

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE

RIFTSER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®

Inside this Issue...

Fantasy: The Legacy of Blood
Rifts®: D-Bees of the Eastern Wilds
Rifts® Air Combat Rules
Heroes: S.C.R.E.T. Revised
The Hammer of the Forge™
Palladium Open House
News, Product Info & More

Esley

© 1995 Palladium Books, Inc.

Warning!

Violence and the Supernatural

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

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

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



The Rifter® Number 33

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing – January, 2006

Copyright 2006 Palladium Books Inc.

All rights reserved, world wide, under the Universal Copyright Convention. No part of this book may be reproduced in part or whole, in any form or by any means, without permission from the publisher, except for brief quotes for use in reviews. All incidents, situations, institutions, governments and people are fictional and any similarity, without satiric intent, of characters or persons living or dead, is strictly coincidental.

Palladium Books®, Rifts®, The Rifter®, Coalition Wars®, RECON®, Nightbane®, The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®, The Mechanoids®, The Mechanoid Invasion®, After the Bomb®, Phase World® and Megaverse® are registered trademarks owned and licensed by Kevin Siembieda and Palladium Books Inc.

The slogan “A Megaverse of adventure – limited only by your imagination” and titles and names such as Rifts®: Promise of Power, Beyond the Supernatural, BTS-2, HU2, Splicers, Chaos Earth, NEMA, MercTown, Merc Ops, Tome Grotesque, Beyond Arcanum, Naruni, Mechanoid Space, Dinosaur Swamp, Arzno, Lazlo, Victor Lazlo, Lazlo Agency, Lazlo Society, Heroes Unlimited, Powers Unlimited, Ninjas & Superspies, Aliens Unlimited, Mutant Underground, The Nursery, Hardware Unlimited, Gadgets Unlimited, Three Galaxies, Void Runners, Gramercy Island, Skrapypers, Atorian Empire, Wormwood, Land of the Damned, The Citadel, The Palladium of Desires, Wolfen Wars, Wolfen, Wulfen, Cosmo-Knight, Cyber-Knight, Dragonlands, Triax, Gargoyle Empire, Free Quebec, Xiticix Invasion, Fadetown, Hammer of the Forge, Siege on Tolkeen, Psyscape, Dweomer, ARCHIE-3, Northern Gun, Coalition States, Erin Tarn, Emperor Prosek, Splugorth, Splynncryth, Mega-Damage, Skelebot, SAMAS, Glitter Boy, Dog Boy, Dog Pack, Techno-Wizard, Ley Line Walker, Shifter, Bio-Wizardry, Psi-Stalker, Brodkil, Juicer, Crazy, ‘Burbs, ‘Borg, ‘Bot, D-Bee, Chi-Town, Triax, NGR, and other names, titles, slogans, and likenesses of characters are trademarks owned by Kevin Siembieda and Palladium Books Inc.

Palladium Online www.palladiumbooks.com

The Rifter® #33 RPG sourcebook series is published by Palladium Books Inc., 12455 Universal Drive, Taylor, MI 48180. Printed in the USA.

Palladium Books® Presents:



#33

Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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

Editor: **Alex Marciniszyn**

Contributing Writers:

James M.G. Cannon
Evan Cooney
Glen Evans
Edward May
Kevin Siembieda
Josh Sinsapaugh

Interior Artists:

Kent Burles
Comfort Deborah Love (DSS)
Mark Dudley (DSS)
Kevin Long
Allen Manning
Brian Manning
Apollo Okamura
and other Palladium Madmen

Proofreader: **Julius Rosenstein**

Cover Illustration: **Christopher Arneson**
& **Jeff Easley**

Cover Logo Design: **Steve Edwards**

Credits Page Logo: **Niklas Brandt**

Typesetting: **Wayne Smith**

Keylining: **Kevin Siembieda**

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

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® #33 – January, 2006

Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

This issue, Kevin gets down to some serious talk about the gaming industry, the state of role-playing games and Palladium's views on things. The short version is that the RPG industry has been struggling a bit and some doomsayers seem to think RPGs are a thing of the past. However, Kevin (and the rest of us here at Palladium) think that's a bunch of baloney and that role-playing is here to stay. Read all about it right here.

Then, take a look at *Palladium's Product Release Schedule* (page 10; perhaps our most ambitious ever, especially if you knew what we are kicking around for the second half of the year), as well as our plans for **Palladium's 25th Anniversary Celebration** (page 8). It will be a year long extravaganza with a new, Anniversary inspired commemorative product (like *The Best of The Rifter®*, bumper stickers, T-shirts, and much more) each and every month, plus a *Palladium Open House* (page 14) in May that should be a blast for everyone. (So book your ticket today and come on down!)

Page 8 – Palladium News

Rifts® *Promise of Power™*, the videogame for the N-Gage game deck, is out and it is spectacular.

Work on the script for the Rifts Movie continues.

Palladium holds the line on the price of RPGs. We know times are tough for a lot of gamers, so we will try to keep our prices right where they are, with one or two exceptions.

Year long Celebration of Palladium's 25 Year Anniversary. This will be fun, cool and is designed for YOU, our fans. Wait till you actually see what's in the works. Check out our website (www.palladiumbooks.com) every week or so for the latest news and updates.

Palladium Open House – May 6 & 7. Game Masters are needed for it.

2005 in Review and What's to Come from Palladium in 2006. It's all right here.

Page 10 – Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2006 Product Schedule through July. We'll probably add a few reprint titles and the list does not include most of the Anniversary items because many will only be offered through **The Rifter®** and the Palladium Books online at www.palladiumbooks.com.

Check out **The Best of The Rifter®** (page 11; available in February) which will include some of the best items to appear in **The Rifter®**, including a classic Knights of the Dinner Table strip and a comprehensive index of all previous issues of **The Rifter®**.)

Also take note of the **John Zeleznik Collector's Rifts® Coloring Book** (see page 12) – and not to be confused with the Art of John Zeleznik (128 pages of full color) coming out in June or July 2005.

And other good stuff.

Page 13 – The Rifter® Best Subscription Offer Ever

Please support your favorite game shop by purchasing **The Rifter®** and all Palladium products from them, but if you have trouble getting a copy in stores or you'd like it delivered right to your doorstep, then this is something to consider.

Page 14 – Palladium Open House – May 6 & 7

That's right, two days of gaming, panel talks, autographs and fun in the back of Palladium's warehouse! We knew people would come on over from a number of states, but we are pleasantly surprised to see Palladium fans gathering from around the world! We already have tickets sold to fans from coast to coast in the US and Canada, but the shocker has been a gent from Australia! A few gamers from England and Germany tell us they plan to come on down too! Amazing. We'll try to make this a memorable experience for everyone. Limited to roughly 500 people. Advance tickets only.

Page 17 – The Legacy of Blood

Optional Material for Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Evan Cooney's contribution to **The Rifter®** offers up a new O.C.C., a brewing war that could threaten the entire Palladium world, ancient weapons, magic items and history that date back to the days of the Elf-Dwarf War. And if that's not enough, how about some Spells of Legend from the forgotten mystic arts of Apocalypse Magic?

Artwork is by the indomitable *Kent Burles*.

Page 29 – S.C.R.E.T. Revisited & Revised

Optional Source Material for Heroes Unlimited™

Glen A. Evans offers an interesting take on the realm of Heroes Unlimited™. Learn about S.C.R.E.T.'s origins and parent agency, G.I.G.M.A. (Government Investigation of Genetic Mutations and Abnormalities). Homeland Security will never be the same. Includes S.C.R.E.T. experimental weapons, vehicles, aircraft and superhuman holding facilities, the typical S.C.R.E.T. agent and a quintet of elemental based villains (and the mysterious David Slave).

Art by the ladies and gents from *Drunken Style Studio*.

Page 50 – D-Bees of the Eastern Wilds™

New Races and R.C.C.s for Rifts®

A nice companion piece for **Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp and Dinosaur Swamp**, by Josh Sinsapaugh. Includes the Acisse Tribal Hunter, Adna Nomad, Bayou Ursine, the strange and mysterious Forest Wardens, Idie Swamp Men, and the Two-Horned Techno-Men. Each is fun to play and presented in such a way as to inspire new adventures.

Artwork by *Apollo Okamura*.

Page 68 – Air Combat™

Optional Rules for Rifts®

Newcomer, Edward A. May, offers a massive set of optional rules and things to consider involving air combat for the Rifts setting. Includes Piloting rules, mishap tables, damage tables, formation flying, weather and environmental modifiers, air-strips, air bases, repairs and maintenance, air-to-ground attacks, air-to-air combat, dogfights, and much more.

Piloting Aircraft – page 69

Landing – page 72

Repair or Replacement – page 76

Air-to-Ground Combat – page 78

Air-to-Air Combat – page 79

Conclusion of Air Combat – page 82

Aircraft Design Flaws – page 85

Rifts® Air Combat Summary – page 90

Artwork by Brian & Allen Manning, Kevin Long & others.

Page 90 – Rifts® Phase World®

The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter 33 of James M.G. Cannon's popular, ongoing saga finds our hero discovering just how dangerous home can be. Read and enjoy.

Artwork by Apollo Okamura.

Page 96 – Ad for Beyond the Supernatural

The Theme for Issue 33

Secrets. Secret governments, secret wars, secrets of aircraft, forgotten and secret magic, and the secret of the Palladium Open House!

This issue is another fun filled book that should inspire and motivate players and Game Masters alike to try new ideas and expand their game Megaverse®. We hope you enjoy it.

The Cover

The cover is special for us, because it marks Palladium's first direct publication of work by the talented Mister Chris Arneson and Jeff Easley.

Chris had done some card art for the ill-fated Rifts® CCG. We liked his work very much, and made a note to use him in the future. Well, a lot has happened since the CCG and we kinda forgot until we reprinted a bunch of the card art in the Rifts® Ultimate Edition. That put us back in touch with Chris and he agreed to do a cover for The Rifter®. Since Kevin requested a painting with a dragon in it, Chris decided to ask his long-time buddy, Jeff Easley to give him a hand designing the dragon and general layout, while Chris did the finished painting. We thought the end result was quite impressive. Don't be surprised if it resurfaces in the future as a cover to a Palladium Fantasy sourcebook. We hope you like it as much as we do. Thank Chris, Jeff, nice work.

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.

www.palladiumbooks.com – Palladium Online

Coming . . .

The Best of The Rifter® (& Index)

- P.P.E. Channeling.
- Knights of the Dinner Table
- A comprehensive index of issues #1-33.
- And a heck of a lot more!
- 128 pages – \$12.95 cover price.
- In stores by the end of February. Tell your friends.

The Rifter® #34

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

- More for *Palladium Fantasy*®.
- Material for *Beyond the Supernatural*™.
- Material for *Rifts*®.
- News and other developments.
- Palladium's Summer 2006 catalog.
- 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

From Palladium's point of view, the primary problem lays with a changing retail/sales environment. The comic book crash in the mid-1990's saw thousands of stores (half of which carried RPGs) go out of business. Something like 6000 stores, as I recall, vanished within a couple of years. So did a bunch of distributors. That was followed by the Collectable Card Game (CCG) boom, which also worked to change how retailers looked at and sold games. Both occurrences affected distribution and retail, and sent everything into a spiral. The soft market and mundane product that followed led to a subsequent industry downturn.

Today, there are fewer Mom and Pop (or independent) hobby, game and comic shops than five years ago. Even fewer specialize exclusively in games. To survive, many retailers and distributors have found they must carry a wide range of diverse products from books and cards to RPGs and board games, and toys and anime. Available cash is tight, and stores must cherry pick the products they carry. A bad decision and poor sales could make their situation worse and survival questionable, so they have to be very careful and cautious. Don't buy too much. Be careful of new, unproven titles, carry only a small selection of back stock titles and focus on new releases and proven ever-green product. It's tough out there. It's murder for new companies.

Fans, manufacturers and industry pundits are quick to point the finger of blame all over the place, but there really isn't anyone to blame. There is no one causative factor. Change is happening on a primordial level, like a hurricane or an ice age. Nobody can stop it, and everyone has been swept up by it.

The questions are, who will survive, what other changes does the future hold, and what good will come of it all?

Some interpret *adaptation* as moving *out* of role-playing entirely (or mostly) and into something completely different. That might be the answer for them, but not Palladium Books.

I don't pretend to have all the answers, and Palladium has had its ups and downs these past few years. My philosophy has always been: try to be flexible, adaptive, imaginative, push the envelope and try new ideas in a controlled, smart way. All the while being *true* to ourselves and our fans.

At Palladium, we see adaptation as taking role-playing to new *heights* and new *frontiers*. To experiment with ideas, formats, concepts, storytelling, marketing and advertising. To tweak the principles of role-playing games and give ideas and tradition a twist that will invite new gamers to take a look and give us a try. If they like what they see, they'll stay around to discover and play more. Likewise, we are doing products like **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** (and others in the pipeline) to *recapture* the attention and playtime of gamers who have left Rifts®, or RPGs in general, behind for awhile and remind them why it's so fun to play in our RPG worlds.

Most importantly, we strive to please YOU, our core supporters who have followed our products for years and who love role-playing games just much we do, even if you can't find the time to play as often as you used to.

Role-playing games dead?



Let me tell you what few others are willing to openly admit. The role-playing game industry is in trouble. Struggling. Limping along.

In fact, many industry insiders seem to believe role-playing games are on the verge of extinction. For the last year or two the burning question, "Is role-playing dead or dying?" has been the subject of frequent debate.

Many people seem to believe the answer is yes.

I say, baloney!

Sure the industry is in a downturn and people are hurting. Yes, a lot of companies have suffered massive layoffs and firings, and many have quietly vanished or switched from RPGs to board games or other products. People are scared and confused. Sadly, I think a number of game companies may go out of business over the next year. But the role-playing game industry dying? No way. If anything, Palladium is seeing gamers *returning* to role-playing.

So what's going on?

Change and evolution. The Role-Playing Game industry is going through puberty, and it's a painful transition – awkward, different and new. For many, that also makes it scary and painful.

Not if Palladium fans are any indication. They are as enthusiastic and committed to gaming as ever, and so are we. In fact, the most common question we get is, "When can we expect new product? We want more! What's coming next? And please, don't be late." That doesn't sound like a dead industry to me. Furthermore, as it becomes increasingly difficult to find back stock titles in the stores, our online sales and mail order have grown higher than they have ever been in 25 years of business. (Thanks, by the way, for coming to us to buy your favorite game titles when you can't find 'em in the stores.)

We are seeing older gamers in their 30s and 40s coming back to gaming as their lives settle down in marriage and work. And as their kids start to reach "gaming age," we see them pointing their children in our direction. Cool! A new generation of gamers! Palladium is also seeing new gamers in their teens and early twenties discovering our products for the first time. (Also cool.) Heck, our survey shows there are thousands upon thousands of people who love and play RPGs.

Palladium Books plans to return that love for RPGs by pushing the envelope and presenting games, settings and ideas that are different, exciting, sophisticated, and above all, fun. We hope to create RPGs that grab you by your imaginations and carry you away on amazing journeys that you can't bear to be without.

Ironically, while the traditional venues – places and sources – for RPGs seem to be slowly vanishing, new ones are appearing. Online sales, conventions and chain bookstores are just a few. The latter seems especially strange to us, because the chain stores have avoided RPGs for years. However, just as many have embraced *manga*, they are also embracing role-playing games.

Another avenue for role-playing games is the electronic medium. I think you'll be seeing a lot more adapting of traditional pen and paper games (new and old) into PC, console games and platforms like the X-Box, PlayStation, online massively multiplayer games, and, handheld, mobile platforms from cel phones to who knows what! All of which are expanding platforms by which traditional pen and paper RPGs can be reformatted and translated into a new medium easily accessible to millions of new gamers. Gamers who will enjoy the worlds we pen and paper guys and gals already know about. That means *we* will become the elite forecasters of what's to come. Discovering and playing games that will, in time, be translated into other mediums. Then there's also film and novels and comics and . . . the possibilities for role-playing are huge.

That having been said, I believe pen and paper RPGs are here to *stay*. I even believe traditional pen and paper RPGs will experience a renaissance within the next 3-8 years. No matter how good the technology gets, nothing beats the experience and depth of traditional role-playing. Nothing beats the power of our own minds and imaginations. Nothing! We enjoy mind-bending, role-playing adventures and excursions into the imagination that are sharper and more vivid than the real world. We enjoy the depth of emotion, warm feelings and rich memories of camaraderie and friendship with our fellow gamers as they explore the wonders of the Palladium Megaverse. How many times have you vanquished evil, plumbed the recesses of arcane magic, saved lives and even saved entire worlds? It is an experience the *Average Gamer* has not yet discovered. The Average Gamer –

be he a master videogamer, a clever card gamer, a brilliant miniatures strategist, or cunning board gamer – he has only just begun to unleash his imagination. For he has yet to discover the freedom, flexibility and endless possibilities of *role-playing*. A Megaverse of adventure that you, my dear friends, already have at your fingertips. And when our brother gamers do finally discover the wonder of true role-playing games, let us embrace them and draw them into the worlds we know.

The market is changing and evolving, for sure. But here at Palladium, we think the metamorphosis will be into something grand and exciting, like the caterpillar turning into the glamorous and high-flying butterfly.

So spread the word. Tell the world that role-playing is alive and well, and bring new gamers into the fold! Welcome them to the Megaverse of infinite imagination that is role-playing.

I can hear the voices of my detractors now. "What are you? The Pied Piper of role-playing games?"

You know what? Maybe I am.

"That's right, come with me and I'll take you on amazing adventures you'll never forget. I'll show you new worlds and share ideas that will thrill and tantalize. Use the Force. Search your feelings. You know what I say is *true!* Join me, and together we'll explore the Megaverse!" (Um, sorry, a little too much Star Wars recently.)

Corny?

Maybe, but that's how I truly feel. Role-playing games aren't dead. They can't be. I have a million ideas I've yet to share with you. Role-playing is in my blood. And I've met enough of you and heard from so many of you (online, at conventions, in letters, in X-Mas Grab Bag comments, on the telephone and across the globe) that I know it's in your blood too. Besides, it seems wherever I go I find old friends and new faces playing Palladium RPGs. Good, because the Palladium crew – me, Wayne, Alex, Julius, Erick, Carmen, Carl, Todd, Brandon, Taylor, John, Apollo, Mike and a host of others – have fun, fresh ideas and journeys to share with you for years to come. We hope you'll be there with us to enjoy the experience. Bring a friend.

2006 marks Palladium's 25 year anniversary, and we plan to make the next 25 years even better than the first.

Keep your imaginations burning bright and role-playing games can never die and fade away, but carry us into the future and new realms of wonder.

– Kevin Siembieda, RPG Publisher,
Game Designer & Crazy Man, January 2006



Happy New Year.

Palladium News

By Kevin Siembieda (the guy who should know)

Rifts® Promise of Power

– videogame is a critical success

The game is out, and the word is in – *great!*

Critics and fans alike agree that **Rifts® Promise of Power** for the N-Gage QD Game Deck is nothing short of fantastic. A highwater mark for Nokia and videogame RPGs in general.

I wish I could take credit for this wonderful videogame, but all I did was pick Nokia to make the first Rifts® videogame ever, and inspire the creative forces at Nokia and Backbone Entertainment. Sure, I watched over their shoulders, offered some suggestions and gave them a few nudges in the right direction, but they are the ones who made magic happen. Nokia Producer Shane Neville, and Trent Ward and his wonderful development team at Backbone are the geniuses who have taken Rifts® and made it come alive in a new medium.

Rifts® fans who have asked, “Why Nokia and the N-Gage?” know the answer as soon as they start playing the videogame. Wow. Great story, strong graphic design, color, action, and true to the Rifts® pen and paper RPG roots. In my humble opinion, this is a *great game* and you don’t know what you are missing if you haven’t played it.

For those of you on the bubble about buying an N-Gage just for the *Rifts® Promise of Power game*, it’s time you jumped off and got one.

You don’t need to get cellular service for the N-Gage to play the game on one (although you miss out on the online and arena features), you can just use it as a mobile game platform. And for those of you who don’t yet realize it, there are more than 70 hot games for the N-Gage like *The Sims Bustin’ Out*, *Pathway to Glory*, *Spider-Man 2*, *X-Men Legends*, *Tomb Raider*, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004*, *Pocket Kingdom: Own the World, One*, and many more.

Letstalk.com – <http://ngage.letstalk.com/rifts> – (or click onto the direct link on the Palladium Books website) has a great offer in which you can get the *N-Gage, Rifts®: Promise of Power* and something like *three other games* of choice for free with a service contract! That’s a fantastic deal. I’m telling you, check it out and get one or you’ll hate yourself later. And I don’t know how long the super-multi-game deal is going to last.

Rifts® Movie Update

Last we heard, David Franzoni was working on another draft of the script. Jerry Bruckheimer has gone on record (on his website) saying he wants to get the script right. The film will not get the green-light for production until Mr. Bruckheimer has a script he likes.

Christmas Grab Bags were a smash hit

Funny, but I never quite thought of it like this, until a fan made the comment that I really was like Santa Claus, making fans happy around the world with the Grab Bags and signed

books. Wow. I’m humbled and pleased. I hope all of you enjoyed your Grab Bags. Please know that I read every single comment and helped to pack every single package shipped out. It was a ton of work, we signed something like 5000 individual items, and lost hunks of writing time out of every workday, but it was worth it. We hope all of you enjoyed the Surprise Packages. We do them for you.

Holding the Price on Product

Printing costs went up a little last year and are likely to rise a bit more in 2006. This has prompted Palladium to raise the price on its 160 page books by one dollar, to \$18.95 starting with **Tome Grotesque**. We are pleased to be able to keep our prices well below those of our competitors and understand that many people in the world today find it necessary to stretch their money as best they can. You can count on Palladium to continue to hold the line as long as we can.

Year Long Celebration

Palladium’s 25 Year Anniversary

You heard right, a *year long anniversary celebration* designed with fun and fans in mind.

To our knowledge, nobody has ever done a year long celebration, so this is a first. And one we think you will love.

Each month, Palladium Books will release one or more anniversary commemorative items. Most will be inexpensive, ranging from \$2-\$10. What that new item(s) is will be announced EVERY month online (and in each issue of *The Rifter®*), but we want to make it a *surprise*, so you won’t know what the new item is until it is released!

The **John Zeleznik Collector’s Coloring Book** and the **Best of the Rifter®** (\$12.95) are just two examples. The following are things we have been *considering*. Please let us know what you’d like to see and don’t hesitate to send us *your own suggestions*. If we like it, we’ll use it.

Bumper stickers with snappy sayings like “Real gamers use dice,” “My other vehicle is M.D.C.,” and a whole lot more.

Anniversary T-Shirt(s)

Bookmarks, each representing a different Palladium Books game line (probably sold as a set).

Sewn Patches (of various Palladium game lines).

Poster(s)

Limited Edition “Jam Print” with art by numerous artists and creators (Apollo, Williams, Perez, Siembieda, Wilson, Burles, Zeleznik, etc.) depicting all of Palladium’s game lines.

And we are open to hearing *your* ideas and suggestions!

Palladium Open House – May 6 & 7

– Two days of fun & games – Taylor, MI

For us this is BIG news! An anniversary celebration and gaming event held out of the back of the *Palladium warehouse!*

More than 20 Palladium creators (writers, artists, editors, freelancers, etc.), plus friends (online moderators, Rifter contri-

butors, Game Masters and players, local gamers, convention buddies, and associates of Palladium Books) will all be present to chat, sign autographs, run games and host panel talks.

A dozen or more panel talks and seminars with me (Kevin Siembieda) and other Palladium creators.

Gaming! And not just any gaming, but Palladium *role-playing games*. Yep, finally an event dedicated exclusively to us "role-players."

Palladium RPG products, anniversary commemorative items, original artwork, oddities and more, all for sale.

Advance ticket sales only.

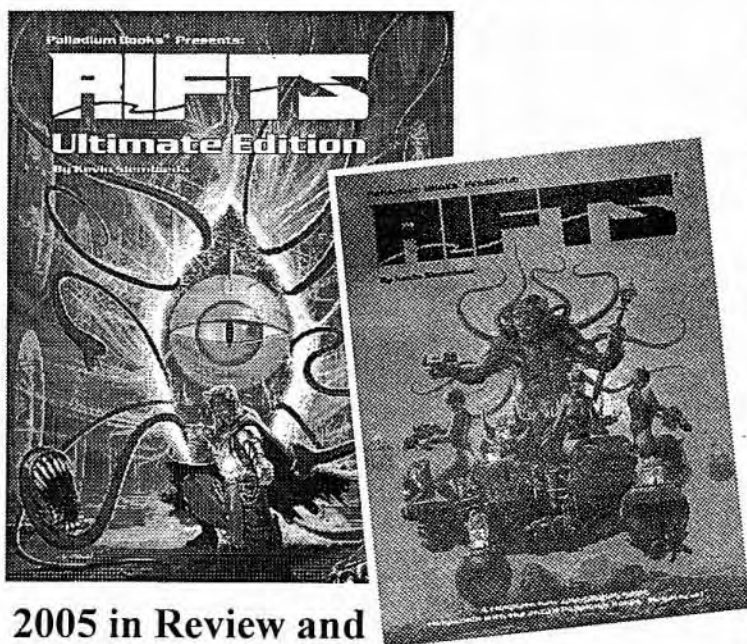
Read more about this historic event elsewhere, this issue.

Game Masters Wanted for Open House

We need good Game Masters to run events at the Palladium Open House in May. So please let us know if you are interested in running one or more game events and what Palladium games you'd like to run.

We'll talk about the details and benefits of running for us when you contact us.

Write, call (734-946-1156) or send us an email to volunteer (palladium-gm@palladiumbooks.com). Um, of course you must be present to run. G.M.s will get a *special gift* for their help.



2005 in Review and What's to Come in 2006

The year 2005 was a strange one for me and the Palladium crew, full of highs and lows.

Some of the highs included the release of **Beyond the Supernatural, Second Edition** and **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**. Working on both was a dream for me, allowing me to carry two favorite RPGs into a new era of gaming. I was delighted that both launched to rave reviews and positive fan excitement.

E3 is always a swirl of sights, sounds, fun and action, and this year I got to hang a lot with my friend and agent, Mark Freedman of Surge Licensing, as well as my dear friend and fellow game designer, Erick Wujcik and his crew.

Gen Con Indy was another highlight, being "the" big, fun gaming event of the year, but **Trinity Con** was probably my favorite time at any convention (small, intimate, lots of friends, good conversation, and a fun time gaming). **U-Con** was fun too, and gave me a chance to get reacquainted with **Larry Elmore**. I could listen to this man's stories, thoughts, and ideas all day long, so it was a genuine pleasure spending time with Larry for three days.

My personal highlight of the year, however, has to be Nokia sending me on a European press junket. (Thanks Nokia!) London, Milan, Paris and Madrid. Fabulous. I enjoyed meeting with regional Nokia games people and chatting with members of the press. I got to hear their views and expectations for **Rifts® Promise of Power** and the N-Gage, discuss the Rifts video-game, share my thoughts on the game and working with Nokia (which is wonderful), and even talk a little about game theory and the future of gaming. After business was taken care of, I had time to explore my surroundings with my pal, Shane Neville, the Producer of **Rifts® Promise of Power** and all-around great guy. Shane was a joy to travel with and we wandered all over the place sightseeing, eating and exploring the wonders before us. Wonders that included Big Ben, a Salvador Dali and Picasso art exhibit, and the parks and streets of London; the Dome and the Center market district in Italy; the Louvre, Museum Rodin, the Eiffel Tower, graveyards, streets and parks of Paris; and a cool comic book shop and the market plazas of Madrid.

There were also some nice moments with friends throughout the year.

Low points, however, seemed to plague us from the onset of 2005. January third, Julius Rosenstein (Palladium proofreader, contributing writer, warehouse guy and my longtime friend) was in a serious car accident. He was shaken up but okay. His car, however, was totaled. Julius made a comment that would prove prophetic and something of a curse. "What a start to the New Year," he said, "I hope the whole year isn't going to be like this." It was.

Palladium's release schedule was knocked out of orbit and never recovered.

One reason involved theft and trouble by an employee. This character's actions caused plenty of emotional distress and frustration, as well as a pile of problems we had to address throughout the rest of the year. This created delays and some cash flow problems. No, not enough to put Palladium out of business, thank goodness, but enough to steal away a few months of valuable time investigating, talking to attorneys and police, and dealing with numerous related issues. It has been a nightmare dealing with this situation, but we seem to be through the worst of it.

Many other delays this year involved illness and death. My girlfriend lost someone who was like a second mother to her. Another friend lost his mother to cancer, and a few weeks later, found out his stepfather also has cancer, and then a couple months later he had to deal with an unexpected illness himself. Around the same time, another dear friend had a (thankfully minor but scary) bout with cancer, and another friend's mother is locked in a continuing battling with cancer. Meanwhile, yet another friend's father was diagnosed with cancer, and then there was the death of my friend, Keith Parkinson. On top of that, yet another couple of friends are dealing with unexpected divorces

and then my own Dad suffered a loss in his extended family, and during the week of Thanksgiving he was rushed to the Emergency Room with agonizing back pain and vomiting. I'm delighted to report that my Dad is fine after surgery to remove a kidney stone and was back to work within a few days.

Some of the people noted above are freelancers and their problems delayed the books they are working on, or they are taking a sabbatical from game design to recover, be with family, or to find their balance. Palladium is more like a big, creative family than a machine precision business. All of these folks are people I care about, so there is no pressure for them to hurry back to work, and I have taken time to talk, visit and console them whenever I can.

This cluster of events (many heaped into the last four months of the year) wore me down and gave me writer's block in the last quarter of 2005. It's hard to write, especially in an entertaining way, when you are feeling blue. That led to two of my personal disappointments, failing to get **Tome Grotesque** and **Beyond Arcanum** for BTS out in 2005 after I *promised* I would. Sorry folks, I just couldn't do it.

As fate would have it, however, my mind has been bursting with ideas for months. Ideas for new games, ideas for old games, ideas for sourcebooks, ideas like the Palladium Open House and ideas for the year long 25th Anniversary, and a whole lot more.

A new beginning in 2006

I'm glad to report that I believe 2006 may be Palladium's most impressive year of releases and events in recent memory. I am back on track writing and plotting all kinds of new product.

I expect to get **Tome Grotesque** and **Beyond Arcanum** out within the first six months of the year, and hopefully a BTS-2 adventure book or two later in the year.

We have several exciting books in the pipeline from freelance writers: **Powers Unlimited 3** and **Atorian Sourcebook for HU2, Arzno – Vampire Incursion** and **Madhaven for Rifts®**, followed by the new **Rifts® Sourcebook One** by me, **Triax Two**, and Carl Gleba's five part **Minion War Crossover** epic starting with **Dimension Book: Hades** and **Dimension Book: Dyval**, followed by adventure and fun in the **Three Galaxies**, **Heroes Unlimited** and **Rifts®**.

And that's just some of the books, a bunch of **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** and **Chaos Earth** books should see release in the latter part of the year, out of print titles should get back into print, and we have some fun, different items like the full color, **Art of John Zeleznik** book coming out, the **John Zeleznik Collector's Coloring Book** and all kinds of **25th Anniversary** products – something new *every* month.

We also have a few things we are kicking around for later this year. What? No, let's wait talking about those for now. You have plenty to chew on and look forward to in the first half of the year.

2006 is going to be Palladium's Year. I can feel it in my bones. Read on to see what's coming.

Happy New Year and keep the faith.

– Kevin Siembieda, January 2006

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2006 Product Schedule

All dates listed are "ship dates" from Palladium to mail order and distributors. The book will appear in stores 1-2 weeks after that date.

A number of out of print books may be slotted into the release schedule along with a couple of **Heroes Unlimited™** and **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** titles (although right now, it looks like most Fantasy titles will be out in the Fall).

January 2006

Rifts® WB 2: Rifts® Atlantis – *back in print* – 160 pages, \$17.95 retail – January 13, 2006.

The Rifter® #33 – *new* – 96 pages, \$9.95 retail – January 16.

Rifts® WB 27: Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp™ – *new* by Siembieda and Yoho (and introducing the amazing art of Jeffery Russell) – 160 pages – \$17.95 retail – January 26.

February 2006

The Best of The Rifter® – A Palladium Books 25th Anniversary Special (free for subscribers) and includes a comprehensive index for issues 1-33 – 128 pages – \$12.95 retail – February 15.

Tome Grotesque™ (for **Beyond the Supernatural™**) – *new* by Kevin Siembieda – 160 pages – \$18.95 retail – February 27.

March 2006

GAMA Trade Show – March 13-16, 2006 – *see some of you there.*

Rifts® WB 28: Arzno™ – Vampire Incursion™ – *new* by Jason Richards – 160 pages – \$18.95 retail – March 16.

The John Zeleznik Collector's Rifts® Coloring Book™ – A Palladium Books 25th Anniversary Special – 48 pages – \$5.95 retail – March 24.

April 2006

Rifts® WB 29: Madhaven™ – *new* by Brandon Aten & Taylor White – 128 pages – \$14.95 retail – April 7.

The Rifter® #34 & Summer Catalog – *new* – 128 pages – \$9.95 retail – April 21.

May 2006

Palladium Open House – May (5) 6 & 7, 2006 – hope to see a lot of you there!!!

E3 May 9-12, 2006 (*tentative*).

Powers Unlimited™ 3 – *new* by Carmen Bellaire – 96 pages – \$13.95 retail – May 25.

June 2006

Beyond Arcanum – *new* by Kevin Siembieda and Todd Yoho – 192 pages – \$22.95 retail – June 16.

Rifts® & Other Worlds – The Art of John Zeleznik – *new* by John Zeleznik – full color, hardcover collection of John's work for Palladium Books (includes concept sketches, and never before seen color roughs) – 128 pages of full color – \$25.95 – June 30.

July 2006

The Rifter® #35 – *new*, our first Swimsuit Spectacular! – 96 pages – \$9.95 retail – July 20.

Rifts® Dimension Book 10: Hades™ – *new* by Carl Gleba – the Minion War Crossover begins with this book; suitable as a standalone sourcebook as well as a vital chapter in the Minion War Crossover! 160 pages – \$18.95 retail – July 13.

An additional title or reprint is likely to be added.

Also slated for 2006

Rifts® Dimension Book 11: Dyval™ (Minion War, part two)

Rifts® Dimension Book 12: Minion War™ in the Three Galaxies (Minion War, part three)

Heroes Unlimited™ Minion War™ Crossover (part four)

Rifts® Minion War™ Crossover (part five; conclusion)

2-4 new **Fantasy RPG®** titles and the return of Western Empire.

2-3 new **HU2** books – including **The Atorian Sourcebook™**.

Chaos Earth™: NEMA™ Mission Book One

Chaos Earth™: Psychic Storm™

Rifts: Triax 109 P.A.™ (all new)

The Rifter® #36

BTS-2™ Adventure Book

Splicers™ Sourcebook

Breaking News Report: Palladium's printer is *still* on an "extended schedule" which means instead of turning books around in about four weeks they are taking 6-8 weeks! In November, the printer thought they'd be back to their normal schedule by the year's end, but I have just been informed that they expect this *extended schedule* to continue through January and probably February. This will push some of the release dates listed below off by 1-3 weeks later. Sorry. – KS

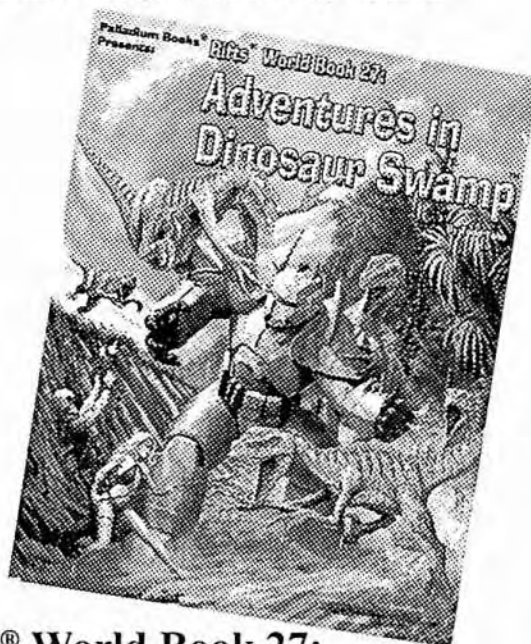
New Product Descriptions

Rifts® World Book 2: Atlantis

"Back in print" after being outta print for 9 months, this is one of our best selling sourcebooks of all time (over 100,000 sold, Vampire Kingdoms too). Minor updates and modifications to make it 100% compatible with **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**.

- Tattoo Magic and the Tattooed Man O.C.C.
- Stone Magic and Bio-Wizardry.
- More than 20 optional player characters, including the Sunaj Assassin, True Atlantean and a host of D-Bees.

- Minions of Splugorth, overview of Atlantis and more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 804.
- \$17.95 retail – Ships around January 13, 2006.



Rifts® World Book 27: Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp™

This takes the ideas of the first Dinosaur Swamp World Book to a whole new level. Intelligent dinosaurs who hunt and enslave humans, mysterious Indian mounds seething with magic and potential, new O.C.C.s, and much more.

Our goal is to set your imaginations on fire with bold characters, exciting ideas and new avenues of adventure.

- New dinosaurs and monsters.
- New R.C.C.s, Native Americans, weapons and equipment.
- The secrets of the Ocmulgee Indian Mounds.
- World information and adventures ideas.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Todd Yoho.
- Your first glimpse at the artistry of Jeffery Russell.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 866.
- \$17.95 retail – Ships around January 26, 2006.

The Best of The Rifter® & Index

A Palladium Books 25th Anniversary Special

This special issue of **The Rifter®** is an index and best of collection published as part of the *Palladium Anniversary Celebration* (and is a *free* bonus issue for subscribers).

It will include some of the most interesting, useful, fun and funny moments from the last eight years.

Best of all, it includes a comprehensive index of articles from issues 1-33!

When asked exactly what would be in this special issue besides the comprehensive index, Wayne said: "What? I don't know . . . good stuff." So there you have it, good stuff.

- A comprehensive index for issues #1-33.
- P.P.E. Channeling, G.M. tips, great art and, um, "good stuff."

- A must for collectors of The Rifter® and those collecting Palladium's 25th Anniversary items.
- 128 pages – Cat. No. 090.
- \$12.95 retail – Ships February 15, 2006.

Tome Grotesque™

For Beyond the Supernatural™

Okay, I know this book and Beyond Arcanum were delayed just as many BTS gamers feared, but Beyond the Supernatural has not been forgotten or shoved aside. This is the next book I'm diving into as soon as Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp is finished! And other than some editing and changes to Arzno and Madhaven, **Beyond Arcanum** is "my" next big project after Tome Grotesque. I'm as anxious to finish writing these two books as you guys and gals are eager to see them.

Tome Grotesque could just as easily have been called "The Book of Darkness," because it deals with the gruesome and malevolent nature of supernatural beings. A frightening look into the psychology, nature and power of monsters that lurk in the shadows and torment mortals.

- Demonic magic and psionic abilities.
- Horrific Supernatural Predators, Pranksters, Demonic Servants, Ancient Evil and more.
- Spectacular artwork by Russell, Dubisch and others.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 702.
- \$18.95 retail – February 27.

Rifts® World Book 28:

Arzno™ – Vampire Incursion™

Mercenaries and vampires! What else could anyone ask for? Actually, Jason gives you plenty more.

- The city of Arzno mapped and described.
- New merc weapons, equipment and TW items.
- Vampire insurgents, their henchmen and leaders.
- The Blood Cult, Blood Priest and vampire worship.
- Coalition Vampire Killers, Cyber-Knights and more.
- Written by Jason Richards.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 868.
- \$18.95 retail – Ships around March 16, 2006.

The John Zeleznik Collector's Rifts® Coloring Book™ – March, 2006

A Palladium Books® 25th Anniversary Special.

This little gem was Johnny Z's idea for a special anniversary commemorative item. A coloring book created from the pencil drawings for the many painted covers he has done for Palladium Books. They may include some concept sketches as well as some other line artwork.

As the publisher, I (Kevin Siembieda) thought this would be fun, interesting, and "unique." As an artist myself, I always love

seeing concept drawings and preliminary sketches, and I thought you might too. Plus, they'll be blown up to 8 ½ x 11 and truly suitable for coloring. I say buy two, one to keep as a collectable and one to color with markers, crayons, watercolor or colored pencils.

Note: This is Palladium's March Anniversary item.

- Good reproduction on good quality paper.
- Created and designed by John Zeleznik.
- 48 pages – Cat. No. 870.
- \$5.95 retail – Ships around March 24, 2006.

Rifts® World Book 29: Madhaven™

Brandon Aten & Taylor White, contributors to The Rifter®, have expanded their teamwork to create a complete sourcebook about the ruins of New York City known as "Madhaven."

- Madness, ghosts, monsters and mutants.
- The Order of the White Rose Mystic Knights.
- Underground tunnel networks and their inhabitants.
- World information and adventure ideas.
- Written by Brandon Aten & Taylor White.
- 128 pages – Cat. No. 869.
- \$14.95 retail – Ships around April 7, 2006.

The Rifter® #34 – April

The usual fun, optional source material for numerous Palladium RPG lines in the Palladium Megaverse®, as well as news and fiction.

- Articles for various Palladium RPG series.
- Palladium's Summer Catalog.
- 128 pages – Cat. No. 134.
- \$9.95 retail – Ships around April 21, 2006.

Powers Unlimited™ 3

At last, Carmen Bellaire's latest book in the Powers Unlimited™ series for Heroes Unlimited™.

- New Major and Minor Super Abilities.
- New Power Categories and info on super beings.
- Written by Carmen Bellaire.
- 96 pages – Cat. No. 523.
- \$13.95 retail – Ships around May 25, 2006.

Beyond Arcanum™

For Beyond the Supernatural™

I have pushed back the release date of this BTS-2 title to insure its quality. This is another book that will rock your minds and shatter the conventions of role-playing gaming.

- A new spin on magic that works in our modern world.
- Magic wielding O.C.C.s.
- Magic weapons, charms, rituals and the cursed.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Todd Yoho.
- 192 pages – Cat. No. 703.
- \$22.95 retail – Ships around June 16, 2006.

The Rifter[®]

Best Subscription Offer Ever

- ✓ Free Shipping!
- ✓ Free Gift!
- ✓ Free *Best of The Rifter*[®]
- ✓ Great Savings!
- ✓ A Megaverse of adventure and fun!

The Rifter[®] is a quarterly sourcebook series for the entire Palladium Megaverse[®]. It is written by fans and up and coming writers, for fans.

Each issue presents official and unofficial adventures, characters, powers, weapons, equipment and fiction for *Rifts*[®], *Splicers*[™], *Beyond the Supernatural*[™], *Heroes Unlimited*[™], *Palladium Fantasy RPG*[®], *Chaos Earth*[™], *Nightbane*[®], and/or any variety of other Palladium games and world settings. It's also a place where we test new ideas, and showcase new games, like *BTS-2* and the upcoming *Mechanoids*[®] *Space*.

It's also a way to get the latest news and sneak previews of upcoming Palladium products, events and secret projects.

The Rifter[®] is unique in that it is more than a magazine or simple sourcebook. It is also a forum for *new talent*. Imaginative "fan" and semi-professional writers and artists submit their work for consideration and see their creations brought to life and shared with thousands of other Palladium fans. (And get paid for it too!) Palladium regularly uses The Rifter[®] as a vehicle to try new talent with an eye toward future, bigger projects.

In short, if you're into one or more of Palladium's role-playing games and like to explore new realms of possibility, then The Rifter[®] is for you.

We've held the price at only \$9.95 – a steal for 96-128 pages of RPG source material, adventures, ideas, and great artwork packed into every issue.

Super-Whammy Subscription Offer

- **The Price:** \$31.80 – four issues. That's only \$7.95 each.
- **Free Shipping:** Palladium picks up the shipping cost. You only pay the price of the subscription. (Limited to the USA and Canada. Overseas subscriptions *are* charged additional for shipping.)
- **A gift worth \$15-\$20!** Subscribe or re-subscribe *now* through *March 31, 2005* and get your choice of any *ONE* of the following products absolutely *free*:
 - **Rifts[®] South America One** or **Rifts[®] Australia**, free;
 - or two back issues of **The Rifter[®] #16 & 17** or **The Rifter[®] #18 & 19**, free;
 - or **Mutants in Avalon** and **Mutants Down Under** (suitable for **HU2** or **After the Bomb[®]**), free;
 - or **Heroes Unlimited Sourcebook: Gramercy Island[™]** or **Aliens Unlimited Galaxy Guide[™]**, free;
 - or the **Palladium Fantasy RPG Sourcebook: Northern Hinterlands[™]** or **Land of the Damned One[™]**, free.
- **Plus** all new subscribers will get a *FREE* copy of **The Best of The Rifter[®]** as soon as it is ready to ship (February 2006)! This 128 page *Anniversary Special* includes some of the best, out of print articles, art and material from past Rifters[®] as well as a complete *Index/User's Guide* for issues #1-33!
- **Important Note:** Please enclose *five dollars* (\$5.00 US funds) for postage and handling, to get the *free gift* book sent to those of you in the United States – \$8.00 for Canada, and \$11.00 for overseas subscribers.
- That's practically like getting **The Rifter[®]** subscription for a few dollars an issue! Don't delay, order today! And tell a friend! Tell lots of friends!!
- **A Megaverse[®] of adventure and fun!** Let *The Rifter[®]* be your gateway to adventure and the infinite Megaverse[®].

How can Palladium afford to make such a tantalizing offer? Because our fans always come first and because we are anticipating an amazing year of fun and surprises, and **The Rifter[®]** with its news, coming attractions and sneak previews is your first look at the Palladium Megaverse[®] and all the excitement that's coming your way. Be part of the adventure.

- **How to order.** *Send mail orders* with a check or money order (for \$36.80 – including the handling and shipping cost of the free gift in the *USA*) to:

The Rifter[®] Subscription Dept.

12455 Universal Drive

Taylor, MI 48180

Credit Card orders can be made in our online store (www.palladiumbooks.com) or by telephone (734-946-1156; this is an order line *only*).

Please indicate what issue number you'd like your subscription to *start* at: #32 (last issue), #33 (this current issue), #34 (next issue, April 2005) or when your current subscription ends.

Offer good only till March 31, 2005

Palladium Open House – May 6 & 7, 2006

2006 is Palladium's 25 year anniversary. We're proud of this accomplishment and plan to celebrate all year long with the people who really matter, *YOU*.

We thought it would be fun to hold a small gathering – an *open house* at Palladium Books' warehouse. A weekend event where we could hold seminars, panel talks, gaming events, autograph sessions, sell product, and enjoy hours of playing Palladium games. And all of it happening in the back of the Palladium warehouse (17,000 sq. feet of books and fun)!

To our knowledge, nothing like this has ever been done in the history of role-playing games! At least not in the United States. So come on down to join this historic moment.

Meet the creative men and women behind Palladium Books at the location where the magic happens! Chat with Palladium creators, artists, writers, staff members and friends. Bring books to be autographed, purchase back stock items to fill in your collection, buy original art from the artists (a few of whom may be doing character sketches), and pick up special Open House items.

The Palladium Open House will offer an unprecedented gathering of Palladium creators – more Palladium maniacs than have ever been assembled under one roof ANYWHERE, ever!

The following Palladium creators have already agreed to be at your disposal, and MORE are expected to join the fun!

Kevin Siembieda – publisher, owner, writer, artist & game designer.

Henry Siembieda – creator of Kevin Siembieda!

Wayne Smith – editor and troubleshooter, Editor-in-Chief of *The Rifter*.

Alex Marciszyn – editor and idea man.

Julius Rosenstein – contributing writer and proofreader.

Kathy Simmons – customer relations and American sweetheart.

Carmen Bellaire – writer, game designer and Game Master (author of *Splicers*, *Powers Unlimited* series and contributor to more)!

Todd Yoho – writer (*Dinosaur Swamp*, *Arcanum* and more).

Jason Richards – writer (author of *Arzno* & contributor to *The Rifter*®).

Brandon Aten – writer (co-author of *Madhaven* & contributor to *The Rifter*®).

Taylor White – writer (co-author of *Madhaven* & contributor to *The Rifter*®).

Roger & Randi Cartier – contributing writers (mainly *Fantasy*), map-makers and play testers.

Thomas Bartold – writer (*PFRPG: Island at the Edge of the World*), long-time pal, and one of the original Defilers!

Carl Gleba (tentative) – writer of *Three Galaxies*, *Megaverse Builder*, and others books.

Randy McCall (tentative) – co-author of the original *BTS*.

James Brown (the G.M., not the singer).

John Zeleznik – painter and artist supreme, coming all the way from California (tentative)!

Ramon Perez – artist, coming in from Toronto, Canada.

Apollo Okamura – artist, coming in for the Toronto area.

Kent Burles – artist, coming in from the Toronto area (his first time at any US gaming event).

Mark Dudley and *Drunken Style Studio* artists.

Other artists are likely to be added.

Contributors to *The Rifter*.

Palladium's Online Moderators, friends and more.

The Palladium Open House will be a one-shot, ONE-OF-A-KIND, one-time event to celebrate **Palladium's 25th Anniversary** and **Kevin Siembieda's 50th Birthday** (actually April 2). And as it turns out, **Apollo Okamura's 33rd birthday** is Sunday, May 7.

And you get to celebrate it all up close and personal with dozens of the Palladium madmen. (Note: The only other conventions Palladium plans on attending in 2006 are *Gen Con Indy* and *Trinity Con*.)

- **Meet the Palladium staff and creators.**
- **Talk with Kevin and crew on just about any subject involving games, art, comic books, movies, and publishing.**
- **Purchase new and back-stock Palladium product for sale.**
- **Get special Open House and Anniversary commemorative items.**
- **Original art and prints for sale by the artists.**
- **Character sketches made to order by select Palladium artists.**
- **Learn the latest news and happenings at Palladium Books.**
- **Attend seminars and panel discussions (free to all).**
- **Play in scheduled game events by Palladium creators, friends and associates (nominal fee of \$1-\$2). Palladium RPGs only!**
- **Run your own game in the *Open Gaming* area – Palladium RPGs only!**
- **This is your chance to *drop off* manuscripts and art samples for our consideration as new additions to the Palladium Megaverse. Also accepting writer and artist contributions to *The Rifter*®. All can be dropped off all weekend long – a signed unsolicited manuscript form is required; available at the Open House.**
- **Scheduled gaming events (nominal fee of \$1-\$2). And role-playing games only! Yep, an RPG weekend extravaganza.**
- **Meet and game with other Palladium fans from around the country.**
- **Intimate setting & tons of fun.**

Be part of an event people will be talking about for years to come.

Advance Ticket Sales Only

Attendance limited to approximately 500 people

Due to space limitations and safety concerns, attendance must be limited. Sorry. Tickets will be sold on a *first come, first served* basis, so the sooner you order the more likely you are guaranteed admission. We hope you understand.

All reservations must be in by **April 15, 2006** – and tickets may sell out before that date. Tickets are sold on a first come, first served basis. A name must be assigned to each ticket.

No refunds for cancellations after March 15, 2006. No refunds for no-shows.

Price of Admission:

\$30 for the two day weekend (Saturday & Sunday) per individual.

\$15 for a single day (Saturday or Sunday).

\$40 additional for V.I.P. Friday, a special, one-evening event limited to 20-40 people. See details below.

Hours

Saturday, May 6: 10:30 A.M. till 10:30 P.M.

Sunday, May 7: 10:30 A.M. till 6:00 P.M.

Special Friday Night Event (an additional cost):

V.I.P. Friday (6:30 P.M. to 10:30 P.M.): An evening with Kevin Siembieda and select members of the Palladium crew held in the Palladium lounge.

Limited to 20-40 *lucky individuals* willing to shell out an extra \$40. (The final number of people has not yet been decided. We want to keep it intimate and special.)

Includes a private tour of the Palladium Offices by Kevin Siembieda (worth it alone to see the artwork hanging on the walls), and then spend 3-4 hours “hanging and chatting” with Kevin, the Palladium staff and other Palladium notables in the lounge area.

Kevin and other creators will be available to talk one-on-one, answer questions, and sign autographs. Any question may be “asked,” though we can’t promise all will be answered. You can even ask Kevin or his father, *Hank*, to tell embarrassing childhood stories!

Soft drinks and munchies will be available free at this exclusive and intimate gathering.

Palladium Books Inc.

12455 Universal Drive Taylor, MI 48180

Methods of Payment

Credit Cards: Visa & MasterCard are preferred.

Note: You may place your reservation online in a similar way as placing a book order or you may call our order line (734) 946-1156.

All Credit Card orders must include the following information:

– Credit Card No. – Name on the card – Address of the Credit Cardholder – Expiration date – telephone number of the cardholder.

– Name and address of *EACH* person for whom a ticket is being purchased. It is okay if their address is different than the cardholder.

– Will you need a hotel Room?

– Will you be driving or flying in?

Mail – Check or Money Order: You may also send a check or money order to Palladium Books.

Housing

Palladium’s office and warehouse is only a few miles from the *Detroit Metro Airport*. That means plenty of hotels for out-of-towners only 5-10 minutes away from the Palladium Open House. Once we have an idea of how many people will need hotel rooms, we will work to get a special rate at one or more of the hotels. We anticipate rooms to run between \$50 and \$80 a night.

Tell us if you will need a hotel room and we will try to point you in the right direction. We are NOT convention organizers, but we want to help out friends from out-of-town (which sounds like quite a few of you, based on the online reaction to our initial announcement), so please tell us if you will need a *hotel room*.

Ultimately, *YOU* will have to make your *own* arrangements, but we can provide a list of hotels in the area and we also hope to secure a few blocks of rooms at nearby hotels and motels, hopefully at a reduced rate.

Transportation

Those of you who may be *flying in* will have to rent a car or take a taxi. The latter may be a bit expensive, even with hotels being only a few miles away. Sorry, there will NOT be any sort of shuttle service.

Food & Restaurants

There are dozens of places to eat within a five mile radius of the Palladium office and warehouse. A half dozen are within walking distance (3-6 blocks), most are a short drive away. There is also a shopping mall, a Meijer, Target, other national chain stores, fast-food places (McDonald’s, Wendy’s, KFC, Taco Bell, White Castle, Hungry Howie’s Pizza, and many more) and sit-down restaurants within that 5 mile radius.

Driving In

Palladium Books is conveniently located near I-94 (Telegraph South Exit) and I-75 (Telegraph North Exit), just a short distance from *Detroit Metro Airport*.

The building is located one block west of Telegraph (US-24) and one block north of Northline Road in a small industrial park.

Parking is limited, so some of you should expect to have to park and walk from as far as a block away. We plan to make arrangements with some of our neighbors to help accommodate parking.

Open House Address: 12455 Universal Drive, Taylor, MI 48180

Panel Talks and Seminars

All panel discussions and seminars are free and will be hosted by notable Palladium personalities.

Siembieda Note: Since Kevin Siembieda could not possibly game with more than 60-100 people if he gamed all weekend, he has decided to put most of his time and energy into panel talks and seminars where he can meet and talk with scores of people at a single sitting. Kevin will probably run only one or two games (if any). The rest of the time, he will be wandering around the warehouse chatting with fans, signing autographs, and causing trouble. Fear not, plenty of other Palladium personalities and friends of Palladium will be running games.

The following are just some of the panels that will be presented during the weekend. They are listed in no particular order:

Meet Kevin Siembieda & Company (the Palladium Staff and Creators; Saturday & Sunday Morning at 11:00 A.M.) Introductions followed by Questions from the audience. 60-90 minutes. Free.

Meet the Artists! A question and answer panel with John Zeleznik, Ramon Perez, Apollo Okamura, Kent Burles, Mark Dudley and others. 60-90 minutes. Ask them about getting published, working for Palladium, life as a freelancer, art techniques, their past, their plans for the future, etc. Free.

Hollywood Stories and Tales of Licensing. Ask questions about the *Rifts Movie* and the Hollywood experience, licensing videogames, experiences with Nokia and the *Rifts® videogame* for the N-Gage, working on the *Ninja Turtles* and *Robotech*, how licensing works, licenses Palladium tried to get but failed or turned down (*X-Files*, *Aliens vs. Predator*, *Star Wars*, and others), and possible licenses in the future. Hosted by *Kevin Siembieda and Wayne Smith*. 90 minutes. Free.

Where do ideas come from? Hosted by *Kevin Siembieda* and various writers and artists. 60 minutes. Free.

Game Master Playing Tips, Approaches and Stories. Hosted by *Kevin Siembieda with other Palladium G.M.s*. Q & A from audience. 90 minutes. Free.

Designing Adventures – Game Master discussion focused on creating adventures. Hosted by *Palladium creators*. 60 minutes. Free.

Map-making & Game Master Tools and Props. This seminar is always hugely popular at conventions when hosted by *Randi and Roger Cartier*. G.M.s and map-makers do NOT miss this one! 90 minutes. Free.

What's in Palladium's Future? Get the inside scoop on books, games, licenses, and product planned for the future, from the *Palladium creators* working on them. Probably 60 minutes. Free.

A chat with Kevin & Henry Siembieda. Meet Kevin Siembieda and his dashing (but silly) father, *Henry*. Ask who was Kevin's earliest artistic influence (Dad drawing at the kitchen table is one), about drawing, comic books, catching chipmunks, frog hunting, the early days of Palladium and antics as a kid and teen. Open to questions from the audience. A rare chance to see father and son. **Note:** Henry Siembieda is one of

the Palladium staff members behind the scenes, and at a spry 75 years old, still works in the warehouse and processes mail order. 60 minutes. Free.

A chat with Ramon Perez and what he's doing outside of Palladium. 60 minutes. Free.

Ask us anything! Question & answer session in which *Kevin Siembieda and fellow Palladium Madmen* answer questions from the audience. What's it like working at Palladium Books? Why are books always late? How about licensing and releasing the *Robotech* RPG books? And just about anything you might want to know. 60-90 minutes. Fifty dollars . . . just kidding, free!

You share "your" ideas for Palladium with "us." A seminar in which members of the audience tell *Kevin Siembieda, Wayne Smith and other Palladium creators* what YOU want to see from us. Offer suggestions and ideas.

This is also your chance to drop off YOUR manuscripts or outlines for our consideration for publication as new sourcebooks, world books, games, character sheets, or contributions to *The Rifter*. Artists may also drop off photocopies of art samples and portfolios. Probably 120 minutes (two hours). Free.

The future of the Role-Playing Industry. The views of the Palladium staff. Free.

Artist Portfolio presentation. Artists, show your portfolios to Palladium artists any time during the Open House and get their opinions and feedback. Be prepared for constructive criticism and critiques. Not for the faint of heart and artists who can't take criticism.

More are likely to be added. Some may be repeated on Saturday and Sunday.

Gaming Events

Open Gaming

An area will be available for open gaming by ANYBODY who wants to start a game. So Game Masters, bring your books, adventure notes, dice and be ready to game. The whole idea behind the open house is to revel in Palladium role-playing games and the RPG experience. Meet and game with new players, try new ideas, or play old favorites.

Scheduled Gaming Events

We are still putting these events together and a complete list will not be available for another month or so.

Those of you with online access should check for updates and info on the Palladium Books official website – www.palladiumbooks.com.

Those of you who order POH tickets, but lack online access will be *mailed* an event listing and can mail or phone in your event requests.

ALL events will be sold on a first come, first served basis. Cost for scheduled game events will be \$1 & \$2.

In addition to gaming events there will be open gaming, panel talks, a dealer's area (Palladium stuff) and artists' alley.

Note: Events will be best suited for ages 13 and older.

Palladium Books' 25 year Anniversary Celebration



The Legacy of Blood

Optional Source Material for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Evan Cooney

Imminent War on a Global Scale

From The Island of Byzantium to the Timiro Kingdom, from the Eastern Territory to the Western Empire, a dark pall hangs over the world. The threat of war! Such a war as has not been seen since the age of Elves and Dwarves seems to lurk on the horizon, dominating the thoughts of king and peasant alike. Will the Wolfen Empire and Eastern Territory explode in full-scale conflict? Will the Timiro Kingdom lose control of its slave population? Demon Black Ships again sail the seas; who can contain the Western Empire's global aspirations? Certainly not Byzantium, they face a civil war as the Shadow Coast threatens rebellion. All it will take is a single spark, and the entire house of cards that is the Palladium world could collapse in an orgy of death and destruction unparalleled for 8,000 years.

While diplomats desperately try to maintain the peace, swords are sharpened, and countless hidden factions try to push the buttons that will send the nations of the world over the brink.

Historians grimly point out that "those who forget history are doomed to repeat it." This statement has not been entirely ignored, but it certainly has been taken in ways that the historians never intended it to. With concerns of an epic war stirring all across Palladium, governments and independent agents from the four corners of the world have converged upon the ancient battlegrounds and ruins of the Elf-Dwarf War. Some come seeking great weapons to lead their cause to victory, others come to find evidence of the horror of war that will pull the world back from the brink of repeating its past atrocities, and even more come for personal reasons, their interest in the past stirred up by the current talk of trouble.

Leading the charge is a group of rough and tumble scholars known as Paleologists. They have no guild, avoid associating with each other, and frequently have no allegiance but that which can be paid for. Despite this apparent lack of organization, they have come in hordes to the Old Kingdom and Baalgor Wastelands, each with his own agenda, plans, and ideas on where the ultimate treasure will be found. Their findings, once one can work through the slander and competing claims of discovery that permeate their papers, have brought to light an unprecedented number of discoveries in recent years. Artifacts, essays, maps, and historical treatises, some propounding abso-

lutely bizarre theories, have flooded from the Old Kingdom and into the hands of the wealthy and powerful the world over. The Library of Bletherad has its hands full trying to catalogue incoming copies of the works, and the curators are tearing their fur trying to sort the worthwhile scholarship from the outright lies.

These mercenary researchers let nothing get in their way, and more than a few lives have been lost when two parties meet at a site and engage in an argument over who has the rights to its treasures. In the lawless Old Kingdom, there is nothing to stop these fights, and nobody seems too keen to try. The results cannot be argued with; places and items whose memories were lost to history, drowned in the blood of millions dead, are coming to light for the first time in eight millennia. The legacy of the Dire Conflict is a legacy of blood, and it is coming to light just as its chaos seems ready to cripple the world all over again.

Paleology

Relic Hunting in a Dangerous World

In the highly competitive world of gathering rare artifacts, there are destined to be two types of people. The first are those who use money, power, and influence to buy or “acquire” an item they desire. The second are those who just go and find it for themselves. The Paleologist falls into this second category. Well educated, but unwilling to dedicate themselves to a life of study inside scholastic walls, these adventure-loving specialists head out into the field armed with their wits, their weapons, and a keen knowledge of what can be sold for cash. Let others worry about building museums and amassing collections, the Paleologist lives for the thrill of the chase. Being the first to discover some lost ruin, locate an ancient civilization, or identify a powerful item is the life’s dream of most who pursue this risky career.

While some Paleologists do amass collections for themselves, and nearly all possess a certain quantity of unusual and obscure items, the overwhelming majority sell most of their finds for cash, equipment, and favors, keeping things only as long as is necessary to return to civilization and find a buyer. Every Paleologist has a detailed journal cataloging their finds, complete with sketches, descriptions, information about location and circumstances of discovery, and probably some speculation about the purpose or history of the item or site. These journals are frequently written in private code, to prevent rivals from using the information for their own benefit should the journal fall into the wrong hands. When a Paleologist finally begins to feel too old or worn out to continue the intense field work, their journals can serve as the basis for writing a book or two, and retiring to a position as a lecturer or scholar at some learned institution.

Paleologists are a curious crossbreed of professions, part scholar, and part ranger, with a little bit of a bounty hunting mentality tossed in. The less ethical of their numbers are likely to have some thieving skills as well, though most are good or Unprincipled researchers who simply aren’t willing to accept the restrictions of academia. Regardless of alignment and motivation, they are scholars and merchants first, with some combat and survival skills picked up in the field as a result of having to

fend for themselves against all manner of beasts and men. They can fight in a pinch, and most have been in quite a few scraps over the years, but it isn’t their preferred method.

One can find a Paleologist almost anywhere, as they will pursue any lead they think is likely to guide them to their current obsession. Currently, they are found in the largest numbers in the Old Kingdom Mountains and Lowlands, poring over the remains of ancient civilizations, convinced that there is something new to be found if only they turn over the right rock. The wild theory that humans originated in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, laughingly dismissed by the rest of the scholarly community, has also sent legions of Paleologists southward at high speed, determined to be the first to prove or disprove the idea. A few have ventured north, to the Great Northern Wilderness, pursuing the stories of hidden Elven cities, but no word has yet come out as to their success. While a few Paleologists are commissioned by wealthy patrons and lead large expeditions, most work by themselves or with small groups, where they are free to do what they want, and can claim more credit for anything found.

The Paleologist Optional O.C.C.

If the G.M. allows it, a player character may choose to be a Paleologist, starting at first level. The character is likely to be a recent graduate from a learning institution who, somewhere along the line, discovered the joys of fieldwork.

Paleologists & Armor

Having spent most of their life as scholars, Paleologists are not trained in the use of heavy armor, and tend to dislike the weight (they prefer to save their strength for carrying their finds). Some form of leather is definitely the preferred style, combining flexibility and protection. Magic armor such as a Cloak of Armor or Leather of Iron is highly coveted, but obviously isn’t the norm.

Paleologist O.C.C.

Alignment: Any, but most tend towards good or selfish.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 11, P.E. 9; a high P.S. is helpful, but not required.

O.C.C. Skills:

Anthropology (+20%)

Archaeology (+20%)

History (+15%)

Languages: Native tongue at 98% and two of choice (+15% each).

Literacy: Native tongue at 98% and two of choice (+15% each).

Lore: One of choice (+25%).

Wilderness Survival (+15%)

W.P.: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Martial Arts (or Assassin, if evil) for the cost of three.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select 10 other skills at level one, plus select two additional skills at levels three, six, nine, and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.



Communications: Any (+10%).

Domestic: Any.

Espionage: Any.

Horsemanship: General or Exotic only.

Medical: Any, except Surgeon/Medical Doctor.

Military: Heraldry and Recognize Weapon Quality only (+10%).

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Wrestling.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any (+15%).

Scholar/Technical: Any (+15%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select five Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and one additional skill at levels three, five, seven, ten, and thirteen. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in the parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited (any, only, none) as previously indicated in the list.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a pair of boots, hat, belt, bedroll, backpack, 2 large sacks, 2 small sacks, a water skin, food rations for 1D4 weeks, 2D4 sticks of charcoal or graphite (for writing and drawing), two crow quill pens, a bottle of ink, a 100 page note/sketchbook, a lantern, a tinder box, and a 25 foot (7.6 m) length of good rope.

Armor: Starts with studded leather (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38).

Weapons: A dagger and one other weapon of choice. Both are basic S.D.C. weapons of good quality.

Magic weapons and other equipment must be acquired later.

Money: The character starts with 200 in gold, which can be saved or used immediately to purchase more equipment. Additional money will come from payment for jobs, or from selling information and artifacts.

Experience: Uses the same experience table as the Scholar.

Treasures from Ancient Lands

The Lost Arsenal of Baalgor:

Ancient Elven Magical Equipment

During the great Elf-Dwarf War, many fantastic, bizarre, and unique items were created by the Elves in their quest to find an answer to the Dwarven Rune Weapons. Finding it nearly impossible to actually match the Rune Weapons in direct confrontational strength, the Elves developed a great many highly specialized weapons designed for combat against their subterranean foes. Nearly all of these creations have been lost to history, having never been mass-produced in the first place, and generally rendered obsolete by the end of the war as well. A few of these items have survived, however, and occasionally show their heads in ancient troves, remote ruins, and the collections of the powerful or insane. Like much of the magic that was in use during the war, many of these items can be as dangerous to the wielder as the target, if not used properly.

With the recent influx of highly educated fortune seekers tearing their way through the ancient battlegrounds, armed with research and a powerful sword arm, such ancient weapons as have survived the march of time are being turned up at an astonishing rate (relatively speaking). Many are one-of-a-kind items, swiftly sold to wealthy nobles or ambitious nations for huge sums, but a few have turned up in quantity enough to hit the open market of an amazed world. Below are a few of these strange and lethal items, and an estimate of their market price. The prices could easily skyrocket to many times these numbers if the conditions are right.

Dwarf Sensing Spheres: One of the most basic of the Elven specialty weapons, the Dwarf Sensing Sphere was developed to help sentries in the battlefield, as well as to guide soldiers creeping through the black tunnels of the Dwarven underground. Normally a transparent crystal sphere approximately an inch around, it glows red if Dwarves are within 100 feet (30 m), with the color growing more and more intense the closer they get. If the Dwarves come within 50 feet (15 m), the crystal begins to vibrate, again, more intensely the closer the Dwarf is. If one of these spheres is ever held by a Dwarf, it will vibrate so violently that after one melee of contact, it will explode, causing 1D6 damage to the person holding it. A few of these have turned up at most of the major battle sites of the war, especially around the locations of known sieges. Cost: 30,000 gold or more, if available at all. Rare item, valued for its collectability more than its function.

Earthquake Seeds: These powerful, single-use magic weapons were the Elven answer to the question of how one destroys an underground fortification. Earthquake Seeds are approximately six inches (15 cm) long, and the width of a finger. They are made of a polished white ceramic-like substance, with two gold symbols painted on them. On one end is the symbol for force directed inward, and on the other end is the symbol for force directed outward. The warrior deploying an Earthquake Seed grasps the seed in both hands, speaks the word "Acba," places (or throws) it on his target, and then runs like mad. Thirty seconds after the word Acba is spoken, a massive earthquake will rip through whatever surface the seed is on, out to a maximum of 50 feet (15.2 m) in every direction. Any person standing in the area of effect will be thrown from their feet and will lose all attacks until the shaking stops, taking 1D6 damage in the process unless a successful roll with the fall is made. Most importantly, if the target area includes buildings, walls, or tunnels, it has a chance of causing a structural failure; 25% chance for reinforced/fortified walls, 40% for normal buildings and shored tunnels, and 60% for un-shored tunnels (roll for each building, section of wall, or branch of tunnel). If a person should be foolish or ignorant enough to still be holding an Earthquake Seed when it goes off, that person will be slammed to the ground, violently convulsing. That individual will suffer 2D6x10 damage, and is also 75% likely to break 1D6 bones. Any armor or packs will be loosened, and belts or girths may be snapped. Only two caches of these seeds have ever been found, and the first was mostly destroyed when a foolish fortune hunter object read a Seed to discover its activation word, then immediately tested it. Cost: 65,000 gold minimum, possibly far more if there is a seller's market. Extremely rare, the magic for creating these has been lost, so any that are around come from one of the two caches. Anybody finding another cache and trying to enter the market will find themselves the targets of the angry Paleologist who controls most of the current collection.

Enchanted Arrows: Enchanted Arrows can still be created by many Alchemists today, though there simply isn't a big market for them. Most archers don't see the point in spending large amounts for individual shafts, knowing that any given arrow could easily miss its mark and be gone forever without using its magic to any great effect. Myriad spells are available for arrows, and can be used for various purposes, but the following seem to have been favorites among the Elves during the Elf-Dwarf War, given the numbers of them discovered, scattered about. Unless otherwise noted, bringing one in to an Alchemist is the easiest way to get more, as they can attempt to study the magic and replicate it. Beware of unscrupulous dealers, however, who will simply steal the arrow with a passing comment, "I trust there will be no objections..." With the exception of the Targeting Arrow, all are single use items.

Daylight Arrows: Designed for illuminating large underground areas for combat, Daylight Arrows streak to their target like a tracer, and upon impact, illuminate a 30 foot (9 m) sphere with *true daylight* for 5 minutes. Damage is only 1D6, as they aren't designed for combat. Incidentally however, they do make excellent weapons against the undead. Cost: 1,000 gold per shaft.

Digger Arrows: When the Elves needed to get through heavy earthworks to gain access to a Dwarven stronghold, Digger Arrows could be used. When fired into the ground (natural dirt,

sand, pebbles, etc.), they explode in a spray of soil and displace the top 2 feet (0.6 m) of ground in a 5 foot (1.5 m) diameter. With a shower of these, the Elves could whittle through many defenses at an alarming rate. The dirt does have to go somewhere, as it's just sprayed aside, not removed from existence. Digger Arrows are ineffective against solid stone, cement, wood, metal, and people; damage is just 1D4. Cost: 2,000 gold per shaft.

Gas Arrows: Upon impact, gas arrows erupt in a pale greenish haze that covers a roughly 10 foot (3 m) diameter area. The haze will seep through cracks and under doors unless they are made airtight. Those caught in the haze immediately take 2D6 damage direct to Hit Points unless a save versus lethal poison is made. Furthermore, A save versus magic must be made each melee, or the person will fall into a magic slumber for the duration of the haze. Duration is 1D6+4 melees. Gas Arrows cause no physical damage from their impact, and must be transported carefully, as they can be set off if the head is struck too hard. Cost: 2,000 gold per shaft.

Goo Arrows: These oddities are designed for restraining prisoners or covering an escape. When they impact, they spread out into a ball of vile-smelling taffy-like goo able to fill a 10 foot (3 m) wide hallway with a wall three feet (1 m) thick. Any person within 5 feet (1.5 m) of the impact point must roll a dodge, or be caught in the sticky mess. The goo can be chopped through by normal weapons at a rate of a foot per melee, or by magic weapons at a rate of 5 feet (1.5 m) per melee. If a person is hit with the arrow on their body, they will be completely immobilized, and must roll a separate dodge of 15 or better (with bonuses) to keep their head free. If their head is trapped, they will begin to suffocate unless saved. Duration of the goo is 5 minutes, then it fades away to nothing. Goo arrows do no physical damage from their impact. Cost: 3,000 gold per shaft.

Rope Arrows: Perfect for climbing and spelunking, when a Rope Arrow is fired it magically trails a line out behind it to a distance of 100 feet (30 m) or until it impacts. The arrow will bury itself solidly in any target, and only the archer who fired it, a combined P.S. of 30, or 25 S.D.C. damage can break it free. The rope is strong enough to support up to 1,000 pounds (450 kg) at a time, and cannot be burned. Damage is 2D6, and it could certainly cause more damage trying to remove it than it caused going in. Cost: 1,000 gold per shaft.

Targeting Arrows: The ultimate sniper weapon, Targeting Arrows must be drawn and held for a full melee before firing, with no other actions possible. When fired, they have a bonus of +3 to strike, an extra 100 feet (30 m) of range, and an extra +5 to damage. Damage is otherwise equal to whatever is normal for that type of bow. Cost: 25,000 gold per shaft, if even available. The secret to making these arrows has been lost, Alchemists cannot replicate them, and they are very rare. Nearly all of those that have been found are in the hands of powerful families and guilds, with every effort made to recover the shaft after use.

Water Arrows: Used for flooding trenches and underground facilities, creating strategically placed swamps and morasses, or as emergency firefighting tools, these arrows create 100 gallons (378.5 liters) of water at the point of impact. Once created, the water is entirely normal, and acts just like normal water, running, dripping, and evaporating as usual. Cost: 750 gold per shaft.

Rune Stunner (Club): Designed with one purpose in mind – defeating a Rune wielding opponent! These clubs utilize powerful lost magic to create an effect seen nowhere else in all Palladium. When a Rune Stunner contacts a Rune Weapon in any way, that weapon must immediately roll a save versus magic, Spell Strength 14. If it fails, the entity that is bound to the weapon is stunned for 2D4+2 melees! During this time, it cannot communicate with the wielder, cast any spells, or use any special abilities; only the damage remains unchanged. Though they serve minimal purpose today due to the scarcity of Rune Weapons, they were a mighty force to be reckoned with on the battlefields of the Elf-Dwarf War! There is a 75% chance that any Rune Weapon old enough to remember the Elf-Dwarf War will have heard about Rune Stunners, and will recognize what has happened to it. Regardless of whether they know what it was or not, any Rune Weapon struck by a ‘stunner will have a burning desire to destroy the wielder of it and eliminate the threat. Anarchist and evil weapons may go so far as to take action without the owner’s permission once they have recovered. Rune Stunners are heavy, indestructible hardwood batons, about two feet (0.6 m) long and an inch and a half thick. Damage is 2D6+4. These weapons have been located in various places around the Old Kingdom, amidst old weapon caches. There was only one known test of the ‘stunner since they were rediscovered, and the person testing it is no more. He was massacred by the Rune Weapon he tested it upon as soon as that weapon recovered. Cost: 75,000 gold minimum, very rare. If there is known to be a rune wielder somewhere in the area, the cost could quadruple. No self-respecting Rune Weapon will permit its handler to own a Rune Stunner as well.

Tunnel Crawlers: Related to the same school of magic that now produces Chaser Crystals, the Tunnel Crawlers were designed specifically for clearing out the tunnels of the Dwarves. Looking something like a modern ‘potato-masher’ grenade, when the glass globe on the end is smashed, a three-foot (1 m) long, centipede-like creature emerges and charges at a speed of 44 straight down whatever hallway it is in. When it senses it has caught up with or located a humanoid, it explodes in a massive fireball, 15 feet (4.5 m) in diameter, which does 6D6 damage. Soldiers using a Tunnel Crawler must be very sure the hall doesn’t loop back around behind them, and that they aim it the right way when they break the glass, otherwise they will end up blasting themselves. Tunnel Crawlers are extremely sensitive to daylight, and if they are used outside, or in an area of magical daylight, they will immediately shrivel up and vanish without ever exploding. A supply of these was located in the remains of an Elven city in the Old Kingdom Mountains that was destroyed sometime between the Second and Third Peace. Nobody knows how many there are except the group that found them, and they aren’t telling anybody. Cost: 10,000 gold apiece, very rare, and no more can be manufactured. The right Alchemist *might* be able to figure out the secrets, if he had enough of them to study, and would probably pay handsomely for specimens. Adventure, anyone?

Additional Elven Enchantments

In addition to the specialized weapons that have been found, many standard weapons have been found that bear additional magical enchantments designed to aid the fight against the

Dwarves. Given an example to study, a good Alchemist weapon smith should be able to emulate these effects. Just like with arrows though, one must be careful about which Alchemist one chooses to work with.

Dwarf Slayer: Similar to Demon and Deevil Slaying weapons. Does normal damage to all creatures except Dwarves, to whom it inflicts double damage. Cost: 16,000 gold.

Daylight Weapons: Daylight weapons can, on command, radiate true daylight out to a range of 10 feet (3 m) for a period of 30 minutes, 3 times per day. This light will harm undead, and even while this power is not in use they will not want to touch the weapon. Shadowbeasts will also avoid it if it is lit. While the daylight is engaged the weapon is nearly blinding to look at, and leaves a glittering golden path behind every swing, tracing the actions of the wielder for a brief moment before fading out. Cost: 25,000 gold.

Attunement: A rare power that mimics one of the basic functions of Rune Weapons. The enchanted weapon can be attuned to a specific race, a specific type of alignment (good, selfish, evil), or a specific person. Anyone grasping the weapon who falls outside this category will feel like they’ve been shocked, and will take 2D6 damage. Continuing to hold on will result in another 2D6 damage and a roll to save versus magic every melee. Failing the roll means the body part doing the grasping goes numb and can no longer hold on; the weapon will drop. The numbness will go away after one full minute. Cost: 90,000 gold, very unusual. If attuning the weapon specifically to one person, that person must give the Alchemist their true name; a risky proposition.

A Rune Book:

“The Madness of Korin Gilead”

Apocalyptic Magic of the Dwarves
from the Last Days of the Dire Conflict.

Deep within the bowels of an ancient Dwarven tunnel complex, the name of which is forever lost, an equally ancient Rune Book was discovered. Entitled “The Madness of Korin Gilead,” the book is filled with written descriptions (in Runes) and vivid, terrifying pictures depicting some of the most dangerous and unstable spell magic ever used on the face of Palladium. Written as a warning to the future by a Dwarf who witnessed the events described, it was hidden away from the purges that claimed the life of its owner. The book contains no spell formulae, but rather accounts of the destruction wrought by seven horrific spells not seen since.

Created in the closing days of the Elf-Dwarf War, in the same vein as the circle of Absolute Elemental Power, these spells are the product of sheer madness. Blinded with rage and hate, the sorcerers behind these most potent of spells could not see the destruction they were bringing to the world and to themselves. To them, the idea of butchering thousands of warriors, friend and foe alike, was just a part of the conflict; the more corpses, the better they liked it. As the graphic pictures in the Rune Book attest, having been drawn straight from the mind of their creator, these mad mages would wade into the thronging battle and there sacrifice themselves to bring their cruel vengeance to fruition.



There is no mortal alive who has the knowledge of these spells, and it is unlikely any ever will. This is almost definitely a good thing for the world. At the G.M.'s option however, some ancient artifact may exist with a charge or two of one of these spells, or a super powerful world-threatening menace may arise who has uncovered secrets the gods will kill to protect. Regardless of how they are incorporated into the game, they are not to be taken lightly! Even the least powerful has an immense effect on the caster, and can very easily be lethal to everybody involved. This is no small factor in accounting for why these spells are no longer known! Those who dared use them often died in the process.

Apocalypse Magic, as it is generally called by those few who have seen this tome, does not act like standard spell magic. Though it technically falls into this school, it has effects unlike any other, tapping into the P.P.E. reserves of the world itself to fuel its effects. Some of these differences are comparatively minor, and some are crippling. They are as follows:

1) **P.P.E. Vortex:** Each apocalypse spell requires a vast amount of P.P.E. to cast, but even these huge amounts can do nothing more than trigger the effect. To maintain themselves for their entire durations, the spells actually create a P.P.E. vortex, sucking in all of the P.P.E. from the surrounding environment and burning it to create the magic. Within the area of effect of the spell, Ley Lines and Nexuses will be sucked completely dry for the duration. Also, no spells can be cast in their radius while the effect is active; the P.P.E. is simply absorbed and burned off (though spells cast beforehand remain in effect for their full duration). Also, any P.P.E. bearing objects or individuals in the area will find themselves being drained at a rate of 5 P.P.E. per

melee, with gods as the only exception. Yet another effect of this self-feeding is the fact that once cast, these spells cannot be stopped! They will run their full course, regardless of anything the caster may try to do to cancel them.

2) **Body and Mind:** Being the conduit for such massive forces has an effect on the caster. This can range from permanent stat loss, to insanity, to aging, to all of that and more! The mortal body is frail, and Apocalypse Magic abuses it horribly. Even using a charged object to cast the spell, should one be so lucky (cursed?) as to find one, will not free one from this toll.

3) **Affects Everybody:** Just to be clear, Apocalypse Magic affects everybody within range, including the spell caster himself. None are immune to the effect. This is part of why it is so lethal to use.

4) **Required Level:** Apocalypse spells don't have spell levels in the classic sense, but they are very level sensitive. If a person below the required level attempts to cast an apocalypse spell, or channel it via an artifact, they must roll on the following side-effect table.

Side Effects for Using

Apocalypse Magic at Too Low a Level:

01-10: Lucked out, no side effects, successful casting.

11-40: Spell fails to cast correctly. Caster faints under the strain, and must rest for 1D4 days to recover (-4 to all physical stats, -20% on all skills until then).

41-70: Spell fails to cast correctly. Caster collapses unconscious, and cannot be roused. Will wake up again in a week + 1D6 days, but will have no memory of the attempted casting.

71-90: Spell fails to cast correctly. Caster collapses in a coma and will die without medical attention. Rolls to recover are made at -10%, and will suffer "near-death" effects.

91-00: Spell fails to cast correctly. Caster dies instantly, his body torn apart by the massive magic he was trying to control. Resurrection can be tried, but at -20%.

Apocalypse Magic

Presented here are the complete spell write-ups for the seven Apocalypse spells described by the Rune Book, along with excerpts from their descriptions therein. Remember, the book does NOT contain formulae that would allow a person to cast these, the write-up is provided so as to allow the G.M. the option of including them in an appropriate epic-style campaign. One final note: the text of the book is written in Runes, and all the pages of the book are "sealed" and therefore are unable to be erased.

Bloodspring – Rain of Death

Late in the afternoon of the third day of battle at Mos Chulus, A roiling mass of black clouds swept in from the north, moving against the wind. As they came, steam rose from the ground beneath them. At first it was ignored as just another spell, but then the screaming began. It was not the scattered screams of battle, nor the cry of wounded men; it was a single rising wail that rose above the din of conflict, carrying a shattering note of agony and horror. The cloud settled low over the battle; a dark, heavy

rain was falling from it. Watching the carnage from a rise, I puzzled over the red mist it made as it struck the ground. Then I realized it was not rain... it was hot, boiling blood.

As the storm of blood poured down and seared the flesh of those below, the thousands of corpses scattered across the battlefield from three days fighting convulsed, and began spitting up blood as well, as if each one was a spring in the ground, giving up water. As soldiers boiled to death and fell, they too began to yield up their blood to the ever growing flood. It was not long before the only sound was the hiss of the dark storm and the clank of armored bodies striking each other as they floated downstream on a boiling slurry of blood, flesh, and all the detritus of war.

Bloodspring

Required Level: 11

Range: 600 foot (183 m) diameter circle.

Duration: 10 minutes (40 melees).

Damage: 4D6 per melee round, minimum.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 3,500

This spell's effect is twofold. First, it summons a large, black storm cloud some 600 feet in diameter (183 m), with the spell caster right outside the edge of it. The storm cloud pours down a heavy rain of thick, boiling hot blood. The blood comes down at a rate of an inch (2.5 cm) a minute over the storm area, an almost blinding storm even without the other aspects of it. This boiling downpour accounts for the 4D6 per melee round damage listed in the description. Full plate armor with a helm will reduce damage taken by the wearer by 50%.

The second effect of this spell is more ghastly. Any corpse in the area of affect that is not yet fully decomposed, i.e. nothing but bones left, will immediately begin to cough up all the blood it had in it when alive. This includes corpses that are buried, but still have flesh on them, from whom the blood will seep up out of the ground as if from a spring (hence the spell's name). If there is enough of it (G.M.'s discretion), this additional groundswell of boiling hot blood will do an additional 2D6 per melee round to those who are caught in it.

The blood is 100% real, and is not a magic liquid. Having fallen, it will run in rivers, form lakes, and be re-absorbed into the ground as it cools and dries, just like real blood. There is no magical saving throw against this attack. The only way to avoid damage is to flee the area, or be completely impervious to heat damage. Even then, the stench of the blood slurry will probably cause most people to want to leave the area. The caster would be wise to stand on high ground when casting this, so the boiling blood does not run downhill onto him.

This spell takes two minutes (8 melees) of uninterrupted concentration to invoke. During that time, the dark clouds will gather, seeming to draw together at breakneck speed from beyond the horizon in all directions. At the end of the two minutes, the 3,500 P.P.E. will be expended, the vortex effect will begin, and the blood begins to come down. If concentration is interrupted prematurely, the effect stops immediately, and half the P.P.E. casting cost is lost.

Side Effects: This spell strains the physical abilities of the caster, as some of his blood vanishes in the casting, never to be

replaced. The result is that he tires more easily, and looks pale. Takes 4D6 damage directly to Hit Points, and permanently loses 1 P.B. point. The caster will always tire twice as fast as normal from then on, for the rest of his life.

Icefall – Storm of Frozen Blades

As the long column of an Elven cavalry regiment approached, a cold wind began to blow. I saw them raise the collars of their cloaks, little knowing how laughable that action would seem in retrospect. Dismounting their horses, the lead cavalymen stepped forward to see if they could spot the source of this new magic, for magic it obviously was in the midst of what had been a scorching jungle day. With a crash of thunder, the first two were laid low by a huge blade of ice which hurtled from the clear, blue heavens and severed both their heads. Moments later, hundreds more shards of ice began flying, and the horses bucked and screamed as the entire column was struck with flying death. Ice began visibly forming on the bodies of the soldiers, slowing their attempts to flee the maelstrom.

Out of the many hundreds of riders struck, our best records suggest perhaps two dozen escaped with their lives that day. All across the site of the massacre lay frozen pieces of Elves and their mounts, sliced into ragged piles of flesh by the whirling ice. In some places, legs without torsos stood like incomplete statues, glittering in the deceptive sun. In others, blocks of ice lay upon the ground, and only when seen from the appropriate angle did one recognize that they contained a piece of a former trooper. We decided to leave the area before they thawed and began to attract dangerous scavengers...

Icefall

Required Level: 12

Range: 800 foot (244 m) diameter circle.

Duration: 20 minutes (80 melees).

Damage: 2D6 per melee round, plus 4D6 per strike, and slow effect.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 4,000

This lethal area effect spell calls up killing cold and huge scythes of ice to freeze and dismember one's opponents. The effect occurs in an 800 foot (244 m) circle, with the spell caster right outside the edge of it. There is no visible change in the sky associated with this spell, but there is a frigid wind that will be immediately felt. When the spell goes off, those in the area of effect will find themselves rapidly freezing to death! Ice begins to crystallize from nowhere and coat the bodies of victims, slowing down their movement more and more the longer they are in the area. In the first melee round, the effect is minimal: 10% reduction in Spd, and -2 to dodge. These increase rapidly however, over the next minute (4 melees). Each additional melee round will see Spd decrease by another 20%, and dodge by -2, until finally the victim is moving with a 90% Spd penalty, and a whopping -10 to dodge. This freezing is responsible for the 2D6 per melee damage of being in the area. Those impervious to cold don't take damage, but do still have the other penalties unless they can keep the ice from forming somehow.



The reason the Spd and dodge penalties are so lethal is the fact that it is critical one escape quickly from the area and dodge well if one wants to live! Huge, scythe-like blades of ice are whipped through the air at terrific speed, severing limbs and impaling people with uncanny accuracy. Those caught in the Icefall must roll a dodge twice per melee round, or be struck with one of these deadly missiles. A dodge of 14 or higher means a near miss, lucky you. Failing to dodge means being struck for 4D6 damage, and probably (60% chance) being knocked to the ground. When the Icefall is complete, normal temperatures return, and the ice begins to melt naturally.

This spell takes three minutes (12 melees) of uninterrupted concentration to invoke. During that time, freezing winds will begin to blow, and will grow colder and stronger until they reach full force at the moment of inception. At the end of the three minutes, the 4,000 P.P.E. will be expended, the vortex effect will begin, and the Icefall commences. If concentration is interrupted prematurely, the effect stops immediately, and half the P.P.E. casting cost is lost.

Side Effects: Using a spell this cold freezes the heart of the caster, rendering him more cold and callous – drop alignment by one level when used. It also tends to cause severe mental trauma, resulting in a random psychosis developing within 1D4 days after the incident.

Earth Shatter – The Ground Rebels

As I left our siege camp early, headed southward to deliver a message for one of our generals, I little thought it would be the last I saw of my friends in camp, or of my foes entrenched in their hilltop fort. Expecting another routine day of boredom, I went on my way, urging my steed to high speeds, thinking that would be my only excitement for a long time. As I neared my destination some 60 miles from where I started, I heard a distant rumbling, a sound I attributed to thunder beyond the horizon. Thinking nothing of it, I delivered my message, ate a leisurely lunch, and began the ride back. As I came within 10 miles of our camp, I realized something was wrong. An immense cloud of dust hung on the horizon, and though it was thick, I could see through it well enough to discern that the hill upon which the Elven fort had sat was no longer there!

Riding as rapidly as I could, I tore across the open plains of the lowlands, and within 30 minutes found myself back where our camp, and the fort, should have been. Instead of either of these things, I found a massive sinkhole, spider-webbed with deep crevasses and jagged outcroppings. Lying low, and creeping to the edge of one of the dark tears that split the earth open, I peered in. Though I could not see the bottom, I was able to discern a few shattered bodies and pieces of architecture hanging on the rough and twisting sides. The entirety of the fort, camp, and both military forces were gone, swallowed up by the shattered ground.

Earth Shatter

Required Level: 13

Range: One quarter mile (0.4 km) diameter circle, centered on the spell caster.

Duration: 3 minutes (12 melees), permanent results.

Damage: See description.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 4,250

The ultimate in siege warfare, this spell causes the earth itself to rebel beneath the feet and foundations of any so unfortunate as to be in the area. Powerful earthquakes shake the ground, causing liquefaction, and undermining the strongest of structures with the quicksand-like effect it has. The eventual result is a massive sinkhole, a quarter mile around, filled with crevasses hundreds of feet deep that yawn wide to swallow up the unsuspecting. Hills flatten and vanish, solid rock cliffs break apart and collapse, and buildings disappear straight into the ground without a trace.

Standing is nearly impossible (only 10% chance to keep one's feet, per melee). Those flung to the ground take 2D6 damage per melee from the jolting, and may well be sucked into the liquid ground or swallowed by a crevasse. A dodge of 5 or better must be rolled each melee to avoid the crevasses (which are effectively a death sentence if you can't fly, average depth 2D4x100 feet and remember that other magic spells don't work in the area of effect), and a dodge of 10 or better is needed to keep out of the liquid earth. Those stuck in the liquid earth will be sucked in completely in 3 melees unless they are rescued somehow or can use natural or psionic abilities to escape. Buildings will collapse and be swallowed within 6 melees, along with their contents. It's best not to be in a building when it goes under.

This spell takes three minutes (12 melees) of uninterrupted concentration to invoke. During that time, a low rumble will be heard, and in the final seconds the ground will begin to tremble. At the end of the three minutes, the 4,250 P.P.E. will be expended, the vortex effect will begin, and the ground begins the buckle. If concentration is interrupted prematurely, the effect stops immediately, and half the P.P.E. casting cost is lost.

Side Effects: For the spell caster, this is an extraordinarily dangerous spell. Firstly, it centers on him! Unless the caster is in the air, he will be subjected to the full force of this spell, and quite possibly killed. Secondly, because it is centered on the caster, the caster must be very close to the intended target. Seeing as how defenders of most structures are quite likely to focus on a single caster who is standing in one place for several minutes concentrating on a spell, this is also risky.

This spell is also physically draining in the extreme, weakening the caster as if he had been engaged in strenuous lifting all day. The caster will feel winded for several days, and will find that from that time on, he will require an extra hour of sleep each night to feel rested. One final interesting side effect of this spell is that the caster will forever be a marked man to Earth Elementals of all types, who will attempt to kill him without provocation should they cross paths. Call it instinct.

Swarm of Hades – Demonic Locusts

Koorthak Fiildur had an immense grin on his face as he spoke to me about the new spell he had created. We were standing together in the rich farm fields of our enemy, a short way behind our own front line, which was pushing the Elves back to their city. "Watch this!" said Fiildur, cracking his knuckles, "After this, we won't even have to lay siege to the city to starve

them!" With that he strode away from me up a corn row, planted his feet, and became very still. I watched him, growing more nervous with each passing minute. Spells didn't take this long to cast unless they were something very bad, very bad indeed... The sky began to shift through various intense hues; purple, orange, green, and others. Suddenly, there was a brilliant flash of light and I saw a Rift open in the sky over him. A deafening buzzing sound filled the air, and the Rift vomited forth a writhing, swarming, all consuming flood of hellish darkness. I fled.

I returned two days later, assigned to lead a small guard of soldiers to find our prominent Wizard, Koorthak Fiildur. What once were fields of endless golden wheat and green corn were now no more than a patchy brown wasteland of destroyed crops. Navigating by memory, using the terrain as my guide, I led the soldiers to where I had last seen the mage. There, lying amongst the brown fields, was a patch of highly polished white. Approaching it, I quickly recognized that it was a set of skeletal remains, picked as clean as can be imagined, so that they almost looked false in some way. We gathered up the loose bones, and made our way back to report. Fiildur's spell certainly had laid waste to the breadbasket of the Elves, but it laid waste to him as well. Such was the price of that demonic swarm.

Swarm of Hades

Required Level: 13

Range: 100 foot (30.5 m) diameter swarm, centered on spell caster.

Duration: 24 hours.

Damage: 1 point per bite, 5D6 bites per melee round.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 4,750

These locust-like insects are not actually demons, nor are they from Hades, but to a victim they certainly must seem like it. This spell summons forth an immense, blindingly thick swarm of omnivorous flying insects. These insects move at a Spd of 22, and will devour anything organic in their 100 foot (30.5 m) wide path. They'll strip the flesh from a cow in less than a minute, and turn fields of crops into fields of ruins at the speed they move. Supernaturally hungry, they are never satisfied, and never full. They will move with mechanical efficiency, proceeding to the nearest edible target area at maximum speed, consuming it, and moving on. This surging swarm of insects cannot be controlled by the caster nor by anyone else. They will not pursue specific targets (unless it is the only source of food in the area); they will simply consume everything within their area and move on.

The swarm is summoned via a Rift in the sky, and once 24 hours have passed, the members seem to die and vanish. Those caught in the swarm take 5D6 damage per melee round from the vicious bites of the insects. There are so many of them (literally millions) that there is no practical counter-attack at the individual level. Only solid barriers stop them. Individuals wearing scale or heavier armor with full head protection will find damage reduced to 1D6 per round. Chain mail is not effective, as the insects can work through the chain, and the swarm will simply eat leather armor or weaker. The best idea is just to run.



This spell takes five minutes (20 melees) of uninterrupted concentration to invoke. During that time, the sky will begin to flicker and change color rapidly. At the end of the five minutes, the 4,750 P.P.E. will be expended, the vortex effect will begin, and the Rift opens, bringing in the swarm. The vortex effect of this particular spell is unusual in that it follows the swarm. Those caught inside the swarm suffer all the effects (can't cast spells, P.P.E. drainage, etc.), while those outside it or who enter areas vacated by the swarm are unaffected. If concentration is interrupted prematurely, the effect stops immediately, and half the P.P.E. casting cost is lost.

Side Effects: Should the caster survive summoning this swarm, he will find that his appearance has taken on a blotchy and unattractive hue. People will no longer want to associate with the caster much either, as he will have become a bit more uncouth, impolite, and downright scary. Permanently reduce P.B. by 3 and M.A. by 2. Also, the caster will find he must eat 3 times as much food as usual or suffer crippling hunger pains (-3 to strike, parry, and dodge, -10% on all skills). He does not gain the ability to metabolize things any faster however, so he is likely to gain a huge amount of weight. As a final justice, the caster will develop a strong phobia about flying insects.

Cinder Cone – Fire from Below

The battle was going badly, and our forces were clearly being overwhelmed by the legions of the Elves. A surprise attack from the southwest by a second column had caught us completely off guard, and that flanking maneuver resulted in many

thousands of dead in our ranks. Soon our army was streaming away eastward, desperately trying to elude the crushing jaws of Elven steel, but with so much confusion there was little hope of escape. Then, as we fled, I heard a mage yelling to the commander of one of our last cohesive units. "We must have a rear guard! Protect me for five minutes, and I shall make these Elves regret their pursuit!" The commander called orders to his soldiers, and soon that brave regiment had wheeled about and formed a semi-circle of a thousand or more raised shields, guarding the solitary mage against numbers twenty times their own. Cursed by the curiosity that is mine, I concealed myself some distance away and observed the bloody proceedings.

The host of Baalgor fell heavily upon the staunch defenders, and there was much carnage. The closer the Elves came to the center of our little formation, the more did the Dwarven shields resist their ingress. I do try to remain a neutral party in my recording of events, but this was a sight to see, and I was proud, in that moment, to call myself a Dwarf. As our rivals did gather for one final strike, sure to annihilate the few score valiant fighters left of our command, an immense rumbling sound filled the air. A sound like ten thousand galloping horses resounded in my ears as the ground began to tremble. I saw the Elves charge, and our forces brace themselves. One final ear splitting crack echoed across the plains, and all were quite suddenly obscured in an enormous cloud of ash. None, of either side, was ever seen again.

Cinder Cone

Required Level: 14

Range: Casting range, 100 feet (30.5 m) max. Effect covers a 300 foot (91.4 m) diameter circle to start, and grows out to 3,000 feet (914 m).

Duration: 15 days, permanent results.

Damage: See description.

Saving Throw: Standard against the ash (half damage and penalties). None otherwise.

P.P.E.: 5,000

This very impressive, and usually deadly, spell has the remarkable effect of drawing a new volcano up from the ground! Using magic to tear apart the crust and reach down to the magma core, a cinder cone volcano explodes forth from the ground, and rapidly begins building towards the sky. When the cinder cone breaches the surface, an ash cloud (equivalent to the level 2 Fire Warlock spell: Cloud of Ash) is blasted forth over a 300 foot (91.4 m) area, doing 2D6 damage per melee, giving -5 to strike, -9 to parry and dodge, and blinding people, as well as choking them and setting flammable things ablaze (see Cloud of Ash for full description of effect). The cloud lasts for about the first hour of the new volcano's life. As soon as the ash cloud has appeared, 2D4 Lava Elementals crawl from the volcanic vent and begin laying waste to any living things they can find in the area. They cannot be controlled, and attack without discrimination or mercy. They are unhindered by the volcano's effects, and will remain until the hour has passed.

Within a melee of the ash cloud effect and arrival of the Elementals, cinders and blobs of congealed lava begin flying from the vent, spraying across the entire area of effect, and beginning to build the cone. Anybody in the area of effect has a 50% chance per melee of being hit by a sizable piece of burning lava, which does 6D6 damage (half heat, half impact). The cone builds towards the sky at a remarkable pace of 100 feet (30.5 m) per day upward, and 200 feet (61 m) per day outward! It continues for 15 days, erupting non-stop until it has reached a height of 1,500 feet (457 m), with 45 degree angle sides sloping down to the 3,000 foot (914 m) diameter base. It will continue to belch out black smoke for the entire time, and even after it ceases active eruptions, it is likely to continue smoking for weeks.

The cinder cone is a fundamentally weak structured volcano, as it is made of piles of loose material, and without additional eruptions to continue supporting it, it will begin to collapse and erode away, falling back to a pile of rocks within a few years. Nonetheless, while active, it will destroy any person or thing near it as easily as a hot knife carves through butter.

This spell takes five minutes (20 melees) of uninterrupted concentration to invoke. During that time, a distant rumbling sound will be heard, growing louder and louder until the very air seems to vibrate with it. At the end of the five minutes, the 5,000 P.P.E. will be expended, the vortex effect will begin, and all hell breaks loose. The vortex effect covers the entire area of effect for the volcano (starting at 300 feet/91.4 m, growing to 3000 feet/914 m) for the duration of the 15 day eruption period. After that, P.P.E. returns to normal in the area, though not many people will want to be on the volcano's slopes anyway. If concentration is interrupted prematurely, the effect stops immediately, and half the P.P.E. casting cost is lost.

Side Effects: Besides being caught inside the ash cloud of your own induced volcanic explosion? People who use this spell will find they are not able to breath properly ever again, imped-

ing their stamina and agility badly (permanently lose 2 P.E. and 1 P.P. points). Also, they spend the rest of their lives suffering from a pyrotechnic version of the Midas touch. Anything flammable (lamp oil, paper, DRY wood) touched by the caster will begin to smolder after 1 melee of contact, and will burst into flames after a full minute of contact. One final little curiosity is that, for a month after casting the spell, the mage will smell strongly of smoke no matter how hard he or she washes.

Meteor – Death from Above

As I write this, I am reminded of the reason I am always walking stooped, and of why I can no longer wield a sword as once I did. This cursed spell! The fool who cast it was either ignorant of his power, or else cared not for his countrymen. The cynic in me says it is the latter. For 17 months we had been camped outside the walls of the Elven city, and at last it seemed they were willing to come to terms. We had defeated their reinforcements, held tight our lines, and not a bite of food or drop of water had entered their compound since our arrival. They called for us to send a delegation to discuss terms, and among the Dwarves who went was a Wizard of ours, whose five brothers all had been slain in our campaign.

Clearly, I cannot answer as to the exact occurrences that went on inside the Elven palace, but I know all too well what happened outside it. We began to see shooting stars stream across the sky high above, visible through the broad daylight. Awed by this, we thought perhaps it was a good omen, a sign from the gods showing their favor on this day of triumph. How very wrong we were. After a few minutes of watching these stars, one seemed to grow closer. As it came across the sun, we saw a shadow center on the Elven citadel, and suddenly begin to grow bigger at an alarming pace. We turned and ran, but moments later there was an enormous booming sound. I felt sharp pains in my back, the ground lifted under my feet, hurling me through the air, and then it was black.

Meteor

Required Level: 14

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m).

Duration: Instant, permanent results. Vortex lasts 5 minutes after the strike.

Damage: 1D4x1000 to the first 50 feet (15 m) in every direction, 3D6x10 to the next 250 feet (76 m), 3D6 to the next 500 feet (152 m).

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 6500

If there is an equivalent to an A-Bomb in the Palladium world, this may be it. Falling from a clear, blue sky, with little warning unless one is watching the heavens for the telltale meteor shower, those at the center of this impact have effectively zero chance of surviving. A 25 foot (7.6 m) diameter ball of burning rock plummets from the heavens to smite the target of the caster's choice, up to a maximum of 100 feet (30.5 m) away. Never mind that the blast zone is 800 feet (244 m) in each direction, it sure teaches your enemy a lesson, right? Well, apparently in the mind of the madman who invented this spell, it is worth it.

This meteor devastates the immediate area, sends a shock wave out 300 feet (91.4 m), and blasts spinning fragments a full 800 feet (244 m). Those caught within 50 feet (15.2 m) are probably atomized. Those in the second zone have their bodies bent and broken, and perforated with flying shards of rock, and those in the outer zone are rained with smaller pieces. A large, smoking crater is probably the only thing that will be left at ground zero, perhaps here and there a piece of slag with discernible characteristics indicating what it used to be. The P.P.E. vortex effect remains in effect in this crater for 5 minutes after the blast, sucking up energy to repair the cosmos. After that, things will be back to normal... or at least as normal as they can be given what just occurred.

This spell takes ten minutes (40 melees) of uninterrupted concentration to invoke. During the second half of that time, shooting stars will begin to stream across the sky, first at wide intervals, and then faster and faster. At the end of the ten minutes, the 6,500 P.P.E. will be expended, the meteor will slam to ground, and the vortex effect will kick in. If concentration is interrupted prematurely, the effect stops immediately, and half the P.P.E. casting cost is lost.

Side Effects: The caster of this spell, should he survive, will suffer the effects of a severe concussion. Permanently loses 2 I.Q. and 1 M.E. points. Also, the Wizard will be deafened! He will have to resort to using sign language and writing for receiving communication. Though he will still be able to speak, it will probably sound slightly off to many people – a result of the caster not being able to hear himself when he talks. –10% to spoken languages.

Apocalypse – The End of Days

The most eerie part of it all was the silence. The air was lit with lightning flashes, and one could easily see the soldiers of both sides screaming in agony as their bodies exploded through the joints of their armor, but not one sound came out of the grim red-lit area that stood like a beacon against the night sky on the high mesa where they fought. The ones who were lucky were stuck by the lightning, hastening their death and ending their pain. Those who avoided the charged bolts from the sky found themselves suffering a drawn out and hideous death, about which they could do nothing. Suddenly the sky returned to normal, and with an enormous whooshing sound I found myself sucked off my feet and hurtled headlong towards the battlefield.

When I staggered to my feet, I found myself covered in the most disgusting slop one could imagine. I have seen many horrors in my days, some of which are described in this book, but this was by far the worst situation I have ever found myself in, and I pray that none shall ever face it again. I had to wade, and I mean this literally, though the liquefied remains of what had once been two great armies. Suits of armor lay bobbing on gelatinous masses of flesh that once filled them, and charred ground steamed as it came in contact with the gooey substance. Since that day, I never again returned to a battlefield. I have become accustomed to the nightmares, and they no longer interfere with my daily operations, but night is a time of terror for me...

Apocalypse

Required Level: 15

Range: A half-mile (0.8 km) diameter circle, centered on the spell caster.

Duration: 3 minutes.

Damage: 1D6x10 per melee round direct to Hit Points. 5D6 per lightning strike. Possible Insanity – see Side Effects.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 10,000

Ok, so it doesn't end the world, but it does have a pretty good chance of extinguishing the majority of life within its half-mile area of effect. With this foul bit of Wizardry, the caster sacrifices himself to induce the absolute destruction of all those around him. The damaging effects of this spell are the result of the simultaneous creation of a huge vacuum, and the summoning of a large quantity of very powerful lightning. Either one by itself would probably kill the majority of victims, but together they result in carnage on an unparalleled scale.

Firstly, the vacuum effect evacuates all the air from a half-mile wide dome, about 500 feet (152 m) high in the center. This is an instant effect, and will floor 90% of the people within the vacuum, leaving them gasping as the air is sucked from their lungs. The second effect of this vacuum is that, like in outer space, the inner pressures of the body really can't hold a person together any more, and the hapless victim is turned inside out and sucked in liquid form right out of whatever armor, clothes, and other trappings they may have worn. Suffice it to say this process is quickly lethal. The damage per melee of this spell is a measure of this effect, and how quickly various victims take to reach the point of messy death.

In case being liquefied and sucked out of one's armor isn't enough, the reddish sky is filled with sizable lightning bolts that rain down liberally upon those below. There is a 50% chance of being hit by a lightning bolt per melee. Most victims of this spell, if they were able to think about such things as they happened, would consider death from the lightning a mercy. It is very difficult to move in the vacuum, and both standard and magical flight will fail completely (there is no air to fly upon!). Maximum ground movement speed is 50% normal, and every moment is agony. Psionics still work, if you have anything that will help.

When the spell ends, the red sky will return to normal, the lightning will cease, and the vacuum will disappear. The elimination of the vacuum will cause all the air around it to rush inward with a sound like a thunderclap, sucking nearby people and objects off their feet and pulling them towards the affected area.

Side Effects: For the caster: Death. This spell is 100% lethal to use. The caster of the spell is usually the first to die, as his body seems to explode with lightning bolts flying in all directions. Even if his atomized corpse were somehow gathered together and restored, nothing short of deific resurrection could bring him back to life, and no god would likely do that. For those victims who somehow survive, as well as those who watched a significant portion of the event, roll a save versus insanity. Failure means suffering a random phobia. Regardless of success or failure, all will suffer recurring nightmares for the rest of their lives about what they saw.



S.C.R.E.T.

Revisited and Revised

By Glen A. Evans

I've always liked the concept of S.C.R.E.T., but I felt that if the federal government actually sponsored an organization bent on capturing, containing, and eliminating super beings, they'd be better equipped, organized, and have some sort of agenda, which may or may not be the same one wanted by the American people. So in response to *Heroes Unlimited 2nd Edition* and all the supplement books that have come since *Villain Unlimited* first came out in 1992, I decided it was time to reexamine the U.S. Superbeing Control, Retrieval, and Elimination Agency and *update* them to the current day.

G.I.G.M.A.

The origin of the Government Investigation of Genetic Mutations and Abnormalities (G.I.G.M.A.) starts at the end of World War II. During the Nazi war crime tribunals, the Allies uncovered numerous super-advanced genetic projects designed to perfect the so-called Master Race. Among them were Doctor Aldelbert Oberlin's eugenics experiments, Doctor Heinrich Vossen's "ubermensch" ventures, and Professor der Klug's "changeling" research. Although the three men in charge of these programs escaped prosecution, their unethical exploration into the creation of super beings initiated an international ban on the use of ultra-eugenics and other areas of genetic engineering. A handful of world leaders, including President Truman of the United States, called for the complete destruction of all research into human experimentation made by the Nazis, citing it as just one more atrocity committed by madmen. But unlike the Jewish detention camps, the general public was kept unaware of these unethical studies, namely because dozens of scientists convinced most of the Allied governments to conceal the knowledge from the media, citing the beneficial possibilities the Nazi research might have in the future. Furthermore, a climate of distrust and fear permeated the Allies, especially the Soviet Union, whom nobody trusted at the time.

In 1947, the U.S. Department of Defense discovered a double agent in their midst working for the Soviets. Hoping to avoid the death penalty, the agent revealed the Soviet spy plan known as "Project Chameleon." It involved infiltrating the various government branches and military with metamorphs, espionage agents with the ability to alter their physical appearance and stature, enabling them to impersonate anyone. At first the Department of Defense dismissed him, thinking it nothing more



than the desperate ravings of a Soviet spy. But four influential members of President Truman's administration didn't think so. Already suspicious of Communist expansion, they sought out to prove these so-called accusations. To everyone's horror, two metamorphs were discovered, one turned out to be a four star General in the U.S. Army, the other a prominent U.S. Senator.

All at once the U.S. government went into panic mode. How many more of these metamorphs were there? Who had they replaced? What U.S. military secrets were already in the hands of the Communists? President Truman wanted answers, and no one had any to give. Then the same members of his administration who uncovered the presence of the metamorphs suggested recruiting individuals from various intelligence and law enforcement departments to serve as undercover agents with the power to investigate **anybody**, including the President himself. These covert spies would work under the direct control of the President, but no one except for the four key leaders would know their true identities. Truman agreed, and went ahead with creating the organization without the knowledge of Congress, since members of legislative branch might turn out to be metamorphs. The name chosen for the agency was G.I.G.M.A.

Six weeks after its creation, agents located three more metamorphs, one being a Supreme Court judge for the State of New York. The paranoia about who else might be an enemy agent grew with each passing week. The four leaders of G.I.G.M.A. insisted they needed further manpower and influence, and the President gave it to them after they discovered a metamorph among his cabinet who nearly learned about the entire operation.

As the 1940s came to an end, G.I.G.M.A.'s authority continued to rise. The agency made and implemented plans without consulting the President or informing some of their own people. Secrecy was essential because most of their tactics were unconstitutional and downright illegal. Yet their methods continued to be effective, as they found fifteen Soviet metamorphs in prominent positions of power. Sadly though, no one could find out what these metamorphs had done with the individuals they replaced.

By the time President Eisenhower took command of the country, G.I.G.M.A. carried out covert operations in all 50 states and within the federal government and military. But the four who created G.I.G.M.A. were reluctant to allow a new administration to gain control over their organization, so they implemented plans to ensure no one person, not even a future President, could seize control over the G.I.G.M.A. governing body. To their surprise, this was to the liking of Eisenhower's administration for it gave the President plausible deniability when it came to their involvement. In fact, Eisenhower's administration broadened G.I.G.M.A.'s mandate, ordering them to carry out operations in Europe and South America. This resulted in the capture of twenty Soviet metamorphs, and the discovery of a plot in the French Communist party to assassinate French Presidential candidate Charles de Gaulle in 1958, allowing him to become President of France in December of that same year.

By the time of Kennedy's presidency, G.I.G.M.A. carried out covert operations throughout the world, managing even to infiltrate and corrupt the very organization within the Soviet Union responsible for the creation of the metamorphs. In October of 1963, G.I.G.M.A. succeeded in its mandate to permanently shut

the operation down using propaganda and key assassination attempts on prominent Communist party leaders. This made the Communists believe that their metamorph agents sought to wrest control of the Soviet Union out from under them, so they shut Project Chameleon down and eradicated the entire lot of metamorphs.

With the war to find the metamorphs over, a number of individuals in President Johnson's administration thought it was time to diminish G.I.G.M.A.'s authority, and remove the power that many claimed the organization abused. G.I.G.M.A. leaders were outraged, insisting the agency's purpose remained necessary. Although the Soviet Union might no longer be using metamorphs to gain access to top secret information, other nations might, including those who are friendly or allied with the United States. Nevertheless, Johnson's administration and key members of Congress and the U.S. military (who'd been told of G.I.G.M.A.'s existence) decided to scale back the agency's authority and remove its international presence.

About this time, many of G.I.G.M.A.'s home base operatives noticed a subtle increase of super beings in the United States. At first this was taken as a temporary phenomenon, possibly due to the increase of thermonuclear testing occurring throughout the planet. In addition, advances in biotech and genetic engineering started to entice numerous corporations with the possibility of fame and fortune. New life forms and human experiments started popping up at research facilities. Some ran away to escape being studied like lab rats (see *Mutant Underground* for further information). Cybernetics and robotics were in their infancy and sometimes fugitive test subjects emerged from their labs to go on a rampage. With an increasing number of super villains and criminal masterminds appearing across the country, state and local law-enforcement departments were often overwhelmed. In response, other super beings all over the country decided to take action and combat these villains, declaring themselves defenders of freedom, democracy, and justice for all American citizens. As a result, these "superheroes" received celebrity status, resulting in an explosion of super beings across the country, and to a lesser degree, all over the world.

It all came to a head in 1971 in Atlanta, Georgia, when a giant, fire-breathing mutant called Gogmagog went on a rampage, causing the deaths of dozens of people and leaving hundreds more injured. Police and S.W.A.T. teams tried to stop him but the sixty foot giant simply crushed them beneath his feet. In an act of pure malevolence, he picked up a gasoline tanker truck and tossed it into the State Capitol building, causing a huge explosion that leveled the structure. Eventually, he was brought down by a squad of fighter jets launched from Dobbins Air Force Base. Afterward, the public demanded accountability for the mutant's actions, namely because he'd been an elementary school teacher for years. Where had he gotten his powers from? Was anything about him infectious towards their children? Why hadn't anything been done to stop him?

President Nixon at the time was in Ottawa, Canada meeting with Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau. By sheer coincidence, a band of super being terrorists called the Unchained Canadians held twenty people hostage in a supermarket. Then, all at once a Canadian government task force armed with the most advanced technological equipment of the time assaulted the super beings, freed the hostages, and took half of the Unchained

Canadians into custody. The other half died during the conflict. When Nixon asked the Prime Minister, "What kind of task force was it?" the Prime Minister responded, "A secret one."

Two days later, President Nixon met with the leaders of G.I.G.M.A., key members of Congress, and the heads of the Department of Defense. He announced he wanted a special agency created to help control, capture, monitor, and/or eliminate any individual using meta-normal technology or abilities to extort, assault, manipulate another human being. When the leaders of G.I.G.M.A. said they already own that charge, Nixon insisted this assignment would go to the new agency, while G.I.G.M.A. continued its original mandate; the investigation of genetic mutations and abnormalities. However, they would no longer be granted authority above the laws of the U.S. constitution, or for that matter, the power to break any and all laws in the execution of those duties. While everyone else applauded the President's decree, the four leaders of G.I.G.M.A., the very same individuals who had been running the organization since Truman's days, were outraged at the thought of being diminished to such a feeble capacity. Furthermore, they were told to disclose the identities of all administrators and agents to anyone with the authority to ask for it. This proclamation became the final insult to the senior leaders. They resigned and seemingly disappeared from public life, but in actuality they took their key staff members, a wealth of information, money seized from numerous third world dictators, and enough political influence to forge a new organization. One even more ultra secret than G.I.G.M.A. had ever been. The agency's charter was simple, to watch over the safety of America and protect her from all threats, domestic and foreign, including the federal government. The agency became notorious for its black budget and covert projects, as well as its infamous ability to do anything to get the job done. Its name: *The Sector*.

G.I.G.M.A. Today

Today G.I.G.M.A. and S.C.R.E.T. fall under the direct control of the Department of Homeland Security. G.I.G.M.A. employs hundreds of field agents whose only duty is to seek, identify, track, observe, and keep a record of any and all super beings within the borders of the United States. It's the Big Brother of metahumans. Unlike its sister agency, G.I.G.M.A. field agents are not trained to retrieve or eliminate super beings nor are they to respond to any who become a threat. Their job is to watch over them, and indicate who is likely to become a threat, and contact S.C.R.E.T. to remove them before it comes to that. Like U.S. Marshals, field agents search for super beings as if they are fugitives. In a recent attempt to broaden their authority, several members of Congress are pushing to pass the SARGE ACT (Super Ability Registration to Guard against Extortion) which will make it mandatory for all individuals with meta-normal abilities to register with the U.S. government, just as an individual must do if he or she wants to own a gun. So far, the bill has been filibustered to death in the House of Representatives, namely because Congress is being influenced by powerful lobbyists from various bio-tech labs like Bio-Spawn and Genesys. Furthermore, mega-corps like the Cyberworks Network and Price Pharmaceuticals don't want to reveal the number of super beings they have on their payrolls. Not to mention the

government itself doesn't want a record that one day might be called into question. Still though, individuals such as Ander Michaels of S.H.O.C.K. and Reverend Thomas Griffin of the Church of Principalities are calling for Congress to take a stand and make the SARGE ACT into a law.

G.I.G.M.A. operatives are trained to be able to blend into normal everyday life, to look and appear as the average Joe and Jane. The man selling hot dogs in the football stadium. The lady who works the checkout counter at the neighborhood grocery store. Maybe the plumber fixing your bathroom sink. The impersonation goes as far as to appear as if the said individual willingly chose the occupation as his or her calling in life. No one will ever know their true identity. In fact, G.I.G.M.A. operatives are forbidden to reveal their true identity to anyone, not even to friends or family. It is essential for the operative to immerse him or herself in their chosen field, only coming out to report the actions of a sighted or known super being on a daily basis. As a result, most G.I.G.M.A. agents tend to be loners and try to isolate themselves from society. Some have turned into mavericks and hot-heads, unable to deal with the stress of finding the bad guy and having to call in the cavalry instead of taking him out themselves.

G.I.G.M.A. agents operate alone, however each operative will report to a regional office which can be found in any large U.S. city (with a 1 million population), as well as large cities found in all U.S. territories (the Virgin Islands, for example). Although G.I.G.M.A. operatives are not looking for a fight, they are trained to defend themselves and they're given the latest in high-tech sensory and communications equipment. However, the rule of thumb is for them to avoid being seen carrying high-tech or unconventional weaponry on their person and thereby giving away their civilian identity. For the most part, agents obey this restriction, but that doesn't mean they don't keep "something" special in their car or at their home under their pillow.

G.I.G.M.A. boasts having the best field agents of any government sponsored agency. Although the Sector and MTF will debate the issue, the G.I.G.M.A. agent has the authority to obtain the Sector and/or MTF agent's classified personnel file, and therefore discover all his or her strengths and weaknesses. Nevertheless, G.I.G.M.A. field agents are directed not to take the initiative against anyone. Their primary charge is to help S.C.R.E.T. combat the enemy by learning all they can about their quarry, to watch him from afar, monitoring his daily routine (when he takes out the trash, goes to work, etc.), and making note of any special powers displayed. Thus many a villain is taken completely by surprise when S.C.R.E.T. shows up fully armed with weapons that exploit his one great weakness.

Some G.I.G.M.A. agents resent the idea of watching over people like vultures. Others consider it the most important job in the world, because the agent has the right to allow the mutant, a) the freedom of a normal life uninterrupted and undisturbed (if he doesn't harm people or use his powers in an abusive way), or, b) to be arrested by S.C.R.E.T. and taken to one of their holding compounds, where he is likely never to be seen or heard from again.

Century Station is the only city in the U.S. that G.I.G.M.A. has no jurisdiction to operate from. The laws that granted the city immunity from various legal requirements forbid

G.I.G.M.A.'s presence. This doesn't mean agents avoid the city; on the contrary, most come to further their training or to vacation. Although Sector 10 doesn't like the idea of G.I.G.M.A. agents in their city, there's really nothing they can do about it. Furthermore, G.I.G.M.A. agents are known for coming to Century Station just to show off to their spy counterparts. Even today, bad feelings remain between the leaders of G.I.G.M.A. and the Sector, which has apparently rubbed off onto Sector 10. On numerous occasions, CSPD has been called in to break up a bar fight between two agents.

What G.I.G.M.A. represents to super beings is a matter of perception and degree. To the average person on the street, they only know of S.C.R.E.T., so the work of a G.I.G.M.A. agent is thankless and in some regards, unrewarding. However, S.C.R.E.T., operatives have been known to go out of their way to try and save a G.I.G.M.A. agent from harm's way. But to the super powered community, particularly those who know of G.I.G.M.A.'s existence, it's a dehumanizing feeling, knowing some guy selling newspapers might really be a government agent keeping tabs on them. Perhaps their so-called best friend at work is really telling S.C.R.E.T. to be on the lookout against him or her. G.I.G.M.A. doesn't see a difference between heroes and villains, to them they are all metahumans who must be monitored at all times.

G.I.G.M.A.'s central headquarters is in Richmond, Virginia where it appears to be a recruiting center for the F.B.I. There are about 5000 field agents on duty throughout the country, with the majority working in the big metropolitan centers. But that doesn't mean a few can't be found working in rural America, driving a tractor in a corn or wheat field.

Typical G.I.G.M.A. Field Agent NPC

Note: Eighty percent of all G.I.G.M.A. agents are normal humans. The rest are Psionic (10%), Bionic (7%) or Experiment (3%). Mutants and Aliens will never be accepted because nobody in the agency trusts them.

Alignment: 30% Scrupulous, 25% Principled, 20% Aberrant, 15% Unprincipled, 6% Anarchist, 3% Miscreant, 1% Diabolic.

Average Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 15, M.A. 14, P.S. 14, P.P. 12, P.E. 16, P.B. 11, Spd. 13.

Average Hit Points: 25-30

Average S.D.C.: 70 (1D6x10+40 if rolled as a Special Training Secret Operative), does not include bonuses from skills and other combat bonuses.

Average Age: 20-30

Average Sex: 70% male, 30% female.

Average Height: 6 feet (1.83 m) for male agents, 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 m) for female agents.

Average Weight: 180-200 lbs (81-90 kg) for male agents and 130-150 lbs (58.5 to 67.5 kg) for female agents.

Average Experience Level: 1D4+1

Super Power Category: Essentially a Secret Agent/Spy. In Heroes Unlimited, 2nd Edition, the character would be considered Special Training: *Secret Operative*, and rolled up accordingly (see HU2, page 216) with the following changes to *Step Two*: Education & Skills:

Common & General Skills:

Pilot Automobile (+10%)
Pilot: Two of choice (+10% any).
Basic Mathematics (+15%)
Speak Native Language (98%)
Read and Write Native Language (98%)
Speak two other languages of choice (+20%).
1D6+3 Secondary Skills.

Espionage Program (Special G.I.G.M.A. Standard Skills):

Disguise (+15%)
Impersonation (+20%)
Intelligence (+20%)
Tracking (+20%)
Detect Concealment (+10%)
Interrogation (+10%)
Surveillance Systems (+15%)
Two Espionage or Communications skills of choice (+10%).

Military Program (Modified G.I.G.M.A.):

Hand to Hand: Martial Arts
Running
Climbing (+20%)
Military Etiquette (+15%)
Radio: Basic (+20%)
Radio: Scramblers (+20%)
W.P. Pistol
Two Military or W.P. skills of choice (+10%).

Special Occupation Training, G.I.G.M.A. humans only, pick one of the following:

Note: This represents the G.I.G.M.A. agent's undercover identity.
Actor: TV/Video and Seduction (+15%) and +5% bonus to Disguise and Impersonation.
Artist: Art and three Technical Skills (+15%).
Athlete: Four Physical Skills (+10%).
Automotive Mechanic: Auto Mechanic and Basic Mechanics (+15%).
Broker/Financial Consultant: Business & Finance and Computer Operation (+15%).
Chef/Cook: Cooking and two Domestic or Technical skills (+15%).
Computer Programmer or Technician: Computer Scholastic Skill Program (+15%).
Construction/Factory Worker: General Repair, Pilot Truck, Carpentry, and Basic Mechanics (+15%).
Farm Hand: General Repair, Pilot Truck, and Identify Plants & Fruits (+15%).
Firefighter: Paramedic, Pilot Truck, Body Building, Cook, W.P. Axe (+15%).
Groundskeeper/Gardener: Identify Plants & Fruits, Land Navigation, and General Repair (+15%).
Janitor/Maintenance: General Repair, Basic Electronics, Basic Mechanics, Carpentry (+15%).
Journalist/Media Reporter: Journalist Scholastic Skill Program (+15%).

Legal Aid/Clerk: Business Scholastic Program (+15%).

Medical Assistant: Medical Assistant Scholastic Skill Program (+15%).

Musician/Singer: Play Musical Instrument, Sing, and two Domestic Skills (+15%).

Nurse: Paramedic and two Domestic skills (+15%).

Police Officer: Police Scholastic Skill Program (+15%).

Professional Driver: Auto Mechanics and two Pilot Skills (+15%) and +5% to Pilot Automobile.

Research Assistant: Computer Operation, Research, Writing, and one Science skill (+15%).

Teacher: Research, Computer Operation, Writing, and two skills from either Communication, Domestic, Electrical, Mechanical, Medical, Physical, Science, and Technical (+15%).

Travel Agent: Business Scholastic Skill Program (+15%).

Writer: Writing and three Technical skills (+15%).

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Typical Number of Attacks per Melee: 4 (5 for those 4th level).

Agent Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with punch/fall, +3 to pull punch, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 to Perception. +1 to save vs magic and poison, +4% vs coma/death. These are in addition to possible bonuses from other attributes, skills, or power categories (includes Hand to Hand).

Appearance: G.I.G.M.A. agents typically look like average everyday people.

Occupation: Covert Federal Agent.

Weapons & Armor: G.I.G.M.A. agents typically carry two conventional weapons depending upon their mission parameters. Some do have access to high-tech weaponry but this is not standard issue. Sometimes they wear concealed body armor if they feel they are entering a dangerous area.

Base of Operations: Every G.I.G.M.A. agent lives in an apartment or house that functions as his or her secret base of operations. The agent has spent 5D6x \$10,000 in special equipment to outfit his home/secret lab. However, the agent will attempt to keep his residence as normal looking as possible. Replacement of lost or damaged equipment is automatic.

Vehicles: See Souped-Up Car under *Secret Operative*. Of course, the G.I.G.M.A. agent has the option of having any type of vehicle (pick up truck, motorcycle, motor boat, etc), but only gets one. However, the agent is required to purchase his or her own vehicle (the company will only modify it). Assume this has already been done.

Cybernetics: All agents (except Experiments) can receive three (3) bionic implants. These include cybernetic/bionic features for the ear, eye, sensors, lungs, and throat implants from **Heroes Unlimited, 2nd Edition** and any of the cyber implants from **Ninjas & Superspies™**.

Available Money: With a weekly pay of \$4000, plus expenses, agents can afford to live well, but if they are attempting to impersonate a special profession, they will make every attempt to appear as if they only make the appropriate amount (i.e. they can't be a janitor if they are seen driving a BMW sports car).

G.I.G.M.A. Organization Statistics

A. Outfits: None (0 Points).

B. Equipment: Gimmicked Equipment (30 Points).

C. Weapons: Armed Agents (5 Points).

D. Bionics & Robotics: Cyber Agents (25 Points).

E. Vehicles: Spy Cars (25 Points).

F. Communications: Computerized (15 Points).

G. Offices: Regional (25 Points).

H. Military Power: Security Guards (5 Points).

I. Super Power Operatives: Freelance (10 Points).

J. Sponsorship: Government (10 Points).

K. Special Budget: Big Bucks (35 Points).

L. Administrative Control: Agency Protection (25 Points).

M. Internal Security: Iron Clad (25 Points).

N. External Infiltration: General Infiltration (25 Points).

O. Research: Superior Connections (30 Points).

P. Agency Credentials: Unknown (3 Points).

Q. Agency Salary: Excellent (30 Points).

Total Agency Points: 323 Points.

S.C.R.E.T.

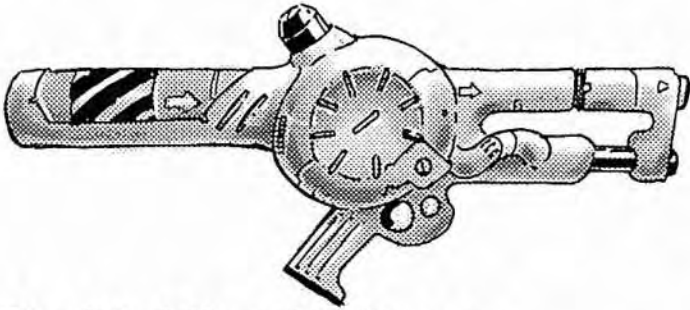
Experimental Weapons

Stone Foam

Stone Foam is a sticky, thick white foam that begins to harden almost immediately to a solid, dense consistency. The foam is somewhat similar to substances used as insulating sealants, only a hundred times stronger. The foam is a powerful adhesive forming into a durable coating on nearly any surface. Its molecules then undergo a transformation, completely reinventing themselves within 3 seconds of being exposed to the air. Once hardened, the foam is almost like concrete, yet retains its permeability so there's no chance of suffocation. The foam is highly resistant to fire and sub-zero temperatures (i.e., the foam takes ¼ the normal damage). If the foam is not treated with its special classified solvent (good, old H²O), it will remain for 12 hours, irregardless of the amount used. In its fluid-like state, Stone Foam restricts all movement, even against the likes of giants, supernatural beings, and robots. It's such a powerful adhesive it can be used to halt any vehicle attempting to drive over it (reduce Spd. by 93%). One liter/quart of Stone Foam can completely restrict all movement of a being with a Supernatural P.S. of 30 (Superhuman P.S. of 50). Each additional liter/quart will add 10 to that number. Thus 3 liters/quarts can hold a Supernatural P.S. of 50 (Superhuman P.S. of 70). Once the foam turns into its granite state, the adhesive properties remain, meaning it stays attached to the target. A single liter/quart of Stone Foam will produce a barrier equal to 320 S.D.C., which is equal to 200 lbs (90 kg) of concrete. Because Stone Foam bonds directly with the target, the additional weight negates various superpowers because of the increase in mass. This means a power like teleport will not work, and neither will intangibility or invisibility (i.e., an intangible person could walk through solid Stone

Foam, but could not turn intangible once Stone Foam bonded to his or her skin). It's important to think of Stone Foam as gooey tar that instantly turns rock hard. A single liter/quart can coat a floor, wall, table, an average sized person, or an entire sports car.

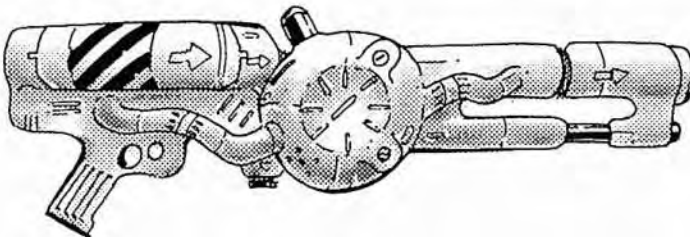
As of now, Stone Foam can be dispensed in either two methods, the DL-2 Portable Cannon or DL-6 Vehicle Mounted Cannon. C-SWAT and Sector 10 are currently fielding testing both with great success. Gramercy Island has recently purchased two portable cannons, but keeps them in the R&D Center (possibly in an attempt to replicate the Stone Foam formula).



The DL-2 Portable Cannon

Total Weight: 20 lbs (9 kg) loaded. **Fuel Capacity:** 4.16 gallons (16 liters). **Maximum Range:** 90 feet (27.4 m).

Payload: 16 single shots (1 liter), 4 short bursts (4 liters), 2 long bursts (8 liters/cost 2 attacks), or one full melee spray (19 liters/4 attacks). **Cost:** \$1800. \$200 per quart/liter.



The DL-6 Vehicle Mounted Cannon

Total Weight: Cannon 25 lbs (11.25 kg); metal and ceramic, 27 gallon (102 liters) drum weighs 190 lbs (85.5 kg). **Maximum Range:** 300 feet (91.44 m). **Payload:** A single shot will dispense 3.1 gallons (11.7 liters). A full blown spray (4 attacks) can empty the tank in a single melee. **Cost:** \$15,000. \$5500 per gallon. **Note:** This weapon can be mounted on cars, trucks, robots, or carried by anyone with a P.S. of 21 or higher.



The MT-7 Splattergun

M-Tech is very pleased with this baby. It's nothing more than a modified paintball gun in the shape of an M-16A1 assault

rifle. But instead of firing paintballs, the weapon fires gel-coated rounds filled with a classified chemical called Green Rot. This stuff forces skin tissue to instantly absorb any secondary chemical that is also contained within the round. Green Rot is not reactive with most other compounds and is soluble in nearly everything. As a result, various toxins can be combined with Green Rot to cause quick and instantaneous reactions that are next to impossible to resist. Anyone shot with a Green Rot round is -5 to save vs poisons and toxins. The MT-7 uses compressed gas canisters, but the manner in which air is released makes the weapon silent and recoil-free, even under burst fire conditions. The weapon accepts all standard top and under-barrel accessories, but no barrel-mounted accessories. The refillable compressed air canister fits into the stock of the rifle and is good for 60 shots. The 30 gel round clip fits into the gun just like the standard clip does in the M-16A1 rifle. **Effective Range:** 200 feet (61 m). **Feed:** 30 round clip. **Weight:** 5.5 lbs (2.5 kg). **Barrel Length** 24 inches (609 mm). **Mode:** Single shot or semi-automatic (3 rounds). **Cost:** \$9500 which includes the gun, one 30 round clip of Green Rot plus secondary compound, and 1 refillable air canister.

M-Tech provides the following toxins to be included in the gel rounds:

Paralysis. Victim is -8 to strike, parry, and dodge for the first melee round, then becomes immobile for the next 5D6+2 minutes. The saving throw is 16. **Cost:** \$8,000 for 30 rounds.

Convulsive. Victims are racked with nausea and stomach cramps; -7 to strike, parry, and dodge, and has no initiative for the next 4D6 minutes. Engaging in combat or running has a 70% of causing the victim to vomit. The saving throw is 16. **Cost:** \$6000 for 30 rounds.

Poison. Victims take 2D6 points of damage off their S.D.C. or Hit Points every melee for the next 2D6 melees. The saving throw is 14. **Cost:** 10,000 for 30 rounds.

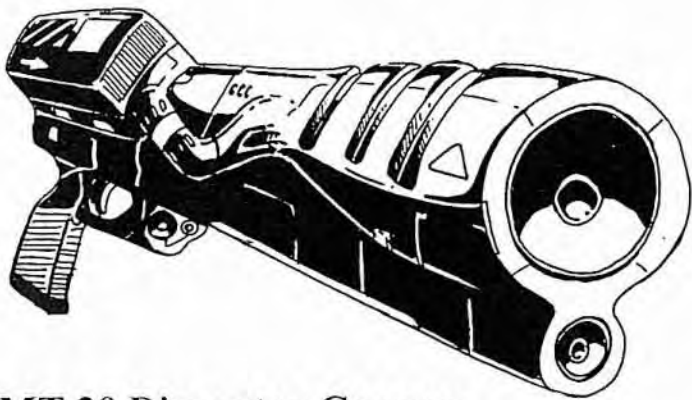
Note: Remember, the Green Rot causes a -5 penalty to the saving throw (effectively making a non-lethal saving throw a 21!!!), and the effect is instantaneous. The damage and penalties are not accumulative, but the duration and effect is (e.g. failing a three round burst with paralysis rounds results in a 15D6+6 minute duration).



MT-5 Pulsar

This pistol-size weapon fires darts that deliver an incapacitating electric shock. Each capacitor dart modulates a discharge of voltage that disrupts all neural signals sent by the brain. **Range:**

85 feet (26 m), **Damage:** 1 point of damage from the dart plus the victim must make a save vs non-lethal poison (16) or suffer -8 to strike, parry, and dodge. Reduce Spd. and number of attacks per melee by one-half. The victim has no initiative. The effects last for 2D4 melees. **Feed:** 8 shot clip. **Rate of Fire:** Single shot. **Weight:** 1.5 lbs (0.7 kg). **Cost:** \$850. Extra clips cost \$100 apiece. **Note:** The darts have a Penetration Value of 2. Even those impervious to poison will be affected by the dart, unless they're impervious to electricity. Can't use bonuses to save vs poison (only P.E. attribute score bonuses).



MT-20 Disruptor Cannon

An effective but messy weapon that can disable a single individual or a large crowd. It has no effect on hard solid objects, however its ultrasonic vibrations produce devastating effects on soft objects, such as the internal organs within a human body. The sonic vibrations will pass through body armor and vehicles, and inflict harm upon the person inside, although the effects are reduced by a third. Characters with Heightened Sense of Hearing or Ultra-Hearing are rendered temporarily deaf by this weapon unless they wear ear protection (-3 to initiative, strike, parry, and dodge), and will still suffer from the effects the weapon has on their internal organs. If this weapon is used on a large crowd, more than likely HAZMAT will have to clean them up. Nevertheless, this weapon is very useful in pacifying people. **Range:** 300 feet (91 m). **Weight:** 15 lbs (6.8 kg). **Length:** 28 inches (71 cm). **Damage:** 1D4 points of damage, plus the victim must make a save vs non-lethal poison (16) with a -2 penalty, otherwise the sonic vibrations cause nausea, stomachaches, loose bowels, and vomiting. Reduce Spd. by 70% (those who run or engage in combat have a 90% chance of vomiting and/or having diarrhea). Victims are -6 to strike, parry, and dodge, and have no initiative. Victims are -12 to strike, parry, and dodge while throwing up. **Duration:** Continuous while the machine is turned on and two melees afterward. **Payload:** 10 shot energy clip (each melee the weapon is on burns up a shot). **Cost:** \$30,000. Extra E-Clip \$2500. **Note:** Even those impervious to poison will be affected by the sound, unless they're impervious to sonic attack. Can't use bonuses to save vs poison (only P.E. attribute score bonuses).

PHD (Psychic Harmonic Disruptor)

A handy weapon useful against psychics and wizards, and it's partially effective against normal people. The energy rifle emits rapid-firing pulses of low level laser light and ultrasonic noise on a level that only psychics and wizards can detect. The double

combination makes it impossible for psychics or spell casters to focus or concentrate. No spells or psychic abilities can be performed or activated while the victim is under the influence. Furthermore, the victim has no attacks for the melee, cannot move or speak coherently, except groan and writhe in agony. The best part of this attack is it doesn't cause any physical damage, and the effects end the instant the weapon is turned off. The weapon can continually fire up to a minute without burning up an E-Clip. Those who are not psychic or spell casters will be dazzled by the laser light show and will be unable to perform any physical actions well (-35% to skills), much less carry out any task that takes coherent thought (reduce attacks/actions by 70% and lose initiative). **Range:** 100 feet (30.5 m). **Weight:** 3 lbs (1.4 kg). **Length:** 18 inches (45 cm). **Duration:** One minute per shot. **E-Clip Capacity:** 10 shots. **Cost:** \$80,000. E-Clip \$15,000. **Note:** The saving throw to resist is 16, but one can only use bonuses from their M.E. attribute score (not saves vs psionics).

Capturator

This is a highly experimental weapon currently being tested by a dozen Sector 10 agents. There are supposedly only 20 of these guns around, and M-Tech refuses to comment if this is true or not. However, its inventor is confident enough to suggest that once this weapon meets with approval, it will become the standard weapon in the Sector 10 arsenal. **A.R.** 15, **S.D.C.** 200. **Length:** 3.8 feet (1.1 m), **Weight:** 7 lbs (3.2 kg), **Damage:** Negate Super Abilities, Power Bands, and Sleep Dust at 5th level in power. The weapon can activate all three abilities, however Negate Super Abilities requires the owner to maintain the attack, thus he loses ½ of his actions. **Range:** The Negation power has a range of 170 feet (51.8 m) on a single target or 60 feet (18.3 m) away to blanket a 50 foot (15.2 m) radius. The Power Bands have a range of 300 feet (91.4 m). The Sleep Dust has a range of only 8 feet (2.4 m). **Cost:** 2.5 million dollars, however it is rumored that anyone knowledgeable in the skills of Weapon, Mechanical, and Electrical Engineer can repair the devices for the price of \$11,000.

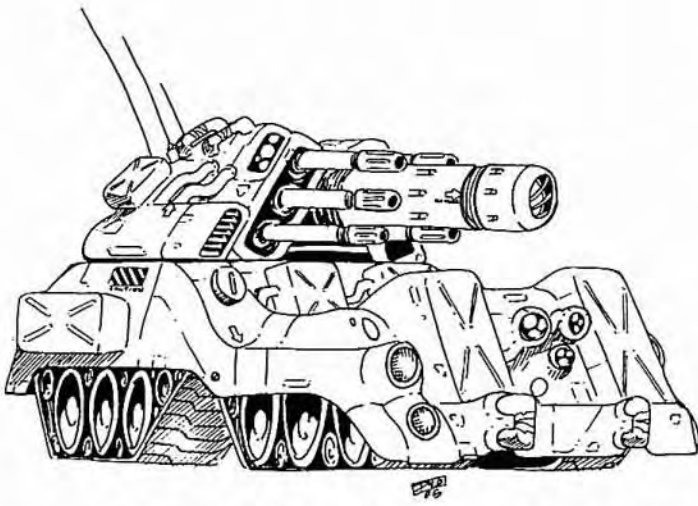
Bola Rounds

These are two shotgun slugs connected by a resilient monofilament line. When fired, the slugs spin around each other during flight, and together strike the target with a wider area of impact than standard slugs do. The slugs do 4D6 points of damage or can entangle the opponent, usually around the legs. A person entangled loses initiative, -1 to strike and parry, -6 to dodge, and reduce Spd. by 80%. It takes 1D4 melees to get free. Those who are running suffer from knockdown damage. **Cost:** \$250 per bullet.

New S.C.R.E.T. Vehicles

Cyberworks Network Diomedes

Shortly after deployment, S.C.R.E.T. agents complained the Thunderclap was simply impractical to use in an urban environment. The forty-three ton tank destroyed interstate highways and



city streets (especially those with subways or large sewer tunnels beneath them), was unable to cross bridges, and lacked maneuverability. Not to mention the countless times its energy weapons proved unreliable when so many metahumans were either energy resistant, impervious to energy attacks, could bend light (they lost count of how many agents were killed by reflective fire), or the meta simply disregarded the “devastating” effects of the sonic cannon and destroyed the tank in less than fifteen seconds. So the Cyberworks Network suggested the Thunderclap be moved to rural areas and be deployed against robot vehicles, exo-skeletons, or cyborgs. As a replacement, the Cyberworks Network sent the Diomedes. Based on the design of the M50 Tank Destroyer, the Diomedes is a light tank designed to incorporate tank-level firepower in a compact, mobile, and air portable vehicle. Given its small size and relatively low weight, a premium has been placed on firepower, mobility, and protection. Armed with six auto-loading 106mm recoilless rifles with carbon fiber and titanium inserts, all six rifles can be fired at once or singularly, and can be used as infantry weapons on ground mounts. Sophisticated fire control, thermal sights, laser rangefinder and gun stabilization systems give the Diomedes excellent firepower while on the move, be it day or night. The rifles have a multi-purpose nature which allows them the ability to fire a variety of rounds. Its advanced ceramic/aluminum/titanium composite armor (impervious to magnetism) makes the Diomedes one of the best protected tanks in the world. Its gas turbine engine is small and easy to field service, but more importantly, it has been modified so its fuel consumption is cut by half. The Diomedes can go anywhere thanks to its carbon fiber/rubber composite treads, including over terrain once thought impassible for tanks.

Armor: A.R.: 16. Stops pistol, rifle, heavy machinegun (20 and 30 mm) rounds and fragments. The armor can reduce damage from energy attacks, armor piercing bullets, explosive rounds, grenades, and light explosives by half damage when their roll to strike is 17 or higher (Penetration Value 11).

S.D.C. by Location:

- Main Body – 800 S.D.C.
- Turret – 300 S.D.C.
- Treads (2) – 220 S.D.C. each
- Laser Cannon – 75 S.D.C.

Crew: 2

Length: 13 feet (3.96 m).

Width: 8 feet, 6 inches (2.60 m).

Weight: 17,000 lbs (7650 kg).

Height: 7 feet (2.1 m).

Speed: 42 mph (67 km).

Range: 300 miles (480 km).

Total Vehicle Bonuses: +4 to strike with all weapons in addition to the gunner’s skill bonuses.

Typical Armaments:

Laser Cannon: Damage: 1D4x10. Energy Capacity: Unlimited. Range: 1800 feet (548 m).

Six 106mm Recoilless Rifles: Damage: 1D4x100 each. Ammo: 36 rounds. Blast Radius: 20 feet (6 m). Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Note: Auto loader allows each gun to fire twice in a single melee. The Diomedes typically fires HE rounds but it can also fire the following:

HEDP (High Explosive Dual Purpose). A combination round used against either large crowds or lightly armored vehicles. Damage: 2D4x10. Blast Radius: 30 feet (9 m).

Fragmentation. Needle-like flechettes that can pierce 50-100mm of reinforced steel plate. Damage: 3D6x10. Blast Radius: 70 feet (21 m).

Armor Piercing (AP). These depleted uranium core rounds (DUC rounds) have a Penetration Value of 18! These rounds can penetrate tank armor with ease. Damage: 2D6x10. Blast Radius: 5 feet (1.5 m).

CS. An extremely powerful version of tear gas. The gas will instantly affect all individuals without protective masks or environmental body armor. The eyes burn, sting, and water profusely, causing great discomfort and seeing is nearly impossible. It also causes major irritation in the nose, mouth, and throat, making breathing difficult. Victims become heavily nauseated and the skin becomes irritated. The effects last for 3D4 minutes. The 30 foot (9 m) cloud dissipates in about 5 minutes unless blown away by the wind (dissipating quickly in 1D4 minutes). The victims of CS are -10 to strike, parry, and dodge, -3 on initiative, and lose one melee action/attack for the next 1D6+1 melee rounds. There is no saving throw.

Stun/Flash. These types of rounds are used to confuse and disorient, especially when in a confined location. Each shell makes a loud exploding boom and releases a bright flash of light (and some smoke) to startle and blind any onlooker within 200 feet (61 m). The flash is so overwhelming that even targets not facing the blast may be affected by light reflecting off walls and other large surfaces (01-33%). There is a blast radius of 3 feet (.9 m) around the impact that does 1D6 points of damage. Flare compensation devices will reduce penalties by half. Closing one’s eyes does nothing to protect one’s eyes from the flash, nor does putting up one’s hands in front of their face. Those observing the flash are -10 to strike, parry, and dodge for 2D6 minutes with no initiative and a loss of half of their attacks.

Smoke. These rounds release a cloud that covers a 20 foot (6 m) radius. The smoke obscures vision in and through the smoke cloud and causes minor difficulty breathing. Infrared optic systems cannot see into or through smoke. Those in the cloud are -5 to strike, parry, and dodge and -1 on initiative. Attacking by firing into/through the cloud is shooting completely wild!

Aimed shots or controlled bursts are impossible (the shooters cannot see the target)!

Illuminating. These are powerful flares that illuminate a 300 foot (91.4 m) area for 2D4 melees.

Special Equipment:

Electro-Hydraulic Stabilizer System: This allows all six rifles to fire simultaneously while the vehicle is moving. This results in no penalty when firing at a moving target.

Laser Range Finder: This allows the vehicle to track and determine the distance of a target, even while it's moving. This results in no penalty when firing at a moving target or one at maximum distance.

Thermo-Imager: An optical heat sensor that converts the infrared radiation of warm objects into a visible image. The pilot and gunner can see in total darkness, shadows, and smoke. Range 1600 feet (488 m).

Remote Probe: An optical video probe that is operated by the gunner by remote control. There is a video camera with telescopic lens (200 ft/61 m range) that transmits everything it sees and hears. Range of transmission is 1600 feet (488 m). The unit moves via wheels and a silent motor. S.D.C. 10. The vehicle is 16 inches (40 cm) long and 12 inches (30 cm) tall.

Radio: Range: 300 miles (480 km).

Laser Targeting System: +1 to strike with all weapons in turret.

Encrypted Burst Transmitter/Radio Scrambler: Range: 300 miles (480 km).

Radar Targeting Computer: Range: 30 miles (48 km), able to identify 20 targets and simultaneously track 20 targets flying at 600 feet (183 m) or higher.

Combat Computer w/Heads-Up Display (HUD). +2 to initiative rolls.

Multi-Optics Periscope and HUD

Radiation Shielding

Pressurized Cabin (Full protection from Nuclear, Biological, & Chemical Warfare-NBC).

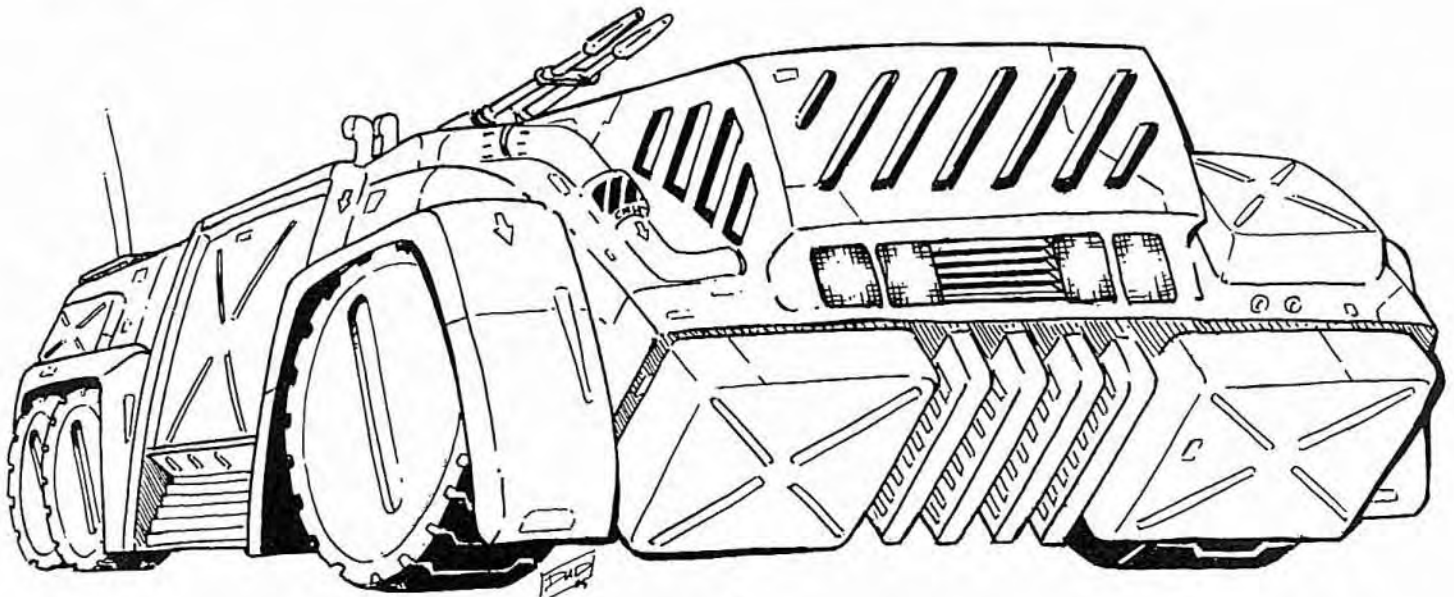
Life Support Unit

Cyberworks Network Ajax

Although the Dragoon 300 remains a staple in S.C.R.E.T.'s arsenal, its weight and dimensions make it difficult to operate in an urban environment. In response, Cyberworks developed an air-transportable, light amphibious vehicle for multi-purpose roles, namely to rapidly deploy a single S.C.R.E.T. squad in a quick and easy response. The vehicle is of a familiar semi-trapezoidal shape with sloped armor, large wheels, and state of the art firepower. However, this vehicle has a hybrid-electric drive system which gives extended range and reduces IR and noise signatures. Essentially, each wheel of the vehicle is powered by its own motor, so destroying a single wheel will not disable the vehicle. All it takes is two wheels and Ajax can continue to operate, regardless if they are the front or back. Each wheel can rotate 180 degrees, which means the vehicle can park itself at a right angle or drive sideways.

Two side hatches swing outward from the roof, opening like a clam shell, thus providing full cover for the S.C.R.E.T. team as they enter/exit the vehicle (shooting the troops while they stand behind the doors results in a -6 to strike). Like the Diomedes, the Ajax is protected by ceramic/aluminum/titanium composite armor (impervious to magnetism). The armored tires are self-sealing. The six man crew sits up front with a large cargo area behind them. This cargo space allows for many uses such as command vehicle, ambulance, and forward air control (FAC) platform. The Ajax has the option of being armed with a 7.62mm machinegun, a .50 caliber machinegun, or a 40mm automatic grenade launcher. After witnessing what the Ajax can do and how easily it can be transported across country by aircraft, S.C.R.E.T. is eager to get their hands on them as soon as possible.

Armor: A.R.: 14. Stops pistol, rifle, and heavy machinegun (20 mm) rounds and fragments. The armor can reduce damage from energy attacks, armor piercing bullets, explosive rounds, grenades, and light explosives to half damage when their roll to strike is 15 or higher (Penetration Value 10).



S.D.C. by Location:

Main Body – 660 S.D.C.

Wheels/Tires – 40 S.D.C. each (A.R. 10)

Machine Gun (1) – 50 S.D.C.

40mm Turret (1) – 80 S.D.C.

Crew: 4-6. One individual will have to serve as gunner.

Length: 18 feet (5.49 m).

Width: 8 feet, 5 inches (2.5 m).

Weight: 7080 lbs (3186 kg).

Height: 5 feet, 6 inches (1.67 m).

Speed: 70 mph (112 km).

Range: 300 miles (480 km).

Total Vehicle Bonuses: +4 to strike with all weapons in addition to the gunner's skill bonuses.

Typical Armaments: One of the following.

7.62 mm Machinegun: Damage: 6D6. Ammo: 1000 rounds. Range: 3,000 feet (914 m).

.50 caliber Machinegun: Damage: 1D4x10. Ammo: 800 rounds. Range: 3000 feet (914 m).

40mm Automatic Grenade Launcher: Damage: 2D4x10 (explosive), 2D4x10 (flechette), smoke or tear gas, Blast Radius: 20 feet (6 m; explosive only), Feed: 50 round belt, Range: 5249 feet (1600 m). (See Firing a Burst for Combat Rules). **Note:** The weapon can also fire smoke, illumination grenades, HE, AP, flame, fragmentation, shaped charge (HEAT), CS, and stun/flash grenades.

Special Equipment:

Magnet Motor, Hybrid-Electric: Four independent motors, one in each wheel. Disable a wheel, the vehicle will still operate. The vehicle doesn't register on infrared or thermal scans. Drivers enjoy a +15% to all control rolls. The vehicle is able to prowl at 35%, or 65% at night.

Laser Range Finder: This allows the vehicle to track and determine the distance of a target, even while it's moving. This results in no penalty when firing at a moving target or one at maximum distance.

Thermo-Imager: An optical heat sensor that converts the infrared radiation of warm objects into a visible image. The pilot and gunner can see in total darkness, shadows, and smoke. Range: 1600 feet (488 m).

Ram-Prow

Armored/Self-Seal/Inflating Tires.

Radio: Range: 300 miles (480 km).

Laser Targeting System: +1 to strike with all weapons.

Encrypted Burst Transmitter/Radio Scrambler: Range: 300 miles (480 km).

Radar Targeting Computer: Range: 30 miles (48 km), able to identify 20 targets and simultaneously track 20 targets flying at 600 feet (183 m) or higher.

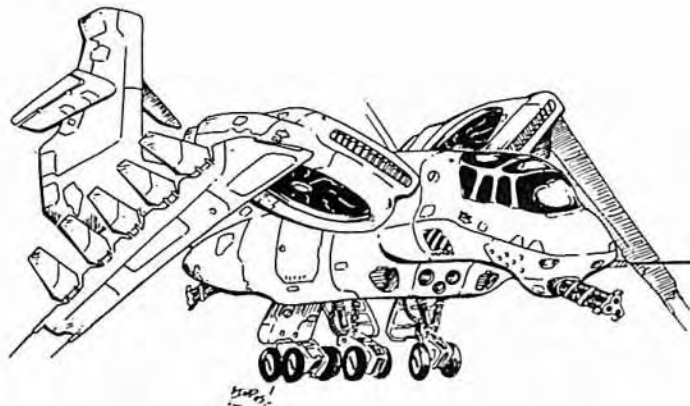
Combat Computer w/Heads-Up Display (HUD). +2 to initiative rolls.

Multi-Optics Periscope and HUD

Radiation Shielding

Pressurized Cabin (Full protection from Nuclear, Biological, & Chemical Warfare-NBC).

Life Support Unit



The Goshawk

This is KLS's experimental Vertical/Short Takeoff and Landing (VSTOL) aircraft. It is designed to combine the independence from airfields and the hover capability of helicopters at sub-sonic speed. This multi-use aircraft functions as a rapid troop carrier, escort/gunship aircraft, and special operations mission platform. A series of high-powered directional turbofans provide the Goshawk lift, thrust and maneuverability far beyond anything a helicopter could ever achieve. It can literally land and take off at right angles. It's virtually a giant hovercraft that can land and take off almost anywhere, especially close confines like alleyways or rooftops. It uses a highly advanced terrain-avoidance/terrain-following radar that allows the pilot a 3-D picture of 360 degrees around the aircraft, enabling him or her to fly in any direction desired. The pilot wears an integrated helmet display that includes night vision goggles similar to a Heads-Up Display (HUD) and a Forward-Looking Infrared output. Both the forward and rear mounted, 6 barrel, .50 caliber Gatling guns are electronically linked to the pilot's helmet. The Goshawk can also carry two or four rocket launchers on attachment points that can be extended from the side of the ship. For electronic support, the Goshawk has a missile-warning system which automatically triggers countermeasures.

Armor: A.R.: 14. Stops pistol, rifle, and light machinegun rounds under .30 caliber (Penetration Value of 7+).

S.D.C. by Location:

Main Body – 500 S.D.C.

Cockpit Windows (9) – 200 S.D.C. each

Wings (2) – 250 each

Turbo Fans (2) – 120 S.D.C. each

Crew: 3 (2 pilots, 1 crewman) + 24 troops (even if they are wearing the EX-9 Super Exoskeleton). The ship can also carry one Ajax along with 12 troops.

Length: 57 feet (17.37 m).

Weight: 25,417 lbs (11,438 kg).

Width: 16 feet (4.88 m).

Height: 17 feet (5.2 m).

Max Internal Load: 11,000 lbs (4950 kg).

Speed: 414 mph (662 km).

Ceiling: 30,000 feet (9144 m).

Range: 495 miles (792 km).

Total Vehicular Bonuses: +7 to dodge, +4 to initiative, +4 to strike (Nose or Rear Gun Array, doesn't include pilot's or gunner's bonuses).

Weapons:

Each Goshawk has two GECAL, .50 cal, 3 barrel Gatling guns, one mounted on the nose of the craft and one on a ball turret on the rear. Both turrets can fire in a 180 degree arc in any direction. The GECAL fires linkless ammunition. A delinking feeder can be installed to handle standard, linked ammunition.

GECAL .50-Cal Gatling Gun: Range: 22,000 feet (6706 m). Damage: 1D4x10 per round. Rate of Fire: Long and full melee bursts only. This weapon's rate of fire is so fast that a long burst only counts as one attack and a full melee burst counts as only two attacks. Payload: 8,000 rounds. Enough for 16 long bursts, or eight full melee bursts (see Machinegun Combat Rules). **Note:** Anyone thinking they can carry this weapon around needs to know it weighs 96 lbs (43 kg) empty, and is nearly 4 feet (1.2 m) long.

Other Weapons: The Goshawk has the option of carrying two or four KS-7 Rocket Launchers (similar to the XM-3), only it's an arrangement of 12 tubes of guided short-range missiles. These missiles can either be HE, Frag, AR, Plasma, Tear-Gas, Knockout-Gas, Smoke, or Fire Retardent. (KLS is encouraging combinations.) All missiles are guided (+3 to strike). A volley can be 1, 2, 4, 6 or all 12. Total 24 or 48 missiles. **Note:** The vehicle is unable to use the missile package if it's transporting an Ajax or any other vehicles.

Special Equipment:

V/L Controls and Terrain Radar: The extreme sophistication of the vertical and lateral controls and the Terrain Radar allow the Goshawk to move in any direction at a moment's notice (even at right angles) and can stop on a dime. Working together the two provide the pilot a +7 to dodge (includes HUD).

Zero Emissions Output: Specially designed sound suppressors reduce the noise of the turbfans while they are running, nor do the fans give off any ambient energy, thus making it difficult to hear the aircraft approach or to lock onto it with a man-portable surface-to-air weapon.

Missile Warning System and Anti-Missile Chaff: Enough to decoy 10 missiles. The system provides a +5 bonus to initiative whenever any missiles or rockets are propelled at the vehicle.

Radio: Range: 300 miles (480 km).

Laser Targeting System: +1 to strike with all weapons.

Encrypted Burst Transmitter/Radio Scrambler: Range: 300 miles (480 km).

Maxi-Radar: Range: 50 miles (80 km).

Combat Computer w/Heads-Up Display (HUD): Confers +3 to dodge.

Multi-Optics Periscope and HUD

Radiation Shielding Pressurized Cabin

The Montauk

KLS designed the Montauk to replace the Modified AH-1G Huey Cobra Helicopters built by the Cyberworks Network. The shark-like airframe with its five-blade, bearingless main rotor with a high hinge offset provides improved maneuverability. It also has an eight-bladed Fantail antitorque rotor and a T-tail. The engine is a dual-centrifugal compressor design able to reach a speed of 196 mph (313 km). Its ceramic composite armor has a synthetic chameleon skin that allows the helicopter to become 90% undetectable whenever it's simply hovering (-3 to strike within 30 feet/9.1 m and -6 to strike when beyond that). During night, the stealthy configuration of the body and fuselage increases its ability to blend into the darkness. The entire helicopter is heavily insulated against electrical, heat, and sonic attack. Infrared signature suppression is accomplished by mixing the engine exhaust with cool air drawn through grilles behind the engine. Like the Goshawk, it also has zero-emissions exhaust and a state of the art sound suppressor system, which is powerful enough to reduce the noise of the helicopter to a mere 30 decibels (equal to normal human conversation). The Montauk has a special automatic flight control system (activated by the pilot) in which the flight system holds the laser-selected altitude, even during pilot maneuvering. However, the one thing that truly sets the Montauk apart from the Huey Cobra is its nasty array of firepower.

Armor: A.R.: 15. Stops pistol, rifle, and light machinegun rounds under .50 caliber. The armor also reduces damage from electrical, heat, and sonic attacks by 70%. These attacks cannot bypass the armor and harm the crew (Penetration Value of 8+).

S.D.C. by Location:

Main Body – 650 S.D.C.

Cockpit Windows – 300 S.D.C.

Tail – 300 S.D.C.

Rotor – 250 S.D.C.

Crew: 3 (Pilot, co-pilot, crew chief) +10 troops.

Length: 47 feet (14.5 m).

Weight: 7500 lbs (3375 kg) empty. 11,000 lbs (4950 kg) during missions.

Width: 18 feet (5.49 m).

Height: 11 feet (3.3 m).

Max Internal Load: 5000 lbs (2250 kg).

Speed: 196 mph (313 km).

Ceiling: 30,000 feet (9144 m).

Range: 373 miles (597 km).

Total Vehicular Bonuses: +6 to dodge, +4 to initiative, +4 to strike (Nose Gun Array, doesn't include bonuses from the pilot).

Weapons:

Each Montauk has one 20mm, 3-barreled, KS-10 Gatling Cannon turret mounted under the cockpit. The gun can fire in a 180 degree arc in any direction (except straight up, which would hit the rotor). It has a linear, linkless feed system. The bullets themselves are semi-Armor-Piercing, High Explosive, Incendiary projectiles (Penetration Value 13).

KS-10 Gatling Cannon: Range: 11,000 feet (3353 m). Damage: 2D4x10 per round. Rate of Fire: Long and full melee bursts

only. This weapon's rate of fire is so fast that a long burst only counts as one attack and a full melee burst counts as only two attacks. **Payload:** 1500 rounds. Enough for 4 long bursts, or two full melee bursts (see Machinegun Combat Rules). **Note:** Anyone thinking they can carry this weapon around needs to know it weighs 132 lbs (59.4 kg) empty and is nearly 6 feet long (1.8 m).

Missiles: Configuration ultimately results in a maximum of either:

Six HE (medium), short-range air to ground missiles (AGM) and two plasma, short-range air to air missiles (AAM).

Four HE (medium), short-range AGM and four plasma, short-range AAM.

Two HE (medium), short-range AGM and eight plasma, short-range AAM.

Note: Unlike normal HE (medium), short-range missiles, those used on the Montauk can reach speeds of Mach 1.1. The plasma, short-range missiles travel Mach 1. (See Missiles on page 82 of *Heroes Unlimited, 2nd Edition* for damage and range.) All missiles are guided (+3 to strike). Missiles can be launched in volleys of 1, 2, 3 or 4.

Special Equipment:

V/L Controls Thruster Package: The sophistication of the vertical and lateral controls of the Montauk gives it superior directional capabilities and allows it to stop at a moment's notice.

This grants the pilot a +6 to dodge (includes HUD).

Zero Emissions Output: Combined with the specially designed engine, enhanced sound suppressors reduce the noise of the craft to almost nothing. The helicopter does not give off any ambient energy, thus making it difficult to hear the aircraft approach or to lock onto it with a man-portable surface-to-air weapon.

Missile Warning System and Anti-Missile Chaff: Enough to decoy 10 missiles. The system provides a +5 bonus to initiative whenever any missiles or rockets are propelled at the vehicle. Missiles lose any guidance bonus, straight unmodified dice rolls only.

Infrared Signature Suppression: This prevents the helicopter from being seen on infrared and thermal sensors/cameras. Combined with its chameleon skin, it becomes virtually undetectable at night (-6 to strike).

Radio: Range: 300 miles (480 km).

Laser Targeting System: +1 to strike with all weapons.

Encrypted Burst Transmitter/Radio Scrambler: Range: 300 miles (480 km).

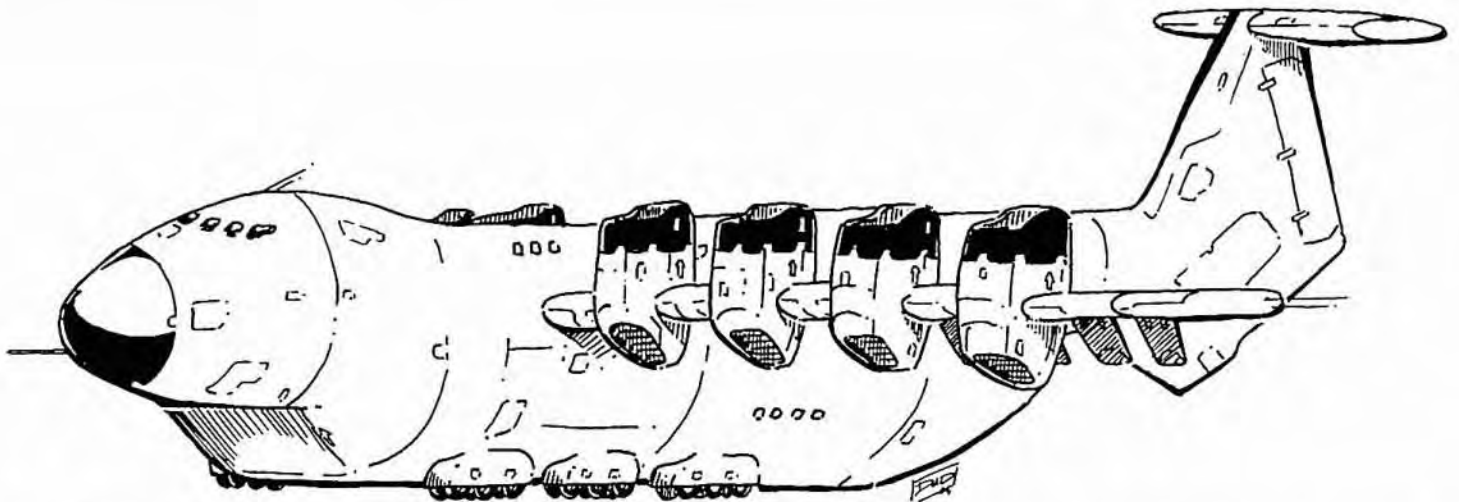
Maxi-Radar: Range: 50 miles (80 km).

Combat Computer w/Heads-Up Display (HUD): Confers +3 to dodge.

Multi-Optics Periscope and HUD

Radiation Shielding

Pressurized Cabin



The Super Galaxy (C-10)

The C-10 is a strategic airlift transport and the largest aircraft in the world. It's an even bigger version of the C-5 Galaxy used by the U.S. military to transport vehicles and troops. The Super Galaxy has only one purpose: to transport as many S.C.R.E.T. teams as possible to one location as soon as possible. Like the C-5, the C-10 can operate from a rough field and has a low stalling speed and extensive landing gear. But what makes it different from the C-5 is its ability to land anywhere, regardless of the terrain conditions. The shoulder-mounted wing will retract back toward the middle and its eight powerful turbofans can rotate toward the ground, thus allowing it to function as a Vertical Takeoff and Landing (VTOL) vehicle. It only takes four of the

engines to launch it into the air, then the other four propel it forward. As it starts to gain speed, the other four engines slowly rotate forward, causing the aircraft to blast-off like a rocket. Some call the vertical lift and takeoff "going to light speed," which also led to the C-10's informal nickname of the "Scream Machine" because of the ear-piercing cries made by the passengers. It is absolutely essential everything in the craft be fastened or secured, otherwise it will go flying. Numerous injuries have resulted because someone left a pen in their shirt pocket or a fork on a table. Red bio-hazard bags and waste dispensers are located throughout the aircraft.

The nose of craft comes to a blunt point and is hinged below and behind the flight deck like a visor, opening to grant unob-

structed access to the main cargo deck. There is also enough upper deck room for a relief crew. The 30 foot (9.14 m) wide rear ramp forms the bottom of the rear fuselage, which tapers up to meet the tail. The gigantic landing gear has a total of 40 wheels. Four wheels are mounted side by side on the single nose-gear strut, which retracts to the rear. The other 36 wheels are carried on 6 six-wheel bogies in tandem sets, left and right, that retract into bulged fairings on the lower fuselage under the wing. The gear can “stoop” to lower the aircraft and put the cargo deck floor at truck-bed height. There are only three Super Galaxies in existence. One for each ocean coast and one in a secret reserve hangar.

Armor: A.R.: 12. Stops pistol and rifle rounds (Penetration Value of 7+).

S.D.C. By Location:

Reinforced Pilot Compartment/Cockpit – 350

Tail – 350

Wings (2) – 300 each

Main Body – 1300

Crew: 5 (pilot, copilot, flight engineer, 2 loadmasters) +100 troops on upper flight deck +350 in main cargo bay. Consider this, the aircraft could carry 4 Thunderclaps (43 tons each) and 13 troops in 400 lb (180 kg) exoskeleton armor.

Weight: 448,800 lbs (201,960 kg) empty. That’s 224 tons!

Payload: 349,200 lbs (157,140 kg). That’s 174.6 tons of stuff!

Fully Loaded: 399 tons!

Wingspan: 266 feet (81 m).

Length: 298 feet (91 m).

Height: 65 feet (19.81 m).

Cargo Hold: Length 133 feet (40.5 m). Width 23 feet (7 m). Height 14 feet (4.26 m).

Volume: Upper Deck Forward 2010 feet³ (56.91 m³). Upper Deck, Aft 6,020 ft³ (170.46 m³). Lower Deck 34,795 ft³ (985.29 m³).

Fuel: Classified, rumored to take over 70,000 Gallons.

Speed: 571 mph (913 km). In vertical takeoff it takes 3 minutes to reach 2000 feet (610 m) above the ground. It takes the craft 9.7 seconds to go from zero to a cruising speed of 552 mph (883 km).

Range: With max payload, 4120 miles (6592 km).

Ceiling: 35,750 feet (10,896 m).

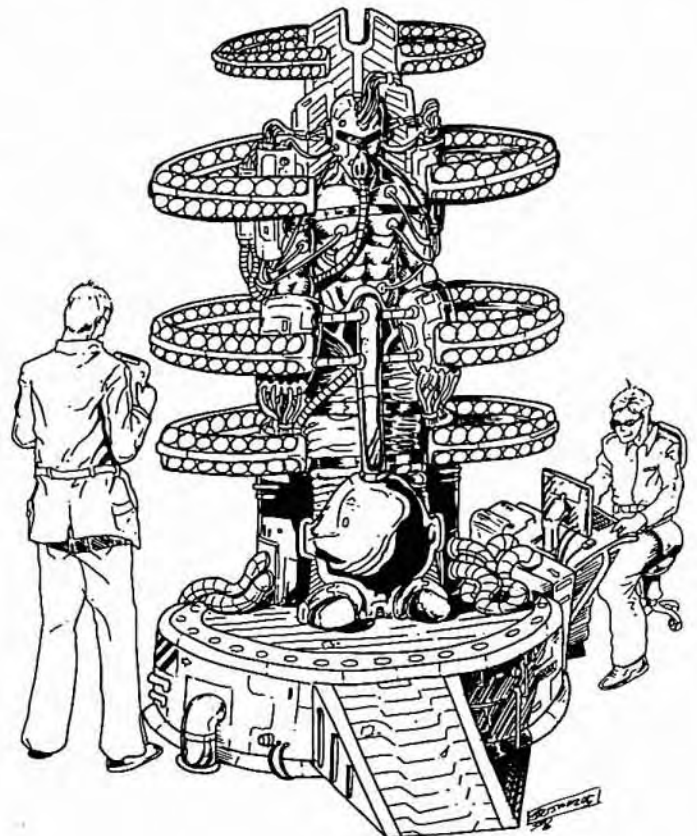
S.C.R.E.T. Superhuman Holding Facilities

What does S.C.R.E.T. do with all the super beings after they’ve been captured? Most believe they are sent off to prison, specifically Gramercy Island, and this is what appears to happen. Unfortunately, conventional facilities have never been adequate for holding superhuman criminals, who usually manage to escape in a matter of weeks or months. Gramercy Island is the only facility in the New World capable of successfully containing metahuman prisoners, but it’s currently at near full capacity.

Although construction is underway to triple the size of the cell block and both Ultropolis and Victory City are building similar facilities, for the most part, there appear to be no safe place to house these criminals, at least that is what S.C.R.E.T. and the U.S. government wants the general public to think.

The truth is since S.C.R.E.T.’s creation, the government has several medium and maximum security installations in which to incarcerate superhuman criminals. But by no means are the facilities to be thought of as prisons. They are, in essence, military bases from which large S.C.R.E.T. teams operate. Just as Gramercy Island inmates are kept under permanent lockdown, so are those who come to any of the S.C.R.E.T. facilities. The only difference between them and Gramercy Island is, everyone knows metahuman criminals are being held at Gramercy Island. Less than 0.3% of the U.S. population knows anything about the S.C.R.E.T. facilities, much less what goes on there.

All maximum security installations (four in total) are devoted to metaology, the study of super beings (alien and domestic). Prisoners are subjected to a variety of tests and experiments to determine the nature of their abilities. Of course, most of this is done without the willingness of the inmate, but since no one knows of the existence of these facilities, and visitors are never allowed inside, inmates have no way of complaining to anyone about their mistreatment. Furthermore, the general public, for the most part, has little interest in the condition of a four-armed mutant who just tossed a school bus into a lake and drowned everyone on board. Unfortunately, not all prisoners are certified criminals. Any superhuman S.C.R.E.T. takes into custody can be sent to such a facility, and S.C.R.E.T. has the authority to transfer any metahuman prisoner in the country with or without another facility or law-enforcement agency’s permission. Furthermore, S.C.R.E.T. can conduct any test or experiment upon



the inmate without anyone's say so. This is done in order to quantify and classify meta-normal abilities in order to assist S.C.R.E.T. in being able to combat against them. However, this information has also been handed over to top secret programs in the United States government which are involved in creating super humans or instilling super abilities (the Sector, the Nursery, and the MTF). In addition, this information has sometimes been "secretly" exchanged with various private and civilian industries who supply S.C.R.E.T. and G.I.G.M.A. with technology in order to combat the metahuman threat (KLS, the Cyberworks Network, S.I.G.H.T., Bio-Spawn, just to name a few).

Medium security facilities are slightly different from their counterparts in that they are used strictly for incarceration and not research. Only a small portion of the facility is designated for scientific research, and mostly for examining prisoners to determine the safest means to contain them. Surprisingly enough, information gathered by S.C.R.E.T. has yet to be shared with Gramercy Island and vice versa. Why this is so no one is quite sure, but it may have something to do with the animosity between Warden Harker and the military leaders of S.C.R.E.T. However, if rumors of Harker's political ambitions are true, this might change over time.

Each S.C.R.E.T. facility is led by a high ranking military officer, thirty-five guards (all S.C.R.E.T. agents), a six member squad to escort prisoners to/from the facility, and a four person science/medical team who screen and test prisoners upon arrival to determine the special containment needs required. Maximum security facilities sometimes employ additional scientists/medical teams in order to conduct a full study, but such people are paid directly by the government or whatever research firm they belong to and have ultra-high government clearance levels, even greater than the military officer overseeing the facility.

An example of a medium level security holding facility is in *Heroes Unlimited G.M.'s Guide* in the adventure *Shock to the System*. For stats on prison security, G.M.s can use those given in Gramercy Island for walls, fences, guard towers, cell blocks, and the various methods of super being containment.

Unfortunately, various criminal enterprises (Fabricators Inc., the Dark Tribunal, the Shadow Margin), the Mutant Underground, and numerous super villains, have learned of these holding facilities and what goes on behind their walls. Some, like the Mutant Messiah, have attacked these facilities not only in an effort to free prisoners, but to strike out against the blatant injustice against metahumans who are being treated as nothing more than lab rats. Some may argue these mutant criminals/terrorists deserve what they get, others declare the 8th Amendment is being clearly violated. While others declare intelligent and humanoid life forms created by science have no rights, until it can be proven that the super being is not being created by science, but by then, he or she has already been used as a guinea pig for numerous experiments (for additional information on this subject, see the book *Mutant Underground*).

With the increasing number of attacks against these facilities (the cost to repair the damage is beginning to rise into the millions) and the recent assault against S.C.R.E.T. on live television, the President has ordered all S.C.R.E.T. facilities to increase their guard numbers and to stop thinking of themselves as prison guards. The agency is actively recruiting new personnel from all the different branches of the military, even inviting

those who've served in the military until injury forced them into inactive duty to undergo cybernetic reconstruction.

Typical S.C.R.E.T. Agent (revised)

For Heroes Unlimited, 2nd Edition. Based on the original concept by Kevin Long.

Alignment: Any, but often Anarchist or Aberrant.

Typical Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 17, M.A. 10, P.S. 21, P.P. 18, P.E. 15, P.B. 10, Spd. 24. Those agents who are Physical Training will either have P.S. equal to Superhuman or Extraordinary.

Average Age: 23-35

Average Sex: 65% male, 35% female.

Average Height: Male 6 feet, 3 inches (1.9 m), female 5 feet, 10 inches (1.75 m).

Average Weight: 185-200 lbs (83-90 kg) for male agents and 130-150 lbs (58.5 to 67.5 kg) for female agents.

Average Experience Level: 2D4. Team Leaders must be 5th level or higher.

Super Power Category: Primarily Physical Training (40%), but can also be Special Training – Secret Operative (20%), Hardware/Super Invention (20%), Bionic (10%), Super Soldier (7%), Other (3%).

Average Hit Points: 30

Average S.D.C.: Varies. Those who are Physical Training will have 70 or 90 S.D.C. This does not include bonuses from skills and other combat bonuses.

Combat Training: Those with Physical Training will either specialize in Aggressive and Deadly or Defensive and Fast. All others will have Hand to Hand: Martial Arts or Assassin.

Typical Number of Attacks per Melee: 5 or 6 (6 or 7 for those 4th level).

Agent Bonuses: The following are bonuses granted to S.C.R.E.T. agents irregardless of their Super Power Category. +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 to Perception, +6 to damage, +2 to strike, parry, and dodge. +1 to save vs psionic attack and insanity. These are in addition to possible bonuses from skills or power category (includes Hand to Hand).

Special Abilities: Varies with each agent. The majority will rely on their special combat abilities (see Physical Training, *Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition*, page 189) and the weapons and equipment available to them.

Education Level and Skills: Military or Military Specialist. Those belonging to the Physical Training or Hardware category must sacrifice one entire Skill Program, however it cannot be Military Program (Basic). Special Training: *Secret Operative* agents are rolled up accordingly (see HU2, page 216).

Appearance: S.C.R.E.T. agents typically look like average everyday people.

Occupation: Federal Agents who purposely attack super beings.

Weapons & Armor: Any, but usually a laser or other energy rifles and pistol, an automatic pistol (Glock) with special munitions (A.P., exploding, Hollow Point, etc.), grenades: two (2) CS, two (2) knockout, two (2) nerve gas; six (6) shurikens and/or two (2) throwing knives.

Special Weapons: When agents are assigned to encounter a specific metahuman, they will be equipped with special weapons or equipment for help neutralizing that particular super being's powers. Every S.C.R.E.T. agent has access to high-tech weaponry and anything conventional. Generally, wears a hard armor vest (A.R. 12, S.D.C. 120) or Class 4 Armor (full suit; A.R. 17, 280 S.D.C.). All S.C.R.E.T. agents will be issued the following:

Multi-Optics Helmet with laser targeting (+3 to strike), thermal and ultraviolet imagers, infrared sensor system, and independent air supply.

Ear Mike Radio Receiver and Transmitter.

Two pairs of Heavy Handcuffs.

Vehicles and other Equipment: See *Villains Unlimited, 2nd Edition*, pages 44-45, and those mentioned above. Availability-wise, the EX-7 Equalizer is now considered a standard piece of equipment.

Headquarters: S.C.R.E.T. has offices and agents in every major city in the U.S.A. with a population over 1 million. They also have nine Super Being Holding Facilities across the country, five medium security and four maximum. S.C.R.E.T. has no offices or agents in the District of Century Station or Motor City.

S.C.R.E.T.

Most Wanted:

The Unnatural Disasters

Little is known about the history of the group of super-villains calling themselves the Unnatural Disasters, other than that they are terrorists and mercenaries, and that each member of the group has super powers related to weather or geological phenomena that cause great destruction, hardship, and loss of human life. They specifically target buildings, stadiums, bridges, dams, power stations, oil fields, coastal beaches, or anything that, if destroyed, will cause widespread destruction and distress. Their motivation for causing such sudden upheaval to huge population areas is unknown. On several occasions they have referred to their alleged financial backer, a man known only as David Slave. Even they are not entirely certain why Slave orders them to destroy what they do. Some theorize he is a self-styled radical environmentalist who can no longer stand by and watch humanity endanger Earth's fragile ecosystem. The name David Slave doesn't appear on any record in the United States or, for that matter, in any other place in the world. According to the UD, Slave is a megalomaniac who places himself above society's laws and conventions in pursuit of his private vision of a better world, one in which he is the sole ruler of it. This has led some in G.I.G.M.A. to suspect that Slave might be an immortal of some kind. Regardless of Slave's goals, the UD primarily carry out their missions for the sole purpose of getting paid, but recently, they've taken some initiative and begun causing disasters on their own. So far the UD have avoided capture by soundly defeating every heroic super team who has gone

against them, have caused havoc and chaos in over twenty cities in America, Europe, and Japan (contributing to something like 300 billion dollars in property damage), and have directly or indirectly caused the deaths of tens of thousands of people. In the wake of their most recent attack on S.C.R.E.T., the UD have become the most feared and hated team of super villains on the planet, and where they will strike next remains unknown.

Cyclone

Jennifer Carr and her twin brother, George, don't talk about her past to anyone. When asked how they received their powers, both mention an incident in which they were exposed to industrial waste leaking out of metal containers secretly stashed in a pond, deep in the woods of their small town. Shortly after being exposed to the chemicals, they became deathly ill, spending weeks in their town's local hospital while doctors tried to figure out the cause of their strange, physical mutations. Late one night, Jennifer and her brother were kidnapped by operatives from a privately owned research facility, who proceeded to conduct experiments on them in order to discover what triggered their mutations, since the toxic waste came from their facility. Years later, Jennifer and her brother managed to escape the research facility, thanks, in part, to the super abilities they received after their exposure to the waste. Shortly after their harrowing escape, both vowed to make those who hurt them suffer. Days later, they destroyed the complex, killing some thirty people in all. Afterward, they disappeared for two years, reemerging as Typhoon and Cyclone.

George can still be very protective of his sister, even though it's not necessary for him to be that way. She is more than capable of taking care of herself. For the most part, she ignores Wind Chill's flirts, in fact she enjoys giving him the cold shoulder (no pun intended). It doesn't take much to get her angry, and when she does, she lashes out at everything and everyone who happens to cross paths with her.

Cyclone

Real Name: Jennifer Carr.

Occupation: Terrorist and Mercenary. Possibly a bodyguard for David Slave.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 19, M.A. 9, P.S. 25, P.P. 38, P.E. 31, P.B. 10, Spd. 320 mph (512 km).

Age: 23

Sex: Female.

Height: 5 feet, 4 inches (1.62 m).

Weight: 114 lbs (51.3 kg).

Experience Level: 5th

Hit Points: 52. S.D.C. 121.

Power Category: Mutant.

Unusual Characteristics: She has gray hair and skin. Her hair grows down to her knees and when cut, grows back very quickly.

Note: Cyclone's abilities are hyper-powered. She cannot minimize or moderate them. They are always unleashed at maximum power-full damage, full duration, and 30% greater range.



Major Super Powers: Spin at High Velocity.

Minor Super Powers: Extraordinary Physical Prowess, Extraordinary Speed, and Impervious to Energy and Electricity.

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Number of Attacks: 8 (2 initial, +3 from Hand to Hand Combat, +3 from super abilities).

Bonuses (all): +10 to initiative, +12 to strike, +15 to parry, +20 to dodge, +13 to auto-dodge, +18 to damage (+24 while spinning), +5 to pull punch, +13 to roll with punch/fall, +4 to damage for every 20 mph (32 km) of speed.

Saving Throws: +2 to save vs psionic attack and insanity, +31% to save vs coma/death, +8 to save vs magic and poison.

Other Combat Info: Punch 1D4, Power Punch 2D4, Karate Kick 2D4, Elbow/Forearm 1D6, Knee 1D6.

Education Level: On the Job Training.

Criminal Program: Streetwise (55%), Pick Locks (80%), Pick Pockets (80%), Palming (70%), Prowl (85%).

Physical Program: Gymnastics, Acrobatics, Athletics, Hand to Hand: Basic.

Secondary Skills: Running, Dance (65%), Swimming (85%), Sing (60%), Cooking (60%), Land Navigation (56%), Radio: Basic (70%), Wilderness Survival (55%), Basic Math (70%), Pilot Automobile (70%), Climbing (85%), First Aid (60%).

Money: She has amassed somewhere in the vicinity of 3.5 million dollars. The majority of her money has been used to buy herself expensive jewelry, beautiful clothes, and fancy sports cars. She never keeps cash on hand; if she needs anything she will simply steal it.

Weapons: None.

Vehicles and Equipment: Whenever she can get her hands on a fancy sports car she will buy it or often, attempt to steal it. She owns five already.

Typhoon

For as long as he can remember, George Carr has loved being immersed in water. One of his earliest childhood memories is going to the local pool with his mother. His twin sister Jennifer has no such memory. In fact, she doesn't recall their mother taking them anywhere except the local grocery store. However, she does recall an incident in which George nearly drowned in a neighbor's swimming pool. Her brother insists that she is lying. He is also the one who convinced her to swim in the pond in the woods that, unbeknownst to them, served as a toxic waste dumping ground. After being exposed to the waste, he and his sister became deathly ill and were taken to the local hospital. There the doctors became baffled by their strange physical mutation. A privately owned research facility heard about what had happened and decided to remove them from public view since it was their waste that caused their transformation. They kidnapped the two children and spent five years studying their mutation. For reasons unknown, George became physically more powerful than his sister, and being near and/or around water made him stronger. No longer able to tolerate what these scientists and corporate executives had done to him and his sister (especially after hearing her scream one night for reasons she has yet to reveal), he decided the time had come for them to escape.



Using their newly acquired powers, they broke away from the confines of the facility only to return days later to destroy it.

The two then disappeared for the next two years, only to reemerge as mutant mercenaries Typhoon and Cyclone. Apparently they were found by David Slave who paid to have them undergo special training to become his hit squad. During that time George continued to mutate, developing an even greater affinity toward large bodies of water, to the point that he needed to stay in and/or be near it all the time. A few months later, David Slave joined them up with Wind Chill and Volcano to form the Unnatural Disasters. By this time George gained another ability, one that allowed him to control and manipulate the aspects of water. George now saw himself as a living embodiment of nature on the rampage. Sending a massive storm surge and hurricane-force winds to destroy a coastal region brings a smile to his face. He is still very protective of his sister, and has threatened Wind Chill that he'd better leave her alone. Despite his destructive nature, George enjoys spending time with his mother and making sure that she is well taken care of. The older he gets, the more powerful he will become. His ambition is to become team leader of the Unnatural Disasters, but first he believes he must gain David Slave's admiration, and that can only be done by continuing to destroy city after city. His ultimate goal in life: to flood Victory City and watch the chaos that will surely follow.

Typhoon

Real Name: George Carr.

Occupation: Terrorist and Mercenary. Possibly a bodyguard for David Slave.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 14, M.A. 8, P.S. 35/41 when wet (Supernatural), P.P. 13, P.E. 27, P.B. 14, Spd. 14.

Age: 23

Sex: Male.

Height: 7 feet, 1 inch (2.1 m).

Weight: 430 lbs (193.5 kg).

Experience Level: 5th

Hit Points: 49. S.D.C. 172 dry, 322 wet.

Power Category: Mega-Mutant with Continuous Mutation.

Unusual Characteristics: He is stocky, has extra large hands, and glowing eyes (blue). He will gain another minor power at levels 6, 8, 12, and 14.

Mega-Abilities: All normal Mega-Abilities plus Impervious to Pressure. **Note:** Not only is the range of all of his powers increased by 50%, so is the area of effect of his abilities as well.

Major Super Powers: Control Elemental Force: Air and Control Elemental Force: Water.

Minor Super Powers: Underwater Abilities.

Achilles' Heel: Special – Just like a true hurricane, Typhoon maintains his strength from being in and nearby an ample source of water. Should he step beyond 1500 feet (457 m), all of his powers, combat bonuses, and physical attributes (including Hit Points and S.D.C.) diminish by one-half (he will be unable to control any aspect of water) and his Supernatural P.S. will revert to normal. Even though he could use a wa-

ter source such as a sewer, water pipeline, underground stream, rain, or a pond to power his control over water, his other powers and physical attributes will still diminish, unless he is near a large body of water (lake, river, sea, or ocean).

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Number of Attacks: 6/7 if wet (2 initial, +3 from Hand to Hand Combat, +1 from Boxing).

Bonuses (all): +2 to initiative, +3 to strike/+5 when wet, +6 to parry/+8 when wet, +6 to dodge/+10 when wet, +15 to damage/+21 from punching/+21 when wet/+27 with wet fists, +2 to pull punch, +6 to roll with punch/fall. +7 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs poison, +24 to save vs coma/death. +2 to save vs Horror Factor and Possession.

Other Combat Info: Restrained Punch 2D6+23, Full Strength Punch 5D6+21, Power Punch 1D6x10+23, Elbow/Forearm 6D6+15, Knee 6D6+15, Karate Kick 1D6x10+15, Snap Kick 5D6+15, Tripping/Leg Hook (knockdown), Crush 4D6+15, Body Block/Tackle 4D6+15 (with possible knockdown), Pin 18-20, Knockout on a Natural 20.

When wet: Restrained Punch 4D6+27, Full Strength Punch 1D6x10+27, Power Punch 2D6x10+27, Elbow/Forearm 2D4x10+21, Knee 1D6x10+21, Karate Kick 2D6x10+21, Snap Kick 1D6x10+21, Tripping/Leg Hook (knockdown), Crush 6D6+21, Body Block/Tackle 6D6+21 (with possible knockdown), Pin 18-20, Knockout on a Natural 20.

Education Level: On the Job Training.

Physical Program: Boxing, Wrestling, Advanced Swimming (95%), and Athletics.

Science Program: Computer Operation (85%), Chemistry (70%), Meteorology (see *The Rifter* #25; 65%), Oceanography (see *The Rifter* #25; 80%), Anthropology (50%).

Secondary Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert, Pilot Sail Boat (85%), Pilot Motor Boat (85%), Pilot Ship (70/64%), Pilot Water Scooters (75%), Radio: Basic (70%), Boat Building (40%), Fishing (55%), Basic Math (70%), Pilot Automobile (70%), Ocean Survival (see *The Rifter* #25; 27%), Water Skiing & Surfing (see *Beyond the Supernatural*, 2nd Edition; 56%).

Money: He has amassed some where in the vicinity of 1.9 million dollars. The majority of his money went into purchasing and maintaining a luxury yacht (see Vehicles and Equipment).

Weapons: None. He is a living weapon.

Vehicles and Equipment: The Typhoonia. A luxury yacht that he spent a fortune on. He recently had Fabricators Inc. tinker with it. It now has fuel efficiency modifications, submersible water capabilities, pressurized cabin, and light armor with Plexiglas windows.

Wind Chill

Pasha Skirski joined the Russian Army in hopes of adventure in far-off lands. They stationed him at a military base in the middle of Siberia. For the first few months he thought he made the biggest mistake in his life, but then a group of scientists arrived looking for volunteers for a top secret project. They were



attempting to engineer a soldier who could function indefinitely in the coldest of environments. These soldiers would also be given the latest in specialized training and equipment, thereby allowing the government the ability to pull a majority of its troops from Siberia, but leaving its frozen borders protected by an elite group of super soldiers. Pasha was the first to volunteer for the procedure. After spending 24 hours in a chemical vat, the scientists installed numerous implants/sensors throughout his body and plated his skeleton with a nearly unbreakable metal. Weeks afterward, Pasha discovered he could not only go outside in sub-zero temperatures in the buff for hours upon end without suffering any ill effects, but most of his physical attributes were greatly enhanced, especially his strength. Days later, while Pasha was running through the snow-covered wilderness, he stepped through thin ice covering a frozen pond. The second his skin touched the cold water, his body transformed into a living chunk of ice. The scientists spent days trying to figure out how to undo the transformation, but eventually Pasha learned how to do it himself. He also discovered he could expel short, powerful gusts of wind and release bone-chilling bolts of cold energy. Pasha wanted what was done to him to be undone, but the scientists seemed determined to try and create more duplicates of himself. This enraged Pasha and he took it out on the people who made him a monster. After destroying the base, he fled, traveling west, swam across the Bearing Sea, and journeyed across Alaska and the Canadian wilderness to arrive in the United States. Along the way he killed anyone he could in order to get food, money, or lodging. Late one night, he got into a bar fight in western Michigan with several locals. After freezing one man solid, he caught the eye of an individual who worked for David Slave.

After meeting with Slave, Pasha found a new goal in life, to serve the man in any way he could. Slave paid to have him further trained in the use of his abilities and gave him a new name, Wind Chill. Slave decided to partner him up with his other protégés, the brother and sister duo, Typhoon and Cyclone, and the alien, Volcano. Because Wind Chill had the most experience and a military background, Slave elected him to be the team leader of the Unnatural Disasters. A position Pasha holds with pride and extreme satisfaction. Despite his cold exterior, he tries to have a warm heart with the ladies, especially Cyclone, who wants nothing to do with him. Typhoon has threatened to rip his arms off, but Wind Chill knows the man will do nothing to him or risk Slave's wrath, and he has seen firsthand that the boss is not to be trifled with. Wind Chill is one hundred percent loyal to Slave and his goals, although he has enjoyed the mayhem he and the other Disasters have brought upon the United States and Europe lately. His goal in life is to see the city of Moscow encased in ice and snow for all eternity, and he hopes by being loyal and subservient to Mr. Slave, he'll make his dream come true.

Wind Chill

Real Name: Pasha Skirski.

Occupation: Terrorist and Mercenary. Possibly a bodyguard for David Slave.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 21, M.A. 16, P.S. 29, P.P. 11, P.E. 27, P.B. 17, Spd. 29.

Age: 22

Sex: Male.

Height: 5 feet, 2 inches (1.55 m).

Weight: 295 lbs (132 kg).

Experience Level: 6th

Hit Points: 62. S.D.C. 421.

Power Category: Super Soldier.

Major Super Powers: Alter Physical Structure – Ice.

Minor Super Powers: Energy Expulsion – Cold, Super Wind Blasts.

Super Soldier Enhancements: Skeletal Plating, Physical Transformation, Tissue Density, and Bionic Sensor System (Clock Calendar, Motion Detector, Heat Sensor, Infrared Warning System, Radiation Detector, and Radar Warning System).

Vulnerability: -2 to save vs airborne gases, drugs, and toxins.

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Number of Attacks: 5 (2 initial, +3 from Hand to Hand Combat).

Bonuses (all): +2 to initiative, +2 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +14 to damage, +3 to pull punch, +6 to roll with punch/fall. +3 to save vs psionics, +4 to save vs insanity, 40% to trust/intimidate, +24% to save vs coma/death, 35% charm/impress.

Other Combat Info: Full Strength Punch 2D4+16, Power Punch 2D6+16, Elbow/Forearm 1D6+14, Knee 1D6+15, Karate Kick 2D6+16, Crescent Kick 2D6+14, Wheel Kick 3D6+14, Tripping/Leg Hook (knockdown), Crush 1D6+14, Jump Kick 7D6+14, Flying Jump Kick 5D6, Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20, Disarm.

Energy Expulsion – Cold 8D6 (or 1D4x10+8). +3 to aim/+1 wild.

Education Level: Military (Basic).

Military Program (Basic): Running, Climbing (80%), Military Etiquette (75%), Radio: Basic (85%), W.P. Auto/Semi-Auto Rifle.

Military Demolitions: Basic Electronics (65%), Basic Mechanics (65%), Demolitions (88%), Demolitions Disposal (88%), Underwater Demolitions (88%).

Espionage Program: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Detect Ambush (70%), Intelligence (66%), Wilderness Survival (75%), Arctic Survival (see *The Rifter* #25; 85%), Tracking (65%).

Physical Skills: Swimming (90%), Advanced Swimming (90%), Prowl (67%), Athletics.

Secondary Skills: Read/Write/Speak Native Tongue: Russian (98%), Body Building, Pilot Truck (64%), Automotive Mechanics (55%), Language: English (95%), Language: French (80%), Language: German (80%), Land Navigation (60%), Recognize Weapon Quality (55%), Basic Math (75%), Pilot Automobile (72%), Hunting, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides (50%), Law (30%), Streetwise (24%).

Money: He has amassed somewhere in the vicinity of 2.7 million U.S. dollars. He also has 1.2 million in roubles (Russian currency) that he has stolen over the years and hidden in various Swiss bank accounts. The majority of his money is used on escort services (loves American women) and buying en-

tainment items (plasma screen TV, MP3/DVD player/recorder, etc.).

Weapons: None, although he is thoroughly trained to use an AK-47 assault rifle.

Vehicles and Equipment: None. He makes do with the vast resources of David Slave and the various vehicles the man has at his disposal.

Volcano

Volcano is a mineraloid from the Ilta Quadrant. His home world is the moon of a giant high gravity planet, and because of the internal tides brought on by the close proximity of the planet, the moon's surface remains volcanic. The air is full of dust and toxic gas. Although surface temperatures stay around -235 degrees F (-148 degrees C), in the vicinity of the eruptions the temperatures reach 80 degrees F (27 degrees C). It is here that Volcano's people have made their home. His people have the approximate technological level of ancient Rome, which calls into question exactly how Volcano made his way to Earth. He refuses to answer, and David Slave refuses to comment. The other members of the UD have been able to determine several things about their stony associate. He was not captured by Project Tyche or Secure, nor was he aided by alien friendly Earthlings, yet he has some familiarity with Earth, its major nations, cultures, and laws. Yet the question remains, how did he get here? Volcano is extremely subservient to Slave and willingly obeys any order Wind Chill gives him without question. But when it comes to human life, Volcano shows no compassion. To him, humans are insects to be killed without care or remorse. He won't think twice about tossing a school bus full of children into a nursing home, and setting it ablaze. Yet for whatever reason, he will follow the orders of David Slave to the very end and absolutely will not stop until the mission is over. The others try to include him in everything they do, but the alien rock man shows little interest in anything but killing and torturing humans. He awaits his next mission, carries it out, then goes off on his own to find new ways to entertain himself with murder and mayhem.

Volcano

Real Name: Gin Ariyoshix.

Occupation: Terrorist and Mercenary. Possibly a bodyguard for David Slave.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 9, M.E. 12, M.A. 14, P.S. 26/78 (Supernatural), P.P. 13, P.E. 26, P.B. 10, Spd. 28.

Age: 105 (His race lives for about 300 years.)

Sex: Male.

Height: 8 feet, 6 inches (2.6 m). Growth +52 feet (15.8 m).

Weight: 690 lbs (310.5 kg). Growth +6600 lbs (2970 kg).

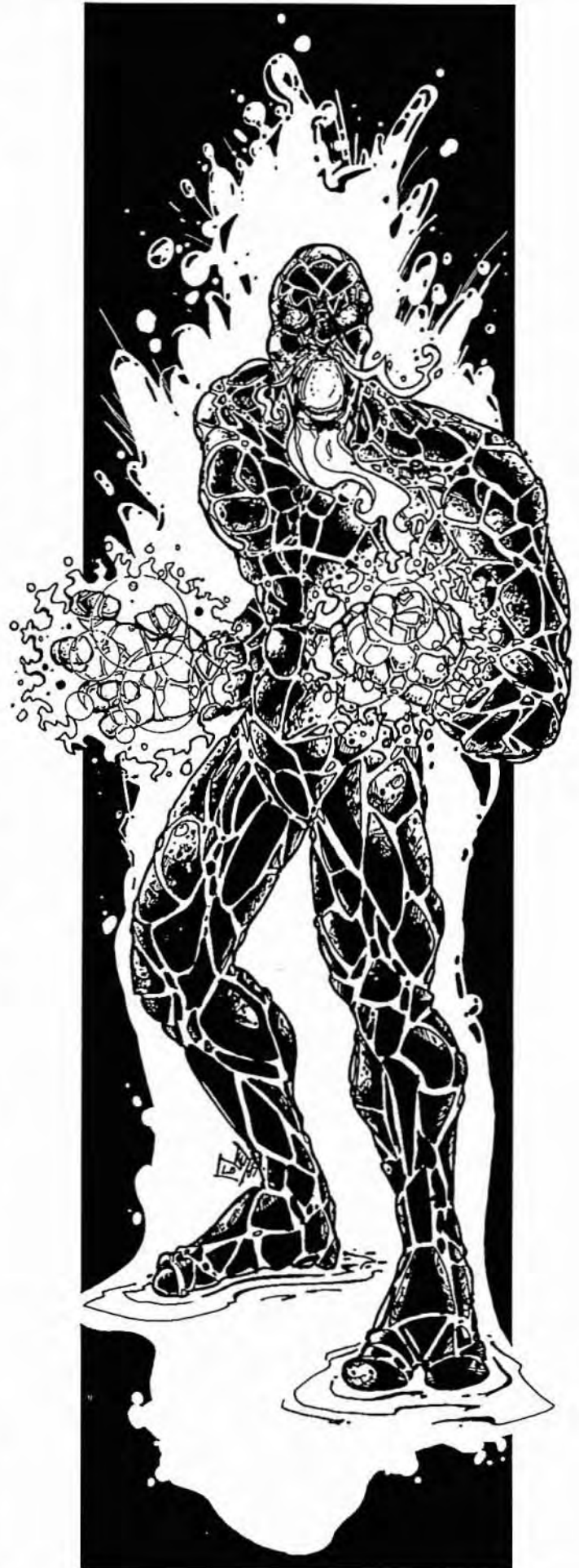
Experience Level: 6th

Hit Points: 41. S.D.C. 262/max height 1040. Natural A.R. 14.

Power Category: Alien-Mineraloid.

Major Super Powers: Alter Physical Structure – Fire and Growth.

Natural Abilities: Kinetic energy and impact weapons (bullets, projectiles, physical attacks, falls, thrown weapons, and explosives) only do half damage if they can bypass his A.R.



(even when bathed in flame). Electricity, ion beams, and lasers also inflict half damage (even when bathed in flame). He is impervious to radiation. As a living rock, he is impervious to harm that would befall organic creatures (so he cannot be harmed by toxins, poisons, chemicals, drugs, etc.), nor does he need to breathe or eat (survived on ambient energy). Bio-regenerates 2D6 S.D.C./Hit Points per 24 hours. He can go into a healing trance that doubles the rate of healing each day. All mineraloids are considered supernatural beings.

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Number of Attacks: 6 (2 initial, +3 from Hand to Hand Combat, +1 from Boxing).

Bonuses (all): +2 to initiative, +2 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, +11 to damage (+63), +3 to pull punch, +7 to roll with punch/fall. +6 to save vs magic, +22% to save vs coma/death.

Other Combat Info: Restrained Punch 2D6+11, Full Strength Punch 4D6+11, Power Punch 1D4x10+11, Elbow/Forearm 5D6+11, Knee 4D6+11, Karate Kick 5D6+11, Axe Kick 1D4x10, Tripping/Leg Hook (knockdown), Crush 3D6+11, Body Block/Tackle 3D6 (with possible knockdown), Pin 18-20, Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20, Knockout on a Natural 20, Disarm.

Growth: Restrained Punch 6D6+63, Full Strength Punch 2D6x10+63, Power Punch or Stomp 4D6x10+63.

Continuous Bolt of Flame: 8D6 (or 1D4x10+8). +4 to strike.

Fire Ball: 9D6 (or 1D4x10+14). +3 to strike.

Breathe Fire: 1D6+6. +1 to strike.

Education Level: Science Specialist.

Anthropology: Alien (humanoid; 70%), Xeno-Biology (humanoid; 80%), Astronomy (75%), Astrophysics (75%), Civil Engineering (see *The Rifter* #25; 80%), Holistic Medicine (70%), Paramedic (90%), Boxing, Wrestling, Radio: Basic (95%), Radio: Satellite (75%), Computer Operation (90%), Advanced Math (95%), Read Sensory Equipment (80%).

Secondary: Hand to Hand: Expert, Athletics, Carpentry/Construction (60%), Land Navigation (60%), Basic Math (95%), Running, Body Building, Research (80%), Read/Write/Speak English, Spanish, Chinese and Hindi (90%). W.P. Battle Axe (+2 to strike, +1 to parry, +1 to throw), W.P. Blunt (+1 to strike, +1 to parry), Identify Plants & Fruits (30%), Masonry (see *Beyond the Supernatural*, 2nd Edition; 45%).

Money: He has amassed somewhere in the vicinity of 10 million U.S. dollars. He uses the money to purchase additional equipment that allows him to study humankind, its cultures, physiology, etc. For him his secret stash of \$21,000 in precious gems are his true valuables. These are gemstones taken from his home world.

Weapons: David Slave gave him a giant-sized Kisentite Axe (4D6). Although it's taken him a few years to get used to the weapon, Volcano now considers it his pride and joy, especially when it comes to crushing human skulls.

Vehicles and Equipment: He sold his Hover Platform to a man in exchange for information that led him to the location of David Slave. Now he has access to all the technology he

could ever want. Most of it he uses to satisfy his curiosity about the human race, especially what makes them die.

Tremor

Tremor is the newest member of the Unnatural Disasters. In fact, he's only been with them for a month. He not only participated in an ambush that resulted in the death of thirty-one S.C.R.E.T. agents, but he singlehandedly caused the collapse of the Bank of Liberty Building in Ultropolis, which resulted in the deaths of 300 people and injured an additional 600. He's young and rather inexperienced, but he knows how to make an impact. At first the UD, who'd been together for quite awhile, were not impressed with the kid's talents, but after watching him handle himself against several of Slave's cronies, they agreed he had potential. So Typhoon suggested they put him to the test. Slave organized their ambush against S.C.R.E.T., and thanks in part to Tremor, the endeavor was not only successful, but embarrassed the U.S. government. Afterwards, the other members of the UD openly welcomed him among their ranks.

Arthur Eddex received his incredible powers after being exposed to a mysterious gas while he and his family visited an active volcano on an island in the South Pacific. A day later, Arthur began experiencing horrible side effects and mutations to his body. His parents took him to Bioforms Genetic Laboratories in an effort to cure him. Yet in a short while, Arthur started to enjoy his new found abilities. When scientists asked him if he would like to receive training to fully master his powers, he accepted without question, even though it required him to fake his own death so his parents would not come looking for him. One year later, Arthur took on the name Tremor and found himself hired out to various powers within the underworld. One such individual was David Slave.

Tremor

Real Name: Arthur Eddex.

Occupation: Terrorist and Mercenary. Possibly a bodyguard for David Slave.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 10, M.A. 13, P.S. 29/39*, P.P. 14, P.E. 17, P.B. 8, Spd. 28.

Age: 18

Sex: Male.

Height: 6 feet (1.83 m).

Weight: 210 lbs (94.5 kg).

Experience Level: 3rd

Hit Points: 34. S.D.C. 61. Natural A.R. 10 (as long as he has contact with the Earth).

Power Category: Mutant.

Minor Super Powers: Blur (as long as he remains conscious he will be constantly vibrating; he can turn it off at will), Alter Physical Structure of Limb – Stone, Earth Empowerment*, Seismic Power, and Super Borrowing.

*If he has direct contact with the earth, he can carry/lift with Supernatural P.S.

Unusual Characteristics: He has extra large feet (double their normal size).

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Number of Attacks: 4 (2 initial, +2 from Hand to Hand Combat).

Bonuses (all): +1 to initiative, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +2 to auto-dodge, +14 to damage, +3 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch/fall, +1 to disarm an opponent.

Saving Throws: +1 to save vs magic and poison, +5 to save vs coma/death.

Other Combat Info: Full Strength Punch 1D4+14, Power Punch 2D4+11, Elbow/Forearm 1D6+14, Knee 1D6+11, Snap Kick 1D6+14.

Education Level: On the Job Training. He has to turn off his Blur power if he wants to do the skills marked with asterisks (*).

Criminal Program: Streetwise (47%), *Pick Locks (60%), *Prowl (55%), Concealment (47%), Find Contraband & Illegal Weapons (53%).

Technical Program: *Carpentry/Construction (see *The Rifter* #25; (70%), *General Repair & Maintenance (55%), Masonry (see *Beyond the Supernatural*, 2nd Edition; 70%), *Computer Operation (70%).

Secondary: Athletics, Body Building, Run, Physical Labor (see *Beyond the Supernatural*, 2nd Edition), Land Navigation (48%), Radio: Basic (60%), Recognize Weapon Quality (40%), Pilot Truck (52%), Basic Math (55%), Pilot Automobile (66%), Basic Mechanics (35%), Basic Electronics (35%).

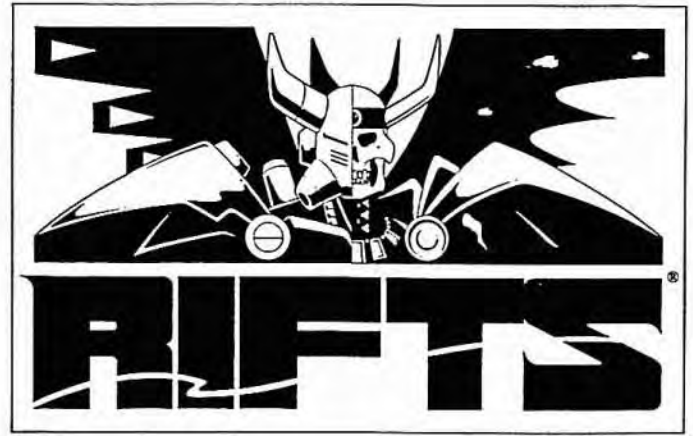
Money: In his brief career he has made \$320,000, but already spent \$300,000 on clothes, fancy cars, and vacation resorts. He is proving to be very irresponsible when it comes to money.

Weapons: None.

Vehicles and Equipment: He wants to have a fancy sports car for every day of the week. So far, he has a BMW, Jaguar, Porsche, and a Dodge Viper. Typhoon has suggested he learn to drive race cars before he starts driving them like a wild man.

David Slave?

Who is he? He is the mastermind behind an international secret organization (has no name) bent on world domination (200 billion dollar organization) which has been responsible for dozens of terrorist attacks across the globe. Presently, Slave is using the UD to cause unprecedented disasters to strike at the financial heart of the major nations of the world, even if it means killing hundreds or thousands. He will consider anything, even the use of nuclear weapons (which he has obtained through unknown means). The man is a megalomaniac who suffers from a God Complex. So far, very little information has leaked out about him or his empire, and he intends on keeping it that way. What is he? That's for the G.M. to decide. If G.M.s are looking to create the ultimate villain (or mega-villain), then that man is David Slave. Regardless of Slave's Power Category, he will be 10th level or higher. Alignment: Aberrant.



D-Bees of the Eastern Wilds

Optional New Source Material for Rifts®

By Josh Sinsapaugh

Preface

Just one of the many, many things that I have enjoyed about the setting of the *Rifts Role-Playing Game* has always been the plethora of alien life forms who either call our little blue mud ball home or are just simply visiting. I usually liken it to the famous cantina scene in *Star Wars Episode Four: A New Hope*, a scene where you cannot blink lest you miss three or more alien races. In *Rifts*, familiar fictional races such as Elves, Dwarves, Orcs and Goblins mix with new original races such as the Trimadore (my personal favorite), Quick Flex Aliens, the Larmac and the fan favorite, Grackle Tooth. It is a truly unique mix that I have enjoyed for years and years, and to which I now intend to add.

The focus of this article will be the D-Bees of the *Eastern Wilds*, the mostly uncharted wilderness east of the Domain of Man on the North American continent. Lands found in the Eastern Wilds include (but are by no means limited to): the Dark Woods (Alabama), Dinosaur Swamp (Florida, Georgia and parts of the Carolinas), the Horror Forest (much of the Eastern Seaboard) and the so-called Shemarrian Nation (the land that A.R.C.H.I.E. Three's Shemarrians claim as their own; Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania and parts of New Jersey). The Magic Zone is usually referred to as part of the Eastern Wilderness, especially by the Coalition, however much of it *does* exist in the Domain of Man and thus D-Bees of the Magic Zone have not been fully represented here.

In the year 90 P.A., the Lazlo Council of Learning commissioned a study of the D-Bees living to the east of the Domain of Man, a vast assortment of territories referred to by the council as the "Eastern Wilds." The expedition was placed under the

charge of a human Legacy Scout named Joachim Curli, one of the many scientists who accompanied the famed Deearn Neenok in the early 80's P.A. on his first expedition to Dinosaur Swamp. His findings were published in 105 P.A. as *The Dimensional Beings of the Eastern Wilds: A Short Study* and can now be found in libraries & schools throughout Lazlo and (to a much lesser extent) New Lazlo. On the intent of his expedition, Joachim wrote the following while stopping briefly in New Paducah (now known as MercTown) on the third of April, 90 P.A.:

My associates and I have stopped in New Paducah in order to join up with the final additions to the expeditionary party, my dearest friends, Odom Lunarix and Urmof Rayven. Fellow naturalists whose presence I've deemed valuable enough for which to steer the expedition miles off course. At the moment, my two associates are busy selling the last of their furniture, a desk, from their temporary home (a comedic affair I watched with great amusement) in order to purchase some last minute supplies. I have thus taken a moment to convey my intent for this expedition.

When I accompanied the great Deearn Neenok to the Dinosaurian Swamp some six years ago, I saw many, many creatures both sentient and monstrous, both mundane and magical: dinosaurs, monsters, wilderness people and a fair share of the supernatural. What intrigued me the most, though, were the Dimensional Beings (or D-Bees as many of my companions crudely call them) who were unique to the region. Every species that we met forged a yearning into me, a yearning to launch my own study, my own expedition and eventually, write my own book. A lesser companion to Neenok's I assure you, as I am no Neenok (and I am definitely no Erin Tarn), but a book of my own regardless. A book written to catalogue the Dimensional Beings of the Eastern Wilds. Now, at the courtesy of the Council of Learning, I am allowed to fulfill my ambition.

I do not know what (or rather who) I will find east of the Domain of Man, but that is perhaps up to providence, as that is what will have brought me there.

Additional excerpts from Joachim Curli's book are presented with each D-Bee description.

D-Bees of the Eastern Wilds

- Acisse Tribal Hunters
- Adna Nomads
- Bayou Ursines
- Forest Wardens
- Idie Swamp Men
- Two-Horned Techno-Men

Acisse Tribal Hunters

They spoke in Gobblely and referred to themselves as the Acisse (pronounced Ah-key-say), a strange race of tribal hunters found in the Old American Empire Carolinas and in the piedmont of the Old American Empire State of Georgia. I was told of their existence by a band of Swamp Stompers who in-

tended to warn us of the Acisse's presence in the area. Much to the surprise of the stompers, we asked them to show us these wild men, a proposal they finally accepted with a little monetary persuasion. About an hour later we watched intently from a cliff in the Appalachian Mountains as a tribe descended relentlessly on a wounded Hypacrosaurus (or Duckbilled Honker, as it is more commonly known).

The Acisse moved with such tenacious intent as they closed in on their prey that Lunarix couldn't help but comment that the poor beast was "doomed." I couldn't help but agree as I watched from on high. Additional study of the Acisse (which I will detail), along with my conversations with the Swamp Stompers, would eventually reveal other aspects of this race of alien barbarians.

The Acisse are a race of relatively primitive tribal hunters who roam the swamps and forests of the Eastern Seaboard south of what was once West Virginia. Nomadic, the Acisse survive through hunting and gathering, with the males performing the former while the females perform the latter. A majority of the hunting is done within the shadows of the Appalachian Mountains, where game is plentiful and hiding from Splugorth Slavers (who prowl the East Coast) is easier. The wild men excel at hunting, deploying expert tactics that can make an easy task out of bringing down full-grown dinosaurs with little more than crude Vibro-weapons (stolen from adventurers). However, the Acisse are not skilled warriors and can only perform well when the element of surprise is granted to them, and thus fight poorly even when combating unintelligent dinosaurs. When possible, the tribal hunters will employ tactics similar to those used by other (human) barbarians in the east (see *Rifts World Book 26: Dinosaur Swamp*, page 12).

The relationship between the Acisse and other barbarians (as the Acisse are barbarians) is a tenuous one, with both the other barbarians and the Acisse viewing each other in a paranoid and hostile light. Most wilderness barbarians give these wild men a wide berth and the Acisse return the favor by avoiding other barbarian tribes. Confrontations do occur though, with small tribal wars temporarily springing up between the Acisse and human wilderness barbarians. Such wars typically last only a few weeks or months, with a six month war being a rarity while wars lasting more than a year are altogether unheard of. The short time span of wars (although all barbarians would argue that they are always at war with enemy tribes) is due to two factors: the harsh environment where war is usually a secondary concern when compared to survival, and the Acisse's nomadic nature (the wild men follow game within their usual range on the Eastern Seaboard).

Overall, the Acisse are very similar to the human barbarians of the Eastern Wilds, with the only distinguishing feature aside from their racial identity being their language: Gobblely. Although the vast majority of Acisse speak American, the language that they call their own is the Goblin language, and they view anyone who speaks anything else as their common tongue to be suspicious. Likewise, even though many of the human wilderness barbarians speak Gobblely, these humans view anyone who does not speak American as their common tongue to be suspicious and not worthy of their trust. Despite their distrust of one another, both groups of barbarians (human and Acisse) view



outsiders from west of the Appalachians with an equal level of marked distaste that makes the animosity between them seem like a brotherly quarrel in comparison. Stories of Acisse and human barbarians joining forces to fend off common enemies (Splugorth, Coalition or Free Quebec scouts, etc.) are not uncommon and can occasionally be witnessed by third parties. Joachim Curli's expedition witnessed one such encounter in the Georgia Piedmont:

The unfortunate souls never knew what hit them. One moment the Coalition vendetta squad was searching for the fugitive who had taken refuge within our party, and the next, they were assailed on both sides with Vibro-Blades and the occasional laser blast. It was one of the most well laid ambushes I had ever seen, both the Acisse and the barbarians acting in concert with one another. The Coalition soldiers fought valiantly, however their modern warfare tactics ultimately succumbed to the primitive savagery of the barbarians. I never thought I would see a SAMAS get destroyed by a volley of Vibro-Spears... but then again, I never thought I would see men trained by the greatest

military on the continent lose to a loose knit alliance of barbarians. Perhaps ironically, the same two tribes were witnessed by our scouts battling each other the day before.

Physically, the Acisse are orange-skinned, five to six feet (1.5 to 1.8 meters) tall humanoids. Their reverse-jointed legs end in soft, four-toed feet while their arms end in four-fingered (three fingers and an opposable thumb) hands that are just as capable as those of a human. Their heads are not even remotely human-like in appearance, but long and alien with a short, tapir-like snout located where a human's mouth would be. The snout is used to breathe and to talk while a larger opening beneath the chin and often hidden from sight acts as the mouth for these aliens. Their heads are also crowned with a bony red protrusion that the Acisse call a "klawen." The Acisse klawen serves the same purpose to the D-Bee as the osteoderms do for the Stegosaurus: regulating body temperature like a radiator (the Acisse are warm blooded but do not have sweat glands). The white eyes of the Acisse are clear, devoid of either pupils or irises, and are surrounded by a patch of red skin.

The Acisse live in tribal clans, dressing in loincloths and sleeping under the open sky or in dinosaur skin tents as they follow herds of dinosaur up and down the Eastern Seaboard. These aliens rarely settle down or build settlements with greater complexity than a lean-to, preferring instead to follow the nomadic lifestyle that has been the norm for them for over three hundred years. They wear patchwork armor when needed, use crude Vibro- or Eco-Wizard weapons and adore modern firearms but are rarely able to get their hands on them in the wilderness. An unknown number of these D-Bees exist along the East Coast, with the wild men traveling in scattered familial clans numbering as few as five members to as large as five hundred (three of these exist). A clan of three thousand or more is rumored to exist somewhere within the Georgia Piedmont or on the Florida Panhandle, although few claim to have ever encountered such a tribe and the story may be little more than a folk tale (which is likely).

Acisse - Optional Player Character or NPC

Pronunciation: *Ah - Key - Say.*

Also known as "Red Capped Wild Men," a name that refers to the Acisse's red *klawen*. Expeditionary scouts and vendetta squads from Free Quebec and the Coalition States refer to them as "Feral Red Caps."

Alignment: Any; typically Unprincipled, Anarchist or Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+3, M.E. 2D6+1, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 2D6+6, P.E. 4D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 3D6+4.

Size: 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 meters) tall; equivalently human-sized.

Weight: 100 to 200 pounds (45 to 90 kilograms).

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

Base S.D.C.: 1D4x10

Horror Factor: Not Applicable.

P.P.E.: 4D6

Disposition: The disposition of a Acisse varies from individual to individual. Most Acisse are simple hunters who care little for wealth or power and are simply trying to eke out an existence in the wild. All Acisse are paranoid of outsiders from the west.

Average Life Span: 60 years, an eternity in the wilderness. Most Acisse die much sooner in combat, hunting or through disease.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 90 feet (27 meters), good sense of sight and smell (roughly equivalent to those of a human) and excellent hearing (can hear a heartbeat from 12 feet/3.6 meters away).

Experience Level: 1D4+1 or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Player Characters should start at first level.

Combat: As per Hand to Hand Combat skill of the chosen O.C.C.

Damage: As per combat skill; all kicks inflict double normal damage.

Bonuses: In addition to those acquired from attributes and skills: +2 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry and +3 to save versus disease, heat and cold.

Vulnerabilities: Traditionally, the Acisse are *Tribal Hunters* and thus do not fare well when they do not have the element of surprise on their side. In such instances the Acisse are hesitant and incur the following penalties: -3 to save versus Horror Factor, -2 to strike and -2 to roll with punch. Penalties *only* apply when the character *does not* have the element of surprise.

Psionic Powers: Standard, the same probability of psionic abilities as a human.

Magic Knowledge: None, unless a magic O.C.C. is selected.

Available O.C.C.s: Limited to Acisse Tribal Hunter (see below; 60% choose this occupation), Barbarian O.C.C.s (especially the Wild Knives Warrior), Eco-Wizard, Mystic, Ley Line Walker and Vagabond. For all non-Barbarian O.C.C.s, ignore Engineering, Electrical, Mechanical and Science skills that might normally be available and replace them with Domestic, Horsemanship, Physical, Rogue, Technical skills that don't use advanced technologies, Weapon Proficiencies (most any) and Wilderness skills. Also, substitute any advanced technological equipment with low-tech equivalents when possible.

An Acisse taken out of the tribal society at a young age may learn most O.C.C.s as long as he or she meets the requirements. Such an Acisse is hated by its brethren and often attacked on sight. Juicer and M.O.M. (Crazy) technologies do not work on the alien physiology of these beings. Acisse can become cyborgs or even Cyber-Knights, however none have ever done so.

Standard Equipment: Standard equipment as per O.C.C.

Money: Regardless of O.C.C. affiliation, an Acisse will have 1D6x1,000 credits worth of tradable goods.

Cybernetics & Bionics: None to start; although an Acisse is a candidate for bionic and cybernetic augmentation it is extremely unlikely that the character will ever receive such augmentation. Most Acisse view cybernetics in the same light that they view demons and the supernatural.

Habitat: The temperate swamps and forests of the southern East Coast, including the territories that were once known as Georgia, Florida and the Carolinas. It is unknown whether Acisse exist elsewhere on Rifts Earth.

Slave Market Value: Equivalent to the value of human slaves, sometimes half as much due to their primitive nature.

Alliances and Allies: Most Acisse trust only the other Acisse within their familial clan. Rogue and exiled Acisse get along quite well with humans and other D-Bees, although they will never fully trust them.

Rivals and Enemies: Wilderness barbarians, outsiders and Acisse who are not from the same tribe are viewed as competing enemies in a harsh environment. All Acisse view the Splugorth and their minions as the evil enslavers that they are.

Acisse Tribal Hunter R.C.C.

A large percentage (60%) of Acisse fall into this category of occupational knowledge that deals almost exclusively with hunting, gathering and survival. This *is not* a warrior class, rather a semi-primitive R.C.C. skill set that reflects the Acisse's barbaric nature.

R.C.C. Skills:

Native Language: Gobblely at 98%.

Language: American (+10%)

Basic Math

Hunting

Cooking (+10%)

Camouflage (+10%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Preserve Food (+10%)

Skin & Prepare Animal Hides (+20%)

Identify Plants & Fruit (+20%; knowledge only pertains to those found in and around the southern Eastern Seaboard).

Lore: Dinosaur (+30%; see skill description in *Dinosaur Swamp* on page 49 for details).

Track Animals (+20%; Dinosaurs +30%)

Wilderness Survival (+20%)

Climbing

Outdoorsmanship

Prowl (+20%)

Swim (+10%)

W.P. Spear

W.P. Blunt

W.P. Knife

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic may be changed to Expert at the cost of one R.C.C. Related Skill, or to Martial Arts (or Assassin if of an evil alignment) for the cost of two. More advanced Hand to Hand disciplines such as Commando can never be chosen.

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select four additional skills at level one, plus one additional at levels 3, 7, 11 and 15. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Language or Literacy (counts as two skill selections) only.

Cowboy: Any, except Herding Cattle and Horsemanship: Cowboy.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Detect Ambush (+10%) and Sniper (counts as two selections) only.

Horsemanship: General (+20%) or Exotic (+10%) only.

Mechanical: None.

Medical: Animal Husbandry (+10%), First Aid and Holistic Medicine (+10%) only.

Military: Armorer and Trap Construction (+12%) only.

Physical: Any, except Boxing, Juicer Sports, S.C.U.B.A. or space skills.

Pilot: Bicycling, Hovercycle (-24%; yes, that is a minus) and Kayaking only.

Pilot Related: None.

Rogue: Any, except Computer Hacking and Streetwise skills.

Science: None.

Technical: Any skill that does not require advanced technology (+10% on Lore skills).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+15%).

Secondary Skills: Select three Secondary Skills at level one and one additional skill at levels 4, 8 and 13 from the Secondary Skill List found in *Rifts: Ultimate Edition*, page 300. All new skills start at first level proficiency. All skills are also limited as found in the list above: any, none, etc.

Standard Equipment: A crude Vibro-Spear (1D6, 2D4 or 2D6 M.D.; one or two Vibro-Knives or a single Vibro-Saber fastened to a rod or stick), a Vibro-Knife (1D6 M.D.), a survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.), a large travel sack, medicine pouch, 100 feet (30.5 meters) of rope, a water skin, three loincloths, personal tent (made from Dinosaur skin), crude wooden cross, mallet, 4+1D4 wooden stakes, 1D4 dinosaur and animal calls (each specific to one type of animal or dinosaur, usually made out of wood or bone), and a suit of patchwork Fury Beetle or Dinosaur hide armor plus a few personal items.

If a Horsemanship skill was selected the character may start with a good quality riding horse or (if Horsemanship: Exotic was selected) a small predatory dinosaur such as a Silonar or Ostrosaurus. However, the allocation of a riding animal is left solely up to the G.M.'s discretion.

Money: 1D6x1,000 credits worth of tradable goods such as semi-precious & precious stones and furs.

Adna Nomads

I am very happy to report that our first encounter with an Adna Nomad was a pleasant one. He was nice enough, quiet but friendly, and more than willing to share some of his travel rations with the expedition. He spoke in American and pointed out the best path to take out of the southern Horror Forest and on to the population center known as Char. He warned me of the dangers of that squalid shanty town and I thanked him, although I assured him that I knew the dangers full well, especially after having visited the town with the great Deearn Neenok. It was then that I learned the true nature of the Adna Nomads.

I mentioned that I had been in the area before and expressed my amazement that I had not seen another Adna on my first trip to the region. Our new friend hung his head and recounted the



sadness that he believed inflicted every member of his race: "We are rapidly heading toward extinction and I know not how many of my kind remain." He spoke solemnly with great intent, choosing his words carefully. "We have come to this planet for one more adventure before the doors of fate slam shut on us." His state soon returned to cheer and formality, before bidding us farewell and disappearing into the woods.

I am burdened with a great sadness to write that I have not met another Adna Nomad since that Sunday encounter in the woods. I pray he wasn't an illusion or apparition; he was such a nice fellow.

The Adna, a species of nomadic humanoids, are one of the rarest D-Bees on the North American Continent and can occasionally be found in and around the entire length of the Appalachian Mountains. Joachim Curli estimates the presence of the Adna Nomads in North America to be fewer than one hundred, although leading scholars in Lazlo and Free Quebec place the estimate at around five hundred. Unbeknownst to both Curli and the scholars, the actual number is probably closer to about fifty individuals in the Appalachians and another ten scattered across the world. The Adna themselves will give such a small estimate, going as far as to provide an estimate of only a thousand nomads throughout the entire Megaverse.

The reason for the low population and looming extinction of the Adna on Rifts Earth (and elsewhere) is as simple as it is tragic: disease. 98% of all Adna are inflicted with disease, specifically a genetic disease that the race calls *The Long Death*, a sickness that renders the beings sterile. Adding insult to injury is the inability of gene therapy and all other cures to even remotely hinder the disease. Furthermore, even the 2% not affected by the Long Death carry it and run a large risk of passing the sickness on to their offspring (80% chance). Thus, newborn Adna are few and far between as two non-inflicted nomads are needed to produce a child, a meeting that is often improbable as the D-Bees have succumbed to and accepted their fate and wait patiently for the end. This path of apathetic acceptance has made the majority of the Adna outwardly happy even though a constant sadness dogs them in secret.

The Adna Nomads who have come to Rifts Earth have done so both to forget the Long Death (a complete and utter impossibility) and to partake in one last adventure. These D-Bees always have been and will be a race of explorers who can never seem to shake away a persistent feeling of wanderlust, no matter how many lands or dimensions they visit. The Adna on Rifts Earth can thus be found wandering the mountains and foothills of the Eastern Wilds as lone individuals or the super rare two to three member family clan. Most Adna traverse the Eastern Seaboard and the Appalachians in general as they find the quiet splendor of the wilderness to be calming despite the wild nature of both the locals and the environment. Overall, their focus on the eastern mountains stems from their love of peace and tranquility, traits that the Adna are hard-pressed to find in the few population centers to the west and north in the Domain of Man. The pacifist nature of these gentle nomads is so well known that even the most militant human and D-Bee barbarians will not harass, attack or raid them unless attacked first.

Physically, the Adna do not differ significantly from most humanoids, although they could never be mistaken for a human

even from a quick glance. The Adna have salmon pink skin, elongated heads, skeletal noses, dark gray eyes and long, flexible arms that reach further toward the ground than those of a human. The Adna are noticeably taller than most D-Bees, measuring eight feet to nine feet (2.4 to 2.7 meters) in height, with their large heads measuring around two feet (0.6 meters) tall. The Adna often explore with large travel packs filled with their belongings, a walking stick, and tend to dress in baggy, weather stained clothing in shades of green, brown and gray.

Adna - Optional Player Character or NPC

Also known as "Sulking Wanderers."

Alignment: Any.

Attributes: I.Q. 4D6, M.E. 3D6+6, M.A. 2D6+4, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 2D6+3, P.E. 2D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 3D6.

Size: 8-9 feet (2.4 to 2.7 meters) tall.

Weight: 300 to 500 pounds (135 to 225 kilograms).

Mega-Damage Capacity: P.E. Attribute number plus 6D6, plus an additional 2D4 per level of experience.

Horror Factor: 5

P.P.E.: 2D6

Disposition: Like humans, the disposition of a given Adna varies from individual to individual. However, all Adna are deeply depressed on the inside and often put on a facade of cheer and joy for those they meet.

Average Life Span: 100 years.

Natural Abilities: Highly adaptive and resourceful.

Experience Level: 1D6+1 or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Player Characters should start at first level.

Combat: As per Hand to Hand Combat skill of the chosen O.C.C.

Damage: As per combat skill. Note that despite their M.D.C. nature, the Adna have normal strength and thus inflict S.D.C. with physical attacks.

Bonuses: In addition to those acquired from attributes and skills: +2 to save versus disease, possession, heat and cold.

Vulnerabilities: -2 to save versus magic; P.E. and O.C.C. bonuses to save versus magic do not apply. 98% of all Adna are inflicted with the Long Death, a genetic disease described above.

Psionic Powers: All Adna are considered minor psychics and possess the following psionic abilities: Resist Thirst (6), Resist Fatigue (4), Summon Inner Strength (4) and Presence Sense (4). I.S.P.: M.E. Attribute number plus 3D6, plus an additional 1D6 per level of experience.

Magic Knowledge: None, the Adna vehemently avoid magic.

Available O.C.C.s: Any non-Man of Arms or non-Magic O.C.C. The Adna typically lean toward scholarly or adventurous pursuits such as Rogue Scholars, Rogue Scientists, Wilderness Scouts (any) or the Mind Melter O.C.C. A full 50% of Adna are of the Adna Nomad R.C.C.

Standard Equipment: Standard equipment as per O.C.C.

Money: As per O.C.C.

Cybernetics & Bionics: None to start; although an Adna is a candidate for bionic and cybernetic augmentation it is extremely unlikely that the character will ever receive such

augmentation. Most Adna detest cybernetic & bionics as they believe that they “alter who you are.”

Habitat: Adna can survive in any place that a human could but are most commonly found in and around the entire length of the Appalachian Mountains on Rifts Earth. In recent years the Adna have avoided the portions of the Appalachian Mountains that exist in the territories claimed by the Shemarrians.

Slave Market Value: Equivalent to the value of psychic human slaves.

Alliances and Allies: Most Adna can get along quite well with humans and most other D-Bees. The Adna particularly enjoy the company of both Larmacs and Grackle Toths as they find their carefree attitudes to be quite enjoyable. People who happily lead simple lives, including most Idie Swamp Men and some Bayou Ursines, are also favorite acquaintances of these beings, although a meeting between an Adna Nomad and an Idie is a rarity.

Rivals and Enemies: The Coalition States, Free Quebec and Atlantis. All Adna view the Splugorth and their minions as the evil enslavers that they are. Most Adna cannot stand the company of their own kind as they find it to be a constant reminder of their impending extinction.

Adna Nomad R.C.C.

Half of all Adna fall into this category of occupational knowledge. Similar to the Atlantean and Lurgess Nomads, the Adna Nomad R.C.C. focuses mainly on the character’s nomadic, often solitary lifestyle.

R.C.C. Skills:

Native Language: Adnan at 98%.

Language: American at 95%. (Adna Nomads elsewhere on Earth and the Megaverse will have learned the common language of the region they are traveling in. Replace American with the applicable language.)

Two other languages of choice (+20%).

Literacy: Adnan at 98%.

Literacy: Other: American (+20%)

Basic Math (+20%)

Lore: Demon & Monster (+10%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+15%)

Cooking (+10%)

Preserve Food (+10%)

Identify Plants & Fruit (+5%)

Climbing

Swimming (+10%)

W.P. Blunt

W.P. Sword

One Modern W.P. of choice, excluding Sharpshooting, Heavy Weapons & Heavy Energy Weapons.

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic may be changed to Expert at the cost of one R.C.C. Related Skill, or to Martial Arts (or Assassin if of an evil alignment) for the cost of two.

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select seven additional skills at level one, plus one additional at levels 3, 7, 11 and 15. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%, +10% on Language and Literacy Skills).

Cowboy: Any, except Herding Cattle and Horsemanship: Cowboy.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Any.

Espionage: None.

Horsemanship: General or Exotic (+15%) only.

Mechanical: Any.

Medical: Any, except Juicer Technologies, Medical Doctor and M.D. in Cybernetics.

Military: Field Armorer only.

Physical: Any, except Juicer Sports.

Pilot: Any (+5%), except robots, power armor and military vehicles.

Pilot Related: Any (+5%).

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except Sharpshooting, Heavy Weapons & Heavy Energy Weapons.

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

Secondary Skills: Select three Secondary Skills at level one, plus one additional skill at levels 5, 8 and 12 from the Secondary Skill List in **Rifts: Ultimate Edition**, page 300. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Standard Equipment: L-20 Pulse Rifle (or similar rifle) and one energy side arm of choice, 1D4+2 additional E-Clips per each weapon, Vibro-Sword (2D6 M.D.), survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.), walking stick (1D8 S.D.C.), large travel backpack, set of cookware & eating utensils, tinder box, flint, collapsible shovel, bedroll *or* sleeping bag, 100 feet (30.5 meters) of rope, canteen, Geiger counter, gas mask or air purifier, electronic distancing binoculars, pair of goggles, small hand-held short-range radio, four sets of travel clothes, a comfortable coat or hooded cloak, a sturdy and comfortable pair of hiking boots, personal tent, small silver cross, a mallet, four wooden stakes and a suit of light Mega-Damage body armor plus a few personal items.

If the character has chosen a Horsemanship skill, he or she may start with a living or robot horse, mule or light M.D.C. riding animal (if they chose Horsemanship: Exotic) plus all the necessary equipment such as saddlebags, feed bag and extra horseshoes. Otherwise the character must rely on good, old-fashioned foot power and shoe leather.

Money: 2D4x1,000 in credits and 3D6x1,000 credits worth of tradable goods such as semi-precious & precious stones and furs.



Bayou Ursines

It was in the bayou of the Old American Empire State of Louisiana, a little too close for comfort to the CS Naval Base at Baton Rouge, when we first met the curious bear-like Dimensional Beings known as Bayou Ursines. They have accepted the name from some forgotten scientist who had passed through the area long ago, though others call them Bandit Bears and other such uncouth names. I have met with other bear races, such as escaped Coalition mutants, Bug Bears, the occasional Bear Man, and each and every one of them looked more or less like a humanoid version of a bear. As for the Bayou Ursines, their appearance is odder than that, unique amongst the different bear races: shaggy fur, four ears, six eyes and two bushy tails. My esteemed colleague Rayven suggested, as a joke, that perhaps we'd better cut back on the rations of alcohol that our expedition had been given. I disregarded his quip with a laugh and attempted to make contact.

The jittery little thing stopped for a moment from his path through the muck several steps from our position and commented simply in American that: "Y'all best be getting along, there is a Fin-Back Razor (apparently slang for a Spinosaurus)

in the area and them Deadboys are gonna be patrolling these parts in about a half hour, they usually do so on Thursdays." I thanked him for the tip and tried to ask him if we could accompany him back to his residence but he wouldn't have it. "Sorry folks, I'm all for Southern Hospitality and all that jazz, but I'm afraid that my li'l girl would be mighty scared of such a big group of weird looking fellars!" With that, he went about his way through the trees and soon disappeared from sight. Thankfully, he wasn't the last we would meet.

Without a doubt, the Bayou Ursines are one of the strangest D-Bees in the Eastern Wilds, if not the entire continent. Four to six foot (1.2 to 1.8 meter) tall, bear-like humanoids with shaggy white, black and brown fur and two bushy fox-like tails, the Ursines can be found living in small villages and homesteads throughout the entire Eastern Wilds, but are most common in the deep south of the Dark Woods, Dinosaur Swamp and most notably, the bayous and swamps of what was once Louisiana and Mississippi. Their heads are adorned with four ears, a pair for hearing within the human range of sounds and a pair for hearing within the ultrasonic range. Their eyes are perhaps the strangest and most distinguishing features on their body, they have six of them and all are completely black and spider-like. Their strange eyes do serve a purpose though: the creatures can see a wider spectrum of light than humans, which includes both the infrared and ultraviolet spectrums.

In general, Bayou Ursines are energetic but lazy creatures who prefer to eke out a living of subsistence through small game hunting and fishing. Most Ursines expect and prefer an easy life with little actual labor and thus are often found fulfilling the role of both pirates and bandits. In this regard, these bears are fairly common, with many pirate and outlaw bands of the southeast containing one or more Bayou Ursines within the group of permanent members. Further prompting the bears to live as pirates or bandits is their semi-aquatic nature. Bayou Ursines are expert swimmers and can even breathe under water, making them ideal pirates and also assisting them if they are bandits further inland (the southeast is riddled with rivers and swamps, more so after the Coming of the Rifts than before). Of course, their aquatic talents could allow them to be career fishermen, rescue personnel or expert cargo haulers along the waterways of the south, but such occupations are often much too strenuous for the bears, especially when easier money can be found through banditry. Joachim Curli comments on the D-Bees' common criminal pursuits in his book:

Despite the fact that nearly every Bayou Ursine who our expedition stumbled across was kind and cheerful, I must sadly report that some eight out of ten were career criminals of one kind or another. During my time traveling along the Gulf Coast, my expedition encountered about six pirate bands passing by on the open sea – each had at least one Ursine amongst its crew. The same can be said about the six or seven river pirate groups we encountered.

The tendency toward careers of piracy and banditry has placed an unforgettable stigma on the Ursines, who are usually viewed with contempt and suspicion by a majority of residents within the south. Although the stigma is well earned, about 20% of all Ursines live an honest life and are thus undeserving of such racial prejudice. Even the honest Bayou Ursines will find

themselves discriminated against through sneers, slurs, unwarranted aggression and overcharging by almost all merchants, except the Naruni. These honest Bayou Ursines cannot account for the other 80% of their race, but neither can they stem the tide of prejudice and bigotry that has been set against them. In response, many of the honest members of this race live a solitary life, hidden away in small homesteads with others of their kind in the deepest parts of the bayou and the darkest parts of the woods.

Bayou Ursines speak American and other common languages of North America and are without a unique language to call their own. Much like the Grackle Tooth, Bayou Ursines remember neither where they came from nor what they had originally called themselves. A majority do not care though, and live a very relaxed and carefree lifestyle throughout the southeast. Fairly common for a D-Bee in the wilderness, one million (probably fewer) are believed to exist, scattered across the south and on the high seas, with another quarter million scattered elsewhere across the continent.

Bayou Ursines - Optional Player Character or NPC

Also known as "Bayou Bears," "Bandit Bears," and "Pirate Bears."

Alignment: Any, a majority (72%) of all Bayou Ursines are of a selfish alignment.

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

Size: 4-6 feet (1.2 to 1.8 meters) tall.

Weight: 120 to 300 pounds (54 to 135 kilograms).

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

S.D.C.: 1D6x100+100 (extremely light Mega-Damage Creature with equivalent M.D.C. of 2-7).

Horror Factor: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: 3D6

Disposition: Varies from individual to individual. Most Bayou Ursines are fairly lazy creatures and expect an easy life. Many of the Ursines are addicted to gambling and other vices, nasty habits that the D-Bees often support through thievery or other unsavory occupations.

Average Life Span: 70 years.

Natural Abilities: Can see in both the infrared and ultraviolet spectrums of light, Nightvision 120 feet (36.6 meters), can hear both normal and ultrasonic sound, can breathe both underwater and above water and are natural swimmers with a skill equivalency of 89%. Their oily fur acts as both a great source of insulation when in the water and as a cooling method when above water similar to human sweat.

Experience Level: 1D4 or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Player Characters should start at first level.

Combat: As per Hand to Hand Combat skill of the chosen O.C.C.

Damage: As per combat skill.

Bonuses: In addition to those acquired from attributes and skills: +1 to pull punch and +1 to dodge.

Vulnerabilities: None per se, other than the racial prejudice that is often leveled against them.

Psionic Powers: Standard, Bayou Ursines have the same probability of psionic abilities as a human.

Magic Knowledge: None, unless a Magic O.C.C. is selected.

Available O.C.C.s: Bayou Ursines do not have a standard R.C.C. skill set like the other D-Bees presented here and thus must pick an O.C.C. Selections are limited to: Vagabond, Pirate, River Pirate, Pirate Slaver, Bandit, Bandit: Highway Man, Saloon Bum, Saddle Tramp, Gunfighter, Gunslinger, Wilderness Scout (any, except Naturalist and Legacy Scout), Head Hunter (any, except Momano), Partial or Full Conversion Cyborg, Mining 'Borg, City Rat (any, except Hack Rat), Cyber-Snatcher, Grunt (equivalent), Mercenary Soldier, Ley Line Walker, Mystic, Techno-Wizard, Eco-Wizard, Warlock, Whale Singer, Ocean Wizard, Shifter, Necromancer, or Salvage Expert. Bayou Ursines are not candidates for Juicer or Crazy conversion. None are known to have become Cyber-Knights and it is extremely unlikely that any ever will.

Standard Equipment: Standard equipment as per O.C.C.

Money: As per O.C.C.

Cybernetics & Bionics: As per the chosen O.C.C., Bayou Ursines are not against cybernetic implants or bionic augmentation.

Habitat: Bayou Ursines prefer to live in and around forests, swamps, bayous, and river deltas or on small islands off the mainland. They can often be found as far north as the Ohio River Valley or as far south as the northern bank of the Rio Grande. They are almost never found in desert or arctic regions.

Slave Market Value: 3D4x1,000 with a low demand.

Alliances and Allies: Bayou Ursines enjoy the company of their own kind and any other race who can treat them fairly or as equals. The Ursines are commonly found among pirates and outlaw bands in the southeast. Unknown to most, Bayou Ursines can occasionally be found as part of the crew of a Horune Pirate Ship.

Rivals and Enemies: Anyone who holds a prejudice against them. Bayou Ursines tend to judge on a case-to-case basis and typically only hold resentment against the Splugorth unless they are either working for them or one of their allies (such as the Horune). They recognize the Coalition as D-Bee haters and thus tend to avoid them because of it.

Forest Wardens

I had seen video footage of both the Cactus People of the New West and the Nurilian Plant-People of Atlantis and had concluded that those two species were the only plant-like Dimensional Beings on Rifts Earth. I was proven wrong during my time in the Dark Woods where I met the enigmatic beings who the locals called Forest Wardens. My expedition likened the creatures to mythical beings called "Ents" from some pre-Cataclysm book, however, unlike those Ents, the Forest Wardens were not in the least kind creatures.

We first learned of them from an ambush they had laid, surrounding our group while hooting, hollering and hurling stones. Not knowing what to expect we gathered close together, placing our hired muscle along the outside, in case the Forest Wardens



threatening behavior turned violent. One of our Juicers fired off a shot from his rifle in an attempt to frighten off the creatures, the laser missing one of them just barely. The warning shot

seemed to work, the Wardens fleeing into the gathering twilight. We began to move forward again slowly, the attack having happened on a day where we had not one but three demon encounters. They returned a few moments later, though, this time with greater numbers and energy weapons, quickly cutting down the Juicer who had fired the warning shot with a flurry of laser fire. We had no choice but to escape back in the direction from which we had just come.

Further encounters with the Forest Wardens yielded similar results, with the plant-men attacking without provocation. The locals would later inform me that the Wardens are a reclusive race with great prejudice against outsiders, with many believing that they hate large groups of adventurers. I tend to agree.

One of the more unsettling elements of the Dark Woods of Alabama is the presence of the plant-like D-Bees known by the locals as the Forest Wardens. They are paranoid of outsiders (anybody who is not from the Dark Woods) to the point that they will attack travelers without provocation and often on sight. Further endangering the unknowing outsider is their propensity to set up ambushes and their plant-like nature which allows them to stay still for hours while waiting for adventurers to pass by. The mean streak of these D-Bees is so virulent that many scientists have speculated that they are perhaps not mortal Dimensional Beings but rather some sort of demon or lesser supernatural being. Such speculation is altogether false with the more learned scientists (such as Joachim Curli) believing that the Forest Wardens are in fact D-Bees, pointing to the existence of other plant-like D-Bees such as the Cactus People and the Nurilian Plant-People.

The rationale behind the Forest Wardens' paranoia against outsiders is unknown, with many of the D-Bees often giving the simple explanation of "because they are outsiders." Joachim Curli theorized that perhaps the semi-primitive nature of these plant-like D-Bees is the reason for their disposition against outsiders. Curli points to their exclusiveness to the region and the fact that few Forest Wardens have ever left the woods to reason that anyone from outside is viewed as if from another world. Their hatred and paranoia is thus pure ignorance and stems rather from fear than from any true reason. Unknown to Curli, he is correct that the Forest Wardens have no understanding or grasp for what lies outside the forest's edge. Many adventurers and scholars would laugh at such a notion, however, the same is true for the majority of people on Rifts Earth, who are fearful to leave their own small town as what is twenty miles (32 kilometers) away may be just as unknown as something that is a thousand miles (1600 kilometers) away.

To those who live within the confines of the Dark Woods and to those who the Forest Wardens are acquainted with (even outsiders), the D-Bees can be surprisingly kind, loyal and laid back. However, to outsiders and fellow residents of the woods who would despoil the local flora, the plant-like D-Bees can be extremely malignant and hostile even to the point where they will attack construction power armor and other hi-tech logging vehicles for even passing through the woods. Their hatred toward those who would harm plants is what has earned the creatures their name, with the aliens often acting as the wardens or guardians of the forest. Travelers going to or through the Dark Woods should thus be careful when collecting firewood or firing off en-

ergy weapons & rail guns (as they will likely destroy local plant life) when Forest Wardens are in the area. Countless stories are told at night around campfires in the Dark Woods of entire logging camps laid to waste by the wrath of these strange aliens.

The often belligerent nature of the Forest Wardens is reflected in their appearance, which has often been compared to sick or wilted trees brought to life in the form of old wild men or hags. The Wardens are always thin, with wiry arms & legs, long noses and two to five dark amber eyes. The hands and feet of the Forest Wardens are equipped with four to eight fingers/toes (one or two opposable thumbs and three to six fingers/toes) and can be used with equal dexterity (the Wardens can fire a gun or use other weapons with their feet without penalty). The prehensile hands and feet of these D-Bees allow them to move swiftly through the Dark Woods through *brachiating* (swinging from limb to limb like a monkey).

Both male and female Forest Wardens have long beards and manes of hair that are seemingly made of leaves, pine needles or willow wands. The realization of the various "hair" types of these aliens sparked an epiphany in the expedition led by Joachim Curli. Curli noted that several different "breeds" existed within the Forest Warden species, all of them containing traits similar to different trees on Earth (or elsewhere in the Megaverse). The most common are those who appear to be humanoid versions of willows, pines, oaks and elms. The general appearance of the Wardens reflects their given breed, including their skin/bark, hair/leaves and blood/sap/pitch. For example: a willow-like Forest Warden will have willow wand hair, willow bark skin, etc. Regardless of respective breed, all Forest Wardens measure roughly seven to nine feet (2.1 to 2.7 meters) in height, often towering over humans and other D-Bees.

The Forest Wardens have limited contact with other humanoids and often live in the deepest parts of the woods in muddy, hut-like dwellings nestled in the arms of trees or on the sides of cliffs and rock quarries. In these dwellings the Wardens live out a Stone Age existence with primitive tools and only a base understanding of modern technology (they know how to use an energy rifle but cannot find a way to charge an E-Clip, thus energy weapons are a rare but discardable commodity). These D-Bees are found almost exclusively in the Dark Woods and parts of Mississippi, with only a few thousand believed to exist, often living in small communal groups of ten to forty members. Occasionally different communal groups will join together in order to work toward a common goal or when a certain section of the woods has become too dangerous for one of the communal groups to live in. Such instances are few and far between, with only twenty taking place in the past two hundred years.

Forest Warden R.C.C. - Optional Player Character or NPC

Player Character Note: The Forest Warden is not particularly recommended as a player character as the creatures are rather primitive, with a limited understanding of humans, D-Bees and technology. The character will be secretive, paranoid and altogether naive when removed from its natural environment (the Dark Woods of Alabama). Such traits will thus make the character a hazard to not only itself but the entire player group, especially when the Forest Warden witnesses an "in-

justice" against a plant. All Forest Wardens have an almost paternal instinct for helpless plants and will thus fly into a rage against any sentient being who willfully harms plant life (yes, this does mean that the character *will* try to kill the kindly old man who is operating his lawn mower, though they will not attack someone for walking across grass).

Also known as "Tree Men," "Tree Women" and "Forest Lords."

Alignment: Any, a vast majority (90%) of all Forest Wardens are of a selfish or Aberrant alignment.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+1, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 2D6, Supernatural P.S. 4D6+2, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 4D6+10, P.B. 2D4+1, Spd. 2D6+4.

Size: 7-9 feet (2.1 to 2.7 meters) tall.

Weight: 300 to 1000 pounds (135 to 450 kilograms).

Mega-Damage Capacity: P.E. Attribute number x3 plus an additional 2D6 M.D. per level of experience. Forest Wardens never wear armor or use force fields.

Horror Factor: 12

P.P.E.: 6D6

Disposition: Always paranoid of other beings and slow to trust or even tolerate other life forms. Otherwise, the disposition of a Forest Warden varies from individual to individual.

Average Life Span: 500 years or more. At age 300 and over, a Forest Warden begins to slow down; reduce all physical attributes and bonuses by half plus the character requires an extra hour of sunlight a day.

Natural Abilities: Does not require oxygen and only requires a small but steady supply of carbon dioxide to survive. Forest Wardens exist on a diet consisting of wild berries, grass, onion grass, roots, tubers and water. Sunlight is used to further supplement the diet of these plant-like beings (four hours a day is required or bonuses are reduced by half, round down, until another six hours are spent in the sun).

Also bio-regenerates 2D6 M.D.C. per hour, sees via thermo-imaging with a range of about 4,000 feet (1219 meters) and has hearing equivalent to that of a human. Impervious to human disease (but *may* be affected by plant diseases), carcinogens, poisons, toxins, normal heat and cold (extreme conditions have the same effect on the character as they do on humans) and symbiotic union/control.

Experience Level: 1D6+1 levels or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Player Characters should start at first level. . . .

Combat: Four attacks per melee at level one plus one additional attack at levels 3, 6, 9 and 15.

Damage: As per Supernatural Strength.

Bonuses: In addition to those acquired from attributes and skills: +2 to strike, +1 to parry, +1 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +1 to save versus Horror Factor at levels 1, 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15.

Vulnerabilities: All types of M.D. fire (including plasma) inflict double damage to these creatures, with a 70% chance that the character may combust and receive damage equal to half of the initial damage dealt per melee round until the fire is put out. S.D.C. fire deals its damage as M.D. with only a 30% chance of combustion.

Psionic Powers: None.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Available O.C.C.s: None. A Forest Warden does not get to choose an O.C.C. and must instead rely on its limited R.C.C. skills and abilities.

R.C.C. Skills:

Native Language: American at 90% (if Forest Wardens ever had a tongue of their own, they've forgotten it).

Two other languages of choice (+10%; language skill proficiency cannot exceed 90%).

Basic Math

Lore: Demon & Monster

Land Navigation (+5%)

Wilderness Survival (+15%)

Identify Plants & Fruit (+10%)

Climbing (+25%)

Prowl (+10%)

Swimming (+10%)

W.P. Blunt

Pick one: W.P. Energy Pistol *or* Energy Rifle.

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select five additional skills at level one, plus one additional at levels 4, 8, 12 and 15. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: None, except Language and Literacy (counts as two selections) skills.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Dance, Gardening (+10%), Play Musical Instrument and Rock Painting & Engraving (+10%) only.

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Detect Ambush, Imitate Voices & Impersonation and Tracking only.

Horsemanship: Exotic (counts as two skill selections) only.

Mechanical: None.

Medical: First Aid or Holistic Medicine (+10%) only.

Military: Trap Construction only.

Physical: None.

Pilot: Any primitive vehicle (+5%).

Pilot Related: None.

Rogue: Ventriloquism (+5%) only.

Science: None.

Technical: Limited to Art, Gemology, and Lore skills (all at +10%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except Dead Ball.

Wilderness: Any (+10%), except Boat Building, Carpentry, Hunting and Skin & Prepare Animal Hides.

Secondary Skills: Select three Secondary Skills at level one, plus one additional skill at levels 3, 6 and 10 from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts: Ultimate Edition**. These are areas of knowledge without the benefit of bonuses listed in parentheses and are limited (any, none, etc.) as per the list above. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Standard Equipment: A set of clay bowls and woven grass mats in the character's dwelling, 2D6 small throwing stones (1D6 to 2D6 S.D.C.), small woven grass satchel *or* a small satchel stolen from a campsite (or looted from a dead body),

crude wooden cross, walking stick (1D8 S.D.C.; found or stolen, never broken off from a tree) and not much else. One in ten will have a Vibro-Knife *or* an Energy Weapon with one or two E-Clips that they have found or stolen. Remember, Forest Wardens live in a Stone Age society with little need or want for advanced technology or even many belongings.

Money: Most will only have 1D4x100 credits worth of semi-precious and precious stones for limited trading with other inhabitants of the Dark Woods. Adventurous or exiled Forest Wardens (player characters) will have 1D6x1,000 credits worth of tradable goods. Most Forest Wardens will never be able to understand the concept behind North American credit systems and will thus never use or accept Universal, Northern Gun/Manistique Imperium or Black Market credits.

Cybernetics & Bionics: None. Will not and cannot (due to regenerative nature) receive cybernetic augmentation.

Habitat: Exclusive to the Dark Woods and parts of Mississippi, and believed to have emerged from a Rift near the pre-Cataclysm town of Selma in what was once Alabama.

Slave Market Value: 2D4x1,000 with a limited demand, they make insufficient slave stock but supposedly they "taste okay."

Alliances and Allies: None per se.

Rivals and Enemies: Forest Wardens fear and loathe those from outside of the Dark Woods, often regarding them as alien or strange aberrations of nature not to be trusted. Recognizes the Splugorth and their minions as the evil enslavers that they are.

Idie Swamp Men

They called themselves the Idie (pronounced: eye - day), a word no doubt from their forgotten language although the locals often refer to them solely by the name "Swamp Men" or "Cat-fish People" (as our resident Head Hunter "Jaguar" called them). We met these Swamp Men first on the coast of what used to be the Gulf of Mexico in the Old American Empire state of Mississippi, and then again several times in what used to be the American southeast.

Friendly enough to give us directions to sources of fresh water but still paranoid enough to keep their distance, our expedition often encountered them traversing the waterways on simple wooden rafts and almost always engaged in the activity of spear fishing. I was told of their prowess in this area by a Bayou Ursine we had met, yet was still amazed when I witnessed it firsthand. The Idie are professionals; that much needs to be said, and close relations between the Idie and small human fishing villages are not uncommon. The least isolated of all the D-Bees we would meet on our expedition, we often found an Idie or two living as a valued member of the fishing villages found on the coast of the Eastern Wilds.

The Idie, or "Swamp Men" as they are more commonly called, are a common sight on the swamps and waterways of the southeast, often seen spear fishing off the coast on rafts during the pre-dawn hours. Despite the near ancient nature of spear



fishing, the Idie are professional fishermen (and women) who are more than adept at drawing in scores of fish, crabs and crayfish. Their prowess in fishing is so great that these D-Bees are often regarded as the best fishers in the south, second only to hi-tech commercial fishers (which are an extreme rarity). Make no mistake though, the Idie are not primitives like the barbarians of Dinosaur Swamp or the Forest Wardens of the Dark Woods. Instead, the Swamp Men are just as technologically capable as any human in the east and only spear fish out of years of experience and expertise, not ignorance of a more advanced fishing method. In fact, many Idie use hi-tech Vibro-Spears to catch M.D.C. creatures or to fend off supernatural monsters of the rivers, lakes and seas.

Although a large portion of the Idie species are professional fishermen, the D-Bees also fulfill other water oriented occupations quite adequately and are occasionally found amongst

gangs of pirates, although with nowhere near the frequency of Bayou Ursines or humans. Their proficiency in aquatic professions comes naturally to them (literally) through both their amphibious nature and generations of experience. Even the most disenfranchised and cut-off Idie is an expert in the waterways of the south, similar in many instances to the dry land oriented Roadwise Skill. Many wilderness scouts and adventurers thus turn to the Swamp Men when journeying through the southeast. Rumors persist that some Idie are even capable of leading entire groups of adventurers past the Coalition Naval Base at Baton Rouge without being noticed (most likely false).

The Swamp Men themselves are gray-skinned humanoids with large fish-like eyes (that give them a deceptive paranoid look) and catfish-like whiskers around the lips. Their passing resemblance to catfish has earned the Idie the nickname of Catfish People, one of the many names held by this race of spear fishers and navigators. Stocky and often overweight, the Idie are otherwise of equivalent human size. However, unlike humans, the Swamp Men have only three webbed fingers (one opposable thumb and two fingers) on their hands and two webbed toes on their feet. Although fairly common for a D-Bee in the south it is unknown just how many Idie can be found in the Eastern Wilds, with official Coalition estimates placing their numbers at fewer than a quarter million spread out across the Gulf States and the rest of North America. Idie Swamp Men can be found living as productive members of fishing villages throughout the south or in small familial villages numbering 5 to 20 members strong. Communities of Catfish People can also be found living along the waterways of Kentucky and Tennessee, although their numbers are comparatively scarce in these areas.

Idie Swamp Men - Optional Player Character or NPC

Pronunciation: *Eye - Day.*

Also known as "Catfish People." Coalition soldiers stationed at Baton Rouge or in the Coalition State of Fort El Dorado call them "Swamp Sushi," in a cruel joke referencing the not uncommon massacres of Idie villages by Coalition soldiers and sailors.

Alignment: Any; typically good or Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6+4, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 2D6+6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 2D6 on dry land, 6D6 when swimming.

Size: 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 meters) tall; equivalently human-sized.

Weight: 150 to 320 pounds (67.5 to 144 kilograms).

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

Base S.D.C.: 4D6+3 plus those gained from physical skills and O.C.C.

Horror Factor: Not Applicable.

P.P.E.: 4D6

Disposition: Varies from individual to individual, similar to humans. In general, the Idie are a race of simple and kind people with the occasional wild card among them.

Average Life Span: 65 years.

Natural Abilities: Natural swimmers equal to a Swimming skill of 95%, depth tolerance of 1,000 feet (305 meters) and the

character can hold his or her breath underwater for 2D6+4 minutes at a time.

Experience Level: 1D6 or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Player Characters should start at first level.

Combat: As per Hand to Hand Combat skill of the chosen O.C.C. or from the Idie Fisherman R.C.C.

Damage: As per combat skill.

Bonuses: In addition to those acquired from attributes and skills: +2 to save versus disease and +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Vulnerabilities: None per se.

Psionic Powers: Standard, these D-Bees have the same probability of psionic abilities as humans.

Magic Knowledge: None, unless a magic O.C.C. is selected.

Available O.C.C.s: Limited to Idie Fisherman (73% choose this occupation), Vagabond, Operator, City Rat (any, except Hack Rat), Head Hunter Techno-Warrior, Grunt (equivalent), Mercenary Soldier, Saloon Bum, Salvage Expert, Pirate, River Pirate, Privateer, Pirate Slaver, Wilderness Scout (any), Whale Singer, Sea Druid, Ocean Wizard, Mystic, Conjuror, Ley Line Walker, Eco-Wizard or Techno-Wizard.

Juicer and Crazy augmentation does not work on these beings' alien physiology. Idie Swamp Men can become Cyber-Knights, however none have yet done so.

Skill Note: All Idie Swamp Men gain the *Riverwise* skill at 65% +5% per level of experience (35% +5% per level when chosen by a non-Idie; counts as a Pilot Related and/or Wilderness Skill). All Idie, except for those born outside the south, have an intimate knowledge of the waterways of the south equivalent to the Roadwise skill (except that the skill pertains to rivers instead of roads). What this boils down to is that the Idie know every shortcut, lake, river and stream found in the area that the Swamp Men commonly inhabit, as well as all of the tricks and dangers of water navigation. The skill also provides a bonus of +10% to Navigation (and other similar skills) when traveling on waterways that the character is familiar with.

Standard Equipment: Standard equipment as per O.C.C.

Money: As per O.C.C.

Cybernetics & Bionics: None to start; although an Idie is a candidate for bionic and cybernetic augmentation it is extremely unlikely that the character will ever receive such augmentation. Most Idie view cybernetics in the same light that they view the Splugorth.

Habitat: The swamps, lakeshores and coasts of what was once the southern United States, especially in the territories that lie along the Gulf of Mexico. Scattered communities can also be found along the waterways of Kentucky and Tennessee. It is unknown if any other communities of Idie exist elsewhere on Rifts Earth.

Slave Market Value: Equivalent to the value of human slaves.

Alliances and Allies: The Idie are generally reasonable and thus judge on a case by case basis. They get along quite well with most aquatic and amphibious D-Bees and especially enjoy the company of the beings known as Swamp Sludgers. Most Catfish People are on fair terms with the Natchez at Sky Fort.

Rivals and Enemies: Again, the Idie tend to judge others on a case by case basis, although most have bought into the hype leveled against Bayou Ursines (believing they are no good) and Larmac (believing they are lazy and good for nothing). All Idie view the Splugorth and their minions as the evil enslavers that they are.

Idie Fisherman R.C.C.

A large percentage (73%) of Idie Swamp Men fall into this category of occupational knowledge that deals almost exclusively with fishing and water navigation.

R.C.C. Skills:

Native Language: American at 98%.

Language: Other: One of choice (+20%).

Basic Math (+10%)

Pilot: Boat: Sail Type (+10%)

Pilot: Boat: Ships (+10%/+8%)

Pilot: Kayak (+10%)

Boat Building (+15%)

Carpentry (+10%)

Track & Hunt Sea Animals (+10%)

Fishing (+25%; professional quality)

Advanced Fishing (+25%)

Cooking (+10%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Preserve Food (+10%)

Skin & Prepare Animal Hides (+20%)

Identify Plants & Fruit (+20%; knowledge only pertains to those found in and around the southern Eastern Seaboard).

Wilderness Survival (+20%)

W.P. Spear

W.P. Energy Rifle

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic may be changed to Expert at the cost of one R.C.C. Related Skill, or to Martial Arts (or Assassin if of an evil alignment) for the cost of two.

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select five additional skills at level one, plus one additional at levels 3, 5, 9 and 12. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Radio: Basic, Language (+10%) and Literacy only.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Detect Ambush (+10%), Imitate Voices & Impersonation and Sniper only.

Horsemanship: General (+10%) or Exotic only.

Mechanical: Basic Mechanics only.

Medical: Animal Husbandry, First Aid and Holistic Medicine (+10%) only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Boxing, Gymnastics or Juicer Sports.

Pilot: Limited to Bicycling, Boat: Motor & Hydrofoil (+5%),

Hovercraft, Hovercycle, Motorcycle and Water Scooters (+5%).

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any.

Science: None.

Technical: Any (+10% on Lore skills only).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: Select four Secondary Skills at level one and one additional skill at levels 4, 8 and 13 from the Secondary Skill List found in **Rifts: Ultimate Edition**, on page 300. These skills are limited as marked above, all new skills start at first level proficiency.

Standard Equipment: Three high quality spears (1D8 S.D.C.) for spear fishing, Vibro-Spear (2D6+4 M.D.), Vibro-Knife (1D6 M.D.), Energy Rifle or Pistol of choice (typically L-20), four additional E-Clips for the weapon, survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.), large travel sack, backpack, bedroll, 100 feet (30.5 meters) of rope, canteen, three sets of travel clothes, one set of dress clothing, tackle box, collapsible fishing pole, personal tent, mosquito netting, hatchet, wooden cross, a mallet, 4 wooden stakes and a suit of medium Mega-Damage armor plus a few personal items.

Money: 2D6x1,000 credits worth of tradable goods such as semi-precious & precious stones and furs.

Two-Horned Techno-Men

Most of my information regarding the Two-Horned Techno-Men relies on hearsay and what very well may be folklore. Only a single encounter was granted to our expedition while traveling through the woodlands of the Old American Empire State of Pennsylvania. Unfortunately, our encounter was short and what one might consider unconfirmed as it was both at night and at a great distance. Thus, my knowledge of these people is based solely on a combination of rumors and legends. What little information can be considered factual I garnered from my conversations with mountain men and wilderness people. A reclusive people who pilot oversized suits of power armor, they are both feared and respected by wilderness folk, who seem to grant them a sort of spiritual quality. However, all of my research seems to indicate that they are mortal, flesh and blood creatures.

The most reclusive race of D-Bee of the Eastern Wilds, little is known about the Two-Horned Techno-Men aside from their fascination with technology and use of power armor (a rarity amongst wilderness people). The isolation of these creatures, in the backwoods and deep mountain valleys, has granted them an almost legendary status, making them appear to be creatures of folklore rather than flesh & blood mortals. Indeed, a resident of a wilderness village who may live within ten miles (16 kilometers) of the Two-Horned Techno-Men can quite easily go their entire life without seeing one of these D-Bees save for the occasional glimpse at night, usually from a great distance.



The isolation of these D-Bees is not due to paranoia or fear of persecution from other races, but rather due to their religious teachings, a fact that is unknown except to Free Quebec troops and the robot minions of Archie-Three. To both parties, this came as a shock; no one could have guessed that the technologically dependent Techno-Men would be religious zealots. Much like the transcendentalists of the nineteenth century, the Two-Horned Techno-Men seek a sort of oneness with nature, however, unlike those philosophers of the past, they seek to do so with the help of technology. Hidden in the recesses of the wilderness, they use power armor and high-tech weaponry to secure their isolation from the world. However, their tendency to hide in the mountains and forests has not stopped them from ruthlessly targeting Splugorth Minions and (after their increased activity in 109 P.A.) Shemarrians, both of which the Techno-Men view as unwanted trespassers into the tranquility of the wilderness.

The power armor that the majority of Two-Horned Techno-Men pilot is an oversized construct that they refer to as the "Steel Explorer." Little is known about how or where these D-Bees manufacture such an ample supply of these massive machines, although rumors persist that the tech-savvy people have converted an old pre-Rifts United States Military manufacturing facility, located somewhere in the Eastern Wilds, probably near Madhaven, to fit their needs (partially true; they have converted an old civilian manufacturing plant, its pre-Rifts use unknown, located somewhere in what was once Vermont). Unlike the war

machines of the Coalition States or Free Quebec, the Steel Explorer power armor is not a combat-oriented armor but rather an armor designed for exploration and survival. The great size and bulk of the armor, originally believed to represent a combat orientation, is really made in compensation to the D-Bees' comparatively diminutive size.

Physically, the Two-Horned Techno-Men are short, four foot (1.2 meters) tall, furry humanoids with three large black eyes (the third eye is above the other two and oriented similar to the depiction of the proverbial "third eye" of Asian Spiritualism) and a rather small mouth. Their bodies are feeble and almost comical with short, almost stumpy legs with four toed feet and long, thin arms that end in four-fingered (three fingers and an opposable thumb) hands. Further perpetuating their comical appearance is their often rotund bellies, which seem out of place with their thin arms and neck. Any and all comedic effect is lost when these D-Bees pilot their oversized power armor, where only their heads remain visible. The "Two-Horned" title granted to these beings is a misnomer as what are often believed to be small horns are actually pointed ears. The Techno-Men make no attempt to correct this misconception though, believing that it subconsciously grants them a devilish quality which forces most wilderness folk to avoid them.

Sociologically, Two-Horned Techno-Men live in loose-knit religious communities where the only obligation for a member is to keep away outsiders and to support their coexistence with nature. Typically, the former entails patrolling the woods at night (and only at night) in an attempt to scare off intruders. The nighttime activities of these D-Bees have led several people to speculate that the Techno-Men are a nocturnal species (they are not) or even that they may be some form of demon or creature of magic that only comes out at night. Both misconceptions serve to keep most wilderness folks away from their isolated villages, although many adventurers still attempt to locate the retreats of these reclusive D-Bees. Occasionally, when an outsider does come too close to, or finds the villages of the Techno-Men, they are often left with no choice except to kill the intruder or to move their community deeper into the wilderness, with often the latter being chosen. This being said, Two-Horned Techno-Men *are not* pacifists but simply prefer to maintain their rumored existence through little or no contact with other races.

Communities and lone hermitages of Two-Horned Techno-Men can be found throughout what were once the Old American Empire States of Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. The largest communities of Techno-Men, numbering about a hundred each, can be found in the Green Mountains of Vermont (where their manufacturing plant is located) and the Catskill Mountains of New York State near where the town of Saugerties once stood. A few communities can also be found in southeastern Canada, although these Techno-Men tend to be more nomadic than their brethren to the south. The number of Two-Horned Techno-Men found throughout the territories that they inhabit is unknown mainly due to their reclusive nature but is believed to be small, with most estimates placing their population at fewer than two thousand. However, their numbers could be easily half to ten times that number. Occasionally, a lone Two-Horned Techno-Man or a pair will set out into the world to explore and have even been known to join adventurer groups.

Two-Horned Techno-Men - Optional Player Character or NPC

Also known as "Iron Fur Men" by Native Americans. Free Quebec and Coalition soldiers call them "Metal Rug Amateurs," in reference to the D-Bees' use of power armor.

Alignment: Any; typically good or Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+6, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 2D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 2D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd. 3D6.

Size: 4 feet (1.2 meters) tall.

Weight: 60 pounds (27 kilograms), fairly scrawny.

Hit Points: P.E. Attribute number plus 1D4 per level of experience.

Base S.D.C.: 2D6 plus those gained from Physical skills and O.C.C.

Horror Factor: None normally, 8 when in power armor for most wilderness folk. Horror Factor does not apply to most other people in North America.

P.P.E.: 2D6

Disposition: Varies from individual to individual, similar to humans. In general, the Techno-Men are a race of simple and kind people with the occasional wild card among them.

Average Life Span: 200 years.

Natural Abilities: Natural technological aptitude (reflected in skill bonuses), impervious to mind control and possession.

Experience Level: 1D4+2 or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Player Characters should start at first level.

Combat: As per Hand to Hand Combat skill of the chosen O.C.C. or from the Two-Horned Techno-Man Explorer R.C.C.

Damage: As per combat skill.

Bonuses: In addition to those acquired from attributes and skills: +2 to save versus Horror Factor when piloting their power armor and +10% to save versus Coma/Death.

Vulnerabilities: Small size and dependence on technology renders the character -5 to save versus Horror Factor when outside of their power armor.

Psionic Powers: All Two-Horned Techno-Men are Major Psychics with the following abilities: Telepathy, Empathy, Telemechanics, Telemechanic Mental Control and Telemechanic Mental Paralysis. **I.S.P.:** M.E. attribute number plus 1D4x10, plus 1D6+5 per level of experience.

Magic Knowledge: None. Two-Horned Techno-Men avoid the study of magic as if it were the plague.

Available O.C.C.s: Limited to the Two-Horned Techno-Man Explorer R.C.C. (80% choose this occupation), Body Fixer, Vagabond, Operator, Rogue Scholar, or Rogue Scientist.

Two-Horned Techno-Men would never consent to Juicer or Crazy augmentation, and such augmentation cannot work on these beings' alien physiology anyway. Two-Horned Techno-Men have never been known to become Cyber-Knights and it is highly unlikely that any ever will.

Skill Note: When selecting an O.C.C. *other* than the Explorer R.C.C., add a bonus of +10% on all Communication, Electrical, Mechanical and Pilot Related skills. Adversely, apply a penalty of -10% to Lore and Physical skills.

Standard Equipment: Standard equipment as per O.C.C.

Money: As per O.C.C.

Cybernetics & Bionics: None to start even if the chosen O.C.C. states otherwise; typically avoid them despite their love of technology.

Habitat: The forests, fields and mountains of what was once the northeastern United States, especially in what was once Pennsylvania, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. Can also be found in the woodlands of the Canadian southeast

Slave Market Value: Unknown, most Two-Horned Techno-Men fight to the death or flee when confronted by slavers.

Alliances and Allies: None. Two-Horned Techno-Men are rather reclusive and tend to avoid contact with other intelligent beings. Occasionally, one or two will settle down in a wilderness town or village or even join adventurer groups or mercenary companies.

Rivals and Enemies: Shemarrians, Splugorth Slavers and other Splugorth Minions top the list of beings that Two-Horned Techno-Men attack on sight. Free Quebec and Coalition Troops are also hated by these beings but are often given a wide berth to avoid purges by expeditionary forces or vendetta squads.

Two-Horned Techno-Man Explorer R.C.C.

The vast majority (80%) of Two-Horned Techno-Men fall into this category of occupational knowledge that deals with exploration and the piloting of power armor. Exploration refers both to actual physical exploring and spiritual exploration.

R.C.C. Skills:

Native Language: Dragonese at 98%.

Literacy: Native Language: Dragonese (+30%)

Language: Other: One of choice (+20%).

Basic Math (+20%)

Pilot: Robots & Power Armor (+20%)

Pilot: Power Armor Combat Elite: Steel Explorer

Read Sensory Equipment (+30%)

Weapon Systems (+30%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+20%)

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons and Rail Guns

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic may be changed to Expert at the cost of two R.C.C. Related Skills, or to Martial Arts (or Assassin if of an evil alignment) for the cost of four.

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select ten additional skills at level one, plus one additional at levels 3, 5, 9 and 12. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Any (+20%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Any (+20%).

Espionage: Detect Ambush only.

Horsemanship: None.

Mechanical: Any (+20%).

Medical: First Aid or Paramedics only.

Military: Armorer, Demolitions, Demolitions Disposal, Trap Detection and Trap Construction only.

Physical: Any (-10%; yes, that is a minus), except Boxing, Acrobatics, Gymnastics or Juicer Sports.

Pilot: Any non-military.

Pilot Related: Any (+20%).

Rogue: None.

Science: Any (+20%).

Technical: Any (-10% on Lore Skills; yes, that is a minus).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, except Sharpshooting.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: Select three Secondary Skills at level one, plus one additional skill at levels 4, 8 and 13 from the Secondary Skill List as found on page 300 of **Rifts: Ultimate Edition**. These are areas of knowledge that the character has picked up along the way and do not enjoy the benefit of bonuses listed in parentheses and are limited as marked above. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Standard Equipment: Steel Explorer Power Armor, energy rifle and pistol of choice, four additional E-Clips for each weapon, S.D.C. hunting rifle with 36 rounds of ammo, survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.), large travel backpack, sleeping bag, 100 feet (30.5 meters) of rope, canteen, personal tent plus a few personal items. Overall, Two-Horned Techno-Men travel light and tend to rely heavily on their power armor.

Money: 3D6x1,000 credits worth of tradable goods such as semi-precious & precious stones and furs *or* an amount equal to half that in Universal Credits.

Steel Explorer Power Armor

A bulky, oversized power armor that appears to be nothing more than a giant suit of heavy armor (which, aside from its automation, it really is). Unique amongst many of the power armor found on Earth, the Techno-Man's head is exposed and protected only by a localized force field. The suit blurs the line between giant robot and power armor, with the pilot operating the fully automated mecha through use of a series of peddles and levers. The armor does not come standard with an integral weapon system, the pilot must instead rely on handheld weaponry.

Model Type: None; these D-Bees have not seen fit to designate model numbers to their Power Armor as appearance and function of the machines often vary dramatically from suit to suit.

Class: Exploratory Powered Exoskeleton.

Crew: One Two-Horned Techno-Man.

M.D.C. by Location: (Most locations provide a number to roll rather than a standard M.D.C. This is due to the fact that most Two-Horned Techno-Men have a unique suit with varying amounts of M.D.C.)

Shoulder Plates (2) - 10+1D4x10 each.

Upper Arms (2) - 80+1D4x10 each.

Forearms (2) - 50+1D4x10 each.

- Hands (2) - 25 each.
- Legs (2) - 100+1D6x10 each.
- Feet (2) - 50 each.
- *Head Force Field - 75
- **Main Body - 1D4x100+100

*The Head Force Field protects the otherwise exposed head of the Two-Horned Techno-Man, and replenishes lost M.D.C. at the rate of 10 per hour or 5 per hour if its M.D.C. is depleted. An auxiliary force field, with 25 M.D.C., is engaged when the first is depleted but does not replenish M.D.C. (except when fully depleted, at the same rate as the main force field) and is only used as a means of emergency protection. The Head Force Field of the power armor is a small and difficult target to hit, shielded by shoulder plates and the oversized neck collar and thus can only be hit on a "Called Shot" with a penalty of -3 to strike. If both shields are depleted, the exposed head of the Techno-Man is an even more difficult target, and incurs a penalty of -6 to successfully strike.

**Depleting the M.D.C. of the Main Body will shut the armor down, making it useless.

Speed:

Running: 60 mph (96 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does not tire out its operator and the maximum speed can be maintained indefinitely.

Leaping: 12 feet (3.6 meters) high or across, increase by 50% with a running start.

Flying: Not possible.

Underwater Capabilities: Not really suited for underwater operations, but fares admirably in such an environment. Swimming through paddling motions with arms and legs can achieve a speed of roughly 5 mph (8 km). The power armor can also walk on the sea or lake floor at 25% of its normal running speed.

Maximum Depth Tolerance: 2,000 feet (610 meters).

Statistical Data:

The size and weight will vary dramatically from suit to suit, the data below reflects the average.

Average Height: 11 feet (3.3 meters).

Width: 5 feet (1.5 meters).

Length: 5 feet (1.5 meters).

Weight: 2 tons fully loaded.

Physical Strength: Equal to a Robotic P.S. of 24.

Cargo: Small storage area with room for a pistol, first-aid kit and six weeks worth of travel rations.

Power System: Nuclear, average energy life is 20 years.

Market Cost: Absolutely not available! Manufactured in a short and limited supply by the secret manufacturing facility in Vermont, this power armor has never been available on the Black Market.

Weapon Systems:

1. Handheld Weapons: The Steel Explorer is not equipped with any integral weapon systems and instead the pilot must rely on handheld weapons such as energy rifles, rail guns and the occasional Neural Mace. Any normal-sized or power armor-sized weapon can be used and some can be cabled to the suit's nuclear

power supply. A few Two-Horned Techno-Men opt to add weapon systems to their power armor, but this is a rarity (and not usually available to a player character as starting equipment).

2. Hand to Hand Combat: Instead of using a handheld weapon the pilot may opt to engage in Mega-Damage hand to hand combat. The Steel Explorer Power Armor has its own unique "elite" combat training. Those not skilled in *Power Armor Combat Elite: Steel Explorer Power Armor* must use the "basic" hand to hand skill. Note: All bonuses are in *addition* to those of the pilot. They *do not* apply to the pilot outside of the power armor.

Damage and Bonuses from Steel Explorer PA Combat Training:

Restrained Punch - 2D5+5 S.D.C.

Full Strength Punch - 1D4 M.D.

Power Punch - 2D4 M.D. (counts as two attacks)

Kick - 1D6 M.D.

Leap Kick - 2D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks)

Head Butt - 1D6 M.D.

Body Flip/Throw - One M.D. (counts as one attack, opponent loses initiative and one attack).

Body Block/Tackle - 1D6 M.D.

Bonuses: +1 extra attack/action per melee round, *plus* those of the pilot, at levels 1, 4, 8 and 12. Critical Strike is the same as the pilot's (if any). +1 on initiative, +2 to strike and parry, +1 to dodge, +3 to roll, +4 to pull punch and +1 to disarm.

Experience Point Tables

Forest Wardens use the Dragon experience point table, while Bayou Ursines use the experience point table of the chosen O.C.C. Acisse, Adna, Idie and Two-Horned Techno-Men who opt to pursue an O.C.C., rather than the provided R.C.C.s, use either the experience point table presented here, or the table for the given O.C.C., whichever is *higher*.

Acisse Tribal Hunter R.C.C.

1	0,000-1,925
2	1,926-3,850
3	3,851-7,450
4	7,451-14,900
5	14,901-21,000
6	21,001-31,000
7	31,001-41,600
8	41,601-53,000
9	53,001-73,000
10	73,001-103,500
11	103,501-139,000
12	139,001-189,000
13	189,001-239,000
14	239,001-289,000
15	289,001-339,000

Adna Nomad R.C.C.

Two-Horned Techno-Men Explorer R.C.C.

1 0,000-2,300

2 2,301-4,600

3 4,601-9,200

4 9,201-18,400

5 18,401-26,500

6 26,501-36,600

7 36,601-51,700

8 51,701-74,800

9 74,801-100,900

10 100,901-140,000

11 140,001-193,100

12 193,101-235,200

13 235,201-290,400

14 290,401-350,600

15 350,601-425,800

Idie Fisherman R.C.C.

1 0,000-1,950

2 1,951-3,900

3 3,901-8,800

4 8,801-17,600

5 17,601-35,600

6 35,601-50,600

7 50,601-70,600

8 70,601-95,600

9 95,601-125,600

10 125,601-175,600

11 175,601-225,600

12 225,601-275,600

13 275,601-325,600

14 325,601-375,600

15 375,601-425,600



Air Combat

Optional Rules for Rifts®

By Edward A. May

The Red River Valley Gaming Group, a veteran Rifts game group with 14 years of gaming experience, has developed a series of air combat rules we would like to introduce to gamers everywhere. First, however, a little background behind these rules.

While Rifts® is well known for its adventure campaigns, its high-powered gunfights, and its sorcery - air combat has largely been ignored as a prospective form of combat. This omission is made even though the books are filled with technological and mystical creations that obviously bear combat capabilities that span the three dimensional battlefield of the sky.

When Palladium announced the *Coalition Wars*® series we looked forward to it with great anticipation. It would be the biggest event yet to transpire to affect the whole of our game world.

As weeks and months passed by without mention of when the books would be released, in our impatience, we created our own details for Tolkeen, and for how the war would transpire.

Our impression of Tolkeen, however, was a little off. We believed that they would use technological military equipment supplemented with magic to wage war. Some things good, old-fashioned technology fashions better than magic after all, just as some magic creates effects that technology could never facilitate. With this impression in mind, we came to the conclusion that air power would play a heavy role in this modern war that would soon take place.

That set the stage for the longest running campaign the RRVGG ever enjoyed, a six year long campaign we knew and loved, as "The Skies Over Tolkeen." In this campaign we played volunteer and mercenary pilots who joined a new fighter squadron, formed specifically for such foreigners. We eventually rose from being no-names equipped with second-rate equipment to being the top scoring fighter squadron in the Kingdom, leaving our posts less than three weeks before the war's end, even as our last improvised airstrip was overrun by Coalition skirmishers. (In our campaign the defeat occurred in stages, with key strongholds falling one by one.)

Throughout the course of that campaign, as the Game Master, I created and perfected a series of air combat rules that made it very realistic, dangerous, and yet enjoyable. These rules, below, are those that facilitated our enjoyable campaign, and we hope that they aid yours just as much.

Please note that the tables below describe combat involving multi-engine fighter aircraft with nuclear power. In our campaign these aircraft have Hafnium powered reactors. These state of the art reactors, which are coming into existence today, generate an electrical charge by bombarding the slightly radioactive Hafnium core with x-rays, thereby creating gamma radiation. This gamma radiation heats a fluid medium that spins a small turbine that generates electricity. This electrical charge is used to power the aircraft. Propulsion for these aircraft is generated by electromagnetically spun, ducted fans with dozens of rows of turbine blades, similar to what one sees in jet aircraft today, only more of them. Meanwhile, the liquid medium is ducted through the thruster, thereby cooling the liquid, and providing additional thrust to the aircraft as the heated air expands rapidly. Contrary to the wonderful artwork, there are no flames that come from the rear of these aircraft, just some heat distortions - afterburners are a thing of the past.

Aircraft such as the Coalition States Nightwing, Sea Striker, Shrike, Triax XM-280, IHA Gray Falcon, New Navy Sea Hawk, and similar, all fit into the category of aircraft described in the tables below. Feel free to alter them to fit other aircraft types in air combat.

(Optional) Skill Advancement Rule

Given the realism this system of rules created, we quickly realized that lower level characters in this campaign were at a supreme disadvantage, and seldom stood much chance of surviving long enough to attain a high enough level of experience to be of any consequence. As a result, I developed new skill advancement rules to allow a character's commonly used skills to advance faster and their skills that are seldom used to



advance more slowly. It's a very simple system that compliments the old adage that 'practice makes perfect.' We assigned all skills a level, thus as you start your character, all your skills are at first level proficiency. You must use that skill ten times to attain a second level proficiency with it, keeping track of skill usage next to your skill. Once it is a second level skill, you start over with the skill uses - and you must use it twenty times to attain a third level proficiency with it. It's simple, effective, and it allows a specialized character to really begin to shine through - simply by choosing what skills they use more regularly than others. We laid this skill system out like this:

Pilot: Jet Fighter: 40 %+4% Lv: 1 (8)

This displays the skill name (Pilot: Jet Fighter), the percentage (40%), the percentage modifier (4%), the level of the skill (1st), and the skill usage (8 uses). By this system, this character would only have to use the skill two more times to attain 2nd level proficiency with Pilot: Jet Fighter. Areas that are underlined would be left blank and filled in with pencil.

This skill advancement rule really helped, and aided this system to become more exciting, and in our view, realistic.

Piloting the Aircraft

As in any pilot training, you have to start with the basics - the piloting skill. In this case, I'm only going to address Pilot: Jet Fighter.

The percentage this skill provides is your primary piloting ability. A first level character is basically a raw recruit with limited familiarity with flying an aircraft. They have watched others do it, they have been formally introduced to it, and might even have been allowed to fly a few hours with an instructor - but not much more than this. This level of character is liable to find tasks as simple as landing or takeoff a harrowing event, especially if weather conditions are not perfect. The low starting percentage of these skills represents this fact very well. When landing, taking off, flying in formation with other aircraft, adjusting trim for buffeting winds, adjusting trim for varied weight loads, and performing other basic non-combat related maneuvers, this is the percentage you will roll against.

The following tables will help to illustrate what happens when pilots fail these rolls.

Takeoffs

Taking off in an aircraft is often difficult for inexperienced pilots, especially in poor conditions. It is important that a Game Master lay out the details of what surrounds the runway prior to beginning the takeoff run. That will make illustrating what occurs in the event of a failed piloting roll on takeoff much simpler. A failed roll is often catastrophic, as this is when the aircraft is moving comparatively slowly, and there is not much measure of opportunity to correct mistakes.

Conventional takeoff is an aircraft accelerating along a runway in an effort to achieve enough lift to fly skyward. Some aircraft require longer airstrips than others do, so we will not get into those details. Aircraft with VTOL capacity in *Rifts* most of the time have sufficient power to allow a vertical takeoff even with a full load of ordnance, but if previous battle damage has rendered one thruster incapacitated, a conventional takeoff may be the only option.

Vertical takeoff is facilitated through the use of thrust vectoring ducts or nozzles that direct thrust from the thrusters to a point more or less downward. This is a tricky affair in even the most optimal of conditions, as keeping the rate of increased thrust constant for both engines, and maintaining the lateral and longitudinal pitch just right, is difficult. Perhaps the most difficult part is adjusting the thrust vectoring ducts or nozzles to begin moving the aircraft forward, attaining lift, without losing altitude. At this stage in a vertical takeoff the aircraft is extremely vulnerable, as maneuvers are impossible to perform without crashing. The one saving grace of a vertical takeoff is the smaller amount of space necessary for such an aircraft to takeoff from.

The tables below help to illustrate failed takeoffs and some of the side effects they may result in.

Conventional Takeoff Mishaps

01-25% The pilot retracted the flaps too soon! In his/her eagerness to take to the sky, the pilot retracted the flaps too soon after lifting off of the runway! As a result, the aircraft slowly drops back to the runway. If the pilot does not think fast, he may run out of runway before being able to climb skyward! See "Misjudged the Length of the Runway," below, for details.

26-50% Skid! The aircraft's thrust to one side is too great, and instead of compensating the correct amount, the pilot sends the aircraft skidding slightly sideways and precariously bouncing around. The tires have a 01-20% chance of blowing out on the side of the skid, and unless the pilot succeeds in a further control roll to straighten out the skid, the aircraft slides off of the runway. Damage for this event varies per the type of ground off of the runway. Trees surrounded some of our strips, soft soil farms flanked others, ditches flanked others, and others yet still had buildings and revetments lining the runways. If colliding with trees, buildings, revetments, or ditches, damage will be 6D6 M.D. per 10 mph (16 km), with the aircraft traveling at 3D4x10 mph (3D4x16 km) at the time of skidding off of the runway. The pilot inside of the cockpit will take 2D4 S.D.C. per 10 mph (16 km) on such an impact, mostly to the back, neck, and legs. Roll on the damage location chart to indicate what was damaged, and to determine any secondary side effects on the aircraft. If the aircraft slides into soft soil there is a 01-75%

chance for each landing gear strut of collapse under the stresses placed upon them. Even if the gear collapses in soft soil there is only a remote, 01-10% chance that any ordnance will detonate.

51-75% Stall! The pilot attempts to pull off of the ground before enough speed is attained, and as a result, it stalls and drops back to Earth onto its aft fuselage belly. If the pilot succeeds a Perception Roll he/she may attempt an emergency bailout - because this sort of crash is particularly hard, sometimes fatal for aircrews. The impact with the runway catapults the nose down into the runway - hard, with a 01-25% chance of buckling each of the main gear struts, and a 01-45% chance of buckling the nose gear strut. (Even if the gear struts do not buckle the tires will likely blow from the force of the impact, and cause a shock rupture in all three gear struts.)

In the rare event that all three gear struts hold, the shock damage to the aircraft is a moderate 1D4x10 M.D., mostly in the form of damaged reinforcements, slight bending throughout the airframe, plus 1D4x10 M.D. inflicted on the rear fuselage in the initial impact. (A nightmare for maintenance crews!) The pilot, however, will suffer 3D6 S.D.C. from the shock of impact, most likely to the spine, neck, tailbone, or legs. The aircraft will continue to roll down the runway on its blown wheels for 1D4x100 feet (3D4x10 m) before coming to a 'safe' stop.

If the nose gear gives way but the main gear holds then 3D6x10 M.D. is inflicted to the forward fuselage, plus the original 1D4x10 M.D. inflicted by the initial aft fuselage impact. The pilot will take 1D4x10 S.D.C. from the increase in the catapult effect, as the nose is quickly flung down towards the airstrip, in the same places described above. The aircraft will continue down the runway for 4D6x10 feet (4D6x3 m) forcing its damaged nose ahead with the inertia of the aircraft's mass.

If a main wheel gives way but the other two hold, 2D6x10 M.D. is inflicted to the wing on that side, mostly to the wing tip, plus 1D4x10 M.D. is inflicted to the aft fuselage from the initial impact. The pilot in this scenario will take 5D6 S.D.C. from the jarring effect of the gear collapsing, flinging him/her far towards the collapsing side, plus the effect of hitting the tarmac at such a high velocity. Broken ribs or collarbones are common in this sort of gear failure, in addition to the effects described above. After the initial impact, the aircraft will careen wildly towards the direction of the collapsed main gear strut, and may flip onto its top as the center of gravity is shifted, with force on the remaining gear struts. Otherwise, the aircraft will skid for 3D6x10 feet (9D6 m), tipping and swiveling precariously down the runway, with a good chance of careening off the runway.

If one main gear strut and the nose gear strut collapses, 2D6x10 M.D. is inflicted to each, plus the original 1D4x10 M.D. inflicted by the initial aft fuselage impact. The pilot will take 1D4x10+10 S.D.C. from the jarring effects of the gear collapsing, flinging him/her forward and to the side against his/her harness. (The areas affected in the pilot are the same as those described above.) After the initial impact, the aircraft will turn into the skid, with its damaged nose and main gear trailing behind it, dragging the aircraft off towards whatever side main gear was collapsed, for 2D6x10 feet (6D6 m).

If all gear units collapse entirely, the aircraft and pilot are in serious trouble, as the aft fuselage impacts the runway, and catapults the forward areas of the aircraft downwards. The gear buckles under the strain and virtually pancakes the airframe, in-

flicting 4D6x10 M.D. to the forward areas of the fuselage, plus the original 1D4x10 M.D. from the aft fuselage impact. The pilot is in perhaps the most serious trouble of all as the force of the impact slams him forward against his harness, inflicting 1D6x10+6 S.D.C. with little to absorb the impact, mostly to the neck, spine, and tailbone. The aircraft will continue to skid along the runway for 4D6x10 feet (6D6x2 m). The pilot can attempt a last minute emergency ejection to avoid the crash by rolling a dodge of 14 or better, but if the ordnance cooks off he has far less protection against the explosives outside the cockpit than inside. (Pilots who sustain such crash landings as this one often suffer broken backs or necks in the crash.)

76-00% Misjudged the Length of the Runway! The pilot throttles up too slowly in the run-up to takeoff, and as a result, has run out of runway! The pilot may attempt to turn into a skid, sacrificing the wheels and possibly the landing struts, but allowing the skid to take up the speed already achieved. In the alternative, the pilot may opt to simply lock the breaks but there is only a slim (01-25%) chance that the brakes will stop the aircraft entirely. If a major obstacle lies in the path the pilot may opt to make an emergency ejection to escape a bad collision.

Vertical Takeoff Mishaps

01-25% Lost Roll Stability! Either the pilot failed to activate the automatic computerized balancing system during preflight checks, or there has been a systems failure that allowed this tragedy to occur. As a result, the aircraft's thrust to one side becomes improperly balanced, due to a mistake on the pilot's part, along with the failure to activate the system. The result is that the aircraft rolls towards the weak side, and then drops to the ground from 2D6x10+20 feet (6D6+6 m), as no thrust is now there to hold the aircraft aloft. No recovery is possible, save for last minute ejection to escape, as described above. The aircraft will strike wing tip first, and tumble wing over wing. Damage is 3D4x10 M.D. to the initially struck wing, and half that to the opposite wing, plus 2D6x10 M.D. to the main body. The under wing/underbelly carried ordnance has a 01-45% chance of detonating, as described above. The pilot will take 1D4x10 S.D.C. from this type of crash landing, without even considering the likelihood of exploding ordnance.

26-50% Lost Pitch Stability! Either the pilot failed to activate the automatic computerized balancing system during preflight checks, or there has been a systems failure that allowed this tragedy to occur. As a result, the aircraft's nose or aft side becomes improperly balanced, due to a mistake on the pilot's part, along with the failure to activate the system. As a result, the aircraft's nose or tail pitches dangerously, resulting in the aircraft going down to the ground, nose or tail first, from 2D6x10+20 feet (6D6+6 m)! No recovery is possible, save for last minute ejection to escape, as described above. The aircraft will strike nose or aft side first, inflicting 4D6x10 M.D. to the main body, likely buckling the nose entirely, and tumbling the aircraft end over end, likely coming to settle on its belly if carrying heavy ordnance. In this event, the under wing/underbelly carried ordnance has a 01-55% chance of detonating, as described above. The pilot will take 1D6x10 S.D.C. from this type of crash landing, without even considering the likelihood of exploding ordnance.

51-75% Misjudged Forward Momentum! The pilot swivels the vectored thrust ducts towards the rear and shifts thrust over to the main exhaust ports too quickly. As a result, the aircraft begins to lose altitude quickly, and will crash within a few moments, inflicting 5D6x10 M.D. to the aircraft and 2D6x10+10 S.D.C. to the pilot. A pilot may attempt to cushion the crash by vectoring the thrust downward again, but it will not be enough to keep the aircraft aloft - just cushion the impact. Damage is 4D6 M.D. to the main body from various forms of structural fatigue, tires blowing, and shock absorbers blowing. In this instance, the pilot takes 3D6 S.D.C. worth of damage. What the aircraft lands on depends on the layout of the airfield.

76-00% Misjudged Altitude! The inexperienced pilot misjudged the altitude of the aircraft before switching over to forward flight, and now an obstacle stands approaching his aircraft even as he begins to attain lift! A quick thinking piloting roll may save the aircraft at this point by pouring on the thrust and pulling up without stalling, but the roll must be made at a penalty of -20%! A failed roll means one of two things; 01-50% indicates that the pilot cleared the obstacle - but the aircraft went into a stall and is now plummeting to Earth with no hope of escape, 51-00% indicates the pilot struck the obstacle at 4D4x10 mph (4D4x16 km)! Depending on the object, the Mega-Damage aircraft MAY be able to fly right through it, sustaining some damage in the process, but there is a 01-45% chance of sucking a critical amount of debris into each of the thrusters. Roll on the thruster damage table once per thruster damaged. If the object or objects is too tough however - the best the pilot can hope to do is conduct an emergency ejection as described above.

Formation Flying

Formation flying is a tricky business. Generally speaking, one individual will lead the formation. They are the eyes and ears of the formation, keeping watch, flying their course, and deciding where exactly the unit goes. The rest of the pilots flying in formation are watching his/her aircraft or another aircraft in the formation, keeping tabs on speed, course, and altitude - constantly matching that of their formation mates. While loose formations are relatively easy to maintain, just a straight control roll, tight formations take intense concentration, providing a -10% penalty to the pilot's basic flying ability. The advantage to flying a tight formation is that it thwarts radar to some degree. A very closely linked formation will look to a radar screen, like a single object, or only one or two objects, rather than revealing the true number. Tactically speaking, this will provide some measure of surprise to any opposing forces. Before entering into a melee of air combat, however, generally speaking the formation will loosen up so as to allow the pilots better concentration on the combat at hand. A loose formation may reveal the true number of the aircraft in that formation, but it does not require such intense concentration. It also allows the other pilots to provide their eyes for searching for enemy aircraft or ground targets, while not relinquishing the tactical advantage of flying in formation.

Formation types vary dramatically. The purpose behind formation flying, however, is apparent. There are more eyes available to watch for danger or prospective targets, and when you do line up on a target you have far more than just your own weapons brought to bear on enemy targets. Furthermore, there is

protection in flying in formation, if someone tries to take up a position on your six o'clock position (directly behind you) your wing-man or wing-men can drop back and take up positions on his six o'clock position.

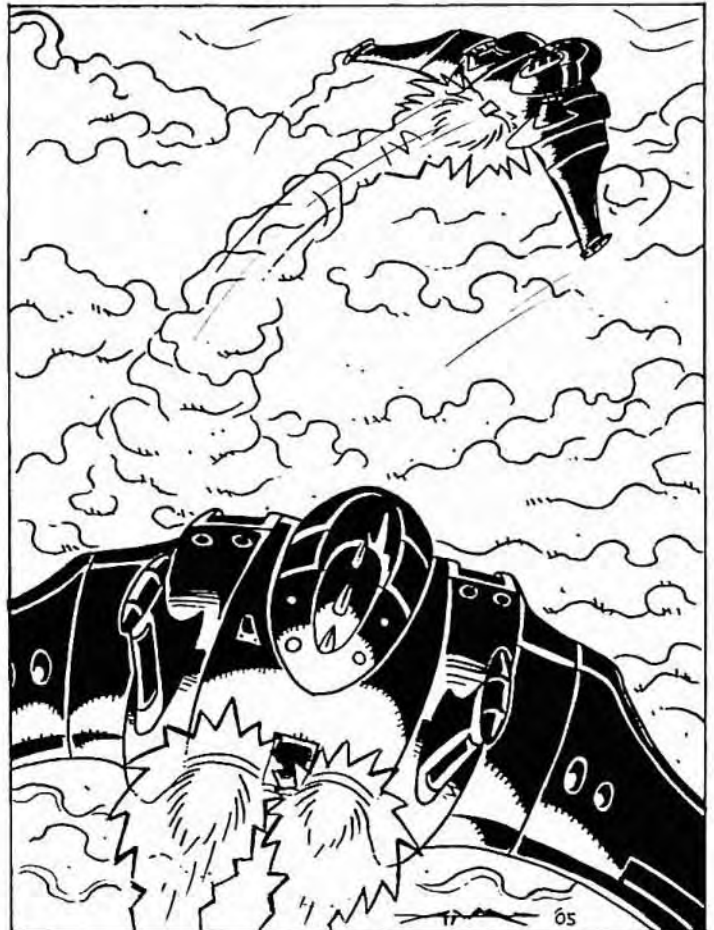
Failing a roll while attempting to maintain formation is not always that serious. Flying nape of the Earth, which is flying close enough to the ground to avoid radar detection, could be serious if you begin to drop below the altitude of your peers. Flying in tight formation is where it gets especially dangerous. Even expert pilots such as today's Thunderbirds or Blue Angels occasionally make errors when flying in tight formation, and the results are often catastrophic. This table outlines the possible outcomes of failing a maintain formation roll.

Formation Flying Failures

01-16% Drifting Left! The aircraft is drifting slightly off course from the other aircraft in the formation to the left. (If flying in tight formation, and there is an aircraft to the left, the pilot of the left aircraft must make a Perception Roll, prior to making a control roll to avoid collision!)

17-33% Drifting Right! The aircraft is drifting slightly off course from the other aircraft in the formation to the right. (If flying in tight formation, and there is an aircraft to the right, the pilot of the right aircraft must make a Perception Roll, prior to making a control roll to avoid collision!)

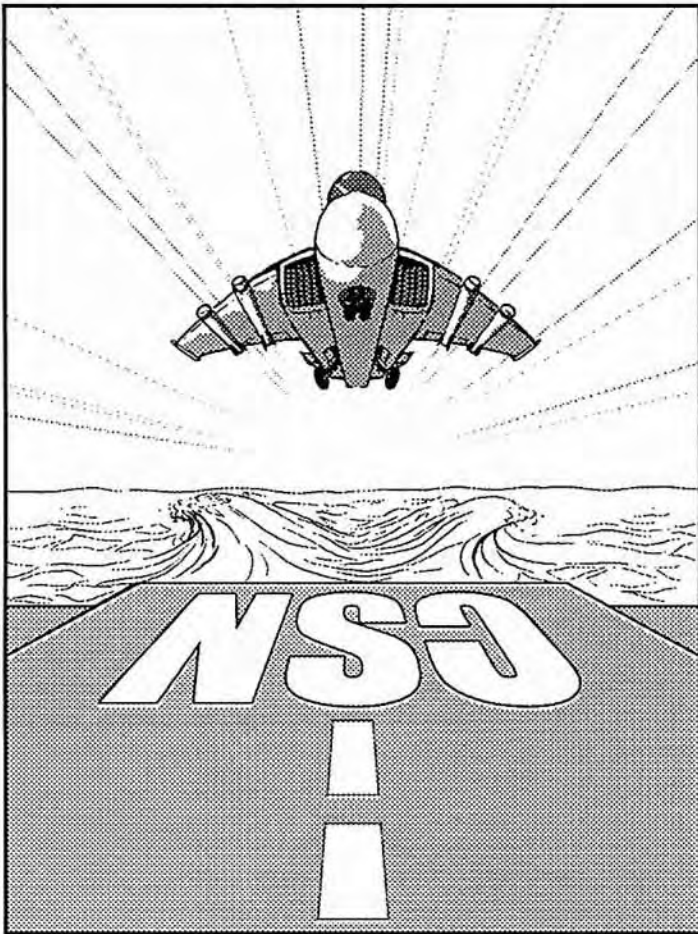
34-49% Too Slow! Speed is too low, and so the pilot's aircraft is falling behind. (If flying in tight formation, and there is an aircraft behind them, the pilot of the aircraft in the rear must make a Perception Roll, followed by a control roll to avoid collision!)



50-68% Too Fast! Speed is too high, and so the pilot's aircraft is moving forward in the formation. (If flying in tight formation, and there is an aircraft ahead of his own, the pilot must first succeed a Perception Roll prior to making a control roll to avoid collision!)

69-84% Too Low! Altitude is too low, and so the pilot's aircraft is falling out of formation. (If flying in tight formation, and there is an aircraft below, the pilot of the lower aircraft must make a control roll to avoid collision! If flying nape of the Earth, the pilot must make a control roll to avoid colliding with the ground!)

85-00% Too High! Altitude is too high, and so the pilot's aircraft is rising out of formation. (If flying in tight formation, and there is an aircraft above, the pilot must first succeed a Perception Roll prior to making a control roll to avoid collision! If flying nape of the Earth, in an effort to avoid radar detection, there is a 01-65% the aircraft will be detected by any actively scanning radar, provided that there are no objects in the path of said radar.)



Landing

Landing can be a tricky issue, especially when conditions are not perfect, such as poor weather, battle damage, improvised landing strips, etc. It is imperative that before landing commences that the Game Master describes the layout surrounding the landing strip. This will make deciding what exactly happens in the event of a failed roll. When landing I always allow ONE correction roll on a failed roll, often with negatives. If the sec-

ond roll failed, then a crash of some measure or another is inevitable.

Conventional landing is just that, landing on a prepared airfield of sufficient width and length to allow the aircraft to come to a halt. Some aircraft require longer landing strips than others, so we will not get into those details. Aircraft with VTOL capacity in *Rifts* most of the time have sufficient power to allow a vertical takeoff and landing even with a full load of ordnance. Battle damage that has rendered a thruster inoperable, however, may require even a VTOL aircraft to land conventionally, as the one thruster does not provide sufficient thrust to land vertically.

Vertical landing is a tricky affair in even the most optimal of conditions, determining altitude, rate of descent, and attitude of the aircraft is often difficult. Furthermore, the vertical thrust provided by the thrust vectoring ducts is not sufficient to provide fast changes in speed, rates of descent, direction, and similar - making it all the more chancy of a method of landing. The one saving grace of a vertical landing is the smaller amount of space necessary for such an aircraft to land and take off from.

The tables below help to illustrate failed landings and some of the side effects they may result in.

Conventional Landing Mishaps

01-14% Forgot to Lower the Flaps! The pilot failed to lower the landing flaps, and so the aircraft's speed is too high and the attitude of the aircraft is not sufficient for a safe landing. If the pilot succeeds a Perception Roll of an 11 or better, he/she can roll a straight control roll to pull up out of the landing before touching down to avoid a possible crash, and come around for another attempt at landing. If the pilot fails the Perception Roll the impact is hard on the wheels, with a 01-20% chance for each tire on the aircraft of having a blowout. There is even a small chance (01-10% chance) that the internally mounted wheel brakes may burst into flames when the brakes are applied. If no tires blew during the landing, a pilot may make a control roll at a penalty of -5% to apply thrust and lift back off of the runway. If not the pilot must simply try to stop before the runway runs right out from under him, since his landing speed is much faster than it should be. In this case the pilot must make a control roll with a penalty of -10%, or proceed to the "Misjudged Landing Strip Length" section below.

15-29% Failed to Lower the Landing Gear! The inexperienced or rattled pilot failed to remember the first cardinal rule about landing - always check to be sure your landing gear is locked in the down position before landing. The damage is serious, inflicting 3D6x10 M.D. to the aircraft as it drags its belly along the runway for 1D4x100 feet (3D4x10 m). There is again a chance that ordnance will explode with being dragged across the runway, see above for details. In addition to these dangers, pieces of the aircraft, such as the nose cone, pieces of the fuselage armor plating, and similar, may (01-15% chance) rip off of the aircraft and land themselves in the thrusters. While most small pieces of various debris will do little but scuff or scratch the sensitive and precisely wrought turbine blades, large pieces of Mega-Damage metals, ceramics, and plastics stand a chance of doing a great deal of damage. Roll on the Thruster Critical Damage table to see what effects are incurred, IF pieces of the aircraft are sucked into the turbines. While hard on the aircraft,

the pilot only suffers minor bumps and bruises from such a failed landing, equaling 1D6 S.D.C. at most.

30-46% Skid! The aircraft begins skidding sideways because of too sharp of an angle on the rudder. The tires have a 01-20% chance of blowing out on the side of the skid, and unless the pilot succeeds in a further control roll to straighten out the skid, the aircraft slides off of the runway. Damage for this event varies per the type of ground off of the runway. Trees surrounded some of our strips, soft soil farms flanked others, ditches flanked others, and others yet still had buildings and revetments lining the runways. If colliding with trees, buildings, revetments or ditches, damage will be 6D6 M.D. per 10 mph (16 km), with the aircraft traveling at 3D4x10 mph (3D4x16 km) at the time of skidding off of the runway. The pilot inside of the cockpit will take 2D4 S.D.C. per 10 mph (16 km) on such an impact, mostly to the back, neck, legs, ribs, and collarbones. Roll on the critical damage location chart to indicate what was damaged, and to determine any secondary side effects on the aircraft. If the aircraft slides into soft soil there is a 01-75% chance for each landing gear strut of collapse under the stresses placed upon them. Even if the gear collapses in soft soil there is only a remote, 01-10% chance that any ordnance will detonate.

47-60% Nose-Down Stall! The aircraft is traveling too slowly before touchdown is achieved. The result is that the nose drops downward towards the ground. The nose hits at an angle, causing the nose and main gear to buckle. Any ordnance carried under wing/underbelly has a 01-20% chance of detonating, as described above. The fuselage and possibly one wing will take 4D6x10 M.D. from the impact and the resulting skid along the ground. The pilot takes 6D6 S.D.C. from the crushing impact with the ground, mostly to the spine, neck, tailbone, and legs. The pilot can attempt a last minute bail out to avoid the crash by rolling a dodge of 14 or better, but if the ordnance cooks off he has far less protection against the explosives outside the cockpit than inside.

61-73% Nose-Up Stall! The aircraft is traveling too slowly before touchdown is achieved. The result is that the aft side of the aircraft drops to the ground, impacting the runway, and catapulting the nose down into the runway - hard. Damage is nearly identical to the nose-down stall, but the pilot takes 1D6x10+6 S.D.C. from the catapult-like impact with the ground. (Pilots who sustain such crash landings as this one often suffer broken legs, backs, or necks in the crash.) Again, the pilot may attempt a last minute bail out, as described above.

74-87% Landing Speed is too Low! The pilot misjudges the distance to the start of the strip and the velocity of his/her aircraft, and winds up setting down 1D4x20 yards before the runway begins! The effect of setting down too soon varies per the landing strip. Use the figures above for Skidding to determine what happens, but the speed is now 4D4x10 mph (4D4x16 km).

88-00% Misjudged Landing Strip Length! The pilot does not anticipate the end of the runway soon enough, perhaps failing entirely to take note of the markings at the start of the runway indicating its length, and so must take evasive action to prevent careening off into whatever lies beyond. If the pilot succeeds a Perception Roll of 12 or better, the pilot may take note of the approaching end of the runway in time, and so may pour on the throttle and pull up before the end of the runway. This is accomplished by rolling a straight control roll, thereby allowing him or

her to make another attempt at landing. If the pilot fails to notice the quickly approaching warning stripes, the pilot may attempt to turn into a skid, sacrificing the wheels and possibly the landing struts, but allowing the skid to take up the last remaining speed. This maneuver may be accomplished through a control roll with a penalty of -15%. The pilot may even opt to simply slam on the breaks but there is a 01-35% chance of starting a brake fire in the process. The brakes are not a sure-fire guarantee of stopping the aircraft in time - as the brakes are notoriously touchy on fighter aircraft. A successful stop through the use of the brakes may only be made at a penalty of -30%, failing means that the fighter continues on past the end of the runway into whatever is beyond. If a major obstacle lies in the path the pilot may opt to make a last minute ejection to escape a bad collision.

Vertical Landing Mishaps

01-25% Lost Roll Stability! See the Vertical Takeoff Mishaps section illustrating this failed maneuver.

26-50% Lost Longitudinal Stability! See the Vertical Takeoff Mishaps section illustrating this failed maneuver.

51-75% Misjudged Rate of Descent! The aircraft is dropping too quickly, as the pilot has pulled back too far on the throttle. If the pilot notices this in time by accomplishing a Perception Roll of a 10 or better, a quick action control roll, at a penalty of -15%, to pour on the thrust will cushion the impact enough to spare the aircraft and pilot any serious damage. Succeeding the control roll gives each of the wheels a 01-35% chance of a blowout, and each of the shock absorbers a 01-10% chance of a blowout. Failing the perception or control roll to counter the rate of descent will result in the aircraft settling down entirely too heavily, likely blowing the tires (01-75% chance for each) and collapsing the landing gear (01-20% chance for each gear strut). The main body will take 1D6x10 M.D. from structural fatigue as a result, and the pilot will take 3D6 S.D.C. from the shock of such a heavy impact, mostly to the legs, neck, spine, and tailbone.

76-00% Misjudged Distance from Object! The aircraft is too close to a foreign object, such as a vehicle, another aircraft, a building, a light post, or something similar. The pilot may attempt a Perception Roll to detect the presence of a foreign object in the path of the descending aircraft. A successful Perception Roll will allow a subsequent control roll to avoid the collision. If the roll is a failure however, the object is struck. The effects vary significantly - be creative - but remember, aside from the misjudgment on the part of the pilot as to the location of foreign objects in the path of the landing, the aircraft is descending at a safe rate of speed.

Adjusting Trim

Adjusting an aircraft's trim is an imperative thing to attend to for most any combat pilot, as it effects the overall performance of the aircraft. Essentially what trim is are small flaps that create drag on one wing or tail surface to compensate for an imbalance of weight/drag on the opposite side of the aircraft. Thus if you are carrying six long-range missiles on the wings of your CS Nightwing, and you fire one from your left wing, you will want

to adjust the trim so that it pulls the aircraft to that side. This compensates for the loss of the weight and drag on that side of the aircraft. Failing to do this will pull your aircraft slightly off course, making maneuvers slightly difficult (-5%), and make plotting a direct navigational course quite difficult (-15%). Fortunately, adjusting trim is relatively easy, and requires only a straight Pilot: Jet Fighters roll to succeed.

Piloting the Aircraft - Modifiers

There are things that affect a pilot's most basic of skills, and make their job more difficult. These modifiers can mean the difference between successful air operations and impossible air operations - and can often lead to a great deal of discontent among the pilots with the commanding staff if these factors are not taken into account.

Weather

The most significant x-factor in all aspects of flight, however, is without a doubt - weather. Different regions would have different weather patterns, of course, but since we operated mostly over Tolkeen we created a table that we felt most closely emulated the weather of Minnesota. (Being Minnesotans ourselves helped - a lot!)

Overcast

01-10% Clear Skies.

11-30% Mostly Clear.

31-40% Mostly Cloudy.

41-50% Completely Overcast. 1D4x10,000 foot (1D4x3,048 m) Ceiling.

51-60% Completely Overcast. 1D4x1,000 foot (1D4x305 m) Ceiling; -5% on Approach to Runway.

61-70% Foggy! -20% to takeoffs and landings.

71-80% Misting. -5% to takeoffs and landings.

81-90% Raining/Snowing Moderately. 1D4x1,000 foot (1D4x305 m) visibility. -5% on Approach to Runway.

91-95% Raining/Snowing Heavily. 1D4x100 foot (1D4x31 m) visibility! -20% on landing or takeoff!

96-99% Heavy Thunderstorm/Blizzard. -25% to takeoffs and landing, due to visibility and distractions - if flying IN the Thunderstorms, use the same percentage for simple control rolls once every 5 minutes, due to high winds, hail, wind sheer, etc. Also, no less than a 30 mph (48 km) wind for a Blizzard, likely wind sheer gusts of turbulence in thunderstorms.

00% Bizarre weather, tornadoes, softball-sized hail, rain in winter, etc. Negatives vary with the incident.

Winds

01-20% Completely Still.

21-45% Slight Breeze.

46-60% 10-15 mph (16-24 km) crosswind. -10% on landing and/or takeoff.

61-70% 10-15 mph (16-24 km) head/tail wind. -5% on landing and/or takeoff.

71-80% 16-30 mph (26-48 km) crosswind. -15% on landing and/or take off.

81-90% 16-30 mph (26-48 km) head/tail wind. -10% on landing and/or take off.

91-95% Gusting winds from 1D4x10 mph (1D6x10+4 km) to still without notice. -10% on landing or takeoff per every 10 mph (16 km).

96-00% Micro-bursts or Straight Line Winds, with wind speeds of 40+1D6x10 mph (64+1D6x16 km). These erratic wind conditions make flight operations nearly suicidal with a penalty of -50% to -80% on landing and/or takeoff.

Note: Crosswinds over 30 mph (48 km) are difficult to manage in fighter aircraft, and as a result, oftentimes flight operations will be canceled when they are encountered. If the wind conditions have changed since an operation has begun, oftentimes the aircraft are vectored to either another airstrip on the same base, or to an alternate landing site. Attempting to land with these sorts of crosswinds will result in an additional -5% penalty per 1 mph (1.6 km) over 30 mph (48 km) as the pilot is basically trying to make it in 'on a wing and a prayer.' In regards to accumulation of snow/sleet, the ground crew will be busily trying to clear runways of snow or freezing rain through use of salt or plowing. IF no ground crew is available for this sort of task, or the supplies for this sort of thing are short, there is a cumulative -5% penalty for landings and takeoffs for every 2 inches (5 cm) of snow accumulation or half-hour of freezing rain.

Runway & Airport Facilities

The actual facilities at an airport can also affect the performance of the pilots assigned to a unit. Not all facilities are concrete runways built specifically for the use of combat aircraft. Logistics often also prevents airports from having all of the necessary facilities for repairs, regular maintenance, and even for pilot lodging.

Military air bases and even civilian airports are often some of the first targets of an enemy air force to prevent their rival air forces from having any noticeable effect on the outcome of the impending air war. Tolkeen had a series of improvised airports that they used throughout the course of the war, and also developed some rather spectacular tactics for defending their established airports. This allowed them to continue operations throughout much of the conflict, some literally until they were overrun by Coalition ground forces. These tactics were necessary in our campaign, since through much of the conflict Tolkeen used a mix of imported conventional fighter aircraft acquired from one manufacturer or another. Albeit these aircraft were modified by Tolkeen with mystic systems to improve their combat capabilities in the face of the overwhelming numbers of the Coalition Air Forces.

Conventional Airstrips

These reinforced concrete airstrips are built on firm soil, meticulously leveled and packed. They can be anywhere from 60 feet (18 m) to 120 feet (37 m) in width, and are generally from ½ mile (1 km) to 2 miles (3 km) in length. Generally, the larger

the runway the better. Larger runways allow for support aircraft to operate from them as easily as fighter aircraft, and what's more - when taking off on combat operations, more than one fighter can take off at the same time.

These landing strips are designed specifically for conventional takeoff and landing procedures, and therefore provide no penalties to landing or taking off from their surfaces. However, given the typical targeting of such elaborate facilities by enemy air forces, repairs are a common necessity. Hasty repairs, within 3D6 hours, may be effected but these often result in depressions or bulges in areas of the runway, adding stress on the aircraft and trying the pilot's abilities. Runways so repaired require a control roll with a penalty of -5% on landings and takeoffs.

Many modern airstrips have a system called I.L.S. or Instrument Landing System that is composed of a localized transmitter, glide path transmitter, an outer marker transmitter, and the approach lighting system. These systems use radio signals to assist the aircraft in a near zero visibility approach by sending a universal coded signal to align the aircraft properly laterally, longitudinally, and in the proper glide slope. This will reduce penalties for landing in fog, rain, or snow by 75%. Unfortunately, in times of war these sorts of systems are seldom activated to prevent these automated systems from drawing enemy fire.

Improvised Airstrips

These are essentially airstrips using straight stretches of concrete, asphalt, and occasionally even gravel roads for conventional takeoff and landing operations. It depends heavily on the aircraft as to what sort of airstrip can be used by it. The Nightwing and its related naval air force brethren are not designed for operations from improvised airstrips where a significant amount of debris types may be sucked into their intakes. That having been said, they are not in danger of suffering major damage from minor debris such as gravel, twigs, leaves, and various refuse being sucked into their turbines. Simply put, if they do operate from such improvised strips, the aircraft will require a great deal of extra maintenance to repair or replace the highly polished and precise turbine blades due to the slight dings and scuffs they would receive from such debris. The XM-280 produced by Triax has a unique intake arrangement that allows it to operate from improvised airstrips; its intake's lower lip is shielded by a long guard, preventing air from being pulled in from under the aircraft. The Sea Hawk of the New Navy provides provisions for improvised airstrip operations. As does any GAW-F15s refitted for Mega-Damage combat.

Concrete and asphalt airstrips, composed of straight stretches of paved roads, are generally more narrow than an ordinary airstrip - about 30-50 feet (9-15 m) compared to the usual 60-120 feet (18-37 m) for a purpose-built airstrip. Landing on such narrow airstrips is difficult - in fact, any amount of strong winds can make it nearly impossible. The penalty for landing on this type of surface even in ideal conditions is -10%. This is of course assuming that any trees, structures, signposts and similar are cleared away from the sides of the road to allow the wings to overlap the edges of the road.

Gravel roads are ill suited for improvised airstrip usage as this road surface type cannot absorb the impact of the heavy

weight of a combat aircraft. Occasionally, the use of gravel road improvised runways is, however, necessary during cases of extreme emergency. These roads are generally even narrower than concrete and asphalt roads, being only about 18-30 feet (5-9 m) in width. Lining up on these tiny airstrips is only possible with the knowing hand of an expert pilot, and at a penalty of -15%. If the sides of the gravel road slope down into ditches on either side, however, this penalty rises to a -20%. This is done because the aircraft stands a good chance of having one of the main gear units slipping down the sloped sides of the road into the ditch due to the wide landing gear tract, and the loose gravel on the road.

Packed soil may even be improvised to become an airstrip by laying down interlocking steel mesh grates, designed to absorb the weight and impact of an aircraft coming in for a landing. These types of improvised landing strips take as little as a few days to arrange with a proper construction crew and provide no penalties - unless it is of an exceptionally narrow width. These interlocking steel mesh grates are cheap and easily replaced. An attack on such an improvised airfield is easily repaired within 2D4 hours by filling in the holes caused by explosives, and replacement of the damaged grates.

Air Base Facilities

This general term refers to the various facilities used in the maintenance and upkeep of the aircraft, as well as the facilities for the pilots and ground crew.

Maintenance and upkeep of military aircraft is a necessary component to air combat operations. Men and women specialized in maintenance on specific avionics, armory, and the various mechanical components of the aircraft are necessary to keep on staff ready to attend to the aircraft between missions. All the technical experience in the world, however, is useless without a ready supply of tools, spare parts, munitions, and ordnance. This requires secure communications with supply and transportation for the necessary components from wherever they are manufactured or stored. While crafty technicians can emulate factory specific components, it is time consuming, difficult, and often falls short of matching the same capabilities of the factory manufactured components. These are all the facilities absolutely NEEDED to operate the aircraft. Hangars, revetments ("U" shaped dikes or dugouts that shelter the aircraft from strafing enemy aircraft), and the like are not adamantly necessary for air operations but provide protection for the aircraft and a convenient maintenance area for the ground crew between missions. Ground crew trying to effect repairs and maintenance on aircraft when the proper tools and replacement parts are not available can suffer repair penalties of anywhere from -5% to -25%, and depending on the severity of the issue, it may be entirely impossible. Failure to repair or replace damaged or outdated avionics correctly can result in false readings, failed operations entirely, and similar effects.

Pilot and ground crew facilities are also helpful for any fully equipped air base. A solitary mess hall or one for each, the enlisted and officer ranks, bunkhouses, shower/rest room facilities, and the like, are all very helpful for maintaining human comfort. In the most primitive of conditions, tents are often the alternative, banked with sandbags, or arranged inside of foxholes. The

more primitive of conditions generally lead to troubles, however. The human component of the unit is quite susceptible to the elements in these conditions. Damp sleeping quarters, poor quality food, basic latrine facilities, and such, all stack up on the whole of the unit - and make the job all the more stressful. Ultimately, I leave it up to the Game Master to determine just how badly the unit is being affected by these conditions. Sleep deprivation from noise or the elements is common, and with that often come illness, distractibility, and a general lack of morale. Skill performance penalties for these sorts of conditions can range anywhere from -5% to -15%.

Repair or Replacement of Mechanical Components

During combat operations or even just with regular field use, various systems may occasionally require repair, recalibration, or outright replacement. Different rolls are required for different systems. A good ground crew can accomplish these regular maintenance issues without too much difficulty, while a crew that is largely green will have a great deal of trouble.

The result of poor maintenance will result in some systems failing to operate, returning false readings, and occasionally quirks the pilot has to deal with to make a system operate correctly. Most systems failures are relatively harmless, but some can actually cause the aircraft to crash.

General System Repair/General Maintenance/Recalibration/Replacement

Systems like radar, radio transmitters/receivers, navigation computers, tracking computers, combat computers, fly-by-wire systems, I.F.F. systems, brakes, tires, thrusters, and similar, occasionally need maintenance for various reasons. It's a simple fact of aircraft operations. Seldom is the ground crew made up entirely of experts, thus a little math is required. For the assessment rolls, the specialist in his field can make his own roll independently, but for the actual repair/maintenance related skill rolls, you must take an average between the expert's advanced skill and the assisting ground crewmen's skills. For example, Tom, the ground crew leader, has Mechanical Engineer at 87%, and he is assisted in some task by four crewmen with the skills of Basic Mechanics. The four crewmen's percentages are 30%, 45%, 55%, and 98%. Averaging (For an average you add the percentages together, then divide it by the number of individuals present.) the skill performance roll of these five individuals, it comes out to 63%. This percentage would then be considered the ground crew performance percentage.

Repair

Repairs are the result of damage incurred during combat, standard flight operations, or due to a malfunction of a system. The first thing done during repairs is for a specialist to analyze the situation by making a roll on the skill of Mechanical Engineer. Success indicates that the process is fairly simple. Failure indicates that the engineer will either have to confer with his fellow engineers on post to discern what the proper course of action is, (In that case, they make a skill roll.) or he/she may



proceed blindly on the next roll with a skill penalty of -10%. Most of the time (01-85% chance) the damaged system must be removed from the aircraft for repairs to be made.

Next a qualified specialist in military grade electronics (i.e. Electrical Engineer) is required to separate the system from the power grid of the aircraft, often with the assistance of ground crewmen with the skill of Basic Electronics. (See above for ground crew performance percentages.) A failed roll at this point indicates that an electrical conduit was damaged, or was not separated correctly, and will require more work later to repair it.

Afterwards, another roll is required to remove the system from its mountings to bring it out of the aircraft without damaging it or its mounting points inside of the aircraft. A failed roll indicates that either the system is further damaged or the mounting points inside of the aircraft were damaged during the process. (This could be something as simple as a snapped bolt to damage that requires a replacement part to be brought in.)

Next the system undergoes repairs. If it is a computer system, then of course Computer Repair is required, if it is an electrical system like radar, I.F.F., an electrical component of an electromagnetic turbine, or similar, then the skill Electrical Engineer is required. If it is a mechanical aspect like a damaged rudder actuator, a damaged or worn turbine blade, a leaky hydraulic line, a faulty canopy seal, or similar, then Mechanical Engineer is required. First, an assessment roll on the specialized skill is required, followed by the ground crew performance percentage roll. For the first roll, failure indicates that the engineer will have two courses of action to follow. The specialist may confer with his fellow engineers on post to discern what the proper course of action is, (In that case, they make a skill roll.) or the crew may proceed blindly on the next roll with a skill penalty of -10%. Failure on the second roll indicates one of the following, but these will not become apparent unless the device is tested while it is still out of the aircraft:

01-20% The system fails to operate entirely.

21-40% The system fails critically, requiring complete replacement afterwards.

41-60% The system seems to work fine at first, but fails within 2D6 uses.

61-80% The system is buggy, seeming to work some of the time, and some of the time failing entirely.

81-00% The system seems to work fine but causes other systems to glitch occasionally.

Repairs take a minimum of 1D6 work hours for minor systems and 2D6 to 2D6x10 work hours for major repairs. With the entire crew working, the hours are divided among them. Removal and reinstallation of parts generally requires anywhere from a few minutes to 1D6 hours.

Once the repairs are completed the system is replaced in the opposite order in which it was removed, omitting the assessment rolls.

Recalibration & Reprogramming

Recalibration & reprogramming are required for a number of different systems like the brakes, the various computer systems, the I.F.F. systems, and radar. Few of these require the systems to actually be removed from the aircraft, or for any significant portion of the ground crew to assist the expert, unless other general maintenance is to accompany the recalibration/reprogramming. For each, a Computer Operations roll is required, with a diagnostic roll on Read Sensory Equipment coming second, followed finally by a Computer Programming roll if it is required.

Replacement

Replacements of parts of the aircraft are required from time to time. Turbine blades eventually wear out, as does the main turbine shafts, tires must be replaced after a certain number of landings, and portions of the brakes must similarly be replaced at certain intervals. From time to time, old avionics or components to aircraft are replaced with superior alternatives as well. In these cases, follow the Repair guidelines for carrying this out. (For replacing flight surfaces and similar, see Armor & Structural Repair.)

General Maintenance

This includes such activities as making certain tire pressure is correct, checking the turbine blades for dangerous flaws, cleaning various components of the aircraft, greasing moving parts, and similar. (Most electromagnetic turbines do not require any form of lubricant thanks to the electromagnetic suspension rings common among them, though some obscure types may still use old-fashioned foil air bearings.) Rolls for this sort of maintenance are only on the basic level, such as Basic Electronics or Basic Mechanics. Higher skills are only required if components are to be broken down for thorough cleaning/examination.

Armor & Structural Repair

Fighter aircraft in *Riffs* are often protected by a thin layer of composite armored plate in the place of the old, flimsy metals used in the aircraft we observe today. Repairs of this sort of protective covering are essential to bring a damaged aircraft back up to full damage capacity. A simple way of working this is to have the aircraft's Mega-Damage capacity returned to it in 10% increments, each taking 1D6 hours of work. An example of this would be: A Nightwing with 450 M.D.C. that takes 270 M.D.C. during an Air-to-Ground attack mission requires repairs. The ground crew leader assays the damage and determines the proper course of action by making a Mechanical Engineer roll. Then the ground crew effects the repairs by making six repair

rolls on the skill Aircraft Mechanics. Failing any one of those 6 repair rolls reduces the aircraft's maximum M.D.C. by 10%. If this crew failed one of these rolls, the Nightwing's maximum M.D.C. is reduced to 405 M.D.C. and cannot be brought back up to the maximum of 450 M.D.C. until a complete and exhaustive overhaul is conducted on this aircraft. Occasionally, areas of the aircraft are so badly damaged (i.e. reduced to less than 10% of the total M.D.C.) that they cannot be repaired, and as a result, that area of the aircraft must be replaced entirely. If it is the main body of the aircraft, then the useable components are removed and used in repairing other aircraft. If it is a wing, vertical stabilizer, horizontal stabilizer, etc., the old and badly damaged component is merely removed with two successful rolls on Electrical and Aircraft Mechanics. (Assessment/analysis rolls again are made by the expert followed by rolls on the ground crew performance percentage.) A failed roll on either of the assessment rolls means that the part is so badly mangled that he/she can see no easy way of getting the part off without consuming great amounts of time cutting the old part away enough so that the mountings may be removed. A failed roll on either of the second rolls is deadly for the pilot, as they will often fail under the stress of high G maneuvers, or during high speed flight. (These armor repair rules can be readily adapted to body armor or armored vehicles as a realistic way of simulating war weary equipment.)

Arming the Aircraft

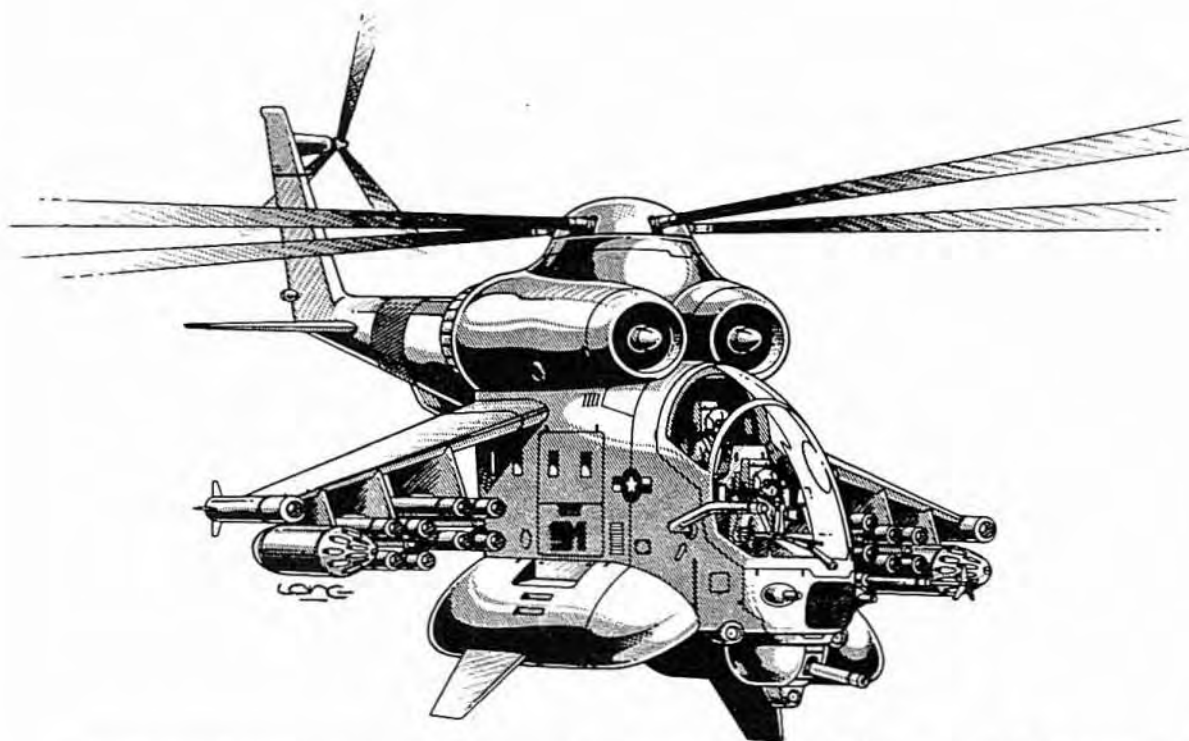
It is the ground crew's responsibility to arm the aircraft, as per mission specifications. This often includes loading/checking ammunition, loading missiles onto open pylons or into pods or launchers, loading bombs onto open pylons, and similar. The skill required for this includes an assessment roll on either Armorer or Weapons Engineer for the specialist in charge. Next the ground crew will conduct the actual placement of the weapons, with all members using the skill of Weapon Systems. If a weapon is mounted incorrectly it may do any of the following.

01-75% The gun/cannon that is loaded jams, but there are no ill effects. If it is a missile or other disposable ordnance loaded, the ground crew failed to remove the pins from the weapon, and so it cannot be armed.

76-85% The gun/cannon that is loaded misfires, damaging the weapon! If it is a missile, once it is armed the rocket motor suddenly engages and rips itself off of its mountings, flying unguided until it either runs out of fuel or impacts with an object. If it is any other form of disposable ordnance it simply arms, but cannot be released.

86-95% The gun/cannon that is loaded misfires, and results in a fire in the avionics bay inflicting 2D4 M.D. worth of damage per melee! Unless the character can set down quickly and extinguish the fire with a hand extinguisher, the aircraft will be lost. If it is a missile or other disposable ordnance the weapon falls off the mounting bracket as soon as it is armed.

96-00% The gun/cannon that is loaded misfires, damaging the weapon badly. If it is a cannon the explosion sets off a chain reaction that detonates ALL of the ammunition carried for that weapon. If the M.D.C. of the main body is depleted the aircraft disappears in a fiery explosion. If it is a missile or other dispos-



able ordnance the weapon explodes wherever it is mounted, as soon as it is armed!

Piloting the Aircraft Summary

This concludes the basic lesson in piloting the aircraft in *Rifts*. It's very realistic - yet far more dangerous than the trimmed game details Palladium provides. With this system it's easy to see that a beginning character wouldn't stand much of a chance if he or she were taking off into a heavy rainstorm, with a 40 mph (64 km) crosswind, from an improvised gravel airstrip. Let alone trying to engage in combat! That in and of itself is realistic and far more fun to play than just having to worry about the combat aspects. Just think of the role-play sessions of goofing around on post, messing with the army guys, or sneaking into town to get into fights with the locals, whenever the weather is bad.

Air Combat

The next section talks about the actual air combat missions a character would encounter, and how to work the actual progression of air combat in conjunction with the general piloting skills.

All characters who possess the skill of Pilot: Jet Fighters are trained in the basics of air combat. Not a lot of training, but enough to where you can hold your water while you're up there. Most of these pilots will have attained training in both ground attack procedure as well as the rudimentary skills of air combat maneuvering, but not enough to be considered experts. Other skills necessary for such operations include Read Sensory Equipment, Weapon Systems, Radio: Basic, and Navigation.

Air-to-Ground Attack

Most of the time a ground attack operation will begin with intelligence gathered by a reconnaissance aircraft, information from ground units, or from simple observation by the aircraft preparing the ground attack operation. Once this information has been processed, it is then determined how the operation will commence.

If this is information gathered before the flight begins, the unit will arrange the details of the operation while still on the ground. Smart commanders will take input from their pilots, using their individual strengths and weaknesses to their advantage. This is an important role-play aspect of the game, and can lead to a great deal of character building in the process. Disagreements, arguments, and flat out fist-fights have developed during the briefing. It is oftentimes here that the exact tactics are developed that will lead them into the oncoming fight with ground forces. One of the biggest factors to consider is the weaponry of the suspected ground forces. If they have air defenses, that becomes the foremost thing on the minds of the fighter pilots, and the organization of the attack.

Coalition forces are known to use the CTX-52 Sky-Sweeper Anti-Aircraft Tank heavily in the defense of their ground forces. These are some of the most effective mobile anti-aircraft batteries yet developed, with the combined use of medium-range missile launchers and long-ranged laser cannons. Non-Coalition forces use a variety of less effective anti-aircraft defenses, such as batteries of rail guns mounted on top of utility vehicles, or even shouldered mini-missile launchers. It all depends heavily on what the ground units in question have access to. A wise unit commander will assign a number of pilots in the attack formation to deal with these air defenses.

Once in the air, the flight or squadron leader often will organize the unit into a formation, with the appropriate rolls necessary at the time of forming, plus periodically during direction, altitude, and speed changes. The method of attack varies dra-

matically, as does the weaponry, so I will not go into specific information as to how to go about this - ultimately, BE CREATIVE! Organizing the attack can be the most fun part, and watching your enemies scurrying about on the ground in terror is just the icing on the cake. (Note: It is always wise to make certain you have someone on guard dog duty, watching for enemy aircraft, either just by sight or via radar. More than a few pilots have gone to an early grave conducting ground attack duties, and being 'bounced' by enemy fighters.) Before combat can begin however, a roll on the weapon systems skill is necessary to arm the weapon systems that will be used. In a conventional low level attack mission, the attack will be made, and then the aircraft will quickly pull out, likely executing a series of zig-zag maneuvers or the jettisoning of chaff/flare bundles to elude pursuit of ground-to-air missiles. Once a pull out has been made, a roll to adjust the trim of the aircraft is necessary to compensate for any under wing/underbelly ordnance dispatched during the attack, as well as a roll to disarm any weaponry that was armed and unfired during the attack. Reforming may be necessary as well, prior to making yet another attack, depending on how the operation was carried out. (See the section below for maneuver penalties.)

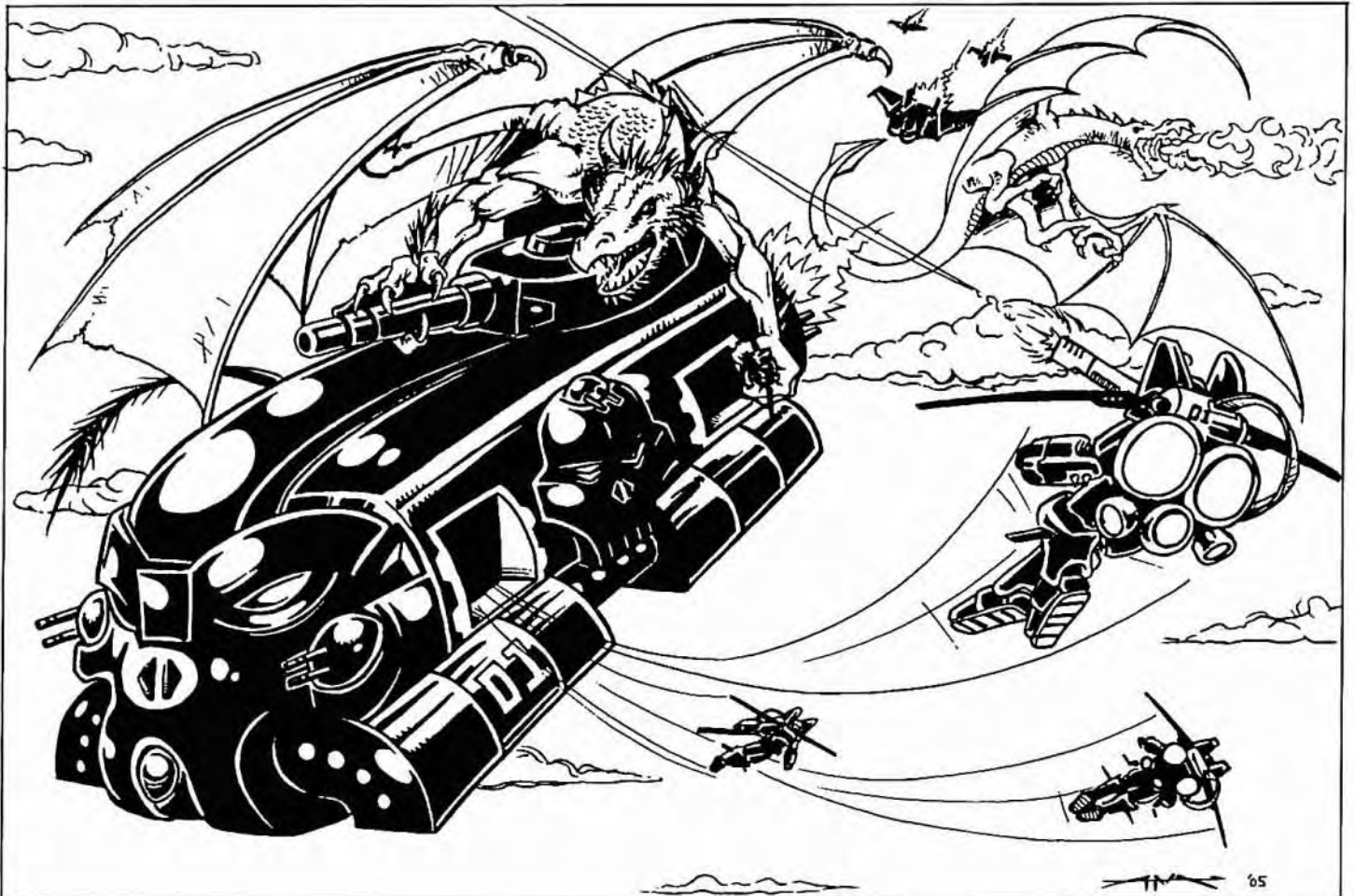
Air-to-Air Combat

As mentioned above, all pilots trained in Pilot: Jet Fighters have some measure of knowledge in conducting air to air com-

bat. Some receive additional training in this field, however, that makes them an expert in A.C.M. - Air Combat Maneuvering.

This skill is covered in Palladium Books' role-playing game, *Ninjas & Superspies™* as Air-to-Air Combat. We have adapted this skill to *Rifts* as A.C.M. The base percentage of this 'new' skill is 10%+2% per level of experience. This percentage is added to the percentage of Pilot: Jet Fighters during air combat maneuvers to counter percentage penalties, and to illustrate the added skill of the pilot. Combined a pilot can often have more than 100% during their air combat actions. These percentage points quickly dwindle with various factors like G Forces, maneuvering for position on enemy aircraft, and similar that incurs a penalty.

Air-to-air combat operations are often less well organized than ground attack missions as the theater of air operations is much more fluid. Information about air to air combat may come to the unit in the form of vague reports regarding the sighting of enemy aircraft over a certain position. These sorts of reports may be outdated, mistaken identity, or something silly like a flock of geese seen at a distance by an aerial observer. Air to air combat may also be called for to guard a different air unit attacking ground targets, guarding a friendly military facility, or even directly protecting friendly troops against enemy ground attack aircraft. Other times the unit is sent up on what is called Combat Air Patrol, generally just flying a certain course, looking for any enemy air operations within the range of sensors or vision.



Regardless of the type of information that led to the air combat operation, eventually it will lead to shots being fired. Most of the time air to air combat will transpire from a significant distance entirely or will, at the very least, begin in this fashion. This is a common feature of modern air to air combat. Like ground attack operations, the pilot must first arm whatever weaponry he/she intends to deploy in an attack. If the enemy is returning fire, attacking from ranges may be punctuated by evasive maneuvers, attacking missile volleys, or deploying chaff/flare bundles to spoof missile guidance systems. If the airborne melee cannot be completed from a distance, however, then it leads to air combat maneuvers.

Air combat maneuvers may be carried out in a number of ways. Lightweight and heavyweight aircraft handle very differently in maneuvers, and as a result, the best close combat tactics will vary dramatically. Lightweight aircraft are generally more maneuverable than their heavier brethren. They can turn and roll all over the sky, with comparatively little impediment to their speed, well inside of the radius of heavier aircraft. Furthermore, they accelerate faster in level flight than their heavier brethren do. This makes them ideal aircraft for engaging in a "Turning Fight" - i.e. a dogfight. Heavyweight aircraft are not well suited to this form of combat since their turning radiuses are larger and their maneuver reaction time is slower than that of a nimble, lightweight fighter. In tight combat maneuvers a heavyweight fighter will also bleed off speed far faster than their lighter brethren will. However, a heavyweight aircraft does bear a couple of advantages in close air-to-air combat. They can zoom-climb and dive faster than lightweight aircraft can, as their mass allows them to retain their momentum and gain momentum in a dive faster than the lighter types. This provides them with the ability to hit and run with relative immunity, provided that the enemy does not have ranged weapons with which to attack the fleeing aircraft. These combat tactics are known as "Energy Fighter" tactics.

As a result of these two very different schools in close combat capability, pilots will adopt different strategies for dealing with different adversaries when the need for such combat arises. (Thus it is important for the unit leader to either have the Espionage skill of Intelligence, to know the performance envelopes of enemy aircraft, or for the unit to have the input from an experienced intelligence officer prior to a fight.) Pilots of aircraft that are lighter than their opponents will try to draw their enemies in close, and force them into a turning fight. Pilots of heavier fighters than their adversaries will attempt to use their superior dive and climb characteristics to attack and then quickly break off into a rapid zoom-climb, or a dive to escape being forced into a turning fight.

As a result of these differing abilities, two separate sets of penalty factors will apply for close air to air combat, according to the weights of fighter aircraft. Always remember though that fighter pilots will almost invariably try to end the engagement with ranged combat FIRST, as close air-to-air combat scenarios are particularly dangerous.

As an aside, some aircraft in *Rifts*, most notably the Nightwing family of aircraft, including the Sea Striker, and Shrike, and the Sea Hawk of the New Navy, employ turreted lasers. These lasers can potentially be swiveled to engage enemy aircraft both during pursuit, when an enemy is on their tail, as

well as during the midst of the dogfight! The gunner in the rear seat can attend to that function even as the pilot simply flies the aircraft. Another note about these two-seat aircraft is that they are often more capable of air combat than single-seat aircraft. With a second person to attend to secondary duties such as locking up targets, identifying bogies, operating the radio, plotting the navigation charts, operating any jamming systems or spoofing systems, etc., this lessens the workload on the pilot, and saves him costly attacks in the process.

Combat Rolls

For this system we melded a number of factors into a beautifully streamlined system of combat. We combined Fighter Combat: Basic with Pilot: Jet Fighters, and Fighter Combat: Elite with Air Combat Maneuvering. These skills were described on page 151 of *Rifts Dimension Book 2: Phase World*, specifically for space fighter combat, but it applied well to atmospheric air combat as well. We felt that this illustrated the limited air combat training known by the majority of fighter pilots as compared to specially trained experts in air combat maneuvering.

Attacks

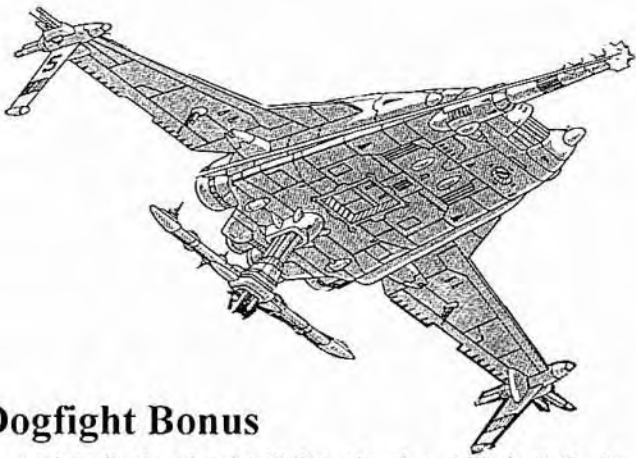
The attacks of the character during air combat are determined by two factors. If the character has just the basic Pilot: Jet Fighters, they attain the attacks of Fighter Combat: Basic, plus the character's hand to hand attacks. If the character has both Pilot: Jet Fighters and Air Combat Maneuvering, they attain the attacks of Fighter Combat: Elite, plus the character's hand to hand attacks.

Strike Bonus

The strike bonus of the character is determined by a number of factors. Firstly, the character attains the bonus from Pilot: Jet Fighters/Fighter Combat: Basic, or Pilot: Jet Fighters + Air Combat Maneuvering/Fighter Combat: Elite. Next, it is imperative that the character possesses the skill of Weapon Systems for any combat aircraft operations, thus that bonus is also attached. Weapon proficiency is also a necessary component of the jet fighter pilot's training, as he must understand the ranges the weapons can be used most effectively at, applicable deflection angles, and other factors. Pilots often possess both W.P. Heavy and W.P. Heavy Energy for this purpose. Finally, any bonuses from the aircraft itself are also applied for specialized targeting computers, laser-targeting systems, and similar.

Dodge Bonus

The dodge bonus is determined by two factors. Firstly, the character attains the bonus from Pilot: Jet Fighters/Fighter Combat: Basic, or Pilot: Jet Fighters + Air Combat Maneuvering/Fighter Combat: Elite. Second, the character also retains any bonus acquired through Physical Prowess, indicating the speed of his or her reflexes.



Dogfight Bonus

As described under the Fighter Combat skills in *Rifts Dimension Book 2: Phase World*®, there is an additional bonus provided to all strikes and dodges for characters trained in Fighter Combat: Elite. This displays their exceptional training in using the weaponry and performance of the aircraft during air combat maneuvers.

Air Combat: Penalties & Bonuses G-Forces

-5% per 250 mph (400 km) during maneuvers, due to the G forces pitted against the pilot. Generally, this means that air to air combat generally takes place at under mach speeds. (Trying to pull any kind of tight/sustained maneuvers at speeds over Mach 1 will often result in the pilot/aircrew blacking out.)

Mass Modifiers

Turning Fight Tactics Penalties

11-20 tons - -1% per each slight maneuver or jink following the first, or -3% per each tight maneuver* following the first, as the aircraft bleeds speed slowly due to its low mass. Each slight maneuver/jink will reduce the aircraft's speed by 2%, and each tight maneuver* will reduce the aircraft's speed by 6%.

21-30 tons - -2% per each slight maneuver or jink following the first, or -5% per each tight maneuver* following the first, as the aircraft bleeds speed due to its moderate mass. Each slight maneuver/jink will reduce the aircraft's speed by 4%, and each tight maneuver* will reduce the aircraft's speed by 10%.

31-40 tons - -3% per each slight maneuver or jink following the first, or -7% per each tight maneuver* following the first, as the aircraft bleeds quickly, due to its heavy mass. Each slight maneuver/jink will reduce the aircraft's speed by 6%, and each tight maneuver* will reduce the aircraft's speed by 14%.

*A tight maneuver refers to a hard 90 degree turn. For every additional 90 degrees added to the turn, increase the maneuver & speed penalties accordingly.

Energy Fighter Tactics Penalties*

11-20 tons - Zoom-Climb: Reduce speed by 10% per melee of climbing. Dive: Increase speed by 5% per melee of a dive.

21-30 tons - Zoom-Climb: Reduce speed by 8% per melee of climbing. Dive: Increase speed by 8% per melee of a dive.

31-40 tons - Zoom-Climb: Reduce speed by 5% per melee of climbing. Dive: Increase speed by 12% per melee of a dive.

* The only control roll truly necessary during such an attack is a slight maneuver/jink roll to escape a collision with their targeted aircraft. More than a few World War II fighters collided with their adversaries during such an attack.

Note: It can easily be seen then that extremely lightweight aircraft like the various Sky Cycles utilized by the Coalition States are well suited to turning fights - but terrible when dealing with large fighter aircraft. Comparatively, large fighter aircraft can use their superior speed, climb, and dive characteristics to attack and evade without providing much opportunity for the Sky Cycle pilot to react or pursue his attacker. Many fighter pilots will not even waste their ranged weaponry on such opponents - so effective are these tactics.

N.O.E. (Nape of the Earth) Maneuvers

This sort of flight is a terrifying and difficult experience even for grizzled fighter pilots. Difficulties in maneuver rolls vary with the landscape. Low, hilly country provides a penalty of -5% to all piloting rolls. Jagged, rocky valleys and cliff faces, though relatively open, provide a penalty of -10% to all piloting rolls. Flying through city streets or other tight spaces - -15% to -30% depending on the difficulties described.

Aircraft Maneuverability Modifiers

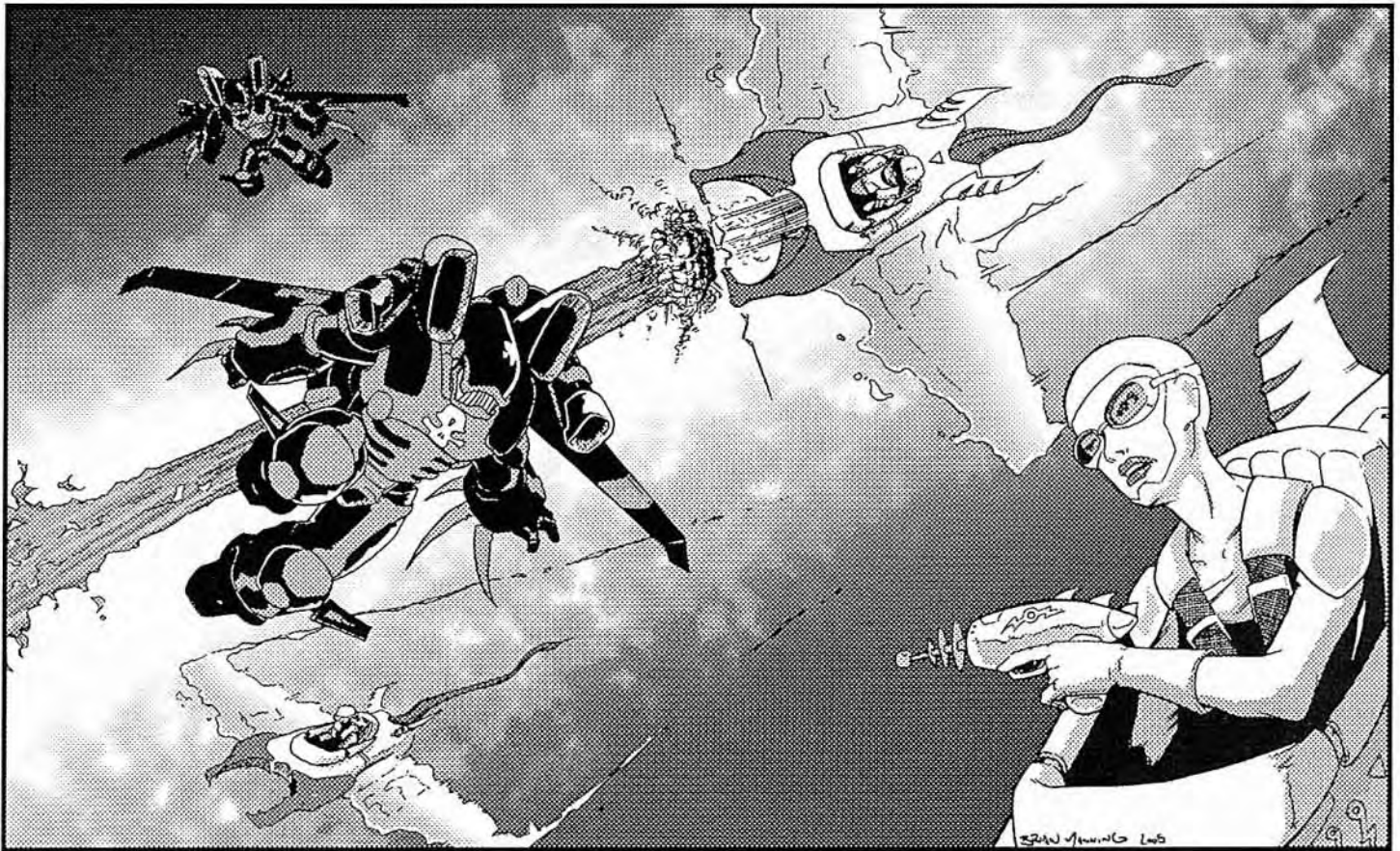
Some aircraft are very well suited to low speed maneuvers due to their wing loading, computer assisted vectored thrusters, specially designed maneuvering flaps that allow rapid turns, etc. These aircraft attain a percentage modifier under their description that essentially allows them one or two extra maneuvers without succumbing to the typical rigors of losing speed in a turning fight. Those listed in the *Rifts* books include the Coalition CSN-117 Shrike and the New Navy's S-14 Sea Hawk.

Benefits: For Superior Aircraft

+5% for the aircraft in the engagement with a higher maximum speed.

+10% for an aircraft in the engagement with VTOL capabilities, when pitted against a non-VTOL aircraft. (All pilots of VTOL aircraft are trained in a maneuver called VIFFing, or "Vectored In Forward Flight". This is essentially a sudden use of the thrusters under the aircraft to pause the aircraft in its forward flight, or a sudden sideways maneuver that would otherwise be unexpected. Aircraft not similarly equipped would have a really tough time of NOT flying right past them if they were hot on the tail of an aircraft that did this. By flying right by, that would give them an automatic chance to take a position on their adversary. If used while trying to take up a position, it could give you greater distance between yourself and an enemy aircraft and give you the chance of firing a long-ranged weapon at the aircraft not similarly equipped.)

+5% for an aircraft in the engagement with thrust vectoring modifications to the main thrusters when pitted against aircraft not so equipped. Admittedly, this modification is not quite as effective as a full VTOL capable aircraft, but it does help to narrow the performance advantage such aircraft achieve.



Conclusion of Air Combat

Now, I've established the rougher points of the air combat rules we use here, now comes the conclusion of Air Combat. In air combat one seldom has time to do more than line up on a target and fire, thus you aren't always aiming at one part or another - it's just going to hit wherever. What's more, it isn't just going to damage the armor of an aircraft, it's going to hit vital systems inside! Thus, here are some fun random hit tables I've come up with, along with critical hit tables to figure out what happens. These critical hit tables are applicable only if a critical strike is rolled on an attack OR if 10% of the remaining M.D.C. in that location is depleted by the damage inflicted.

Random Hit Location Table

- 01-40% Main Body.
- 41-80% Wing/Aileron. (01-50% right, 51-00% left.)
- 81-85% Under Wing/Underbelly Weapon. (If applicable, if not, it strikes the wing.)
- 86-90% Thruster. (20% Main Body M.D.C.)
- 91-94% Vertical Stabilizer/Rudder. (30% Main Body M.D.C.)
- 95-98% Horizontal Stabilizer/Elevator. (30% Main Body M.D.C.)
- 99-00% Canopy! (Reinforced Pilot's Compartment.)

Main Body Critical Damage Table

01-50% No extra effects. The damage inflicted struck no major systems in the process.

51-55% Radar or other specialized systems are knocked out. One specialized sensory system will not respond to the pilot's commands or shows no useful information.

56-60% Targeting computer knocked out! The targeting computer has been completely knocked out, preventing the pilot from any real accuracy with any weaponry deployed. Missiles cannot lock onto their target, the heads up display will not provide any useful assistance to targeting, nothing seems to work right - therefore, all attacks made without the targeting system are considered wild!

61-65% Radio knocked out. Nothing but static is heard over the radio, and no transmissions may be made.

66-70% Fuselage weapons electronics knocked out. Any weapons mounted inside or under the fuselage will not respond!

71-75% Fuselage damage makes flight erratic. A sizable hole in the surface of the fuselage is interfering with the airflow, making flight erratic, and piloting difficult. Penalties include -10% to the maximum speed of the aircraft, or risk loss of control, and -20% to all subsequent piloting rolls - including landing! (This penalty does not apply to aircraft landing via VTOL.)

76-80% Splinters and/or sparks in cockpit. Something minor explodes in the cockpit, showering the pilot in sparks, smoke, and splinters. If the pilot is unarmored he/she suffers 2D6 S.D.C. and is distracted for 1D4 actions afterwards, suffering a penalty of -3 to strike and dodge, and -15% to maneuvers during these 1D4 actions.

81-85% Fly by wire linkage short! The controls are temperamental, seeming to react to some commands, and failing to react

to others - resulting in a dangerous predicament for the pilot. Penalties include -50% to the maximum speed or risk losing control, and -30% to all subsequent maneuvers.

86-90% Landing gear will not respond! Either the hydraulics or electronic actuators have been shot out. The gear affected are: 01-25% Nose Gear, 26-50% Right Main Gear, 51-75% Left Main Gear, 76-00% All landing gear!

91-95% Control panel fire! All sensory and operating systems - save for rudimentary control systems are knocked out, -20% to all navigational rolls, -20% to all weapon systems rolls, and -30% to all subsequent maneuvers!

96-00% Reactor or main power couplings knocked out! Backup emergency power provides the fly by wire system enough power to maneuver for only 1D4 minutes, just enough time to dive for the ground from an air battle, and bail out.

Wing/Aileron (or Elevon) Critical Damage Table

01-50% No extra effects. The damage inflicted struck no major systems in the process

51-60% Fly by wire linkage short! The flight surfaces on that wing are temperamental, seeming to react to some commands, and failing to react to others - resulting in a dangerous predicament for the pilot. Penalties include -30% to the maximum speed or risk losing control, and -10% to all subsequent maneuvers. If both wings are damaged in this fashion, use the penalties described under the Main Body Critical Damage Table for fly by wire linkage short.

61-70% Wing weapons electronics knocked out. Any weapons mounted inside or under that wing will not respond!

71-80% Landing flaps will not respond! This is a dangerous situation for conventional aircraft, as the landing flaps adjust the attitude of the aircraft upon landing and also keep the speed low - without stalling. Landing conventionally without the landing flaps deployed is a harrowing event. See the Conventional Landing Mishaps heading above for details on landing without the landing flaps deployed.

81-90% Wing damage makes flight erratic. A sizable hole in the surface of the wing is interfering with the airflow making flight erratic, and piloting difficult, bouncing up and down and rocking slightly towards the damaged wing, due to the interrupted airflow, especially at high speeds. Penalties include -15% to the maximum safe speed of the aircraft, or risk loss of control, -10% to all subsequent piloting rolls, and reduce the maximum altitude by 5%.

91-95% Aileron/Elevon knocked-off! Either the aileron/elevon or the mounting bracket for the control surface suffered such severe damage that it simply broke away from the aircraft. Each subsequent piloting roll is made at a penalty of -10%, as the roll rate is now half that of what it should be. In aircraft that have no horizontal stabilizers (or canard wings) and purposeful elevators with them, they use what are called elevons on the trailing edge of the larger than normal sized wing. These control surfaces control both roll and pitch, and losing even one of these will result in the aircraft becoming uncontrollable to such a point that only ejection can save the pilot. In an aircraft that uses both elevators and ailerons, losing both ailerons is similarly crippling. (Some modern aircraft have what are called all-flying tail-planes which control the majority of rolling forces in these

aircraft. These types are not as adversely effected by the loss of the ailerons, resulting in a penalty of -20% to all subsequent control rolls. Note that none of those described in the *Rifts* books feature an all-flying tail-plane, except the GAW-F14.)

96-00% Aileron/Elevon jams in an extreme position, causing an uncontrollable roll! There is no recovery from this malady possible, only ejection will save the pilot.

Under Wing/Underbelly Weapons Critical Damage Table

01-50% No extra effects. The damage inflicted struck in a rather harmless area and failed to cause any adverse side effects.

51-70% Weapon will not respond. Either the weapon's electronics have been damaged in such a way that the weapon system will not respond to the commands of the pilot, or the connections between the pylon and the under-slung weapon have been severed.

71-95% Weapon falls off of its mounting! The pylon holding the weapon in place was damaged in such a way that the weapon was wrenched off of its mounting brackets.

96-00% The ordnance or magazine of the weapon detonates, inflicting damage to the wing or fuselage carrying it! One or more fuses of the weapons were faulty enough to allow the weapon to detonate, inflicting full damage to the wing or fuselage, depending on where the weapon was mounted. If the blast radius is large enough, and the damage great enough, the aircraft may disappear in a brilliant fireball with no hope of survival for the pilot.

Thruster Critical Damage Table

01-20% No extra effects. The damage was inflicted harmlessly to the armored nacelle surrounding the thruster, with no adverse effects on the performance of the thruster.

21-40% Thruster loses 50% of its power. The throttle controls of the thruster were damaged in such a way that the engine cannot exceed 50% of its usual maximum power output. This means that one thruster is capable of 100% power and the other can only reach 50% power, which leads to an imbalance of power per side. Therefore, it is often necessary to fly with the good thruster at 50% to prevent the aircraft from yawing too heavily towards the damaged thruster.

41-60% Thruster throttle control jams! The thruster jams into whatever power setting the thruster was set at the time the damage was inflicted. The only way to decrease throttle is to shut the thruster down by cutting its power completely. (If the aircraft is outfitted with vectored thrust capabilities, in the alternative the thrust ducts may become jammed in an extreme position, making maneuvers difficult. In this case the maximum speed is reduced by 50%, and use of the control surfaces to counter the effect of the thrust may result in a penalty to control rolls of -10% to -20%.)

61-80% The cooling system of the Electromagnetic Suspension Rings is damaged! MOST aircraft in the *Rifts* books utilize nuclear power that provides an abundance of energy for all the aircraft's necessary functions. For movement in the turbine, electromagnetic suspension rings serve to suspend the turbine shaft perfectly centered with electromagnetic force, omitting the

need for lubrication or for terribly complex foil air bearings. The advantage to this system is that it reduces friction damage nearly to zero, thereby cutting back on the maintenance needs of the turbines. The only drawback to this system is that they require a cooling mechanism to keep them operating properly, or they will essentially fry their sensitive electronic components. In this case a fragment or lucky shot managed to disable a cooling sleeve! If the engine is not shut down, the E-mag Suspension Ring will destroy itself from its own heat within 1D4 minutes. This causes the turbine to explode like a giant fragmentation grenade as the turbine shaft goes out of alignment. See below for effects.

81-95% Power couplings to the thruster are severed! As a result the engine shuts down, causing the aircraft to begin to yaw towards that side of the aircraft. Unless trim is quickly applied, the pilot will suffer a -15% penalty in controlling the aircraft. Applying trim can negate these effects, however, and will allow the pilot to bring the aircraft home safely. Speed, acceleration, and maximum altitude are also reduced to approximately 50% of their normal maximums.

96-00% The engine explodes in the nacelle! As a result the aircraft sustains 4D6x10 M.D. to the main body or wing, depending on where the thruster was located. There is a 01-50% chance that the exploding turbine will also fry the power couplings, shutting down all power in the aircraft, leaving only 1D4 minutes of emergency control power. Otherwise the pilot must deal with the issue of trimming the aircraft for the loss of the engine's power, as described above, as well as fuselage or wing damage, making flight erratic, as described in the fuselage and wing critical damage tables.

Vertical Stabilizer/Rudder Critical Damage Table

01-50% No extra effects. The damage inflicted struck no major systems in the process.

51-70% The Rudder is knocked off! Either the rudder or the mounting bracket for the rudder suffered such severe damage that the control surface simply broke away from the aircraft. If this aircraft has twin vertical stabilizers, this means that the aircraft still has one working rudder, and so air combat maneuvering remains possible but subsequent rolls must be made at a penalty of -5%, as the aircraft does not yaw as sharply as it once did. Furthermore, the aircraft can only endure a conventional landing with a crosswind of 20 mph (32 km) or less. If the aircraft has only a single vertical stabilizer and rudder, or if both rudders are lost on an aircraft with twin vertical stabilizers, all yaw control is lost. This means that maneuvers in air combat maneuvering are limited, providing the pilot with a penalty of -15% during such control rolls following the loss of the rudder(s). Aircraft outfitted with vectored thrust capabilities CAN effect yawing maneuvers by vectoring the thrust for the desired direction, but this slows the aircraft more than the use of the rudder, and the aircraft does not react as quickly to this as it did with a proper rudder. Thus using this in air combat maneuvering results in a penalty of -5%. An aircraft that has lost both of its rudders and does not have vectored thrust capabilities is incapable of landing with any kind of crosswinds.

71-90% Vertical Stabilizer damage makes flight erratic. A sizable hole in the surface of the stabilizer is interfering with the airflow, making flight erratic, and piloting difficult, shimmying

from side to side due to the interrupted airflow, especially at high speeds. Penalties include -25% to the maximum speed of the aircraft, or risk loss of control, and -10% to all subsequent piloting rolls.

91-00% Rudder jams in an extreme position, causing an uncontrollable yawing turn! If the rudder jams in an odd position it forces the aircraft to yaw suddenly towards the direction the rudder is turned, causing the aircraft to quickly lose speed, and continue to turn in that direction. Unless the aircraft is outfitted with vectored thrust, the aircraft will become uncontrollable and will crash. With vectored thrust the pilot may attempt to counter the turn by vectoring the thrust to counter the turn rate caused by the jammed rudder, with a control roll made at a penalty of -10%. This slows the aircraft to about 10% of the aircraft's maximum speed, however, and makes air combat maneuvering virtually impossible. Consider all subsequent rolls to be made at a penalty of -25%.

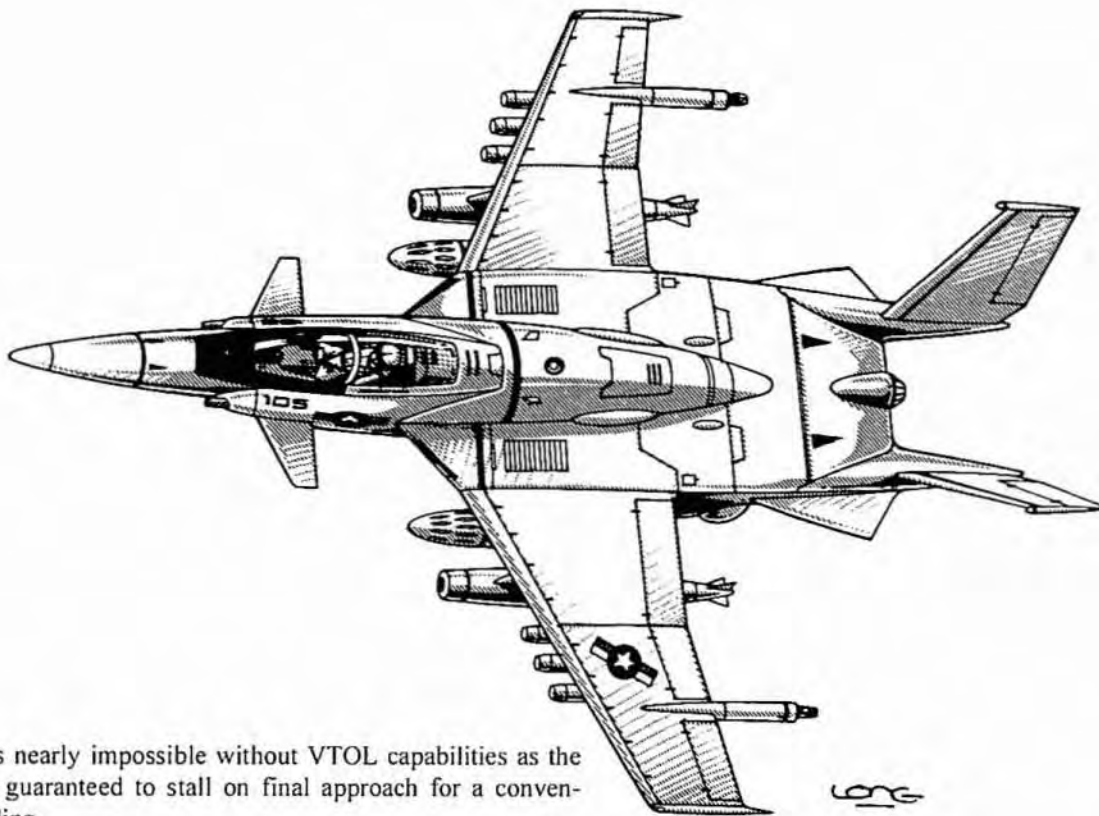
Horizontal Stabilizer/Elevator Critical Damage Table

01-50% No extra effects. The damage inflicted struck no major systems in the process.

51-70% The Elevator is knocked off! Either the elevator or the mounting bracket for the elevator suffered such severe damage that the control surface simply broke away from the aircraft. Each subsequent piloting roll is made at a penalty of -35%, as the aircraft will attempt to yaw towards the remaining elevator with every upward or downward pitching maneuver. If both of the elevators are knocked out, unless the aircraft is outfitted with vectored thrust capabilities, the aircraft is doomed, as the pilot will no longer have any capabilities to control the pitch. Aircraft outfitted with vectored thrust capabilities CAN effect pitching maneuvers by vectoring the thrust for the desired direction, but this slows the aircraft more than the use of the elevators, and the aircraft does not react as quickly to this as it did with proper elevators. Thus using this in air combat maneuvering results in a penalty of -10%.

71-90% Horizontal Stabilizer damage makes flight erratic. A sizable hole in the surface of the stabilizer is interfering with the airflow, making flight erratic, and piloting difficult, bouncing up and down and rocking slightly towards the damaged elevator due to the interrupted airflow, especially at high speeds. Penalties include -25% to the maximum safe speed of the aircraft, or risk loss of control, and -10% to all subsequent piloting rolls.

91-00% Elevator jams in an extreme position, causing an uncontrollable upward or downward pitch! If the elevator jams in an odd position it forces the aircraft to yaw suddenly towards the direction the rudder is turned, causing the aircraft to quickly lose speed, and continue to turn in that direction. Unless the pilot acts quickly to cut power and force trim all the way over to the opposite side, he/she will lose control of the aircraft - resulting in the aircraft spiraling earthward. This control roll is difficult and can only be made at a penalty of -25%, and even if he/she succeeds, the maximum safe speed is limited to about 150 mph (240 km). If both elevators jam in an odd position the pilot is in serious trouble, as the aircraft will either begin to dive or climb uncontrollably. A control roll is difficult and can only be made at a penalty of -40%, and even if he/she succeeds, the maximum safe speed is limited to about 150 mph (240 km).



Landing is nearly impossible without VTOL capabilities as the aircraft is guaranteed to stall on final approach for a conventional landing.

Canopy (Reinforced Pilot's Compartment) Critical Damage Table

01-75% No Extra Effects. The attack failed to do more than blacken a small area or slightly crack the canopy of the aircraft.

76-95% Spiders/Fogs the windscreen! The windscreen spider-webs or fogs from heat distortion, partly obscuring the view of the pilot, making visibility a problem. All subsequent maneuvers are only possible at a penalty of -25%, and Perception Rolls are made at a penalty of -4.

96-00% 10% damage comes through cockpit! Some of the laser beam, fragments of an explosive charge, or slightly spent rail gun rounds manage to penetrate the protective cockpit, inflicting 10% of the damage to: 01-20% the pilot, 21-90% a minor system, 91-00% knocks out controls!

Aircraft Design Flaws

Most combat aircraft have design flaws in their earliest fielded versions. In time, some of these are worked out, but others remain throughout the duration of their service. In the 1940s, the P-38 had problems with compressibility issues that would render the elevators useless in high-speed dives, resulting in the inability to pull out of a dive from high altitudes. This problem was eventually solved through the use of dive brakes. In the 1960s the A-6 Intruder's computer was so temperamental that a trained remedy indicated that the operator should kick in a certain spot in an effort to bring it to functioning properly. In the 70s and 80s, the F-14 of fame had a long running series of engine failures that resulted in many, sometimes fatal, accidents. It is therefore assured that, in the grit and grime of the post-Cataclysmic era, similar problems will arise with new designs. There is a 01-70% chance that first generation versions of aircraft will

have some form of flaw in their design that potentially could be remedied with redesign work later. To determine the flaws of a design, roll 1D4 to determine the number of problems the aircraft has. Then roll this number of times on the critical damage table to determine what system(s) the aircraft has problems with. Use common sense in this, obviously holes are not going to rip themselves wide in an aircraft, so if a roll of this sort appears, choose something else. To account for later redesign work, roll ONCE on the following table.

01-25% The flaw was completely remedied.

26-50% The flaw now only happens half as often as before.

51-75% The flaw only appears when damage has been inflicted to that area. (Switch around some of the critical damage tables for this aircraft only to where it is 5-20% more likely that this flaw is what would be affected by damage to this area.)

76-00% The flaw has actually become worse, and happens twice as often as before!

Here is a list of design flaws our group has come up with for various aircraft in the *Rifts*® game:

Coalition Air Force NA-15 Nightwing

Introduced in 103 P.A., this aircraft had a very short teething period due to the acute need for this aircraft in front-line service. During this early period the Nightwing suffered from aileron jams in the extreme position during high speed rolling maneuvers that invariably ended with the loss of the aircraft. By 105 P.A. modifications had been made to prevent this from occurring during maneuvers, but the mechanism used to regulate the ailerons is particularly sensitive to damage and jarring. As a result, when taking damage to the wing/elevator change the criti-

cal damage table to 81-85% Wing damage makes flight erratic, 86-90% Aileron knocked off, 91-00% Aileron jams in an extreme position causing an uncontrollable roll.

Critical Damage Note: Note that the Nightwing uses a V configuration tail with control surfaces that function as both rudder and elevator. A loss of one of these control surfaces means that both the pitch and yaw control of the Nightwing is diminished, as though it had lost one of each - see the critical damage tables for details.

Coalition Navy CSN-115 Sea Striker

The Sea Striker was developed from the same prototype series that resulted in the Nightwing, and as a result, they are close cousins. Its modifications include the addition of new, more powerful thrusters, naval adaptations, revised weapons accommodations, a clipped wingspan, and a slight increase in length to stabilize the new aircraft's center of balance. Despite all of the changes it is still easily recognizable as a member of the same family as the Nightwing, and enjoys a long list of common components with its CS Air Force brethren. As a result of this commonality, the Sea Striker unfortunately inherited the same design flaws as the Nightwing. See above for details.

Critical Damage Note: The use of the same configuration of tail surfaces used by the Nightwing results in identical results when damage is incurred. See above for details.

Coalition Navy CSN-117 Shrike

The Shrike was the most recently developed Coalition fighter aircraft in the Nightwing family. Unlike the Sea Striker, the Shrike is a far more distant relation to the Nightwing. Its modifications included extremely high thrust electromagnetic turbines, a new fuselage and turret design, new wings, naval adaptations, an extreme weapons accommodations revision, and new tail surfaces. As a result of all the massive alterations the type enjoys very little commonality in general airframe components with its two relative types, but it does have the best performance envelope of the three CS fighter types. Thanks to an all new wing, the aileron flaws of the previous two types did not carry over to the Shrike. It is the only fighter in CS service that has no design flaws whatsoever.

Iron Heart Armaments GF-1A Grey Falcon

The Grey Falcon, designed and built in the now CS occupied city of New Kenkora, is an excellent, low cost, delta winged fighter aircraft. Based on pre-cataclysm designs, it is a distant relative to the New Navy's S-14/16 Sea Hawk. Its main design flaw lies with its basic low cost design, with its thrusters being placed in a side by side fairing, sharing many systems instead of having redundant safety features. As a result, any damage incurred to one thruster WILL affect both! If one of the thrusters explode as a result of damage, the other thruster takes full damage from the resulting explosion, and is very likely to explode in turn!

Critical Damage Note: The Grey Falcon bears a single vertical stabilizer and rudder, and as a result, it is a vulnerable target.

Loss of this single vertical stabilizer WILL result in the aircraft crashing! Loss of the rudder results in the loss of all yaw control in flight. While this aircraft does bear a delta wing, it does NOT use elevons to control pitch and roll capabilities. It features canard wings outfitted with elevators located forward of the main wing to control pitch, and ailerons at the back of the wings as normal.

Unmentioned Systems of Rifts® Aircraft

Palladium Books did not mention several key systems throughout the development of their aircraft for the game. I could only speculate as to why they were omitted, but I would have to wager that it was the result of saving space in the *Rifts* books. In this section I will also labor to try to remedy their omissions by including them here.

Coalition States Aircraft Systems of Note

The sections describing the Coalition aircraft throughout the books are often inconsistent or omit details that would be helpful to know about when using aircraft in a campaign. I have used as many pieces of real-world technology in the descriptions, extrapolating on some to illustrate the higher technology levels, and omitting some where the illustrations did not display telltale features of their presence.

In a couple of instances in the *Rifts* books I suggest changing certain abilities of the aircraft. *Rifts Sourcebook 4: Coalition Navy*, is where the most changes are necessary.

The radar system of the Sea Striker and the Shrike describe ranges of 500 miles (800 km), a ludicrous range for such small aircraft. The powerful Aegis radar, used on naval vessels today, has approximately a 200 mile (320 km) range. In *Rifts World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign*, the CS aircraft described there have a 200 mile (320 km) range. Considering the tech levels, it is conceivable that the ranges were increased to that degree, but 500 miles (800 km) is a technological stretch when compared to other types of radar listed in the books. I suspect the reason that Patrick Nowak chose this range is because of the listing in the *Mercenaries Book* that ludicrously listed the ranges of the radar and sonar outfitting Iron Heart Armaments aircraft as 500 miles (800 km) for both. I suggest that the ranges of these radar systems be reduced to the CS standard of aviation radar sets as described in *Rifts World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign*.

Secondly, let us discuss sonar. Sonar is the use of sound waves to locate, or possibly image in extremely sophisticated cases, objects underwater. Passive sonar is the device listening for sound emitted by the object. (As in the case of listening to a large armored creature's plates creaking or clacking as they swim through the water, a submarine trying to stealthily pass by a blockade of vessels, etc.) Depending on the sound levels, this can reveal the distance, approximate direction, and in some cases, an exact position of an object. Active sonar is the sonar device emitting a loud sonic pulse to locate objects. The sonic

pulse bounces off of the object and returns to the device, revealing the exact position of all objects within the range of the system. In the process, however, if the object also has sonar - this reveals the exact location of the vessel that sent out the sonic pulse as well.

Aircraft that have these capabilities can not just fly over the water and miraculously pick up on ambient sound waves underwater, or transmit sonic pulses to the surface of the water. Today, how it works is that something called a "Sonar Buoy" can be dropped into the water. This device then uses its onboard sonar, and transmits the gathered data, via radio signal, up to the aircraft that deployed them. This arrangement allows Anti-Submarine Warfare aircraft to screen large areas of water by deploying their buoys, and then reacting if anything shows up on sonar.

My recommendation for CS aircraft, like the Sea Striker, outfitted as ASW aircraft is to replace one of the pylon mounted long-range missiles with a sonar pod. This pod would have a payload of 4 buoys, each with a 5 mile (8 km) radius of effect, plus the equipment to interface with the buoys. The buoys are semi-disposable, with an average lifespan of 12 hours, and are able to transmit data to the aircraft up to 50 miles (80 km) away.

One other point of interest to cover is an issue concerning the CS Nightwing. The Mercenaries & Game Master's Guide both indicate the maximum altitude of this aircraft as 10,000 feet (3,048 m). This maximum altitude is ludicrous for any jet aircraft, as maximum altitudes of even primitive fabric covered aircraft that served during the First World War often exceeded 20,000 ft (6,096 m). I suspect the cause of this misconception was the result of missing text in the Mercenaries book, omitting mention of the service ceiling/maximum altitude, and so the maximum hover altitude was deemed the service ceiling. I recommend using the maximum altitude of the Sea Striker for the Nightwing, which is 60,000 ft (18,288 m).

Here is a list of systems I suggest that ALL Coalition Fighter Aircraft SHOULD have. The last two described were systems designed during our campaign called, "The Skies Over Tolkeen." During our version of this war a sort of tech-war played an undertone in the campaign where Tolkeen or the CS would devise some sort of advantages and the enemy would have to develop something to counter them. These were a couple of the Coalition's responses to Tolkeen's developed advantages.

1. Radar & Tracking Computer: This system is identical to the systems installed on the Coalition States SF-7 Talon Stealth VTOL Jet Fighter. Also included is terrain-following capabilities to aid piloting NOE (Nape of the Earth) maneuvers by negating any penalties incurred from flying so close to the Earth, and for finding targets amidst ground clutter. See page 178 of *Rifts World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign* for details on the radar and tracking computer. (One thing not mentioned in the book is that this radar ONLY covers a 120 degree cone forward of the aircraft! It cannot detect targets if they are approaching from any other direction. IF enemy aircraft approach from other directions with their radar activated, however, the radar detector will reveal their presence.)

2. Inertial Navigation Computer: This system charts the movement of the aircraft along with prerecorded sector charts and maps to aid the aircrew in identifying his/her position, and

navigating to wherever they need to be. This system provides a +20% bonus to the operator's Navigation skill.

3. Radar/Radio Jamming System: This is an active though minor electronic counter-measures system intended to thwart the radar guidance portion of modern missiles and nearby communications, though it does little to impede the optical imprint portion of the guidance systems commonly used in missiles. The system attempts to jam any missile 'painting' the aircraft with its radar within a 5 mile (8 km) range, with a 01-25% success rate. Up to a dozen radio frequencies may be jammed simultaneously, as per the command of the pilot/aircrew.

4. I.F.F. Transponder: This is a sophisticated system that utilizes encrypted radar pulses to determine friendly from unfriendly aircraft. This system sends an interrogation signal to any unknown aircraft within 50 miles (80 km), which is automatically detected by their transponder system. Their transponder then sends an automatic reply - IF it is coded to understand the interrogation signal. Coalition transponders indicate unit, mission, aircraft type, course, speed, and altitude. These coded signals are very difficult to crack, and are changed periodically to keep such sensitive material out of the hands of enemies. This system is instrumental in helping to prevent mid-air accidents, mistaken identity, friendly fire incidents, and to further aid coordination on the battlefield.

5. Radar Detector: This system detects when the aircraft has been scanned by radar waves, and analyzes them to determine their intent, and direction to the microwave transmitter. Thus if a ground based robot vehicle scans the sky with its radar and detects the aircraft with this system, the Radar Detector will indicate the type of radar wave as an active scan, and the direction from which it was detected.

6. Long-Range Radio & Scrambler: This is the same radio set outfitted in most of the Coalition military power armor and robot vehicles.

7. Combat & Targeting Computer: These systems are essentially identical to those fitted to standard types of Coalition Robot Vehicles, but are configured to allow the aircraft to use the exceptional range of its Radar in combat. (All data is interfaced to the aircrew through the use of the Heads Up Display.)

8. Laser Targeting System: This system is essentially identical to that fitted to Coalition Robot Vehicles. It is not configured to aid laser guided munitions, but is intended as a targeting aid for close-range engagements.

9. Ejection Seats: All aircrew members have ejection seats identical to those fitted to Coalition Robot Vehicles, complete with parachutes for the crew integrated into the harness. (In our campaign, late in the Tolkeen war, a new mini-jet pack was developed to replace the parachute that permitted downed pilots to escape back to friendly lines within a relatively short time. This jet pack has 15 M.D.C., can lift up to 250 lbs/112.5 kg, and fly at speeds of 20-30 mph/32-48 km depending on its encumbrance, at up to 500 feet/152 m in altitude.)

10. Magnetic Anomaly Detection System: In pre-cataclysm times, ASW fixed wing aircraft mounted a long probe at the tail of the aircraft to accommodate this sort of system. Back then it was used to detect the magnetic field of large masses of metal underwater - i.e. submarines. The New German Republic experimented with ancient M.A.D. technology a few years ago and learned that enchanted objects or individuals gave off an odd

magnetic signature. (It is believed, by some, that this is how Psi-Stalkers and Dog Boys can sense magic, they are attuned to this magnetic frequency of the supernatural.) When the CS Air Force began suffering heavy losses at the hands of a volunteer fighter squadron that utilized invisibility generators and P.P.E. cells to essentially appear and disappear at their leisure, the NGR shared this data with the Coalition States. Through the use of this information the Coalition States developed a sensor that was specifically keyed to locating the specific magnetic signature of enchanted objects. Once completed, this system was adapted to a conventional Heads Up Display on a Nightwing Attack Aircraft, and was programmed to reveal objects enchanted or high in P.P.E. energy with a sort of spectral aura around them - even invisible objects. Within a few months the CS High Command issued orders that these systems would be installed in all CS Fighter Aircraft. Unfortunately, it is a very short-ranged device with only a 1 mile (1.6 km) radius of effect, BUT it gives the aircrew some chance to defend against impending mystical attacks. While meant to detect invisible objects, it has proven wonderful for locating most any magical object within its range. Its drawbacks are that it is easily foiled by the use of enchanted spoofing devices, and it is completely blind inside of a Ley Line.

11. **Chaff/Flash-Flare Dispensers (2):** Another system added part way through the Tolkeenite war after losses to Tolkeenite fighters reached a critical point. Seeking a way to level the playing field the Coalition States added a Chaff/Flash-Flare dispenser to their aircraft that can blind the dual radar/optical imprint targeting systems of modern guided missiles. It has a payload of five chaff/flash-flare bundles, and each has a 01-70% chance of diverting missiles from their course. Anywhere from 1-5 may be dispensed in a single action, thereby increasing the chances of diverting missiles. (Keep in mind the speed of missiles, and the distance from which they were fired for determining whether the pilot or copilot/gunner has a chance to deploy these counter-measures.)

Iron Heart Armaments Aircraft Systems of Note

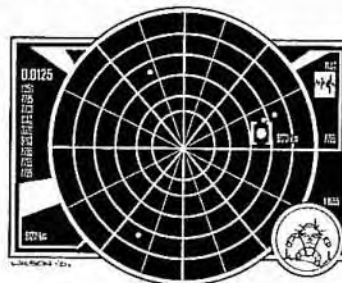
The GF-1A Grey Falcon is the only aircraft produced by IHA that fits into the context of this article, thus I will focus on the details surrounding the Grey Falcon. Performance-wise, the Grey Falcon is not too dissimilar from the Nightwing. It is a Mach 2 interceptor and carries an impressive payload of disposable ordnance. Where it differs is in the two following areas - armored protection, being less than that of the Windjammer Sky Cycle, and its price. Armored protection aside, this still does not account for the low price. The aircraft costs only 2/5ths of what the Nightwing costs. One can only assume that this price is a reflection of the avionics carried on board. Thus the systems of the IHA GF-1A Grey Falcon will fall somewhat short of those carried by its CS contemporaries.

1. **Radar & Tracking Computer:** These systems are identical to the systems in most commercially available robot vehicles. This radar ONLY covers a 120 degree cone forward of the aircraft! It cannot detect targets if they are approaching from any other direction. IF enemy aircraft approach from other directions

with their radar activated, however, the radar detector will reveal their presence.

2. **Inertial Navigation Computer:** This system charts the movement of the aircraft along with prerecorded sector charts and maps to aid the pilot in identifying his/her position, and navigating to wherever he/she needs to be. This system provides a +20% bonus to the pilot's Navigation skill.

3. **I.F.F. Transponder:** This is a sophisticated system that utilizes encrypted radar pulses to determine friendly from unfriendly aircraft. This system sends an interrogation signal to any unknown aircraft within 30 miles (48 km), which is automatically detected by their transponder system. Their transponder then sends an automatic reply - IF it is coded to understand the interrogation signal. IHA transponders indicate course, speed, and altitude plus a specially coded signal to indicate an assigned code-name or numeric designation. While the basic information is coded in non-encrypted code, the latter specially coded signal is unique to the purchaser of the aircraft. This system is instrumental in helping to prevent midair accidents, mistaken identity, friendly fire incidents, and to further aid coordination on the battlefield.



4. **Radar Detector:** This system detects when the aircraft has been scanned by radar waves. Unlike CS types, this radar detector only indicates that the aircraft has in fact been passed over by scanning radar waves, and cannot indicate any further information than this.

5. **Long-Range Radio & Scrambler:** This is the same radio set outfitted in most commercially available power armor and robot vehicles.

6. **Combat & Targeting Computer:** These systems are essentially identical to those fitted to commercially available robot vehicles. (All data is interfaced to the pilot through the use of the Heads Up Display.)

7. **Laser Targeting System:** This system is essentially identical to those outfitted upon commercially available robot vehicles. It is not configured to aid laser guided munitions, but is intended as a targeting aid for close-range engagements.

8. **Ejection Seats:** The pilot is furnished with an ejection seat identical to those fitted to commercially available robot vehicles, complete with a parachute integrated into the harness.

Triax Aircraft Systems of Note

Triax is undeniably the most advanced native aircraft manufacturer on the planet, and their systems should reflect this. Their XM-275 Lightnings and XM-280s are some of the best combat aircraft yet devised, yet their listings for systems is relatively spartan and unimaginative. Here is a revised list of systems common to all fighter aircraft produced by Triax.

1. Imaging Radar & Tracking Computer: This system is a sophisticated and powerful radar and tracking computer designed to detect *and* image objects at extreme ranges. The radar is so sensitive, up to a range of 225 miles (360 km) in a 180 degree arc forward of the aircraft, that it can literally create an image of the radar return and surmise a visual of the object it is viewing. The tracking computer, linked to the radar, is capable of tracking up to 144 objects. The radar screen also serves as a touch pad, so that if the pilot (or other aircrew member) wants to view what is what on the radar screen, all they must do is push the icon of the tracked object. This will bring up a pop-up image next to the icon displaying what the radar return is revealing. Also included are terrain-following capabilities to aid piloting NOE (Nape of the Earth) maneuvers by negating any penalties incurred from flying so close to the Earth, and for detecting targets amidst ground clutter. See page 178 of *Rifts World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign* for details on the radar and tracking computer. Note that it cannot detect targets if they are approaching from any other directions. IF enemy aircraft approach from other directions with their radar activated, however, the radar detector will reveal their presence.

2. Hindsight Radar System: This separate radar system is contained between the tails of the XM-275 and XM-280. It essentially allows a pilot to see targets approaching from the rear and lock forward facing missiles onto targets BEHIND the aircraft. This separate radar system has a 30 mile (48 km) range, and can see in a 60 degree cone of the sky immediately behind the aircraft. This system is slaved to the Tracking Computer, previously described.

3. Inertial Navigation Computer: This system charts the movement of the aircraft along with prerecorded sector charts and maps to aid the aircrew in identifying his/her position, and navigating to wherever they need to be. The imaging radar also provides an accurate, up to the moment view of the terrain of the countryside forward of the aircraft, allowing the pilot to spot landmarks amidst the landscape. This system provides a +30% bonus to the operator's Navigation skill.

4. Radar/Radio Jamming System: This is an active though minor electronic counter-measures system intended to thwart the radar guidance portion of modern missiles and nearby communications, though it does little to impede the optical imprint portion of the guidance systems commonly used in missiles. The system attempts to jam any missile 'painting' the aircraft with its radar within a 15 mile (24 km) range, with a 01-45% success rate. Up to two dozen radio frequencies may be jammed simultaneously, as per the command of the pilot/aircrew. If the radar unit that is actively scanning the fighter is friendly, the pilot/aircrew may opt to override the R/RJS.

5. I.F.F. Transponder: This is a sophisticated system that utilizes encrypted radar pulses to determine friendly from unfriendly aircraft. This system sends an interrogation signal to any unknown aircraft within 225 miles (360 km), which is automatically detected by their transponder system. Their transponder then sends an automatic reply - IF it is coded to understand the interrogation signal. Triax transponders indicate the pilot/aircrew names and ranks, unit, mission, aircraft type, course, speed, and altitude to compatible I.F.F. devices. These coded signals are very difficult to crack, and are changed periodically to keep such sensitive material out of the hands of ene-

mies. This system is instrumental in helping to prevent midair accidents, mistaken identity, friendly fire incidents, and to further aid coordination on the battlefield.

6. Radar Detector: This system detects when the aircraft has been scanned by radar waves, and analyzes them to determine their intent, and direction to the microwave transmitter. Furthermore, this system is programmed to memorize specific radar frequencies and strengths to indicate what type of radar set is being used to scan the aircraft. An example of this system in action is that of a ground based Black Knight robot vehicle scanning the sky with its radar and picking up the aircraft. The Radar Detector in turn will indicate to the pilot/aircrew the type of radar wave as an active scan, the direction from which it was detected, and will likely be able to indicate that it is from a friendly radar set.

7. Long-Range Radio & Scrambler: This is the same radio set outfitted in most of Triax's power armor and robot vehicles.

8. Laser Communications Array: A small receiver panel fixed on the tail surfaces and a retractable turreted laser transmission device somewhere on the dorsal spine of the fuselage comprises the main components to this system. This system is used for making jamming and interception free communications between fighter units and with air bases, without breaking radio silence. The range is generally limited to about 10 miles (16 km), or further on exceptionally clear days.

9. Combat & Targeting Computer: These systems are essentially identical to those fitted to standard types of Triax Robot Vehicles, but are configured to allow the aircraft to use the exceptional range of its Radar in combat. In addition to these common features, the advanced targeting computer will attempt to aid in targeting - providing a bonus of +2 to strike by graphically indicating on the H.U.D. angles of deflection, energy states of enemy aircraft, and similar pertinent details.

10. Laser Targeting System: This system is essentially identical to that fitted to common Triax robot vehicles, but with a much longer range - 10 miles (16 km). Unlike common North American types, this not only aids in targeting during short-range engagements, but aids in long-range engagements, and also can be configured to aid laser-guided munitions/ordnance into their target.

11. Ejection/Escape Capsule: Instead of producing jet packs or parachutes for pilot survival, Triax developed a novel way of bringing the NGR's pilots home. The entire reinforced pilot's compartment may jettison away from the aircraft, and fly home without the aircraft! The two thrusters underneath and one behind the escape capsule have 25 M.D.C. each, and the armored side walls/canopy of the reinforced pilot's compartment have the same M.D.C. they had at the time of ejection. The maximum speed of this contraption is only 120 mph (192 km), and can easily heft 600 lbs (270 kg) in addition to the weight of the Ejection/Escape Capsule, up to 6,000 feet (1,828 m) in altitude.

12. Magnetic Anomaly Detection System: A small, retractable M.A.D. probe in the nose or tail of the aircraft may be extended to search for large masses of metal such as hidden armored vehicles, robot vehicles, artillery pieces, and even submarines. It can 'see' up to 2 miles (3.2 km) underwater, in a 1 mile (1.6 km) radius, from an altitude of 6,000 feet (1,828 m). Over land it can 'see' buried or hidden metal objects up to 10 feet (3 m) underground, in a 1 mile (1.6 km) radius, from the

same altitude. Devices that use electromagnets, such as rail guns, gauss weapons, and electromagnetic drives, will also trigger this device when in this mode of searching from ten times its usual scanning radius! Triax has also programmed the M.A.D. system to switch to a mystic sensitive mode in which it scans for the odd magnetic signature that indicates enchanted objects or those which contain a significant amount of P.P.E., aiding in locating hidden Gargoyles and hostile magic users. When in mystic sensitive mode, this system has a 5 mile (8 km) range. Unlike the CS type, this system does not visualize the target, but only indicates a position on a radar-like screen.

13. **Chaff Dispenser:** This system is identical to those mentioned in the Triax & the NGR book, but it should be further stated that this chaff dispenser, to have any effect on modern missiles, would also have to thwart the optical imprint portion of the guidance systems. It mentions in the book that “a cloud of chaff and other obtrusive particles” are dispensed. I suggest that the “other obtrusive particles” are in fact magnesium dust that ignites when it hits air, creating a white hot flash soon after jettisoning from the aircraft. While the heat itself would do little, the polarized lenses of the optical imprint portion of the missile would temporarily darken, giving the aircraft a chance to move out of the missile’s narrow line of sight, and therefore, escaping.

Rifts® Air Combat Summary

This article wound up to being a LOT longer than I had intended, but I feel it was well worth it. Many of these rules were not so well defined when we ran our Skies Over Tolkeen campaign, but the changes are definitely an improvement. Hopefully, this article will bring a new age, and degree of danger, to aerial combat in *Rifts*®.

I would also like to say thank you to all of the members of the Red River Valley Gaming Group who took part in the Skies Over Tolkeen campaign: Jan Knoell, Tony May, Angelina May, & Dan Beaton. Without your encouragement and approval of the campaign, these rules never would have seen the light of day. Also, I would like to say a word of thanks to Mike “Flakbait” Booth, whose assistance and editing expertise were essential to bringing this all together. Thanks again, and Happy Hunting!

- Edward A. May a.k.a. SirTenzan, July 20, 2005

The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter Thirty-Three

Traveling Music

By James M.G. Cannon

Two days into the trip south, the giants showed up.

Caleb thought the blue demons, the Brodkil, who had ambushed him at Mt. Rushmore qualified as giants, but as with so many things concerning this strange post-apocalyptic Earth, he was off base.

The Dakota hills were long behind them and the great plains of America’s Midwest opened up before them as they rode south and west. Hart, the leader of the band of mercenary adventurers with whom Caleb had joined, told him they were heading for somewhere called the Pecos Empire, and that they would have to be wary of Coalition patrols as well as the usual nasties from the Rifts. Caleb didn’t know what any of that meant. Though born on Earth, he had left it for the stars in the summer of 1968, and things had changed considerably while he was gone.

In snippets on the trail, Hart and the others clued Caleb in to what had happened. While he learned about this wild new Earth, he also watched and observed his new companions to learn about them. This was a harsh world, and the people in it were forced to be harsh as well. With demons and vampires and worse stalking the globe, humanity had to adapt to survive. Technology gave them a way to level the playing field against supernatural opponents, but technology could only take a person so far.

Hart was the leader, a tall, rawboned Amerind with shoulder length hair and an inscrutable gaze. He had a laconic, easy manner and seemed entirely unruffled by anything, no matter how outlandish or insane it might be. Caleb couldn’t tell if it was an act, or some kind of supernatural skill. But even when the giants showed up, Hart didn’t curse or sigh or mutter under his breath, just accepted the event as the natural state of affairs and proceeded from there.

The big scary guy in the heavy armor with the death’s head theme, mini-missile launch tubes bristling from his back like the spines on a porcupine and a huge plasma ejector hanging off his belt, wasn’t half so dangerous as Hart. Bill Wagner was a cyborg, and built for destruction, but the certain way he carried himself and interacted with the others – particularly the girl – told Caleb that Bill’s lost humanity had to be taken away from him along with his limbs and most of his vital organs. Inside that tin shell was a man, psychologically brittle due to his trauma, but a man nonetheless. Hart, on the other hand, had carefully and consciously ground away at his own humanity until only the barest thread remained. Listening to Hart talk about the birth of the Rifts and the rise of the Coalition, it was plain to see that being cold and unforgiving was the only way Hart knew how to survive.

The Soothsayer was the group’s wizard, a strange fellow wrapped up in rags and robes and fetishes, his face and head hidden behind a horned helmet. Runes and sigils were carved or painted onto nearly every exposed surface, and his amulets and bits of gris-gris and what have you jingled with his every movement. The Soothsayer kept to himself mostly, muttered strange

sayings and intimated that because of his magical skill and wisdom, he knew all sorts of secret things and the real way the world worked. Yet he was pretty flummoxed when the giants appeared.

The most normal seeming member of the troop was Stephanie Sawyer, a slip of a girl barely out of her teens, with a shock of red hair and two of the bluest eyes Caleb had ever seen. She had a decent sense of humor, called Hart "Sarge," and flirted with Bill constantly. But the Soothsayer derisively called her "Mind Melter," and there was something decidedly odd about the faraway look she got in her eyes from time to time. Caleb hoped she wasn't poking around in his brain without his knowledge.

The strangest of their number, even odder than the Soothsayer, was referred to as the Marshal by everyone in the group. He was a demented character, some strange mix of John Wayne, Dudley Doright, and Curly Howard. The Marshal dressed like a cowboy, had modified his Predator X-10 power armor to look like a cowboy, and talked like Roy Rogers jacked up on all sorts of illegal substances. That was weird enough, but the Marshal's first words to Caleb were, "Are you a penguin?" to which Caleb had to reply with a bemused "no." That was apparently the right thing to say, because they'd been "pardners" ever since. Hart informed Caleb that the Marshal was a Crazy – not just crazy, but part of a whole clan of like-minded folk who had traded in their sanity for nanotech brain implants that provided them with superhuman abilities.

Caleb had seen some strange and wonderful things in his lifetime. He had survived a supernova, fought a billion year old weapon of mass destruction, flown in space under his own power, he'd fallen down a black hole, and once he even saw the Norse god Thor driving a chariot through space and having a fight with a fleet of starships. But his return to Earth proved to him that the universe outside his former back door was stranger still by far than anything he'd experienced in the Three Galaxies.

The sad thing was that the most reassuring and normal part of this whole strange trip turned out to be Geryon. The Kreeghor scientist and admiral who had designed and built a weapon capable of generating black holes, who had threatened the Three Galaxies with cosmic genocide, was the tiny bit of sanity amidst all the madness. Because, at the end of the day, Geryon was a known quantity. Caleb knew what Geryon was all about, what he stood for, what he was capable of perpetrating. These other people, who looked human and sounded nothing of the sort, just kept rattling Caleb's cage.

For example:

"So this Coalition," Caleb asked on the morning of the second day, "which we're avoiding as much as possible, is the very same force that you say represents humanity's last best hope?" He rode behind Hart, astride the taller man's hover bike, his arms held lightly around Hart's armored torso. Geryon was lashed to the spare bike while the Marshal piloted his mech high in the sky, ostensibly to keep an eye out for any threats on the ground.

"Yes," Hart agreed. "But it's not that simple."

"It never is," Caleb said. He had disdained the spare suit of armor the mercenaries had offered him, but he had his own

comm unit. It only took a little adjustment to be able to key into Hart's helmet radio. Caleb liked to feel the wind in his hair and stinging his cheeks. "You guys are outlaws, right?"

"Any free thinking individual is an outlaw in the Coalition. Anyone who believes in free will, self determination, or the possibility that Karl Prosek doesn't have all the answers is labeled a terrorist. They raise sheep there, but sheep with fangs. The Coalition believes in war, in slaughtering their foes to the last man, and exterminating all foreign life and its influence on Earth. To do that requires total obedience and subservience from the populace, willing or otherwise."

It was the note of admiration in Hart's voice that gave Caleb the heebie-jeebies. His father had been a paratrooper in World War II. Caleb could recognize Nazis when he heard one, and these Coalition guys sounded like goose-stepping freaks to him. "You sound like you think that's a good plan."

"It is. You've not been here long, Caleb Vulcan. You don't know what this world is like. Every day is a struggle for survival. Alien gods walk the landscape turning people inside out with a wave of their hands. Brodkil and worse hunt and eat anything on two legs, four legs, ten legs. Strange flora is altering the environment irrevocably. There are legions of undead beyond the Rio Grande. And let us not speak of Atlantis. No, Caleb, if humanity is to survive in this twilight world, then it needs men like Karl Prosek to keep the species alive."

"Then why is it that you and Wagner are on the run from them?"

Hart chuckled. It was a dry sound. "What's good for the species isn't necessarily good for the individual. I don't know if I'll survive the day, let alone leave a legacy for unborn generations. I can't think or plan or live like that. I need freedom. I need the horizon open before me and the wind in my hair. It is a selfish attitude, but one I can't seem to break. I know that I am not a great person. I am not the savior of an entire civilization or species. I am but one man, and —"

Hart was interrupted as the Marshal squawked in everyone's ears. "Break right hard, pardners! There's a haze dead ahead that my sensors can't read and I barely saw with my own two peepers!"

Without a word, Hart spun his bike right and sped west. Caleb looked to their left and squinted. There was a kind of shimmer to the air, he decided, but that could easily have been from the sun as from anything else. Then there was a thunderous boom and Hart's hover bike disintegrated out from under them. The scout would have slammed into the ground at 70 mph but Caleb's Forge enhanced reflexes enabled him to grab Hart and leap into the air in one smooth movement.

Hart's bike left a black smear across the grass as it blew apart, still hurtling west.

The shimmer dropped like a curtain, and there were the giants. Six of them stood in a semi-circle around a much larger figure. The smaller ones were hairless, with stony skin and dead eyes. They wore crude animal skins and carried spears and clubs, and though easily ten feet tall or more, each sat astride a huge beast that looked like some kind of funhouse mix of buffalo and dinosaur. They grinned as the illusion dropped, and Caleb thought he saw wisps of smoke coming off their teeth.



The one in the middle stood nearly twice as tall as the others, clad in form fitting red scaled armor that included a helmet shaped like a dragon's skull. A gigantic, two-handed sword hung across the giant's back, and he held some kind of howitzer in one meaty paw. He, too, was grinning, but it looked like he had a double row of teeth in his massive jaw.

"Well, qrun me," Caleb muttered.

Hart slipped out of Caleb's grasp and tumbled agilely to the grass. The rifle slung across his back was in his hands within the same movement, and a half dozen blasts of blue light flashed from the barrel and hit one of the stony giants dead center. The giant reeled but did not fall.

The other mercenaries circled around on their bikes, grasping for weapons while the giants kicked at their mounts and surged forward.

Caleb heard a popping sound and saw a number of missiles fire from the mounts on Wagner's back. They slammed into another of the stony giants and he tumbled from his mount with a cry, body shattered and bleeding. The beast tore off in another direction, itself bloody and smoking.

Sawyer burst into flames and started throwing fireballs at the giants, while the Soothsayer began to chant and wave his hands in the air, his fetishes jangling loudly. Magical lines of force formed around him. Geryon clenched his teeth and tried once again to break free from the megasteel bonds keeping him bound to the spare hover bike. He was a sitting duck.

Caleb was distracted momentarily, concerned about his prisoner. The howitzer boomed a second time, and a slug the size of a dinner plate slammed into Caleb's chest. He crashed to the ground with a bone jarring bounce. He lay there for a long moment, staring up into a stark blue and cloudless sky. This wasn't how he imagined returning home. Not by a long shot. With a sigh, Caleb summoned his armor and rose to his feet.

The giant with the gun aimed his cannon in Wagner's direction, but noticed Caleb standing and now clad in shining metal armor. With a frown, he aimed the gun at Caleb again.

Caleb unleashed a full blast of his eyebeams. The whole field flashed red for a brief second, and the giant staggered backwards a half-step. Caleb was already in the air, launching himself at the giant, fists flying. The giant dropped his hand cannon and tried to swipe at Caleb in the air, but the Knight was too agile. Caleb wasn't going to allow the giant to tag him again. His chest still stung from the shell.

Then Caleb zigged when he should have zagged, and the giant's massive fist sent him spinning through the air, huge knuckle-dents in his breastplate. Caleb tasted blood. He grimaced and loosed another blast from his eyes, but by then the giant was able to unsheathe the two-hander and somehow deflected the beam.

This was just not his day. The mercenaries seemed to be holding their own against the stone giants, but the giants appeared to be able to spit ghostly figures from their mouths which swirled around the mercs. The Soothsayer's shield was the only thing that seemed proof against them. Hart shouted orders across the commlink, desperately trying to get the Soothsayer to banish the ghost-creatures while urging the others to keep away from them as much as possible. Blue beams of light crisscrossed the air, and Wagner's heavy gun spat plasma at them, but nothing could connect.

Then with an ear-splitting "YEEE-HAAAA!!!" the Marshal came buzzing in out of the sky, guns blazing. Yellow bolts of light forced the mounted giants to scatter, and more than a few were hit by the Marshal's barrage. Another of the mounts died horribly as the Marshal's missiles slammed into it.

Then the giant's two-handed blade came flashing towards Caleb and he was forced to return his attention to his own fight. He just managed to evade getting decapitated by the blade, but the point took a chunk off the crest of his helm and sent him spinning wildly again.

Caleb shot up and away, putting distance between himself and his adversary. He was going about this whole thing the

wrong way, letting his opponent dictate the fight. He could almost hear Lothar in his head, "Sloppy work, pup."

The giant eyed him with a shrewd look on his face, then leaned down and groped for his hand cannon. Caleb held out one of his own hands, and a red bar formed there that quickly coalesced into the massive sledgehammer that was his signature weapon. He spun the hammer lazily in his hand and noted the giant's narrowed eyes. He might have looked crude and stupid, but it was clear the giant was intelligent enough to be wary of any new threat. Almost certainly, Caleb was the first Cosmo-Knight the giant had ever encountered, but he was holding his own quite nicely.

It was just as well. Without him to keep the giant busy, he had little hope that the mercenary band would have survived this encounter. The stone giants looked atavistic and disorganized, and despite their size and numbers, the mercs were doing well against them, especially now that the Marshal had joined the fray. The guy with the sword was the brains of the operation, and it was probably him who had designed the ambush, although it didn't look like he had any magical aptitude. Must have been the stone giants that threw up the screen.

The giant had his gun in hand again, and raised it quickly to squeeze off a round. As he did so, Caleb shifted his stance slightly, cradling the hammer against his right shoulder like a Louisville slugger. The shell buzzed towards him at the speed of sound, and Caleb met it. Forge-born reflexes enabled him to crack the shell with the face of his hammer and send it hurtling back in the direction from which it had come. The giant was not so quick. He crashed to the ground with a thunderous clamor as his attack rebounded into him.

Caleb pressed his advantage. His eyebeams flashed again, and at the same time he threw the hammer. The energy blast caught the giant in the head, shattering his dragon skull helm and flash burning the flesh beneath. The hammer struck the giant's midsection with all the force of a runaway train.

The giant roared and somehow found his feet. The gun was discarded, but he hefted his huge two handed sword easily. "Come down here and fight me!" the giant shouted.

Caleb was momentarily surprised. He didn't expect the giant to speak English, and yet now that it had, he couldn't think of a plausible reason why it shouldn't.

The other battle appeared to have paused. The Soothsayer's magic was keeping the ghosts at bay, while the mercenaries were cutting the stone giants to pieces with energy weapons and blasts of psionic flame. More than half of the stone giant force lay dead or dying, their mounts largely scattered. Wagner's heavy armor was slightly dented from a giant's club, but neither Sawyer nor Hart appeared to have been touched at all. But both sides looked up at the giant's exclamation, and now eyed the two larger-than-life combatants who faced off across the grass.

Caleb slowly drew closer to the giant, careful to stay out of the range of his sword arm, and ready to shoot backwards should the creature lunge. "Look," he shouted, "you're beaten. There's no shame in that. Throw down your arms and surrender – all of you – or we'll be forced to kill you."

The giant laughed, a harsh sound. "I am Skullcrusher of the Pogtal, and I do not surrender to flying tin men! Kill me if you dare, but know that I will grind your bones between my teeth, in this life or the next!"

Caleb sighed. They never take the easy way. He shot forward at full speed, hoping that he moved too quickly for the giant to follow, and cut into him with his eyebeams. He traced a burning furrow across the giant's chest and then swung his hammer up with all his strength, connecting with the giant's chin. Bone shattered and flesh split, and a half-dozen teeth sprayed out of the giant's mouth. Then Caleb was up and over the giant's head, swooping around behind him to blast him again.

Despite his wounds, the giant spun around, swinging his huge sword in a too short arc that Caleb easily avoided. Excellent at medium range, the blade was simply too massive to be of much use with Caleb so close to him. The eyebeams flashed again and once more the giant plummeted to the ground. This time he would not be getting up.

Caleb alighted on the ground and surveyed the carnage. The stone giants scrambled onto what mounts remained and fled, harried by shots from Wagner and the Marshal. The Soothsayer stopped his chanting and the field around him gradually faded.

Hart approached Caleb cautiously, the way a man would approach a dog that might have rabies. He held his rifle against his shoulder, the barrel pointed at the ground. Caleb could tell by the set of Hart's shoulders that the scout would have the weapon aimed between Caleb's eyes within a heartbeat. Not that lasers were any proof against a Knight of the Forge, but Hart didn't know that.

"What are you?" Hart finally asked. His face was inscrutable beneath his helmet, but for the first time Caleb thought he heard some kind of emotion in Hart's voice. It sounded like fear.

Caleb sighed. He dispelled his armor and leaned on his hammer like a cane. He offered Hart a lopsided and hopefully friendly looking grin. "I'm the Coalition's worst nightmare. I'm an American born superhero who doesn't take any guff." He straightened up. "You okay, Hart? Any of your people hurt?"

"Amazingly, no. The Soothsayer kept the evil spirits from us – and you kept the dragonslayer from wiping us out. My. . . thanks."

Caleb shrugged. "Any time. But maybe we shouldn't linger here." Hart nodded in agreement. In moments, the band was mounted and riding again. Hart took the spare bike, since his was destroyed, leaving Caleb to fly on his own. Somehow, he felt better that way.

He didn't like this place. Not at all.

* * *

On the pastoral world of Adumar, deep within the Consortium of Civilized Worlds, early evening settled around the tiny hamlet of Artex. It was a community founded by a group called Ludmerites, who disdained a high level of technology in favor of a more primitive lifestyle. They herded sheep, worked farms, and somehow survived without indoor plumbing or trideo access. But recently their idyllic existence had been destroyed by a servant of the Splugorth, which had somehow abducted the entire town.

The intergalactic wizard and troubleshooter Doctor Abbot, visiting Adumar at the time, was asked to investigate. It was he who had correctly divined the nature of the town's disappearance, and it was he who suggested the radical and dangerous plan to rescue them.

Eobard Grimley and China Perlman, the officials in charge of the investigation, now stood in the middle of the broad meadow that lay in the center of the town. Perlman puffed irritably on a nic stick that hung from between her lips. "I don't like this, Grimley," she said.

Grimley shrugged and offered her a tentative smile. "I realize it's unorthodox, but it doesn't look like we have another choice."

Perlman shot him a glare. "We have foreign soldiers on Adumar soil, and a wizard of unknown loyalty about to open up a Rift that he claims will open a conduit to the Splugorth! This isn't unorthodox, it's insane!"

Grimley forced a chuckle. "You make it sound a lot worse than it really is." Perlman gritted her teeth around her nic stick.

On the other side of the clearing stood the wizard in question, Doctor Abbot. In the gathering gloom, his shadowy form was nearly invisible. Only the battered trenchcoat and fedora he wore gave him definition. And the orange eyes that glimmered beneath the hat brim. Beside him stood a beautiful woman with green skin and blue hair, a near human in monkish clothes that could not hide her lithe, athletic body. Her name was Arwen of the Celestial Brotherhood.

"So are we going to do this, Doc?" Arwen asked.

Abbot nodded. "In a moment, my dear. One does not open Rifts lightly. Particularly when they lead to where I think this one will."

"You keep saying stuff like that, I might actually start to get nervous."

Abbot's eyes twinkled, his version of a smile. "One of these days, Arwen, you will meet a foe that you cannot defeat through strength of arms."

Arwen grinned. "Always up for a challenge, Doc."

Abbot shook his head. The girl was incorrigible. He just hoped she never did encounter something beyond her abilities. He thought of Caleb at that moment, whom he had tried to locate without success. Abbot's spells should have found the Knight if he was anywhere in the Three Galaxies. If he was alive, at least. Abbot feared the young man might be gone forever. That would be a crippling blow, especially so soon after losing Lothar.

Caleb would be missed, and Abbot hoped he was alright, but he had to admit that the Knight wasn't necessarily needed. Kassiopaea Acherean had brought with her a squad of fellow Undead Slayers, Atlanteans and members of Clan Acherean all. Joriel, the winged Celestine, had come as well. With that kind of firepower, Abbot trusted that they would be able to handle whatever lay on the other side of the Rift. The Atlanteans were all clad in blue-black battle armor incised with Atlantean runes and protective spells. Each of them was armed with guns and blades, and their armor and clothes were cut in such a way as to give easy access to their tattoos.

As Abbot examined them, Kassy crossed the meadow towards him. Her long black hair was tied back from her face. Her blue eyes were cold, her lips a grim line. "When will you be ready, Abbot?"

"Feeling antsy, too, huh?" Arwen said. Kassy ignored the younger girl, who simply shrugged and looked away.

"In a few moments," Abbot told Kassy. "I'm waiting for the stars to align properly and the ley lines to swell to the right proportion."

"We're ready when you are. Whatever is waiting for us on the other side is in for a surprise."

Abbot saw Perlman begin to approach and decided to head her off. "Kassy, would you deal with the angry federal agent while I begin the ceremony?" Kassy arched an eyebrow but headed towards Perlman with a purposeful stride.

Abbot produced his cane and stepped into the middle of the meadow. He reached out with his senses and felt the natural magical power of Adumar beginning to swell. It took the merest bit of concentration for Abbot to begin drawing that power into himself. His body began to grow darker and darker, his eyes brighter and brighter. Then at last he called out in a strong voice seven words in a secret tongue and smote the ground with his cane.

Space and time split open. A line of shimmering light opened in the air as a phantom wind appeared. Abbot's coat snapped as the wind increased and the light grew in intensity. The air around the light rippled and a crack in reality formed. It widened with each passing second. A silver sheen appeared where the gap showed, blocking the view of whatever lay on the other side. The space grew larger and wider, reaching the size of a window, and then a door, and finally matching the size of a gate. The mirror-like sheen reflected the gathering group on the meadow, while the white light gave them all a glow.

When Abbot judged that the Rift had reached the size he wished for, he gestured for Kassy to lead her force through. He waited for Arwen to enter the Rift before he himself followed. He stepped into his own reflection, felt his body melt into the shimmering surface of the Rift, and expand across the furthest reaches of the cosmos. The next step took him out of the Rift, to the other side, and his mind and body snapped back into place as his foot fell.

Abbot found stone cobbles beneath his feet and a dark sky overhead. Arcs of red lightning split the night. Thunder echoed across the clouds. The air smelled of ozone and decay.

The company stood on a broad plaza, surrounded by cyclopean buildings fashioned from huge blocks of basalt. Strange figures and signs were carved into the rock, nightmarish and lewd. As the Rift closed behind them and the light died, the Atlanteans spread out and secured the plaza, weapons at the ready. Abbot doubted they would need them just yet. He could sense nothing alive anywhere around them, no living pulse of psychic energy. Even the land felt dead.

Other than the distant peal of thunder and the scrape of Atlantean boots across the cobbles, there was no sound.

Arwen stood beside Abbot, bouncing on the balls of her feet. "Where are we?" she said in a hushed tone. It was unlike her to be so affected by a place, and Abbot took note.

"I don't know," Abbot said. "But I do not sense the Splugorth or their servants anywhere nearby. Which is odd."

"Nothing to hit," Arwen said. "What a let down."

Kassy approached across the plaza, moving quickly and quietly. "This place is clean. Too clean. I don't like this, Abbot. Are you sure the trail led this way?"

“Yes, of course. I would hardly have brought you here otherwise.”

Kassy frowned. “I know. I just. . . this place makes me uneasy.”

“I don’t think we’ll be here long,” Abbot said. “I suspect the Shoggoth used this place as a staging point. If you’re certain we’re quite alone, I can begin sussing out the next stage of our journey.”

“Okay,” Kassy said. “You’re the expert.” She holstered her pistol and clicked the comm at her collar. “Stay alert everyone. I have a bad feeling, but with any luck we’ll be leaving soon.”

Kassy and Arwen stepped aside and Abbot began to walk carefully around the plaza. He searched for the psychic spoor of the Shoggoth, or the echo of any other Rifts that might have opened here in the last few days. He tip-tapped his cane along the stones, his eyes and more subtle senses searching for clues.

Abbot heard a skittering sound to his left and looked sharply. There was nothing there but shadow. Even to his eyes, all he could see was darkness. That was impossible. Composed of shadowstuff himself, there was no darkness his eyes could not penetrate. He turned to shout a warning to Kassy and the others, but whatever had made the skittering noise moved much faster by far. Abbot felt a body slam into him and knock him to the ground. His cane flew from his hands as sharp claws dug into his shoulders.

Abbot twisted and thrashed, but he could not dislodge his attacker. Suddenly a violet glow fell upon them both, and the weight of his attacker disappeared. Abbot scrambled to his feet and found Arwen standing beside him, suffused in the purple light of her personal force field. His attacker lay on the ground, a pale and broken thing with emaciated limbs and glimmering red eyes. The creature contorted and found its feet, rising up with jerky, spider-like movements. When it was erect, Abbot saw blood-flecked foam around the creature’s mouth, and a lolling pink tongue that curled around enlarged canines.

“Oh no,” he said.

Arwen didn’t recognize it, but he heard shouts of alarm from the Atlanteans spread across the plaza. More of the creatures began to appear, almost materializing out of the darkness, swarming at the edges of the plaza, climbing along the ridges of the huge buildings. They were humanoid, pale with the hue of death, red-eyed and quick.

Vampires. Hundreds of them. Perhaps thousands.

The Shoggoth had laid a neat trap for whomever tried to follow it, using one of the vampire worlds as a stopping off point. The undead would have no interest in the Shoggoth, even if the Splugorth and the Vampire Intelligences were ancient enemies. But Abbot and his friends were prey of a different sort.

The vampires eyed the interlopers, snarling and sniffing at them, beginning to edge closer. In a moment, the vampires would rush them and it would all be over.

Then Abbot felt the flare of magic brought to life, and knew the Atlanteans had activated their tattoos. Thirteen Undead Slayers, ancient foes of the vampires in their own right, prepared for battle. Joriel’s wings flapped lazily as the Celestine took to the air and surveyed the vampires, the blue white glow of his psychic weapon illuminating his grim visage. Arwen’s force field thrummed with energy, and the young monk had a wild look in her eye.

Abbot held his right hand out and his cane snapped into his palm. A bolt of crimson lightning flashed across the square, showing the starving vampires in all their terrifying numbers. Abbot wished the storm were a normal one, that rain might begin to fall, and yet knew somehow that it would never come.

He summoned up the magic deep within his core, and readied himself for the fight of his life.

The vampires charged.

Palladium Books® Inc.



Beyond the Supernatural™ Role-Playing Game, Second Edition

BTS-2 has all the makings of a smash hit role-playing game. We haven't seen anticipation for a new game like this since *Rifts*®.

The setting is our modern world, today.

The heroes – ordinary people and those with the gift of paranormal abilities. Characters drawn into the realm of the supernatural because of their “gifts” or because they have suffered in the clutches of supernatural terror and have chosen to fight back.

Beyond the Supernatural™ is different, realistic, challenging and cutting-edge.

- Extensive background and lush setting.
- 14 Psychic Character Classes (P.C.C.s), including the Autistic Psychic Savant, Diviner, Fire Walker, Ghost Hunter, Latent Psychic, Nega-Psychic, Physical Psychic, Psi-Mechanic, Psychic Sensitive and Ordinary People ready to take a stand.
- 42 occupations, including the Professional Psychic and Psychic Investigator.
- More than 100 psychic abilities, plus special P.C.C. powers.
- The Lazlo Society and Lazlo Agency.
- Victor Lazlo (and others) quoted extensively.
- Creatures of darkness, Entities and other fiends.
- Easy to learn and fast playing rules get you started with a bang.
- Fast modern combat. Perception Rolls.
- Plausible powers, plausible setting and unique characters.
- Delightfully weird and wicked supernatural horrors.
- A role-playing game of subtlety, investigation, horror and suspense.
- \$24.95 retail; 256 pages, written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Cat. No. 700 – Available now.

Coming for BTS-2

Tome Grotesque™ Sourcebook: More than a book of monsters, *Tome Grotesque*™ will present gruesome Supernatural Predators, the most vile of demonic Pranksters, and Ancient Evil as you've never imagined it before. Insidious forces of evil, manipulating human pawns and empowering evil humans from the shadows.

- Demonic beings great and small.
- Demonic psychic abilities and magic.
- Cults, dark forces and adventure ideas galore.
- Final page count not yet determined; 160-192 pages.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Cat. No. 702.

Arcanum™ Sourcebook presents the secrets of magic, ley lines, places of power, ancient artifacts, magic wielding player characters and NPC villains (Necromancers and others). Magic, you see, is a force that can be used for good or evil.

- The Arcanist and other practitioners of magic.
- Magic spells specifically designed for the BTS world.
- Magic rituals and means of supernatural protection.
- Magic weapons, charms and curses.
- Final page count not yet determined; 160-192 pages.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Todd Yoho.
- Cat. No. 703.

Coming for Rifts®

Rifts® *Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp*™ – the name says it all.

Rifts® *Arzno*™ – Mercenaries and vampires.

Other Palladium RPGs

Nightbane® – A unique game of horror and monstrous heroes.

Rifts® – Palladium's popular science fiction game where players are limited only by their imaginations. Film rights optioned for a live action, Jerry Bruckheimer movie, and *Rifts*® *Promise of Power*™, the first *Rifts*® videogame ever, coming Summer 2005 for the N-Gage game deck.

Rifts® *Chaos Earth*™ – The end of the world, *Rifts*® style.

Splicers™ – A new, gritty sf game of war, insanity and strange organic weapons and technology.

Heroes Unlimited™ – Comic book style heroes and action adventure.

Ninjas & Superspies™ – Martial arts characters and espionage.

After the Bomb® – Mutant animals and global holocaust.

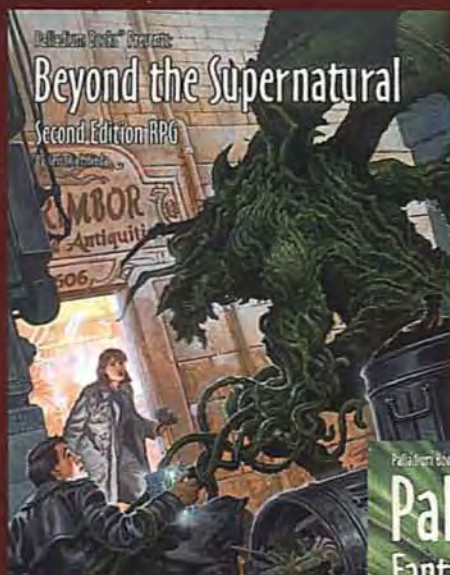
Palladium Fantasy RPG® – A unique fantasy realm of humans and non-human characters, magic and ancient secrets.

And more.

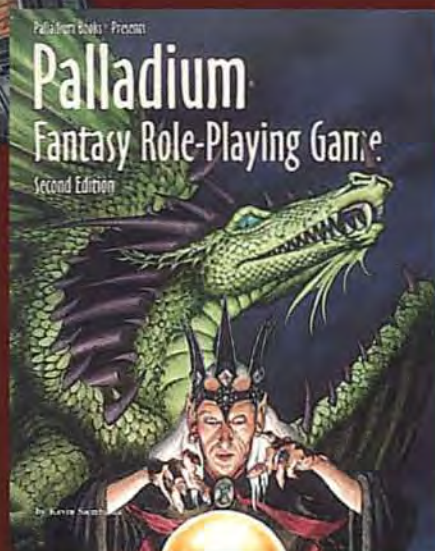


Contact Kathy at Palladium Books® – 12455 Universal Drive – Taylor, MI 48180 – orders@palladiumbooks.com – (734) 946-1156 to get more information, our latest catalog, or help getting our products.

© 2005 Palladium Books Inc. All rights reserved, worldwide. *Rifts*®, *Megaverse*®, *The Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, *After the Bomb*®, and *Phase World*® are Registered Trademarks owned and licensed by Palladium Books Inc. *Beyond the Supernatural* and all other names, titles and slogans are also trademarks of Palladium Books Inc. All rights reserved.



At stores
everywhere



Also from Palladium Books®

Heroes Unlimited™ RPG

- Ever imagine being a superhero? Be one.
- Create any type of hero imaginable.
- Mutants, aliens, super-soldiers, cyborgs, & more.
- More than 100 super abilities plus sub-powers.
- More than 100 magic spells and 40+ psionic powers.
- 352 pages of unlimited possibilities.

Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG

- 14 O.C.C.s from psychics to ordinary people.
- 100+ psychic abilities and core rules.
- A handful of creatures of darkness to get started.
- World and background information, adventure ideas.
- 256 pages. An ongoing series.

Palladium Fantasy RPG®

- Unique and fun fantasy setting.
- Play humans or nonhumans: Wolfen, Changelings, etc.
- 300+ magic spells, plus wards, rune weapons & more.
- Mind Mage and 80 psionic abilities.
- Giants, Demons, Faerie Folk & more.
- 352 pages of adventure.

Other Palladium RPGs

Rifts® Chaos Earth™
Rifts®
Splicers™
Nightbane®
Phase World®
Ninjas & Superspies™
After the Bomb® (mutants)
Mechanoid Invasion®

The Rifter® Number Thirty-Three

The Rifter® is a vehicle to numerous Palladium role-playing worlds. It is a tool for Game Masters and players alike. A place to showcase new talent and exchange ideas for the entire Palladium Megaverse®. Every issue, unique and informative.

Issue number 33 presents optional new aircraft combat rules and D-Bees for Rifts®, new weapons and gizmos for Heroes Unlimited™, and adventure for Palladium Fantasy®. Plus the latest news, Palladium's 2006 product release schedule, our 25 year anniversary celebration, coming attractions, and more. Unleash your imagination.

- Palladium Fantasy RPG® – Legacy of Blood, history, magic, Paleologist O.C.C. and secrets best left undiscovered.
- Heroes Unlimited™ – S.C.R.E.T., its origins, operations, gear, new O.C.C.s and adventures.
- Rifts® – new D-Bees of the Eastern Wilderness; 'nuff said.
- Rifts® – Aircraft combat – optional rules.
- Phase World®: The Hammer of the Forge™.
- Palladium Open House, news and happenings.
- Product schedule and descriptions.
- 96 pages of fun and ideas!

A Megaverse® of Adventure
– limited only by your imagination™

\$9.95

Cat. No. 133

ISBN 157457-159-1

ISBN 1-57457-159-1



5 0995



9 781574 571592