

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®

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BTS: Nain Rouge, The Red Dwarf

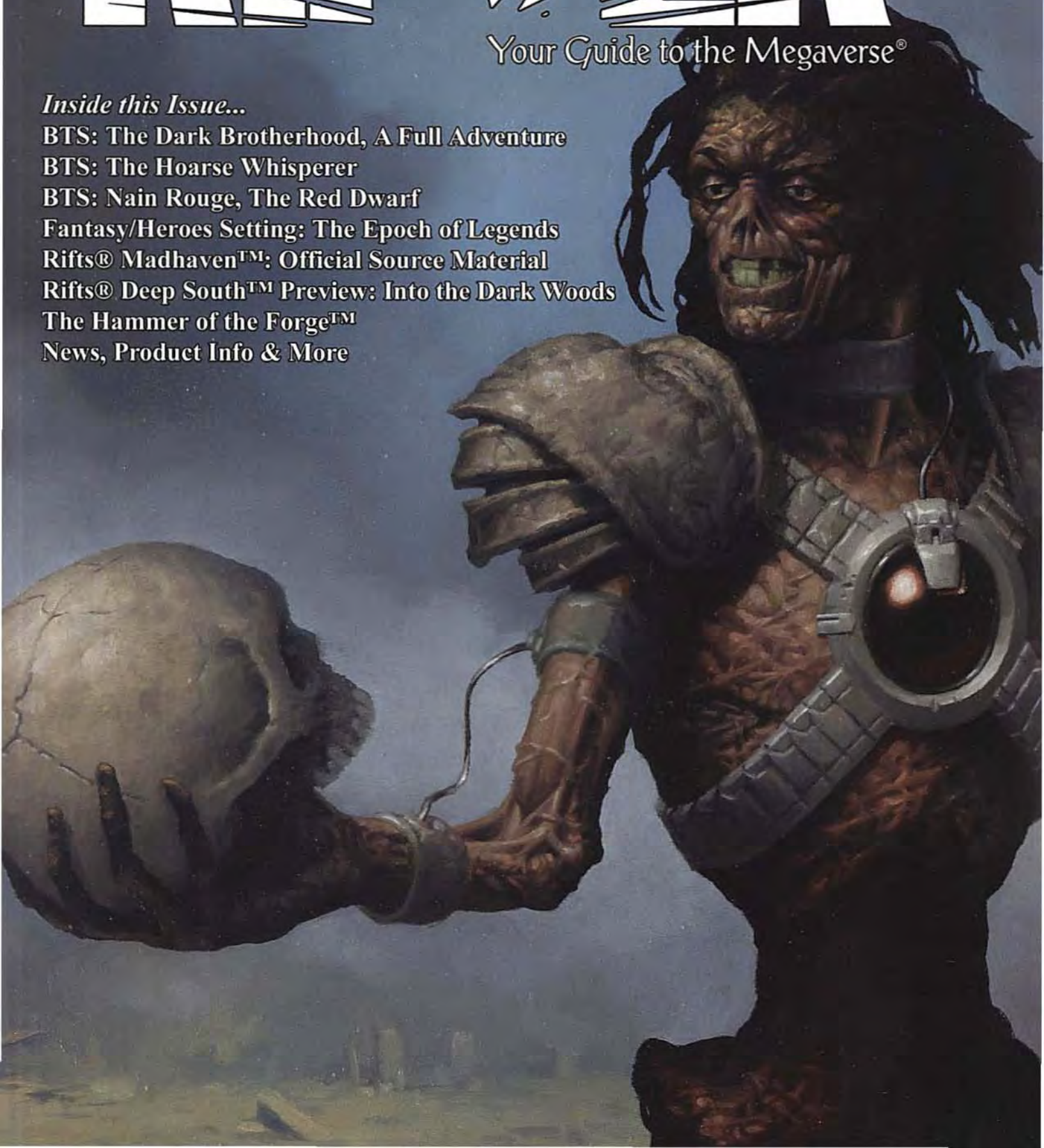
Fantasy/Heroes Setting: The Epoch of Legends

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News, Product Info & More



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Violence and the Supernatural

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

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

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



BRIAN MANNING 2006

The Rifter® Number 36

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing – October, 2006

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Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER #36



Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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

Contents – The Rifter® #36 – October, 2006

Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

The Boss Man talks about miracles, our fans, how much better things are at Palladium, why books are late, and hints about Palladium's future. There's so much we still want to do, but our situation recovering from the Crisis of Treachery makes it difficult for us to move as quickly as we'd like.

Page 7 – Palladium News & Coming Attractions

The last game convention of the year for Palladium Books is coming up fast. **UberCon VIII**, in New Jersey, is the last *game* convention of the year for us. This will be our first time ever in New Jersey and we're excited about it. We hope Palladium fans from all around the area will join us for a weekend of gaming, panel talks and fun. Palladium Guests include: Kevin Siembieda, Wayne Smith, Mark Evans and Brandon Aten.

(A last minute notice: Kevin and crew will also be attending **YoumaCon** – November 3, 4 & 5, 2006, at the Troy Hilton, Troy, Michigan – www.youmacon.com – anime, role-playing games, dealer's room, masquerade, Cosplay, and more. Palladium Guests include: Kevin Siembieda, Wayne Smith, Julius Rosenstein, Tony Falzon & Lonnie Langston, possibly others. Anime Guests include: Tony Oliver (the voice of Rick Hunter), Brett Weaver (the voice of Roy Fokker), Lou Albano, Matt Hill, Dave Anez, Robte & Emily Dejesus and The Spooky Bards (musicians). Join the fun.

According to Kevin, we will be so busy in 2007 he doubts we'll do more than 2-3 conventions, so *see us now*, while you can.

Page 7 – Coming Fall 2006

Some nice stuff for Rifts including **Rifts® Sourcebook One** (featuring new and old material, robot creation rules and the Republicans), **Rifts® Hades** (adaptable to all Palladium RPGs), **Rifts® D-Bees of North America**, and more. One dynamic new product after another.

Page 9 – Coming in 2007

The opening line says it all “2007 promises to be incredible.” The return of **Robotech®**, the release of **Warpath: Urban Jungle™** and new titles planned for **Phase World®**, **Rifts®**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Nightbane®**, **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, and **Rifts® Chaos Earth™**. Read all about it here. And get all the latest news, commentary and info from our web site at www.palladiumbooks.com.

Page 10 – Nain Rouge, the Red Dwarf

Optional fiend for

Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Ed.

Jeffry Scott Hansen delivers the goods on this nasty, little, fella. Inspired from the real world, mythical figure said to be a demonic imp and harbinger of disaster. A fun addition to any BTS-2 campaign.

Art by Mark Dudley.

Page 13 – 2006 Christmas Surprise Package

It has become a tradition for Palladium Books to give a little back to the fans this time of year. The *2006 X-Mas Surprise Package – Grab Bag* is our way of doing that. Autographed books, T-shirts, back stock, new releases, special editions, laser etched anniversary glasses, original artwork and surprises can be yours if you are willing to take the *chance*. Our way of saying thank you and Happy Holidays. See page 13 for all the details. Limited time offer.

Page 15 – The Hoarse Whisperer™

Optional monster and adventure idea for Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Ed.

Steven Dawes presents a detailed look at a scary supernatural being known as the Hoarse Whisperer (a Lesser Demon/Supernatural Predator).

Art by Mark Dudley.

Page 20 – The Dark Brotherhood™

An adventure for Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Ed.

Ed Emmer's BTS-2 adventure involves a death cult working to bring about the end of the world. Our heroes have caught wind of something deadly brewing and have to stop the cult before they summon the Dark One (Ancient Evil), a symbol of death, decay, winter and the end of all things! An exciting adventure that deals with figuring out clues, battling dark minions, exploration and horror.

Art by Kent Burles.

Page 47 – Ellios: Epoch of Legends™

An optional setting for Palladium Fantasy® and Heroes Unlimited™

Steven Smigielski presents a fantasy level setting with a twist. An Earth-like realm where the gods walk the planet. Elves have actually overthrown the gods, crushing them to become the most powerful beings on the planet. Hundreds of years later, the spawn of the gods seem to have returned, as select people begin to exhibit the powers of the gods. A fun twist on the Fantasy setting with Heroes Unlimited type powers and more. Uses Bio-E points, special skills and super powers ideal for Game Masters looking for something different.

Artwork by Kent Burles.

Page 62 – Into the Dark Woods

An Introduction to Rifts® Deep South

A short, spooky story by Josh Sinsapaugh that gives you an advanced look at his upcoming Rifts® Sourcebook, **Rifts® Deep South**.

Page 71 - Madhaven: Into the Ruins™

Official source material for Rifts® Madhaven™

Brandon Aten and Taylor White present more background and info about Madhaven, including notable finds, key locations within the ruins, Edgetowns, Newark Psi-Stalker Tribe, a random treasure table, Reconciler O.C.C., the Excavator O.C.C., excavation tools, some new Techno-Wizard equipment and clarifications.

Artwork by Brian and Allen Manning.

Page 91 – Rifts® Phase World®

The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter 36 of James M.G. Cannon's popular, ongoing saga finds our hero discovering just how dangerous home can be. Read and enjoy.

Artwork by Apollo Okamura.

The Theme for Issue 36

As is tradition with *The Rifter*®, our October issue is always dedicated to horror, monsters and spookiness. This issue is especially good with a nice big chunk of source material for *Rifts*® *Madhaven*, a couple of monsters and a juicy adventure for *Beyond the Supernatural*, strange, new gods and other fun, weirdness and scary stuff. We hope you enjoy it as much as we did putting it all together.

Another fun-filled issue designed to provoke your imagination, inspire and motivate players and Game Masters alike to try new ideas and expand their gaming Megaverse®.

The Cover

The cover is a Juicer Zombie originally created for the ill-fated *Rifts*® Collectible Card Game. It's by Italian artist, *Igino Giordano*. It just seemed to scream "use me for the October, horror issue of *The Rifter*®" – so we did.

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.

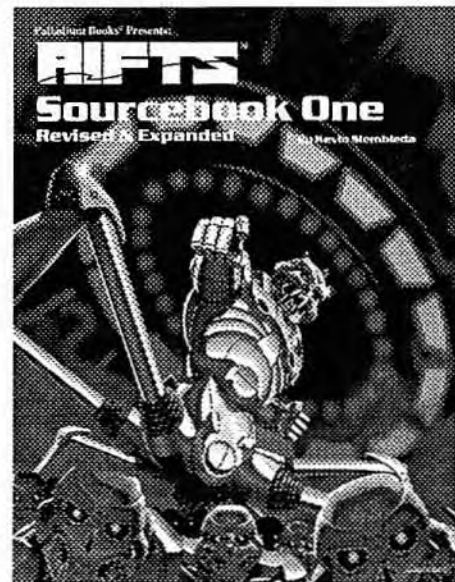
As for optional tables and adventures, if they sound cool or fun, use them. If they sound funky, too high-powered or inappropriate for your game, modify them or ignore them completely.

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.

The Rifter® #37

We should have concrete Robotech® news and a tentative release schedule, other news, and a peak of what's coming down the pipeline, along with the usual source material and fun from across the Palladium Megaverse.

- More for *Palladium Fantasy*®.
- Material for *Heroes Unlimited*™.
- Material for *Rifts*®.
- News and other developments.
- The next, epic chapter of *The Hammer of the Forge*™.
- Source material for the entire Palladium Megaverse®.
- New contributors and fun. So please join us.



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

Palladium's games are found in stores everywhere

From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

I wish there was a way, other than through words, that all of you, our fans, could experience what goes on at Palladium Books.

I wish there was a magic spell or alien device that could allow you to watch and hear us from afar, as if through a crystal ball or hidden video camera. That way you'd truly *know* exactly what we're dealing with and what we're up to. You'd see the many things we have to consider and deal with, how we make the choices we do, and why our release schedule is a mutating mess. You'd be able to see exactly how we think, all the angles we consider, our dreams, our fears, our struggles, and our hopes for the future.

I often worry some of you look at the book delays, rescheduling and choices, and wonder, with disappointment, if Palladium cares about you. Not so much **Rifts®** fans, but the fans of the **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®**, **Heroes Unlimited™** and **Beyond the Supernatural™**. I know some of you feel abandoned and forgotten, but that's not true.

I wish you could feel *my* frustration, disappointment and angst so that you would know how badly I want to see new product for these lines. I wish you could know how badly I want to write **Tome Grotesque** and **Beyond Arcanum**, and write them right *now!* I wish you could see the ideas for them inside my head, and I wish you knew how many other personal projects are stuck in limbo while the Palladium crew and I focus our attention on matters and titles that will help save the company.

I wish you could see and know about the many secret projects, hopes and dreams going on *behind the scenes*. I wish you could see how much work goes into efforts that have tremendous *potential*, but which all too often take months to realize or, in the end, go nowhere. You see, we must explore each opportunity whether it works out or not, because you never know which big idea might pan out. We're trying to lay the groundwork for a better tomorrow and build for the future. Unfortunately, it all takes time and energy that is stolen from our book schedule.

Ironically, at the same time, we are also doing some of our best work EVER! The strong sales and enthusiastic praise from fans over **Powers Unlimited 3**, **Rifts® Madhaven** and **The Rifter® #35** clearly indicate that you agree.

Somehow, despite all the chaos, raw emotions, pressure and fatigue, we are boiling with ideas and enthusiasm that cannot be smothered. Somehow, like the Incredible Hulk, the more battered and beleaguered we become, the stronger we get. We can't stop. We won't give up. And as if to buoy our spirits and fuel our fevered minds and tired bodies, the ideas and excitement behind them just keep boiling up. You can't imagine the number of great ideas for new books, games, settings and products tucked away inside our heads. Ideas we haven't even hinted at yet, because it will be a year or more before we can hope to execute them. It may sound crazy, but it's true and it keeps me and the guys going. That and the support of our fans.

Last week, two different people privy to some of the regular madness, on two different occasions, asked me the same ques-

tion, virtually word for word: "How do you deal with all this without having a nervous breakdown?" Some days I feel like the answer to that questions is, "not very well." Ultimately, we do the best we can.

The massive and devastating damage done to Palladium Books left the company in bad shape. The treachery was equally shattering to everyone on a personal and emotional level. It was devastating. I guess we press on because we love what we do. We love what Palladium is, what it means to so many people, and we want it to continue. I'm lucky that I seem to be able to handle a great deal of pressure and stress without having a nervous breakdown, and I'm blessed to have a staff, friends, and fans who are willing to give me and Palladium their all to help the company survive. It is inspiring to say the least.

Still, the task ahead of us is daunting. I've had more than one person recently call me a "miracle worker" to have survived all we have endured as well as have a plan in place that should save the company and make Palladium bigger and stronger than ever (if we can pull it off).

Well, part of that miracle is made possible by having a *selfless staff* and *friends* who have been working their tails off to help keep Palladium going. Another big part of that miracle is you, *our fans*. Since our public appeal we've had unpaid volunteers come to work at the office and warehouse, we've received thousands of inspiring well wishes, heartfelt and kind testimonials as to how much Palladium means to you, and, of course, an outpouring of purchases that has enabled us to pay off a ton of crippling debt and help keep Palladium going for the past six months.

I guess what I'm trying to say is, hang in there. Stay with us and keep the faith. I know our schedule is a wreck and to some of you it may not seem like we have much of a plan in place, but believe me, we do.

As I have said in my on-line **Murmurs from the Megaverse®**, I often feel like I'm juggling 200 balls in the air at once and dropping 10-20 on a regular basis. Fortunately, I have people scooping up those dropped balls and tossing them back into the air. We may drop some more, but we keep juggling and doing our best.

These are crazy, desperate times for Palladium, but things have gotten better. Were not out of the woods yet, but we hope if we can keep juggling long enough, put the right plan into effect and realize even just a little of Palladium's incredible potential, everything will work out.

Just know that you, our fans, are never forgotten nor taken for granted, and that we are working our fingers to the bone to rebuild, reshape and make Palladium Books stronger and better than ever.

Kevin Siembieda, October 2006

News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

Conventions and Trade Shows

To show our fans and retailers that Palladium Books is alive and kickin' we've done more conventions and trade shows than ever. Something like 10-12 when we usually do 3-5.

The **ACD Games Day** and **Alliance/Diamond Retailer Summit** were a great success on a number of levels. We got some valuable industry info and valuable perspective in a number of areas. We spoke to old friends, talked to retailers, met retailers looking to add RPGs to their line up and got a little bit of swag.

We have one more trade show in October (Fort Wayne, Indiana), followed by a gaming con (*UberCon VIII*, October 20, 21, & 22 in New Jersey), and two local conventions we're considering in November.

UberCon VIII

– October 20-22 – New Jersey

The last big convention of the year for Palladium Books will be **UberCon VIII**.

UberCon should be a lot of fun! The convention is anticipating 700-1000 gamers to show up, and it is one of the last "gaming" conventions around.

This is **Palladium's first visit to a New Jersey convention EVER**, and my first time being back in the *New York vicinity* in five years (my last appearance was December, 2001 at the *Compleat Strategist* after 9/11). I hope a lot of Palladium fans in the New Jersey/New York area come down to join us, as I keep telling people how great our fans are in that part of the country. Then again, Palladium fans the world over are pretty darn fantastic, so that's nothing new. :) I have no idea when we'll be back to the area, so take advantage of our appearance if you can.

Artist **Mark Evans** (he did the cover to *Madhaven* and others), **Wayne Smith** (Editor/*Rifter*®) and **I, Kevin Siembieda**, will be guests. Meanwhile, *Brandon Aten*, *Carl Gleba* and a few other Palladium creators have talked about coming to **UberCon** as well. We will *all* man a sizable Palladium booth full of back stock books, new titles, prints, artwork and other good stuff. **Mark Evans** is bringing some artwork and signed prints, and we will *all* be available to chat, sign autographs and goof around. I'll be participating in several *panel talks* throughout, and *running a game* on Saturday night. Author *Mike Stackpole* is the gaming guest of honor at the convention.

The **UberCon** organizers, *Kevin and Andrea Jagh*, are big fans of Palladium and are giving Palladium the booth space for **FREE** to help us through our Crisis of Treachery. (Actually, several other generous convention organizers and pals offered us free tables too, but we could only attend so many shows. Thanks everyone.) I tried to return the favor by illustrating the *Convention Program Cover*, a fun cartoon-style cover featuring the Convention's dragon mascot and some *Rifts* characters. *Apollo Okamura* helped me out by digitally coloring the art for

me. I think it turned out well and it's been nice doing more artwork lately.

Ubercon VIII – October 20-22

Wyndham Suites – Secaucus, New Jersey

Inquiries: (866) 823-7366

www.UberCon.com

Come on down to UberCon VIII, and tell 'em Palladium sent you.

See us while you can

I suspect 2007 will see me and the Palladium creators cut our convention appearances dramatically. Probably only 2-3 shows plus the 2007 Palladium Open House. (We're pulling out all the stops next May to give you the most awesome three days of gaming you can imagine!) Sorry, but that's how busy we'll be fighting to keep Palladium alive and going. So come see us where you can in 2006.

That's actually good news because it means we will be killing ourselves to get Palladium back on its feet and running at top speed by the end of 2007. And wait till we can reveal some of the secret projects we're working on now. I think you guys and gals will be thrilled. But that's for the future.

Other good convention news, Palladium expects to be *represented* by the **Megaversal Ambassadors™** running more games and **Adventure Retail** (a high quality convention vendor) carrying our products *at more conventions than ever in 2007*. Unfortunately, most of the Palladium crew and I will not be able to attend those same shows. We have to do what we have to do to overcome this crisis. Besides, you are gonna LOVE what we have in store for you in 2007.

Annual X-Mas Grab Bag

It's that time of year again when Palladium offers its Christmas Surprise Package/Grab Bag.

Goodies include a selection of books from your want list, autographs if you want them, recent "gold" editions, original art, T-shirts, back issues of *The Rifter*®, weird stuff like proofreader copies of books (signed by the guys), 25 Year Anniversary Laser-Etched Glasses, bumper stickers, wood pins, prints, posters and other odds and ends.

Read all the details *elsewhere* in this issue and . . . season's greetings and good cheer from all of us at Palladium Books.

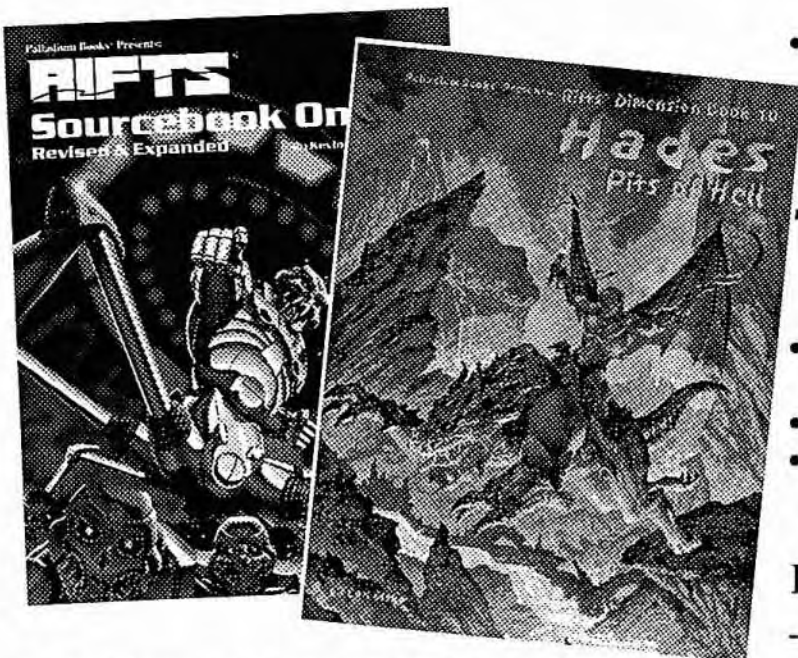
Coming – Fall 2006

Rifts® Sourcebook One™

– Expanded and Updated – October, 2006

"I hope the *redo* of this book is going to surprise and please a great many Palladium fans," said author, Kevin Siembieda, adding, "I've tried to really go all out with this one and I think fans will love it."

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.
- Robot creation rules.
- 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.
- Notable monsters, adventures, and new adventure ideas.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 801 – \$18.95 retail.
- Ships around October 25, 2006.

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 10: Hades, Pits of Hell™ – November 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. Part one of the Megaverse® spanning Minion War saga.

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 Outbreak* (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.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 872 – \$18.95 retail. Ships November, 2006.

Rifts® D-Bees of North America™ – November 2006

A dozen freelancers contributed 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 **Rifts® World Books**.

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

- Around 100 *D-Bees*; 30+ new. All native to North America and completely statted out and updated.
- New dynamic artwork.
- Cover painting by Dave Dorman.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and others.
- 192 pages – Cat. No. 874 – \$22.95 retail.
- Anticipated release date November or December 2006.

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.

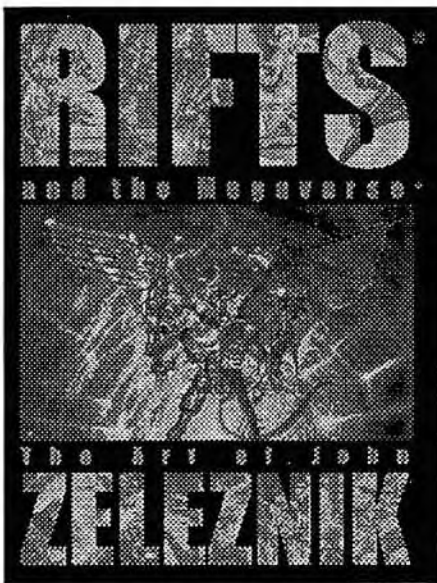
- Full color throughout.
- Compiled and designed by John Zeleznik.
- 128 pages of color – Cat. No. 2510 – \$28.95 retail.
- Anticipated release date: November 2006.

Note: Unfortunately, the high cost to produce this book will require Palladium to wait and see what pre-order numbers are before we can send it to the printer.

Rifts® and the Megaverse®

– Collector's Masterwork Limited Edition

This is the most unbelievable deal we have ever heard. In fact, we don't think anybody has *EVER* done anything like this before, and it's all John Zeleznik's idea.



Each copy of the Collector's Masterwork Limited Edition will include an original piece of artwork by John Zeleznik! Most will be concept sketches tipped (glued) into the book itself, by hand, done personally by Kevin Siembieda. That's right, YOU will have an original sketch/drawing/concept artwork from one of John Zeleznik's paintings or illustrations that appears in this very book!

"I've never heard of anything like this," said Publisher, Kevin Siembieda. "It's remarkable. A true collectible and piece of art and Palladium history all rolled into one. This is a deal of a lifetime. And because John is such a great guy, he wants us to keep the price low so Palladium fans can afford one. I was dumbstruck when he made the offer. I still am."

- Limited to approximately 100-180 copies (the total number is yet to be determined based on the availability of original art).
- Signed by John Zeleznik and Kevin Siembieda.
- Leatherette or cloth cover with gold logo. Hardcover.
- All the same color art as the regular edition.
- An original pencil drawing/sketch from John Zeleznik's private archives.
- \$125.00 each plus \$15 in the USA, \$20 in Canada, or \$35 overseas for shipping and handling so it can be shipped quickly and via a method that is safe and traceable.
- 128 pages – color – hardcover – Cat. No. 2510-CML.
- November 2006. The ultimate collectible!

Coming in 2007

2007 promises to be incredible

The following is the most comprehensive listing of books Palladium has ever revealed in advance. ALL are actually being written as you read this.

We hope to support ALL of Palladium's RPG lines, as you can see from this line up.

Rifts® Dimension Book 11, Minion War™ 2: Dyval, Minion War 3: Dimensional Outbreak™, The Atorian Empire™ for Heroes Unlimited™ as well as a new Phase World® sub-

mission (that I haven't had a chance to look at yet) are all sitting in my office waiting to be reviewed, edited and assigned artwork. All are likely to appear early 2007.

A retooled, beefed up manuscript for *Mysteries of Magic*™ for *Palladium Fantasy RPG*® is in the works, and *Rifts*® *Deep South/Dark Woods*™, *Rifts*® *Delta Blues*™ and *Rifts*® *Voodoo* are all nearly finished and expected to hit my desk by the end of December if not sooner.

Todd Yoho, author of the two *Rifts*® *Dinosaur Swamp*™ Books, is working on a secret project.

Jason Richards, author of *Rifts*® *Arzno*™, is working on a secret project that I'll reveal right now, a butt-kicking *Chaos Earth*™ sourcebook that will surprise and please everyone. Jason also helped to coordinate the writing of the *Rifts*® book, *D-Bees of North America*™, scheduled for a Fall release.

Carl Gleba, the author of *Three Galaxies*, *Megaverse Builder* and other books, is also the madman behind the *Minion War*™ series. The cool aspect about the *Minion War* books is that the first two, *Hades* and *Dyval*™, are stand-alone *Dimension Books* that map and describe these two planes of Hell! They also present more demonic minions, magic and weapons used by these fiends, as well as set the stage for the "Minion War." What is the Minion War? Hades and Dyval at war. One trying to conquer the other, and their battle spills across the Megaverse! Thus, each of the Hell books is suitable for ALL of Palladium's settings from *Rifts*®, *Phase World*® and the *Three Galaxies*™ to the *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, *Heroes Unlimited*™, *Nightbane*® and *Beyond the Supernatural*™! *Minion War*™ 3: *Dimensional Outbreak*™ takes place at and around *Phase World*®, *Minion War*™ 4 carries the adventure to the *Heroes Unlimited*™ setting, *Minion War*™ 5 goes to *Rifts* Earth, and Carl's thinking about a possible sixth book in the series. We'll see. Right now, *Minion War*™ books 1, 2, 3 are written and awaiting rapid-fire release every month or two, starting November 2006. This should give Carl enough time to finish books four and five on schedule. (No repeat of *Coalition Wars: Siege on Tolkeen* where books were late by 2-5 months.) Of course, I've already seen the first three books and have an overview of the entire series, so I can tell you this will be an epic adventure that spans the Megaverse®.

Brandon Aten is working on *Triax*™ 2 while plotting a couple other projects that include the *Sovietski* and other settings.

Taylor White is working on a secret project or two with me, one of which is a sourcebook for *Chaos Earth*™.

I recently spoke to a pair of freelance writers (a two-man team) about writing *Nightbane*® sourcebooks. They seem to have a good handle on the setting and I'm optimistic we'll have at least one new *Nightbane*® book released in 2007.

I have another freelancer working on a *secret project* that is going to knock the socks off *Rifts*® fans. This project is so secret, the material so unexpected, so wild, so different, that I'm even keeping the writer's name secret for now.

Beyond the Supernatural™, *Heroes Unlimited*™ and *Palladium Fantasy RPG*® are NOT forgotten, and I hope to see at least 2-3 sourcebooks for each. Wayne Breaux Jr. has been fooling around with a couple of new themes for HU2, I'm dying to get the next two *BTS-2* core books to market (*Tome Grotesque*™ and *Beyond Arcanum*™) and in addition to *Mysteries of Magic*™ (which may be released as a series of books), at least two other *Palladium Fantasy RPG*® books.

Much of 2006 has been spent on rebuilding Palladium's foundation and that includes establishing a network of committed freelance artists and writers the likes of which Palladium has never before seen. Creators dedicated to consistently producing high quality sourcebooks for all of Palladium's game lines for years to come.

Robotech® RPG for 2007

That's the plan.

I have been working with Harmony Gold on a new licensing agreement that will enable Palladium Books to produce a series of new Robotech® RPGs that will update and build upon our original Robotech role-playing game books from the 1980s. This would be an expanded, rewritten and improved rule book and sourcebooks that might be thought of as Robotech® RPG Ultimate Edition with Robotech® getting a similar treatment as we gave Rifts® last year. Actually, the new Robotech® RPG series will probably be more thoroughly changed and rewritten than that, but I won't know until I dive into the actual writing. We're still in the concept stage of development. We may also experiment with the format. We also anticipate doing entirely new material as well.

If all goes well, the new Robotech® RPG should hit store shelves around February or March of 2007. Stay tuned for updates.

Warpath: Urban Jungle™

— Spring 2007

Warpath: Urban Jungle™ has been *delayed* to 2007 because co-creator and co-author *Jeffry Scott Hansen* is caught up in a big project that is a previous commitment for him and super-amazing. A project bigger than anything you could imagine (no, not film or TV and not for Palladium, but wow). Hmm, "secret" seems to be a running theme here, because we can't tell you a word about what it is, and neither can Jeff, so please don't badger him about it on-line. Heck, I'm one of maybe 10 people who are in the loop. Good luck Jeff, and go get 'em!

Anyway, with Jeff tied up on this other project and Robotech sneaking into our line up, Warpath: Urban Jungle™ will probably be delayed till *Spring or Summer 2007*. And yes, it will be hardcore and gritty like you can't imagine; nothing like Ninjas & Superspies or HU2, but plenty of fun to play for those of you who ain't squeamish girly-men.



An Optional Villain for Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Ed.

NAIN ROUGE THE RED DWARF

By Jeffry Scott Hansen

Nain Rouge is the Red Dwarf of Detroit, herald of calamity and one of the most diabolical creatures in all of existence. In the past 300 years of the Motor City's existence, the Red Dwarf has appeared several times, right before major traumatic events. The first person to supposedly lay eyes on the crimson imp was none other than Cadillac, French explorer and founder of Detroit. Described as a stout little dwarf about 3 feet (0.9 m) high, round about the belly with red clothes, Nain Rouge has a very red face and large nose to match. He was sighted in 1805 right before the great fire of Detroit, and was observed outside of Grace Hospital in 1926 on the day Harry Houdini died.

His origin is shrouded in somewhat of a mystery, however documents discovered in Ireland, of all places, give quite an interesting background to the Red Devil.

In 1998, Irish folklorist and archeologist Bonnie O'Grady was given several manuscripts that were allegedly penned by Darren Kildare of Cork, Ireland.

Mr. Kildare was the great grandson of Fergus Kildare, a man who was purported to be the basis of a well-known Irish folk hero. According to the writings of Darren Kildare, as passed down to him verbally by his great grandfather, the Little People, also known as *Leprechauns*, were real. They had lived in Ireland for thousands of years and were always at odds with humans. The powers granted to the wee folk of the Emerald Isle were so great that they could change ordinary rock into gold and conjure

anything out of thin air. How and why they were given such power is still a mystery, but out of these writings came some very interesting stories.

One tale tells of King Brian, King of all Leprechauns, and his cousin Shane Seamus, Duke of Donegal and Derry, at odds about a game of chess. Seamus was not a very good chess player, and swore that King Brian was a cheat, and said so in front of several of the King's loyal subjects. King Brian was furious and decided to banish the Duke from Ireland for all eternity. Seamus, so angry and embarrassed by his cousin's punishment, turned five shades of red, threw off his green jacket and hat, and spit on the very ground he stood on. For that, the powers that be caused his skin and clothes to remain beet red, and he was tossed into the ocean to make his own way in the world. Shane Seamus swam to the nearest boat and was saved by three very shocked fishermen.

He told the trio that if they would sail him to England, he would pay them in pure gold. Obviously, that kind of offer was not one taken lightly, but the men agreed to take Seamus to the nearest port in England. When they arrived at port, Seamus kept his word. He pointed at the fishermen's boat and turned it into pure gold. The boat sank and the three men on board were all drowned.

The banished Leprechaun made his way to the sprawling city of London. He stayed for more than fifty years, making nightly visits to local horse stables and causing the equestrians there much grief. He would make such a ruckus that the owners of the stable yards never got a good night's sleep. When he was sighted one night by one of the stable owner's daughters, she screamed so loud that it caused one of the elderly stable hands to have a heart attack, killing the man.

This mischief went on for some time until finally the stable owners contacted a local priest and begged him to exorcise the dastardly demon from their once quiet suburbia. When the priest evoked the name of the Lord, Shane Seamus set the stables on fire and placed a curse on the horses and turned them into *Shadowmares*, demon steeds that are ridden upon by the dead. (Supposedly, according to legend, it is one of these very horses that the Headless Horseman mounts for his ride in the town of Sleepy Hollow.)

Shane Seamus bade farewell to the stable owners and the priest, laughing hysterically, and jumped at the stable owner's daughter, grabbed her and vanished without a trace. The stable owner's daughter became his unholy bride and accompanied her groom to Paris, France. It was there, in the slums of Paris, that Shane Seamus became and will always be known as Nain Rouge.

As time went on his appetite for destruction grew, and he would bask in the cries of victims as one would lay in a warm bath. He received immense pleasure from the sobs and shrieks of people who had lost loved ones, and was always sure to make himself available to watch large battles involving great armies.

In late 1697, while in a drunken state, Nain Rouge boarded a ship that famed explorer Cadillac was launching the next day for the New World. He had heard many tales of the Americas, and decided to see what mischief he could bring to it. He made himself invisible while on the ship, occasionally setting fire to a sleeping sailor's foot here and there. He traveled around with Cadillac's crew and one day in July of 1701, Cadillac decided to

head to what is now the City of Detroit. Nain Rouge went ashore with the landing party. When the two priests who accompanied Cadillac began throwing holy water around at the Frenchman and his crew, Nain Rouge was struck by a few droplets. His invisibility spell failed, and he was burned and began screaming and cursing the priests. Cadillac attacked the vile creature and Nain Rouge fled into the nearby forest. Once he collected his wits, Nain Rouge called out a curse upon Cadillac, who would later be put in prison in France and would never again set foot on the American continent. There has also been speculation that Nain Rouge traveled to America way before the fabled trip with Cadillac, for there are Native American tales of a red demon-dwarf throughout the tribes of the Huron, Ottawa and Mohawk, that predate Cadillac's arrival by over one hundred years.

Nain Rouge would journey back and forth between America, France and England, and traveled constantly to have lunch with one of his oldest friends, *the Great Jinn of Persia*. He and the Jinn had met five hundred years prior, and after Seamus was banished from Ireland, the two would curse the name of King Brian together and would think up ways to cause immense grief for the human race.

One tale begins with the Great Jinn eating a bowl of fruit with Seamus when the Jinn's nephew, the *Tal-Haj 'Maljah, Jinn of Syria*, came to visit. The three sat eating themselves drunk with grapes when Seamus began vomiting for more than two hours. It was determined that the Tal-Haj had brought with him a great sickness from his human slaves and that it was so powerful that it could make even an immortal sick to his stomach. The Great Jinn was furious and was about to behead his own nephew when Seamus began laughing uncontrollably. After composing himself, Seamus explained that if the sickness could cause him to retch for two hours, imagine what it would do to mere mortals. The Great Jinn dropped his mighty sword, laughed for a week straight and commanded his nephew to prepare a large ship with peasants ill with the plague. The ship and its foul cargo made for the French town of Marseille and in 1720, one of the worst plagues in history was unleashed upon the unsuspecting populace.

Another account places Nain Rouge at a famous dinner party, where he had disguised himself as a court jester for none other than Queen Antoinette. It is said that when the peasants came to the palace doors begging for food, he whispered an enchantment at the Queen, causing her to mutter the now infamous line, "Let them eat cake." He was in the town square when her majesty lost her head, and when her body was taken away he took her fright-filled noggin and danced with it under a blood-red moon.

In recent years, especially in the streets of Detroit, Michigan, Nain Rouge was spotted outside a popular sports bar, where its owner was gunned down over a gambling debt. The bar owner's son had witnessed the Red Dwarf the night before, skipping merrily down a rat-filled alleyway, singing the name of the future victim. He was observed two days before the Blackout of 2003, and in January of 2006, witnesses reported a little red man jumping rooftop to rooftop in Downtown Detroit's Greektown. Several Police Officers chased him for hours until he vanished into a dark alleyway.

One of the last writings of Darren Kildare before he passed away was that he believed that Nain Rouge may have started out

as a happy-go-lucky Leprechaun, but over the course of these many years, he has *evolved* into something far more sinister. "It would make sense," he wrote, "that Shane Seamus, so high and mighty in his title of Duke, who was thrown out on his britches by King Brian, would turn to such evil. He was betrayed not only by his own cousin, but by the very country and soil that he was born from. That in itself would drive anyone mad, and who wouldn't lash out against such a disgrace?"

There are several places in Detroit that are notorious for strange activity. The Old Train Station in Southwest Detroit, the Brightmoor Tunnels, and the cavernous Salt Mines, are but a few places that Nain Rouge may hold his unholy court.

Nain Rouge

Haunter and Demonic Servant, Herald of Calamity

Also known as Red Dwarf/Devil, Shane Seamus.

Alignment: Diabolic evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 18, M.A. 16, Supernatural P.S. 24, P.P. 19, P.E. 16, Spd 46.

Size: Three feet (0.9 m) tall.

Natural A.R.: 15

Hit Points: 96

S.D.C.: 160

Discorporation: If defeated, melts into ground, leaving a red puddle that dries into tiny rubies that faintly radiate magic.

Threat Level: x4; Prankster, equivalent to a Lesser Demon.

Horror Factor: 8 in his true appearance, 14 when agitated.

Natural Abilities: Standard Leprechaun Abilities: Nightvision 60 feet (27.4 m), keen normal vision, turn invisible at will, ventriloquism 88%, and sense secret compartments/doors 64% (an automatic and innate ability).

Can mesmerize at a glance. Has been known to change his appearance into an adorable child and when approached, turn into a ravenous, fang-baring ghoul. Can exist in daylight without a problem, usually appearing in vacant lots or streets. (Plenty of those in Detroit.) His nighttime appearances tend to be more dramatic, with a flare for *showmanship*. Can run at a very fast pace, even with his short, stubby legs, and can leap 30 feet (9 m) vertical or lengthwise and run straight up a wall 100 feet (31 m) high. If grabbed (good luck), he will give off a horrible odor, and if jumped on or tackled he will leave his attacker in a red blob of sticky gook. Magically knows all languages at 95%. Teleport Self: Flawless, 10 mile (16 km) range. Has a gift for causing mass hysteria and confusion. Can magically turn mundane items into gold or jewels. Summon Lesser Demons/Haunters.

The farther he is underground, the more powerful he becomes. Increase Spell Strength by +1 when more than 20 feet (6.1 m) underground, and double spell durations.

Vulnerabilities: 1. Has an extreme aversion to holy water. Small sprinkles cause severe burns and dampen all powers for up to 30 minutes. If doused with an entire bucket of holy water, Discorporation occurs. **Note to Game Masters:** Holy water must be asked for. If it is stolen, it ceases to be effective. To have any effect on Nain Rouge, it must be from a Roman Catholic Church.

2. Unable to enter Irish pubs. Due to his curse, Nain Rouge is forbidden from entering any establishment that is named for or has any relation to Ireland.

3. Allergic to Irish stone/soil or products made from Ireland.

4. Can catch human diseases, but only the really nasty ones (e.g. the Plague).

5. Can not go into a church. If tricked or forced into one, he will erupt into flames.

6. Avoids happy places or people.

Skills or Equivalents: Land Navigation 55%, Wilderness Survival 60%, Preserve Food 60%, Recognize Precious Metals/Stones 96%, Track Animals 40%, Track Humanoids 50%, Faerie Lore 90%, Sing 60%, Dance 70%, Swim 80%, Prowl 60%, Climb 60%/50%, Palming 60%, Concealment 60%, Pick Pockets 82%, Pick Locks 55%, Locksmith 40%, Street-wise 84%, W.P. Knife and W.P. Blunt.

Attacks per Melee: Six physical, psionic, or magic attacks per melee round, or any combination of them.

Damage: Punch: 2D6+9 from a restrained punch, 3D6+9 from a full strength punch, or 6D6+9 from a power punch (requires two attacks).

Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute bonuses): +4 on initiative, +2 to parry, +4 to dodge, +4 to roll with impact, +3 to save vs magic, +2 to all other saving throws, and +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: Possesses a large ruby talisman worn around his neck. Talisman can hypnotize and blind, causing victim to see red for an hour. Casts spells same as any other Faerie, meaning they do not use P.P.E., but he can only cast each spell once per 24 hours on a given target. Spells: Befuddle, Cloak of Darkness, Escape, Fool's Gold, Summon Fog. Spell Strength: 16.

Psionics: Empathic Transmission (6), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Mentally Possess Others (30), Mind Block (4).

Enemies: Leprechauns, Roman Catholic priests. Horses, dogs and cats become very agitated by his presence.

Allies: The Great Jinn of Persia. He also controls a pack of Hell-Hounds and can summon them at will if need be.

Habitat: City of Detroit. Alleys, vacant lots, cemeteries, and abandoned buildings and sewer systems.

2006 Christmas Surprise Package

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

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

The X-Mas Grab Bags have always been our way of giving a little something back and delivering some Christmas cheer, and putting a smile on the faces of some big kids. This year, the Christmas Grab Bags are even more meaningful and will be filled with gratitude.

When you can order

Now till December 23, 2006.

Note: Orders received by Palladium after December 12th can *NOT* be *guaranteed* to arrive *before Christmas*. Likewise, Palladium makes no promise that foreign or military base orders will be received before December 25th regardless of when they are placed. The first orders *WILL NOT* be filled until October 16th.

The Cost

\$32.00 US plus \$8.00 in the USA and Canada. The eight dollars goes toward shipping and handling per *each* individual X-Mas Surprise Package/Grab Bag (i.e. one Grab Bag is \$32 +\$8 for a total of \$40, two are \$64 +\$16, and so on). Those ordering *online* can select their method of shipping, but you will pay for the *additional* shipping costs as well as a \$3.00 handling fee.

Overseas Orders require additional postage, \$20 for mail order, and will be sent by the most economic and convenient way for Palladium Books. That also means the slowest way (5-10 weeks). Such orders will take extra time to arrive. If you want faster or special delivery, you will need to *call* us or order *online*, where you can select different methods of shipping. YOU, the customers, pay ALL shipping (\$20 or more to most overseas locations via "air parcel post").

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Or e-mail using the ordering info on our web page at www.palladiumbooks.com – or call our order line at (734) 946-1156 to place an order by telephone using a credit card. This is an order line only.

What you get

A minimum of *sixty dollars (\$60) retail* in Palladium product, probably more. Last year, Kevin Siembieda was so full of Christmas spirit that many Surprise Packages got more than \$70 worth of goodies. Plus, upon your request, we'll *sign* your books.

This year, each X-Mas Surprise Package will get two or more (usually more) "Special Wants" from sourcebooks and role-playing games, plus something from Palladium's "Surprise Package" of goodies. Extra items may include posters, prints, bumper stickers, back stock items, a Rifter, or a surprise or two. Multiple orders *will* result in some duplication.

Autographs: If you ask for signatures, *every book* will be signed by *Kevin Siembieda* and available staff members and freelancers.

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

Ideas for "Special Wants"

To insure your X-Mas Surprise Package is everything you want it to be, send us a *list* of your "wants" – ideally listed in the order of what you want most. And give us as many choices as possible (at least 7 items) and please, *not* books you know are not yet in print like *Tome Grotesque* or *Robotech*®. **Note:** Santa Kev and his elves are *NOT* mind readers. If you do not give us a clear idea of your wants, you *may* be disappointed by what comes in your Surprise Package.

Likewise, saying something like "I own everything, surprise me," makes our job more *difficult*. We want to make each Grab Bag special, but because we don't know you or what books you own, like or want, we don't have a clue as to what to send.

Please say something like this: "I own it all, but would love any duplicate Fantasy books signed by the Palladium crew." Or, "I have most of it, surprise me with artwork and/or odd things like signed proof-reader copies, or T-shirts," and so on.

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

- **For Rifts®:** Rifts® Coloring Book, Rifts® WB 28: Arzno, Rifts® WB 29: Madhaven, Rifts® Sourcebook One Expanded (not available till November 1), Rifts® Spirit West (back in print; and what about the other World Books set in the West like Lone Star, New West and Arzno?), Rifts® Dinosaur Swamp and/or Rifts® *Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp*™, Rifts® D-Bees of North America (not available till mid-November), or some of the Rifts® Mercenary books (Rifts® Mercenaries, Rifts® Mercenary Adventures™, Rifts® Merc Ops™, and Rifts® MercTown™) or the South America books or Dark Conversions™ or Conversion Book 2: Pantheons of the Megaverse® (back in print), both great, but sometimes overlooked titles, and so on.

- **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** core rule book. The first printing is almost gone and we expect to be sold out soon, so this is your last chance to get a *first printing*. (Second printing is fundamentally the same with some changes and corrections; January 2007).

- **Rifts® Ultimate Gold.** Fewer than a hundred signed and numbered copies remain. That means many sent out in Grab Bags will be a (rarer?) *proof copy* signed by Kevin Siembieda and the available Palladium crew; Kevin usually draws a dragon-head drawing above his signature in these books. **Note:** The *Rifts® Ultimate Gold* is a \$70 dollar collector's item – request it and it *may* be the *ONLY* item you get in your X-Mas Surprise Package.

- **Rifts® First Edition Rules – "Silver" Hardcover.** This item is sold out, but 50 copies are available for this X-Mas Surprise Package. This is considered to be a \$60 dollar collector's item – request it and it *may* be the only item you get in your X-Mas Surprise Package.

- **Rifts® Miniatures.** Some are already out of stock, others are running low and we don't think we'll be recasting them anytime soon. Get 'em while you can. Normally sell for 4-6 dollars per pack, but order 'em for the 2005 Surprise Package and we'll send you a heap of 'em along with your other goodies.

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

For Heroes Unlimited™: Powers Unlimited™ Three (new), Powers Unlimited™ Two (back in print), Villains Unlimited™ Revised, Heroes Unlimited™ G.M.'s Guide, Century Station™, Gramercy Island™, or the Aliens Unlimited Galaxy Guide™, among others.

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Western Empire™ (back in print after being absent for several years), the **RPG itself, Dragons & Gods™, Eastern Territory™, Mount Nimro™, Northern Wilderness™, Land of the Damned™**, and others.

For **Beyond the Supernatural™**: There's only the **BTS-2™ RPG** soft cover or the **BTS-2 Gold Edition Hardcover** (signed proof copy or signed and numbered).

All Nightbane® titles are in stock except the discontinued *Shadows of Light*. Did you know *Nightbane* characters can be used in *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™* and/or *BTS-2*?

Back stock items galore and other considerations:

- **Back stock:** RPGs, sourcebooks, world books and supplements you've been meaning to get, but haven't gotten around to. This is a great way to *fill those holes* in your collection, get hard to find back stock items or try a new game like *Rifts®*, *Palladium Fantasy®*, *Nightbane®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, *Mystic China™*, *After the Bomb®*, *After the Bomb® Sourcebooks*, *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Chaos Earth™* or *Splicers™*.

- **Rifter® Back Issues.** Palladium has stopped reprinting back issues of *The Rifter®* and issues 1-13 are no longer available – *except* for the X-Mas Surprise Package and conventions attended by Palladium. We have kept 30-100 copies of most of *The Rifter®* issues especially for this purpose, but some issues are already completely gone (like issues #4, #8, #21, #22 and #26). We only have ten copies of *The Rifter® #34* put aside for Grab Gags, and other numbers are nearly gone, so they are available only while supplies last. Oh, and don't forget *The Best of The Rifter®* (which includes a listing and index of everything that has ever appeared in *The Rifter #1-32!*).

- **Out of print and hard to find items.** Still need that copy of the *Systems Failure™ RPG* (only a few left) or the collected *Magic of Palladium Books*, or *RECON®* (Vietnam era), or the *Compendium of Contemporary Weapons*, or a copy of first edition rules for the *Heroes Unlimited™ RPG*, or *Old Ones™* sourcebook for *Palladium Fantasy®* or first edition *After the Bomb®* sourcebook, or first edition *Exotic Weapons* sourcebook?

Have you been wanting to try *Splicers™*, *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Nightbane®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, *After the Bomb®* or *Rifts® Chaos Earth™*? Well, this is a great way to do so.

- **Beyond the Supernatural™ "Gold" hardcover, 2nd Edition RPG.** Limited to 600 signed and numbered copies (half already gone). Only about 1 in 50 requests will get a copy. This is a 50 dollar item.

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

- **Original artwork!** We have approximately 50 pieces of artwork – mostly quarter page illustrations (a few larger) – donated by the artists (or from Kevin Siembieda's personal archives).

Only people who request artwork will be considered for it! We have a very limited supply so only the luckiest will receive art. You can beg or you can be witty, but only Santa Kev will decide who gets artwork. These are donations by the artists and available only in a very limited supply. Please indicate which artists you are most interested in and whether or not you'll be happy with anybody, and cross your fingers and wish on a star. Available artists include Scott Johnson, Kent Burles, Ramon Perez, Mark Dudley (DSS), Drunken Style Studio, Brian & Alan Manning, Kevin Siembieda, and other odds and ends.

- **25th Anniversary Laser-Etched Glasses** – Six different laser-etched glasses (25th Anniversary Logo, *Rifts®*, *HU2*, *BTS-2*, *Nightbane®*, and *Palladium Fantasy®*). 17 Ounce Glasses; dishwasher safe. \$45 value. Limited edition 400 sets; will NOT be reissued.

- **Weird Keepsakes** – Every year some people want weird, odd items like photocopies of books used and marked up by Palladium's proof-reader or editors (value is at least \$20 each), old packaging, old promotional items, flyers, stationery, magazines, prints by pals like John Zeleznik, Larry Elmore and others, and so on. Last year, one fan asked for "Kevin's left shoe, autographed," and got it along with a letter of

authenticity. The thing is with oddball items, they may become a valuable collector's item or end up worthless junk, or just a fun and unique keepsake. If you ask for weird stuff, you may be disappointed or thrilled. "Weird," and its "value," like art appreciation, often lays in the eye of the beholder. (We don't know if the guy who got the shoe was happy or felt ripped off.) You order the weird at your own risk.

- 8x10 autographed, color photo of Kevin Siembieda or of Kevin and the key Palladium staff. We include this only because more and more people seem to ask for them every year! Estimated Value: Priceless. Okay, how about six bucks value?

- **"I Survived the Palladium Open House" – T-Shirt.** Mostly XL and XXL, but we also have a few Small, Large and 4XL available on a first come, first served basis. This is your LAST chance to get these first Open House anniversary shirts whether you were actually at the Open House or not.

- **Classic T-Shirts** available while supplies last; some sizes are already gone. First come, first served. All have a \$20+ value.

Lazlo Society T-Shirt – XL and XXL only.

"Rare" Palladium Tenth Anniversary T-Shirt – "Small" only.

Discover the Megaverse® (powder blue) – XL and XXL only.

Rifts® Logo – XL only.

Rifts® Dog Pack – XL only.

Rifts® Grey Summoner (Perez artwork) – XXL only.

Rifts® Borg (Color) – Small size only.

REMEMBER, this is a "Surprise Package." While Kevin Siembieda and the Palladium staff *personally* try to make each and every Surprise Package something special, we cannot guarantee satisfaction. It is a "Grab Bag" surprise package. Buyers may *not* always be satisfied (although we seem to succeed with most) and duplication *will* occur with multiple orders. Also note that some items *may* be slightly damaged (so we can send you *more*), and we cannot control damage that may occur in the mail/shipping.

Ordering the 2006

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THE HOARSE WHISPERER

An Optional New Monster for Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Ed.

By Steven Dawes

"Mommy, I'm ready for bed now," said Kristen from just inside her bedroom doorway.

From her own bedroom, Kristin's mom replied back. "Alright sweetie, just let mommy help get daddy into bed and I'll be right with you, okay?"

"Okay." Denise could overhear her daughter immediately begin rummaging through her toy box while she helped Dale get into bed.

Dale had come from work early that day due to a strange and sudden illness. He went to work feeling just fine, but in a matter of a few hours, whatever bug that had started biting him was really sinking its teeth into him. He had only gotten worse since he'd gotten home but had refused to lie down and rest the afternoon away, opting to work on bills or anything else he could do without much physical restraint as he hated downtime, especially over a "friggin cold," as he'd been calling it all day.

It seemed more to Denise like he had a bad chest cold or sinus infection, perhaps even a combination of them both. The doctor appointment she arranged for him wasn't until the next morning, but she was sure he would confirm one or both of those ailments. Still, Denise hated seeing her husband so sick,

almost as much as Dale hated letting himself be seen like this by his wife and children. He hated worrying them.

"Darling, I can get into bed on my own, I don't need your help." His tone was grumpy and weak sounding; but his "tough act" wasn't fooling anyone, least of all his wife.

"Honey, you're burning up, you're wheezy, you're having a hard time breathing and you're shaking like crazy. You get any worse and I'm driving you to the emergency room. I've let you roam the house all day when I knew better and you're only getting worse. Now lay down, Dale."

With as much dignity as he could muster at the moment, he decided to give in and let Denise arrange his pillows and tuck him in. "Tell Krissy I'm sorry I can't kiss her and Serena good-night. The last thing we need is the whole house getting sick, especially as hard and fast as this one is hitting me." Helping tuck her husband into bed, she replied, "I will, honey, you just get some rest."

Serena had already been put down in her crib about an hour before and hadn't made a peep since, but Denise still peeked inside the doorway to make sure she was ok. Hearing the adorable sound of Serena's light snore from the dark corner of her crib, she quietly shut her infant daughter's bedroom door and turned to now take care of her favorite five-year-old in the world.

"Look, mommy!" came a shout from Kristen's bedroom as her mom was entering. "The prince is here to rescue the princess and take her to his kingdom so they can live happily ever after!"

"Aww, that's so sweet, Krissy!" Denise replied with a smile. Kristen was imitating the ending of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarves." It was her favorite cartoon; she watched it at least once a day. Denise reminisced while she recalled how that was a favorite of hers growing up as well. She couldn't help but let

Kristen finish the reenactment before telling her to put her toys away for the night.

"Daddy is really sick right now sweetie, so he's not coming to say goodnight tonight."

"Is daddy gonna die?" A sudden look of concern and even a bit of fear shot from Kristen's eyes like an arrow towards her mother.

Denise was caught by surprise with her sudden reaction and question, only to remember how sad she had been a few weeks ago. One of her daycare playmates had just lost her mother to some kind of strange illness. Dale said she cried for her friend all the way home when he picked her up. Kristen was very sensitive and caring for her age.

"Oh no, sweetie... He just has a bad cold or something, but he'll be okay in a few days. People get sick all the time, but they get over it. Remember that time a few months ago when you had the sneezes and that runny nose?"

"You mean when I was Sneezy Dwarf?" Denise's memory flashed back to when Kristen said that she was "Sneezy Dwarf" while she had a cold. Imitating Sneezy helped her deal with it much better.

Smiling, she replied, "yes, when you were "Sneezy Dwarf." Remember how it went away one morning? It's just like that. Daddy doesn't want you to get sick so he's not coming in to kiss you goodnight tonight, but in a few days he'll be back to normal. I promise, okay?"

"You pinky swear, momma?" Denise kept on smiling at her charming daughter. She picked up the "pinky swear" promise in daycare and since then all promises by mom and dad had to be sealed with a pinky swear.

"I pinky swear," her mom replied with a smile, shaking pinkies to seal her promise. "Now lay down, Krissy, you've got a big day tomorrow, with the field trip to the zoo." Kissing her on the forehead and tucking her in for the night. Kristen snuggled around "Muffin the Frog," her favorite plush toy. It had been her favorite since her dad skillfully grabbed it out of the crane game at the supermarket months ago.

"Goodnight, momma," she replied. "Don't forget to turn on my safelight!"

"I won't forget. Goodnight, Krissy... sleep well." Turning off her bedroom light before quietly shutting the door behind her, Denise turned on the hallway nightlight for Kristen in case she had to find the bathroom or her mom's room in the middle of the night.

After picking up the house a bit from the day's activities to help wind down, Denise decided to go to bed early herself tonight. Truth be told, she was feeling a bit under the weather herself and if she was coming down with something she'd need all the rest she could get.

Going back to her bedroom she heard her husband's wheezing. He sounded as terrible as ever! But fortunately he also sounded like he was sleeping somehow through it, so she dared not disturb him. Denise washed her face, brushed her teeth, got into a warm nightgown and gently got into bed. Her mind wandered for a bit while her husband's wheezing continued. She was almost finally asleep when his breathing suddenly stopped.

"Honey?" she called out... no answer. Her back was to him... she switched on the nightstand light and turned over to him in concern.

"Honey!?" She called out louder this time and shook him slightly. He suddenly shook and let out a very gritty and hoarse cough.

"*I'm just fine,*" he declared. His voice sounded hoarse and miserable, he barely had any voice. It was like pushing the air out of his lungs to force enough sound to speak.

"Honey, I really think we should take you to the ER. You sound so terribly sick."

"*No, I'm just fine now... just let me hold you... Denise.*"

"Dale, if you get any worse I swear to God I am taking you to the ER."

"*You won't have to... Denise... I promise you... I am feeling much better now... I promise.*" Denise noticed he wasn't wheezing anymore, although he had to pause between every few words to breathe. Perhaps his cough had loosened up the phlegm in his chest? As much as she thought against it, she couldn't help but feel strangely soothed by his words and accepted his answer, turning off the light and turning back over to snuggle into her loving husband of seven years. She smiled to herself, thinking about Kristen's earlier comment. "You pinky swear, Dale?"

"*Heh heh heh,*" Dale let out a hoarse, gravelly giggle that sounded more chilling than endearing to her. "*I pinky swear.*" He slowly moved his left hand to hers, giving her a weak pinky swear shake.

"Honey, your hand is awfully cold," she noticed as his hand slowly took hers while spooning around her.

"*You'll warm me up... you're very tired... just relax... I need you... Denise.*"

Unsure exactly why, Denise gave in and snuggled into Dale a little more. For the next few minutes his wheezing had not returned and she was feeling better about that, but a strange sound suddenly came from his mouth. His head was just behind hers, and while she wasn't sure what it was (but it slightly resembled an exhaling yawn) she heard it clearly. Denise listened intently to hear if another strange sound would come out during his next breath. While waiting, she suddenly felt like she had breathed in a strange vapor of some sort that had a slight smoky smell. She coughed in response to it.

"What was that?" she thought. Taking her next breath very carefully she wondered for a brief moment if maybe something was on fire in the house. But she smelled nothing in the next several breaths of air she took in, judging each one in turn. She was suddenly feeling very tired, her lungs felt heavy and it was hard to breathe.

Perhaps she was dreaming, but she was suddenly watching what was like a flashback of her life before her eyes. Her growing up, her meeting and eventually marrying Dale, Kristen being born and then Serena... all the major points of her life darted past her eyes in a matter of moments. She wanted to open her eyes and wake up, but she felt so very tired. The last thing she heard before losing consciousness was a hoarse, whispery voice, "*Just relax Denise... you're very tired... and I need you.*"

She was too tired to even realize that the voice wasn't coming from Dale like she had thought, but from herself. Denise fell asleep while Dale lay still next to her, his hand still covering over hers... the night went on and both their hands had become cold.

The master bedroom door creaked open. Kristen was awake and carefully crept in, suddenly having a bad feeling about her parents. Looking at the alarm clock next to her parents' bed, she hadn't learned what the numbers meant yet or she would know that it was just after three o'clock in the morning. Her friend "Muffin" was held in both of her arms in a protective embrace like a hug. She softly called out, "Mommy?" Her mother's wheezy breathing had suddenly halted.

"Kristen... come lay next to me... you're very tired."

"Mommy, your voice sounds funny."

"It's ok Kristen... I promise... you're very tired... and I need you... come lay next to me."

Kristen was overcome with a sudden feeling of being very tired and climbed into bed to lie down next to her mother. But mom didn't feel very comforting. In fact, she felt cold to the touch, even with the blankets over her.

"Are you sure you're okay mommy? I had a bad dream that you and daddy were in trouble."

"I'm fine... Dale is fine... just relax Kristen... you're very tired... and I need you."

In the moments that followed, Kristen heard a strange sound come from her mom and coughed at a strange smell and sensation. She suddenly felt even sleepier and perhaps had dozed off awhile. She had a quick dream of watching her short life flashing before her eyes. The last thing she heard was her mother's hoarse whisper of a voice say, *"Just relax Kristen... I will be fine... I promise."*

"You... you pinky swear?" Kristen was suddenly so tired she could barely ask the question.

"Yes Kristen... I pinky swear." Kristen fell asleep before she could reach out to seal the promise, too tired to notice that the hoarse whisper came from herself, not her mother.

Sunlight was just starting to shine through the curtains in the house. The quiet of the house was broken by the sound of Serena crying out from her room. Her crying was answered moments later by her bedroom door slowly opening, an ominous creak in the door announcing it. The sound of light footsteps on the carpet moved slowly closer to the crib. Serena's only sister stared at her through the crib bars with sunken and sickly looking eyes, her skin growing pale and cold.

"Serena... just relax... you're very tired... and I need you."

* * *

The Hoarse Whisperer is one of the hardest supernatural creatures for parapsychologists to define, locate or deal with. It shares a few traits in common with Entities, such as its natural form of a supernatural energy being that's invisible to the human eye (while in its base energy form), plus it's a P.P.E. vampire, and like the Possessing Entity, it can control humans (albeit to a limited extent). However, there is more than meets the eye, depending on what stage one confronts this cold-blooded killer and tormentor.

While in its energy form it shares all the same traits of Entities; they are impervious to all physical attacks, they hover, fly and even possess limited psychic ability. However, the Whisperer has an above average I.Q. and is very determined to thrive

and survive. And it survives by feeding off P.P.E. via vampirism. However, to feed, the Whisperer must invade the human body like a disease!

These creatures act very much like viruses, and begin the process by selecting a suitable host to invade. To that end, the Entity slowly wanders around in its invisible state, harmlessly passing through people (literally) as it does so until its cherry picking procedure strikes gold. While it can try to invade any human body it desires, it prefers to locate a victim whose immune system is weak at that moment for one reason or another (genetics, old age, already suffering from an illness of some sort, etc.), and invades them. At this point, the Whisperer is no longer an energy being, it converts into a mucus form.

In its mucus form it begins to "infect" its host by entrenching itself in the lungs, using its natural abilities to affect its host. The host suddenly begins feeling "congested" and will start coughing and wheezing. Within the first hour, the host begins to feel and act as if he is suffering from a severe chest cold, sinus infection or even flu-like symptoms. The reasons for the Whisperer affecting the host in this manner are twofold.

The first is that the act of making its host look and feel ill helps hide the fact it's presently in its host's body to its enemies (psychics that can see it). The second reason is that the victim will eventually be forced to relax and rest, slowing down his metabolism and breathing. This "relaxed" state is essential for the Whisperer to continue its invasion and the eventual usurping of its host's body.

Once the conditions are right, the Hoarse Whisperer will begin slowly expanding and crawling up through the lungs and the esophagus, further constricting the host's ability to breathe. While in the process of doing this the Whisperer invades and coats the host's voice box, causing his voice to sound very hoarse and gravelly, requiring a tremendous amount of effort to even speak (and hence the Entity's common name). At this stage it also begins to collect pieces of knowledge about the host's life (experiences, skills, etc.) through a sort of Mind Bond, as this information may be useful to it later.

Within an hour or so of its repositioning, the Whisperer begins to thicken and expand its mucus body and will slowly suffocate its host to the point of unconsciousness and death shortly afterwards (oftentimes while the victim is asleep). While the P.P.E. from its host's death is what it craved to begin with (and it will drink gluttonously like the vampire it is), the supernatural invader may not necessarily leave the host at this stage. It may have more plans for the host's body, as it can now take it over like a villainous puppeteer.

If it stays within the host body after it's consumed all the energy it can, the Whisperer begins to take over the brain and motor functions of the host, usually within a matter of a few minutes. It will continue to move the host's lungs to imitate breathing (which causes a wheezing sound), move around the eyes and the mouth, and perform all the movements one would expect a person to do. However, its now dead shell of flesh looks cold and sickly, and the creature knows it has to act as ill as it looks. To this vile being's credit, it can perform the actions and reactions of being ill and display various symptoms very well. The hoarse and raspy, whispery voice, the moans of discomfort and aching, producing a runny nose and/or sneezing and coughing up phlegm (its own mucus body providing the

source), and other imitations are all part of its bag of tricks. Even the actions of forgetfulness and lack of the host's memory and "brain power" work to the Whisperer's advantage, as most people give huge allowances and excuses to those who are so obviously under the weather.

This gives the Hoarse Whisperer the option to move about in society to fulfill whatever motive it may have at the moment, or carry out and perform a task or command given by the person or supernatural being that may have summoned it. Its guise is useful and particularly helpful in that it's unlikely to be disturbed or hindered by others, since most people tend to dodge folks who look this sick like they have the plague. In this capacity, they can make good spies, moles and assassins.

If the Whisperer is not under a superior's command, it amuses itself by tormenting those close to the host it has invaded, causing general mischief and mayhem to the general human populace, or using the host body to help it get closer to another human to infect and invade. Once the Whisperer has invaded a host, this is its preferred method of traveling and looking for a new host to feed on. This mucus form is less taxing on the creature, and it just enjoys the puppeteer-like dominance over its now dead host, and prefers to stay in its shell as long as it can until it's ready to invade another.

From its hidden lair inside the host, when it's ready to invade a new victim, it expands the lungs of its current body and immediately shifts into its third form - a mist-like substance, allowing the lungs to push it out and becoming airborne. In this form it floats quickly towards its target in hopes of being inhaled. Once inhaled, it will travel directly to the lungs and once it's reached its destination it reverts back to its mucus form to begin its invasion methods all over again in a new host. This is the Whisperer's favorite method of invasion. Unless the host has adequate shielding, the Whisperer almost ALWAYS successfully invades its new host, dominating the victim to its influence, eventual death and puppetry much faster than through its energy form!

The Hoarse Whisperer is a very frustrating creature to hunt down, encounter and combat. First off, it's nearly impossible to tell apart from a Poltergeist or a Haunting Entity while in its invisible energy state. The Whisperer knows this and has been known to use this advantage by imitating Poltergeist activities (moving, throwing or hiding things, etc.) to draw the curiosity and attention of its food source to them. If it is lucky enough, perhaps it will get the attention of its natural enemies so it can invade their bodies, namely psychics. It especially loves to invade Psychic Sensitives, Ghost Hunters and particularly Psychic Healers, as it sees these psychics as the most direct threats to it.

This is only more frustrating and dangerous to psychics as the weaknesses of the Hoarse Whisperer are very different from the Entities they resemble and imitate. Those who don't know that they're confronting a Whisperer usually aren't prepared to combat or defend themselves against it. This often leads to an invasion by the Entity, becoming its next host! The Whisperer loves to inhabit the bodies of their natural enemies (psychics) when it can and uses them to torment and attack their comrades, friends and family.

Even after the Hoarse Whisperer has changed into its mucus form it's a tough opponent to combat. While in a host it hasn't taken over yet (its host is still alive), it's not quite as dangerous

to others yet, but it's no less of a challenge to combat or expel from the body. It also has several psionic abilities it can use to defend itself. If forcefully expelled from its current host it returns to its energy form and may try to invade the one who expelled it. Then again, it may flee the area to hide from its attackers and find a different host altogether.

If the Hoarse Whisperer has claimed the life of its host and has full control of the body, it becomes a much tougher opponent to face. Like a Possessing Entity, it gains complete control over the host body, and it turns the body's P.S. into Supernatural Strength when needed. It may cause the host body to look and act very sickly, but this is merely a ruse. It's very capable of fighting like the devil and can move its host body deceptively fast, making for a dangerous combatant. Even worse is that besides the unexpected agility and strength of the host body, the Hoarse Whisperer still has its psionic arsenal at its disposal! If the body is destroyed, the Whisperer is ejected from it, but it has the option to either return to its invisible energy form or its mist form to try and invade its attacker.

Hoarse Whisperer -

Entity/Lesser Demon and Supernatural Predator

Also known as the *Whisperer*, the *Sickening Entity* or *Phlegm Demon*.

Alignment: ALWAYS Diabolic (these creatures live/exist for cruelty, tormenting and killing for food and pleasure).

Attributes: Not applicable in either its energy or mist form (see R.C.C. Bonuses for the few bonuses it has in that form). However, it is very intelligent and is extremely good at tormenting and abusing people, both verbally and physically when it has control of a host body. Has an I.Q. of 13+1D4 and an M.A. of 15+1D6. These creatures are very intimidating and speak in a very evil and vicious manner with their hoarse and whispery voices. Listening to this fiend taunt, belittle, defy, and contempt you is a horrid experience, especially when it knows personal details about the player characters that it can exploit.

Armor Rating: Not applicable for humans.

Hit Points: 2D6x10+50

S.D.C.: None in energy or mist form, 1D4x10+20 in its phlegm form, and as per the S.D.C. of the host body it may be invading at that given time (see R.C.C. Bonuses for details).

Discorporation: When in energy form only people that can see the invisible or spirits can see a Hoarse Whisperer, which resembles a sphere of energy about the size of a grapefruit and looks identical to a Poltergeist, Haunting or Tectonic Entity. When destroyed in their energy form it simply vanishes with a tiny wisp of smoke. In its mist form it is roughly about the size of a football that also vanishes in a tiny wisp of smoke.

In its mucus form, when its S.D.C. is depleted it suddenly explodes, sending slimy, sticky bits of mucus everywhere, sticking to everything it lands on. Examination of this phlegm will only reveal common bacteria as well as the proteins, resins, mucins, sputum and fluids secreted by the human mucus membranes. Depletion of the S.D.C. of the phlegm body returns the Whisperer back to its energy form.

Threat level: x4; a Lesser Demon and Supernatural Predator.

Horror Factor: 10 to those who mistake it for a Poltergeist, 14

for those who know (or eventually discover/realize) what it truly is.

P.P.E.: 1D4+4

Size: In energy form it's about the size of a grapefruit. In its mucus form it is a shapeless phlegm blob weighing five to seven pounds (2.25-3 kg). In its mist form it is a shapeless mass about the size of a football and appears to look like a small, greenish or yellowish, vapor cloud.

Natural Abilities: In energy form the Whisperer can hover and fly at a speed of 30 mph (48 km), its natural state is invisible and it is impervious to physical and energy attacks.

Knows All Languages: Magically understands, reads and speaks all languages at 90%. May communicate via Telepathy, but may also speak using its host body. Either way its voice still has the hoarse and whispery quality it is known for.

Also see *Psionics*, which may be used in its energy, mist or mucus form, as well as when in control of its host body.

Limited Possessing and Mind Bonding (Special): Like the Possessing Entity, the Whisperer can take control of its living host, but only in a limited capacity. The victim must roll to save vs Possession on an hourly basis and need a 13 or higher (plus bonuses, if any). A failed roll means the victim's body is possessed and begins to feel the sensations of becoming severely ill. The symptoms induced will run the gamut of common effects similar to severe colds, flu and other ailments that weaken and wear down the human body. The victim is suddenly feeling extremely disoriented, physically exhausted and on death's door. He has no initiative, -4 to strike, parry, dodge and perform any combat moves, reduce attacks per melee round and Speed by half, and -50% on skill performance.

After an hour of being "infected," the victim will then need to make a saving throw of 10 or higher (P.E. bonuses included) on an hourly basis if fighting his "illness" (keeps pushing on through the day, staying active, etc.). But if the victim decides (or is forced by exhaustion) to get some rest (relaxing, going to bed, goes to the hospital, etc.), his saving throw raises to a 17 or higher! If the victim fails to save, then the Whisperer has begun its invasion of the victim's mind, reading and memorizing portions of his life. Things like surface thoughts, recent events in the last few weeks, and several skills that are important to that person are also temporarily acquired. It is also during this time the victim is suffocated to death by the Whisperer, drinking every last drop of his P.P.E. and taking over the host's body.

Inhabit A Host's Dead Body (special): Similar to the Dybbuk, the Whisperer can physically inhabit the recently deceased, controlling the motor functions of its dead host body, and use it to travel and carry out whatever agenda it may have. However, the Whisperer can only inhabit the body of the host it has killed, and must take possession of it immediately (within 1D4 minutes) upon its death. Once inhabited, the Whisperer can keep the body functioning at minimum capacity and can remain inhabited in the body for up to 1D6+2 weeks before the prolonged but eventual and inevitable rigor mortis sets in. Of course, the body itself will look like a "dead man walking" after a few weeks, and may be mistaken for a ghoul or a zombie. Whenever the Whisperer leaves the

body (either voluntarily or forced out), it severs all the ties it had on the body and will NEVER be able to inhabit that body again. While under its control, the body's P.S. becomes Supernatural when desired or needed.

Invasion Bonuses When in Mist Form: When the Whisperer voluntarily leaves a host body it has successfully invaded, it turns into a mist form that makes it easier to infect another human. If a human breathes in even a small portion of the mist, he automatically begins suffering the illness effects (no saving throw allowed). Even worse is that it may begin to start attempting an invasion immediately. The victim must roll to save vs invasion of 17 or higher every 20 minutes! The Whisperer can only turn into mist form when leaving a host body, and it can only remain in mist form for 1D4+1 minutes before it reverts back to its energy form. Mist form has a max floating speed of 15 miles an hour (24 km; Spd of 22), which is enough to chase almost anyone who tries to flee the mist on foot. Like you would expect from a mist form, it can move under cracks in a doorway, move through ventilation shafts, and anywhere else that air can get through.

Vulnerabilities: 1. While in energy form, mainly exorcism and psionic attacks are the only real weapons against it. If exorcised from a host body that hadn't been successfully invaded yet, the shock reverts it back to its energy form. However, at will the creature can lunge out of the host's mouth and try to attack/suffocate the caster, or revert back to energy form and flee the body. If exorcised from a host after it has successfully invaded it, it leaves in its mist form and can try to invade another human in this "preferred" form. A completely successful exorcism will send the Whisperer back to its own non-earthly realm, but the chance of a complete success is only 21%.

2. When in its mist form, plunging or swinging an object/weapon made out of pure iron into the mist does 2D6 damage to its Hit Points. Its mist form is also vulnerable to vacuums and heavy winds, and can be blown away from an area or even captured within a vacuum apparatus (however, it can turn back to its energy form at anytime to escape its prison).

3. The Whisperer does not like various incenses, and will stay clear of a room or area where they are burning while in energy or mist form. While they have no issues with incense while inside a host (in mucus form), if they are expelled from their host for any reason they will turn into an energy being immediately and flee the area. Frankincense, Rosemary, Cedarwood, Mugwort, Myrrh and Vervain are all known incenses that keep them at bay.

4. While in its mucus form it is vulnerable to all weapons, but they will only do half damage and mainly splatter its body around, leaving splotches and smears of mucus wherever it lands. Fire, however, does double damage to its mucus form, while magical and psionic fire do *triple* damage.

5. The Whisperer absolutely DESPISES Psychic Mediums. They cannot be invaded by the Whisperer (it is a form of possession, which Mediums are impervious to), and this frustrates them to no end. Even worse is that the Medium can see the Whisperer whether in its energy form or when possessing a host, and can injure the fiend with its Spirit Strike ability, even when it's hiding inside a host! The Spirit Strike

bypasses the S.D.C. of the host and affects the mucus S.D.C. of the Whisperer, and if the S.D.C. is depleted, it has lost its hold on the host and the shock of losing its phlegm body returns it back to energy form (does not leave via its more dangerous mist form). Even more salt in the wound is that the Medium can still attack the energy form once out of the host and destroy it.

R.C.C. Skills or Equivalent (do not improve with experience): Basic Math 80%, Escape Artist 65%, Land Navigation 80%, Streetwise 60%, Track Humans 45%, Tailing 75%, and Anthropology 60%.

Equivalent Level of Experience: 1D4+3

Attacks per Melee: Four physical attacks per melee round in a host body, or two psionic attacks (like the Possessing Entity, being locked in the physical form impairs its psychic abilities). Has four psionic attacks in energy or mist form, or in mucus form outside a host body.

Damage: Mainly relies on its psionics and physical attacks via its host. Its mucus form has no real physical combat ability besides attempting to smother/suffocate an opponent by plastering itself over their mouth and nose. Choking rules apply during this time.

R.C.C. Bonuses: +2 save vs magic, impervious to cold, possession and mind control. While in its Phlegm Form: The large phlegm blob moves by lunging and floating around the floor or on the walls and ceiling (either by levitation or a 10 foot (3 m) leaping ability, and sticks to surfaces like an insect). It has +2 to initiative, +3 to strike (lunging at its opponent to suffocate them), and +3 to dodge (it cannot parry in this form).

While in a Host's Body: The host has Supernatural P.S. and an additional 25 S.D.C. While it may act sick and weak, the host body is quite agile and moves with a P.P. of 18 and a Spd of 21! Combat bonuses include +3 to initiative & to strike, and +4 to parry & dodge.

Magic: None.

Psionics: Needs a 10 or higher to save vs psionic attack. I.S.P is 1D4x10+20.

Limited Psionic Powers: Empathy, Empathic Transmission, Levitation (varies), Telekinesis (varies), and Telepathy (4). The Whisperer also has a special form of Hypnotic Suggestion which can only be used while invading a host, and only to help calm/soothe another human in an attempt to invade their body next (still costs 6 I.S.P.). Psionics are equal to the Whisperer's level of experience.

Enemies: The Whisperer sees humans as either food or a source of amusement between meals. They also have a vendetta against psychics, especially Ghost Hunters, Psychic Sensitives, and Psychic Healers. They consider Psychic Mediums, however, to be their eternal enemies due to their abilities (see weakness section), and will go out of their way to fight or flee them, depending on their current mood, strength or bravery. If they have no specific agenda or they're not under anyone's control at the moment, they can and do go out of their way to torment their "rivals" by inhabiting friends/relatives or their psychic colleagues.

Allies: None, per se. They tend to be loners content with aimlessly wandering from host to host or carrying out some form of torment that it so loves to do. But they are summoned occasionally by evil sorcerers, demonic lords or evil gods for various purposes. As long as those purposes involve tormenting or killing someone, they will happily obey their summoners. They will struggle and fight if commanded to do anything otherwise, and if they get the chance they will try to possess the summoner out of spite and anger. But those who summon these vile creatures are "usually" smart enough to know this fact.

Habitat: Anywhere, but prefer places where food is plentiful (humans). They're especially fond of places where sickness is commonplace (third world countries, the slums of a city, hospitals, etc.), as these places help them literally hide out in the open while they invade host after host.

THE DARK BROTHERHOOD

An Adventure for Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Ed.

By Ed Emmer

This mystery is designed to be an entry level (1st and 2nd level) adventure for 3 to 5 players in *Beyond the Supernatural*, 2nd Ed. Ideally, it is intended as the catalyst event that unites the player characters for the first time against a common supernatural threat. This mystery takes place in the small city of Simmonsville, located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. (Game Master's note - in the original play test, this fictitious small city was situated in the Piedmont/Blue Ridge region in the northwest corner of South Carolina along the border with North Carolina. However, Game Masters should feel free to alter this location as desired.) Several NPCs are provided as both background for the current story and for inclusion in later ad-

ventures at the Game Master's discretion should you wish to continue to use Simmonsville in any future adventure setting.

The design of this adventure is intended to be non-linear in that once the players are presented with the mystery hooks detailed below, they can investigate each potential lead in any given order without disrupting the flow of the story. This mystery is set up in layers. With each clue, the players peel back one layer only to reveal another beneath. Only in this case, there are several different angles with which to peel back the layers, all of which will ultimately lead to the heart of the mystery.

Furthermore, at several points throughout the mystery, Game Master notes are provided to suggest what clues the players might learn if certain psychic powers are used throughout the investigation. Feel free to alter these clues to provide either more or less information for your players depending upon the circumstances of your adventure. Remember, the world of the psychic



is a vague, nebulous setting where what works in one instance might not work the same way twice. Above all, have fun with it.

Background Information about Simmonsville

Simmonsville is a small, fictitious city located in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in the southeastern United States (situated northwest of Greenville, SC in a nebulous region of woodland, small lakes, and rolling hills along the South Carolina/North Carolina border). There are two major points of interest in this small community, one old and one new. First, Simmonsville is home to Benhurst College, a small but prestigious, private liberal arts university founded in the latter half of the 1800's following the end of the Civil War. Benhurst College houses a small library with a noteworthy collection of colonial and pre-colonial texts, writings, and manuscripts, a small Department of Natural History with a trio of professors well versed in geology, paleontology, and life-sciences, and a very small Department of Alternative Sciences and Metaphysics (paranormal studies). Research into the history of Benhurst College will reveal that a number of well known figures in the fields of physics, geology, natural history, and metaphysics have either served as faculty or guest lectured there, including Albert Einstein and Victor Lazlo. Further digging will reveal that the founder of the college, Sirrus Benhurst, was a naturalist who spent part of his early career exploring the American Midwest, cataloging a wide variety of flora and fauna as well as fossilized life, much of

which is on display in the college's small Natural History Museum. Rumor has it that some of the species he discovered, both extinct and extant (still alive), are unknown to the world of biology.

Apart from Benhurst College, the other institute of special interest in Simmonsville is PENStar, a privately funded scientific research facility that has only recently moved into the area (within the past 8 months). Exactly what PENStar does is not generally known to the public, for although it provided a number of jobs during its initial construction, most of its employees are not locals, but rather scientists, engineers, and specialists from a wide variety of universities both in the United States and abroad. Rumors around Simmonsville suggest that they are some sort of biomedical firm involved in anything from stem cell research to cloning. Research into PENStar will reveal little other than it is privately funded by a number of generous private foundations, receives no federal funding (which means no federal guidelines in conducting research), and owns a great deal of land adjacent to their main facility. This research will also indicate that PENStar contributes to a variety of universities, including Benhurst College. Further research will reveal that the founder and CEO of PENStar is one Everret Manning, an independently wealthy businessman who has ties to several multi-national businesses, is reputed to be something of a globe-trotter, has degrees in biology, microbiology, and business, and is worth in excess of \$500 million. For more information on Simmonsville and the surrounding region, consult the section entitled "Map Notes" at the end of the adventure.

Player Character Background

In addition to any other NPCs the players might already have as initial contacts, all of them should have some connection to a Mr. Charles Haydon, a local freelance investigative journalist of some repute (perhaps he was a guest speaker at the school one of them teaches at, or he contacted one of them as research on a story he was working on, etc.). Game Masters - feel free to use any of the other NPCs presented in this adventure as potential contacts for the players to begin with. This could include being a colleague or student of one of the faculty members of Behurst College, working at PENStar in some minor capacity, having helped Detective Daniels of the local police on an earlier investigation, etc.

There will be two noteworthy events on the day that the mystery begins, which just happens to be on the Winter Solstice (December 22). The first is the top news story of the day: the reporting of the earthquake that happened at dawn on December 22nd (see "Mystery Hook #1" below), and the other will be a phone message that each character will receive at some point during the day (see "Mystery Hook #2" below).

Mystery Hooks

1: News report on the recent earthquake

"The top story this morning is the earthquake that literally "rocked" the region this morning around 7:30. Unless you were not already getting ready for work or holiday shopping and were a REALLY heavy sleeper, you probably felt the quake, which geologists rated as a 5.2 on the Richter scale. Some minor structural damage has been reported, mainly broken pipes, a few cracked foundations, and one report of a downed power line. For most of us, however, the real damage was being shaken out of a heavy sleep and maybe some broken glass and books falling off of shelves. Police report that the Highway 9 bridge over Laken River suffered some structural damage and are advising motorists to take alternate routes until road crews can stabilize it. The quake, with its epicenter located twenty miles north of Simonsville, was considered "severe" by local standards. Professor Steven Altman, of the Department of Natural History at Benhurst College, reports, however, that while quakes happen all the time in the region, most are too slight or too deep to be felt by humans. Still, while major ones like this morning's are rare, they do happen from time to time, owing to the geologic history of the region. Several locals reported that their pets became agitated just prior to the earthquake, which, according to Professor Altman, is also not uncommon. One local hunter living near the epicenter claims that his dogs became nearly violent prior to the quake, before settling down into a general state of nervous restlessness."

The news item will be accompanied by a map of the region showing the approximate location of the epicenter, as well as images of the minor damage done to local structures.

2: Phone message from Charles Haydon

"Hello? Damn, you're not there. This is Charles. Charles Haydon. We need to meet. That earthquake this morning . . . It was . . . No, I will explain it when I see you. Come to my home tonight at 9 PM. There will be others. This is very important. Bye."

If the players have caller-ID or some other way to track the call, they will get Charles' home phone number. Any attempt to call him during the day will result in reaching his answering machine. If any of the players come by his house during the day, they will find his driveway empty.

1st Layer Clues

1: Meeting at Charles Haydon's house at 9 PM

The players, some of whom may be meeting for the first time, will find Charles' house dark. The house is a three-story building with a number of windows, a front porch, and a driveway going along the side of the house all the way to the back yard (Haydon's car is now present). There is also a back porch, a tool shed, a fountain, and a garden in the back yard. As the players investigate, they will discover that the front door is locked. If the players look into the windows, they will notice that while some of the curtains are open, there does not appear to be a light on inside. As the players search the grounds, they will find that the back door is slightly ajar. If they spend a great deal of time outside the house, especially in the front yard, snooping around or openly talking/arguing about their course of action, Game Masters may want to have a neighbor call the police to investigate these "prowlers." (Charles Haydon lives in a nice neighborhood that is not accustomed to a large number of strangers acting suspiciously.)

As the players enter the house (the back door enters into a kitchen), they might notice that the alarm was not set and is still in stand-by mode (if a player does not ask about this, then it might be revealed on a Perception Roll of 10 or higher). There are no obvious signs of struggle in here or any other room on the first floor. The first floor is pretty typical; a large living room, dining room, what looks like a reading room (no books of particular interest), a bathroom, and a utility room. Should any of the players attempt to use any psychic abilities at this stage of the investigation, they may learn only minor clues (see below); however, most of the information will be revealed when they find the body.

Ultimately, the players will move upstairs. At the top of the stairs, there is a large landing with a balcony overlooking the stairs below. Off of this landing, there are five doors. Two lead to what look like guest bedrooms that show no signs of occupation. The third door leads to Charles Haydon's master bedroom. While this room does show signs of occupancy, there is nothing of note in this room. The fourth door leads to a large, full bathroom and the final door, which is the only door that is also slightly ajar, is Haydon's private library and is where they will find his body. Other than a few bookshelves, the only other

thing of interest on the landing is a grandfather clock and another set of stairs that climb to the third floor. On the third floor landing, the players will only find a locked door that leads to an attic.

When the players enter Haydon's private library, they will immediately notice his ritualistically murdered body lying naked on the floor in the center of the room. At this time, the psychic characters will feel their base I.S.P. surge to the level of Investigation (x2) for the duration of the encounter.

Haydon's body is found naked and spread-eagled on the floor of his library. Players who are not in a profession accustomed to a human corpse (Medical Doctor, Coroner, Police Detective, etc.) will need to roll a saving throw versus a Horror Factor of 14 or be forced to leave the room for 1D4 rounds until they can overcome their initial revulsion. Players who fail their Horror Factor saving throw poorly (rolling 1-4) will experience nausea and vomit on the spot and will be unable to enter the room for the duration of the encounter.

Players with any medical skills will immediately notice that it looks like Charles Haydon's heart, tongue, and eyes have been removed. A successful Crime Scene Investigation or Forensics skill roll will reveal that the organs were removed with surgical precision. A circle drawn in blood (Haydon's) surrounds the body so that it forms a closed pentagram (with the body being the five-pointed star) and there are several strange symbols also drawn in blood painted on his naked skin. There are five small pools of melted black wax just outside of the circle at each point of the star (next to Haydon's feet, hands, and head). The wax is cool to the touch, suggesting that it has been some time since the candles that made them were lit. If the players make a successful skill roll in Lore: Magic, Lore: Magic, Arcane or Understanding the Principles of Magic (Parapsychologist/Arcanist special skill) they get the feeling that the symbols on the body seem familiar; however, they will need to take pictures of the body or sketch the symbols, in order to further investigate them (see "Investigating the significance of the ritual killing of Charles Haydon").

The library itself appears out of place in today's modern world. Floor to ceiling bookshelves dominate the walls except for a single window that looks out over the front street (curtains drawn) and where the door exits back onto the landing. The books on the shelves all appear to be about a variety of topics, including crime, psychology, and parapsychology. There are two chairs in the room; one is a comfortable sitting chair with a small table next to it and the other is a luxurious leather chair in front of a large wooden desk and with its back to the window. There is also a pair of lamps, a floor lamp next to the reading table and a small banker's desk lamp on the desk. There are two things of interest on the top of the desk; one is a very modern looking computer with a flat screen monitor. If any of the players turn on the computer, they will find that it is password protected. Though a successful Computer Hacker skill roll will get around this, there is nothing of interest on the computer anyway.

The other item of interest on the desk is what looks like a personal journal. If the players flip through it quickly, they will notice that several pages seem to be missing directly preceding the final journal entry (see "Investigating the journal entries" for the details of the pages if the players take the time to read them or somehow gain access to the journal entries later). The desk

drawers themselves do not contain anything of real interest other than a small computer printer hooked up to the desktop computer.

Should any of the player characters utilize their psychic abilities during this encounter, the following possible psychic premonitions may also be revealed depending upon the P.C.C.s present:

- ▶ Autistic Psychic - Seeing the symbols, the character will begin chanting, "The Dark One punishes!"

- ▶ Diviner - The pattern of blood on the floor will appear to look like a misshapen, demonic animal-like creature composed of multiple body parts (If the Diviner possesses Lore: Demons and Monsters and calls for a skill roll made at -15% he may think it resembles a Boschala or Hell Hound).

- ▶ The Pyrokinetic Psionic Power Fire Omen will cause a lit flame to lie flat (either humans or a supernatural creature under human control is responsible for the killing).

- ▶ Medium - Auditory Reading will hear "... meddling in the affairs of the Brotherhood ...". Olfactory Omen will smell rotting human flesh (murder), and Object Read the Dead will reveal a completely hairless, pale human face as the one responsible for the murder (as will the Sensitive Psionic Power Object Read). Spirit Channeling will not work as the mystic symbols inscribed on his body also prevent contact with Haydon's spirit.

- ▶ The Sensitive Psionic Power Clairvoyance will reveal that the killing was indeed done in this room and that it was part of a blood sacrifice to fuel a magic ritual as well as placate a demonic entity. A Clairvoyant Flash will warn of the impending arrival of the police. A Clairvoyant vision will also reveal the same hairless pale face described above.

- ▶ The Sensitive Psionic Power Precognition will also warn of the arrival of the police as well as provide a brief vision of the same demonic creature described above.

- ▶ The Sensitive Psionic Powers of Presence Sense, Sense Evil, and Sense Magic will all reveal the presence of a moderately powerful supernatural entity in the vicinity (the attic).

- ▶ Sensitive Psychic - Any Sensitive Psychic P.C.C. will automatically sense the presence of the Dark Servant in the attic when they enter the house. However, the Dark Servant is under orders to wait until Haydon's associates arrive and are arrested, and is to flee if anyone enters the attic. It will not directly fight any of the players at this time and it will not be present when the police search the house. For stats on the Dark Servant, see the section entitled "The meeting in the park."

If any additional psychic powers are used, it is up to the Game Master to determine exactly what else might be revealed, though don't forget to make the clues sufficiently cryptic and vague.

2: Arrested and held for questioning

If the players are in the house for more than 20 minutes, they will suddenly see the tell-tale flashes of blue and red lights outside warning them that the police have arrived. The Sensitive Psionic Power Sixth Sense will NOT warn the players of this as the arrival of the police is not considered a life-threatening event. They will find the house surrounded by a number of police (two for every one character present). Force will not be used

unless the players resist arrest. They will be told that they are under arrest for breaking and entering and for the murder of Charles Haydon. Players who are directly involved in law enforcement may be able to talk their way out of being arrested at first, but once the police officers find Haydon's body, no amount of fast talking will work. Players with a known criminal record will immediately be arrested without question. No further information will be forthcoming from the police as they are handcuffed and taken to lock up. As the players are taken away, they will notice a CSI (crime scene investigation) unit arrive at the house. This is actually a local doctor/coroner who does work for the police, as Simmonsville is too small for a real, full-time CSI unit.

After spending several hours in lock up, the players will be interrogated one at a time by Detective William Daniels. Daniels will ask them routine questions about how they know Haydon, what they were doing at his house, why they were carrying whatever unusual or illegal items they might have had in their possession (weapons, firearms, Psi-Mechanical devices), why they did not call the police at the first sign of trouble, etc. How this plays out will depend greatly upon the players' role-playing skills as well as any appropriate skill rolls or the use of any psychic powers the players may use during the interrogation (don't forget that there is at least one other detective watching the interrogation behind a one-way mirror). At some point during the interrogation, the players will find out that it was an anonymous tip that led the police to investigate Haydon's murder. (The tip came from the cultists who knew from Haydon's journal that the player characters would be meeting with him. A trio of cultists will follow the players whether they are arrested or not - a successful Surveillance or Tailing skill roll will reveal their presence.)

Ultimately, the players will be released the next morning when it is obvious that they could not have committed the murder (time of death is earlier than when the players were in the house and there is no sign of the murder weapon or blood or missing organs on any of the players). However, Detective Daniels will also tail the players even after their release (a successful Surveillance or Tailing skill roll is necessary to reveal his presence).

Detective William Daniels - 5th level Ordinary Human.

Occupation: Police Detective.

Age: 35

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 18, M.A. 10, P.S. 18, P.P. 16, P.E. 10, P.B. 11, Spd 25.

Size: 6 feet, 2 inches (1.9 m) tall; 180 pounds (81 kg).

Natural A.R.: N/A

Hit Points: 28

S.D.C.: 31

P.P.E.: 4

Base I.S.P.: 0

Horror Factor: N/A

Attacks per Melee: 5 physical.

Bonuses: +3 to strike (+5 with blunt), +5 to parry (+7 with knives), +5 to dodge, +5 to pull punch, +3 to roll with impact, +2 to disarm, +1 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 to

save versus magic, +3 to Perception, +2 to save versus psionics and insanity.

Damage: Night Stick (1D8+3), Automatic Pistols (4D6), Karate Punch (2D4+3), and Karate Kick (2D6+3).

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Expert, W.P. Hand Guns (+2 to strike), W.P. Shotgun (+2 to strike), W.P. Blunt, Athletics: General, Running, Surveillance (65%), Streetwise (46%), Prowl (55%), Intelligence (58%), Crime Scene Investigation (70%), Combat Driving, Automobile (80%), Lore: Cults and Secret Societies (50%), Streetwise: Weird (60%), Law (80%).

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Appearance: Tall and moderately muscular, with dirty blonde hair and light brown eyes.

Detective Daniels has some minor experience with the occult as a result of several bizarre killings that were ultimately attributed to a serial killer. If the players role-play their answers carefully when questioned about what they were doing in Haydon's house on the night of the murder, then they might be able to convince Detective Daniels that they can be of help and might even be allowed access to some of the evidence (pictures of the symbols or even photocopies of the journal) to help in the investigation. After all, this is a small town and the players are all local experts on the occult. At the Game Master's discretion, Detective Daniels may be one of the initial contacts for one of the player characters, which may be a bridge to allow the players access to the evidence (this was the case in the original play test). Otherwise, when the players' personal possessions are returned, they will find that any copies of the symbols as well as the film from any cameras have been removed. This will make investigating these leads much more difficult unless a successful Perception/Memory roll is made (16+) or unless the Sensitive Psionic power of Total Recall is used.

If the players leave Charles Haydon's house before the police arrive, one or more of them may be picked up two or three days later as a result of their fingerprints being found at the crime scene (especially if their occupation is one in which their fingerprints might already be on file). Only characters that make a successful Streetwise or Crime Scene Investigation skill roll will be able to successfully avoid leaving any prints or clear away any evidence before the police arrive, and then only if they think to do so.

3: A follow-up news story on the earthquake

The next morning, one or more of the players will either read the following story in the newspaper or see it on the morning news.

"Two hunters and one backpacker have been missing since the night of the earthquake. Local police believe that the hunters, missing two nights now, might have gotten lost or suffered some accident and are planning to launch a manhunt in the region. The backpacker has been missing since the night after the quake and is believed to have been trapped and/or killed by falling debris or a rock slide triggered by the quake (this report is accompanied by still pictures of the three missing persons).

"Local hunter George Dunlow, however, offered a different theory for the disappearance of the missing persons." (At this point, the scene cuts to a shot of George Dunlow outside his country home.)

"I know what's been killin' them fellers an' it ain't no rock slide nor wild animal, least ways none that live in these here parts." (Cut back to the news desk).

"Local police have dismissed Mr. Dunlow's suggestions as nonsense and are planning to launch a manhunt into the region. If you have any knowledge as to the whereabouts of these individuals, please contact the local police at . . ." (the local police number is provided at the bottom of the screen).

Game Masters, obviously modify this story if the players read it in the paper or hear it on the radio.

2nd Layer Clues

1: Investigating the significance of the ritual killing of Charles Haydon

Two obvious things stand out about the nature of Haydon's murder - the positioning of the body and removal of the eyes, tongue, and heart; and the symbols painted on the body in Haydon's blood. If the players do not have access to pictures or sketches of the symbols and have no way of recalling the details precisely (Total Recall), they will need to make a Perception Roll of 16+ in order to remember the information accurately. However, if the players have befriended Detective Daniels, then he may have already solicited their aid and given them access to photocopies of the scene of the crime as well as the pages from Haydon's journal.

Characters making a successful Lore: Cults and Secret Societies skill roll will learn that they have something to do with an obscure cult called the Dark Brotherhood and are usually left as a warning to others on the body of a member who has betrayed them. They are also supposed to consign the betrayer's soul to damnation. Further information about the Dark Brotherhood may also be learned by investigating the book entitled *Cults and Secret Societies: America's Dark Traditions* (see "At the Library").

Characters making a successful Lore: Magic, Lore: Magic, Arcane or Understanding the Principles of Magic (Parapsychologist/Arcanist special skill) will learn that the removal of the organs in such a manner is supposed to prevent contact with the person's spirit as well as send the person's soul to some dark master (Ancient Evil or Alien Intelligence).

Unless the players are officially helping in the investigation, however, they will not have access to the coroner's report. If the players do receive a copy of it (or, through the successful use of the Computer Hacking skill, managed to access the coroner's files), they will learn the following information. The removal of the organs was done with surgical precision and no parts of them were left behind. There is not enough blood either in the victim or on the floor to account for the total amount that should be in the human body (i.e. something must have removed at least some of Haydon's blood). Death was caused by tissue trauma and extreme blood loss associated with the removal of the victim's heart. It is likely that the victim was alive when

they first removed his eyes and tongue. The blood painted on the body and the floor matches the victim's. There are no prints on the body (other than those of the players if any of them touched Haydon's body). Death occurred around 8:00 PM. Still waiting for the toxicology and blood reports, but the coroner expects them to come up clean.

2: Investigating the journal entries

If the players elect to read the journal in Haydon's library before the police arrive, they will have already learned the following information. If not (or if they only took pictures and had the film confiscated), then they will only have access to this if they are directly aiding Detective Daniels.

Entry dated December 5th: "I received a call from Jeremy Alston today. Haven't talked with him in ages, not since Jessica. He sounded pretty disturbed. Said he wanted to talk to me about his son, Jacob. I told him to go to hell."

Entry dated December 7th: "Jeremy called back. Pleaded with me to hear him out. Said that this had nothing to do with Jessica. That his son was involved in something that had him worried. Wouldn't talk about it over the phone. Asked to meet at my house tonight around 7 PM."

Entry dated December 8th: "Jeremy came by last night and told me about his son. It seems Jacob and his father have had a falling out (I know all about that with Jeremy). Jacob has run off to join some cult and he wants me to investigate them for him. Begged me to help, for Jessica's sake. I almost threw him out when he pulled that one, but I owe it to her."

Entry dated December 10th: "I have just come from "Hidden Treasures" where I ordered a few books to help in my investigation of Jeremy's son: Cults and Secret Societies: America's Dark Traditions and Ritual Magic in the 20th Century. Cleinfel says they should be here in a few days."

Entry dated December 14th: "The books arrived today and I am going to pick them up this afternoon. I think there may be a link between the cult Jacob got into to and a much older cult. I hope one of these books will make the connection."

Missing Entries

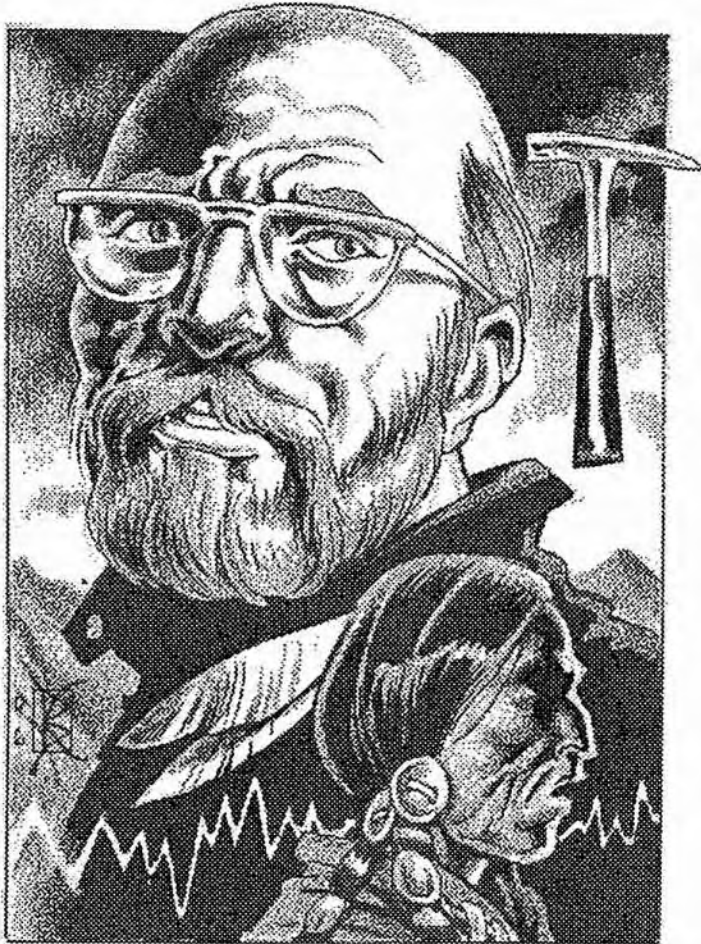
Entry dated late afternoon December 22nd: "I tried to call (lists names of the players), but they were not home. I hope they get the message. I need to reveal the truth behind the quake and alert them to the threat I have witnessed before it is too late for me".

This is the last entry; only blank pages follow. It is worth noting that there was no sign of either of the books Haydon's journal mentions in the study on the night of the murder.

3: A history of earthquakes in the region

If the players want to investigate the earthquake more, they will need to find a source of information about the regional geology. One possible avenue is to browse through old copies of the local newspaper, though this will require quite some time (not to mention several successful Research skill rolls). It is also likely that players will try to conduct internet-based research (requiring successful skill rolls in Research and Computer Operation). However, while they may learn some of the information (earthquake history of the region, general location of ALL of the regional epicenters), they are going to have spend more time

(and make more successful skill rolls) to make the connections that they might otherwise learn if they can contact an authority on the topic, such as the resident geologist in Simmonsville, Professor Altman of the Department of Natural History at Benhurst College.



However, as it is currently winter break, they will need to track him down (which is actually not too difficult as not only is he listed in the local phone book, but also through the college's web page, where he has an email link which he checks daily). If they managed to contact Professor Altman, he will be more than willing to meet with them at his office at the college later that day. If not, then the players may have to wait a few days as by now, it will be the day before Christmas.

When they finally meet with Professor Altman, he will be able to explain to them that there is actually an interesting history of earthquake activity in the region that he told the news reporter about but was left out of the original news cast. He will go on to explain that "major" earthquakes, like the one from the other morning, seem to occur in December every 23 years almost like clockwork and are almost always at dawn or dusk.

He will then go on to explain that local Native American legend holds that the location of the quakes is supposed to be a place of "dark medicine" (successful Lore: Geomancy and Ley Lines skill roll will suggest that this reference could mean a Ley Line Nexus. A successful Lore: American Indians skill roll will also indicate that this place is well known in local native history as a place of darkness and ill repute).

Finally, reports of missing persons are frequent in the days and weeks following the 23-year quakes, though as with the

present, these are mainly dismissed as accidents related to the instability of local rock outcroppings weakened by the earthquake.

Professor Altman will gladly show them the location of the epicenter on a local topographic map of the region, though he will point out that the site is on land owned by PENStar. Any attempts to contact PENStar to gain access to their property will put them in touch with an office assistant who will give the players the run-around about filling out paperwork, signing damage and injury waivers, checking with higher-level officials, etc. Ultimately, it will mean that any attempt to gain legal access to the site of the epicenter will not be forthcoming.

Professor Steven Altman - 4th level Ordinary Human.

Occupation: Professor of Geology.

Age: 51

Alignment: Principled.

Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 14, M.A. 15, P.S. 13, P.P. 7, P.E. 14, P.B. 11, Spd 15.

Size: 5 feet 7 inches (1.7 m) tall; 190 pounds (85.5 kg).

Natural A.R.: N/A **P.P.E.:** 2

Hit Points: 28 **Base I.S.P.:** 0

S.D.C.: 21 **Horror Factor:** N/A

Attacks per Melee: 2 physical or 3 non-combat actions.

Bonuses: +1 to dodge, +3 to Perception, +1 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 to save vs magic.

Damage: Fist (1D4), Rock Hammer (1D8), Field Knife (1D6).

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Computer Operation (95%), Technical Writing (71%), Cryptography (66%), History (93%/73%), Research (86%), Geology (71%), Geophysics (71%), Paleontology (71%), Biology (81%), Gemology (61%), Lore: Native American Indians (56%), Lore: Superstitions (61%).

Magic: None.

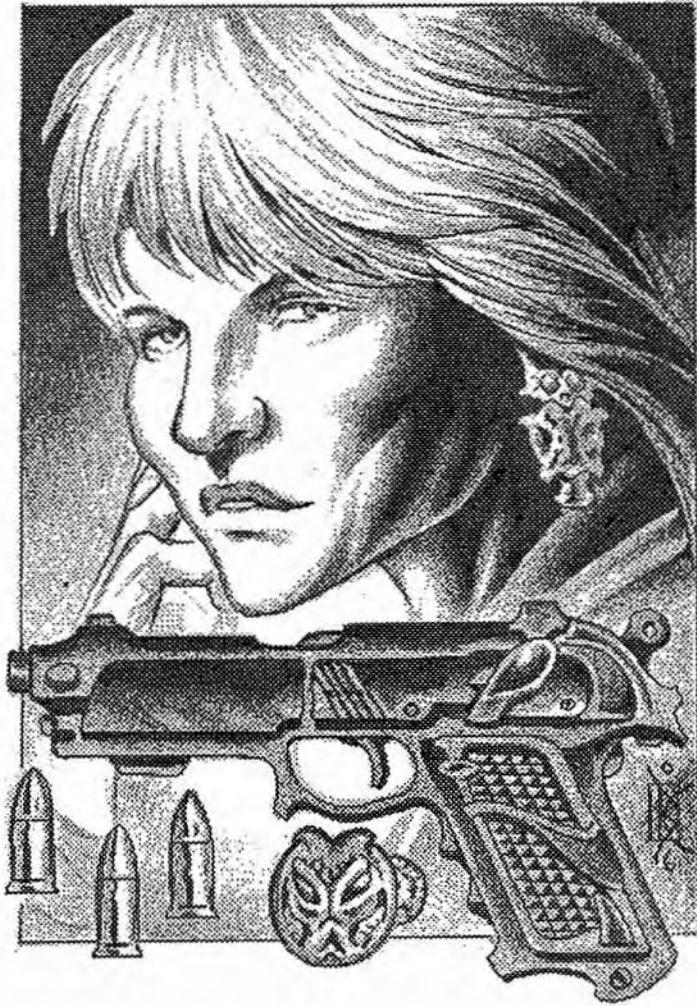
Psionics: None.

Appearance: Short and bald, slightly overweight, with a full reddish-gray beard and green eyes.

Additional help from Benhurst College may also come in the form of Professor Angel Nielan. Angel has a Ph.D. in psychology and parapsychology and is the chair of the college's very small Department of Alternative Sciences and Metaphysics. She will also know something of the region's interesting history with regards to the supernatural and paranormal and may be a useful source of information as the players peel back additional layers of the mystery.

On a personal note, Angel was an undergraduate student at Benhurst College when Victor Lazlo spoke as a guest lecturer several months prior to his disappearance in 1984 and was greatly influenced by the brilliant parapsychologist's thoughts so much so that she shifted her career from simple psychology to parapsychology and the occult. Far from a genius, she is still very bright and knowledgeable in the occult and supernatural and is something of an authority on the history of the paranormal in the southeastern United States. Though she has a few connections with the Lazlo Agency, she seldom takes her work into the field to directly confront the supernatural. Rather, she

has offered her aid to the agency in the form of research and an authority on the occult and paranormal in the region.



Professor Angel Nielan - 5th level Parapsychologist.

Occupation: Professor of Parapsychology.

Age: 42

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 14, M.A. 11, P.S. 13, P.P. 17, P.E. 20, P.B. 15, Spd 11.

Size: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.8 m) tall; 145 pounds (65.3 kg).

Natural A.R.: N/A

Hit Points: 38

S.D.C.: 15

P.P.E.: 12

Base I.S.P.: 11 (x2, x3, x4, x6), minor psionic.

Horror Factor: N/A

Attacks per Melee: 5 physical or psionic.

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with the punch, +1 to disarm, +3 to Perception, +3 to save versus Horror Factor, +3 to save versus possession, +3 to save versus hypnosis, +5 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus curses, +2 to save versus mind control drugs, +3 to save versus poison, +10% to save versus coma/death.

Damage: Fist (1D4), Karate Kick (1D8), Silver Knife (1D6), Automatic Pistol (4D6). Angel keeps a supply of silver bullets in her home just in case.

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Recognize Real Psychic Abilities (72%), Recognize Mind Control and Possession (62%), Principles of Magic (66%), Read Magic (48%), Anthropology (75%), Lore: Cults & Secret Societies (55%), Lore: Demons and Monsters (70%), Lore: Ghosts and Entities (70%), Lore: Magic Arcane (55%/75%), Lore: Mythology (70%), Lore: Paranormal and Psionics (75%), Lore: Geomancy (65%), Parapsychology (80%), Psychology (80%), Research (75%), History (86%/66%), Computer Operation (87%), Literacy: Latin, Greek, and Ancient Egyptian (70%), W.P. Automatic Pistol (+2), Hand to Hand: Basic.

Magic: Knows a small number of magic rituals, though she has never tried them for fear that she might unleash something she cannot control. She also secretly fears that she might enjoy the experience too much and start down a path she feels will lead to corruption.

Psionics: A minor psionic with the following abilities: Meditation (0), Sixth Sense (2), Medical Hypnosis (2-4), Sense Evil (2), See the Invisible (4), See Aura (6), Sense Magic (3).

Appearance: Angel is attractive in a bookish sort of way. She has long auburn hair that is usually tied up in a bun, her blue eyes are distorted behind large glasses, and she has never worn makeup in her adult life. Though she would be moderately attractive if she tried, her personal insecurities will not allow her to see herself as pretty.

Angel Nielan will not be as easy to contact as Professor Altman during the current semester break, and players will need to use whatever connections they might have already made in the area and at the university to attempt to contact her. If approached, she will initially be hostile as she knows that some of her fellow faculty members ridicule her behind her back. If the players can convince her that they are genuinely interested in investigating the paranormal, she will cautiously help them.

4: News report on the murder of Charles Haydon

The afternoon following the murder of Charles Haydon, there will be an item in the evening news (as well as the next morning's newspaper) that will report on the murder. Most of the details have been left out as the investigation is still under way.

"Local investigative journalist Charles Haydon was murdered yesterday evening in his home in the upscale Greenborough neighborhood. So far, police have not revealed any details of the murder, though they are asking for anyone with information regarding the killing to contact them. Mr. Haydon is best known for his hard edge journalism which made him more than a few enemies over time and earned him the respect of those who have been helped by his efforts. Mr. Haydon, killed at the age of 53, has no known relatives."

3rd Layer Clues

1: Seeking out "Hidden Treasures"

The players will have no trouble locating the rare bookstore mentioned in Haydon's journal. It is owned by a man named

Marlon Cleinfel. Marlon is a suspicious man who will not offer up his information easily, especially if the players mention their association with the late Charles Haydon. However, if the players make it worth his while (i.e. offer to buy a rare and/or expensive book from him), he will reluctantly tell them what he knows about the two books. Unfortunately, he has no more copies in his store.

As far as *Cults and Secret Societies: America's Dark Traditions*, Marlon cannot tell them much. He has never read the book personally and knows very little about it. He will, however, offer to put out a search for another copy of it and offer to acquire it for them (this will cost over \$500.00 and take several days to acquire - if the players take him up on this offer and pay up front, he will be more willing to share the rest of his information). If the players explain that they need it much sooner, Cleinfel will suggest researching the occult section in the library at Benhurst College.

He will be able to tell the players more about the book entitled *Ritual Magic in the 20th Century* (especially if they have already garnered his favor by offering to purchase an expensive book), though he will also sadly explain that he does not have a copy of it. Cleinfel will, however, explain that he has personally read that book and can provide the players with a general overview of what it was about, explaining that the book described the significance of certain rituals and practices still believed to be used by cults in the modern world. Unlike pop-culture books on the subject, however, the book was authored by a university professor with an extensive background in paranormal research and parapsychology and was believed by many in the "industry" to be very accurate in its descriptions of how the rituals were supposed to have worked and what the purpose behind them might have been. The book, however, was reputed to have only described the rituals, not detailed the actual formulae for performing them.

Unbeknownst to the players, Marlon is a Psychic Sensitive who keeps his abilities very hidden lest it cost him business or draw attention to himself. Still, he does use his abilities from time to time, though mostly just in the acquisition of new inventory for his store.

Marlon Cleinfel - 3rd level Psychic Sensitive and owner of Hidden Treasures.

Occupation: Antiquities Rare Book Dealer.

Age: 31

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 14, M.A. 21, P.S. 7, P.P. 9, P.E. 11, P.B. 13, Spd 10.

Size: 5 feet, 7 inches (1.7 m) tall; 145 pounds (65.3 kg).

Natural A.R.: N/A **S.D.C.:** 19

Hit Points: 20 **P.P.E.:** 2

Base I.S.P.: 13 (x2, x4, x6, x12) Master psionic.

Horror Factor: N/A

Attacks per Melee: 2 physical or 3 non-combat actions.

Bonuses: +5% to skills (already factored in), 65% to invoke trust and intimidation, +1 to dodge, +3 to save versus possession, +3 to save versus mind altering drugs, magical charms, and mental confusion, +1 to save versus magic, +3 to save versus Horror Factor, +3 to Perception.

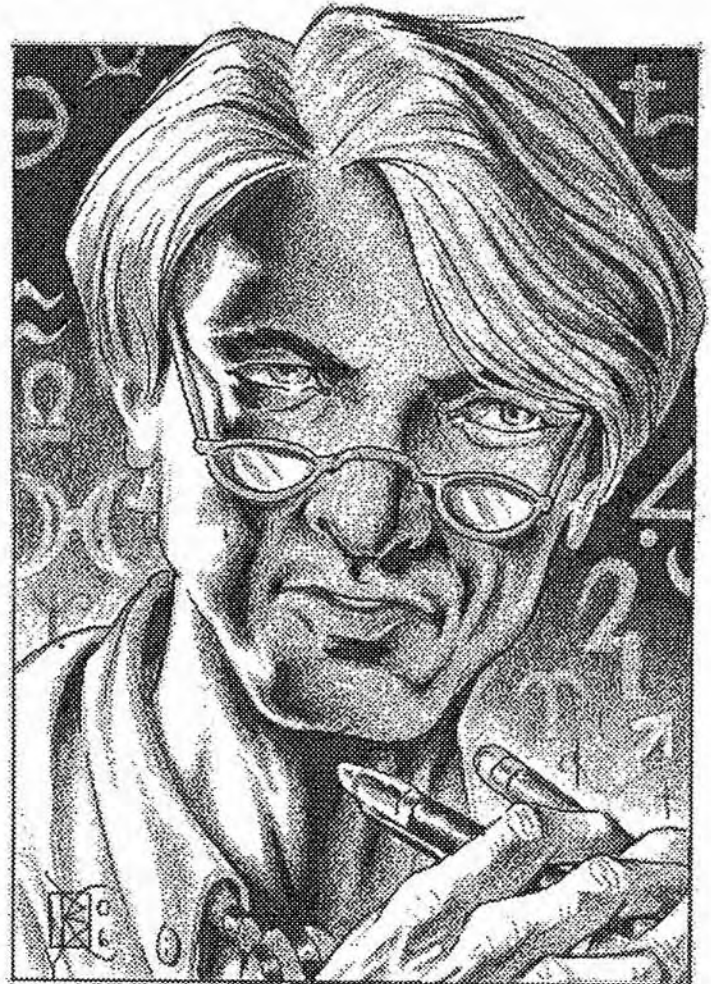
Damage: Revolver (4D6+4). Hidden under his counter or on his person whenever out of his shop.

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: W.P. Hand Guns (+1 to strike), Appraise Antiques (60%), History (93%/73%), Lore: Magic, Arcane (60%/80%), Lore: Mythology (65%), Lore: Magic (65%), Research (65%), Art (60%), Recognize Weapon Quality (55%), Gemology (52%), and is Literate in several modern and ancient languages - Game Master's choice (67%). As a Psychic Sensitive, Marlon also possesses the abilities of Sense Supernatural Evil (400 foot/122 m radius), Open Oneself to the Supernatural (800 foot/244 meter radius), Recognize Possession (65%), and Recognize Magic Enchantment (45%).

Magic: Lore only.

Psionics: Meditation: Advanced (2), Empathy (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Mask I.S.P. and Psionics (4), Object Read (6), See Aura (6), Speed Reading (2), Psychic Literacy (7), Total Recall (3), and Thought Reading (10).

Appearance: Marlon is short and skinny. He looks older than he really is (appears to be in his late 40's when he is actually in his mid 30's) with his graying hair, bookish looks, and spectacles balanced on his nose.



Game Masters - Feel free to embellish Hidden Treasures as you see fit. Cleinfel only recently inherited the store from an old relative and has had little time to catalogue more than a tenth of the store's inventory. As such, while he is very skilled at searching for copies of books through outside sources, there is a trea-

sure trove of old texts collecting dust under his very nose about which he knows next to nothing. That is not to say that Marlon Cleinfel can be bluffed or duped into selling a priceless book for next to nothing; he knows value when he sees it. It simply means that Marlon has no idea of exactly what different books he has. As such, it may be worthwhile for a player to spend several hours browsing the shelves and stacks in Hidden Treasures. Who knows what two-hundred year old treatise on the occult the players might find? It will cost them, but the information may be worthwhile. Once again, it is purely up to the Game Master exactly what the players might find. If the Psychic Sensitive power Sense Magic is used, the psychic will get a vague sense of magic in the shop, but not strong enough to pinpoint an exact source (just enough to tantalize the players).

2: At the Library

Players will need to have some connection to Benhurst College in order to gain access to the library (either as faculty or a student) or they will need to get someone who knows them to vouch for them (i.e. Professor Altman). Players will not find the book *Cults and Secret Societies: America's Dark Traditions* listed amongst the regular collection of books in the occult section of the library; however, players making a successful Research skill roll will learn that there is a copy of the book in the library's restricted section. Unfortunately, the players will not be allowed access to the restricted section without a letter from a faculty member (again, if the players are on good terms with Professor Altman, this will not be too difficult, but they will need to explain why they need it before he will help them).

If the players attempt to research the Dark Brotherhood cult in some other book in the general occult section (after making another successful Research skill roll), the players will learn that the cult is mentioned in a reference to the witch hysteria that occurred at the same time as the Salem Witch Trials in colonial America. Little else is known about the secret society other than it is believed to have survived the witch trials and continued at least up through the American Revolution. A reference is also made to the book entitled *Cults and Secret Societies: America's Dark Traditions*.

If the players manage to gain access to the restricted section of the library's collection and, with another successful Research skill roll, find a copy of *Cults and Secret Societies: America's Dark Traditions*, published in 1948, they will learn much more. (A successful Seduction or Streetwise skill roll along with creative role-playing might also gain the player characters access to the restricted section, as would the successful use of certain psychic powers such as Hypnotic Suggestion if the players do not have a letter from Professor Altman.)

In this book, there is an entire chapter devoted to the Dark Brotherhood, from its origins back in Old Europe, its migration to the Americas during the colonial era, its connection to the Salem Witch Trials, and its continuation after the hysteria died down. The Dark Brotherhood traces its origins back to a religion espousing a return to the more naturalistic ways of pagan pre-Christian Europe called the True Path. The book will go on to suggest that the True Path was actually an amalgamation of several Roman and Greek religious practices and rituals. As the followers of the True Path were persecuted in England, they fled to the Americas with others seeking freedom from religious in-

tolerance. After several bizarre events were attributed to the cult, they were further persecuted by the Puritanical leaders in the colonies until they were forced to hide their activities. Though originally benign, the cult took a darker turn following the witch trials and renamed themselves the Dark Brotherhood, believed to be a reference to the Dark One, one of the pagan deities the True Path originally venerated. The Dark One is reputed to be the embodiment of death and the end of all things as symbolized by the Winter Solstice. Though most scholars believe the cult to have died out before or during the American Revolution, the author believes them to still be at least partially active from time to time throughout history as a result of several symbols found marked or painted on ritualistically killed bodies. These symbols, he claims, are perversions of older pagan nature symbols that can be traced back to documented rituals of the True Path. Pictures of several of the symbols found in the book are similar to the symbols found on Haydon's body. Finally, a footnote at the end of the book notes that the author died "under mysterious circumstances" shortly before the book was published.

Any character coming into long-term possession of this book and studying it intently will be granted a one time bonus of +10% to their Lore: Cults and Secret Societies skill.

Further research through the restricted section on the topic of the Dark One will uncover a book entitled *Forgotten Pagan Deities of Old Europe*. Mentioned briefly only as a select group of obscure nature deities, the book describes veneration of the Dark One involving sacrifice (possibly human), placation of "the one without form," and a special ceremonial event happening once every 20 to 25 years. No additional information can be found about the Dark One or "the one without form."

Unfortunately for the players, *Ritual Magic in the 20th Century* is not listed as part of the library's collection, general or restricted.

At some point during the investigation at the library, the players will feel their Threat Level increase to x2. Almost immediately, the players will be attacked by three cult members who have been tailing them ever since the night of Haydon's murder. These are basic street thugs who have been lured into the cult and serve as brainless muscle and little more. They have no experience in the supernatural and have no idea what they are actually involved in. They are only under orders to follow and report, but being simple minded thugs, they have decided to take it upon themselves to assault and rob the players.

3 Members of the Dark Brotherhood Cult - equal to 2nd level Ordinary Humans.

Occupation: Criminal: Thug/Gang Member.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 13, M.A. 10, P.S. 19, P.P. 13, P.E. 14, P.B. 13, Spd 10.

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

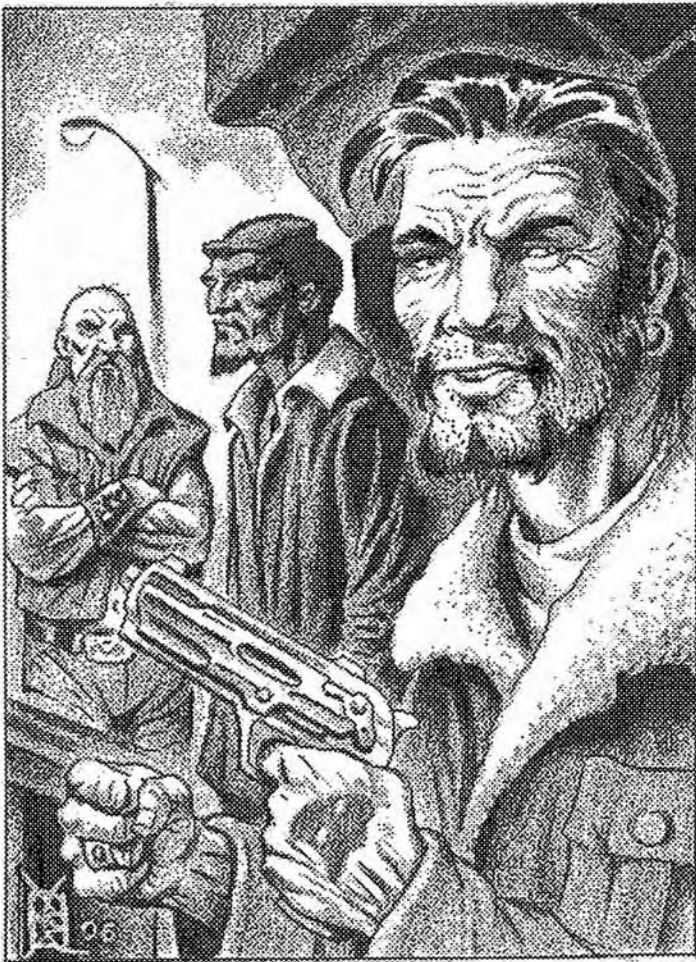
Natural A.R.: N/A **P.P.E.:** 18

Hit Points: 17 **Base I.S.P.:** 0

S.D.C.: 36 **Horror Factor:** N/A

Attacks per Melee: 4 physical.

Bonuses: +1 to strike with knives and blunt, +3 to parry (+4 with knives and blunt), +3 to dodge, +4 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.



Damage: Knives (1D6+4) and Automatic Pistols (4D6).

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Hand Guns (+1 to strike), W.P. Knives, W.P. Blunt, Body Building and Weightlifting, Athletics: General, Tailing (45%), Streetwise (44%), Prowl (45%).

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Appearance: Typical strong arm thugs dressed in street clothes. Each bears a tattoo of a black executioner's hood (a successful Cult and Secret Societies skill roll will suggest that this might be a modern symbol associated with the Dark Brotherhood). These low-lives are some of the muscle of the Dark Brotherhood. They will not fight to the death and will flee as soon as any obvious signs of powerful psychic or magical powers are displayed (and report them back to the leaders of the cult with some lie about being spotted and ambushed by the players. They will not be believed and will end up being killed for not following orders).

If this encounter is particularly violent or destructive, the police may end up being called in to investigate the disturbance at the library (however, since it is winter break, there is actually almost nobody on campus). How this plays out will depend upon what kind of relationship the players already have with the police and Detective Daniels.

3: Interviewing Jeremy Alston

Players will be able to find Jeremy Alston's address in the local directory with relative ease. He will not be willing to talk

with anyone, however, unless they mention either Charles Haydon or his son. Jeremy Alston is a 57 year old male with a muscular build and gray, thinning hair. If the players gain his trust by mentioning their connection to Haydon, he will offer them a drink and reveal that he and Charles were once good friends who had a falling out several years back. If asked what it was about or if questioned about who Jessica might be, Jeremy will become silent and appear sad for a moment, then he will remind the players that they said something about his son or about Charles. Through the course of the interview, Jeremy Alston will reveal the following information:

"It started when we were arguing over whether or not Jacob would be going to college now that he was a senior and would be graduating this spring. He said that one of his friends had heard of this cult thing that sounded good and that he wanted to make his life mean something." Here Jeremy pauses, as if trying to control his emotions. He is clearly having trouble explaining this. "We had a fight. We both yelled some things that we didn't mean. He said he hated me and I told him that no son of mine would be in some pagan, tree-hugging hippie cult. He said he wished his mother were still here. I got mad. I don't remember what I said or did next, but he left. He just left." Once more, at this point he will pause, clearly struggling to control his feelings of guilt.

"I tried to contact him. Tried to see him to make it better. His friends told me that they hadn't seen him since fall break. I finally went to the place that he had been talking about, that Enlightened Path Church. I asked to see my boy. They sent me away, told me that he did not want to see me. I tried to be civil, tried to reason with them. They told me that since he was 18, he had the right to make this choice. I told them that I just had some things I needed to talk to him about. They threatened to call the police on me. Me! The boy's father! They threw me out." At this point, he is shaking with fury.

After a moment, he continues. *"I tried to call the police, but they said that since he was 18, unless I had evidence of something illegal going on, there was nothing they could do. Next, I tried to file a missing persons report to force the cops to do something about my son. At first, I thought this might do it, but they contacted me and said that they were able to meet with Jacob and that he showed no signs of being coerced or abused in any way. They also warned me that if I persisted, the Enlightened Path would file for a restraining order to keep me away and then file harassment charges against me.*

"I had no choice by then. I called the only person I knew I could trust to get to the bottom of this and find my son, Charles Haydon. He didn't want to help me at first, but eventually he agreed. For a while, I didn't hear anything from Charles, but about 3 days before his death, I received a letter from him saying that he thought Jacob was into something way over his head and that he would try to get closer to find out what it was."

Jeremy Alston pauses once more. This time, he grows pale. *"When I heard about his death, I was terrified. I did not contact the police since they told me not to interfere. I am afraid that this has something to do with the investigation into my son and that cult. I'm afraid they will be coming for me next." He will then narrow his eyes and look at the players with suspicion. "Do you know what happened to Charles?"*

If the players tell him the truth, it will only increase his terror over what his son might be into, as well as his concern for his own safety. Before the players leave, he will give them a small picture of Jacob as well as a card that he managed to get from his first attempt to retrieve his son.

Should any of the player characters utilize their psychic abilities during this encounter, the following possible psychic premonitions may also be revealed depending upon the P.C.C.s present:

▶ Autistic Psychic - During the interview, the psychic will begin messing around with any random items that might be present (matchbooks, coins, keys, etc.). If any other players notice what he is doing, they will see that the Autistic Psychic has spelled out the word "sacrifice." If questioned, he will have no explanation for what he has done.

▶ Diviner - Should the Diviner perform a touch Clairvoyance it will reveal nothing out of the ordinary about Jeremy Alston and will confirm his sense of urgency and fear about his son and his own well-being. If the Diviner makes a successful Perception Roll (10+), he will notice a reflection in the glass he is holding (provided he accepted the offer for a drink) that looks like a person lying face up on a table or platform. If the Diviner successfully uses the picture of Jacob Alston to attempt to locate him through Psychic Dowsing, the trail will lead to the Enlightened Path Church.

▶ The Sensitive Psionic Power Clairvoyance (especially if the psychic uses the picture of Jacob or some personal possession from his room) will reveal a vague sense of unease and distant but impending danger.

▶ The Sensitive Psionic Power Object Read will only confirm Jeremy's story about the two having a fight in the past. Using the Sensitive Psionic Powers of Object Read or Remote Viewing to get a glimpse of Jacob's present will show an image of a rectangular worship hall filled with people all dressed in black slacks and white shirts, all chanting in what sounds like Latin, though the exact words are too muffled to make out.

▶ The Sensitive Psionic Powers of Telepathy and Empathy will also confirm Jeremy's account of the story (he is speaking the truth).

4: Another follow-up news story on the earthquake

At some point that afternoon, the players will hear the following on the radio.

"The police manhunt has turned up no sign of the two hunters or backpacker missing since the night of the earthquake. So far, they have not given up hope yet, but it seems that they may need to widen the manhunt as now two more people have been reported missing. In one case, a couple who had been driving along Highway 401 north had stopped to change a flat tire. The woman explained that while she waited in the car, her husband went to check on the damage. She heard a shout, felt the car lurch, and when she looked back, there was no sign of her husband. After shouting for several minutes, she drove the damaged car all the way into town, where she called the police. In the other case, a 16 year old girl was last seen biking along an off-road bike trail yesterday afternoon and has not been heard

from since. Local hunter George Dunlow claims that whatever has been killing all these people has also killed some of his hunting dogs. Though questioned by the police about these disappearances, Mr. Dunlow has not been charged with any crime. So far, police are unsure as to whether these are the actions of a wild animal - perhaps a bear frightened out of the mountains by the quake - or if a person is responsible. For now, police are advising everyone to stay clear of the woods north of Simmonsville in the area around Highway 401."

If the players make a Perception Roll of 12+, they will remember that this happens to be the same area where the epicenter of the earthquake was (if players have also already conducted research into PENStar for any reason, they will have learned that some of the land owned by PENStar is in this same region).

4th Layer Clues

1: Investigating the Enlightened Path Church

With the card from Jeremy Alston, the players will have a couple of options open to them to investigate the Enlightened Path Church. If the players begin an internet search for the church, they will find not only the church's own webpage (which is already provided for them on the business card), but a number of web sites sponsored by groups claiming that the Enlightened Path Church has been brainwashing their family members (to find these, the player must make successful Computer Operation and Research skill rolls).

The Enlightened Path's webpage basically outlines what the church is about. Essentially, the church is a naturalistic, pagan-like faith that believes in the worship of natural forces instead of specific deities. The webpage gives the church's phone number, the address, and a listing of various activities that the church practices. It is worth noting that one of these is a nature outing which takes place on land owned by PENStar relatively close to where the epicenter of the quake was (PENStar is listed as a contributor, though additional research along this avenue will not reveal any further connections). Players will also be able to learn that the Enlightened Path Church is a legitimate tax-exempt religion that has been around for 3 years now.

There are also half a dozen web pages dedicated to decrying the Enlightened Path Church as a brainwashing cult and accuses the church of a number of nefarious deeds, including fleecing its members for money, using mind-altering drugs on them, taking part in ritualistic violence and animal sacrifice, etc. Four of these six web pages are sponsored by families who list names of friends and family who they believe have been duped or drugged into following the cult (Jacob Alston is not listed, however). If the players attempt to contact the police (especially if they are on good terms with detective Daniels), they will learn that several complaints have been filed by family members and advocate groups against the Enlightened Path Church but preliminary investigations have so far turned up no obvious signs of wrongdoing.

If the players do some additional digging on the computer (requires a successful Computer Hacking skill roll), they will

learn that not everything about the church is legitimate. What is cleverly concealed through careful record keeping is that much of the funding provided through donations is funneled to some other organization (though they will not be able to learn that the funding is being diverted to the Dark Brotherhood Cult).

Should the players actually pay the Enlightened Path Church a visit, they will find it located in a small strip-mall in which most of the other locations are unoccupied. They will first be met by the church's secretary who will hand them several brochures describing the Enlightened Path Church. (If the players have already read *Cults and Secret Societies: America's Dark Traditions*, a successful Perception Roll of 14+ will reveal that the beliefs and practices of the Enlightened Path Church sound very similar to the True Path). A character using the psionic powers Empathy or Telepathy will indicate that the secretary believes what she is telling them (she is an innocent dupe who sincerely believes in the good work of the church).

If the players ask about Jeremy Alston's son, they will be asked to wait as the secretary fetches Brother Franklin. Brother Franklin, a mid-thirties man dressed in dark slacks and a plain white shirt, will tell them that "Brother Jacob" joined the church of his own free will and he would be more than willing to allow a meeting with him if not for the fact that he is currently away on retreat. Any character attempting to use Empathy, Telepathy, or See Aura (or any other probing psychic abilities) will be unsuccessful as Brother Franklin is using Mind Block to prevent any such probes.

At some point in the interview, another member of the cult will enter and whisper something quietly into his ear. This man, also dressed in the same drab uniform as Brother Franklin, has pale skin and a completely hairless head. If any of the characters present received a psychic impression of who Haydon's killer was when they first found his body, they will immediately recognize this man as the killer from the vision. If an Autistic Psychic is present, he will once again begin whispering, "The Dark One punishes!" when the bald figure enters the room. Players must make a successful Perception Roll of 14+ to notice. Also, a Psychic Medium will catch the faint odor of sour milk (witchcraft) shortly after the stranger leaves the room.

A Psychic Sensitive will feel the presence of supernatural evil the moment he enters the premises. Also, if any player uses the Psychic Sensitive Powers of Sense Evil, Sense Magic, or Presence Sense, he will also detect one or two supernatural presences in the general area.

Game Master's Note - The Enlightened Path is a legitimate church in every way and most of the members are genuine believers in the teachings (some mild brainwashing is practiced, though it is really done via clever propaganda and persuasion along with the occasional application of the psionic power of Medical Hypnosis provided by one of the cult's few legitimate psychics). (Author's Note: In real life, the Enlightened Path is NOT a real entity and this entry is in no way meant to malign similar naturalist faiths - it is simply intended to be part of the game setting.)

2: Visiting George Dunlow

Should the players continue to follow up on the earthquake, the only remaining lead will be to visit George Dunlow, the 80 year old hunter who has lived in the back country north of

Simmonsville his entire life. Dunlow is not listed in the phone book, so tracking him down will take some imagination. Contacting the local news station might work, though they will need to resort to some clever role-playing to convince the news reporter that she needs to reveal the old man's address. Another possible option might include asking around the local sporting goods store or seeing if he is known at the local hunting lodge. Eventually, they will find out that he lives on land adjacent to Highway 401 (on land not far from the woods owned by PENStar where the earthquake took place the other night).

Located about a mile down a dirt road off the highway, George Dunlow's home is a large wooden cabin that shows no obvious signs of being part of the modern century except for a beat up pickup truck parked along the side of the road. When the players arrive, they will hear the sound of dogs barking from the back of the house. Should the players take time to examine the layout of the property, they will notice that there are four dogs tied up to a porch around the backside of the house. They will also notice that a section of chain link fence about as big as a car has been recently torn through.

Psychic Sensitive and Psychic Medium P.C.C.s as well as any other P.C.C. who is open to the supernatural will immediately sense the presence of a Banshee in the vicinity. The Lesser Demon is lurking in the woods next to the back yard and is what is driving the dogs crazy. This Haunter is of no immediate threat to the players and is really only hanging around because it has sensed that George Dunlow and his pack of hunting dogs will be the next to die. Because the demonic figure is impatient, it will have already begun to wail in desperation and anticipation of feasting on the P.P.E. of the old hunter and his dogs. Only Psychic Sensitives and Mediums will be able to hear the moaning and see the Banshee; however, the aura of doom will be felt by everyone present. (Game Masters - you should only describe the effect of the Banshee's power as a feeling of general malaise or depression that seems to permeate the rundown cabin and property.) An Autistic Psychic Savant may also point and hiss "Angry Lady!" and then cover his ears when the players first arrive. The players should only figure out it is actually caused by the Banshee if either of the aforementioned psychics is present or if Sense Evil, Sense Magic, or Presence Sense is used. A Diviner may notice signs that suggest the presence of the Banshee (a shadowy female form, a pattern in the dirt or the bark of a tree that suggests a vaguely female shape, etc.).

Banshee - parasitic entity feeding on the psychic deaths of the Boschala's victims.

Threat Level: x4; Haunter, a Lesser Demon.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 5, M.A. 5, Supernatural P.S. 7, P.P. 12, P.E. 4, P.B. 2, Spd 15 (floating).

Size: 7 feet (2.1 m) tall; insubstantial (no weight).

Natural A.R.: N/A

Hit Points: 50

S.D.C.: 50

Discorporation: When slain, the Banshee turns into mist and fades away within one melee round.

P.P.E.: 8

Base I.S.P.: 50. Considered a Major Psionic.



Horror Factor: 14

Attacks per Melee: 3 physical against other Astral Beings; otherwise it can only physically attack with Mind Bolt once per melee and will only do so in defense or if it feels threatened.

Bonuses: +1 to strike other Astral Beings, +3 to save versus Horror Factor, impervious to mind control or possession.

Damage: None to physical beings other than with Mind Bolt. Claws inflict 2D6 damage to other Astral Beings, travelers or spirits.

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Natural state is invisible (cannot make itself visible), Bio-regenerate 2D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points per hour, Empathy (automatic - costs no I.S.P.), Ethereal (has no physical form to harm with conventional weapons as well as heat, cold, poison, and disease). Floats up to 100 feet (30.5 m). Hear Death Rattle (up to 20 minutes in advance). Knows all Languages (98%) but cannot read or write any (is rarely willing to talk, but if it does, will speak only of death, feeding, doom, and seeking out more death). Teleport self flawlessly up to 2000 miles (3200 km) to common feeding grounds (hospitals, sites of disasters, nursing homes, etc.). Aura of Doom - radiates a distracting feeling of doom and foreboding for 1000 feet (305 m). Penalties include -2 on Perception Rolls, -2 to save versus Horror Factor, and -10% on skill performance (double for the Psychic Medium, Psychic Sensitive, and any other psychic who can see, hear, or otherwise is aware of the creature's presence). No saving throw.

Vulnerabilities: Repulsed by love, good feelings, happiness, and joy. Vulnerable to weapons made of white jade, alabas-

ter, and pearl, as well as psionics, and magic. Vulnerable to exorcism (sends it away).

Magic: None.

Psionics: Possesses the following psionic powers: Clairvoyance (6), Commune with Spirits (6), Empathy (4), Mind Bolt (varies), Precognition (10), Psychic Diagnosis (4), See the Invisible (4), Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (3) and Sense Time (2).

Appearance: Appears as a seven foot (2.1 m) tall, misty female wrapped in a tattered, gray, hooded robe. No facial features can be seen and the robe becomes mist at the knees so that the feet are not seen. The Banshee will ignore the players unless they attempt to attack it. It will not fight to the death and will flee if endangered. However, it will return when the players are gone and follow George and his animals as they go on their ill-fated search for the Boschala. While his dogs are clearly aware of the spirit's presence, George is not. He thinks that the sensation of depression he is feeling is a result of his memories of his father who also confronted a similar threat decades before (see below).

George will be suspicious of anyone snooping around, asking questions about the missing people or the earthquake, but if the players convince him that they are not here to make fun of him, he has a great deal to tell them.

If asked about the quake, he will explain that all night long, his dogs were acting nervous. Then, a few hours before dawn, they became aggressive and George had to go outside to calm them down. At exactly daybreak, they became so wild that George had to retreat back inside. That was the exact moment of the earthquake. Then, within moments, they calmed down and became very nervous, almost fearful for the rest of the morning.

When asked about the comments he made in the interview, he will claim that, *"It ain't no natural quake that shook the ground the other night. I been livin' in these here woods for all my life and every 23 years, that same quake happens like clock-work."* He will pause before adding, *"an' that's when the killin' starts."*

If asked about the killings, he will go on to explain that, *"My Pappy been livin' in these woods all his life, too, and when I was a youngen' he tolt me 'bout what was really causin' all them killings. It ain't no rock slide an' it ain't no wild animal . . . at least it ain't none o' God's creations. When I was a kid, I asked my Pappy what made the ground shake like that. He said that in most places, the earth just groans when it moves but every 23 years, on the morning o' winter's longest night, the God's Earth groans in protest to somethin' evil comin' through. I asked him what he meant by that an' he said he weren't gonna tell me. Only that the last time it happened, he an' a few of his friends went a' huntin' it, after it kil't someone they knew. He said that seven of them went out an' only he came back. An his hair was white as snow even when he was a young man. An' he had lost one o' his eyes. Now, I know what yer thinkin'. Crazy ol' man with a crazy ol' story. An' I thought my Pappy was just funnin' with me, too. But I never seen him with that kind o' far-away look in his eye before. Stone sober and deadly serious. I asked him what done all the killings then? He said that he wasn't gonna tell me what it was, only that whatever it was it wasn't one o' God's creatures. An' he was doin God's work by puttin' it down. That was 69 years ago. An' it's back agin."*

If asked how he knows that or if asked about the hole in his back fence, George will then go on to explain *"It were after nightfall when I heard em' makin' all that noise. At first I thought maybe a coon or rabbit had gotten itself inta' the yard. Figured my dogs would have themselves a little snack. Then I heard the sound o' metal bein' split. Well, I grabbed my shotgun and ran out back to get whatever was after my hounds, but when I got there, whatever it was had already kilt two of 'em. The other four were cowering in the far corner of the yard, snarlin' and foam'in' but not darin' to come any closer. That's when I knew fer sure that whatever my Pappy had kilt all them years ago, either it had come back or another had come through with the quake."* He then adds, with a stern look, *"An' I plan on killin' it just like my Pappy went an' did."*

George will then show the players where the "thing" crashed through his fence and nearby underbrush. Players who make a successful Track and Trap Animals skill roll will be able to determine that there are tracks of about five or six different types of animals present but that it is impossible to determine the exact number. Whatever crashed through the fence was at least as large as an elephant and its tracks head northeast into the hills.

Should any of the player characters utilize their psychic abilities during this encounter, the following possible psychic premonitions may also be revealed, depending upon the P.C.C.s present:

- ▶ Autistic Psychic - Before the players leave George Dunlow, this psychic will feel compelled to place his arms around George (the old hunter will find this awkward) and tell him that he is sorry about what is going to happen to him tonight.

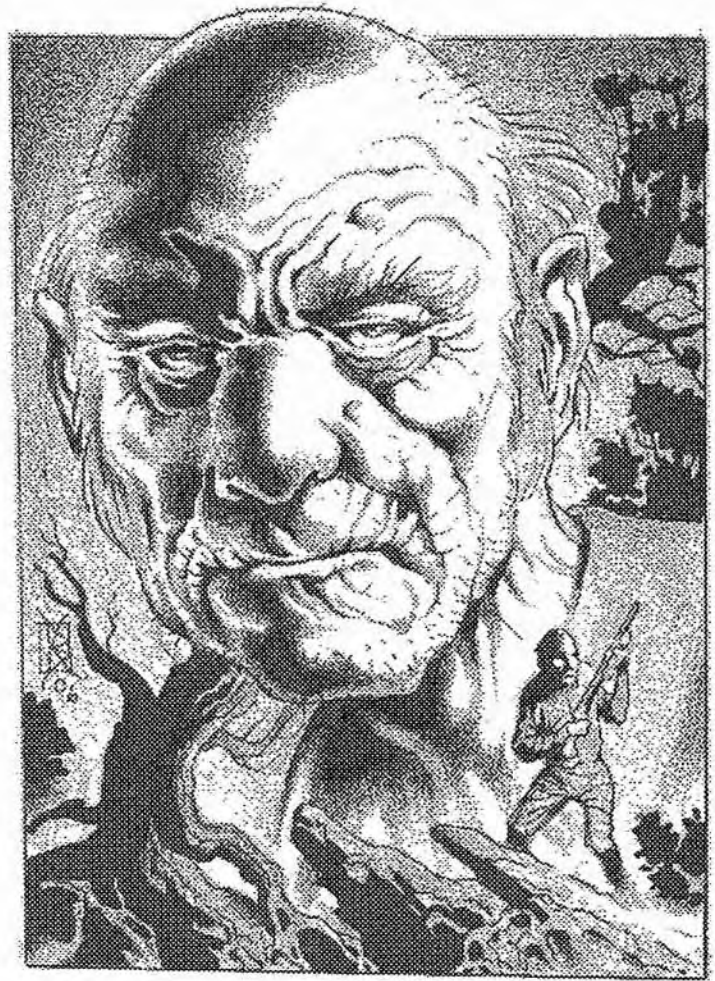
- ▶ Diviner - If the Diviner examines the back yard and sees the dogs, he will for one fleeting instant see them as dismembered and mutilated corpses rather than as vicious, barking animals.

- ▶ The Pyrokinetic Psionic Power Fire Omen will cause a lit flame to go out entirely (death lies ahead).

- ▶ The Sensitive Psionic Powers Clairvoyance and Precognition will detect an overwhelming sense of doom in George Dunlow's future.

- ▶ Psychic Medium - Olfactory Omen will smell cat urine mixed with animal musk (indicates Supernatural Predators and Lesser Demons).

If the players head northeast to follow the tracks (it is not a difficult trail to follow, especially if there is a Diviner present in the group), then they will encounter a large outcropping of granite after a few hours. If they take the time to study the outcrop, they will notice several faded pictographs of Native American origin. A successful Lore: Native American Indians skill roll coupled with a successful Cryptography skill roll will reveal that these symbols speak of a place of ancient evil known and shunned by the local natives well over 1000 years ago (this place is not the place of evil - that lies many more miles into the wilderness where the epicenter of the quake was). Reestablishing the trail will be easy given the size of whatever made it, though after another hour, they will lose it as it leads directly into a lake. A careful search of the area will take hours before the players find the trail again and it will be dark before they're done. If a Diviner successfully tracks the trail into the lake, he will get the impression that the supernatural threat is indeed hiding in the lake, but there will be no obvious way to follow it underwater.



If the players are still searching after dark, they will hear the sounds of dogs barking and a shotgun being fired (player threat level will raise to Investigating - x2). The sounds and the flash of the gunfire will lead the players to a small clearing where they will find the mutilated remains of George Dunlow's four remaining dogs (actually, the players will find scattered bits and pieces of the dogs and it will require either a successful Animal Husbandry or Veterinary Medicine skill roll to determine the exact number of animals slain). The players will also find the upper torso and head of Dunlow. A great deal of blood trails away from the body, leading north and west. Players will need to roll to save versus Horror Factor 16+ in order to avoid being overcome with revulsion at the sight (as with the earlier encounter at finding Charles Haydon's murdered corpse, a low roll of 1-6 will result in nausea and vomiting). A more detailed examination of the scene (Perception Roll 17+) will reveal several small patches of dried green powder. Analysis will indicate an organic compound similar to snail slime (requires a successful Chemistry or Chemistry: Analytical skill roll as well as the necessary laboratory analysis equipment).

Should the players attempt to contact the slain spirit of George Dunlow via the Psychic Sensitive ability Commune with Spirits or the powers of the Psychic Medium P.C.C., the deceased hunter will explain that, *"It were a queer kind o' thing, all made o' diff'rent parts o' all kinds o' animals. I fired at it an' my dogs attacked, but it seemed to have arms everywhere. I think I hurt it some, but it didn't slow down. Before I knew it, it had me an' . . ."* The spirit looks down at what's left of his body. *"Oh . . . no wonder my Pappy never tolt me about what happened to the others."* With that, his spirit fades.

Players making a successful Lore: Demons and Monsters skill roll will be able to identify Dunlow's description of the thing that attacked him as most likely belonging to a Boschala. Object Read and Object Read the Dead will reveal that they were all killed by a Supernatural Predator. Olfactory Omen will be identical to the one received at George Dunlow's backyard.

Players trying to track the Boschala from this site will have an easy time following the tracks initially; however, ultimately, the tracks will either dead-end once again in a lake or up against a steep outcrop of rock which the players will either have to climb (in the dark) or go around. In either case, the Boschala will be long gone by then.

George Dunlow - 8th level Ordinary Human (attributes and skills modified for age).

Occupation: Outdoorsman.

Age: 80

Alignment: Scrupulous.

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

Size: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.8 m) tall; 130 pounds (58.5 kg).

Natural A.R.: N/A **P.P.E.:** 2

Hit Points: 46 **Base I.S.P.:** 0

S.D.C.: 38 **Horror Factor:** N/A

Attacks per Melee: 3 physical.

Bonuses: -1 to initiative, -1 to strike (+2 with knives), +3 parry with knives, Critical Strike on a Natural 19-20, +3 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 to save versus magic, -1 to Perception.

Damage: Hunting Knife (1D6), Hunting Rifle (7D6) with scope (+1 to strike).

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Rifles (+4 to strike), W.P. Knives, Prowl (62%), Hunting, Land Navigation (74%), Outdoorsmanship, Swimming (88%), Skin and Prepare Animal Hides (70%), Wilderness Survival (65%), Track and Trap Animals (60%/70%), Physical Labor.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Appearance: Thin and stooped with age, with a sparse crown of gray-white hair, wrinkled and weathered skin but still has bright blue eyes.

3: An unexpected call

One afternoon, either the same day as, or some time after, the players visit with the Enlightened Path Church, one of the players who was there will receive a cell phone call that will be listed as coming from the church.

The caller will identify himself as Lawrence Kelhoun, and claim to have seen them at the church earlier talking to Brother Franklin. If asked how he received their number, he will claim that he saw their names and numbers on a piece of paper next to the name Charles Haydon, and he heard some of the elder brothers talking about the visitors being the ones who went to see Haydon and who were asking about Jacob Alston.

"I heard Brother Franklin and another brother talking about a sacrifice and some meeting at the church this evening. I had-

n't heard about any ritual or service tonight, so I asked what was happening. Brother Franklin just looked at me in kind of a funny way and, in a quiet voice, told me not to worry, it did not concern me. I don't know why, but I got a really bad feeling about what he meant by that.

Before the players can ask him more, he will say "Look, I can't talk now in case someone finds me on the phone. Can we meet? Town park, old grove, one hour." With that, Kelhoun will hang up.

Any attempt to call back will receive a recorded message saying that office hours of the Enlightened Path Church are from 8:00 AM until 4:30 PM and that they can leave a message if they wish.

If the players do not, however, actually visit the church, modify this encounter accordingly. Remember that the cultists will still have knowledge of the group from Charles Haydon's journal. Lawrence would still call them anyway, making the connection between Jacob Alston, Charles Haydon and their names on the piece of paper he saw.

The Heart of the Mystery - Final Encounters

1: The meeting in the park

The old grove is a stand of old hardwood trees located in the heart of the Simonsville town park. In the cold of the afternoon, the park is almost deserted and there is no one in the old grove. The players will be standing in the park as the shadows lengthen when a figure will step out of the darkness. He will be dressed in the same white shirt and dark slacks that the other members of the Enlightened Path church were wearing. Players making a Perception Roll (difficulty of 8) will recall that they saw this man in passing, but never actually met with him. This is Lawrence Kelhoun, a mid-level novice in the Enlightened Path Church.

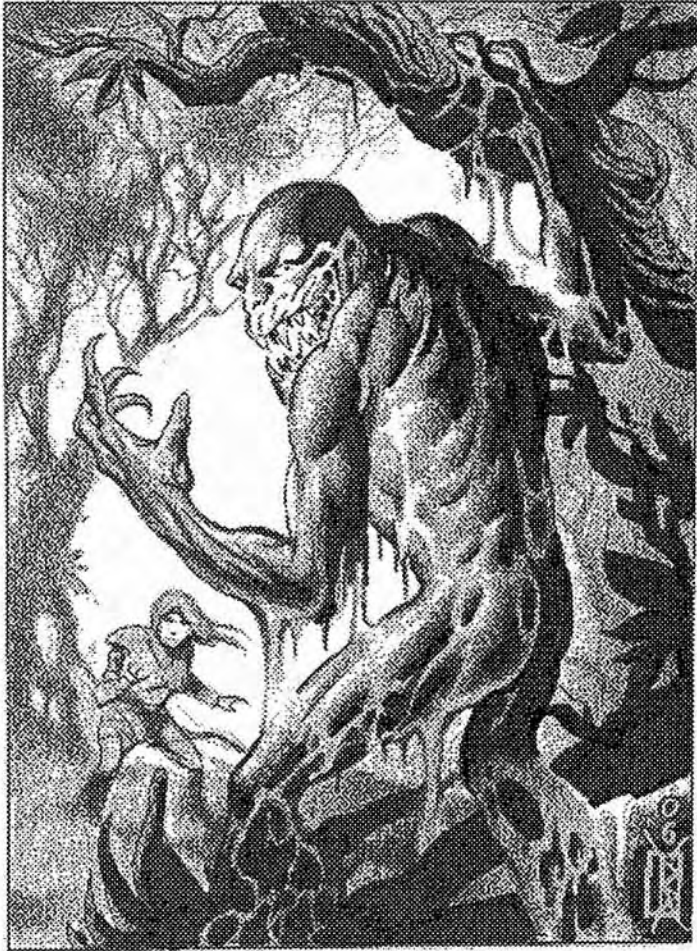
He will explain that he overheard Brother Franklin and another Brother who he did not recognize expressing concern about the evening's sacrifice. As there were no ceremonies planned for the evening, he was confused, but then he heard the other Brother, the one with no hair, go on to explain that they should use Brother Alston, who Haydon's associates were asking about when they came by today. If the players ask about the hairless Brother, Kelhoun will say that he has never seen him before and was surprised that Brother Franklin, one of the elders, would defer to this stranger with almost reverence.

During the entire conversation, the shadows under the trees will gradually grow darker (requires a Perception Roll of 12 or higher to notice this before it is too late). About this time, any Psychic Sensitive will sense the approach of the Dark Servant and any players with the Psychic Sensitive Psionic Power Sixth Sense will be warned of impending danger. Before the players can ask anything else, the shadows in the park will abruptly darken and the players will feel their Base I.S.P. surge to the level of a Lesser Demonic threat (typically x4 for most P.C.C.s).

Suddenly, some invisible force will lift Brother Kelhoun off the ground and, before their very eyes, will snap his spine in

half. This invisible force will then begin to rend the body limb from limb. As the blood fountains from the broken body, it will seem to arc through the air and vanish at a point about 10 feet (3.1 m) above the ground. This entire scene has a Horror Factor of 17.

As the unseen force gorges itself on Brother Kelhoun's blood, its body will appear. With a toothy grin, the beast will attack the players.



Dark Servant - demonic servant of the Dark One.

Threat Level: x4; a Lesser Demon.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 8 (2D6), M.E. 11 (3D6), M.A. 3 (1D6), Supernatural P.S. 22 (12+2D6), P.P. 20 (16+1D6), Supernatural P.E. 24 (20+2D6), P.B. 1 (1D6), Spd 50 running (1D6x10).

Size: 10 feet, 6 inches (3.2 m) tall; 290 pounds (130.5 kg).

Natural A.R.: 9

Hit Points: 54 (P.E.+5D8), reduce by half in direct sunlight.

S.D.C.: 80 (1D6x10+40), reduce by half in direct sunlight.

Discorporation: When slain, the body collapses in a spray of blood that vaporizes into thin air within a matter of seconds.

P.P.E.: 84 (P.E.+1D8x10).

Base I.S.P.: 25 (M.E.+6D6). Considered a minor psionic.

Horror Factor: 17 to watch it feed and 16 when it is visible.

Attacks per Melee: 5 physical or psionic or 2 by magic.

Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +4 to strike, parry, and dodge, +6 to save versus magic, +3 to save versus psionics, +8 versus Horror Factor. (Standard bonuses are +8 save versus Horror

Factor, +2 to initiative, +1 to strike, parry, and dodge, +1 to save versus magic, +3 to save versus psionics. All bonuses are in addition to attribute and O.C.C. bonuses.)

Damage: Bite (2D6), Claws (4D6+7) and Kick (5D6+7). Standard damage for claws is Supernatural P.S. +1D6 and kick is Supernatural P.S. +2D6.

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Track Humanoids (70%), Interrogation (45%), Prowl (80%), natural state is invisible until it feeds on the blood of its intended victim at which point it becomes visible, see the invisible, nightvision - 1000 feet (305 m), magically understands and speaks all languages but is illiterate. Cold and electricity based attacks do ½ damage. Bio-regenerate 1D6 per melee. Also possesses the ability to dim the lights in a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius shortly before it attacks (requires a Perception Roll of 12 or higher to notice).

Vulnerabilities: Vulnerable to physical weapons, though only if they exceed the Dark Servant's natural A.R. of 9, vulnerable to magic and psionics (full damage) and fire and light (double damage). Reduce all physical attributes and skills by half when in direct, full sunlight. (Can function in deep shadows, however.)

Magic: Knows the following spells: Sense Magic (6), Chameleon (6), Cloak of Darkness (6), Concealment (6), Fear (5), Charismatic Aura (10), Shadow Meld (10), Trance (10), Charm (12), Domination (10), Fly (15), Compulsion (20), Agony (20), and Globe of Silence (20).

Psionics: Possesses the following psionic powers: Telepathy (4), Empathy (4), Empathic Transmission (6), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), See Aura (6), Telekinetic Leap (8), Mind Bolt (varies), and Bio-Manipulation: Pain only (10).

Appearance: To those who can see the invisible, in its natural state a Dark Servant appears as a muscular, black-skinned humanoid with a huge, exaggerated, leering mouth full of long teeth and disproportionately long fingers ending in claws. When it has fed on blood, it will become visible for 3D4 minutes, during which time it cannot become invisible. When visible, the black skin will appear to be streaked with crimson blood, almost as if its victim's blood has filled in its own veins.

Dark Servants are Lesser Demons who serve a variety of Ancient Evil gods and Alien Intelligences dedicated to darkness, deception, shadow, and death. They serve in the capacity of recruitment, interrogation, spying, and retribution. Seldom found as free agents, they are usually dispatched by their masters to serve as intermediaries to human cults and worshippers. For recruitment, they use their psionics and magic spells to convince the unwitting mortal that they are, in fact, some angelic being rather than the horrifying demonic creatures that they are. Also using their psionic and magical abilities, they perform torture and interrogation for their masters. Though they relish both of these roles, their favorite by far is retribution where they are sent to slay some enemy of their master's or the human cultists they are currently bound to. Seldom fights to the death and will flee, evading its pursuers in order to bring a warning back to its masters.

Should the players overcome the Dark Servant quickly, there will most likely be little interference from the police. However, if firearms are used to excess, then it is likely that the police will

arrive and, with another dead body and the players involved, will most likely take them into custody. How the players talk their way out of jail will depend greatly upon their resourcefulness, their prior encounters with the police, and skillful role-playing.

2: Battling the Brotherhood

When the players arrive at the Enlightened Path Church that evening, they will find it dark and seemingly deserted. However, players making a Perception Roll of 14+ will hear the faint sound of chanting coming from somewhere within. With all of the doors locked, they will need to perform a successful Pick Locks skill roll or try some other method of forcible entrance. However, since the building is not alarmed and the cultists are all downstairs involved in their ritual, no one will hear them unless they use firearms to gain entrance.

Once inside, the sound of chanting is too diffuse to easily track to a specific location, requiring additional successful Perception Rolls (12+) to track it to the cleaning closet. Psychic Sensitives will once again automatically sense the presence of supernatural evil (as will the use of Sense Evil, Sense Magic, and Presence Sense). A Diviner P.C.C. can attempt to track the supernatural presence using his powers and if there is an Autistic Psychic Savant present, he will become more agitated the closer the group gets to the cleaning closet.

If the players successfully follow the chanting to its apparent source, they will find what looks like an ordinary cleaning closet. Careful examination (a successful Locate Secret Compartments and Doors skill roll made at +25% due to the chanting emanating from behind the wall) will reveal a secret passage behind a false wall that leads to a set of stairs heading into the basement. As the players descend into the basement, their Threat Level will elevate to Greater (x6 for most P.C.C.s).

Beyond another door at the base of the stairs, the players will see a large, open basement with six chanting cultists all dressed in black robes, wearing masks which reveal only their eyes and mouths. In the middle of the group, tied to a large wooden table, the players will see a teenage male, also wearing black robes, though these have been torn open at the middle to reveal his bare chest. If they have already seen a picture of him, the players will recognize this youth as Jacob Alston. The look of terror on his face clearly indicates that he is not a willing participant. Before anyone can react, one of the cultists will notice the players and shout a warning. Turning, the cultists will attack.

Game Master's note - Depending upon the level of strength and number of the players, the two cult leaders will find their own power levels increased to either x4 or x6.

4 Members of the Dark Brotherhood Cult - equal to 3rd level Ordinary Humans.

Occupation: Criminal: Thug/Gang Member.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 13, M.A. 10, P.S. 19, P.P. 13, P.E. 14, P.B. 13, Spd 10.

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

Natural A.R.: N/A

P.P.E.: 18

Hit Points: 21

Base I.S.P.: 0

S.D.C.: 36

Horror Factor: N/A

Attacks per Melee: 4 physical.

Bonuses: +1 to strike with knives, +2 to strike with blunt, +3 to parry (+5 with knives and blunt), +3 to dodge, +4 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Damage: Knives (1D6+4), Crowbars (2D6+4), Kick Attack (1D8+4), Fist (1D4+4).

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Hand Guns (+1 to strike), W.P. Knives, W.P. Blunt, Body Building and Weightlifting, Athletics: General, Tailing (50%), Streetwise (48%), Prowl (50%).

Magic: None.

Psionics: none.

Appearance: Unlike the earlier cult members encountered in the library, these are slightly more skilled gang members, though they still lack any true paranormal abilities. Though they do not have their guns in this final encounter, they will attack with any of the sacrificial blades that were about to be used on Jacob Alston. Also, unlike the earlier cult members, they will not flee at the sign of psychic or magical abilities (they have witnessed those possessed by their cult leaders). They are fanatically loyal and will not flee unless they see their masters killed or flee themselves.

Brother Franklin Armath - 4th level Latent Psychic (Thrilled psychic).

Occupation: Cult Leader/Clergy.

Age: 38

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 16, M.A. 16, P.S. 9, P.P. 10, P.E. 13, P.B. 15, Spd 13.

Size: 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 m) tall; 170 pounds (76.5 kg).

Natural A.R.: N/A

Hit Points: 28

S.D.C.: 18

P.P.E.: 6

Base I.S.P.: 11 (x2, x4, x6, x10) Major psionic.

Horror Factor: N/A

Attacks per Melee: 5 physical or by psionics.

Bonuses: +2 to strike with knives and swords, +2 to parry (+4 with knives and swords), +2 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +4 to save versus possession, +2 to save versus magic curses, +1 to save versus magic, +4 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 to save versus psionics, +1 to save versus insanity, 40% to invoke trust or intimidate.

Damage: Ceremonial Knife (1D6), Short Sword (2D4), Kick Attack (1D8), Fist (1D4).

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Knives, W.P. Swords, Streetwise: Weird (55%), Lore: Religions (80%), Public Speaking (60%), Lore: Magic Arcane (45%/65%), Psychology (70%).

Magic: Lore only.

Psionics: Telekinesis (varies)*, Summon Inner Strength (4), Biofeedback (8), Mind Block (4)*, Circle of Fire (15)*, Impervious to Fire (6), Hypnotic Suggestion (6)*, Meditation (0), and Death Trance (1). Only those powers with an (*)

next to them can be used consciously; however, if the conflict becomes desperate, some of his other powers may manifest themselves in defense.

Appearance: Brother Franklin is the handsome, charming face of the Enlightened Way church. In his mid-thirties, he has smooth skin, dark blonde hair, and blue eyes. He is also the second in command of the Dark Brotherhood cult.

Brother Arturo Hansfor - 6th level Witch (Gift of Magic - modified from *Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game*®, 2nd Ed.).

Occupation: Cult Leader/Clergy.

Age: 41

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 12, M.A. 13, P.S. 13, P.P. 11, P.E. 19, P.B. 12, Spd 9.

Size: 6 feet, 3 inches (1.9 m) tall; 200 pounds (90 kg).

Natural A.R.: N/A

Hit Points: 46

S.D.C.: 21

P.P.E.: 68 (x2, x4, x6, x10) plus an additional 100 as long as he is within 300 feet (91 m) of his demon familiar.

Base I.S.P.: 0

Horror Factor: N/A

Attacks per Melee: 5 physical or 2 by magic.

Bonuses: +1 to strike (+4 with sword, +3 with knives), +2 to parry (+5 with knives, +4 with swords), +2 to dodge, +2 to

pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to save versus possession, +3 to save versus magic curses, +2 to save versus magic, +4 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 spell strength, +2 to save versus mind altering drugs, hallucinations, and illusions.

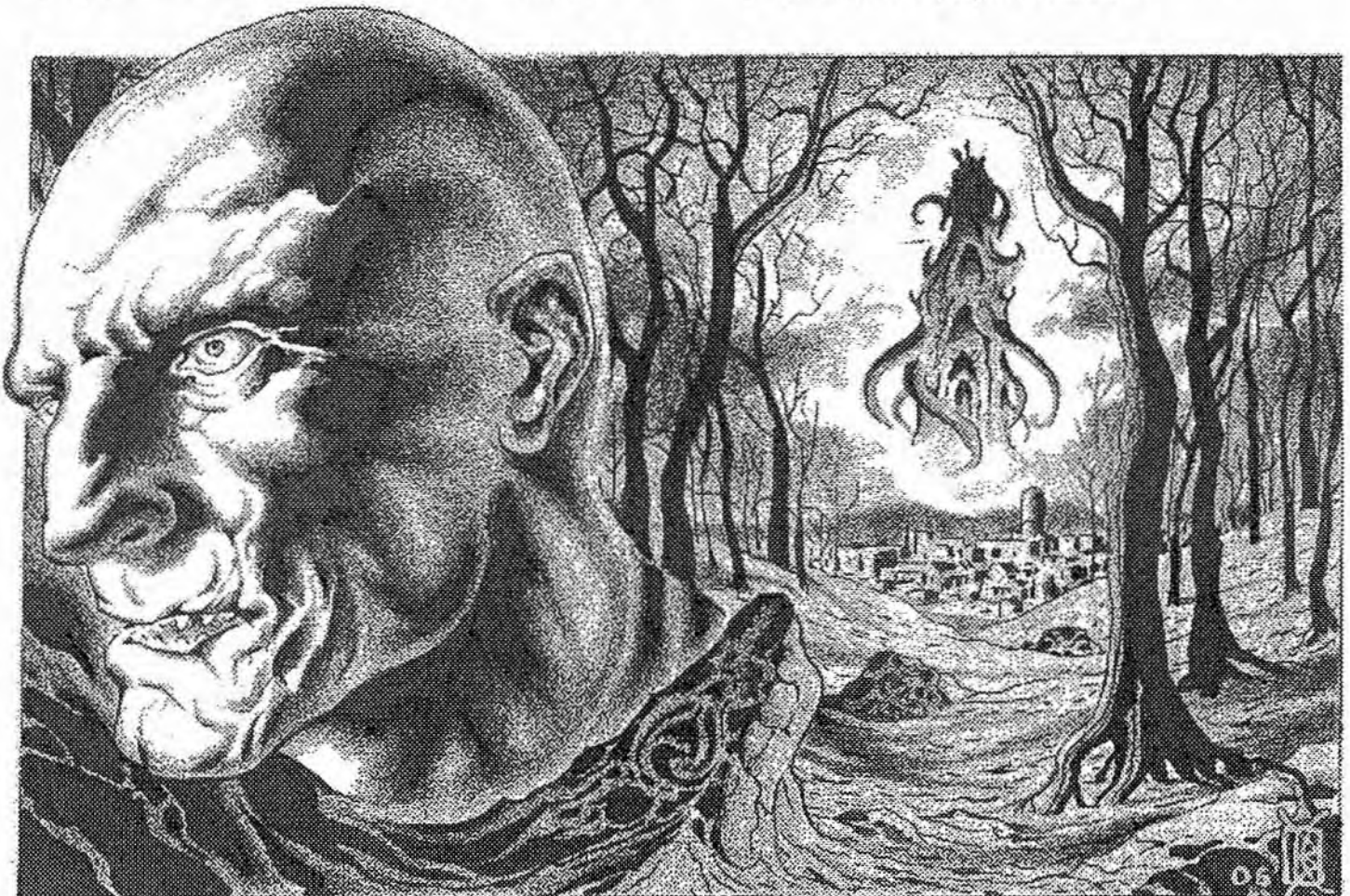
Damage: Ceremonial Knife (1D6), Short Sword (2D4), Kick Attack (1D8), Fist (1D4).

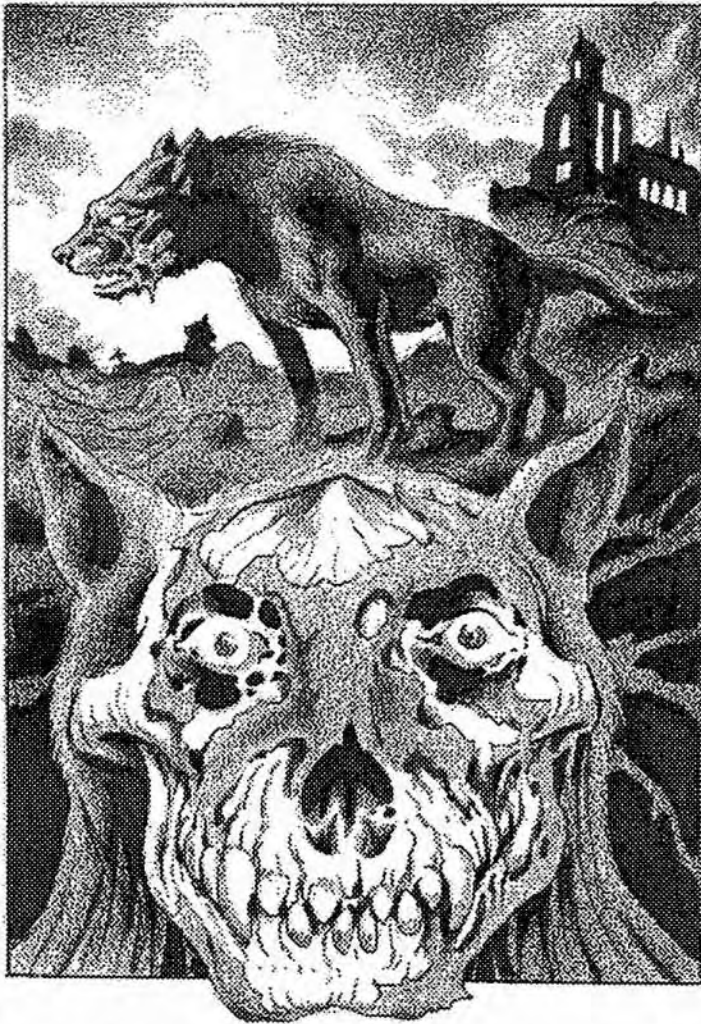
Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Knives, W.P. Swords, Lore: Magic (80%), Lore: Religions (70%), Lore: Demons and Monsters (75%), Parapsychology (65%), Literacy: Latin (75%), Cryptography (50%).

Magic: Cloud of Smoke (2), Blinding Flash (1), Death Trance (1), See Aura (6), Thunder Clap (4), See the Invisible (4), Aura of Power (4), Befuddle (6), Fear (5), Chameleon (6), Orb of Cold (6), Wave of Frost (6), Charismatic Aura (10), Deflect (10), Domination (10), Horrific Illusion (10), Life Drain (25), Minor Curse (35).

Psionics: None.

Appearance: Brother Arturo is the cult leader of the Dark Brotherhood operating in Simmonsville. His head is completely hairless and his skin is pale, almost bloodless. He has dark gray eyes and slightly pointed teeth. He will fight until he feels that his life is truly threatened, at which point he will use his illusion powers to distract the players while seeking to hide and/or escape. If he survives, he will ultimately seek revenge on those who destroyed his cult. Game Masters - Feel free to modify this entry to bring it in line with the material presented in the upcoming *Beyond the Supernatural*™ 2nd Ed. sourcebook, *Beyond Arcanum*™.





Shade - Brother Arturo's Demon Familiar (modified from *Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game*®, 2nd Ed.).

Threat Level: x4; a Lesser Demon.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 19, M.A. 12, P.S. 22, P.P. 16, P.E. 24, P.B. 10, Spd 34.

Size: 3 feet, 6 inches (1 m) tall; 60 pounds (27 kg).

Natural A.R.: 12

Hit Points: 41

S.D.C.: 30

Discorporation: When slain, the demon's host body appears to be that of an ancient and withered dog's. A detailed examination will reveal nothing out of the ordinary other than extreme old age.

P.P.E.: 89

Base I.S.P.: 100

Horror Factor: 10

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

Bonuses: +2 to strike and parry, +3 to dodge, +7 to save versus magic, +4 to save versus Horror Factor.

Damage: 2D4+2 Fangs, 3D6+7 Claws, 6D6+7 Power Punch (x2 attacks).

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Nightvision - 150 feet (45.7 m), Prowl (50%), Track Humans (65%), Climb (60%/55%), Swim (40%), Bio-regenerate 1D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points per

melee round, fire and cold resistant (half damage), impervious to poisons and drugs.

Magic: Knows all spells known by Brother Arturo, but will not cast them unless commanded to do so or in order to protect the witch or itself.

Psionics: Possesses all Physical psionic powers.

Appearance: In its natural form, the demon familiar is an energy being. It inhabits the body of whatever animal its master wishes it to possess, in this case, a very large, black attack dog. The familiar will remain hidden in the shadows unless called for by Brother Arturo or if its master's life is in danger. It will flee if its master flees. Game Masters - Feel free to modify this entry to bring it in line with the material presented in the upcoming *Beyond the Supernatural*™ 2nd Ed. sourcebooks *Beyond Arcanum*™ and *Tome Grotesque*™.

Game Master Note - Should the players be particularly powerful or large in number, include the Dark Servant from the previous encounter ("The meeting in the park") if it survived that encounter and fled back to its masters in the Dark Brotherhood.

After the players have defeated and/or driven off the cult members, if they search the underground chamber, they will find the cult leader's personal chambers behind a locked side door. Inside, they will find the following items of note - the two books taken from Charles Haydon's study (*Cults and Secret Societies: America's Dark Tradition* and *Ritual Magic in the 20th Century*), Haydon's missing journal entries, and a weathered, ancient bound book. Otherwise, Brother Arturo's chambers are rather Spartan, containing only a small wooden table, with a reading lamp and a small radio on it, a folding chair, a cot, and a footlocker. Inside the locker, the players will find \$350.00 in cash, clothes (more of the same dark trousers and white shirts along with two black robes like the one he and the other cultists were wearing), another ceremonial knife (Game Master's option as to if there is anything significant about the knife - it has a dark metal blade, a black leather wrapped handle, and has a number of crude symbols scratched into the leather - a successful Object Read performed on the blade will reveal that it has a long, bloody history of murder and ritualistic sacrifice - presence of magic???), and a collection of loosely bound papers that seem to be Brother Arturo's personal notes (again, it is up to the Game Master what these might contain - they are basically the ramblings of an insane, megalomaniacal sadist with delusions of godhood). An intent study of these papers (requires a save vs insanity to remain focused enough to understand them) will garner a one time bonus of +3% to Lore: Cults and Secret Societies.

The missing journal entries will reveal the following accounting of what Charles Haydon discovered about the Dark Brotherhood cult before he was discovered and murdered.

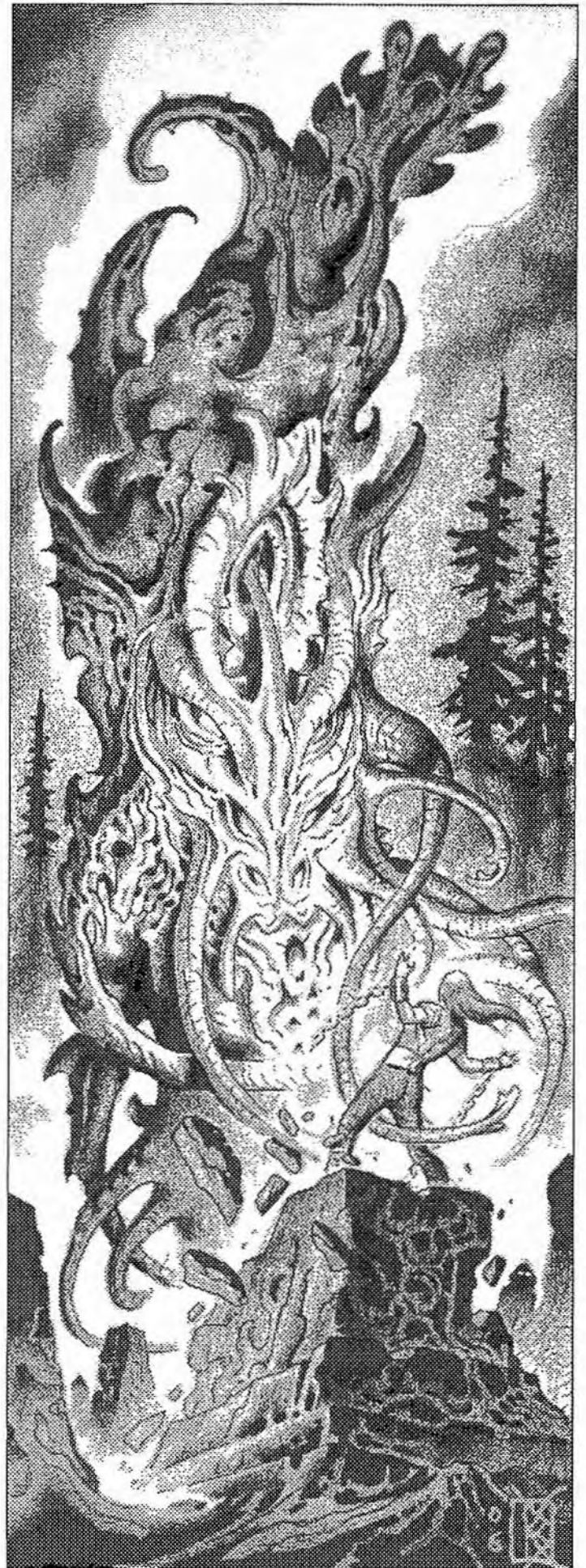
Entry dated December 16th: "I have made initial contact with the Enlightened Path Church, telling them that I was planning on writing an article about the misconceptions most people have about alternate faiths in order to gain their trust. On the surface, they seem to be a legitimate organization. Perhaps Jeremy's concerns are unfounded. In many respects, this church resembles the True Path religion described in the book. Still, I will dig further."

Entry dated December 18th: "Research into the Enlightened Path Church reveals several groups of people claiming that the

cult is responsible for brainwashing members, drugging and poisoning them, etc. So far, I have not been able to determine the validity of these claims, but my own digging has revealed that some of the "church's" money is being used for something they are not too keen on revealing. I will begin watching the place to see what I might discover."

Entry dated December 20th: "Have watched the church last night and it seems that a small number gather there in the evening, though for what purpose I cannot discern. Still no sign of Jacob, but I will continue to follow and watch."

Entry dated mid-morning of December 22nd: "I have witnessed things this morning that are beyond comprehension. I must write them down before I succumb to sleep and awake, hoping that what I have seen is nothing more than a terrible dream. I watched at the church once again when in the pre-dawn hour, a large black van drove away. I followed them until they drove off the road north of town. They left the van and I think I saw them dragging something that was bound and tied. At first I thought it was Jacob, but soon saw that it was a young teenage girl. I followed them into the woods for over an hour until they arrived at a small clearing. There were several large stone blocks forming a rough ring around the clearing with one larger, flat stone in the middle. With the first faint hint of dawn appearing in the sky overhead, I could see faded white pictographs painted on them and I knew that this was one of the local Native American sites north of town. The six members tied the girl to the middle stone and began chanting. I checked my cell phone, but had no signal to call for help. I was helpless to do anything but watch what I thought would be the ritualistic murder of this girl. But at the exact moment of daybreak, the ground shook violently. Though the girl screamed and even I shouted out in alarm, the chanting cult members seemed unaffected by it. As I regained my footing, I turned my attention back to the ceremony and saw that which I will now try to describe. The air above the stone altar seemed to become blurry and waver as if waves of heat were rising from the poor girl's body. Then, what can only be described as a tear formed in midair. From beyond the opening, a blinding white light gleamed, illuminating the entire scene. Terror filled the girl's face as she screamed, though I could only stare in mute horror. Then, something stepped through. I could not see what it was as the instant it appeared, the light vanished and it seemed as if even the morning light had somehow dimmed. Whatever stepped into our world was massive, at least 15 feet in height, and it lashed out with many thrashing limbs. It made a sound like a half a dozen different wild animals all crying out in agony at once. I even thought I heard a vaguely human-sounding voice speaking some gibberish, but it may have been the girl who had become quite hysterical. Then her screams were cut off abruptly as the shadowy form leaned over, blocking her body from my view. When it reared back up, I could see that the girl's body was no longer on the stone. Instead, it was being torn limb from limb and devoured by the terrible beast. Regaining my wits, I fled the scene and have only now stopped moving. I know not what unholy thing I have witnessed, but I must do something. In the morning, I will be able to think clearly, though not even the thought of sunlight brings me peace. Still, for now I will try to catch a few hours of sleep."



Entry dated midday December 22nd: *"I have seen a strange car parked a few houses down from my home and I fear that I was somehow discovered early this morning. I think I know who to contact, to warn them, but I am not sure if they will believe me. I cannot call Jeremy now, not until I can make sense of what I have seen . . . if ever that day comes. And the police, they can do nothing, even if they believed what I would tell them. Already, reports of the night's quake are in the news, though the poor fools have no idea what truly caused it or what was unleashed upon the unsuspecting world. I can only hope that my friends and associates believe me and can do something about it."*

The ancient book is written in a cryptic text that is almost impossible to decipher, though at the Game Master's discretion, a Psychic Savant might be able to read parts that are immediately important (reading the text requires the following successful skill rolls: Literacy: Latin and Cryptography). The book details the beliefs and practices of the Dark Brotherhood. Extensive study of the book will grant a one time bonus of +5% to Lore: Cults and Secret Societies and Lore: Religions (when dealing with pagan faiths). Also, knowledgeable characters (requires a successful Lore: Magic Arcane, Lore: Magic, or Read Magic skill roll) will be able to learn that the book contains the formulae for three magic rituals. Two are described in Brother Arturo's notes (see below) and the third is a spell designed to place the caster in a trance-like state in order to communicate with the Dark One.

Dreams of the Dark One (ritual)

Level: 4

Range: Self.

Duration: 1D4 minutes.

Saving Throw: Standard saving throw versus Insanity (see below).

P.P.E.: 15

Base Skill: Equal to the character's M.A. plus 5% per level of experience to contact the Dark One (+10% if cast between September 22nd and December 21st, +20% if cast on December 22nd/Winter Solstice, -10% if cast between March 23rd and June 20th, and -25% if cast on June 21st/Summer Solstice). There is also a 30% +2% per level chance that the spell caster will experience a Precognitive Vision. This ritual can only be performed on moonless nights (new moon).

Once this ritual is complete, this spell places the caster in a trance-like state for 1D4 minutes, during which time there is a chance that his mind will make contact with a being of Ancient Evil - the Dark One. The first time this spell is cast and successful contact is made with the Dark One, the person conducting the ritual will need to save versus insanity or suffer a random insanity as a result of the mental strain of being in contact with such an evil, psychotic being.

This ritual is usually used by the Dark One's priests and witches to make direct contact with their deity and to receive guidance and visions. It is also how one might first become a servant of the Dark One if, once contact is made, the Dark One sees potential in the spell caster and if the mortal is willing to accept the "promise" of power. If not, however, or if the spell

caster has no idea what he is getting into when performing the ritual, then the Dark One bombards the mortal's mind with horrific images, requiring another saving throw versus insanity (Game Master may select the insanity in this case, as this is the result of a direct mental assault from a powerful Ancient Evil), before the dark god breaks contact. This is often the fate of foolish mortals who are presumptuous enough to assume they can contact such a being without ill effect.

Regardless of whether or not the spell caster successfully makes contact with the Dark One, he may also receive a Precognitive Vision during the trance (identical to the Psychic Sensitive psionic power of Precognition).

The Dark One - Symbol of death, decay, winter, the end of all things.

Ancient Evil (Threat Level - x10).

Alignment: Diabolic.

Disposition: Psychotic evil!

The Dark One is the symbol of death and the end of time. It is a psychotically evil being dedicated to insanity and destruction. Mortals are little more than playthings and tools to bring about more death and destruction. Those who show a similar insane desire for chaos and death (murder, mass murder) will be looked upon as potential servants/witches. All others are little more than insects to be toyed with before being brutally crushed.

If the players ever take the book to Marlon Cleinfel, proprietor of the Hidden Treasures rare bookstore, he will at first offer \$200 for the book, but will be willing to go as high as \$1500. The presence of three working magic rituals actually makes the book much more valuable (\$10,000+), though the players will need to first successfully translate the book and then make a successful Lore: Magic (general knowledge), Lore: Magic Arcane, or Appraise Antiques skill roll in order to estimate the true value of the book. Marlon will only pay even close to its true worth if the players can verify that it contains three working magic rituals.

While translating it will take months of effort, fortunately for the players, Brother Arturo made several notes detailing the rituals to be performed. These are tucked in the back and describe two rituals that are entitled "Summon the One without Form" and "Dismiss the Formless Emissary." These rituals are similar to the spells Summon and Control Lesser Being and Expel Demons with the following exceptions: the summoning ritual can only be used to summon a Boschala; it requires a human sacrifice be made available for the demonic predator to consume when it arrives; and it only costs 300 P.P.E. to cast (instead of the usual 450). The other ritual is designed to only dismiss a Boschala summoned by the previous spell, though it will also work, to a lesser degree, on other demonic entities (the Boschala must roll to save versus magic of 18 or higher to resist, while other Lesser Demonic entities must only roll a 16. Greater entities and Avatars need only roll a 10 or higher to resist and beings of Ancient Evil and Alien Intelligences are unaffected). The ritual only costs 30 P.P.E. to perform. Brother Arturo's notes suggest that both rituals must be performed at a "sacred site of elemental and spiritual power" (A successful skill roll un-

der Lore: Geomancy and Ley Lines or Lore: Superstitions will indicate that this means a Ley Line nexus or similar place of power), preferably at a “time of peak power” (another successful Lore: Geomancy and Ley Lines skill roll will reveal the peak times; otherwise, Arturo has noted the two most convenient times - noon and midnight, as well as directions to the Native American ceremony site - the Ley Line nexus). Finally, Arturo’s notes will suggest that if the “One without Form” is not pacified with sacrifices on a fairly regular basis, it will begin seeking its own victims from the surrounding areas.

Should the players choose not to confront the Boschala at all or wait too long to do so - such as if they need to spend a great deal of time recuperating from injuries, then they will hear more news reports about missing people in the wilderness north of Simmonsville, as well as discoveries of mutilated, half eaten bodies. Characters of good alignment should feel compelled to act as soon as possible or suffer (either loss of experience points or a random insanity brought on by the guilt of knowing not only what it is that is doing the killing but also that they are the only ones really equipped to try to put a stop to it).

At the Game Master’s discretion, feel free to add any physical requirements to the formula for the ritual - candles, incense, fetishes, etc. that the players may need to spend time to acquire, adding to the urgency the players should feel about quickly dismissing or destroying the Boschala before it kills more people.

3: Battling the Beast

If the players have already dealt with the cult members in the basement of the Enlightened Path Church, they will already know that their best plan will be to use the “Dismiss the Formless Emissary” ritual at the ley line nexus where the original earthquake occurred. If not, then they will not have the benefit of the ritual’s protection when they attempt to destroy the Boschala.

Finding their way onto the land by following Arturo’s notes will no be too difficult. There is an old access road onto the PENStar property off Highway 9. The players will encounter a gate with a sign warning that they are trespassing on PENStar property and will be prosecuted if caught; however, the gate is also slightly ajar. If the players take the time to examine the gate, the chain on the fence is not cut, but appears to have been either professionally picked or deliberately unlocked (?) as there is no sign of violence on the chain or padlock.

When the players arrive at the clearing described in Haydon’s journal entry and Brother Arturo’s notes, they will feel its power and know that it is a ley line nexus (raise Threat Level to x2). If a Diviner is present in the party, he should have no problem finding the nexus, especially using his power in conjunction with the notes. While at the ley line nexus, psychic players will be able to draw upon an additional 8 I.S.P. per melee (non-cumulative) and Arcanists will be able to draw on an additional 10 P.P.E. (non-cumulative) beyond their amplified base I.S.P./P.P.E. (adapted from *Beyond the Supernatural*TM, 1st Ed. - Game Masters, feel free to modify the effect of the ley line nexus on the players based upon the rules presented in the upcoming *Beyond Arcanum*TM sourcebook). Furthermore, the duration as well as any possible damage of their abilities/spells is doubled. If the players are present either at midday or midnight, in addition to the aforementioned bonuses, the cost of their psy-

chic powers will be half (but not spells). Also, for one minute from 12:00 to 12:01, there will be an additional 20 ambient P.P.E. available per melee to be used in the casting of any spell magic or the invocation of the ritual. If the players are attempting to dismiss the Boschala at noon, there is only a 5% chance that it will be anywhere near the clearing when they arrive. However, if they are attempting to use the ritual at midnight, there is a 25% chance that the creature will be in the area before the players begin the ritual.

Part of the power of the ritual is to call the Boschala to the nexus in order to dismiss it. It will be irresistibly drawn to the players as they begin the ritual, arriving 4D4 minutes into the ritual (threat level rises to that of a Lesser Demonic threat - x4 for most P.C.C.s). Though they will be unaware of this at first, as long as the players remain hand in hand as they perform the ritual, the Boschala will be powerless to stop them, though it will rage, bellow, and make feinting charges in an attempt to disrupt the ceremony and draw the players into conflict. Furthermore, all of those actively engaged in the ritual receive a +3 to save versus the creature’s Horror Factor (in addition to any bonuses they may already possess). However, should any player fail his Horror Factor saving throw, he will be distracted and break from the ritual either to flee or to fight the creature directly. Though this will still allow the other players to continue the ritual (as long as the player leading the ceremony is not affected), those who are overcome with horror will no longer be protected by the ritual and are now targets for the creature to attack. Furthermore, the P.P.E. of the player(s) who break from the ritual will not be available to cast the spell (which could be a problem if the players have an overall low P.P.E. base or no Arcanist P.C.C. with them - without sufficient P.P.E., they will be unable to complete the ritual and dismiss the beast).

To heighten the suspense of the moment, have the Boschala behave in the following manner. Before it appears, it will make a great deal of noise in the woods adjacent to the clearing (requires a saving throw versus Horror Factor of 10+). Then, when it first appears, it will merely stand and watch (second saving throw versus Horror Factor of 16+). If none of the players break, it will bellow, wailing in a multitude of different voices from its multiple heads (Horror Factor of 17+). Finally, if no one has broken from the ritual yet, it will make several feinting charges (full Horror Factor of 18+) for the final two melee rounds of the ritual. As a sign of the players’ increasing confidence, with each successive failed attempt to break up the ritual (i.e. no one breaks from the ritual), increase the Horror Factor saving throw bonus by +1 on top of the initial +3 provided by the ritual automatically (basically, the players see that the ritual will protect them and this should offer them some measure of strength in resisting their fear of the beast).

Though the demonic predator can be fought by psychic powers and conventional weapons, the players’ best chance at defeating it without sustaining serious injuries is through the ritual. One minute (4 melees) after the Boschala appears, the ritual will be completed. If the monster fails its saving throw (18+, no bonuses applicable), another dimensional Rift will appear, just as described in Haydon’s journal, only this one will draw the creature back into it. Alternately, if the players successfully kill the creature by reducing its Hit Points to 0, it will also be slain, though this course of action will most likely put the players’ lives in peril.

Don't forget - Psychic Sensitives will automatically sense the approach of the Boschala before it enters the clearing, as will the use of Presence Sense, Sense Evil, and Sense Magic if used during the ritual. At the Game Master's discretion, an Autistic Psychic Savant may seem to be more coherent and focused while on the hunt for the Boschala.

Boschala - The One without Form.

Threat Level: x4; Supernatural Predator, a Lesser Demon.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 8, M.E. 12, M.A. 9, P.S. 31, P.P. 15, P.E. 23, P.B. 1, Spd 9.

Size: 15 feet (4.6 m) tall; 2000 pounds (900 kg).

Natural A.R.: 8

Hit Points: 100

S.D.C.: 123

Discorporation: When slain, the Boschala's body turns into slime that dries up and blows away 1D6 minutes later. Analysis of the slime or dust will indicate an organic compound similar to snail slime.

P.P.E.: 30

Base I.S.P.: 0

Horror Factor: 18

Attacks per Melee: 6 physical.

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +6 to pull punch/bite, +2 to disarm, +2 to roll with the punch, +2 to save versus psionics, +7 to save versus magic (but not against the dismissal ritual), +10 to save versus Horror Factor.

Damage: 3D6 Fangs, 2D6+16 Restrained Punch, 5D6+16 Full Strength Punch, 7D6+16 Claws, and 1D6x10+16 Power Punch (x2 attacks).

Natural Abilities/Skills of Note: Track Humanoids (50%), Prowl (60%), Swim (70%), Climb (90%/85%), Camouflage (50%), Imitate Voices and Sounds (45%), fire and cold resistant (half damage), impervious to poison and drugs, nightvision - 300 feet (91.5 m), track by smell (70%), Doesn't breathe air, see the invisible, normal daytime vision and Bio-regenerate 6D6 Hit Points and S.D.C. per hour.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Appearance: Like all Boschala, this one is a chimera-like amalgamation of numerous creatures. Its main body is that of some giant prehistoric armored fish. Its five heads (Snake, Spider, Fish, Bull, and Human-like) are all armed with long, spike-like teeth. It has four pairs of legs (Feline, Elephant, Human, and Bear) and a massive snake-like tail. Its six arms have the following characteristics: Ape-like, Insect-like pincer, Feline with claws, Bear claws, and a pair of Tentacles. When it appears in the clearing, the players will hear it speaking in several different voices, all calling out at once, each crying out in some bizarre language. This will be so distracting that players will suffer -1 on all combat rolls (but not saving throws).

Game Master's note - If the Boschala is encountered before the players have the ritual to properly dismiss it and they still manage to harm it significantly, it will flee into the woods, ultimately diving into the lake and hiding until it has completely regenerated itself.

Loose Ends?

Even with the Simonsville cult of the Dark Brotherhood dealt with and the Boschala dismissed/slain, there might still be a few loose ends that the Game Master may wish to exploit in a later adventure. These could include (but are surely not limited to):

The Dark Brotherhood - Were the six members in the basement the only truly active members of the cult? Were there others who were not present that night? Did Brother Arturo have a disciple/pupil who may assume the mantle of cult leader now that his master is slain? Or did Brother Arturo or Brother Franklin manage to escape? They would most certainly come looking for revenge upon those responsible for disrupting their plans.

The Plans of the Dark Brotherhood - Just what were their plans? Why was Jacob Alston being sacrificed in the first place? What was the purpose behind the summoning of the Boschala? Brother Arturo's notes show an insanely diabolical, psychotic man with delusions of godhood. Were these events part of his overall scheme to achieve even greater power?

Other Dark Brotherhood Cells - Were these the only remaining members of this obscure pagan cult? In Brother Arturo's notes found in the footlocker in his chambers, he alludes to the possibility of other cells of the Dark Brotherhood in other places. If there are other Brothers out there, could they come looking for revenge?

The Dark One - If Brother Arturo gained his mystical powers from a link with the Dark One, then such a being (Ancient Evil) would have known about the defeat/death of one of its witches. Would it see it as a fitting end to an undeserving pawn too weak to serve his master successfully, or would it crave revenge on those who have disrupted its plans by murdering one of its mortal agents?

PENStar - Just what was their involvement, if any, with the Dark Brotherhood? The organization was listed as a contributor to the Enlightened Path Church and the Ley Line nexus is on their property. And don't forget that the back gate onto their land was unlocked. Did someone at PENStar know what the Dark Brotherhood was up to, or was someone simply bribed to look the other way? And if PENStar knew about the ritual and the Boschala, what were their plans for the creature and/or dimensional nexus? (PENStar does have a Parapsychologist on staff and does extensive/secret research in the area of supernatural and psychic phenomena - more on that later . . .)

Jessica Alston - Though only mentioned a few times, Jessica Alston was clearly an issue between Jeremy Alston and Charles Haydon. What happened to her is never revealed. Did she die? Did she divorce Jeremy? Is she somehow involved in either the Enlightened Path Church or the cult? After all, Jacob did mention his mother in the final argument between him and his father before he left to join the church.

Criminal Charges - Exactly how many times did the players cross the legal line in the course of their investigation? If they were on good terms with Detective Daniels, they might get off relatively easy, especially if they managed to save Jacob Alston (who would more than be able to vouch for the evil insanity of his captors, though he will be a bit too shaken up to be taken seriously as a witness to any displays of supernatural power that took place in the final battle with the Dark Brotherhood). On the

other hand, if the players constantly ran afoul with the police, what will this mean in the future if they continue to investigate supernatural happenings in and around Simmonsville? And what about their jobs? How much time off did they have to take during their investigation? If they were arrested (more than in the first encounter), might they lose their jobs?

Finally, local Native American legend about the “place of dark medicine” goes back over 1000 years, long before Europeans would have settled the region, bringing the practices of either the True Path or the Dark Brotherhood with them. What other supernatural menaces might slip through the nexus from time to time. Do any still inhabit the region? Additional research into the site (either through Lore: Native American Indians or History skill rolls) will reveal that the woods north of present-day Simmonsville are reputed to be haunted, with a rich history of weird phenomena, unexplained disappearances, and strange sightings going back from before colonial times all the way to just before World War II.

Map Notes

Charles Haydon’s House

1. Front Porch - Front door is locked and window curtains are drawn.

2. Entry Hall - Contains several book shelves holding unremarkable books as well as a coat rack, a small table, and a floor lamp. Doors lead off to a series of other rooms and stairs go up to the Upstairs Landing (#14).

3. Dining Room - Has a large, wooden, rectangular table with eight chairs, a buffet with silver, crystal, serving sets, etc., and a small bar with wine and liquor. Window curtains are drawn.

4. Kitchen - Fairly modern kitchen with a center island for food preparation. Window curtain is open and back door is slightly ajar.

5. Living Room - Several more book shelves, several comfortable chairs, a sofa, and a coffee table. Set of French Doors leads to adjacent room. Front window curtains are drawn but side window curtains are open.

6. Sitting Room - Similar to the Living Room, but a bit more casual. Contains a TV/Entertainment center as well as seating. A small table sits behind the sofa against the north wall and looks to get a fair amount of use (loose papers, dirty dinner plate, etc.). Curtains are open but the back door is locked.

7. Downstairs Bathroom - Half bath with access to both the Entry Hall (#2) and the Sitting Room (#6).

8. Closets - Contains a variety of household items, coats, etc.

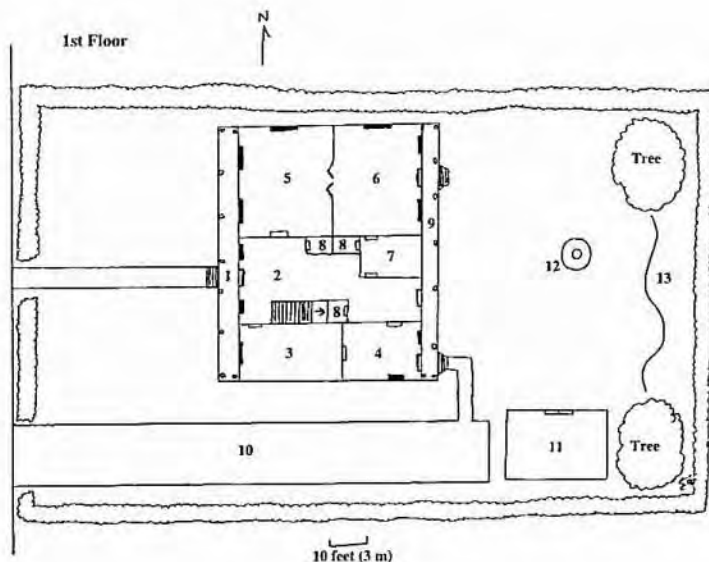
9. Back Porch - Back doors to the Entry Hall (#2) and the Sitting Room (#6) are locked but the door to the Kitchen (#4) is ajar.

10. Driveway - Haydon’s car is parked there by nightfall.

11. Tool Shed - Contains miscellaneous tools, garden implements, lawn mower, etc.

12. Fountain.

13. Garden - A variety of several small and large shrubs bordered by two large trees.



14. Upstairs Landing - Several more book shelves, a balcony overlooking part of the Entry Hall (#2) and several doors branching off to other rooms. The window curtains are open and the side passage leads upstairs to the Attic (#19).

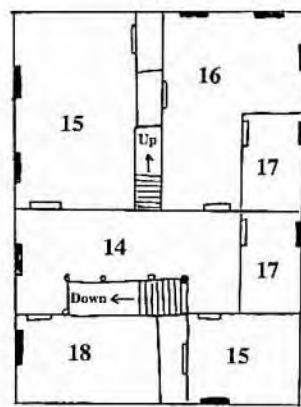
15. Guest Bedrooms - These two guest rooms look seemingly untouched. Curtains are open.

16. Master Bedroom - Charles Haydon’s bedroom. Looks well lived in, somewhat sloppy, but otherwise, has nothing of interest apart from typical personal effects. A side door opens to the Master Bathroom (#17).

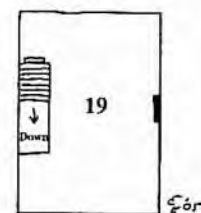
17. Upstairs Bathrooms - Both of these are full baths (include tub and shower). One is attached to the Upstairs Landing (#14) and the other to the Master Bedroom (#16).

18. Private Library - This door is slightly ajar. The curtain is drawn. The room is occupied by a desk, chair, wall to wall book shelves and the ritualistically murdered body of Charles Haydon. See full description under “Meeting at Charles Haydon’s house at 9 PM.”

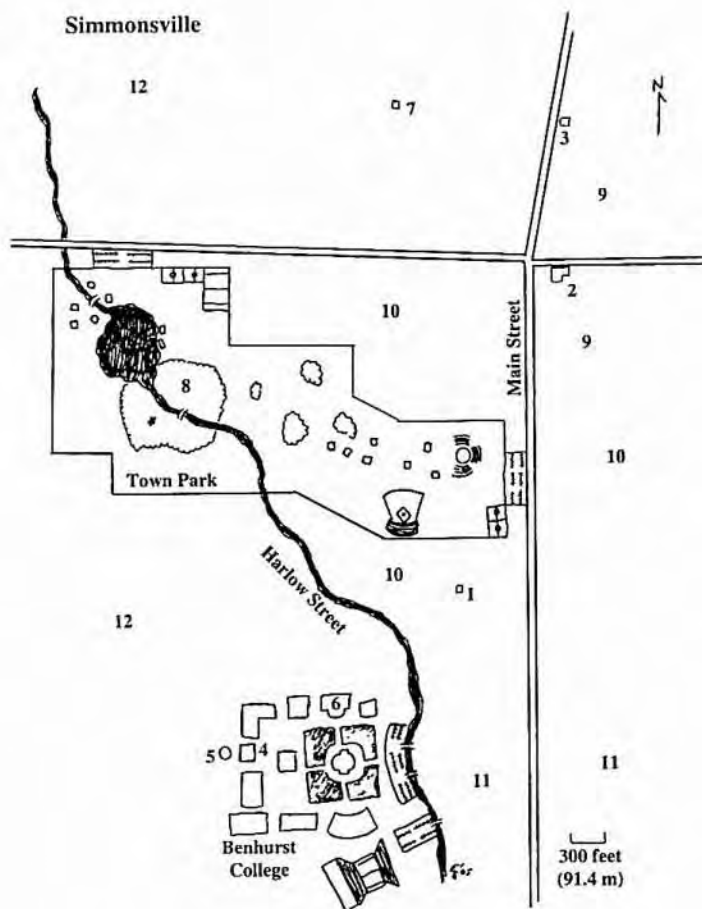
2nd Floor



Attic



19. Attic - The Dark Servant is hiding in the attic, under orders to observe whomever discovers the body and report back to its masters in the Dark Brotherhood. It is under orders not to engage them in combat and if discovered (i.e. someone enters the attic), it is to flee. Other than that, there is nothing of real note in here other than old furniture, boxed up personal belongings, etc.



Downtown Simmonsville

1. House of Charles Haydon - See full description under "Meeting at Charles Haydon's house at 9 PM."

2. County Jail/Police Department - See full description under "Arrested and held for questioning."

3. Hidden Treasures Rare Book Dealer - See full description under "Seeking out 'Hidden Treasures.'"

4. Natural History Building, Benhurst College - See full description under "A history of earthquakes in the region."

5. Observatory, Benhurst College - Fully functioning, 24-inch refractor telescope available to the public with an appointment through the Department of Natural History.

6. Benhurst College Library - See full description under "At the Library."

7. House of Jeremy Alston - See full description under "Interviewing Jeremy Alston."

8. Simmonsville Town Park Old Grove - See full description under "The meeting in the park." The star marks where the players will meet Lawrence Kelhoun. Other park features of note include a large gazebo bandstand with seats, a set of tennis and basketball courts, a football/soccer field, scattered clusters of trees and picnic pavilions, a small pond with a boathouse and boat rental, and a wide stream running the length of the park.

9. Old Main Street area - Main Street, Town Hall, Antique Shop, General Store, Fire House, Simmonsville Junior High, etc.

10. Old Residential - Older homes, mainly people who live and work in the Simmonsville area.

11. Commercial Developments - Strip mall, take out, fast food, grocery, drugstore, gas station, etc.

12. Newer Bedroom Communities - Most of the people in this area live in Simmonsville but commute to and from work in larger towns and cities to the south and east.

Simmonsville Region

1. Simmonsville.

2. PENStar Main Complex.

3. PENStar Property.

4. Ley Line Nexus/Standing Stones.

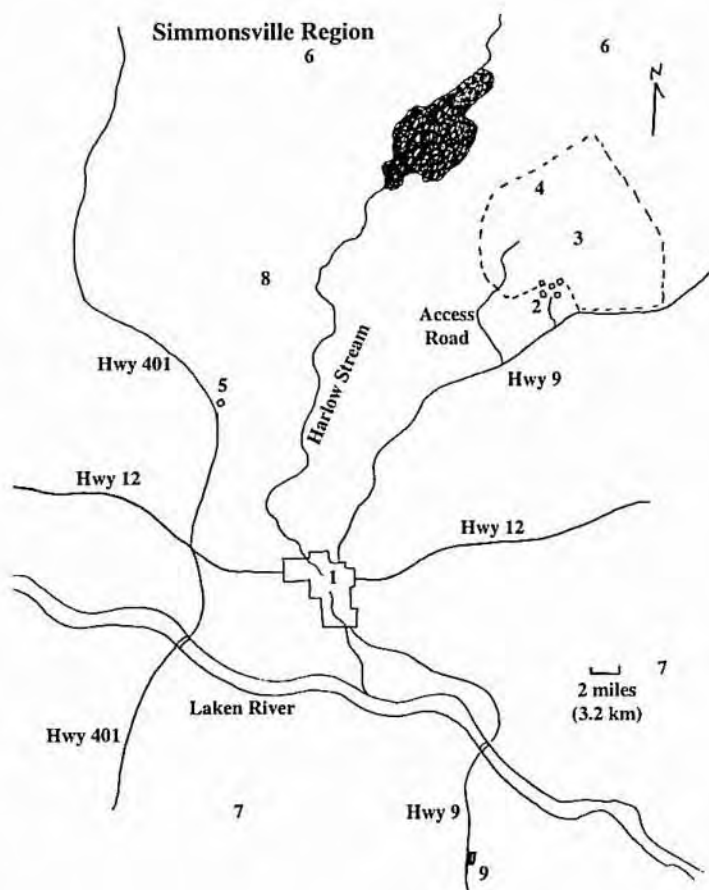
5. George Dunlow's House.

6. Mountainous Wilderness (at least mountainous for the Southeastern United States, Blue Ridge region).

7. Farmland.

8. Pictograph Rock.

9. Strip Mall location of Enlightened Path Church.



The Enlightened Path Church

1. Waiting room - Contains a number of chairs, a sofa, a receptionist's desk and a collection of pamphlets describing the details of the faith of the Enlightened Path Church.

2. Connecting Hallways - 50% chance of any given door being locked except the doors to the Main Worship Hall (#10) and the Cleaning Closet (#11), both of which are locked.

3. Brother Franklin's office - Contains a desk, computer, and several filing cabinets containing fairly unremarkable files on the members of the church (nothing illegal or damaging).

4. Other office space - Looks to be unused for the most part (desk, computer, and filing cabinet that is mainly empty).

5. Sleeping Chambers - At times, some of the members stay on site, especially if they have no other place to go (left their parents' homes). Each room is a series of small cots, each with a small table with a reading lamp. Locker-like cabinets contain a variety of personal effects, nothing of real value (most of that has been donated to the church) and several changes of clothing (the standard "uniform" of the church). At the time of the final encounter, these are unoccupied.

6. Dining Hall - Several long tables with folding chairs. A cabinet in the corner contains plates, utensils, etc.

7. Kitchen - Over a low bar, the facility's kitchen contains nothing remarkable.

8. Restrooms - The two adjacent to the Main Worship Hall (#10) also have small shower cubicles.

9. Storage Room - This chamber is always locked and contains the robes for the clergy of the church, a collection of candles, a crystal pitcher containing a deep red fluid (wine laced with a mild hallucinogenic drug - save vs poison of 14+ or become susceptible to suggestions of others). It also contains a locked safe containing \$25,000 as well as a variety of personal effects (rings, jewelry, watches, etc.) with an approximate value of \$10,000. Also included in this safe are detailed files on the church's more nefarious practices (brainwashing techniques, records of who contributed what money, plans for expansion, local figures targeted for either recruitment or retribution) as well as files on all of the church members. However, no files about the connection to the Dark Brotherhood exist. In addition to these items, there is a tarnished silver goblet of ancient design. A series of faded markings on it suggest a Latin text (must make a successful Literacy: Latin skill roll to decipher) which read "vessel of power and life." The inside of the goblet shows traces of dark red stains (human blood) and the goblet radiates 3D6 P.P.E. if viewed with the psychic ability See Aura. A successful Object Read will indicate that the participants of various rituals would bleed a small amount of blood into the vessel (thereby charging it with P.P.E. - total capacity of the vessel is 50 P.P.E., but an Arcanist or Parapsychologist would need to research the proper ritual in order to learn how to access it).

10. Main Worship Hall - This large chamber contains a number of pews, arranged in a circular fashion around a raised platform with an altar-like table, covered by a white cloth with a variety of astrological and pagan symbols embroidered on it.

11. Cleaning Closet - Cleaning supplies, brooms, mops, etc. Behind a false back wall, a set of stairs descend to the Secret Hallway (#12). See full description under "Battling the Brotherhood."

12. Secret Hallway - Stairs lead back to the Cleaning Closet (#11). Another door, unlocked, enters into the Balcony (#13).

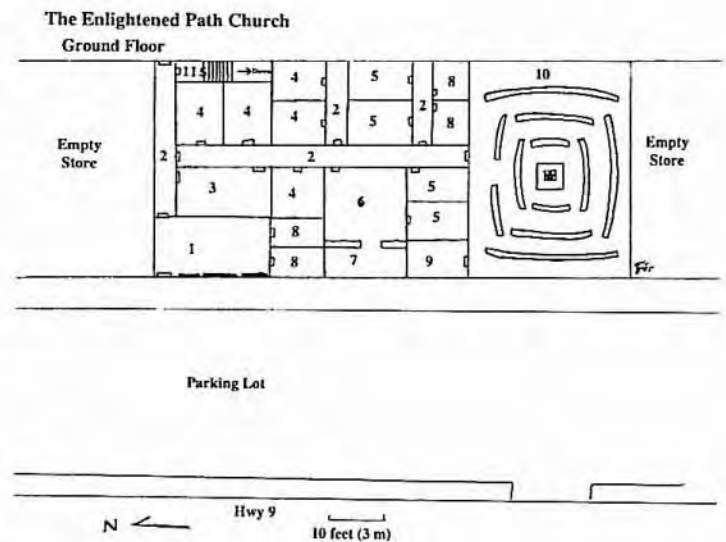
13. Balcony - A wide metal balcony with a waist high rail overlooks the basement 10 feet (3 m) below.

14. Sacrificial Chamber of the Dark Brotherhood - See full description under "Battling the Brotherhood." The chamber is lit by a series of candles both resting on the Table (#15) and on floor-candlestick holders situated around the room.

15. Table - This is the table Jacob Alston is strapped to, surrounded by the 4 cultists, Brother Franklin and Brother Arturo.

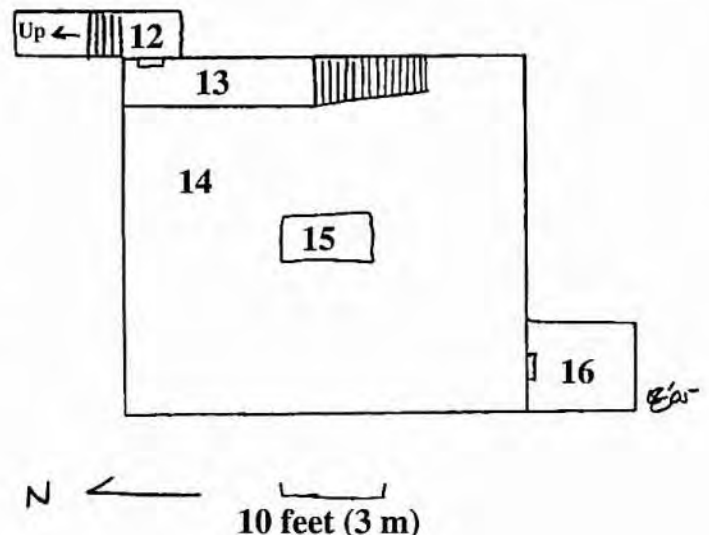
Shade (demon familiar) and the Dark Servant (if present) are hiding in the shadows.

16. Brother Arturo's Private Chamber - See full description under "Battling the Brotherhood."



The Enlightened Path Church

Basement



Ellios: Epoch of Legends

An Optional New Setting for
Palladium™ Fantasy and Heroes Unlimited™

By Steven Smigielski

Overview Commentary

*From the wilderness poured forgotten terrors...
... and heroes once again walked the earth to fight them.*

Ellios is a world which only barely recovered from the collapse of a worldwide society when the shadows of its own past returned. When the ruling caste of the world was toppled, the land was thrown into war. Now, as the world recovers, old races, once defeated and locked away, have returned with a vengeance. A barely stable world is once again plunged into conflict, and heroes arise to make their mark.

The basic concept of Ellios was to create a world akin to the old myths and legends of the world. It is a world somewhere between the past of Earth in *Heroes Unlimited*™, and the present of the *Palladium Fantasy*® world. In the end, Ellios is simply a world where gods are not creations with their own special rules, and while they may be able to bring down a city, doing so is still a dangerous idea.

Originally, the *Epoch of Legends* idea was spawned as a collection of Palladium variant rules to add the *Heroes Unlimited* feel in an attempt to allow the players to feel like mighty Thor, without getting into arguments over which R.C.C. to use. As I worked on creating bases for the various characters some of the guys in my gaming groups asked about, the world started to take form. Initially, I tried using an O.C.C.-based system, but found that the flexibility of the *Heroes Unlimited* and *After the Bomb*™ education system fit the idea of the world a little better. In the end, the *Epoch of Legends* system was created, and we just needed a world to test it in.

Ellios was actually extrapolated from a single character background: The idea of a character with the might of a god, in a world where that was a bad thing. As we worked on the character idea and back story, the setting just took off in my mind. What started as just a basic idea of history got expanded and twisted until Ellios formed as what I felt would be a playable game world. The histories and views provided are written as what the common person might know, not necessarily the real history. In my gaming I have a habit of re-writing the history of the world to whatever fits the plot best. That ability is one of the things I wanted to leave in this setting, so the world is left incomplete. Aside from a few general core ideas, everything is left liquid to allow anyone running the system to adjust the world as they need.

Anyways, I'm still testing the setting, but figured I'd share it with the world. Maybe if there's interest I'll finish writing the rest of the world from my campaign notes and submit it later.

- Steve Smigielski



History of Ellios

Birth of the World

The history of the world is a fairly brief one, as the High did their best to erase any and all memory of the old ways when they took over. As the common man knows, the world began as a simple thing, full of mindless creatures and the Low. For untold years, the Low lived simple, barbaric lives, never striving to be more than hunters and gatherers. What few civilizations arose from the Low were quickly destroyed by roving war-tribes and soon forgotten.

Coming of the Gods, Epoch of Men

The gods arrived in a thunderous storm which tore the sky from one horizon to the other. All tribes of the Low saw the portal of the gods, and many were drawn to what later became the island of Ghodome. Here, on the westernmost island of the world, the twelve Old Gods revealed themselves to the Low pilgrims who arrived. Those who pledged loyalty to Fhu were given the gifts of Men.

Raised above their brethren, this new race of Men divided into two castes. The Builders stayed with the gods to build great cities in their honor, beginning with the temple city of Ghodome, and later the crystal city of Lazifhu itself. The Speakers were sent forth into the world to preach the word of the gods and bring the Low under their protective wing.

Raising of the High, Epoch of Gathering

After the gods' central city of Lazifhu was finished, those Builders and their families who still served the gods were given a new gift. Their bodies were blessed with divine light from the Great Eye and given the gift of immortality so they could serve the gods forever. Because of their new gifts, the Builders took on the title of the High, and took over management of the other races while their masters walked the land to bring back the Speakers and those loyal to the gods.

During this Epoch, the two life giving gods remained in Lazifhu: Gia and Fhu. Under their guidance the High created all the Servants of the world. Fantastic creatures slaved away as the High and Men lived in luxury. It was the end of the Epoch when the first of the traveling gods returned.

The First War

Lhot, the first of the gods to leave to gather the Speakers, had spent too much time out of the light of the Great Eye. At the furthest edge of the world he was beset upon by a Low tribe who refused to accept the power of the gods. After a fierce battle, he was rescued by Closs, the wind god, who brought him back to Lazifhu. Lhot's wounds were grave, and the god fell to death during the journey. It was upon his return that the High learned of the gods' mortality. Trusting the High, the gods allowed their highest officials to aid in the resurrection of Lhot.

After Lhot was revived by the Eye, he explained the weakness of the gods to the High. Without the Great Eye, the gods were nothing. Only he and the High had been granted life eternal by the Eye, and thus were its chosen children destined to lead the world. Gia and Fhu tried to restrain Lhot, claiming he was not in his right mind, but the god reborn was already bound to the Eye and used its power to expel them and their servants from the city.

While the gods gathered outside the city of Lazifhu, Lhot revealed the truth of the Great Eye to all the High who swore fealty to him. Empowered with this mystic knowledge, the High rose to their destiny as the divine rulers of the world and struck against the army of the gods.

The First War raged for uncounted years, until at last the gods began to falter and fail. Without the Great Eye, their bodies grew old and died. Eventually, the Eye's power was used to seal away the last of the gods and their servants in the dark places of the world, and Lhot passed on his power and wisdom to the Grand Chancellor of the High as was the will of the Great Eye.

Epoch of the High

For centuries the High pushed the borders of their land until it spanned the world. Under their rule, all other races knew peace. While some would say it was a dark, oppressive peace where none could speak out openly against the will of the High, none could deny that the world had never seen an age with so little conflict before.

Once the last of the Low tribes were inducted into the nation of the High, everything else was a simple matter of maintaining the world with a calm, iron fist. Everyone in the land knew the role they were born into. The simple caste system established by

the rule of Lazifhu was returned, with the Low and Men filling gaps left by the absence of the Servants.

Years passed with little more than whispers in the dark about the old gods, until they were all but forgotten.

The Epoch of Strife

The calm of the world was shattered in a single night. The Night of Fire was a horrid experience throughout the entire world. Everywhere the sky was blackened by clouds of ash and the earth shook with such force that even the great walls of the Stone City were torn open to the wilderness.

When the quakes stopped, the city of Lazifhu, capital of the world, was consumed in fire. Erupting from the Tower of Endless Light, a pillar of fire joined the city to the sky in a display visible for miles. Around the world, Homus servants bound to the Crystal City cried out for a brief moment then collapsed, confirming the death of their home. Although the pillar only burned for a brief moment, the city was burned to ash. Only Low and Men living in the slums around the city survived the incineration. Those surviving quickly scattered like the city's ashes on the four winds, many appearing in other cities telling tales of signs of the gods' return to the world. Many even proclaimed that in the Night of Fire, Fhu, the Burning God himself, walked the streets, bringing holy vengeance upon the High.

With these rumors of the gods' return surfaced Men who claimed to still practice the old ways in secret. The Old Priests shared stories of the High's betrayal of the Old Gods, and their crafting of the Eye. From these stories sprung distrust and rebellion. The world was consumed by war again and without the power of the Eye, the High were weakened much as the gods they had once defeated.

The Eye, housed in the bowels of Lazifhu, had been the backbone of the High nation. When the Night of Fire had destroyed the city, the Eye had been closed, some even said destroyed. While many of the creations of the High would work without the Eye's power, they were greatly reduced. Additionally, without the Eye to maintain the seals created in the First War, they weakened over the years, and finally broke. The prisons of the Servants were opened again.

The Epoch of Legends

With Ellios still recovering from war, the High sent forth proclamations that the Eye had been re-opened. Moved from its shattered sanctuary of Lazifhu, the Eye was taken to the temple city Ghodome. From there the High tried to rebuild their empire, sending envoys to the warlords and kingdoms which survived the Epoch of Strife. The High promised protection from the attacks of the Servants, in exchange for a return to the old ways. However, this salvation was offered too late. With the return of the Servants, new heroes have been born. Often proclaimed the mortal descendants of the Old Gods, sometimes claiming to be gods themselves, the world is held in constant war between the races of the world, many striving to regain former glories of the past.

Character Creation

This part is going to be a little compressed compared to the real books' take on it. We assume everyone has a good idea how to make a character, but since there are a few interconnected areas now, we suggest this order of character creation.

Step 1: Attributes

Roll attributes as normal.

Step 2: Race Selection

Some races automatically receive supernatural abilities and/or count as Power Bases themselves (like the Homus). Apply these abilities when you select your race. They are applied as though the character was a Mutant in *Heroes Unlimited*™. Yes, Negate Super Abilities can negate racially provided powers.

Step 3: Education

The character's education limits the level of training he or she can acquire. Not everyone who aspires to be a great wizard trains in the Halls of the Wise. In addition to filtering what Skill Programs the character can choose, the character's education table affects what Careers they can select, and their Secondary Skill options.

Step 4: Career Selection & Other Skills

The character will have two types of programs. This system was designed to create a flexible character class system, thus allowing the character to effectively choose their Occupational Character Class as a single skill "Career" Program, and then fill in how they do their job with Secondary Skill Programs. Ideally, this means that the system is flexible enough to represent everyone's character backgrounds without having to create a new class for every variation of the same core idea.

For example, two players could create characters with the Knight Career, but travel different paths to get there. The first might determine his knight to have fought through many battles to be promoted, and thus represent this by having his Secondary Skill Programs from the Military and Weapons categories. At the same time, the second could choose a life of privilege leading to appointment as a knight from family stature, picking his secondary programs from Domestic and Technical categories. On the base, they are the same basic character class, but their training is obviously vastly different.

Step 5: Power Base Selection

When the player selects a Career, often a Power Base is attached to this. There are four major power types: Magic, Psychic, Skilled, and Superhuman. If the character's Career Program gave them any special rules or abilities, it was most likely a Power Base. At character creation, players are advised to only have one Power Base; however, the system is designed so a character may tap all 4 power types if they so choose.

Mages can learn Kung Fu, Psychics may develop unnatural abilities, and so on. The only restriction the system places on the



character design is that some developments require Skill Program selections. If the Power Base provides skills, it requires a Skill Program to select.

Step 6: Hit Points and S.D.C., and Other Stats

Hit Points are calculated as normal. S.D.C. is defined by the character's Career.

Military Career types have a base 40 S.D.C.

Laborers have a base 30 S.D.C.

Merchants and Nobles have a base 20 S.D.C.

Any character that doesn't fall into these categories has a 1D4x10 S.D.C. base.

P.P.E. and I.S.P. are generally provided by Power Base; otherwise assume the character has a base P.P.E. of 2D6, and no I.S.P.

Races

When the gods first came to Ellios, they found only the Low creatures of the world. Distraught at the simplicity of these creatures, the great god Fhu chose to give the gift of understanding to one of the many clans of the Low. These new creatures crafted by his divine will he called Men. These Men would

serve as a base for all his great creations, and as the builders of his great empire.

When the Men of the world finished the great city of Lazifhu, the gods wept tears of joy. The tears, bearing the blessings of divinity, fell upon the builders of Lazifhu, imparting in them the wisdom of the gods, and their own miraculous energies. Thus, the High were born of Men and gods.

- The Chronicles of the Lotuni

There are five primary races in Ellios: The High, Men, the Low, Servants, and the Homus. Each religion of the world seems to have its own genesis of these races, but the only one all faiths agree on is that of the Homus. In regards to game mechanics in other systems, the High, Low, and Men are all effectively humans. However, millennia of controlled breeding seems to have turned the High and Low into fairly stable mutations, practically becoming new races all to themselves, despite their ability to still cross-breed with each other.

The High

To most worlds, those of the High would be considered Elves. All share the same deformities of pointed ears and ashen skin. Unlike other Elven races of the Megaverse, the High do not share a natural aptitude for magic. In fact, they approach the subject more like a science than a mystic creation. In Ellios, the High were the first Artificers, men who learned to bind magic to physical devices and mold it to their will. In all faiths, the High are accredited with creating the Homus as their foot soldiers for the First War.

In Ellios, the High wear the robes of both the hated, and the noble. Before the Epoch of Strife, the High ruled all corners of the world. Their magic had crushed the forces of the old gods and driven them into hiding. Because of the High, the world knew peace. When the city of Lazifhu was torn in half by a pillar of fire from the heavens, the other faiths of the world reappeared. The ancient followers of Fhu claimed that their gods had returned, and struck down the old capital as a sign of their anger. Now the world is torn between those still faithful to the High and the peace they brought, those who have pledged allegiance to the old gods, and those who simply use the chaos of the age to put themselves in power.

Supernatural Powers: Immortality, Night Vision, and Extraordinary P.P.

Deformities: Restricted magic/psychics, pointed ears, and ashen skin.

Special: Lowered birth rate: While the High can bear children as often as normal Men, bringing a child into the world is a special event to their race. Because of the magic used to imbue the High with Immortality, they are normally incapable of bearing children. Thus their Immortality (and other abilities) must be blocked in order for a High to bear a child, usually using one of the mystic Collars of the Handlers.

Men

Men are just that, standard humans, the base template of the universe. Men consist of the majority of the population. During the rule of the Highborn, Men served as the lowest rung in soci-

ety within cities. The faith of the High told that Men lead lives of servitude as a penance for serving the failed gods.

When the Epoch of Strife began, it was Men who created the first alliances. Because of their willingness to work with the Low, outcasts of the High-ruled society, many of the former duchies of the world became self-sustaining nations free of the High. Now, Men rule the land the High abandoned when the Servants returned.

Supernatural Powers: Varies, only 20% of Men are born with supernatural gifts.

Deformities: Only those born with supernatural gifts, as per normal tables.

The Low

Considered the “earthen races” of the world, the Low would be seen by most as Dwarves and Gnomes. All Low bear the burden of low stature, but most bear it with pride. By many accounts, the Low races were the first of Ellios, and in their own culture they are called the Prox.

Supernatural Powers: Supervision (Infrared and Ultraviolet), Extraordinary P.E.

Deformities: Short, and glowing eyes.

Half-Breeds

Half-breeds are virtually unheard of in lands ruled by the High. By High law, all half-breeds are abominations and must be destroyed by their 10th year. While a half-breed will share appearance traits from both parents, by game rules, they will generally have the powers and deformities of only one parent, the dominant genetics. When the half-breed is predominantly High or Low, they may trade one of their deformities for a roll on the random deformities table.

The Homus

When the High first realized the gods were merely mortal without the power of the Great Eye, the First War began. Initially, Men were used to fight the armies of the gods, but Men were weak willed, and easily bent to the gods' will. Then the first Sorcerer King, Kelar Vashlophen, revealed the High's greatest weapon. The armies of Homus released soon after crushed anything before them, and even the Avatars of the gods were hard pressed to resist them...

- Journals of Foswik

The Homus are artificial Men supposedly first created by the High. According to the legendary texts, the creation of a Homus is the pinnacle of an Artificer's skill, the ability to create life in defiance of the gods. The Homus are living machines, born of bronze and steel, imbued with life and set to guard the holy places of the High.

Homus are the only race that classifies as a power category in and of itself. They cannot have super powers, magic, or psychic powers. All Homus can be put in one of three categories:

- **Servants of the Eye** – High-crafted Homus, reactivated after the Epoch of Strife. All Servants are marked with the symbol of the Eye and will do anything they are told by a High. Only War type Homus can be Servants.

- **Free Walkers** – Homus are often reassembled by rogue Artificers. With parts collected from ancient battlefields, museums and tombs, the Free Walkers are gestalts of former Homus reanimated and loosed on the world. More often than not, the creation of the Homus drains the life of its creator when made this way, and thus all High will view the Free Walker as an abomination awaiting destruction. Most Free Walkers are War types.
- **Shadows Homus** – creatures of legend. Rumors circulated that at the end of the war, the High created Homus that could pass as Men or Low to act and serve as assassins. Others say that the Shadow was the ultimate form of Homus, the goal of King Vashlopen, and meant to be the successors to the High. Either way, most Shadow Homus never reveal themselves, and tend to detonate when discovered. All Shadow Homus have the “Mortal Flesh” modification, making them Infiltration types.

Servants of the Gods

The old “Servants of the Gods” are the *beast races* of the world. In the past they were not even considered intelligent enough to mention in the various holy texts of history. The Servants, once nothing more than a side note in the ages, returned in force during the Epoch of Strife.

The term Servants is applied to all the old races of Palladium that are not Elves, Dwarves, Men, or Gnomes. While clans of many different races have overrun the world, the most common **Beast Races** that survived the Epoch of Strife are the **Wolfen, Kankoran, Coyles, Giants, Goblins and Orcs**. While the canine races tend to keep together and dominate what lands they conquered during the Epoch of Strife, the Goblin and Orc clans roam freely, ravaging what civilized settlements they happen across. As with most worlds, the giant Servants reclaimed their mountain homes, and generally only those expelled from their clans find their way into civilized lands.

Education

Characters have three skill areas: their Career Program, other Skill Programs, and their Secondary Skills. At creation, and generally throughout their lives, characters will generally have only one Career Program. Acquiring a new Career requires the character to go through the training for that Career, usually taking 1 to 3 years.

Socially, there are three distinct education levels. For simplicity, they are labeled Peasant, Middle, and Upper respectively. Characters of the Peasant level are generally born of farmers, criminals, and wilderness folk. They are generally from urban areas and considered less civilized by those from the cities. Middle educated characters were raised in or around the cities, and have had the advantages associated with city life.

Upper educated characters either are of noble blood, or were raised by one of the religious organizations of the world. Those of the Upper education tend to be the more scholarly of the world, and often have access to the better schools of the age.

Career Programs are restricted by the character’s education level, unless approved by the G.M. Similarly, each education level has its own Secondary Skills list, which may be modified

by the character’s Career. When selecting Careers, and any magic/psychic program, the character may only have ONE program from each Power Base. Thus, while a Long Bowman may be an Adept, and a Latent, one CANNOT be an Adept and a Mystic, nor a Long Bowman and a Crusader.

During the reign of the Highborn, only the High would have received an Upper education. Since the Epoch of Strife, the old social order only prevails in kingdoms still ruled by the High. Anywhere outside these lands, the chance is even for any level of education.

Skills every character is assumed to have:

Hand to Hand: Basic

Language: Common Tongue

Characters of the High race also have Language: Dragonese/Elven.

Characters of Middle or Upper Education receive Literacy: Common Tongue.

When multiple Skill Programs provide the character with the same skill, the player may either choose to select another skill from the same category, or apply both programs’ skill bonuses to the skill. The only skill where this does not apply is Hand to Hand Basic, which is simply overwritten by the new Hand to Hand skill.

In general, any skill list can be used. While the skill tables do list all the *Heroes Unlimited* categories, it is suggested that the *Palladium Fantasy* skill list is used.

Education Level Table

(Roll D100 or choose)

01-20 – *Barbarian – Peasant* – Uneducated wilderness folk, most only trade with farmers and merchants at the edges of the peaceful world. Receive no Career, nor normal Programs. Instead choose 8 skills from any category, and 8 Secondary Skills.

21-40 – *Farmer – Peasant* – Depending on the area the character is from, they may be little more than a serf. In addition to a Career Program (+10%), select one other Program (+10%) and 8 Secondary Skills.

41-60 – *Soldier – Middle* – Local militias are formed everywhere; the character is a member of one of these. Receive the Soldier Career Program (+10%), two Programs of choice (+10%) and 8 Secondary Skills.

61-75 – *Merchant – Middle* – Raised in the cities, the character had the ability to choose their place in life. Receive one Career Program of choice (+15%), two other Programs (+10%), and 10 Secondary Skills.

76-90 – *Noble – Upper* – Born to one of the ruling classes within the cities, the character has received a proper education. Receive a Career Program restricted to Upper class only (+15%), two other Programs of choice (+10%), and 10 Secondary Skills.

91-00 – *New Nobility – Upper* – The character descends from a family line that was not nobility before the Epoch of Strife. Receive a Career Program (+10%), two other Programs (+10%) and 10 Secondary Skills.

Skill Programs

Any Program may be defined as 4 skills from the same category.

Career Programs

In addition to the standard Career Programs, some of the skill oriented Power Bases count as Career Programs in themselves: Long Bowmen, Crusaders, Martial Artists, Specialty Psychics, and most Men of Magic. Programs related to Power Bases directly are listed in *Italics*.

A character can always take a Career Program from below their education level. In these cases they must pick either their Career education level's Secondary Skill list or their base education level's Secondary Skill list. They cannot use both.

A character may only select one Career Program at creation. However, they may use the Career Programs as guidelines for their other Skill Programs, effectively choosing 4 skills from a Career Program as one of their other Skill Programs.

Peasant Educated

Laborer – Any artisan or field worker with no notable education does not have a Skill Program associated with them. Characters who wish to have this background may select 1 skill from any category which defines their Career (e.g. Armorer for Blacksmiths, Identify Plants/Fruits for Herbalists, etc.) and three Technical, Domestic, or Wilderness skills to define the rest of their lifestyle.

Burglar – Appraisal, Climbing, Prowl, and Pick Locks.

Cutpurse – Disguise, Pick Pockets, Palming, and Streetwise.

Mercenary – Hand to Hand: Expert, Military Etiquette, Recognize Weapon Quality, and Streetwise.

Soldier – Hand to Hand: Expert, three Weapon Proficiencies of choice, Military Etiquette, and Forced March.

Ranger – Prowl, Tracking (Human and Animal), Wilderness Survival, and one Weapon Proficiency of choice.

Martial Artist – (See Skilled Power Base) 3 Physical skills of choice.

Long Bowman – (See Skilled Power Base) W.P. Longbow, Recognize Weapon Quality, and Forced March.

Middle Educated

Acrobat – Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Climbing, and Rope Works.

Architect – Mathematics: Basic, Mathematics: Advanced, Art (Building Design), and select either Carpentry or Masonry.

Assassin – Hand to Hand: Assassin, either Prowl or Disguise, Streetwise, Use/Recognize Poisons, and either Imitate Voices or Pick Locks.

Guard – Hand to Hand: Expert, Detect Concealment, Detect Ambush, Military Etiquette, and Law.

Knight – Hand to Hand: Expert, Heraldry, Horsemanship: Knight, Military Etiquette, and one Weapon Proficiency of choice.

Official – Etiquette, Heraldry, Law, Language and Literacy: Dragonese/Elven.

Performer – Public Speaking, two Communications skills of choice, and one Rogue Skill of choice.

Tradesman – Appraisal, Bartering, Mathematics: Basic, and two Languages of choice.

Artificer – (See Magic Section) Lore: Magic, Mathematics: Basic and Advanced, Principles of Magic, Read Magic, and one Art skill of choice.

Specialist – (See Psychics Section) Lore: Religion or Psychics, Meditation, and two skills of choice.

Upper Educated

Infiltrator – Disguise, Intelligence, Imitate Voices, Seduction, Streetwise, and Research.

Noble – Diplomacy, Etiquette, Language and Literacy: Dragonese/Elven, Horsemanship: General, and one Domestic or Communications skill of choice.

Professional Duelist – Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Athletics, Dance, and W.P. Sword.

Priest – Lore: Religion, Public Speaking, and two Lore or Communications skills of choice.

Strategist – Military Etiquette, Strategy/Tactics, History (Military), Horsemanship: Knight, and Intelligence.

Crusader – (See Psychics Section) Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Etiquette, Horsemanship: Knight, Lore: Religion, and two Weapon Proficiencies of choice.

Mentalist – (See Psychics Section) Meditation, Lore: Psychic, and three skills of choice.

Wizard – (See Magic Section) Lore: Magic, Meditation, Principles of Magic, Read Magic, one Technical skill of choice, and one Communications or Domestic skill of choice.

Non-Career Programs of Note

Adept – (See Magic Section) Meditation, Lore: Magic, and Read Magic.

Secondary Skill Lists

The basic Secondary Skill list for a character is determined by their education level. After that, their Career might modify their skill list.

Career Modifications

Military Careers: Physical and Military skills are changed to "Any."

Magic/Psychic Careers: Technical and Science are changed to "Any."

Peasant Educated Secondary Skill List

Communications: Any, except Cryptography.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Sniper only.

Horsemanship: General Only.

Medical: Any except Surgeon/Medical Doctor.

Mechanical: None.

Military: None.

Physical: Any, excluding Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Boxing.
Pilot: Basic: Sailing and Horsemanship (General) only.
Pilot: Advanced: None.
Rogue: Prowl only.
Science: Basic Math only.
Scholar, Noble, and Technical: Any except Lore.
Weapon Proficiencies: Any Ancient weapons, except Lance.
Wilderness: Any.

Middle Educated Secondary Skill List

Communications: Any.
Domestic: Any.
Electrical: None.
Espionage: None.
Horsemanship: General Only.
Medical: Any except Surgeon/Medical Doctor.
Mechanical: None.
Military: Heraldry and Recognize Weapon Quality only.
Physical: Any, excluding Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Boxing.
Pilot: Basic: Sailing and Horsemanship (General) only.
Pilot: Advanced: None.
Rogue: Streetwise and Ventriloquism only.
Science: Any.
Scholar, Noble, and Technical: Any except Lore.
Weapon Proficiencies: Any Ancient weapons, except Lance.
Wilderness: Any.

Upper Educated Secondary Skill List

Communications: Any.
Domestic: Any.
Electrical: None.
Espionage: None.
Horsemanship: General only.
Medical: Any except Surgeon/Medical Doctor.
Mechanical: None.
Military: Heraldry and Falconry only.
Physical: Any, excluding Acrobatics, Gymnastics, and Boxing.
Pilot: Basic: Sailing and Horsemanship only.
Pilot: Advanced: None.
Rogue: None.
Science: Any.
Scholar, Noble, and Technical: Any, except General Repair.
Weapon Proficiencies: Any Ancient weapons, except Lance.
Wilderness: Wilderness Survival only.

Learning New Skills

All characters may select a new Secondary Skill every three levels. This assumes they are spending some of their free time at least with a hobby interest.

Players wishing to pick up new skills faster follow the Heroes Unlimited guidelines for learning a new skill. Learning new Career Programs requires twice as long as learning any other Skill Program.

Power Bases

Not everyone is tapped into the mystical fabric of the universe, nor is everyone skilled to a point beyond the normal powers of man. When creating a character, players only have a 40% chance of classifying as a power category. Those who are not must simply make due with what they have. When selecting a specific Power Base, make sure, if it is a Career Base, that the character has access to the education level required to receive the training required. Any Power Base that offers skills is a Skill Program.

Random Power Base Tables

01-30 – Normal Person, no Power Base to start.
31-40 – Skilled.
41-65 – Magic.
66-80 – Psychic.
81-00 – Other.

Magic Table

01-30 – Elementally Sealed.
31-45 – Mystic Weapon.
46-60 – Mystic Item.
61-75 – Artificer.
76-95 – Wizard.
96-00 – Adept.

Psychic Table

01-15 – Latent.
16-40 – Specialist (Healer).
41-55 – Specialist (Sensitive).
56-80 – Specialist (Physical).
81-90 – Crusader.
91-00 – Mentalist.

Magic Bases

Non-Career Power Bases

Adept – The lowest level of magic user, only capable of accessing low level spells and with a fairly limited supply of energy. Generally, only those of Middle or Upper education can afford this training.

Skills: Meditation, Lore (Magic), and Read Magic.

Powers: Select 6 spells total from levels 1-6. Adepts may never learn spells above level 6.

P.P.E. Base: $1D4 \times 10 + P.E. + 2D4$ per level.

Elemental-Sealed – The most limited form of magic, not accessible to those with supernatural powers. Unlike normal magic, the Sealed are bound with an Elemental spirit and receive skills from it. Like Warlocks of other worlds, the Sealed are seen as brothers by Elementals, and thus share many of the same benefits.

Powers:

- **Elemental Affinity** – As per a Warlock, the Sealed chooses an element with which they are associated. Those Sealed with an M.E. and P.E. above 15 may select 2 elements.

- **Elemental Awareness** – All Sealed can sense the presence of other Elementals, Sealed, and Supernaturally Powered characters with Control Elemental Force or Alter Physical Structure powers. The range of this sensing ability is 500 feet (152 m) and provides a general sense of direction. Line of sight (and the ability to see the target) is needed to sense other Sealed and Supernaturally Powered characters.
- **Elemental Speech** – All Sealed can Speak Elemental at full proficiency.
- **Elemental Gift** – As per a Warlock, the Sealed receive the base powers associated with their Elemental Affinity.
- **Elemental Magic** – Each level, the Sealed may select a total of two spells from their Elemental Affinity's Warlock spell lists. If the Sealed has 2 elements, they must select one spell from each element. Selected spells may only be from levels equal to or less than the current level of the Sealed.

P.P.E. Base: 3D4x10 + P.E. + 2D6 per level.

Restrictions: The Sealed cannot meditate to recover P.P.E., nor are they able to siphon it from P.P.E. batteries or the like. The only ways they may recover P.P.E. are through sleep or meditation, or having it channeled into them from a friendly Elemental.

Mystic Item – As per the Mystic Item in *Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Ed.*

Mystic Weapon – As per the Mystic Weapon in *Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Ed.*, but powers are limited as follows:

Initial Powers and Bonuses bestowed (spells or super powers) and weapon damage granted at first level.

One of the powers held by the weapon is gained at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12.

Thus, a 6th level character would have the base powers, and three powers held by the weapon.

Career Power Bases

Artificer – The Artificer is more scientist than mystic. Unlike wizards, who practice magic by studying what their ancestors did, and try to manipulate the fabric of reality on instinct and luck, the Artificer has learned to apply quantitative values to the actions of mystic practices. Most Artificers consider themselves to be divine mathematicians, trying to discover and solve the great equation that defines the universe. Everyone else tends to think of them as just another group of religious fanatics.

Skills: Lore: Magic, Mathematics: Basic and Advanced, Principles of Magic, Read Magic, and one Art skill of choice.

Powers:

- **Create Magic Item: Single Use Items** – The base ability of the Artificer is to bind magic energies into simple items (most often jewelry or potions) which, when opened or broken, activate a stored spell in a manner similar to the Ward Magic of *Palladium Fantasy®*.

With Single Use Items, the spell's P.P.E. cost is stored in the item, and thus anyone can activate the item if they know what spell it stores. However, since the P.P.E. must be stored in the item, only spells with a P.P.E. cost less than 20 can be made into a single use item, and the spell only remains in the item for a number of weeks equal to the Artificer's level of experience.

Creation of a Single Use Item simply needs a small, destructable object to which the spell can be bound.

- **Create Magic Item: Multiple Use Items** – A more advanced form of the base ability of the Artificer allows them to create items which must have P.P.E. channeled into them to activate. Unlike Single Use Items, activation of the stored spell does not destroy the object, and thus allows the Artificer to use the same spell multiple times from the same item.

Multiple Use Items can store any spell, and retain their spell casting ability for one year for every level of the creating Artificer. However, Multiple Use Items need to be crafted by hand by the Artificer, and tend to have to be fairly sturdy items.

- **Item Creation Limits** – Activating an item takes a single action for any item storing a spell up through level 5, and two actions for any spell level 6 and above.

No item that is already carrying supernatural abilities can be bound with an Artificer spell.

Artificers may only have a number of spell storing items in existence equal to their P.E. plus their experience level.

- **Grounding** – A unique ability to the Artificer granted to them by their study of the mystic energies manipulated by men of magic when casting spells. By surrounding themselves in mystic energy, the Artificer learns to effectively short circuit other wizards' spells by touching them to the mystic base of the universe.

Grounding a spell acts like a simultaneous attack action. Both the spell caster and the Artificer make D20 rolls, each adding his M.E. bonus and his experience level to the roll. The Artificer also receives a +5 bonus if he knows the spell his opponent is attempting to cast. If the Artificer scores higher on the roll, the opponent's P.P.E. is still expended, but the spell has no effect.

Additionally, the Artificer may attempt to Ground supernatural abilities and psychic powers, but without the +5 bonus.

- **Spell Knowledge** – At creation, the Artificer may select 6 spells total from levels 1-7. They may learn additional spells by studying spell books and scrolls like normal Wizards. The Artificer may also "figure out" one spell equal to or less than his current level at levels 4, 8, and 12.
- **P.P.E. Channeling and Collecting** – Through meditation, most magic users can gather P.P.E. from surrounding people and the environment itself. The character can draw in his P.E. attribute number in P.P.E. after one melee of meditation. Most men of magic can hold twice their base P.P.E. for one hour before they become exhausted from the effort.

P.P.E. Base: 1D6x10+10 + P.E. + 2D6 per level.

Wizard – The default man of magic in the world.

Skills: Lore: Magic, Meditation, Principles of Magic, Read Magic, one Technical skill of choice, one Communications or Domestic skill of choice.

Powers:

- **Spell Knowledge** – Select 8 spells total from levels 1-6 of regular magic, and another 4 spells total from levels 7-10. The Wizard may "figure out" another spell from his current level or lower, every other level (i.e., levels 2, 4, 6, 8, etc.).



Additionally, Wizards may study the spell books and scrolls of other Wizards, or learn spells directly from each other.

- **The Familiar** – At level 2, the Wizard may bind a simple creature to himself. The creature must be a normal animal, smaller than the Wizard. For the most part, the creature will act as a normal example of its kind, but will be completely obedient and loyal to the Wizard. For notable abilities, treat this as the usual Familiar Link spell.
- **Sense Magic** – The Wizard is trained to be more attuned to the mystical energies of the world than most spell casters, and thus has a base 45% +2% per level chance of sensing the use of magic within 100 feet (30.5 m) of himself. When attempting to identify the direction and/or source of the magic (by sight), this drops to 30% +2% per level.
- **P.P.E. Channeling and Collecting** – Through meditation, most magic users can gather P.P.E. from surrounding people and the environment itself. The character can draw in his P.E. attribute number in P.P.E. after one melee of meditation. Most men of magic can hold twice their base P.P.E. for one hour before they become exhausted from the effort.
P.P.E. Base: 2D4x10+20 + P.E. + 2D6 per level.

Psychic Bases

Non-Career Power Bases

Latent – An untrained psychic. Latent psychics generally have learned to control their powers by trial and error.

Powers: Select three powers from the same basic category (Healer, Physical, or Sensitive), OR select 2 powers total from any of the basic categories.

I.S.P. Base: 1D6x5 + M.E.x2 + 1D4 per level.

Career Power Bases

Specialist – Trained psychics who have learned to control their abilities. Roughly 1 in 10 priests of the old faiths are actually Specialist healers raised to believe their powers are a gift from the gods.

Skills: Lore: Religion or Psychics, Meditation, and two skills of choice.

Powers:

- **Psychic Training** – Select four powers from one of the psychic categories (Healer, Sensitive, or Physical) and 1 from one of the others.
- **Advancement** – Select one power from any of the basic categories (Healer, Physical, or Sensitive) every 3 levels. At levels 5 and 10, select one power from the Super category, or two from any of the lesser categories.

I.S.P. Base: 1D6x10+10 + M.E.x2 + 2D4 per level.

Mentalist – The Mentalist is the highest level of training in the Psychic Careers. Mentalists are the only psychics who easily access the Super psychic category.

Skills: Meditation, Lore: Psychic, and three skills of choice.

Powers:

- **Psychic Training** – Select two powers from each of the basic psychic categories (Healer, Sensitive, or Physical), and two from any category (including Super).

- Advancement – Select one power from any category at level 2, and one every other level (levels 4, 6, 8, etc.) after that.

I.S.P. Base: 2D4x10+10 + M.E.x2 + 2D6 per level.

Crusader – The holy knights of lore. Generally, these are men and women of noble birth gifted with natural abilities from the gods and trained to use them to fight the evil of the world. Crusader characters may, instead of receiving their normal powers, choose to be the recipient of a Mystic Weapon.

Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, 2 W.P.s of choice, Horsemanship: Knight, Lore: Religion, and Military Etiquette.

Powers:

- Minor Psychics – Select 4 powers from the Healer or Sensitive category. Select another power from one of these categories at levels 3, 6, and 9.
- Spiritual Weapon of Will – May summon a Psi-Sword as a normal action at half cost at level 1. At level 5, summoning the weapon has no I.S.P. cost.

I.S.P. Base: 1D4x10 + M.E.x2 + 2D4 per lvl.

Skilled Bases

(All Skilled Bases are Careers)

Martial Artist – The Martial Artist receives the benefits of the *Heroes Unlimited* Physical Training category, receiving everything but the skills listed.

If a supernaturally powered character selects the Martial Artist option, they only receive the special hand to hand training from the category.

Imported Kung Fu Option: With G.M. permission, martial arts may be brought into the Epoch of Legends from the *Ninjas & Superspies*TM books. Characters with such skills are considered Super-Powered characters (as many martial arts provide special powers), with the martial art as their sum total of super powers. They do not have to roll for deformities, but cannot possess other powers.

To compensate for the super power limitation, the character does not need to meet the martial art's attribute requirements. Instead, if the character does not meet the requirements, their stats are raised to the required value. Most characters with Imported Kung Fu are former monks who abandoned their temple to try and perfect their own form of fighting. To take Imported Kung Fu the character must select the Martial Artist Career, but receives none of the Physical Training category selections. The martial artist may only trade one martial arts power for a non-Physical Skill Program.

If this option is allowed, it is suggested the G.M. go with the *Ninjas & Superspies* Weapon Proficiency limitation where hand to hand bonuses only apply if the character has a Weapon Kata with the weapon, and allow regular characters purchase a Weapon Kata at the cost of 2 skills instead of 1 for just a Weapon Proficiency. Thus most characters will only use their P.P. and W.P. bonuses with the weapon.

P.P.E., I.S.P., and Chi Note: When tapping into the power of *Ninjas & Superspies*TM, all references to Chi are changed to P.P.E. Characters with magic training cannot take Chi Mastery abilities. Likewise, characters with Chi Mastery

powers cannot learn magic. With G.M. permission, a Chi Master may learn the Celestial Calligraphy magic in place of normal magic training, but this is not suggested.

The Artificer's Grounding ability (explained below) applies to martial arts special abilities (not including combat maneuvers) as though they were supernatural abilities.

Long Bowman – The great marksmen of the world, specializing in the use of the longbow for its speed and accuracy.

Skills: W.P. Longbow, Recognize Weapon Quality, and Forced March.

Powers:

- Longbow Sharp Shooting – Receive all 6 trick shots under Sharp Shooting, and +1 to strike for a P.P. of 18, and +1 for every 4 points after that.
- Longbow Speed – Receive an extra attack with the longbow each melee round at levels 1, 5, and 10, over and above the usual Archery rate of fire.
- Improved Range – Increase the effective range of their bow by 10% at level 2, and every 3 levels after that.
- Ranged Defense – Halve any penalties to defend against ranged attacks. At level 8, the Long Bowman no longer suffers penalties when defending against ranged attacks.

Other Bases

(None of these Bases are Careers or Skill Programs)

Beast-Men – Either the canine Servants of the old gods, or more commonly, the results of mystic experimentation by Artificers and Wizards, these creatures bear a social standing of little more than pets. While not unheard of since the Epoch of Strife, they have become fairly rare, as they are too easily confused with Servants.

Players who choose to play Beast-Men may either choose one of the canine races, or use the Mutant Animal section of *Heroes Unlimited*TM, 2nd Ed. to create their race.

Homus – Artificial men originally created by Artificers. Homus are effectively the robots/golems of the world, and inspire fear and wonder in the general populace. Many are crafted to appear as normal men in armor when not using their full capabilities. (See "The Homus," below.)

Supernaturally Powered – These characters are mutations, or touched by the gods, depending on what faith one follows. Either way, they are extraordinarily gifted, and generally become deformed. Any race, except Homus, may become a Supernaturally Powered character, but those from the High or Low who are Powered lose their racially gifted powers, although they do not have to roll for Deformities for their first two powers. (See "The Price of Power," below.)

War Born – As the art of creating the Homus is rarely found outside the records of the High, few can afford the services of such a war machine. Those seeking a superior warrior, without the possible mental problems of the Supernaturally Powered, often try mystic experimentation to empower their own soldiers. The results are the War Born, super-soldiers by most definitions. War Born have a shorter list of accessible powers, but tend to be less mutated, and far more stable than the Supernaturally Powered.

The Price of Power

Supernatural abilities don't come free. There are two prices to pay in gaining super powers: skills and deformity.

For each power the character has, they must also take a Physical skill called "Power Usage: (power name)." Power Usage rolls are only required in stressful situations – and for any character under level 5, combat is a stressful situation. Rolling for Power Usage is done the first time the character attempts to activate his powers, and for any physically altering power, again when the character tries to deactivate the power. A failed roll means the character cannot try to use the power again for another 1D4 minutes. Basically, he just isn't in the right mindset to control it. A failed roll to deactivate means he is stuck in that form for another 1D4 minutes before he can try again. Base Skill for Power Usage is the character's I.Q. attribute number, plus 10% per level of experience.

Deformity occurs when the character develops a power. Because of this, players are allowed to choose to not manifest all their powers at creation, and instead they may leave the "power slots" they rolled at creation empty to be filled at a later level. The general guideline is one power developed every 2 levels. Thus, powers generally manifest at levels 1, 3, 5, 7, and so forth.

The penalty for a manifested power is the chance of deformity. The base chance a character will suffer a deformity when they gain a new power is 60%. This is increased by 10% for every power they have already manifested, and reduced by 5% for every level since manifesting their previous powers.

Characters manifesting more than one power in a level automatically receive 1D4 deformities. Additionally, 45% suffer insanities as per a Crazy Hero, and 35% suffer insanities as per the standard Random Insanity tables.

Random Deformity Table

(If a deformity is rolled twice, re-roll.)

01-20 – Short.

21-30 – Marked.

31-35 – Undead.

36-50 – Roll on the *Heroes Unlimited* Experiment side-effects table.

51-70 – Roll on the *Heroes Unlimited* Mutant side-effects table.

71-85 – Restricted Magic/Psychics.

86-95 – Nullified Magic.

96-00 – Mental Anguish - Roll on the Random Insanity tables.

Deformity Definitions

"Short" – Character's height is reduced to 2 feet, 6 inches (1.67 m), plus 2D6 inches (5-30 cm). Because of their height, their base speed is reduced to 2D6. (If this deformity is rolled after initial character creation, re-roll.)

"Restricted Magic/Psychics" – Every race, except Homus, can be born with psychic powers, as per the Psychic Power Base. Similarly, every race can learn Magic Programs and Career Programs. Those who suffer the flaw of Restricted Magic and Psychics cannot have a Magic or Psychic Career. For one

reason or another, their bodies simply cannot serve as a greater P.P.E. or I.S.P. battery.

The only exception to this rule is High who agree to serve the Eye. High in service of the Eye are trained as Artificers, and marked with its holy symbol.

"Nullified Magic" – The character is unable to maintain a P.P.E. base. Their base P.P.E. is reduced to 1D4. Such characters can no longer use magic, as they can no longer power the spells. The only upside to the situation is that it also seems harder for magic to find them, giving the character a +2 to all saving throws versus magic.

"Marked" – Born to the bloodlines of one of the heroes of legends, these mutants have the mark of the old gods. Such people are easily identified by the tattoo-like markings on their skin which glow when their powers are in use. Unlike other Super-Powered characters, they do not have to roll for random mutations whenever they develop a new power. Instead their markings grow and expand, becoming more complex, and more visible as they approach godhood.

"Undead" – Some find power at the cost of their lives. The Undead are those whose own powers have burned away their bodies, but not their spirits. Forced to survive off the lives of others, they become P.P.E./blood vampires. When feeding on a victim's physical body, they also instinctively drain the spiritual energy they need to survive. Such creatures need to feed at least once a week, but do not develop further mutations as they evolve. Instead, they develop one of the following random weaknesses each time a new power is developed:

1. Vulnerable to Sunlight – Suffers 2D6 S.D.C. per melee round exposed.
2. Vulnerable to Holy Symbols – Suffers an additional 2D6 damage from contact; this includes Weapons of Light.
3. Vulnerable to Healing Powers – Healing powers deal equivalent damage to the character.
4. Weakened by Sunlight – All powers at half effectiveness when exposed, and all combat bonuses halved.
5. Vulnerable to Fire – Suffers double damage from fire attacks, all "Immune to Fire/Heat" powers are lost.
6. Weak Point – Can be hit on a Called Shot. If impaled through the weak point (usually the heart), all powers are disabled.

Random Powers Table

Use the Number and Category of Super Abilities table from *Heroes Unlimited*TM, 2nd Edition, page 226. Yes, psionics are still left in the table. Supernatural characters who roll psychic powers may opt to manifest all of their psionics as a single power. They receive the same base I.S.P. as a Latent.

Setting-Specific Power Bases

The Homus

Although Homus are artificial creatures, they are nearly standardized enough that using the usual robot construction rules



would be impractical. Instead the Homus receive a standardized collection of abilities, and the rest is determined using a modified Bio-E system.

Homus Automatic Powers

- Natural A.R. – While the specific value is determined by the Homus's appearance, they all are machines and thus granted the full protection of a Natural A.R.
- Doesn't Breathe, Doesn't Eat – The Homus are living machines and do not need air or food to survive, although they do need power. A side effect of this ability is that most Homus have no sense of taste or smell.

All Homus "feed" off ambient P.P.E., and in any living environment collect their P.E. attribute number in P.P.E. each hour. Should the Homus's P.P.E. base be reduced to 0, they fall unconscious until their recharging system gathers one hour's worth of P.P.E.

- High P.P.E. Base – Base P.P.E. for the Homus is $3D4 \times 10 + P.E. \times 2$. This does not increase over time. Homus are treated as men of magic when dealing with others who wish to drain their P.P.E.
- No Magic, No Psionics – Despite their magic nature, the Homus can master neither magic nor psychic abilities. While some of their abilities emulate magic or psionics, they are still considered Supernatural powers. For the sake of Power Base considerations when choosing Skill Programs, Homus are already Psychic, Magic, and Skilled.
- No Fatigue – Being artificial means the Homus does not suffer fatigue. While they can be rendered unconscious through P.P.E. exhaustion, normal physical activity does not affect them. However, the Homus still must spend 4-6 hours each day inactive, effectively sleeping.
- Superhuman Strength – All Homus are considered to have Superhuman Strength.
- High Base S.D.C. – As Homus cannot receive the benefits of physical training (no stat or S.D.C. bonuses from skills), they tend to be built out of sturdy materials. Base S.D.C. for the Homus is $1D6 \times 100 + 100 + P.E.$ This generally doesn't change.
- Not Living – While the Homus detects as a mystic creature, it is neither living, nor undead. This means it cannot heal itself, and must be repaired. Most blacksmiths can improvise the repairs at a -15% penalty to their skills and will take 2 to 3 days of work.

Additionally, this means the Homus cannot activate mystic items or weapons. They suffer no ill effects of carrying such items, but in their hands, Mystic Weapons are little better than normal weapons. The only advantage a Mystic Weapon provides is its ability to automatically damage anything it hits.

Being unidentifiable as alive has its advantages. All Homus are considered to have the power of Mind Block Auto-Defense at no cost.

Homus Construction

(Use the normal Mutant Animal rules)

Base Bio-E: $50 + 1D4 \times 5$.

Effective Size Level: 10

Build: Medium

Attribute Modifiers:

P.S.: +5 (Minimum 20)

P.E.: +5

Weight (from table): x 1.5

Biped: Always Full.

Hands:

- None – The Homus’s hands are tools or weapons. No manual dexterity. Not an option for Shadow or Labor Homus. War Homus may select 2 melee weapons or a weapon and shield. The built-in weapon deals an additional die of damage.
- Partial – One of the Homus’s hands is a weapon, the other is a functional hand, usually with only 2 or 3 fingers and a thumb. The mounted weapon can be any melee weapon, or a crossbow, and deals an additional die of damage. Manual tasks that require both hands are performed at -10%.
- Full – The Homus has a complete pair of working hands, usually with only 3 fingers and a thumb.

Looks:

- None – Considered a War Homus and obviously inhuman. Proportions tend to be distorted or exaggerated. Homus has a Horror Factor of 10, and a Natural A.R. of 17.
- Partial – Common for Labor Homus. Generally designed to look like normal suits of armor and can pass for human at a distance. Homus has a Horror Factor of 8 when someone realizes what it is, and a Natural A.R. of 15.
- Full “Mortal Flesh” – Shadow Homus. Designed with unique looks, the Homus can pass for whatever race it is designed to look like. Shadow Homus have a Natural A.R. of 14, and if their nature is revealed, a Horror Factor of 12.

Speech:

- None – The Homus cannot talk, it simply makes strange grinding noises. Other Homus can understand these noises as speech, but no one else can.
- Partial – The Homus has a very mechanical, monotone voice.
- Full – The Homus was crafted with its own unique voice, and can mimic others it has heard with 40% accuracy.

Natural Abilities:

5 Bio-E Powers (All following powers cost 5 Bio-E each):

- Sense of Smell.
- Sense of Taste.
- Heightened Sense (any of the Mutant Animal heightened senses, but must have the sense first, in the cases of Taste and Smell).
- Mark of the Eye - +5 P.S., +100 P.P.E. and S.D.C.
- Focus Crystal – either serves as a P.P.E. battery, or to cast 1 spell each melee as a 2 attack action. Can be struck on a Called Shot of 16 or better, and has N.A.R. 18, S.D.C. 100, and 50 P.P.E. The Homus may have up to 3 Focus Crystals.
- Presence Sense (as per the psychic power, but I.S.P. cost is P.P.E. cost).
- Sense Magic (as per the psychic power, but I.S.P. cost is P.P.E. cost).
- Sense Psionics (as per the psychic power, but I.S.P. cost is P.P.E. cost).

- See Aura (as per the psychic power, but I.S.P. cost is P.P.E. cost).

15 Bio-E Powers (All following powers cost 15 Bio-E each):

- Elemental Expulsion – Usually Fire or Electricity, as per the Minor Super Ability of Energy Expulsion, but drains 10 P.P.E. from the Homus each melee round the power is used.
- Supernatural Strength – When activated, increases the Homus’s Strength by 25 and makes it Supernatural. While active it drains 10 P.P.E. each minute.
- Supernatural Leaping – Allows the Homus to move with astounding jumps, either by pure strength, or some kind of thrusters. Activating the power increases the Homus’s jumping distance to 100 feet (30.5 m) up or across, and allows it to triple its speed. The power drains 10 P.P.E. per minute.
- Mystic Shielding – Grants the Homus an Armor of Ithan style mystic field lasting for a number of minutes equal to its level. Activation costs 10 P.P.E., and grants 200 S.D.C. with an A.R. of 18.
- Self-Repair – Requires a melee of concentration, and costs 10 P.P.E. After the melee of concentration, the Homus recovers 5D6 S.D.C.
- Battle Mage – The Homus is endowed with skills similar to the Artificer. They may be taught spells in the same fashion and have restrictions as an Artificer. To “cast” the spell, they must either use a pre-made Artificer device (they cannot make their own), or use a pre-implanted Focus Crystal. The Homus starts with 4 spells total from levels 1-4.

Homus Education

Most Homus are designed for warfare. After determining the unit’s design, the character is limited by the unit’s looks. Any War or Labor Homus must select a Career with combat training that is not given Horsemanship. Shadow Homus are not restricted in their selections.

War Born

Originally, the War Born were named such as they were the results of generations of High-controlled, selective breeding experiments. War Born, in the reign of the High, were Men who had been “elevated” to more than mere mortals. Although not on the same power level as the High sorcerers who created them, the War Born were given nearly as much respect, as every War Born was bound to a High master, and usually one of respectable status.

After the High drove the old gods out of the world, the Homus replaced most War Born as the new privileged servants of the High. Unlike their fleshy counterparts, the Homus needed little upkeep, and when empowered with the Eye, Homus were utterly obedient. The Epoch of Strife began with only a handful of War Born in service throughout the nation, and most in service were to sentimental old High, and were getting on in their years themselves.

The War Born servants of the High replaced by Homus were not killed off. While their usefulness was at an end, they were still living, super-powered beings. In the end, the High simply let them try and return to their own race, while doing what they could to track them; many were Collared by Handlers for the



safety of those around them. Most of the early generations of War Born were imbued with enough latent mystic energy that Handlers could track them, and their children if need be. As the years passed, this inherent energy, and the likelihood of supernatural powers, died off.

Following the Epoch of Strife, the War Born resurfaced. With the arts required for making the Homus lost in the destruction of Lazifhu, the High have returned to experimenting on the flesh of Men to fill out their military ranks. Sometimes they discover the families descended from the old War Born and send Handlers to bring them back to the welcoming arms of the High. At other times, rogue sorcerers and Artificers will make their own attempts to recreate the human warriors of myth, and produce a soldier of comparable might. In the end, all War Born are labeled the same, and most spend their lives as servants of their creators.

War Born Power Tables

Roll or select 5 powers from the following table:

1. Extraordinary Attribute – Rolled randomly on the Extraordinary Attribute Sub-Table.

2. Uncanny Targeting and Throwing – Character can attack with two thrown weapons simultaneously at no penalty. Additionally, gains a +2 to strike with thrown or projectile weapons, and can dodge projectiles he can see coming at no penalty.

3. Homus Flesh – The character has plates of living metal grafted to his skin. He cannot wear armor without customization, nor is it very useful. The grafted plates provide a Natural A.R. of 10, and 100 S.D.C., which regenerates at a rate of 1D4 per melee.

4. Strength of Steel – One of the character's arms is replaced with a mechanical one similar to the technology of the Homus. The arm makes the character's Strength Superhuman, and has 100 S.D.C. with a Natural A.R. of 9. Unless the character has the Homus Flesh adaptation, the arm's S.D.C. must be repaired by a blacksmith or by magical means. The arm is only damaged if targeted directly.

If selected/rolled twice, the character may make one selection from the Homus abilities, but similarly will have to pay any P.P.E. costs associated with its activation.

5. Increased Awareness – Roll randomly on the Heightened Senses Sub-Table.

6. Concealed Weapons – Mystic pockets have been "sewn" into the character's flesh. The character can conceal 2D4 items in the form of tattoos about his body. Any item can be stored, but all the tattoos read as magic items. Removing an item from the pockets simply requires touching the tattoo related to the item. Items must be small enough for the character to conceal under a cloak, and cannot contain living components.

7. Combat Awareness – The War Born character's mind can open to the flows of energy people emit during combat in a kind of low-level Telepathy. He is aware of everyone within 15 feet (4.6 m) of himself (including the invisible). Because of this awareness, he cannot be struck unaware from behind, suffers no blindness penalties, and can attempt to parry missile weapons fired within this radius. Additionally, he has +6 to initiative, and +2 to parry and dodge.

8. Invisible to Magic – The character becomes a void in the magic spectrum. He cannot be seen or targeted by any magic abilities. This includes helpful ones. This cannot be combined with Concealed Weapons.

9. Explosive Energy – The character receives the minor super ability of Power Channeling or Energy Expulsion: Energy.

10. Increased Toughness – Body is transformed, turned into what the character envisioned as ideal physical prowess. Character may distribute 3D6 to any 3 physical attributes (one die to three different stats, or all three to one stat, or whatever). If only a single die is put into an attribute, and it rolls a 6, an additional 1D6 is added to the stat (*do not* roll again if another 6 is rolled). Character also receives an additional 40 S.D.C.

11. Speed of Mind – The War Born has exceptional mental faculties. Character is automatically ambidextrous (+1 attack, all paired weapons), and can simulate the psionics of Speed Reading and Total Recall at no cost.

12. Night-Blooded – Bred as an assassin or scout, the character automatically has the Nightstalking minor super ability.

The Price of Power Notes

War Born are always trained in the use of their abilities. Like normal Supernaturally-Powered characters, they must have skills to control their abilities; however, the War Born characters automatically have these skills at 98%.

Like all Supernaturally-Powered characters, the War Born characters have a chance for deformity. When the War Born character gets his powers for the first time, he has only a 10% one time chance of deformity.

In the end, because of the tampering done to their bodies, all War Born are unable to use magic or psychic abilities. Any character with such abilities before he is transformed into the War Born, loses those abilities. He may still remember how they were used, which means he could still teach magic to others, but attempting to use the powers himself results in nothing happening but a massive headache (-4 to all skills and combat rolls for 3 hours).

The Handlers

During the rule of the High, it was determined that those who developed supernatural abilities could too easily become a threat to the security of society. Because of this, the High created the *Sha'vari*, or Handlers in the common tongue. In their prime, the Handlers were feared by all as the most effective way to restrain and control anything with powers beyond mortal men. Shortly before the Epoch of Strife, they were little more than urban legends. The number of supernatural creatures threatening the lands of the High had dropped to a point where most Handlers had retired, leaving a scarce few to deal with the wars that erupted.

In the modern age, the Handlers are the pride of the High. Serving as both supernatural hunters and ambassadors to countries distressed by the existence of supernatural menaces, the presence of a Handler is usually a calming force.

In truth, Handlers are little more than well equipped Artificers, but the fact that only the Handlers seem to know how the devices are created places them on a level all their own. Every Handler, upon finishing their training, is equipped with two items of note: The Gauntlet of Control, and the Collar.

The Gauntlet of Control is always an ornate glove of some sort, usually stylized to fit the Handler's personality. This is the true symbol of the Handler's position. Aside from the social status it implies, the Gauntlet has three major powers:

1. Warning Glow – Similar to Sixth Sense, whenever the Handler would be in danger from a supernatural ability (powers, magic, or psionics) the crystals mounted in the glove will begin to glow.

2. Nullify – For 15 P.P.E., the Handler can activate any of the powers listed under the major super ability Negate Superpowers.

3. Improved Grounding – When attacked with any supernatural power that requires a strike roll to succeed (Psi-Sword, Energy Expulsion, etc.), the Handler may choose to parry (with his normal parry bonus) and allow the Gauntlet to absorb the attack instead (negating whatever power was used).

The Collar of the Handler is not nearly as complex as their Gauntlet of Control. Generally, the Collar is a fairly ornate ring of brass and steel with a handful of gems embedded along the outside. When placed around a victim and imbued with 10 P.P.E., the Collar generates its own Grounding field. Once the Collar is active, it constricts to fit snugly around the wearer's throat. Whenever the wearer attempts to tap into the mystic energies of the world for use of any supernatural powers, the Collar constricts, cutting off their air flow until they stop trying to activate the power or pass out. In addition, because of the Grounding field, anyone stuck in it must make a save vs pain at 17+ to even activate a power, spell, or ability. If the save is made, another must be made each activation or melee round if the power is maintained.

The Collar negates all abilities this way, including natural powers like the Immortality of the High. Because of this power, it has not been unheard of for High criminals to be collared as punishment for their crimes, forcing them to live as mortal Men for decades at a time.

Walking Ghosts

With an entire race of creatures on the planet gifted with Immortality, one generally would wonder why they don't have a countless population. Unforeseen death comes to the High in two common forms: politically inspired accidents, and the Walking Ghost. While accidents often come in the form of intruders in the night, or mislabeled food additives, the Walking Ghosts only come in one form, darkness.

Said to be the descendants of the ancient god Caz'Inco, the Walking Ghosts are the physical embodiment of death among the High. Other than rumors, the only evidence proving their existence is the numerous unexplained deaths each year with no real identifiable method of execution.

Into the Dark Woods

By Josh Sinsapaugh

*Midway on our life's journey, I found myself
In dark woods, the right road lost. To tell
About those woods is hard - so tangled and rough
And savage that thinking of it now, I feel
The old fear stirring: death is hardly more bitter!*

- Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 1



An Introduction to Rifts® Deep South

"I've been to hell and back more times than I can count. I've rode both for and against the First Apocalyptic Cavalry on several occasions. I once saw a demon tear a man in two, hell, I once tore a man in half..." His voice ripped through the smokey haze of that pub in Houstoun on that March night like a knife through butter, disrupting me from my third bottle of Zoom Beer. And after the second bottle, that crap was actually starting to taste good.

"Hey old man, mind keeping it down?" I found myself shouting over the sleepy little pub at the loud stranger behind me. "It's bad enough that I'm getting drunk in this rat's nest. I don't need to hear your crap, too." Looking back at that moment now, I wish I had just sat there and drowned my voice in beer instead of shooting off my mouth. I would have left that pub and found some alley to sleep in and would have probably died two weeks later from a hole in the head courtesy of some punk City Rat. That would have been just fine in my book. But of course, I did open my mouth and none of those wonderful things happened. Call it fate if you like, I call it bad luck.

"Don't interrupt me, boy!" The voice bellowed back, angry, insulted. A massive hand grabbed my shoulder and turned me around on that stool before I knew what was happening. Within a second I was face to face with that old man... all eight feet of him.

"Crap, you're a 'Borg,'" I said in an almost matter-o-fact manner. I still believed I could shrug that old bucket of bolts off. I was wrong.

"I've torn a man in half," he growled. "Yet, as I was saying, I will never go back there." I couldn't resist, he had set himself up. Besides, I still thought I had a handle on the situation.

"Back where? The Bathroom?" I asked with a smirk. "Aside from the roaches and a drunk Larmac it's pretty clean." I went to turn back around, but he wasn't going to have that. With only a flick of his wrist he had me turned back around and staring once again at his face plate.

"I wasn't done, you little puke!" he yelled. "I would never, even under the threat, of death go back to the Dark Woods." He released me with a shove and walked back through the haze. He was probably heading toward his table or out the door. Either way he was heading out of my life, probably forever. Too bad I spoke again.

"What? You are like what... seven or eight feet tall?" I laughed. "And you're scared to go through the Dark Woods? I've been through there, you sissy, it's just a forest with the oc-

casual hermit nut job." I polished off the beer as I watched him approach me once again through the somber quiet that now gripped that rat's nest.

"You are as stupid as you are loud!" he bellowed as he closed the distance. "Sure, it's nice enough when you just pass through, when you're on the path, the right road. But if you wander off the path... you'd rather be dead."

"How in the hell did a 'Borg get drunk?" I retorted, still believing I had a grip on the situation. "It's a cesspool of refugees and exiles, a pen of swine. The Dark Woods are dark in name only." Why couldn't I have just shut up, why did I have to utter my ignorance, why? And I kept going: "I don't remember no paths, either!"

"The paths are in your mind," he shouted back. "It is then that you find things beyond imagining. Those refugees and exiles? You find the ones that are a little insane, a little off kilter, a little beyond human understanding." He gripped my shoulder tightly, so tight that I nearly swayed from the pain. "Demons in human skin." I should've just shut up, apologized, turned my back, pretended to pass out, or I could have just closed my eyes and waited for him to disappear. But no, I spoke again, like some infernal fool.

"Sounds like a party."

* * *

I was born Maximillian Lucan Sammond, although my friends always called me "Mill," not sure why, either. Typically the name Maximillian is abbreviated as "Max," and never as "Mill." A mill is a freaking building, a place where grain is made into flour, not a name. Never met or heard of another Maximillian that had his nickname as Mill. Honestly, that always ticked me off. It really doesn't amount to a hill of beans now, though. So call me Mill, it is a name that is good as any.

I was born in Lazlo and I was going to die there if it weren't for my foolish nature. I saw some pre-Cataclysm westerns when I was sixteen, some guy named Clint Eastwood slingin' guns like nobody's business. I am sorry to admit it, but those films changed my life, for the worst most likely. Could've been a scholar, a senator, maybe even a poet but instead I ran off at sixteen, styled myself a gunslinger, and a gunslinger I became.

I never made a name for myself, though. I was either far too drunk or far too busy chasing some girl across the Earth to do so. Didn't matter, though, I was never very good at 'slinging. If I placed a revolver to your forehead and pulled the trigger, I would still probably miss. More than likely, though, I would forget to load the gun or forget to cock it. My 'slinging skills are just as poor as I am... guess I was a 'slinger in name only.

And names meant nothing in those woods.

* * *

So there I was, wandering around the wilderness, trying to lose the path. I couldn't take that moron's word for it, needed to experience it for myself. The only problem was that when you are trying to lose something, unless it's your sanity, you won't be able to lose it. You can try, but anything you forget on pur-

pose is not really forgotten. When someone asks you where it is or what it was, you know, but you choose to say otherwise. You're trying to forget it and you won't. It's like when you are a kid and you're holding your breath in an attempt to get what you want from your parents: eventually you'll pass out, smack your head on the coffee table and begin breathing again. Either way I was trying to lose the path and failing miserably.

It was at about that time, on that quiet April morning as the rain fell gently through the canopy, that I saw *her* for the first time. She was relatively short, especially for an Elf, probably around five and a half feet, although I guess I wasn't much taller at an inch shy of six feet. She moved rather gracefully either way, almost as if she was gliding down the hill, her weather-stained and ragged hair still beautiful even as it flowed in her wake. Pale skin, pale eyes and my heart pales now as I recount her: an angel in purgatory, the most beautiful woman I ever laid eyes on. Enamored, crushed, bewildered and with my sense of logic out for lunch, I called out to her:

"I never expected to lay eyes on another soul here in the Eastern Wilds, especially one as beautiful as you." It was then she noticed me, her hauntingly perfect (at least in my regards) eyes fell upon me rimmed with the amazement of a child at the circus. She continued to walk, circling me now as she did so.

"Soul?" She said with a hint of remorse, her voice pale but beautiful, just as she was to me. "I also never expected to meet a soul here in these woods, off of the one true path." She continued her path around me, almost dancing as she sang softly in a voice that matched the gentle rain.

*"And yet there is beyond this day
a sense of wonder to which I pray
a yearning of things lost and found
of fireflies, snow and human sound
where I shall dance beneath the moon
across these hills and the stars of June
to where my weary feet belong
a reverie of this distant song"*

I do not rightfully remember if there was another verse or if those were even the words she sang, all I can remember truthfully from that moment was her voice: so beautiful, yet so very sad. I watched and listened in awe of this woman, like some fey spirit out of an old world faerie tale. I could only nod slowly as she circled me and the rain caressed us, me and her in a lonely dance in those accursed woods. At length I finally spoke up again, my voice seeming to trespass into the holy silence.

"Off of the one true path?" was all I could manage to say, my voice low, almost a whisper. "I am trying to wander off the one true path." Her eyes fell on me once again or at least I think they did, I was never quite sure that her gaze had ever left me. She nodded slowly and then bowed in her dance. She spoke again, my heart warmed and my soul chilled by the return of her voice to the holy ground that my own had disturbed in its insolence.

"Follow me and keep your left foot first."

* * *

It is a peculiar place by anyone's standards. Before the Cataclysm the area was known as Alabama, a state of the Old American Empire and a largely agricultural state at that. For over two

hundred years now it has been known as the Dark Woods, a land of exiles and a haven for those who wish to be left alone. It is usually nice enough though, with large tracts of the woods consisting of pastoral wilderness populated by normal everyday folk. That is how I used to view the entire place, and a fool's view it was. To respected men and women the punishment of exile into the Dark Woods is a fate worse than death. I never wondered why, I always thought it was because either they couldn't stand a life in exile or they were just being superstitious. I forgot though that many superstitions have roots in reality.

A fate worse than death. I always thought that was just an expression, a phrase or an exaggeration. They're just woods, for God's sake. That's what I used to think and I laugh sometimes looking back now. It should have been obvious seeing as some of the most famous Shifters and Necromancers have claimed to have hailed from the Dark Woods. It should have been obvious that it was a horrible place when I saw that madman, that demon in human skin, when I was but ten years old. He was evil, the kind of evil that you don't find anywhere but in some hellish place where the word "law" is more foreign than the monsters that stalk the land. It was almost as if his humanity had been removed.

That is what that place does to you, it destroys your humanity.

* * *

It was raining again, just like it had for every night since we met. Nothing but rainy nights for two whole weeks. Two whole weeks of huddling under a tree as she moved about to the beat of some unseen drum. That is what she always did. She never stood still or sat down and I never once saw her sleep. It didn't matter one bit to me though, I was with the most beautiful girl in the world in a place that had yet to live up to its hype. So I sat under some ancient tree and watched her dance about in the rain.

"Does that dance have a name?" I found myself asking in a voice that was weighed heavy with a yearning for sleep.

"Dance?" she asked with a slightly quizzical look about her face. "What do you speak of?" She continued on her circuit around some murky puddle in front of me, only a few yards from my position.

"What you are doing, that is called a dance." I stated simply as I lit my last cigarette and continued to watch her. "Back at civilization people dance for all sorts of reasons but mostly just for the hell of it," I continued between drags. "My sister was into something called 'swing dancing,' a pre-Cataclysm dance style that was high in energy and low in debauchery." She stared at me blankly, her eyes ceasing to blink. "What?" I asked, lowering my voice in fear of her unbroken, unblinking gaze.

"Civilization?" she said, in the same voice she used before when she asked what a dance was. "What are these strange riddles that you keep speaking in?" I laughed immediately, I thought she was joking. Looking back now I realize she probably wasn't. I was far too stupid to realize that then, realize the truth about her. I knew she wasn't human from the get go, I just foolishly thought she was an elf. Hell, she might have been an elf once, she sure as hell wasn't anymore though.

Right when I was about to speak again the rain stopped, a wind from the south came dancing gently by and lulled it all away. The sun remained hiding in her palace of clouds though, probably used to the wind taking center stage at that point. It would be another day before she finally belched her rays once again into those woods. Under an overcast sky and in the damp solitude of the Dark Woods we stole away again, me following in her dancing wake like a moth drawn to a flame. It was then, I believe, looking back now, that I finally lost the path. She danced me into obscurity, between the trees and over hills into nothingness.

She danced me right off of the path.

* * *

I would think that it was all a dream, had it not been for the fact that I have scars from my trek through the woods, scars that stood as a testament from every falter and failure that I incurred off of the path. Come to think of it, he had scars to, that madman that arrived in Lazlo, claiming to be from the Dark Woods.

He would have been short and unimposing, were it not for the fact that he emanated an aura of pure evil, an aura that was perceivable even to someone like me that lacked psychic powers. His black hair was long and uncared for, a tangled mass of greasy knots that cascaded off of his shoulders and danced wildly about as he walked. His skin was pale, dirty and pocked with scars so numerous that you could easily lose count if you were to try and count them. His face was unscathed though, fair but terrible, devoid of facial hair or a single imperfection, conjuring up the old idea about the Devil taking an attractive form. His eyes were fierce and gray, weighed down as much by madness as they were by sadness, and the skin around them had taken on a vibrant purple hue as if he hadn't slept in decades.

His clothing made him seem the most mad though, a seemingly regal cloak made of rags, pelts and bits of God-only-knows-what, all in a deep, weather-stained brown. He didn't wear shoes or anything else for that matter and carried with him a crooked rod made of some smokey metal that produced a dull reverberating thud every time it struck the ground. It was the kind of staff that a Shifter would carry, and although I never once saw him weave a bit of magic, my father said he reeked of the arcane.

I was only ten then, and he scared the hell out of me, walking up the street like he owned the place, laughing the entire time. He stopped right before he passed me and his terrible gaze fell upon me, causing me to shudder. He approached me slowly without laughing, his right hand extended toward me as if he wanted to shake my hand. Sweat was pouring down my brow, my ears rang and I'm pretty sure I wet my pants at least once; I wanted to run but couldn't find the strength. I was a deer caught in the headlights of a madman.

"Do you wish to follow me, boy?" he asked in a voice that echoed onto itself. "Do you wish to serve me? You have great potential as a man of magic, even if you never have seen what I have seen." He knelt low and grabbed my shoulder, his yellow nails digging deep into my flesh. "What say you, boy?" I shook violently and started to cry, not knowing what to do. Luckily though my father arrived and sent the madman running with a

swift kick and a bolt of fire. He started to walk once again though, when he was several steps away from my father and I, all the while laughing quietly to himself.

It was not until later that I would find out that he was from the Dark Woods.

* * *

It was three days after the rain had stopped and the sun was busy piercing the canopy of the woods. The light dancing with my guide, both of them out of place in the marsh that had crept up around us. I fit in though, a grimy traveler, a dark stranger traversing terrain that looked just as unpleasant as I. It must have been some sight, if any were there to see us, her in all her pale grandeur dancing through a swamp and I a filthy vagrant struggling to make it through all of that muck.

"It's almost as if you do not sink into this sludge," I called out with a laugh as I slipped for what was probably the ninth time in an hour. "Is it that dance that allows you to do that?"

"Dance?" she said with a sigh as her gaze connected with mine for but a moment as she twirled through the marsh. "No... dancing has nothing to do with it. I am simply unburdened by the weights of this world."

"You sound like a Grey Seer," I told her, my voice unwavering in its joy despite the fact that her own seemed somehow sad. Familiar with her ignorance of the world I didn't even wait for her reaction, so I cut her off before she could speak. "You probably don't know what one is, do you?"

"Oh, yes... I know what Grey Seers are," she responded, my eyes growing wide in disbelief. "I have met them on many, many occasions... they are tuned into the same paths that I like to walk." With the word "walk" she hopped up to the top of some ancient stump that stood in our path and spun once again. "Know them... don't like them."

"Dare I ask why?" I pulled myself over the stump just as she was stepping down from it, feeling a little daunted by the fact that she used less effort than I to cross it. "I know that many people do not like the Grey Seers, probably because they don't tell the future people want to hear."

"Want?" she asked with a rare chuckle. "No, nothing to do with want, I am not bound by wants." Dancing backwards now, she brushed hair from her eyes and gazed off into the forest behind me (as I gazed off into the marsh behind her) and she continued with her explanation. "The Grey Seers are concerned with the future, just as much as those without an opened third eye are concerned with the past. However, where you blinded ones show curiosity, they show obsession... it is all they see." She twirled again and danced on, her back to me. "I, on the other hand, I pay close attention to both directions of the river that is time."

"What about the present?" I asked, intrigued by the new depths of her psyche that she was allowing me to see. "Very few are ever concerned with the present unless it is in threat to their lives."

"I am blind to the present," she whispered in a cold voice, actually stopping her dance for but a moment as she turned and pierced me with her gaze. For a moment I felt ashamed, like some scolded child that had uttered a curse in front of his

mother. I actually stopped in my tracks and watched my feet in disgrace. Her voice rose to a height that I had not heard from her before: "For me, the present is only a means to an end, it is the future on its way to becoming the past... nothing more, nothing less." Immediately she turned and continued, as if she had never stopped. Stumbling forward, I followed her once again.

That was the only time I saw her pause in her dance.

* * *

A few hours after we had entered the marsh the sun finally crawled down behind the trees and past the horizon, allowing the twilight to creep once again into the woods. Once again, in response to the growing darkness I found a tree to huddle under for the night, this time on one of the only dry patches of land I could find, a feat in and of itself in the marsh. She, like always, continued her dance both in consideration and in disregard of myself, a few steps away, weaving around some unseen circle. I, of course, divided my time between trying to sleep and quietly watching her dance, however, my attention was diverted as the night grew darker.

"I've never seen so many fireflies." I remarked as I watched the small orbs of light dance along with my guide across the swamp. "Back home, I don't think I ever saw so many of these insects... I used to love them as a kid." One of the little lights landing next to me on a branch as I finished speaking. Oblivious to me, it paused for a moment and then took off again, going about its merry way.

"They're not all fireflies." My guide said quietly, a halo of the bugs seeming to form around her head. "Some of them are much more unnatural, they were seldom seen before the Rifts arrived." She pointed to a firefly that was busy dancing with its brethren in the distance.

"If not fireflies, than what are they?" I asked, reaching for my laser pistol as I did so. "Should we be wary of them?" I made sure the clip was loaded properly and trained the end of the barrel on the light, carefully trying to keep up with its movements as it faded in and out.

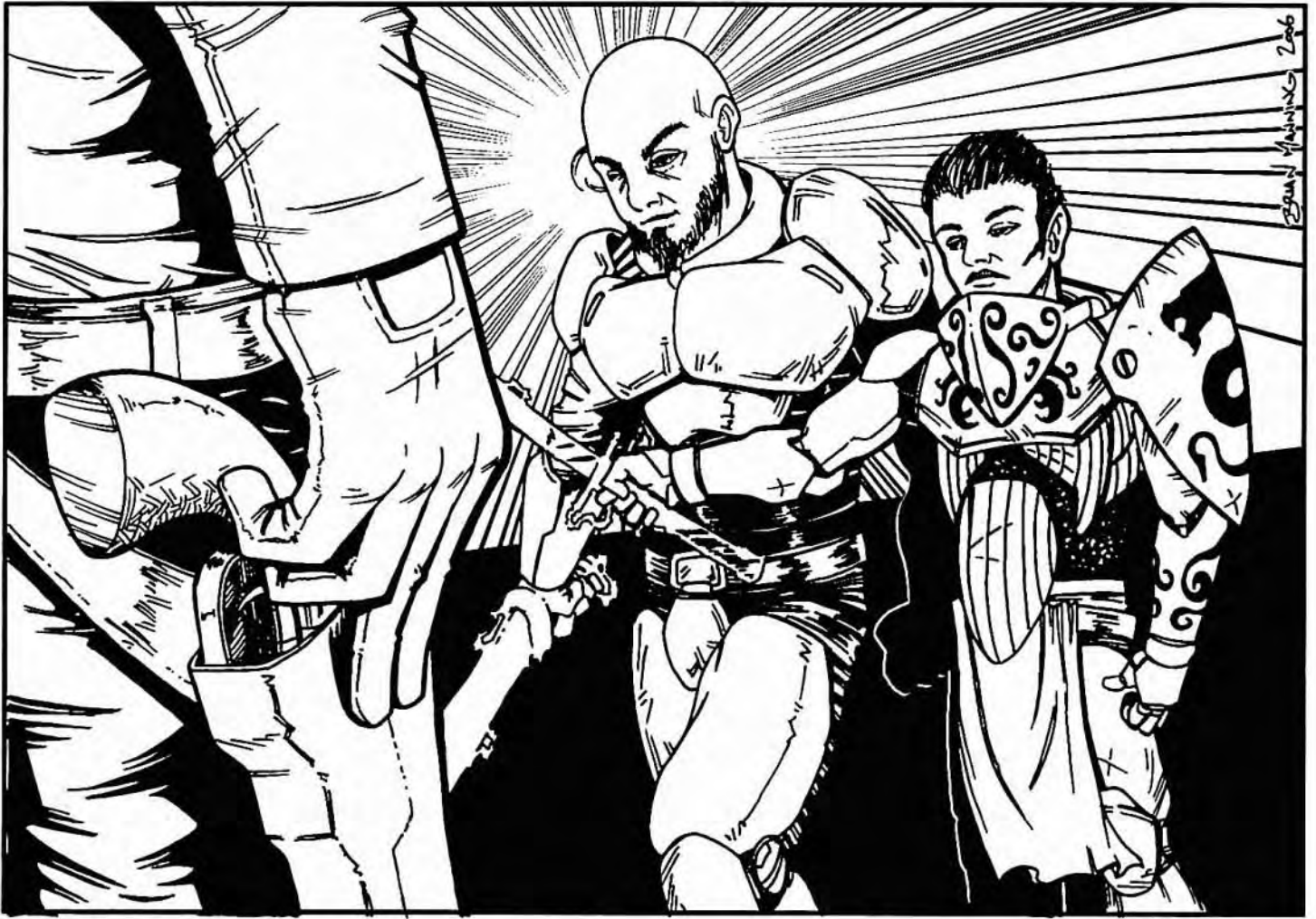
"*Ignis Fatuus*." She answered, her finger still trained on the dancing light. "They are only dangerous if you follow them." She lowered her hand and looked down at me as she continued to dance. "You would never follow anything like that would you?"

"I can't say I could ever follow something unnatural." I answered, oblivious then to the hypocrisy in my statement that is so very, very clear now. I was following a girl that I never saw sleep or eat, a girl that I only saw pause in her dance once and I thought nothing of it.

I guess I wasn't thinking much at the time.

* * *

I never held much stock in Cyber-Knights. I guess I should explain that. I have no problem whatsoever in how they try to help people, however I have always despised self-righteous champions who act like they are THE grand defenders of the weak and innocent. I hated the Cyber-Knights that confronted my guide and myself in the marsh on the day after we watched the fireflies for another reason altogether.



"Why don't you just leave us be and go save some squirrel from a fox or something," I growled at the trio of Knights that stood a few yards in front of us, weapons drawn, accusing my guide of being some sort of monster. She paid them little attention though, dancing slowly around me with a contemptuous gaze on her face, one that seemed to speak *get rid of them*. I checked my side for my pistol and then retrained my sight on the Knights. One of them waved his Psi-Sword, a glowing blue katana that flickered menacingly as he moved it through the air.

"You fool, we have told you three times now that she is not to be trusted, that you might as well be following a demon," the katana waver pleaded. "Now step away from her and move over here where it is safe!" He jerked his sword toward his companions and himself. "She is leading you into obscurity!"

"Mind your own business!" I shouted back, reaching for my pistol. "I've got a Wilk's-Remi here that says she is not a demon, and I trust my Wilk's-Remi more than you vagrant Knights errant." I spat at their feet and slowly drew my pistol. "You guys got no problem with me defending myself, do you?"

"We'd render your head from your neck before you could even pull the trigger." This time it was another Knight that spoke up, a tall one with a gladius for a Psi-Sword. "Go ahead and draw your weapon, you cannot match a Cyber-Knight in speed!" The foremost Knight cuffed him with a quick backhand, silencing his subordinate instantly.

"We are trying to save him, not start a fight," the katana-waving leader growled. "Keep talking like that and you'll kill

the man we are trying to save!" He pointed his Psi-Sword at me once again and repeated his order: "Step away from her and over here to where it is safe."

"Now listen here," I began with a growl of my own. "I don't need no saving and I am not going to be stepping anywhere. You best just get the hell out of here!" I removed the safety from my pistol and fired a warning shot into the air, disturbing a family of squirrels that must have been watching the commotion from above. "The next blast is going to be drilled into the middle of one of your errant foreheads, now leave us be!" The tall gladius-wielding Knight eyed my gun hand closely and shifted his weight to one side, probably preparing for some strike against me. His leader stopped him though, placing his hand on the big oaf's shoulder.

"Listen, you fool," the leader said with a hint of aggravation in his voice. "This is how the next few seconds will work out: I will be at your side in less than a second in order to disarm you, while at the same time Sir Virgil and Sir Gabriel will be destroying that demon lady you've been following. It will all be over in a matter of seconds." He motioned toward my guide, who gave him a very sarcastic smile in return. "You have had fair warning.

If ill becomes of you then it was due to your own foolishness." He released the oaf Knight from his grasp, shifting his own weight. "On the count of three, men! One... last chance traveler... two... drop your weapon, padre... and thr-

With sudden speed and ferocity, my guide was whirling about in some stylized dance of death, the leader's head gone before he could even finish counting. The other two Knights leapt at her in rage, swords swinging and throats rupturing with angry bellows, primal battle cries from the depths of their souls. She bent one in half with a kick, his armor cracking as he slouched in a heap into the muck. The other fell courtesy of one well placed blast from my Wilk's-Remi – the promised blast to the forehead. Like the katana-wielding leader had said, it was all over in a matter of seconds, leaving me and my guide alone again in the marsh.

I looked over at her with new admiration, a woman that took out two Knights as if it was par to the course. Her eyes were still very sad though, as if she regretted the killing, which I am pretty sure that she very well did. Returning to her normal dance-like steps she moved onward into the marsh, calling for me to follow as she went:

“Come now, let us leave these evil men behind.”

* * *

“Are they filled with darkness?” I asked my father when I was twelve on the subject of the Dark Woods. “Are the woods like the void that Astral travelers have claimed to have seen?” The questions were pertinent to me at the time. One of my teachers from school was willingly exiling himself to the woods to explore that corner of the Eastern Wilds.

“Well, no one knows for sure,” my father answered. “Many people have passed through the woods and report that it is similar to any other portion of the Deep South, and that the name really only refers to what goes on in certain portions of that forest.” My father scooped another portion of ice cream into his bowl and motioned for me to take the spoon from him. “However, many people have theorized that some places within the woods reflect the evil that occurs there. They think that in some remote regions even the sun dares not trespass, perpetual twilight during the day and perpetual darkness at night. Some even say that there are places where it is dark twenty-four hours a day, the only light provided by fireflies and sentient beings.” He took a spoonful of ice cream into his mouth and gazed out the window into the streets of Lazlo. “I suppose that your teacher, Mr. Geronimus, wants to find out whether or not these theories are true or not.”

“What do you think?” I asked in between spoonfuls of ice cream. “Do you believe that there are really such black places in the Dark Woods?” I turned my gaze from the mountain of chocolate in front of me to the kitchen window, outside of which my little sister was playing with her friends from school. My dad was watching too, mindful perhaps of the approaching twilight, wondering whether or not to call his daughter in from the street yet.

“Well Mill, I actually asked Plato about this once,” my dad began, however I quickly cut him off.

“You met Plato?! You've talked to him in person?” I was ecstatic, next to Erin Tarn, Plato was the biggest celebrity that I looked up to in the foolish days of my youth. “I can't believe you met him.”

“Yes,” my father sighed. “I met Plato, and I take his stance on the Dark Woods, that it is foolish to theorize about some-

thing when your current data is only speculative. Any theory would simply be nothing more than a faerie tale.” He looked at me, a twelve year old thinking of far away lands, and smirked slightly, seeing his younger self reflected in his son. “I believe that is why Plato asked Mr. Geronimus to delve deeply into the Dark Woods, to separate fact from faerie tale.” His face took on a somber visage. “Mr. Geronimus is a good man. He is sacrificing a lot by willingly exiling himself into the woods, simply for the sake of knowledge.”

Who knew that years later I would find what Geronimus was searching for.

* * *

I was concerned when the sun didn't rise on that morning. I was more concerned though when the predawn twilight lingered well past noon, leaving my guide and myself no choice but to travel through the darkness that had gripped that portion of the Dark Woods. Our trek became much more hesitant at that point. I could not see easily in such darkness and would have lost my guide if she was not aware of my disability. She kept close to me, dancing only a yard or two in front, often circling back to make sure I was following.

“The woods have grown far too tangled for even the sun to pierce here.” Her voice, low as if weighed by sleep, still managed to thunder through the silence, sending some unseen beast rustling through the trees high above. It was the first time that she spoke since we left the marsh behind three days prior. If I didn't know better I would have thought that she was as fearful of the silence as I was, a stark contrast to the silence of our first meeting where her voice seemed at home.

“Do you know if this area has a name?” I asked at length, finally able to muster the courage to break the silence with my own voice. I had been far too busy trying to navigate the twilight to speak until that moment, dividing my gaze between my guide and the ground in front of my feet.

“If it does,” she said with a sigh, “then it is unknown even to me. You are the first human to set foot here in fifty years. A majority of the inhabitants have never even seen humans before.” She gestured to the trees and gave a slight laugh that almost seemed to become swallowed up by the silence. “That is what you probably are to wild beasts: a faerie tale. Their grandparents whispered about your kind in stories that were passed down for generations and now suddenly the faerie tale of their childhood has finally come to life, stepping down from folklore into reality.”

“So, animals tell faerie tales to their children?” I asked with an amused grin. “Do you know this for a fact?”

“I really don't know, I never asked a squirrel or a badger if they had folklore to speak of,” she answered, her voice containing neither sarcasm nor sincerity. “You should ask one if you ever get the chance.”

“Will I ever get the chance?” I asked with mocking interest, still very amused by the conversation. “Will I ever be able to ask any of these animals a question?” My guide simply shrugged her shoulders, a peculiar thing for her to do, and then continued off into the darkness.

Far above, unbeknownst to ourselves, a stranger paid close attention to our movements, amused by the appearance of a hu-

man into his kingdom. He sat for a moment after we passed and contemplated his next action. With his mind made up, he descended to the forest floor and stole off into the twilight, following in my footsteps.

It was not until later that I would learn of this being and his dark intent.

* * *

I awoke with a start to complete darkness. I strained my eyes and listened intently for any sign of my guide but to no avail; she was gone. I didn't even bother to check the time, on my watch or otherwise, I was suddenly all too frightened to be alone in such a dark portion of the woods. All at once, every fable about the Dark Woods flooded back into my mind, swirling about in a maelstrom of fear and unbelievable terror. I was alone in an unfamiliar land and I couldn't even see my feet. Instinctively, I reached for my pistol.

"I wouldn't remove that toy from its holster if I were you." This new, unfamiliar voice rose like a clap of thunder somewhere in front of me, a cruel thunderous voice that seemed to echo into itself. *"Such novelties from the outside will do you no good here in my kingdom."* I strained my eyes in the voice's general direction but was met only with nothingness. I gathered my strength and managed a feeble reply.

"Who are you?" My voice was barely more audible than a mouse's squeak when compared to the stranger's. I desperately tried to adjust to the darkness as I awaited the response.

"Me?" The answer came in a mocking tone. *"I am myself, the ruler of this kingdom of twilight between the marsh and the meadow. I certainly do not need to divulge my name to a trespasser in my kingdom."* He growled. And not one that any human could produce, this was the growl of a large animal, the likes of which I have never heard prior to my encounter with him and would never hear again. *"However small my kingdom might be, it is still my kingdom and you are trespassing here."* Saucer-shaped and catlike, two massive, glowing yellow eyes suddenly opened in front of me, only a yard away, casting bright beams upon me not unlike those from the headlights of a car. I was suddenly illuminated and although I could not see my host, I could tell I was in a deep glade of some sort with my guide nowhere to be found.

"Did that fool of a woman who was leading you think that she could slip you through my kingdom?" the voice asked with amusement as the light from the eyes became extinguished. *"Did she think she could sneak by without paying homage to the master of this thicket? How very brazen of her, if she only knew that I watched as you two entered my kingdom, speaking of faerie tales."* The beast growled again, the air from his exhale blowing my hair about in a helter-skelter fashion. *"What do you have to say in your own defense, following such a woman?"*

"What the hell did you do with her?" I asked back, parrying his question with another, an action that he found to be deplorable.

"Do not think that you are in a position to ask a question of me." His voice dipped into new depths of anger. *"And do not accuse me of touching her. Her kind is allowed to pass through my kingdom. As for her location, at the moment I cannot say, she must have left the boundaries of my realm, she must have abandoned you for fear of my wrath."*

"Liar!" I found myself shouting back in foolish rage. "Whatever or whoever the hell you are, you are a liar!" I suddenly realized the depths that my foolishness had just taken and sank back into the tree, fearful of what was to come from my host.

"DO NOT CALL ME A LIAR WITHIN MY OWN KINGDOM!" the beast bellowed in return, sending several birds and God-only-knows-what in the unseen branches above into a state of fearful chattering. All around the glade I could hear them scurrying away or taking flight, some of them hissing as they did so and a few even making noises that until this day I am sure that no animal could ever make. Even the tree against which my back had been shook violently with the exodus of its inhabitants. I slouched lower into the cradle made by two massive roots, suddenly realizing that the entire forest knew of my presence and that they were probably on his side, whatever he was. *"I should devour you for your insolence,"* he growled, his voice returning to its normal level of thunder. *"Yet I have no love for the taste of human flesh. But what shall I do with you?"*

Just as quickly as it came, the voice receded back into silence, leaving me shuddering in the darkness, wondering if the voice's owner still sat only a few paces away. I dared not move for fear of what was there and I dared not to speak for the very same reason. After a long while of shuddering in the darkness, sleep gripped me once again, a persistent aching to slip away into the dream world. Struggling, I kept myself awake for at least another hour but soon fell back into the embrace of an uncomfortable slumber.

The darkness around me became darker still and I knew no more.

* * *

I woke to several aches and pains, disoriented and oblivious to where I was or even what time it might be. My mind was swimming through a state of delirium the likes of which I had never experienced. My eyes were shut tight both through my physical inability to open them and my fear of what I may or may not see before me. I quietly prayed that my guide was there and that the beast who claimed the thicket as his kingdom was not. Funny, I never prayed much before I entered the Dark Woods, but after my encounter with that thicket king I found myself praying a lot. I would pray before I fell asleep and pray when I woke up. I was praying then, too, as I've said already. I was praying as a means to break through my confusion.

After an hour or so, or at least what felt like an hour, the delirium passed and I found the ability to open my eyes once again. Sunlight greeted me along with tall grass and sweet smelling flowers; I was within a forest meadow. Quite suddenly, the words of that beast crashed violently back into my mind: *"I am myself, the ruler of this kingdom of twilight between the marsh and the meadow..."* I was outside of his kingdom, or at least that is what I hoped as I pulled myself up from the ground and surveyed my surroundings. There was no giant beast to be seen, although that meant nothing. After all, I had no idea what he looked like. There was no sign of my guide either. I was alone in a forest meadow in some forgotten corner of Alabama.

To my left I could see the darkness of that monster's thicket and to my right a pathway leading out of the meadow and back into the woods on the other side. What was beneath me though

left me terrified: footprints, massive footprints leading out of the thicket to my location and then back again. I was actually resting in one, a print that could be made into a tub for a full-sized Grackle Tooth if the need was to arise. They were all similar to the prints that a lion or some other large cat would make, although the size was a lot larger than any terrestrial cat that I had ever seen. Sitting in amazement within that depression, it was then that I realized my situation.

My weapons were either gone entirely or in pieces at my side. My favorite Wilk's-Remi was stamped flat a few paces from me, as was my hunting rifle that I was using to get food. Speaking of food, that was gone also, stamped into oblivion or gone completely. As for my armor, luckily I still wore it. However, there were several scrapes that were not there before, along with what must have been tooth marks cracked into the abdomen. The rest of my equipment was scattered around me, with any objects key to my survival smashed into pieces. Cursing, I rose to my feet and recovered what I could from amongst the tall grass.

Once what was left of my belongings had been collected, I looked toward the path that led back into the woods and contemplated my next move. I was without a single weapon or scrap of food and quite obviously things appeared to be rather bleak. I considered trying to see if anyone else was nearby but I decided that that would probably be a waste of time. I even considered pleading with that monster for help, although I quickly decided against that. Eventually, I started to think of ways to find my lost guide even though I knew that that was probably impossible. Finally, I decided the best thing to do was to see where that path led.

As I moved toward the trail I spotted a shadow, though. A shadow that was descending from above. Looking up, I saw its source: a blackbird fluttering down on a light breeze. The avian landed near me, standing proudly in my path with his black eyes trained on me. The little bugger made a movement as if bowing, spreading his wings and letting forth a loud croak. Stopping in my tracks, I peered down at the blackbird with both amusement and curiosity, the first friendly face I'd seen since my guide. The simple entrance of this bird, oblivious to the predicaments of a human life, truly warmed my heart.

Suddenly, I was reminded of a park back home and the blackbirds that would congregate there. I saw myself as a child playing both the role of nurturer and destroyer. As a nurturer I would leave bread for the birds, although this also attracted pigeons which I held no love for. As a destroyer, though, I would hurl small pebbles at them from a distance, sending the little birds scattering to the safety of a nearby tree. The blackbird in front of me was lucky. He did not know the cruel hypocrisy that humans were capable of, nor did he know what hypocrisy was. I was just a simple curiosity to him.

"What do you want, I have neither bread nor stones?" I asked at length, knowing full well that he wouldn't respond, his lack of fear for me most likely due to the fact that he never saw a human before.

"Twas simply pondering what would bring a man with such fair countenance as yourself this close to the thicket over yonder." I jumped back in surprise. I don't know why, though. I should have come to expect anything living in the world that I do, a world of Rifts and all sorts of monsters. "A might bit

touchy, are you not? Have you never seen one such as myself before?" The bird ruffled his feathers and turned his head sideways in what was probably an attempt to get a better view of me. It was most likely a pitiful sight.

"I am not going into the thicket. I came from it," I answered at length, bewildered by the talking bird at my feet. "And no, I have never seen a talking blackbird."

"Quite a shame, quite a shame," the bird retorted in a quick fashion. "We certainly are a proud race and I shudder to think that any human does not know of us." He hopped about in the path suddenly, as if he was having a fit of some sort, shaking his head about and croaking as he did so. "Please sir, tell me that you did not just say that you came *from* the thicket!" The bird stopped abruptly and returned his sideward gaze to me, leaning forward like someone straining to hear a whisper.

"Yes, I came from the thicket," I answered again, looking back toward the darkness behind me. For a moment I imagined a large cat stalking the shadows. I quickly shrugged off the reverie though and turned back to the bird.

"Amazing, absolutely amazing!" he shouted up at me. "I do not know of another human that has set foot in that clearing ever since the King ascended the throne three and fifty years ago. Yes, truly amazing, although I would never boast of it if I were you. The King does not like to be spoken of." The bird clicked his bill and twisted his head to the side. "What you have done, Sir, is remarkable... but why ever would you travel into such a place?"

"My guide led me in there." I replied. "She seemed to be familiar with the woods so I trusted her."

"Few guides are brazen enough to lead travelers through that thicket... who was your guide?" The bird's gaze quickly became much more intense, his eyes glowing with recognition of some hidden notion that I failed to grasp.

"Well, I don't know her name," I admitted, suddenly feeling very stupid.

"You followed someone... a stranger... without knowing her name?" The blackbird seemed to have trouble forming the words, as if he couldn't believe that he had to ask such an absurd question.

"I guess that her name... never came up." My answer was pathetic and I knew it. The bird knew it also, actually laughing (or at least what sounded like a laugh). He placed his head beneath one of his wings, muffling his amusement, although the hopping dance he was partaking in easily gave him away. Feeling awkward and uncomfortable, I passed the bird and headed up the path toward the woods, his laughter echoing after me. However, I paused for a moment at the forest's eaves and shouted back, "If I follow this road will I reach a town?"

"A town!" the bird exclaimed, stopping his laughter immediately. The little creature twirled in the path and looked at me sideways, the eye facing me growing very wide, easily visible behind his still raised wing. "Along that path... there can be found a community." He lowered his wing and clicked his bill, any and all semblance of laughter or amusement gone. "A community," he repeated. "But not a town."

"I don't have time for a semantics argument," I said with a prolonged sigh. Looking back on the blackbird, I held him again with a sense of wonder and immediately endeavored not to

make the same mistake twice. "By the way," I continued. "What is your name?" Immediately his eyes narrowed and his wings rose, his bill clicking in apparent disgust. At once I knew that I had offended him, even though it seemed hypocritical to me. Moments ago he was laughing at me for not knowing my guide's name.

"Names mean nothing in these woods," the bird answered in a low voice. Moments later he took flight and disappeared into the blue sky that was stretched out far above. Turning with a shrug, I exited the meadow and began my trek up the forest path, wondering if there was any hidden meaning in the avian's words. *Names mean nothing in these woods.* I repeated the phrase to myself over and over again but couldn't grasp anything except the obvious. Eventually though, it became like a dogma to me and I still repeat it today as a proverb to the ignorant.

Names meant nothing in those woods.

* * *

"Mr. Geronimus, are there towns in the Dark Woods?" The question came from one of my classmates, a girl by the name of Eleanor who sat a row over from me. It was one of many questions on that day, the day before Mr. Geronimus, our geography teacher, was to leave for the Dark Woods of Alabama. Normally, faraway lands were only reviewed with a cursory interest in his class, but on that day he had made an exception.

"Well," he began as he gazed at the sunshine that was flowing lazily through the window. "Like most things in the Dark Woods, no one knows for sure. What we do know is that most of the Dark Woods is thinly populated by humans and non-human races with a few homesteads, farms and hunting lodges sprinkled throughout the region. But are there any actual towns? That, we really do not know." Mr. Geronimus strolled away from the window and sat, leaning on his desk, his arms resting on stacks of textbooks and final exams and then proceeded to continue: "The Cyber-Knights state that there are several small communities around the Ley Line Nexuses of Alabama, especially the Nexus that sits where Guntersville once stood. They call the concentration at Guntersville the *Guntersville Enclaves* and are said to visit there often to help keep order." He finished speaking and combed the rows of students with his eyes, looking for another question. Of course I raised my hand and he nodded in my direction.

"What about deep within the woods?" I asked as I stood up. "What kind of communities are found within the darkest corners of the woods?" I gave a slight nod and sat down, happy that I had found the right opportunity for my question. Mr. Geronimus answered almost immediately.

"That depends whether or not you believe the faerie tales of such fabled reaches of the woods, Mill," he said with a hint of skepticism. "We know for a fact that a majority of the woods are similar to any forest in the Eastern Wilds and have no evidence whatsoever that such 'deep places' exist." He opened a nearby book and spread it open on his lap, thumbing through pages, his eyes transfixed on the tome. He continued to speak regardless: "However, that does not mean that such places aren't there. We also have no evidence that they don't exist... so it is impossible to..." He looked up from his book at his class, all saying in unison:

"It is impossible to truly prove a negative." That phrase was one of the many things that Geronimus managed to hammer into our heads during his short tenure as our geography instructor and he smiled as we recited it.

"Very good, class," he praised with a laugh, flipping the book up vertically so we could see the page he was looking for. It was an ancient map of the Old American Empire state of Alabama, worn and stained, ready to fall out from amongst the pages of what was probably once an atlas. "Now you see, Mill," he said as he traced with his index finger a large portion of the woods. "No one has ever found a location of darkness or 'deep place' within this entire perimeter. If such a place exists, it would exist outside of this area." He snapped the book shut and placed it back on his desk. "If a town can be found in the far reaches of the Dark Woods, I'll find it... that is one of the reasons that I am going to the woods and why I will no longer be your geography instructor." The girls in the class (and a few of the boys) started to cry and everyone looked troubled at the resurgence of the bad news that was all but forgotten during the question and answer session. "Do not cry," Mr. Geronimus said with a nearly unperceivable hint of sadness. "I am going to explore, to dispel doubt and uncover the truth."

I sat in my seat in the third row and looked upon Mr. Geronimus with a new sense of admiration. He was my newest hero and I suddenly wanted to be just like him. I wanted to explore far off lands, places where I was a stranger to both the people and their customs. I wanted to be famous, too. I wanted to be able to tell of some glorious adventure in a foreign land. I couldn't grow old fast enough.

Years later, I was approaching a community in one of the "deep places" as a stranger in every sense of the word, finding myself wishing to be that little boy in school, back home in Lazlo.

* * *

I never would have thought in my years of traversing the North American continent that I would ever be foolish or unfortunate enough to be alone in an unfamiliar land. Back then, when I was younger, when I was an overconfident vagrant, I failed to see the disparity of the situation. I knew that death was a real possibility. After all, I probably cheated death in the card game of life a dozen or more times before that incident.

I knew that I had no food and that was a problem. I knew that I had no weapons and that was a problem. Also, I knew that my chances of procuring sufficient amounts of either commodity were slim at best. However, what I did not know and failed to realize was the complete idiocy of going down that path. I guess I figured that I could beg at doorsteps to get what I needed or that I could somehow send a message to someone I knew in the "outside world." Yes, I was foolish to assume either one of those scenarios would have ever played out. Yet that was not the most foolish thing that I assumed at that time.

Somewhere within that inexperienced head of mine I *knew* that the community which existed somewhere down that path was a safe haven. I *knew* that my presence would be welcome. I *knew* that it was filled with pleasant folk willing to give a man down on his luck such as myself a helping hand. I *knew* that there would be no miscreants. I *knew* that there would be no de-

mons. I *knew* that all would be fine and well as soon as I reached that community, that I could place this odyssey behind me.

I knew nothing. I knew nothing at all. I knew not what lay ahead in the darkness that stretched out across that dusty path. I knew not of fear or logic or even just how bleak things were. I knew absolutely nothing. Armed with my knowledge of nothing, I stared down the path ahead of me, attempting to divine my future from the darkness. The sun sank and the chorus of the night began to sing, yet still I stumbled ahead, wondering.

Suddenly though, my attention was drawn upwards and my feet halted their march. High above, beyond the green leaves and fireflies, a single star, the first star of the evening, burned with a quiet intensity, and like a child I gasped in awe. It seemed, at that moment, further out of place than I. I stood and thought for a moment about the past, about the good that resided in the world and the concrete certainty that lit my path back then. Disturbed from my reverie by a passing mosquito, I returned my gaze to the darkness ahead of me and stepped forward.

With my left foot first, I sank off into the gathering twilight away from one uncertainty and on again toward another.

madhaven™

Into the Ruins

Expanded Source Material for Rifts® Madhaven

By Brandon Aten and Taylor White

When Madhaven was first turned in to Palladium Books for original editing and perusal it contained a comprehensive vision for a region previously untouched in Palladium canon material. Mutants, Mystic Knights, Ghosts, and most importantly, TREA-SURE awaited the Rifts players in an environment which was so completely unlike any other that had yet been seen. When it was originally announced and before the Palladium staff had really started the big push of editing and revising the book, it was slated for 128 pages. When Kevin finally got his hands on the book he had a field day and his artistic vision really took hold. The art from Nick Bradshaw truly inspired him and what poured out of his mind was simply astounding.

But all of the new material that was born during those weeks of revision meant that some of the things originally contained within the manuscript ended up on the cutting room floor. While I viewed the inclusion of the excavation and treasure information as absolutely key, I understood that it had to be cut, especially when I saw the new mutant races that Kevin had in mind. Kevin still loved the information and actually wanted Taylor and I to put something together to include it in a Rifter shortly after the book had seen print.

I have been more than thrilled at the reaction to Madhaven and I know that now the fans and fellow gamers can finally dive into the ruins, brave the dangers, and hopefully come out for the better, or at least have a good adventure trying...

-Brandon K. Aten

A Deathtrap or an Opportunity Waiting?

Many of you might be saying to yourselves, "What does it matter, since I'm never going there? That place is insane!!!" True, the region is pretty dangerous being that it is full of ghosts, territorial mutants, isolationist Mystic Knights, and god-only-knows what else. It's out in the middle of nowhere with no major civilized places for hundreds of miles. Why would anyone ever go there? It's a good question.

Well, if you think about it, there is actually a very good reason for going to Madhaven: The very fact that no one ever goes there. That, in and of itself, should be reason enough. Consider this. At the time of the Great Cataclysm, New York City could have been considered the "Capital of the World," as it has been referred to as such more than once throughout its history. And that statement was never as true as it was at the height of the Golden Age. Many of the wonders of that age were created and used in other places, true enough. But New York is where they were bought and sold. New York was where they were first seen. New York was the living embodiment of the Golden Age.

When the Rifts came and toppled the great cities of the world, New York fell just as any other city did. It became a wasteland of pieces of skyscrapers. And with those pieces were the material wealth the people of New York had come to own and enjoy. Every imaginable item, from kitchen appliances, to ultra-modern cars, Mega-Damage weapons and equipment, priceless art, and everything in between found its way to New York and there it stayed. Many things such as books, video discs, medicine, water and food, and precious metals were stowed away in large personal vaults designed to protect their contents from Mega-Damage explosions and weapons. All of these wonders were buried under tons of concrete, glass, and steel.

New York was not the only city on Earth to have such lovely things. Many people all over the world who were fabulously wealthy had extravagances that became ancient artifacts, relics of a dead past. The difference is that those other places were looted very quickly after the Great Cataclysm. Whether it was by people just trying to scrounge for supplies, or gangs and looters who just wanted the things that were denied them in the old world, in a matter of decades a great deal of the Golden Age had been dug up out of the dirt and sold, or taken apart and reverse-engineered and improved upon. The Coalition States and many other weapons manufacturers got their starts with such finds. New York, however, sat untouched, for centuries.

It wasn't that people didn't try. All kinds of people wanted to get into New York for the very reasons mentioned above. They wanted to dig up all those goodies underneath the rubble, but there was a terrible price to pay. Manhattan became one of the most haunted places on Earth, with only some select places in China even coming close. The place seemed cursed. Those who went in went completely insane, yet no one could figure out



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why. It was a cruel irony to the survivors of the Great Cataclysm; that the greatest city of the Golden Age was denied to them. Eventually, word spread about the horrors of the ruined city, and the river of people trying to dig up the city quickly turned into a trickle. Most gave up and turned their attention to more favorable excavation sites. As a result, the treasures of the Golden Age are still there, just waiting to be rediscovered. Lost technology, ancient knowledge, and billions in saleable items are only some of what can be found. Of course, getting in and surviving long enough can be a real challenge. One must be smart, brave, and prepared, but above all else, one must be prepared for anything.

The smart treasure hunter will do his research. He will test the city at first, find out its effects on his body and mind. The smart character will also be ambitious, but not greedy, for greedy characters die quickly in Madhaven. They might find some treasure rather easily, but this only goads them further. They stay longer, and delve deeper. Soon, the city overtakes them and they lose everything. An ambitious character goes for one dig, and only one dig. They employ other treasure hunters who can locate valuable finds deep within the city. They have no reservations about hiring psychics, mutants, D-Bees, or mages. And they pay their cohorts well, or at least wait for a safe place to double-cross them. Many treasure hunters have scored a big find and then shot their compatriots in the back, only to find that they could not protect themselves from the dangers of the ruins.

Note: G.M.s, don't be afraid to let bad things happen to the player characters. There is a reason there is so much treasure to be had in Madhaven. If it were easy, the place would have been cleaned out centuries ago. Don't go easy on them. Of course, that said, you shouldn't indiscriminately slaughter them, either (though doing so would be rather simple). Give the players a chance to learn from their mistakes... and maybe make it out alive.

Notable Finds

Although there are plenty of treasures to uncover in Madhaven, some finds have become legendary for their value. Those who are in the know about Madhaven dream about one day hitting the jackpot with one of these finds. They are only rumored to exist, however, and none of them may be real. Plus, there may also be comparable or even bigger finds that are unknown to anyone.

The Federal Reserve Bank

Somewhere in the Financial District, is the find to end all finds. Some treasure hunters say "the Fed" (as it was known in pre-Rifts times) is just a myth. Surely, no one place could house so much gold. But it's true. The Federal Reserve Bank stored more than one quarter of the world's gold bullion. By pre-Rifts currency estimates, the gold was worth over 90 billion credits.

In 109 P.A., it will be worth over three times as much (some rumors suggest that there may also be magical items or legendary weapons inside. This is not true).

The purpose of the Fed was not only to house incredible amounts of gold, but to serve as an international banking service. It was an independent organization within the American government that helped with all sorts of financial services, including currency exchange, maintaining relationships with foreign banks, and investing marketable goods into the Universal Credit System. They were the biggest pushers of the Universal Credit System, and worked to get as many nations on board as possible.

The vaults of the Fed, which house the gold bullion, are located 80 feet (24.4 m) below street level (or 150 feet/45.7 m below the surface of the ruins), sitting on pure Manhattan bedrock. The vaults were impenetrable in pre-Rifts times. Their walls and ceilings are made of thick Mega-Damage steel, and fitted with one of the most sophisticated locking mechanisms ever invented. It used a combination of time, rotating steel, and electromagnetic locks. The only entryway was a large doorway that opened into a revolving chamber which was operated by a security guard in the central control room. When the Great Cataclysm tore apart Manhattan, the power was cut off to the Fed. Without power, it cannot be opened. If the vault is found, it will take days to cut through the security walls, or weeks to hack into the locking system. But the treasure inside could be worth any amount of time and effort.

“Charging Bull”

One day in 1989, a 7,000-pound bronze bull statue appeared in front of the New York Stock Exchange. It was planted there the night before by the artist as a whimsical tribute and a piece of “guerilla art.” It was quickly removed by the police, but public scrutiny demanded the statue be placed nearby. It is rumored to have magical properties, such as the ability to grant wishes or bring financial success to any who possess it. By itself, the statue would be worth 5.6 million credits; even more to a collector, and ten times as much if the rumors are true about its magical powers.

Kuan Yang Lee, Chinese Antiquarian

In a large Manhattan townhouse, located smack in the middle of (what was once known as) Chinatown, lived Kuan Yang Lee. Kuan was an eccentric Antiquarian who was said to be over 200 years old. Surely this was not true, as Kuan rejected Golden Age medicine and bio-systems and lived by a strict Taoist lifestyle. Ironically (or perhaps not), he had the appearance, vitality, and strength of a man in his mid-40s, up until the Great Cataclysm claimed his life.

Kuan Yang Lee was an extensive world traveler, and collected many odd things from around the world during his adventures. He was also a notorious pack rat, and could never bear to throw anything away. When asked about any particular item, whether it be a Chinese rice hat, Native American totem, or a moon rock, he would become excited and go into a fantastical story on how the item was procured.

Rumors persist about Kuan Yang’s mansion, which is rumored to be full of priceless ancient artifacts and magical trea-

tures. But if it exists, it must have been smashed to dust, right? Or perhaps it wasn’t. Some say that there is a hermit in the Catskill Mountains who knows the exact location of the Mansion, and has memorized a perfect catalogue of its contents.

Manhattan NEMA Hangar

Somewhere in Madhaven there is rumored to exist an underground hangar of NEMA power armor and weapons. During the Great Cataclysm, these soldiers were the first response to the destruction, trying desperately to rescue as many people as possible. The tsunamis toppled the city and buried their urban Manhattan headquarters, forcing the surviving squad elsewhere. Perhaps they kept the story alive by word of mouth, so that someone would find their weapons and use them to take the city back from the demons and undead that besieged it during the early days of the Dark Ages. Now, no one knows if the story is a true account or just a story. If it is true, there is likely to be a large handful of Chromium Guardsman and Silver Eagle power armor suits, as well as other treasures. With the haul this find is supposed to bring in, a man could start his own heavy mechanized army, powerful enough to take on the likes of Kingsdale or El Paso.

Brooklyn Bionics Corporation

The science of bionic enhancement and replacement goes back to the early 21st century. Back then, replacements were very crude, providing just enough strength and mobility to get an accident victim back on his feet. The technology improved, but most of the better bionics and cybernetics were reserved for the military and NEMA. The Brooklyn Bionics Corporation (BBC) was one of the first companies to change all that. For the first time, bionic and cybernetic enhancement was available to consumers on the open market. At first, the government tried to step in and legislate the sale to civilians, but the BBC had powerful friends in Congress who managed to get the cases thrown out. In 2050, the BBC was a two-bit manufacturer of bionic legs, arms, lungs, and eyes to construction and industrial companies. Five years later, they were one of the top three Bionics Corporations in the world. They led the Eastern American market in research of new technology and made their investors filthy rich. The company produced everything from bionic limbs to cybernetic weapon systems, to bio-organic replacements, to super-secret technology that was never unveiled.

The main headquarters of the BBC is located, naturally, in the borough of Brooklyn. Rumors say that they had a towering skyscraper office and a bionics factory that covered five city blocks (some say it was ten). If the factory and offices could be located among the ruins of Brooklyn, not only would the finder have hundreds of thousands of bionics to unload on the Black Market, but they may even find the research data on the BBC’s experimental projects.

Naruni Weapons Cache

When the Coalition Army fought to push Naruni Enterprises off the Earth in 105 P.A., a particularly clever bunch of Uteni traders thought they could get one over on the CS by hiding out in the haunted ruins of Madhaven. They figured they could handle any silly ghosts that might pop up, and they’d bide their time

until the whole thing blew over. Needless to say, things didn't quite work out that way. The Uteni traders did not survive one week in Madhaven. They lasted just long enough to hide their stock of weapons, armor, and vehicles somewhere in the wreckage. Those who were last in contact with the traders suspect the cache may be somewhere on Long Island.

Western Bandit Gold

Fleeing from a vendetta posse out west, a small band of Pecos Bandits fled far to the east. They had with them about a million credits worth of gold coins, and a box of computer discs from the old American government. One of these discs is rumored to have an override program designed to shut down the killer satellites orbiting earth, as well as changing their programming to attack earth-based targets!!! The bandits had no idea what they had stolen, but the posse did, and followed them right into Madhaven. Neither group has been seen since.

The Coalition State of Lone Star (well, Desmond Bradford anyway) knows of this disc and has dispatched spies and Skelebot squads to track down the last known location of the bandits. Whoever has control of the killer satellites could become the next great power in North America, possibly rivaled only by Atlantis.

Apollo's Tree

Somewhere in Harlem is an item once known as the "Tree of Hope." It was believed that the Tree of Hope would grant luck to all those who stood under its branches. When the Apollo Theater opened in 1934, the tree had to be removed from its location. A section of trunk only eighteen inches across and twelve inches high was taken by the theater's owner, mounted to a column, and placed to the right of the Apollo's stage. Over the years, from 1934 to 2098, performers at the Apollo Theater would rub the stump and hope that the tree would grant them success in the entertainment world. The legends of the Tree and the Apollo Theater have survived into the post-Rifts era. Many believe Apollo's Tree will grant them great luck, financial success, or even the powers of a god.

Having the tree trunk in a character's possession will give him +1 to all saving throws and +5% to all skill rolls as long as he believes the tree grants him luck. The character will want to rub the tree once a week, and possibly before any major battles or confrontation in order to maintain good luck. Whether the tree really has any greater powers or not, I leave to the G.M.

Random Treasure Table

Roll percentile. Use this table to determine the kinds of things characters can find just rooting through the rubble in Madhaven. The value following the description of the item is the average worth of the item on the free market. Finding anything of any value at all should take 2D4+1 hours of searching plus excavation time. Excavation without damaging the find will generally take one day for books, videos and artwork, but upwards of a week or more for vehicles, power armor, and robots. G.M.s, use your best judgment on this.

01 Velvet Painting of Elvis: Oh, what a lovely texture. 1D6x10 credits.

02 Billboard: Could be any size, advertising any product imaginable, from liquor to Broadway Shows. 1D6x1000 credits, more for advertisements depicting action-violence (movie advertisements), bikini girls (beer or movie advertisements), or high-technology (usually corporate ads).

03 Crate of Guns: 1D4x10 S.D.C. rifles or pistols and about 1000 rounds of ammunition. Some minor rust makes the weapons jam when fired, but they should be easy to repair. 2D4x100 credits each once repaired.

04 Kitchen Appliance: Anything from a toaster to a blender. 30% chance of it still working. 3D6 credits for a broken appliance, but 2D6x10 for a working model.

05 Magic Item: A scroll, talisman, or magic weapon. It appears to be very old. Most likely, whoever owned it didn't know what they had. I suggest not making it anything too powerful. Could be worth anywhere from 2D6x1000 credits to a million or more.

06 Dry Cleaning: A suit that was pressed and cleaned right before the Cataclysm hit. Or a very expensive dress. 2D4x1000 credits.

07 Fire Hydrant: Not connected to the city's water supply anymore. Might make a good decoration, or a gag gift for your favorite Dog Boy. 8D6 credits.

08 Action Figures: At one time, these sci-fi toys from the 1970's were collector's items, worth thousands. No one remembers these characters anymore. 5D6 credits each.

09 Bad Artwork: Either decent artwork in bad condition or bad artwork in good condition. 3D6x100 credits either way.

10 Good Artwork: Obviously shows some talent, and in good condition too. 6D6x100 on average, twice as much to a dealer or museum curator.

11 Fantastic Artwork: Ironically, the artist was completely unappreciated in his own time. 1D6x1000+200 credits, 50% more to a dealer or museum curator.

12 Discs – Music: Electronic Jazz, Classic Country ("classic" being anything from 2000 to 2020), and Japanese Rave were the most popular forms of music in New York in 2098. Other musical discs can be found too, however. 3D6x100 credits each.

13 Discs – Video: Digital movies were etched onto plastic discs by laser going back to the late 20th century. The technology prevailed even into the post-Rifts age. These ones could be anything from drama to documentaries (a big seller). Prices range from 5D6 for horror and sci-fi (most of these films pale in comparison to daily life), to 1D4x100 for drama and comedy, to 2D6x1000 for documentaries, educational, and industrial films.

14 Discs – Technical: These discs have digital blueprints for all sorts of technical items. Mundane items will go for 1D6x1000 credits. Really good stuff like plans for power armor and Mega-Damage weapons could go into the millions, but may likely be impossible to find.

15 Discs – Software: Computer Games, Home Design, Tax Preparation, Word Processing, Operating Systems, and thousands of other miscellaneous types of software. Prices range anywhere from 1D4x10 to 2D6x1000 credits.

16 Discs – Books: Perhaps fearing the worst for civilization, or maybe just backing things up, it's a good thing people copied books onto digital media. Fiction will go for 6D4x100, History for 2D4x1000, Science books will go for 4D6x1000 credits.

17 Books – Technical: Valuable technical journals, how-to instructions, blueprints, schematics, formulas, etc.: 4D6x10,000 credits. Some are worth millions and all are highly illegal in the Coalition States.

18 Books – Domestic: Recipes, home improvement ideas, books on sewing and cleaning. 2D4x100 credits.

19 Books – Fiction: Novels of all genres: Romance, Crime Thriller, Classics. 3D4x100.

20 Books – Science Fiction: Books about the future are embarrassingly quaint. 2D4x100.

21 Books – Self-Improvement: Trendy weight-loss books, exercise manuals, as well as books on working through depression and other modern maladies. Most of the problems of the Golden Age seem trivial compared to those in the post-Rifts era. 1D4x100 credits.

22 Books – Periodicals: Old newspapers, magazines, and comic books. Newspapers and magazines are very popular, since they give direct information on what life was like before the Rifts. Unfortunately most are in very bad condition. 2D4x10 credits.

23 Books – History: History books are even better than periodicals, which tend to stay in better condition. Very popular. 1D4x1000 credits.

24 Random Junk: Bottle caps, fast food wrappers, and broken toys which are nearly worthless. Assorted odds and ends worth 2D6 credits. Not even worth the time.

25 Random Junk: Assorted odds and ends worth 8D6 credits.

26 Random Junk: Assorted odds and ends worth 2D4x10 credits.

27 Television: 40% chance of a working TV set. Cable-ready with parental controls and A/V jacks. 4D6x100 for a working set. 4D6 for a broken set.

28 Computer, Good: This computer was top of the line in 2097, and it still works, too. 5D6x100 credits.

29 Computer, Bad: This computer was top of the line in 2090, and/or it doesn't work. Could still be salvaged for spare parts. 2D6x100 credits.

30 Computer, Broken: It doesn't matter how powerful it used to be because it's junk now. 1D6x10 credits for spare parts.

31 Street Sign: Hang it up in your bedroom. 1D4x10 credits.

32 Mailbox: 80% chance of it still having letters inside. The letters could actually be worth more than the mailbox, depending on what they say, or have in them. 1D4x10 for the box, 2D6x10 for the letters.

33 Refrigerator: 20% chance of finding a working model. If it works, it will need the Freon replaced. There is no food inside, though there may be milk cartons and plastic storage dishes. 1D4x10 for a broken model (can still be used to store things, like a portable closet), but 3D6x100 credits for a working model, 50% more to bars, taverns, saloons, and restaurants.

34 Mutant Bones: A metal skeleton of a Haven Mutant lies under the rubble. Some of the bones are cracked and broken, so

the cause of death should be obvious. A metal skeleton is quite an oddity, but most people assume it is faked. Still, the metal can go for 1D4x10,000 credits as raw Mega-Damage material.

35 Pre-Rifts Currency: Totally worthless in 109 P.A. Still, a collector may be interested. 1D6x10 credits.

36 Pre-Rifts Automobile in Good Condition: With some minor repairs, this thing might just run. Has 600 S.D.C. fully repaired. 3D4x1000 credits.

37 Automobile in Bad Condition: Will need major repairs to make it run. 3D6x100 credits to sell for parts. Fixing it (a major endeavor) will yield a better resale value, but may not be worth the investment.

38 Automobile, Broken: Completely immobile. 1D6x10 credits for metal scrap.

39 Large Truck in Good Condition: With some minor repairs, this thing might just run. Has 15 M.D.C. fully repaired. 4D6x1000 credits. Large enough to haul 4 tons of cargo.

40 Large Truck in Bad Condition: Will need major repairs to make it run. 8D6x100 credits to sell for parts. Fixing it (a major endeavor) will yield a better resale value, but may not be worth the investment.

41 Large Truck, Broken: Only good for scrap metal, or as shelter in a pinch. 2D4x10 credits.

42 Gold: A very good find! Currently worth 1000 credits an ounce. Any gold in Madhaven is likely to be jewelry (rings, necklaces, teeth). The character finds 1D4 ounces.

43 Silver: Almost as nice as gold. Currently worth 400 credits an ounce. Similar to gold, only really found in personal jewelry stashes. The character finds 2D4 ounces.

44 Diamonds: The perfect engagement gift. 3D6x1000 credits per stone.

45 Jewelry: Miscellaneous pieces of jewelry can range from 2D6x100 credits to 10,000 or more. Depends on the market and buyer. People in large cities such as Chi-Town have more money and are more likely to spend it on shiny trinkets.

46 Gargoyle: Not the monster, though it certainly will remind some people of those beasts. 4D6x10 credits for a small one, 8D6x10 for a large.

47 Nothing Good at All: Better keep digging. There's nothing at all here but rocks and debris.

48 Strange Skeleton: A large skeleton of some long-dead creature is found in the ruins. It could have been a dragon, or maybe a Rhino-Buffalo. It's hard to tell. Not worth anything to anyone except scholars, who will pay up to 1D6x10,000 for this mysterious creature. Necromancers may also be interested, but are more likely to kill the character and just take the bones. If they do pay, it will only be 1D4x10,000.

49 Medicine – Cold/Flu/Allergy relief: Sealed in airtight containers, these capsules are taken orally and will soothe symptoms in 1D6 minutes. Can sell for 3D4x100 credits per pack of 12.

50 Medicine – Ibuprofen/Aspirin: Perfect as mild painkillers for headaches and backaches. Also good for a fever. Takes 2D4 minutes to take effect. Sells for 1D6x10,000 per bottle (60 pills).

51 Medicine – Painkillers: These are hospital-quality anesthetics. Very popular on the black market for use in chop-shops,

field hospitals, and recreational use. 2D6x10,000 per vial (5 doses). Take effect almost instantly once injected into the bloodstream.

52 Medicine – Antibiotics: There is great demand for medicine in rural and poor areas. Typically go for 5D6x10,000 credits, more to Cyber-Docs and Body Fixers. No narcotic uses.

53 Medicine – Anti-Influenza: Medical advances during the Great Cataclysm lead to the elimination of many diseases that were previously thought incurable. These intravenous treatments can go for major credits in cities, but tragically, the poorer communities, which need them the most, cannot afford them. One vial, which can cure up to 1D4 different types of diseases, has 5 doses. Worth between one and four million credits.

54 Narcotics/Drugs: Pre-Rifts drugs such as cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamines. Could get anywhere from 2D4x100 credits to 200% more to an addict.

55 Children's Toys: Various playthings that were never worth much money. 8D6 credits.

56 Helicopter in Good Condition: Although hover technology has made helicopters more or less obsolete, they are still cheaper to produce and maintain. This helicopter needs some work, but can fly. Fully repaired, it will have 12 M.D.C. and can carry 1500 lbs (675 kg) of cargo. 2D6x1000 credits.

57 Helicopter in Bad Condition: This helicopter needs a lot of work, and the parts may be impossible to find. Spare parts will go for 1D4x100 credits.

58 Helicopter, Broken: Totally worthless. This thing will never fly again. 100 credits for the metal.

59 Armored Truck in Good Condition: These trucks, which were mainly used to haul around cash currency and other valuables, were built tough. Luckily, this one survived reasonably intact. Will need some new tires and engine work, but will drive like a dream once it's repaired. Will hold 4 tons of cargo and has 100 M.D.C. when fully repaired. 1D4x10,000 credits.

60 Armored Truck in Bad Condition: This truck has taken major structural damage and needs a lot of work. But it should drive. 3D6x1000 credits.

61 Armored Truck, Broken: It took a couple of collapsing buildings to do it, but this truck is completely smashed. Still, the armored body can be used for scrap metal. 1D6x100 credits.

62 Mega-Damage Military Weapons: 2D4 energy rifles that became standard for the infantry during the Golden Age. They do 3D6 M.D., have a payload of 10 shots, and a range of 1000 feet (305 m). There is a 70% chance that these weapons still function. 3D6x1000 credits.

63 Bionics – Leg: Medical bionics were common during the Golden Age. These are not the combat-ready models produced for most mercenaries. These bionics were intended for accident victims to give them back full mobility. It has a P.S. of 11, and 3 M.D.C. 60% chance of still functioning. 20,000 credits.

64 Bionics – Arm: It has a P.S. of 10 and 2 M.D.C. 60% chance of still functioning. 15,000 credits.

65 Bionics – Torso: Full Bionic torsos were more uncommon and generally reserved for the military. Still, they saw their use among civilians who were severely crippled from disease or accidents. It has 30 M.D.C. and there is an 80% chance of it still working. 100,000 credits.

66 Cybernetics – Eyes: 5D6 cybernetic eyes, all basic medical replacements. They are in a sealed container which, fortunately, is undamaged. 20,000 credits per eye.

67 Cybernetics – Ears: 5D6 cybernetic ears, all basic medical replacements. They are in a sealed container which, fortunately, is undamaged. 1500 credits each.

68 Cybernetics – Internal Systems: This could be anything from a clock calendar to a bionic lung. G.M.'s choice. Value will vary from system to system, but the price should generally be 20% less than modern systems.

69 Cybernetics – Weapon Systems: These were highly illegal for civilians to possess, but still were available on the Black Market of the day. Value is roughly 10% less than modern systems.

70 Robot Body: This robot stopped functioning centuries ago. Robots in the Golden Age were much more simple than those found in 109 PA. They were only used in the military, NEMA, and heavy labor. This robot will need major repairs and a completely new power supply. It is not intelligent, and was only programmed for specific tasks. It is only worth 1D6x100 credits for the material, but worth hundreds of times more to the right buyer, who may wish to fix it up and reprogram it.

71 Construction Powered Armor: This large exoskeleton has hover capabilities, 120 M.D.C., and a Robotic P.S. of 40. It was used by wealthy construction companies to maximize the efficiency of a skilled laborer. Companies who utilized powered suits finished their work 40% faster than companies who didn't, and with fewer accidents (though the accidents that did occur in the exoskeletons were more severe). This suit is non-functioning (though it can be repaired), and not suited for combat (too slow and cumbersome). If fixed, it could be sold for 2D4x100,000 credits to a city or feudal kingdom.

72 Domestic Decorations: Pottery, window blinds, curtains, wallpaper, paint buckets, mattresses, and other mundane items found around a comfortable, lived-in home. 8D6 credits, sometimes less or more depending on the buyer. A seller can typically get twice as much in one of the larger cities.

73 Furniture in Good Condition: High-quality table, chairs, desk, bookcase, etc. 1D4x100 credits.

74 Furniture in Bad Condition: Low quality, or damaged. Could be fixed. 1D6x10 credits.

75 Furniture, Broken: Cannot be fixed. Only good as firewood. 15 credits.

76 Designer Clothing: A trunk or box full of high-quality clothing from the top designers of the Golden Age. 3D4x1000 credits for the whole lot.

77 Brand-Name Clothing: 3D4x10 credits per item.

78 Civil Servant Uniforms: You only wore these to work. 1D6x10 credits.

Note: For entries 79-85, roll percentile on the following chart to discern the condition of the antiquated equipment. See *Rifts® Chaos Earth™* for descriptions of these weapons. Ammunition will be difficult, if not impossible to find, yet these weapons would be EXTREMELY valuable to a collector or an Operator able to retrofit them. Costs given are for items in perfect condition. 50% of that if the item is lightly damaged, 15% if heavily damaged, and 5% if damaged beyond repair. Remember that these prices would be signifi-

cantly higher if the buyer actually knows what they are paying for.

01-25% - Damaged beyond repair. Only a 5% chance that the unit can be reverse engineered. Drones, power armor, and robots will need a new power supply.

26-65% - Heavily damaged unit. An Operator would need 2 weeks+4D6 days to even repair the unit, if a weapon, 3 weeks+6D6 days for a drone, 4 weeks +6D6 days for a power armor or robot. There is a 20% chance that the unit can be reverse engineered, but it would take at least three times as much time as it would to repair. Drones, power armor, and robots will need a new power supply.

66-90% - Lightly damaged unit. Repair times are one third of those for the heavily damaged units. There is a 50% chance that the unit can be reverse engineered, but it would take twice as much time as it would to repair. Drones, power armor, and robots will need a new power supply.

91-100% - Perfect working condition. Other than a dusting and a polish, the unit seems to be in perfect working order. Drones, power armor, and robots will need a new power supply.

79 NEMA Weapons (Roll Percentile)

01-08% - NEMA Automag (AMT) Pistol. 1D4x1,000 credits.

09-16% - NEMA 5.56 mm Assault Rifle. 1D8x1,000 credits.

17-26% - NEMA PLP-20 "Police Special" Laser Pistol. 1D4x10,000 credits.

27-36% - NEMA MIP-21 "Crime Stopper Maxi-ion Pistol. 1D4x10,000 credits.

37-46% - NEMA LSR-250 Laser "Sharpshooter" Laser Rifle. 1D4x10,000 credits.

47-56% - NEMA LGR-360 "Terror Stopper" Laser Grenade Rifle. 1D4x10,000 credits.

57-66% - NEMA PR-470 "Hot Seat" Plasma Rifle. 1D6x10,000 credits.

67-74% - NEMA PR476 "Incinerator" Plasma Cannon. 1D6x10,000 credits.

75-82% - NEMA GLR-540 "Thunderer" Grenade Rifle. 1D6x10,000 credits.

83-88% - NEMA ML-557 "Destroyer" Mini-Missile Rifle. 1D6x10,000 credits.

89-94% - NEMA R-660 "Striker" Rail Gun. 1D6x10,000 credits.

95-100% - NEMA R-670 "Lightning" Rail Gun. 1D6x10,000 credits.

80 NEMA Drone (Roll Percentile)

01-35% - Spider Probe. 1D6x10,000 credits.

36-60% - Flying Probe. 1D8x10,000 credits.

61-78% - Pup Scout. 1D4x100,000 credits.

79-94% - Combat Hound. 1D10x100,000 credits.

95-100% - Combat Drone Soldier. 1D4x1,000,000 credits.

81 NEMA Mastiff Robot (Roll Percentile)

01-98% - Mastiff. 2D6x1,000,000 credits.

99-100% - "Big Dog" Super Mastiff. 2D10x1,000,000 credits.

82 NEMA Bull Dog Robot: 2D6x1,000,000 credits.

83 NEMA Chromium Guardsman (Pre-Rifts Glitterboy Unit): 2D6x1,000,000 credits.

84 NEMA Gunbuster Power Armor: 1D8x1,000,000 credits.

85 NEMA Silver Eagle Power Armor: 2D6x1,000,000 credits.

86 Toolbox: Simple tools such as a hammer, screwdriver, and electric drill. 2D6x10 credits.

87 Mega-Damage Toolbox: These tools are similar to normal tools, only made of much tougher material. They were used to repair modern Mega-Damage structures. 1D4x1000 credits.

88 Subway Car: This huge car won't move. Stripped down, it could be worth a good amount of money. Some particularly grisly cars still have the remains of pre-Rifts people trapped inside them. It gives one pause to reflect on how horrible the Great Cataclysm must have been. 1D6x10,000 credits for the material.

89 Mutant Tunnel!: The characters break through the rubble into an open cavern-like area under the street. It is dark, musty, and cold. If they explore further, they will find themselves face-to-face with Haven Mutants. The Mutants don't appreciate having their tunnels broken into. They see the player characters as a threat to their homes, and will respond with deadly force.

90 Jackhammer: Not worth much on the open market, however this jackhammer could be used to help the characters dig around in Madhaven. It needs 1D4 hours of cleaning and a power source, but is otherwise in fine working condition. Worth 1D4x10 credits, but far more to an Excavator or other treasure-hunters.

91 Empty Safe: Whatever was in this safe was removed a long time ago. It can still be used, however. Requires knowledge of safecracking to decipher the combination. It has 30 M.D.C. 1D6x10 credits.

92 Parking Meter: These were all over the streets of New York. Golden Age versions had slots for credit cards and sent a signal to nearby police when the time had expired. 1D4x10 credits.

93 Elevator Car: Like a subway car, only smaller. 20% chance of finding the remains of people trapped inside it. 3D4x1000 credits for the material.

94 Metal Statue: Pre-Rifts New York had a large number of very beautiful statues all over the city, representing famous authors and artists, patriots, and humanitarians. These statues are unique and hard to come by. It is a shame that most modern people do not know who these statues represent. This metal statue is worth 2D6x1000 credits.

95 Stone Statue: Same as above, only worth not as much. 1D4x1000 credits.

96 Industrial Equipment: If it is working (50% chance), it will sell for thousands to someone who needs it. The problem is finding a buyer for such large machinery. Values vary by size: small is 1D6x1000 credits, medium is 3D6x1000, large is 6D6x1000, very big is 2D4x10,000, huge is 3D6x20,000.

97 Phone Booth: Most phone booths became obsolete around the turn of the 20th century. Still, some lingered around. Using one in 2098 was a bit embarrassing, unless one was stranded or very poor (which almost no one was). In the world

of Rifts, a phone booth could be very useful in a community with ground-based or underground communication lines. They will love it in Chi-Town. 2D4x100 credits.

98 Coffin: "I say we open it." "Maybe we should knock first." I leave it to the G.M. to decide what's in the coffin. Don't be too hard on them.

99 Air Conditioning Unit: 40% chance it still works. This unit is large enough to adequately cool a 4-story office building. 1D4x10 credits.

100 Bodies of Previous Digging Team: This is never a good omen. It seems these treasure-hunters met with an unpleasant demise. Still, their equipment is in decent working condition. They will have some excavation equipment, body armor, basic adventuring gear, and some energy weapons of different types.

Excavator O.C.C.

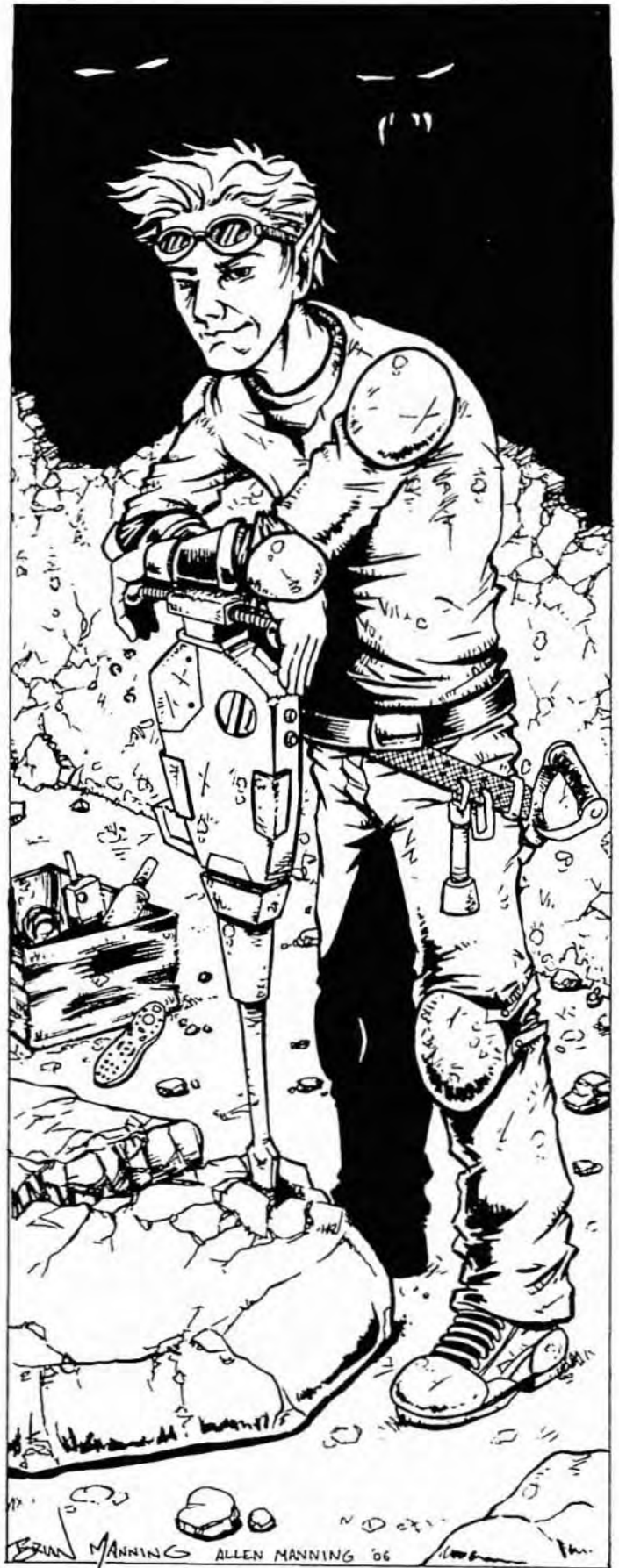
The Excavator is a little bit of a mix between a Wilderness Scout and a Professional Thief. They are ambitious, worldly individuals who are in the business of finding pre-Rifts artifacts, and selling them, either personally on the open market, or to the Black Market (which frequently yields higher payoffs, but is dangerous for obvious reasons).

In order to find the really good dig sites, an Excavator is constantly working, with his ear always to the ground. When he hears a rumor, he calls up his contacts to substantiate or deny the rumor. If it looks like the dig might be legitimate, he is on the road immediately, hiring other treasure-hunters on the way. He knows he has to get there quickly, because frequently the first excavator on the scene is the one who walks away with the goods.

This professional competition can be very fierce, and some more dishonorable excavators are not above killing their competitors to get treasures for themselves. This means that excavators must also be able to defend themselves, either with their own training and weapons, or by hiring others to do it for them. An Excavator knows, however, that once an artifact has been sold off, it's no longer on the "open market" and stealing it at that point is considered dishonorable. Only the most diabolic Excavators kill or steal from another's man's client.

Excavators also have a sort of not-so-friendly rivalry going with the Dynasty Hunters (see the O.C.C. in Dinosaur Swamp). Dynasty Hunters are also on the lookout for good digs, but have different reasons. Whereas the Dynasty Hunter is a historian, and digs up pre-Rifts artifacts for the purpose of knowledge and education, the Excavator is only interested in making money for himself. He knows that, to the right buyer, and with the right finds, he can make millions. The Excavator is seen by the Dynasty Hunters and other historians as ruthless opportunists and pirates who are selling out their past.

Unfortunately, the way of the Excavator is old. They are a dying breed. After three hundred years, there are very few places left in the world that have anything worth digging up. Many, when digging is slow, turn to looting and robbing Coalition convoys and outposts. CS gear is always in big demand, and the work is just as exciting. Madhaven is a personal dream for many Excavators. They know that because of the curse, and the strange ghosts that inhabit the city, there are still billions of



credits worth of artifacts just waiting to be claimed. To some, it is the only real dig left.

Special Abilities of the Excavator

1. Ear to the Ground: The Excavator is a character who never takes a day off. They are always working; always eavesdropping on conversations, always listening in for clues to their next big score. Wherever they go, they are asking questions on who lives around there, what pre-Rifts cities were in the area, and if any other Excavators are in town. They are experts at gathering clues and piecing together bits of rumors to find out the truth on buried treasure and forgotten artifacts. If someone finds a decent dig, every Excavator in 200 miles (320 km) will know about it before the week is over.

This also means the character has a wide network of informants, stool pigeons, and City Rats connected to the Black Market where they go for news on the underground. The Excavator will try to have one or two contacts in every major city in his regular stomping grounds, and a couple in more faraway places.

In game terms, this means the Excavator gets a skill bonus when trying to gather information on dig sites and the search for pre-Rifts artifacts, in addition to all other skill bonuses. *At first level, this bonus is +5%, and the character gets +1% per each additional level of experience.* A first level character will also have 2 Black Market contacts in nearby cities or towns whom he can go to for rumors and the latest news. More may be added through role-playing and additional levels of experience. *The reliability for these contacts to be available and knowledgeable is 20%, +5% per additional level of experience.* A failed roll means the contact either gave the character faulty information, or is too busy to deal with the character. New contacts start at the base reliability percentage.

2. Salesman: Excavators make their living pushing pre-Rifts junk onto people. Every once in a while, they may show up with something useful, but first there are years of sorting through old newspapers, broken appliances, cracked jewelry, and other assorted trash. However, the character is skilled at making it sound like you just can't live without the fabulous items he has available. "Now, ma'am, I know what you're thinking. It's just an old soda can. And yes, you're right. But more than that, what you hold there is a piece of history! Think about all this can has been through. Think about the person who drank from it, then callously threw it away. This is a symbol of what we've lost, ma'am. And a symbol of all things civilized people are trying to regain. Imagine living in a world where you can just drink a soda and throw away the can, and not have to worry about it. Every time I look at it, it makes me think of a better world that we're all striving for. Wouldn't it be nice to have it on your mantel, as a reminder of what's really important in life?"

The really good salesmen know how to incite mystery and excitement from the junk they dig up. With some things, such as books, video discs, and pre-Rifts weaponry, this is not so hard since all of those things are highly illegal in the Coalition States. "Now, I can't talk long, sir. I think there might be some Dead Boys hot on my heels. I gotta unload this stuff quick. So I'm going to make you a deal. Check out this picture. Feel the texture. That's real velvet, sir. Now, the CS doesn't want you or me to have this picture. Don't know why; too scared to ask. And I don't want to hang onto it. Too much excitement for me. But I tell you, it would look real good hanging in the cockpit of my Mountaineer. Really impress my friends. Say, you've got a Mountaineer, don't you?" Anyway, you get the idea.

At first level, the Excavator gets a +5% bonus to their skill rolls when trying to buy or sell pre-Rifts artifacts. This bonus applies to Barter, Appraise Goods, Trust/Intimidate, Charm/Impress, Seduction, and any other roll the G.M. finds appropriate. The bonus increases by 2% every additional level of experience, and is cumulative with other bonuses.

The Excavator O.C.C.

Also known as the Gravedigger, Treasure Hunter, Garbage Man, and Trash Collector

Attribute Requirements: This character works long hours, so a good P.E. is necessary. Excavators in Madhaven or other haunted cities definitely will want a high M.E. Having a high M.A. or P.B. may also be important as the character tries to unload his finds onto the market.

Racial Restrictions: None, though the vast majority (95%) of them are humans. Human Excavators feel they have more right to pre-Rifts artifacts than D-Bees, since they feel they are recovering the past of their own civilization. There are slightly more female Excavators than male (54% female, 46% male), though no one knows why.

Special Bonus: Add +1 initiative, +1 perception, and 1D4 to P.E. Excavators tend to have keen insight and are very resilient.

O.C.C. Skills

Climbing (+5%)

Speaks Native Language at 98%.

Language: Two of choice (+10%).

Land Navigation (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+5%)

Streetwise (+10%)

History: Pre-Rifts (+5%)

History: Post-Apocalypse (+15%)

Basic Math (+20%)

Research (+10%)

Salvage (+20%)

Barter (+5%)

Appraise Goods (+20%)

Excavation (+15%)

W.P. Knife

W.P.: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Expert for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Martial Arts for the cost of two skills. No other Hand to Hand skill is available to this character.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select 8 other skills, but at least 2 must be taken from Rogue, and 3 must be taken from Technical. Plus select an additional skill at levels 2, 4, 6, 9, and 14.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic and Automotive only.

Espionage: Any.

Horsemanship: General only.

Mechanical: Basic and Automotive only.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any except Acrobatics and Gymnastics.

Pilot: Any except Robots and Power Armor.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any (+10%).

Science: Any (+5%).

Technical: Any (+15%).

W.P. Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: Select 6 from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*. Select one more skill at levels 4 and 9.

Standard Equipment: Set of wilderness clothing, city clothing, and a nice suit for formal occasions. A set of light to medium Mega-Damage armor, hat or helmet, sunglasses or tinted goggles, air filter and gas mask, first-aid kit, 3D4 large sacks, a backpack, a utility belt, 500 feet (152 m) of rope, 6 iron spikes, 6 wooden spikes, a large hammer, hand axe, utility belt, 2D4 flares. Night-vision goggles and a flashlight, a PC-3000 computer, a pocket digital audio recorder and player, and a telescope with a laser distancing readout.

Weapons include an energy rifle and energy pistol of choice. Also get a Vibro-Blade of choice.

Vehicle to start is usually fast and something that can haul cargo. Later on, they can buy some trucks to carry around the really good finds. Military vehicles, power armor and robots, TW vehicles, and robot horses are not available to this character initially.

Money: 4D6x100 in Universal Credits, and an additional 1D6x1000 in Black Market items. Some Excavators are notoriously stingy with their cash, and hoard it away for their retirement. Others are just the opposite, celebrating a successful dig with booze, gambling, drugs, and prostitutes. One thing all Excavators do is put back a sizable amount of money investing in equipment and hirelings. They all know that if they don't secure the best tools, talented workers and proper defenses, then they'll quickly fall behind the competition.

Cybernetics: None to start, but may be purchased later as normal.

Excavation Tools

How to make your character filthy rich

Buyable equipment

Basic tools, such as shovels, picks, and axes, are readily available in even the most backwater towns. They typically cost between 20 to 30 credits each, and do 1D8 damage in combat. Mega-Damage tools are available, but cost around 800 credits and will do 1D6 M.D. from a hit. These basic tools are good for very small digs, grave-robbing, or to hand out to a large number of workers.

Power tools are the way to go for most small-time Excavators. They can be used by one man, and can do the work of many more in a fraction of the time. These tools include jackhammers, metal-cutting torches, drills, and chainsaws. The only drawback is that they require a power source. Usually combustion engines, though they are available with rechargeable batteries. Techno-Wizard versions add 2D6x1000 credits onto the cost, but can be activated for 10 P.P.E. (or 20 I.S.P.) and can stay powered for 12 hours of continuous use. S.D.C. power tools can be bought for 1D4x100 credits. M.D.C. power tools are more expensive, but greatly reduce wear and tear on the tools, and are 60% more effective. They cost 3D6x100 credits.

For serious Excavators, Heavy Machinery is absolutely necessary. A character who can afford a small convoy of these vehicles most likely takes a more hands-off approach and hires workers to do the hard work for him. A team of salvage professionals operating these bad boys can clear out a large dig site in a matter of days. Heavy Machinery includes Dozers, Drill Trucks, and Scoop Shovels, among other tread-driven vehicles. These bad boys can be had for 20,000 to 25,000 credits, and are usually only available in medium to large-sized cities. (They typically have 1200 S.D.C., max speed: 70 mph/112 km, max range 150 miles/240 km before needing refueling; M.D. models have 20 M.D., but cost three times as much).

Excavators need a way to carry and store all of those relics, and for that they use Haulers and Trucks. These are vehicles designed simply to carry large amounts of material long distances. They come in a variety of sizes, shapes, and models. Any decent treasure hunter will have at least one truck to cart around his valuables. Some of the most successful are known to own an entire convoy of trucks, fully armed with energy weapons and explosives, or protected by magic. Some basic stats for these kinds of vehicles can be found below.

Pickup Truck: 2200 S.D.C., can carry up to two tons of cargo. Maximum Speed 100 mph (160 km), Range 250 miles (400 km). Cost: 11,000 credits. 24,000 for the armored version with 60 M.D.C. Add 50,000 for hover capabilities.

Cargo Van: 6000 S.D.C., can carry up to five tons of cargo. Maximum Speed 100 mph, Range 500 miles (800 km). Cost: 14,000 credits. 50,000 for the armored version with 120 M.D.C. Add 75,000 for hover capabilities.

Converted Mountaineer (a typical Mountaineer that has been retooled to haul cargo): Costs 20,000 plus the cost of the Mountaineer. Triple the available cargo space. Adding hover jets will cost 300,000 credits on top of other costs. All other stats remain the same.

Hauler Dump Truck: 200 M.D.C., can carry up to thirty tons of cargo. Maximum Speed 80 mph (128 km). Range 150 miles (240 km). Cost: 100,000 credits. 600,000 credits for the hover version which can fly at 100 mph (160 km).

The application of Bionics and Cybernetics can be invaluable in recovering pre-Rifts artifacts and for other salvage operations. An Excavator who has all his tools built directly into his body, as well as augmented strength and environmental protection, can cut his costs in digging time into much more profitable and efficient numbers. The overhead investment can be quite costly, but most treasure hunters find that Cybernetics and Bionic enhancement pays for itself. Most (70%) of professional Excavators and other salvage specialists have more than a few such devices, and

a sizable portion (20%) are Full-Conversion 'Borgs! I recommend checking out the *Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook* for an extensive look at the subject. Some suggestions that might make an Excavator's life easier would be the following: Multi-Optic Eye, Gyro-Compass, Internal Comp-Calculator (for figuring out those large sums of money he's going to make), Metal Detector, Radiation Sensor, Surveillance Ear, and a Climb Cord. Of course, any Bionic limbs and Tool Attachments will be very useful.

Somehow, all those wonderful artifacts are going to need to be located. That's where Sensory Equipment comes in. For most Excavators and other Treasure Hunters, digging is a hit-or-miss scenario. You go out, find a pre-Rifts city or military base, or ancient battle site (from the many battles fought during the Great Cataclysm and the Dark Ages that followed), put the tools to the dirt, and hope you hit something. Some Excavators with great intuition and experience will just "know" where something is. If one can afford it, however, modern sensory equipment is a necessity.

Charting Seismic Activity usually involves placing small explosives around a certain area (around 1000 square feet/93 sq. m), then using a computer to measure how the vibrations caused by the explosions ripple out. A Seismic Survey Kit includes 20 small explosive charges (does 2D6x10 S.D.C.), a drill delivery rig, and necessary computer software and reading devices. It costs 1D4x10,000 credits.

Metal Detectors are useful and cheap. The cheapest can detect metal underground at a range of 2 feet (0.6 m) and cost 40 credits. The most powerful metal detectors are usually hooked onto industrial equipment and have a range of 400 feet (122 m). They cost 10,000 credits, and installation fees will be another 1D4x1000.

Geiger Counters can detect harmful radiation, usually emanating from a wrecked military vehicle or robot. Those used in salvage and excavation operations have a range of 100 feet (30.5 m; or 20 feet/6.1 m underground) and cost 2D6x1000 credits.

P.P.E. Readers are Techno-Wizard devices used to locate and detect other TW machines or magic items. P.P.E. Readers are extremely handy to have around, and are especially popular with Mage-hunting operations. A P.P.E. Reader is a small machine that fits into the hand, and resembles a radio with a dosimeter. As sources of magic energy get stronger, the dosimeter begins to move more rapidly. The pattern that the dosimeter forms can let the user know if the source of the magic is a ley line, living creature, or inanimate object. Using one costs 10 P.P.E. (or 20 I.S.P.) for one hour of use. It has a range of 200 feet (61 m) in every direction, and is not hindered by walls or floors (though having multiple magic sources around can confuse the device and produce inaccurate readings). They usually cost 150,000 credits each.

Useful skills, spells, and psionic powers

Skills are a true treasure hunter's bread and butter. Most who take up the profession of digging up the past and selling it off are normal humans, with little or no powerful abilities. They are too cunning for the life of a soldier or mercenary, although adventure and the lust for money dwells deep within them. Most

are well-educated and highly personable. They need to be able to read, write, do research, figure out clues, be well versed in history (true history, not the Coalition's view), locate digs, perform manual labor (and sometimes lead a large group of other workers), appraise their finds, and finally sell it off, usually to the Black Market. What follows is a list of skills that any who take up treasure hunting (not just the Excavator O.C.C.) will find most useful. Many more than what is presented could be used well in their own right; the following skills could be considered necessary. All of these skills and more can be found in *Rifts Ultimate Edition*, pages 302 and 303.

Appraise Goods, Archaeology, Barter, Basic Electronics, Basic Mechanics, Computer Operation, Demolitions, Excavation, Find Contraband, Gemology, History: Pre-Rifts and Post-Apocalypse, Land Navigation, Language (any if the character expects to travel a lot), Literacy, Mining, Navigation, Pilot: Automobile, Hover Craft, Truck, or Tracked & Construction Vehicles, Recognize Weapon Quality, Recycle, Research, Salvage, Sensory Equipment, Streetwise, and Wilderness Survival.

The use of Psionic powers in excavation is rare, though it is found on occasion. There are many adventurers out there who possess limited powers; certainly not enough to rely on as much as a Mind Melter or Psi-Stalker. Rarer still are Major and Master psychics who choose to devote their time to such mundane tasks as digging up garbage and selling it to fools and criminals. Nevertheless, some psionic powers can be quite useful, especially in avoiding danger and sensing valuable artifacts. And never underestimate how helpful psionics can be when influencing a potential buyer.

The following powers are found on pages 164-184 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*: Commune with Spirits ("Can you show us where the gold/silver/jewels/Elvis paintings are?"), Levitation, Object Read, Psychic Omni-Sight, Resist Fatigue, Sense Magic (especially useful for locating buried Techno-Wizard items), Speed Reading, Summon Inner Strength, Telekinesis, Telekinesis: Super, Telekinetic Lift, Telemechanics, Total Recall.

Note: Of course, when digging through the ruins of Madhaven, psychic powers bring an entirely new dimension to the game. Powers such as Exorcism, Sense Evil, See Invisible, and Mind Block can help one from succumbing to the ghosts and madness long enough to actually find something worth keeping.

Magic is even more rare than psionic powers among treasure hunters. To those who can alter reality with a few words and a flick of the wrist, what good are decrepit baubles from an ancient and dead civilization? To most spell casters, the answer is "not much." There are those, however, who see an opportunity here. With so few spell-casters in the excavation business, who can stand up to their power? Most feel that there is no written rule about what a mage must do with his power. Why shouldn't he use it for personal gain? If there is money to be made, why shouldn't he be the one making it? Where is it written he must be a warrior, mercenary, or hero? The power of magic is his to do with whatever he chooses. So goes the mentality of treasure-hunting mages.

The following spells are taken from the *Rifts Book of Magic*. The list of magic spells in *Rifts* is quite exhaustive, so I have only listed the very most useful, and even then from basic Invocation spells, which are most commonly available.

Animate/Control Dead (to create workers who will never tire), Charismatic Aura, Eyes of Thoth, Featherlight, Implosion Neutralizer, Magical-Adrenal Rush, Manipulate Objects, Mystic Alarm, Mystic Fulcrum, Mystic Portal, Superhuman Endurance, Strength, and Speed, Tongues, Wards, Watchguard, Words of Truth.

Note: Once again, it is worth mentioning that in places such as Madhaven, magic can be the one force that saves one from those who inhabit ruined cities. There is a large amount of spells devoted to protecting oneself and one's possessions from evil forces. It is always wise to do some research and be prepared for anything.

Edgetowns

Surrounding the ruins of Madhaven is a smattering of small towns that act as a last stop to re-supply and gear up before entering the ruins. Some of these towns and cities are thriving agricultural and industrial centers of the past that have fallen into ruin and disrepair while others have always been small hovels trying to eke out an existence as peasant farmers in the unforgiving wilderness. This halo of villages and towns is usually a good place to stop to gather information and supplies. Some of the most notable Edgetowns are listed here.

Madison

Madison is the largest of the towns near Madhaven, and also happens to be the closest. It is so close, in fact, that it is troubled by Entities and undead monsters on occasion, especially on days where local ley lines flare up and magic energy is at its highest (there is a ley line only 10 miles/16 km north of Madison that goes straight into the Harlem Nexus).

Built on the ruins of the pre-Rifts town of the same name, Madison is one of the oldest settlements for thousands of miles. It has the look and sensibilities of a small New England town, with large, beautiful Victorian houses and a Roman-inspired Town Hall in the center of town. Things are very quiet and peaceful in Madison, contrasting the insanity and terror of Madhaven, only 25 miles (40 km) to the east. Even the few ghosts that appear in the area do little to upset the tranquil demeanor of this town. Ironically enough, Madison was rumored to be haunted even before the Rifts came. The residents have no idea if these ghosts are old spirits or new ones from Madhaven.

The people of Madison have been living with the supernatural and other strangeness for a very long time. It is a very spiritual community, and very tolerant of all faiths and walks of life. A large segment of the population is also born with psychic powers, and a few go on to learn the practice of magic. They trade regularly with the Newark Psi-Stalkers and other villages, and most residents welcome outsiders with open arms, as long as there are no signs of hostility.

While the tranquility of the town may seem disarming at first, it is not to be mistaken for a sign of weakness. The people of Madison are used to living with ghosts and the undead, and are no strangers to fighting. A majority also possess strange psychic powers or can control magic energy to fight off unwelcome guests. If one resident is endangered, the whole town will band together and fight. This sense of togetherness and solidarity has

strengthened the community, allowing them to last as long as they have.

Madison has a few bed-and-breakfast style hotels in which travelers may stay at the cost of 100 credits a night; breakfast is included. The general level of technology is medium, roughly equal to early 21st century. All of the buildings have electricity and running water. There is only one weapon shop in town, Pandora's Box, which sells mainly used items bought off of adventurers and Psi-Stalkers. There is a mechanic in town who can do repairs on most common vehicles, but knows little about repairing robots and power armor.

Madison Population 109 P.A.

Approximately 5600 residents.

20% Ordinary humans.

40% Psychic humans (Sensitives are the most common, very few Mind Melters).

10% Magic-using humans (Ley Line Walkers and Mystics are the most common).

15% D-Bees of various types.

10% D-Bees with prominent psychic or magic abilities.

5% other.

Trenton

The town of Trenton, located in between the ruins of Philadelphia and Madhaven, was a boomtown that grew huge during the reclamation of the ruined cities during the Dark Ages. It was a big Black Market town, selling weapons, armor, magic items, and pre-Rifts artifacts recovered from its neighboring decimated metropolises. This era of prosperity lasted for nearly a hundred years before the whole town went bust. Word started to spread about the horrors of Madhaven, so treasure-hunters stopped going there. Within another ten years, Philly had been mined and excavated almost completely. There was nothing left of any real value.

When the digging dried up in Philly, so did business in Trenton. The Black Market moved their operations to greener pastures, and took all their money with them. Since then, Trenton has been little more than a ghost town. There are still people there, who are simply too scared or too entrenched in the place to leave. They make most of their business in trapping and luring in what few adventurers come out this far. There is still a small Black Market presence here, but only to buy and sell equipment, and to prevent any other criminal organizations from starting up digging in Madhaven.

These days, Trenton is a dirty little town out in the middle of nowhere. It has very little to offer travelers. There is a brothel and hotel here, but the building is crumbling and the call girls are not in much better condition. Any weapons or equipment bought here is likely to be faulty or stolen (or both). The once-sprawling city is mostly empty, and D-Bees sometimes squat in the dilapidated buildings for a couple of weeks before moving on to better locations. The occasional Excavator or treasure-hunter can also be found here, planning his next dig in Philadelphia or Madhaven.

Trenton, not surprisingly, is popular with the criminal element. Many people who end up here are CS criminals fleeing Chi-Town or Iron Heart. The town falls below CS search parties

as being unfit for habitation, and for that reason it is a superb safe house. Criminals will stay in Trenton for a couple of weeks while deciding where to go next.

The “mayor” of Trenton is a Mystic Knight named Cornelius McGregor. He is mayor insofar as he is the most powerful individual currently residing in Trenton. There really is no government and no elections. McGregor simply took the place over and does what he pleases. Many years ago, the Mystic Knights known as the Order of the White Rose were in Trenton, hiding out from their evil brothers who sought their destruction. The White Rose Knights are long gone, having disappeared someplace to the northeast. He stays in the area, hoping to catch some sign of the White Rose. McGregor is very old, however, and will likely be unable to continue his search for very much longer.

The level of technology in Trenton is very low. None of the buildings have electricity or running water. There is no sewer system either. The only man in town who has a car or any energy weapons is the smuggler working for the Black Market. He will not defend Trenton in case of an attack. Not that there’s really any reason to attack Trenton anyway. It poses no threat to anyone, and there is really nothing to steal.

Trenton Population 109 P.A.

Approximately 800 residents (at the height of its success, Trenton had over 20,000 residents and an additional 6000 transient population).

70% Ordinary humans.

10% Psychic humans.

20% D-Bees of various types (this number fluctuates regularly by 15%).

Haverstraw

The Township of Haverstraw comprises the survivors of the pre-Rifts cities of Haverstraw, West Haverstraw, and Stony Point. In the times before the Rifts, these three cities were popular for their yacht clubs and beautiful bay area. The continental shifts that connected Manhattan to the mainland and Brooklyn to Staten Island also had a profound effect on the waterways of the Hudson River. The Haverstraw Bay has almost completely dried up. Only a small river remains, just barely deep enough to sail a boat down.

Fortunately for the people of Haverstraw, the open ground left behind after the waters receded was rich in nutrients. In order to survive, they planted wheat, barley, and vegetables in the ground away from the ruins of their city. The crops grew surprisingly fast and healthy. Their harvest was plentiful and there was more than enough food to last them through the harsh winters of the Dark Age.

The following years yielded much bigger harvests as the people reverted from consumers to farmers. They rediscovered the ways of their forefathers quickly, and even though the newly formed township was troubled by strange dimensional anomalies, unpredictable weather, and creatures from the Rifts, they flourished. So much, in fact, that they were able to form trade agreements with other local communities. They traded with Trenton, Madison, and the Newark Psi-Stalkers and in exchange for their food crops, Haverstraw received weapons, armor, and trained fighters to defend their city. A couple of times, they ven-

ured into Madhaven to see if there were any survivors, but those journeys always came to a gruesome ending. Haverstraw has only grown larger since its inception during the Dark Ages. They trade regularly with the surrounding communities, and sometimes with places as far away as Lazlo and New Lazlo. Through it all, they remain simple country folk, and take their success with a grain of salt.

There really isn’t much for mercenaries and adventurers in Haverstraw. They have one small hotel, with reasonable rates (75 credits a night, meals are extra), but no weapon stores or place to buy or sell adventuring equipment. They do have a town militia, which is ready at all times to defend the people from bandits or monsters. Members of this militia also escort the food transports to other towns.

If Haverstraw has one drawback, it is that the general attitude of the population is discriminatory towards mutants and D-Bees. Apparently, at one point in the town’s history, some D-Bees came into town and spread some horrible disease that crippled or killed a good majority of the town’s population. Even though that event was over two centuries ago, there is a lasting enmity for all non-humans. Psi-Stalkers and most human psychics are still considered “decent folk,” though the occasional hurtful remark may unintentionally slide through. Other D-Bees, and mutants which are inhuman or very ugly, are not allowed in town. If they wish to trade, then members of the town militia will escort someone to meet with the “undesirables,” and charge them five times the going rate for anything. If they don’t like it, tough luck.

Haverstraw Population 109 P.A.

Approximately 5000 residents and constantly growing.

90% Ordinary humans.

10% Psychic humans. (Most are minor psychics. Major and master psychics tend to hide their powers, or leave the community for fear of persecution.)

Fort Dix

About seventeen miles (27 km) southeast of Trenton is an old American military base, Fort Dix. Before the Great Cataclysm, Fort Dix was a recruiting station for NEMA soldiers located in central New Jersey. Today, however, the Atlantic coast has eaten most of the state and now Fort Dix is prime beachfront property.

The aboveground buildings at Fort Dix were wiped out during the Great Cataclysm, and forests have retaken the land. However, some excavators and treasure hunters believe that the underground bunkers are still intact. Unfortunately, preliminary investigations have revealed that the base’s nuclear reactor has cracked and is spilling deadly radiation throughout the base. So far, the effects have not been observed outside the base, so there is little danger to plants or wildlife.

The really strange thing about Fort Dix was discovered when someone was taking seismic readings of the underground bunker. They found that there are things moving around down there. Vaguely humanoid shapes were picked up, moving very slowly and in erratic patterns. The base is known to be sealed, so whatever is moving around down there must have either Rifted into the base, which is unlikely, or has been there since before the Great Cataclysm!! Even though digging through the

rubble in Madhaven is no safer, some say they would prefer it rather than burrow into a radioactive tomb full of god-knows-what.

Long Island Splugorth Outpost

At the very eastern tip of Long Island (where Montauk used to be) is a small settlement set up by the Minions of Splugorth. These Minions conduct raids on the mainland, rounding up humans, Psi-Stalkers, and when they can catch them, Haven Mutants. On occasion, a Slaver team will wander accidentally into Central Park, but none have made it out to tell of the Knights hiding inside.

Haven Mutants absolutely despise Splugorth Slavers, and attack them with intense ferocity and vengeance. They love it when Slavers become victims to the ghosts, and will hunt them down and exterminate them after the Slavers are driven insane. They don't understand Bio-Wizard technology, so they break any items looted from the Slavers rather than risk them being used against the Mutants in the future. Despite their best efforts, a few Haven Mutants have been captured and taken back to Atlantis. There, they are subject to horrible, agonizing experiments meant to discover the secrets of their psionic immunity and metal bones.

The Long Island Outpost is very small, with only the basic amenities to sustain the Minions stationed there. They also have a large slave pit to house their captives until a ship can come pick them up. A Splugorth transport arrives from Atlantis to pick up slaves and drop off supplies once every three months.

Long Island Splugorth Outpost Population 109 P.A.

- 100 Slavers.
- 250 Altara Blind Warrior Women.
- 54 Overlords.
- 22 Powerlords.
- 30 Kittani Soldiers.

(In addition, at any given time there are 1D4x100 captives of various races and classes. Lacking sufficient equipment to tranquilize all of them, the Minions simply throw them all into a large, covered dirt pit, feeding them only about five times a week, if they can remember to. The captives who are still alive after three months are then shipped to Atlantis for the slave market.)

Newark Psi-Stalker Tribe

Living in the dark forests that used to be New Jersey is the Newark Tribe. They take their name from the old Pre-Rifts city of Newark, which still has a sizable amount of ruins along the coast facing Madhaven. That area is now known as Jersey Side to the Order of the White Rose, but its true name is long forgotten to everyone else. If there is one group outside of the Order of the White Rose and the Haven Mutants who know the ins and outs of Madhaven, it is these tribal psychics. For generations, they have been testing the limits of the ruined city and its inhabitants. Their powers give them the uncanny ability to locate ghosts and Entities and defend themselves against their effects.

Madhaven is, to this tribe, a proving ground of sorts. There is no real civilization for hundreds of miles, and no other Psi-Stalker tribes of any relevant size. The area is mostly wilderness

with some small farming villages nearby. No other group knows these woods and Madhaven like they do.

The Newark tribe routinely goes into Madhaven to battle with the Haven Mutants, monsters and ghosts there. There really is no point to these excursions beyond testing their abilities and the limits of their courage. The Psi-Stalkers have little want or use for the treasures of a bygone era. And even though the tribe suspects there may be powerful mystical warriors hiding out somewhere in the city, they don't care enough to mount an official search.

The Newark Psi-Stalkers and the Haven Mutants see each other as bitter rivals. The Haven Mutants don't want outsiders intruding on their stomping grounds, stirring up trouble. The Psi-Stalkers laugh at the idea that anyone can control or own Madhaven, and are sure to let the Haven Mutants know that they will do whatever they want, wherever they want, whenever they want. In addition, the Newark Psi-Stalkers are sometimes hired by adventurers to act as guides and defenders against the supernatural while excavating the ruins. This has caused even more animosity between the mutants, because treasure-hunters sometimes damage Mutant Tunnels, agitate the Entities, and generally cause a ruckus.

Skirmishes between the mutants are expected whenever one group sets foot in the other's area, but an all-out war is highly unlikely. They are competitors for territory, or somewhat like neighbors who detest each other's ways and habits, but not out of fear or hate. In any case, the Haven Mutants never miss an opportunity to let the Newark Psi-Stalkers know that they are unwelcome, and the Psi-Stalkers never miss an opportunity to let the Mutants know that they don't care.

In recent years, the tribe has had a few encounters with Shemarrian Warriors from the south. The Psi-Stalkers are very wary of the female warriors, who they suspect are machines (the Shemarrians give off no psychic signals and have no auras). They don't really know where the Shemarrians come from, and try not to involve themselves. The Shemarrians do not take kindly to the mutants trespassing in their territory, and will not tolerate it.

Newark Psi-Stalker Tribe Statistical Information 109 P.A.

Population: Around 1600 mutants. Roughly 46% male and 54% female. These numbers fluctuate, because this tribe is one of the few to accept new members from the outside. They only accept Psi-Stalkers. 95% are Wild, with the rest being "Civilized" Stalkers who wanted to return to the wilderness away from the cities. **Alignment Breakdown:** 20% good, 30% Unprincipled, 40% Anarchist, 10% other.

Main Area of Operation: The forests and shores of what once was New Jersey. Although they are named after the city of Newark, they spend much of their time miles to the south and west.

Special Bonuses for members of the Newark Tribe:

All bonuses are in addition to those normally acquired from attributes, skills, and R.C.C. considerations.

+3 to M.E., P.E., and Spd.

+2 to initiative, +2 dodge and parry.

+3 to save versus possession and mind control.

+4 to save versus Horror Factor.

+10% to track and sense Entities and ghosts. This bonus only counts when trying to track or sense the basic Entities and the new ones presented here. It does not count when trying to track or sense any other supernatural beings.

+5% bonus to the following skills if they are taken, Lore: Demons and Monsters, Land Navigation, Prowl, Spelunking.



“The Sane” Darkhound Tribe

Throughout the region of Madhaven there has been a growing presence of Darkhounds, which have always been known to populate the Magic Zone. Only in the past five years have the hounds begun to filter into the region through Ohio and Pennsylvania. The rumors that have followed the Darkhounds since their initial emergence in the Magic Zone speak of their origins as mutations of Dog Boys originally created by the Coalition States and horribly transfigured by the forces of Alistair Dunscon. These rumors have found their way into the underground of many of the Edgetowns around the region and have helped to destroy any positive image that the townspeople may have had about the beasts.

The first Darkhounds who migrated to Madhaven explored their surroundings, but never actually moved into the boroughs or Manhattan, but rather stayed on the outskirts of the mountains of wreckage and only entered to hunt when food was scarce in the outlying region. Eventually, as more Darkhounds moved into the region, the creatures began to form hunting packs and felt more comfortable venturing into the wreckage strewn and haunted areas. The packs would range in size from 4 to 10 members and would take advantage of the Darkhounds’ sensitive psychic abilities and brute strength. Ruin Worms were originally the selected prey of the hunting packs, but eventually they started to test their skills at attacking and hunting Entities.

Over the past year, the Darkhound hunting packs have united and formed what they call “the Sane,” a large group which acts for the mutual defense of all of its members. The Darkhounds have been increasing their territory in the area and have been establishing a standard hunting ground which they defend ardently. Some would believe that the territorial nature of Darkhounds and the Newark Psi-Stalkers would cause trouble but for some reason the Psi-Stalkers and the Darkhounds almost ignore each other when hunting and will only attack each other

if they are attacked first. The two groups have also been known to work together in the past to fight off Shemarrian warriors, and occasionally mercenary forces (some who are working for Charles Krieger) and excavation teams who enter into their territory.

The Darkhounds have not encountered the Order of the White Rose more than a handful of times, but the Order has been keeping a close eye on the group just to see if they are a threat to the security of the Order. On the other hand, the Haven Mutants have had many encounters with “the Sane” and the two groups are not having friendly relations. Members of these groups will attack each other on sight and generally fight to the death. Both groups have lost many members but the situation doesn’t seem like it will be letting up anytime in the near future.

“The Sane” Darkhound Tribe Statistical Info 109 P.A.

Population: Around 1450 Darkhounds. Roughly 40% male and 60% female. These numbers fluctuate due to the increased migration of Darkhounds migrating from the Magic Zone and the continuing battles with other factions in the region. If the population continues to increase at its current rate the Darkhounds will number well over 2000 by the end of 110 P.A.

Alignment Breakdown: 10% Unscrupulous, 10% other good alignment, 25% Unprincipled, 40% Anarchist, 10% Aberrant, 5% other evil.

Main Area of Operation: Northern New Jersey and South-eastern New York.

Special Bonuses for Members of “The Sane”:

All bonuses are in addition to those normally acquired from attributes, skills, and R.C.C. considerations.

+3 to M.E., P.S.

+2 to P.P.

+10 to M.D.C.

+1 to initiative, +2 dodge and parry, +3 to strike.

+3 to save versus possession and mind control.

+2 to save versus Horror Factor.

+5% to track and sense Entities and ghosts. This bonus only counts when trying to track or sense the basic Entities and the new ones presented in *Rifts® Madhaven*. It does not count when trying to track or sense any other supernatural beings.

The Order of the White Rose Supplemental Material Reconciler O.C.C.

When the Knights of the White Rose and the other survivors established residence in Central Park, there was an overwhelming problem with the horrible Entities that stalked the ruins entering into the Park’s interior. The Entities began causing all sorts of mischief and mayhem that was a constant torment to the Knights and the ragtag group that followed them. A small group of Knights and mages took it upon themselves to find ways to combat these supernatural forces and combat those both within the boundaries of the park as well as within the ruins themselves, and thus the foundations of the Guild of the Reconcilers were laid.

The Reconcilers go through the same basic training as all the Knights of the White Rose, so they have many of the same abilities, yet their control of the mystic arts pales in comparison to their more scholarly brothers. After a short time training with the Knights, any of the trainees who have been specifically selected for the Reconcilers are then separated from the rest and taken to a separate area of the grounds where they undergo a very specialized training regimen. They have a firm grasp of the weaving and manipulation of magical energies and have wonderful control of the few psionics that they have, but their real specialty does not lie in either of these.

The true power of the Reconcilers comes from their ability to hunt and harm the supernatural monsters and Entities that prowl not only the ruins of Madhaven, but also Rifts earth. The majority of their mystic and psychic energies have been channeled into abilities which allow them to both see these creatures when invisible, and also to damage them in their intangible forms. They do this by channeling their harnessed magical energy through their bodies and weapons and focusing it into devastating physical and mystical attacks.

Some Reconcilers see it as their sole purpose in life to rid the world of the supernatural horrors, but the majority of them see their purpose as different and more profound. The strenuous training regimen to which they are subjected teaches them more about demons, monsters and Entities than the average Knight and also teaches them specific ways in which to harm or subdue them. They also learn much about ancient, pre-Rifts religions and philosophies, making them similar to a priest or cleric, yet are relatively uneducated in other areas. Many use this knowledge to release spirits from their worldly bonds by communing with these spirits and finding out why they are so bound to wreak havoc in this plane of existence rather than continuing on to the next. This special ability of Reconciliation is where the guild gets its name.

The guild is the smallest of the various guilds of the Order, but not for lack of interest but more for lack of talent since the Knights have a very difficult time finding candidates who would be able to handle the incredible mental and physical strain needed to become a Reconciler. The other guilds of the Order of the White Rose acknowledge the skills and abilities of the Reconcilers and would never send any party out into the ruins of Madhaven without two or more Reconcilers to accompany them, yet the guild is often watched with a wary eye because of its reputation for communing with evil spirits and the supernatural. The Reconcilers tend to keep to themselves and their guild and only really interact with the rest of the guilds when ordered to or when necessary. This aloofness also tends to earn them the suspicion of the other members of the Order.

When it comes to combat, these Knights are equally as deadly as their comrades if not more so. Since their abilities rely mainly on melee combat, they are extremely proficient in the use of melee weapons and tend to use them above all others. This isn't to say that all Reconcilers are unskilled in the use of ranged or modern weapons, yet it would be fair to say that they do strongly prefer the use of their hands, knives, or swords when in combat. Often one will find the Reconcilers in the thick of the battle fighting any adversary that comes their way with the ease and confidence one would expect to see from a lioness playing with her cubs.



Even though the Reconcilers are considered the elite forces when it comes to handling the supernatural it is not unusual to see groups of four or more Reconcilers being assigned to missions that one or two could easily handle. This redundancy serves two purposes: first, this means a greater chance of success without any casualties, and second, this ensures a quick and decisive victory, which is often appreciated and rewarded by the selected clientele.

Special Reconciler O.C.C. Abilities

1. P.P.E. Channeling: This is a unique power that sometimes resembles spell casting. The character can channel and convert P.P.E. energy into other types of energy with the following effects:

- Can power most, comparatively simple electronic items simply by holding them in his hand and desiring them to function. Such items include: flashlight, radio, video camera, portable computer, language translator, electric shaver, etc. No P.P.E. cost.
- Recharge most types of batteries: One small, S.D.C. energy battery per level of experience at a total cost of one P.P.E. point.
- Recharge large S.D.C. battery (the equivalent of an automobile battery): 2 P.P.E. points.
- Standard E-Clip (M.D. Energy): 12 P.P.E.
- Long E-Clip (M.D. Energy): 18 P.P.E.
- Energy Canister or Rail Gun: 30 P.P.E.
- Recharge a high-powered energy cannon with one blast (1D6x10 to 2D6x10 M.D.; two blasts if the energy beam does 6D6 to 1D4x10 M.D.): 30 P.P.E.
- Recharge P.P.E. Clip: 60 P.P.E.

2. Fire Energy Bolts: The Mystic Knight Reconciler can fire 4D6 M.D. Energy bolts (+1D6 at levels 4, 8, and 12), 1000 feet (305 m) from hands or eyes. P.P.E. Cost: 5 per blast. An additional 1000 feet (305 m) of range can be added for the cost of 10 P.P.E. These blasts look to be deep crimson or black rather than the electric blue of the blasts of the Knights.

3. Steal & Redirect Ley Line Energy: The Knight can prevent others from drawing on ley line energy at a particular location along that line; 50 foot (15.2 m) length per level of experience. He can also steal P.P.E. being summoned by one or more mages during a time of power (eclipse, solstice, ritual etc.) by redirecting the flare of energy into himself instead of the person(s) who drew it out in the first place. Likewise, at the key moment of the ceremony, the Mystic Knight can steal 1D6x10% of energy and draw it into himself. He can then use the stolen energy for his own magic. **Note:** In all cases, he must know who is drawing on the energy, have line of sight visual contact, and be within 200 feet (61 m). This extra energy can be held and used for ten minutes per level of experience, after which, any energy beyond his normal P.P.E. base/capacity is harmlessly released.

Using his channeling and redirection abilities, he can draw upon double the usual amount of P.P.E. typically available to practitioners of magic at ley lines and nexus points.

4. Impervious to Energy: The Mystic Knight is impervious to lasers, ion blasts, particle beam weapons, plasma bolts, electricity, fire, heat, and radiation.

Magically created energy and ley line storms inflict half damage.

Rune Weapons, and most magical weapons of all kinds do full damage. Likewise, ordinary swords, clubs, spears, etc. as well as bullets, arrows, Vibro-blades, thrown rocks, falls, punches, and most kinetic based attacks do full damage.

5. Impervious to Vampires: The Reconciler is impervious to the bite of Vampires. He cannot be turned into a vampire nor mind controlled by them in any way. Additionally, the Reconciler is +4 to save against all types of mind control, hypnosis, and mind altering chemicals.

6. Improved Communion with Spirits: The Reconciler has the ability to commune with spirits in a way that is vaguely similar to the psionic power of Commune with Spirits. The power enables the Reconciler to not only feel the spirits, Entities, or supernatural creatures, but also to see them in their true form. Any creature capable of magical invisibility or natural invisibility is seen by the Reconciler and the Reconciler will automatically know the nature or true form of the creature. This includes mages with an invisibility spell cast, Vampires, Astral Beings, and metamorphed Dragons. This power is constant and cannot be turned off.

In order for the Reconciler to communicate with supernatural spirits (i.e. Native American Spirits, Astral Beings, and Entities etc.), the Reconciler must be in a calm state of mind. This simply means that he cannot be angry, frustrated, or under the effects of a creature's Horror Factor. This is not difficult since the Reconcilers are trained to always be in control of their feelings and emotions and can often be seen as distant or cold. When in this relaxed and calm state of mind the Reconciler simply has to ask the spirit questions by speaking aloud. Entities, such as the classic Entities and the Madhaven Entities, will see the Reconciler as a kindred spirit and will generally answer honestly, but there is a 50% chance that they will recognize him for the mortal imposter that he is and will be increasingly hostile towards him, either answering him with a spout of lies, or not answering at all, but attacking instead. If the Reconciler asks the right questions then he may be able to assist the spirit carry on to another plane of existence through Reconciliation. (**Note:** Most Reconcilers see Entities as not necessarily evil but more misunderstood. They view the spirits as souls of the lost that just need to be shown the way to the afterlife. This Ability will not work on the Conglomeration Entities.)

7. Reconciliation (Special!): The act of Reconciliation is one that members of this special guild do not take lightly. It is their duty to help these tortured souls move on to the next life, whatever and wherever that may be. After a successful communion has been made (see #6 above) the Reconciler can attempt to take the burdens of the spirits upon themselves.

To do this, the Knight must concentrate for an entire melee (15 seconds) on the torment of the Entity which they wish to be released. At the end of this time of concentration they have to physically cut themselves and draw blood (at least 1D6 S.D.C or Hit Points). This act of bloodletting and the expenditure of P.P.E. alongside the concern for the souls will allow the Entity to travel on to the next plane. This act is not without problems of its own. Aside from the initial cut, the Reconciler will take 4D6 additional points of damage direct to Hit Points, or 6D6 M.D. if a Mega-Damage being, and will be physically exhausted

(-1 attack per melee, -3 to strike, parry, and dodge) for 3 hours. Attempting to use this power more than once per three hours runs an increasing risk of physical injury or death for the Knight. For every time after the first, there is a cumulative 20% chance that the Knight will collapse and fall into a coma as if they had NO Hit Points or S.D.C. This ability will NOT work on the Conglomeration Entities.

This ability costs 40 P.P.E. per attempt.

8. Harm Supernatural Evil: These special Knights have the ability to harm the supernatural with their bare hands or any simple melee weapon. All S.D.C. damage, including strength bonuses (if the Knight does not have Supernatural Strength), is translated into M.D.C. Reconcilers can even use this on intangible foes such as Entities or Astral Beings. This power is always active and cannot be turned off.

Also, spirits and Entities have a 60% (+3% per level) chance to not notice any Reconciler passing through the area. This makes Reconcilers the ideal scouts for traversing the ruins of Madhaven.

9. Masters of Combat (O.C.C. Bonuses): The Mystic Knight Reconcilers are similarly trained in the ways of hand to hand combat similar as their evil brethren, but there is more of an emphasis placed on speed and reaction time than brute force. Bonuses are in addition to attributes and skills: +1 to P.S., +1 to P.E., +1D6+1 to P.P., +1D8+6 to Spd. +20 to S.D.C.

+1 attack per melee round, +4 on initiative and +1 at levels 5, 10, and 15, +3 to disarm, +2 to entangle, +1 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +2 to pull punch at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 14, +5% to save vs coma and death, +2 to save vs disease and poison, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to Perception Rolls, and an additional +2 to Perception Rolls when dealing with the supernatural.

10. P.P.E.: Like spell casters, the Reconciler has a considerable capacity to hold magic energy. Base is 2D4x10 + P.E. attribute. They get an additional 2D6 per level of experience. Like the spell casters, they can draw additional P.P.E. from Ley Lines and Nexuses, but can draw twice as much energy.

11. Additional Spell Knowledge: Being a "Mystic," the Reconciler's spell knowledge, like everything else, comes from within the character himself on an intuitive level. The Reconciler, like all Knights of the White Rose, spends years pondering life, his place in it, and how magic might help him find his place in the world. Then, when he is ready to find or make his place in the world, the mystic enters into a three day period of fasting and meditation. At the end of this period, he somehow knows the following spells: Globe of Daylight, Lightblade, Magic Shield, Armor of Ithan, Tongues, Energize Spell, Fists of Fury, and Power Weapon. These are part of the Mystic Knight's permanent spell casting capabilities.

12. Learning New Spells: The Reconciler will intuitively sense when he has reached a new metaphysical plateau (new level of experience). At each new junction in life (experience level), the character will find the time to meditate on combat, justice in the world, personal goals, and magic. Being that the Reconciler is not as well versed in the mystic arts as the regular Mystic Knights, their progression is notably impeded. At each level, the character can select two spells from levels 1-7.

Unlike the other magic O.C.C.s, the mystic can not be taught nor can they purchase additional spell knowledge. In fact, the

character never even tries to learn additional spells. The character simply does not have the mastery of magic to go beyond this point, and the mystic accepts this without question or regret. Reconcilers often use Techno-Wizard devices and covet magical weapons and armor, especially rune weapons.

13. Psionic Powers: Reconcilers are not nearly as adept at the use of their psionic powers as the rest of the Knighthood, but they still have a few mental abilities. Commune with Spirits, Sixth sense, Resist Fatigue, Mind Block, Exorcism, and one psionic power of choice from the Sensitive or Physical category.

Select one additional psychic ability from the Sensitive or Physical categories at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14. The Reconciler can select one ability from the Super category at level six and another at level twelve.

14. I.S.P.: Roll 4D6+6 plus the character's M.E. number to determine the base Inner Strength Points. The Mystic Knight is considered a *major psionic*, so he or she receives another 1D6 I.S.P. per each additional level of experience.

Reconciler

Alignment Restrictions: Any good or selfish alignments. The position is very sacred, and the candidates are sought out individually based on moral character and mystical potential. The Order makes sure that there are NO evil members and very few members of selfish alignments.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 13, P.E. 10, M.E. 14 and a strong desire to rid the world of the ghostly and demonic.

Race Restrictions: None. The majority of the Reconcilers are human, but about 22% of their number are some form of D-Bee.

O.C.C. Skills:

Language: American (+25%)

Language: One of choice (+5%).

Literacy (+10%)

Horsemanship: General (+10%)

Horsemanship: Exotic (+5%)

Lore: Faeries (+5%)

Lore: Psychics and Psionics (+5%)

Lore: Magic (+10%)

Lore: Demons and Monsters (+10%)

Lore: Religion (+10%)

Mythology (+10%)

Intelligence.

Boxing or Kick Boxing

Forced March or Physical Labor

Running

Land Navigation (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+5% where applicable)

W.P. Sword

W.P. Chain

W.P.: Three Ancient of Choice.

Hand to Hand: Expert

Hand to Hand: Expert can be changed to Hand to Hand: Martial Arts at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill. Hand to Hand: Assassin is not available for selection.

O.C.C. Related Skills: At first level, the character can select three other skills, plus one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Any (+10%).

Mechanical: Basic Mechanics only.

Medical: None.

Military: Any (+5%).

Physical: Any (+5% when applicable).

Piloting: Any except Robots and Power Armor and Robot Combat.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any except Computer skills (+10%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The Character gets to select three secondary skills from the secondary skills list on pg. 300 of the Ultimate Rifts Book, plus two additional skills at levels 3, 7, 10, and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge and do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: The character starts with two sets of traveling clothes, ceremonial robes, one set of dress clothing, one set of black clothing for covert operations, utility belt, two canteens, backpack, knapsack, tent, three weeks of food rations, 50 feet (15.2 m) of strong cord/rope, 1D4 flares, a flashlight, compass, pocket knife, gas mask/air filter, tinted goggles, hatchet, silver cross, and a first-aid kit.

The TW Infiltrator body armor has been slightly modified to fit the preferences of the Reconcilers and the individual Knight. The suit is NOT environmental. The traditional demon helm can be issued to the Knight in the event of a special mission of infiltration or impersonation where the identity of the evil Mystic Knight is needed.

Weapons include two TW melee weapons representative of their Weapon Proficiencies, and three ancient weapons of choice. (Note: These weapons need to have the G.M.'s approval so as not to overpower the character!)

Transportation is generally a horse with M.D.C. barding, or other mount. Phantom Wolves and War Birds have become some of the most desired mounts.

Money: The Knight starts with 1D6x100 credits and 2D6x1000 credits worth of precious metals and gems. They generally try to barter for goods and services rather than pay using credits. The less of a money trail their enemies have to follow, the better.

Cybernetics: None. The Reconciler will avoid cybernetics at all costs.

New Techno-Wizard Equipment

TW Spirit Cloak

Much like the Ghost Band, this is a TW device used to hide its wearer from spirits, ghosts, Entities, and Astral Beings. The cloak is usually made from cotton or silk, but is lined or dusted with silver. The clasp of the cloak contains a small generator and 3 tiny wires that when turned on, vibrate with a low humming sound. While not great for moving in and out of haunted areas, it is great for a low profile stakeout.

Powers: Same as Chameleon spell, but only valid for Astral Beings and ghosts/spirits.

P.P.E. recharge: 6 P.P.E. for a 10 minute charge.

Creation Requirements: Chameleon (6), Astral Projection (10), an initial cost of creation of 100 P.P.E. and the physical requirements of the cloak, a few silver wires, and a small quartz worth at least 500 credits.

TW Ghost Video

This is a rather powerful (and expensive) device that is used to both study ghosts and keep them at bay. This item looks like a handheld PDA or computer or sophisticated digital camera with a large topaz or ruby at the top of it or both. It used to deter ghosts from getting near the holder by blinding the ghost or causing it to run in fear (and for a little extra cash, both). It also allows the viewer to look inside of the viewfinder and see things as if they had See the Invisible and See Aura cast upon them. There is also a "record" button that will record about 1 hour of footage (but you need a disc to record the footage on). This with the Ghost Band and/or the Spirit Cloak helps researchers study ghosts without alerting them to their presence, and should their presence be revealed, it also allows for a quick means of escape.

Range: Ghost Flash (Blinding Flash that affects only ghosts, Entities, and Astral Beings): 10 feet (3 m). Ghost Bane: 10 feet (3 m). Supernatural Vision (See Aura, See the Invisible): 1000 feet (305 m).

Damage: Ghost Flash: Same as Blinding Flash, save is based on Techno-Wizard who worked on it, typically 14 or 15.

Ghost Bane: Save vs Horror Factor 16 (same as the Horror spell that is cast upon the camera).

P.P.E. to Recharge: Ghost Flash - 10 P.P.E. for 5 flashes, Ghost Bane - 10 P.P.E. for 5 charges, each charge lasting 10 minutes, Supernatural Vision - 5 P.P.E. for 10 minutes.

Recorder: 2 P.P.E. for 1 hour run time.

Creation Requirements: Energy Bolt (5), Globe of Daylight (2), Reflection (7), Astral Projection (10), See Aura (6), See the Invisible (4): Also, for Ghost Flash, Blinding Flash (1) is needed. For Ghost Bane, Horror (10) is needed, plus an initial P.P.E. cost of 400 for just Ghost Flash or Ghost Bane individually, but for 650 P.P.E. the device can have both powers. The physical requirements are the PDA or the digital camera, a large quartz worth at least 1000 credits, 3 star sapphires (*EXTREMELY RARE*; can cost upwards of 5000 credits each), and a large yellow topaz worth at least 1000 credits for the Ghost

Flash, or a small ruby worth 2000 credits for Ghost Bane (both topaz and ruby if both spells are wanted).

Some Clarifications

Some questions have been raised since the release of the book and we have done our best to answer them accordingly.

Would the Curtain stop Demigods, and what about Spirits of Light?

If they are impervious to illusions or if they make their saving throw, then they will see through it. Otherwise, it will work normally on them.

Madhaven mentions how no member of the Knights of the White Rose knew who William Tecumseh Sherman was, but shouldn't Sir Gabriel know?

Should he know who Sherman was? Yes. Does he? Not really. He was a businessman and doesn't have the History skill. If anything, the stories of Sherman's life that the Knights regale each other with could possibly be creations of Gabriel's.

The Order of the White Rose got a few new suits of body armor but no market prices were listed. What would the value of these suits be?

Any suit not owned by a Mystic Knight of the Order of the White Rose would be either stolen, salvaged, or taken from a Knight who is presumed dead. The Knights WILL NOT part with their armor willingly, so one can assume the worst about someone else donning the suits. That being said...

Special thanks to Tom Nelson for compiling this list:

Mystic Knight Armor: 85,000-95,000 credits.

Light White Rose Armor: 20-30,000 credits.

TW Infiltration Armor: 300,000 credits.

TW Gateway Armor: 250,000 credits.

TW Cherubim Armor: 1 million credits.

Maximilian Armor: 5 million easily. (Good luck getting a suit!)

TW Animal Barding: 40,000 credits.

Can the Channeling Blade be used by psionic characters to focus their Psi-Swords like the Dueling Blades of the Amaki Duelist?

No. They can only channel the magical energy of the energy bolts of the Mystic Knights (good or evil).

What would dosing yourself with drugs like Psike-B (from World Book 5: Triax and the NGR™) do for your survival chances in Madhaven?

Psike-B, as it says in the description, would operate exactly like a Mind Block. But like it says on page 16 of *Madhaven* under Major and Minor Sensitive Psionics, there is the problem of sleep. Unless you woke up every so often and took your dose of Psike-B (and then again you would have to know exactly how long it would stay in effect), you would be vulnerable in your sleep. Secondly, the side effects of Psike-B, like LOSING TRACK OF TIME and forgetting details, would make this diffi-

cult. I don't know about you, but I don't even like stumbling drunk through a not so good neighborhood when I'm drunk, let alone a dangerous area of cliffs, crevasses, ghosts and things that want to eat me.

Psike-E is a little different. Psychic characters will feel more confident, since it makes the psionic characters a little more powerful and able to resist some levels of psionic attack, but for the most part, the lowered resistances to possession and mind control are a VERY BAD THING in Madhaven.

Also, as with almost all drugs in Rifts, addiction and the availability of these drugs could pose a problem to adventurers in Madhaven.

In the book, it states that the Yellowstone Super-Volcano erupted on December 22, 2098. I thought it erupted later. Which is right?

Chaos Earth™ states that the Yellowstone Super-Volcano erupts at 9:45 P.M., December 23, 2098. The reports that were heard by the people in New York City were false reports that were reactions to the unprecedented amount of seismic and volcanic activity seen throughout the Rocky Mountains and the rest of the United States. The tidal waves and "the Collapse" ended up being the end of most people, so they were fortunate enough as to not see the true eruption.

The book mentions Yankee Stadium. Is it the current Yankee Stadium or the one that will be finished in 2009?

It is the old stadium. The one built in 2009 will be their home until 2088, when the people of New York revamp and restore the old home of the Bronx Bombers.

How come there is no mention of Shea Stadium?

It was destroyed during the Cataclysm.

Madhaven mentions that the Super Healing potion made from the entire flower can remove Bio-Wizard parasites. Would this work on the Para-Sym Transformer, as this parasite lists that nothing can remove it and that the character is doomed?

The potion will remove the parasite and any bonuses or penalties associated with it.

The text says that there are five other obelisks like Cleopatra's Needle. Are all of them magical or just that one? If so, would they all have similar powers?

All of the Obelisks are magical and each one offers control over a certain type of magic. We were going to detail each one but they are all believed to have been destroyed or been taken by powerful Alien Intelligences.

Why was there no mention of bone arrows/bows?

Bone arrows would do 2D6 M.D. and have a range of 500 feet (152 m). Bows are EXTREMELY RARE and mutants will do their best to retrieve EVERY arrow that they fire, often going to insane ends to get them back.

On the subject of the Lockdown of the Metropolitan Museum and members of the Council of Seven choosing one magic item; does this mean that *only* members of the Seven are ever given items from the museum?

Members of the Council of Seven are the only people given Rune Weapons and powerful magical items. When the Order of the White Rose is in need of funds or Knights are sent on special missions where money might be needed, they are sometimes given a piece of art or two to sell along the way.

In the book it says that creatures of magic are perceived to be less susceptible to the psychic imprint of Madhaven, but there is no listing specifying how much so, and in fact, such creatures (such as a dragon) would actually be more

susceptible being minor psychics. Was that a missed section (by myself or in the book), or is it a bad perception?

Dragons and creatures of magic can go twice as long without suffering any ill effects of the psychic imprint, but they are still vulnerable to the various ghosts and Entities of the area. Nothing spells lovin' like an insane dragon.

Oh, I thought of one. How would creatures which don't "feel" emotions like humans, like Elementals, react in Madhaven?

The psychic imprint of Madhaven would have no effect on them. Elementals generally avoid Madhaven only because it doesn't interest them. Oddly enough, when working with a Warlock, the Elementals are more eager to leave and will ask to be released in half the time.

The Hammer of the Forge

Chapter Thirty-Six

Hammer Time

By James M.G. Cannon

The hot August sun beat down upon the East Texas plain like a fiery hammer. Not a single cloud hung in the bright blue sky to stave off the heat, and no wind whipped along the plain to lighten the temperature. Stretched out upon that dusty ground was the bulk of King Victor Macklin's army, the Pecos Raiders. Macklin had left a nominal defensive force in his own lands while leading most of his troops to the city-state of Asgarth, a small trading town ruled over and protected by a powerful psionic named Solo. Amongst Asgarth's many assets were a Juicer facility, a M.O.M. plant, and a thriving marketplace. It was one of the jewels of the lawless, wild Pecos Empire, but it was also independent.

And that independence rankled King Macklin quite a bit.

Luckily for him, Solo came down with some kind of fatal disease, and the people of Asgarth had cried out to Macklin for help in their time of need.

Or so the stories would say when the dust cleared. Naturally, Solo had been poisoned with a rare, pre-Rifts chemical, supplied by Macklin and, as far as he knew, incurable. The people of Asgarth had reacted rather poorly to the arrival of the Pecos Raiders, sealing up their walled city and buckling down to pre-

pare for a siege. In his infinite mercy, Macklin had offered them his protection and patronage if they surrendered peacefully. So far, Asgarth appeared reluctant to cooperate.

But Macklin knew they would. Solo had only hours left, if that, and while Asgarth's adobe-packed megasteel walls provided considerable protection against the beasts and monsters from the Rifts, they were helpless against an aerial bombardment. Macklin preferred it not come to that, because precious things like that Juicer facility or marketplace would tend to get bruised in violent confrontations, but he would bomb Asgarth to rubble if he had to. No one defied King Macklin and lived to tell the tale.

Seated at the rear of the army ringed the city, comfortable beneath a raised canopy and sipping an iced fruit juice while his troops sweated in the summer sun, Victor Macklin observed Asgarth and pondered what the next few hours would bring. A triumphant parade through the city streets as heroes, or a violent, one-sided battle that left all those innocent folk dead?

Macklin sipped his juice and turned his head to regard the hulking shape of his SAMAS armor. He felt a trickle of sweat slide down his brow and realized he was beginning to get an-

noyed with Asgarth's obstinacy. That second option was beginning to look more and more attractive.

Then a peal of thunder split the empty sky. Macklin returned his attention to Asgarth, in time to see a crimson bolt careen through the air, blasting *into* the city.

"What the hell?" said Rodrigo, one of Macklin's lieutenants, standing nearby.

Macklin's thin lips pursed into a frown. He scratched at his dark goatee. "Mobilize the troops," he told Rodrigo, making a sudden decision. "We've given these folks more than enough time to surrender – or to come up with some pitiful scheme to save themselves. Time to remind them of the precarious nature of their existence."

Rodrigo smiled cruelly and snapped a quick salute. He grabbed the comm at his lapel and began barking orders. Slowly, but with gathering speed, the Pecos Raiders mobilized for war.

* * *

The air shimmered around Caleb Vulcan as he landed on the square before Solo's home. His metallic red armor was still hot from the trip through the Earth's atmosphere, returning from near-orbit around the Earth.

The people of Asgarth had gathered around Solo's mansion in their hour of need, beseeching their leader and savior for help. They recoiled in alarm at Caleb's appearance, crying out that the attack had started. When Caleb did not immediately attack, they suddenly recalled that he had volunteered to go into space and find the antidote for the malady that had struck Solo down. Before they could surge forward and turn their beseeching upon him, Caleb held up a hand to keep them back. He turned to the mansion and strode purposefully towards the front door.

Solo's robot butler, Phineas, was waiting for him. His silvery carapace reflected Caleb's armor. "Welcome back," Phineas said. "Were you successful?"

Caleb held up the megasteel package Phineas had provided him. "Let's not stand here flapping our gums. . . or whatever it is you have," Caleb said. "I saw the army parked outside your front door. We haven't any time to lose."

"Very well," said Phineas. His servo-motors hummed as he led Caleb into the house. The interior of the house gave Caleb the impression of an antebellum home from the South. White walls and hanging plants were interspersed with works of art and other delicate artifacts, creating an ocean of serenity and peace in this post-apocalyptic world. The floors were wood, burnished brightly, and they creaked under the heavy tread of the robot and the Knight.

They reached the second floor quickly and hurried to the bedroom, where Solo lay in her four poster bed, body shrouded by hanging sheets. Phineas pulled aside the curtain.

Solo was curled up in pain upon the bed. Her milky white skin looked even paler, and her silver hair was slick with sweat as the fever twisted her body. But as Caleb knelt beside her bed, her pale pink eyes opened and she reached out a hand toward him. She tried to gasp out something, but her voice was too weak. She shuddered as a spasm of pain wracked her thin form.



Caleb dispelled his armor with a flash of red light. He hadn't trusted the package Phineas had given him, and had secreted the vial of antidote against his breast, protected from the void of space and the heat of re-entry by his armor. Now he reached into his silvery shirt and pulled out the antidote, handing it to the robot butler. "I was told that this is what she needs," he said. A strange, glowing, frog-like alien had actually given it to him, after some gobbledygook about both his and Solo's destinies on this Earth. He hoped the creature had not lied about the potion's efficacy.

Phineas took it, his mechanical hands more delicate and dexterous than they appeared, and inserted the vial into a syringe-gun kept on hand for this purpose. He bent over Solo's supine form and administered the drug. The antidote entered her system with a soft hiss. Phineas stepped back. "Now all we can do is wait."

"I don't think you have that much time," Caleb said. "This King Mackey fellow doesn't look like he'll leave without a fight."

"Macklin," Phineas automatically corrected. "And yes, I agree with you. We have a few hours yet before his time limit expires, however, and hopefully Solo will be strong enough by then to lead us."

Caleb shook his head. "The people of this city are going to have to step up and make a decision for themselves, for good or ill. It's their city too, and they deserve a say in all this."

"Perhaps, but I am merely a 'bot, Master Caleb, and my purpose is to serve my mistress."

“Right,” Caleb said. He’d let himself get fooled by Phineas’ artificially handsome features and mellifluous voice. It was just a machine, following its programming. He looked at Solo. Her face had softened, losing some of its edge, giving her a more peaceful look. Perhaps the antidote was doing its job. Caleb only hoped it would repair all the damage.

“I should be on the wall,” he said abruptly, and turned to go.

“My thanks to you, Master Caleb,” Phineas said before he left. “Whatever this day brings, you will have my eternal gratitude for the efforts you have made.”

Caleb smiled, reminding himself once again that it was just a robot. “You’re welcome,” he said, and headed out the door. He made his way through Solo’s house and out the front door, where once again the crowd pressed in around him, recognizing him even without his brilliant red armor, badge of his office. Once more Caleb waved them off. “I brought the antidote,” he started to say, and the crowd cheered, momentarily drowning out Caleb’s next sentence. He raised his hands and urged them to silence. They reluctantly subsided.

“As I was saying, I brought the antidote,” Caleb said. “It has been administered, but only time will tell whether Solo will pull through. In the meantime, Macklin’s army is outside your gates. You’re going to have to defend yourselves.”

The jubilation of the crowd began to disintegrate. Caleb’s words did not encourage hope; they had expected their savior to be cured, to rise up and lead them. The Knight looked at the gathered townsfolk; men, women, and children of half a dozen different species; craftspeople, farmers, traders; young and old, noncombatants all. Beyond the gates of Asgarth, their life expectancy could be measured in hours, maybe days. But here, guided by the immortal psionic lady they worshipped, they had survived and prospered. Now all that they had built was jeopardized, and there did not appear to be any last minute reprieve, any *deus ex machina* to save the day and make everything right again.

Caleb shrugged his shoulders. He was no politician. He stepped into the air before the crowd could react and flew across the low buildings of Asgarth to the city walls. He landed lightly on a platform behind a huge rail gun, where stood Hart and his companions, the mercenaries who had found Caleb and guided him to this town.

Hart was a tall, rangy Amerind in buckskins and light armor, his dark hair tied back with a leather thing. Taciturn and cold-blooded, Hart seemed to have mastered both the skills and the psychological mindset required to live in this harsh, apocalyptic Earth. Caleb didn’t much like him.

Beside Hart was a hulking mountain of blackened megasteel, the ‘Borg known as William Wagner. Once a Coalition special forces operative, Wagner had been literally torn apart by a D-Bee assault. But his country had rebuilt him, made him faster and stronger and virtually indestructible. But their new weapon, rather than embracing the change, had deserted his post and his country, eventually finding his way south to the Pecos Empire. Wagner was all business, as hard to read as a mechanical man could be, but unlike Hart, some vestige of humanity survived within Wagner’s heavily armored chassis.

The source of that, Caleb had no doubt, was the petite, attractive redhead Samantha Sawyer. Clad head to toe in a suit of

Gladiator armor, a laser pistol and a sword hilt at her belt, Samantha looked unassuming. But she was a “Mind Melter,” a psionic with incredible power. Though nowhere near the extent of Solo’s prodigious abilities, Samantha remained formidable enough, especially when backed up by the Ley Line Nexus that thrummed at the heart of Asgarth.

The fourth member of the quartet was the strangest of the group. Tall, well-muscled, and with a movie-star’s clean good looks, the man known only as the Marshal appeared to be the most upstanding and normal of them all. But the Mind over Matter technology implanted in his brain made him madder than a March hare – albeit superhuman in other ways. He piloted a cowboy-themed suit of power armor, but right now stood with his friends in his normal, Lone Ranger-esque outfit and grun-eating grin.

“Good to see you, Vulcan,” Hart said. “Mission successful?”

Caleb nodded. “I brought back what Solo needed. I can’t tell you if it was worth it, whether I made it in time or not.”

“All that matters,” Hart said, “is that you made the attempt. Nothing more we can ask of you.”

Caleb frowned. “Maybe.” He looked past the four and onto the East Texas plain before Asgarth. “They look like they’re getting ready to move.”

“Yeah,” Hart agreed. “Guess Macklin got tired of waiting. We’re ready for him. We just have to hold them off long enough for Solo to get her strength back.”

“We hope,” Wagner said, his voice low.

Both Hart and Samantha shot the ‘Borg sharp looks, but the Marshal appeared not to have noticed. He clapped Caleb on the back. “Gonna help us with these rustlers, pard?”

“Thought I might. You folks look like you could use the help.”

Out on the plain, giant robots began to lurch forward, flanked by tanks and personnel carriers. Hover bikes and flying suits of power armor lifted into the air. Cannons and missile launchers bracketed into place, preparing to unleash a deadly barrage onto the town.

Caleb looked around at Asgarth’s walls. Besides Hart and his companions, there were a dozen other clusters of hard-looking men and women in body armor, manning defensive positions. Caleb didn’t see any of the hugely muscled linebackers, the troops who made up the bulk of Asgarth’s forces. “This is it?” he asked. “Where’s the rest of your army?”

Hart smirked. “You’ll see.”

Wagner ambled towards the big rail gun. It was already powered up, thrumming with energy, and it reacted like a living thing as he took hold of it and aimed. The huge ‘Borg grinned bleakly. Hart and Samantha shouldered laser rifles and took up positions beside Wagner, while the Marshal simply stepped off the edge of the platform and dropped thirty feet to the ground without batting an eye. His modified Predator X-10 with the stetson and chaps bolted to its armor plates was waiting for him there, and he slipped into it with an ease born of long years of practice. The engine was whining and the armor lifting up off the ground before Caleb knew it was happening.

A huge shell slammed into Asgarth’s walls, propelled from one of the giant robots on the plain. The adobe exploded in a

shower of dust and chunks of clay, but the hard megasteel beneath held. Enemy power armor and light aircraft blasted forward, already firing missiles, rail guns, and energy blasters towards their foes.

Caleb grimaced. His armor was around him in a split-second, flashing bright and red, and in the next moment a red bar formed between his hands, coalescing into the massive sledgehammer that was his signature weapon. As Wagner's gun began to fire, and a steady stream of empty shell casings rattled to the platform's floor, Caleb once more took to the air. He felt the Marshal's Predator fall into a wingman position beside him, and heard a cheerful "Yippie-ki-yay!" on his comm.

Caleb roared a battle cry himself, "Remember the Alamo!" and flew into the fray. His eyebeams slashed through the air, sizzling as they slammed into a skybike pilot with enough force to knock him from his perch. As the skybike spun out of control, Caleb threw his hammer in an overhand toss at the biggest and meanest looking giant robot. His hammer slammed into one of the thing's shoulder plates, momentarily jarring it, but otherwise not doing much damage.

Then they were in the thick of it. Rail gun bullets and laser blasts flashed past Caleb at supersonic speeds, some aimed at him or the Marshal or a handful of other Asgarthian pilots, others aimed past them towards the city walls or over them at the unprotected buildings beyond. Caleb concentrated on disabling any and all rockets and missiles he could reach, but he was only one man, albeit one suffused with the power of the Cosmic Forge, and there was only so much he could do. One by one the Asgarthian gun emplacements withered under sustained enemy fire. The megasteel walls of the city began to show wear, cracking and tearing in places, and the buildings on the perimeter of the wall suffered substantial damage. Clouds of acrid dust and smoke rose up as one building collapsed under the onslaught.

Laser blasts and other energy fire simply sank into Caleb's Forge-enhanced armor harmlessly, absorbed as easily as sunlight. But the Pecos Raiders had plenty of other weaponry on hand that could harm him, and he felt the sting of several rail gun bullets and caught shrapnel as missiles exploded near him. His armor held, but he had rarely taken such a beating, and couldn't hope to hold up against it for too much longer. The Raiders seemed to have picked him out as a particular danger, unfamiliar with his look or abilities, and wasted no time doing all they could to eliminate the threat he posed. Unlike the soldiers of the Three Galaxies, trained in ship to ship and vehicle to vehicle combat, the warriors of Rifts Earth had no trouble targeting a human-sized flyer.

It doesn't look good for the home team, Caleb thought as he unleashed a barrage of eyebeams onto a skull-faced suit of power armor that bore down at him hard, spitting hundreds of rail gun slugs in Caleb's direction.

Macklin's army edged closer towards Asgarth's walls, growing in confidence as the city's defenses collapsed. Around him, Caleb saw the other Asgarthian pilots taking quite a pounding as well, and more than half of them slammed into the ground, flaming wrecks. The Marshal still hung beside Caleb, backing him up, but the stetson had been sheared off, along with the armor's left visual sensor, and black smoke drifted from the armor's engines and left leg.

A shot from a tank cannon slammed into Caleb's chest, splintering his stylized breastplate and knocking him from the sky. He hit the ground hard, bounced twice, and rolled to a stop.

Caleb levered himself on all fours. He tasted copper. Part of his visor had cracked and fallen away, exposing one blue eye to the world, out of which he saw Macklin's army dangerously close. The tank that had felled him was quickly traversing its turret to finish him off. Caleb tried to get himself onto his feet, but something inside him was broken. He coughed and spat blood and phlegm into his helmet. He would heal, if given the chance, but it didn't look like he'd get it.

Well, he thought, as the cannon swiveled toward him, *at least I get to die on Earth.*

Then it happened. From below ground, a dozen heavily muffled "whumps" went off, and the very earth shuddered and shook, and collapsed beneath Macklin's forces. Tanks and personnel carriers foundered as the ground gave way beneath them. Giant robots tottered like drunken sailors, weaving on suddenly unsteady legs, and then toppled with thunderous crashes, shaking the earth further. Macklin's air force flew overhead in wide circles, suddenly uncertain.

As the robots began to regain their footing, dragging themselves upright once more, the troops in the tanks and carriers began to throw open hatches and dig themselves out.

Then the gates of Asgarth swung open, and five hundred screaming mad Dallas Cowboys came thundering out onto the plain, armed to the teeth and crying out for blood. Asgarth's Juicers, the elite army of the city, built like linebackers and twice as mean, surged towards Macklin's demoralized troops and went to work. The soldiers were cut down like chaff, and even the robots looked uncertain. The Juicers moved like quicksilver, preternaturally quick, able to make their hover bikes and ATVs do things no sane pilot could do, or would ever want to do, dodging in and out of battle, up and around their foes and one another. Vibro weapons and guns chattered as they bit into enemy flesh, and the cries of the wounded and dying mingled with the shouts and cheers of the Juicers.

But Macklin's raiders rallied. The Juicers were numerous, but lightly armored, and for the most part used small arms and light anti-tank weapons. Macklin's troops fell back towards the robots and began to lay down suppressive fire while the robots regained their balance. Then the ordnance began firing again, and Juicers began to disappear in clouds of red. The aerial troops started to pepper the ground with fire, and they were just as maneuverable in the air as the Juicers were on the ground. The Asgarthian advantage proved momentary, but it was enough to even the odds. The two forces weren't as lop-sided as they appeared at the battle's beginning, and even if that left the end of the altercation in doubt, that was still an improvement.

Caleb's body had begun to pull itself together. He felt his chest slowly grow whole again, and even his armor was beginning to knit back into one piece.

And then there was a popping sound that filled the air, like the crackle of summer lightning. Caleb smelled ozone and looked around sharply, forcing himself finally to his feet.

Behind him, the walls of Asgarth were enveloped in a shimmering field of silver light, reflective and nearly opaque, through which the city itself could barely be glimpsed. Caleb

felt the hackles on the back of his neck begin to rise, but noted that the appearance of the light field clearly made Macklin's remaining troops uneasy as well.

But there cannot be lightning without thunder, and Caleb winced involuntarily as it came. Exploding out of the force field came a thirty foot tall Solo composed of silver light, that swelled to sixty feet and then a hundred in the space of a few eyeblinks. Solo's silver eyes flashed angrily, and she swept and arm out in a dismissive gesture. The robots, which were redirecting their attacks away from the Juicers and towards the glowing monolith of the enraged psychic, were knocked aside by an invisible force, thrown across the plain with the casualness of child's toys.

"THIS BATTLE IS AT AN END," Solo's voice boomed. It did not come from the giant effigy, but rather echoed in the minds of everyone who saw it. "GO NOW, VICTOR MACKLIN, WITH YOUR TAIL BETWEEN YOUR LEGS, AND KNOW THAT I HAVE GRANTED YOU THE MERCY

YOU WOULD HAVE DENIED ME AND THE PEOPLE IN MY CARE. THE NEXT TIME WE MEET, I SHALL BE MORE HARSH IN MY JUDGEMENT."

Macklin's forces broke and ran in record time, abandoning tanks and other vehicles in their haste to escape the angry demigod. They'd been promised an easy victory, and faced off against a foe better prepared than they had expected. Even then, they might have persevered through sheer orneriness or fire-power, but a living, breathing, Solo anchored to a Ley Line Nexus was more than they bargained for.

As Macklin's troops faded into the light of the setting sun, escorted by a few stray shots from Asgarth's forces, the giant Solo faded away. The force field slowly died as well.

Caleb sat down in the dust, healing, and had himself a good laugh about the absurdity of it all. As he wiped tears from his eyes, he wondered if this apocalyptic Earth might be making him lose his mind.



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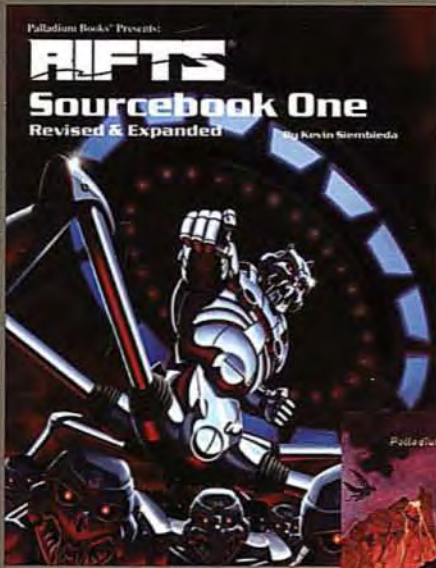
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