

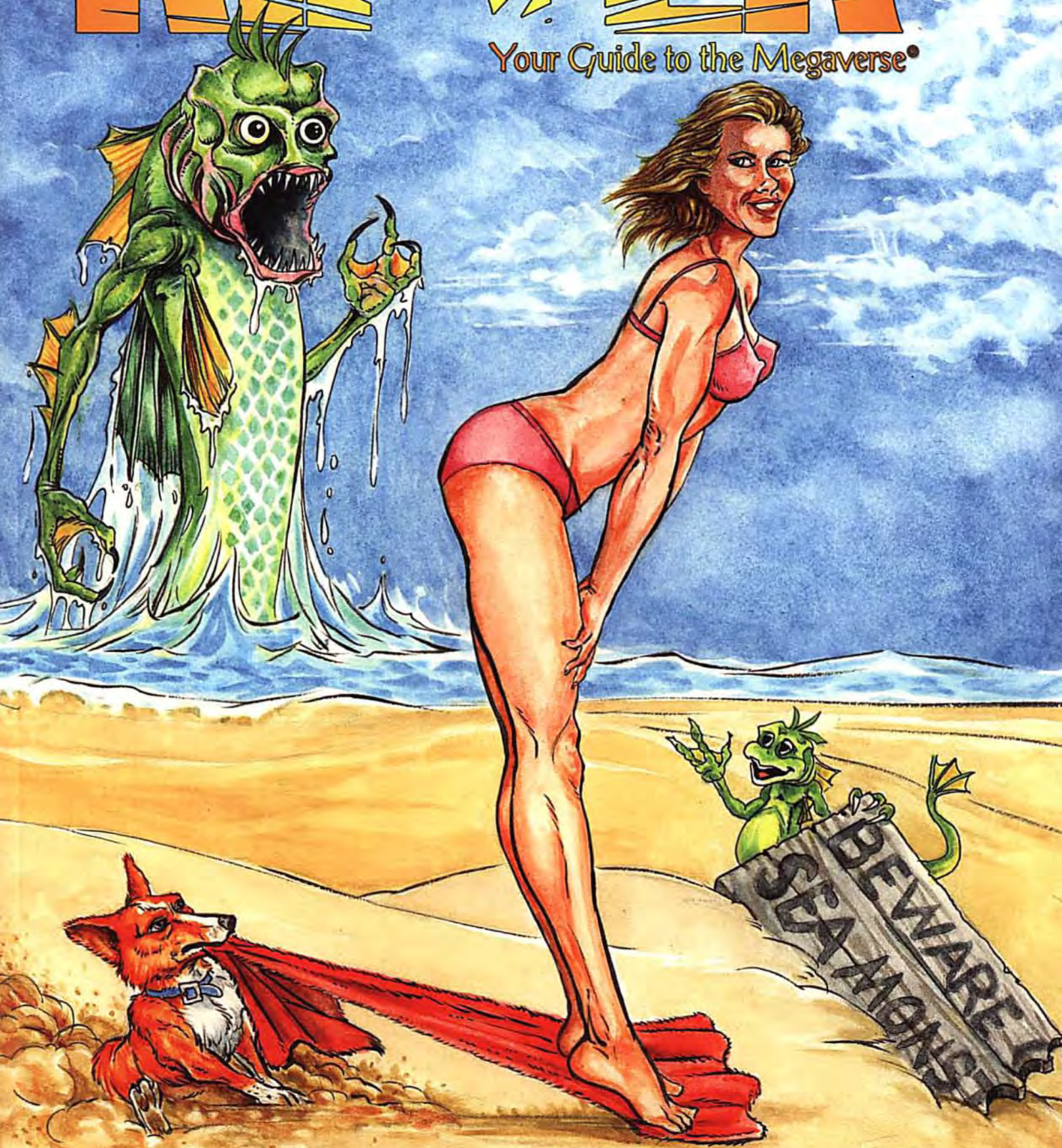
Palladium Books® Presents:

Super Summer Swimsuit Issue

THE

RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®



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The Rifter® Number 35

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing – July, 2006

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THE RIFTER #35

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Special Thanks to Wayne Breaux Jr. who suggested doing a swimsuit issue, Johnny Z for his center spread pinup page, Larry Elmore, David Martin, Jeff Easley, Chris Bourassa, and all our pinup page artists for their contributions (we paid 'em dirt, so this was a work of love and a favor to Palladium), to our other writers and artists, and to the Palladium guys for embarrassing themselves in the name of fun. Our apologies to anybody who got accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

Contents – The Rifter® #35 – July, 2006

Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Publisher, Kevin Siembieda, talks about Palladium's recent crisis, how we're doing and how you, our fans, can help.

Artwork by Kent Burles. Originally done for *Rifts*® *Madhaven*™, but it never made it into that book. We liked it here, because it seemed to us that the submarine is coming out of the darkness and ruins and into the light and clear sailing.

Page 8 – Palladium News

The *Megaversal Ambassador* program is a way for Palladium fans, gamers and especially Game Masters to network, play and meet new gamers.

Kevin Siembieda and The Rifter's very own, Wayne Smith, are hitting more conventions and trade shows than usual this year. Those of you in the *New York/New Jersey* area can join us at *Ubercon VIII* in October. All the info is found on page 10. And start planning to come on up for Palladium's second, three days of fun and gaming at the *Palladium Open House Two*, May 4-6, 2007.

Page 11 – Coming Attractions

Palladium 25 Year Anniversary items, T-shirts and upcoming book releases through 2006 plus a peek at things to come in 2007.

Rifts® *Minion War*™ series is going to be big. It starts with the two Dimension Books that map and describe Hades and Dyval, the Hells of demons and Deevils. The two infernal realms go to war and their activities spill into *Phase World*®, the *Three Galaxies*™, *Heroes Unlimited*™ and *Rifts Earth*.

A book of John Zeleznik's art for Palladium Books coming this Fall. The perfect Christmas gift. Read about it on page 13.

Warpath: Urban Jungle™ is going to be the new RPG that everyone is talking about. Read about it here, on page 16.

Page 17 – Christmas in July – Special Offer

This is a rare and special opportunity you diehard fans won't want to miss. (Kevin tells us he's putting aside a few sets of artwork and prints for mail order folks, so don't think you are out of luck if you didn't see this sooner.)

Page 20 – Palladium Books®

2006 Swimsuit Spectacular!

The *Rifter*® #35 makes history as the *first* swimsuit issue ever done for the *role-playing game industry*.

37+ pinup pages of bathing beauties (well, mostly beauties) from across the *Palladium Megaverse*®!

We tried to have our artists represent every one of Palladium's game line and settings. As far as I know, we've pretty much done that, the only exceptions being licensed properties.

The *Rifter* #35 is destined to become an instant collector's item. So sit back, read the source material that follows, and enjoy the "swimsuit" pics in this very special issue. Consider it our gift to you.

The idea to do a swimsuit issue is the brainchild of Wayne Breaux Jr. who has been trying to get us to do one since *The Rifter*® first came out! Well Mr. Breaux, better late than never. Great idea. It was a blast to do and we hope you and our fans enjoy it as much as we did. Our thanks to all the artists who contributed to this special issue.

Page 1 – The opening illustration to this issue is a reprint we just had to include. Pencils by *Wayne Breaux Jr.*, inks by *Scott Johnson*.

Page 21 – *David Martin* is the artist behind this great illustration. It is one of the *Palladium staff's* favorites. It could depict a moment from *Palladium Fantasy*®, *Rifts*®, or the *Three Galaxies*™.

Page 22 – This adorable illustration comes from *Palladium Pal*, *Larry Elmore*, and represents *After the Bomb*® and everybody's favorite mutant animals.

Page 23 – *Jeffrey Russell's* *Ley Line Walker* never looked more alluring (okay, in a menacing kinda way); *Rifts*®.

Page 24 – *Comfort Deborah Love* depicts an undead maiden having fun with a human visitor at one of the *Blood Pools* in the *Vampire Kingdoms*; *Rifts*®.

Page 25 – *Allen Manning* gives us a lovely Asian master of martial arts to represent *Ninjas & Superspies*™.

Page 26 – *Ramon Perez* brings us fun at the beach with our favorite cadre of adventurers from his *Rifts*® comic strip that appeared in early issues of *The Rifter*®.

Page 27 – *Christopher Bourassa* is one of the outstanding artists who worked on the *Rifts*® *Promise of Power* videogame from *Nokia*. He is a *Backbone Entertainment* artist who wanted in on this special issue (and Chris may be doing more for *Palladium* in the future). It depicts a friendly *Coalition* maiden standing guard at a "Humans Only" CS beach. What a sweetheart.

Page 28 – *Nick Bradshaw* gives us a special *Palladium Fantasy RPG* illustration showing a *Sphinx* prowling the beach to pick up hot babes. Hmm, funny, we didn't know people surfed on the *Palladium* world.

Page 29 – *Freddie E. Williams II* gives us a hot momma from *Dyval* (or is it *Hades*) . . . er, well . . . she's hot if you're another *Deevil* (take our word for it).

Page 30 – *Michael Wilson* goes native with a jungle maiden from the pages of *Heroes Unlimited*™.

Page 31 – *Michael Dubisch* shows us that supernatural horrors from the *Beyond the Supernatural*™ *RPG* even haunt the dark corners of our beaches and seas.

Page 32 – *Jeff Easley* is another one of our guest artists who presents a playful succubus from the pits of *Hades*. This illustration could represent *The Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, *BTS-2* or the upcoming *Dimension Book: Hades and the Minion War*™.

Page 33 – *Dirk Johnson* is an old artist buddy. *Robotech*® fans might remember his work in the *RDF Accelerated Training Program* sourcebook.

Page 34 – *Mark Evans* is one of *Palladium's* rising stars as a cover artist and all around great guy. The tattoo on this lady's shoulder suggests she is a *Coalition Military Specialist*, the one on her bottom suggests her speciality is slaying demons. (Or could it mean she's a *Federation of Magic* double agent!?) *Rifts*®.

Page 35 – *Adam Withers* gives us a super-hottie and friends from the *Heroes Unlimited RPG*™ setting.

Page 36 – *Mark Dudley* goes all out with this dynamic illustration of a robot pilot out for a little sun and R&R on the beach; *Rifts*®.

Page 37 – *Chris Bourassa* returns to give us a little darlin' for all you *RECON*® fans.

Page 38 & 39 – *John Zeleznik* portrays *Tera*, the pinup girl of the *Coalition Army*. No wonder so many guys wanna join the *Coalition Army*!

Page 40 – *Larry Elmore* contributes another outstanding bathing beauty. She could be from the pages of *The Palladium Fantasy RPG*® or *Rifts*®.

Page 41 – What the . . . That's no bathing beauty! That's *Palladium* Publisher and ace game designer, *Kevin Siembieda*, at a tropical resort. (Actually, that's his girlfriend, *Kathy Simmons*'s, gorgeous backyard in *Michigan*, tricked out to look tropical.) Let's hope he doesn't think that pose is sexy.

Page 42 – *Erin Lindsey* illustrates a pair of exotic beauties, one bionic and the other a *ninja assassin*. These girls could have bounced out of the pages of *Ninjas & Superspies*™, *Heroes Unlimited*™, or *Rifts*®.

Page 43 – *Brian Manning* gives us a cool super-heroine chillin' at the beach, using her super abilities to take down a pair of bad guys.

Page 44 – Our anime pal, *Ben Rodriguez*, shows a Splicer pilot stepping out of her organic, Splicer, bio-armor for some fun at the beach. Represents the *Splicers™ RPG*.

Page 45 – Not again? *Wayne Smith*, Palladium Editor and Editor-in-Chief of *The Rifter®*, going for the glamour-shot?

Page 46 – *Kent Burles*' cosmic babe, waves and a living surf-board. Is she a goddess or Lemurian? Only Kent knows for sure.

Page 47 – Oh no, that's Palladium Editor, Online Monitor and Researcher, *Alex Marciniszyn*, mugging for the camera with a muscleman pose.

Page 48 – *Bill Bryan* is an old pal of Kevin Siembieda who goes way back to Kevin's *A+Plus* comic book days. We like Bill's idea of a "fantasy" illustration. Hubba hubba.

Page 49 – Palladium proofreader, contributing writer, G.M. supreme, and warehouse guy, *Julius Rosenstein*, hamming it up in a traditional gi and samurai sword. Julius is a 3rd degree black belt in Aikido, so we couldn't refuse him when he wanted to be part of the swimsuit issue dressed like a samurai.

Page 50 – *Wayne Breaux Jr.*, the mastermind behind the swimsuit issue, depicts super-vixen, Undine, from the pages of *Heroes Unlimited™*.

Page 51 – This handsome gent is Kevin Siembieda's father, Henry Siembieda. We don't know why he has his hands behind his back.

Page 52 – *Mike Mumah* gives us a midnight bathing beauty. Somehow we think this lady will keep her toes dry. Represents *BTS-2* or *Rifts®*.

Page 53 – *Mike Mumah*'s next pinup is a bionic charm from the pages of *Heroes Unlimited™*.

Page 54 – *Edward Woodward III*'s pretty, little Necrophim from *Nightbane®*.

Page 55 – *Apollo Okamura* presents the New German Republic's anime version of Erin Tarn as she muses on the beach writing *Traversing Our Modern World*.

Page 56 – *Apollo Okamura* (part two). The real life Erin Tarn, embarrassed at seeing a poster of her anime-self plastered on a wall during her visit to the NGR. (We thought Apollo outdid himself on this one; idea by Kevin Siembieda).

Page 57 – *Kevin Siembieda* – this is a previously unpublished pencil illustration done by the boss man the year he launched Palladium Books.

Page 58 – A photo array of the Palladium crew. We hope you found the photos of key Palladium staff members (namely "the guys") funny and not too, uh, disturbing. We just thought they'd make for some silly fun. Hopefully, they don't give anybody nightmares.

Including swimsuit photos of the staff was actually *Kathy Simmons*' idea, but she refused to participate, threatening death to anyone who snapped her picture. It seems Kevin's influence as "the boss" only goes so far. Btw, *Brandon Aten* was supposed to send Palladium a swimsuit picture to include in this issue (it was raining the last few days we had planned to take his picture during his internship at Palladium), but he must have chickened out. Too bad, we hear he has nice legs.

Page 59 – A Megaverse® United™

A way to help keep Palladium Going

A great way for Palladium fans to help Palladium out of its financial difficulties. Approximately 1700 prints sold in the last three months. Art by Kevin Siembieda.

Page 61 – The Army of Scorched Earth™

Source material for Rifts® Chaos Earth

Josh Sinsapaugh gives us another perspective on the people, heroes and dangers of ravaged Chaos Earth during the Great Cataclysm.

Demons, rebel army, Marine Commandos, new weapons, new vehicles, adventure ideas, and more.

Artwork by Brian & Allen Manning.

Page 73 – The Star of Horus, Part Two

A tale of adventure for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Aaron Corley and *Allen Gardner* whisk you away on an exciting and wonderful tale of adventure, magic and wonderment in the Fantasy setting.

Art by Comfort Deborah Love and Adam Withers.

Page 89 – Rifts® Phase World®

The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter 35 of James M.G. Cannon's popular, ongoing saga finds our heroes facing killer satellites, glowing frogs, and a giant bunny rabbit. Read and enjoy.

Art by Ramon Perez.

Page 97 – Palladium's 2006 Summer Catalog

The Theme for Issue 35

Summer fun, girls, art and silliness. We hope everyone enjoys the pinup artwork and photos, as well as the regular articles and news.

The Cover

More swimsuit-inspired fun.

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

The Rifter® #36 – Fall Horror Issue

As usual, the October issue of *The Rifter®* is our *horror* issue. And should include . . .

- Material for *Beyond the Supernatural™*.
- Material for *Nightbane®*.
- A *Palladium Fantasy®* setting.
- And monsters, dark magic and fun for *Rifts®* and other RPG lines.
- News and Coming Attractions.
- 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

A near death experience

For those of you who might not have yet heard, Palladium Books suffered grievous losses and damage in the hundreds of thousands of dollars as the result of theft and embezzlement by a trusted employee. In fact, I calculate the approximate, total damages at over one million dollars. It was a blow Palladium could not survive. At least not without help.

A soft market and other disappointments made Palladium unable to abate the loss. I was selling everything I owned and borrowing every penny I could, but it wasn't enough. Palladium was facing going out of business.

"Happy 25 Year Anniversary, you're going out of business." How ironic. How sad. The Palladium staff shuffled around like zombies. The laughter was gone. Our future looked bleak. My mind whirled nonstop through sleepless nights as I considered and weighed every possible option. They stunk.

Then I came up with the idea to turn to *you*, our fans. I struggled with that idea for a couple of months. On one hand, it seemed like a good idea. On the other, it seemed . . . awkward. You don't owe me or Palladium anything. Then, one day as I struggled with the idea, a friend said,

"Kevin, I know your fans, and I think they'd be angry if you didn't turn to them. They care about Palladium. If they find out they had a chance to save it, but Palladium's gone because you didn't ask them, it will make them furious. They'll feel cheated and betrayed."

She was absolutely right. I made my decision. It felt right. The staff held their collective breath as I wrote Palladium's appeal to its fans for help.

On April 19, 2006, in the hopes of surviving this *Crisis of Treachery*, I made a public appeal on the Palladium Website for help via the Internet.

A **Megaverse United**, a limited edition print, signed, personalized and numbered by me, Kevin Siembieda, was offered as one means to help keep the company going. I drew the art myself, special for this one purpose and as a thank you card to those who would buy it. The cost: \$50 plus shipping. If we could sell 3000 or so by the end of the year . . .

Purchasing books and T-shirts and other good stuff would help too. I suggested that *now* was the time to buy the RPGs, sourcebooks and other items you've been meaning to purchase.

I tried to present the situation as best I could by opening up my heart and telling it like it was.

(Go to www.palladiumbooks.com and read the message boards for complete details).

The outpouring of support has been unbelievable

Nothing prepared us for the onslaught of well wishes, testimonials, purchases of prints and sales of books. It has been nothing short of miraculous, inspiring and a bit overwhelming.

Thank you, everyone.

The flood of orders was a huge help. As of this writing, we have sold 1710 **Megaverse® United** prints, as well as scores of RPGs, sourcebooks and products of one kind or another to just about every country on the planet – England, France, Germany, Norway, Croatia, Yugoslavia, and scores of other European countries, as well as the Middle East, Japan, China, Korea, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, South America, Mexico, Canada and, of course, every State in the US.

Fans even demanded Palladium establish a Pay Pal account for donations, and sent us thousands of well wishes via email, message board postings, letters and phone calls.

Palladium's fans and fellow gamers were also instrumental in spreading the word of our precarious situation around the world in a matter of days!

That influx of cash has enabled us to get caught up on bills, pay freelancers, and reprint eight out of print titles and three new books (including *The Rifter® #35*).

More importantly, the outpouring of love, friendship and kindness has helped to inspire us and keep us going. The emails, website postings, testimonials, letters, gifts, telephone calls and in person words of encouragement have been humbling, uplifting, and inspiring to us all.

We still need your help

As tremendous as your help has been, Palladium is not out of the woods yet. We still have a way to go and encourage all of you to continue to purchase books you've planned to buy but haven't gotten around to yet. We also have a plethora of 25 Year Anniversary items, T-shirts, prints and other cool items for sale, all at www.palladiumbooks.com.

For you toy collectors out there, I'm selling the majority of my massive toy collection (20 years worth). Check out our online store at:

<http://stores.ebay.com/kevinstoys-artandcollectibles>

I'll also be offering some collectible artwork and Japanimation on the ebay store, so take a peak every few weeks to see what's new. Right now we are focusing mainly on superhero toys, but I have a zillion *Star Wars* and *McFarlane* toys that will be going up in the months to come.

Also take advantage of Palladium's **Christmas in July Super-Collector Grab Bag** for a chance to get original artwork (donated by the artists) and good deals on books 'n stuff.

New avenues of RPG fun

Ultimately, don't take Palladium Books, or role-playing in general, for granted. Support us and your other favorite RPG companies. Spread the word to other gamers about how much you enjoy RPGs and get back into running or playing on a regular basis.

Some people think pen and paper role-playing games are obsolete and destined to extinction. I disagree. I think many people

have forgotten the joy of role-playing and others have never even had the chance to play. To rectify that, Palladium Books will be launching the **Megaversal Ambassadors** program. A group of volunteers from around the world to run Palladium RPG gaming events at conventions, stores and special events.

Palladium will also be hosting the *second Palladium Open House, Gaming Extravaganza, May 4, 5 & 6, 2007*. A weekend of nonstop, Palladium games held in the Palladium warehouse and hosted by the Palladium staff and freelance writers and artists. This year's event was awesome, next year's can only be better.

We honestly planned on a one shot event, but virtually EVERYONE attending the event said how much fun it was and asked (some begged, others insisted) we do it again next year! Many commented on how much fun it was to play only *role-playing games*, and *Palladium role-playing games* at that. And many others said they forgot how fun the different Palladium game lines (HU2, BTS-2, Splicers, Chaos Earth, Fantasy, Nightbane, etc.) were to play. Plus, folks had a chance to meet the creative minds behind it all at the very place where the magic happens, and purchase back stock items, rare out of print items, original artwork, toys and other stuff. It was all great fun, and that's what role-playing is all about.

All of us at Palladium want to *remind* people about the magic of role-playing. To absolutely revel in every aspect, meet fellow gamers, try new game settings, play with different people, play test upcoming books, and have a blast doing it. Even us dedi-

cated gamers sometimes forget how fun and dynamic role-playing should be. The **Palladium Open House** is the place to cut loose and have the ultimate RPG experience. Don't take my word for it, talk to some of the folks who attended this year.

Start planning your visit to Palladium, May 4-6, 2007, right now!

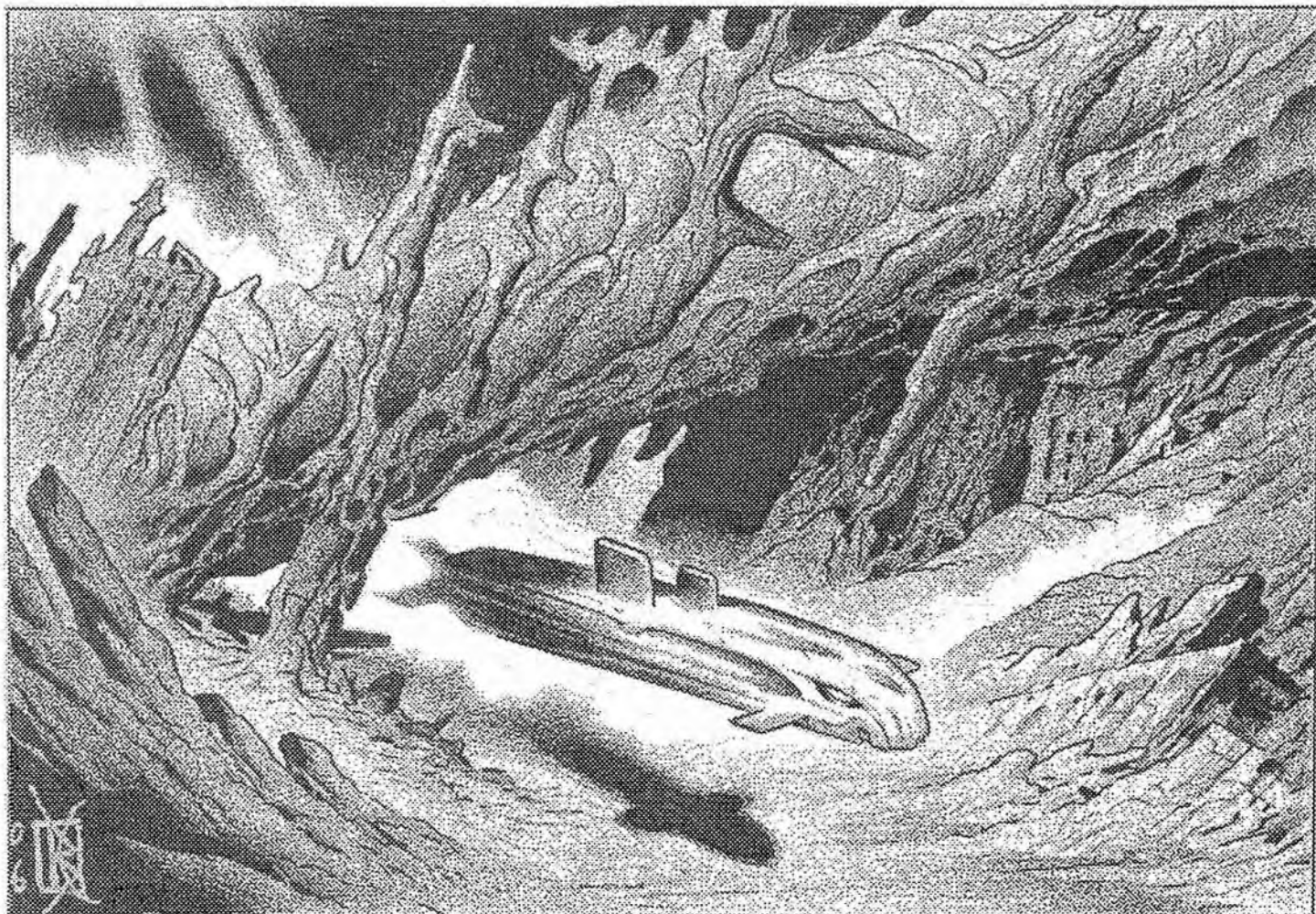
A bright future is possible

I guess what I'm trying to say is we have HUGE plans for Palladium in the future.

Palladium finally has a band of freelance writers and artists committed to the same vision of bold, new worlds and imagination unleashed. These guys and gals are boiling with fantastic ideas for future sourcebooks, games and adventures.

I, myself, have never felt more excited about the future or been filled with such a range of cutting edge ideas.

We have big plans for the Palladium Website, new RPGs, new approaches to RPGs, new world settings, new licenses, new types of products (toys, miniatures game, novels, comics, electronic games, etc.) and new mediums. In fact, we have ideas for new ways of doing a lot of things. **The Megaversal Ambassadors**, the **Palladium Open House** gaming spectacular, dynamic product that pushes the envelope or tries new ideas (like this issue of *The Rifter*®), and many other things we have in the works are *new* spins on popular ideas, and they are just the tip of the iceberg.



But we need YOU for all of this to work! We need your enthusiasm, support and input. We need you to share the excitement, spread the word and be part of it all.

Of course, Palladium's first hurdle is surviving our current crisis. We are working hard to do just that, while planning for an amazing future. With a little luck, hard work and continued support from you, I think we can do it. And I mean more than just help Palladium survive. I mean spearhead a new era for role-playing games.

— Kevin Siembieda, July 2006

News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

Palladium Books has some big plans for the future. The RPG community has, over the years, splintered and drifted apart. We want to bring that community back together and grow it to new heights.

To that end, we have a number of plans we are just starting to launch. The Megaversal Ambassadors is just one leading program, a plan for a new, expanded, more interactive web site is another. New games and sourcebooks for all our game lines (and some new ones) that push the envelope, challenge old ideas and stride on the cutting edge are another. And they are just the beginning. Read on.

Megaversal Ambassadors

The concept is simple: A volunteer force of Game Masters ready and willing to run Palladium RPG events and demos at conventions, stores, libraries and special events.

Why?

1) To introduce new gamers to Palladium RPGs and the joy of role-playing.

2) To remind long time gamers how much fun it is to play **Heroes Unlimited**, or **Rifts®**, or **Palladium Fantasy®**, or **Beyond the Supernatural**, etc., and to try different Palladium world settings and genres.

3) To put positive, smiling, friendly faces on pen and paper role-playing games and invite more people to play our games.

4) To put Palladium Books' RPGs out in the public eye and plant the seeds that pen and paper RPGs have a lot to offer. That makes Palladium's **Megaversal Ambassadors** modern day *Johnny Appleseeds*, only instead of planting apple trees, we're planting the seeds of storytelling and unrestrained imagination via the role-playing game experience. The *real* RPG experience.

What makes this program different?

Sure there have been similar (and successful) game tournament and demo programs in the past. There is the RPGA and Organized Play groups, and countless tournaments for CCGs and miniature events, but they are orchestrated as "official" competitions with "formal" rules and a cash prize for the "champion."

That's cool, but the **Megaversal Ambassadors** are different. Forget about stuffy formality, hard and fast rules, winners and prizes. We want to get down and dirty with the gamers. We want to just *play*, be silly, and have fun.

The prize is the joyous experience of a good time with other gamers and/or discovering a new game or world setting. We want to bring gaming *out* of the tournament arena and back into the living room, basement and kitchen table!

No, not by going into people's homes, but by running informal events that are all about *role-playing* and *fun*, not about competition, winning and prizes. We want to run RPG events held at conventions (large and small) and at local hobby and comic shops looking to promote one or more nights of gaming.

We want to show newcomers and remind established gamers the fun of laughing and playing with *real live people* and not just a video screen.

We want to show gamers the incredible range of experiences and limitless imagination that can be unleashed with pen and paper RPGs. Experiences, laughs, memories and camaraderie that exceed even the coolest graphics and on-line interaction, and exhibit storytelling taken to the max.

We can win *new players* by sharing this experience.

One reason people are turning to online and video games is because nobody has shown them how cool traditional role-playing can be. Another reason is they can't find players or a good Game Master to run a game. Hopefully, the **Megaversal Ambassadors** can solve both of those problems and inspire others to start running RPG campaigns of their own as well as help build a cohesive network of gamers.

And we want these gamers cutting their teeth on **Palladium Books RPGs**, where they can enjoy infinite possibilities, maximum flexibility and fun.

What does it take to be a Megaversal Ambassador?

Go to Palladium's website and read about the **Megaversal Ambassadors** on the *Megaversal Ambassadors* Message Board.

Let organizer *Zachary Houghton* know you'd like to participate, get our rules and guidelines, and give a try at running events. You don't have to run every week or even every month (though you can if you wish), but focus on a specific convention weekend or two a year where you run 2-4 game events and/or demos.

You have to be a genuine Palladium supporter/fan and a Game Master with the skill to run games and demos, but you don't have to be the world's greatest or most experienced G.M. A good game is a good game, and this is a way for you to get more experience and have fun yourself. You should not look at being a **Megaversal Ambassador** as a job, but as your *calling*.

Be yourself and an RPG evangelist at the same time, and have fun. *Fun* is contagious after all, and RPGs should be all about fun.

Megaversal Ambassadors must also take this role seriously. You will be seen as the *face* of Palladium Books. As such, we need you to be friendly, helpful, patient with newcomers (and troublemakers), and run a good game. In short, you are very much an *ambassador* representing Palladium Books and role-playing in general. We need you to inspire fun, imagination and more gaming. We need you to let people discover and enjoy the Palladium role-playing experience.

We don't expect every game to be whiz-bang spectacular, but to get across the value and fun of role-playing games. To leave newcomers with a sense of wonder and wanting for more, and return the sense of wonder and adventure in gamers who have drifted away from RPGs.

Fun is the operative word. Plain and simple RPG fun. If you think you can pull that off, then consider joining our growing legion of ambassadors.

Don't let pen and paper RPGs fall victim to apathy, let's reinvigorate the industry together.

I know this can work, because I've seen it with my own eyes. Even at the *Palladium Open House* this past May, I saw the thrills, excitement and wonderment rekindled in the hearts of everyone who attended. These were hardcore gamers mind you, and even they were saying things like, "Wow, what an experience." "Wow, I forgot how fun *Palladium Fantasy* is." "Wow, I never played *Heroes Unlimited* before. It's great!" "Wow, that *Chaos Earth* game was awesome. I think I'm going to try running that world setting myself." And on and on. The other comment I was delighted to hear was, "I can't believe how welcomed I felt." And, "I played with gamers I never met until today and yet, we gamed like we were old friends. It was great."

Of course it was great, it was the *Palladium RPG experience!* Where we welcome everybody and emphasize storytelling and fun. Where we welcome everybody and emphasize storytelling and fun.

That's why so many people have begged us to host the **Palladium Open House** – three days of playing, talking and breathing *role-playing games* and fun – next year. And I mean *begged* for us to host it again. Some folks acted like they had never been to a game convention before — and truth be told, they had probably never been to one like this.

I believe the advent of the "multi-media" gaming conventions has diluted the thrill of the role-playing game experience. These media conventions attract a wide range of people with a wide range of somewhat related interests, typically *gaming*, *science fiction* (or comics) and *film* (or Anime). They include all kinds of experiences and games – card games and board games, miniature and computer games, role-playing games and LARPs, tournaments and demos, as well as offering a host of media guests, movie rooms, Japanimation, costume party, a big dealers' room, swords, toys and everything in between. None of that is bad, and some of these conventions, large and small, are *awesome*. HOWEVER, it is a mixed bag of so many different things that *role-playing games* get lost in the myriad other sights, sounds and events. A smorgasbord of choices can be wonderful, but sometimes you just want *meat and potatoes*.

The Palladium Open House and the **Megaversal Ambassadors** are designed to offer delicious, satisfying, *meat and potatoes role-playing*. To focus on one thing and one thing only, the *Palladium role-playing game experience* – strong characters, memorable story, interesting worlds, surprises and fun. Okay, two other things too, *fun* and *intimacy*. No thronging multitudes, no prizes or money to win, no movie celebrities to meet, just role-playing games, role-playing game celebrities (artists, writers, designers), fellow gamers and fun. And man, oh man, there is *nothing* like it. Heck, at the **Palladium Open House** we don't even charge for individual game events. It's first come, first served with plenty of equally fun games to go around for everyone (and open gaming for those who want to run something of their own). The end result was immersion into the Palladium Megaverse and a sense of raw excitement, fun and coming home where you belong. Everyone spoke the same language, shared the same love for the Megaverse® and was glad to meet you, share ideas and sit down and talk or game for hours on end. We were told by some that it felt like coming home. You don't get that anymore, not anywhere – except from Palladium.

We want to spread that feeling around the world via the **Palladium Open House RPG Extravaganza** (the next one, May 2007) and through the **Megaversal Ambassadors**. If that sounds like a good thing to you, join us. Be one of the people who show others a new way to have fun. Not only as Game Masters running game events, but as players in the games of others. Also as evangelists who spread the word about the **Palladium Open House, Megaversal Ambassadors, and Palladium's RPGs** and sourcebooks. The fancy word for it is "networking," but it really breaks down to talking to other people and sharing your fun experiences, ideas, likes and dislikes. While you're at it, find some time to run or play RPGs with your old gaming buddies, you won't regret it.

Together, let us bring role-playing back to the forefront where it belongs. Only now, some 30 years after its inception, we can do so with more freedom, creativity and reach than ever before. We are more sophisticated as gamers and the old stigma that RPGs are somehow dangerous or evil is mostly gone. The Internet lets us reach out to others more easily and across the globe.

If you ask me, a new era of role-playing mania seems poised to be had. Let us make it happen, starting with Palladium's RPGs and the **Megaversal Ambassadors** program.

Would you like to be a Megaversal Ambassador?

Check out the Megaversal Ambassadors message board on the Palladium Books website (www.palladiumbooks.com) and read the guidelines, ask questions, leave a message or send a pm to the right person.

Or contact Zachary Houghton at megaversal.ambassador@gmail.com.

Only serious and committed Ambassadors need apply.

Do YOU need Game Masters for your convention or event?

Check out the Megaversal Ambassadors message board on the Palladium Books website (www.palladiumbooks.com) and

leave a message or send a pm to the right person, or contact Zachary Houghton at megaversal.ambassador@gmail.com.

If we have volunteers in your area, we'll try to get 'em to run something at your event/convention/store.

Slight Price Increases

Palladium will be increasing our cover price on most new books and reprints by a dollar or two. For example, **Powers Unlimited 2** and **Powers Unlimited 3** will cost \$14.95 each instead of the earlier announced price of \$13.95. (Don't worry, those of you who have pre-ordered before the price hike will get the books for the original price.) Likewise, **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** will be going up from \$33.95 to \$35.95 this Fall with the *second printing*.

Palladium's prices still remain the *lowest* in the industry by \$5-\$10 for books of comparable size and quality from other RPG companies.

As I have often said, I grew up poor and know what it is like to have a limited amount of money to acquire the books you love. We appreciate our fans and will continue to keep our prices as reasonable as possible.

We hope you understand.

Palladium's 2006 Convention Appearances

Okay, because you, our fans, have requested it, we are trying to do a few more conventions this year (even though it plays havoc with our release schedule).

Gen Con Indy – Booth 301

August 8-11, 2006 – Indianapolis, Indiana

This is "the" BIG gaming event of the year and Palladium will be part of it.

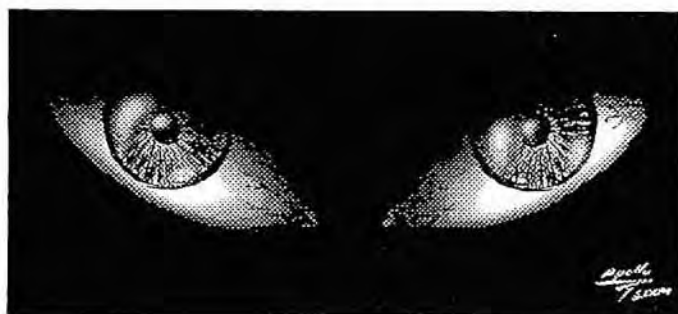
We will have a big, slick display with all our back stock book titles, the *Megaverse United print* (to be signed, numbered and a little dragon head sketch to be done on site), original artwork, laser-etched glasses and other collectibles, plus **Powers Unlimited 2** (back in print), **The Western Empire** (back in print), **Rifts® Spirit West** (back in print), **The Rifter® #35**, **Rifts® Madhaven** and, with a little luck, **Powers Unlimited 3**.

A note about *The Rifter® #35* – this is a great item to get signed by the Palladium crew and the many artists who usually attend Gen Con, such as Larry Elmore, Jeff Easley and others.

Publisher, *Kevin Siembieda*, Editor, *Wayne Smith*, Sales Manager, *Kathy Simmons*, and a few helpers will be running an island booth number 301 (located in the front of the hall to the left as you enter the hall). *Brandon Aten*, *Taylor White* and a few other Palladium freelance writers and artists hope to join us for the fun. ALL the Palladium crew will be available to chat and sign autographs.

And not to sound grim, but we still don't really know if Palladium Books will survive another year or two (we think we will, and hope we will, and are working hard to be around for another 25 years, but the verdict is still out), so see us and get product while you *know* you still can.

Hope to see hundreds of you at the convention.



See you in New Jersey

Ubercon VIII – October 20-22, 2006

I haven't been to a convention in the New York/New Jersey area in something like 10 years, so Wayne and I accepted the generous offer of the Ubercon folks when they said they'd give us 3-5 tables and a hotel room for free.

We are doing this for YOU, our fans, so please spread the word and come on down to Ubercon to see me (*Kevin Siembieda*) and *Wayne Smith* (and I suspect, *Carl Gleba*, *Brandon Aten*, and a few other freelance creators) and chat, get autographs, buy product and have a good time. Hopefully the Megaversal Ambassadors will be running a few Palladium games at the event as well. I know the convention staff already has a few Palladium events on their schedule.

Other Attractions: Author Guest of Honor: Michael A. Stackpole, other guests, anime, independent film festival, LARPing, miniature and CCG events, board games, LAN Tourney and free play, costume contest, a big dealer's room and 700-1000 fellow gamers.

Note: Check out the Ubercon website (www.ubercon.com) for more info and *save \$10* on a full weekend pass when registering online and using the code "UBERNJ9."

Hey, and tell 'em that you are coming to see Palladium so the convention can determine what kind of drawing power we represent. Thanks. I hope to see a lot of you East Coast gamers at the con. I have no idea when we might be out your way again. And again, not to bring up a sad subject, but we still don't know if Palladium Books will survive another year or two (we think we will, and hope we will, but the verdict is still out), so see us and get product while you *know* you can.

Ubercon VIII – October 20-22

Wyndham Suites – Secaucus, New Jersey

www.UberCon.com or call (866) 823-7366.

Trinity Con will be back in 2007

One of our favorite conventions, Trinity Con, is taking a hiatus this year as it reorganizes and works to become bigger and better. They will be back October 2007.

Palladium Open House 2 – May, 2007

That's right, because you demanded it, **Palladium Open House 2** – a weekend of Palladium role-playing games and fun – will be back, *May 4-6, 2007*. More on it later, but next year's event will be bigger, better, and smoother than ever.

So start planning, *NOW*, to come on down to the only gaming convention dedicated entirely to role-playing games and Palladium's many RPGs and world settings. You'll hate yourself if you miss it again.

Trade Shows in 2006

Diamond/Alliance Retailer Summit

– Sept. 11 & 12 – Baltimore, M.D.

Kevin Siembieda and Wayne Smith will be available to talk about new product, Palladium's future and sign autographs.

Diamond/Alliance Retailer Summit

– Oct. 14 & 15 – Ft. Wayne, Indiana

Kevin Siembieda and Wayne Smith will be available to talk about new product, Palladium's future and sign autographs.

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 25 Year Anniversary



Laser-Etched Commemorative Glasses

Palladium's 25 Year Anniversary Laser-Etched Glasses are dishwasher safe and look just plain cool. In fact, White Wolf and other companies will soon be following Palladium's lead with their own *glassware*, but Palladium Books was the first.

Six different laser-etched glasses: 25th Anniversary Logo, Rifts®, HU2, BTS-2, Nightbane®, and Palladium Fantasy®.

17 Ounce Glasses: Laser-etched so they never fade or wear off. Sturdy, attractive and dishwasher safe.

Limited Number: Limited to under 600 total sets. Available only till the end of 2006.

Price: \$45 plus \$6.00 for shipping in the continental United States, \$9.00 to Canada and \$15.00 overseas. Or may be ordered online where the shipping cost may be a bit less. Available now, but only from Palladium Books.

Bumper Stickers

Got P.P.E.?TM – white print on a blue background, 6 1/4 x 3 1/4 inches. \$2.00 – our second most popular bumper sticker.

JuicedTM – yellow print on a red background, 6 1/4 x 3 1/4 inches, \$2.00.

Hell was full, so I came backTM – our most popular bumper sticker is yellow print on a black background, 11 1/2 x 3 inches; \$2.00.

He who lives by the Vibro-Blade, dies by the particle beamTM – 11 1/2 x 3 inches; \$2.00.

Price: \$2.00 each or the set of four at \$6.00 + \$2.00 for postage and handling (\$5.00 for Canada and Mexico, \$9.00 for overseas). Available only from Palladium Books and only for a limited time.

25 Year Anniversary Logo T-Shirt

25th Anniversary Logo on the front (gold on black), a list of all major RPG lines running down the back (gold on black).

Prices & Sizes: Medium, Large, XL – \$18.95 each

XXL – \$20.95

3XL – \$22.95

4XL – \$24.95

5XL – \$26.95

Please, make sure you include your shirt size.

Save the Megaverse[®] T-Shirt

I helped save the Megaverse[®] and all I got was this lousy T-Shirt is white print and art on a royal blue T-shirt.

Prices & Sizes: Medium, Large, XL – \$18.95 each

XXL – \$20.95

3XL – \$22.95

4XL – \$24.95

5XL – \$26.95

Please, make sure you include your shirt size.

Note: See the Palladium Books online store on our website (www.palladiumbooks.com) for other limited edition T-shirts like *I fear (skull & crossbones) New York* (for Madhaven; red on black), *Game Master T-shirt* (white on grey) and others.

New RPG Book Releases

As you might imagine, Palladium's difficulties and our struggle to survive have taken up a great deal of time and energy. However, as things continue to improve, you can count on seeing favorite books back in print and a number of new books for every major game line that will knock your socks off.

Palladium has assembled a team of freelancers who are brimming with ideas and energy to create great new RPG sourcebooks. Publisher, Kevin Siembieda, has told them to let their imaginations run wild and to push the envelope when it comes to new ideas and adventure.

We need your continued support, and when you see all that we have in store for you with our new books, you'll understand that Palladium is hotter and more cutting edge than ever before.

For Rifts®

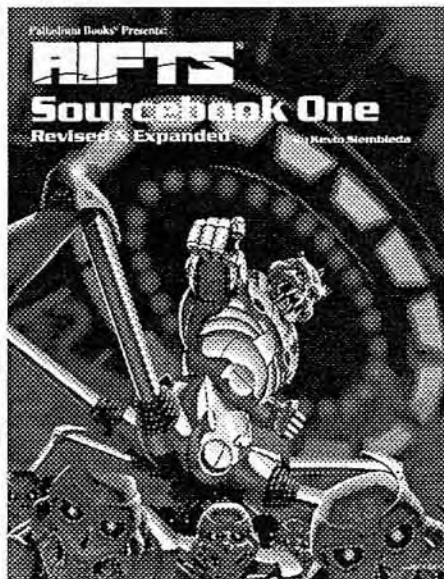
Rifts® World Book 29: Madhaven™ – New

Rifts® Madhaven™ is a place of terror and legend. A land so plagued by ghosts and monsters that no one has been able to conquer it in 300 years.

Bold adventurers come only to loot the ruins of pre-Rifts artifacts and search for ancient secrets of advanced technology. Only half survive the journey. The other half tell of horrifying ghosts the likes of which are found nowhere else, deadly monsters, weird mutants, and madness. Indeed, Madhaven earns its name, for it is a place where even the bravest and the most powerful are driven insane in a matter of days, and only the most fortunate survive. Yet still treasure hunters come to Madhaven with the dream of striking it rich, and so the chain of terror and death continues.

Ah, but Madhaven is much more than it may seem. Many are the secrets buried in its shadowy depths. Secrets that keep adventurers coming to brave the dangers and madness for the promise of wealth and power.

- 8 weird mutant R.C.C.s that boggle the mind.
- 7 Ghostly Entities that haunt the ruins and torment the living.
- 11 strange monsters not found elsewhere.
- The secret Order of the White Rose Mystic Knights.
- The unrivaled healing power of the fabled White Rose.
- Techno-Wizard weapons and devices.
- Mega-Damage Bone weapons.
- The history, curse and inhabitants of Madhaven.
- Random encounter table and more.
- Spectacular cover by Mark Evans.
- Written by Brandon Aten, Taylor White, & Kevin Siembieda.
- 128 pages – Cat. No. 869.
- \$14.95 retail – in stores everywhere July, 2006.



Rifts® Sourcebook One™ – Expanded and Updated – Fall, 2006

The original Rifts® Sourcebook One sold more than 100,000 copies. Now, 16 years later, the original author, Kevin Siembieda, expands and updates this out-of-print classic, giving it the same kind of treatment he gave the *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*.

- Includes never before revealed information on A.R.C.H.I.E. Three and for the first time ever – *The Republicans* and their link to A.R.C.H.I.E. Three.
- Weapons, power armor & equipment (new and old).
- Triax weapons & power armor (new and old).
- A.R.C.H.I.E. Three, Hagan Lonovich and robotic minions.
- The Republicans revealed at last!
- The Republicans' secret war against A.R.C.H.I.E. 3.
- World information, adventures, and new adventure ideas.
- Cover by Scott Johnson.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 801 – \$18.95 retail.
- Ships Fall (September?), 2006.

Rifts® D-Bees of North America™

A dozen freelancers have chipped in to create a book with 30+ new D-Bees along with updated stats and information on 60+ D-Bees of North America collected from other World Books.

This will be a handy reference for players (especially those looking to play a particular D-Bee) and Game Masters.

- 100 D-Bees; thirty-some new. All native to North America. Completely started out and updated.
- Artwork by Perez and others.
- Cover painting by David Martin.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and others.
- 192 pages – Cat. No. 871 – \$22.95 retail.
- Anticipated release date: Fall, 2006, or Early 2007.

Rifts® and Other Worlds™ – The Art of John Zeleznik

This will be a magnificent, full color, hardcover book collecting John Zeleznik's Rifts® and other Palladium paintings, and also includes color concept pieces, sketches and pencil drawings.

A must for fans of *Rifts*® and the artistry of *John Zeleznik*. A great Christmas gift and Palladium 25 Year Anniversary item.

- Full color throughout.
- Compiled and designed by John Zeleznik.
- 128 pages of color – Cat. No. 2510 – \$28.95 retail.
- Anticipated release date: Fall, 2006 (October or November 2006).

The Minion War™ Series

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 10: Hades, Pits of Hell™ – Fall, 2006

The demons and monsters of Hades have been part of Palladium role-playing games for 25 years. Now, for the first time ever, we explore the demons' home dimension, the landscape of

Hades, the evil denizens who populate it, and their plans for conquest and war across the Megaverse®.

A *stand-alone* sourcebook designed for use in *Rifts*®, *Rifts*® *Chaos Earth*™, *Phase World*®, and *Heroes Unlimited*™, but easily adapted to the *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, *Beyond the Supernatural*™ and all other Palladium games.

Rifts® *Hades* also sets the stage for an epic, five or six book crossover adventure theme called the *Minion War*. The *Minion War* series will have *Dimension Book Hades*, *Dimension Book Dyval*, *Dimensional Outbreaks* (Phase World®), *Armageddon Unlimited* (Heroes Unlimited), and a *Rifts* Earth finale, *Megaverse in Flames*, plus a possible *Minion War Aftermath* book. Keep your eyes peeled, it all starts with *Hades*.

- The mystical and cursed realms of Hades mapped and described.
- The legion of demons and monsters that inhabit Hades.
- New horrors such as the Hades Netherbeast, Black Vultures, Ant Lions, and Pit Vipers, along with old favorites.
- Journey through places like the Fire Bog, the Island of the Dead and Forest of Stone, and learn the secrets of infernal life.
- Faerie Weapons, Blood Rifles and other magical and terrible weapons of war.
- The *Minion War*: a plan by the demons of Hades to invade and conquer their arch-rivals, the demons of Dyval. But the



demonic battles will spill into the worlds of man and wreak havoc across the Megaverse!

- A stand-alone Dimension Book that is also the first step in an epic, five book adventure.
- Artwork by Russell, Bradshaw, Dubisch and others.
- Cover painting by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 872 – \$18.95 retail. Ships Fall (October or November, 2006).

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 11: Dyval, Hell on Earth™ – Fall, 2006

The Deevils and monsters of *Dyval* have been part of Palladium role-playing games for 25 years. Now, for the first time ever, we go to the fiery pits of Hell to explore the demons' home dimension, the evil denizens who populate it, and their plans for conquest and war across the Megaverse.

A *stand-alone* sourcebook designed for use in Rifts®, Rifts® Chaos Earth™, Phase World®, and Heroes Unlimited™, but is easily adapted to the Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Beyond the Supernatural™ and all other Palladium games.

Rifts® *Dyval* also continues the epic, five book crossover adventure theme called the *Minion War*.

- The realms of Dyval mapped and described.
- Non-Deevil Minions including the insectoid Cryxon, Dragon Shock Troopers, Bonelings, Devil Worm, Ice Golem, and others.
- The Nexus Deevil, Deevil Dragon and Ice Wraith, among others.
- Beasts of War such as Flying Horrors, Infernal Sprite, and more.
- Journey through the Realms of the Deevil Lords, the Great Dyval Desert, the Frozen Wastes and other places.
- Magic weapons, spells and artifacts.
- The Minion War: Dyval's retaliation against incursions from Hades.
- A stand-alone Dimension Book that is also the second step in an epic, five book trans-dimensional adventure we're calling the *Minion War*.
- Artwork by Russell, Bradshaw, Dubisch and others.
- Cover painting by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 873 – \$18.95 retail. Ships early 2007 (February or March).

Rifts® Dimension Book 12: Dimensional Outbreak™

Four levels of Phase World's Center mapped and described as demons and Deevils spill into Phase World and the Three Galaxies in the Minion War.

- Phase World, demons, magic and intergalactic turmoil as the Minion War heats up.

- A stand-alone Dimension Book that is also the third chapter in an epic, five book trans-dimensional adventure we're calling the *Minion War*.
- Cover painting by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 877 – \$18.95 retail. Ships early 2007.

Armageddon Unlimited™ The Minion War™ Part Four

The superhumans battle the twin forces of Hell in the *Heroes Unlimited* chapter in the Minion War saga.

- Written by Carl Gleba.
- Final page count, cover art, retail price and catalog number yet to be determined. Expected to be 160 pages, \$18.95.
- Anticipated release date: Early 2007.

Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™ The Minion War™ Part Five

The grand finale happens on Rifts Earth. 'Nuff said.

- Written by Carl Gleba.
- Final page count, cover art, retail price and catalog number yet to be determined. Expected to be 160 pages, \$18.95. Anticipated release date: Spring or Summer 2007.

Coming for Rifts® in 2007

Rifts® World Book: Delta Blues™

The people and places of the Deep South. A look at the Delta Conflict, Louisiana Wetlands, El Dorado Periphery, and perhaps some of the specific hauntings of the Delta (the Yearly Apocalypse, etc.). Plus the CS and Sky Fort, the Crull, Tech-Arcana, the Alligator Tribe Psi Stalkers, the Loup Garou, the Ukt tribes, the Demon Turtle, and the D-Bees (Idie & Bayou Ursines).

- Written by John Philpott & Josh Sinsapaugh.
- Final page count, cover art, retail price and catalog number yet to be determined. Expected to be 160 pages, \$18.95. Anticipated release date: Winter 2006 or Spring 2007.

Rifts® World Book: The Dark Woods™

The whole Dark Woods of Mississippi & Alabama including the Hamlet of Clavicle, the Gunthersville Enclaves, Angel's Fen, Dragon Hill, Ebon Moon, & the Thicket Kingdom. Plus, the Blacktooth Psi-Stalkers and other people and creatures of note.

- Written by Josh Sinsapaugh & John Philpott.
- Final page count, cover art, retail price and catalog number yet to be determined. Anticipated release date: Early 2007.

Rifts® Sourcebook 5: Voodoo & the Spirit World™

Ties closely to Delta Blues, The Dark Woods, and the Rifts® South America books. This will be the Delta Arcane, including Voodoo & the Spirit World and the City of Spirits (the Old New Orleans Spirit Realm). Additional text to include rules on some of the more "famous" Divine Loa (Danbhalá, Legba, Erzuli, Chango, Baron Samedi, etc.), conversion rules to play a Santero/Santera (Santeria Priest) or Candomble Priest using the Voodoo Priest O.C.C. as a template, specifics on Voodoo practice in the Rifts® Deep South, the City of Spirits, South America, and perhaps elsewhere.

- Written by John Philpott & others.
- Final page count, cover art, retail price and catalog number yet to be determined. Anticipated release date: Spring 2007.

Rifts® World Book: Triax™ Two

Everything you'd expect – more robots, power armor, vehicles, weapons, Gargoyles and trouble.

- Written by Brandon Aten.
- Final page count, cover art, retail price and catalog number yet to be determined. Anticipated release date: Spring 2007.

For Heroes Unlimited™

Powers Unlimited™ Two

Back in print (with some corrections). Powers Unlimited Two presents 11 new types or variations of super beings along with their unique perspective, powers and gizmos.

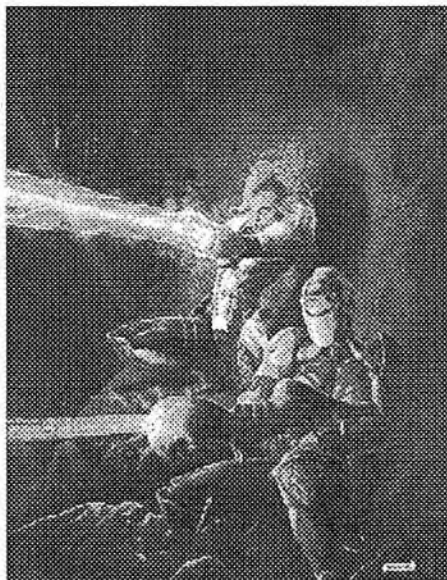
- 11 new Power Categories and many sub-sets of heroes.
- Immortals, Supersoldiers, Natural Genius and more.
- Cover painting by Ramon Perez.
- Written by Carmen Bellaire.
- 96 pages – Cat. No. 522 – \$14.95 retail.
- In stores everywhere August, 2006.

Powers Unlimited™ Three

Carmen Bellaire is back with a spectacular range of new super abilities.

In the world of **Heroes Unlimited™** there is no such thing as too many super abilities. Are we right?

- 130 new super abilities.
- 83 Major Super Abilities and 43 Minor Super Abilities.
- Many sub-powers and unique abilities.
- Random Power Tables.
- Cover painting by E.M. Gist.
- Written by Carmen Bellaire.
- 96 pages – Cat. No. 523 – \$14.95 retail.
- In stores everywhere August, 2006.



Wayne Breaux Jr.'s Atorian Empire™

The people, weapons, ships and power of the Atorian Empire. An ideal companion to the two *Aliens Unlimited™* sourcebooks or as a stand-alone adventure sourcebook.

- Cover painting by Wayne Breaux Jr.
- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr.
- 192 pages – Cat. No. 524 – \$22.95 retail.
- Coming Winter, 2006, or Early 2007.

More to come for Heroes Unlimited™

Wayne Breaux is working on two other HU2 titles, as are a couple other freelancers.

Meanwhile, Kevin Siembieda has been quietly developing a superhero game unlike any other on the market. It's still in development and probably a year or two from being ready for publication.

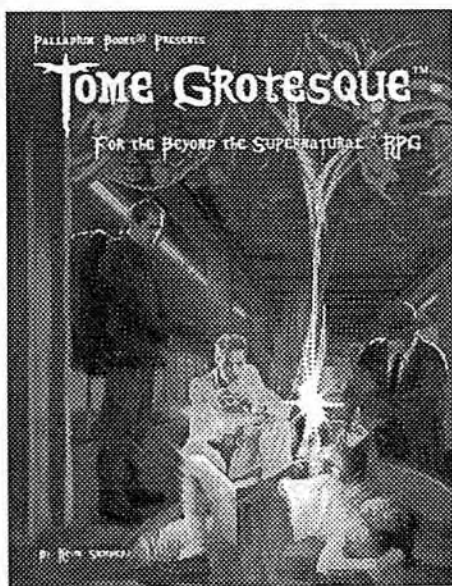
Also watch for **Warpath: Urban Jungle™**. It's a new RPG about the secret operatives who work behind the scenes to keep our cities and countries safe. It's not exactly superhumans, but the concepts and characters are easy to adapt to HU2.

For Beyond the Supernatural™

Kevin Siembieda promised this unique approach to horror would not languish after the release of the acclaimed BTS-2 RPG. Here it is a year and a half later, and the two core rule sourcebooks are not out yet.

Know that the delay has been due to extreme circumstances, and that the creator and writer, Kevin Siembieda, is dying to get the time to write them both. He hopes to do so by the end of 2006, but no promises. Those who have heard his ideas can attest that you will not be disappointed when these hotly anticipated books finally hit the shelves.

In addition, freelancers are working on two other BTS-2 titles tentatively scheduled for a 2007 release. Keep your fingers crossed that these dynamic titles come out sooner rather than later.



Tome Grotesque™

A look into the black souls and wicked minds of demonic beings and monstrous supernatural creatures that stalk our modern world.

Tome Grotesque™ is a core sourcebook for the **Beyond the Supernatural™ Role-Playing Game**. It plumbs the depths of the true *nature* of supernatural evil and presents scores of monsters complete with their unique powers, motivations, goals and corruption of humanity. A frightening look into the psychology, nature and power of monsters that lurk in the shadows of our modern cities.

- Supernatural Predators, Pranksters, Ghostly Entities, Demonic Servants, Ancient Evil and more.
- Demonic magic and psionic abilities.
- The powers and abilities of supernatural beings.
- How these creatures think, and why they do what they do.
- Spectacular artwork by Russell, Dubisch and others.
- Cover painting by Mark Evans.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 702 – \$18.95 retail – with any luck, ships Fall 2006.

Beyond Arcanum™

This third core book for **Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Edition**, brings the series into full focus. The entire book is devoted to *magic* and presents the realm of magic as logical and believable in our modern world.

- The mystic arts, spells and magic in our modern world.
- Magic-wielding character classes.
- Magic weapons, charms, and rituals.
- Curses and cursed weapons and artifacts.
- Cover by Mark Evans.

- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Todd Yoho.
- 192 pages – Cat. No. 703.
- \$22.95 retail – with any luck, ships Fall 2006.

Warpath: Urban Jungle™ RPG

The setting: The dark underbelly of our modern world. The dark and dangerous places that suburbanites don't even know exist, the wherelocals pray they survive.

The player characters: They consider themselves heroes and patriots, though others might see them as the elite, secret enforcers of a powerful government that knows no limits. They are men and women who fight the secret wars that never make the newspapers. They are the “spooks” and nameless “shadow warriors” who operate beneath the radar and outside the law. They are the elite selected from every branch of the military and law enforcement agencies to get the dirty jobs done.

Their mission: To strike down enemies from within and abroad. To keep “the people” safe without their ever knowing they were in danger. To fight and win battles on our streets without the media or the authorities ever knowing about the conflict. And if the conflict is discovered, without knowing who was involved, where they came from or where they disappeared to.

Warpath: Urban Jungle™ is a new, hard-edged, combat role-playing game that deals with the secret war against crime, gangs, terrorism, sabotage and drugs going on in the shadows of our own streets. Police, FBI, CIA, NSA, Special Ops, and ex-criminals join forces under the auspices of a super-secret agency more covert and mysterious than the NSA.

Warning: This isn't a lightweight, touchy-feelie combat game for kids nor a superhero RPG, but a gritty game of espionage, violence and war. The name “Warpath” says it all: Hell unleashed in secret wars that take place in the Urban Jungle (our modern cities). The soldiers involved are given the authority to use extreme violence, deception, and whatever it takes to get the job done and save lives; provided they don't get caught.



Although it will not be for everyone, we suspect **Warpath: Urban Jungle™** will be the surprise hit RPG of 2006. Inspired by the novel, *Warpath*, by Jeffry Scott Hansen. Watch for it.

- Cover by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Jeffry Scott Hansen & Kevin Siembieda.
- Final page count and retail price yet to be determined. Expected to be 192-256 pages, \$22.95 to \$24.95 (\$28.95 if we go hardcover with it); October or November is our target release date.
- Anticipated release date: October or November 2006.

For the Palladium Fantasy® RPG

The Western Empire – *Back in print*

The nefarious “Empire of Sin” is at last revealed, beginning with its history and continuing on with its politics, Noble Houses, Emperor Itomas, greatest cities and brewing wars.

- 13 regional provinces and their lords.
- 18 cities; all mapped & described.
- The history of the Empire. Western society, trouble spots & war.
- New magic items, herbs, poisons and drugs.
- Adventures and adventure ideas. Maps and world information.

- Written by Bill Coffin for Palladium Second Edition.
- \$22.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 462 – in stores, August.

Coming soon for Palladium Fantasy®

This popular fantasy sourcebook heralds the much anticipated return of sourcebooks for the **Palladium Fantasy®** series.

In the works is **Yin- Sloth Jungles™, Second Edition**, updated and expanded.

Four new sourcebooks are also in the works. Plus, Kevin Siembieda is kicking around the idea of doing a sub-series that takes place during the *Elf-Dwarf War* when both races were at their height, Rune Magic represented advanced technology, and humans were mainly barbarians.

Rifts® Chaos Earth™

This line is not forgotten. In fact we have big plans for this series with four sourcebooks in the works.

The Return of Robotech®?

We hope so. Palladium is currently engaged in talks with Harmony Gold USA to license **Robotech®** for role-playing games again. If all goes well (and things seem to be moving along nicely), a contract will be signed soon and a new line of **Robotech® RPG** products will start hitting the shelves early 2007.

Palladium Books® 2006 Christmas in July Super-Collector's Grab Bag

A number of Palladium's fabulous artists have donated their **original artwork** to help Palladium Books® get through its current crisis and back on its feet. That means you can get original artwork, prints, RPG books and other goodies via **Palladium Books' Christmas in July Super-Collector's Grab Bag!**

You heard right, *Christmas in July*. (And don't worry, Palladium's Annual Christmas Grab Bag will also take place later this year, so nobody misses out.)

Limited Time Offer and Limited Availability

– now thru August 16, 2006 – but only while supplies last! Sold on a first come, first served basis.

The 2006 Super-Collector's Grab Bag is built around *donations* by Palladium's generous freelance artists or Kevin Siembieda for the purpose of getting Palladium back on its feet. These one of a kind items mean there is a *limited* number of

Grab Bags that can be created and shipped. We estimate 140-170 total Grab Bags.

Sold on a first come, first served basis, the Super-Collector's Grab Bags *could* sell out before August 16, 2006. So get your orders in as soon as possible (or call our office to make sure they are still available, 734-946-1156; order line only). This is a unique opportunity that will *not* be offered again.

Each 2006 Super-Collector's X-Mas in July Grab Bag will contain any combination of the following:

- An original piece of artwork (or two if small) worth \$50-\$150 by such talents as . . .
 - *Michael Wilson* has donated 50 pen and ink illustrations from **Rifts®**, **Heroes Unlimited™** and other titles. Dozens of lucky people will get a *half to full page* illustration (or two quarter page illoes) by this fan favorite artist. And one lucky person will get Mike's full page "pin-up" from **The Rifter® #35!** Available for the first time from Palladium Books.
 - *Scott Johnson* has donated 20 original pen and ink illustrations from **Rifts®**, **Palladium Fantasy®** and other titles.
 - *Kent Burles* has donated 30-40 works of original art from **Palladium Fantasy®**, **Rifts®** and other titles, limited.
 - *Nick Bradshaw* – this new artist sensation has created three original, currently unpublished, full page illustrations especially for this grab bag.
 - *Brian & Allen Manning* have just sent in approximately 20 illustrations for this grab bag. These two personal and dynamic artists were the hit of the Palladium Open House.
 - *Ramon Perez* has promised to send a pile of pen and ink illustrations from **Rifts®** and other titles, but he's having trouble finding artwork.
 - *Kevin Siembieda* artwork, some pen and ink, some pencil fantasy pieces from his own private archives. Rare, hard to find, and worth more than you might think. He just recently sold three pencil pages to a gentleman in Germany for \$500!
 - *Kevin Long* – a tiny handful of pen and ink illustrations or pencil sketches from Kevin Siembieda's remaining personal collection *may* be available to a lucky few who request them. Specify if you want **Robotech®** art or *anything* by Kevin Long.
 - *Drunken Style Studio* illustrations by Mark Dudley, Comfort Debra Love, Adam Withers, and others.
 - *John Zeleznik* was unable to send original artwork, but he is donating at least 100 signed, limited edition, color prints worth \$20-\$40 each and other rare odds and ends. These are prints created and sold by John's own company, *Zeleznik Illustrations* and include sci-fi, fantasy and pin-up style art (not Palladium art). **Note:** Please indicate if you'd prefer a *John Zeleznik Print Grab Gag* (three or more signed, limited edition, Johnny Z items with a total value of \$100 or more) instead of original artwork.
 - *Other Palladium Artists* may also donate artwork to the cause (sorry, Apollo Okamura and Freddie Williams are all out of originals, other than a few odds and ends we may still have on hand from past X-Mas Grab Bags).

The Value of the Artwork: The artwork in each Grab Bag will be worth an *estimated* \$50, but may range from \$50 to \$150, sometimes more. In the case of small quarter page illustrations, two pieces of artwork may be included. On the other hand, if a person is getting an exquisite full page or large illustration worth an estimated \$100-\$150, or more, that artwork may be ALL he or she gets in that Grab Bag. Remember, value is in the eye of the beholder and some artwork you may not particularly like, may be quite valuable. Also remember that as more and more artist work in the digital medium, "original" artwork will become increasingly rare and valuable.

Certificate of Authenticity and Value: Kevin Siembieda will personally estimate the value of each piece of artwork included in every Christmas in July Grab Bag. A signed, certificate of authenticity and value is included with every order.

Please indicate two or more of your favorite Palladium artists listed above, in the order of preference. Remember, this is a "grab bag" and artwork is limited, so there is no guarantee you will get art by your favorite artist, but we will try our best to accommodate everyone. All artwork (and prints) is available only while supplies last, and is distributed on a first come, first served basis.

- **Super limited edition portfolio** created special for this Grab Bag for *summertime*. Each print is 8 ½ x 11, suitable for framing. Limited to approximately 300 copies. \$25.00 value.
- **Palladium's 25 Year Anniversary Laser-Etched Glasses.** Six different laser-etched glasses (25th anniversary logo, **Rifts®**, **HU2**, **BTS-2**, **Nightbane®**, and **Palladium Fantasy®**) with a going price of \$45 plus shipping may be *requested* as part of your Super-Collector's Grab Bag. But remember, list several different wants so you'll be surprised. \$45.00 value.
- **A Palladium Books RPG or sourcebook or two.** You may list *several special wants*, but there's no guarantee you'll get any. List several wants from recent releases or back stock. \$20-\$70.00 value.
- **A request for autographs** will get the items signed by Kevin Siembieda and whoever else is available at the time.
- **Gold Editions (signed and numbered or printer proof).** Requests may include the *Beyond the Supernatural™ Gold Hardcover Limited Edition* and/or the *Rifts® Ultimate Edition Gold*, or the old *Rifts® Silver Hardcover*; available only upon request and there is *no* guarantee you'll get that item, so list alternative wants. Remember, you might get something completely different than your request, after all, it is a "surprise grab bag."
- **Rifts® T-shirts:** Available in sizes M, L, XL, XXL, 3XL, 4XL and 5XL.

Choice Number One: 25th Anniversary, I Survived the Palladium Open House (gold on black). Include your size, please.

Choice Number Two: I helped save the Megaverse® and all I got was this lousy T-shirt (white on blue). Indicate your size, please.

Both have a \$18.95 to \$26.95 value depending on the size.

- **Total Value** of this Grab Bag can range anywhere from \$100-\$200 and artwork, prints and limited editions are likely to increase in value.

- Limited to approximately 140-170 people on a first come, first served basis. A rare opportunity.

\$100.00 plus shipping & handling for USA destinations

\$100.00 for the Collector's Super X-Mas Grab Bag.

\$5.00 handling and packaging

+\$20.00 for shipping to customers in the USA.

\$125.00 US total.

Be sure to include the shipping and handling costs with your order.

All orders will be sent via UPS or US Priority Mail (or International Airmail Parcel Post) because they are fast, traceable and the contents can be insured. Each Grab Bag is a unique combination of items in which an irreplaceable original work of art is included. We must be able to trace and insure the package. We hope you understand. **Note:** Street address is preferred, *not* a P.O. Box.

No C.O.D. orders.

The shipping cost may sound high, but this is a special one of a kind offer and we need to do this right. Artwork may be shipped separately in a second package, requiring additional packing materials, time and care. Especially large or heavy packages may even require custom-made boxes and additional shipping costs at our expense.

General Warning! Palladium Books can *NOT* be held liable for damage in shipping. We will diligently pack and wrap each and every package with the greatest of care to protect the artwork. However, it seems inevitable that there will be some dinged corners and a few seriously damaged or lost packages; it is unavoidable, so you order *at your own risk*. Even if a package can be insured, original art and signed and numbered books and prints can *NOT* be exactly duplicated. *Sorry, no refunds.*

That having been said, Palladium has decades of extensive experience shipping artwork, and we will do everything we can to insure all orders arrive in good to excellent condition.

Special shipping and next day delivery are available at the customer's expense and should significantly reduce the risk, but not eliminate it. See our web site, or call the Palladium office to make special arrangements.

APO Warning: You guys and gals in the military know how unreliable APOs can be, so we recommend sending your *Super-Collector's X-Mas in July Grab Bag* to a friend or relative. Palladium Books cannot be held responsible for *damage* or *loss* for orders sent to an APO. You order at your own risk. Shipped via US mail. No refunds.

Available only while supplies last.

Canada & Overseas Orders

\$100.00 US dollars for the Collector's Super X-Mas Grab Bag.

+\$5.00 US dollars for handling and packaging.

+\$30.00 US dollars for shipping to those in Canada or Mexico.

+\$50.00 US dollars for shipping *overseas* orders.

The purchaser pays for *all* shipping costs and artwork should be sent *International Airmail Parcel Post* and insured. Sorry, no refunds for missing packages. You order at your own risk.

An important note to our friends in Canada, Mexico & Overseas: Because artwork and clothing (T-shirts) are part of this package, you *may* be charged *additional* duty, taxes and fees by Customs or the shipper (UPS) at the border. These charges may be prohibitively expensive. Palladium Books can *NOT* be held responsible for these costs, and customers outside the United States *might* want to investigate these costs before ordering. Additionally, Palladium Books cannot be held responsible for *damage* or *loss* to orders sent to foreign countries. You order at your own risk, *no refunds*. Remember, part of each package includes original artwork that can *NOT* be replaced.

Order Today

The orders for the limited, *Super-Collector's X-Mas in July Grab Bag* will be accepted starting *now* and ending at midnight *August 16, 2006* – or until we run out of artwork and prints. Sold on a first come, first served basis. When the art is gone, the deal is over! So don't wait, order soon.

Available only while supplies last. (734) 946-1156 order line.

Send orders to:

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12455 Universal Drive

Taylor, MI 48180 – USA

Or you may order online at the Palladium Website:

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Palladium Books®

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**Brought to you from
across the Megaverse®**















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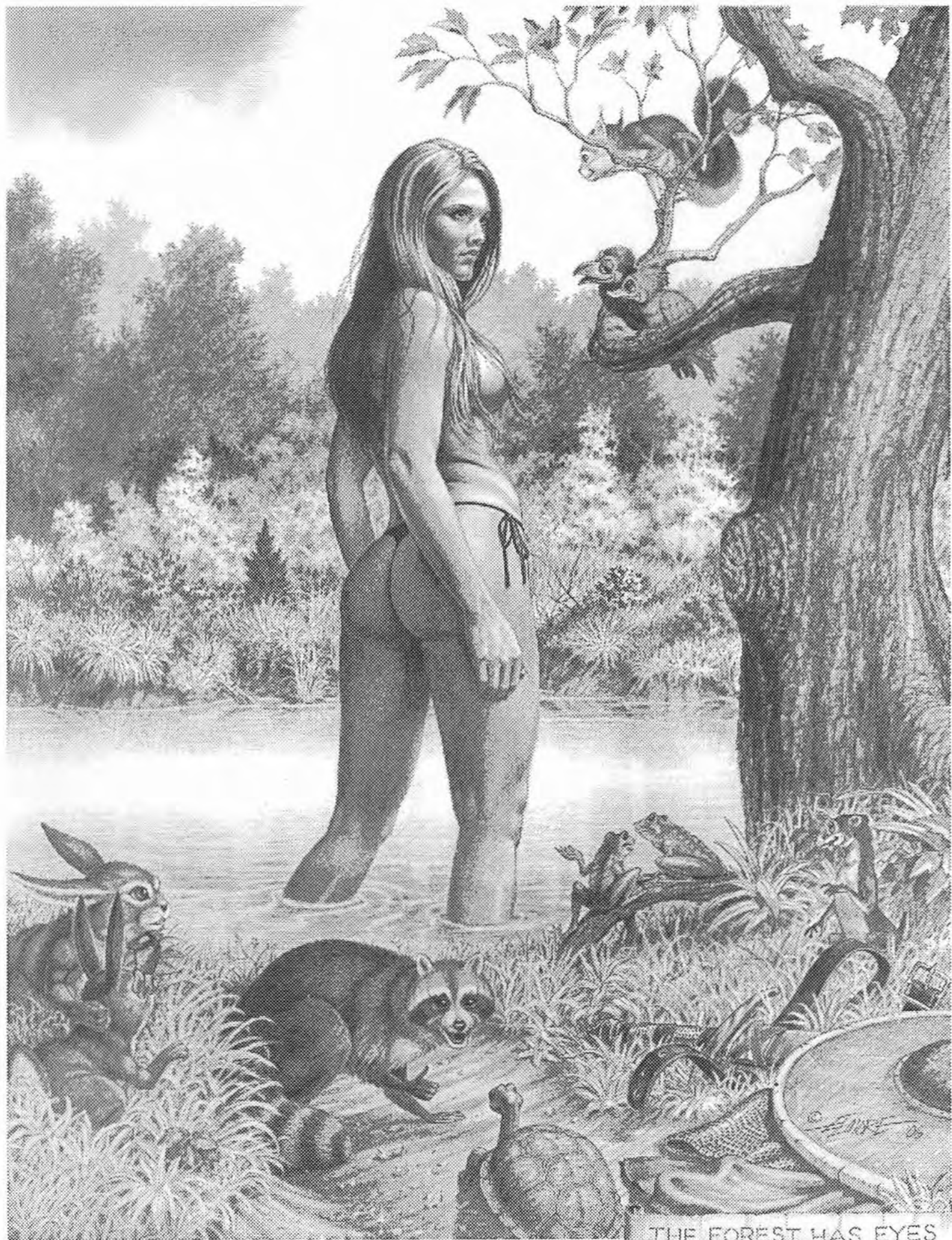


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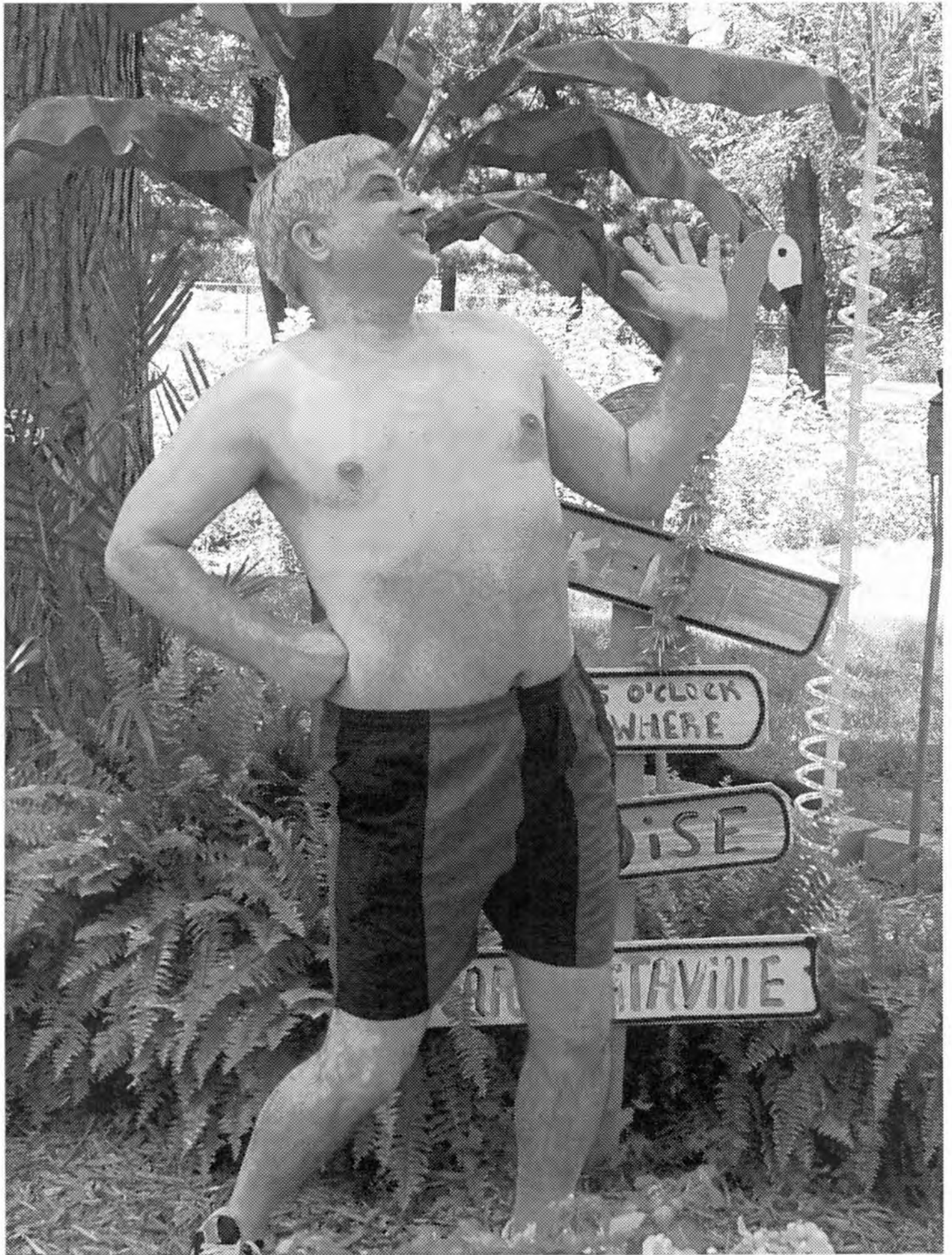


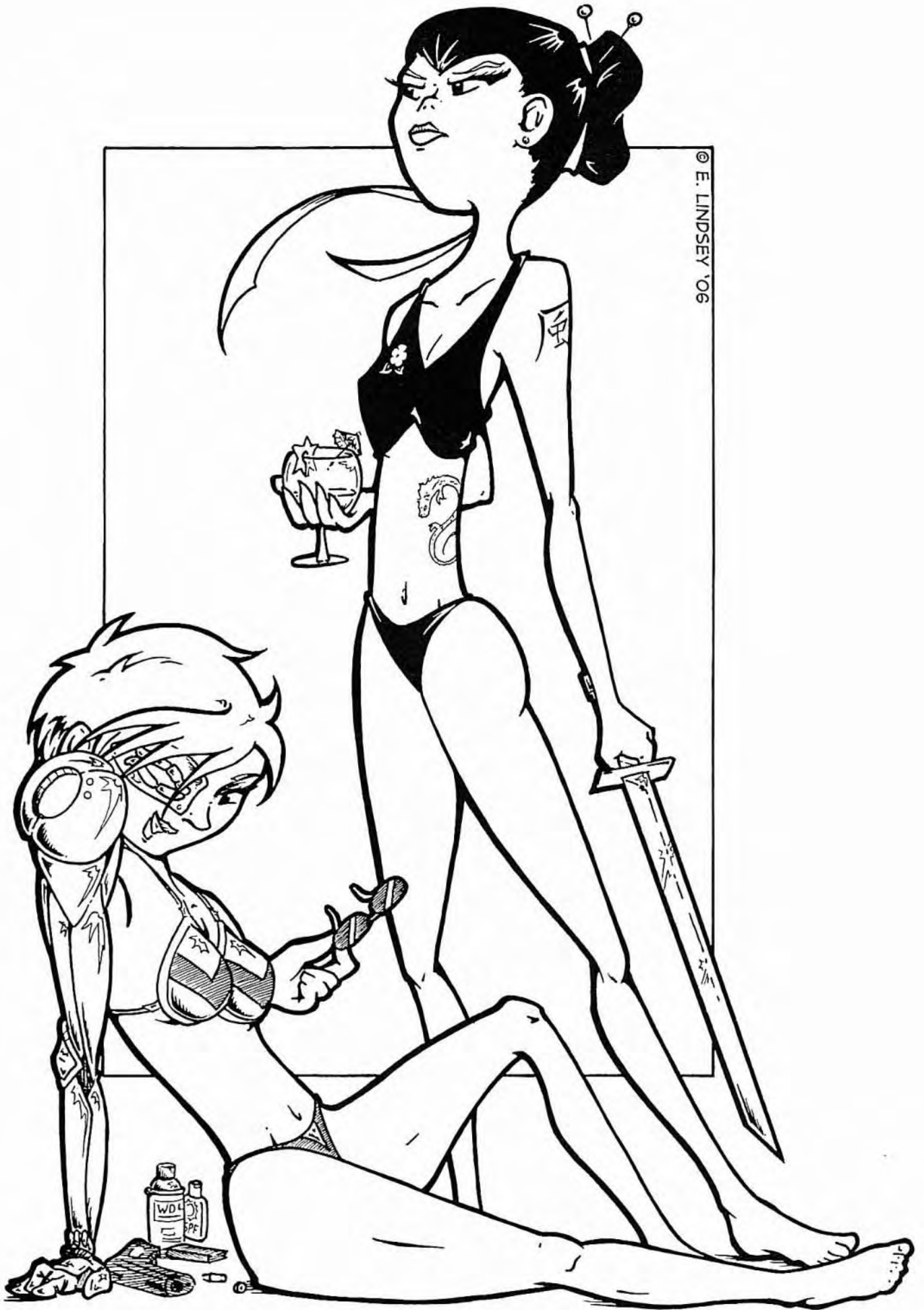
To all the bad boys
at Palladium
Slugs & Kisses,
Tera x

2006



THE FOREST HAS EYES

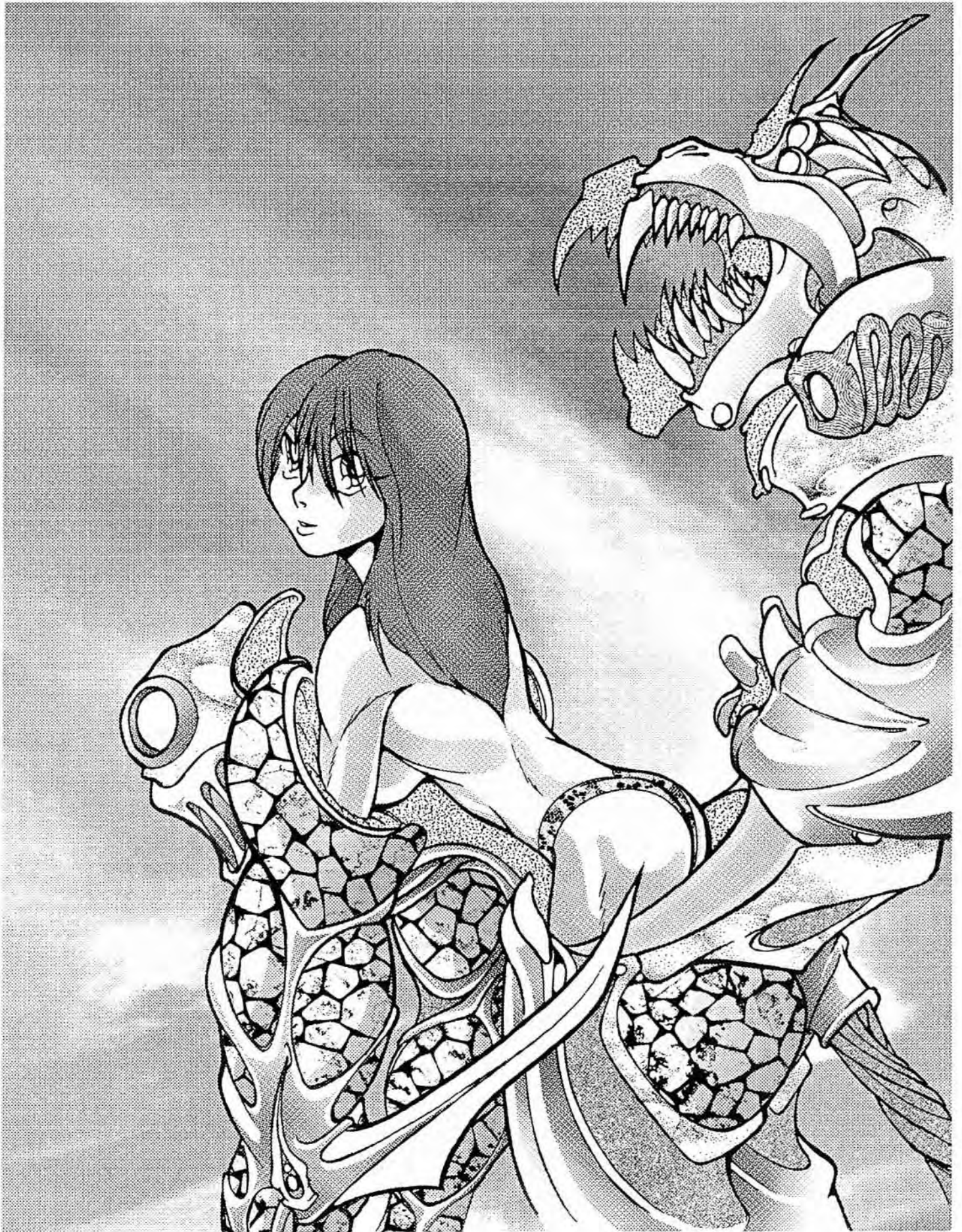


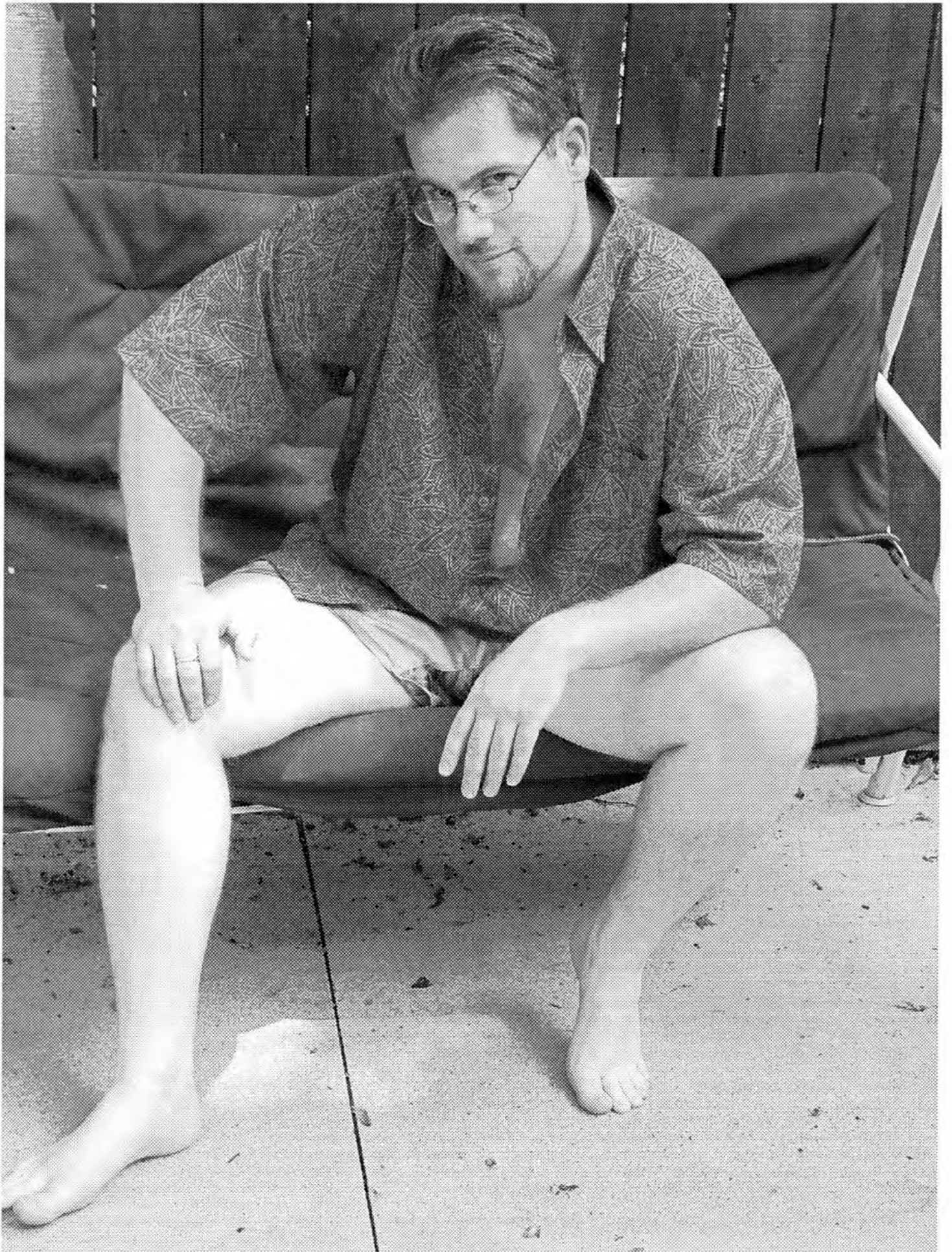


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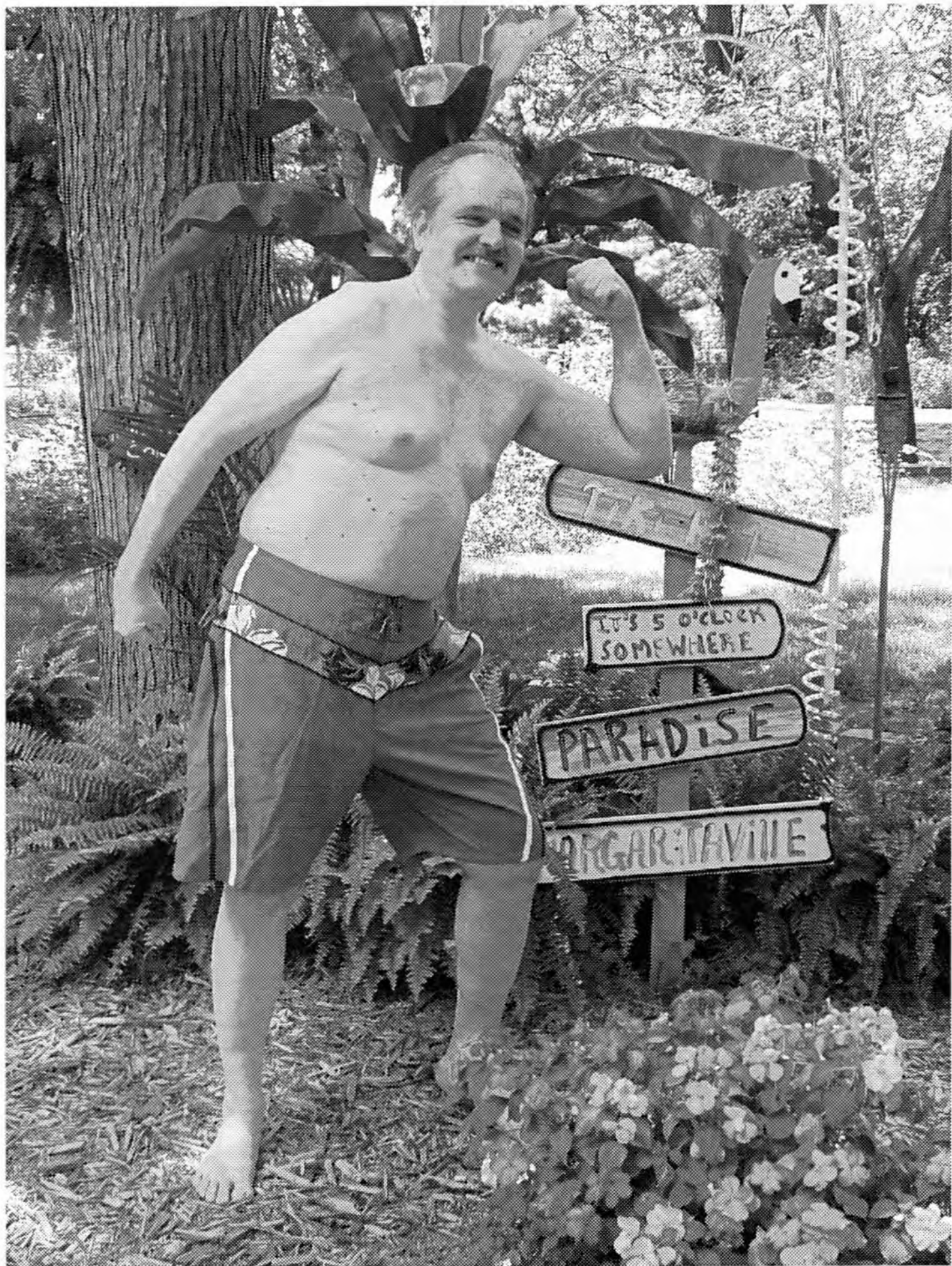


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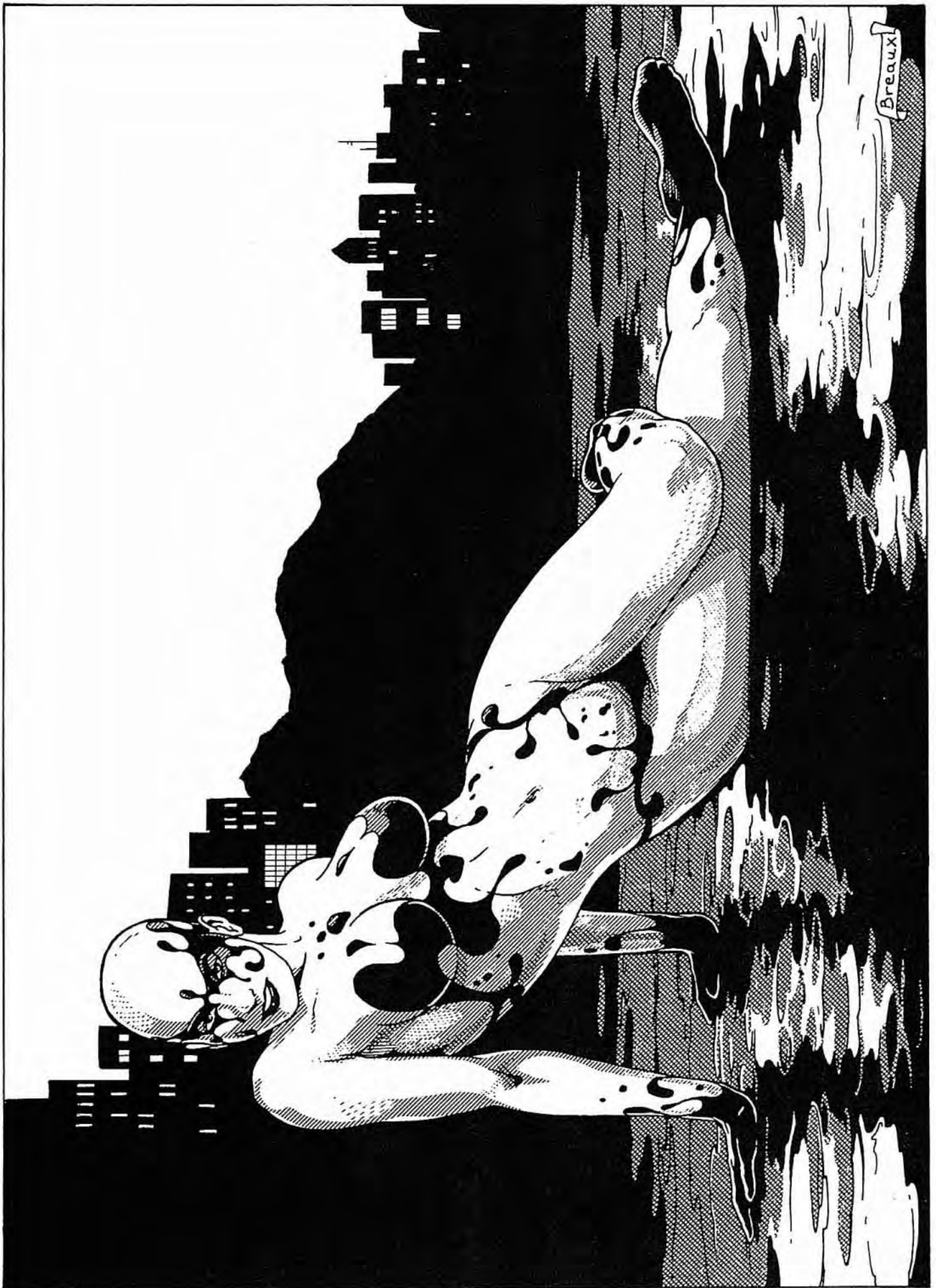


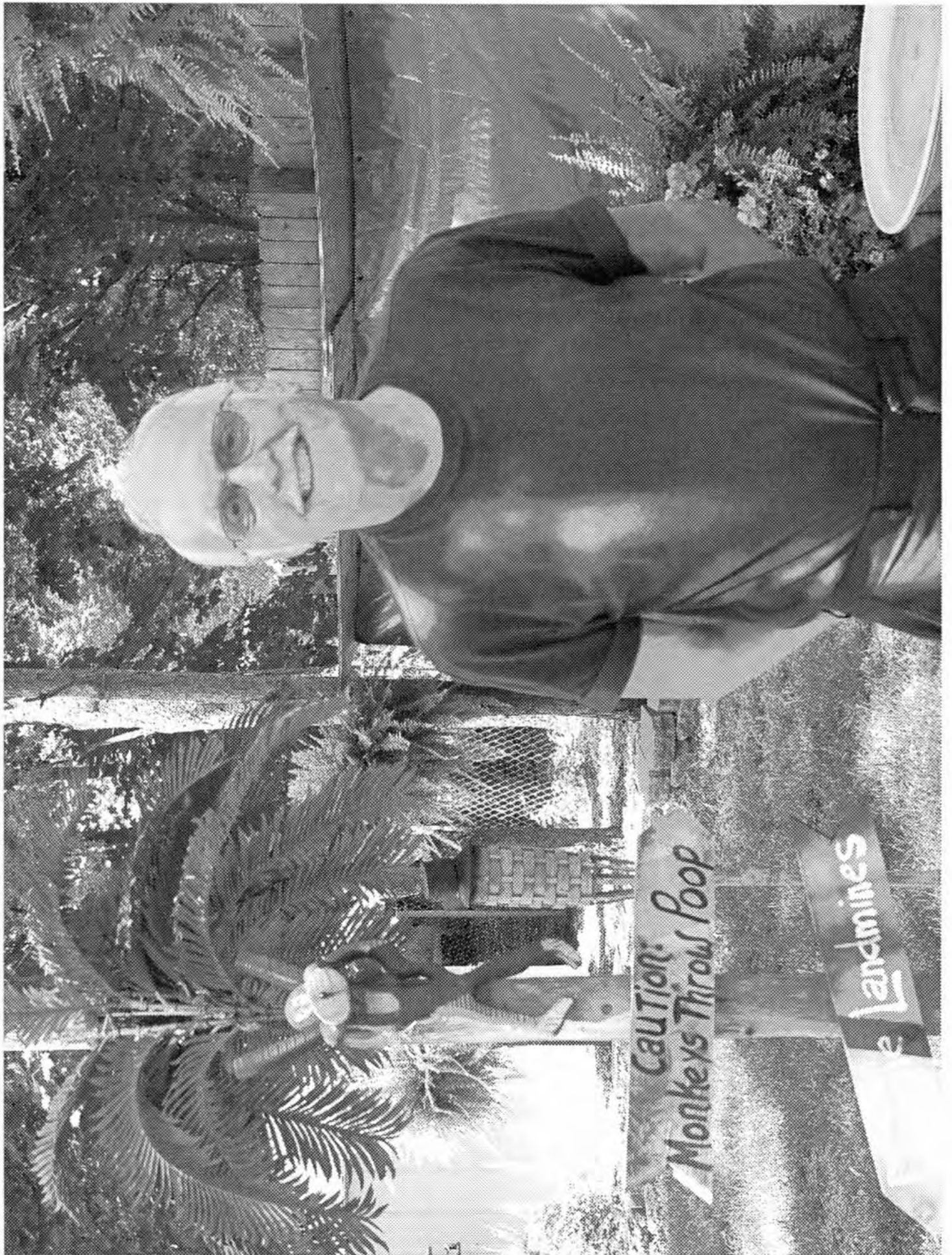




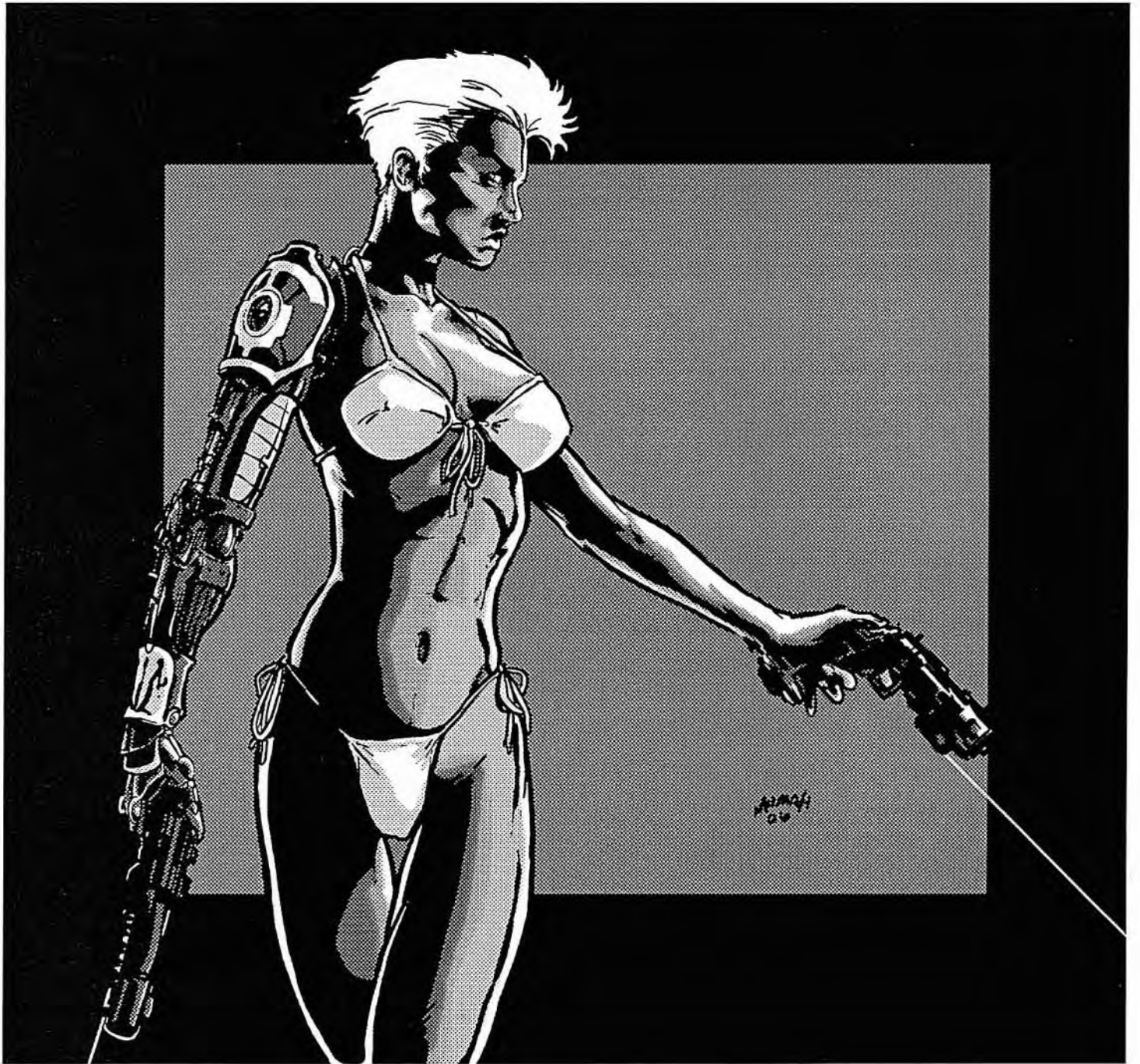














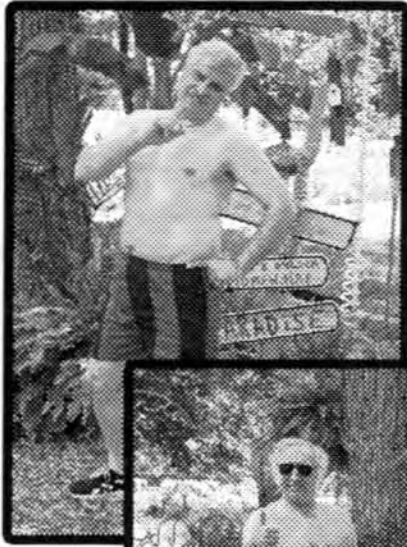




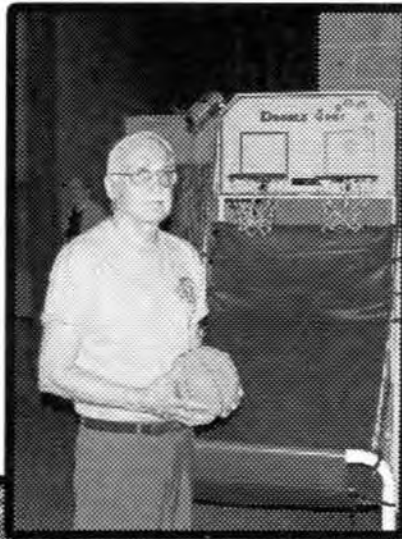


The Palladium "Guys" 2006

Kevin



Hank



Brandon



Julius

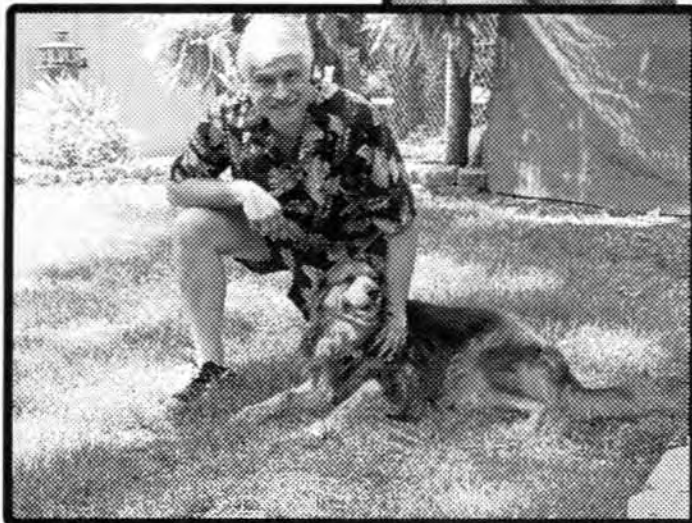


Father
&
son

Bandit



Wayne · Jules · Hank · Alex



Kevin & Norton



Please help save Palladium Books

For those of you who haven't heard, Palladium Books fell victim to skulduggery and betrayal. Without your help, the company could go under. Kevin and the Palladium crew are doing everything we can do to stay afloat, get back on our feet and continue to produce the role-playing games you love for years to come.

Read a summary of these events and where we are going in the front of this issue. For complete information, go to the Palladium Website (www.palladiumbooks.com) or drop by our booth at *Gen Con* or another convention.

Despite our problems and uncertain future, we also have high hopes. Our fans have rushed to our aid in unprecedented numbers and support. They've bought the special, limited edition, *A Megaverse® United print*, purchased back stock titles and new books, as well as sent us words of support, encouragement and love. It has been awesome, inspiring and humbling.

Kevin and our freelancers also have big ideas for the future. With continued support from you, our fans, hard work by all of us at Palladium, and a little luck, the company *should* survive this crisis and be around to wow you with new, cool games and sourcebooks for another generation or two. Check out the News and Coming Attractions section for a glimpse of our big plans, and they are just the beginning.

To Purchase a Print

Kevin Siembieda has created a special, black and white, limited edition print he calls *A Megaverse United*. The print was hand drawn special for this purpose.

- Each print is hand signed by Kevin Siembieda and numbered.
- EVERYONE who purchases the print will see *their names* appear in the back pages of a major book listed as "Heroes of the

Megaverse®!" In fact, Kevin plans to tie all the names into the basic story line in a *Rifts®* sourcebook he hopes to call, *Heroes of the Megaverse®*.

- 11 x 14 inches, printed on a good quality paper.
- Black and white, toned piece of artwork.
- \$50.00 +\$5.00 for shipping and materials to the USA. (+\$9.00 to Canada & Mexico, \$15.00 overseas).
- We hope to sell 3,000-5,000 prints by the end of the year (we've sold approximately 1700 in just three months).

Sale of the print should give us the money we need to get back on our feet! The initial sales already gave us a much needed shot in the arm. With continued support, we hope to weather this storm.

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

YOU can make a *real* difference

This is one of those rare moments in life when YOU, as an individual, *can* make a real difference. You can be a real hero by purchasing one of those prints and encouraging every Palladium gamer you know to do the same. Spread the word online, at conventions, at game stores, everywhere. Encourage every Palladium fan who has ever enjoyed our games, purchased a Grab Bag, or visited us at a convention to run home and place an order.

I would never ask this great kindness of you if I didn't think it would *really work* to save Palladium and keep us going for years.

This is easier than it may sound. Three to five thousand may seem like a big number, but that's not even close to the number of gamers who purchased the *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* within the first few weeks of its release! Palladium has a mailing list of 14,000 fans who buy from us throughout the year. We sold 2000+ Christmas Grab Bags last year alone. We get 25,000-50,000 hits on the website every month, with some months exceeding 100,000!!!

Millions of gamers around the world have played our games over the years — *Rifts®*, *Ninja Turtles®*, *Robotech®*, *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Nightbane®* and others. MILLIONS!

With *YOUR* help Palladium *CAN* survive. Already, we know we can survive through the rest of the year, and if we can sell another 1700 or more prints, it should free us of the most crushing debt, and help get us standing on our feet.

What else can you do?

- Come to the conventions Palladium is attending this year and to the Palladium Open House in 2007, and celebrate the past, present and future; buy back-stock items, new releases, art and collectibles.
- Keep supporting Palladium by purchasing our games and supplements.
- Spread the word about Palladium's role-playing games to other gamers. The greatest sales tool there is, especially in this age of the Internet, is "word of mouth." Encourage others to play Palladium games, run games and demos at your favorite game store or local game convention.
- Tell stores that you want our books and wish they'd carry them (but only if it's true).
- Share your thoughts and ideas with us.

All of us at Palladium Books thank the thousands of people who have already shown Palladium their support by purchasing the print and other products, and sharing with us their thoughts, words and heartfelt encouragement. And all of you who have supported us by purchasing our products for decades, you guys and gals are what keeps us all going. Thank you.

— Kevin Siembieda and the Palladium Staff, 2006



BRAN MANNING
ALLEN MANNING '06

Rifts® Chaos Earth™

THE ARMY OF SCORCHED EARTH

Optional Source Material for Rifts® Chaos Earth™

By Josh Sinspaugh

He had lost his friends, family and nearly everyone else he knew and loved in the upheaval that brought those accursed lines of blue energy to earth and now he had lost his patrol. To further complicate matters, his radios were offline and his signal flares had gotten lost in that last battle with demons near Waukegan. Now Sergeant Horatio Lakewood was alone outside the main hub of Chicagoland in a community called Elgin, far from Central Headquarters and what little order that entailed. During the few quick seminars and training exercises that were administered after 12-22 on how to fight demons and counter creatures from the Rifts, Sergeant Lakewood had learned one crucial piece of information that dogged his mind as he crept through Elgin: a soldier separated from his squad is as good as dead. Try as he might, that was all the man could think of as he hoped and prayed to reconnect with his patrol. He was especially fearful, as a number of patrols had disappeared after going into Elgin, a fact that was becoming well known amongst the NEMA rank and file.

With a leap, the NEMA Peacekeeper spun around and fired his LSR-250 Laser Rifle toward the sound that had suddenly startled him. To his relief, nothing was there except for some shrieking cat that he had nearly hit and atomized with his laser blast. The frightened beast ran shrieking over a pile of rubble and disappeared from sight, his wails continuing until they too faded into the distance.

"Sorry, kitty." Sergeant Lakewood whispered as he made an attempt to disappear behind a pile of rubble. He hoped that his patrol would hear the racket caused by the terrified feline, yet he hoped even more that nothing else heard it. "There is no way in hell that I can take on a demon alone," the Sergeant whispered to himself. "No way in hell." After about twenty minutes of unnerving and thunderous silence, the soldier returned to his creeping through the desolation of Elgin.

About a half hour later the Peacekeeper's fears were realized: a bronze skinned, eight foot tall demon towered over him, a shaggy wild man with long hair and rippling muscles. Bracing its legs, the demon held out its fists much like a boxer would, immediately beginning to shout incoherently at Sergeant Lakewood.

"Not a Savage Fury!" Sergeant Lakewood mumbled to himself. "I could've taken a Demon Rat, but not a Savage Fury!"

Bravely, he brandished his rifle and brought the demon into his sights. If he were to die, at least he would die fighting.

"I was hoping you would fight back," growled the monster almost gleefully, as it leapt forward and with one hammer-like blow knocked the rifle out of the human's hand and sent it skidding away. Sergeant Lakewood tried to leap back but the Savage Fury was already on him, landing another devastating blow, this one a haymaker that shattered the helmet of Lakewood's body armor and knocked him back, stumbling into a pile of rubble. The Sergeant's vision was now blurred, his ears rang and he almost thought he felt blood pouring out from them. He was absolutely sure he heard something go *crunch* inside his head, and the taste of blood in his mouth was more potent than the acrid smell of ash and smoke in the air. He had no time to reflect on his pain, though, as the demon closed in again, attempting another punch. This one the soldier managed to dodge by rolling out of the way, causing the monster's fist to become embedded in the rubble. Seizing the opportunity, he drew his Vibro-Knife and jammed it into the stomach of the beast, instantaneously rolling away again.

Letting out a bellow, the Savage Fury (who apparently ignored the knife sticking out of its abdomen) jerked its hand free from the concrete and closed in on Lakewood once again, even as the soldier was scrambling to his feet. Before Horatio was even halfway up from the ground, the demon landed a hefty kick that cracked the soldier's chest plate and sent the mortal flying into a nearby wall at the same time. Sergeant Lakewood's head was pounding and his body was wracked with pain, he lay prostrate on the ground in a heap, watching the demon in fear as it closed in for what was undoubtedly the final time. Stunned and unable to speak, the soldier prayed like he never prayed before, prayed to whatever god would listen. Laughing, the monster drew closer, even as Lakewood closed his eyes, praying again for help.

Luckily for the soldier, help came, a succession of ion blasts tearing the Savage Fury into pieces even as it readied the finishing blow. Opening his eyes, Sergeant Horatio Lakewood saw his saviors, six men clad in power armor, each holding the infamous United States of America's M-160 Ion Assault Rifle. As his eyes focused, he recognized the power armor: APA-15C Semper Fi Power Armor, a scaled down version of the more venerated APA-15. The suits didn't shine, though, as they normally would. They were instead painted with what looked like dull gray exterior house paint and shrouded with tattered black tarps, which they wore as if they were capes or cloaks. They stood still in front of Sergeant Lakewood, looking down at him and the remains of the Savage Fury. The foremost stepped forward and began to speak over the built-in loudspeaker.

"So you must be with NEMA," the man said in what Lakewood swore must have been a New Jersey accent. "What is a NEMA brat doing all the way out here in Elgin?" Slowly, Lakewood sat up and faced the apparent leader, his vision blurred and his head still pounding.

"I got separated from my patrol and ended up here," the Sergeant answered as he rose to his trembling feet. "Are you guys with the US Marines?" Lakewood asked, surveying the Semper Fi power armors again. "Have you just arrived in Chicagoland?"

"Yes, we are Marines and no, we've been here for a while," snorted the leader almost contemptuously as he raised the power

armor's wrist above his head and sent an ion blast into the sky. "Why, has NEMA been in Chicago long?" His tone was sarcastic and as cold as the frigid air about them.

"I mean you no disrespect," began Sergeant Lakewood. "But I must ask you, do you have some problem with NEMA?" He didn't know why, but he was still trembling and afraid.

"I have no problem with NEMA."

"Then why the attitude?"

"I wasn't aware that the First Amendment was revoked." The leader snarled. "I am allowed to conduct my attitude as I see fit. But if you must know, I am sick and tired of NEMA patrols talking down to us as if they were the only ones fighting for mankind."

"If I talked down to you I apologize," Sergeant Lakewood said quietly. "But I was unaware that I had done so."

"You asked if we had been here long!" shouted the man, fury in his voice. "As if we haven't been making a difference!"

"That wasn't my intent," Sergeant Lakewood stated, shrinking back from the Semper Fi. "I was just overjoyed to find more military personnel other than NEMA here in Chicagoland. We had thought that a majority of the US Military had..." Suddenly, with a rush of fear, it finally dawned on Sergeant Lakewood. The leader had stated that NEMA patrols always talked down to him. If this was the case, why then had he never heard about Marines in the area before? Furthermore, he suddenly remembered those reports, the reports of the patrols who were lost after moving into Elgin.

"Please finish your thought," snarled the leader. "You were saying that 'a majority of the military had,' and then you stopped speaking." The man stepped toward Sergeant Lakewood. "So please, finish your thought."

"Who the hell are you?" Lakewood shouted as he frantically tried to get his radio to work. It was to no avail, though, and the Sergeant now knew why he was so scared.

"Me?" The leader laughed as he took another step forward. "I am Corporal Thaddeus Rhodes of the United States Marines, leader of the Army of Scorched Earth." He motioned toward the insignia on his forehead, a poorly painted triangle with a curved line cutting through it. "We are here to eradicate the enemies of humankind."

"Then you should join up with NEMA!" Sergeant Lakewood shouted, almost pleading as the Semper Fi drew closer. "You would be a valued part of our forces!"

"Afraid not," snarled Corporal Rhodes. "We play by our own rules. Furthermore, we don't take kindly to NEMA nowadays. Word is that NEMA has accepted help from a few Blue Zone and Chaos Wizards."

"Yes, that is true," stammered Sergeant Lakewood. "But they are a valued help in our fight against the Demon Plagues."

"But they rely on the science of demons, or 'magic' as you children so willingly call it!" Corporal Rhodes scowled as he placed his Semper Fi's hand over Sergeant Lakewood's head. "They are accepting help from the enemy and for that they must die along with the enemy!"

"Please don't," Sergeant Lakewood managed to whimper before he felt an impossible amount of pressure on his skull. His vision blurred again, his ears rang and the pain, the unbearable

pain flushed over him for a moment before he went completely numb. Less than a minute later, darkness overtook him and Sergeant Horatio Lakewood was no more.

Demons in Human Clothing

The Army of Scorched Earth is an army in name only, yet they are still a force of great evil that has suddenly befallen the people of Chaos Earth who are unfortunate enough to live outside of the central hub of Chicagoland. Although the squad of Marines who act as the central unit of the organization have been joined by a few rogue NEMA agents since their conception, they still do not have enough forces to constitute being referred to as an army in any sense of the word. They are at best a band of murderers, rapists and thieves led by a madman with a grudge against the world. The entire "army" is just as evil as the demons that they seek to destroy, regarding the innocent civilians of Chaos Earth as a commodity to be used as pawns in their sojourn against both the Demon Plagues and NEMA.

NEMA are the heroes and saviors of the day, a military force that has taken up the fight against a sea of impossible odds in order to protect not just themselves but the innocent men, women and children that the madness of the transformed Earth would most likely swallow up in an instant. To the Army of Scorched Earth the selfless actions of NEMA are the actions of dogs. For hundreds of years the United States Marines were the elite of the elite, a force that not even the most stalwart dictator would want to have on his doorstep. However, with the Coming of the Rifts, all of that changed. Suddenly NEMA, a world police organization that stood outside of the normal chain of command, was the elite of the elite, a sacred organization made up of the saviors of humankind. The venerated United States Marines were cast to the wayside, a pauper's witness to the events of the day. And to make matters worse, NEMA was accepting help from those who dared to practice "the science of demons."

For all of these transgressions NEMA must be made to pay, they must be destroyed along with the demons that torment mankind. Such is the twisted logic of the Army of Scorched Earth, a band of misguided rogues who sully the name of both the United States of America and the United States Marine Corps. Such is the new unseen enemy that NEMA and the remnant military forces acting in Chicagoland (including the US Marines) must face.

The Origins of Madness

Prior to the great cataclysm, what would eventually become the central unit of the Army of Scorched Earth was nothing more than a few insolent Marines on the fast track to a dishonorable discharge from the US Military. A nine man squad consisting of six power armor pilots and the three man crew of an Iwo-Jima MIFV; a squad that couldn't follow an order if their life depended on it. The military brass considered them a disgrace, nine soldiers who earned demotions and pay cuts as if it were part of their regular salary, nine soldiers who didn't deserve to be called Marines. A few days before the cataclysm the process to discharge the utter failures from the Marine Corps was set into motion. At last, it seemed as if the US Military was to be rid of a persistent smudge on their reputation. Unfortunately for the brass, the cataclysm struck.

With the Coming of the Rifts, the remnants of the United States Marine Corps sprang into action, ready to defend mankind alone or alongside other forces, such as NEMA, when possible. In the midst of the chaos, the nine man squad under the command of Corporal Thaddeus Rhodes was placed as an infantry support unit connected to a squad that was very similar to the one that they themselves were a part of. However, unlike themselves, the other squad was issued suits of APA-15C Light Semper Fi power armor, a scaled down version of the normal Semper Fi along with an Iwo-Jima MIFV. To Thaddeus Rhodes and his men the new squad had robbed them of their own glory, leaving them to follow as a support unit without power armor to call their own. In the mind of Corporal Rhodes, a mortal sin was committed against them, one that needed to be rectified when the right time presented itself. So, the psychopath and his followers plotted against their fellow Marines, watching, waiting, and biding their time.

Unfortunately, for the other squad, an opportunity quickly presented itself. On the way to Chicago, where the Marines hoped to join up with NEMA forces that were mustering there, both the Semper Fi unit and Rhodes's unit became separated from the main force during a battle with an army of demons from the Rifts. After a lengthy battle, the main force found itself scattered and clinging to a slim victory over foes that had outnumbered them ten to one. Over ninety percent of the troops were lost in the conflict either through casualties or separation from the main force. The few remaining soldiers gathered together and headed toward Chicago. They never made it though, their fate unknown to both NEMA and the two squads who were struggling to survive cut-off from any and all military support.

That very night, Corporal Rhodes set his plan into action. Oblivious to the bitter sentiments that their fellow Marines held against them, the exhausted Semper Fi squad agreed finally to take a quick rest while Rhodes and his men stood watch, using, with permission, the mecha and Iwo-Jima MIFV to assist in the task. The moment that the other squad was asleep Rhodes and his men slaughtered them, burning the hovel that they were staying in and all evidence to the ground. Not a single man survived in the other squadron and not a single member of Corporal Rhodes's squadron felt even a modicum of remorse or guilt. Infact, they laughed as they committed their grievous deeds, believing that their anger was both righteous and justified. They had not committed murder or treason in their minds; instead, they were fully convinced that they had enacted the will of God. Newly equipped with war machines and plenty of ammo, Rhodes led his squad to Chicago and the glory that he believed awaited him there.

However, as luck would have it, Rhodes did not find the political environment to be to his satisfaction. Instead, he found that the NAA's military force: NEMA, was in charge of operations in the city. Worse, he saw NEMA accepting assistance from the filth that used magic or "the science of demons" as Rhodes and his men often referred to it. The entire place put a bad taste in his mouth that the insane Corporal just couldn't stand. Immediately, he had his men withdraw from Chicago and the influence of the "dogs of NEMA." If fate were a kinder force then Rhodes and his men would have disappeared into obscurity, passing from the minds and tales of the people of Chaos Earth like the winter wind; that just wasn't the case though.

As Rhodes and his squad entered into the outskirts of Chicago they came upon the community of Elgin, a town that was under the cruel yoke of a very territorial gang of lesser demons. Acting quickly, the squadron dispatched the gang leader and either killed or drove the rest of the miscreants away, leaving behind a very grateful throng of civilians who begged for the protection that the group could provide. Sensing opportunity, Rhodes obliged and set his squadron up as the protectors of Elgin. In a few short weeks, he had consolidated his power, driving most of the remaining demon gangs and the innocent practitioners of magic away from the town. Furthermore, he and his men quickly brainwashed the paranoid people of Elgin, with the vast majority believing that Rhodes's ideologies against magic and against NEMA were true. The few that disagreed were framed by the squadron as either being possessed or in league with the "evil outsiders" and were summarily lynched, their dead bodies often left in the street to be fed on by dogs and demons alike.

A short while after that, as rogue NEMA agents that had either gone insane or had become disenchanted with NEMA began to join Rhodes in Elgin, the insane Corporal began to have delusions of grandeur. The events of those few short weeks since his arrival in Elgin inspired Rhodes to name his forces that were organizing there as the "Army of Scorched Earth." Their mecha and equipment were given fresh coats of a dull gray paint and all were shrouded with black tarps that they wore as if they were capes or cloaks. These new "disguises" acted as the final severance between the Army of Scorched Earth and both NEMA and the United States of America. Suddenly, almost overnight, the miserable failure of a Marine was a king, even a god to his men and a couple hundred very scared and very paranoid civilians. Unbeknownst to NEMA, a seed of evil just as horrible as any demon had been planted in Elgin and its roots were growing deep.

The Demon of Elgin

To the central command of NEMA, deep within the heart of Chicagoland, the community of Elgin, a town outside of the central hub, is a mystery wrapped in an enigma along the swollen Fox River. Most patrols that go through Elgin disappear completely, never to be seen or heard from again. The few that make it through encounter no resistance whatsoever except for the occasional demon that is inhabiting one of the ruins there. These patrols report no sign of hostile forces, just a couple dozen civilians hiding and trying to live their lives in dilapidated buildings. Not a single Blue Line passes through the town, either, with the nearest existing some two miles away, so the patrols are certainly not being waylaid by an anomaly of some sort. It just doesn't make any sense, with the only logical explanation being that either the patrols that get lost go AWOL or are swept away by some demonic force that exists outside of the community. Elgin confuses the NEMA central command to no end, however they usually have many other much more pressing matters to attend to, and thus a formal investigation probably will not be launched unless things calm down (fat chance).

All of the mystery surrounding Elgin has led many civilians and soldiers alike to speculate that there is a powerful demon living within the ruins of the town. Many people that have passed by (but not through) the town have reported seeing a

large robed figure stalking the ruins in the distance or have heard the screams of dying men and women from within the town. Although NEMA has yet to have their own sighting of the monster, many soldiers believe it to be a fact. So far, any patrols that have made it through Elgin unscathed have reported that they have seen neither the demon nor evidence of him. Disregarding the lack of physical evidence (which really amounts to nothing nowadays anyways), many civilians give Elgin a wide berth.

This entire veil of mystery is all the handiwork of the Army of Scorched Earth who go to great lengths to maintain their secrecy. Most NEMA patrols are secretly shadowed as they pass through Elgin, their strengths and weaknesses studied and noted. If Rhodes believes that a strike is in order, he has his men jam radio signals and handles the patrols through misplaced trust just as they did in the case of Sergeant Horatio Lakewood. Sometimes though, he'll set up an ambush and destroy any intruder through a hail of gunfire. Other patrols he allows to pass by untouched to help further add a veneer of mystery to "his" town. All the while he facilitates a story about a demon of Elgin through garbing mecha in black tarps (so as to look like hooded cloaks or capes) and sending spies out to spread the rumors for him. As long as he keeps things confusing and plays off of the chaos as he has been, then NEMA is unlikely to come knocking on his door with a large force. Rhodes knows this and exploits the fact to the tenth degree. Furthermore, even if a large force ever does arrive he will simply either hide his troops in one of the many basements of the town or move the entire operation elsewhere.

The civilians of Elgin, who blindly follow their "leader," also contribute to the scheme by hiding the large bulk of their numbers when NEMA patrols pass through the town. They also help by burying any of the evidence left behind by Rhodes's men or by participating in firefights using salvaged NEMA weaponry. The civilians also repair or demolish walls damaged by laser fire, incinerate bodies, fortify buildings through use of M.D.C. scrap metal (from defeated enemies) and lure soldiers and demons into traps (a fair share have been caught in the cross fire and are considered martyrs to Rhodes's dream). The work of the civilians is largely what allows the town to appear unassuming and of little consequence to the few patrols that are allowed to pass through. Although the maniac would be loath to admit it, the civilians alone make his little game a possibility. Without their help, Rhodes's little kingdom would be much harder to maintain for very long and may very well have been stamped out by NEMA long ago.

Unfortunately, so far Corporal Thaddeus Rhodes's luck has been good, with a small force growing around his mission statement of "eradicating the enemies of mankind." A mission statement that is more than a bit ironic as Rhodes is very much an enemy of humanity. Despite the harsh irony to which the maniac is oblivious, he and his men follow steadfastly the mission that he has planned, one that has the goals of the utter destruction of NEMA and the thwarting of the Demon Plagues.

Life in the Army of Scorched Earth

Population Breakdown: 251 People. Personnel are typically third to sixth level with about sixty percent of Rhodes's forces being male.

20 Volunteer Militia Fighters
12 Demon & Witch Hunters
9 United States Marine Corps Mechanized Specialists (including Rhodes)
6 NEMA Armored Sentinels
4 NEMA Silver Eagle Pilots
2 NEMA Chromium Guardsmen
2 NEMA Para-Arcane
196 Civilians

Military Assets: 18 Mechanized units and one support vehicle.

6 APA-15C Light "Semper Fi" Power Armor
4 USA-G20 Gunbusters
4 USA-106 Silver Eagles
2 USA-G10 Chromium Guardsmen
2 Bull Dogs
1 Iwo-Jima MIFV (nicknamed "the Dagger Shroud")

Plus several NEMA and US Military firearms, explosives, armor and captured equipment. Explosives and hard ammunition is used sparingly as it is very difficult to restock, at the moment. Energy weapons are typically cabled into the nuclear power supply of the mecha when possible, although E-Clip charging has been possible through the jury-rigging of a defeated Mastiff's power supply.

Structured in no way whatsoever like an actual army, the Army of Scorched Earth is by and large a collection of madmen that are organized more or less like a gang than any coherent military force. All soldiers within the army are considered to be equal in both rank and share of any and all loot that they may acquire, although it is well known that Corporal Thaddeus Rhodes and his eight fellow Marines are considered "more equal" than others. Rhodes (and to a lesser extent, his fellow Marines) is by far the leader of both the army and Elgin, with his word effectively becoming law. The rogue Marine corporal has specifically and intentionally hand-picked soldiers and subjects who will not only refuse to question him but will not even think of it for a moment. Any and all dissenters are executed in brutal shows of force that Corporal Rhodes refers to as "setting an example."

Restricted primarily to Elgin, the army is rarely allowed to leave the town for fear of drawing more attention to Elgin than is needed to lure in small patrols. It is in their town where the ambushes can be most easily set against both NEMA and marauding demons. Free time is usually spent educating new recruits, both military and civilian, on the philosophy of Thaddeus Rhodes or through working on the hidden fortification of the hospital that the army uses as its central headquarters. Soldiers are also continually drilled on standard procedure and the energy blast based communication system that Rhodes has devised for his army (the use of a radio is too risky). The daily life of a member of the Army of Scorched Earth is indeed a rigorous one, just as rigorous as any other human that is struggling to survive after the cataclysm.

For the civilians that follow Rhodes, life is equally as strenuous. The civilians work twelve hour days performing a variety of tasks and often spend what little free time they have either fortifying buildings or studying the teachings of their insane

leader. Each and every civilian expects to either hide or fight at a moment's notice in order to preserve their town and many of them will lay down their lives for Rhodes and his men. The civilians also act as spies, scouts, and pack mules when need be. Unfortunately for the few civilians that do fight, they are forbidden to use Mega-Damage body armor and are only allowed the use of Mega-Damage weaponry under the direct supervision of Rhodes or one of his eight Marines.

Corporal Thaddeus Rhodes

Leader of the Army of Scorched Earth

What is left to be said about Corporal Rhodes that has not been revealed already in the preceding pages? A self-proclaimed leader of a faux army, insane philosopher, horrible soldier and a vindictive monster of a human being that believes he does not need to justify his actions to anyone. Perhaps that single sentence adequately describes the monster, however the madman that hails from New Jersey (of all places) is a lot deeper than one might expect.

Rhodes joined the Marines at the age of twenty-four with the high aspirations of changing the world and changing it for the better. Early on, he was a model soldier that climbed quickly through the ranks of the United States Marine Corps, enjoying lots of success and recognition along the way. At twenty-six he married his high school sweetheart and at twenty-nine she gave birth to a son that was in every way a spitting image of his father. It was during this portion of his life that the man was at his happiest, everything was perfect and the future was the most inviting that it had ever been for the young man. Three years after the birth of his son, that all changed as his world was suddenly turned upside down.

On one rainy November morning, Rhodes received the news he always dreaded most: his wife and son were found dead in their home, murdered by some desperate drug addict that had broke into the house in the dead of night, presumably to find some money to help support his habit. Mrs. Rhodes and her son were awake at the time, each staving off the effects of a nasty fever. Noticing that the family was not only home but also awake and aware of him, the addict panicked and killed the pair before they could even scream and then stole off into the night. The man was caught hours later, gibbering in some damp alleyway with the blood still caked on his trembling hands.

For a few short weeks, the news media covered the story and revealed several bits of information that would later shape Thaddeus's ideology, especially the fact that the addict was a former member of NEMA! Of course, the murderer had no actual ties to the organization any longer and was in no way a representative of the military alliance, yet this did not stop Rhodes from making the organization a scapegoat for his anger. The Marine started to drink in secret and disobeyed orders frequently. Furthermore, he found men within his own squadron that had doubts about the worth of an organization such as NEMA and turned those doubts slowly into hatred. Even after the soldier sobered up, he still clung to his new beliefs, even as he and his men earned demotion after demotion. Two years later, the cataclysm struck.



At first the cataclysm seemed to have actually thrown Corporal Rhodes back into the rational man he once was, however, what he believed to be the unfair treatment of his men along with the horrors he experienced quickly jarred him back into the bitter man he had been for the past two years. Worse yet, the anarchy that now ruled quickly drove him into even deeper wells of insanity as the man saw opportunity and the chance to do whatever the hell he wanted without consequence, that is when he and his men began to plot against their fellow Marines. Once that hurdle was overcome, he led his men toward Chicago where he believed glory awaited them. Much to his dismay, he found NEMA in charge there, however he also found the perfect excuse for his mind to rationalize destroying those selfless men and women: magic. Rhodes despised magic, garnering this opinion on the trek to Chicago, and in Chicago, he found NEMA occasionally accepting the help of magic users. It was not long after that that he and his men arrived in Elgin.

The Thaddeus Rhodes of today is very different than even the Thaddeus Rhodes of a month ago. The corporal is insane in every sense of the word, suffering from delusions of grandeur and an unreasoning paranoia. He is beginning to actually think of himself as a god and as a god he does not believe he needs to ever justify his actions. According to his twisted mind, life and death are the judgments that he has been charged with making. To him, NEMA is just as evil as the demons that he despises, the enemies of himself: the one true god. Once the model soldier, now an insane dictator with a grudge against the world, Rhodes sees himself as THE salvation of mankind.

Corporal Thaddeus Rhodes

True Name: Thaddeus Jordheim Rhodes.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 20, M.A. 9, P.S. 14, P.P. 13, P.E. 12, P.B. 12, Spd 28.

Hit Points: 40, S.D.C.: 42.

Height: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.78 m).

Weight: 180 pounds (81 kg).

Age: 34

P.P.E.: 6

Level of Experience: 8th level Marine Mechanized Specialist.

Disposition: Cunning and subversive, Thaddeus Rhodes is a zealot who believes fully in the cause that he has set out for himself. The events of his life, especially those of the Cataclysm, have formed a rather twisted code of ethics and an even more malignant form of logic, one that can easily justify the most horrible atrocity. Rhodes is beyond Machiavellian in this regard with the end not only justifying the means, the end mandates them. Further complicating his degenerating sense of right and wrong is the increasing propensity to think of himself as not only a god, but as the one true God. After all, God never had to answer to anyone or justify his actions, so why should he?

What little humanity remains in the depths of this twisted individual is slowly slipping away. Every single day that goes by the monster becomes a little crueller, a little more vindictive and a whole lot more ruthless toward his enemies. If the current trend continues over an extended period of time

he will become reckless and begin to challenge NEMA openly, a mistake that will most likely end in his death. Until then though, Rhodes remains stern and demanding, expecting absolute obedience from both his men and his subjects (you cannot question a god). At the moment he is still highly intelligent with a deep understanding of military tactics and the limitations of his forces.

Appearance: Thaddeus Rhodes is a slender Caucasian male with close cropped, raven black hair, hazel eyes and a fairly muscular build. His face is long and wizened, often shaved completely clean without even a hint of facial hair. Overall his appearance and build is similar to that of a professional baseball player, something that the lunatic relishes as he has always been a fan of the sport. He still wears the traditional uniform of the United States Marine Corps, although the insignia of the Army of Scorched Earth (a triangle with a curved line cutting through it) has replaced most of the Marine insignias and all of the decorations he has earned have been discarded. Rhodes originally lived in New Jersey and is still host to a rather strong accent from that region.

Insanities: Rhodes suffers from severe cases of Megalomania and Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome as well as a minor case of Paranoid Schizophrenia. Prior to the cataclysm these ailments would most likely have been corrected rather quickly through advanced forms of medication, gene therapy or through the help of an experienced psychiatrist. Unfortunately for Rhodes, those that blindly follow him and his enemies, the current environment of Chaos Earth not only prevents treatment, but also can only serve to make his condition worse.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Expert and Power Armor Combat Elite: APA-15C "Semper Fi."

Attacks per Melee: Five normally, eight when piloting his power armor.

Bonuses (Without power armor): +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +3 to pull punch, kick attack does 1D6 S.D.C. damage, +3 to save versus psionics/insanity and +5% on all skills.

Bonuses (When piloting his power armor): +5 on initiative, +5 to strike, +7 to parry, +7 to dodge, +7 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +5 to pull punch and +2 to disarm.

Skills of Note: Language and Literacy in American 98%, Basic Math 98%, Radio: Basic 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Detect Ambush 85%, Swimming 98%, Military Etiquette 98%, Land Navigation 85%, Power Armor Combat Elite: APA-15 "Semper Fi," Power Armor Combat Elite: APA-15C Light "Semper Fi," Pilot: Power Armor Basic 98%, Pilot: Robot Basic 95%, Pilot: Hovercraft 98%, Weapon Systems 98%, Read Sensory Equipment 90%, General Athletics, Running, Climbing 85/75%, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Heavy, W.P. Automatic Rifles and W.P. Paired Weapons.

Psionic Powers: None.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Weapons of Note: Any weapons, vehicles and equipment available to the Army of Scorched Earth are available to Corporal Rhodes. Rhodes is typically clad in his Light Semper Fi with an M-160 Assault Rifle and a LAWS-3 Rocket Launcher

loaded with armor piercing rounds. When outside of his power armor he usually wears the standard United States Marine Combat Armor and uses an M-160 Assault Rifle.

Cybernetics: USA Marine Corps Identification Implant, Biocomp Self Monitoring Systems and a Universal Headjack complete with sound filtration.

Money: At any given time, Rhodes has the equivalent of 400,000 credits in supplies. However, the corporal is more likely to use sabotage, intimidation and force to get what he wants rather than paying for it.

United States Marine Corps Mechanized Specialist O.C.C.

Historical Note: Years later, this character class, along with several others, will effectively fuse together to become the more generalized Marine O.C.C. of the New Navy. For details on both the New Navy (the descendants of a secret Pre-Rifts branch of the United States Navy) and the Marine O.C.C., please refer to *Rifts® World Book Seven: Underseas*.

All nine members of Thaddeus Rhodes's original squadron, including Rhodes himself, are of this special division of the United States Marine Corps, a division trained thoroughly in the operation of power armor and robot vehicles, producing some of the best mechanized infantry men and women that the United States Military had to offer. Normally, these soldiers were highly disciplined patriots dedicated to the United States of America and the North American Alliance, although this just wasn't the case with Rhodes and his men. Aside from a few dissidents (such as what is now the central unit of the Army of Scorched Earth), the remaining members of this highly trained division have taken up the fight against the growing chaos and destruction of the continually changing Earth. In some instances these brave men and women have even thrown in with NEMA and fight alongside the organization, although in Chicagoland this is a rarity as NEMA is more or less cut off from the outside world.

Prior to the cataclysm, the Marine Mechanized Specialists were the bane of dictators and enemies of the United States of America, especially when NEMA wouldn't support a military strike of any capacity. It was in these instances, when NEMA refused to cooperate, that these pilots would shine. With the cataclysm the Marine Mechanized Specialists were forced to take a back seat to NEMA's mechanized forces, not because of any political factor but rather due to the sheer carnage of the cataclysm. Through nothing more than sheer misfortune the militaries of the three allied nations were hit much harder than NEMA, most likely due to the fact that NEMA is a multi-national organization. However, the majority of Marines (and military forces in general) that have survived the initial chaos have either joined NEMA or have taken up a similar role where they are needed.

The Marine Mechanized Specialists themselves are, in effect, a combination of power armor pilots and elite infantry, formidable both in and out of their war machines. Equipped with some of the best cutting edge equipment that the United States Military

had to offer the Mechanized Specialists were capable of taking the fight wherever they are needed, including outer space, although the space stations and moon colony have been cut off from Earth, with travel between Earth and space most likely impossible. In the environment of Chaos Earth they excel in urban combat, able to go toe to toe with demons and human miscre-



ants (such as the Army of Scorched Earth) in both open and tactical combat. As demonstrated by Rhodes's units, the Mechanized Specialists are highly capable in setting up ambushes, gathering intelligence and engaging in rudimentary psychological warfare.

United States Marine Corps

Mechanized Specialist O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q., P.S., P.E. and M.E. of 10 or higher and a P.P. of 12 or higher. About 70% are males, 30% females.

Base S.D.C.: 3D6+18

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to roll with punch/impact/fall and +1 to pull punch both in and out of power armor. +1 to strike, parry and dodge in power armor.

M.O.S.: The focus of this O.C.C. is the piloting of the APA-15 "Semper Fi" Power Armor as well as other war machines.

Pilot: Power Armor Basic (+20%)

Pilot: Power Armor Combat Elite: APA-15 "Semper Fi."

Pilot: Power Armor Combat Elite: One of choice. (All members of Rhodes's unit have chosen APA-15C Light "Semper Fi.")

Pilot: Robot Basic (+10%)

Pilot: Tank or Hovercraft (pick one, members of Rhodes's unit have all chosen Hovercraft; +10%).

Land Navigation (+12%)

Weapon Systems (+15%)

Read (& Operate) Sensory Equipment (+10%)

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Heavy

O.C.C. Skills: These are in addition to M.O.S. and reflect basic training.

Math: Basic (+10%)

Language, Native: Standard

Literacy, Native: Standard

Military Etiquette (+20%)

Radio: Basic (+10%)

Computer Operation (+10%)

Detect Ambush (+10%)

Swimming (+15%)

Athletics: General

Running

Hand to Hand: Expert

Hand to Hand: Expert can be changed to Martial Arts at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Commando (or Assassin if of an evil alignment) for two skill selections.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select 8 other skills. Plus select two additional skills at level three, two at level six and one at level nine and twelve. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Any.

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Mechanical: Any.

Medical: Paramedic and First Aid only (+5%).

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any (+5% where applicable).

Pilot: Any (+10%).

Pilot Related: Any (+5%).

Rogue: Any.

Science: Math and Chemistry only (+5%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select six Secondary Skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 106 of *Rifts® Chaos Earth™*. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the benefit of the bonuses listed in parentheses. All start at the base skill level and normal restrictions apply.

Standard Equipment: A suit of APA-15 "Semper Fi" Power Armor (*Rifts® Underseas*, pages 118 to 120) or a suit of choice (typically APA-15C Light "Semper Fi" or USA-G20 Gunbuster) as his or her readily available war machine. The power armor is assigned to the pilot and he or she is expected to make sure that it gets regular inspections and maintenance.

Other equipment includes a suit of US Marine Combat Armor, M-2011 Energy Pistol and M-160 Assault Rifle, 4 extra E-Clips for each, two explosive grenades, two smoke grenades, four to six flares, Vibro-Knife (1D6 M.D.), survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.), First Aid medical kit, pocket computer, flashlight, disposable cigarette lighter, utility belt, air filter & gas mask, walkie-talkie, uniform, dress uniform, combat boots, canteen and an additional non-energy, S.D.C. weapon of choice.

Army of Scorched Earth Equipment: Marines in the Army of Scorched Earth have the same equipment as above except that they only have access to APA-15C Light "Semper Fi" Power Armors and use primarily M-160 Assault Rifles and LAWS-3 Rocket Launchers loaded with armor piercing ammunition.

Money: Standard for Mechanized Specialist was 3,800 credits a month plus hazard pay with officers typically earning double. All soldiers had equipment, clothing, room and board supplied by the Marine Corps. Currently there is no Marine Corps to provide for the Marines, but soldiers who have joined up with NEMA are typically paid 380 credits a month mainly as an incentive for morale and are provided standard NEMA housing. All characters start with 3D6x100 credits in savings.

Cybernetics: Starts with United States Marine Corps identification implant (under the skin of the forearm or back of the neck) and Universal Headjack with sound filtration and one other non-weapon implant of choice.

Weapons and Equipment of the Army of Scorched Earth

The weaponry, armor and power armor used by the Army of Scorched Earth are primarily standard issue NEMA arms and armor, with only Rhodes and his eight fellow Marines using equipment that is unique. Although a few of the Demon & Witch Hunters and Volunteer Militia fighters use Mega-Damage Weaponry of the American Military that is either similar or identical to the weapons used by Rhodes's squad. Much of the equipment that follows originally appeared in *Rifts® World Book Seven: Underseas* and has been reprinted here for your convenience along with pertinent data about their use in the Army of Scorched Earth. Additional Mega-Damage equipment of the United States Military can be found in the same book.

It is important to note that all US Military equipment is becoming harder and harder to find. A majority of the US Military's armaments were destroyed in the initial onslaught of the Cataclysm, while the remaining supplies can now be found either in the hands of remnant military forces, in the hands of NEMA or lost in hidden caches, buried as the once great cities and military strongholds fall, one by one. The cost of such weaponry outside of military establishments is already high and can only continue to grow as the demand rises.

USA M-2011 Energy Pistol

Very few M-2011 Energy Pistols are within the possession of the Army of Scorched Earth, although each member of "The Dagger Shroud" (an Iwo-Jima MIFV) crew generally carry one of these weapons as a side arm. The pistol, which more closely resembles a sub-machinegun, discharges ion instead of laser blasts in order to provide more stopping power and penetration. Before the cataclysm, this was the standard issue side arm of officers, pilots and vehicle crews within the United States Military.

Weight: 5 lbs (2.25 kg).

Mega-Damage: Two settings: 1D4x10 S.D.C. or 3D6 M.D. per single blast.

Rate of Fire: Standard

Maximum Effective Range: 800 feet (244 m).

Payload: 20 shots with short E-Clip, 30 shots with long E-Clip. The Army of Scorched Earth has only short E-Clips available.

Cost & Availability: Exclusive to the United States Military and occasionally NEMA, with any weapons found outside these two organizations most likely found or stolen. Sells for 20,000 credits or equivalent in trade with poor availability.

USA M-160 Assault Rifle

Of all the weapons used by the main squad of the Army of Scorched Earth, the M-160 Assault Rifle is the most numerous, with Rhodes and his eight fellow Marines each having three of these illustrious rifles and plenty of spare ammo to boot. In addition, some of the Volunteer Militia Fighters and Demon & Witch Hunters within Rhodes's army have one of these weapons

in their possession. Before the Cataclysm, this assault rifle, which also employs the use of ion blasts opposed to lasers, was the standard issue small arm of the United States Military. The M-160 is an innovative weapon that fires energy "packets" that explode on contact with solid objects, delivering impressive damage in short bursts, does not lose range or performance underwater and is made of highly durable, sturdy material. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the M-160 is in the greatest supply more than any other weapon in the United States Military arsenal, and thus can be found in the hands of Volunteer Militia Fighters across North America.

Weight: 7 lbs (3.2 kg).

Mega-Damage: 3D6 M.D. per single shot or 1D6x10 M.D. per controlled three round burst.

Rate of Fire: Single shot or controlled three round burst.

Maximum Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 m).

Payload: 30 shots with short E-Clip, 55 shots with long E-Clip. The Army of Scorched Earth has ample supplies of both at their disposal.

Cost & Availability: Exclusive to the United States Military and occasionally NEMA, with any weapons found outside these two organizations most likely found or stolen. The M-160 sells for 38,000 credits or equivalent in trade with fair availability.

USA XM-219 Combat Ion Shotgun

A few years before the Cataclysm, the United States Military attempted to create an effective ion shotgun for use by its military forces. The result of the design program was the XM-219 Combat Ion Shotgun, a weapon that employs the use of a revolutionary spray beam system that expels several small ion beams over a short area. The system, although (arguably) good in theory, is not good in practice, with the weapon draining a large portion of the energy from a standard E-Clip, although the damage is impressive. The weapon is none too reliable and was thus never slated for mass production, although a few hundred were produced for experimentation and field tests. Physically, the weapon has a stylistic resemblance to the old Ithaca Stake-out Shotgun, although the bore of the weapon is much larger and fairly intimidating. A few of these weapons have somehow fallen into the hands of Corporal Rhodes and his Semper Fi unit, with three being in their possession. The Army of Scorched Earth uses these weapons sparingly and primarily for crowd control when large mobs of ordinary folk from outside Elgin come searching for the infamous demon that is rumored to exist there.

Weight: 8 lbs (3.6 kg).

Mega-Damage: 5D6 M.D. to a six foot (1.8 m) area and 2D6 M.D. to an additional three feet (0.9 m).

Rate of Fire: Single shot only.

Maximum Effective Range: 200 feet (61 m).

Payload: 5 shots with short E-Clip, 10 shots with long E-Clip. Cannot be cabled to a power pack or nuclear power supply. The Army of Scorched Earth has moderate supplies of both at their disposal.

Cost & Availability: Exclusive to the United States Military with any weapons found outside the military organization most likely found or stolen. The XM-219 sells for 40,000 credits or

equivalent in trade with extremely poor availability. Despite the dismal payload this weapon offers (after all, several more readily available and less expensive weapons have better payload, range and damage capability), when encountered it is often popular. The weapon's popularity is most likely due to the American fascination with shotguns in general.

USA Rapid-Fire LAWS-3 Rocket Launcher

The LAWS-3 Rocket Launcher is the most powerful weapon within the arsenal of Thaddeus Rhodes's personal squadron. Classified as a Light Anti-Tank Weapon System, the LAWS-3 fires rocket-propelled grenades from a six round, disposable clip that can be laser-guided or fired through line of sight. The launcher has a rapid-fire system that allows for automatic fire, enabling the Marine/Soldier/Sailor to fire three round bursts. The disposable plastic clip ejects automatically when empty and can be reloaded in less than three seconds (or one melee action) by trained personnel (approximately six to ten seconds/two to three melee actions). The weapon can either use armored piercing or fragmentation ammunition, with armor piercing the only available ammo for Rhodes's men. Although originally designed to combat tanks and mechanized units, the LAWS-3 fares equally well against supernatural monsters. The Semper Fi unit of the Army of Scorched Earth has seven of these weapons with one typically being assigned to each of the six pilots and one placed in the care of the Iwo-Jima MIFV crew.

Weight: 18 lbs (8.1 kg) fully loaded. Each ammo clip weighs 6 lbs (2.7 kg).

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. from armor-piercing (AP), 1D6x10 from high explosive (HE) or 4D6 M.D. to a 20 foot (6 meters) area with fragmentation. A three round burst does 3D4x10 for AP rounds, 3D6x10 for HE rounds and doubles the blast area and damage for fragmentation.

Rate of Fire: Single shot or controlled three round burst.

Laser Targeting Bonus: +2 to strike; no bonus when shooting line of sight without targeting enhancement.

Maximum Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 meters) for the laser guidance system. Rockets can be fired without the laser guidance system beyond 2000 feet up to a range of 4000 feet (1219 meters).

Payload: Six round clip. The Army of Scorched Earth has an ample supply of AP rounds with only a few clips of HE rounds and no fragmentation.

Cost & Availability: Exclusive to the United States Military and occasionally NEMA, with any weapons found outside these two organizations most likely found or stolen. The LAWS-3 sells for 45,000 credits or equivalent in trade with poor availability. Loaded clips cost 3,000 credits for AP or HE and 2,100 for fragmentation.

US Marine Corps Fully Environmental Combat Armor

Corporal Thaddeus Rhodes along with his eight fellow Marines all have two to three suits of this highly durable combat armor, the standard issue armor of the US Marines before the cataclysm. The armor has some superficial similarities to twentieth century flak jackets, but it has the addition of a helmet, can be made airtight in an instant and has limited life support, as well as built-in radio, insulation and all standard features common to NEMA environmental body armor (refer to pages 62-63 of *Rifts@ Chaos Earth™*). The armor comes in olive green, forest-jungle camouflage pattern, and the beige-brown desert camouflage pattern. All suits of armor within the Army of Scorched Earth are painted a dull gray.

Size: Human equivalent.

Weight: 21 lbs (9.5 kg).

M.D.C. by Location:

Head/Helmet - 50

Arms - 25 each

Legs - 35 each

Main Body - 85

Mobility: Good, -10% on the performance of Prowl and other Physical skills.

Maximum Ocean Depth: 2000 feet (610 meters).

Cost & Availability: Exclusive to the United States Marine Corps. Any suits found outside the Marine Corps have either been found or stolen and sell for 35,000 credits or equivalent in trade.

US Marine Corps Light "Semper Fi" Power Armor

APA-15C Land Assault

Power Armored Exoskeleton

The APA-15C Light "Semper Fi" power armor is a scaled down, no frills version of the more venerated APA-15 "Semper Fi." This scaled down, more cost effective version was designed for the Marines with urban combat in mind and in that application the armor excels most graciously. Unlike its more heavily armed predecessor which is used in a number of different operations, the APA-15C is NOT suited for multi-role implications, instead it is a straightforward combat power armor that is used in many of the same ways that normal infantry would.

The differences between the normal and light Semper Fi are straightforward, with the latter having no thruster system, no mini-missile launchers, no stabilizing fins and no standard issue rifle. Instead of the APA-15s M-90 MWAS, the APA-15C must rely on an M-160 or other handheld weapon. Luckily though, most energy weapons can be cabled directly to the nuclear power supply, giving the weapon an effectively unlimited payload. Within the Army of Scorched Earth the APA-15C pilots typically are equipped with an M-160 or XM-219 as a small arm and a LAWS-3 (slung on the back of the armor when not in use) as a secondary weapon for combating formidable foes.

Just like all mechanized units within the Army of Scorched Earth, the APA-15Cs have been given a dull gray paint job and have been furnished with large, tattered black tarps that the pilots have draped on to their Semper Fi Power Armors like hooded cloaks or capes. This strange practice has helped to contribute to the rumors of a demon living in the town of Elgin. When seen from a long distance away, garbed in a black robe, the eight foot (2.4 meters) tall power armor appears to be a monstrous wraith of some sort moving through the night. This simple illusion is actually a ploy of Thaddeus Rhodes to insure that ordinary folk stay as far as possible from his operation, and the ploy has worked so far.

Light "Semper Fi" Power Armor

Model Type: APA-15C

Class: Land Assault Combat Exoskeleton

Crew: One

M.D.C. by Location:

*Head - 90

Arms (2) - 100 each

Legs (2) - 120 each

**Main Body - 295

* Destroying the head of the power armor will result in a loss of all optical enhancements and sensor systems. The pilot must now rely on his or her own senses, all bonuses from Power Armor Combat skills are negated. The head is a small and difficult target to hit, requiring a -4 on a called strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body shuts the armor down completely, rendering it useless.

Speed:

Running: 70 mph (112 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does tire the out its operator but at 10% of the normal fatigue rate thanks to the robotic exoskeleton.

Leaping: The powerful robot legs can leap up to 15 feet (4.6 meters) high or across.

Flying: Not possible with this model.

Underwater Capabilities: Roughly 4 mph (6.4 km/3.4 knots) when swimming through use of arms and legs to paddle. Can also walk on the sea/lake floor at 25% of its normal running speed. Maximum Ocean Depth: One mile (1.6 km).

Statistical Data:

Height: 8 feet (2.4 m).

Width: 4 feet (1.2 m).

Length: 3 feet (0.9 m).

Weight: 300 lbs (135 kg).

Physical Strength: Equal to a P.S. of 30.

Cargo: None.

Power System: Nuclear, with an average life of 15 years.

Cost & Availability: Exclusive to the United States Marine Corps. Any power armor found outside of the Marine Corps was either found or stolen and sells for upwards of twenty million credits or equivalent in trade.

Weapon Systems

1. Wrist Ion Gun (2): The only built-in weapon system of the

APA-15C is the wrist ion gun, a backup weapon that fires high intensity ion blasts. For additional firepower the pilot must instead rely on a hand-held weapon. One of these weapons is located over each wrist.

Primary Purpose: Anti-personnel.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. per burst, can only fire bursts.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the combined hand to hand attacks of the pilot.

Maximum Effective Range: 2000 feet (610 meters).

Payload: Effectively Unlimited.

2. Hand to Hand Combat: Available only to those who take *Power Armor Combat Elite: APA-15C Light Semper Fi*. Those not "skilled in Elite" use the *Power Armor Basic* stats. **Note:** These bonuses are in addition to those of the pilot. They do not apply outside of the power armor.

+2 extra attacks/actions per melee round, *plus* those of the pilot. Add an additional attack per melee at levels three, nine and twelve.

+2 on initiative.

+1 to strike in long-range combat.

+2 to strike in Hand to Hand Combat.

+2 to parry.

+2 to dodge.

+2 to disarm.

+2 to pull punch

+3 to roll with fall/impact or explosion.

Punch Damage: 6D6 S.D.C. on a restrained punch, 1D6 M.D. on a full strength punch.

Power Punch Damage: 2D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Kick Damage: 1D6 M.D.

Power Kick Damage: 2D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Leap Kick Damage: 2D4 M.D.

Tear or Pry with Hands: 1D6 M.D.

Body Block/Ram Damage: 2D4 M.D.

Full Speed Running Ram: 3D6 M.D., but counts as three attacks.

3. Special Sensory System Note: All those standard to Power Armor plus language translator, depth gauge and the following:

1. Optical System: Full optical systems including laser targeting, telescopic, passive nightvision (light amplification), thermo-imaging, infrared, ultraviolet, and polarization.

Iwo-Jima Class MIFV Combat Troop Transport

Out of place on the streets of Chicagoland, more so than most demons, is the Army of Scorched Earth's Iwo-Jima Class MIFV, nicknamed "the Dagger Shroud" by the troops. Designed for amphibious combat, the Iwo-Jima is essentially a troop transport with the original intended capability of moving a ten man squad (or six man Semper Fi squad) from a ship to land. The Iwo-Jima MIFV (Marine Infantry Fighting Vehicle) is equally suited for travel on both open water and dry land thanks

to its air cushion hovercraft system, however, as stated above, this vehicle stands out in an urban environment. To counteract this, the Army of Scorched Earth has taken to camouflaging their MIFV with trash and broken bits of masonry, making the vehicle appear as a pile of rubble when not in motion. The high profile target that this hard to disguise vehicle can become when moving has resulted in the use of "the Dagger Shroud" as more or less a gun emplacement; although in the rare mission outside of Elgin the vehicle is used to its full capability.

The vehicle is equipped with an ion pulse cannon and two heavy missile launchers on its turret. A secondary short-range launcher and an ion pulse gun on the main body further add to the firepower of this war machine. In addition to its guns, the MIFV also has six firing ports where infantrymen can fire their weapons from inside the vehicle if need be. Limited visibility from these firing ports makes accuracy difficult though, resulting in all shots to strike incurring a penalty of -2. The Army of Scorched Earth has only one Iwo-Jima MIFV ("the Dagger Shroud") and thus use the transport with great care as it would be damn near impossible to get their hands on another one. The army also has limited supplies of missiles and thus uses the MIFV's payload sparingly if they use it at all.

Iwo-Jima Marine Infantry Fighting Vehicle

Model Type: MIFV-99

Class: Marine Infantry Fighting Vehicle/Troop Carrier

Crew: Three: Pilot, gunner and commander/gunner.

Troop Capacity: 10 soldiers or 6 in power armor.

M.D.C. by Location:

Weapon Turret - 180

Ion Pulse Cannon in Turret - 100

Heavy Missile Launchers (2, in turret) - 100 each

Light Missile Launcher (1) - 70

Light Ion Gun (1) - 45

* Main Body - 225

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

Speed:

Hovering: The Iwo-Jima fares equally well on hovering on land or hovering across the surface of water. The vehicle moves at 100 mph (160 km) in both instances.

Maximum Depth: The Iwo-Jima is not suited for underwater operations and is NOT submersible. If sunk the vehicle can be made airtight and will endure pressure up to a depth of 500 feet (152 m). However, the recycled air supply will become too stale to breathe within 72 hours, sooner if seriously damaged or if the air supply is compromised.

Statistical Data:

Height: 12 feet (3.6 m).

Width: 10 feet (3.0 m).

Length: 25 feet (7.6 m).

Weight: Twenty tons fully loaded.

Cargo: Instead of troops, the MIFV can carry up to five tons of cargo.

Power System: Nuclear, with an average life of 15 years.

Cost & Availability: Exclusive to the United States Marine Corps, any MIFV found outside of the Marine Corps was either found or stolen and sells for upwards of sixty million credits or equivalent in trade. Extremely rare.

Weapon Systems

1. Ion Pulse Cannon: One of the most powerful weapons in the Army of Scorched Earth's arsenal is this heavy cannon, designed to combat "hard" targets such as tanks, robots and power armor.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Armor.

Secondary Purpose: Defense

Mega-Damage: 3D4x10 M.D. per blast.

Rate of Fire: Although the firing of this massive cannon only counts as a single melee attack, the cannon itself can only fire four times per melee round.

Maximum Effective Range: 6000 feet (1828 meters).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. Heavy Missile Launchers (2): Mounted on the turret are two box shaped missile launchers each similar in appearance to the launcher on the twentieth century Bradley IFV.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Armor and Anti-Aircraft.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: Varies with missile type (long- or medium-range missiles). The Army of Scorched Earth has limited supplies of missiles and must rely on whatever missiles they can salvage from defeated mecha.

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

Maximum Effective Range: Varies with missile type.

Payload: Eight total; four per launcher.

3. Light Missile Launcher (1): This forward-facing launcher is built into the main body of the front of the vehicle.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Armor and Anti-Aircraft.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: Varies with missile type (short-range missiles). The Army of Scorched Earth has limited supplies of missiles and must rely on whatever missiles they can salvage from defeated mecha.

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

Maximum Effective Range: Varies with missile type.

Payload: Four total.

4. Ion Pulse Gun: This bow-mounted gun can be operated by the driver or gunner. It is used mostly against "soft" targets, such as infantry troops or lightly armored vehicles.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Personnel.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D. per multiple ion burst; can only fire bursts.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the combined number of hand to hand attacks of the pilot or gunner.

Maximum Effective Range: 4000 feet (1219 meters).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Adventure Ideas for the Army of Scorched Earth

The situation that the Army of Scorched Earth represents when introduced to a game can allow for various forms of adventures from a simple urban combat campaign to a campaign ripe with mystery and intrigue. Any campaign that has the Army of Scorched Earth as one of the centerpieces of the plot will most likely have to do with the unmasking of the organization or the hunting of the player characters by the faux army. Game Masters and players looking for a darker, more gritty experience and a change of pace from the standard hero roles of the Chaos Earth RPG could elect to play as members of the rogue military force.

Discovery - While on extended patrol the player characters hear a commotion from nearby Elgin. If the player characters decide to investigate they will most likely observe (from a distance) fellow NEMA forces engaged in a fire fight with the Army of Scorched Earth. This is a fairly straightforward scenario that will most likely result in the characters joining the fight and/or helping their fellow soldiers escape. Further intrigue can be created by the NEMA brass refusing to acknowledge that there is an established military force in Elgin (most likely due to the fact that the Army of Scorched Earth forces remained mainly out of sight and constantly kept moving, both disguising their numbers and preventing video confirmation). If this is the case then the destruction of the Army of Scorched Earth may be left solely in the hands of the player characters with Thaddeus Rhodes quickly turning into a reoccurring villain.

The Plan Fails - Corporal Thaddeus Rhodes decides to take advantage of misplaced trust in military remnant forces in an attempt to kill the player characters on patrol in Elgin. The group's radios are jammed and the trap is set, with Rhodes and his men impersonating friendly Marines that have just entered Chicagoland. Ideally, the player characters would be drawn into close quarters and then slaughtered while unaware by the Semper Fis and other units hiding nearby. Unfortunately, a new recruit fires early, possibly tipping the player characters off that they are being led into a trap. Normally, Rhodes could salvage the situation by attacking the new recruit, however this time his anger gets the best of him with the corporal reprimanding his soldier. The player characters, most likely heavily outnumbered, will flee with the Army of Scorched Earth in hot pursuit. This may be the final unmasking of the army if a player character or friendly NPC catches the band of thugs on camera. However, they must first make it out of Elgin and back into central Chicagoland alive.

Marked for Death - A youth within the civilian populace of Elgin has developed the characteristic powers of a Chaos Wizard and has been marked for death by Corporal Rhodes and the entire community. The youth, who idolizes Rhodes, has sought the help of the passing player characters. The child does not wish any harm of his idol (protesting if the player characters attack Rhodes or his men) and wants to remain in Elgin. However, to remain in Elgin will most likely result in his or her death. It is up to the player characters to convince the stubborn child to leave the town and, more importantly, to stay outside of the town for good. Through the course of the adventure the child

NPC could develop great depth as he or she experiences one epiphany after another.



The Star of Horus

A short story by Aaron Corley with Allen Gardner

Part Two of Two

The University of Grashona

The riders left within the hour and the crew said little more about the encounter. Ender moved about the crew for a while, trying not to draw attention to himself, and then went back to his quarters to sleep. Eight or nine hours later, he went back on deck to watch the crew prepare to dock at Grashona. As he did, Darimun approached.

"Crocus has asked that I accompany you to the University after we arrive," he said without preamble.

"Alright," Ender replied. "Oh, who were the bird people yesterday?"

"They work for Drodar — a rival shipper. He and Crocius don't get along well. I don't know all the details, but Crocius had a few minor run-ins with Drodar over the years, though

nothing too serious. Things have cooled off since Nimara came to Grashona, but secretly I think Crocius wants Drodar dead," Darimun said as they rounded a corner leading through a market area. As he had predicted, Grashona seemed cooler than any of the other islands Ender has visited so far, which meant his cloak did not look at all out of place among the Kobolds walking the streets there.

"Who is Nimara?"

"I don't know too much about him. He is a wealthy merchant and philanthropist-type who lives somewhere near the University."

Ender nodded, but said nothing more.

The University's main building overlooked the inward part of the island; a huge domed structure with several towers and multi-story building around it, all built out of rusted sandstone. Trees flanked the buildings and people seemed to fill every empty space available in the courtyard.

Darimun took Ender through the walkway's twists and turns until they arrived at an entrance to the dome. Along the way, Ender heard snippets of speeches, music and conversation on nearly every topic imaginable.

A pot-bellied Kobold guarded the entrance they chose. He demanded a gold piece from any who wanted to pass, but when he saw Ender and Darimun, he paused a moment. Ender worried the guard would ask him to remove his hood, but instead, the guard warned in a stern tone, "There'll be no violence in the cloister, hear?"

"Right, sir," Darimun said, handing him the required toll.

After a short walk, they came to a huge foyer, at least six stories tall, with stairs to one side and hordes of Kobolds quietly moving about. A sign stood nearby, presumably with directions to every section of the library. Darimun walked up to it, put a hand on his chin and asked, "So what are we looking for?"

"I've got two things I think we need to find. My friend was with the monks of Horo-Dur and it would be nice to know where they went when they left Horo-Dur," Ender said. "Additionally, I was here to assist in locating an artifact. It is a medalion shaped like a seven-pointed star, with an eye sculpted in the center and ornate carving on each of the star's arms. If we can find someone to help us, that would speed things greatly."

"The monks of Horo-Dur could be anywhere now. I doubt that would be in a book. We better ask somebody about that one." Darimun walked up to an older male Kobold wearing a cowl, "Excuse me, sir; we are looking for information on the monks of Horo-Dur."

"Fifth floor, section twenty-one."

"No, I mean, where have they gone since their monastery was attacked?"

The Kobold excused himself to talk with a similarly dressed associate. After a moment, he returned and said, "I believe they fled to Askara, but I have been unable to verify that."

"Excellent," Darimun answered. "Now, where would we find artifacts?"

"What kind of artifacts?"

Ender described the Star of Horus again. The librarian listened attentively and directed them to the third floor, section eleven. Ender thanked him and they walked over to the stairs.

After a moment, his companion asked, "You came all the way to our world for this artifact, why?"

"I do not know. I came here with the one seeking it, but I do not know the reasons why."

"Well, I am not familiar with Askara. Let's see if we can find it on a map."

"Do you have any ideas about the location of the artifact?"

"Sure," Darimun said, "Third floor, section eleven."

"Is it doing anything there? Is it in a box? Is it being studied?" Ender asked, not realizing the Kobold was joking with him.

"I doubt it. That is just where the old man said we could find out more about it."

"Okay," Ender said, still a little confused. "So let's find out where Askara is and then let's head up to the third floor, section eleven, to see what they know about the artifact."

Ender remembered that Crocius commented about someone attempting to build a large scale model of the islands here at the University. He mentioned it to Darimun and they asked a few people about it before getting directions to an adjacent building.

"Do you want to start here or there?" his companion asked.

"Let's start with the model."

"Oh, wow!" Darimun gasped several minutes later when they entered the tower's main room. The model of Cerulea proved to be everything Crocius had hinted it would. Standing over sixty feet tall and thirty feet wide, the mostly-bronze creation resembled a giant with dozens of arms, swinging them about in a methodical, nearly-berserker fashion. Scaffolding enclosed one side, like fetters around its leg, while Kobolds in leather aprons tightened bolts or discussed blueprints. Now and again, some of them moved to avoid being bludgeoned by the sweeping arms tipped with lopsided chunks of bronze. Meanwhile, other arms moved in seemingly conflicting orbits without touching.

"Amazing," Darimun said, moving closer to the guardrail at its base.

Looking up, Ender saw a massive, spider web-like window where the sun would have been, providing natural lighting for the entire model. Blue and white tiles surrounded its tree trunk-like base. He saw no visible gears, though he could hear the metal teeth pushing against one another from somewhere either inside or below the model.

"May I help you gentlemen?" A middle-aged Kobold with no hair approached. He wore an official looking smock, different from the others they had seen so far.

"We are looking for the location of Askara in relation to our current location," Ender said from under his cloak and hood.

"Let's go up to the eighth floor," he replied. "That will make it easier to pinpoint the upper islands." He ducked under the railing and led them to a nearby flight of stairs along the tower's outer wall.

"My name is Doctor Hrondis, by the way. I teach geography, cartography, mathematics, geometry and physics here at the University. The model is my pet project and, if it weren't for some generous funding, I am afraid it would have never gotten this far.

"It's taken three years to build the actual model. I spent fifteen doing research before that. Orbital equations are difficult to

solve with all the arcs and spheres to calculate, but I think we got most of them. I had the hardest time getting the diameters of the various orbits right. Finally, I discovered that there is a relationship between diameter and circumference. Once I invented a number to represent that, it was much easier.

"Then, of course, we had to find material light enough to sculpt with but durable enough for the model. I finally decided to go with an alloy called bronze I came across on one of the lower islands. They make it by smelting copper and tin together. It makes for great weapons, armor and statues. I thought it would be wonderful to use here, in a *peaceful* manner, rather than in war like they do there.

"So for three years now, my students and I have been busily assembling all of the parts together, figuring out how to make everything turn in exact proportion to everything else. That is when I had to study the clock on Askara — what a marvel — and from there it was easy. A couple of gears the right size and a big corkscrew to regulate it all and — voila!

"All that remains now is a little more research on the upper islands and the lower islands. Unfortunately, I can't seem to find detailed charts. As you know, it's *very* hot in the upper islands — that is why so few people live there — and very cold in the lower islands. Besides, they have the most unusual phenomenon there: frozen water. One of my colleagues did a study on it. It comes down like rain in some places. In fact, he theorizes that below the outermost islands there are more islands made of nothing but huge chunks of this stuff. He calls it 'ice' and he claims it is solid enough to *walk* on. Can you believe that?"

Hrondis laughed, mostly to himself, and continued, "Anyway, here it is: the eighth floor. You can see most of the upper islands from here, though we may have to walk around a bit to pinpoint the one you are looking for." He looked puzzled a moment and asked, "Which one are you looking for again?"

"Askara," Darimun repeated.

The professor walked to the right about ten feet and then pointed toward a mass of small islands near the center of the model. "That's it there. Next to Horo-Dur."

Ender saw that each island was labeled in characters he could not read, but the relationship was clear. On the model, Askara currently floated about a foot away from Horo-Dur, making its way farther outward at a snail's pace.

"Doctor, what's the scale of this model?" His companion asked.

"Each foot is about ten leagues."

"Thirty to forty miles," Darimun translated for Ender.

They watched the model for several minutes before Hrondis sighed like a teenager in love. "Beautiful, isn't it? The model, I mean. It's beautiful."

"Darimun, can you find that island now that you have seen its location?"

"Easily. Shouldn't take more than seventy hours to get there from here either."

"Let's go check on the artifact now."

"Which artifact is that?" Hrondis asked.

Ender told him.

"I've never heard of it," the professor confessed, "but stop by the monastery at Horo-Dur on your way to Askara. The monks there keep information on all kinds of things."

"Thanks," Darimun said, walking toward the stairs. Ender followed.

The University library housed a large collection of books and scrolls on every topic known to the Cerulean Kobolds spread over six floors and subdivided into seventy sections. However, finding out more about the artifact ended up being a lot more difficult than Ender had anticipated. The first problem was literacy: Ender didn't read the local language, and having Darimun recite book title after book title to him as they walked by the shelves ended up being a cumbersome task.

Secondly, far too many of the books — and almost all of the scrolls — lacked any kind of index or table of contents, so even when they did find a book that sounded interesting, the only quick way to tell if had the information they wanted was to thumb through it for illustrations. This proved equally taxing, especially when many of them had only text and no pictures.

After several hours, a third difficulty became obvious. Not all of the books in this section were on the shelves — and of those that were, not all of them were sorted correctly. When Darimun told Ender that the third floor, section eleven was meant to contain books about anything made by hand, the search got even more frustrating. None of the books present mentioned the Star of Horus by name and they failed to find any reference to it either.

Finally, after eating all of the cheese and fruit in Ender's bag and seemingly standing on his feet all day, they returned to the boat for some much-needed rest. In addition, a constant deep rumbling in his gut begged Ender for some more food.

As they stepped onto the deck, one of the hands reported, "We've unloaded all of the cargo. Master Crocius is away, but I think he plans to leave soon."

"Thank you. I will be in my quarters if I am needed," Darimun said. He turned to Ender, "Shall we start again after some rest?"

"Yes, but I would really like to get back to the monks of Horo-Dur."

"I know. We are scheduled to stay here another fifty hours. We might as well use the time at the library."

"Sounds good. Is there a librarian who may be more familiar with the books in that section who may help us?"

"I don't know, but we can ask when we return."

The second day of searching proceeded much like the second. As impossible as it sounded, they were unable to locate a librarian with the information they were seeking. By the time Ender and Darimun made it back to the boat, Ender began to feel discouraged. The information he had hoped to find was not available in the library and, even if it was, he could not read the local language, complicating the problem further.

As soon as he sat down on the bed to rest, however, he heard a knock at his door.

Ender pulled his hood over his head just as the door opened and Crocius entered. "Fruitless search? I did not realize you do not read our language when I suggested to Darimun that you visit the library together. My apologies, of course.

"I have some news that may lift your spirits, however. Lord Nimara has requested an audience with you at his home. This is, of course, a great honor. He is most busy and much sought-after by our people. Perhaps he may be able to assist you in your

quest. I shall return in ten hours time to accompany you,” he said. Then, after a brief pause, the Kobold backed out the door and closed it behind him.

An Audience with Nimara

Nimara’s estate must occupy the entire island, Ender thought as they made their way through a lavish garden of fruit trees, trimmed hedges and fine statuary, followed by ornate patios and well-guarded gates and walls. So far during his stay on Cerulea, he had seen nothing else like it. Not even Crocius had as much art in his quarters, though he had plenty of wooden furniture — something Ender had noticed a lack of elsewhere.

“You must overlook some of Nimara’s eccentricities,” Crocius said as they passed through a large gateway and ascended steps leading to a set of double doors ten feet tall. “He doesn’t share our affinity for the dark. In fact, I think his entire estate is above ground. Strange, I know.”

They walked through the doors and a male Kobold in a fine black robe led them down another hallway to a large room with vaulted ceilings and wooden accents. Ender noted how big everything was in the house: tall doors, wide hallways, high ceilings and big chairs — all in a scale larger than Ender was used to, but found refreshing.

“Please wait here, sirs,” the Kobold instructed. He left them, but returned a moment later, instructing Crocius to remain there and Ender to follow him through another door.

Ender soon found himself sitting on a large balcony overlooking an aerie full of giant birds like the ones he had seen days before. At least a dozen workers saddled them while others tended to more mundane tasks: brushing feathers, grooming claws, changing straw and polishing saddles while birds cawed at one another. Luckily, the soft breeze that blew past kept the balcony downwind.

“This is my favorite spot. You can see the University from here — and the docks, if you look hard enough,” a deep, serpentine voice said.

Ender turned to see an eight-foot tall reptile approaching. He stood on two feet, wore a purple, fine silk robe and lots of jewelry. His scales were gold and silver, catching the sun and sparkling like droplets of rain. A spiked fin jutted up from his head, disappearing down his spine. He regarded the feline martial artist with two emerald green eyes. At first, Ender thought this was some sort of awe-inspiring statue, and when the Lizard Man offered him a chair. It took a few seconds for the invitation to sink in.

“Greetings. I am Lord Nimara,” he said, “and you must be Ender the Lost Traveler. It is good to finally meet you. May I offer you something to drink?”

“Water, if you have it.”

“I have plenty,” Nimara assured him. A moment later, the same Kobold in black robes returned with two silver goblets and a pitcher on a tray. He filled each goblet and departed, taking the tray with him.

“Crocius tells me you are a traveler lost on our world and that you have been separated from your companion.”

Ender nodded, almost involuntarily.

“Perhaps I can be of additional assistance. You last saw him at the monastery at Horo-Dur. Correct?”

“That is correct,” Ender confirmed and continued, “If I might pry, it appears that you are not of this world. How did you arrive here?”

“Like you probably did: I came through a dimensional portal. I did a little exploring and found I liked it here. The Kobolds are a fascinating species and the physics of this world are particularly unique.”

“It is very different from what I expected.”

“Yes. I found that too,” Nimara took a sip from his goblet and said, “The monastery is in chaos at the moment. They were attacked about ten days ago and a fire scattered most of the stragglers. It is unfortunate. The monastery had many priceless articles that can not be replaced, let alone the loss of life. Most of the monks fled to Askara. I am sure your friend was with them there, though I doubt he remained to help clean up.

“Master Crocius has stated his intention of taking you to Askara, although I do wish I could be of assistance as well. Perhaps, you and your friend could stop by here before leaving our world and I could examine the artifact you seek.”

“I will extend your offer to my companion when I find him,” Ender promised.

“Thank you. Please allow me to pry now: where do you come from?”

“I am from Earth. And you?”

“I was hatched on Palladium. I thought only humans lived on Earth.”

“Mostly. There were a few that I met that we not human, but they were usually genetically modified.” Ender added silently, *like me.*

“Genetic modification? Through science and technology, I assume?”

“Yes.”

“Interesting. I have never understood why humans dabble in the sciences. Magic is far more manageable. Nothing like the trial and error that characterizes these lesser pursuits,” Nimara said. “Granted, few wizards I have met worried about creating new species. Most left that to the Old Ones.”

“How did you come to be lord here?”

“A transdimensional storm. I was searching for my species’ homeworld — called Valusia — when I got caught in a storm. Next thing I knew I was here.”

“Have you thought of continuing your search for home, or are you content here?”

“I *am* content here. There is plenty still to explore in this world. If you are interested, once this mission is completed, I am sure we could have some interesting adventures, as well. What do you think?”

“That sounds interesting, but I think I should finish the current task first,” Ender explained. “Thanks, though.”

“That is all right. I don’t suppose there is anything else we can do for each other at the moment then,” Nimara said as if the last phrase were an invitation.

“Not unless you can get me where I need to go faster than my current accommodations.”

"No. Stay with Crocius. He is your best bet."

A few minutes later, Ender followed Crocius out of Nimara's massive estate and across the grounds. As they descended the stairs leading to the main entrance, he saw that a dark cloud now surrounded the island. "We best hurry if we want to beat the rain," Crocius said, turning off the main path and heading left toward a covered walkway.

After a moment, they passed through a gate, into a courtyard darkened by the shadow of Nimara's aerie. Ender heard the birds cawing in their stalls high above. Already rain had begun to fall.

As the gate closed behind them, Crocius stopped. Six Kobolds armed with crossbows stood before them. Two more materialized from the shadows behind them. Each dressed exactly like the mercenaries that attacked the monastery at Horo-Dur the night Ender and Matthias arrived. In addition to crossbows, they carried short swords on their belts and probably some hidden weapons as well.

"Put your hands where I can see them," one of the mercenaries ordered. Ender's body instinctively flinched, but he knew he could not dodge all six crossbow bolts without getting hit by most of them.

Crocius raised his hands to shoulder level, palms outward. *Stay calm and do as they say*, Ender heard the Kobold's voice say in his head.

Obediently, Ender raised his hands.

Ender felt one of the Kobolds unclasp the leather strap on his sheath, taking his sword and energy disk, while the others frisked Crocius but found no weapons. "Any other weapons?" the Kobold asked, feeling around Ender's boots and pant legs.

"Clear," the Kobold reported.

"Up against the wall then," the lead mercenary ordered. He motioned to Ender's left with his weapon.

"Very good, Captain. Make sure you dispose of the body where no one will find it," Crocius said, lowering his hands. Stepping aside, he took Ender's weapons from the mercenary. He put the energy disk in the pocket of his robe and slung the sword over his shoulder.

"I want that ring, too," Crocius said pointing at Ender's raised hand.

Ender did not reply. Instead he sized up the mercenaries, trying to get a good idea of where each one is now standing. *Nine to one odds*, he realized.

"The ring, dirt bag!" the lead mercenary said, striking Ender in the ribs.

Well, here goes. Suddenly Ender sprang into the air, surprising all eight of the Kobolds. Still, he heard the twang of their crossbow bolts and felt one bury itself into his right calf. The pain was incredible, but he managed to jump off the wall toward his right, aiming for one of his attackers. Instead of scoring a jump kick against one, he used the Kobold to break his fall. The mercenaries hesitated to strike their companion, giving Ender enough time to stand up again, before a crossbow bolt ripped harmlessly through his cloak and another grazed his left shoulder.

"Kill him!" Crocius yelled. "Kill him now!"

The lead mercenary drew his short sword and rushed into the fray as the one standing next to Ender fired another bolt.

Ender dodged, only to have the leader cut him across the right shoulder with his blade.

Simultaneously, Ender grabbed the leader in a neck hold, bending him over, while launching his foot into the crossbowman's face — a Tae Kwon Do technique called Butjapgo Chagi. The blow sent the Kobold backward, bloodying his nose. The leader struggled against Ender's grasp, but was unable to break free.

He poked the leader in the eyes, hoping to blind him before moving on to the others. Ender hurled the blinded Kobold into his advancing troops, knocking down one of them. The others moved to attack. He parried their first round of attacks, then grabbed the one on his left while kicking his companion. The blow pushed the Kobold away, but little more. Using his free hand, he fended off the other attacks.

Repeating the blinding technique he used on their leader, Ender then hurled that Kobold at his fellows while parrying another sword thrust. He moved to grab a third attacker, when a sword thrust in his back stopped him.

Ender kicked the mercenary behind him, then rotated so his back was to the courtyard and all of the Kobolds — except Crocius — were in sight. He tried to grab another, but the Kobold ducked out of his grasp. Meanwhile, he kicked the Kobold immediately to his right as the first one cut his arm around the elbow.

He pummeled the next closest Kobold, hoping to knock him out of the fight completely. The Kobold could not strike back in time, but remained standing. Next, Ender kicked him, then parried several punches from the mercenary's companions.

He concentrated his attention on this Kobold, pausing only to protect himself from the others. It took quite a few strikes before he saw his target drop. In the meantime, the mercenary leader cut him across the arm, too. Ender moved onto the next opponent, knocking him out after several punches as well.

Meanwhile, outside Ender's peripheral vision, Crocius took a few steps back and turned his attention to *Ender's Light*. Placing his left hand on the mouth of the sheath, Crocius reached down with his right to draw the sword. As soon as his fingers touched the hilt, however, he drew them back with a yelp of pain. The tips of his fingers smoldered and the air filled with the smell of burnt flesh. "What is this?" he puzzled aloud, angry and confused.

He tried again, but this time, the magical blade fell through the balcony railing to another eave below, where it slid along the terracotta tiles before it stuck in a rain gutter.

As the feline martial artist finished off a third attacker, he became aware of Crocius entering the fray, a scimitar made of sparkling white energy in the Kobold's hand. The mercenaries stepped aside at his command. "I can see I will have to take care of you myself," he sneered, lunging at Ender.

Meeting his attacker's advance, Ender tried to disarm Crocius, but was unsuccessful. He narrowly parried the Kobold's returned strike. Then, using another martial arts technique, he jabbed the merchant square in the chest with his claws. He heard bone crack as the merchant's blade bit through his left thigh.

"Die, alien scum!" Crocius sneered, gasping with pain.

Ender's next attempt to disarm Crocius failed. Luckily, however, his parry succeeded.

They each attacked again, but only Ender was successful: he planted a kick against Crocius' chest, hoping to break more ribs, and then parried the merchant's lunge.

Meanwhile, as Ender focused his attention on the Kobold in front of him, he hardly noticed the squad of guards pouring into the courtyard. Seeing them, the mercenaries made for the gate, only to find another squad coming through it.

"Freeze!" one of the guards yelled. The outnumbered mercenaries hesitated, but Ender and Crocius continued to fight one another.

Oblivious, Ender kicked again, using his momentum to parry the Kobold's next strike. Crocius spun, slicing into Ender's left calf. He roared in pain as the blood flowed down the back of his leg. It hurt almost enough to knock him over and he doubted he could maintain his balance enough to kick again.

With a deep breath, Ender launched his claws into the Kobold's face. He heard the bone snap and, when he pulled his hand back, bits of bloodied flesh trailed from his fingers. Crocius staggered. Swaying, he brought his sword arm up to strike again, but his blade had vanished. By the time it registered in the Kobold's mind, however, he had toppled backward on the ground, his chest unmoving.

Ender took a step forward, suddenly feeling very light-headed. He sensed a dark shadow falling over him and stumbled sideways into Nimara's waiting arms.

"Are you hurt?" the Lizard Man asked, as if he did not see the blood covering Ender's body.

"Just a bit. I wasn't expecting him to attack me. I guess I was too trusting."

"Let's get you inside."

New Arrangements

"Feeling better?" Lord Nimara asked hours later as Ender followed the butler into the dining room of the Lizard Man's massive estate. He had just woken up, though he had no idea how long he had slept for. The butler must have heard him moving around (he instinctively inventoried his equipment when he awoke and found all of it there), because he knocked a moment later and offered Ender something to eat. His stomach growled loudly before he could answer, so the butler led him to Nimara's dining room.

"Nothing a little sleep and the right potion won't fix," Nimara continued, "I hope it worked. You have been asleep close to a hundred hours — I believe that is four days of Earth time, right? Small price to pay for good health and no scarring."

Ender looked. Sure enough, he could find no scars on his calf or chest where Crocius had cut him. His muscles felt rested, his mind alert. Only his empty belly begged for attention.

"Some water, bread, cheese and meat," Nimara directed the butler, then offered his guest a seat. "We have much to discuss," he said once they were alone.

"Why do you think he attempted to kill me, and why do you think he had those mercenaries attack that monastery?" Ender asked, confused.

"Who is to say? Crocius was a greedy man. He possessed unusual powers for a Kobold and had developed unusual greed and ambition as well. I have worked with him in the past. I suppose I

ought not to be pleased that you have defeated him, but I think you have done this world a service."

"Well, I still wish to seek out my companion. Will you travel with me or help me find him?"

The butler arrived with a pitcher of water and poured them each a goblet. "I wish I could. Your quest interests me a great deal, but more mundane affairs keep me here. Instead, I have made arrangements for you to fly to Askara and then sail to Horo-Dur."

"Thank you. When does the ship leave?"

"You are welcome. It is the least I can do anyway. After the storm broke, the boat you arrived on left. There seems to be some confusion now in Crocius' organization that may prove to your advantage. As for the boat to Askara," Nimara paused, looking slightly embarrassed, "the best I can do is a Roc. The pilot is very skilled — one of my best — so you should get there quickly and safely."

"I have no problem with flying on a Roc," Ender said, guessing the word referred to a great bird of prey that, on Earth, was a product of mythology, but must have existed here. "Thank you for your generosity in helping me get where I need to go."

"Well, I do feel partially responsible."

"Why do *you* feel responsible?" he asked.

"You, a guest at my estate, were attacked by someone I trusted."

"He is the one at fault, not you. Thank you for helping me afterward —"

"Of course," Nimara bowed slightly. After a moment, he smiled slyly, "Where did you learn to fight like that?"

"I grew up learning to fight. I trained to fight that way," he said referring to his martial arts background on Earth.

"Really? I don't recall the English teaching their people martial arts like that."

"They weren't all English speaking, but some of them knew martial arts as well."

"Someday you will have to tell me more about this. The monks of Horo-Dur teach similar combat techniques. You might find it interesting. In the meantime, is there anything else you need before leaving here?"

"Not that I am aware of — is there anything you think I will need?"

"No. You seem to travel light anyway," Nimara said as the butler brought in a tray of bread, cheese and sliced meat, "I will have my chef prepare you something for the road. How is that?"

"Sounds good to me."

"Excellent," Nimara said before instructing the butler to alert the chef and the pilot of Ender's wish to leave soon. Once the butler had gone, Nimara directed his attention to the food on the table between them.

After a moment, Ender asked, "Do you have a way to open a dimensional gate?"

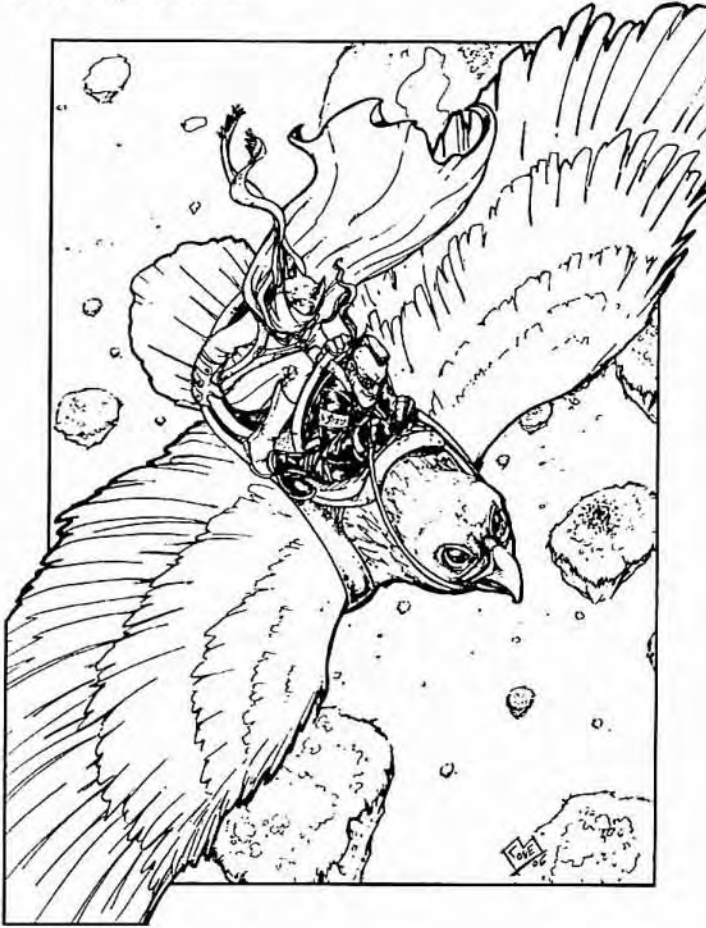
"No," he shook his head. "That takes far more energy than you will find in this dimension. Your employer must have powerful magic to have brought you here."

"Aren't you seeking for a way out of this dimension?"

"No, I like it here."

"Okay. Well, thank you for all your help. I hope to see you again, once I find my employer."

"I hope to see you again someday as well. I wish you the best of luck in your travels."



Roc Flight

After Ender finished his meal, the butler gave him a cloth bundle and led him out to the aviary where the Kobold introduced him to a pilot named Kestrel. The pilot wore tight leather clothing lined with fur. His head was shaven except for an inch-long black Mohawk that ended in a ponytail down his back.

"Pleased to meet you," he said, leading Ender to the right perch. "You are a bit larger than my usual packages, but we should be all right."

They stopped beside a covered stall occupied by a large falcon as tall as Ender. Dark brown plumage covered its head and wings while its underbelly was much lighter. Someone had already gone to the trouble to saddle the animal — a feat Ender wondered about when he noticed the bird's large, sharp beak and long talons. Kestrel seemed not to care, however, as he greeted it with a pat on the belly and a "hello, how are you?"

The bird screeched briefly, keeping its eyes on Ender, but became noticeably calmer with its rider standing nearby.

"She's harmless," the Kobold assured Ender. He untied the reins and led the bird out into the aisle way. "Have you flown before?" he asked.

"Not on a Roc."

"It can get a little bumpy, but hang on and I will take care of everything. Have you been to Trilon before?"

Ender shook his head.

"That will be our first stop. It will probably take six or seven hours to get there, depending on the updrafts. She'll need an hour's rest and then we can continue on to Askara. That'll be another five hours or so."

"Sounds good. Let's get started."

Once on the balcony, a wide, circular platform overlooking the entire island, Kestrel reined his bird to a large metal loop in the floor. He assisted Ender into the saddle. "Specially designed for a passenger," he commented as he lengthened the stirrups and handed the hooded feline what looked like an archaic seatbelt.

After Ender buckled up, Kestrel handed Ender a scarf from his saddlebag and motioned for him to tie it around his mouth and nose. Then the Kobold unchained the bird. He climbed into the saddle and donned a leather cap that came down over his face far enough to cover his mouth and nose, while still letting him see through a primitive visor.

Eager to fly, the great bird hardly waited for the tug on the reins before lifting off the stone balcony into the air. It flapped its great wings in a motion that bobbed Ender and Kestrel up and down for several minutes as it gained altitude over the spires of Nimara's estate and the University. Finally, it caught a favorable draft and soared clear of the island before steering away gently to the left and upwards.

The sun beat down on them, causing sweat to gather under Ender's scarf, which combined with the glaring sunlight and the cool wind blowing in his face made the ride almost comical.

The wind made communicating orally difficult, so Ender waited until they arrived on Trilon to ask anymore questions. The next seven hours dragged on slowly and Ender found himself fighting the drowsiness of boredom a couple of times. Finally, the Roc leveled out on a course for a small wooded island amongst a widely-spaced cluster of larger islands. He saw towers and docks on the others, but only trees on their destination.

As they prepared to land, Kestrel said, "Trilon is a good rest spot. I stop here for supplies anytime I travel upward and outward. We can get some water and a little rest. You might want to walk around a bit. Askara is at least five hours from here."

Moments later, the Roc landed on a bald hilltop near a stone archway leading underground.

The feline martial artist decided not to stray too far from the Roc. Finding a shady patch of grass nearby, he sat down to open the cloth bundle Nimara gave him. Inside he found a shoe-sized loaf of hard bread, a bunch of grapes and a fist-sized ball of white cheese.

A few minutes after he started eating, Kestrel emerged from the archway bearing two water skins. He handed one to Ender, who could feel the water was still cold inside.

The Kobold fed and watered the bird, adjusting its saddle and picking debris out of its wings. About the time Ender finished, he announced it was time to leave. They went through the same routine, only this time the Roc flew in a generally level course from Trilon inward.

From the model Ender saw at the University of Grashona, he learned that nearly all of the islands comprising the world of Cerulea rotated either individually or in clusters around a central vertical axis. The Kobolds referred to traveling toward that axis as 'traveling inward' and away from it as 'traveling outward,' just as they referred to vertical travel toward the sun above them as 'upward' and away from the sun as 'downward.'

After about an hour, Kestrel pointed to a cluster of islands floating straight ahead and slightly upward. "Askara is the lopsided one far to the left," he shouted over the wind.

"Do you often see other flyers when you are out?" Ender asked.

"Usually, but it seems pretty quiet today."

"Quiet is good. Who do the other flyers work for?"

"There are a few other major shippers, a lot of couriers, soldiers, fishermen — those kind of people."

"Fishermen?" Ender balked.

"You know, hunters and foragers."

"Ah. How long have you been flying? How old is the Roc?"

"I've been flying about five rotations now. This Roc is probably two rotations old."

About an hour before they are supposed to land, Kestrel pointed out Horo-Dur among the cluster of islands. Even from miles away, Ender could see the burned out monastery. It looked like fire consumed everything above ground, including much of the surrounding trees and fields. He even thought he could see the now-exposed basement sections.

He noticed a change in Kestrel's demeanor as they made the final approach on Askara. Instead of flying in high like he did with Trilon, the courier dropped his bird down below the point where the island's vegetation began. He leaned farther forward, as if expecting to change course at a moment's notice.

They flew along the island's edge for several minutes while the Kobold surveyed the trees and rocks. Then, upon seeing a crack along the edge, he took the Roc in closer, landing in a secluded spot far too close to the edge for Ender's comfort.

"Here you go," Kestrel said, obviously nervous.

Ender looked at the trees, but saw nothing suspicious. During their approach he did not notice any people, buildings or livestock — features common to most of the islands they flew past getting here, but even the Roc seemed to pick up on the Kobold's irritation. It clawed at the ground waiting for Ender to dismount.

As he dismounted, Ender noticed Kestrel's reaction and asked about it.

"I'm not nervous, just alert," the pilot said, sticking out his chest. "I have heard stories about the monks. They are not to be trusted. I prefer to get off their island as quickly as I can."

"Why are they not to be trusted?"

"They keep a lot of secrets — and rumor has it their leader, Shaolin, can fly all by himself."

"Shaolin the monk," Ender thought aloud. "I will remember that name."

Before he could ask anymore questions, Kestrel spurred his Roc and flew away, leaving Ender standing atop a short hill surrounded by pine trees. A slight breeze ruffled the trees while

one of the islands overhead blocked out part of the sun overhead. Ender heard a few birds scattered throughout the forest.

The entire scene felt deceptively idyllic to his trained eye. He crept through the forest with his energy disk in his hand. Years before, he traveled through a similar wood, scouting for a Chrystallon convoy needing to pass through the mountains on its way to Angosh. The air had been quiet — too quiet — tipping off Ender and his friends, Jammer Permillon, Ken Jones and Ted Smythe, that something was amiss. Moments later, an Infiltrator combat android burst from behind a tree, attacking them. They defeated it, but the attack cost Ender his left eye and ear. For some reason, the memory of that day now flooded back.

Cautiously, Ender stepped through the undergrowth, careful not to give away his presence. After several hundred feet, he heard voices ahead and smelled cooked food.

Soon he was close enough to see dozens of tents made from cloth of various colors arranged in a circle around a cooking fire. Kobolds in brown robes milled about, talking, preparing food, cleaning pots and pans and engaging in other mundane chores.

Before he could move to get a better look, however, Ender felt a dull point press against his back.

"Stand up slowly," a male voice ordered.

Ender looked over his shoulder as he stood to see a bald-headed Kobold holding a six-foot wood staff against the small of his back.

"That's right. Hands where I can see them."

Ender recognized him as belonging to the order of monks he met when he first arrived in Cerulea.

"I am searching for the Monks of Horo-Dur," Ender asked, trying to sound as friendly as possible. "Have I found them?"

"It depends. What business do you have with the monks?"

"I am searching for Mathias Whitehand, who I last saw traveling with the monks. I have been hoping that he is still with them."

"Remove your hood," the monk ordered.

The monk flinched, but just barely, as Ender lowered his hood and revealed his face. "We were told about you," the Kobold said. "Come."

The Kobold led him through the bushes into the center of camp. As they passed by, the monks stopped whatever they were doing and looked at him. Conversations dropped off abruptly, changing the moment he passed into speculation about who Ender was and what he was doing in their camp.

After several minutes, they approached a large green tent secured to several of the neighboring trees by rope and the ground by wooden stakes.

"Wait here," his escort ordered, stepping past the feline martial artist and entering the cloth structure.

Although no one looked at him directly now, Ender felt well aware that the other monks were watching him. Hoping to make the right impression, he holstered his energy disc.

The first monk emerged from the tent a moment later. "Our master will see you now," he said, holding the tent flap open.

Ender's eyes adjusted to the darkness almost immediately. In the tent he saw a variety of household items — pots, pans, trunks and other things necessary for day-to-day living. A young

Kobold stood over a chair, fumbling with a scroll that he finally fit into a case before leaving.

Sitting in a small chair near the back center of the room was the oldest Kobold Ender had ever seen. His ears drooped and the skin atop his bald head looked like it was melting off. Huge bags hung under his eyes and the bones protruded from every visible joint. Solitary strands of hair hung down to his shoulders from the sides of his head and onto his plain gray robe.

"You are Ender Smith?" the Kobold said, standing. He bowed slightly and introduced himself as Shoalin, leader of the monks of Horo-Dur.

"I am. I have been looking for Mathias Whitehand. Do you know where I might find him?"

"As a matter of fact, I do. Please sit down. Would you like some tea?" The elderly monk shuffled across the ground toward an unlit cooking fire, "This may take a moment. Are you hungry?"

"Yes, I am. Is there anything I can help you with?"

"No, no. That is quite all right." The old monk went to the corner of the tent and retrieved a pot. "I will send one of the monks for water. Shergn is listening outside the door anyway," he added nonchalantly as he put another log on the fire.

A moment later, a young monk entered, bowing deeply. "You called for me, Master?"

Shoalin cast Ender a look that said, *see, I told you so*, before addressing the acolyte. "Yes, I did. Go fetch enough water for stew."

"Yes, Master." The acolyte took the pot and disappeared through the tent flap.

"Thank you," Ender said.

"I am afraid we all thought you were dead. I have never known someone to fall from one island to the next and survive."

"I'm not sure how it happened. I don't remember much after being thrown over the edge."

"Perhaps it is due to your feline ancestry." The old monk handed Ender a steaming mug and then sat down with his own. "The fact remains, however, that Master Whitehand believes you are dead and has gone on with his mission without you. Fortunately, he is due to return here from the University in another twenty or thirty hours. You can rejoin him then."

"Sounds good. How have things gone since the Monastery was attacked?"

"Well, so far. The monks are eager to rebuild. I have sent several groups over already to survey the damage. We should be able to begin work as soon as I can procure more lumber."

"Do you know who ordered the attack?"

"I have my suspicions, though I doubt it is wise to make accusations before we uncover any concrete evidence. That is another reason I have been sending monks back to the monastery."

"On my way to meet with you, I had help from someone named Crocius, who seemed to be helping me to find your location. However, he tried to have me killed, and he made the attempt with the help of mercenaries that were wearing the same symbols as those who attacked the Monastery. In his attempt to kill me, he died."

Shoalin raised an eyebrow and nodded slightly. "Crocius the shipping magnate, eh? His organization has been strangely silent

for hours now, perhaps he was behind it. If so, we are safe for the time being. Why do you think he would attack you?"

"I am not sure. At one point during the attack, he sounded a little xenophobic, but he also wanted to rob me."

"I am afraid xenophobia is common in this world, even with all the travelers we get. You seem to have fared the attack nicely though."

"I had help from a Lord Nimara. Interesting fellow; the attack happened on his estate, so he felt responsible and helped me recover."

"Lord Nimara? I had not thought him the regretful type. Tell me, what is your impression of him?"

"I am not sure. He seems content to be where he is at the current time. He asked if he might accompany me at one point, but when I told him I would continue my search, he seemed disappointed."

"Perhaps he wants to find the Star of Horus for himself."

"Could be. Do you have any leads on the Star, or is Mathias currently following what is known?"

"Mathias has been at the University of Grashona for several — what is your word for it? Days? — yes, several days now. In fact, I am surprised you did not see him there."

"Strange. I hope he returns."

"Yes, so do I. He is an interesting person. He said he hired you on the Palladium world. Is that correct?"

"That is correct. We were introduced by a mutual acquaintance. I agreed to come with him to help him on his search, and that is what brought me here."

"So he did not summon you for this quest? Where do you come from then?"

"No, I am originally from a planet named Earth. I went through a dimensional portal, and have been traveling around since then, looking for a way back home."

"I wish you luck. It is always good to come home." His words reminded Ender of the burned-out monastery on Horo-Dur. Living in a tent must have been quite a change for Shoalin and the other monks. "Let me know if any of us can be of assistance. Now then, where on Earth are you from?"

"Los Angeles. My earliest memories seem to be from some sort of training facility, which I assume was near there."

"I am not familiar with Los Angeles. Who is the Emperor now?"

"The leader of the country was George Bush."

The old monk thought for a moment and then he shook his head, slightly saddened by some realization. "That does not sound familiar. I suppose Emperor Xiaowen has died since I was in Henan. But then, things have probably changed a lot if humans are creating felines like you..."

"What year were you on Earth?" Ender asked after a brief pause.

"Xiaowen was Emperor of China. I do not recall the year. It was a long time ago," the old Kobold handed Ender a fist-sized loaf of bread wrapped in a blue cloth. "Not that it matters now. I am sure you have plenty of questions about the artifact your companion seeks."

"I do have questions. Like, who made it and what does it do?"

"I do not know much about the origin of the Star of Horus, but according to legend, he — Horus, that is — is the son of Ra and Hathor and they have given him dominion over their realms, the sun and the night sky.

"Once, while both were actively worshipped on Earth, the rival god Set challenged him to single combat. Although Horus won, both were maimed. Horus lost his right eye and Set became impotent. Apparently, a book that used to be in the monastery collection reported that the artifact you seek is, in fact, the lost eye and therefore has power over the day and night skies."

After a sip of tea, he continued, "Horus is also associated with the process of mummification, specifically the canopic jars. Mathias said the book in the monastery library claimed that the Star had power over life and death. Just as the sky is always present, changing only with the time of day, the Star is reported to have the power to cheat death, resulting in immortality for the one who possesses it.

"I had never heard of the Star of Horus being here in this world, though it would not surprise me. It is a realm of sky and eternal day — the same kingdom given to Horus by his parents. Since learning about it, I have wondered if it might not be the force that maintains this world, but I do not know.

"I believe Mathias is hoping to find more of that kind of information at the University, especially since most of the monastery library was destroyed," Shoalin explained. "I suspect he knows more than I have told you, but he has not shared any more with me."

"Well," said Ender. "Let us wait and see what Mathias has found. It will be nice to see what he has discovered."

"I am eager to learn more, as well."

A moment later, the young monk returned with a bucket of water. Shoalin prepared a stew of mixed vegetables, potatoes and various herbs. He handed Ender a hot bowl a few minutes later. While they ate, he offered to find Ender a tent to sleep in until Mathias returned.

Mathias Returns

About thirty hours later, a Kobold woke Ender from a sound sleep. He had spent the last day or so among the monks, talking with Shoalin and helping out where he could. Their lifestyle was simple, especially now with the monastery destroyed, but they seemed to enjoy life no matter what it had thrown at them.

Earlier, he practiced katas with monks, noting their King Fu-like style. Afterwards, he did weapons practice and chopped firewood and hauled water with the others until his body ached. It reminded him of his own training years before. Just like he had in those days, he fell asleep the instant his head hit the pillow. So, when the monk tapped him on the leg to wake him up, he hoped it was for something important because he felt tired.

"Master Ender," the monk said, "I am sent to tell you Master Mathias has returned."

Mathias arrived at the camp on Askara in a large boat that hovered over a clearing not too far from Shaolin's tent. As the boat docked, the old monk came to Ender's side. "Your friend has returned. Let us hope he has found the information he seeks."

Ender said nothing, only watching as someone threw a rope ladder over the side of the thirty-foot vessel and an Elf in heavy robes descended. Meanwhile, a crane began lowering crated supplies from the other side and the monks gathered to guide them gently to the ground before unloading them.

Mathias let go of the rope and turned to look through the gathering crowd. He stood two or three feet taller than most of the Kobolds. He spied Ender and his expression changed suddenly. Hurrying over and greeting him, he said he was anxious to learn what had transpired since they were separated, so Ender briefly summarized his adventures.

"I did not get a chance to meet Lord Nimara," the Elf reported. "I was told he was away when I arrived, but I found the University helpful as well." He drew a thick, leather-bound journal from his pocket and thumbed through it once they sat down in Shaolin's tent.

"Basically," the wizard said without any preamble, "I believe the Star is located on the island of Sh'mal —"

"Sh'mal?" Shaolin repeated, not believing what he had heard, "Are you sure? Sh'mal is pretty far up from here. The heat might have destroyed it all ready."

"No, the Star is indestructible, believe me. And if it is there, I have magic strong enough to protect us from the heat of the sun."

"How far up is Sh'mal? What leads you to believe it is there?" Ender asked.

"Sh'mal is about as close to the sun as one can get," Shaolin answered.

"I believe the Star is there because of some shipping records I found. There was a vessel called the *Far-venture* whose last known destination was Sh'mal. The captain was under the employ of Tyrus Mangrove — an associate of mine for many years until he disappeared," Mathias explained. He held up the journal. "This is his notebook. If I have decoded it correctly, the Star has to be there."

"Did Tyrus have possession of the Star?" Ender asked.

"The journal doesn't include that information. I am assuming he did not."

"Was he searching for the Star as well then?"

"Yes. He and I worked together briefly on another project. He told me about it then and that is how I knew to come to this world."

"Tyrus was Elvish?" Shaolin asked.

"Yes. We worked together at the wizarding academy in Old Timiro — the capital of my country," Mathias answered.

"I do not remember him," the old Kobold shook his head.

"This would have been about seventy years ago." Ender had forgotten that Elves live ten times longer than humans, sometimes more. This in itself seemed to open up all kinds of questions.

"How long have you been searching for this artifact?"

"Actively, for about five years now, but I took over Tyrus' estate after his disappearance."

"How long ago was that?" Ender asked.

"Over six years ago," Mathias said. "His notes suggest that he intended to hide with the Star until he could determine how to access its power. Originally, I thought he might be here on

Cerulea, that is why I first contacted you," he said to Shaolin, "but you haven't seen him, so my guess is he is somewhere else and the answers lie on Sh'mal."

"Could he be on Sh'mal, hiding this *whole* time?" Ender asked, trying to hide his doubt.

"I think so." The wizard sounded confident in his theory.

"I disagree, Master Mathias," the old Kobold said. "Sh'mal is very hot. The climate does not take kindly to strangers."

"All the more reason to stay there," the Elf replied.

Ender shook his head. "Is the secret to unlocking its power so complex it would take seven *years* of trying?"

"Possibly."

"How hard will it be to get up there?"

"We'll take my boat," the wizard motioned over his shoulder. "It shouldn't take more than two or three days."

"What do we need to do to prepare to go?"

"I have all the supplies we need in my vessel — except fresh water, of course. If you need anything else, let me know," Mathias said.

"We can provide you fresh water," Shaolin offered.

"When do you plan to leave?"

"After I get some rest. Sleeping on the boat just isn't the same, as I am sure you know."

The Voyage Upward

While Mathias took a long nap, Ender oversaw the loading of the thirty-foot vessel the wizard had chartered for their journey. It looked like a rugged ship with little wear. The experienced pilot-navigator and two hands seemed to know what they were doing.

The Elven wizard had suggested that Ender get some rest before they depart, but the anticipation kept him awake. The Star of Horus lay just hours ahead and he felt more than ready to find it. This assignment had already lasted longer than he had hoped for and, although he had lost track of time in this world with no night, he felt eager to finish up and get back to his friends in the Palladium world.

So, in the hours before Mathias awoke, Ender pretended to supervise the Kobolds loading the boat. He helped pack several crates of dried food, two barrels of fresh water and a variety of tools: shovels, axes, picks and brooms. It looked more like they would be doing ditch-digging than retrieving a powerful artifact, but Ender figured his employer had done his research and knew what to anticipate.

At last, the Elf emerged from his tent in clean clothes and looking more rested. He discussed a few things with the pilot and then boarded the ship moored several feet above the island. Ender followed him aboard. The crates had been moved to the small hold under the vessel and a tarp has been erected to offer shade for the eighty-hour journey ahead.

Shaolin appeared at the base of the rope ladder dangling from the side of the boat, shouting his desire for them to have a safe journey.

"We should be back in a week's time," the wizard promised, leaning over the side.

"I shall see you then." The elder monk stepped away from the ladder and one of the hands quickly hoisted it aboard.

"Everything ready?" Mathias asked the pilot.

"Yes, but I don't think your tent will be enough."

"If not, I have magic to protect us."

"It will be plenty warm once we pass through the cloud bank," the Kobold insisted.

"We will worry about that when the time comes."

"As you wish," the pilot grumbled and took his place behind the ornate stone used to navigate the boat, waiting for the order to leave.

"You may disembark whenever you are ready," Mathias ordered, taking a seat under the tarp and drawing a long book from a chest nearby. He flipped through it until he found a certain page in the middle and then began reading.

Slowly, the boat lifted away from the island, drifting away from the monks' camp and over the trees until it reached open air. The navigator turned the boat around and set them into a leisurely upward spiral similar to the one the Roc pilot used to bring Ender to Horo-Dur. As they passed into the shadow of another island, Ender watched the monks' tent city disappear into the trees with the growing distance.

Stepping away from the railing, he removed his cloak and draped it over a crate. He had stopped wearing his hood after meeting Shaolin and now, with the air noticeably warmer, he saw no reason for it at all. The monks did not mind, and the crew of the boat seemed to think nothing unusual of it either.

Settling in, Ender asked the pilot if he had ever been this way before.

"Never, and I have been *all* over the world. It gets pretty hot up this way and I like to avoid it," the pilot said, squinting. Ender also remembered that Kobolds were generally subterranean and nocturnal. Without any islands to block out the sun, it probably got too bright for them to see up this way. "I hope this is the last time, too," the pilot added.

"Is there anyone who comes up this way?"

"Very few. The pilot I apprenticed under said he came up this way once to hunt lizards, but I am not sure I believe him. How could anything live in that heat?"

"How hot is it?"

"Hot enough to burn the skin right off your back. There's no water that far up because it evaporates and then drifts farther down."

Mathias laughed aloud suddenly. "It gets hot," he corrected, "but not that hot — at least, not on Sh'mal. There is no shade because there aren't many islands above it. Temperatures routinely get above the boiling point of water, so the islands generally have desert-like conditions." He shook his head in disbelief, "Broghan, I never thought you were such a bumpkin."

The navigator replied, "I was just repeating what I have been told."

"My research indicates that there are no giant lizards in the upper islands."

"You callin' my old master a liar?"

Mathias ignored the question, continuing, "There are two types of islands in the upper regions: sandy islands and steppe islands. My research leads me to believe Sh'mal is a sandy is-

land. It is possible we will have to deal with insects and other nuisances, but we will be in much greater danger from the heat and the wind. Many of the upper islands have never been explored, so it is hard to say what else we could find."

Broghan leaned close to Ender. "Well, I have heard that the wind is strong enough to blow a Kobold right off the island and let him fall to the ice shelf!"

"The winds are that strong?"

"I doubt it," the wizard said, "but remember: a Kobold weighs about half what you and I do."

The pilot harrumphed and looked away as if he did not want to take part in the conversation any more. He lifted the craft slightly, probably to tease Mathias, then leveled off into the same spiraling ascent as before.

"Eighty hours to get there?" Ender asked, not bothering to hide the doubt in his voice. He looked up, but the sun shined bright enough to obscure any of the islands directly overhead.

Mathias nodded, "Sh'mal is somewhere over there." He pointed to a distant group of islands near the four o'clock position in relation to their boat and about fifty degrees up from the deck. "But the eighty hours I told you include three stops to re-supply."

"And the air gets thinner the higher we climb, which slows down the boat," the pilot explained, "But we should make the first stop in another fifteen hours or so."

"What do we need to re-supply?"

"Water, mostly. Broghan might need a little rest too."

Ender turned to enjoy the view. Below, he saw hundreds of islands littering the sky in slow-moving orbits. Storm clouds gathered above him off to the right, but it did not look like they would effect their trip. Overhead, he saw a flock of small birds and the occasional traffic, but most of the first leg of the trip passed so quietly that he fell asleep without knowing it.

Ender awoke as the vessel came to a stop near a rocky outcropping at the edge of a wooded island. One of the hands descended the ladder, securing the boat's tether to a metal ring embedded in a huge rock and then returned to the vessel.

"We are going to wait here while Broghan sleeps," Mathias told him. "You are welcome to disembark, but don't go too far."

Ender got out to stretch his legs and enjoy some shade. The pilot was ready to go in another four or five hours. The hands had brought water aboard that they got from a nearby stream and purified while moored. Once everyone was aboard, the boat set sail once more, ever climbing upward toward a cluster of islands far ahead.

This routine repeated three more times before Sh'mal was sighted. Each time the temperature rose until Ender could feel the sweat between his toes and under his clothes. Drinking water helped, but as the pile of empty jugs grew, Ender wondered if there would be enough for the trip. Luckily, as their destination grew closer, Mathias cast a spell on each of them that made the heat less noticeable. Unfortunately, it did nothing to keep the air from thinning, which made Ender feel out of breath all the time.

"Do you remember my nephew? I was just thinking that I would have loved for him to be here," the wizard said, noticeably excited.

"Maybe he can help you with your research," Ender suggested, recalling that he and Ted Smythe had rescued Mathias' nephew from bandits while traveling in the Eastern Territories several weeks — had it really been that long? — before. The young wizard told them about Mathias and offered to provide a letter of introduction for them. One thing had led to another. Now Ender sat in a flying boat in a strange dimension looking for a powerful artifact with the boy's uncle.

"That is a good idea. He is a good student. He might enjoy this kind of work."

They discussed the wizard's nephew for several more minutes. Within a half hour, they had pulled up alongside the island cluster and began looking for a place to tie down.

Sh'mal did not look hospitable at all. The island was as flat as a table with very little sand, and heat waves rising up from the sun-bleached surface. In fact, through the undulating air, Ender could see the opposite side. Finding a place to moor proved more difficult than imagined, so the hands decided to use some of their supplies as an anchor.

"We shall return shortly," Mathias stated when they finished, backing over the railing and down the ladder.

"Yeah. Hurry," the pilot said, remaining aboard.

Ender stepped barefoot onto the rock. Years of martial arts training involving extremes in temperature now protected his feet from the burning stone. Pulling his cloak around him to ward off the sun, he followed his employer toward a mound of stones. As they approached, he saw that it made the entrance to an underground passage.

They entered the passage, Ender first, taking only a few steps before the darkened air got noticeably cooler around them. Ender folded back his hood after a few feet.

Soon the passage ended in a room. An empty dais occupied the center of the room while skeletons lay sprawled out on both sides of it. Many had arrows or other weapons still protruding from their bodies, as if they died during combat. The bones were too small to be human, except for one skeleton clothed in the remains of a wizard's robe. A scimitar, still standing straight up, separated its vertebrae.

Mathias walked to that skeleton's side. Bending down, he touched the robes then drew back his fingers as if burned by some imaginary fire. "Tyrus?" he questioned.

Ender drew his sword. Mathias stood up, at the ready. "What?" he asked.

Ender looked over some of the Kobold bodies hoping to find any identifying marks or insignias. The clothing had mostly rotted and the leather dried out so much, it was hard to tell it from the dried and shriveled flesh hanging from the corpses. He found nothing uniform about any of their clothing or equipment.

Meanwhile, Mathias inspected the dais, poking and prodding with the end of his staff, but uncovering nothing interesting. "I doubt this was trapped," he announced at last.

"Just in case," Ender smiled.

"I think the damage has been done here already," he said, looking around at the scene. Together he and Ender tried to determine exactly what happened. "It looks like they found the Star and then fought over it amongst themselves."

"Is it still here or did someone survive?"

Mathias cast a spell before answering, "No, it is gone. And someone survived, because Tyrus' accoutrements are missing as well."

"Where to, now?"

"I want to try something. Stand by the exit, but do not be frightened."

Mathias cast another spell, though this one took longer than any Ender has seen him do before. After a moment, the wizard looked into the gloom and asked, "Tyrus, are you there?"

A ghostly figure dressed exactly like the corpse lying at the wizard's feet materialized next to the dais. It took a step forward. "Mathias? Is that you, ole boy?"

"Yes, Master Tyrus, it is me. I have been following the notes in your journal."

"You found it. Good. I was hoping I hid it well enough."

"Trust me, you did. It took me months to decode it. Then I followed your notes. They brought me here."

"Here?"

"Yes. To Cerulea."

The specter looked around, suddenly startled. "Do you see what they did to me?" he pointed at the bodies all around, anger flooding his face. "I led them here and they stole it from me. Mutiny it was! Mutiny!" He waved a fist. Ender felt Tyrus' rage heating the air around them.

"I can see that," Mathias' tone remained calm. "You must tell us how to find them, so that we can bring them to justice."

"And get the Star, too, eh?"

Mathias bowed his head slightly. "Of course," he admitted casually. "Can you tell me who has it now?"

"It doesn't matter who had it, ole boy. They don't have it now."

"What do you mean?" Mathias asked, suddenly confused, but attempting to hide it.

"We came in here and found the Star just as I had thought we would. Then that backstabbing navigator of mine turned the crew against me. He had help; disabled my magic somehow and attacked me from behind, but I got the last laugh, ole boy! I warded the boat, so when they tried to leave without me it exploded. Bits of boat must have gone everywhere!" The ghost smiled devilishly. "The Star is lost forever now."

"Forever?"

"Yes, forever."

"You must be mistaken," Mathias insisted. "Do you know far I have come for that artifact? How much it has cost — for both of us?"

The specter did not answer. Instead it took a step backward before it began to fade back into the darkness. Ender felt sure it made eye contact before it disappeared, but he felt relieved when it had gone. Mostly, he hoped, if it returned, it would not be hostile with them for disturbing its rest.

"Don't go, Tyrus. Tyrus? Tyrus, I command — !" Mathias cursed, then turned to Ender. "He's resisted my summons, but it doesn't matter. The Star *has* to be here somewhere."

"Where do we look? Could it have fallen?"

"What do you mean?"

"To the ice shelf?"

Ender practically saw the light go on in Mathias' head. "You are right. If the ship was destroyed, its magic would have been lost and it would have fallen. If nothing stopped it on the way, it would have landed on the ice shelf. The question now becomes, where?"

The wizard drew his notebook from his pocket and thumbed through it. After a moment, he decided, "We will return to Grashona, see if anything has passed directly under Sh'amal's orbit in the last six years and investigate there first. Then we will try the ice shelf."

"We may want to make sure the explosion did not throw the Star back onto Sh'mal on the surface before we leave."

"Good idea. I guess we are done in here, too," the Elf said. He moved toward the exit, pulling his hood over his eyes to shield them from the sun.

They walked over to the boat, let Broghan know what they were doing and then began circling the island. After a quarter of a mile, they found the scorched remains of a boat and several Kobolds, but no Star of Horus. It became obvious, as they searched, that most of the boat was *not* on the island. The pieces that remained bore the evidence of having been violently blown apart.

A few minutes later, they returned to the boat and untied themselves from the island. The pilot-navigator let the boat drift, then steered them out into the open air. "Finally," he said, angling the boat downward. "Let's get back to someplace with shade."

"Not so fast, Broghan," the wizard said, before explaining the next part of his plan. They dickered over what it would cost for several minutes and, once they arrived at an agreement, the pilot turned his attention to the voyage ahead while Mathias pulled out his notebook to record the latest developments.

Ender moved toward him, curious about the next leg of their voyage.

The Voyage Downward

Getting to the ice shelf took several hundred hours. Broghan explained that the boat could descend faster than it could ascend because of gravity, but it was more taxing for him to maintain control. Because of this, and a lack of supplies for the journey, they made several stops, not just at the University of Grashona, but also at Horo-Dur and seven or eight other islands in between. By the time they left the last one, home of a little community called Friguld, Ender was ready for anything new or different.

At the University, Mathias checked the world model to make sure they had the right destination. In a move that felt to Ender like sheer paranoia, he made them both invisible, allowing them to sneak in and get back out without incident. In fact, as the journey wore on, the wizard seemed more and more secretive about their mission.

Traffic through the middle clusters of islands was pretty thick, consisting mostly of shipping vessels and small-time hunters. After their last stop, however, Ender noticed fewer boats in the air. Broghan attributed it to the cold. Most of the islands below them either lacked vegetation or hid under a blanket of evergreen trees. A cool mist Ender had not noticed before filled the air. As they descended, it thickened into a pale fog.

"It'll pass," Mathias assured him, which was the same thing he said about the shadows cast by the upper islands.

Ender drew a fur wrap around himself as they continued to descend. After another hour, the fog lifted abruptly and he got his first glimpse of the ice shelf. From above, it seemed to stretch forever in every direction. Jagged mountains cut through the snow at intervals, but generally, the surface was flat and unmolested. Even the air felt frozen in place.

"I think the wreckage should be over that mountain range there," Mathias directed Broghan.

They descended a little more, then turned to intercept the mountains. A herd of deer-like creatures played on one of the slopes, though they looked like ants from Ender's vantage point.

"I wish I could sense its magic from the air," the wizard lamented, moving to stand by Ender.

"Can you sense it when we get close?"

"Yes, but we will probably have to disembark and by that time, we may be right on top of it anyway."

"Let's see if we can find the wreckage," Ender said.

It took another hour or two of flying around before Mathias spotted what looked like the stern of a boat barely protruding from the ice. He ordered the boat down and, once in position, prepared to disembark.

Ender drew his energy disc and followed.

Once at the bottom of the ladder, the Elf sunk into the snow up to his knees. He warned Ender to be careful and then walked over to the exposed planks. The wind whipped past him, making it look like snowfall. Luckily, it was overcast, so there was no glare.

The snow reached Ender just above the knee as he followed. The wood looked like it was encased in glass rather than ice. The exposed portion measured two feet high and four feet long with no burn marks or other clues that it was the correct wreck.

"It is here. I can *feel* it," Mathias announced after casting a spell.

"Where do you want to start?"

"Judging by the shape of the snow mounds, there might be an opening over there," he pointed to the left.

"Shall we begin the digging?"

After a pause, the wizard answered, "Yes. I was trying to think of a spell that would dislodge the wreckage, but I could not. I wonder, however..."

Mathias cast a fireball at the snow around the boat, melting some of it and filling the air with mist that quickly crystallized and settled. His efforts weakened the ice and planks. With another spell, he lifted a mound of snow out of the way and tossed it aside using only his fingers as a guide.

"How is that?" he said proudly, pointing to an opening in the snow that led into the tipped cargo hold of the boat. It was just big enough for Ender to crawl into.

"Is there any lingering magic? Any other surprises Tyrus might have left?"

"No, I don't sense anything like that," Mathias said, thinking, *just the Star*.

"Well then, let's go in and see what we can find."

Ender slid into the darkness, climbing over a few crates. One gave as he stepped on it and his foot slid through. It tore his

flesh, but little else. Finally, he stood on what was left of the starboard wall while Mathias followed.

Looking around the gloom, he saw the frozen remains of a charred body sprawled on its side against some barrels. One of them had burst long ago, spilling now-frozen water across the snow-covered floor. Some of the others had been burnt, their contents ruined as well. The explosion must have originated on deck because most of it was missing farther forward.

"Poor fellow," Mathias mumbled, seeing the corpse. He moved toward it, careful not to slip.

"Where do we start?" Ender asked, looking around.

"Well, I doubt the Star made it into any of these cra—" Suddenly, the ice gave way under Mathias' feet and he fell through the bulkhead into a narrow shaft below.

Carefully, Ender peered over the edge and saw Mathias sitting on the ground fifteen feet below the boat in the center of a large crack.

"Are you hurt?" he called.

"I am fine," the wizard tried to stand, but stumbled. He landed on his hands and knees beside a frozen Kobold corpse. Suddenly, the wizard looked up, a smile across his face. "I found it!" he announced, pulling himself out of Ender's view.

"Do you need me to come down?"

"You can come down if you want to. It will take me a moment to chip it loose. It looks like they fought over it and the winner froze to death here," Mathias said as he looked around. After a moment, Ender heard him chipping away at something.

Ender climbed down into the fissure. By the time he reached the bottom, the wizard had cast a spell that encased his hand in flame. He used it to melt the ice on a Kobold corpse with the Star of Horus around its neck. It was larger than he had imagined and the jewel in the center — probably a sapphire — shined hypnotically in the fire's light.

He also saw another corpse, run through with a short sword, and sprawled out on the ground nearby. Evidently, they both survived the fall, only to succumb to their own greed and the elements.

"It should be just a moment more," Mathias said, trying to pull the chain free of the ice.

"Seems like anyone who touches or sees this thing gets so greedy they have to kill everyone around them," Ender noted. "Could it be cursed?"

"It is possible, but I doubt it. Besides, the promise of power makes people irrational." Finally, Mathias wrenched the chain free and removed it from the corpse. He held it up at eye level for Ender to see. "It's beautiful, isn't it?"

Ender eyed it suspiciously, "We have it. Now what?"

"I want to return to Shaolin and then we can go home."

"Sounds good. Do we announce to the pilot that we have found it or make it seem that we are still on the hunt?"

"Broghan is pretty eager to find a new employer, I think. I will let him know."

"Well," Ender shrugged, "let's head up."

Mathias wound the chain around the Star of Horus and secured it in a pouch at his waist. "Ready when you are."

Ender climbed out of the fissure into the boat and then squeezed past the frozen debris into the open air. Mathias came

right behind him. As they exited the boat, Ender noticed one of the hands lying face down in the snow with an arrow in his back. Looking up, they saw a large vessel in the sky, overshadowing their own. Ender instantly recognized it as the one he had ridden in with Crocius to get to Grashona. Now, however, Kobolds wearing the same uniform as those who attacked the monastery had rappelled onto Broghan's boat, taking it hostage, while others were in the process of boarding or coming down to ground level.

Seeing Ender and Mathias, several aimed their crossbows. "Put your hands in the air," someone yelled. Mathias attempted to cast a spell. His lips moved, but no sound came out. A look of panic spread across his face, but quickly changed into rage.

"What do we do now?" Ender asked again, sensing something dreadfully amiss.

In reply, the wizard hefted his staff and readied himself should the Kobolds charge.

"Well, then," Ender said, stowing his energy disc and drawing his sword, "Shall we retreat back into the hull of this boat to force them to come to us, or shall we fight in the open?"

Mathias shook his head negatively. Suddenly, an arrow struck him in the arm. He winced in pain, taking a step back. Another arrow landed at Ender's feet.

"I said drop your weapons!" the voice yelled. To his amazement, Ender saw Lord Nimara floating down from the larger boat effortlessly. The giant Lizard Man landed lightly in the snow. He addressed them both. "Hand over the Star of Horus and no one will get hurt."

"Nimara?" The feline martial artist asked, "Why do *you* want the Star?"

"Why not? I own everything else in this world."

A group of six Kobolds formed up beside the lizard mage, crossbows at the ready. On his right, another pair drew their short swords.

"Hand over the Star, wizard."

Mathias shook his head defiantly.

"Don't you get bored of owning everything?" Ender asked, hoping to distract this newcomer.

"No. Besides, this is what I have been here for all along." The Lizard Mage gestured for the two Kobolds to go forward. They approached, warily, and stopped within three feet of Ender and Mathias.

"The Star," Nimara repeated impatiently.

Without warning, Ender slashed at the first Kobold, cutting him across the middle. The Kobold fell backward, wounded but still alive, while the feline martial artist parried his companion's strike effortlessly. A volley of crossbow bolts flew over their heads, but Ender ducked all of them. Meanwhile, Mathias tripped the second Kobold and took another arrow in the shoulder.

Next, Ender rushed through the snow at the crossbowmen. As he did, a blast of energy exploded behind him. Icy mist filled the air, but he continued his charge, slashing the first Kobold from shoulder to hip. The Kobold dropped his weapon, but his companions got off shots as well. A bolt pierced the feline humanoid's chest, but the magic radiated by his sword kept it from erupting with blood and pain.

Instead, he finished off the first crossbowman while avoiding the other bolts. The second Kobold parried with his weapon, opening Ender up for another bolt. Luckily, his sword created a magic armor that absorbed the impact for him. A second bolt grazed his calf as well.

Slashing again, Ender snapped the weapon in half. He sidestepped another bolt and ran the second Kobold through, burying his blade up to the hilt. Placing his foot on the fallen Kobold, he pulled out the blade only to take another bolt in the back. Ender spun around, beheading a third Kobold and making short work of a fourth. He stepped toward the fifth, catching his forearm with *Ender's Light*. The Kobold misfired his crossbow while the other remaining soldier drew a short sword from a scabbard at his belt.

At this point he also realized he was taking fire from above. With most of their companions out of the way, the Kobolds aboard the ship now attacked. Arrows rained down on him. Though Ender dodged most of them, two hit him in the shoulders.

After killing the fifth Kobold on the ground, Ender parried the sixth's short sword only to have his attack blocked as well. They traded several thrusts with no effect until — finally — Ender sliced the Kobold across the thigh. His next slash severed the soldier's arm and a third swing killed him.

Breathing heavily, Ender looked to his left. Mathias lay on the ground, vainly trying to ward off Nimara's energy blasts with his staff. The wizard still not could use his own magic and looked beaten.

Resolute, Ender leveled his sword at the giant lizard, firing a blast of light. It sailed harmlessly over Nimara's head. In return, the Lizard Mage raised both hands above his head. As he lowered them, a lightning bolt flashed from the sky, striking Ender with its magical force as it traveled through his body into the ground below. Smoke filled the air, clouding his vision.

At the same time, Mathias swung his staff, knocking Nimara behind the knee.

Ender slashed at the Lizard Mage, but the attack seemed to do no damage, but then, neither did the spell Nimara launched back at him. Ender's next strike cut the Lizard Mage low across the gut, but did not seem to do much.

Nimara must be wearing some type of invisible armor, the feline decided.

The reptile's next spell hit Ender full in the chest, knocking him backwards in a flash of flames and burning off the fur on his chest. Mathias caught him before he could fall, but it cost the wizard his chance to attack.

The feline martial artist swung again, but the momentum caused him to slip in the snow and fall. Once again, Nimara called down lightning and, again, Ender took the full shock of the blast. Climbing to his feet, he leapt at the Lizard Mage's head, hoping to decapitate him, but Nimara knocked him aside as if the attack were nothing.

Ender scored another good hit on Nimara, but Mathias' next strike was parried. The Lizard Mage fired another spell at Ender. It exploded against his body, filling the air with smoke. The pain started to get unbearable and his vision blurred momentarily as the heat and impact of the spell dissipated.

Working in tandem now, both Mathias and Ender struck the Lizard Mage, hoping to chip away at his defenses. The feline humanoid's slash was parried, but Mathias' went through and Ender dodged Nimara's next fiery spell.

Ender's next strike hit Nimara, but did not seem to do much good. He struck again, somehow penetrating Nimara's magical defenses and leaving a nasty gash in the Lizard Mage's side. Mathias hit as well, causing blood to erupt from the lizard's skull.

Noticeably shaken, the Lizard Man took a few steps back and cast another fire ball toward Ender, who easily dodged. Seizing the sudden opportunity, several of the archers aboard Nimara's boat fired on Ender and his Elf companion. Ender dodged their arrows, but Mathias was hit three times. Both of them had taken a lot of damage, but without his magic, the wizard looked particularly fatigued and vulnerable. He cried out in pain, but no sound left his mouth. The wizard stumbled, landing on his knees in the snow.

Lunging, Ender swung at Nimara, tearing into the flesh of his left arm and drawing blood. The lizard mage growled with rage, returning the blow with a fire bolt of his own.

"I don't want to kill you, Nimara," Ender yelled, as his sword tore into the lizard's flesh. "Surrender and I will spare your life."

"Look around you, fool. I still have the upper hand. You should surrender to *me*."

Ender swung again, catching Nimara across the middle with a vicious gash. The Lizard Mage cast a spell on Mathias' limp form, causing it to rise into the air. His vessel moved to intercept. "So long, kitty," the reptile sneered, stepping back.

Ender lunged forward to attack again only to find his feet were now frozen to the snow. "Not so fast," he yelled. He dropped his sword and hurled his energy disk with lightning speed. The high-tech weapon sailed through the air, past the Lizard Mage and back into the feline's waiting fingers in the blink of an eye.

Nimara stopped, focused on Ender for the length of a heartbeat. Then, as his body fell backward, his severed head slid off his shoulders and landed on its side in the snow.

Mission Accomplished

Looking up, Ender saw Mathias suspended in the air. The larger vessel moved around Broghan's boat to be alongside the wizard. *They will probably try to 'reel' him in and escape*, Ender realized. *It might take a moment for them to realize that Nimara is dead.*

The feline martial artist could not see into Broghan's ship from where he was, but he remembered that several of the mercenaries had stormed it before the fight began. There were no living threats on the ground.

A few well-placed blasts with his sword convinced the Kobolds to leave Mathias alone. Without their leader, their morale quickly dissipated and they turned tail to run away.

After a minute or two, Mathias regained the ability to talk — and cast spells — thus providing an extra reminder to the fleeing Kobolds to hurry. A moment later, he came back down to the ground of his own accord. Another minute passed before Ender



was able to move his feet. Mathias attributed this to something called a 'Carpet of Adhesion', commenting that it was "a great spell, but a pain to get caught in."

The wizard cast healing spells on both of them. He looked pretty battered, but insisted he would recover, crediting most of it to his magic staff. Using his magic, he sent Ender up to investigate the boat. The pilot and both crewmen had been killed, but otherwise it was intact.

Upon hearing this, Mathias nodded solemnly and suggested a plan. Since neither of them could commune with the stone that drove the boat, Mathias would cast a flying spell to get them to Friguld, the nearest island. They could attempt to hire a new boat from there.

"Sounds good. Before we go, let's search Nimara's body for interesting items," Ender suggested. "Maybe he will have something useful."

"Good idea."

Nimara wore battered leather armor that Mathias said was magical. He carried nothing else of interest.

"I really don't like armor. If you want it, this can be repaired, but it may be quite expensive."

"Let's leave it. I'm not much for armor either."

Mathias searched the rest of the area, making sure nothing else of value had been left around. They left Broghan's boat in place. The wizard suggested it would make a good landmark if ever they needed to return and investigate the wreckage of Tyrus' boat.

"Hold on to my back," the wizard instructed. He cast a spell and suddenly Ender felt weightless. He cast another and they lifted off into the air. Effortlessly, Mathias flew upwards

through the cloud bank and then leveled until he found Friguld. They landed and then hired a boat to take them the rest of the way up to Askara.

After several more days of travel aboard various vessels, they arrived at the refugee camp, where Shaolin looked relieved to see them. The ancient monk invited them into his tent for a hot meal in exchange for a complete report of their trip. He listened attentively and, upon hearing of Nimara's defeat, said, "You did well, Ender. I never believed Nimara's motives were as pure as he tried to convince us. You have done Cerulea a great service."

"I wonder if there will be any other attacks on the monks, now that he is dead, or if someone else will continue what he seems to have started," the feline martial artist replied.

"Only time can answer that question. Would you like some more tea?"

"I have another matter to discuss with you, Master Shaolin," Mathias said. "In order to open a portal back to our world I will need to tap into the psychic energy of your monks. It —"

"Not to worry. We will assist you as much as you need. Meanwhile, is there anything else we need to do before we go?"

"No," Mathias answered. "I think that will be all. Ender?"

"No. I am ready to go back, too."

"Very well, then," the ancient monk said. He stood up. "Perhaps we will meet again."

"Perhaps."

"Until then, may the gods be with you."

The Hammer of the ForgeTM

Chapter Thirty-Five Space Chase

By James M.G. Cannon

It felt good to be in space again.

To shake the planetary dust from his feet, to blast through the burning stratosphere and out into the cold, black vacuum of endless night. Under his metallic red helmet, Caleb Vulcan, Knight of the Cosmic Forge, allowed himself an airless sigh of relief.

Up here in the black, things were clean and pure, and yes, unforgiving, but there were no ambiguities. There were no lies or half-truths or compromises. Just an infinite blanket of stars, blinking quietly, sedately, honestly. It was in sharp and painful contrast to the world he had left below him. From this vantage, it was a brilliant blue jewel, an hospitable-looking planet with vast oceans and sizable landmasses, with no sign of habitation visible. Only the fine network of blue-white lines crisscrossing the globe suggested anything might be amiss.

Down below, those lights, the ley lines, were responsible for the Rifts that had opened the planet up to a thousand different universes. They had turned the planet into an interdimensional melting pot, a savage place of supernatural predators, distaff gods, giants, dragons and monsters. The natives had been forced to embrace cruel philosophies and devastating technologies merely to survive the onslaught. In another time, another place, this had been Caleb's birthplace, a backwater planet called Earth. But now it was a nightmare, transformed into something barely recognizable to the kid from Arizona who had almost gone to Vietnam before being drafted into the ranks of the Cosmo-Knights.

But he'd come back, transported by a freak accident to an Earth three hundred or more years older than when he left it, and there had been people waiting there for him. Not friends, exactly, but people in need who had awaited his arrival, prophesied by a powerful psionic who lay dying. It was Caleb's sworn

duty as a Cosmo-Knight to help anyone in need, so he had acquiesced to their request despite his own troubles.

Which brought him to the present: floating in space, hanging above the Earth, sheathed in the metallic red armor that was his badge of office, cut to resemble that of a Roman centurion. The red megasteel was warm to the touch, even here, while the black of the void that showed through the armor's gaps was as icy as space itself. Encased within, Caleb felt neither heat nor cold, neither pressure nor lack thereof, nor need to breathe or speak. He was an entity unto himself, sustained by the wellspring of cosmic power granted to him by the Forge. The inhabitants of Earth, for all their magic and technology, could not equal him; beset on all sides by enemies, humanity had focused inward, on defense, and ceased to look up. There had been no need to go to the Moon or Mars or simply into orbit, not with vampires and dragons and telekinetic giant insects tramping about on Earth.

The people of Asgarth, a small town in East Texas, what was now called the Pecos Empire, were looked after by an army of Juicers called the Five Hundred, and led by an enigmatic woman named Solo. Solo was an albino, and also a powerful psionic and apparently immortal. She claimed to have been born in 1980, twelve years after Caleb left Earth, and to have lived through the Coming of the Rifts. Through sheer will she had carved Asgarth out of the wilderness, given people a home and a safe haven from the dangers all around them, and kept her city neutral. But one of her enemies had poisoned her secretly, utilizing a Pre-Rifts toxin against which even Solo's immortality proved ineffective. Her psychic abilities, though fading, gave her a clue: her salvation lay in space, aboard one of the forgotten space stations orbiting the Earth, and the only person who could reach them and return to Earth safely was a Knight of the Forge.

Caleb had met with Solo upon arriving in Asgarth, had spent a few hours speaking with her. She was a delicate, beautiful woman with long, flowing white tresses and warm pink eyes, and she had sipped tea and coughed up wads of blood as she told him about her town, her friends, her past. She remembered the Beatles and Buck Rogers and Vince Lombardi and Christmas and the Pledge of Allegiance, and a thousand other things Caleb had left behind long ago. And she, even longer. She did-

n't deserve this place, this ravaged world, with its Rifts and Coalition and Duke Macklin, the mad bastard who had poisoned her in the first place.

Caleb began to remind himself to give Macklin a visit and a stern talking-to that might or might not involve several hammer blows to Macklin's head, when a beam of red-gold light flashed past his helmeted head. Caleb forced himself back to the matter at hand. He had drifted far enough from Earth's atmosphere to come into range of the k-sats that ringed the Earth. Solo had warned him about them; in the days before the war that triggered the Rifts, the nations of Earth had seeded planetary orbit with thousands of armed Sputniks. Apparently it was meant to deter aggression. It was small surprise to Caleb that it didn't work; you can't make people like you by pointing guns at them.

Somehow the satellites had stayed in orbit and in working order long after they should have run out of power and crashed to the planet's surface. Most likely the space stations had something to do with that. Caleb wouldn't be surprised if the spacers had even added to the k-sats' numbers over the years. But their tactical advantage was in Caleb's way, so he couldn't allow them too much sympathy.

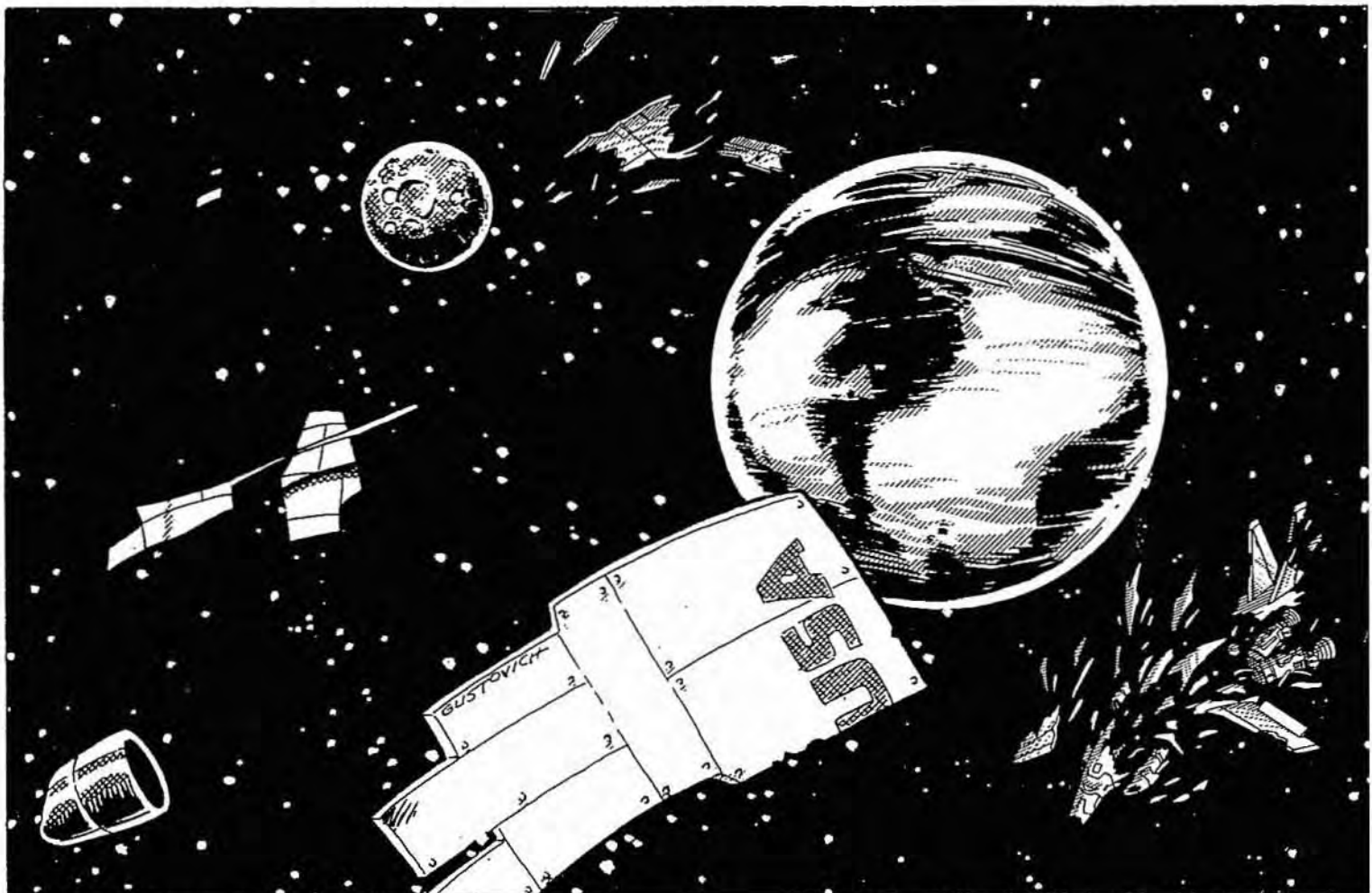
Another beam of light flashed at him, this one striking him squarely on his chest. He barely noticed. These things might be cutting-edge tech in this corner of the Megaverse, but compared to the blasters on a Kreeghor Dreadnought, they weren't that hot. It was the rail guns that worried Caleb; while he was for all intents and purposes immune to energy attacks, the magnetized rounds of a rail gun could pulverize him to meaty chunks. If he

let them. Of course, differentiating between the barrel of an energy slinging k-sat and an ack-ack gun was not necessarily his area of expertise. Best to treat them all as hazardous and not wait for the taste test to sort them out.

Caleb blasted forward. A dozen satellites oriented themselves toward him and unleashed a deadly barrage. Computer targeting systems automatically corrected for drift, recoil, Caleb's speed, and the placement of the other satellites around them. But few things in the universe are as slippery in space as a CosmoKnight with nothing but defense on his mind. Caleb dodged and weaved, juked and rolled, darting through the initial barrage with cosmically enhanced speed and dexterity. He felt a single laser blast cut across his left leg, and saw a fat rail gun slug slide past his visor a split second before it might have hit, and then he was through.

And into another nest of deadly satellites, which opened up even as the dozen he just passed unleashed a second salvo. A slug sheared through his shoulder armor, and another caught him in the calf. The impacts spun him about, and it was all he could do to regain control and give himself a burst of speed before the rest of them finished him off. There were miles of these things, stationed along planetary orbit with the express purpose of keeping the inhabitants of Earth from reaching space. Even as the satellites he passed continued to fire, Caleb saw more drifting into range, firing retro-rockets in short staccato bursts to maneuver clumsily through space.

This was getting tiresome.



Caleb focused a trickle of the cosmic energy inside him and unleashed his eyebeams in a wide arc. At full power, in the depths of space, a single glance from him could disintegrate a kiloton of asteroid or punch through the reinforced hull of a battleship. This time his blasts melted the satellites in his way to slag, clearing a run through the gauntlet that Caleb took full advantage of, blasting forward at full speed. He had to repeat the move twice more before finally escaping the cloud of k-sats ringing the Earth.

He took a few deep breaths he didn't need, looped around, and took a long, careful look at his home world. It looked normal from here, save for the ley lines visible on the planet's night side, as if nothing untoward had happened in his absence. But looks were often deceiving. Caleb shook his head to clear his thoughts and then turned back to space, surveying the void, searching for his destination.

He wanted a place called the Graveyard. Before the Rifts, it had been the largest and most advanced space station in orbit around the Earth, a Sino-Japanese effort that had unfortunately suffered immediate and ultimate losses during the conflict that transformed the planet. Nothing lived there now, according to Solo's visions. At least, nothing human.

The China and Japan of Caleb's time could barely have a civil discussion, but at some point between then and now they had gotten together and built a wonder for their age. It was a damned shame that it ended the way it did, but then that was Caleb's feeling toward this future Earth in general.

The least of Caleb's problems would be the station's state of decay, or the nature of its present inhabitants (human or otherwise). The biggest problem would be the size. According to Solo, the ruins of the Sino-Japanese station were the size of the continental United States. And he had to find one vial of antidote in the middle of all of that. In the meantime, Solo was dying by inches and Macklin was gathering his forces to wipe Asgarth off the map.

But . . .

. . . he couldn't resist one little indulgence. Caleb zipped at full speed towards the Moon and landed lightly upon her dusty surface. He looked up, at the Earth once more, and let himself admire both heavenly bodies for a long moment. He didn't know when, or if, he'd ever return again. He wished he had more time. He wished Kassy or Abbot or Sammadar or any of his other friends were there to see this with him.

Then he went to find the Graveyard.

* * *

"Well," Doctor Abbot said, "at least we have sunlight this time."

Kassiopaea Acherean, Atlantean Undead Slayer, dark haired and blue eyed, with a swirling array of blue-white tattoos winding around her athletic, lithely muscled frame, grunted at Abbot.

"But we still have not reached our ultimate destination," Abbot continued. Kassy grunted again. She looked exhausted. Her black mane was matted to her skull with sweat, and dark circles ringed her brilliant blue eyes. The other twelve Undead Slayers, all thirteen clad in black, rune-inscribed armor and bristling with weapons, looked just as tired. They had fought their way across

three worlds now, each one more savage than the last (and the first had been one of the dreaded Vampire Worlds). The cracks were beginning to show. Even Atlanteans could not keep up that kind of pace forever.

It was just as well that they had finally reached a dimension of relative peace. The small band of warriors, with one wizard, a monk, and a Celestine, stood in the midst of a huge forest. Around them, climbing hundreds of feet into the air were some kind of relative of the Millenium Tree, huge and magical and virtually indestructible, creating a vast canopy of green through which a few stray beams of sunlight managed to filter. Around them, the forest was alive. Birds and insects chattered and flew about, and some species of primate or intelligent squirrel climbed up and down and through the trees. Elsewhere in the wood, huge things moved, shaking the earth and bellowing deep, sonorous sounds. No doubt there were dangers about, some perhaps more subtle than others, but for the moment the troupe was safe.

"Perhaps we should rest here before continuing the chase," Abbot suggested.

Kassy nodded. She pointed two fingers at the three nearest Atlanteans. "Odin, Jocasta, Diomedes. Secure our perimeter. The rest of you, take a breather. Canteens, rations, smoke 'em if you got 'em. But keep your eyes open and your hands near your guns." She dropped to the loamy earth with a groan and produced a water bottle which she proceeded to drain.

Joriel, the winged android and Kassy's current paramour, flexed his brilliant maroon pinions. "I'm going topside to get a look at the lay of the land," he told her. Turning to Abbot, he asked, "You're sure the Shoggoth didn't stop here?"

"Yes," Abbot said. "But we're getting closer." The Shoggoth, a servant of the Splugorth, had opened a Rift onto a pastoral planet in the Three Galaxies and kidnaped the inhabitants of a village there. Abbot and his friends volunteered to go after them. The Shoggoth, however, was not taking a straight route home. It kept popping in and out of adjacent dimensions. At first Abbot and Kassy had been heartened by this, thinking that they might perhaps catch up to the monster before it reunited with its master. But now they were beginning to suspect the Shoggoth had expected pursuit, and tailored its jaunts to keep its pursuers unbalanced and fighting for their lives. If they did catch up with the Shoggoth, they would all be too weary to offer it much of a challenge.

All except Abbot and his charge, the alien martial artist Arwen Griffin. Despite Arwen's repeated entreaties to the contrary, Abbot had kept the two of them in reserve. He had faced a Shoggoth once before, in his youth, and though that encounter had nearly killed him, he was no stripling any longer. Arwen was a member of the Celestial Brotherhood, trained in their esoteric fighting arts, and possessed of prodigious abilities besides. If it came to it, Abbot had no doubt that the two of them would do for the Shoggoth nicely all on their own. They just had to find it first.

Joriel gave Kassy a brief kiss on the cheek and then launched himself into the air, huge wings outstretched to guide him, the grav drive in his chest doing all the real work.

Kassy swished the water around in her bottle and regarded Abbot. She swept a gauntleted hand through sweat-matted hair. "Sometimes I envy you," she said. "Never a hair out of place."

Abbot's orange eyes twinkled in his version of a smile. Except for those two globes, he was entirely featureless, a figure composed entirely of shadow. The rumpled trench coat and battered fedora he always wore gave him some definition and kept him from feeling too alien around all his fleshy friends.

Abbot looked away from Kassy and spotted Arwen enthusiastically hurling herself up the trunk of a nearby tree, finding handholds where they shouldn't have existed. He shook his head ruefully. Arwen had a lust for life and adventure unequalled in the Megaverse. Abbot hoped she would be able to keep up that energy in the face of all she would encounter. Particularly if she stayed with him for much longer. Abbot had a talent for finding the worst, most dangerous, and disheartening places in the Three Galaxies and beyond.

"Hey, lunch!" one of the Atlanteans – Abbot thought his name was Geb – cried as a huge brown rabbit bounded into the clearing. Geb found his feet and drew a hunting knife from a sheath on his belt as the rabbit sat still, twitching its nose and blinking its golden eyes rapidly.

Gold eyes? Abbot thought distractedly as Geb cocked his arm back and loosed the knife. Suddenly, Abbot had the sense that Geb's attack was an extraordinarily bad idea. He pointed his cane at the knife in mid-air, but before Abbot could utter a syllable, something terrible happened.

In a split second, where once a tiny rabbit had sat, a gigantic great horned dragon materialized in the clearing, its great scaled bulk taking up most of the available space. The knife clattered harmlessly off a scale, and Geb looked up at the dragon, mouth agape, dumb with surprise. Before anyone could react, the dragon's horned head flashed out and snapped Geb in two, sharp teeth shearing through megasteel just as easily as it did magically protected flesh. Geb was dead in an instant, and his friend Gwydion was about to join him in the afterlife. The Atlanteans were caught flatfooted, unprepared, just a hair's-breadth away from grabbing weapons and retaliating the vicious, unprovoked attack, but that was just long enough for Gwydion to die.

Except for Arwen.

She got her legs beneath her and leapt off the trunk of the tree in one smooth movement. A shimmering field of violet energy surrounded her body as she spun through the air and came down on the back of the dragon's head. Even as she landed lightly on her feet, she drove a flat-palmed hand into the base of the dragon's skull. There was a crack and a thundering crash as the dragon's heavy, horned head smashed into the ground mere feet from where Gwydion sat. Even as the Atlantean rolled backwards, drawing his pistol, and the dragon began to recover, Arwen struck again. The dragon bellowed, and a sheet of flame erupted from its mouth, scorching the nearby earth and utterly failing to mark the nearest tree.

The Atlanteans, momentarily at a loss, found their footing. The air burned as a dozen laser blasts fired, criss-crossing the clearing and slamming into the dragon. A hawk's scream split the air and Joriel joined the fray, the blue-white fire of his blazer creating a shimmering arc of psionic fury in his right hand.

The poor dragon never stood a chance.

* * *

The Graveyard was not too difficult to find. It hung suspended in the L-4 zone between the Earth and the Moon's orbit, a shattered hulk that had apparently attracted every bit of random space debris for a hundred million miles. Dead satellites, fragments of spaceships, bits of asteroids and meteorites, the garbage and slag from the active space stations, and a thousand other little bits of nothing had somehow fused together around the central core of the original Sino-Japanese station, held there by gravity and inertia. There were no lights, just a cold hunk of metal spinning lazily in the void, practically invisible unless one knew what to look for, a dark shadow against the field of stars.

Caleb felt a slight tinge of trepidation as he drew closer to the wreck. There was just something about the place that made him uneasy. He had seen and experienced much worse in his short but storied career as a Cosmo-Knight, so he didn't know why he felt this way. But he wasn't one to ignore intuition, so he made some slow circles of the station and kept his eyes open. He wasn't sure what he was looking for, but in the end he didn't see anything genuinely alarming, so he was at last forced to ignore the nebulous fear he felt and go down into the wreck itself.

Caleb's boots settled with a silent thunk on the station. The hulk was large enough to generate its own gravity, but it was pretty weak. Caleb hopped along the hull towards a gaping hole in the wall and slipped inside. Within, the station was pitch black. Even the emergency lights had died long ago, leaving the place in perpetual night. Caleb reached down to a pack on his hip, made of megasteel supplied by Solo's people, and produced a flashlight. He flicked the button, surprised but gratified that it had survived the trip through Earth's atmosphere.

With the light to guide him, Caleb began to pick his way through the station, navigating through a network of passages, side passages, tunnels, and rooms. All of them airless, empty, untouched by time, kept pristine by the vacuum of space. He found his first corpse deep inside the complex; a young Asian man in a blue uniform, slumped across a chair, frozen and mummified whole. Caleb paused there, feeling the unease come back, but left the man quickly, reminded himself that the living still needed him.

He found more bodies after that. Each one chilled him to the bone. Especially the kids.

Caleb focused on the task at hand. The place was getting to him. The darkness and endless silence, so welcome and comforting when at first he left Earth, were here cloying and uncomfortable. He felt an itch growing at the small of his back, as though someone or something were watching him. He tried to shake the feeling, but it persisted. He switched the flashlight to his left hand and summoned his signature weapon, a massive sledgehammer, into his right. It glimmered with crimson light, illuminating the passage for a brief moment, and Caleb's eyes were drawn to a shadowed corner.

He approached slowly, hammer at the ready. There, wedged between the bulkhead and a door, was another body. But this one was partially eaten.

Orum, Caleb thought, swearing in Kreeghor. He swept the flashlight around the passage, but it showed nothing he had not already seen. But his instincts had been right. There was something here. Something dangerous. Perhaps it would not risk attacking anything alive, let alone a living arm of the Cosmic Forge.

Caleb continued down a few more corridors until he came upon a green glow. He found a lump of something that looked equal parts technology and organic stuck to the wall, emitting a phosphorescent light. *Curiouser and curiouser*, Caleb thought.

* * *

Atop the adobe-packed megasteel walls of Asgarth, Hart looked out upon the dusty Texas plain and frowned. Tall and rangy, clad in light armor and buckskins, Hart kept his long dark hair tied back from his face with a leather thong. Once he had served as a soldier in the mighty Coalition Army of Lone Star, but these days he was a free man. Hart led a small group of elite troops in service to the town. They had just recently returned to Asgarth, bringing the Cosmo-Knight Caleb Vulcan with them.

But within a day of their return, Duke Macklin had arrived with his own army at his back. Outside the town's walls, at a discreet distance, they had massed. Armored personnel carriers, tanks, robots, dragons, giants, gunslingers and bandits, Psi-Stalkers, Orcs and Ogres, Simvan Monster Riders and their bestial mounts, troops of human and monstrous bent in body armor and powered armor stretched out nearly as far as the eye could see. It was as grim a sight as Hart had ever seen.

"Lovely day," said the hulking 'borg at his side. William Wagner had been a special forces officer in Chi-Town before a D-Bee ripped him apart. The Coalition had rebuilt him. Only his brain, part of his spine, and some of his face remained. The rest of him was machine, encased in a thick chassis of blackened megasteel. Will's eyes, hidden behind a shaded visor bolted to his helmet, were aimed upward. Watching for their savior to return, or just admiring the low hanging clouds against the brilliant blue sky?

"What do you think, Will," Hart said, "they going to hit us today or wait until the sun dips below the horizon?"

The 'borg grunted. His eyes dropped down. "Doesn't really matter. I never thought I'd live this long anyway." He adjusted the huge plasma ejector slung across his shoulder. "Not that I plan to die easy."

Hart looked away from his friend. Will was always good to have in a fight, and Hart was glad to have him there now, with Macklin's forces breathing down their necks, but he wasn't much for conversation. Sometimes Hart wondered if Will had been like that before his transformation, or whether the Coalition had bred him cold-blooded.

"They're keeping their distance," Hart said. "Just out of range of our big guns. Waiting for us to sortie out so they can rip us to pieces."

Will frowned. "Macklin won't attack until he's sure Solo is dead. They have enough ordnance out there to raze this city, but that's not his aim. He wants Asgarth whole, wants the market and the money it provides, the Juicer factor and the M.O.M. tech. But he'll kill us all if it comes to it. Figure an aerial bombardment, right over the walls, soften us up, then storm the walls and cut us down one by one. It will be ugly."



Hart's frown deepened. "We may have to surrender, rather than see that happen. Lots of innocent folk look to us for protection. If Solo dies, maybe we just offer up Asgarth to Macklin and hope he decides employing us is less trouble than killing us."

Will gave Hart a sharp look, readable even through his visor and helm. "You don't sound like yourself, Hart."

"It's not just you and me here, Will. Like I said, lots of innocent folk here. We can't win this one, and they don't deserve to die."

Will was silent as he turned back to the army. "Yeah."

Stephanie Sawyer, the beautiful young Mind Melter, joined them on the wall. "You guys look pretty dour," she said, threading her delicate arm through Will's massive metal limb. "It's just an army! I mean, really, what's the worst that could happen?"

Hart and Will looked at her. "Right," she said. "Forget I said that. But remember Solo's prophecy; the red knight will be our deliverance. We found him, brought him back, and now he's off to find the cure. We don't have anything to worry about."

"Mmm," Will said thoughtfully.

"A-ha," Hart agreed.

Stephanie's smile died on her lips. "You don't think so?"

Hart was about to reply when his attention was diverted to the empty plain between Macklin's army and Asgarth's walls. Something was happening out there. A humanoid shape materialized on the ground, a hulking mass of metal in the shape of a SAMAS power suit. The pilot reached up and slowly removed the helmet, revealing the devilishly handsome features of Duke Macklin himself.

On Asgarth's walls, every available soldier shouldered a gun and aimed it. Hart's and Will's weapons were in hand immediately, but before Hart could even draw a bead, Stephanie laid a hand across the barrel. "It's not him," she said. "Just a projection. He's got a Melter or a Walker with him, throwing his image out here. Everyone's going to hear what he has to say, too. Throwing his voice."

"CITIZENS OF ASGARTH!" Macklin's voice boomed, just as Stephanie predicted. "I AM YOUR ADVOCATE, YOUR ALLY, YOUR TRUSTED FRIEND, DUKE VICTOR MACKLIN. YOUR PATRON LIES DYING. I AM ALL THAT STANDS IN THE WAY OF YOUR IMMINENT DESTRUCTION AT THE HANDS OF THE COALITION, THE DEMONS FROM THE WASTES, OR THE OTHER IMPERIAL POWERS OF PECOS. SURRENDER TO ME, PLEDGE YOUR UNDYING LOYALTY TO ME, AND I SHALL SPARE YOU FROM IMMINENT DESTRUCTION." The vision of Macklin paused. "YOU HAVE TWELVE HOURS TO DECIDE." He replaced his helmet and faded from view at the same moment.

Hart put his rifle down. "Tell me, Steph, how is Solo feeling?"

The girl's face had a green pallor to it. "Weakening. She might be able to shield us from the first barrage, but beyond that . . ."

Will double checked the readout on his E-Clip. "Let's hope Vulcan comes through. If not . . . we may have to go with that back-up plan of yours, Hart."

* * *

Aboard the Sino-Japanese station, Caleb picked his way cautiously through the empty corridors. More and more of the techno-organic glowing material appeared the deeper he penetrated into the station's depths, until nearly the entire surface of walls, ceiling, and floor was covered with the stuff. The phosphorescent glow reflected off his red armor to give it a sickly, brown look, and the material under his feet had a slight springy feel to it. It almost felt like he was walking on flesh, a feeling not at all helped by the semi-translucent quality of the stuff, which showed some kind of arteries or cables carrying blood, nutrients, or electricity along its length.

It was really seriously giving Caleb the heebie-jeebies.

He wanted to find the antidote and get the hell out of there quick. Caleb lifted off the ground and began to fly down the mutated corridors. He had put away the flashlight and shifted to a two-handed grip on his hammer. So he was mostly ready when the huge frog-thing came out of a side passage and nearly barreled into him. Still, he kind of freaked out a little, and the huge creature recoiled in surprise.

It was nearly twice as tall as Caleb and almost managed to completely fill the passage with its bulk. It was made out of the same techno-organic stuff covering the walls, emitted a soft green glow, and looked like a bipedal frog, with a wide slash of a mouth and big yellow eyes that swivelled around in shock. Caleb hefted the hammer and the frog-thing lifted an arm to ward off the blow, big eyes blinking.

Caleb froze and looked at the creature. It blinked again, but when his blow didn't fall it finally dropped its arm and returned his look. Caleb let his own arm drop and allowed the hammer to wink out of existence. The frog-thing relaxed a little more and shuffled a step backwards.

Caleb settled down onto the floor. The beast shuffled backwards again. Caleb held his hands up, empty, and the beast nodded as if it understood. It gestured for him to follow as it ambled back down the way it came. Reluctantly, Caleb complied. In the airless environment, they couldn't really communicate, but then the thing probably didn't speak English anyway. Or any of the Galactic tongues Caleb had picked up. Still he followed, as the creature awkwardly ambled down the passageway.

He wasn't sure where they were going, but he didn't think the thing was dangerous. Perhaps it was feeding off the corpses left behind by the tragedy, perhaps it was transforming this relic of human technology for its own purposes, but it wasn't malicious.

As they walked along, the techno-organic material grew more pronounced and elaborate. The creature seemed to glide along the surface, its inherent glow aligning itself to the glow around it. At least they reached their apparent destination, a small room covered in the creature's strange technology, where the walls appeared to undulate and roll as if breathing. The uncomfortable feeling was coming back and Caleb almost called the hammer back. Instead he watched as the creature walked over to an apparently featureless wall and stretched out a rubbery hand. The wall opened up and an arm extended out, holding a vial. The creature accepted the offering, then turned to Caleb and held it out to him.

Caleb took it. It was a small metal cylinder with a bio-hazard sign on it followed by a string of kanji. It looked like the object Solo had described. He looked hard at the frog-thing and it smiled.

We have been waiting for you, Knight of the Forge, a strange voice echoed in Caleb's mind. The woman called Solo has a great destiny to fulfill on this Earth, as do you. Though that lies far in the future, it could not be without the actions you have taken this day.

"Who are you?" Caleb thought at the creature, using the same gift that allowed Cosmo-Knights to speak to one another in space.

We are those who watch and wait and serve the cosmic weal. We have promised never to directly interfere, but we are allowed sometimes to help those who do. More than that, we cannot say at this time. More will be revealed when you return to this Earth again. But you must go, and swiftly. Solo's enemies have gathered, and her kingdom will be destroyed if you do not bring the cure to her.

"Okay," Caleb said. He looked at the frog-thing again, quiet. "Thank you."

We will meet again. May the light ever shine upon you, Knight of the Forge.

"You too," Caleb said. There was a mystery here, but it was the kind of thing he was getting more and more used to as his career as a Cosmo-Knight continued. There were a lot of entities out there who seemed to know more about what was going on than he did. He thought of Romana Vorishcenko ne Usckios, and the Council of Time, who had helped him defeat Quajinn Huo and his Cosmic Watch. The Council monitored the time-stream itself, knew things about the past and present and future that no one else knew, and seemed to know an awful lot about what lay in store for Caleb. Now a giant glowing frog was doing the same thing, and it felt like just another day on the job.

Behind his helmet, Caleb smiled. He didn't really miss Arizona that much.

He turned and left the frog-thing there, and flew at his best speed for the exit.

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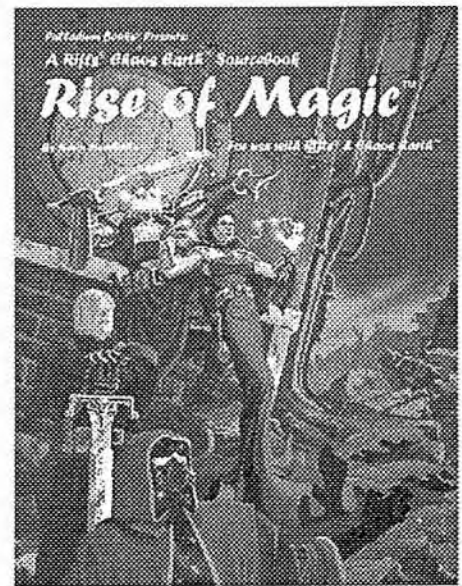
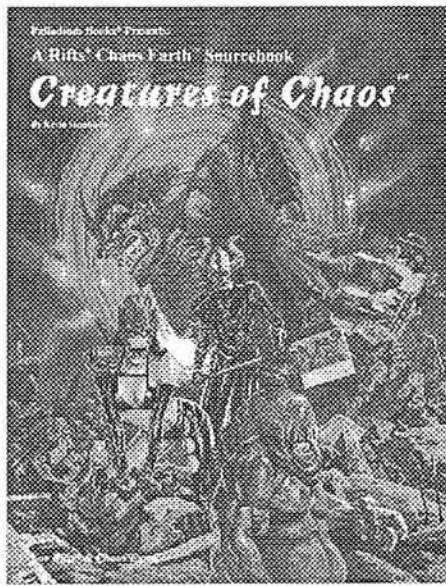
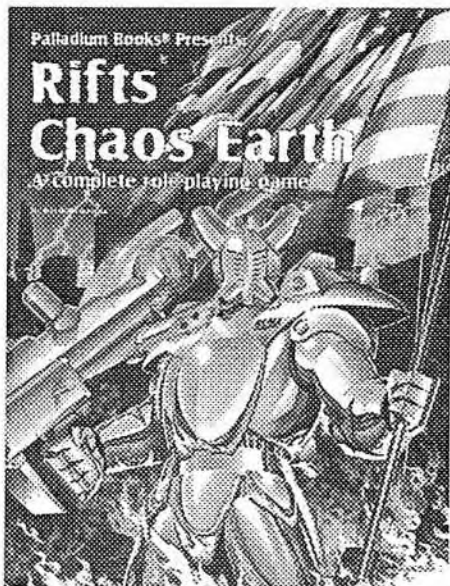
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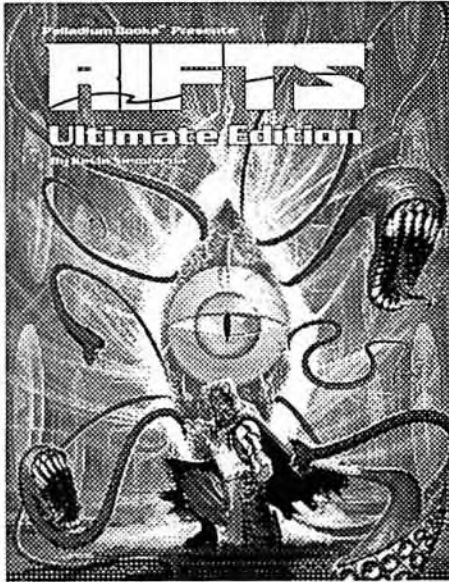
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- Anticipated release date: October or November 2006.

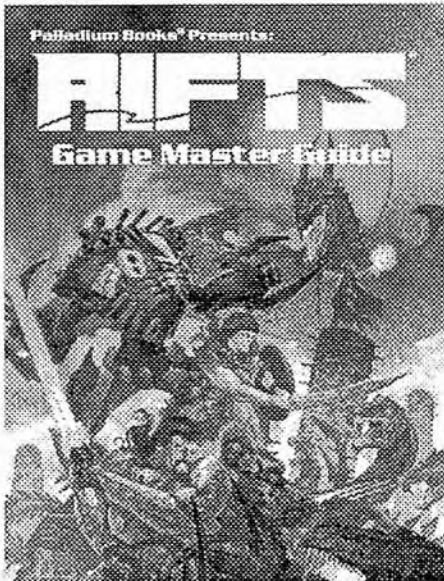
Note: We may also do a \$70.00 limited edition version (300-400 copies) signed and numbered by John Zeleznik and Kevin Siembieda. Check the Palladium Website for details or call our order line.

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

Glitter Boy in Flames Print

A heroic Glitter Boy holding a tattered American Flag.

- Signed and numbered by artist, Scott Johnson, and Rifts® creator, Kevin Siembieda. • Limited to 600 copies.
- A giant, 20x28 inch image. Heavy silk paper stock. Suitable for framing. Shipped in mailing tube.
- \$20.00 – Cat. No. PR802.



Rifts® Game Master Guide – Core Book

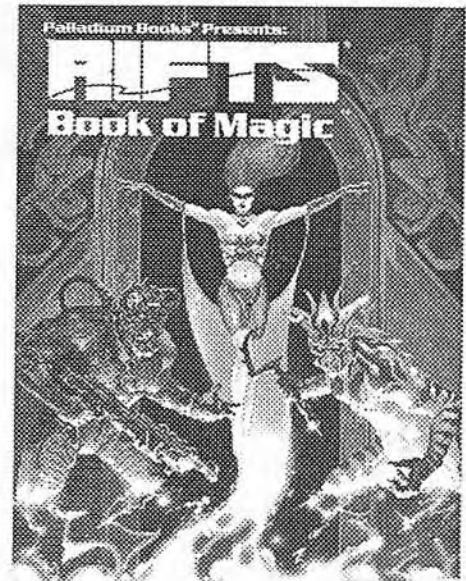
This core Rifts® book is back in print and ready to ship. It is a massive 352 page tome jam-packed with weapons, equipment, body armor, robots, power armor, and vehicles from every Rifts® World Book #1-23, Sourcebooks 1-4 and Siege on Tolkeen™ 1-6! This helpful reference book is a must have resource for Game Masters and an easy guide for players.

- Hundreds of weapons collected from over 30 Rifts® books.
- Vehicles, power armor and other equipment collected from over 30 Rifts® books.
- Compendium of Skill descriptions and Psionic powers.
- Experience tables for character classes from World Books 1-23.
- Designer notes, G.M. tips, strength tables and more.
- Indexes for O.C.C.s, R.C.C.s & monsters.
- 101 adventure ideas, World maps and more.
- Written by Siembieda, Coffin and others.
- \$26.95 – 352 pages. Cat. No. 845 – ISBN 157457-067-6

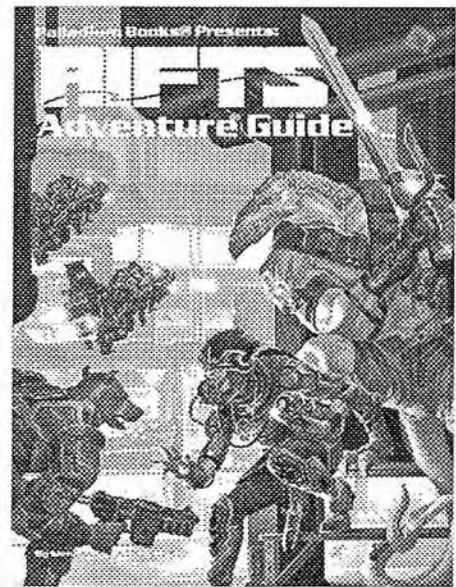
Rifts® Book of Magic – Core Book

This core book contains all the magic spells from over a dozen different types of magic disciplines from World Books #1-23, Sourcebooks 1-4 and Siege on Tolkeen 1-6! It is also a vital reference for Rifts® Chaos Earth™, Rifts® Federation of Magic, the Rifts® China books and all Rifts® titles. Don't get caught without it.

- More than 850 magic spells!
- Elemental, Necromancy, Spoiling Magic, Conjuring & others.
- Magic Tattoos, Stone Magic, Temporal Magic, and Living Fire.
- Cloud Magic, Whale Songs, Ocean Magic, and Shamanism.



- Techno-Wizard vehicles and devices, rune weapons, amulets, fetishes & magic items.
- Optional rules & clarification on magic and more.
- \$26.95 – 352 pages. Cat. No. 848 – ISBN 157457-069-2



Rifts® Adventure Guide

Great for new G.M.s, this is the ultimate beginner's reference for creating and running Rifts® adventures. Lots of sound suggestions, tips, information, and creation tables.

- More than 150 adventure ideas!
- Tables for creating cities, towns, organizations & traveling shows.
- Finding and building on ideas, and creating names.
- Tips on adventure design, running the game and more.
- Written by Siembieda, Wujcik and Coffin.
- \$21.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 849 – ISBN 157457-072-2

Rifts® Ultimate Edition End Sheet Prints

From the pages of the new Rifts® Ultimate Edition. Almost sold out.
Chi-Town by Night Print – \$10.00 – Cat. No. PR800.

Emperor Prosek's Throne Room Print – \$10.00 – Cat. No. PR801.



Rifts® Mercenaries™

This book is filled with exciting mercenary O.C.C.s, weapons, equipment, merc organizations, information, great art and adventure ideas.

- Nine mercenary Occupational Character Classes including the Bounty Hunter, Thief, Spy, Safecracker, and Smuggler.
- Rules for creating mercenary organizations.
- Hints and suggestions for playing a mercenary campaign.
- A half dozen major mercenary companies and their key officers.
- Naruni Enterprises, Iron Heart Industries, Manistique & more.
- Weapons, ammunition, force fields, aircraft, tanks, boats, power armor, robots & vehicles. Plus ideas for adventures.
- Written by C.J. Carella & Kevin Siembieda.
- \$16.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 813 – ISBN 0-916211-70-3

Rifts® MercTown™

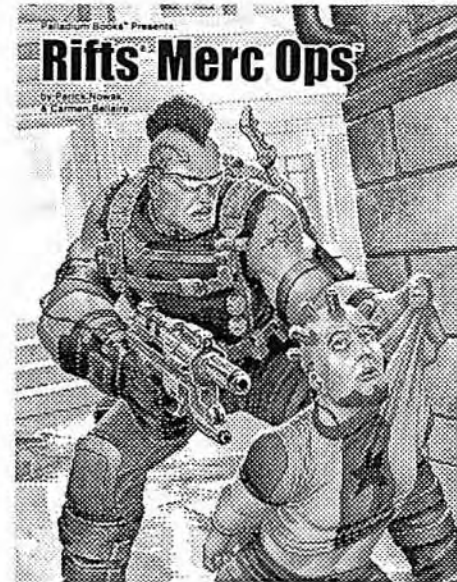
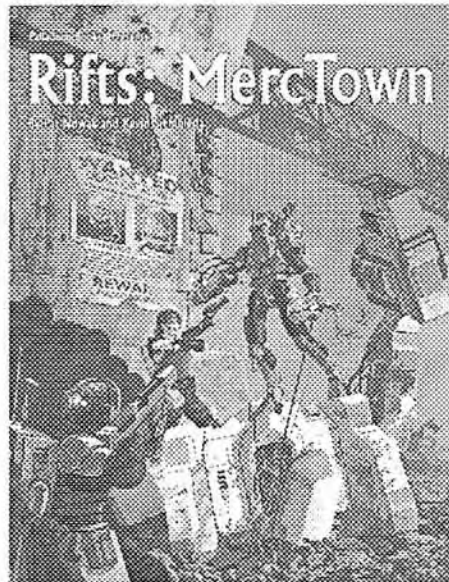
MercTown is set in the Magic Zone, near the Federation of Magic, but is a town run by mercenaries, for mercenaries. Many of the townspeople and businesses cater to the mercenary trade, have secrets to preserve or intriguing pasts. Others have their own agendas and ties to merc outfits, the Black Market, the Ravenshome Thieves' Guild, the Coalition States or other nefarious organizations.

- 220 locations and nine pages of maps.
- New mercenary groups, gangs, Black Market & Thieves' Guild.
- Magic, weapons dealers, job brokers & augmentation clinics.
- Interesting characters and countless avenues for adventure.
- Written by Patrick Nowak and Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 863 – ISBN 157457-105-2

Rifts® Merc Ops™

An adventure sourcebook packed with new merc weapons and equipment, as well as criminals, desperados and fugitives wanted by the CS and other authorities, each an opportunity for adventure.

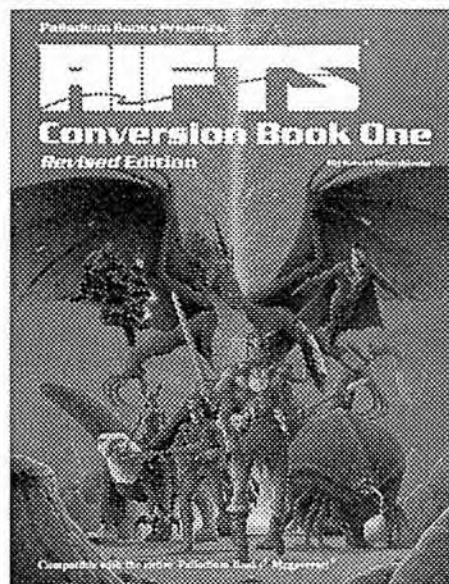
- Guns! Lots of Guns. New weapons and equipment from Golden Age Weaponsmiths, Northern Gun, Wilk's, and others.
- New Techno-Wizard weapons and oddities.
- A rogue's gallery of wanted fugitives & adventure ideas.
- Written by Nowak, Bellaire and Siembieda.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 865 – ISBN 157457-109-5



Rifts® Merc Adventure Sourcebook™

New! Boot Camp at the MercTown *Headhunter Academy* (and a way to earn experience and bonuses for first and second level characters). New merc O.C.C.s, Psi-Stalkers and Hook, Line & Sinker adventures.

- A half dozen new, tricked out, "optional" O.C.C.s.
- Devil Rider Psi-Stalker Clan & merc companies.
- A dozen adventure outlines and Boot Camp adventures.
- Written by Pat Nowak, Carmen Bellaire & Siembieda.
- \$10.95 – 64 pages, Cat. No. 867. ISBN 157457-124-9.



Rifts® Conversion Book 1, "Revised"

The new, updated and expanded edition for adapting and bringing characters, weapons and powers into Rifts® or vice versa, as well as rules clarifications, optional tables, and ideas for adventure.

- Specific conversions for over 120 different characters.
- Rifts® stats for 75 monsters, giants, and humanoids.
- 40+ optional player races.
- Conversion rules for adapting characters from other Palladium game lines: *Heroes Unlimited™*, *After the Bomb®*, and *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, and *Ninjas & Superspies™*.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$22.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 803 – ISBN 0916211-53-6



Rifts® Conversion Book 2: Pantheons of the Megaverse®

Back in print due to popular demand!

- 150 gods and pretenders; Aztec, Babylonian, Greek, India, and others. More than a dozen optional R.C.C.s.
- Demigod, Godling and Minion R.C.C.s; Priest O.C.C.
- Written by C.J. Carella. Countless adventure ideas.
- \$22.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 811 – ISBN 0916211-68-1

Rifts® Conversion Book 3: Dark Conversions™

A Conversion Book dedicated to creatures of darkness, undead, demons, and monsters. Has conversions and specific Rifts® stats for 120+ creatures, as well as some rules clarifications, optional tables, and ideas for adventure.

- Specific conversions for more than 120 different characters.
- Alien Intelligences, Elementals, Demons and Deevils.
- Select supernatural beings from Beyond the Supernatural™.
- Legions of Undead from the Palladium Fantasy RPG®.
- The Nightbane®, Nightlords and their minions.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda with others.
- \$22.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 852 – ISBN 157457-79-X

Rifts® World Book 1: Vampire Kingdoms™

Vampires as you've never imagined them in your wildest nightmares! Entire cities of blood-sucking fiends. Plus world data focusing on New Mexico, Central America, and parts of South America. More villains, monsters, animals, adventure ideas, maps of the land and major communities, ley line locations, monsters and menaces.

- Vampires, their kingdoms, society, powers and plans for humans.
- Techno-Wizard weapons for slaying vampires.
- 12 optional Racial Character Classes.
- The famous Reid's Rangers.

- Traveling shows, carnivals and freak shows.
- Mayan gods, werebeasts, dragon slayers, and D-Bees.
- Central America mapped and detailed. Adventure ideas galore.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Art by Truman and Long.
- \$18.95 – 176 pages. Cat. No. 802 – ISBN 0-916211-52-5

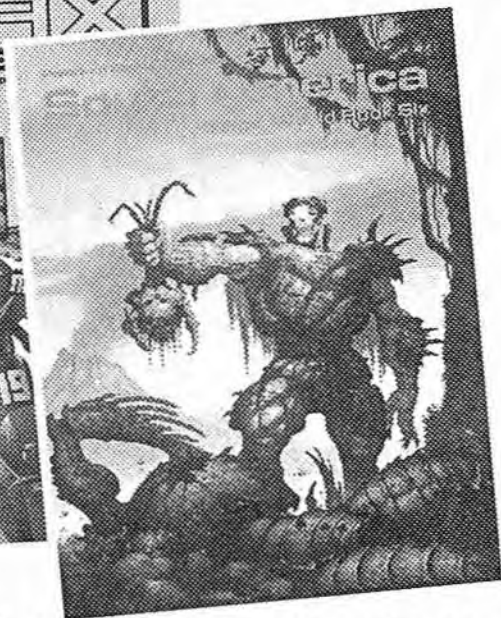
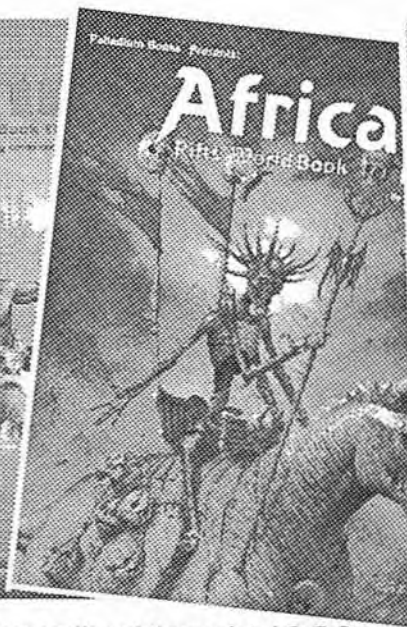
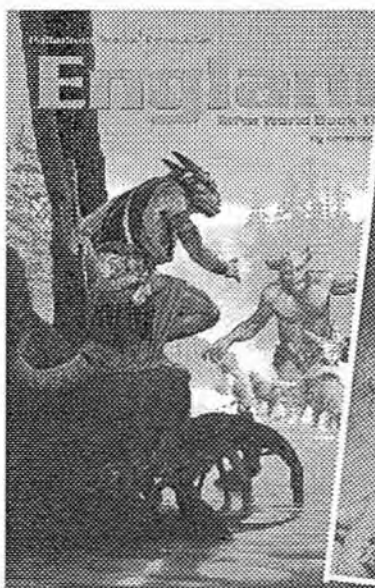
Rifts® World Book 2: Atlantis

Rifts® Atlantis is an alien civilization transplanted to Earth. It is a multi-dimensional kingdom inhabited by monstrous aliens dominated by the Splugorth. Ley lines are tapped by giant, mystic pyramids. Anything and anybody can be bought or sold at the Dimensional Market at Splynn, while the city of Dragcona serves as a haven for dragons and supernatural beings. Located in the southern mountains is the Gargoyle Kingdom and to the north is the Valley of Wonders. Alien creatures lay claim to the land and others are sold at the trans-dimensional slave markets.

- Over 20 optional player characters, including Tattooed Men, True Atlanteans, Undead Slayers, Sunaj Assassins, Stone Masters, aliens, and others.
- Stone Magic: The manipulation of rock, drawing power from gems, and the wonders of pyramid technology.
- Tattoo Magic that enables T-Men to bring their tattoos to life, creating mystic weapons, animals and monsters.
- Bio-Wizardry: Splugorth magic incorporating living organisms for transmutation, augmentation and the creation of magic weapons.
- Rune Magic, general types of weapons, a dozen specific rune items and other magic weapons, statues, gems, & creations of all kinds.
- Complete stats on the Splugorth and their many minions.
- Atlantis, briefly described. Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 804 – ISBN 0-916211-54-1

Rifts® World Book 3: England

Rifts® England seethes with mystic energy from hundreds of ley lines and nexus points, transforming the British Isles into a land of enchantment and home to the legendary Millennium Tree, Brain Trees, ancient gods, Temporal Raiders and Wizards, Woodland Druids, Dryads, Blood Druids, Nexus Knights, Ghost Knights, Stonehenge and more.



- Temporal Magic, with 25 new spells and three related O.C.C.s.
- Herb magic, magic teas, potions, wands, and more.
- 21 New O.C.C.s, the Chiang-Ku dragon & Temporal Wizard.
- The Millennium Tree, intelligent, benevolent and magical.
- New Camelot, a place of bright hope and dark magic.
- Monsters and villains. Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Still \$16.95 – 152 pages. Cat. No. 807 – ISBN 0-916211-57-6

Rifts® World Book 4: Africa

Rifts® Africa outlines key types of magic, places, people, customs, and societies of Rifts Africa. Plus the demonic Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse threaten to destroy all life on Earth. Once life has been obliterated on Earth, the monsters will use the dimensional Rifts to carry their destruction throughout the Megaverse®. If they can be defeated one at a time, the Earth and the entire Megaverse *may* be spared. Failure means oblivion for all.

- The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse!
- Nine O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s, including the Mind Bleeder.
- Necromancy and the Necromancer O.C.C.
- Character stats for *Erin Tarn* and *Victor Lazlo*.
- Egyptian Gods, their minions, and magic.
- New weapons, vehicles, magic and maps. Written by Siembieda.
- Still \$16.95, 160 pages. Cat. No. 808 – ISBN 0-916211-58-4

Rifts® World Book 5: Triax™ & The NGR™

A spectacular book of robots, power armor, weapons and the creations of Triax™ and the *New German Republic (NGR)*; the most powerful *human* kingdom on Earth.

- Over 60 high-tech Triax™ creations: body armor, power armor, giant robots, cyborgs, androids, combat vehicles, tanks, fighter jets, weapons and equipment.
- Over 20 new O.C.C.s, including NGR soldiers, the Euro-Juicer, gypsies, and gargoyles.
- Gargoyle Empire, their giant robots, armor, and weapons.
- The New German Republic, its history, allies and enemies.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Art by Kevin Long.
- \$21.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 810 – ISBN 0-916211-60-6

Rifts® World Book 6: South America 1

Explore the jungles of South America and discover the secrets of Biomancy, living power armor, anti-monster cyborgs, bio-modified female super-warriors, reptilian D-Bees, pincer warriors, voodoo priests, and dark conspiracies. Plus, pirates, insectoid D-Bees, dragons, new weapons and equipment, magic, adventure and more!

- Over 20 new O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s, including the Amazon warrior, Monster Hunter, Lizard Men, Felinoids, and others.
- Biomancer O.C.C., bio-weaponry, and Biomancy magic.
- Voodoo magic, priests, spirits and characters.
- New Kittani weapons, high-tech and magic weapons and gear.
- Legendary El Dorado, Pyramid City, the Pirate Kingdom, vampire wars, D-Bees, monsters and more. Written by C.J. Carella.
- Still \$16.95, 168 pages. Cat. No. 814 – ISBN 0-916211-71-1

Rifts® World Book 7: Underseas™

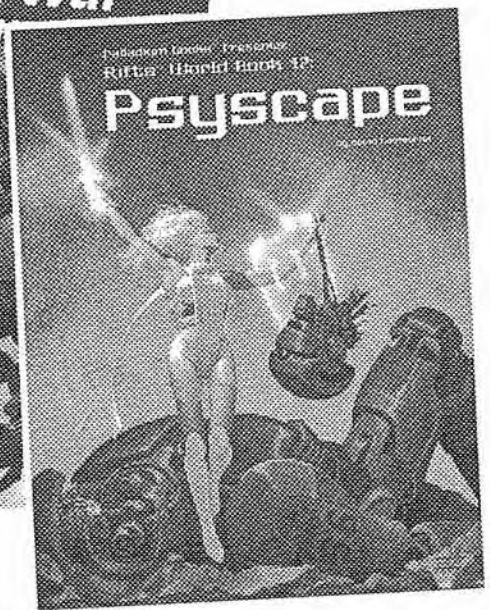
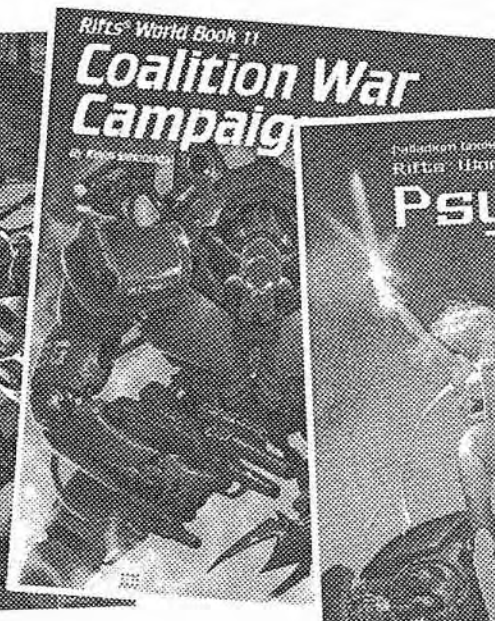
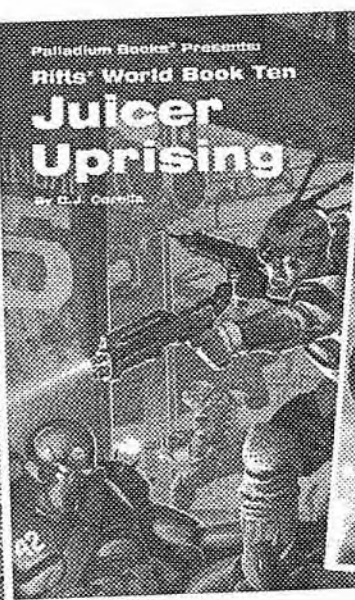
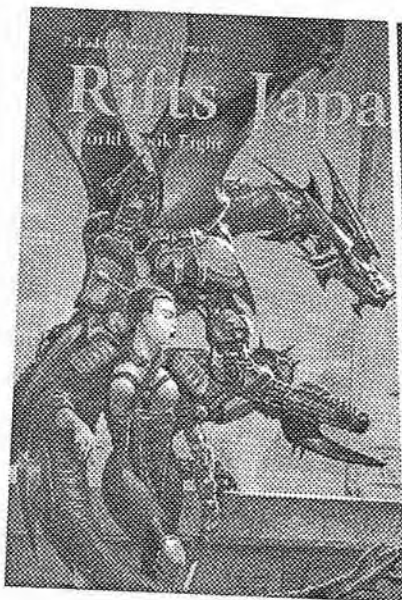
Rifts® Underseas is a fabulous world as unique and expansive as any *Rifts® Dimension Book™*. Gamers may be surprised at the scope of characters, abilities and adventure available to them, both undersea and on dry land.

- 10 O.C.C.s and 20 aquatic R.C.C.s.
- Over 40 Ocean Magic spells, 20 Whale Songs, + Dolphin Magic.
- Bionics, power armor, robots, weaponry, aircraft, subs & ships.
- Tritonia, the New Navy, and other kingdoms, each with its unique history, technology, and O.C.C.s.
- Gene-Splicer™ creations, mutants, Dead Pools, & more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda & C.J. Carella.
- Still \$20.95 – 216 pages. Cat. No. 815 – ISBN 0-916211-72-X

Rifts® World Book 8: Rifts® Japan

Four pre-Rifts cities suddenly materialize from a pocket dimension. For them, three days have passed since the Great Cataclysm began, for the rest of humankind it has been 300 years. Pre-Rifts Glitter Boys, people, and technology clash with anti-technology traditionalists, magic, and Oni demons! Traditional O.C.C.s like the Samurai, Mystic Ninja, Yamabushi priest and warrior monks, blend with high tech marvels like the Dragon-Borg, Ninja Juicer, and Cyberoid.

- Dragon Cyborgs and new bionics and implants
- Japanese dragons, demons, monsters and magic.



- Japanese body armor, robots, power armor and weapons.
- Over 20 character classes, including Demon Queller, Samurai, Mystic Ninja, Juicer Ninja, Glitter Force Trooper, Tengu Birdmen, and others.
- Mysticism and martial arts. The “living” samurai sword, and more.
- World information, the high-tech Republic of Japan, and more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda with Patrick Nowak.
- \$22.95 – 216 pages. Cat. No. 818 – ISBN 0916211-88-6

Rifts® World Book 9: South America 2™

Rifts South America is a hotbed of intrigue and conflict. There are the mysteries of the Nazca Lines (a magic, alien defense system), the return of ancient gods, alien invaders, mutants, Inca undead, trans-dimensional raiders, and more.

- Over 30 new O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s, weapons and equipment.
- The Nazca line maker and line drawing magic.
- Larhold magic of the Blue Flame.
- The return of the Inca Empire led by the return of the Inca gods.
- The Silver River Republic, conspiracies and war.
- Written by C.J. Carella. Cover by Brom.
- Still \$20.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 819 – ISBN 0916211-89-4

Rifts® World Book 10: Juicer Uprising™

A Coalition plot fools a number of innocent people into undergoing Juicer augmentation. When the *lies* are revealed, a Juicer army rises up to lay siege to the CS city of Newtown. Chaos erupts as Juicers, bandits and outlaws ravage the countryside. Action-packed adventure and source material.

- 15 new types of Juicer O.C.C.s.
- The Juicer O.C.C., developed and expanded; the motivations behind these suicidal warriors, and the process and effects of being “juiced” completely described.
- Prometheus Treatment: Juicer immortality or a Coalition lie?
- Newtown, Fort El Dorado, and world information.
- Written by C.J. Carella with Kevin Siembieda.
- \$18.95 – 160 pages. Cat. 820 – ISBN 0-916211-92-4

Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign™

This is “the” guide to Coalition military vehicles, power armor, weapons, and equipment. Emperor Prosek launches a surprise military campaign of conquest and genocide, starting the Siege on Tolkeen and the (short-lived) war on Free Quebec, and unveiling a new high tech army.

- CS power armor and robots like the SAMAS, Super SAMAS, Hellraiser, Hellfire, Glitter Boy Killer, Terror Trooper & others.
- Tanks, APCs, the Spider Scout Walker, hover cars, rocket bikes, mobile fortress, aircraft, & more.
- Skelebots, Dead Boy armor, weapons & equipment.
- More than a dozen CS military O.C.C.s, including CS Cyborg, CS Juicer, RPA Ace, and Special Forces.
- The ISS, Psi-Net, and NTSET city protectors & Police.
- The Coalition’s military structure, ranks, key leaders, etc.
- World information and maps. Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$22.95, 224 pages. Cat. No. 821 – ISBN 0916211-93-2

Rifts® World Book 12: Psyscape™

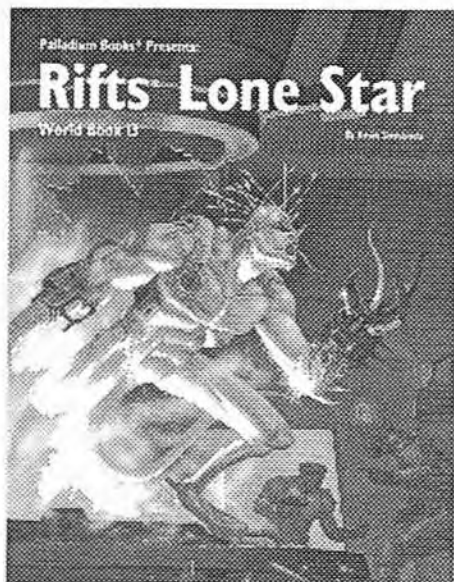
Fabled Psyscape™, the stuff of myths and legends revealed at last! The history, power and key figures of this mysterious realm.

- 11 New psychic O.C.C.s like the Psi-Ghost, Psi-Nullifier, Psi-Slayer, Zapper & others.
- 20 new monsters, some psychic, many just evil.
- Cybernetic psi-implants and side effects.
- Notable factions, villains, heroes and Harvester of Souls.
- Psyscape, D-Bees, aliens, dark secrets and world information.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 822 – ISBN 0-916211-94-0

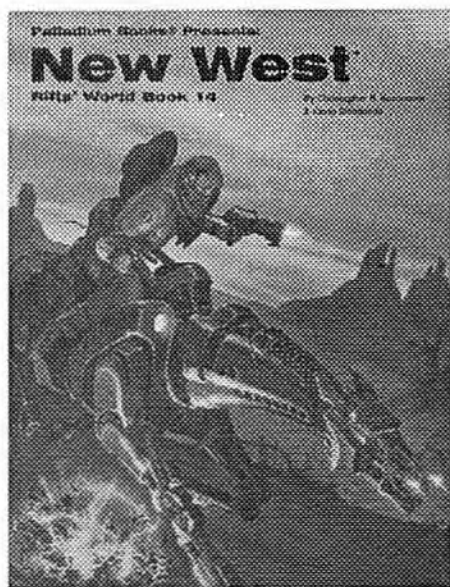
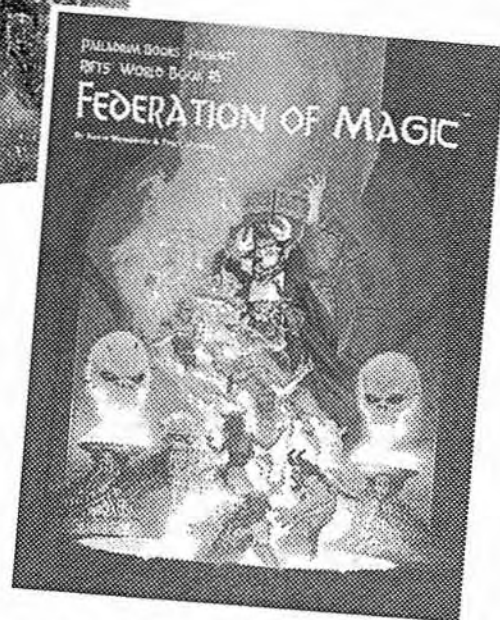
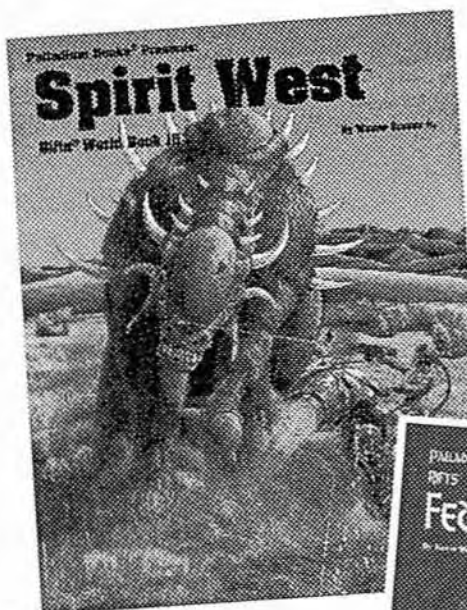
Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star™

Birthplace of the *Dog Boys* and scene of genetic experimentation on human and mutant animals. Background on the Lone Star Complex and the madman who runs it.

- 20 new R.C.C.s, six of them Dog Boys.



- Background on Dog Boys and runaway mutants.
- History and background on the Lone Star Complex.
- Combat hover cycles and miscellaneous equipment.
- The Pecos Empire, bandits, cutthroats and more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- Still \$16.95 – 176 pages. Cat. No. 825 – ISBN 157457-000-5



Rifts® World Book 14: New West™

At last, the Western Wilderness. Called the New West, it is a no man's zone filled with bandits, Simvan Monster Riders, dinosaurs, monsters, intrigue and danger.

- 17 new O.C.C.s, including the Cowboy, Gunslinger, Psi-Slinger, CyberSlinger, Bounty Hunter, and Justice Ranger.
- 9 R.C.C.s and 25 monsters of the New West.
- The history of Wilk's Inc. and a new array of weapons.
- Bandito Arms, a Black Market manufacturer.
- New body armor, robot vehicles, and weapons.
- Cloud Magic and Techno-Wizard weapons & items.
- Overview of the New West™, maps & world information.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda & Chris Kornmann.
- \$22.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 826 – ISBN 1-57457-001-3

Rifts® World Book 15: Spirit West™

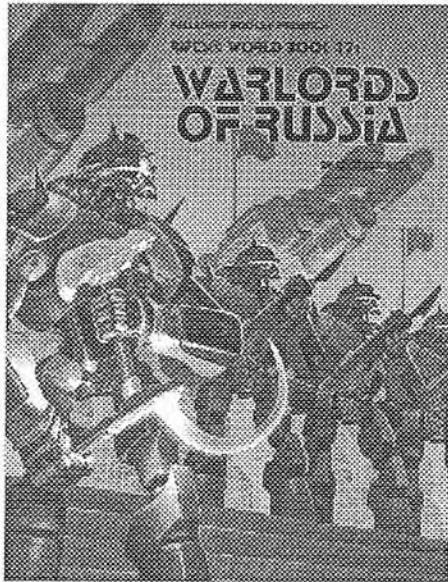
An in-depth look at the *new* American Indian, various tribes, cultures, magic, and gods. While the White Man wars with D-Bees, sorcerers and his brothers in the East, the Red Man is quietly building new nations in the West.

- 11 new O.C.C.s, different Shamans, Totem Warrior & others.
- New magic spells, powers and Fetish magic.
- Magic Weapons and Kachina Dolls.
- Animal Totems that help shape and empower characters.
- Ancient Indian Spirits and Gods; Indian history & culture.
- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr. with Kevin Siembieda.
- \$22.95 – 208 pages. Cat. No. 827 – ISBN 1-57457-002-1

Rifts® World Book 16: Federation of Magic™ Revised

Rifts® Federation of Magic™ delves into the legendary Magic Zone and explores the many factions, faces and magicks of the Federation of Magic.

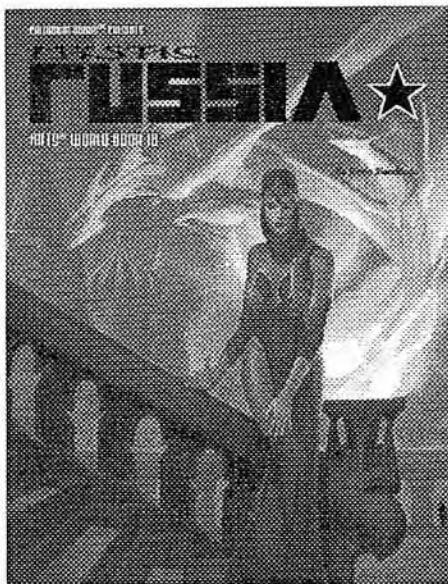
- 34 pages of brand *new* source material on the city of Dweomer.
- Eight magic O.C.C.s (character classes).
- Techno-Wizard devices, vehicles and magic Automatons.
- Alistair Dunscon, diabolical leader of the Federation.
- History and overview, cities and key figures.
- Written by Siembieda & Murphy.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages (34 new). Cat. No. 829 – ISBN 1-57457-005-6



Rifts® World Book 17: Warlords of Russia™

Rifts Russia is a savage wilderness infested by demons and other supernatural horrors. The Warlords and their cyborg legions have risen as Russia's self-proclaimed saviors, but they are also its conquerors and tyrants. Hordes of monstrous cyborgs to dominate the land, but protect the people from supernatural monsters. This book focuses on the cyborgs, technology and people of Russia.

- Over 20 O.C.C.s. Cyborgs like you've never seen 'em! Really.
- The Warlords of Russia, their armies, politics & plans.
- The Sovietski, its history, weapons & war machines.
- World information, monstrous enemies & adventure ideas.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda & Kevin Krueger.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 832 – ISBN 157457-010-2



Rifts® World Book 18: Mystic Russia™

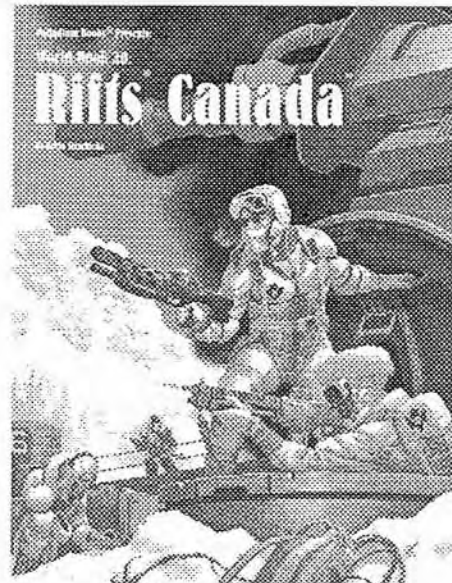
This book is rich in monsters and magic based on Russian mythology and superstition. Rifts Russia is a land unlike anywhere else. The wilderness abounds with mischievous spirits, shape changers and demons unique to Russia (including a comprehensive look at Necromancy).

- 28 Russian demons & spirits.
- Nature and Spoiling Magic. Over 100 new spells.
- Living Fire Magic, Bone Magic & Necromancy.
- Russian Gypsies, their secrets and magic weapon maker.
- Sovietski tanks, war machines, and more world info.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Cover by Zeleznik.
- Still \$16.95 – 176 pages. Cat. No. 833 – ISBN 157457-011-0

Rifts® World Book 19: Australia

Rifts Australia is a savage and alien land reshaped by the Coming of the Rifts and the brutality of survival. A land inhabited by strange creatures and forces of magic. Humankind survives as *Outbackers* (low-tech survivalists and scavengers) and the *City-Goers* (the few who live amongst technological splendor after turning their backs on the rest of humanity).

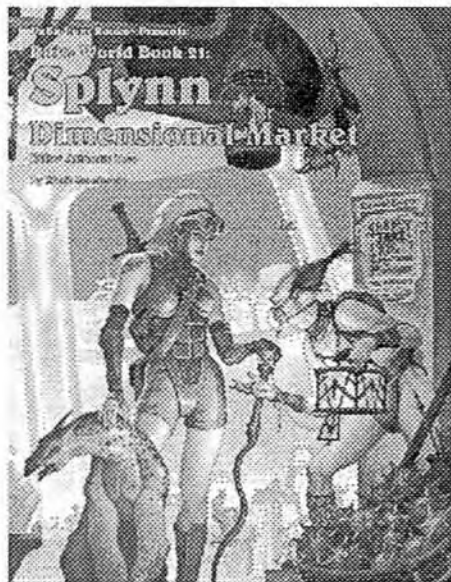
- The Tech-Cities and Outback towns.
- Over 20 O.C.C.s like the Roadganger and Jackaroo.
- Mystic O.C.C.s include the Sham-Man and Songjuicer.
- Mutants, monsters, Dreamtime menaces and more
- New weapons, technology and world information.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 834 – ISBN 157457-018-8



Rifts® World Book 20: Rifts® Canada

An in-depth overview of Canada, its population centers, great cities, ruins, wilderness and supernatural horrors.

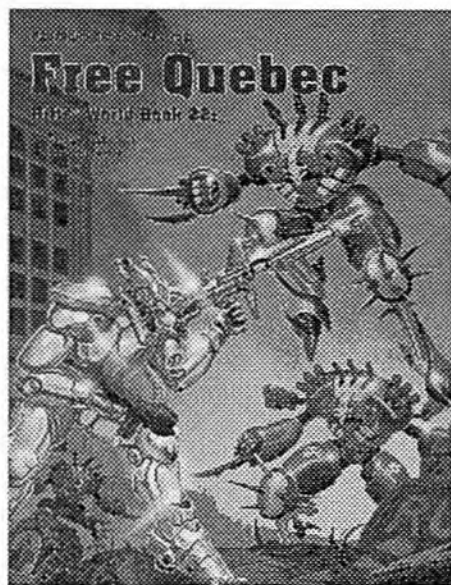
- Over two dozen monsters and D-Bees.
- Headhunter O.C.C. redefined (5 different types).
- Tundra Rangers and their weapons and vehicles.
- Inuit Shaman, spirits, magic and Techno-Wizard items.
- Tons of world information, adventure ideas & more.
- Still \$20.95, but going up to \$22.95 this Fall – 192 pages. Cat. No. 835 – ISBN 157457-025-0.



Rifts® World Book 21: Splynn Dimensional Market™

Atlantis Book Two takes us to the legendary Splynn Dimensional Market. A place where it is said that one can purchase *anything*, including forbidden magic, alien technology and humanoid slaves. Anything goes and one must fend for one's self. The only laws are those governing commerce, and life and death.

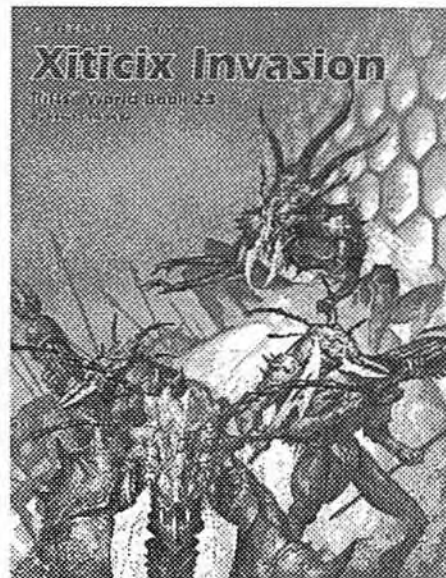
- New magic, magic items, rune weapons & Faerie Weapons.
- New Bio-Wizard organisms, Symbiotes & devices.
- 15 new monsters and aliens. Many avenues of adventure
- The Splynn Market's history, laws, & detailed description.
- More than two dozen places of interest & key figures.
- Written by Mark Sumimoto & Kevin Siembieda.
- Still \$20.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 836 – ISBN 157457-027-7



Rifts® World Book 22: Free Quebec™

The people, places, secrets, defenses, and war machines of the independent nation of Free Quebec. Plus the tension and war that results from Free Quebec's secession from the Coalition States (a subplot in the *Coalition Wars®* series). A lot of fun and useful information whether the war is played out or not.

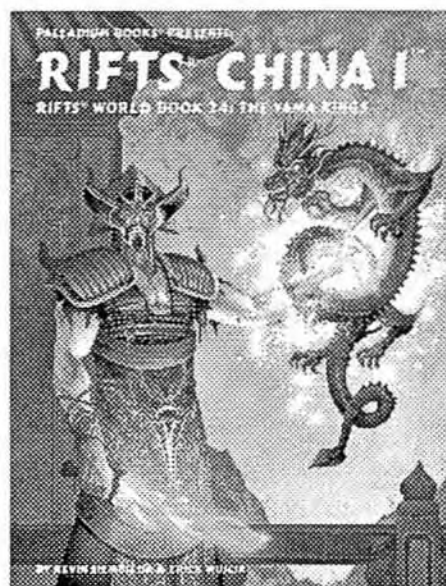
- Quebec's Glitter Boy Legions & six new types of GBs.
- Cyborg Shock Troopers and the GB Side Kick.
- The Quebec Army and Navy, its weapons and vehicles.
- Violator SAMAS, Cyborg Shock Troopers, Sea Dragon & more.
- Old Bones, the Pirates of Montreal and other key places.
- Key people, history and world information.
- \$22.95. 192 pages. Cat. No. 837 – ISBN 157457-030-7 – By DesRochers & Siembieda.



Rifts® World Book 23: Xiticix Invasion™

Peter Murphy and Kevin Siembieda (the team behind *Rifts® Federation of Magic*) delve into the frightening and alien world of the insect-like humanoids known as the Xiticix.

- New varieties of Xiticix, their magic and psionics.
- Xiticix weapons and technology.
- The Xiticix's domains and inside the hive network.
- New O.C.C.s, R.C.C.s, Psi-Stalkers and background.
- Still \$16.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 838 – ISBN 157457-031-5

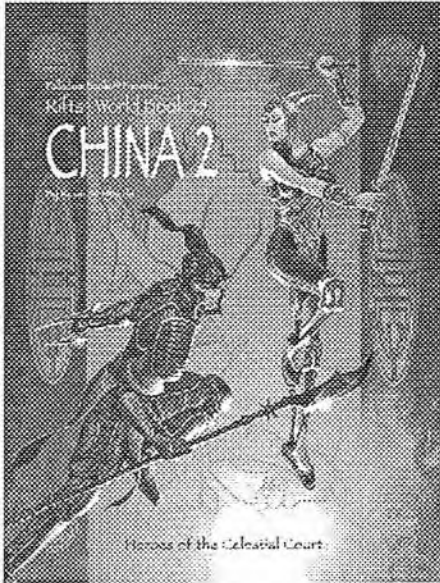


Rifts® World Book 24: China One

There is nowhere on Earth that is more dangerous than Rifts China. The Yama Kings war against themselves and all of humanity, bringing

the ten Chinese Hells to manifest in China. *Rifts® China, Book One* presents the Hells on Earth setting, monsters, demons, villains and more. A smash hit with *Rifts* fans everywhere.

- The Yama Kings and their Hells on Earth.
- 30 Chinese horrors – demons, ghosts & spirits.
- 20+ Chinese curses.
- Overview of *Rifts* China, key people & places.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Erick Wujcik.
- \$18.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 857 – ISBN 157457-094-3



Rifts® World Book 25: China Two

Rifts® China Two presents the heroes of the Celestial Court, champions of the people and the secret high-tech army of Geofront. This book is filled with awesome player characters (O.C.C.s).

- 12 Mystic Martial Arts Powers – *Rifts®* style!
- Fighting Monks, Soothsayers, Blind Mystic and more!
- The Great Demon Catching Hero, Goblin Wrangler, Spirit Host.
- Magical weapons, Chi weapons and Demon Queller items.
- The people, weapons, and army of Geofront.
- Written by Erick Wujcik and Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 858 – ISBN 157457-095-1

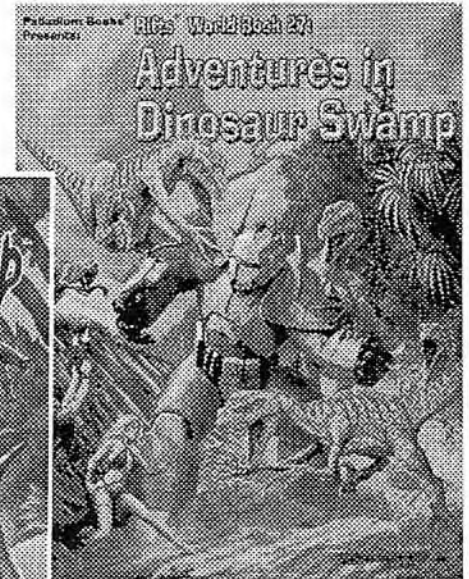
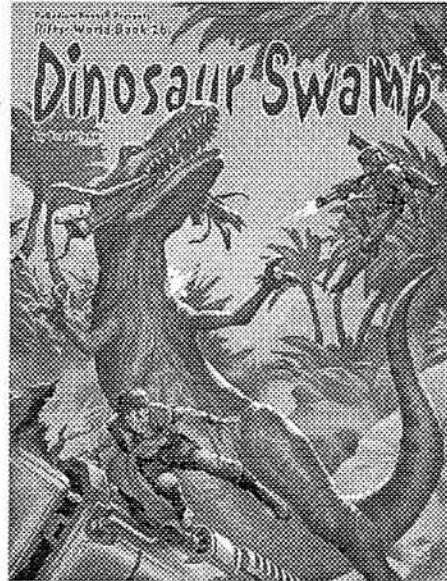
Rifts® World Book: China 3 – Magic

This title is delayed indefinitely, pending receipt of a finished manuscript. Our apologies.

Rifts® World Book 26: Dinosaur Swamp™

The swamps of Florida and other parts of the south are described and mapped for intrepid explorers and treasure hunters.

- Mega-Damage Dinosaurs and monstrous mutants.
- 8 O.C.C.s, including Barbarians and Dinosaur Hunters.
- Eco-Wizards and Eco-Wizard weapons and magic.
- The Secrets of the Swamps – Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas.
- Region mapped and described, and adventure ideas.
- Written by Todd Yoho. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 862. ISBN 157457-104-4



Rifts® World Book 27: Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp™

More dinosaurs, only stranger and more dangerous than you can imagine, dinosaurs that think and use magic, and more background.

- Dinosaurs, other monsters, creatures and dangers.
- New R.C.C.s, Native Americans, weapons and equipment.
- The Ocmulgee Mound, adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Todd Yoho & Kevin Siembieda.
- \$17.95 retail – 160 pages. Cat. No. 866. ISBN 157457-120-6

Rifts® World Book 28: Arzno™

Merces and vampires clash. The city-state of Arzno (located in Arizona) is completely mapped and described as are key characters, villains, cults and Cyber-Knight clans. Plenty of adventure ideas.

- Vampires, their henchmen and their mission.
- Blood Cult, Blood Priest and vampire worship.
- New mercenary weapons, TW items, armor, and vehicles.
- Coalition Vampire Killers, Cyber-Knights and more.
- Regional monsters, wildlife and danger.
- Written by Jason Richards. Coming early 2006.
- \$22.95 retail – 192 pages. Cat. No. 868. ISBN 157457-157-5.

Rifts® World Book 29: Madhaven™

Rifts® Madhaven™ is a place of terror and legend. A land so plagued by ghosts and monsters that no one has been able to conquer it in 300 years. Bold adventurers come to loot the ruins, but only half live to tell the tale. Ghosts, deadly monsters, weird mutants, and madness conceal and protect secrets of the past and present.

- 8 Mutant R.C.C.s that will boggle the mind.
- 7 Ghostly Entities who torment the living.
- 11 strange monsters not found elsewhere.
- The Knights of the Order of the White Rose (4 new O.C.C.s).

- The fabulous healing powers of the mystical *White Rose*.
- Techno-Wizard weapons and devices. M.D. Bone weapons.
- The history, curse and inhabitants of Madhaven.
- Written by Brandon Aten, Taylor White, & Kevin Siembieda.
- \$14.95 retail – 128 pages. Cat. No. 869. ISBN 157457-158-3.

Rifts® Adventure Book Series

A series of 48-64 page books placed in a particular setting or focusing on a particular group, people, or O.C.C. in a specific environment. Each book presents an adventure setting and ideas, plus material on which to build your own adventures. All are written by *Kevin Siembieda* with a little help from his friends.

- **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: Chi-Town 'Burbs – Forbidden Knowledge.** Overview and history of the Chi-Town 'Burbs. Key people and places in the 'Burb of Firetown, with maps, stats, rumors and plenty of adventure hooks.

\$8.95 – 48 pages. Cat. No. 853 – ISBN 157457-082-X

- **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: Chi-Town 'Burbs – Firetown & the Tolkeen Crisis.** Retribution Squads are out for blood, magic and forbidden books are flooding in from the fallen Kingdom of Tolkeen and trouble seems to be brewing in every corner. Revenge Squad Ragnarok, and more of Firetown described and mapped, with a ton of adventure hooks and rumors.

\$10.95 – 64 pages. Cat. No. 854 – ISBN 157457-085-4

- **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: Chi-Town 'Burbs – The Black Vault.** Learn about the mysterious Black Vault where the Coalition States lock away forbidden and dangerous magic items. The history of the Black Vault, its defenses and protectors, CS Anti-Magic Recovery Squads and 101 new magic items!

\$8.95 – 48 pages. Cat. No. 855 – ISBN 157457-086-2

- **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: Chi-Town 'Burbs – The Vanguard.** Practitioners of magic born in the early days of Chi-Town before the formation of the Coalition States, and who are loyal to the CS. Learn their history and their reasons for working for the Coalition, and why they kill and undermine other practitioners of magic. Six new Vanguard O.C.C.s, their methods of operation, adventure ideas and Vanguard agendas. Vanguard members as optional player characters, plus the Firetown 'Burb Part Three. Back in print.

\$8.95 – 48 pages. Cat. No. 856 – ISBN 157457-091-9.

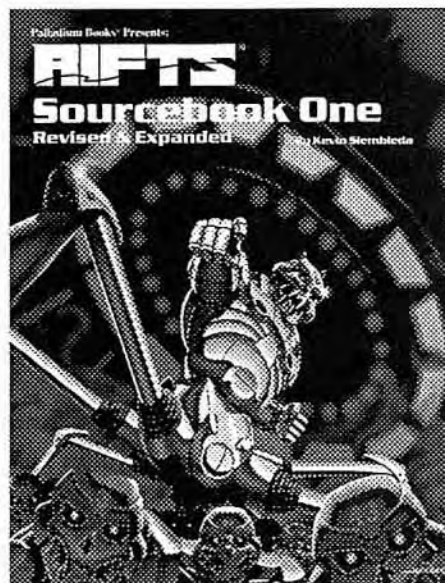
- **Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: Merc Adventures,** described on page 6 of this catalog.

\$10.95 – 64 pages. Cat. No. 867 – ISBN 157457-124-9.

Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook

A compendium of *cybernetics* and *bionics* found on Rifts Earth. Includes new and old items, information, and stats in one useful book.

- Over 160 cybernetic systems: weapons, sensors, implants, etc.
- Over 120 bionic systems: weapons, tools, sensors, armor, etc.
- More on the Cyber-Doc and Black Market cybernetics.
- The Cyborg O.C.C. redefined – Four main types: Partial 'Borg, Full Conversion 'Borg, Cyber-Humanoid, and Mining 'Borg, as well as notes on Slave 'Borgs.
- Six City Rat O.C.C.s and the Cyber-Snatcher Villain NPC.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$13.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 850 – ISBN 157457-075-7.



Rifts® Sourcebook One™ – Expanded and Updated – New

The original author, Kevin Siembieda, expands and updates one of the best selling sourcebooks of all time (100,000+ copies sold), giving it the same treatment he gave the *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*.

- Never before revealed information about A.R.C.H.I.E. Three and his unknown link to *the Republicans*.
- Weapons, power armor & equipment (new and old).
- A.R.C.H.I.E. Three, Hagan Lonovich and robotic minions.
- The Republicans revealed at last! World information & adventures.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and available September 2006.
- \$18.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 801 – ISBN 157457-151-6.

Rifts® Sourcebook Two: The Mechanoids®

A.R.C.H.I.E. Three and Hagan have inadvertently unleashed **The Mechanoids®** into the world. Creatures with one driving goal: To destroy all humanoid life! This book has it all. Source material, the Mechanoids, new equipment, monsters and adventure. Written by Kevin Siembieda.

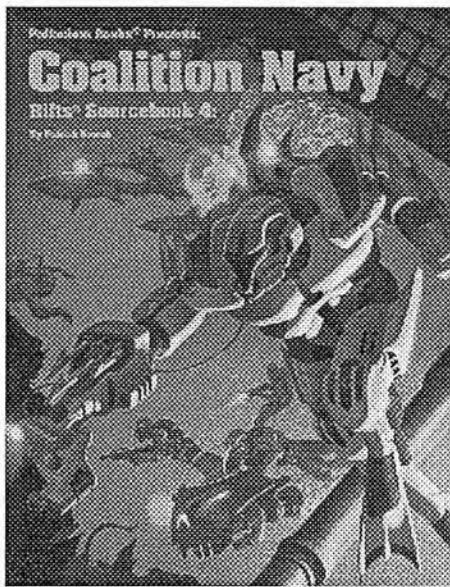
\$12.95 – 120 pages. Cat. No. 805 – ISBN 0916211-55-X.

Rifts® Sourcebook Three: Mindwerks™

Mindwerks™ is a companion to **Triax & The NGR™** with the techno-horrors of the **Mindwerks Corporation** and its insane mastermind, the Angel of Death. More on the NGR, Gargoyle and Brodkil Empires, robots and equipment, plus the Gene-Splicers, a dozen D-Bee races, an evil Millennium Tree and mind altering cybernetic implants. 14 O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s. Mindwerks bots, cyborgs, weapons & equipment. Mindwerks M.O.M. conversions, Crazies and insanity. Written by Siembieda.

Temporarily out of print. Back in print by year's end.

\$14.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 812 – ISBN 0-916211-69-X.



Rifts® Sourcebook Four: Coalition Navy™

An in-depth look at the burgeoning power of the Coalition Navy, its robots, subs, ships, weapons, troops and organization. Navy O.C.C.s, ranks and objectives, Sea SAMAS, Trident power armor, Sea-Spider Walker, Navy body armor and other equipment, CS warships, submarines, patrol boats, water sleds and more. Written by Patrick Nowak with Kevin Siembieda.

\$12.95 – 128 pages. Cat. No. 828 – ISBN 1-57457-003-X.

Rifts® Sourcebook 5: D-Bees of North America™ – New

Approximately 100 D-Bees of North America. Thirty some new and the old ones are updated and collected into one book. The perfect reference for players (especially those looking to play a particular D-Bee) and Game Masters.

- 100 D-Bees completely statted out and updated.
- Cover painting by David Martin.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda & others. Fall or Winter, 2006.
- \$22.95 – 192-224 pages. Cat. No. 871. ISBN 157457-170-2.

Mutants in Orbit™

Rifts® Space: The startling answers to the question of what lays within Earth's orbit, on the moon and Mars. A.R.C.H.I.E. Seven, the Cyberworks Corporation, CAN Republic, Virtual Reality Defense System, three new Glitter Boys, the Steel Dragon, robots, killer satellites, mutants, monsters and more! Half the book (60 pages) has stats and history applicable to Rifts® and half for *After the Bomb®*. Written by Kevin Siembieda and James Wallis.

Still only \$11.95 – 120 pages. Cat. No. 514 – ISBN 0-916211-48-7.

New –

The Minion War™ Series

Rifts® Hades sets the stage for an epic, 5-6 book crossover adventure series called the **Minion War**. The Minion War series will include *Dimension Book Hades*, *Dimension Book Dyval*, *Dimensional Outbreak* (Phase World®), *Armageddon Unlimited* (Heroes Unlimited), and a Rifts Earth finale, *Megaverse in Flames*, plus a possible *Minion War Aftermath* book. But each is also a *stand-alone* title.

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 10: Hades, Pits of Hell™

The demons and monsters of Hades, the landscape of Hades, the evil denizens who populate it, and their plans for conquest and war that wreaks havoc across the Megaverse®!

- The weird realms of Hades mapped and described.
- The legion of demons, lords and monsters.
- New Hades Netherbeast, Black Vultures, Ant Lions, and more.
- Faerie Weapons, Blood Rifles and other magic weapons.
- Stand-alone title that is also part of the Minion War series.
- Written by Carl Gleba. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- \$18.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 872. ISBN 157457-164-8.
- Coming Fall 2006.

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 11: Dyval, Hell on Earth™ – Fall, 2006

The Deevils and monsters of *Dyval*.

- The realms of Dyval mapped and described.
- Non-Deevil Minions such as Dragon Shock Troopers, Bonelings, Devil Worms, Ice Golems, and others.
- The Nexus Deevil, Deevil Dragon and Ice Wraith, among others.
- Beasts of War such as Flying Horrors and more.
- Magic weapons, spells and artifacts.
- Written by Carl Gleba. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- \$18.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 873. ISBN 157457-166-4.
- Coming Fall 2006.

Rifts® Dimension Book 12: Dimensional Outbreak™

Four levels of Phase World's Center mapped and described as demons and Deevils spill into Phase World and the Three Galaxies in the Minion War. Ships early 2007.

- Phase World, demons, magic and intergalactic turmoil.
- A stand-alone Dimension Book and part three of Minion War.
- Written by Carl Gleba. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- \$18.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 877. ISBN 157457-171-0.

Coming for the Minion War™ series

Armageddon Unlimited™ – HU2 crossover.

Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™ – The grand finale on Rifts Earth.

Coming for Rifts®

Rifts® World Book: Delta Blues™

Rifts® World Book: The Dark Woods™

Voodoo & the Spirit World™

Rifts® World Book: Triax™ Two

Rifts® World Book: City of Lazlo



Siege on Tolkeen™

A six part series chronicling the war between the Coalition States and the magic kingdom of Tolkeen. The ultimate magic vs technology scenario. All are written by *Kevin Siembieda* with a little help from his friends.

• **Coalition Wars® One: Sedition.** The groundwork for the war is laid out with an overview of Tolkeen's resources, TW weapons, Monster Squads and more. \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 839 – ISBN 157457-045-5

• **Coalition Wars® Two: Coalition Overkill.** The war escalates as the Coalition Army draws first blood and engages in wholesale slaughter and genocide. More than 60 villains and NPCs. Introducing the *Daemonix* and *General Drogue*, plus a complete adventure. \$12.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 840 – ISBN 157457-046-3

• **Coalition Wars® Three: Sorcerers' Revenge.** Tolkeen's surprise blitzkrieg routs the CS and sends the mighty Coalition army in retreat. More than a dozen D-Bees, 25 NPC Tolkeen warriors, and adventure generation tables. \$12.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 841 – ISBN 157457-050-1

• **Coalition Wars® Four: Cyber-Knights.** The most comprehensive look at the Cyber-Knights, ever! Lord Coake, leader of the Knights, and other key heroes. Code of Chivalry, rules of conduct, Cyber-Knight factions, the Cyber-Knights' role at Tolkeen and more. \$14.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 842 – ISBN 157457-051-X

• **Coalition Wars® Five: Shadows of Evil.** The Coalition Military is back with a vengeance. Random encounters, heroes, villains and key places. \$12.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 843 – ISBN 157457-052-8

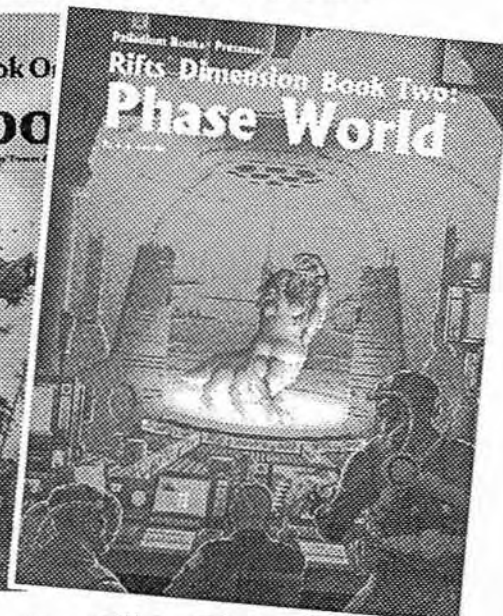
• **Coalition Wars® Six: Final Siege.** The City of Tolkeen in its final days, mapped and described. Freehold, the city of dragons, described. King Creed and 40 NPCs described in detail. Plus secret weapons and the fall of Tolkeen. \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 844 – ISBN 157457-053-6

• **Rifts® Aftermath.** An overview of North America and the world after the fall of Tolkeen. How have things changed? A great reference that outlines most of Rifts Earth. circa 109 P.A. \$21.95 – 208 pages. Cat. No. 846 – ISBN 157457-068-4

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 1: Wormwood™

Wormwood™ is a weird, decadent, and violent world ruled by demonic creatures and evil clergy who control powerful kingdoms of monsters and enslave humans. The demonic destroyers command the *Crawling Towers* and *Life Force Cauldrons* to do their bidding. One of countless alien worlds linked to Rifts Earth by the many dimensional gateways of the ley lines.

- 17 wild Occupational Character Classes & R.C.C.s, including the Apok, Holy Terror, Worm Speaker, & Symbiotic Warrior.
- Over 30 horrific monsters, villains and characters.
- Symbiotic magic, slime, Crystal magic, and weapons.
- A 20 page comic strip by Tim Truman & Flint Henry!
- Written by Siembieda. Concepts and characters created by Timothy Truman and Flint Henry. Art by Truman & others.
- Still \$15.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 809 – ISBN 0-916211-59-2

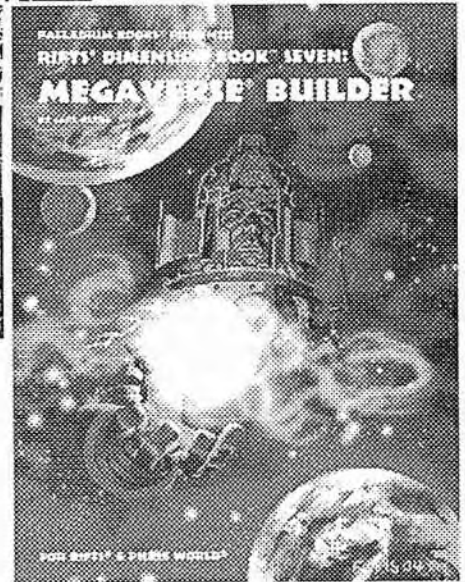
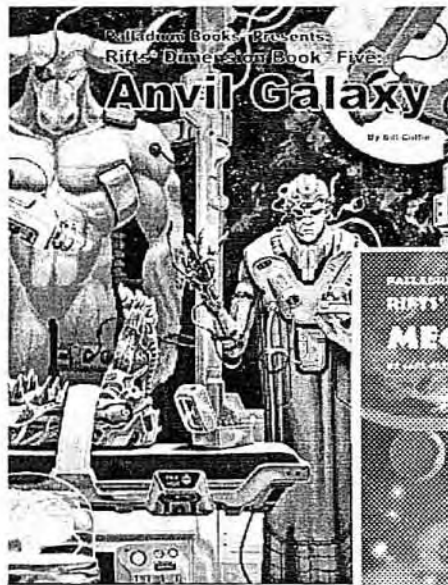
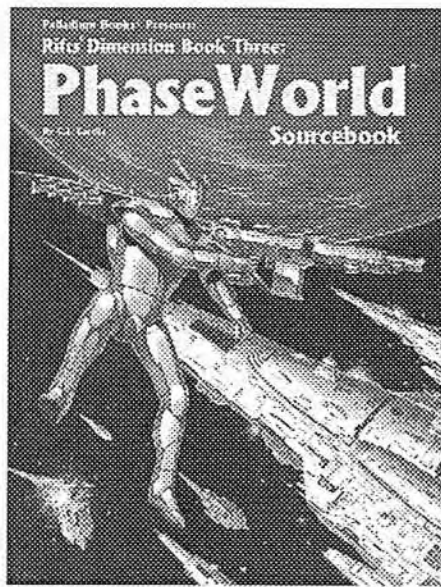


Rifts® Dimension Book™ 2: Phase World®

Phase World™ is an incredible trans-dimensional city that is also a space port located within the Three Galaxies. Visitors come not only from other dimensions but from the neighboring galaxies and other dimensions. Consequently, Phase World is one of the more unique ports in the Palladium Megaverse. Engage in cosmic adventure, space exploration, smuggling, bounty hunting and more.

- The people, empires and technology of the Three Galaxies.
- Techno-Wizard spaceships, power armor and weapons.
- Phase technology and spaceships, robots, weapons and equipment; Cosmo Knights, Kreeghor and Prometheans.
- Over 30 new O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s.

- More on the Naruni and Splugorth. Written by C.J. Carella.
- \$22.95 – 208 pages. Cat. No. 816 – ISBN 0-916211-73-8



Rifts® Dimension Book™ 3: *Phase World*® Sourcebook

The exciting companion book to *Phase World*®, with more alien races, weapons, armor, spaceships and adventure. Plus more about the Kreeghor Empire, the Cosmic Forge, Naruni Enterprises, and Cosmo-Knights.

- More than a dozen new O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s, including Oni Ninja, T-Zee aliens, the Invisible Guardsmen and others.
- Micro-missiles, plasma cartridges and other weapons.
- Solid energy spaceships and body armor!
- Galactic adventure as only Palladium can provide!
- Written by C.J. Carella.
- \$13.95 – 112 pages. Cat. No. 817 – ISBN 0-916211-79-7

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 4: *Skraypers*™

Epic super-hero adventure on an alien planet, as alien heroes fight to liberate their worlds from the tyranny of the world-conquering space aliens known as the Tarlok.

- Invading Tarlok aliens, heroes and world information.
- New superpowers, weapons, equipment, and villains.
- For use with *Rifts*® and *Heroes Unlimited*™, 2nd Ed.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Cover, interior art & concepts by John Zeleznik.
- \$16.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 830 – ISBN 0-916211-78-9

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 5: *Phase World*® The Anvil Galaxy™

This *Phase World*® sourcebook presents a dynamic overview of the Anvil Galaxy, and its many alien races, technologies, conflicts and secrets.

- Legends of the Cosmic Forge and the Forge War.
- Nearly 20 alien races and overview of the Anvil Galaxy.
- Trans-Galactic Empire and Consortium of Civilized Worlds.
- New technology, spacecraft, equipment.
- Planet Creation Tables. Written by Bill Coffin.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 847 – ISBN 157457-019-6

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 6: *Phase World*® Three Galaxies™

This *Phase World*® sourcebook presents a dynamic overview of the Three Galaxies' alien technologies, people and conflict. Tons of adventure ideas. The first printing sold out in six months! This book is hot!

- Overview of the Three Galaxies with Hook, Line & Sinker™ adventures for each.
- 16 new O.C.C.s and alien races. A half dozen monsters.
- New equipment and spacecraft, and space station creation rules.
- Introducing the Demon Star, Demon Planets, and living spaceships.
- Written by Carl Gleba (some additional material by Siembieda).
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 851 – ISBN 15757-078-1

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 7: *Megaverse*® Builder™

Carl Gleba, author of the popular *Phase World*®: *Three Galaxies*™, has created a sourcebook and guide to help Game Masters create their *own* alien dimensions and worlds. A great tool for G.M.s and fun for players.

- Rules, suggestions and tables for generating dimensions.
- Dimensional anomalies and other strangeness.
- The Shifter "Revisited," Dimensional Familiars and new O.C.C.s.
- Many adventure ideas, including *The Mechanoids*®, and more.
- Written by Carl Gleba. Cover by Mark Evans.
- \$13.95 – 96 pages. Cat. No. 859 – ISBN 157457-099-4

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 8: Naruni™ Wave Two

The Naruni are back! Returned to Rifts Earth offering a new array of weapons, armor and vehicles. And looking to give the Coalition States some payback for ousting them from the planet.

- New Naruni weapons and explosives.
- Power armor, robots, armored vehicles and more.
- Molock Enforcer, background on the Naruni & adventure ideas.
- Written by Bellaire, Siembieda & others.
- \$13.95 – 96 pages. Cat. No. 860 – ISBN 157457-102-8.

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 9: United Worlds of Warlock™

This title is delayed indefinitely, pending receipt of a finished manuscript. Our apologies.

But other *Phase World*®/*Three Galaxies*™ books are in development.

The Rifter® Gaming Guide & Sourcebook Series

The Rifter® is a combination sourcebook, Game Master's guide, magazine, talent show and fan forum for the *entire* Palladium Megaverse®, not just *Rifts*®.

Each issue features optional and/or official rules, adventures, characters, O.C.C.s, R.C.C.s, psionics, magic spells, powers, villains, monsters, weapons, and other source material for the entire Palladium Megaverse®.

The Rifter® comes out four times a year and also features the latest Palladium news, coming attractions, serialized articles, fictional stories and other material. Each issue spans the Palladium Megaverse®, focusing on *Rifts*® and at least two or three other Palladium games. All material is designed exclusively for people who play our games.

Frequent contributors include Kevin Siembieda, Pat Nowak, Erick Wujcik, Wayne Breaux, Todd Yoho, Carl Gleba, Brandon Aten, Taylor White, Jason Richards, Josh Sinsapaugh, and James M.G. Cannon, among others.

\$9.95 – 96 pages per issue, perfect bound and looks like a regular Palladium sourcebook, and you can't touch a sourcebook that size for only ten bucks.

Issues #1-13 are out of print. Most issues, #14 to present, are still available on a first come, first served basis. Once sold out, that issue is retired and out of print.

Rifts #35 Swimsuit Special – features 30+ pages of pinup art by Palladium artists and friends. A truly unique issue. \$9.95 – 128 pages, Cat. No. 135. ISBN 157457-167-2.

Rifter Subscription Price: \$35.00 for a four (4) issue subscription; *free shipping*. Note: The retail price may be going up to \$10.95 in 2007 and this locks you in to the lower price.

The Best of The Rifter®

One of Palladium 25 Year Anniversary items, this 128 page special edition collects some of the best source material from the past 33 issues of *The Rifter*® plus comprehensive index of the first 33 issues.

- Contents of issues #1-33; with cover reproductions.
- Index by Category for issues #1-33. Index by Author .
- P.P.E. Channeling, Ludicrous Magic and other features.
- \$12.95 – 128 pages, Cat. No. 090 – ISBN 157457-160-5.

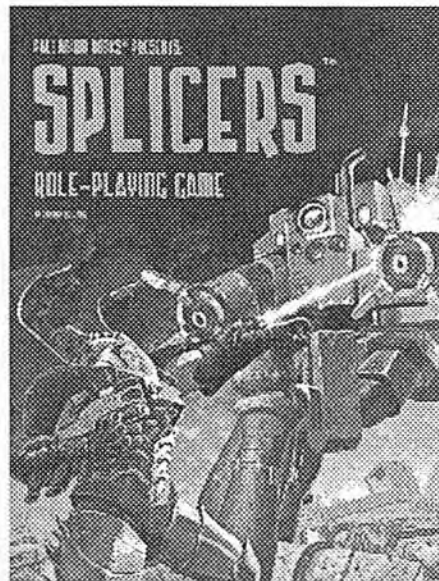
Rifts® Metal Miniatures \$4.00

Get your favorite *Rifts*® characters as 3-Dimensional pewter figures. We've decided that the miniature market is not for us, so we've stopped producing new "minis" and are selling our remaining stock at *blow-out* prices.

Palladium's departure from the miniature market makes these effectively "limited edition" figures with a typical press run of 3000 to 5000.

- Special Discount available through mail order only: Most packs are only \$4.00 each!
- No lead content! All of Palladium's miniatures are made of non-lead metal alloys.
- 25 mm scale with figures ranging from one to seven inches tall for a real and consistent feeling of scale.
- Most packs feature four human figures or one or two large figures.
- Some assembly and clean up may be required. Excellent quality & appearance.

Note: See the order form on page 31C for a complete list of miniatures. Available while supply lasts.



Splicers™

A new science fiction role-playing game

Splicers™ is set on a high-tech world where robots and machines rule. Humans are vermin to be hunted and exterminated, but who refuse to lay down and die. Mankind's struggle is complicated by a *nano-plague* that instantly turns metal objects into killing machines when touched by human flesh. Consequently, humans have been forced to turn to *organic technology* – living weapons and armor – to battle the world-dominating machines.

- Genetically grown power armor and weaponry that improve over time.
- Player characters sacrifice their humanity to save their race.
- 10 O.C.C.s like Skin Jobs, Packmasters, Biotics & Dreadguard.
- War Mounts, bio-weapons, Host Armor, and augmentation.
- The machine mind and her legions of killer robots.
- 19 enemy robots of unique designs and combat capability.
- Mega-Damage system compatible with *Rifts*® and *Phase World*®.
- Written by Carmen Bellaire. Some text by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$23.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 200 – ISBN 157457-112-5

Splicers™ Sourcebook

Delayed Indefinitely.

– New

Warpath: Urban Jungle™ RPG

Players are covert operatives engaged in the secret wars that never make the newspapers. They are the “spooks” and nameless “shadow warriors” who operate beneath the radar and outside the law. They are the elite selected from every branch of the military and law enforcement agencies to get the dirty jobs done.

Their mission: To strike down enemies from within and abroad. To keep “the people” safe without their ever knowing they were in danger.

This will be a hard hitting new RPG that will shock and delight as players take to the streets to defend our nation.

- Final page count and retail price yet to be determined. Expected to be 192-256 pages, \$22.95 to \$24.95 (\$28.95 if we go hardcover with it); October or November is our target release date.
- Anticipated release date: October or November 2006.



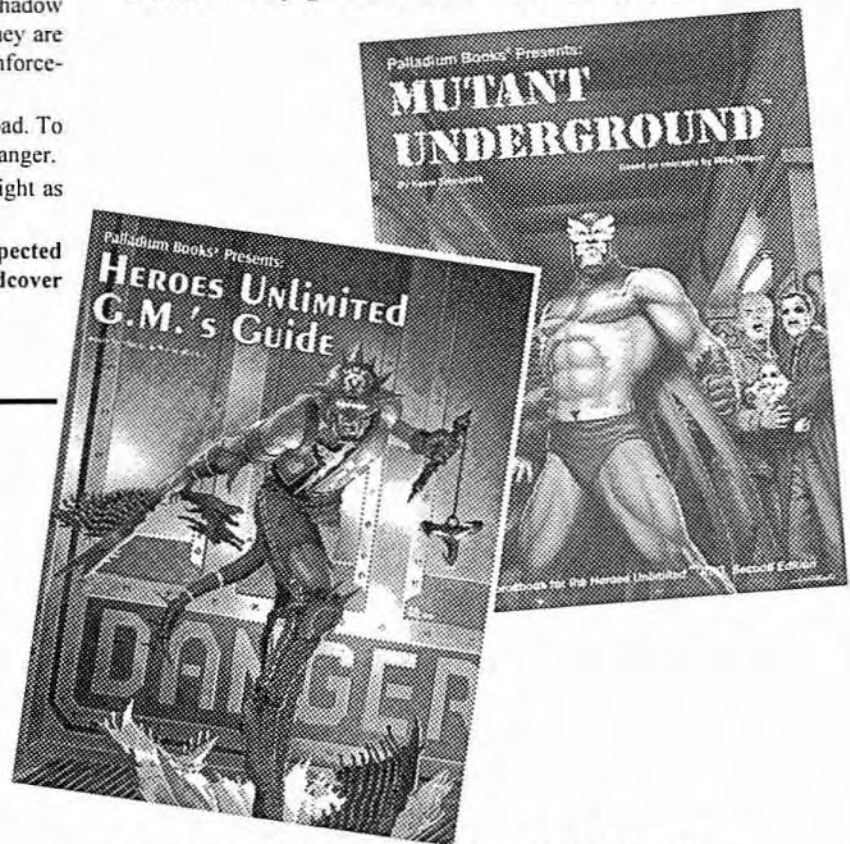
Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition

Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Edition is one of the few comic book inspired role-playing games on the market. So if you're looking to create and play *superhumans*, this is the game for you. Not just superhumans, but every type of hero and villain imaginable: Aliens, mutants, super soldiers, super-detectives, geniuses, tricksters and vigilantes, robots, power armor, cyborgs, weapons experts, martial arts masters, sorcerers, Mega-Heroes, super beings of all kinds and others!

Cut loose and create every type of superhuman and hero conceivable! (See the *Powers Unlimited™* series for even more powers and options.) Plus, there are a number of sourcebooks filled with heroes, villains, organizations, aliens and adventures.

- Creation rules for virtually every genre of hero.
- Over 100 super-abilities plus special skills and genius.
- Over 40 psionic powers and 100 magic spells.
- Cyborg and robot hero creation rules.
- Super-vehicle creation rules, gimmicks and high technology.

- Secret identities and secret organizations.
- Rules clarifications, tweaks and additional information.
- *Steranko* cover and dynamic interior artwork.
- Adventure ideas, guidelines and tons of fun.
- A complete game. Easy to learn. Fun to play.
- Written & created by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$26.95 – 352 pages. Cat. No. 500 – ISBN 157457-006-4



Heroes Unlimited™ G.M.'s Guide

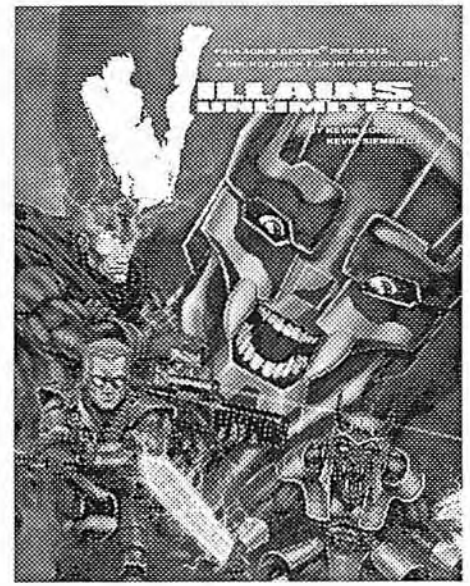
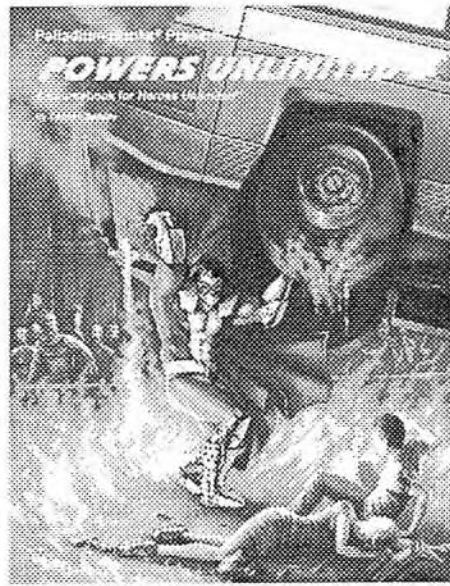
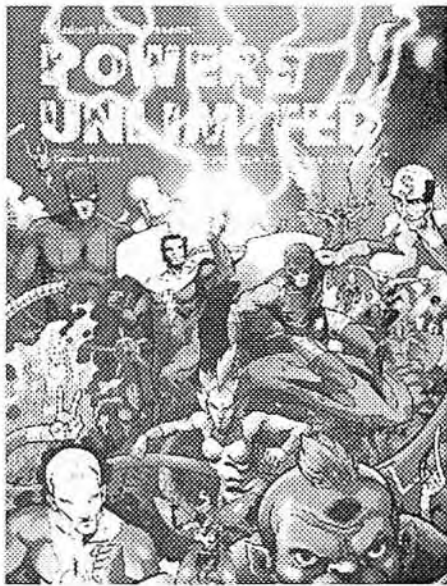
A big adventure sourcebook with Game Master guidelines, reference information, playing tips, optional rules, clarifications, additional equipment, new characters, new villains, new magic, ten adventures and adventure ideas.

- Rampage combat rules and quick roll villains.
- Vigilantes and the law. Crime and punishment.
- Anti-Heroes and tips on playing in character.
- Vehicles and equipment, new magic and more.
- 10 full adventures and ideas for many more.
- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr. & Kevin Siembieda.
- \$22.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 516 – ISBN 157457-035-8

Mutant Underground™

The age of genetic engineering, mutants and superhumans has created a dangerous subculture – a mutant underground – of freaks, rejects and monsters. This book explores their world and provides a unique, urban setting for comic book style adventures.

- Mutant villains, heroes, anti-heroes and lost souls.
- New ideas and variations for mutant humans and animals.
- The secret underground society of mutants, runaways, criminals and rejects, as well as super beings who protect mutants.
- The super-villains and agencies who hunt them.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda; art by Mike Wilson.
- \$13.95 – 96 pages. Cat. No. 520 – ISBN 157457-065-X



Powers Unlimited™ One

Page after page of *new* super abilities by Carmen Bellaire and Kevin Siembieda: Matter Explosion, Battle Rage, Energy Shield, Gun Limb, Hyperdensity, Immunity to Magic, Sensory Orb, Sliding, Swing Line, Tractor Beam, Blur, Liquefaction, Mega-Wings, Weapon Melding, and more.

- More than 120 new Minor Super Abilities.
- More than 45 new Major Super Abilities.
- More than 20 new psionic powers.
- Written by Carmen Bellaire.
- Still \$13.95 – 96 pages. Cat. No. 521 – ISBN 157457-087-0.

Powers Unlimited™ Two

New, amazing types of heroes via 11 new *Power Categories* and their unique abilities, gimmicks and vulnerabilities. Palladium fans have gone wild over this book.

- 11 new Power Categories and many sub-sets of heroes.
- Immortals, Empowered, Natural Genius, Gestalt & other heroes.
- Supersoldiers, designer (genetic) heroes, and symbiotes.
- Weaknesses, minor abilities, inventions and more.
- Written by Carmen Bellaire and others.
- \$14.95 – 96 pages. Cat. No. 522. ISBN 157457-090-0.

Powers Unlimited™ Three – New

A spectacular range of new super abilities.

- 130 new super abilities.
- 83 Major and 43 Minor new super abilities.
- Written by Carmen Bellaire.
- \$14.95 – 96 pages. Cat. No. 523. ISBN 157457-177-X.

Villains Unlimited™, Revised

Page after page of unique and interesting villains, anti-heroes, and secret organizations. 16 pages of new material and cover.

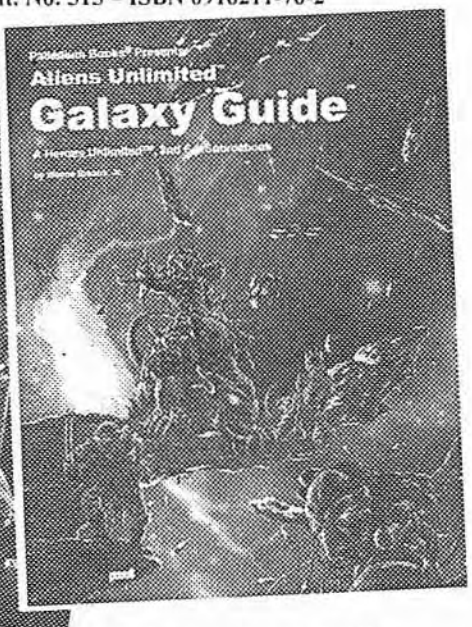
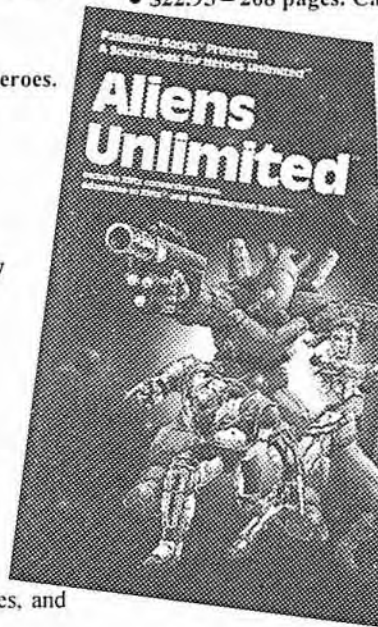
- The Jury – self-appointed policemen of superheroes. New!
- Over 80 villains and a dozen heroes/anti-heroes.
- Secret villainous organizations like Fabricators Inc.; eight in all. Plus rules to design your own organizations.
- S.C.R.E.T. and other government agencies to counter the threat of “super humans.” Plus weapons, gadgets, and equipment.

- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Kevin Long.
- \$22.95 – 224 pages, Cat. No. 501 – ISBN 0916211-49-5

Aliens Unlimited™ (One)

This giant sourcebook is packed with aliens, mutants, cyborgs, power armor, robots, weapons and super beings from across the universe. Suitable for contemporary super-hero adventures or cosmic adventure. Expanded alien character generation tables.

- 84 alien player races and over 100 aliens and monsters in all.
- High-tech weapons, robots, power armor and equipment.
- Secret Organizations, alien bounty hunters, and more.
- The evil Atorian Empire and other villains.
- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr. and Kevin Siembieda.
- Includes *Rifts*® and *Phase World*® conversion notes throughout.
- \$22.95 – 208 pages. Cat. No. 515 – ISBN 0916211-76-2

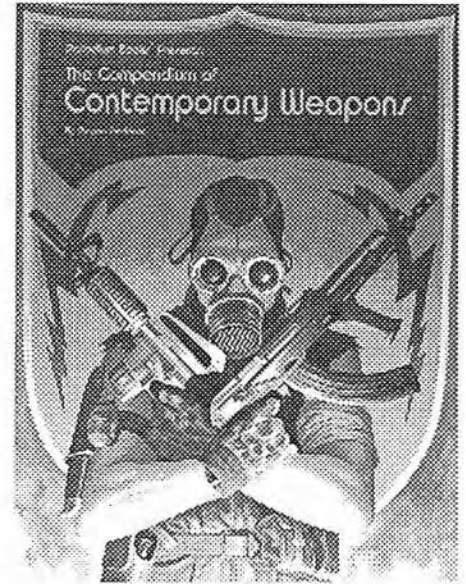
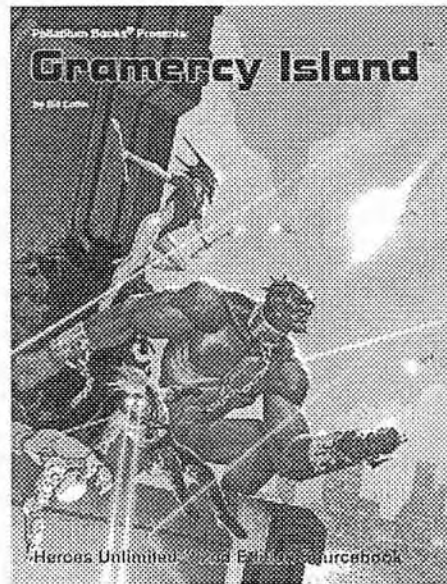
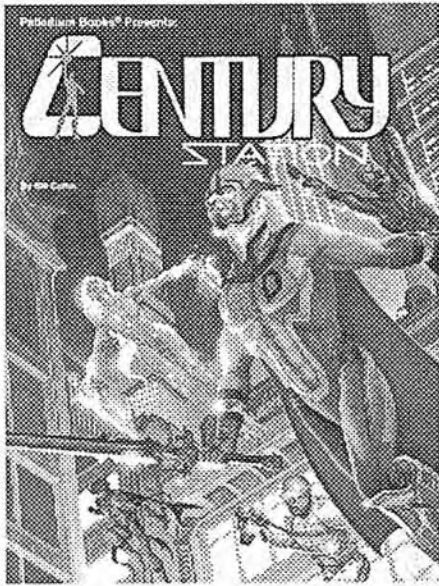


Aliens Unlimited™ Galaxy Guide™

At last, outer space *Heroes Unlimited*™ style! Rules for space travel, combat and building spaceships.

- Space oriented super abilities and magic spells.
- New alien races, alien worlds and space skills.

- More on the Riathenor, TMC and the Atorian Empire.
- Overview of the galaxy, monsters and adventure ideas.
- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr. & Kevin Siembieda.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 519 – ISBN 157457-054-4



Century Station™

The entire city of Century Station is described, complete with its resident heroes, villains, underworld, and notable people and places.

- Over 40 villains, 50 heroes, 101 adventure ideas.
- Over 90 NPCs: 51 villains, 40 heroes & others.
- Criminal masterminds, syndicates and Mega-City described.
- Written by Bill Coffin. Cover by Zeleznik.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 517 – ISBN 157457-040-4

Gramercy Island™

Gramercy Island is a penitentiary in the tradition of Alcatraz and Ryker's, only it specializes in the containment of "superhumans." A great sourcebook for G.M.s and players alike with scores of villains, Mega-villains, and lunatics.

- 90+ new super-villains & criminal masterminds.
- The prison and its superhuman containment systems.
- The superhuman prison culture and 101 adventure ideas.
- Written by Bill Coffin, additional text by Kevin Siembieda.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No. 518 – ISBN 157457-055-2

Wayne Breaux Jr.'s Atorian Empire™

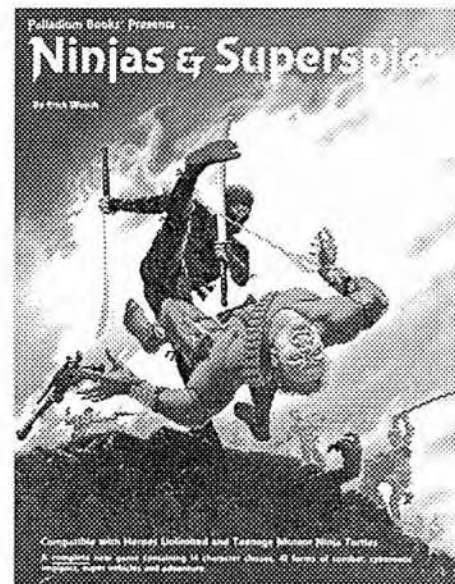
The people, weapons, ships and power of the Atorian Empire. An ideal companion to the two *Aliens Unlimited™* sourcebooks or as a stand-alone adventure sourcebook.

- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr.; cover by Wayne Breaux Jr.
- \$22.95 pages – Cat. No. 524. ISBN 157457-113-3. Coming soon.

Compendium of Contemporary Weapons™

The ultimate weapons reference! Suitable for use with all role-playing games of modern combat from military to super-heroes. Ideal for Palladium's *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, *Beyond the Supernatural™*, and *RECON®*. Adaptable to *ANY* game system!

- Over 400 weapons from around the world!
- Machine-guns, submachine-guns, bazookas, LAWs & mortars.
- Rifles, shotguns, pistols, revolvers, & body armor.
- EOD equipment, grenades, riot control and pyrotechnic devices.
- Tanks, APCs, armored cars, and light artillery.
- Scopes, surveillance, special rounds & combat accessories.
- Optional rules for determining damage, shock and blood loss.
- \$19.95 – 176 pages. Cat. No. 415 – ISBN 0916211-65-7



Revised Ninjas & Superspies™ RPG

Forty (40) forms of martial arts combat as you have *never* seen them in any other role-playing game.

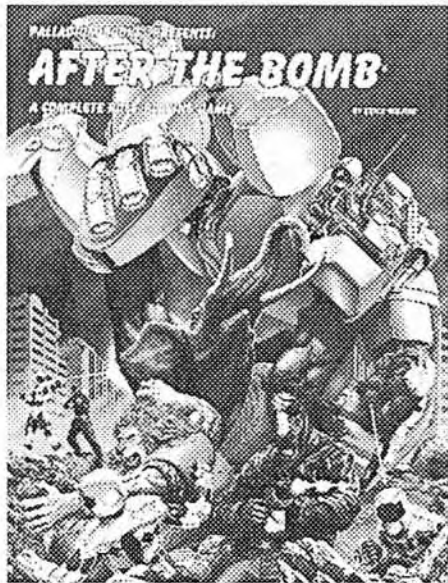
Oriental combat skills accurately portrayed, each with its own unique fighting style, methods of attack and defense presented on an epic scale, complete with legendary *mystic* powers. Cyber agents, gadgeteers, secret organizations, secret identities, gimmick weapons and clothing, cyber-disguises, implants, and more.

- 40 types of hand to hand combat – effectively offering 40 types of martial arts character classes!
- 17 Occupational Character Classes for spies, mercenaries, martial artists and special operatives.
- 48 mystic martial art powers.
- Dim Mak, Chi Mastery, the Arts of Invisibility and more.
- Bionic implants, disguises, weapons, & equipment.
- Secret identities, spy agencies & super-vehicles.
- Rules for creating Secret Organizations.
- Completely compatible with *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Rifts®*, *Rifts® China*, and the entire *Palladium Megaverse®!*
- \$17.95 – 176 pages – Written by Erick Wujcik.
- Cat. No. 525 – ISBN 0-916211-31-2

Mystic China™

China as you never envisioned it! Ancient magic, martial arts masters, supernatural predators, and the dark underworld of mystic China as you have never dreamed.

- 14 new classes of Chinese martial arts.
- Mudra, Atemi, Chi, Katas, Zenjoriki, & other mystic abilities.
- Over a dozen new character classes suitable for *Rifts® China*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, *BTS™* and *Nightbane®*.
- Chi magic with 87 new spells, Celestial Calligraphy & more.
- 10 different types of Immortals, adventures and ideas.
- Written by Erick Wujcik.
- Still \$19.95 – 208 pages. Cat. No. 526 – ISBN 0916211-77-0



After the Bomb® RPG

The ultimate book of *mutant animals* and completely compatible with *Heroes Unlimited™* or used as a standalone game. Easy to learn and a blast to play.

- Nearly 100 mutant animals, chimeras and human mutation.
- Over 40 special mutant animal powers, plus sub-powers.
- Mutant animal psionics, appearance and background tables.
- Five adventures, history, background & the Empire of Humanity.
- Still \$20.95 – 224 pages. Cat. No.503 – ISBN 0-916211-15-0

After the Bomb® Sourcebooks

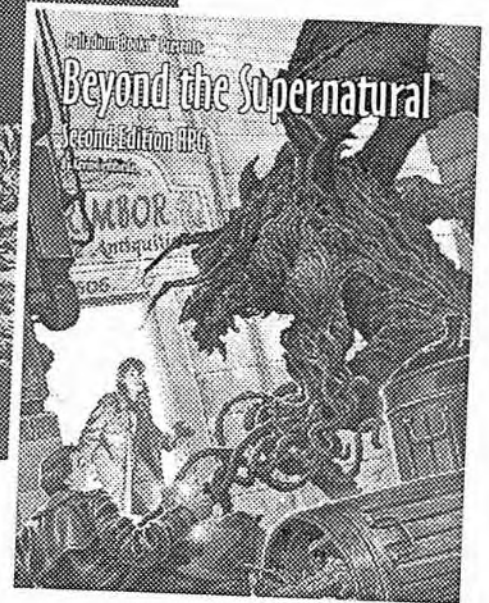
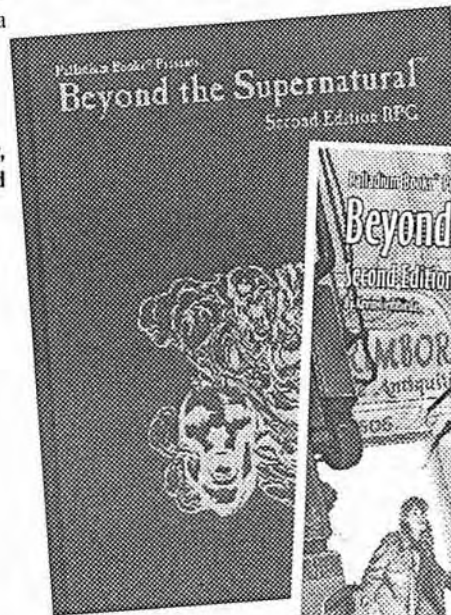
Road Hogs™: 20 new mutant animals, vehicle combat and creation rules, four adventures. \$7.95 – 48 pages. By Erick Wujcik. Cat. No. 505 – ISBN 0-916211-20-7.

Mutants Down Under™: Nearly 30 new mutant animals from Australia. Plus giant insects, Dream Time magic, psionic powers, airship construction, new villains, and adventures. \$7.95 – 48 pages. By Erick Wujcik. Cat. No. 507 – ISBN 0-916211-34-7.

Mutants of the Yucatan™: Over 20 new mutant animals, more trouble from the Empire of Humanity, and adventures. By Wujcik. \$7.95 – 48 pages. Cat. No. 511 – ISBN 0-916211-44-4.

Mutants in Avalon™: King Arthur is back, but as a mutant animal! More mutant animals, mutant insects, druids, druid magic, invasion and adventure. \$9.95 – 80 pages. Cat. No. 513 – ISBN 0-916211-47-9.

Mutants in Orbit™: Killer satellites, space stations, a moon base, new villains, monstrous insects, adventure ideas and more. \$11.95 – 120 pages. Cat. No. 514 – ISBN 0-916211-48-7.



2nd Edition RPG

Beyond the Supernatural™

Unlike anything you've ever played before. Our modern world with a hidden layer of the supernatural and paranormal. A place and time where science refutes the ideas of magic, ghosts, demons and psychic phenomena, so it ignores and even covers up that they really exist! However, the player characters are gifted with paranormal abilities, know the truth and dare to take a stand against dark forces.

The player characters are people who know the supernatural is real, and recognize the wonders and dangers it represents. They operate outside the mainstream and explore dark, shadowy corners few would dare to tread. Most possess psychic awareness or secrets of magic – all are outcasts, oddballs and the disenfranchised. Unable to turn a blind eye to people in need, they seek to learn more and fight supernatural evil in all its forms.

The game drips with a creepy atmosphere that may be taken in whatever direction suits the player group, from psychic investigation and discovery, to supernatural conspiracy, to hunter-killer missions, to battling cultists and the creature they serve, to the mystical and spiritual. Unravel the mysteries of the unknown.

- 14 psychic character classes – 42 occupations.
- More than 100 psychic abilities.
- The Lazlo Agency and Lazlo Society.
- A handful of creatures of darkness to get you started.
- Plenty of world background and setting atmosphere.
- New rules and twists, all easy to learn and play.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Softbound \$24.95 – 256 pages. Cat. No. 700 – ISBN 157457-083-8
- *Limited edition hardcover* \$50.00 – 256 pages. Cat. No. 7000; available *only* from Palladium Books while supplies last. Limited to 500 signed and numbered copies.



Tome Grotesque™

For Beyond the Supernatural™

Tome Grotesque™ describes dozens of supernatural creatures great and small, but it is more than just a book of monsters. It provides the creatures' motives, goals, habits and weaknesses, as well as a keen sense of how and why they operate in our world. Fiends and masterminds who often act invisibly or behind the scenes, where they corrupt and manipulate humans to work their evil. Creatures that possess frightening supernatural abilities, magic knowledge and a taste for blood.

- Horrific supernatural beings great and small.
- Demonic psychic abilities, powers and magic.
- Characters who draw upon dark forces for their own power.
- Spectacular art by Russell, Dubisch, Clark and others.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. In stores in November.
- \$18.95 – 160 pages, Cat. No. 702. ISBN 157457-117-6

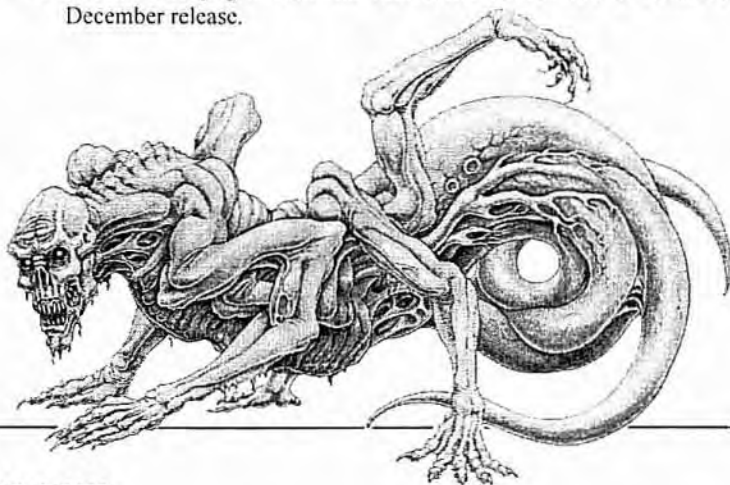


Beyond Arcanum™

For Beyond the Supernatural™

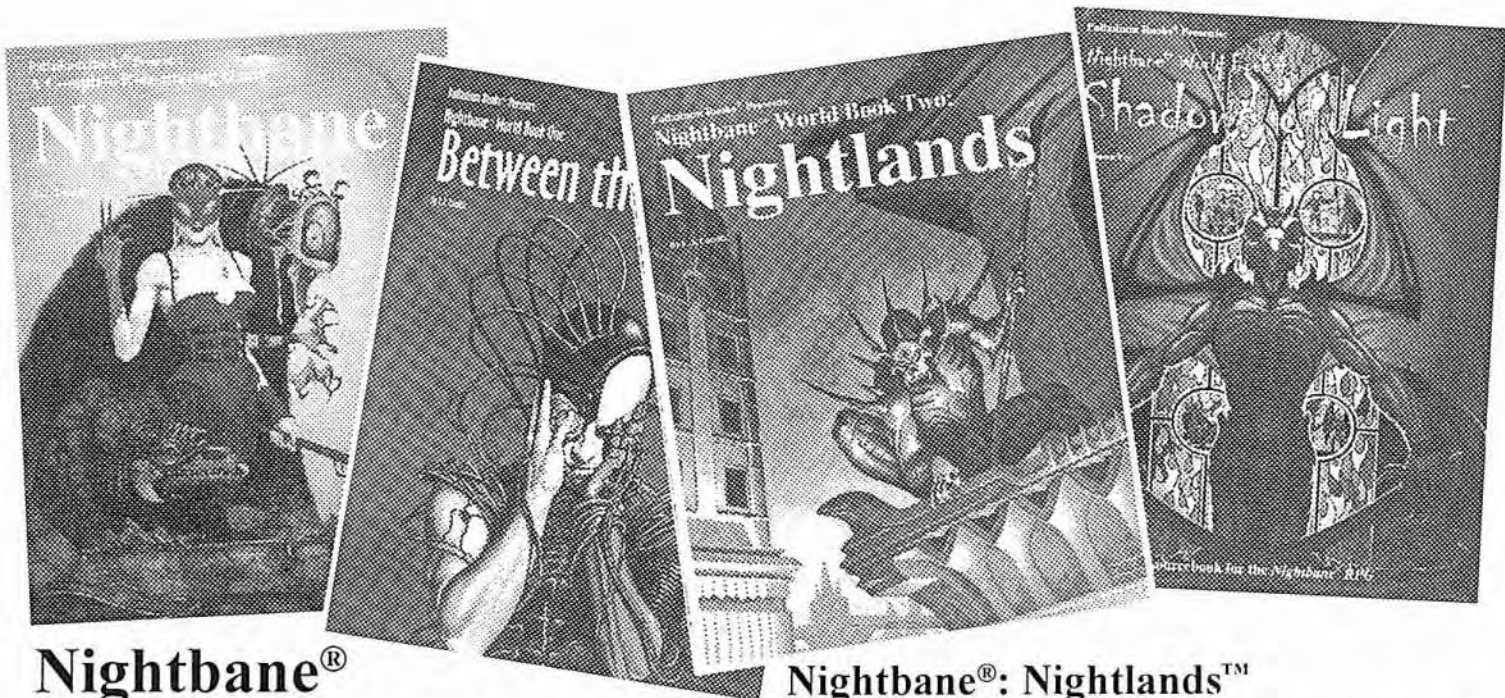
Beyond Arcanum will take players on a journey of hope, darkness, magic and the bizarre. Magic is a choice, and those who choose it are often led down a dark and dangerous path.

- The Arcanist and other practitioners of magic.
- Magic spells specifically designed for the BTS world.
- Magic weapons, charms, items and rituals.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Todd Yoho.
- \$22.95 – 192 pages. Cat. No. 703. ISBN 157457-116-8. Tentative December release.



Palladium Online: www.palladiumbooks.com

For those of you with access to a computer, come visit Palladium's website. It offers chat rooms, message boards, an online catalog, the latest news and updates, extra RPG material from various titles, sneak previews of new product, and the opportunity to interact with other Palladium fans.



Nightbane®

Horror Role-Playing Game Series

The world was forever changed after *Dark Day* – the day that was 24 hours of night. Invaded by a supernatural force known as the *Nightlords* and their minions, including Doppelgangers who can a human's place without anyone being the wiser. These inhuman and evil minions have already infiltrated the top seats of most (all?) world governments and law enforcement, while others lurk in the shadows, assume the shape of humans and work behind the scenes to enslave all mankind.

The only ones who see the truth are the Nightbane® – teens and young adults who woke up one day with superhuman powers. The catch? To use their powers they must turn into an inhuman monstrosity that frightens their fellow humans and alerts the minions of the Dark to their presence. And although the Nightbane® don't know how or why, they intuitively know that only they can fight the Nightlords and save humankind.

A truly off-beat setting that combines elements of super-heroics with horror, conspiracy and suspense.

- Information about *Dark Day* and the *Nightlords*.
- Nightbane O.C.C.s; more than a dozen O.C.C.s in all.
- Nightbane *Morphus Tables*, "talents" (special powers) & magic.
- The *Nightlords*, their minions & other creatures of the night.
- World information and adventure ideas. By C.J. Carella.
- Still \$20.95 (will be increasing to \$22.95) – 240 pages. Cat. No. 730 – ISBN 0916211-86-X

Nightbane®: Between the Shadows™

Thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) of people have discovered another fabric of reality concealed *between the shadows* of the world they once knew. A terrifying world of the supernatural of which they are charter members – they are the *Nightbane*™.

- The Secrets of the *Astral Plane* & the *Dreamstream*.
- Additional Nightbane Talents, *Morphus shapes* & Nightbane data.
- More about the shadow world of the Nightbane.
- Additional psionic abilities and campaign ideas.
- 12+ character classes and strange powers. By C.J. Carella.
- \$16.95 – 144 pages. Cat. No. 731 – ISBN 0916211-90-8

Nightbane®: Nightlands™

Visit the *Nightlands*™, the dark dimension and frightening domain of the demonic *Nightlords*! Places like *Doom Harbor*, a twisted version of New York City, and *Devil City*, the *Nightlands*' evil, mirror image of Los Angeles, and others. Discover the true power behind the Ba'al and their plans for Earth and the *Nightbane*.

- The *Nightlands* and the *Nightlords* revealed!
- Demons, monsters, and servants of the *Nightlords*.
- More Nightbane® Talents, *Morphus shapes* and data.
- Campaign and adventure ideas. Written by C.J. Carella.
- \$16.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 732 – ISBN 0916211-97-5

Nightbane®: Through the Glass Darkly™

Could magic spells be alive and intelligent? Can they take on a life and identity all their own? These and other questions are addressed as we explore the underground world of magic and sorcerers in the world of the *Nightbane*®.

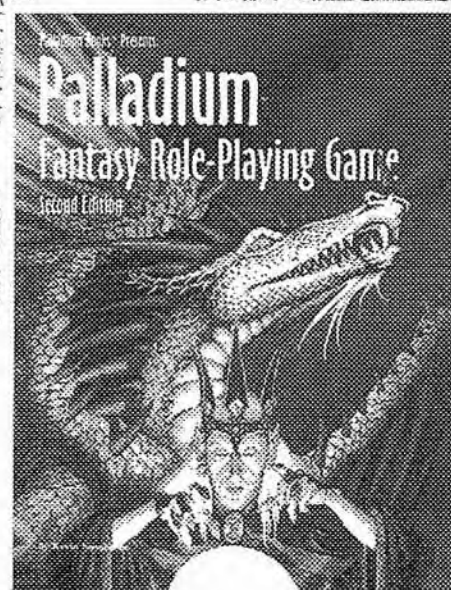
- Magic O.C.C.s, like the *Flesh Sculptor*, *Cybermage*, & *Mirror Mage*.
- Over 50 new magic spells.
- Magic artifacts, talismans & charms.
- Rules for variant magic and modifying current spells.
- *Nemesis R.C.C.* – a dangerous reflection from the *Nightlands*.
- Three adventures, scores of adventure ideas and more.
- Cover by Fred Fields. Written by Kevin Hassall.
- \$16.95 – 152 pages. Cat. No. 733 – ISBN 157457-004-8

Shadows of Light

A Nightbane® Sourcebook

The forces of Light and Darkness clash as never before in the modern realm of the *Nightbane*®.

- More on the *Out of print & discontinued* powers, *Nocturnes* and other factions.
- *Psychic Agents* and *new* powers.
- The angel-like *Athanatos*, *fa.* *and* *Reapers*.
- The vampire conspiracy and an *out.* *adventure*.
- Written by Jason Vey. Cover by Scott Johns.
- \$17.95 – 160 pages. Cat. No. 734 – ISBN 157457-088-9



The Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game[®], 2nd Edition

The Palladium World has delighted gamers with epic fantasy for over 20 years. A world torn in conflict with the non-human barbaric races, creatures of magic and supernatural forces.

Non-Human playing characters provide a host of unusual creatures as regular characters. They include the feared Changeling who can assume the shape and appearance of any humanoid. The giant races of Troll, Ogre and Wolfen. The small and agile Goblin, Kobold,

Gnome and the mighty Dwarf, as well as Elf, human, and dozens of "optional" creatures found in both the Palladium RPG and Monsters & Animals.

The skill system embellishes characters with knowledge and abilities that make him or her more than a simple fighter or mage.

Combat is realistic with strikes, parries, dodges and considerations for shields and armor. Yet it remains extremely quick and playable.

An Experience System in which characters are rewarded for acts of ingenuity, ideas, cunning, discretion, trickery and bravery. Not hack and slash.

Magic: Over 300 spells, plus elemental magic, circles, symbols and runes are yours to command. The most original forms of magic found only in the Palladium RPG are the Diabolist and Summoner. The **Diabolist** casts no spells, instead he uses the nearly forgotten magic of wards (mystic symbols) and circles of power. The **Summoner** too, is versed in the mystic arts of magic circle making, but his is a far more dangerous and often malevolent power, for he dares to summon and command creatures of magic.

The Wizard, Warlock, Priest and other more traditional characters also break away from their more common game molds, with a vast array of spells and abilities that make them truly unique.

The basic game is everything one needs to play. The 336 page rule book lays out the exotic fantasy world of Palladium with unique disciplines of magic, powers and races unlike those of most other RPGs. The Palladium Fantasy RPG® includes:

- Step by step character creation that is easy and fun. Create fictional characters that will come to vivid life.
- Fast, realistic combat, with initiative, parries, dodges, entanglement, paired weapons and more. Warriors and men at arms with real power and distinct skills.
- Over 20 character classes with in-depth skills and training. Wolfen, Changelings, Ogres, Orcs, Goblins, Kobolds, Dwarves, Elves and other inhuman races available as player characters.
- Over 300 magic spells for the *Wizard* character. 60 wards for the *Diabolist*. 50 magic circles for the mystical *Summoner*. Druids, Healers, Priests and others, too.
- 80 psionic powers for the *Mind Mage*.
- Magic items, rune weapons, potions, poisons and herbs, armor and weapons.
- Demons, world information and more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- \$26.95 – 352 pages. Cat. No. 450 – ISBN 0916211-91-6

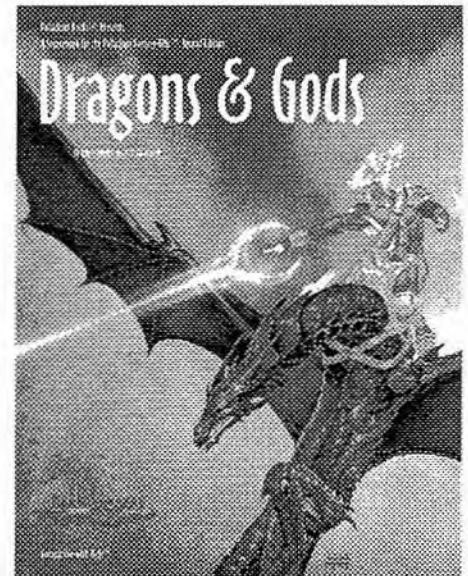
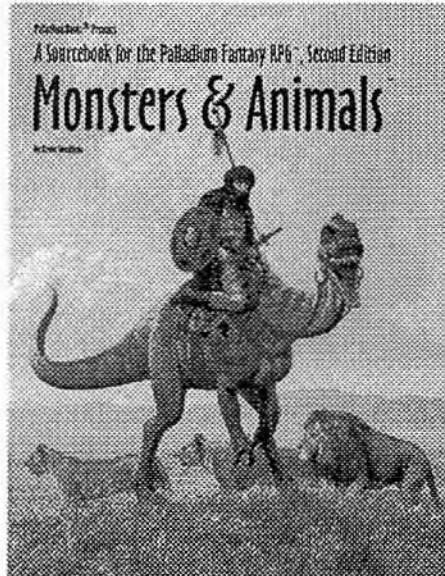
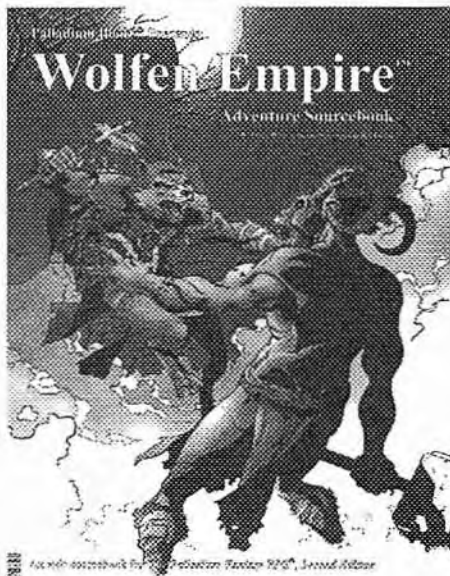
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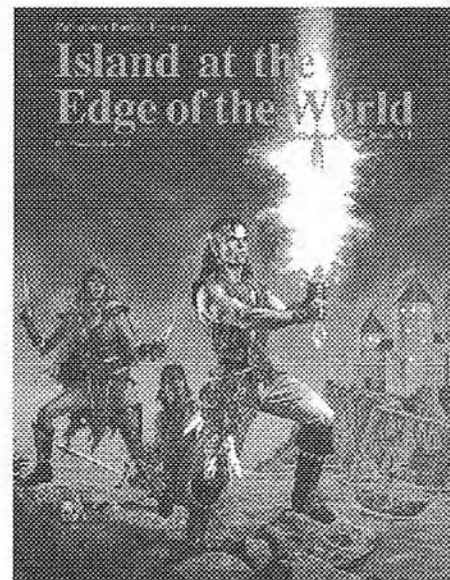
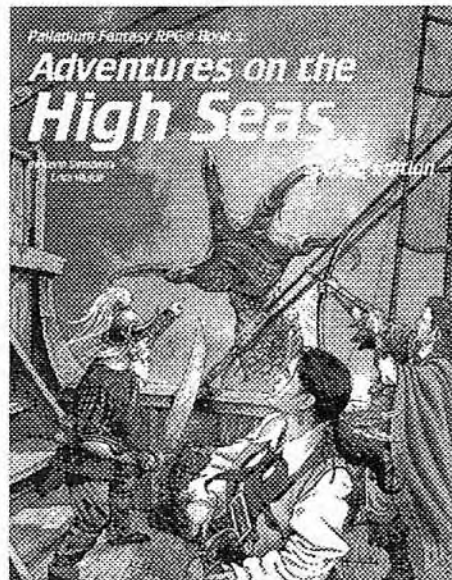
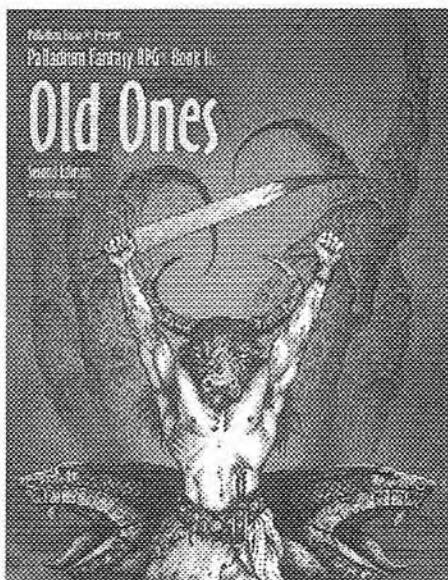
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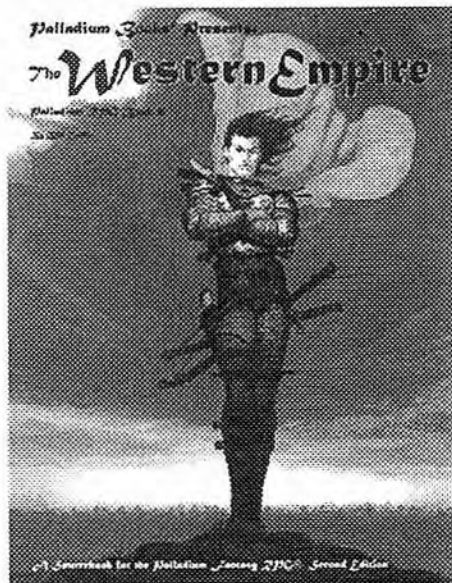
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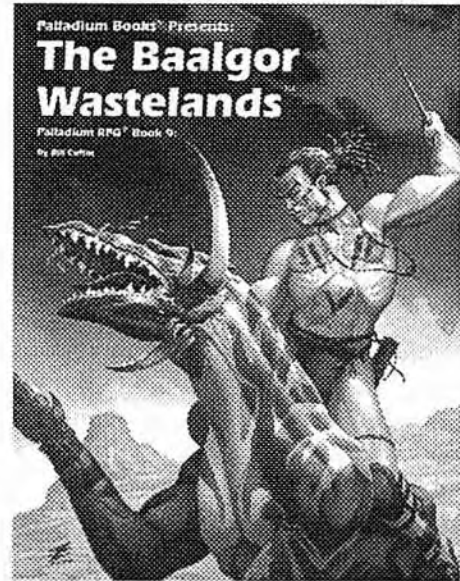
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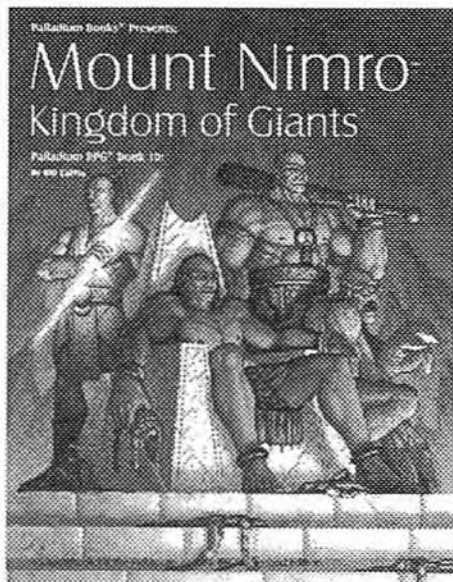
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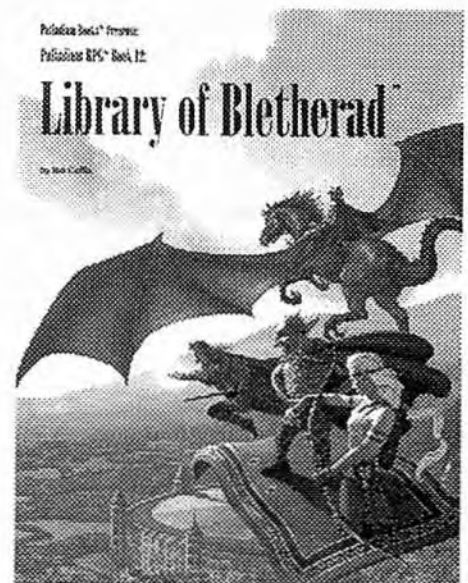
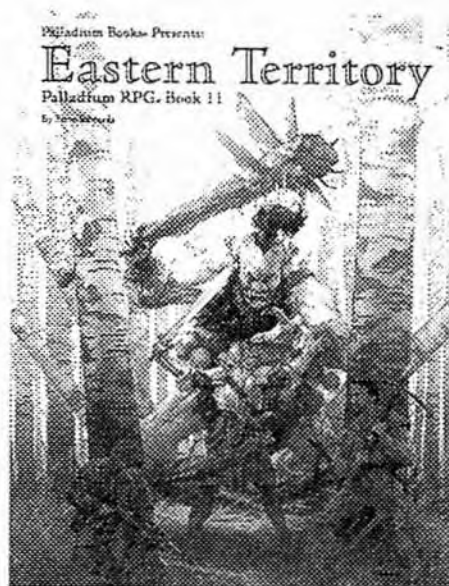


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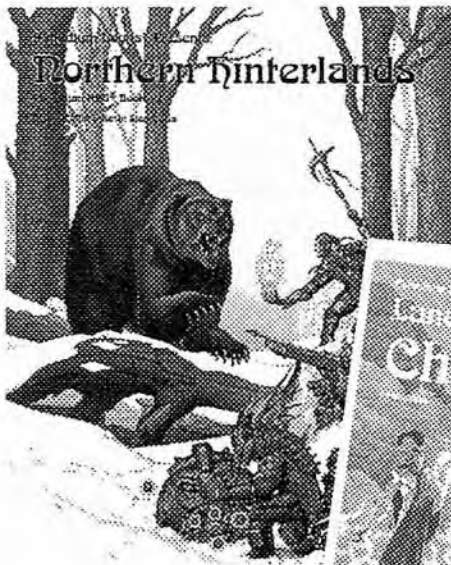
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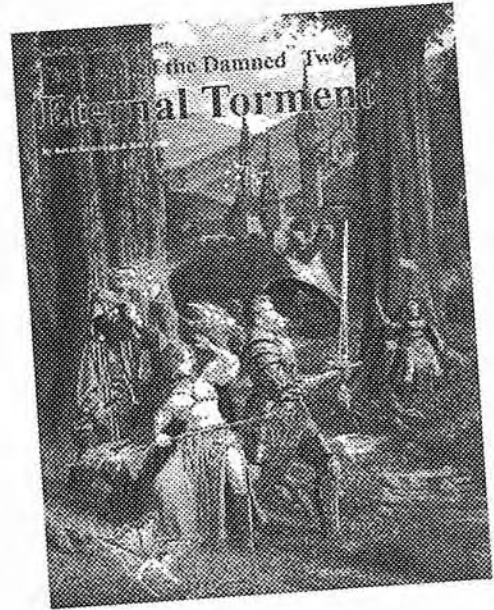
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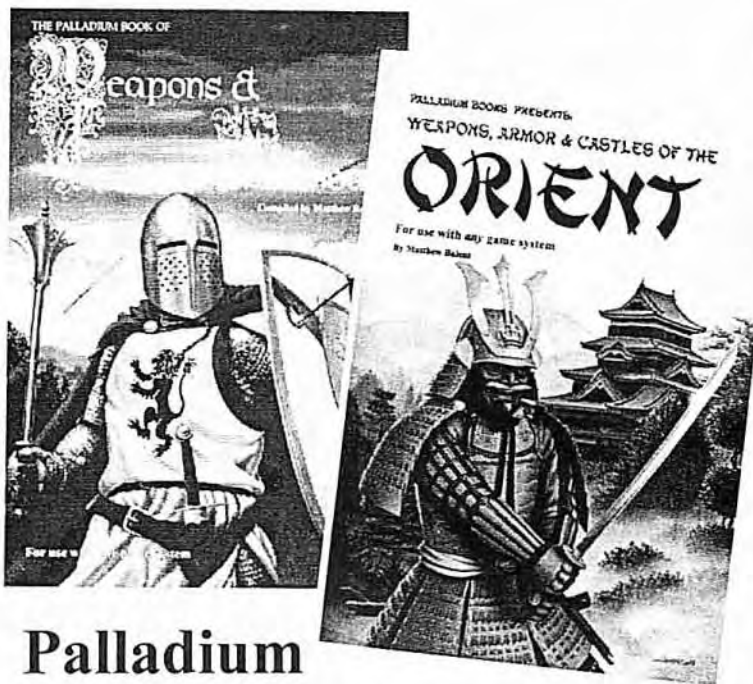
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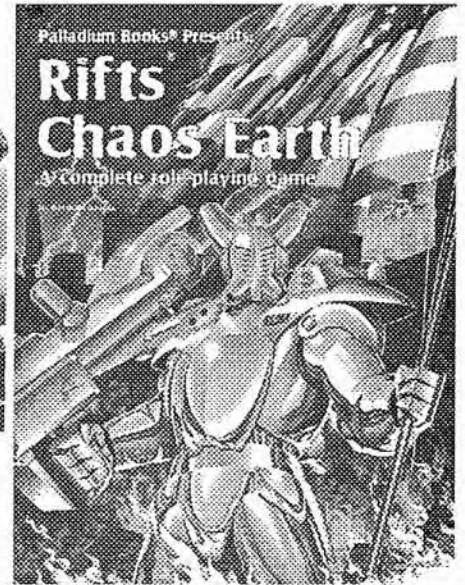
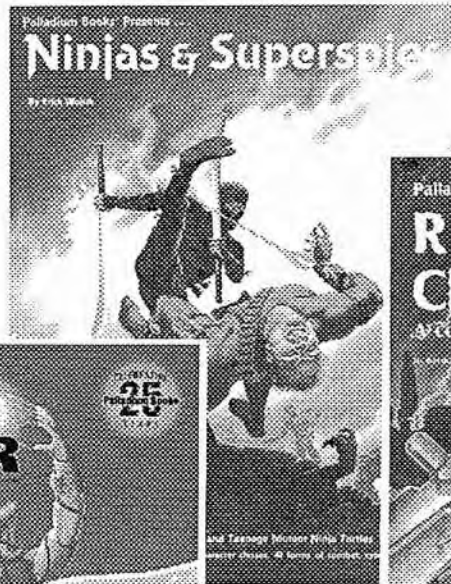
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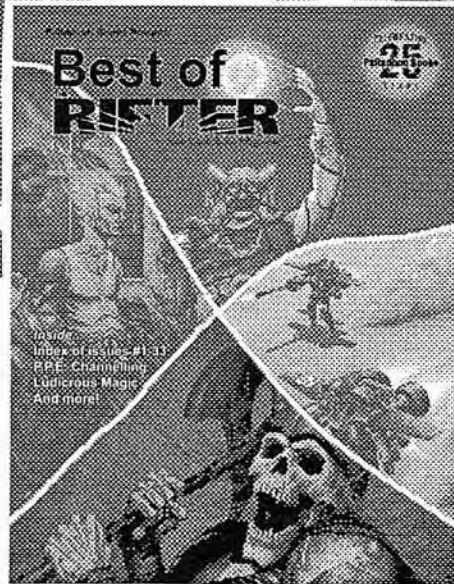
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