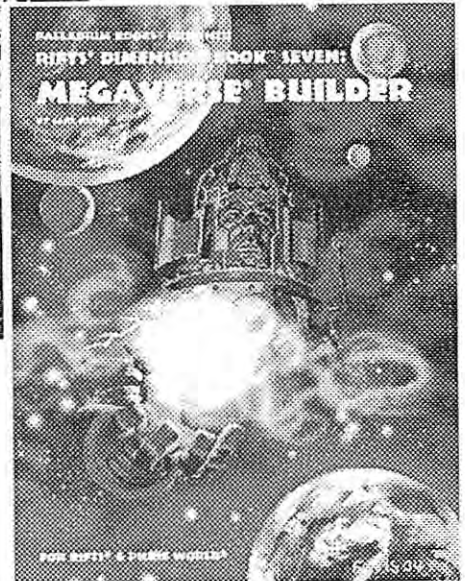
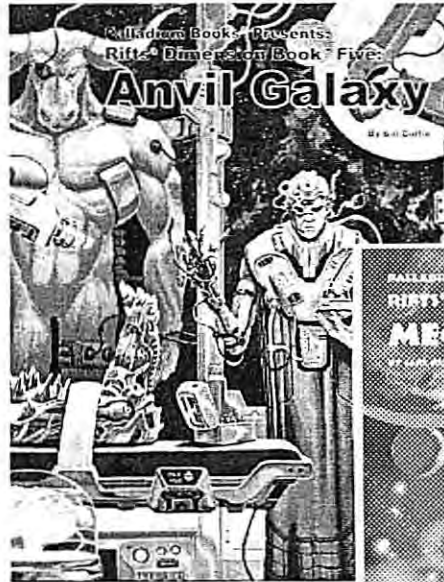
Epic super-hero adventure on an alien planet, as alien heroes fight to liberate their worlds from the tyranny of the world-conquering space aliens known as the Tarlok.

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- Cover, interior art & concepts by John Zeleznik.
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This *Phase World®* sourcebook presents a dynamic overview of the Anvil Galaxy, and its many alien races, technologies, conflicts and secrets.

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- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 851 – ISBN 15757-078-1

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This title is delayed indefinitely, pending receipt of a finished manuscript. Our apologies.

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Adam Chilson's *trilogy* of novels follows a Coalition squad through a series of adventures, treachery and self-discovery.

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The Rifter® comes out four times a year and also features the latest Palladium news, coming attractions, serialized articles, fictional stories and other material. Each issue spans the Palladium Megaverse®, focusing on Rifts® and at least two or three other Palladium games. All material is designed exclusively for people who play our games.

**Frequent contributors** include Kevin Siembieda, Pat Nowak, Erick Wijcik, Wayne Breaux, Todd Yoho, Carl Gleba, and James M.G. Cannon, among others.

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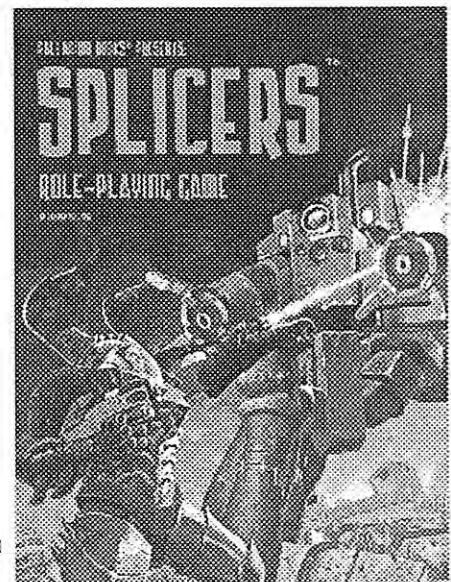
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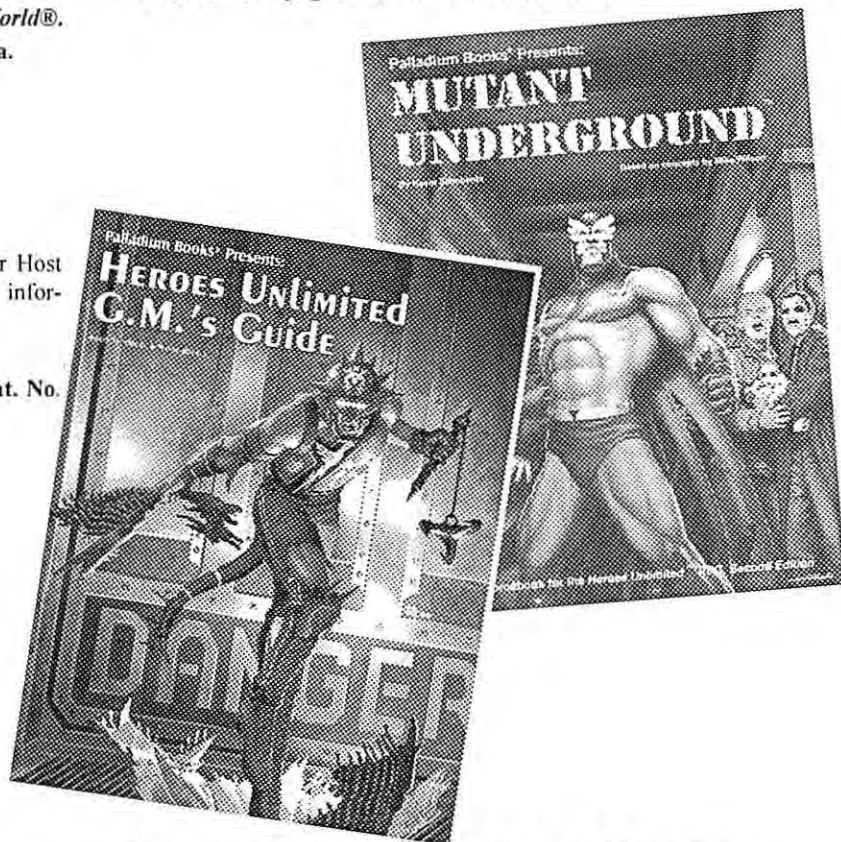
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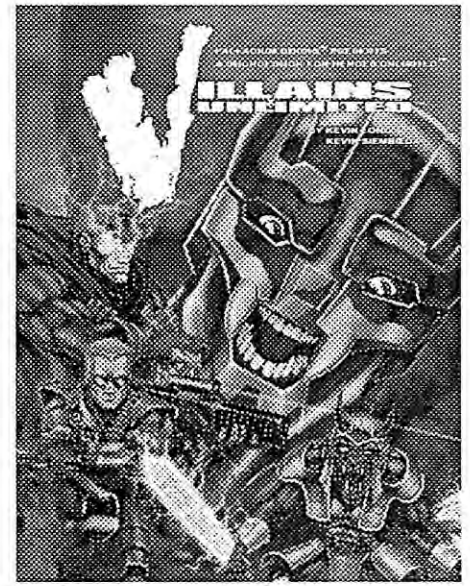
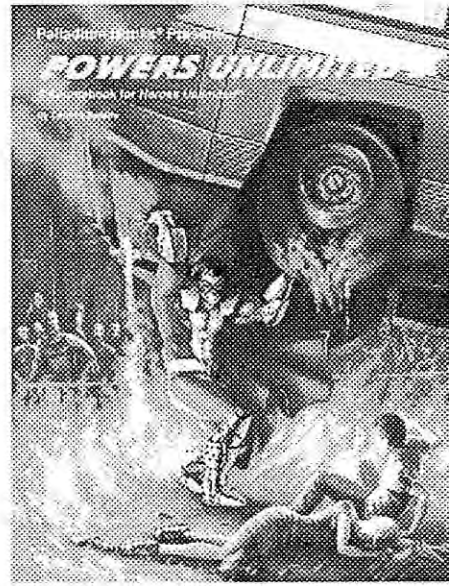
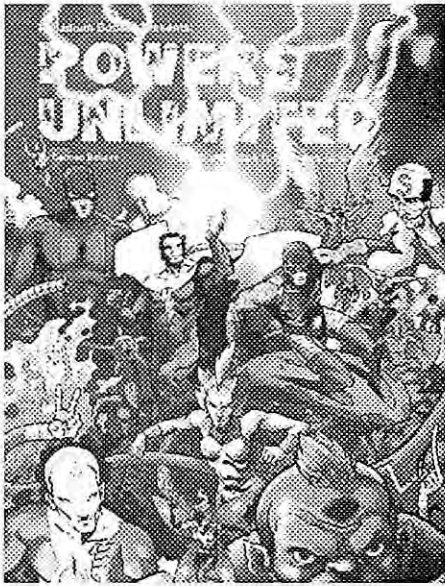
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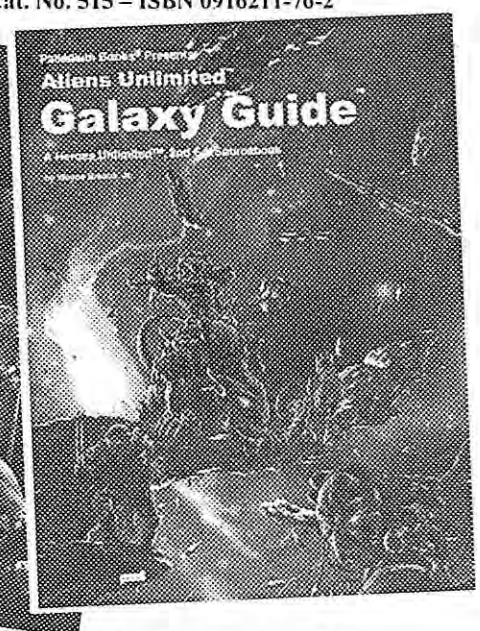
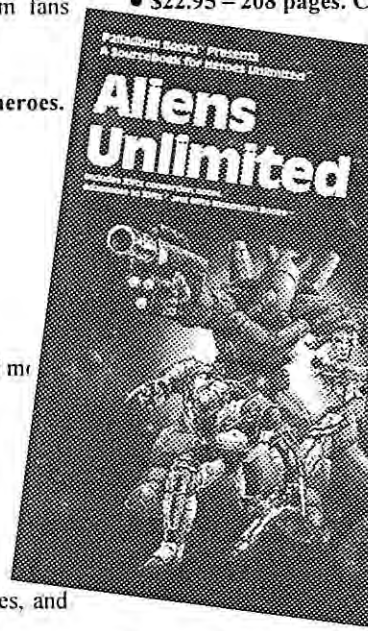
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- Secret Organizations, alien bounty hunters, and more.
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- Includes *Rifts*® and *Phase World*® conversion notes throughout.
- \$22.95 – 208 pages. Cat. No. 515 – ISBN 0916211-76-2



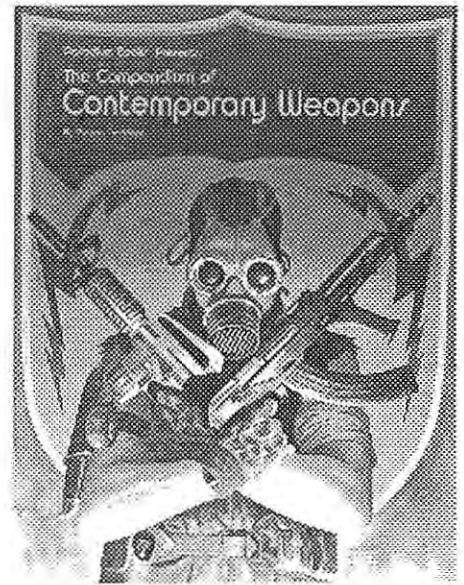
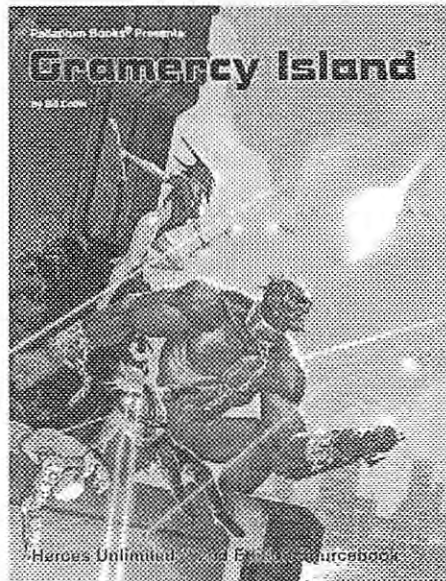
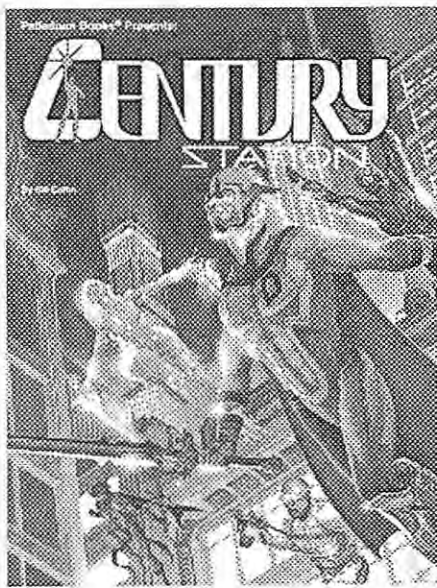
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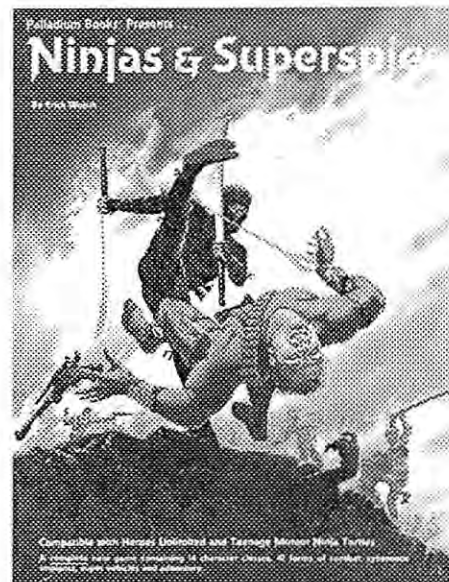
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## After the Bomb<sup>®</sup> Sourcebooks

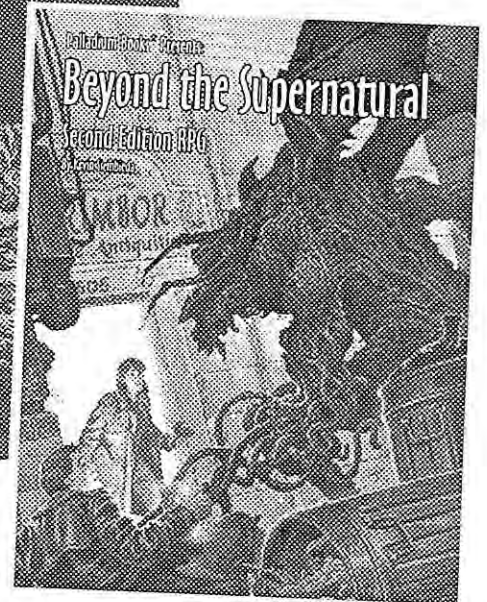
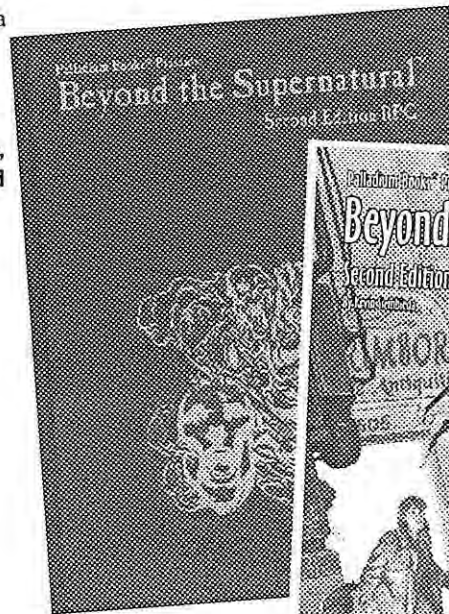
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The **player characters** are people who know the supernatural is real, and recognize the wonders and dangers it represents. They operate outside the mainstream and explore dark, shadowy corners few would dare to tread. Most possess psychic awareness or secrets of magic – all are outcasts, oddballs and the disenfranchised. Unable to turn a blind eye to people in need, they seek to learn more and fight supernatural evil in all its forms.

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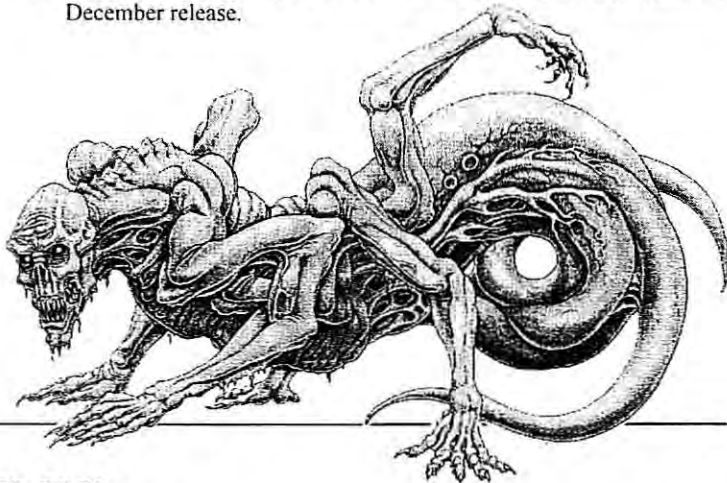


## Beyond Arcanum™

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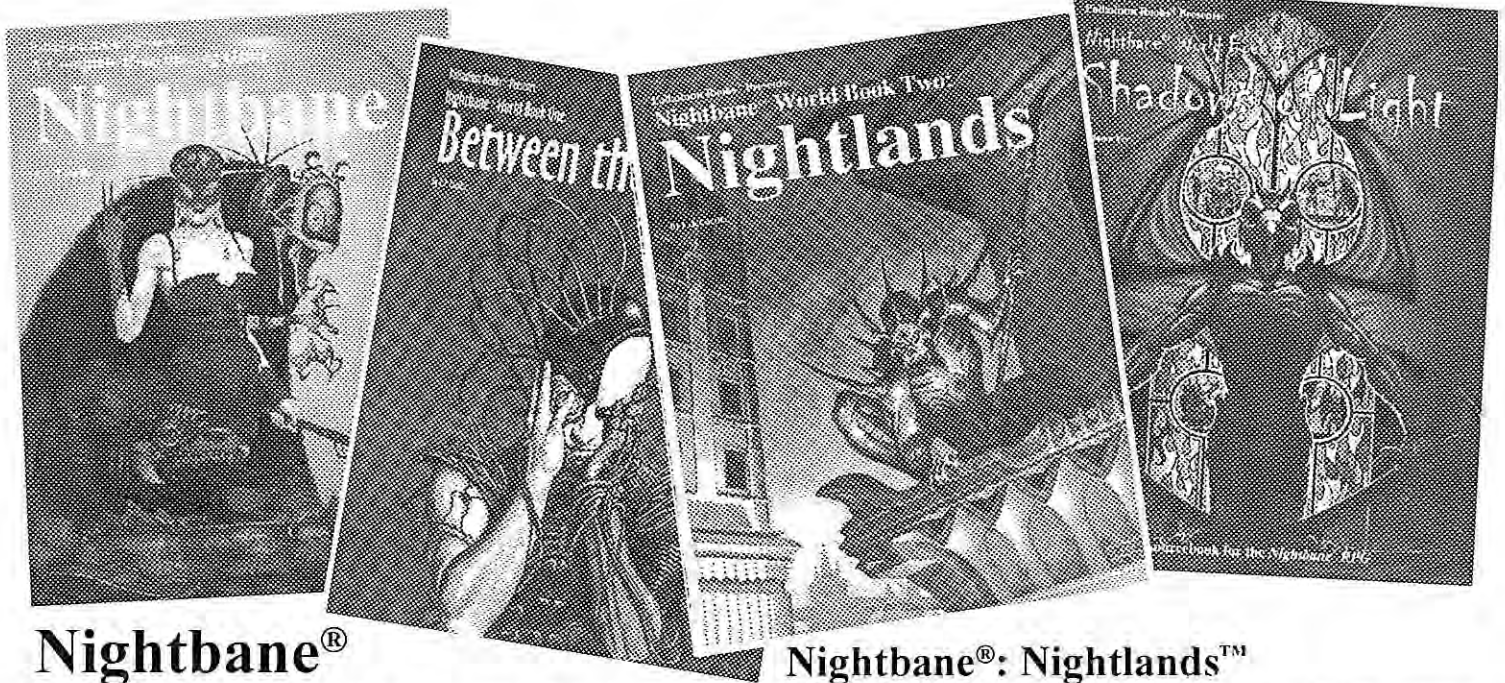
**Beyond Arcanum** will take players on a journey of hope, darkness, magic and the bizarre. Magic is a choice, and those who choose it are often led down a dark and dangerous path.

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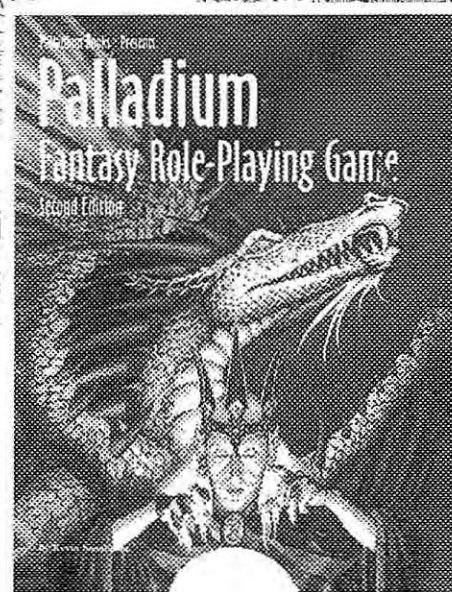
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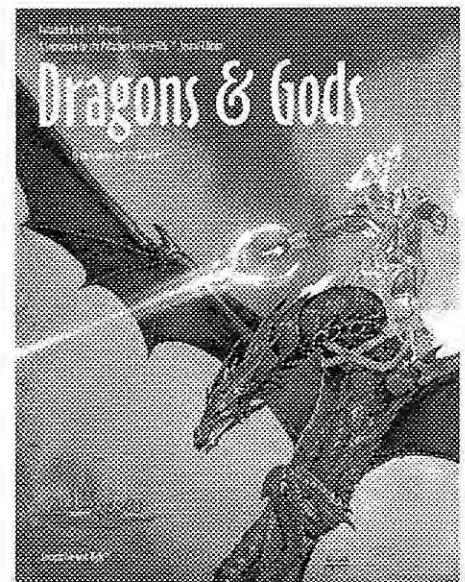
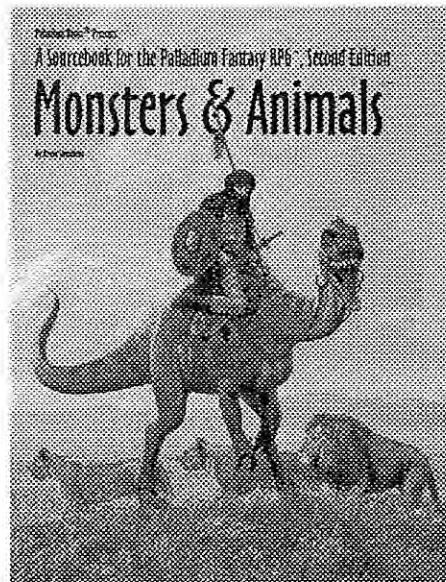
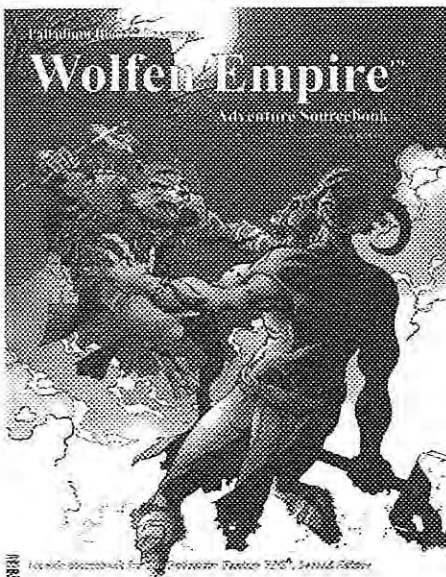
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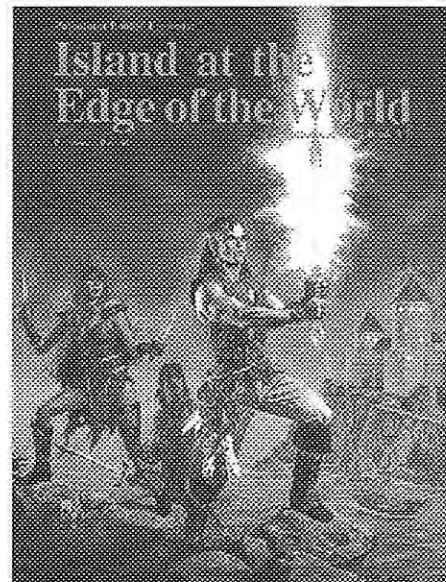
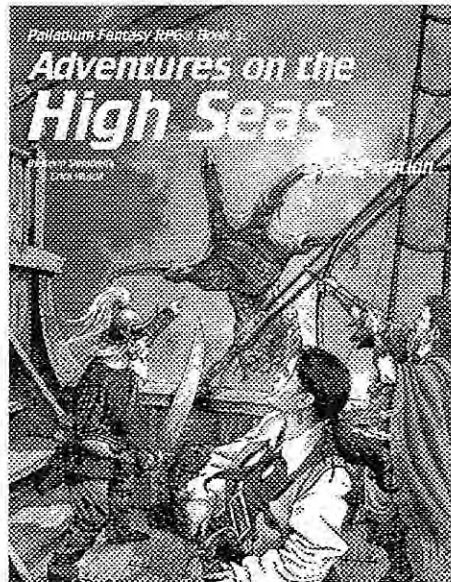
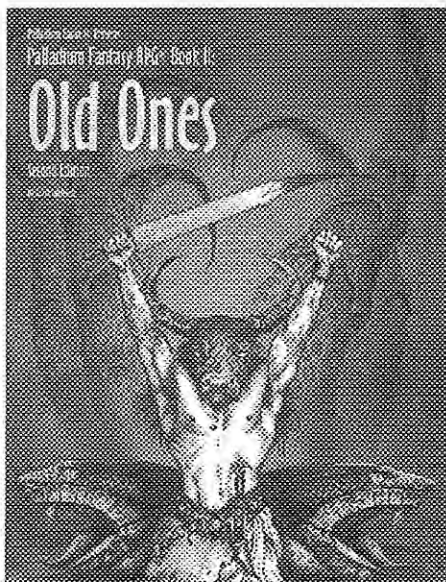
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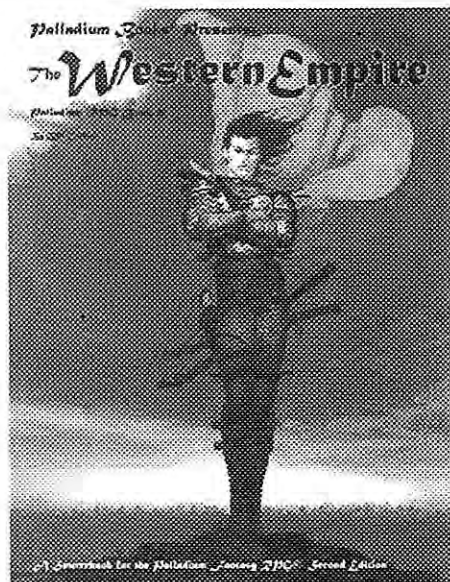




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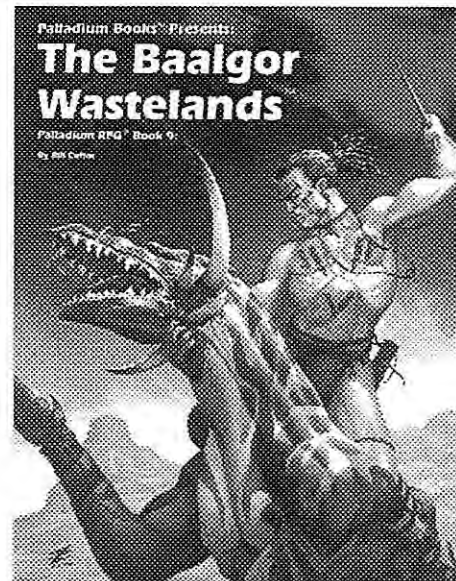
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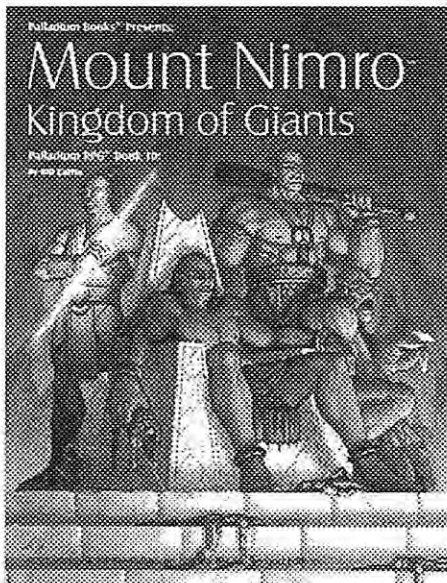
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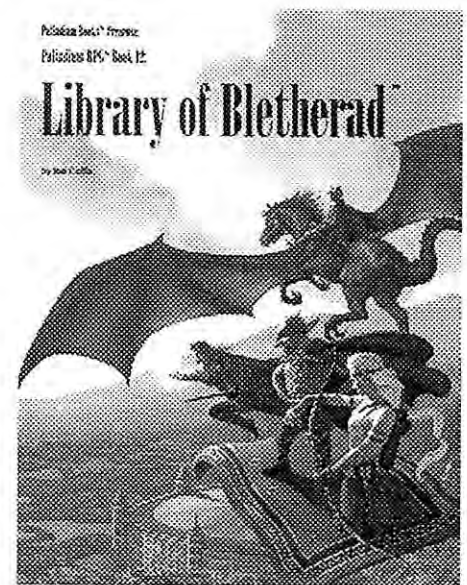
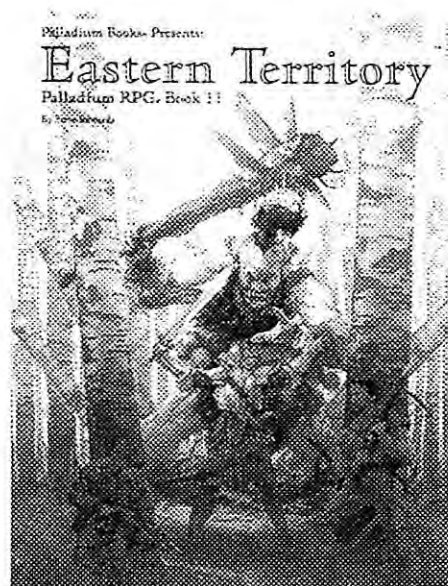


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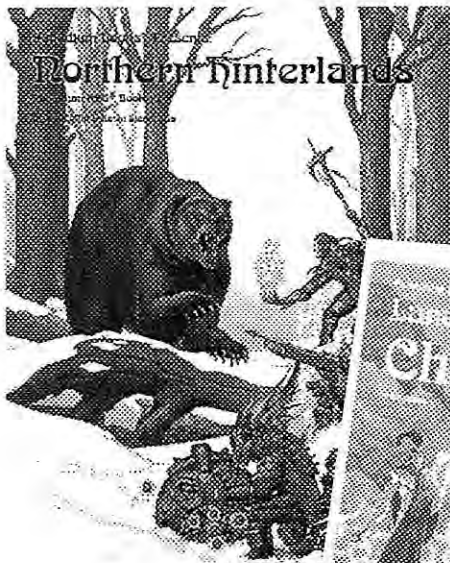
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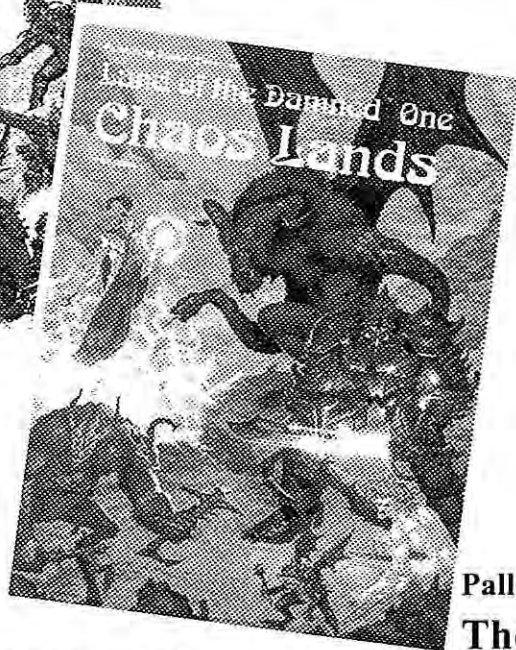
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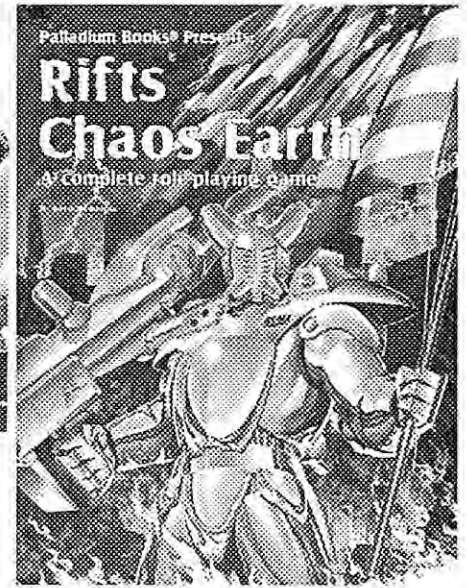
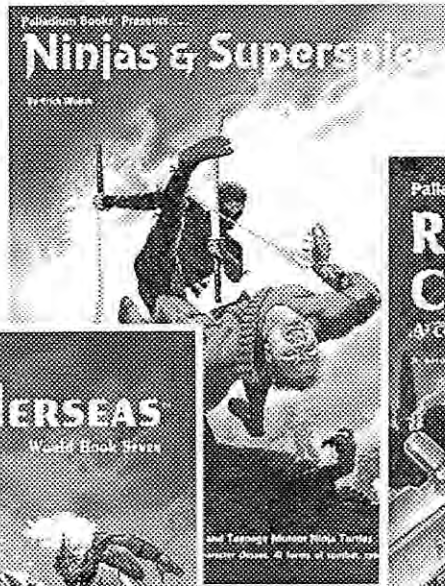
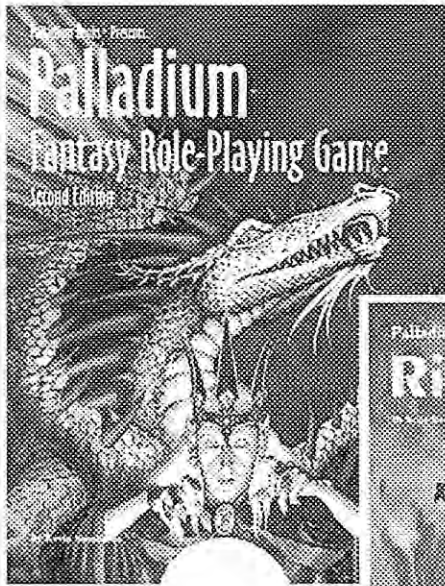
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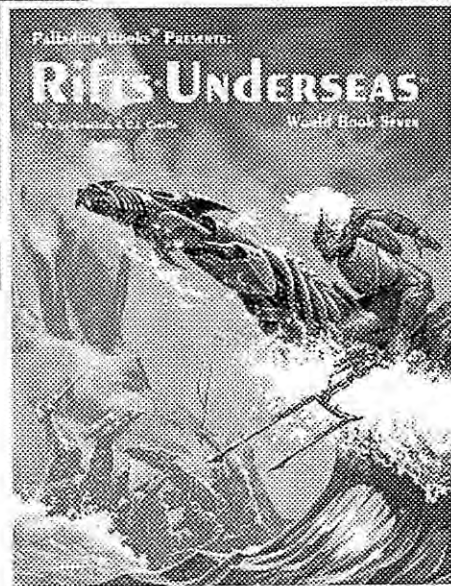
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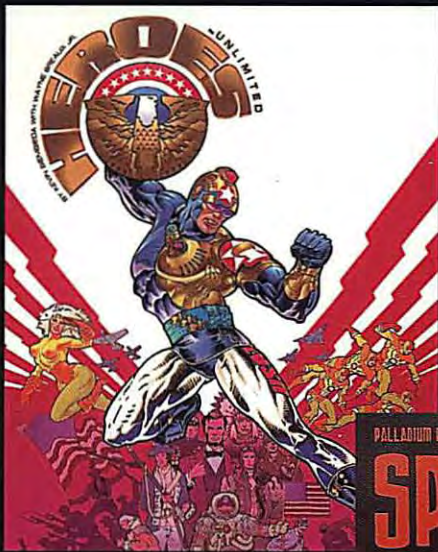


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