

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE

RIFTER®

Your Guide to the *gaverse*®

Super Summer Swimsuit Issue



D. MARTIN © '87

Warning!

Violence and the Supernatural

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

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

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



The Rifter® Number 39

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing – July, 2007

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Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER

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#39

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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.

– *Kevin Siembieda, 2007*

Contents – The Rifter® #39 – July, 2007

Page 6 – Art

This page of sexy art by *Mike Mumah* is a nice introduction piece to our *second annual, Swimsuit Issue* of *The Rifter®*. Mike has been contributing to Palladium as one of the Drunken Style Studio guys for at least 3-4 years. However, his art has taken a quantum leap in the last year, and people are really starting to notice Mike's work.

Mike Mumah has contributed artwork to *Rifts® D-Bees of North America* and *Hades* and several of the upcoming Minion War books.

Page 7 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

The Bossman talks about where we've been, where we're at and where we hope to be going. Things are better at Palladium Books, but we continue to struggle to overcome the Crisis of Treachery and get completely back on our feet.

Kevin says Palladium is at a crossroads. We are at that transitional point where we need to make the next move, and you can help. How? By spreading the word about Palladium's games, products and fun. We need a grass roots movement to let fellow gamers know about cool games and products. Read all about it here.

Page 9 – Palladium News

Robotech®, Game Day in Iraq, Color Catalog (is coming soon), and two conventions in Indiana – one big (Gen Con) and one small and intimate. Come to one or both and join the fun with *Kevin Siembieda*, *Wayne Smith* and others.

Recent Book Releases keeps you apprised of recent releases you might have missed. Like *Rifts® D-Bees of North America*, *Rifts® Machinations of Doom*, *Palladium greeting cards* and *Rifts® postage stamps*. Check it out here.

Page 12 – Coming Attractions

The latest updates and descriptions of books currently in production and on our schedule for 2007. And we have a lot of exciting books planned for 2007. **The Minion War series** – a romp through two different Hells and battles across the Megaverse is 5-6 books all by itself. All are wild and devilishly good fun. **Rifts® and the Megaverse® – the Art of John Zeleznik**. You MUST take a look at this book, it is an amazing testament to 15 years of Palladium publications and artistry (and is unbelievably affordable). It is a MUST have item for anyone who has enjoyed *Rifts®*, Palladium's RPGs, or science fiction art. And just wait till you see what's in the pipeline.

Page 16 – Chaos Earth™

The Moons of Jupiter

Mike Ferguson presents life and adventure away from decimated Chaos Earth during the Great Cataclysm. Alien life forms, mad scientists, and adventure campaign ideas.

Art by Apollo "Spacecadet" Okamura.

Page 23 - WARNING

Swimsuit pinups and game stats start on the next page.

Okay, you've been warned. Read on if you dare.

Page 24 – Megaera – Nightbane®

Written by Irvin L. Jackson.

Art by Apollo Okamura.

Page 27 – Aquaria – Nightbane®

Written by Mark Oberle.

Art by Mike Mumah.

Page 31 – Doctor Lillian Campbell – Nightbane®

Written by Jason Marker.

Art by Michael Dubisch.

Page 35 – La Llorona – Beyond the Supernatural™

Written by Josh Sinsapaugh.

Art by Michael Mumah.

Page 39 – Nimbus & Madam Steel

– **Heroes Unlimited™**

Written by Carl Gleba.

Art by Bill Bryan.

Page 43 – Beatbox – Heroes Unlimited™

Written by Todd Yoho.

Art by Mark Dudley.

Page 47 – Stormwitch – Heroes Unlimited™

Written by Julius Rosenstein.

Art by Comfort Deborah Love.

Page 50 – Scarlet Albany – Heroes Unlimited™

Written by Levi Johnstone.

Art by Allen Manning.

Page 53 – Shock – Heroes Unlimited™

Written by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Art by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Page 55 – 1st Lt. Nicole Bradshaw

– **The Mechanoids®**

Written by Carl Gleba.

Art by Nick Bradshaw.

Page 57 – Alyssa Peknamovic – Rifts®

“Center Spread” Girl of the Year – Circa 109 P.A.

Written by Taylor White.

Art by Chris Bourassa.

Page 60 – Beata Olga Von Strauss – Rifts®

Written by Brandon Aten.

Art by Jeff Russell.

Page 62 – Sirina the Anchian – Rifts®

Written by Jason Richards.

Art by Michael Dubisch.

Page 67 – Lucretia Anteri – Wormwood™

Written by Braden Campbell.

Art by Kent Burles.

Page 69 – The Slingin’ Banditas – Rifts®

Written by Josh Sinsapaugh.

Art by Brian Manning (Amanita).

Art by Mike Mumah (24-Shot Dave).

Art by Brian Manning (Sarah “Quiet Shot”).

Page 79 – Artemis – Rifts®

Written by John C. Philpott.

Art by John Zeleznik.

Page 82 – Nysha Karillith – Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Written by Levi Johnstone.

Art by Adam Withers.

Page 84 – La Mort Venus – Palladium Fantasy®, & Heroes Unlimited, BTS-2, Chaos Earth, & Rifts®

S.D.C. and M.D.C. stats presented.

Written by Kevin Siembieda.

Art by David Martin.

Page 89 – The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter 39: Safari. Amazonian women, giant lizards, Kreeghor Legionnaires, and more are all found in the latest installment of *James M.G. Cannon’s* epic tale. Read and enjoy.

Artwork by Apollo Okamura.

Page 95 – A Checklist of Palladium Books®

The Theme for Issue 39

This issue’s theme is beautiful women with a penchant for combat, danger and walking on the wild side. Some are heroes, others villains, or even monsters, but all are sexy . . . in a deadly, black widow spider kinda way. Twenty characters you can drop into your games and campaigns. Each started out for a particular Palladium RPG, but all easily adaptable to any of Palladium’s game settings.

The idea for this swimsuit issue was to give you, our readers, more than just a bunch of hot babes and pretty pictures, but actual *characters* – heroes, villains & NPCs – you could easily slip into your adventures. To add spice and variety, we had a dozen different writers script out the ladies and create stats based on the artwork (the only exception being *La Llorona*, who is based on real mythology and superstition).

We hope you find the Swimsuit Issue to be another fun-filled issue that provokes your imagination and inspires you to try new ideas and expand your gaming Megaverse®. And aren’t you glad there aren’t any Palladium Staff pinup photos this time around?!

The Cover

The cover is by artist, *David Martin*, who jumped at the chance of painting a beautiful woman (go figure). She’s not exactly a bathing beauty, but she is very much a *femme fatale* (see her stats starting on page 84). In fact, it was David’s cover art that gave Kevin the idea to turn the pinup pages into femme fatales statted out for the Palladium game world. Yep, that David Martin can be an inspirational fella. And he paints real nice too, don’t you think?

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

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

They are alternative ideas, homespun adventures and material mostly created by fellow gamers and fans like you, the reader. Things one can *elect* to include in one’s own campaign or simply enjoy reading about. They are not “official” to the main games or world settings.

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

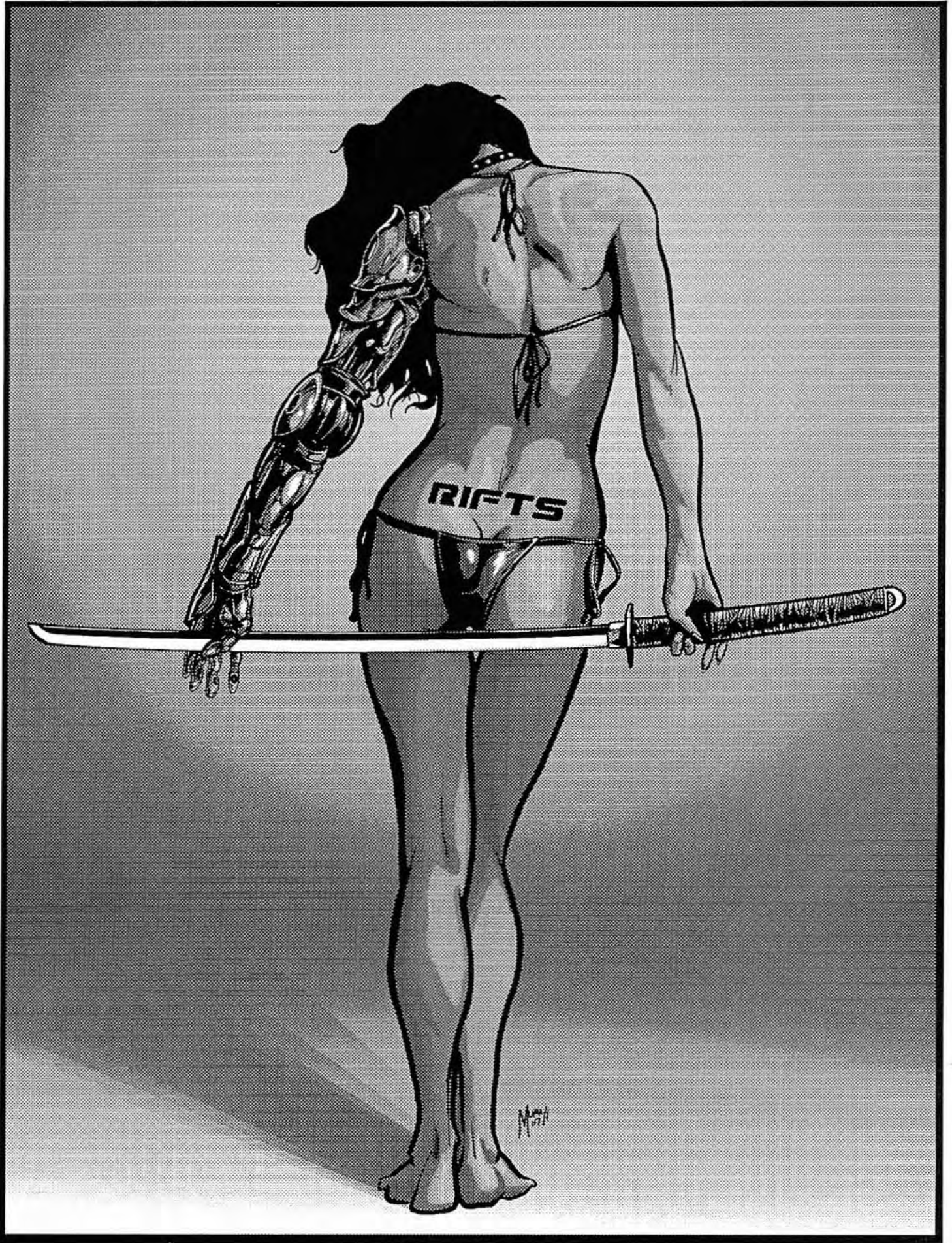
All the material in *The Rifter*® has been included for two reasons: One, because we thought it was imaginative and fun, and two, we thought it would stimulate your imagination with fun ideas and concepts that you can use (if you want to), or which might inspire you to create your own wonders.

www.palladiumbooks.com – Palladium Online

The Rifter® #40 – Annual Horror Special

- **Zombies and other dead things.**
- **Material for Wormwood™.**
- **Material for Beyond the Supernatural™.**
- **Material for Nightbane®.**
- **Material for Rifts®.**
- **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.**
- **Latest news and coming attractions.**

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



From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

There is no denying that with the help of our fans, we have accomplished the impossible. Palladium has survived the equivalent of a nuclear strike or Katrina Hurricane level devastation. Survived it and been rebuilding at lightning speed. The efforts and the result have been nothing short of miraculous.

Our battle is not yet done

There's no denying Palladium is stronger than it was one year ago. We are holding our own and we are full of ideas. Our problem is we are feeling a bit *worn out* and struggling with *insufficient funds* to do everything we *need to do* to get completely back up and running at 100%.

That's reasonable, it's only been one year, but we need to keep pressing forward.

Being worn out means there are weeks at a time where the Palladium staff and I (and even freelancers) are dragging, working slower than we would normally. That translates into missed deadlines and results in cash flow problems which can have a domino effect on several levels. We can overcome this.

In many ways, Palladium's formula for success and survival is a simple equation: *New product = new sales*. The more product the greater the sales. New product generates the sale of *back stock* titles. New product generates excitement and buzz, and attracts new customers which results in growth. We are doing all of that, only *not as quickly* as we need to.

The trick is banging out *high quality product*, because nobody is going to buy second rate stuff. Nobody. That's okay, because Palladium has a great crew of artists and writers.

The other trick is getting people to *buy* the new books and products. That involves advertising, press releases, online efforts and convention and store game demos, etc. Much of this has been fun and relatively easy for Palladium, because we are creating RPGs and sourcebooks that *gamers want*, that are exciting, different and fun, and products that generate buzz. Our strong online community helps immensely in this area, and so will the return of old favorites with new twists and material like *Robotech*®.

However, this effort is hampered by the fact that there are virtually no consumer magazines to advertise in anymore and the economy in many places makes cash tight. Many gamers who *want* Palladium products must make the hard choices of waiting till they have the cash or choosing a few books out of the several they want. That's why, even in this crisis and facing rising printing costs, Palladium strives to keep its prices low and offer *more bang for your buck!*

Palladium is at a Crossroad

We are at a crossroad. Palladium has borrowed money and pumped it into numerous recent and upcoming books and products. We need these products to sell well or we will be in trouble. These include *D-Bees of North America*, *Machinations of Doom*, *Rifts*® and the *Megaverse*®: *The Art of John Zeleznik* (gorgeous book), the upcoming *Minion War/Hell se-*

ries (*Hades*, *Dyval*™, *Dimensional Outbreak*™, *Armageddon Unlimited*™ and *Megaverse*® in *Flames*™), and reacquiring the *Robotech*® license. We're including more dynamic artwork, writing our best, and striving to make all these sourcebooks and games exciting, challenging and fun.

Please, if you find these titles appealing and fun, *buy them*. Also, *talk about them*. **Spread the word**. Tell other gamers about them and encourage them to give the books a try. In the last month, sales have spiked for the **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game**. That has to be from *word of mouth*, because we haven't done anything new to push that line. People are discovering it or coming back to it, or both! Meanwhile, *Rifts*®, *Chaos Earth*™, *Heroes Unlimited*™, and *Ninjas & Superspies*™ sales remain strong. *Nightbane*® should pick up with the release of new sourcebooks starting this fall.

Palladium is doing well, but not yet well enough

You can help by purchasing the books and products you desire. *Also help* by *spreading the word*. Never underestimate the power of word of mouth. Tell fellow gamers, post positive comments online on the Palladium web site and in chat rooms – but also at web sites other than Palladium's! Tell the manager of your favorite hobby store, run games at you local hobby store, run a game at local conventions, all of which show newcomers how much fun Palladium gamers are to play.

Palladium needs to do more than be able to pay its bills. We need to have the cash flow and resources to create new books, reprint old favorites and experiment a little. This can be accomplished by spreading the word.

I guess you can consider this Phase Two: "The Spread the Word" campaign. We need to let other gamers and newcomers know about the availability, joy and fun of role-playing games, and Palladium's RPGs in particular. Can you help?

Here's why we need YOU to help spread the word

Like most businesses, especially during downturns like the role-playing industry has been experiencing for the last few years, distributors and retailers are *afraid to take risks*. That's understandable to a point, but they sometimes take their caution to the *extreme*. Get a load of these three examples:

- **Rifts**® **Sourcebook One, Revised and Expanded**: Online, fans were in a frenzy, especially after the *Nightmares of a Tin Man*™ postings. At Palladium, and online, we know this is one of the most hotly anticipated *Rifts*® books in years. Yet, for some reason, Palladium's third largest distributor decides, a) it's just a reprint (which it's NOT), and b) it's an old book that's been out of print for a long time, which means nobody wants it. **The result:** They order six copies. SIX. Not 160, which they should have ordered. *SIX (6)*. It's crazy.

I finally manage to convince them to take 72 copies. They sell out in days and order another 48. That sells out in a week and they continue to order more copies. They are surprised and happy with the sales.

- **Rifts® & the Megaverse®: The Art of John Zeleznik:** I am terrified about this magnificent book. Hobby distributors have had poor success with the sale of “art books” over the years. For every one that sells, there are 20 that don’t. Thus, most (as in 98%) have decided Palladium’s art book will not sell either. Instead of having 1000 or 1200 copies pre-ordered, we have *less than 200* ordered by distributors. Likewise, sellers of “art books” won’t buy, because in their experience, “art books based on RPGs don’t sell.” Grrrr.

They ignore the following facts:

1. This book isn’t just an art book, it is a **Palladium & Rifts® art book** in which each and every page provides Palladium fans with memories of their favorite books, campaigns, characters and adventures! It’s practically a photo album of memories.

2. It is a *labor of love* on the part of John Zeleznik, and one of the most gorgeous and interesting art books I have ever seen. And I know what I’m talking about, as an artist myself, I must own 200-300 art books, and this one is one of the best I have ever seen – beautiful, full page reproduction, color concept pieces, pencil sketches, all artfully laid out. A beauty.

3. I *know* this is something Palladium fans will like, want and enjoy. More than just pretty pictures, it has scores and scores of pencil sketches, plus (often funny) commentary throughout by John Zeleznik, plus a foreword by me and an introduction by John. All of it provides insight and fun facts about Palladium Books that fans will enjoy and smile at.

4. This is some of John Zeleznik’s best work and represents 15 years of his life’s work at Palladium. Plus John has zillions of fans.

5. The color reproduction, paper and production quality are *top notch*, much better than many art books out there. (I’m always surprised at the number of “art books” with poor reproduction and lousy paper quality).

6. At \$22.95 the price is lower than most comparable art books.

I believe in John Zeleznik and this art book so much, that I pushed ahead with it despite the fact that distributors are afraid to touch it. I’m trusting that *the fans* will find it, want it and purchase it – directly from Palladium/online/mail order if necessary – and/or by pestering their store and telling them they want this book!

I’m hoping that once the distributors *see the book* they’ll order more. I’m also hoping the *book trade* will want this beautiful book, but they’ll need to see it first too and it could be months (X-Mas season) before they order.

A color book of this quality is expensive. We’ll need to sell as many as possible, as quickly as possible, *direct to fans* at full retail (i.e. 400 copies) just to make back *half* our printing cost. Then we need to get distributors to order an additional 900 copies to break even.

- **Robotech®.** Here’s the big one you are not going to believe. Hobby distributors seem to have decided Robotech® is old,

forgotten and unwanted. As a result, pre-orders are HALF of what they would order for a typical Palladium product. More madness and fear.

Robotech® is the RPG line we get requested more than any other! I’ve had hundreds of gamers tell me, personally, they can hardly wait for the release of new books. Plus, there is renewed interest in it from long time fans who miss it and new fans who have recently discovered it on DVD! The distributors *should* be ordering double their usual numbers, not half!

We are confident fans want Robotech® and believe we will sell truck loads of the new RPG and sourcebooks. But . . . arrrrrgh, it makes you want to tear your hair out sometimes.

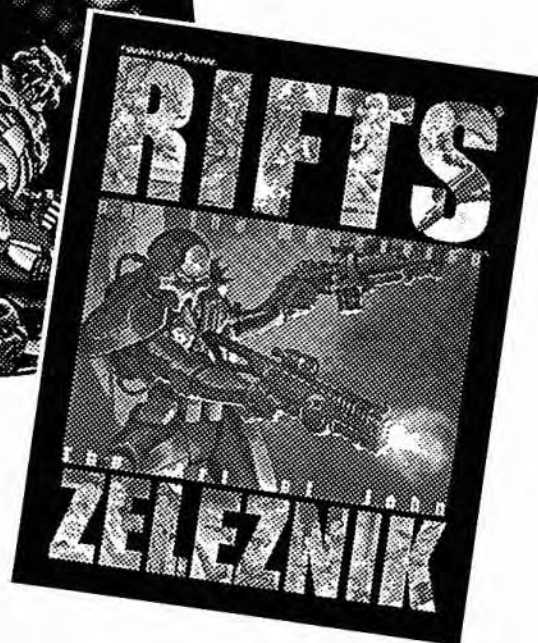
You can see why we need YOUR help to spread the word

This is why we need YOU to help spread the word through the fandom grapevine. We need *your voices* to express *your genuine interest* in these products. We need you to tell *other gamers and fans* about Palladium’s many wonderful games and new, dynamic products. Help us *create a buzz* and *point them* to the Palladium web site for more information or to make a purchase if they can’t find our products in the stores. We hope our distributors and retailers see the light (they’re doing a good job with other Palladium lines and are ordering 20% more of the *Minion War* books!), but we can’t count on them alone.

We need to raise *our voices* and shout to the world that Palladium Books is alive, releasing powerful new RPG products, and kicking . . . um, you know what.

As always, thank you for your support and efforts. Keep the faith and spread the word.

– Kevin Siembieda, June 2007



Palladium News

Robotech® is coming

I don't know if we can "officially" announce this yet, as contracts are not "officially" signed as of this writing, so you did not hear it from us. **Palladium Books® Inc.** and **Harmony Gold USA, Inc.** have come to terms for a **Robotech® RPG** license.

All of us are happy to be in a position to produce **Robotech®** role-playing games and sourcebooks again, and welcome the opportunity to bring the world of **Robotech®** to a new generation of gamers.

With any luck, the first, new **Robotech® RPG, Shadow Chronicles®**, will be hitting store shelves in November, 2007! Keep your fingers crossed.

Game Day in Iraq

Palladium was glad to contribute to **Game Day in Iraq** to help our troops lose themselves in a weekend of gaming. The organizer sent us this thank you.

We received the boxes today. Boy were we impressed with how many books you sent. The guys are drooling because of the signed copies of the Rifts Book & the Palladium Fantasy RPG Book. I actually asked to lock those up in the arms room to keep them safe until the Con - LOL!!! I can't thank you enough for all the help and hard work you have done for us. We really appreciate everything.

You guys are absolutely awesome.

– Dave

You are very welcome, Dave. We think **Game Day in Iraq** is a great idea and hope many other game companies also contributed to the cause. At Palladium, we are happy to lend a hand by providing role-playing games and sourcebooks to help combat boredom, mental fatigue and other issues our soldiers face. Our prayers are with you.

A Megaverse® United Print – Discontinued

The now famous limited edition print by Kevin Siembieda, was discontinued, effective June 1, 2007. The last number issued was 1987 (give or take a number).

Palladium's New Color Catalog

We found a printer who can do our 40 page catalog in *full color* and on glossy paper for the same price as our black and white catalog! Thus, the **2007 Summer/Fall Catalog** should be full color and look fantastic! Should be available in July.

See you in Indiana Twice! August & September 2007

That's right, gamers in the Midwest can get a double dose of Kevin and Company this year.

First, at Gen Con Indy, August 16-19, 2007, in Indianapolis, Indiana; **Booth No. 2527** (in front of *Wizards of the Coast*). Come on over to buy old and new books, get autographs, chat and meet *Kevin Siembieda, Wayne Smith, Kathy Simmons, and artists, Apollo Okamura, Comfort Love, Adam Withers* as well as various other Palladium freelance writers, artists and troublemakers.

Second, at GallowsCon, September 22, 2007, in Merrillville, Indiana. This is a much smaller and more intimate setting, which means you're likely to have an easier time talking with Kevin Siembieda and Wayne Smith, one on one. Plus Kevin is running two fantasy games (his *DeSilca*, timed adventure) while James H. Brown and the *Megaversal Ambassadors* are coming to run a lot of other games (6-10 gaming events). **Note:** Kevin is not running events at Gen Con or any other convention in 2007.

All RPG events are FREE (sign up is on a first come, first served basis). One low admissions price.

Kevin has also learned he is **GallowsCon's first guest!** He's honored, but worried that only a dozen gamers will show up for the convention. Not likely, but you know how he can be sometimes, so come on down and join the fun.

GallowsCon

Saturday – Sept. 22, 2007 – 10:00 AM till 11:00 PM

FLC Banquet Hall

7950 Marshall Street

Merrillville, IN 46410

www.gallowscon.com – website

gallowscon@the-hangmen.org – email Address for questions and more information.

Recent Book Releases

Rifts® World Book 30 – Available now

Rifts® D-Bees of North America™

"It's great! Even old D-Bees feel new."

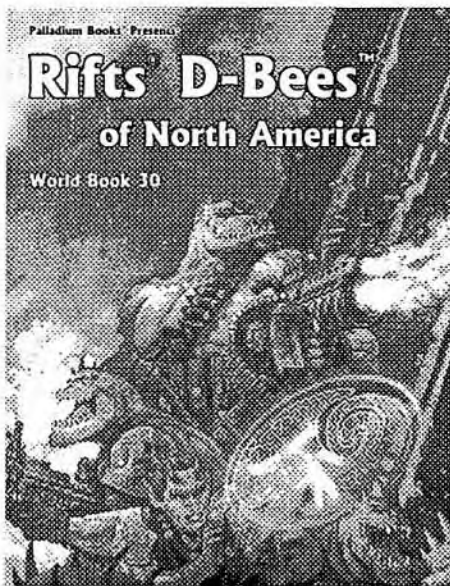
"I like all the extra detail and information."

"I've been waiting for a book like this for years."

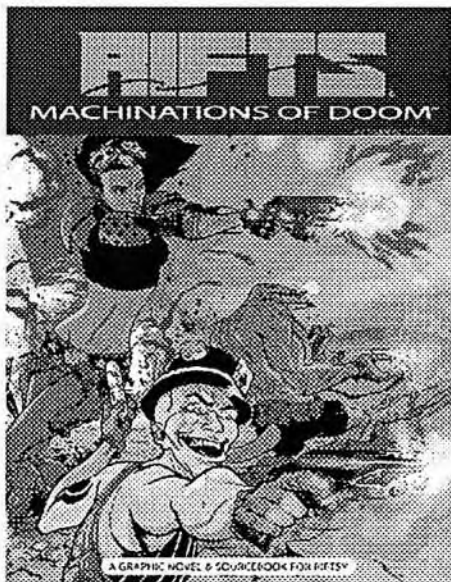
"It's a must for any campaign set in North America."

"I've been rolling up characters ever since I bought a copy."

These are just a few of the things gamers are saying about **Rifts® D-Bees™ of North America** – Palladium's new World Book dedicated to the inhuman races currently known to exist in North America.



- 35 brand new D-Bees (alien beings from other dimensions).
- 47 favorite D-Bees collected from past World and Sourcebooks, with all new descriptions, information, updates and insight.
- 82 alien beings in all for players to create characters.
- 82 beings G.M.s can use for villains, NPCs & foils for adventure.
- More world information and history behind every character.
- Dave Dorman cover painting and great artwork throughout.
- Written by *Brandon Aten, Carl Gleba, Levi Johnstone, Jason Marker, John C. Philpott, Jason Richards, Kevin Siembieda, Josh Sinsapaugh, Taylor White, and Todd Yoho.*
- 224 pages – Cat. No. 874 – \$22.95 retail. Available now!



Rifts® Machinations of Doom™

Graphic Novel & Sourcebook – Available now

There has never been anything like it in role-playing. A graphic novel that is the introduction to a new crisis and numerous adventures for a Rifts® sourcebook.

The graphic novel is a 72 page black and white tour de force by fan-favorite artist, Ramon Perez. The comic originally appeared serialized in the pages of *The Rifter*® and, due to popular demand, has been collected for the first time ever, cleaned up, re-lettered and tweaked to make it better than ever.

The game section picks up where the comic strip leaves off, providing numerous adventure ideas and one potentially catastrophic scenario that could reshape life in North America – perhaps the world. Plus, game stats for all the heroes, villains, monsters and characters in the comic strip.

Machinations of Doom™ is an epic story with new RPG source material that reveals a dark plot that threatens to shake the very foundation of magic on Rifts Earth. *The Machinations* are those of Doctor Desmond Bradford, the *Doomed* could be the Federation of Magic.

- 72 page comic/graphic novel.
- 43 pages of gaming source material.
- Dozens of adventure ideas and character stats.
- Game section written by Kevin Siembieda and Julius Rosenstein.
- Plus pinups, concept sketches, and wrap-around, color cover by Ramon Perez.
- 128 pages – Cat. No. 871 – \$18.95 retail. Available now! **Note:** Due to the vast quantity of artwork, the cost for this book is a bit higher than our usual 128 page book, we hope you understand.

Rifts® Machinations of Doom Collector's Hardcover "Gold" Edition

The same cool sourcebook, only in hardcover. This is Ramon Perez's first, limited edition, collectible, hardcover book. And you know how collectable *Rifts*® Gold Editions have been in the past.

- 8 ½ x 11 inches in size.
- Black, cloth cover with gold embossing.
- Greyscale end sheets of the mass market cover image.
- Only 220 copies will be available from Palladium Books; limited to 400 copies total. 100 copies will go to Ramon Perez and 80 copies will go to staff, freelancers, friends and promotional purposes.
- Numbered and signed by *Ramon Perez* and *Kevin Siembieda* on a special, tipped-in, illustration/signature card (similar to RUE).
- Shipped in a sturdy box.
- Cat. No. 871HC
- \$39.95 plus shipping and handling. Available only while supplies last, so order now, before they are gone.

Rifts® Machinations of Doom

Limited Edition Print – 100 copies

An attractive, greyscale image that is the same as the end sheets that appear in the limited edition, collector's gold hardcover.

- 17x11 inches in size. Black and white/greyscale image.

- Limited to only *100 copies*. **Note:** Previous color and black and white prints have had press runs of 300 to 2000, so 100 copies is an extremely limited run.
- Numbered and signed by *Ramon Perez* and *Kevin Siembieda*.
- Shipped rolled inside a sturdy mailing tube.
- Cat. No. PR871
- \$15.95 plus shipping and handling.
- Available only while supplies last. Available now.



Palladium Greeting Cards

Available now!

Some of you may be thinking, "Greeting Cards?" But they are awesome, unique, collectible, fun, in some cases funny, and reasonably priced.

They are the perfect surprise to send *fellow gamers*, as well as friends and family who enjoy *science fiction, fantasy, adventure, great artwork* and *comic books*.

When was the last time you saw a card that would appeal to a sci-fi or fantasy fan? Or a comic book inspired card that wasn't geared for a child?

Seldom. For some of you, NEVER. Well, here they are and you're going to love them.

Wouldn't it be nice to send a buddy a *birthday card* with John Zeleznik heroes on it, or Scott Johnson's *Glitter Boy in flames*? Wouldn't it be nice to send a J.R.R. Tolkien or fantasy fan a *card* with a Larry Elmore adventurer group? Or a soldier overseas, or a friend you haven't seen for a while a card with Dave Dorman's D-Bees that says *Thinking of you*. And just wait till you see the two humorous *Rifts® Christmas Cards*.

For *gamers*, the cards are not only amusing, attractive and cool, but they bring back fond memories of friends, games and adventure campaigns from days past.

For those who appreciate *artwork*, these cards are bigger and nicer than the little images on trading cards and CCGs. They are easy to display or hang on a wall, are more sturdy than

prints, plus, the cards are probably collectible as we doubt Palladium will ever press more than a few thousand of each.

The color cards look great and serve a real purpose: To say hello, Thinking of You, Happy Birthday, Happy Holidays, and put a smile on the face of those you care about.

Reasonably Priced

\$2.75 for one card and envelope.

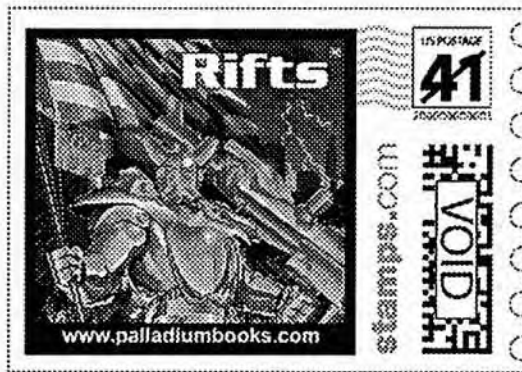
\$12.00 for six cards (one of each or all the same one) and envelopes.

Plus shipping and handling, of course. That makes your best deal buying them six or more at a time.

Shipped in a sturdy, cardboard envelope via First Class Mail or UPS.

Note: If these first cards sell well, others will follow. Kevin and Wayne already have a selection in mind for *Halloween* and additional *Christmas* season cards for the Fall.

Forget Hallmark! Make your Christmas and other occasions Palladium ones with *Palladium's Greeting Cards* – you know you want to.



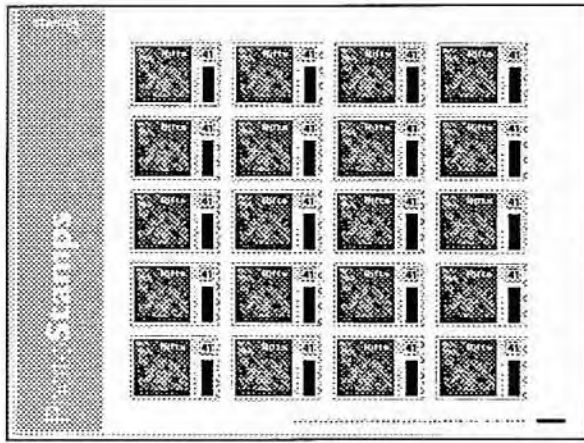
Make Your 41 Cent Postage Stamps *Rifts®*

For those of you who haven't heard, Palladium has created *Rifts® postage stamps* depicting Scott Johnson's famous *Glitter Boy in Flames* illustration as a 41 cent stamp. You might think of these speciality stamps as "vanity stamps," like vanity license plates for your car. They cost more, but they are made to your specific design. They look great and Kevin Siembieda has been putting them on all of Palladium's mail since the postage went up to 41 cents.

We thought they'd make a nice promotional item, but then we thought some of YOU might want to order *Rifts® stamps* too. We thought they'd be fun, and knew some of you would want them, but they are selling at a faster pace than we had imagined. We're glad you like them.

Regrettably, the stamps costs Palladium around \$12 per sheet to create, so we have to sell them for \$14.00 plus shipping and handling (around \$3.11 First Class Mail). That means twenty, 41 cent stamps, with a *face value of \$8.20*, cost you approximately **\$17.11 per sheet**. Available only in sheets of 20 stamps. We're passing them on as cheaply as we can.

We don't think more than 300 sheets will ever be created, so this is a unique, fun collectible – or a fun way to surprise a friend – and they go great with the new *Palladium Greeting Cards*.



Cost: Rifts® 41 Cent Stamps (\$8.20 in postage) – \$17.11 per sheet (\$14 for the sheet of stamps plus \$3.11 for shipping, packaging and handling). Sold by the “sheet” of 20 stamps.

Catalog Number 2511

Must be shipped via *First Class Mail* or *UPS*. Not applicable for “Media Mail.” Shipped in a sturdy card envelope. *Available now.* **Note:** If fans want to see stamps for other Palladium game lines, we may consider doing different/additional stamps in the future.

Three New T-Shirts

Three new T-shirt designs are now available directly from Palladium Books (check out the official Palladium Books website at www.palladiumbooks.com). They include:

Cat. No. 2512: “It’s F__in’ Brilliant.” That’s the answer to the question: “To what do you attribute the success of Rifts®?” asked at the 2006 Palladium Open House. The question and answer are printed white on black and the shirt comes in sizes Medium thru 5XL. Fun.

Cat. No. 2513: “Palladium Books – Going Through Hell” Depicts a Gargoyle Lord and minions on the front (white on black), and printed in red on the back is “Minion War” and the titles of the five books in the series. Available in sizes small thru 5XL. Cool.

Cat. No. 2514: Palladium Fantasy “Polo”. An understated black polo shirt with the image from the old Palladium Fantasy RPG and the words, “Palladium Books, a Megaverse® of adventure” printed over the left breast in red. Available in sizes Medium thru 4XL. Nice.

Coming Attractions



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

My apologies, but my insane work schedule has caused all the Minion War books to be bumped back a month. Hades is coming along wonderfully, and I know you’ll love the book. Coming July 2007.

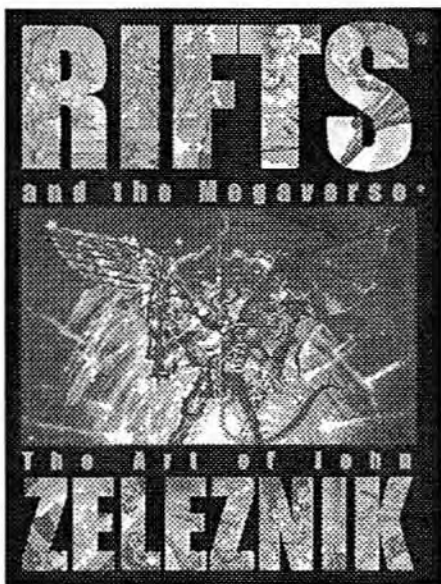
– Kevin Siembieda, 2007

The concept behind the **Minion War™** is simple. Hades and Dyval are two different Hell dimensions that have been *rivals* for countless millennia. *Hades invades Dyval* to conquer and enslave it. *Dyval fights back* and the war spills into the **Megaverse®**, where humans and other races are caught in the middle.

Dimension Book 10 launches the **Minion War™** series by describing **Hades**, its demonic hordes, war mounts, new monsters, notable locations and kingdoms, and Hades’ plans for dimensional conquest of rival Hell, *Dyval*. As a sourcebook, dimensional travelers and bold adventurers can literally go to Hell to explore the very pits of Hades! Or they can battle the demons and devils spilling out across the **Megaverse®**.

- The hellish dimension of Hades mapped and described.
- Demons and monsters galore.
- Magic weapons and demonic riding beasts.
- World information and adventure ideas.
- A stand-alone Dimension Book that is also the first step in an epic, five book adventure that is the **Minion War™**.
- Breathtaking artwork by Russell, Burles, and others.
- John Zeleznik cover painting.
- Written by Carl Gleba. Additional text by Kevin Siembieda.
- 224 pages – Cat. No. 872 – \$22.95 retail.

- Ships July 2007. We are now shooting for a July 16 release date (give or take a week). This book is in final production.



Rifts® and the Megaverse®: The Art of John Zeleznik

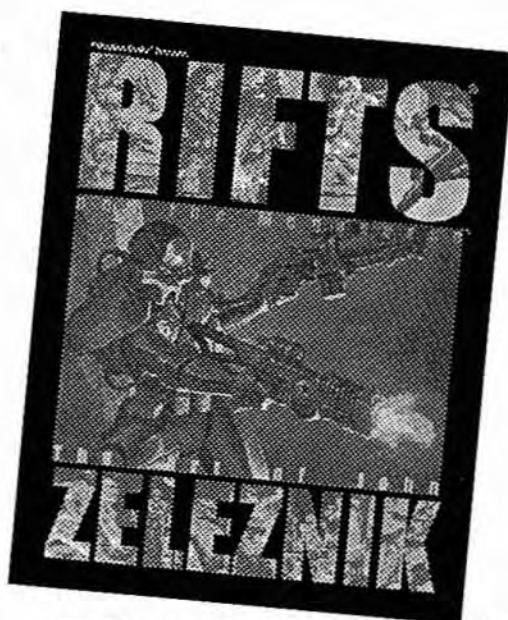
At the Printer – Ships July

On one level it is a beautiful *art book* to be looked at and enjoyed on an aesthetic level. Page after page of color covers, plus scores of drawings and images provide a look at the behind the scenes process of creating each cover. The reader gets a unique view of the artistry you seldom get to see from a painter, his drawings, ideas and designs.

For Palladium fans, the book provides a window into the inner workings at Palladium Books and the artist's mind by showing dozens and dozens of concept sketches, alternative designs, color roughs and brief notes and comments by John Zeleznik. Fun, informative and often funny.

Furthermore, Palladium fans will find it to be a photo album of memories. One glimpse of a favorite Zeleznik cover and the memories of that book and the adventures that may have sprung from it come flooding back to put a smile on your face. That might be the best reason of all to buy this wonderful book of memories. 15 years of John Zeleznik's work for Palladium Books® in one beautiful package.

- Kevin has already approved the proof copy. We were all blown away by the quality reproduction. This is going to be an impressive book.
- Paintings, artwork, design and layout by John Zeleznik.
- Color throughout. More than 200 different art images.
- Softbound, 8 ½ x 11 inches. Color cover, glossy paper stock.
- 128 pages of full color – Cat. No. 2510 – \$22.95 retail. Also see the Collector's Masterwork Limited Edition.
- Ships July 20, 2007. At the printer.



Collector's "Masterwork" Edition Rifts® and the Megaverse®:

The Art of John Zeleznik – Ships July

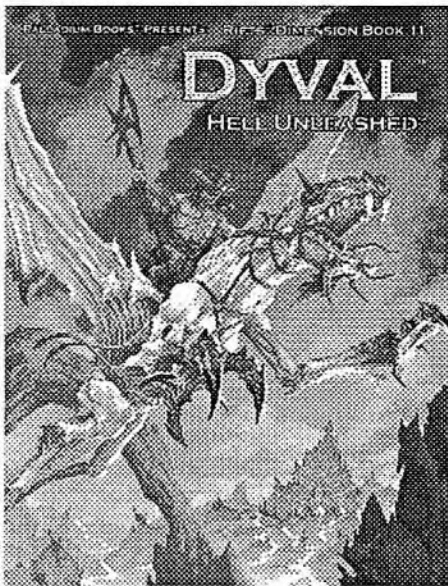
Take advantage of this unprecedented offer. To our knowledge, no artist has ever included an actual pencil sketch used in the creation of one of the works of art depicted in the art book. But that's exactly what *John Zeleznik* is doing. One of his sketches, used in the creation of one of his many paintings, will be hand glued, by Kevin Siembieda, into each copy of the signed and numbered, Masterwork Edition. You will actually own one of the pieces of artwork used to create one of the paintings inside this beautiful art book.

- A truly *one-of-a-kind collectible* for fans of Rifts®, Palladium Books, and John Zeleznik. A perfect *birthday or Christmas gift* for serious collectors and fans.
- Limited to 160-200 copies, depending on the availability of artwork to be tipped in.
- The hardcover "Masterwork" book has a different color image on the cover and end sheets, plus the original pencil sketch by John Zeleznik. A unique collector's item.
- Numbered and signed by John Zeleznik and Kevin Siembieda.
- 128 pages of full color – Cat. No. 2510-CML – available only from Palladium Books and only while supplies last.
- \$125.00 each, plus \$15 for shipping in the USA, \$20 to Canada, and \$35 to all other countries for shipping. MUST be sent UPS, Priority Mail/Certified or some other way it can be tracked and is insured to arrive.
- Available on a first come, first served basis.
- Ships July 20, 2007. At the printer.

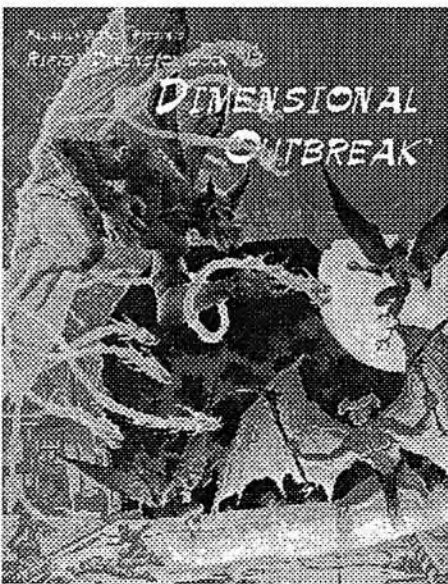
Rifts® Dimension Book 11:

Dyval™, Hell Unleashed™ – August

The Hell known as Dyval and all its evil residents and secrets are revealed at last, as these monsters clash with the demons of Hades in trans-dimensional war! All artwork is done and the manuscript is finished.



- The hellish dimension of Dyval mapped and described.
- Deevils and monsters galore.
- Magic weapons and horrific war beasts.
- World information and adventure ideas.
- A stand-alone Dimension Book that is also the second step in an epic, five book adventure that spills across the Palladium Megaverse®.
- Artwork by Nick Bradshaw, Mike Mumah, and others.
- Cover painting by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 192 pages – Cat. No. 873 – \$22.95 retail.
- Ships August 10, 2007.



Rifts® Dimension Book 12: Dimensional Outbreak™ – Ships September

The Minion War spills into Phase World®, the city of Center and the Three Galaxies™. The epic scale of the Minion War just got bigger and even the Worlds of Warlock, the Splugorth and Naruni are involved.

- Phase World's *Center* described and mapped. Four new levels, including the Gateland, Central Station, the Spaceport, Repo-Yards, Free Trade Zone, Warlock Market, notable merchants and places of business, and much more.
- Demon Knights, Star Slayers, demonic legions and more.
- Demonic spaceships, magic weapons and new horrors.
- Deevil fortifications and defenses.
- Space spell magic (new).
- Spaceships, power armor and other gear.
- The plot for conquering the Three Galaxies.
- A stand-alone Dimension Book that is also the third step in an epic, five book crossover that spills across the Palladium Megaverse®.
- Artwork by Apollo Okamura, Mike Mumah, and others.
- John Zeleznik cover painting.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 192 pages – Cat. No. 875 – \$22.95 retail. Ships September 17, 2007.

Armageddon Unlimited™

The Minion War™ in the *Heroes Unlimited*™ setting

The Minion War has rolled into countless dimensions with a roar, but not on *Heroes Unlimited*™ Earth. Here, the monsters of Dyval are working covertly behind the scenes, causing chaos and mayhem, and have brought Earth to the brink of global war. However, the demons' dimensional incursions have alerted super-heroes around the globe to their sinister presence and the heroes are mounting their own response. Can the heroes of Earth stop the demons' plans to plunge our world into Armageddon?!

- Superheroes vs demons!
- New Powers and Super Abilities.
- New Super Classes like the Heroic Hellion and the Demon Hunter, and variations on old classes like the Mystically Bestowed, Enchanted Weapon and Enchanted Object, only with a demonic twist!
- Notable Magic Guilds and their knowledge of the Minion War.
- The Deevils' plans to cause global Armageddon and create their own hellish version of Rifts Earth under their control.
- Notable Deevils, Anarchy Teams, and their henchmen.
- The Deevil Super Fortress mapped out and described, and the hellish minions who guard it.
- The Demons' response and their rival incursion into Earth.
- The Heroes' response – specific heroes locked in the greatest battle against evil the world has ever known.
- An optional, detailed time-line of events that have brought Earth to the brink of global annihilation. Game Masters can use the time-line to weave a long-term campaign or use it as background in their current games.
- The First Heroes of the Megaverse will make their grand appearance in the battle to save Earth!
- Written by the Head Minion, Carl Gleba.
- 160 pages – Cat. No. 527 – \$18.95 retail. Ships October or November, 2007.

The Rifter® #40

– October – Horror Special

Palladium's traditional horror issue, filled with scary source material, monsters and adventures that go thump in the night.

- Source material for **Beyond the Supernatural™**.
- Source material for **Nightbane®**.
- Source material for **Chaos Earth™**.
- Source material for **Wormwood™**.
- Source material for **Rifts®** and **more**.
- Fan fiction, scary stuff, news and coming attractions.
- Pulse pounding *Zombie cover* by Michael Mumah.
- 96 pages – Cat. No. 140 – \$10.95 U.S. retail.
- Ships October, 2007.

Rifts®/Phase World® Sourcebook: Heroes of the Megaverse®

– Summer or Fall

War factions from the Hells, Hades and Dyval, have discovered the existence of a great mystic artifact that has been hidden and protected by the Cosmo-Knights of the Three Galaxies. And both sides want it.

The artifact is an ancient Rune Book that contains the names of the 2000 greatest heroes the Megaverse® has ever known. But it is more than a historical document, it is a magic item of unparalleled power.

According to legend, the tome has many great powers. One such power is that reading the name of any one person inscribed, while evoking the proper magic, will give the reader the knowledge and power of that great hero. And many are the powers of the 2000.

The artifact also has its dangers. It is said if the *List of Heroes™* is wrested from the Cosmo-Knights and kept locked in the pits of Hell, then the Knights and all heroes of the Three Galaxies will lose hope and flounder. If the book is destroyed, it is said, the Cosmo-Knights will cease to exist within a generation and the forces of Chaos shall reign. Needless to say, the Lords of Hell, the Splugorth and many others who serve Chaos would do anything to get their hands on the *List of Heroes*.

Rumor also suggests that the artifact may hold clues to the location of the Cosmic Forge, perhaps in some sort of code or the memories of the heroes who can be evoked. And there are many other tales of cosmic power, healing and knowledge all associated with the book and the ghosts of the heroes named on its pages.

As circumstance would have it, the *List of Heroes* has fallen into the possession of the Player Characters. The question is, can they keep it safe from the forces of two Hells until it can be returned to the safekeeping of the Cosmo-Knights? Or will they misuse it for their own, personal gain? How will this scenario unfold? Who is on that list? Buy a copy, play out the scenario and find out.

Note: This is the Adventure Sourcebook that prints the names of everyone who purchased the *A Megaverse United™* limited edition print. It is also likely to include the names of

some winners from the *Heroes of the Megaverse®* character contest as fully statted out characters (heroes and villains).

- Minion War tie-in book.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Illustrated by various Palladium heroes.
- 64 to 96 pages – Cat. No. 877 – \$11.95 or \$14.95 retail (final size not yet determined).
- Not yet scheduled. Shooting for a Summer or Fall, 2007, release.

Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: The Shemarrian Nation™

– Summer or Fall

The Shemarrians, the phantom right arm of Archie-Three and a force to be reckoned with in the wild woods beyond the Eastern Wall (the Allegheny Mountains). An in-depth look at the fabricated femme fatales, their false society, and the schemes and dreams that Archie and Hagan have in store for them.

- The Shemarrians and their place in the Eastern Wilderness. How the regional factions and power blocs view the warrior women and how the Shemarrians (and Archie) view them.
- Shemarrian history, society, and culture - the fabrications of Archie-Three.
- Over a dozen android and robot minions of Archie-Three, including the Avian Spy, Shemarrian Pariah, and the so-called R'Mar Alien.
- Shemarrian Mounts and Weaponry.
- Shemarrians as Optional Player Characters.
- Written by Josh Sinsapaugh.
- 64 pages – Cat. No. 878 – \$11.95 retail.
- Not yet scheduled. Shooting for a Summer or September release.

Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook: The Lyboc™ Saga – Summer or Fall

The many schemes, illegal operations and skullduggery of *Colonel Lyboc* in the post-Siege on Tolkeen era (109 P.A.). Guaranteed to surprise and provide hours of gaming.

- Colonel Lyboc's stats, history and current exploits.
- Other notable Coalition States soldiers, henchmen and agents.
- Mark Evans cover painting.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 48 or 64 pages (final size not yet determined) – Cat. No. 879 – \$9.95 or \$11.95 retail depending on the final size.
- Not yet scheduled. Shooting for a Summer or Fall, 2007, release.

Chaos Earth™ Sourcebook: First Responders – Summer or Fall

The Great Cataclysm has devastated civilization, but humanity fights for survival. The struggles of civilian law enforcement, fire and rescue, and everyday men and women are some of the

most epic tales to be told in a world gone to hell. They fight monsters, aliens, the paranormal, the elements, and each other, all with the hope of reclaiming their lives from the Chaos.

- New D-Bees and monsters from the Rifts.
- New “average citizen” Occupational Character Classes (O.C.C.s).
- New equipment for NEMA “Roscoes” and other emergency personnel.
- Source information and stats for common Golden Age technology (weapons, vehicles, medical tech, etc.).
- Apocalypse Plagues brought from other worlds to Chaos Earth.
- Adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Jason Richards.
- Final size not yet determined; 64-96 pages – \$11.95 or 14.95 retail.
- Coming Summer or Fall 2007.

Other Books in the Pipeline

We hope to add a number of the following titles to our Summer and Fall schedule, but they don’t have release dates yet:

For Palladium Fantasy

- **Mysteries of Magic™** for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®. May be a series of books, by Mark Hall.
- **Magic & Monsters™** for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®, by Randi Cartier.
- **Yin-Sloth Jungles™, Second Edition** for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®.

Other Game Lines

- A sourcebook for **Chaos Earth™**.
- A sourcebook for **Nightbane®**.
- **Atorian Empire™** for **Heroes Unlimited™**.
- **Robotech® RPG: The Shadow Chronicles®** – Fall (tentative), to be followed by sourcebooks.
- **Warpath™: Urban Jungle™ RPG** – pushed back to 2008.

For Rifts®

- **Phase World® Spacecraft**
- **Rifts® Shemarrian Sourcebook™**
- **Rifts® Triax™ 2**
- **Rifts® Federation of Magic 2: The Old Guard Rebellion**
- **Rifts® Delta Blues (Deep South)**
- **Rifts® Darkwoods (Deep South)**
- **Rifts® Voodoo**

Plus, we have freelancers working on **Rifts® Lemuria**, **Rifts® India** and sourcebooks for **Rifts®**, **Phase World®**, **Wormwood™**, and *non-Rifts®* sourcebooks for 2008, along with a few special projects.

Can we really get all these books out in 2007?

Probably not. Exactly how many are published will depend largely on the sales of Spring and Summer releases, as well as online products, downloadable adventures and time. But we do hope to add a bunch of them.

The Moons of Jupiter

Optional Source Material for Rifts® Chaos Earth™

By Mike Ferguson

The New Age of Exploration

In the latter half of the twenty-first century, the exploration of the Solar System had largely been abandoned by the governments of Earth, and had been effectively taken over by a handful of mega-corporations. The largest of these mega-corporations, the *Cyberworks Aerospace Network*, was responsible for most of mankind’s greatest achievements in space exploration – the colonization of the moon, the establishment of permanent scientific bases on Mars, and the first tentative manned missions towards Jupiter and beyond.

The Europa Exploratory Voyage (EEV) was perhaps the most well known of these missions to the outer planets of the Solar System. As part of the *Scorpio Mission Series* – the Cyberworks Aerospace Network’s ambitious program to send manned missions to the moons of Jupiter and Saturn – the EEV sought to thoroughly map and explore the icy surface of Europa, one of Jupiter’s four large and enigmatic Galilean moons. It also sought to delve beneath the icy surface of the moon in search of liquid water, and, perhaps, other forms of life.

Launched on May 2, 2098, the Scorpio spacecraft known as *Challenger II* rose majestically from Cyberworks’ undersea launching pads in the Pacific, hurtling towards the stars – and away from the end of a Golden Age of Earth. A crew of thirty scientists and soldiers of fortune were aboard the ship, comprising the best and brightest explorers in the employ of Cyberworks. Two individuals commanded the *Challenger II*. One was the renowned test pilot and war hero *Colonel Gideon Marovich*, best known for his daring solo missions to Venus in 2092 and 2095; the other was *Doctor Shannon Broussard*, a Nobel Prize winner for her work in the fields of astrophysics and spacecraft design.

However, Col. Marovich and Dr. Broussard were not the only ones “in charge” of the Jupiter-bound spacecraft. *Challenger II* was an experimental ship, utilizing highly advanced computer systems for navigation and scientific analysis. Lying at the heart of these systems was a revolutionary form of synthetic artificial intelligence – *S.C.A.R.A.B. (Scientific Command: Advanced Reconnaissance Analysis Base)*. A distant cousin to

Cyberworks' A.R.C.H.I.E. series, S.C.A.R.A.B. was designed to run the day-to-day operations of the spacecraft, and to let the human crew aboard the ship concentrate on their mission of exploration.

Challenger II entered orbit around the moon Europa on December 7, 2098. After successfully mapping a series of potential landing sites over a period of several days, a landing craft jettisoned from the main Scorpio spacecraft. This landing craft, holding a crew of ten brave explorers and piloted by Col. Gideon Marovich, touched down on the surface of Europa on December 21... the day before all hell broke loose back on Earth.

The Discovery of Life

One of the first findings made by Marovich and his bold team of explorers was a strange, black organic material, slimy in texture but relatively harmless ... or so they thought. Although small in quantity, this organic material could be found scattered throughout the icy terrain near the space explorers' landing site. Wildly excited, the crew of the *Challenger II* communicated their revolutionary discovery – proof of extraterrestrial life – back to Earth. Although greeted with equal enthusiasm at the Cyberworks communication centers back on Earth, the news never found its way to the general population, as other important matters (such as the end of the world) managed to occur before this information could be released.

What the crew of the *Challenger II* did not realize was that this alien "material" actually was sentient. Eons ago, two intelligent races of creatures lived on Europa, back when the surface of this moon was warmer, and the heat radiating from both Jupiter and the sun kept the entire surface of Europa covered in deep seas of liquid water. One of these races was the *Sarpedon*, a benevolent group of dolphin-like creatures. The other was a highly intelligent and ruthless parasitic group of creatures known as the *Thorosos*, which resembled small, black jellyfish. On their own, the *Thorosos* were relatively harmless, but if allowed to inject their tendrils into other sentient beings, these malevolent creatures could destroy the memories and free will of their new hosts, controlling their victims like mindless puppets. The *Thorosos* eventually infected the entire *Sarpedon* race, effectively destroying this once-proud race and turning them into little more than living suits of armor.

With no other creatures left to conquer, the *Thorosos* eventually turned upon each other, and their wars would spell the end of their moon as they knew it. Their chemical weapons destroyed the thin European atmosphere, causing temperatures on the moon to plummet. Although the *Thorosos* could withstand the sudden climate change, their hosts – the now-mindless *Sarpedon* – could not. As the *Sarpedon* died off, the *Thorosos* found themselves helpless upon the surface of a dead, icy moon, with nowhere to go and no one to conquer. The few survivors managed to enter a state of suspended animation, sleeping through the millennia in hopes that one day, they would somehow be restored to glory.

That day was December 22, 2098.

As Marovich and his landing party continued to explore the surface of Europa, a strange and sinister event occurred. When the ley lines of Earth exploded from their dormancy, the cata-

clysmic event also triggered similar events throughout the Solar System. For the Earth is not the only world with ley lines – all worlds possess them to some degree. This includes Mars, Venus, Jupiter – and Jupiter's moons. Moons like Europa.

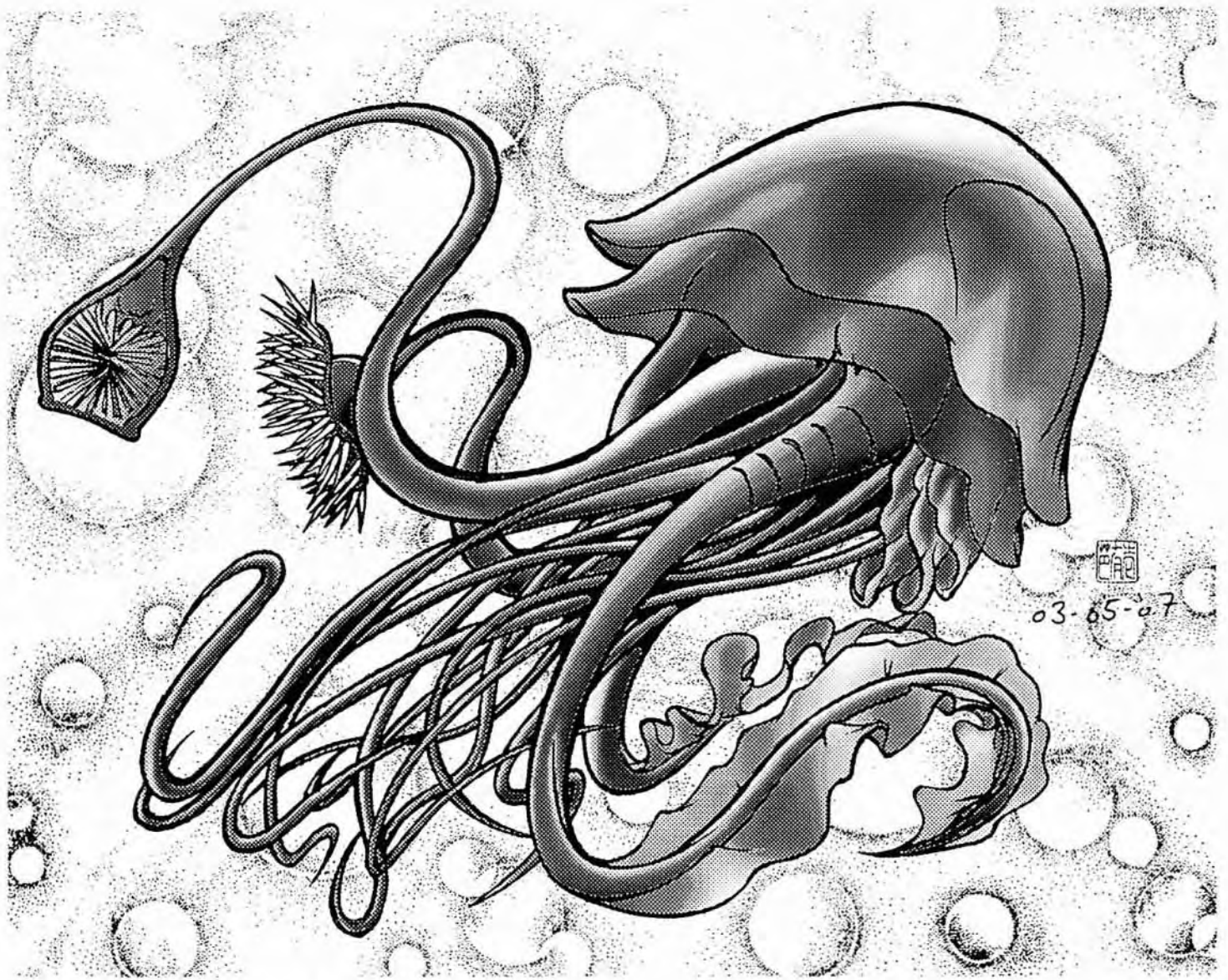
As the ley lines of Europa emerged from eons of slumber, their effects upon the moon were far less catastrophic than those surging across the face of the Earth. Nonetheless, the effects would prove to be equally deadly. The first of these effects was the raising of the temperature across the icy surface of Europa, which began the transformation of the moon back into a watery world. The second was the re-awakening of the "black organic material," which was the dormant *Thorosos*. In a matter of moments, the revived alien creatures attacked Marovich and his crew, turning the helpless humans into their puppets and slaves. Feeding upon the memories of their new hosts, the alien creatures realized that the humans came from a brand new world, full of billions of lives to feed upon... and they had a ship capable of taking them there.

Legions of Evil

Possessed and controlled by the *Thorosos*, Col. Marovich and the rest of the landing party immediately returned to their landing craft, and blasted off. Much to the confusion of Dr. Broussard and the rest of the crew still aboard the *Challenger II*, the landing craft did not immediately return to the main ship, but instead took unscheduled jaunts to two of the other Galilean moons orbiting Jupiter – the fiery, volcanic moon of Io, and the icy, barren moon known as Ganymede. What exactly the landing craft accomplished by landing on these two natural satellites of Jupiter, no one knows for sure – the craft maintained radio silence during the entire time of this unscheduled voyage.

When the landing craft finally made its way back to the *Challenger II* some two weeks later, all hell broke loose. Already on edge from the news of apocalypse being transmitted from Earth, Dr. Broussard and the crew who had remained aboard the main Scorpio spacecraft were paranoid, scared... and armed to the teeth when the landing craft returned. In some ways, this was inadvertently fortunate – otherwise, Dr. Broussard and her crew surely would have been slaughtered by the *Thorosos*-possessed humans aboard the landing craft. As it was, the now-possessed Colonel Marovich and his followers only managed to kill four of Dr. Broussard's crew and possess two before the rest could flee. Col. Marovich quickly managed to regain control of the environmental controls and the main weapons locker of the *Challenger II* – but then, a curious twist of fate occurred.

Making a bad situation even worse was the reaction of S.C.A.R.A.B. to the hostile takeover of the ship. Assessing the situation, S.C.A.R.A.B. reached the conclusion that none of the organic life forms aboard the ship could be trusted, and that they all potentially would endanger both the ship and the mission. In order to restore order aboard the *Challenger II*, S.C.A.R.A.B. immediately terminated the mission, and fired the rockets necessary for a return voyage to Earth. Although it had lost control of the environmental systems, S.C.A.R.A.B. assumed control over all other computer systems on the ship, preventing both ordinary and *Thorosos*-controlled humans from controlling any other main function of the ship. S.C.A.R.A.B. also deployed a dozen



NEMA Combat Drone Soldiers from storage, with orders to shoot and kill any living creature found aboard the massive Scorpio spacecraft.

This may be the players... trapped in a massive spaceship four times the size of a nuclear submarine for the next six months, surrounded by homicidal robots that want to kill them, and genocidal, human-looking aliens – who were once their friends and colleagues – who want to possess and enslave them, along with the rest of the human race. The only two things that they know they can trust for sure are their wits and their guns.

Let the games begin.

The Thorosos Alien Race

Originally from the faraway star system of Gamma Serpentis, the Thorosos once were a principled race of aquatic humanoid creatures. However, just as the Thorosos reached an era of great peace and prosperity upon their original homeworld, a cataclysmic event occurred – lethal levels of gamma radiation began to bombard the planet. Though the Thorosos were not hardy enough to survive the radiation storms, Thorosos scientists quickly realized that other, less intelligent beasts living upon the

planet would certainly be able to endure the impending doom. Quickly, they developed a process for transforming the entire Thorosos race into parasitic beings, hoping to use the less intelligent creatures of their homeworld as “safe harbor” while the gamma radiation storms raged across the planet.

Unfortunately, the process produced two undesirable side effects. The first of these effects was the physical transformation of the Thorosos, who went from being powerfully muscled humanoid creatures to slithering, slimy, jelly-like monstrosities. Worse than this, though, was the mental transformation – once a race of creatures renowned throughout their sector of the galaxy as being peaceful and enlightened, the transformed Thorosos became ruthlessly cruel and malevolent. Though the Thorosos survived the gamma radiation storms, the price of their survival came at the cost of their very souls.

Thorosos (Natural Form)

Alignment: Usually Miscreant, though a few extremely rare exceptions are Anarchist or Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 4D6+4, M.E. 4D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 2D6 (+10 underwater), P.P. 4D6, P.E. 2D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd 4D6 (x10 swimming).

Hit Points: Standard, P.E. plus 1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 1D4x10

Height: 2 feet plus 1D8 inches (0.6 to 0.8 m).

Weight: 24+1D6 pounds (11.3 to 13.5 kg).

Average Life Span: Without a host body: 75 years. With a host body or bodies: 200+ years or more. They can also enter states of suspended animation in cold temperatures, which can allow them to survive for millennia in a coma-like state.

Appearance: In their natural form, the Thorosos appear similar to oily, black jellyfish. They have small mouths filled with thousands of tiny, needle-like teeth.

Supernatural Abilities: The bite of the Thorosos produces some nasty effects. Any living, unarmored humanoid that is not considered a supernatural creature must immediately make a saving throw vs disease (14 or better). If successful, the victim only takes 4D4 points of S.D.C. damage. If the saving throw is failed, then the creature is transformed into a parasite host for the Thorosos creature – and converted into a Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid as per the rules below. This initial transformation is only temporary. 48 hours after being initially possessed, the host creature is allowed a second save to reject the Thorosos parasite – however, while this second saving throw is again considered a saving throw vs disease, a roll of 19 or better must be obtained to permanently get rid of the parasite. Should this second saving throw be unsuccessful, the bond between parasite and host becomes permanent, with the Thorosos creature firmly in control of its victim's body.

Natural Abilities: Thorosos creatures possess both gills and lungs. They can stay underwater indefinitely (which they prefer in their natural form), or on dry land for 12 hours before needing to re-immense themselves in water. They also have keen vision and hearing, and swim at 90% skill proficiency.

Special Weapons: In their natural form, the Thorosos do not use conventional weapons. When occupying a host, they use whatever weapons are normally used by their host race, but tend to favor laser weapons if they are available.

Familiarity with Earth: The Thorosos on Europa (and elsewhere in the galaxy) know of the prehistoric world of Earth, ruled by savage beasts known as dinosaurs. They know nothing of humankind. The ones that are on their way to Earth aboard the *Challenger II* know whatever information can be gleaned from S.C.A.R.A.B. and from the memories of their hosts.

Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrids

Note: Because of the inherently evil nature of Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrids, it is strongly recommended that a Game Master only use these creatures as Non-Player Character villains, and not allow their use as Player Characters. If a player is allowed to use a Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid as a Player Character, the Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid should be of Unprincipled or Anarchist alignment, and should be a pariah and an outcast from the rest of the Thorosos race in order to facilitate good game play.

Established characters transformed into a Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid should use the conversion rules below to determine the changes caused by the evil alien creature. Altern-

tively, the rules for creating a Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid O.C.C. can be used for creating a starting character, if the Game Master so desires.

Bonuses & Benefits of Parasite Hybrid Conversion:

1. Supernatural Endurance: P.E. is increased by 1D6. The Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid becomes a supernatural Mega-Damage creature with M.D.C. equal to his P.E. attribute plus 1D6x10. Add 10 M.D.C. per level of experience. Endurance is also considered to be supernatural.

2. Supernatural Strength: Add 2D6 to P.S. attribute. Minimum P.S. is 20, if lower adjust upward to 20. Strength and all damage caused from physical melee attacks are considered to be supernatural.

3. Super Reflexes: Add 1D4 to initiative rolls, +2 to roll with punch, fall, or impact; automatic parry or dodge on all attacks, even from behind/surprise; add two extra attacks per melee, and add 1D6 to P.P. attribute. Minimum P.P. is 20, if lower adjust upward to 20.

4. Super Speed: Add 1D6x10 to Speed attribute. Can leap 60 feet (18.3 m) across after a short run (half that from a dead stop) and 30 feet (9.1 m) high (half without a short run).

5. Saving Throw Bonuses: +6 to save vs psionics, +6 to save vs mind control (psionics and chemical), +8 to save vs toxic gases, poisons, and other drugs, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, and is impervious to normal heat.

6. Supernatural Healing: Regenerates 2D6 M.D.C. per minute (once every four melee rounds), +10% to save vs coma/death. Also virtually impervious to physical pain.

7. Increased Metabolism: A Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid must effectively feed two organisms – the human host, and the Thorosos parasite attached to the host's body – and the parasite has a much higher metabolism than an ordinary human (which is why it is able to supply its host with such advantages to speed, strength, and endurance). The Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid must consume three times the amount of nourishment as a regular human being, or else he will suffer from low energy levels with the following penalties: reduction of all combat bonuses by half after one day (24 hours) without consuming three large meals. All bonuses are again reduced by half each subsequent day until the bonuses reach zero, unless three large meals are consumed. One melee attack is also lost for each day without full nourishment.

8. Low Life Span: The Thorosos parasite eventually drains its human host of vital energies, killing him or her slowly over a period of months. The average life span of a Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid is 3 years and 3D6 months. When the human host finally dies, the Thorosos parasite disengages from its dead host, and goes in search of a new body to inhabit.

The Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid O.C.C.

Attribute Requirements: None.

O.C.C. Skills:

Radio: Basic (+5%)

Language, Native (Human Origin): Standard

Language, Thorosian: Standard

Literacy, Native (Human Origin): Standard

Literacy, Thorosian: Standard

Intelligence (+10%)
 Climbing (+10%)
 Tracking (+10%)
 Swimming (+10%)
 Wilderness Survival (+20%)
 W.P. Energy Pistol
 W.P. Energy Rifle
 Hand to Hand: Martial Arts or Assassin

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select four other skills, plus select one additional skill at levels four, eight, and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).
 Domestic: Any.
 Electrical: Basic Electronics only.
 Espionage: Any (+10%).
 Mechanical: Automotive and Basic Mechanics only.
 Medical: First Aid only.
 Military: Any (+10%).
 Physical: Any (+10%).
 Pilot: Any, except Power Armor, Robots, and Tanks.
 Pilot Related: None.
 Rogue: Any (+5%).
 Science: Math skills only (+5%).
 Technical: Any (+5%).
 W.P.: Any.
 Wilderness: Any (+10%).

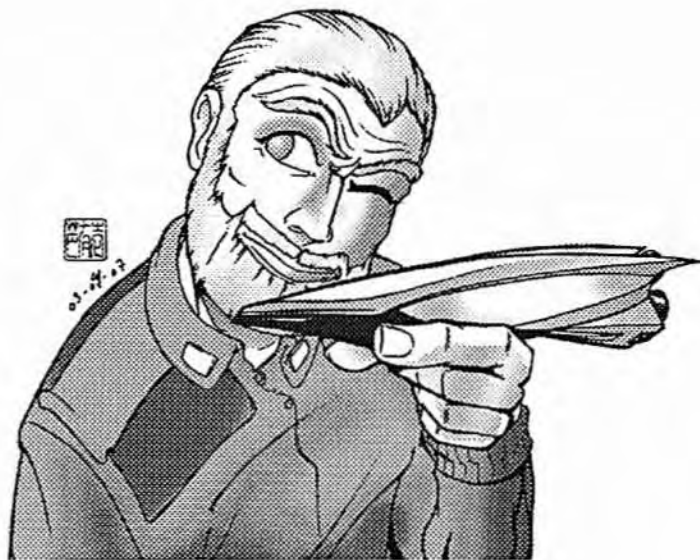
Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select six Secondary Skills from the previous list. These are additional areas of reference that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited (any, only, none) as previously indicated on the list.

Standard Equipment: As per the human being chosen and possessed by the Thorosos parasite.

Money: Starting money is as per the human being chosen and possessed by the Thorosos parasite. In general, Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrids have little use for money – they simply take what they need through force – and rarely carry any sort of currency or valuables.

Cybernetics: None! For some unknown reason, the Thorosos parasites do not like bodies possessing cybernetic implants – they view any sort of cybernetic or bionic implant as a “metallic virus.” Only when left with no other options will a Thorosos parasite possess a human body with any sort of cybernetics, however, the parasite discards the cybernetic host as quickly as possible for another without the hated implants.

Experience: Although not recommended as a Player Character option, should a Game Master allow a player to run a Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid in a campaign, the experience table for the Chromium Guardsman (page 112 of the *Rifts® Chaos Earth™ RPG*) should be used for experience points.



Colonel Gideon Marovich

**Commander of the *Challenger II*;
 Human/Thorosos Parasite Hybrid**

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 24, M.A. 22, P.S. 28, P.P. 23, P.E. 28, P.B. 12, Spd 66.

M.D.C.: 148

Height: 6 feet, 4 inches (1.93 m).

Weight: 260 lbs (117 kg).

Age: 38

P.P.E.: 14

Level of Experience: 8th level NEMA Silver Eagle Pilot.

Disposition: Once a calm, cool pilot with a wry smile and a sarcastic wit, the heroic pilot with nerves of steel known as Gideon Marovich no longer exists. His brain is controlled by a Thorosos parasite called Naamyothl, and the horrid and vile creature could not be any more different than its host. Since being possessed by the parasitic alien, Marovich has become impulsive, sadistic, and violent, and leads his followers with the threat of brute force instead of gaining their trust or respect. He can be quite charming, and can be extremely friendly with others, including his enemies. His promises always sound wonderful – except they are almost always empty, and end with a knife in the back (or a laser blast to the face). Marovich is exceedingly dangerous and irrational – but his brilliant mind and his cruel cunning make him, for the moment, the feared leader of the Thorosos headed to Earth.

Appearance: For the most part, Gideon Marovich appears exactly as he did before leaving for the moons of Jupiter – tall, extremely muscled and athletic, and quite handsome. His blonde hair is cut short, and a trimmed beard covers most of his face. Only thick, black tendrils wrapped around his neck give any indication as to the presence of the Thorosos parasite that possesses him – the creature nests near the top of his spine.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts and Boxing.

Attacks per Melee: Eight.

Bonuses: +1D4+1 on initiative, +6 to strike, +10 to parry, +10 to dodge, +7 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +5 to pull punch, +2 to strike on an Aimed shot, automatic parry or dodge on all attacks, even from behind/surprise, Critical Strike on an unmodified roll of 18, 19, or 20, karate-style kick does 1D8 damage, jump kick does Critical Strike, +1 on entangle attacks, +5 to save vs psychic attack/insanity, +70% to trust/intimidate, +26% to save vs coma/death, and +7 to save vs poison/magic.

Skills of Note: Literacy: English 98%, Literacy: Thorsian 98%, Literacy: Spanish 80%, Language: English 98%, Language: Thorsian 98%, Language: Spanish 90%, Basic Math 98%, Advanced Math 91%, Astronomy 76%, Intelligence 62%, Interrogation 51%, Law 98%, Demolitions 82%, Military Etiquette 81%, Radio: Basic 98%, Electronic Countermeasures 51%, Athletics (General), Body Building & Weight Lifting, Running, Paramedic 45%, Basic Mechanics 65%, Computer Operation 69%, Pilot: Power Armor Basic 95%, Pilot: Power Armor Combat Elite: Silver Eagle, Pilot: Jet Packs 98%, Pilot: Automobile 92%, Pilot: Jet Aircraft 98%, Pilot: Jet Fighters 80%, Parachuting 98%, Navigation 86%, Land Navigation 74%, Read (& Operate) Sensory Equipment 76%, Weapon Systems 91%, Sniper, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons.

Psionic Powers: None.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Weapons: In space, while aboard the *Challenger II*, Marovich is forced to use relatively conventional but formidable weapons and armor, such as the NEMA PR-470 "Hot Seat" Plasma Rifle and standard NEMA body armor. Once back on Earth, Marovich will try to immediately re-acquire a suit of NEMA Silver Eagle power armor, which is both his favorite armor and weapon.

Cybernetics: None.

Money: Marovich has no money or resources to speak of while traveling on the *Challenger II*, apart from the sections of the ship he controls. After landing on Earth, the former pilot and war hero can potentially access a considerable amount of personal funds (over 50,000 credits). He also has security clearances and access codes for several NEMA bases and other military installations. Depending on how the Game Master runs this in a campaign, Marovich can either obtain major amounts of equipment and weapons after landing on Earth, or have virtually nothing (assuming Dr. Broussard lets NEMA know of Marovich's malevolent alien nature before he can get to his resources).

Doctor Shannon Broussard

Scientific Officer of the *Challenger II*

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 24, M.E. 20, M.A. 20, P.S. 14, P.P. 17, P.E. 15, P.B. 21, Spd 22.

Hit Points: 49, S.D.C.: 42.

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

Weight: 126 lbs (56.7 kg).

Age: 34

P.P.E.: 10

Level of Experience: 10th level NEMA Rogue Scientist.

Disposition: A brilliant, calculating scientist, Dr. Shannon Broussard is a gifted individual with a knack for organizing and leading others. She rarely loses her temper, and when she speaks, she has a natural affinity for making people listen. She is a highly analytical person, able to see many sides of a problem and to deal with that problem in the most efficient, logical manner, even if that solution may not always seem obvious to others. Because she is reserved and rarely smiles, many of her colleagues believe the brilliant young woman to be cold and ruthless – her close friends, however, know better, and know her to be a caring, quiet individual. She lives for her work, which is the exploration of the unknown – she has no fear of danger, and her curiosity and thirst for knowledge often get the better of her when working alone. When working with others, though, she always remains focused, keeping the focus of her group – as well as their safety – her main priority, even if that means putting herself in peril.

Appearance: Shannon Broussard is a dark-haired, striking beauty, tall, with a lean, athletic build. She has exceptionally fast reflexes and instincts, and moves about quickly with a lithe grace.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Expert and Boxing.

Attacks per Melee: Seven.

Bonuses: +3 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, +3 to disarm, +3 to S.D.C. damage, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +4 to pull punch, karate-style kick does 2D6+2 damage, +3 to save



vs psionics/insanity, +60% to trust/intimidate, and +55% to charm/impress.

Skills of Note: Literacy: English 98%, Literacy: French 98%, Language: English 98%, Language: French 98%, Language: Spanish 98%, Language: German 98%, Cryptography 60%, Electronic Countermeasures 80%, Laser Communications 65%, Optic Systems 80%, Sensory Equipment 80%, Artificial Intelligence 90%, Astronomy & Navigation 98%, Astrophysics 98%, Biology 98%, Basic Math 98%, Advanced Math 98%, Basic Electronics 98%, Basic Mechanics 98%, Aircraft Mechanics 95%, Automotive Mechanics 75%, Mechanical Engineer 95%, Computer Operation 98%, Computer Programming 95%, Computer Repair 55%, Robot Electronics 55%, Robot Mechanics 30%, Vehicle Armorer 40%, General Repair & Maintenance 75%, Computer Hacking 80%, Basic Cybernetics 85%, First Aid 98%, Forensics 95%, Find Contraband 76%, Pilot: Automobile 90%, Pilot: Airplane 98%, Radio: Basic 98%, Recycle 90%, Salvage 95%, Aerobic Athletics, W.P. Handguns, W.P. Rifles, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle.

Psionic Powers: None.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Weapons: In space, Dr. Broussard uses the main weapons and armor that she and her band of survivors managed to salvage from the weapons lockers of the ship. There, she uses the LV-10 Mega-Damage Vest for protection and the NEMA LSR-250 Laser Rifle as her weapon of choice. Once on Earth, she will utilize whatever is necessary for her mission, with no preference for any particular weapon or armor.

Cybernetics: None.

Money: Aboard the *Challenger II*, Dr. Broussard has little access to money – which doesn't really matter, as there's no need for it on the ship. Once back on Earth, Dr. Broussard's name and reputation carry quite a bit of weight with NEMA and with the surviving governments of Earth – should she be able to connect with government officials or NEMA officers in authority, she will receive pretty much any sort of resources that she requires.

Note: The "NEMA Rogue Scientist" O.C.C. is a renamed version of the Rogue Scientist O.C.C. from the *Rifts® Ultimate Edition RPG*, and uses all the rules and guidelines for that O.C.C. from that book.

Using the Moons of Jupiter in a Rifts® Chaos Earth™ Campaign

The scenario described above can be used to either create a stand-alone adventure or a short campaign for *Rifts® Chaos Earth™*, or can be used as a supplement to enhance a much larger, ongoing campaign. The following are some suggestions for how to integrate this information into your game.

As a Space-Bound Campaign

If the action of the campaign is to be entirely self-contained inside the hull of the *Challenger II*, there will only be a limited number of adventures. Although the ship itself is quite large (the spacecraft has five distinct levels, and is 1,088 feet (331.6 m) long and 225 feet (68.6 m) wide), players and Game Masters

alike can find that a contained space of this size will rapidly run out of room for adventure. It is recommended that a space-bound campaign only be used if the Game Master intends the campaign to be relatively short, or as a prelude to a campaign set on Chaos Earth™.

Asteroids Away!

Since S.C.A.R.A.B. has no value for the living beings aboard the *Challenger II* – all the advanced computer intelligence cares about is the ship itself, and the mineral samples from Europa collected by the landing craft – it has altered the course for home. The *Challenger II* is currently headed straight through the most dangerous parts of the main asteroid belt between Jupiter and Mars. One wrong hit from a large asteroid will breach the hull of the spacecraft and cause it to depressurize, killing all living creatures aboard. Unless the navigation computers can be hacked, and the course back to Earth reset to its original coordinates, the surviving crew faces almost certain doom.

The Garden of Eden

Marovich and the rest of the alien-possessed crew have taken refuge in the bio-labs of the *Challenger II*. Based upon cursory scouting missions, it appears as though they are attempting to clone some of the Thorosos parasites. If Marovich and his evil companions are successful, the *Challenger II* may soon be filled with thousands upon thousands of alien Thorosos parasites – which would be bad news for Earth whenever the spacecraft finally returns home. Marovich must be stopped, which means destroying either the clones or the bio-lab facilities.

The Traitor

The Player Characters discover a coded message at a computer terminal that they find utterly chilling. Seeking to eradicate the remnants of the crew, the Thorosos parasites have struck a deal with one of the crew members: betray your friends, and we will allow you to live. The message, though, provides no indication of the traitor's identity. The Player Characters must scramble to investigate the message, and trace it to its source – and must do so, of course, before the traitor can stab them in the back and sell them out to the Thorosos.

As a Campaign on Earth

Player Characters in this scenario can either be the surviving crew of the *Challenger II*, returning home to face the ruins of an apocalyptic Earth and trying to stop the Thorosos-controlled humans from wreaking even more havoc; or they can be NEMA soldiers and operatives, attempting to find and rescue the crew of the *Challenger II* when it finally lands. Remember, the people of Earth do not know that half the crew has been possessed by a race of parasitic aliens – all they know is that the ship had a number of brilliant scientists on board, some who would presumably be able to help with the crisis at hand. Unless Dr. Broussard or some of the other "normal" humans who survived are able to provide some sort of warning, anyone greeting the ship upon its arrival could be in for a nasty surprise.

Abduction in the Atlas Towers

The *Challenger II* crash-lands just outside the ruins of Chicago as it returns to Earth. Before Dr. Broussard and her band of survivors can warn NEMA and the rest of the world about the Thorosos menace, an elite squad of NEMA commandos infiltrates the wreckage of the ship and recovers Gideon Marovich. They take him to their new base – the Atlas Towers, which just prior to the Great Cataclysm, had been unveiled as the tallest buildings in the world. Unfortunately for the NEMA commandos, they unwittingly bring their own doom within the walls of the towers, as Marovich brings a host of Thorosos parasites with him, and proceeds to infect many high-ranking NEMA officials. The Player Characters need to storm the Towers and rescue any survivors who still remain free from the influence of the Thorosos parasites, before Marovich can transform the Towers into a stronghold for his alien followers.

The S.C.A.R.A.B. Virus

When the Player Characters arrive on Earth, they quickly discover that the Thorosos are not the only parasites arriving on the planet. S.C.A.R.A.B., seeing the havoc caused by the Great Cataclysm, realized that virtually all of humanity had been affected by the strange ley lines crossing the world, and that it needed to protect the few remaining “pure” humans it could find from those it believed to be “infected” by the ley lines. Linking into

several NEMA bunkers, S.C.A.R.A.B. managed to transmit its new findings and directives to another intelligent NEMA computer – A.R.C.H.I.E. Two, at NORAD. Slowly but surely, S.C.A.R.A.B. and A.R.C.H.I.E. Two begin to take control of robot soldiers and other mechanized instruments of war, sending them on a mission to eradicate any “infected” human that they find... which means, more or less, *every* human that they find.

Won't You Step into My Parlor?

Gideon Marovich and his fellow Thorosos parasites arrive in a small town called Providence. Marovich, using his former fame as a well-known astronaut and war hero, announces that he has established a sanctuary beneath the town, which provides safety from the ley lines and opening Rifts, and a large supply of food, water, and power. While the Player Characters suspect the truth of the matter, there is little they can do to stop the mass exodus of survivors heading towards Providence. People simply want to believe in the salvation offered by Marovich, even if it seems too good to be true, and they are unaware of his Thorosos conversion. With no one willing to listen to them, the Player Characters must travel to Providence, where they discover a sinister base established by the Thorosos parasites... and where they must stop the evil aliens from spreading their foul influence amongst the thousands of refugees traveling to the town.

Caution:

The next several

pages contain femme

fatales. Proceed at

your own risque.



Megaera

Optional Material for Nightbane®

By Irvin L. Jackson

Illustration by Apollo Okamura

"Why do you always do this to me?" Megan railed at the mirror.

"Quit your whining. If you had some decency and morals, I wouldn't be in your life at all!" her reflection yelled back at her. "Now, get the mop and clean up all this mess. I'm not about to break you out of jail!"

Megan turned away from the mirror, forcing back the urge to smash it. Sniffing, she grabbed a bucket and a mop from under the sink and began to fill the bucket with hot water from the tap, absently realizing that her new shoes were going to be ruined by the slowly expanding pool of blood threatening to completely cover her kitchen floor.

Looking up at the window as the bucket filled, she found herself staring again at Megaera.

"Stop smirking at me like that!" Megan yelled, bouncing a wet sponge ineffectually off the double-paned glass. Megaera just laughed.

"Little girl, what would you do without me?" Megaera asked, black wings flexing in the mirror. Megan once again resented Megaera for using her face and, as if adding insult to injury, making it so much more beautiful.

"Have a relationship that didn't end in my boyfriend murdered on the floor, maybe?" Megan snapped, almost spilling the bucket as she hauled it out of the sink, sloshing hot, soapy water on the Formica tabletop.

"Relationship?" Megaera scoffed. "Is that what you call what you wanted to do with him, you disgusting little thing?"

Megan turned away from the window, sobbing, actually preferring to focus on the dead body on the floor, making herself stare at the shredded flesh hanging in chunks from her now very ex-boyfriend's neck. Megaera's scourge at work. As she began to cry anew, Megaera's voice chastised her in her head.

"Don't you feel sympathy for him! Don't you dare," Megaera scolded. "He's Cult of Night. I spotted the sacrificial dagger in his pocket while you were busy thinking of... other... things."

Megan forced herself to reach down and feel in his pocket, pulling out the wicked, black, 8-inch Darkblade dagger. Realization set in as she held it in her hands, feeling the supernatural weight of it.

"You knew! You used me as bait!"

"Quit your whining, I said," Megaera shot back. "If you're going to have those sinful urges, some good might as well come from them. Now go get the hacksaw and some clothes you don't mind getting ruined. You're gonna have a long night."

No one in the Lightbringers is sure just what triggered Megan Rivera's first transformation into the deadly Nightbane known as Megaera, but most who know her agree that it must have been something particularly traumatic, even by Nightbane stan-

dards. Some speculate that she may have been raped, others say tortured by the Cult of Night, and some just think Megan's first Becoming was normal, but her mind couldn't handle seeing the face staring back at her in the mirror. However, whatever the belief of her origins, all agree on one thing: Megan/Megaera is out of her mind.

Born to religious fundamentalist parents, Megan Rivera did not fit the profile of the typical Nightbane. Sheltered, protected, and from well-to-do parents and a large family, she did not go through her first Becoming until she was 19 and in college.

Having left home to go to school in New York, against her parents' wishes, she was wracked with guilt and completely out of her element when Dark Day came. Living with a roommate who did not survive the harrowing events of that day, no one but Megan, and perhaps Megaera, knows what she experienced on Dark Day.

Perhaps as a result of whatever trauma she underwent that day, or possibly influenced by her strict upbringing, Megan has never accepted that she is a Nightbane and that Megaera is her *Morphus*, and she refuses to believe any evidence that points to that conclusion. For Megan and Megaera there is only one plausible explanation for her dramatic ability to change shape and form: Megaera is a Fury, or Erinyes, from Greek mythology, whose job is to deliver punishment to the wicked.

Both Megan and Megaera whole-heartedly believe this, and deny any claims of multiple personality disorder, schizophrenia, or even alternate supernatural explanations. Megaera is a Fury and Megan, due to her sinfulness, has been chosen to harbor her vengeful spirit. And that's that.

The Lightbringers, who employ Megaera, know Megan's crazy. But Megaera is a powerful foe of evil, even if she does take things a bit too far at times. She's gotten more and more extreme since she was brought into the faction, however, and belatedly the Lightbringers realize that bringing Megan and Megaera into an organization that utilizes beings such as the Guardians and talk of a "War of Light and Dark" has only fueled Megan's delusions. But Megaera is, to many, too vital an asset in the war against evil to "cure."

Megaera believes the purpose of her existence is to punish the evil within humanity. As such, she focuses her ire and power mostly against turncoat humans who work with the Nightlords, corrupted politicians, wicked sorcerers and the general scum of the earth. She believes the Nightlords and their minions are here to test the faith of humanity and rarely actually interferes with their operations. They are simply placed here to cull the righteous from the faithless and to help her identify those men and women who would compound the misery already heaped on the backs of their fellow man.

Megaera also believes, since encountering the Lightbringers and Guardians, that it is her job to bring renegade Guardians to justice when they cross the line and become evil. This is something the Lightbringers have instigated, feeding her self-deluded fantasies to use her as a tool against evil Guardians. Guardians' powers are such that it is extremely difficult for one Guardian to take down another. It is also emotionally taxing to pit them against one another. Megaera has the power to bring wayward Guardians to task, and feels no remorse in doing so. They also often use her to hunt vampires.

Megaera believes so deeply in her delusions that she does not even truly realize what the Nightlands are. She sees them as some form of Hades, and frequently takes extremely "wicked" humans forcefully into the Nightlands and leaves them in the waste to die, believing she is depositing them there for their well-deserved eternal torment. Having seen many of her victims set upon by the horrific creatures that stalk the Nightlands has only reinforced her belief. When she feels her victims do not deserve exile to the Nightlands she will usually inflict some horrible (but temporary) curse upon them and maybe give them a good flaying with her Darkwhip power, which manifests as a many-tailed, black, barbed scourge.

If she runs afoul of Nightlord minions, she generally attempts to banish them back to the Nightlands with her magic, believing they have overstepped their bounds by hindering her efforts.

The problem with Megaera is that her morals are extremely strict, and over time she has begun to "punish" people for the slightest infractions of her own twisted code. Eventually, she will be beyond the Lightbringers' ability to control, and they dread the cost of having to put this so-called Fury down, so they delay and find reasons to keep sending her on mission after mission to punish "evil."

Megan Rivera/Megaera – Nightbane Mystic

Note: All attributes and stats in parentheses apply to the character only in her Nightbane Morpheus form.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 10, M.A. 14, P.S. 13 (31), P.P. 18 (24), P.E. 16 (28), P.B. 20 (28), Spd 11 (31, 18 in flight).

Hit Points: 54 (103). **S.D.C.:** 38 (197).

Horror Factor: None (13).

P.P.E.: 303

Height: 5 feet, 7 inches (1.7 m) tall. **Weight:** 140 lbs (63 kg).

Age: 25

Level of Experience: 10th level Nightbane Mystic.

Natural Abilities:

1. **The Becoming:** Megan can transform from Façade (human form) to her Morpheus (Megaera) in one full melee round or instantly by making an M.E. roll at +5.

2. **Supernatural Senses:** Megan has Nightvision in both Façade (200 feet/61 m) and Morpheus form (500 feet/152 m), but lacks the normal ability to sense the presence of other Nightbane nearby, as the result of a mental block due to her insanity. Or more to the point, she has the ability, but refuses to acknowledge it or recognize it.

3. **Supernatural Attributes:** Nightbane have Supernatural Strength and Endurance, in addition they regenerate from damage at a rate of 10 Hit Points/S.D.C. per melee round.

4. **Mirror Walk:** Nightbane can cross over to the Nightlands by spending two P.P.E. in their Morpheus form and using a mirror of any size. Can carry up to 100 lbs (45 kg) of inanimate matter or can carry people at a cost of one P.P.E. per two pounds.

5. **Immunities:** Nightbane are immune to all forms of mind control (magic or otherwise), immune to a vampire's slow kill bite, and cannot be physically transformed by any means (magical or otherwise).



Morpheus: Incredibly beautiful woman with angelic features, large, black feathered wings, sleek cybernetic arms and legs (claims they are a gift from the Greek god Hephestus), and articulated spines on her lower legs.

Disposition: Megan is a shy, intelligent young woman who feels an extreme amount of guilt for, in general, just being a typical young woman. She has a very low self-esteem and believes Megaera is a punishment heaped upon her by the universe for horrible sins such as enjoying dancing and occasionally going out on a date. The Megaera persona bosses her around even when she is in her Façade, and berates her for her sinfulness and impurity.

Megaera, on the other hand, is daring, outgoing, belligerent, disrespectful of authority, loud, striding and in-your-face. She has a violent streak a mile wide, is incredibly vindictive, and bows to nobody. Ironically, Megaera tends to have morals somewhere between those of an alley cat and a serial killer. Whenever Megan brings this up, Megaera points out that she is a Fury, not a human, and is not restricted by a human moral code. Megaera says a Fury cannot be bound by human morality if she is to be expected to deliver merciless, sometimes bloody, justice to the wicked. She's here to enforce the morality of humanity, not live it.

Insanity: Megan suffers from Multiple Personality Disorder of a unique sort. She has an alternate personality named

Megaera that believes she is a Fury from Greek legend. Megan is always represented by her Façade and Megaera is always represented by her Morphus. Megan has the ability to “summon” Megaera, and Megaera will come out when Megan is in physical danger or under an incredible amount of trauma. Megaera only tends to stay around for the “action” and when things quiet down, Megan takes back over, switching to her Façade. Megan can always hear Megaera in her head and can often see Megaera in her reflection. Of course, no one else can hear or see Megaera at these times.

Psionic Powers: None.

Talents: Darkwhip, The Shroud, Astral Self, Storm Maker, and Dreamer.

Magical Knowledge: Spell Strength: 14. Spells include Agony, Banishment, Befuddle, Charismatic Aura, Cure Minor Disorders, Curse: Temporary Insanity, Detect Concealment, Fear, Fire Bolt, Globe of Daylight, Horrific Illusion, Impervious to Fire, Impression, Luck Curse, Magic Armor, Sense Evil, Thunderclap and Words of Truth.

Combat Abilities: Façade: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Morphus: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks Per Melee Round: Façade: Four attacks per melee.

Morphus: Five attacks per melee.

Damage: Façade: 1D4 S.D.C. punch and 1D6 S.D.C. kick, or judo-style body throw/flip.

Morphus: 2D6 on a restrained punch, 5D6 on a full strength punch and 1D6x10 on a power punch (counts as two attacks), jump kick and entangle.

Bonuses: Façade: +2 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +6 to roll, +4 to pull punch, Critical Strike on an unmodified 19 or 20, +2 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs disease, +1 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to all Perception Rolls, and has a 50% chance to charm or impress.

Morphus: +1 to initiative, +9 to strike, +10 to parry, +10 to dodge, +8 to roll, +10 to pull punch, Critical Strike on an unmodified 18-20, +11 to save vs magic, +3 to save vs psionics, +7 to save vs poisons, +3 to save vs disease, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +26% to save vs coma/death, +2 to all Perception Rolls, and has an 86% chance to charm or impress.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: None beyond her insanity.

O.C.C. Skills of Note: Read/Speak English 98%, Speak Latin 60%, Speak Greek 55%, Lore: Religion and Lore: Demons and Monsters 90%, Dance 85%, Track Animals 70%, Gymnastics, Holistic Medicine 65%, Lore: Vampires 50%, Prowl 75%, Swimming 95%, Wilderness Survival 75%, Pilot Automobile 78%, W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Whip, and W.P. Sword.

Allies of Note: The Lightbringers, particularly those on the East Coast of the United States, though her support in the organization is dwindling to the more “hard line” and fanatical members. There are a few Nightbane who still try to convince her of her true nature, but most who have encountered her have given up trying.

Minions: None.

Weapons & Equipment of Note: Her personal weapons include a Darkblade long sword (3D6 damage), and paired Colt. 45 pistols always loaded with silver bullets (for vam-

pire hunting), in addition to her Darkwhip talent and magical abilities. Megan owns a small apartment in Queens and as Megaera, has reasonable access to the resources of the Lightbringers faction on the East Coast, particularly when she has been assigned to hunt down a renegade Guardian.

Aquaria

Optional Material for Nightbane®

By Mark Oberle

Illustration by Mike Mumah

NSB Agent Eduardo “Eddie” Cortez shifted uncomfortably as he surveyed the darkened waters of Blount Bay through his nightvision goggles. Here it was, midnight, and he and his partner were standing on a boat in the middle of the bay, searching for a mermaid, of all things. “I guess it could be worse,” the recently awakened Doppelganger thought to himself. “I could be working the Darkblade forges like my counterpart.” He closed his eyes and involuntarily shuddered, and not due to the cool ocean breeze.

“Problems?” came the voice of his partner, Agent Nathaniel Garrett.

“Yeah, damn cleaners must have over-starched my shirt again, it itches like crazy,” answered Cortez.

“Could you two little schoolgirls can the gossip until after we nab this oversized sushi?” chimed in a third agent, whom Eddie hadn’t seen before tonight.

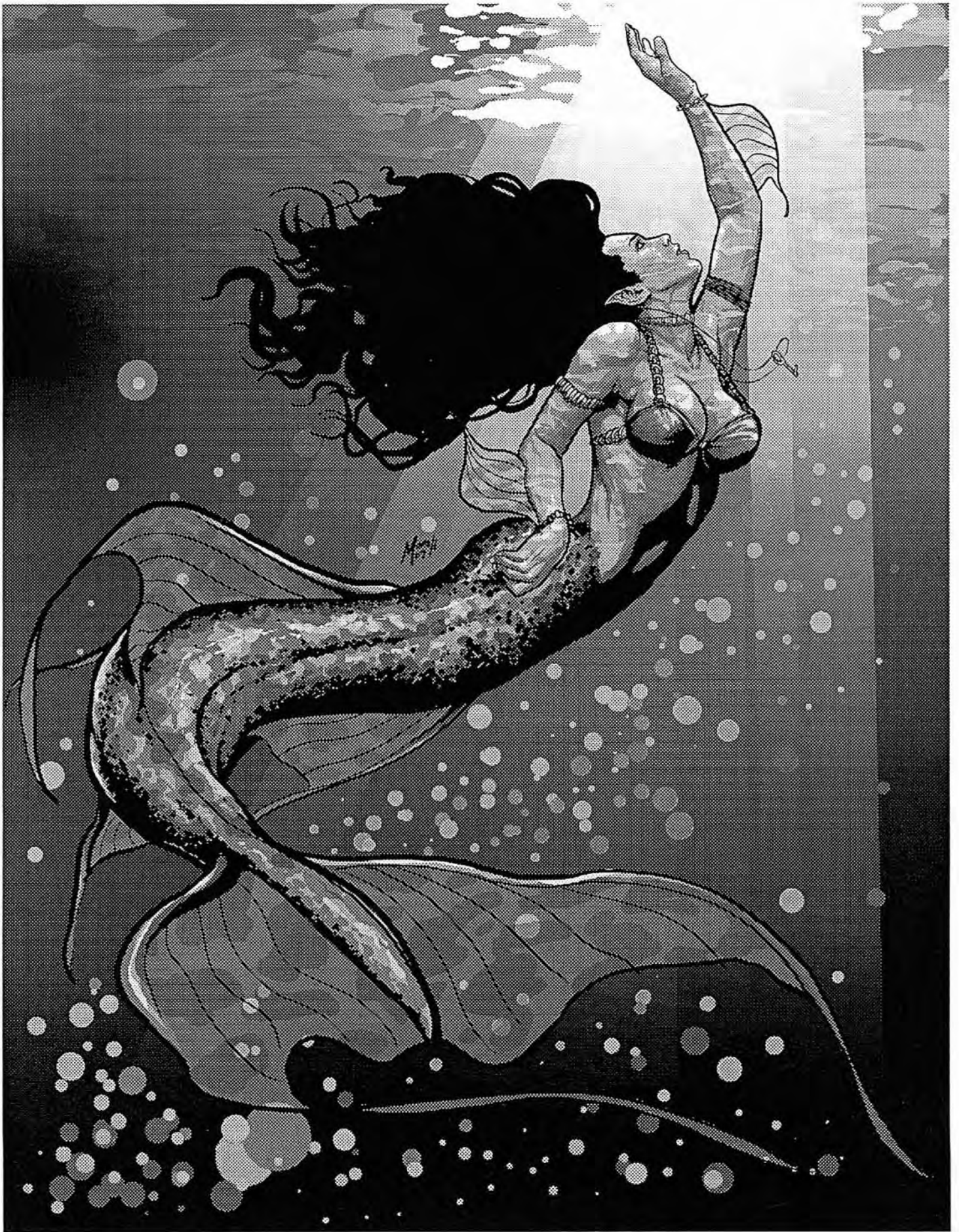
They were just one of several such boats that were taking part in the trap set for a particularly irritating Nightbane that had made herself a nuisance as of late, and was rumored to be a major player in one of the local factions. Acting on a tip from one of their informants, the local NSB office had cordoned off the mouth of the bay with a line of nets, patrol boats with armed agents on the surface, and a phalanx of Hounds at the sea-floor.

Un-shouldering his assault rifle, Eddie turned to tell the guy to lay off. Before he said a word, the quiet lapping of the waves against the side of the boat was interrupted by a distant splash on the starboard side of the commandeered Coast Guard patrol boat. Quickly returning the rifle to his shoulder, he stepped up beside his partner to survey the distance.

The mist rising from the water limited sight to about a hundred meters, but they managed to pick out a couple of dorsal fins moving silently across the surface of the relatively calm waters. In a slightly disappointed voice, Garret remarked, “Ah, just a couple of sharks.”

“Hey, maybe they’ll do our work for us,” Eddie quipped, just before the female agent at the aft of the boat shrieked and opened fire with her sidearm.

“Relax, Chica, it’s just a...” Eddie’s voice trailed off as he turned toward the panicking agent and saw what she was firing at. Like a living nightmare, a forty-foot Great White enveloped in what could best be described as an inverse bubble swooped in over the boat and seized her in its gaping maw. “...shark?!” he managed to squeak a second after it dove beneath the waves once more.



Agent Garrett pulled Eddie to a crouching position and scrambled for the radio, as the inexperienced agent was still trying to process what had happened. Before Nathaniel could reach the helm, the boat jerked violently and listed hard to port, sending the third agent plummeting overboard, and Agents Garrett and Cortez sprawling hard to the deck.

The boat leveled as Nathaniel reached for the mic now dangling on its cord. In a flash of silver, he was pinned to the deck with an ornate trident protruding from the back of his neck and a flood of crimson welling from the fatal wound. As his partner's eyes glazed over, Eddie reached for his .45 pistol holstered under his coat. As he did so, a melodic keening lulled him into a stupor.

When he came to, he was floating several feet above the churning waters, held in place by an invisible force. Before Agent Cortez had time to fully register the mass of fins circling below him, a disembodied female voice spoke to him in a subdued tone.

"You would do well to tell your masters that such small fish as me are surely not worth such effort when they have much more pressing matters on dry land," she stated. "Not to mention," she continued, "I won't be as nice next time."

After being casually flung back into the drifting boat, Eduardo Cortez tried to swallow the knot in his throat and radio his supervisor. He couldn't help thinking that he'd probably have better chances with the sharks.

Julia Chambers was afraid of the water growing up. When she was just seven, her father had died attempting to rescue her from a riptide while they vacationed in Hawaii. Five years later, her mother, who was a marine biologist, died when her boat was caught in open water by Hurricane Agnes.

It seemed that young Julia was destined to meet the same fate as her parents after another five years, when her foster-family's van was forced off the road by a drunk driver one night while they were returning from her foster-brother's Little League baseball game. However, rather than meeting her demise at the bottom of the lake the van careened into, the water rushing over her triggered her Becoming. She quickly realized that she could still breathe and easily tore free of her restraints, pulling the unconscious family of four from a watery grave.

Julia was touted as a hometown hero until she left to attend school at Florida State University a year later. Majoring in archaeology, she decided to put her special talents to use and specialize in the underwater recovery of historical artifacts. After graduating with her bachelor's degree, she landed a job on a vessel named *Sea Dragon* that was dedicated to locating historical shipwrecks, and was funded by none other than the young entrepreneur, Richard Henessy.

After a couple of lucrative finds, young Julia had made a name for herself as a capable treasure-hunter. It was then that the ship's first mate approached her with a secret that the rest of the crew had kept. The team may have been funded by Henessy, but they truly answered to a secret organization known as the Seekers. The team had caught on fairly early that she wasn't using the dive equipment she always went down wearing, and had later observed her Morphus at work.

Rather than being afraid or confused, they had kept an eye on the young 'Bane, learning more about her kind through their own studies. Now, they offered her a position within the organization, as they felt she could be trusted. Their treasure hunting continued right up until Dark Day, locating priceless artifacts and donating large sums of their earnings to various charities (fronts for the Seekers).

Unfortunately, they had become rather well-known in the Southeastern United States as skilled artifact hunters. During Dark Day, their ship answered a distress call while they were off the coast of Mississippi searching for a sunken yacht. It was a Nightlord trap, and their vessel was attacked by a pack of Hunters. Panicked, Julia ran below deck to one of the holds while the Hunters unceremoniously slaughtered the rest of the crew.

When the ship listed hard to port, Julia was thrown headfirst into the bulkhead and knocked unconscious. When she came to the room was dark, and she was ankle deep in water. By the groaning of the hull around her, she surmised that the monsters had sunk the boat thinking that she would perish at the bottom of the gulf. She didn't want to believe what had just happened, and silently wished to be anywhere but where she was. With the still water around her acting as a reflective surface, she got her wish.

She was jolted back to reality as she found herself suddenly submerged in ice-cold water. Instinctively shifting to Morphus, she swam to the surface of the small pool to find she was underground. Very faint light was given off by a kind of bio-luminescent lichen that grew on the rocks of the cave that she found herself in, just enough that she could see clearly with her heightened vision. Exploring the tunnels beyond, she found several dry areas but only one outlet to the surface in the form of a narrow crevice too small to squeeze through.

Returning to the reflecting pool, she found that for some reason, she could see the hold of her sunken ship at its bottom. Swimming back through, she found that the hold had stabilized somehow rather than collapsing and there was apparently enough of a pressure difference to prevent any more water from leaking in. Using the airlock between holds, she was able to let herself out of the ship without compromising the stable hold. She then found a safe place to ride out the rest of Dark Day after doing what she could to lay her friends to rest.

Once Aquaria (the name she took to hide her identity from the Nightlords) was finally able to re-establish contact with the Seekers, they took great interest in the wreckage of the *Sea Dragon* and the cave system it had become linked to. After the installation of a couple makeshift purge tanks to the revamped airlock system, a team led by Aquaria found the hold much as she had left it, though no longer with an open portal. Acting on a hunch, Aquaria engaged her Mirror Walk and the portal opened once again beneath their feet. The team inspected the cave and later reported back to the council that it would make an extremely secure location to house some of the more powerful artifacts that they did not wish the Nightlords or their minions to get hold of.

The cave system was outfitted to house a collection of items the Seekers had in storage at less-secure facilities, and a unique Cybermage lock mechanism was installed on the airlock door, with only a handful of keys created, attuned to certain individu-

als. The makeshift repairs to the remains of the *Sea Dragon* were then disguised (can only be detected by a thorough investigation of the inside of the ship), and Aquaria was appointed as the archivist for the collection and guardian of the makeshift vault. To this day, Aquaria has not let anyone anywhere near the *Sea Dragon* nor caused anyone to suspect that the secret facility even exists (despite the key that always hangs around her neck).

Aquaria's primary directive is to guard and study the artifacts held in the vault (it functions as a makeshift living quarters as well), with new items and supplies air-dropped by helicopter every month. However, she is still sometimes requested for underwater recovery missions and occasionally responds to shipping accidents or lashes out in her own way against the Nightlord invasion.

Name: Aquaria.

Real Name: Julia Chambers.

Race/R.C.C.: Nightbane Mystic.

Alignment: Scrupulous (was Principled, but the death of her friends hardened her a bit).

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 22, M.A. 13, P.S. 14 (29), P.P. 23 (32), P.E. 11 (23), P.B. 12 (22), Spd 10 (34). The attributes in parentheses are for her Morphus form.

Hit Points: 32 in Facade, 68 in Morphus.

S.D.C.: 33 in Facade, 143 in Morphus.

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.73 m) in Facade, 8 feet (2.4 m) from head to tail in Morphus.

Weight: 110 lbs (49.5 kg) in Facade, 350 lbs (157.5 kg) in Morphus.

Age: 43 (appears to be in her early twenties).

Sex: Female.

Horror/Awe Factor: 8 in Morphus form.

P.P.E.: 263

Experience Level: 6th

Disposition: Cool, even-tempered, and analytical in the extreme, Julia tends to stay one step ahead of those around her. She is able to take most things in stride and maintain her composure even under a great deal of stress. Julia is a very confident, capable, and optimistic person able to function well in the role of leader and tactician. However, her current assignment doesn't exploit those particular strengths.

On the other hand, this suits her just fine since she is somewhat of a loner anyway, and can come off as slightly aloof. In fact, Julia is given to short stints of melancholy, especially when reminded of the loss of her family and friends. This is actually made worse by the long absences from civilization, though even there she feels she can't be her true self. Her home lies beneath the waves with the marine creatures as her family and friends, which has led to a measure of dissociation with humanity, her own kind, and even the struggle against the Nightlords.

When she becomes Aquaria, these traits seem to be amplified. She becomes completely businesslike and can seem very cold-hearted, especially when engaged in combat. However, there are times as she darts about the waters or fraternizes with sea creatures that her compassion and childlike exuberance shines through and one might catch a glimpse of her personality from a happier time.

Julia doesn't really have any friends, so her work occupies much of her life. However, she does enjoy exploring the depths around the shipwreck and interacting with the wildlife in the area. She also enjoys curling up with a good novel when she has the time, as well as listening to jazz and blues albums.

Description: Average height with a petite but athletic build. Her long, black hair and olive skin are the result of her Italian ancestry, and her eyes are a blue so dark that they almost appear black. She is fairly attractive, though she doesn't go out of her way to flaunt her looks other than wearing contact lenses rather than glasses to correct her nearsightedness. Julia typically dresses in fairly unremarkable business attire when in public, though she shuns such finery in favor of more comfortable clothing such as jeans and tee-shirts in the privacy of her home.

Skills of Note: Language: English 98%, Literacy: English 98%, Language: Italian 75%, Lore: Nightlands 65%, Dance 65%, Archaeology 75/65%, History: Ancient 95%, Undersea Salvage 75%, Pilot: Ships 70/65%, Navigation 70%, Sensory Equipment 55%, Radio: Basic 60%, Literacy: Aramaic/proto-Judean 30%, and Principles of Magic 46%.

Secondary Skills: Swimming 75%, Underwater Navigation 50%, Research 65%, Rope Works 55%, Sewing 65%, Sing 60%, Undersea & Sea Survival 35%, Computer Operation 50%, and W.P. Forked.

Special Abilities: Nightvision, 200 feet (61 m) in Facade, 1000 feet (305 m) in Morphus. Sense Nightbane: 480 feet (146 m). Supernatural Strength and Endurance in Morphus form and heals 10 S.D.C. per melee round (3D6+2 per day in Facade). The ability to Mirror Walk herself and 100 lbs (45 kg) of gear at the cost of 2 P.P.E., +1 P.P.E. per 2 lbs (0.9 kg) of weight of a passenger. Immune to all mind control and transformation. Can also breathe in both water and air in Morphus, hold breath for 1D6+5 minutes, speak underwater (100 foot/30.5 m range), is impervious to normal cold, has a depth tolerance of 1000 feet (305 m), and has sonar that functions with the equivalent of her normal sight when in the darkened depths.

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Basic (Facade), Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (Morphus).

Attacks per Melee: 5 in Facade form, 6 in Morphus form.

Damage: Facade: Punch 1D4, Kick 1D8, and all others standard. Morphus: Restrained Punch 2D6, Full Strength Punch 4D6, Power Punch 1D4x10, Tail Strike 5D6, Power Strike 1D6x10.

Combat Bonuses: +0 (+2) to initiative, +5 (+12) to strike, +6 (+14) to parry and dodge, +2 (+6) to pull punch and roll, +1 (+0) to disarm, and +1 to Spell Strength (in either form). Bonuses in parentheses are for Morphus form.

Other Combat Information: Aquaria avoids combat as much as possible, preferring stealth and evasion to fighting. However, when she does engage the enemy, she tends to do so at a distance using her spells and talents to deal with the threat. One of her favorite tactics when at sea is to cast Water Envelope and Flying Fish on one or two sharks she has command of through Lady of the Wild and unleash them on unsuspecting foes on the surface (quick average stats: H.F. 14, P.S. 36, P.P. 19, Spd 10 mph, H.P. 300, +3 to initiative, +6 to strike,

+4 to dodge, +10 to save vs H.F., and bite deals 6D6 S.D.C.). Of course, Aquaria typically only fights long enough to secure her escape or deal with any perceived threat by destroying them or frightening them away. The only exceptions are those that get too close to her shipwreck and the agents of the Nightlords (against whom she bears a bit of a vengeful streak).

Other Bonuses: +4 (+10) to save vs magic, +5 (+8) to save vs psionics, +0 (+4) to save vs toxins/poisons, +4 to save vs insanity (in both forms), +3 (+5) to save vs Horror Factor, +1 (+3) to save vs disease, and +7 on rolls vs Becoming speed.

Becoming Description: Liquefaction: Julia's features become increasingly transparent as her physical form shifts to dark water (if becoming Aquaria) or clear water (if becoming Julia) that coalesces into her new form. In this transitional state, she can only be harmed by magic, psionics, talents, and explosives (though the latter does half damage). Bullets, blades, and physical strikes pass through her, dealing no damage.

Morphus Appearance: Aquaria's Morphus form strongly resembles ancient mariners' descriptions of the legendary mermaid. The upper part of the body largely resembles Aquaria's Facade, right down to the flowing black hair. However, her features are more elfin in appearance (including pointed ears), she does not require corrective lenses, and the skin has a light blue tint. She also has small, bluish-green fins that protrude from her forearms, and she tends to be dressed in an aquatic theme complete with shark-tooth jewelry.

The lower half of Aquaria resembles that of a large fish, with a mixture of iridescent blue, green, and grey scales, with blue-green coloration to the membranes of her tail fin. Not only is Aquaria stunningly beautiful to behold, but she is powerfully built and as agile as the fastest creatures of the deep.

Vulnerabilities: Aquaria's Morphus is useless on dry land without some additional means of locomotion such as Air Swim. If forced to crawl on dry land in Morphus form, Aquaria's speed is reduced to 3, her melee attacks are cut in half, and she has no combat bonuses whatsoever!

Magic: Float on Water* (3), Sense Direction Underwater* (4), Water Pulse* (2), See Aura (6), Black Water* (5), Breathe Without Air (5), Impression (5), Invisibility: Simple (6), Flying Fish* (8), Impervious to Cold* (10), Water Envelope*† (10), Weed Snare* (8), Communicate with Sea Creature* (10), and Air Swim* (15).

* Due to her aquatic nature, Aquaria has developed many spells from the rare school of Ocean Magic, which is detailed in both *Rifts® World Book 7: Underseas* as well as the *Rifts® Book of Magic*. If the G.M. doesn't have access to either book, he or she may substitute the Ocean Magic spells for invocations of equivalent level.

† Water Envelope can take 200 S.D.C damage before collapsing.

Psionics: None.

Talents: Darksong, Shadow Shield, and Shadow Blast at 6th level. Lady of the Wild at 3rd level (applies to all aquatic vertebrates such as fish, dolphins, whales, manta rays, and sharks).

Weapons and Equipment: As a respected archivist within the Seekers, Aquaria has access to almost any equipment she might need as well as the various artifacts in her safekeeping (several of which are powerful magic items). She also owns a late nineties-model Jeep Renegade, though she obviously doesn't drive it much.

Aquaria doesn't typically have much need for weapons, though a recently acquired trident serves as her main weapon if she expects trouble. The ornately crafted silver weapon is a major artifact weapon of considerable power. It is indestructible, deals 3D8 damage, and can be thrown 500 feet (152 m), returning to its owner in a melee action. The trident can also cast the Ocean Magic spells Water Rush and Armor of Neptune (150 S.D.C. +15 S.D.C. per level, an A.R. of 16, provides an oxygen supply, and makes the wearer impervious to normal cold and water pressure) in any combination up to four times a day, as well as Strength of the Whale and Whirlpool (damage per melee is 2D4x10 S.D.C. for small targets and 4D6x10 S.D.C. to ships and other large targets for the first 1D4 melees and 2D6x10 S.D.C. or 4D6x100 S.D.C. respectively if the target is pulled under), each once per day, all at eighth level.

Money: Roughly \$100,000 split between four bank accounts and an additional \$300,000 invested in various stocks maintained through half a dozen aliases. However, since her basic needs are provided for by the Seekers, it just sits making more money.

Dr. Lillian Campbell

Optional Material for Nightbane®

By Jason Marker

Illustration by Mike Dubisch

Lillian Marie Campbell, Lily to her friends, was born in Warren, Michigan on June 3, 1971 to Carl and Lora Campbell, the second of two children. Carl worked the line at the nearby Chrysler Warren Truck Assembly plant and Lora was a homemaker who took secretarial jobs when money was tight. They raised Lily and her two brothers in a solidly union, working-class household and worked hard for what they had. Lily was a beautiful child, charming and inquisitive, with dark hair and a pretty smile. She showed an early aptitude for both art and science, enjoying sculpting and biology most of all. She was finicky and fastidious as well, afraid of germs and always washing her hands and cleaning her room.

From as early as she could remember, Lily knew she was bred for better things than Warren had to offer. She spent her youth studying hard and daydreaming about the future. As a girl, her favorite fantasy was that she was adopted, and someday her real parents, wealthy and successful, would come to claim her and take her away to a big mansion in Grosse Pointe. In high school she became obsessed with her looks and health. She ran cross-country and swam on the swim team, and honed her artistic skills by attending art camps and taking part in art shows. She complained bitterly to her parents about the clothes she was forced to wear, the house they lived in, even the car they drove.



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She began to hate her parents. She looked down on them for their poverty and what she saw as a lack of intelligence and ambition. She hated them for the fact that they couldn't provide all the things she knew she so richly deserved. Lily graduated from Warren-Lincoln High School in 1989 near the top of her class. That fall she started her freshman year at the University of Michigan on an academic scholarship and she never looked back.

At U of M she enrolled in the pre-med program. She chose pre-med not out of any sense of duty or desire to heal the sick, but because she knew doctors made a lot of money. She was again on the cross-country and swim teams at Michigan, and split her time between the library, the phys-ed building and her job. She didn't drink, didn't party and had very few friends due to her intense and focused personality. Even though her home town was less than an hour away, Lily never went home to visit. She cut off all contact with her family, even throwing away birthday and Christmas cards. She made up a long story about coming from Grosse Pointe and her father being on the board of a large bank. She stuck to this story, and to this day the few friends she made still believe it.

While she was at college she also began to exhibit signs of mental instability. She became obsessed with cleanliness and worried constantly whether she had locked the door to her apartment. She would go days without sleep, constantly studying or shopping or cleaning. She became fascinated with death and dying, taking great delight in her medical texts, gruesome news stories and obituaries. Her beliefs that she was better than everyone else and that she deserved the finest things consumed her. On the surface she played nice, but pitied her fellow students for being so inferior and even looked down on her professors. She worked out constantly, honing her body, and she ate only the healthiest foods. She spent all of her meager waitressing earnings and racked up huge credit card bills buying expensive clothes and furnishings. She did this to further the illusion that she had come from wealth instead of blue collar slobs. It was during this time her art took a decidedly dark turn. Her sculptures were twisted forms and screaming faces. At one point a concerned art professor reported her to the University counseling center, but never followed up with it and Lily never went.

She did very well in undergrad, graduated cum laude, and attended U of M Medical School, where she studied to be a cosmetic surgeon. She did her residency at Bon Secours Hospital in Grosse Pointe, and after attaining her M.D., she got a job at an upscale cosmetic surgery clinic right near the hospital. Her life was on a roll. All the hard work was paying off, she was making excellent money, she had a prestigious job and a few rich suitors, she finally felt she had made it. Everything came crashing down around her in the spring of 2000.

Dark Day struck just as Lily was stepping out of the shower. Just as she spun the tap closed she became lightheaded. Suddenly, her body was wracked with pain. It felt like her bones were bending and her skin was peeling from her body. She collapsed, screaming in the tub, and as she lay there naked and trembling, a change came over her. Leathery black wings tore through the flesh of her back, splattering the white tiles of the bathtub in bright blood. Her body changed, her hips, breasts and waist becoming exaggerated like a caricature of a woman. Her fingers stretched and it felt as if her face was being burned

away. She lay in the tub weeping and covered in blood. Eventually, she gathered her strength and struggled her way out of the tub. She grabbed the edge of the sink and pulled herself up to stare into the mirror, and what she saw there shattered her mind. She had become a monster. One dark, glaring eye stared out of the middle of a face she barely recognized as her own. She screamed, a high, keening wail that revealed a mouth full of pointed teeth, and blacked out.

When she awoke she was sore, naked and covered in dried blood. She stood slowly and examined her new body, and found it wonderful. She felt more beautiful and powerful than she ever had. She stared at her new face in the mirror and decided that it was the most wonderful thing she had ever seen. She walked through her apartment, her new wings sweeping pictures and knick-knacks from the walls. She strode into the living room and switched on her television. When she saw the terrible news of Dark Day, she laughed in delight. She danced there before the images of riots and death from the TV. Panic, riots, mass murder, and her new body; it was all a sign, and a welcome one at that. She had finally gotten everything she deserved, everything she had worked so hard for. Power and beauty in abundance were hers and she couldn't wait to share them with the world. She would reshape the world, make it beautiful, one person at a time.

Eventually, she reverted to her normal form. At first she was bitterly disappointed, but soon discovered how to change from one form to another. She stayed in her Morpheus form the rest of the day. She cleaned her apartment, scrubbed the bathroom and took another shower. She cut the back out of a silk kimono and wrapped herself in it, allowing her wings room to stretch. She eventually got through to the clinic after hours of trying, only to find that no one but the secretary had shown up for work. She spent the rest of the day in front of the television, transfixed by the scenes of chaos.

In the days that followed, things slowly began to revert to normal. She explored her new body and powers in the evenings and threw herself into her work by day. Three weeks after her Becoming, she bumped into another Nightbane while in a grocery store. She was shocked to find another creature like her. Obviously, it was vastly inferior to her, but perhaps she could get some information from it. After a quiet conversation in the neighboring coffee shop, she agreed to meet with the Nightbane and its friends. At that meeting, she met a Flesh Sculptor. She was immediately taken with him and was fascinated by his powers. She struck up a relationship with him, at first strictly professional, then as lovers. She studied under him and learned Flesh Sculpting magic, and to thank him, she made him her first victim.

Now, seven years later, she's on top of the world. She's got her own, very successful practice as a cosmetic surgeon. She has a beautiful and stylish condo in the recently renovated Book-Cadillac Hotel, a loyal and wealthy clientele, and a steady stream of subjects for her experiments. In 2003, she rented a space in the Russell Industrial Center, a huge factory that's been converted into lofts and studio space. In her loft are her sculpting and pottery studio, a small living space, and a false wall that hides her laboratory and clinic. Her lab is where she experiments on people, making them beautiful by molding them in her image. She lures the homeless, the vain, and the desperate into

her lab, where she tortures them, keeping them alive for weeks and bending and shaping their bodies to her wishes. She discards most of her victims once they are physically and psychologically broken, using her magics to destroy the evidence of her work. Some unfortunate souls, however, are kept in cages like pets. She considers these her special projects. Her lab assistants, Hope and Charity, were her first two special projects, and she considers them some of her finest work.

Dr. Lillian Marie Campbell

Nightbane Flesh Sculptor

Note: All attributes and stats in parentheses apply to Dr. Campbell in her Morphus form.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 24, M.E. 8, M.A. 20, P.S. 15 (25), P.P. 18 (24), P.E. 17 (27), P.B. 19 (25), Spd 30 (40; Spd flying 15).

Hit Points: 47 (100). **S.D.C.:** 56 (170).

Horror Factor: None (12).

P.P.E.: 275

Experience Level: 6th level Nightbane Flesh Sculptor.

Natural Abilities: All basic powers, bonuses and abilities of the Nightbane R.C.C. as detailed in *Nightbane® RPG*, pages 85-114.

1. The Becoming: Dr. Campbell can change from Façade to Morphus in one full melee, or in less than one action by making an M.E. save (12) at +3.

2. Supernatural Senses: Dr. Campbell has nightvision in both her Façade and Morphus forms. She can see in total darkness 200 feet (61 m) in Façade form and 500 feet (152 m) in Morphus. She can sense other Nightbane up to 480 feet (146 m) away and can identify other Nightbane on sight.

3. Supernatural Attributes: All Nightbane have Supernatural Strength and Endurance. They regenerate 10 S.D.C./H.P. per melee round.

4. Mirror Walk: While in their Morphus form, all Nightbane can cross to and from the Nightlands through any mirror. This costs 2 P.P.E. and the Nightbane can carry 100 pounds (45 kg). They can transport a person, but this costs 1 P.P.E. per two pounds of the person transported.

5. Immunities: Nightbane are immune to all forms of mind control, vampire slow-kill bite, and can not be physically transformed by any means.

6. Understand the Principles of Magic: She knows and understands the main points of magic and sorcery. She knows rituals, symbols, incantations and paraphernalia, and can tell the difference between a fake and the real thing at a glance. She can also tell the purpose of specific magical items and can even tell what supernatural forces are responsible.

7. Sense Ley Lines and Nexus Points: Lily can see ley lines and nexus points, magical features usually invisible to the mortal eye, and can see them up to a mile (1.6 km) away.

Nightbane Morphus: Devil Doll - This is a variation of the Fallen Angel Morphus. Devil Dolls have pale white skin, bright red lips, dark hair, pointed teeth (2D6 bite), and perfect bodies. Leathery, black bat wings sprout from her back and give her the ability to fly. She also has Unusual Facial Features: Cyclops and Long, Sensitive Fingers.

Disposition: On the surface, Lily is a charming, competent medical professional. She has a quick smile, a soothing voice, and an excellent bedside manner. Beneath it all she is completely mad. She is obsessed with beauty and wealth, and will go to any lengths to make sure she has plenty of both. She despises the poor and working class and is deeply embarrassed about her upbringing. She never speaks about her family or childhood, and always smiles and changes the subject when it comes up.

Talents: Sharing the Flesh, Darksong.

Psionics: None.

Magical Knowledge: Dr. Campbell is a Nightbane Flesh Sculptor, a rare creature indeed. She has a Spell Strength of 12 and knows the following spells: Reanimate Flesh, Destroy Dead Flesh, Preserve Living Flesh, Reanimate Flesh, Sense Life Essence, Fuse Bones, Replace Flesh, See Through Lifeless Eyes, Disfigure Flesh, Sculpt Flesh, See Health, Skin Rash, Alter Flesh, Crawling Flesh, Heal Living Flesh, Paralysis, Open Living Flesh, Restore Living Flesh, Remove Skin, Mend Living Flesh and Bone, Sculpt Senses, Remove Living Bone and Mindsculpt.

Combat Abilities: Hand to Hand: Basic and Kick Boxing (Façade), Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (Morphus).

Attacks per Melee: Façade: 5, Morphus: 5.

Bonuses (Façade): +1 to initiative, +3 to strike, +5 to parry, +6 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, +3 to roll with punch/impact, +2 to disarm, Critical Strike on an unmodified 19-20, +5 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +5 to save vs disease, +5% to save vs coma/death, +1 to save vs poison, 45% to trust/intimidate, 45% to charm/impress.

Bonuses (Morphus): +3 to initiative, +9 to strike, +11 to parry, +12 to dodge, +7 to pull punch, +7 to roll with impact, +1 to disarm, +10 to damage, +2 to entangle, Critical Strike on an unmodified 18-20, +12 to save vs magic, +3 to save vs psionics, +7 to save vs disease, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, +24% to save vs coma/death, +6 to save vs poison, 45% to trust/intimidate, 75% to charm/impress.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: Insanities! Dr. Campbell is a walking textbook of tics, quirks and personality disorders. She suffers from the following insanities: Mania, Neurosis: Personal Cleanliness, Neurosis: Obsessed with safety/security, Fascinated with Death, God Syndrome, Obsession: Wealth (wants it), Obsession: Appearance (fashion plate), Obsession: Personal Health (health nut), Phobia: Confined Places, Phobia: Basements and Dark, Damp Places.

O.C.C. Skills: Read/Write/Speak English 98%, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Computer Operation 93%, Sculpt (professional quality) 90%, Biology 95%, Medical Doctor 98/88%, Pathology 85%, Spanish 83%, Latin 83%, Lore: Nightbane 75%, Pilot: Automobile 95%.

Other Skills of Note: Research 85%, Chemistry 90%, Chemistry: Analytical 75%, Chemistry: Pharmaceutical 80%, Toxicology 80%, Running, Swimming 80%, Athletics: General, Athletics: Aerobic, Kick Boxing, and Wardrobe and Grooming 85%.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Knife at sixth level.

Allies of Note: None per se. Dr. Campbell does have a number of colleagues, friends and admirers, however. No one knows

about her other life as a Nightbane, nor are they aware of her extracurricular medical activities.

Minions: Her two lab assistants. See Hope and Charity.

Weapons and Equipment of Note: Dr. Campbell lives in a fashionably appointed condo on the 30th floor of the Westin Book-Cadillac Hotel in Downtown Detroit. She drives a brand new BMW Z4M coupe and has a wardrobe of only the finest and most fashionable clothes. Her lab and “studio” are in a studio space at the Russell Industrial Center, a huge factory on Russell Street near Eastern Market that’s been converted to lofts and studios. Her lab is full of all sorts of sculpting and medical equipment and is guarded at all times by her two assistants, Hope and Charity.

Money: As a cosmetic surgeon, Lily makes about \$300,000 a year. She has a 401K, is invested heavily in biotech and has \$60,000 in an interest-bearing savings account.

Hope and Charity

Lab Assistants and Guards

Hope and Charity are two young women who have been turned into nearly mindless slaves by Dr. Campbell. Hope was a young, homeless woman named Candy who Campbell lured into her studio with the promise of a hot meal and a safe place to sleep for the night. Charity was a woman named Lisa Black who was disfigured in a brutal auto accident. She believed Dr. Campbell when she was told there was an experimental procedure that could restore her looks. Both women are the product of weeks of torture, flesh works and mind sculpting. Dr. Campbell made them nearly identical and changed their brains to make them fanatically loyal, aggressive and unquestioning. They act as her lab assistants, present and helpful at every surgery, sculpting and torture session. They are slavish in their dedication and take every opportunity to please Dr. Campbell so as to bask in the glory of her praise. They are also Dr. Campbell’s studio guards. They stalk the empty studio space at night, muttering and singing to themselves and longing for an intruder so they can present their mistress with a gift. Campbell sees them at best as pets, but mostly considers them walking works of art, perfect examples of beauty for the modern era.

Alignment: Anarchist. Totally loyal to Dr. Campbell.

Attributes: I.Q. 7, M.E. 7, M.A. 7, P.S. 17, P.P. 20, P.E. 17, P.B. 15, Spd 15. (Both women have identical attributes. They have essentially been redesigned by Dr. Campbell through Flesh Sculpting magic.)

Hit Points: 55. S.D.C.: 65.

Horror Factor: 15. They are both faceless and emotionless and have a tendency to whisper, mutter, scream and sing aloud for no reason.

P.P.E.: None.

Experience Level: Not applicable; they are essentially mindless slaves. They were ordinary people before they were changed.

Natural Abilities:

1. Heightened Sense of Touch: Another product of sense sculpting magic, the twins have a superb sense of touch. They can identify objects, fabric and material by touch and can detect even the smallest imperfections in a surface.

2. Motion Sensing: Through experimental magicks, Dr. Campbell was able to grant the twins a 360 degree motion sense. This makes up for their blindness and makes them impossible to surprise.

3. Heightened Sense of Hearing: The twins both have extremely sensitive hearing. They can hear sounds as quiet as a whisper up to 300 feet (91.4 m) away. This makes them very hard to sneak up on.

Disposition: Both Charity and Hope are emotionless automatons. They have no personality per se, unless you count their slavish adoration of Dr. Campbell and their bloodthirstiness.

Psionics: None.

Magical Knowledge: None.

Combat Abilities: Essentially Hand to Hand: Basic.

Number of Attacks: 4

Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +5 to strike, +7 to parry, +7 to dodge, +4 to auto-dodge, +3 to pull punch, +3 to roll with impact, +1 to damage, +5% to save vs coma/death, +1 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs poison, immune to illusions, immune to mind control.

Vulnerabilities/Weaknesses: Even though the twins are obviously blind, this is more than made up for by their heightened senses of hearing and touch. Their biggest vulnerability is the fact that they have no free will or ability to really think for themselves. This makes them easy to fool or best in combat with an appropriate amount of observation. They also have no short-term memory.

Skills of Note: Prowl 80%, W.P. Knife (at fourth level), W.P. Blunt (at fourth level), Sing 70%, Dance 70%, Speak English 55%.

Weapons and Equipment of Note: They have nothing of their own except for the clothes that Dr. Campbell dresses them in and the long knives they always carry.

La Lloróna

An Optional New Monster for Beyond the Supernatural™

**Illustration by Mike Mumah
By Josh Sinsapaugh**

Ghost stories from Latin America and the American Southwest often make mention of ghostly women who wander the shores of lakes and rivers in search of their lost children. Wailing and crying in dismay, the stories of how such women came to wander the shore for all eternity vary widely, though nearly all stories name the apparition *La Lloróna*, the “Weeping Woman.”

According to folklore, *La Lloróna* was once a beautiful young woman who, upon her husband abandoning her, drowned her own children in a nearby river out of grief and/or madness. However, *La Lloróna* quickly realized the horror of what she had done and tried to save her children, but it was too late, and she took her own life out of remorse. Other versions of the tale – and there are dozens (if not hundreds) of regional versions –



state that La Lloróna murdered her children so that she could be free to be with her love. Her lover rejected her though, thus driving her to take her own life in the same river where she'd just drowned her children hours before. Another version has the poverty-stricken Weeping Woman forced into a shotgun wedding with a wealthy paramour after the community discovered their children (who had undoubtedly been born out of wedlock). Yet, the father of La Lloróna's paramour killed his own grandchildren in an attempt to stop the wedding, which in turn caused the peasant girl to take her own life out of heartache by drowning herself in the nearby river.

Regardless of how or why her children were drowned, La Lloróna is damned to search for them for all eternity. Wandering the riverbank, she cries out for her children, asking anyone who passes by if they have seen them. She is not just a sad echo of the past though, and is said to be downright malevolent at times. According to some, she presages death, like the Irish Banshee. Others claim that she causes death herself, drowning children (old habits die hard) and luring men to their death. Supposedly, she hates young men the most, as one was the cause of her damnation, and thus targets them more than she does any other. Young men who have abandoned, abused, or have been unfaithful to their wives or girlfriends are despised most of all, and place themselves in the gravest danger if they dare to wander alone by the river at night.

That is folklore, though. In reality, La Lloróna is a supernatural Entity/spirit, similar to the more common Haunting Entity. The spirit latches onto the psychic echo that is left behind by the violent death of a beautiful young woman who died in or near water, and then emulates that woman along the water's edge. Despite popular belief, any violent death near water will attract the Entity, though situations that are similar (or identical) to those spoken of in folklore – where La Lloróna drowns her own children, and then herself – are most common. The Weeping Woman can also haunt any body of water, not just rivers, and may even haunt a bathtub, hot tub, or swimming pool. Why the otherworldly Entity limits itself specifically to the deaths of young women in or near water is unknown.

Unlike the comparatively stupid Haunting Entity, the Weeping Woman Entity does not waste its time continually reliving the death of the woman who it is emulating. Instead, the Weeping Woman spends her time drowning children and luring young men to their deaths, drowning them as well, or sucking away their life force in a kiss of death. The malevolent spirit can easily entice such young men, as "she" usually appears clad in a torn up white dress that has been drenched with water. Of course, the intelligence of the Lloróna Entity is by no means genius level, nor is it far greater than that of the Haunting Entity. In fact, like the Haunting Entity, the malevolent spirit is still bound to the specifics of the empathic residue that it has latched on to. This may mean that the vengeful Entity will target only young men, men of a certain nationality, will not target children, or will only target children (in which case the spirit forgoes the death kiss and relies on drowning its victims). A few Weeping Women will even target other women in addition to men, or even women exclusively.

La Lloróna is visible in "her" natural state, appearing as a beautiful young woman (the woman who the Entity is copying) in a dripping wet dress (usually a white dress), though as an

ethereal image. The Weeping Woman can become solid for short periods, appearing to be completely human (though a Psychic Medium and most psychics will be able to tell the difference). It is when solid that the spirit lures children and adults into the water, especially young men who do not pause to wonder if the beautiful and flirtatious young woman who they have just met is a supernatural predator or not. The Entity must also be in a solid state to feed, either by drowning a victim or by sucking away his or her life force energy with a kiss of death. When in the solid state, La Lloróna is susceptible to all modes of attack, including normal punches and kicks, and can be physically affected like any corporeal creature.

The Weeping Woman Entity haunts the exact spot where the woman it is imitating drowned, though it can move up to two miles (3.2 km) away from the spot. Although any body of water (including tubs and pools) can be haunted, a patch of dry land (usually the shore) must be within the range of the area that the Entity is initially bound to. If a road is within its range, La Lloróna may haunt it as well, luring foolish travelers to their deaths just as if they were by the water. It is also possible that the original body of water may no longer exist, has dried up, or has moved. If such is the case, the Weeping Woman still haunts the location where the water once existed, and will continue to do so even if the water never returns. On the other hand, the body of water may be larger than it use to be, possibly eliminating all dry land from the area that La Lloróna haunts. If this is the case, the Entity still haunts the area, and will be seen swimming or wading in the water, or even walking along the surface. However, if that particular La Lloróna is destroyed, another cannot latch on to the residual empathy until the water recedes enough to reveal dry land.

Destroying a Lloróna Entity is easy enough – they can be killed like any Entity, and can even be damaged by normal attacks when in a solid state – though *permanently* ridding such Entities from the area is another story. Even when the spirit is destroyed, the emotional imprint that it was attached to still exists, and thus *another* Weeping Woman-type Entity may come along and attach to the same psychic echo! This can be infuriating to anyone who spent their time hunting the first malevolent Entity, especially if the scenario is repeated several times. Such Entities can only be permanently rid from the area with the performance of an Exorcism, which in this case renders the empathic echo unsuitable for attachment by La Lloróna. It is important to note, though, that such an Exorcism will do nothing to stop a Haunting Entity from latching on to the empathic residue, and will do nothing to stop the formation of another Lloróna should another young woman die violently in the water.

La Lloróna – Haunter/Predator

Pronunciation: Lah Yoh-ROH-nah.

Also known as: "Lady in White," "Woman in White," and the "Weeping Woman."

Alignment: Miscreant (65%) or Diabolic (35%) only.

Attributes: I.Q. 7+1D4, M.E. 1D6+5, M.A. 20+1D4, Supernatural P.S. 1D6+6, P.P. 2D6+4, P.E. 1D4+2, P.B. 18+1D6, Spd 44 (about 30 mph/48 km) walking or floating a foot (0.3 m) off the ground or water.

Armor Rating (A.R.): Not applicable, even when in a solid state.

Hit Points: 40 plus P.E. attribute number. **S.D.C.:** 50.

Discorporation: When slain, La Lloróna appears to evaporate into a fine mist within one melee round. A small puddle of stagnant water is left behind where the creature last stood (floats atop the water if the Entity was in the water), and will remain there until it is cleaned up or evaporates normally.

Threat Level: x4; Haunter and Predator, a supernatural Entity/spirit.

Horror Factor: 14 for those who recognize the creature for what it is; zero (0) if the observer is oblivious. Those who are being kissed by La Lloróna, and realize that she is sucking the life out of them, must make a save vs Horror Factor of 16 or higher if they did not realize what La Lloróna was beforehand.

Size: Equivalent to a human woman, on average 5 feet, 6 inches (1.67 m) to six feet (1.8 m) tall.

Weight: Not applicable when in its spirit form, roughly 120 lbs (54 kg) in corporeal form regardless of size or proportions.

Average Life Span: Unknown, probably immortal.

P.P.E.: 2D6

Natural Abilities: Ethereal and intangible (but visible) in its natural form, allowing La Lloróna to pass through solid objects with ease, and rendering it impervious to physical and energy attacks. Can turn invisible at will, though cannot attack when invisible, except through Telekinesis. Can make its body solid for short periods of time (a total of thirty minutes once every three hours; transferring from ethereal to solid or from solid to ethereal uses up a melee attack), and must do so to feed; susceptible to normal attacks in physical form, although damage will be healed quickly. Furthermore, La Lloróna has nightvision of 1000 feet (305 m), and bio-regenerates 1D8 S.D.C. or Hit Points once every melee round.

Astral Project for Free (special): During the day (unless there is a rainstorm), La Lloróna automatically enters the Astral Plane, where the monster remains dormant until sunset or until a rainstorm rolls in (whichever comes first), at which point the spirit reenters our plane of existence. The Astral Projection (really *Astral Transference*) that La Lloróna performs during the day does not cost the monster any I.S.P. whatsoever. Furthermore, the Entity enters the Astral Plane completely, without the nuisance of a silver cord, and is always able to find its way back to the World of Man.

Feed off P.P.E. Released at the Time of Death (special): La Lloróna can feed off the double P.P.E. released at the time of death, though the creature can only feed off such P.P.E. when it is from a victim that it has drowned. However, the monstrosity prefers to feed off the life force energy of its victim instead (see below), as it gains much more pleasure from doing so.

Life Force Vampirism (special): La Lloróna can literally suck the life out of victims by kissing them. The creature needs only to lock lips with a mortal when in a solid state, and the life force vampirism can begin. Those who are foolish or unlucky enough to kiss La Lloróna lose 15% of their Hit Points per melee round of mouth-to-mouth contact with the supernatural predator. Victims must make a save vs magic of 13 or higher in order to realize that La Lloróna is sucking the life out of them; those who fail to save are oblivious to the harm

that the creature is causing them. However, those who fail can attempt to save again at the start of each melee round. **Note:** Hit Points lost from La Lloróna's *Life Force Vampirism* take twice as long to naturally heal. An autopsy performed on the corpse of someone who has been killed by La Lloróna's Life Force Vampirism will fail to discern the cause of death (i.e. "cause of death unknown"). La Lloróna is especially vulnerable when performing the "death kiss": all attacks (except attacks from the victim) inflict double damage.

Walk on Water (special): La Lloróna can walk or run across the surface of water without fear of sinking, and can even stand still for an indefinite amount of time. The monster can also move freely beneath the water with an unlimited tolerance for depth, swimming like a human would, and can remain under for as long as desired (after all, it has no need to breathe air).

Knows All Languages: Magically understands all languages at 90%, although La Lloróna can only speak the language of the dead person who it is emulating, and does so at 98%. Can communicate telepathically, though it generally prefers to speak in a soothing, audible voice, and can do so when intangible or solid.

Limited Invulnerability: La Lloróna is impervious to heat, cold, poison, and most physical attacks (vulnerable to all physical attacks when in its solid state). When in its ethereal state, only weapons made of silver can harm the spirit. It is also vulnerable to psionic attacks and influences, as well as any attacks that can harm spirits.

Vulnerabilities: 1. Psionic and magical attacks that can damage spirits can damage La Lloróna when it is in its ethereal state. An Exorcism has no effect on the Weeping Woman, though one can be performed to remove the residual emotional imprint from the area, thus making it impossible for another Lloróna to establish itself (see #8 below).

2. Weapons and bullets made of silver can damage La Lloróna when in its ethereal state, punching painful holes right through the monster. When in its solid state, silver weapons and bullets deal triple damage. Damage incurred from silver cannot be regenerated for six hours.

3. When in its solid state, the monster is vulnerable to all normal attacks. La Lloróna must transfer to a solid state to feed.

4. When performing the "Death Kiss" (see *Life Force Vampirism* under Natural Abilities), La Lloróna takes double damage from all attacks, except for the attacks of the victim (if any), which deal normal damage.

5. La Lloróna cannot attack anyone who is wearing a cross or other holy symbol, and cannot remove the cross/holy symbol via Telekinesis. However, she can suggest that the person remove the cross/holy symbol ("why don't you take that necklace off and come into the water with me?"), though the person is under no obligation to obey. La Lloróna is otherwise unaffected by crosses and holy symbols.

6. La Lloróna is bound to the body of water that she haunts, and thus must remain within a certain distance of the water (or where the water used to be). Specifically, La Lloróna must remain within two miles (3.2 km) of the exact spot where the woman who it is emulating drowned. If the

water dries up, is filled in, diverted, or otherwise disappears, La Lloróna is still bound to the spot, and will continue to haunt it even though the water may never return (and indeed many Lloróna are said to haunt old river channels and even parking lots).

7. La Lloróna can only appear at night or during a rainstorm. During the day, if there is no rainstorm, the spirit goes dormant, resting in the Astral Plane until sunset. At sunrise, the spirit is torn from our plane of existence once again, forced to remain dormant until nighttime or until a rainstorm rolls in (thus allowing it to enter the World of Man once again).

8. Even if La Lloróna is destroyed, the phenomenon may not be permanently removed from the body of water. It is possible, and likely (70% chance), that the strong empathic residue will attract yet another spirit. This other spirit (i.e. another Lloróna) will link to the same psychic imprint and pick up where its predecessor left off. Thus, the only way to permanently rid La Lloróna from the body of water is to perform an Exorcism to remove the empathic echo *after* the current spirit has been destroyed. The Exorcism must be performed on or near the spot (i.e. within 10 feet/3 meters) where the woman who the Entity was imitating took her own life. If the location of the spot is unknown (or if the legend has misplaced the spot), a Diviner with Psychic Dowsing can find it, though any attempt is made with a penalty of -10%. **Note:** This is a special case; an Exorcism cannot normally be used to remove the psychic residue left behind by a violent death. Although the Exorcism makes it impossible for another La Lloróna to latch on to the residual imprint, it does not stop a Haunting Entity from doing so.

R.C.C. Skills or Equivalents: Seduction skill of 60%, plus percentage bonuses from M.A. and P.B. attributes (see the Seduction skill on page 209 of *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Second Edition*). Other skills include: Basic Math 85%, Dance 90%, Land Navigation 70%, Prowl 80%, Sing 90%, Swimming 98%, and Tailing 60%. Skills do not increase with experience.

Equivalent Level of Experience: 1D4

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Damage: Ethereal State: By psionics only; inflicts 2D6 M.D. from a punch or kick in combat with other ethereal beings. Solid State: Punch, kick, or bite as per Supernatural Strength. When Invisible: Via Telekinesis only. Also see *Life Force Vampirism* under Natural Abilities.

R.C.C. Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike in combat with other ethereal beings, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, and is impervious to possession.

Magic: None.

Psionics: Considered a Major Psychic requiring a 12 or higher to save vs psionic attack. **I.S.P.:** 50. **Psionic Powers:** Astral Projection (10), Empathy (4), Mind Bolt (varies), Open Lock (10), Sixth Sense (2), See the Invisible (4), Telekinesis (varies), Telepathy (4), and Thought-Reading (10). Powers are equal to La Lloróna's level of experience.

Enemies: To La Lloróna, human beings are nothing more than food and playthings. The spirit takes great delight in luring foolish men (or women) to their death, and drowning all others.

Allies: None per se. La Lloróna is self-serving and will never work willingly with other supernatural creatures, acting independently out of instinct. Ancient Evil can force the monster into servitude, though the spirit may be of little use to such powerful beings, as it cannot move far from the body of water that it haunts.

Habitat: Can be found along lakes or rivers anywhere in the world. A staple of Hispanic and Hispanic American folklore, such spirits are comparatively common in the American Southwest, as well as in Latin America. *The Lady of Lake Ronkonkoma* on New York's Long Island and similar beings are *not* Weeping Women, rather they are something else entirely.

Note: As noted previously, La Lloróna is imitating a woman who has died, linking to the strong empathic residue left behind by the woman's death, and possibly by the harrowing events leading up to it. Thus, the strong psychic imprint may also attract the more mundane Haunting Entity, which will also imitate the dead woman. This is frustrating for Ghost Hunters and others who investigate and/or combat the paranormal, as a Weeping Woman and a Haunting Entity are indiscernible from one another, at least until the Weeping Woman attacks. Only a Psychic Medium or someone who can commune with spirits can tell the difference at first glance.

Design Note: The literal translation of La Lloróna is "the Weeping," or more appropriately "the Weeping One." However, because English words do not have masculine or feminine forms, I have found it better to translate it as "the Weeping Woman" for the purpose of this article. Translating the term in such a way allows the true meaning of the term to be preserved, and thus nothing is lost in translation.

Nimbus and Madam Steel

Optional Material for Heroes Unlimited™

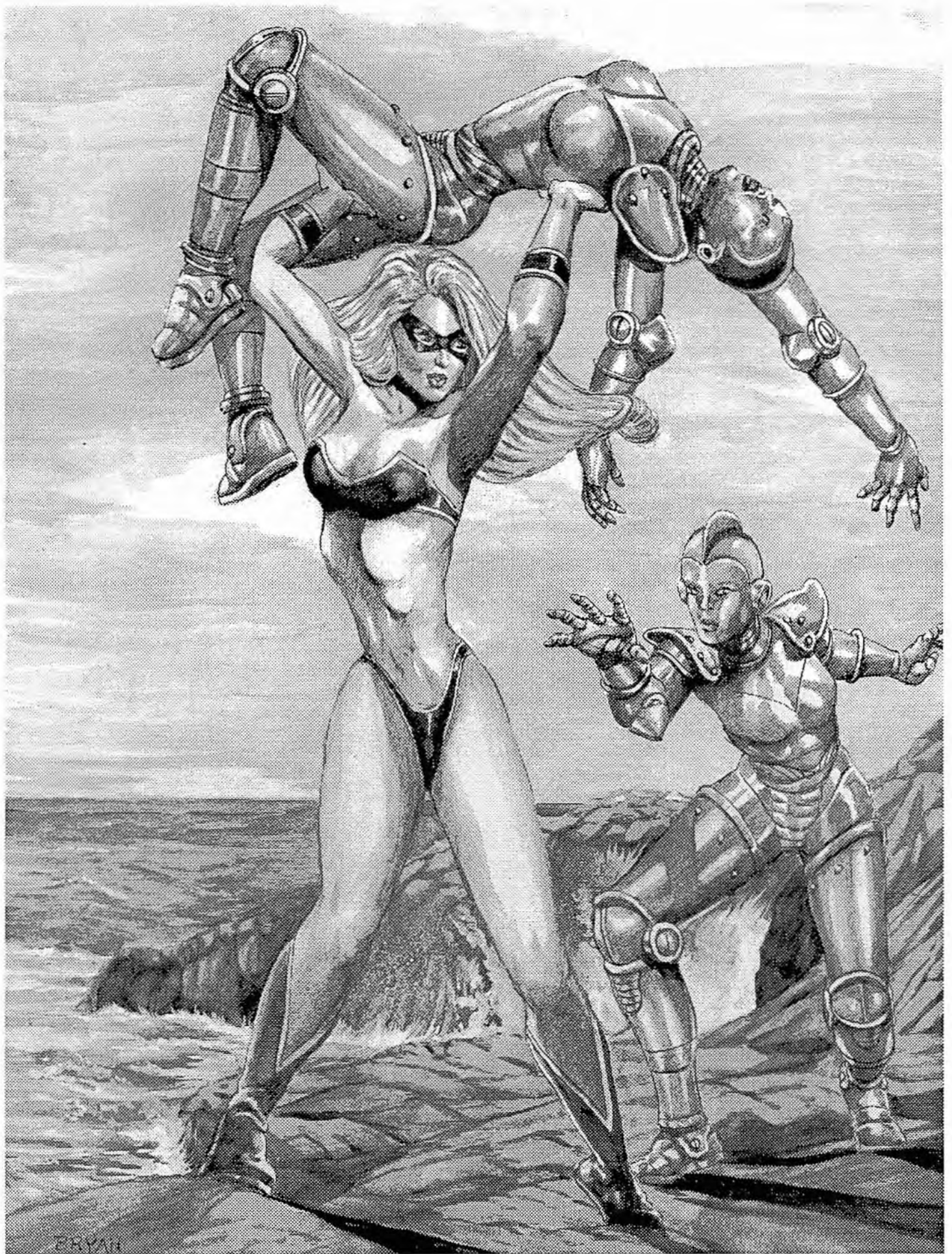
By Carl Gleba

Illustration by Bill Bryan

Nimbus

(The beautiful, scantily-clad babe)

Nimbus hails from a far-off dimension ruled by the Pantheon of Eternal Light. The pantheon, for the most part, was benevolent and the gods of the pantheon were worshiped on hundreds of worlds in a dozen different dimensions. Nimbus wouldn't have even existed if it wasn't for a war that has started to rage throughout the Megaverse. The Demon Lords of Hades had finally given into their hatred and attacked their eternal enemies, the Deevil Lords of Dyval. These fiendish beings had lashed out at each other and their war had spilled into hundreds of dimensions throughout the Megaverse, including many of those where the Pantheon of Eternal Light had worshipers. The gods of Eternal Light were quick to respond, sending aid to their worshipers



often in the form of powerful Avatars. The Pantheon of Eternal Light wasn't going to stand by while all their hard work was cut down by the likes of Demons and Deevils. Many of the gods even took a direct hand, and that would ultimately prove to be their undoing.

Demons and Deevils are opportunistic parasites who will seize opportunities wherever they can, and the gods of Eternal Light exposed themselves in their efforts to save their followers. They couldn't comprehend that both Demons and Deevils would sacrifice hundreds, thousands, even millions of minions and that when their enemies were worn down, they would make the crippling blow. That was the fate of the gods of Eternal Light. Many were defeated and some even cut down amidst their worshipers, compounding the problem. As word spread that their gods had fallen, panic struck many of the pantheon's followers and they would make deals with either the Demons or the Deevils to spare their own lives. Every defeat was a devastating blow to the Pantheon of Eternal Light.

Nimbus was intended to be a leader and a healer, and was sent by her goddess to fight along side her worshipers. Nimbus was determined to turn the tide and repel the demonic invaders. Unfortunately, she lost her first battle against the demonic forces, and while retreating she was caught in a Dimensional Maelstrom. When she finally came to, she was on Earth, a mirror of the world she was once on. She knew all must have been lost when she could no longer feel the connection to her goddess. Even across dimensional barriers, she would still be able to sense her creator. Instead of giving in to despair and defeat, she was determined to fight on, as the taint of the demonic forces was on this world, as well. While Earth had never even heard of the Pantheon of Eternal Light, it still had a profound number of good people. Her original purpose had been to prepare her people and repel the demonic threat. Now she can only hope to continue that effort on Earth.

Real Name: Nymbiena, Avatar of the goddess Morning Dawn Light.

Other Aliases: Nimbus the Naive.

Alignment: Principled.

Disposition: Bold, brave and determined. Nimbus is certainly a strong woman and behaves as if she is following the code of chivalry, which many people find odd. She treats everyone she meets with respect and courtesy and expects the same in return. Unfortunately, many people of Earth wouldn't know what courtesy is if it hit them square in the face. As a result, Nimbus can be a bit naive, as she tends to take people at their word, and has been tricked on more than one occasion. This attitude, especially when caught on T.V., has given the media a lot of ammo, and she is often called Nimbus the Naive despite her genius I.Q.

Attributes: I.Q. 21, M.E. 18, M.A. 22, P.S. 19, P.P. 21, P.E. 17, P.B. 25, Spd 22 (320 mph/512 km while flying).

Age: 120. **Sex:** Female.

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m). **Weight:** 140 lbs (63 kg), all muscle.

Experience Level: 6th

Hit Points: 169, **S.D.C.:** 140, **Natural A.R.:** 12.

P.P.E.: 87, **I.S.P.:** 96.

Power Category: Immortal (Avatar of the goddess known as Morning Dawn Light).

Avatar Powers: Immortality as per the power under the Mega-Hero, resistant to poison, toxins, fire, heat and cold (all do half damage), Bio-Regenerates 1D6 Hit Points or S.D.C. per melee round, and Nightvision 120 feet (36.6 m).

Minor Super Abilities: Flight: Wingless, Energy Expulsion: Particle Beam (An unmodified roll to strike of 11-18 is only a nick and does 4D6+4. A roll of a 19 or 20 is a direct hit that does 6D6+16 points of damage. Nimbus is +1 to strike.)

Psionic Abilities: Psi-Sword (30), Telekinetic Force Field (30), Telekinesis (Super; 10+), Mind Block (4), Teleport Object (10), Presence Sense (4), Sixth Sense (2), See the Invisible (4), Healing Touch (6), and Deadend Pain (4).

Reason for Being on Earth: She arrived on Earth by accident, and has some familiarity with Earth because its culture is similar to where she came from. Nimbus knows the laws and customs of North America and speaks and reads English and Spanish at 94%.

Combat Training: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee: 5 (6 while in flight).

Bonuses (those in parentheses are applicable during flight only): +3 on initiative, +5 (+7) to strike, +7 (+9) to parry, +7 to dodge (+11 while hovering, +13 while flying more than 90 mph/144 km), +3 to roll with punch or fall, +6 to pull punch, +2 to disarm, +4 to damage, +4 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs possession, +6 to save vs Horror Factor.

Other Combat Info: Karate Kick, Snap Kick, Roundhouse Kick, Axe Kick, Backward Sweep, Jump Kicks (all), and Critical Strike on an unmodified 18, 19, or 20.

Education Level and Skills: Trained Healer.

Medical Doctor Program: Biology 82%, Chemistry 82%, Pathology 92%, Medical Doctor 98%/92%, Holistic Medicine 72% and Identify Plants and Fruits 77%.

Secondary Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, W.P. Sword, Swimming 82% and Athletics.

Money: Has \$16,000 worth of trade and has \$8,000 in cash.

Weapons and Equipment: Has a magic sword that does 3D6 S.D.C., is +1 to Strike and Parry, returns when thrown, can detect Demons or Deevils (the blade turns red in the presence of Demons and black for Deevils, range is 500 feet/152.4 m), and it shoots an ice blast that does 4D6 damage per attack and has a range of 200 feet (61 m). Her costume consists of a suit of magic scale mail that has an A.R. of 15 with 200 S.D.C., and is weightless and noiseless.

Madam Steel

(The Cyborg about to be thrown by Nimbus)

Madam Steel has been around for the last twenty years as a major crime boss in Century Station. Her organization is typically involved in industrial espionage and theft of industrial secrets. Many corporations have paid her a pretty penny to set back a competitor, or to even steal their secrets. Early in her career, Madam Steel worked alone, and her usual strategy was to get hired as a consultant and steal the secrets from within. However, one day she was actually caught in the act and as she was trying to escape, she was hurled out of a window on the tenth floor of the office building. Her body was mangled and she would have died if not for a mysterious benefactor, who swept

her from the scene and paid to have her body rebuilt. This benefactor provided for all her needs until she was healthy again, and even promised that if she worked for him, someday she would have her real body back and not the metal replacement she had been given. It was a proposal Madam Steel had to consider, because before being converted into a Cyborg she was beautiful, and it was her beauty that she used like a well-trained blade. But while the offer was tempting, she was too cold and bitter to work for anyone else but herself, and feeling no obligation to this benefactor, she severed her brief connection. That was some twenty years ago. Since then, she has built a crime syndicate based around her old trade, expect this time she employs others to do the work and she takes a sizeable cut for herself. This is a profitable business that has grown to international proportions. She has several hundred agents who work for her, mostly on a freelance basis. Communications are typically done via an encrypted Internet connection where she can give orders and receive the information necessary to pass on to clients. While her organization has no formal name, in international law enforcement circles it has become known as the Steel Syndicate.

Age has finally caught up with Madam Steel, but it's not her organic parts, but rather her bionic components. Despite having some of the best bionics money could buy, her neural pathways have started to degrade and there is a noticeable lag in response time and the overall performance of her bionic body. Fearing that she doesn't have much time left, she has come up with a plan to transfer her consciousness. Madam Steel's primary goal is to transfer it into a young, fresh body, with the alternative being transfer into one of her robot creations. She can feel her time quickly fading, and desperation has gripped the once powerful crime lord to the point where she is going into the field to take matters into her own hands.

What Madam Steel doesn't realize is that her mysterious benefactor from twenty years ago is behind her apparent degradation. Her benefactor is none other than Doctor Villhelm Vilde, a war criminal from World War II and the man suspected behind the chaos that has gripped the Earth. Madam Steel has made a deal with the Deevils, and now they are coming back for payment!

Real Name: Sylviane Despaux.

Other Aliases: Steel Heart.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Disposition: Businesslike all the way, however she has a cold, calculating personality that is very evident. She never cracks a smile or makes a joke.

Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 14, M.A. 8, P.S. 30, P.P. 20, P.E. 11, P.B. 7 (was 21), Spd 77.

Age: 60. **Sex:** Female.

Hit Points: 35, **S.D.C.:** Mechanical Body - 230.

Height: 7 feet (2.1 m). **Weight:** 300 lbs (135 kg).

Experience Level: 8th

Power Category: Bionics (Full Conversion Cyborg).

Combat Training: Basic.

Bionic Systems:

Bionic Arms and Hands (2) with a P.S. of 30 and a P.P. of 20.

Bionic Feet and Legs (2) with a P.S. of 30 and a Spd of 77 (53 mph/85 km).

Bionic Lungs with Gas Filter.

Full Body Exoskeleton (all five). Total S.D.C. bonus 230.

Full Bionic Body Armor. A.R. 18 and 900 S.D.C.

Machine Pistol Implant.

Pair of Wrist Blasters (concealed). 3D6 S.D.C. per blaster. 24 blasts per hour maximum. Range of 600 feet (183 m).

Razor Sharp Fingernails. 1D6+17 damage.

A pair of Ion Rods (one in each leg). 3D6 S.D.C. per blast. 36 charges per energy clip. Range of 300 feet (91.4 m).

Amplified Hearing.

Targeting Sight (+1 to strike).

Gyro-Compass.

Total Cost of Bionic Systems: \$12,415,600

Attacks per Melee: 5

Bonuses: +7 on initiative, +4 to strike, +6 to parry, +7 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, +1 to disarm, +17 to damage.

Other Combat Info: Karate Kick, Critical Strike on an unmodified roll of 19 or 20, and Body Throw/Flip.

Education Level and Skills: Ph.D. (College).

Robot Program: Computer Operation 98%, Computer Programming 98%, Robot Electronics 98%, Robot Mechanics 98%.

Science Program: Advanced Mathematics 98%, Chemistry 98%, Chemistry: Analytical 96%, Biology 98%, Astrophysics 96%.

Mechanics, Vehicles Program: Automotive Mechanics 96%, Aircraft Mechanics 96%, Basic Electronics 98%, Weapons Engineer 96%.

Mechanical Program (General): Mechanical Engineer 96% and Locksmith 96%.

Basic Skills: Mathematics: Basic 98%, Speak Native Language (French) 98%, Read and Write Native Language (French) 98%.

Secondary Skills: Language: English, German, Russian 91%, Literacy: English, German, Russian 71%, Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Knife, W.P. Auto-Pistol and Swimming 85%.

Money: Her crime syndicate brings in 1 to 4 million dollars every month, so she is not lacking for money. Her legitimate wealth is somewhere in the ballpark of 5 to 6 million dollars, which includes legal assets like her home and fleet of vehicles. Overall, her syndicate is worth 35 million dollars.

Weapons: Madam Steel has access to any kind of weaponry thanks to her crime syndicate. She typically uses robots that are custom built to defend her, otherwise she uses the weapons on her person.

Vehicles and Other Equipment: Madam Steel is usually driven around in a limo, or flies in one of her personal jets.

Clone-Bot Mark I

(The Robot trying to stop her creator from being thrown)

Clone-Bot is Madam Steel's first attempt at creating an Artificial Intelligence. Clone-Bot Mark I is an experiment that is on-

going. The robot body is being assessed by Madam Steel in the field, as a candidate in the future for a possible transfer of her intelligence into a mechanical form, if she can't find a flesh and blood body to her liking. Clone-Bot Mark I is just the first version as Madam Steel works on getting the design and looks down that she wants. For now, she is having Clone-Bot assist her in her various underhanded jobs and other illegal activities to test out the robot body's capabilities.

As far as Clone-Bot is concerned, Madam Steel is her creator and, for now, the robot does as ordered. However, Clone-Bot is not stupid and has already surmised that Madam Steel is looking to transfer herself into something that will last a little longer than her aging bionic body, and that would likely be Clone-Bot Mark I or a newer model. The A.I. is not ready to terminate its existence and finds the world a fascinating place, and there is too much that can be learned. Clone-Bot has been pursuing an alternative line of research on behalf of Madam Steel, which is to transfer her intelligence into a perfectly healthy body of a beautiful female super being. However, this first attempt at acquiring a young and attractive body (depicted in the illustration) has yielded bad results. The Madam might have to consider finding a young and attractive female who is not as powerful as Nimbus.

Real Name: CBM v1.0

Alignment: Aberrant.

Disposition: Curious and analytical. Clone-Bot is still learning about the world and is very curious, and tends to get annoying very quickly with its barrage of questions.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 15, M.A. 10, P.S. 40, P.P. 20, P.E. N/A, P.B. 10, Spd 10.

Age: 1. **Sex:** Not applicable, but appears as a female.

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m). **Weight:** 170 lbs (76.5 kg).

Experience Level: 2

S.D.C.: 225, **A.R.:** 12.

Power Category: Robotics (True Robot).

Combat Training: None.

Attacks per Melee: 5

Bonuses: +4 on initiative, +5 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +1 to roll with punch or fall and +4 to pull punch.

Education Level and Skills: A.I. Programming.

Basic to All Robots: Basic and Advanced Mathematics 98%, Literacy in English and French 90%, Speaks English and French 90%, and Biology 52%.

Investigative Program: Criminal Science/Forensics 90%, Computer Operation 94%, Intelligence 88%, Interrogation 82%, Photography 90%, Surveillance Systems 84%, Research 90%, Read Sensory Equipment 82%, and Optic Systems 82%.

Secondary Skills: General Repair/Maintenance 37%, Pilot Automobile 62%, and Auto Mechanic 27%.

Money: None.

Weapons: It just uses those that are built into it for now.

Vehicles and Other Equipment: None, the Madam provides whatever is needed.

Type: Two - Advanced Artificial Intelligence.

Body Frame: Basic Humanoid, Reinforced Frame.

Armor Rating (A.R.): 12

S.D.C.: 225

Power Supply: Micro-Fusion Power System.

Legs: Human size legs and feet, Spd 10.

Arms and Hands: P.S. 40. Interchangeable Hand Units, Buzz Saw, High-Powered Drill, and Acetylene Torch.

Audio Systems: Advanced Audio System, Radar Signal Detector, Wide-Band Radio Receiver and Transmitter, and Loudspeaker.

Optics: Advanced Robot Optics and Video Receiver and Transmitter.

Sensors: Combat Computer and Micro Radar.

Weapons: Finger Blaster (3D6 S.D.C. with a range of 200 feet/61 m, payload effectively unlimited), Electrical Discharge (4D6 S.D.C. with a range of 12 feet/3.6 m, payload effectively unlimited), Flame Thrower built into the mouth (3D6 S.D.C. with a range of 16 feet/4.9 m, and can fire 40 blasts before needing to be refueled). Can fire up to five blasts per melee.

Total Cost: \$14,110,000

Beatbox

Optional Material for Heroes Unlimited™

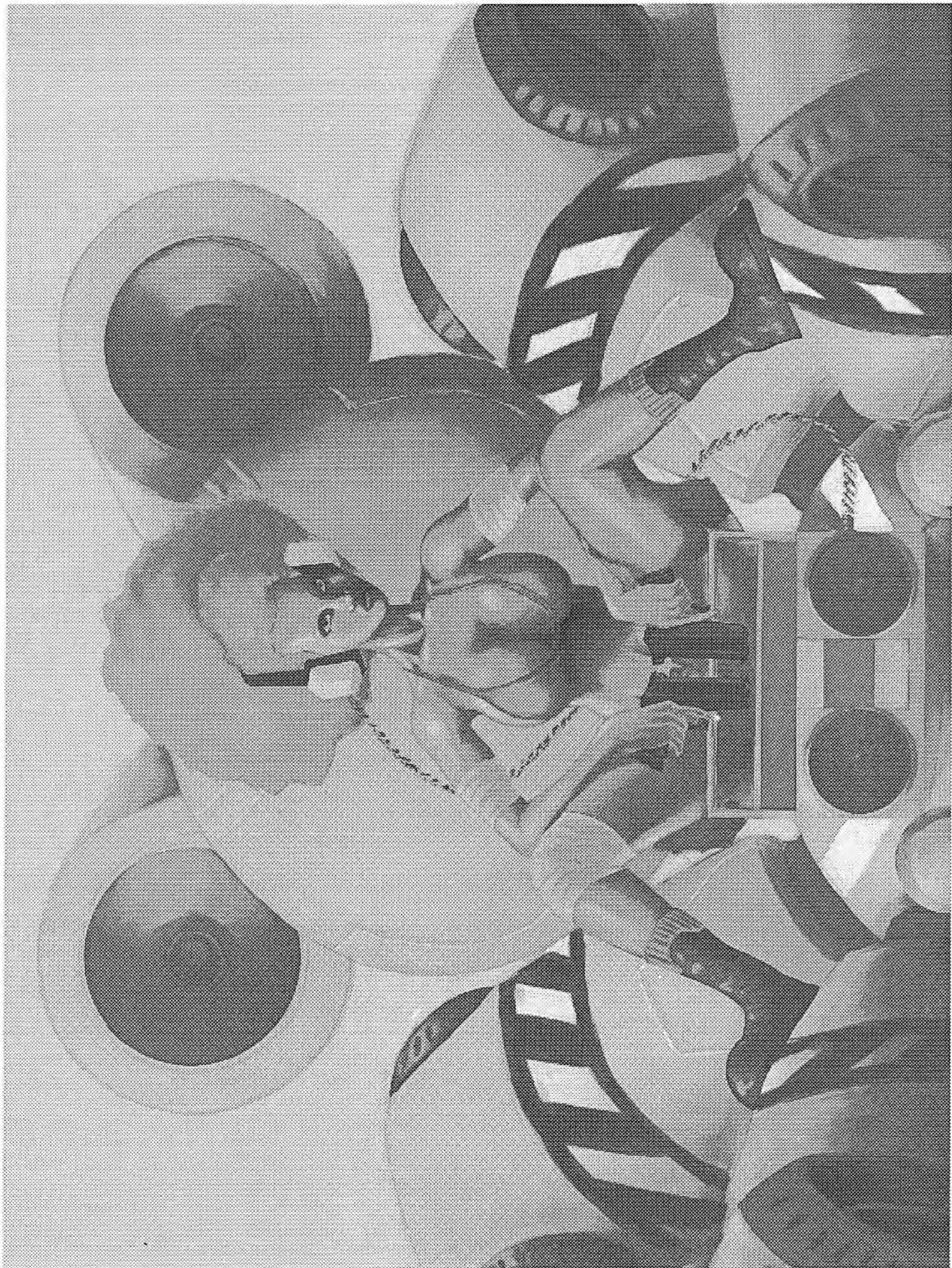
By Todd Yoho

Illustration by Mark Dudley

One of the first heroes of the 21st century, Beatbox is part of a rising generation of heroes who have rejected the brooding, melancholy hero stereotype prevalent in the past decade. She is, instead, a throwback to a breed of hero that is more in synch with the optimism of an older generation of heroes. Beatbox is not a tortured soul who seeks revenge and is oftentimes confused with the villain. She is, rather, a champion for justice and harmony, and fights crime honorably because it's the right thing to do.

A southern hero, Beatbox first appeared in Atlanta, Georgia in 2000. She made headlines with the dramatic arrest of a sonic-weapon wielding murderer named Flashbang. Flashbang was a violent super villain known for his devastating sonic gadgets, and wreaked havoc through Florida, Georgia, and Alabama for the better part of the late 1980s and 1990s. During one of his crime sprees, he demolished a packed school bus with one of his sonic grenades. Seven kids were killed, and another dozen were injured. A young girl named Q'ristee Q'innen, who would grow up to become Beatbox, was one of them.

Deafened by the blast, Q'ristee adapted to her injury with a remarkable amount of maturity and positive spirit. Rather than becoming a bitter child, she turned it into an advantage, allowing it to open doors into meeting new people. She decided at an early age that she wanted to dedicate her life to helping other deaf people adapt to, and if possible, overcome their disability. She was an exemplary student in high school, and excelled in math and science. Upon graduation, she was accepted into the



nursing program at Georgia State. Rather than spend her undergraduate years as a full time student, she split her time between her studies and working at a pediatric research clinic for the deaf. Her commitment to helping others, yet her desire to do even more, touched the heart of a mysterious figure known as Minerva.

Beatbox isn't exactly sure who, or what, Minerva was, but she will never forget the day that she came into her life and gave her exactly what she was looking for; the power to help those in need. One night, while studying for a nursing final, Q'ristee was interrupted by the sound of music coming from her kitchen. At first she thought that she was hallucinating; cracking from the pressure of school and work! However, the music was real, as was the woman playing it. The woman introduced herself as Minerva, and she had finally, after years of searching, discovered her champion.

Minerva explained that she had heard Q'ristee's heart calling out across a thousand harmonious dimensions, seeking the power and opportunity to help those in need. Minerva, meanwhile, had been seeking someone to invest with her power to help fight injustice and bring peace to those who need it most. Minerva explained that she was the last remnant, a fragment, of an ancient force for good whose power was all but spent. She needed a hero to transfer her last bit of power into, and Q'ristee was to be that hero.

In an instant, Minerva reached deep within Q'ristee's mind and transferred the last of her essence into the frightened young woman. Scanning Q'ristee's mind, Minerva crafted an object of power that would enable her young champion to switch back and forth between her normal, mortal self, and into a form that was capable of withstanding and wielding the power that she offered. Minerva thus created a pair of magical, if retro, headphones. They would be totally innocuous among the many devices that Q'ristee used at school and at work, and are a symbol of what she had lost as a child, and what she hoped to bring to others; the beauty of sound.

And so, infused with the power of a force of light, with the form of a goddess and the power to match, Q'ristee took the name Beatbox, and as her first action as a hero for good, she tracked down the man who set her on this course all those years ago. While other students spent their spring breaks partying and cutting loose, Beatbox cut a trail across Georgia looking for the villain known as Flashbang. She found him working out of his basement lair developing even deadlier sonic weaponry. Thanks to her new powers she defeated him easily and confiscated all of his equipment.

While most of Flashbang's weapons and equipment are way out of her league even with her education and experience with audio equipment, she felt that she was the best person to take custody of his lab and weapons. She moved all of his equipment into the basement where she works; who's going to notice a bunch of strange looking sound equipment in a hearing research clinic? She tinkers with it from time to time, but has yet to figure out what most of it is. She hopes that she can use his advanced sound equipment to help the patients that visit the doctors upstairs regain their hearing. She's cannibalized the equipment that she does understand into what is likely the best stereo system in the Southeast, if not the country! She uses the stereo in her research, and hey, if a girl has the best speakers in town as a fringe benefit, there's no harm in that!

Ever since bringing Flashbang to justice she has dedicated her life to protecting the city of Atlanta from crime and the machinations of any super villain who passes through. She has made many friends, and foes, through her actions, and is known throughout the superhero community as one of the best of the "good guys." Because of her reputation as one of the more conscientious heroes, the public and authorities give her benefit of the doubt and fairly large leeway when she's patrolling her beat. She still has to juggle school, work, crime fighting, and trying to be a normal person, but so far, she's been doing a mighty fine job of it.

Real Name: Q'ristee Q'innen.

Common Aliases: Beatbox, and occasionally known as Jabberbox.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 19, M.A. 16, P.S. 9, P.P. 10, P.E. 10, P.B. 11, Spd 9.

Hit Points: 38, **S.D.C.:** 20.

Height: 5 feet, 4 inches (1.62 m). **Weight:** 130 lbs (58.5 kg).

Age: 27

Disposition: As Q'ristee, she is a quiet and very helpful woman who expresses herself through sign language, photography and art. She genuinely cares for the children who come into her office, and makes an instant rapport with them when they realize that she is deaf, too. As Beatbox, she is a motor mouth wise-cracker always trying to make a scene. She talks a mile a minute, leading some of her allies, and enemies, to call her the Jabberbox.

One thing to understand is that Q'ristee is happy to be herself, deafness and all. Beatbox is an equal identity, not her favored one. Just because Beatbox can hear, and has super-human powers, doesn't mean that living her life as Q'ristee isn't fulfilling or somehow inferior. As Beatbox, she is a symbol and a champion. As Q'ristee, she can help children come to terms with their disability and help them and their families. Each aspect of her life is a hero, just not the same kind of hero.

Experience Level: 6th

Super Power Category: Empowered. See *Powers Unlimited™ Two*, page 8, for the full details on this super power category.

Physical Impairment: Beatbox, when not in her Empowered Form, is clinically deaf. Any penalties assessed by this disability have *already* been included in her non-Empowered bonuses, and *do not* carry over into her Empowered Form. Her Demigod body is not subject to the same limitations and frailties as her human form.

Emotional Inspiration: Beatbox lost her hearing when she was only 7 years old. She was selected at age 20 to be the Champion of Minerva, and ever since, she has sought to protect the innocent and helpless.

Physical Compensation: Physical Metamorphosis: Demigod. Beatbox's transformation into her Demigod form relies on her enchanted headphones to morph her from everyday Q'ristee into the superhero Beatbox. Q'ristee cannot transform without her headphones, although if she is separated from them, she can sense their exact distance and location in

order to retrieve them. They are indestructible, and cannot be harmed in any manner; at least as far as Beatbox knows.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic, 5 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: -1 on initiative, +1 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with impact, +2 to pull punch, +2 to save vs psionics, +2 to save vs insanity, 40% chance to trust/intimidate, Critical Strike on a Natural 19 or 20.

Education Level: Three Years of College; Medical Assistant, Science and Communications Programs.

Scholastic Skills: American Sign Language 65%, Basic Electronics 75%, Radio: Basic 95%, Radio: Scramblers 80%, T.V./Video 65%, Basic Math 85%, Advanced Math 85%, Business & Finance 75%, Computer Operation 85%, Biology 75%, Chemistry 70%, Chemistry: Analytical 65%, Chemistry: Pharmaceutical 80%, Genetics 60%, and Paramedic 80%.

Secondary Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic, Art 60%, Photography 60%, Streetwise 40%, Automotive Mechanics 50%, Pilot: Truck 60%, Pick Locks 55%, and W.P. Automatic Pistol.

Appearance: As Q'ristee, she is a short, slim, African-American woman with short black hair. She typically wears t-shirts and jeans, but is most often found in scrubs with a cup of coffee in one hand and her school books in another. She's in her last year of college, which combined with working full time and fighting crime on the side, makes appearance one of her last priorities.

As Beatbox, she is a tall, fit, clock-stopping, African goddess with a large afro, a purple and black body suit, and retro-headphones jacked into a CD player, MP3 player, or some other portable audio device.

Occupation: Nursing assistant at a pediatric audiology research clinic.

Weapons and Equipment: Beatbox normally carries her enchanted headphones, a set of lock picks, two or three MP3 players, and her twin 8mm, blank-firing pistols in her handbag.

Body Armor: As a Demigod, Beatbox has a minor natural impervious nature to injury; however, she also wears an armored costume. When not posing for Palladium Swimsuit Specials, she wears a purple and black costume made of impact resistant fibers and impregnated with puncture-proof crash plates in the chest and stomach region, providing protection from knives, bullets and most other projectiles. A.R.: 14, S.D.C.: 110.

Money and Possessions: \$1000 in ready cash, a white 2003 SUV with purple highlights, a modest apartment near work, literally hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of dollars in audio equipment that she confiscated from Flashbang, CDs, several *terabytes* of downloaded music, and the usual odds and ends that a hip 21st century girl on the go would have.

Beatbox's Attributes, Powers and Bonuses in Her Empowered Form

Natural A.R.: 10, **Hit Points:** 76, **S.D.C.:** 84.

Height: 6 feet, 5 inches (1.95 m). **Weight:** 182 lbs (82 kg).

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 15, M.A. 15, P.S. 31 (Supernatural), P.P. 17, P.E. 17, P.B. 23, Spd 27.

Minor Super Abilities: Energy Expulsion: Directed Sound (special, see below), Frequency Absorption, Impervious to Sound and Vibration, Warp Sound.

Energy Expulsion: Directed Sound (Special): Rather than shouting or making some other kind of vocalization when using her Directed Sound attack, Beatbox channels her power through a pair of blank-firing automatic pistols. When using this power, she is actually amplifying the report of the pistol into a tightly focused beam of sound. The game mechanics of the power operate as written, however she has a mental block preventing her from using her power without an external source of sound.

She is not limited to the pistols, and can use speakers and other forms of audio equipment to project her Directed Sound power, but she likes and understands the psychological value of dual wielding pistols.

Range: 300 feet (91.5 m), **Damage:** 3D6 S.D.C., plus a 45% chance of deafening the target for 1D4+2 melee rounds.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic, 8 attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +5 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 to disarm, +6 to pull punch, +3 to roll with impact, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs mind control, +2 to save vs possession, +2 to save vs psionics, +2 to save vs insanity, 40% chance to trust/intimidate, Critical Strike on a Natural 19 or 20. When in her empowered form, Beatbox's hearing is twice as acute as that of an average human being. While not superhuman, it is still a valuable sensory asset. Note: This list of bonuses already includes those from her mental attributes that Beatbox has when *not* in her Empowered Form.

Campaign and Adventure Ideas

What Beatbox doesn't know is that her nemesis Flashbang and the clinic where she works have a history. The building that she works in was a former research laboratory of Southern Medical Solutions, a powerful scientific and industrial corporation based in Atlanta in the 1970s and 80s. They were shut down by the government for, among other things, human rights violations. The corporation and all of its assets and research was parceled out, sold to the highest bidders, and was dispersed throughout the scientific community. Inevitably, some of this research and equipment made its way into the hands of criminals. Flashbang was actually an operative of SMS, field testing equipment when Q'ristee was injured as a child. If, or when, Flashbang gets out of prison, one of the places that he's going to go to in order to reacquire equipment to rebuild his arsenal is Q'ristee's clinic. The basement where she's keeping all of his old gear? Most of it was designed in that very building! That's why it doesn't look out of place on casual observation!

Adding another wrinkle to Beatbox's life is that there are teams of corporate spies, government and military agents, super heroes and villains alike that always have their ear to the ground listening for old SMS research or equipment to turn up. Q'ristee has incorporated a lot of Flashbang's gear into most of her electronic devices. Odds are, someone with the right knowledge is going to notice; if they haven't already. One such group with a definite interest in old SMS technology is Corporate Solutions; a west coast corporate hit squad, all with ties to Atlanta and SMS. Beatbox could find herself calling on her allies should they

come to town. Game Masters who wish to explore these plot points further are encouraged to pick up *The Rifter*® issue #27 for the article titled “The Software Valley War,” which details the history of SMS and Corporate Solutions.

Stormwitch

Optional Material for Heroes Unlimited™

By Julius Rosenstein

Illustration by Comfort Deborah Love

Tanya Gaynor, a.k.a. Stormwitch, is a classic case of a person being in the wrong place at the wrong time. There was nothing in Tanya’s early life that could possibly have predicted the incredible things that would happen to her.

Tanya’s father owned a small machine shop, and her mother was a bookkeeper. The oldest of three children, Tanya’s childhood was that of a typical upper middle-class kid. She graduated from high school in the top third of her class, and entered a small local college with the intention of becoming a nurse. Unfortunately, during Tanya’s freshman (and only) year at school, something occurred that completely turned her life around.

Tanya’s boyfriend, Billy, was an anthropology major. Billy and some of his classmates were on a field trip looking for Native American artifacts, and Tanya was one of several guests (friends and/or family members) who joined the expedition. Unbeknownst to anyone in the group, they were camping out near a well hidden ancient burial mound.

Unfortunately for Tanya, she happened to be the first one to stumble upon the site of the mound. The spirit (or Entity) guarding the mound took umbrage at this trespass (unwitting though it was) and seized the opportunity to inhabit the body of Tanya Gaynor.

Since first possessing Tanya, this Entity has been steadily growing stronger. Stormwitch has been appearing more and more, with Tanya maintaining her original form less as time goes by.

Meanwhile, Tanya has taken to wandering so that Stormwitch will not be able to cause too much damage to any one place. She is also studying about Native Americans and Mythology, trying to find someone or something to help rid herself of her unwelcome visitor.

Stormwitch

The Stormwitch Entity was a powerful shamaness during her life. Also, she began with good intentions, but the powers she wielded eventually corrupted her and she misused them. Eventually, she turned against her people and instigated a reign of terror which only ended when her tribe managed to overcome her.

As punishment for her crimes, the shamaness was burned to death (causing a fear of fire that remains to this day) and buried in a place regarded as sacred by her people. This, the tribe felt, would put an end to her evil forever. They were wrong!

Although her physical body was slain, due to her magic, the shamaness’s spirit still lingered. Over the years, the spirit grew slowly stronger until it was ready to pounce on the first unsus-

pecting victim who happened upon the burial site. Tanya Gaynor was that unlucky victim.

Stormwitch has the ability to control localized weather to a great degree, a power which increases the longer she remains on this plane (anchored in Tanya’s body). When she takes over Tanya, her features alter into an idealized version of an amalgam of Tanya and the shamaness. Whatever clothes Tanya is wearing at the time disappear as well, to be replaced with the abbreviated outfit shown in the illustration.

Stormwitch hates warm weather and is fond of creating storms at the drop of a hat. Although Stormwitch is primarily an evil person, she still has some trace of decency (see Disposition, below). At some level, using skewed logic, Stormwitch feels that creating storms is actually a good thing because it tests people and makes them stronger.

Stormwitch’s power of Weather Control works both for creating and calming storms. However, it will take either extraordinary circumstances, or Tanya somehow gaining partial control, for Stormwitch to eliminate a storm.

Unknown to even Stormwitch herself, her power could be used to generate droughts as well as storms. Fortunately, Stormwitch has a psychological barrier against creating hot, arid, or dry conditions.

The Stormwitch Entity is so firmly entrenched in Tanya, it will take a full-blown exorcism to remove her presence. If Tanya ever succeeds in ridding herself of Stormwitch, there is a slight possibility (14%) that Tanya herself may retain Stormwitch’s physical appearance and even a slighter chance (3%) of retaining the Weather Control power.

Real Name: Tanya Gaynor.

Aliases: Stormwitch.

Alignment: Tanya is currently Scrupulous, but her alignment may drop if her current situation continues unabated; Stormwitch is Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 14, M.A. 10/16*, P.S. 9/20*, P.P. 12/18*, P.E. 14, P.B. 13/18*, Spd 15/45*.

Hit Points: 32, S.D.C.: 14 (134*).

Legal Status: Wanted by various authorities.

Horror Factor (Stormwitch only): 10 to anyone familiar with her reputation and/or abilities.

Height: 5 feet, 9 inches (1.68 m) tall. **Weight:** 118 lbs (53 kg).

Appearance: Tanya: A young blonde woman of above average attractiveness, but who hides her figure in long granny dresses or baggy jeans. Stormwitch: A hot blonde babe who wears a hooded cloak, thigh boots, and little else. Stormwitch’s eyes glow when she uses her powers.

Disposition: Tanya is a well-meaning and helpful (if somewhat insecure) person who tries her best to get along with everyone. Stormwitch could generally care less about how anyone else feels. However, despite her usual self-centered attitude, Stormwitch can be as unpredictable as the storms she creates. There have been a few cases (albeit rare) where Stormwitch braved her storms (sometimes putting herself at risk) to get some child or other innocent out of harm’s way.

Experience Level: Fifth (5th).

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.



Attacks per Melee: (Tanya) Two (2); (Stormwitch) Five (5).

Bonuses: +4* on initiative, +4* to strike, +2/+6* to parry, +2/+6* to dodge, +5* to physical melee damage, +3* to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2/4* to pull punch, 3 kinds of kick attacks (Karate style - 2D4 damage, Roundhouse - 3D6 damage, Crescent - 2D4+2 damage), +1* to save vs magic of any kind, +2* to save vs possession, +3* to save vs Horror Factor, 40%* to intimidate, 40%* to charm/impress, impervious to non-magical cold-based attacks (magical cold does half damage).

Super Power Category: Magic - Bestowed Abilities.

Major Super Abilities: 1. Weather Control (see below).

Minor Super Abilities: 1. Energy Expulsion: Cold (*Powers Unlimited*TM 1, page 21), 2. Energy Expulsion: Icy Mist (*Powers Unlimited*TM 1, page 23), 3. Impervious to Cold & Freezing (*Powers Unlimited*TM 1, page 32).

Damage: Either by hand to hand combat or the side effects of her weather.

Education: One Year of College.

Skills of Note: Speak English 95%, Read & Write English 70%, Basic Mathematics 85%, Basic Mechanics 60%, Biology 60%, Business & Finance 65%, Climbing 60/50%, Computer Operation 70%, Cook 65%, Dance 60%, Fishing 70%, Holistic Medicine 40%, Land Navigation 62%, Lore: American Indians 35%, Mythology 60%, Paramedic 70%, Pilot Automobile 68%, Recognize Weapon Quality 45%, Research 70%, Swimming 70%, and Athletics (general).

Vulnerabilities: 1) Stormwitch has a perceived vulnerability to fire and heat-based attacks. She has an inordinate fear of such attacks and will avoid them if possible. Failing that, she will take double damage from them. However, this is primarily a psychosomatic reaction. Stormwitch is no more physically susceptible to such attacks any more than she is to attacks of other forms. Her belief that fire is her nemesis is so strong that it actually causes her to react more negatively than any actual physical damage that is inflicted on her.

2) Stormwitch's essence relies on Tanya Gaynor to anchor her to this plane of existence. Some sort of Constrain Being spell could weaken her and make her dormant. An exorcism could eliminate her completely and banish her essence back to the plane of existence she inhabited before taking over Tanya.

Armor: None. Stormwitch doesn't even like to wear much clothing (as illustrated in the picture).

Weapons: None. Stormwitch relies on her own powers.

Money: Tanya/Stormwitch ranges from periods of being dead broke to other times of being temporarily rich (from a big score). Tanya will try to earn enough money to get by through honest means. This usually means taking whatever minimum wage jobs she can get for the moment. Unfortunately, her frequent changes to Stormwitch are not conducive to remaining employed.

Getting money is not a big issue for Stormwitch. As noted earlier, she uses her powers for other reasons instead of accumulating wealth. Sometimes, however, if she happens to see something that catches her fancy, she will take it. After Tanya regains control, if this item(s) happens to be worth something, Tanya may pawn it (for money to survive). De-

pending upon how much she gets vs her current needs, Tanya may donate part of her proceeds to charity so she can feel that some good is coming out of Stormwitch's activities.

Note: Figures with asterisks (*) are when Tanya is transformed to Stormwitch.

New Power: Weather Control

Range: 300 foot (91.4 m) radius per level of experience.

Damage: Varies (see below).

Duration: 10 minutes per level of experience.

This Major Super Ability allows its user to manipulate local weather conditions (such as air currents, air pressure, precipitation, and temperature). In this way the user can cause heavy or light rain, storms, snow, frost, darkness in the sky, clouds to roll in, and other effects. He or she can also slow or stop rain, make clouds go away, calm storms, etc. Weather Control allows its user to:

1. Predict the upcoming weather (1 day in advance per level).
2. Increase or decrease the temperature (10 degrees F/6 degrees C per level).
3. Increase or decrease the ambient humidity (10% per level).
4. Increase or decrease the ambient air pressure (2 lbs per square inch per level).
5. Alter the direction and speed of the winds (10 mph/16 km per level).
6. Change the general weather conditions (clear, cloudy, rain, snow, fog, sleet, etc.).

Prevailing weather conditions will greatly determine the ease or difficulty of the desired weather change (creating blizzards will be much easier to do if it is already snowing, hail is easier to create during thunderstorms, making the day clear and sunny is harder during a cloudy day, etc.). **Note:** Modifiers are listed below.

However, creating and controlling the weather are two separate things. With the winds blowing and lightning striking randomly, a storm may not accomplish what its creator had intended (indeed, it might work against it).

Base chance to create and control weather: 30/15% +5% per level of experience. The first number is the percentage chance of creating the weather to begin with; the second number is the chance of maintaining specific control over the new weather. Note that more volatile weather conditions (hailstorms, tornadoes, etc.) will have negative modifiers to control them.

Once the ability's duration has lapsed, the weather will most likely (94%) revert back to its original condition over a period of 6+1D6 minutes. However, there is a small chance (6%) that the altered weather will remain for awhile (1D6 hours times the user's experience level).

Side Effects: Various weather conditions will have different effects upon those caught in the area of effect. Many of them (clouds, rain, snow, sleet, etc.) will obscure vision. Some of them (heavy rain, snow, high winds, etc.) will reduce ground and/or air movement (if not eliminate it outright).

Some of them (thunderstorms, hail, tornadoes, etc.) will actually cause damage.

Damage: Although the intensity and magnitude of the weather are the main determinants, some base damages are:

Lightning Bolts (from thunderstorms) - 2D12 per bolt.

High Winds (from gales or tornadoes) - 2D4 per wind damage (excluding damage caused by any objects striking the victim).

Hail (from blizzards or hailstorms) - 3D6 per round.

Modifiers:

Converting fair weather to cloudy: -10%

Converting fair weather to rainy: -20%

Converting fair weather to thunderstorm: -40%

Converting snowstorm to blizzard: -15%

Converting snowstorm to hailstorm: -20%

Creating a gale: -30%

Creating a tornado: -50%

Creating a hurricane: Virtually impossible (the area of effect is normally not large enough to build up to a hurricane unless the weather conditions remain in effect for several hours).

At 6th level, this ability can be used as a method of transportation. The user can generate winds that will lift him or her up to be carried through the air. This is essentially a weaker version of the super ability of Flight: Glide (*Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Edition*, page 232). The initial differences are as follows: a) The super-being can ride air currents to fly but must remain in motion; can not hover. b) Maximum gliding speed is 25 mph (40 km) but outdoors only; gliding indoors is not possible. c) Diving with a boost from strong winds or from an airplane or great height (skyscraper's rooftop) is done at 85 mph (136 km). d) Bonuses when gliding are +1 to strike, +1 to parry, +1 to dodge.

At 12th level, the user of this ability can create weather indoors as well as outdoors. Although many of the modifiers (both positive and negative) still apply, the character no longer has to be outdoors in order to affect the surrounding area. Furthermore, the gliding ability improves to be equivalent to the full super ability of Flight: Glide (i.e. hovering, increased speed, improved bonuses, and indoor use).

Scarlet Albany

Optional Material for Heroes Unlimited™

By Levi Johnstone

Illustration by Allen Manning

Like most young and super gorgeous American girls today, Scarlet has dreams of being rich, famous, and married to a movie star. And the young, but mature, 20 year old is well on her way. Scarlet grew up in a small town deep in the South Carolina countryside. But don't let her rich southern accent fool you; this girl is no country bumpkin. "I fell in love with big cities on a trip to New York when I was only 9," she will proudly tell anyone. Now a student at Florida State University, studying theater, this former prom queen is on her way to be being a superstar.

RIFTER: What draws you to theater and acting in front of people, versus doing TV or movies? With a live performance you don't get a second take.

SCARLET: I love entertaining people and being the center of attention. I don't think there's any better way to perform than in person, though. Somehow, TV just strips some of the personality right out of a character. Also, half the fun is improv when someone forgets a line. It's also great being able to see guys' eyes drop when I come on stage in a sexy dress or skimpy costume.

RIFTER: Speaking of improv, I hear you have sometimes caused a little confusion on stage just for fun. Would you like to share that story?

SCARLET: [*Giggles evilly*] Oh, you did your homework.

RIFTER: It was my pleasure studying you. Trust me.

SCARLET: I bet it was. This is a pretty good story. One of the actors in the thespian society was always joking that he thought I needed to do a nude scene in a play. I know it was just because he wanted to see me naked, though. Then I ended up playing opposite of him in a community play as his secret mistress, which was a role I thought I would love, but the character was really, really boring. On the first night I decided to mix it up a little, and in the first scene I kind of accidentally flashed him. I was facing him in the corner and had to bend down over him while he was sitting on the couch and I started to, well, pop out of my costume. It was in the back corner and the scene's focus was center front so I didn't think anyone else would see, so I let it happen. A few guys on that side of the stage in the front row did see, but oh well. Tom couldn't remember any of his lines the rest of the night and I got to do lots of improv to cover for him. It was a blast.

RIFTER: Wow. I should take up acting. Doesn't it make you feel uncomfortable having some of the audience see your breasts too? Some of them are bound to be weirdos.

SCARLET: Weirdos don't bother me at all. We're all a little weird. I love comic books and going to comic cons. There are a surprising number of cute guys at those shows sometimes. And I usually get a ton of attention. For some reason most pretty girls avoid those events.

RIFTER: So, in your bio it says you dated more guys in high school than anyone else. That's not typically something a girl would brag about, why are you proud of that?

SCARLET: [*Laughs*] Well, when you put it that way, it does sound bad. I just couldn't decide who I liked best, so I figured I would play the field. It was a lot fun hanging out with different people all the time. I got a lot of nice meals and movies out of it, too. Besides, I only kissed two of those guys.

RIFTER: Sounds like you do a good job of getting what want from men.

SCARLET: Yes, I do. It's so easy. I think that is part of the reason God made me charming and super sexy. I should probably use my gift for making the world a better place. But I have so much fun using my gifts for myself and entertaining.

RIFTER: Since we are on the subject of men, what do you like in a guy?

SCARLET: I hate that question. I don't really have any one thing I really like in a guy. But, any guy I consider dating will



have to be strong-willed and a bit outgoing. I like to party and have a good time and don't really want a boring guy.

RIFTER: What is the worst thing a guy can do to turn you away?

SCARLET: I know of one thing. I'm a little afraid of heights and I had this one date who took me to the Coaster Super Park. Now, there are plenty of rides I do like, but all he wanted to do was to ride that crazy Falling Star Terra Coaster. He managed to guilt me into going on it once. Only once. It also convinced me to never call him again.

RIFTER: That's harsh, but I think he had it coming.

SCARLET: I think he did.

RIFTER: I hear that strange things happen to sets you're on. Lights dim for no reason, strange flashes of light and sparks are seen sometimes. Are you cursed, or do you like to play jokes on people?

SCARLET: It's both things. I love playing jokes on people, but most of those things just happen. I guess you could call it cursed, but I think those weird little events are kind of cool. They keep things interesting and are really fun at parties.

Scarlet is a young, budding actress, and super hero, who loves to party and entertain. Her friends all know her as an outgoing, fun, and mischievous girl with a flair for the dramatic. Ever since she was a little kid she has loved to entertain and be the center of attention. She has also always had the uncanny ability to befriend anyone. Everyone she ever meets finds her to be divinely charming.

Unknown to all but her parents and a couple of her closest friends, she has super powers. Ever since Scarlet was about three years old, her parents knew something was different about her. She was somehow special. But it wasn't until she was 14 and her powers to absorb energy started to manifest, that her parents realized she was not only special, but extraordinary. For the most part, she hides her power to absorb energy, but she can't always control it fully. So far, though, her incredible charm and looks have helped play off lights dimming and the occasional spark as just weird phenomena.

Most of Scarlet's outward charm and great personality is just an act. She is actually pretty selfish and has found that making others feel good helps her to get what she wants. She sees most men as a fun distraction from theater but nothing more. Luckily for those around her, she has only just begun learning the full extent of her Divine Aura.

Name: Scarlet Albany

Power Category: Mutant.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 17, M.A. 21, P.S. 11, P.P. 14, P.E. 16, P.B. 23, Spd 14.

Hit Points: 22. S.D.C.: 90.

Age: 20

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 125 lbs (56 kg).

Physical Appearance: Scarlet is a tall, thin and fit young woman with fiery red hair, bright green eyes, lightly tanned

skin tone, and divinely beautiful facial features. She tends to wear bright colors and tight-fitting clothes.

Experience Level: 2nd level human Mutant and 6th level Hottie.

Disposition: Outwardly very outgoing and charming. She seems to be the center of attention everywhere she goes and she obviously loves it. She always acts kind and friendly to everyone, but doesn't generally care about anyone but herself.

Super Abilities: Divine Aura and Energy Absorption.

Summary of Divine Aura: Makes her super charming and larger than life. Most average people may find her intimidating and almost godlike.

Awe Factor: 14.

Followers: Whether she wants them or not, and for the most part, she does want them, she will get one follower or devotee per level of experience.

Power of Command: Once every three melees, she can issue a simple, attention drawing command. These commands can be things like "stop," "look," or "no." Followers devoted to her are at +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry, and dodge, and get one additional attack per melee. Note: Each command takes one attack.

Power of Voice Amplification: Her voice can be deep and booming, as if using a loudspeaker, and is clearly heard for up to 1600 feet (488 m). The desired volume can be regulated.

Power of Illusion: She can create the illusion that she is twice as big as she really is. +2 to Awe/Horror Factor.

Summary of Energy Absorption: She can soak up, store, and harmlessly convert and release energy. She is also impervious to heat, fire, laser blasts, electricity, and other forms of energy.

Draining Touch: She can drain devices and batteries of up to one gigawatt per level of experience.

Energy Discharge: Can send a power surge into a system, at least temporarily short-circuiting the system (3D4 melee rounds), if not frying it (01-15% chance). Maximum discharge is 10,000 watts per level of experience.

Energy Flash: Can release a sudden flash of energy that hits everyone within the area. Range: 10 feet (3 m) per level of experience. Damage: 2D6. Duration: Instant. Note: Each flash counts as only one melee attack, but this can only be used once per melee round.

Glow: Stored energy can be released as light. She can glow with up to 500 watts of light. Attackers are at -1 to strike.

Shoot Light Beam: This beam of light does no damage but can be used to blind an opponent (for 1D4+1 melee rounds) if shot at the face. Blinded opponents are -8 on all melee actions for the first round and -6 for the rest of the duration. Range: 2000 feet (610 m). Duration: Instant or indefinitely maintained. Attacks per Melee: Each blast counts as one attack. To maintain a constant beam uses all but one melee attack per round.

Attacks per Melee: 3

Bonuses: +1 to strike, parry, dodge; +1 to save vs magic, poisons, toxins and diseases. Has a 65% chance to make someone trust her or to intimidate them, and to charm or impress someone.

Education Level: Two Years of College.

Skills of Note: Language: English 98%, Basic Math 80%, Literacy: English 98%, Pilot Automobile 64%, Computer Operation 75%, Radio: Basic 55%, TV/Video 55%, Seduction 98%, Sing 90%, Dance 90%, Performance 90%, Lore: Theater 80%, Disguise 70%, Impersonation 70%, General Athletics, and Swimming 60%.

Notes: Currently, she has two followers from the Divine Aura: Thomas Driggers, a fellow thespian, and Jenny Hood, who is a student and drama major like Scarlet.

Shock

Reprinted from *Heroes Unlimited™ G.M.'s Guide*

By Wayne Breaux Jr.

Illustration by Wayne Breaux Jr.

Shock is one of those villains that everyone seems to have heard of. She doesn't show up that often, but when she does, it's sure to be one heck of a show, for she is as flashy as her super abilities. She likes the attention her activities draw and tries to make the biggest impact she can, whether it is demonstrating her powers for an on-site news crew or leaving behind newsworthy destruction. Shock always leaves her calling card in one form or another – she likes to stop the clocks at whatever places she plans to rob or destroy (“You're out of time! Ha-ha!”). Usually she does so with just enough time for someone to get there before she hits it, but by the time someone notices and responds, it is usually too late. Shock is intelligent and her plots are often involved, but rarely is she a subtle woman. One case in point is the robot diversion in this adventure. Sure, she could have used a less dramatic diversion, but why settle just for what works when sensory overload is so much more *fun*?

Shock was a criminal mastermind on the West Coast until she overstepped her bounds and led an ill-fated coup to seize control from her bosses. Her real name is Helen Barnes, daughter of crime lord Arthur Barnes, and it was her father she tried to replace. She failed and they captured her. Unwilling to kill her outright, her father had her put through one of their experimental mutation processes that was practically guaranteed to kill her. If she survived, the doctors would remember the doses to use on someone else and kill her while she was recovering. Unfortunately for her father, Helen lived and before anyone could finish her off, she rocketed through the wall as a bolt of lightning and escaped. Hiding for months, she eventually hunted down each of the men responsible for her torturous transformation, and killed them. Her father was too well protected and managed to escape her wrath. Taking the money of her dead enemies, she fled to Texas and over the years, made her way up the East Coast until arriving in the northeast to gain strength and experience in New York and Chicago. From there, she ended up in a S.C.R.E.T. facility following a botched bank robbery. Not knowing her full power range, the government locked her up in a medium security containment facility for superhumans. There she bided her time, formulating the plans for her actions in this adventure. She escaped shortly thereafter and put her grand plan in motion, beginning with recruiting some new supervillains and arranging the A-11 theft.

In combat, Shock is cool and collected, though her energy and enthusiasm might be misread as rashness. She is an excellent tactician and exploits her high intelligence to its full extent. She is a demanding leader who will destroy any underling who disobeys or betrays her. However, Shock is rarely petty and nearly anything she does has an ulterior motive and will prove its importance at a later time. She has even been known to save or spare so-called “superheroes” for reasons known only to herself. Most believe she does so simply because the heroes represent a staunch enemy of one of Shock's rivals or because they represent a challenge. Of course, sometimes she does so to cause confusion or to trick and manipulate them.

Shock is not a terrorist, but she can and will use innocent people to hinder the capabilities of heroes and law enforcement personnel. One of her prime rules is to know one's enemies, and exploit their weaknesses. Most heroes put the welfare of others before themselves, and she exploits this frequently.

Real Name: Helen Barnes.

Other Aliases: Lady Lightning and Bolt.

Alignment: Aberrant (with a strong sense of fair play and honor).

Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 14, M.A. 21, P.S. 15, P.P. 17, P.E. 20, P.B. 17, Spd 9.

Hit Points: 71. **S.D.C.:** 190.

Height: 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 m). **Weight:** 195 lbs (72.7 kg), mostly from increased mass.

Experience Level: 11th

Disposition: Shock knows how powerful she is and when others do too, she uses it to her advantage to intimidate them. Not to say she is overconfident or conceited. Once she realizes someone is a threat to her, she will pay that person the proper respects and caution they deserve. Opponents who in turn do not show intelligence, respect, or wisdom in combat or toward her capabilities are viewed as fools and given little or no quarter. Worthy opponents rarely have to worry about being killed by Shock as she respects and honors their courage and abilities. She may leave them badly mangled and hospitalized for some time, but she will not kill them unless it is absolutely necessary.

Appearance: Beautiful, graceful, intelligent, and charming, Helen seems to have it all. It's just too bad she's a criminal mastermind. Her hair is a silvery white and her eyes are a strange electric blue that sparkle with energy (sometimes literally). Her Shock costume is black with yellow highlights and lightning bolt designs. The boots, gloves, and shoulders are plated in ceramic composites and used to parry attacks and for protection from clubbing. **Power Category:** Experiment

Side Effects: Increased mass.

Major Super Abilities: Alter Physical Structure: Electricity, Energy Absorption, and Super Energy Expulsion (Electricity).

Minor Super Abilities: None

Natural Abilities: Impervious to electricity (including magical lightning bolts), heat, fire, and other forms of energy (except kinetic energy, of course); glow equal to a 500 watt bulb; -10% to climbing, acrobatics, or gymnastics.



Combat: Hand to Hand: Expert

Number of Attacks: 7

Bonuses: +5% to all skills, +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +4 to pull punch, +10 to damage (takes into account all bonuses), +2 disarm, +3 to save vs poison and magic, +10% to save vs coma, 65% to evoke trust or intimidation, knockout on 18-20, & critical on 18-20.

Education Level and Skills: Streetwise (98%), Pick Locks (98%), Find Contraband and Illegal Weapons (98%), Safecracking (98%), Computer Hacking (98%), Basic Electronics (98%), Computer Operations (98%), Computer Programming (98%), Computer Repair (98%), Business and Finance (98%), Law (general) (98%), Research (98%), Language: Russian (98%), Advanced Mathematics (98%), Chemistry (98%), Astrophysics (98%), Biology (98%), Chemistry: Analytical (98%), Pilot: Automobile (98%), W.P.: Knife, W.P.: Automatic Pistol, and W.P.: Submachine-gun. Shock has also given up three skills to gain proficiency in each of her super abilities. This gives her the listed bonuses to hit with the ranged attacks of those abilities, plus an additional +1 at levels 3, 6, 9, and 11.

Weapons and Melee Combat: Because of her increased mass, Shock does +6 damage in hand to hand combat (+10 total). She is also skilled in paired weapons (all), body flip/throw, and a karate kick (2D4).

Note that if Shock finds herself against someone that is immune to electrical damage, she will use her attacks to topple buildings, blow the floor out from under them, etc., as well as physical attacks and available weapons. Note that during the raid on the prison, the following damages will be augmented by the amplifiers and doubled.

Quick roll damage for super abilities:

Super Energy Expulsion (normal): 1D6x10+20

Super Energy Expulsion (super-blast): 2D6x10+6

Mini-Lightning Bolt: 1D6x10+6

Lightning Bolt: 5D6+22

Electrical Ray: 1D6x10+22

First Lieutenant Nicole “Nicky” Bradshaw

Optional Material for Mechanoids® Space™

By Carl Gleba

Illustration by Nick Bradshaw

Lieutenant Bradshaw grew up in the Orion Colony, located in the heart of the Intergalactic Federation. At an early age, she demonstrated tremendous psionic potential and at the urging of her parents, friends and family, she joined the Colonial Guard. She was a natural and accepted into the Psi-Battalion, where she received the training to further develop her mental powers and learned how best to use them as a Colonial Esper.

Nicky served with distinction during her first tour, and when it came time to reenlist she was promoted to First Lieutenant

and given command of her own squad of Espers. Her unit was then transferred to the frontier colony planet of Gideon-E. She was on the planet for less than six months when the first Mechanoid assault hit them. Her unit was in the field and was spared from the initial onslaught by the attacking wave of Mechanoids. Quick to rally and come to the planet's defense, her unit has remained in the field using guerilla tactics against lone and small groups of Mechanoids. She and her team have been trying to get to a nearby base on the Highland Plateau; however their efforts have been thwarted time and again, as the main Mechanoid force is deployed in the vicinity of the base.

This picture of Nicky has been broadcast throughout the Earth Colonies to bolster hope and depict a hero in action. Nicky and her team were resting at a small oasis after a hard battle, unaware that a squad of Thin Men had been sent after Nicky and her team. The Lieutenant encountered the patrol when she had gone to the other side of the oasis looking for a little privacy and shade. Using her formidable mind powers, she was able to take out five of the Thin Men before the rest of her team arrived, weapons blazing, and destroyed the rest of the androids. On a whim, she then told one of her people to get a shot of her next to one of the Thin Men. The Wasp was digitally added by the press for added effect. The picture was supposed to be an inside joke (she has been asked on several occasions to pose for the Colonial Swimsuit Calendar), but the picture was published anyway, and now Nicky is seen as one of the leading heroines in the battle against the Mechanoids on the planet of Gideon-E.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Disposition: Nicky has a very sunny disposition, and is always positive and secure in her outlook and leadership abilities. She likes a good party and is well liked by her troops, but when it comes to being in the field, she is all business and as tough as nails.

Description: Nicky has a small, athletic build with a mane of black hair and blue-green eyes. She shows her dedication to being an Esper by having their unit patch, “The Flying Serpent,” tattooed on her left arm.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 20, M.A. 13, P.S. 12, P.P. 15, P.E. 14, P.B. 21, Spd 14.

M.D.C.: By armor only.

Hit Points: 48, **S.D.C.:** 25.

Height: 5 feet, 7 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 120 lbs (54 kg).

Age: 25

Skills of Note:

Common Skills: Speak and Read: English 98%, Speaks the Rover Language 71% and Mathematics: Basic 98%.

O.C.C. Skills: Radio: Basic 90%, Computer Operation 95%, Intelligence 70%, Surveillance Systems 80%, Basic Electronics 75%, Running, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Escape Artist 75%, Prowl 65%, Demolitions 91%, Demolitions Disposal 91%, Detect Ambush 75%, Camouflage 65%.

Secondary Skills: Wardrobe & Grooming 78%, Dance 65%, Aerobic Athletics.

Experience Level: 8th level Colonial Esper.



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Psionic Powers: Master Psionic with the following powers: Deaden Pain (4), Resist Fatigue (4), Suppress Fear (8), Levitation (varies), Mind Block (4), Summon Inner Strength (4), Intuitive Combat (10), Object Read (6), Total Recall (2), Telekinesis (Super; 10+), Telekinetic Acceleration Attack (10 or 20), Telekinetic Force Field (30), Resist Hunger (2), Resist Thirst (6), Machine Ghost (12), Meditation (0), Speed Reading (2), Telepathy (4), Electrokinesis (varies), Mind Bolt (varies), Psi-Sword (30), Pyrokinesis (varies), Telemechanic Mental Operation (12), Telemechanic Paralysis (20), Telemechanic Possession (50), and Group Mind Block (22).

I.S.P.: 200

Attacks per Melee: 5

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +2 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +3 to roll with punch or fall, +4 to pull punch, +3 to disarm, +4 on Perception Rolls, Body Flip/Throw, Karate Punch, Karate Kick, Leap Kick, Critical Strike on an unmodified roll of 18, 19, 20, Back Flip, and Back Flip Escape.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Sword, and W.P. Paired Weapons.

Weapons and Armor: When not posing for publicity shots, in the field Nicky prefers to wear Light Combat Armor (80 M.D.C. main body, 20 M.D.C. per arm, 40 M.D.C. for the legs, and 30 M.D.C. for the helmet, good mobility, -5% to Physical skills and -10% to Swimming), mounted with a pair of Infrared Distancing Binoculars, and for personal side arms, Nicky carries a CIB-10 Colonial Ion Blaster (4D6 M.D. damage, range of 600 feet/183 m, and has a payload of 20 shots per clip) and a CLR-40 Laser Rifle with under-mounted grenade launcher (laser 2D6+6 M.D. on a single shot or 1D6x10+8 M.D. on a 4 round burst, range of 2500 feet/762 m; grenade launcher 5D6 for plasma, with a range of 1000 feet/305 m).

Alyssa Peknamovic

Optional Material for Rifts®

By Taylor White

Illustration by Chris Bourassa

Alyssa Peknamovic comes from a modest and unexciting background. She was born in Wroclaw, but grew up in Koln, NGR, to a middle-class, blue-collar family. Her father was a police officer and her mother managed a chain of retail clothing stores. She has two brothers, both younger than her and still in school. Her extended family, which also resides in Koln, is equally unremarkable. Growing up, Alyssa never wanted for anything. She always had food, shelter, education, and the love of a supporting family. She has never even seen a Gargoyle, demon, or D-Bee, except on television and in newspapers.

Growing up in the New German Republic, the average person is bombarded with advertisements and messages from Triax Industries daily, if not every hour. The influence of Triax on daily life is inescapable. They are everywhere. They produce most of everything. The car you drive, the bed you sleep in, your TV, computer, kitchen appliances; all of it brought to you by Triax Industries.

Alyssa grew up with an intense fascination for this giant entity which imposed itself onto her world. The name 'Triax' was everywhere she looked. Once she learned of the threat of the Gargoyles, she also learned that it was Triax who kept them safe. She looked at her family and realized it was Triax that allowed them to have such a pedestrian life.

As soon as she was legally able, Alyssa went to work for Triax. She started out in an entry-level records filing position, but she worked hard, spending many nights reading and learning about Triax and the corporate world. She learned about Triax's relationship with the NGR government and their competitors like Northern Gun, Wellington Industries, and Wilk's.

Alyssa was especially interested about the darker, less public side of corporate politics. She applied and was hired as a Triax Espionage Agent because of her calm personality, social skills, and her dedication to Triax Industries.

Her current mission has been to perform long-range research into North American weapons manufacturers. She has infiltrated nearly every major arms company, except for the Coalition States, Northern Gun, and Bandito Arms. The information she has collected on these companies has been sent back in regular reports to her superiors at Triax, which they use to keep tabs on their rivals.

Alyssa is currently (as of 109 P.A.) working on infiltrating Bandito Arms' main base at Area 51; no easy task. For months, she has been working on establishing contacts and ties within the Black Market, even making deals involving experimental weapons technology (see her special weapons below). She has taken the alias "Bourassa" to conceal her identity. Her cover, which she never breaks in public, is that of a monster-hunting soldier trained by a non-existent mercenary company.

Alyssa's superiors are very pleased with her work in North America, and as a result, are planning on keeping her there for another year or so. This upsets and frustrates her, however. Alyssa has already been in North America for a long time. She misses the clean, gleaming cities of the NGR. She is tired of the squalid, putrid towns and ignorant, uneducated people, the almost omnipresent oppressive Coalition Army, and the constant conflict she finds wherever she goes. Most of all, Alyssa misses her family and wants to join them for a while in their blissfully bland world.

Name: Alyssa Peknamovic (pronounced pek-NAME-o-vitch), a.k.a. "Bourassa."

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 18, M.E. 17, M.A. 19, P.S. 9, P.P. 14, P.E. 15, P.B. 19, Spd 20.

Hit Points: 40, **S.D.C.:** 52.

Age: 23. **Sex:** Female.

Height: 5 feet, 7 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 110 lbs (49.5 kg).

Disposition: Cool, aloof and detached are the best words to describe Alyssa. She never lets her emotions get the better of her. In fact, those who really know her would say she has little emotion at all. That is not to say she lacks feeling; she simply has learned to control it and hide it. Truthfully, Alyssa cares very deeply for Triax, the New German Republic, and the war against the Gargoyles. She is all business, and rarely has any room in her life for anything else.



Description: Alyssa is tall, with raven black hair and a finely-toned physique. She is strikingly attractive, though her aloof demeanor tends to put most people off. She prefers to dress in custom-tailored business suits from the NGR's top fashion designers, though she has no problem slipping into something a little more casual should the situation call for it.

Skills of Note: Speaks and is Literate in Euro 98%, American 97%, Gobbley 82%, Elven/Dragonese 82%, and Pre-Rifts German 82%, Radio: Basic 98%, Surveillance 69%, Sensory Equipment 74%, Undercover Ops 74%, Intelligence 75%, Pilot Hovervehicle 92%, Prowl 59%, Palming 54%, Math: Basic 98%, Computer Operation 94%, Computer Programming 69%, Research 84%, Detect Ambush 74%, Detect Concealment 69%, Disguise 84%, Boxing, Kickboxing, Electronic Countermeasures 74%, Computer Hacking 64%, Pick Locks 74%, Pick Pockets 69%, Safe-Cracking 58%, I.D. Undercover Agent 68%, Swimming, Running, Computer Repair 64%, Basic Mechanics 64%, Basic Electronics 64%, Advanced Mathematics 79%, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, and W.P. Knife.

Combat Abilities: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Experience Level: 6th Level Triax Espionage Agent.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionics: None.

Attacks per Melee: Six.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to entangle, Body Flip/Throw (1D6 damage), Karate Kick (2D6 damage), Leap Kick (3D8 damage), +4 on Perception Rolls, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 to save vs mind control and torture, 70% chance to Trust/Intimidate, 55% chance to Charm/Impress (Triax Espionage Agents receive additional bonuses to these abilities).

Weapons and Equipment: Three sets of business clothes, military fatigues, and one set of formal wear. Briefcase, 3 sets of false identification papers, a PC-3000 computer, language translator, small PDA, digital camera, pocket digital audio recorder, sunglasses, notebook and a set of pens.

Alyssa has two personalized weapons which she almost never goes into combat without. They were specially designed to complement her cover of an alien-hunting mercenary soldier. Alyssa had the weapons designed and built by American Black Market designers, with the intention that she test the weapons in the field for mass-production. Both weapons are similar in purpose to Wilk's CFT line (see *Rifts® New West*) in that they fire Mega-Damage slugs/bullets instead of energy blasts.

AP-10 Slug Pistol

Weight: 4 lbs (1.87 kg).

Mega-Damage: 3D6+6 M.D.

Effective Range: 250 feet (122 m).

Payload: 6 round magazine.

Cost: Currently unavailable, though if it tests well, it could be made available by 111 P.A. and would cost about 5500 credits.

AP-20 Semi-Automatic Slug Rifle

Weight: 15 lbs (6.75 kg).

Mega-Damage: Can fire an individual round doing 3D6+3 M.D., or set to fire 3-round bursts that do 1D6x10 M.D.

Effective Range: 400 feet (122 m).

Payload: 21 round magazine.

Cost: Currently unavailable, though if it tests well, it could be made available by 111 P.A. and would cost about 14,000 credits.

Cybernetics and Bionics: Data Plug Internal Link, Motion Detector, Universal Finger Camera, Universal Headjack, Amplified Hearing, Radio Bandit's Ear, and Wrist Needle (usually filled with Tranquilizers).

Beata Olga Von Strauss

Optional Material for Rifts®

By Brandon Aten

Illustration by Jeff Russell

Over the past few years, the Titan Juicer Conversion has been one of the most popular forms of human augmentation in North America. Anyone looking for some of the heightened reflexes of the Juicer but with the brute force of some of the most dangerous supernatural creatures, at the very least considers the process. But for Beata Olga Von Strauss, it was more than just the simple desire to be an improved human. For Beata, it was actually a way to reach closer to physical perfection.

Beata hails from the small industrial town of Pforzheim, in Germany, where she was the oldest daughter of two Triax research scientists. For years her parents tried to hone her skills as a researcher, but no matter how hard they tried, Beata would have nothing of it. Her parents were always engulfed in their work and often had very little time for her or her two sisters, so Beata swore to herself to never be locked within the walls of one of those large industrial complexes.

Instead of focusing on her studies as her parents wished, Beata found ways to further accentuate her already beautiful and buxom body. By the time she reached her twenties, almost every man she had contact with was head over heels for her, or at the very least, attracted to her. She had dozens of lovers and began to use men only to get her way and for little else. She became increasingly cold and aloof, disregarding the emotions and interests of all of her suitors for the thrill of the "hunt" and the physical relationships that followed.

When she turned twenty-two, all of that changed. In the middle of a restaurant, during a date with one of her many lovers, Beata collapsed and became completely unresponsive. She was rushed to the nearest medical facility where the cause of her condition could be diagnosed. The cause couldn't be tracked down by the resources at the local facility, so she was transferred to the NGR's most advanced facility, in Munich, at the request of her parents. There, the medical staff was able to trace symptoms back to an alien virus that was no doubt transmitted via one of Beata's multiple lovers.

The virus incapacitated Beata, almost completely paralyzing her, and taking her from the heights of the German social circles to being completely bedridden. The doctors at the Munich facil-



ity informed Beata and her family that they had stabilized her but that she would never be able to gain movement from the neck down using conventional means; although she might have another option. The virus exhibited some peculiar behavior that might be affected by the chemicals of the Juicer conversion process, but how it would be affected was not known. Beata's condition could worsen, maybe even killing her in the process, or in the best projections, she could return to a relatively normal, albeit shortened life.

Beata decided to go through with the process, but only if she could undergo the Titan conversion process from the North American continent. Even in her completely debilitated state, Beata was still obsessed with physical perfection, and out of all the Juicer types, the Titan Juicer was the closest to her vision of complete perfection. She also believed that if she only had a few short years to live, that she may as well have fun with them competing in body building and body sculpting competitions, and maybe even the occasional gladiatorial match.

The medical facility was able to get in contact with some medical technicians in Los Alamo who had performed the Titan Juicer conversion multiple times and who were very familiar with the process. When told about Beata's situation, the scientists volunteered their time and resources and went to the NGR to operate. The operation was a success in that it fully converted Beata into a Titan Juicer, but even more so in that it brought with it some rather unexpected side effects.

Because of the alien origin of the virus, when it combined with the chemicals of the conversion which neutralized its detrimental effects, it also modified the detrimental effects of the conversion process. Beata was told that her resistance to physical damage was increased, and she was not suffering the deterioration that usually comes with the process. Her physical strength was also one of the highest that had ever been recorded in a female Juicer.

But these positive modifications were not without their negative counterparts. Beata became increasingly aggressive, even more cold and detached, and her striking good looks slowly deteriorated from their original radiance. While she originally only wanted to dabble in gladiatorial combat, it soon became the only thing that would occupy her thoughts. Currently, Beata is one of the most deadly Juicer Gladiators on Rifts Earth, with a flawless record. She has never been defeated in gladiatorial combat, and generally tries to enter matches she knows she can win (not that she has a problem winning; she just knows her game). She prefers direct combat and Juicer Football, but has also been known to enter Murderthon competitions occasionally.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 16, M.A. 16, P.S. 60, P.P. 22, P.E. 26, P.B. 17, Spd 44.

Hit Points: 584, S.D.C.: 2879.

Height: 7 feet, 1 inch (2.16 m). **Weight:** 520 lbs (234 kg).

Age: 26

Experience Level: 12th level Titan Juicer Gladiator.

P.P.E.: 6

Skills of Note: Math: Basic 98%, Literacy: Euro 98%, Language: Euro 98%, Language: American 98%, Radio: Basic 98%, Surveillance Systems 94%, Computer Operation 98%,

Murderthon, Juicer Football 74%, General Athletics, Climbing 98%/98%, Swimming 98%, Palming 89%, Streetwise 78%, Military Etiquette 98%, Interrogation Techniques 79%, Sniper, Boxing, Prowl 93%, Swimming 98%, Running, Gymnastics, Sense of Balance 98%, Work Parallel Bars and Rings 97%, Climb Rope 98%, Back Flip 98%, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons, W.P. Blunt, and W.P. Sword.

Appearance: After her Juicer transformation, Beata lost some of her beauty that she worked so hard for during her late teens. Since she has spent the time after her procedure mainly body sculpting and participating in gladiatorial games, let alone the fact that her disease has reacted with the chemicals in the process, she has put on even more muscle mass than the average Titan Juicer. She has a hot pink Mohawk haircut currently, but that changes almost monthly.

Disposition: Very cold and aloof. The only time that Beata really shows emotion is during combat, and even then it is more of a barbaric rage. Outside of combat she generally shies away from other people and retires to a gymnasium to work out. She generally tries to ignore the fact that she is sick. Even though her symptoms haven't shown themselves in a negative light for 5 years, and she shows no sign of deterioration due to the Juicer process, the thoughts are still near in her thoughts.

Psionics: None.

Magic Knowledge: Knows a bit about magic but is by no means a scholar on the subject.

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Attacks per Melee: 9

Combat Bonuses: +4 to initiative, +10 to strike, +9 to parry, +10 to dodge, +2 to entangle, +7 to pull punch, +9 to roll, +4 to save vs psionics, +6% to save vs coma/death, +2 to save vs magic. Kick attack does 2D4, knockout/stun on 17-20, Critical Strike on an unmodified roll of 19-20, automatic knockout on a Natural 20, 1D6 M.D. with a restrained punch, 1D6x10 M.D. with a full strength punch, 2D6x10 M.D. with a power punch.

Weapons of Note: "Bertha," a massive, custom built Triax Particle Beam Cannon (2D6x10+30 M.D., 4000 foot/1219 m range, 14 shot payload, single shots only), armored gauntlets, special Titan plate armor (240 M.D.C.).

Sirina the Anchian

Optional Material for Rifts®

By Jason Richards

Illustration by Mike Dubisch

Across the Megaverse from Rifts Earth is a world known as Anchias. This oceanless planet is one solid landmass covered in fresh-water rivers and lakes so large and numerous that they account for more than half of the world's surface area. Marshes, swamps, and bogs account for most of the rest of the planet, with precious little "dry land." This watery biosphere gave birth to a sentient race of aquatic humanoids a millennia ago, known as Anchians.



The Anchians are tall, slender, dark-skinned beings whose rubbery hides vary in shade from olive to tan to mud-brown. Their three-fingered hands and wide, three-toed feet are webbed for swimming, and their heads peak in a high crest used as a rudder. They have relatively poor eyesight, instead relying on four perception lobes distributed around their heads that act as extrasensory eyes and ears. While they have small, beaked mouths, they have no vocal chords, and only use the mouth for eating and respiration. These beings breathe through a set of internal gills, continuously drawing water through their mouth where oxygen is scrubbed out, and expelling the spent water through vents above the beak where one would expect a nose.

For centuries, the Anchians had a sort of submarine Iron Age society, where they lived as fisher-hunters and farmers in tightly-knit, multi-family tribes. They fashioned tools and weapons out of a fiery orange and red crystal mined from the lake bottoms. Tools were used to cultivate edible underwater plants on massive plantations, and weapons to hunt the large fish that made up the other half of the Anchian diet and fight off larger predators. War between clans was uncommon, as hunting and farming to sustain their people was a constant challenge, and different tribes were kept separate from each other, as they relied on different pockets of resources.

Four generations ago, a race of interstellar imperialists known as the Ilvonborns came to Anchias in huge colony ships to settle the "primitive" planet as part of their own empire. The local "savages," the Anchians, were hunted down, shackled, and enslaved, thereafter forced to work vast underwater farms and hunt fish for their surface-dwelling masters, providing a great bounty to the huge cities that towered high over the marshes. The pacified locals, subdued by Ilvonborn masters and their high technology, survived on scant rations and whatever they could smuggle or steal for themselves.

The Anchians dreamed of freedom. Open revolts came and went, but never with any success, and never without a huge toll paid by the Anchian population. The Anchians traded dreams of violent revolution for those of deliberate, calculated revenge. Individual Anchians endeared themselves to their masters while the masses played the part of content and willing broken servants, pleased to trade obedience for a reprieve from punishment. The Anchians learned what they could of technology, weapons, government, and anything that they thought could help them in their struggle. They learned and prepared and waited for the day when the population could rise up, but a handful would win their freedom far sooner than expected.

Sirina was a major architect of the revolutionary plans; one of many scattered across the globe. Having earned some trust from her masters, she was also head of a work crew mining Anchian crystal when her world was struck by the reverberation of a cross-dimensional explosion of mystical energy. A massive earthquake rocked the river bottom where two hundred Anchians worked under the watchful eye of a dozen Ilvonborn masters and their trusted Anchian foremen. Tectonic plates shifted and geological formations were ripped apart, revealing a blue firestorm of energy in a giant fissure, which pulled the workers and slave masters into it and deposited them across space and time into foreign waters. Seizing on the opportunity, Sirina led the charge against their disoriented masters and drowned them in the murky water. Finally, liberty; but at what cost?

Sirina and her fellow Anchians found themselves on a limited world, where rivers and lakes were scarce and their travel restricted. Fish were smaller and less numerous than on their homeworld, and finding enough to sustain even the small group of refugees was difficult. The water and soil contained less edible plant life as well. It became clear that their travel was limited to a few waterways, channels, and reservoirs, and through exploration they found a southern border of contaminated water that choked and poisoned them if they came within miles of it. Predators periodically stalked the river shores or hunted in the lakes. There were other beings on the surface as well; humanoids that fished in the waters and attacked the Anchians if ever they sighted them. Using their psionic senses to observe the natives, they learned that they were called humans, and this world was called Earth. A month went by and Sirina's people suffered. It was clear that on their own they would not survive.

As leader, Sirina made a decision. The Anchians started attacking small boats on the water and other natives too near the lakeshore and riverside. They collected equipment, weapons, and hostages. The Anchians used the knowledge carefully gained over the decades and the remnants of their masters' equipment along with what they scavenged to build nine breathing apparatuses (hydrolungs) that allowed Sirina and a few other trusted leaders to leave the water. This small troupe was able to take control of a small village of humans and press them into slavery. A new era of the Anchian people had arrived, and the slaves had become the masters. Over time, other small villages were taken, and the humans in them made to fish and farm to provide for Sirina's people.

The Anchians control half a dozen villages along what was once called the Trinity River, a once-great shipping channel from Dallas to the Gulf of Mexico in the former American Empire State of Texas (now Lone Star), all far from the influence of the Coalition and below the notice of any major players in the Pecos Empire. The river snakes from west of Dallas in the ruined shipyards that were once the combined Lake Ray Hubbard and Lake Lavon, southward to the overflowing Cedar Reservoir, and then to Lake Livingston near Houston before dumping into the Gulf.

As it turns out, Sirina and her Anchians are ruthlessly effective slave masters. She knows what her people were able to get away with under the Ilvonborn, and has taken measures not to recreate the circumstances that led to the insurgency she herself helped build. The Anchians break up families and move slaves around from one village to another to prevent any organization. They keep the slaves relatively well-fed and protected from outside dangers to keep them somewhat appreciative of the care they receive. They never single any slaves out for special privileges or duties. Punishments are swift and harsh for the most minor disobedience, often with punishments to those around them as well. The human population under the Anchian boot is passive, hard-working, and terrified of their masters, all of which adds up to success for Sirina's regime.

The slave villages are all different, but have common traits. They are all surrounded by at least a pair of wide moats fed by the river, which allow the Anchians to patrol the border of their territory while simultaneously keeping the humans contained. Humans maintain fisheries to keep up the food supply and farm edible seaweed in the shallows. Channels branch from the moats and natural waterways to crisscross the village itself, giving

Anchians access to every building, totally eliminating the humans' sense of privacy or separation; there could be an Anchian lurking in any waterway at any time. The Anchians also often come ashore using breathing devices that circulate and continuously aerate a tank of water, allowing the wearer to breathe. While not nearly as formidable on land as they are in the water, the Anchians are still more than a match for their human laborers, as the magic-rich environment has enhanced their natural psychic abilities.

Sirina doesn't often think of what her enslavement of an inferior race says about her ethics or morality. In her mind, she did the only thing that she could to ensure the survival of her people. The humans are weak in body, mind, and spirit. Her people were never so easy to break as these primates, and if they don't fight back, Sirina reasons, they deserve to be slaves. She rules her own people with absolute authority, but with a sense of fairness that endears her to them. The truth is that no Anchian alive has ever had freedom before, and they enjoy the comfort of being told what to do.

Long-term, Sirina knows that her people's population will strain the resources of the river system and force them to expand. She is devising a plan to spread into nearby waters, but the risk of that type of long-range travel gives her pause. So, for now, she sits tight in her little kingdom, enjoying the spoils of her own liberation.

Real Name: Sirina.

Race: Anchian.

Alignment: Aberrant. Anchians are generally Scrupulous, Unprincipled, or Aberrant in alignment.

Attributes: I.Q. 14 (2D6+3), M.E. 13 (3D6+4), M.A. 11 (2D6+3), P.S. 15 (3D6), P.P. 12 (3D6), P.E. 18 (3D6+4), P.B. 6 (2D6), Spd 10 running (3D4) or 60 swimming (1D4x10+40). Attributes ranges for the Anchian race are in parentheses.

Size: 5 feet, 2 inches (1.6 m) at around eye level, plus another 1 foot, 6 inches (0.5 m) to the top of her skull crest. Both male and female Anchians range in height from 5 feet (1.5 m) to 6 feet (1.8 m), plus roughly another 1 foot, 6 inches (0.5 m) for the skull crest.

Weight: 154 lbs (69 kg). Anchians' bodies are dense, weighing between 130 and 200 pounds (59 to 90 kg).

Age: 19. The average life span of an Anchian is 35+2D4 years; pregnant females lay a clutch of 3-5 eggs as often as every six months, which come to term and hatch in eight months. Anchian mothers provide milk for their young for up to a year after they hatch, and the young become mature and nearly full-grown by 10 years old. Anchian females stay fertile their entire lives.

Hit Points: 42. Anchians have Hit Points equal to their P.E. attribute number plus 1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 125. Base S.D.C. for Anchians is 6D6+100.

P.P.E.: 11. Anchians have a base P.P.E. of 4D6.

I.S.P.: 103. On Rifts Earth, Anchians have I.S.P. equal to their M.E. attribute number +8D6, plus 2D6 per level of experience. On Anchias or other worlds without Earth's substantial magical energies, they have only their M.E. attribute number +4D6, plus 1D6 per level of experience.

Experience Level: 7th level Anchian Slave and Resistance Leader (effectively a Vagabond).

Description: Other than her olive skin, Sirina is mostly indistinguishable from other females of her race. Like all Anchians, she possesses a rubbery hide, cloudy black eyes, long skull crest, and four sensory nodes protruding from around her head. Like her brethren, she bears a tattoo on her right shoulder, representing her owner and her responsibilities in the hierarchy of the Ilvonborn slave population; in her case, a slave foreman for one of the elite Ilvonborn houses. She still wears her wrist shackles from her enslavement, by which she would have her wrists linked together or tied to a post or another slave. She now considers them bands of honor that she will never willingly remove.

Disposition: Sirina views herself as the savior of her people, often forgetful of the happenstance by which she found herself able to break free from her ancestral bondage. She cares deeply about her people and has made a personal vow to never let them again fall under a tyrant's boot. She honestly doesn't see the problem with the enslavement of intelligent races, so long as they aren't Anchians, and will continue the practice as long as it can be sustained. Personally, she is aloof and superior, like a pompous officer lording her power over the pawns. She is quick to remind her comrades that she is in charge and snap them into line if they forget it.

Insanities: None.

Skills: Skills are basically those of the Vagabond O.C.C., with a few exceptions and substitutions. Notably, the Anchians have no vocal chords or ears and communicate telepathically, so Sirina doesn't know any languages. Also, the Anchians' understanding of technology is limited to their Iron Age-like societal achievements and what they could learn from observing their Ilvonborn masters on their homeworld, so many advanced technical skills are also beyond Sirina's grasp.

Racial Skills: Literacy: Anchian Pictographs 75%, Fishing 85%, Swimming 98%, Track and Hunt Sea Animals 80%/70%, Undersea Farming 80% and W.P. Spear. All Anchians get the Swimming skill at 98%, and all other skills listed here at a bonus of +15%.

O.C.C. Skills: Barter 79%, Begging 58%, I.D. Undercover Agent 74%, General Repair 75%, Mining 80%, Streetwise 58%, W.P. Chain, and W.P. Sword.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Concealment 48%, Spelunking 65%, Undersea Salvage 55% and SCUBA (the use of a hydrolung) 55%. Anchians receive only half the number of normally allotted O.C.C. Skills at level one (round up) due to their more primitive natures and selection of Racial Skills.

Secondary Skills: First Aid 75%, History: Anchian 60%, Lore: Ilvonborn 55%, Prowl 55%, W.P. Knife (at 5th level of experience), Camouflage 30% and Lore: Human 25%. Anchians receive only half the number of normally allotted Secondary Skills at level one (round up) due to their more primitive natures and selection of Racial Skills.

Special Abilities: Like all Anchians, Sirina can breathe underwater, is exceptionally agile and strong when underwater, and her natural psychic abilities are amplified substantially on Rifts Earth. Also has the special "Eyeball a Fella" ability at 74% as per the Vagabond O.C.C., but in Sirina's case it

applies specifically to sizing up either her Ilvonborn captors on Anchias, or her human slaves on Earth; she can pick out which ones are soft, tough, troublemakers, hiding something, etc.

Vulnerabilities: Anchians can't breathe out of water without the use of a hydrolung (see Equipment of Note, below), and can't survive on the surface for extended periods without wetting their skin or risk dehydration. Salt water is poisonous to them, as it interferes with their ability to scrub the oxygen they need from the water, thereby suffocating them. Totally deaf (no ears) and unable to vocalize in any way (no vocal chords), instead relying on psychic senses to communicate. Poor eyesight (half the range of a human). Anchians also have rapid metabolisms, and the sustenance they get from Earth resources just doesn't go very far, so they must eat a minimum of 10 lbs (4.5 kg) of food every day to keep starvation away (20% more is typical).

Psionics: A Master Psychic, requires a 10 to save vs psionics. Bio-Manipulation (10, stun only), Bio-Regenerate (self, 6), Death Trance (1), Empathy (4, or 0 with Anchians), Empathic Transmission (6), Hydrokinesis (varies), Intuitive Combat (10), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4, double range), Psychic Body Field (15), Suppress Fear (8), and Telepathy (4, or 0 with Anchians).

On their homeworld and in other areas without the enhanced magical climate of Rifts Earth, Anchians are Major Psychics and have only the powers of Death Trance (1), Empathy (0, with Anchians only), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), Suppress Fear (8) and Telepathy (0, with Anchians only). On Rifts Earth, all Anchians' psychic powers are identical to Sirina's.

Magic Knowledge: None. Completely ignorant of magic, as are all Anchians. However, Ocean Magic would be of great interest to them should they encounter it. Water Warlock Magic would hold no interest, as the Anchians have no desire to become slaves to another master, even a powerful Elemental being.

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 5, +1 when underwater.

Bonuses: Bonuses when on dry land: +3 to pull punch, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to strike, +2 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +2 to disarm, +2 to save vs poison, +2 to save vs magic, and +6% to save vs coma/death. Kick attack, karate punch, karate kick, Critical Strike on an unmodified roll of 18, 19 or 20, W.P. Paired Weapons, and backhand strike.

Additional bonuses when in the water (cumulative with above bonuses): +4 on initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +4 on Perception Rolls, +3 to automatic dodge (do not include other bonuses to dodge), and P.S. is increased to Augmented Strength.

Weapon of Note: Blade of Anchias: This sword, fashioned from the native red and orange crystal that was found on the Anchian homeworld, is the only item of its kind to survive the journey to Rifts Earth. It has become a symbol of authority amongst the Anchians as well as their human slaves. Damage: 4D6+2 S.D.C. Length: 2 feet, 4 inches (0.7 m). Weight: 8 lbs (3.6 kg).

Body Armor: None. Besides the fact that the Anchians have no access to body armor, wearing it would greatly restrict their maneuverability in the water and cause an even greater burden when on land, where they are already somewhat clumsy.

Equipment of Note: Hydrolung: This device is effectively a SCUBA tank for water-breathers. Instead of carrying compressed, breathable air in a tank, the vessel contains water from which an Anchian can use its gills to scrub oxygen via a breathing mask. Going one step further, the holding tank aerates the stored water, fortifying it with more oxygen after it has been used, allowing it to be recycled again and again. Using this device, an Anchian can breathe out of water for 2 hours plus 5D6 minutes before the water needs to be replaced.

Vehicle: None.

Cybernetics: None. Sirina doesn't know anything of cybernetics or bionics, but if she learned of them, she might be interested in acquiring a device that would allow her to breathe on land while retaining her natural internal gills.

Adventure Ideas

Change of Scenery

There's no more getting around it, Sirina's people have to move. Whether by carelessly depleting the resources of the Trinity River, a slave uprising, the introduction of competition from the CS or bandits, a drought, etc., Sirina's people can no longer survive in their current situation. For that reason, she has put out the word through a slave messenger (or an Anchian with a hydrolung) that her people are looking for someone to find a way to transport them to another suitable location in the region. On the table is a payment of a large deposit of Anchian crystal that was brought through the Rift with the refugees, presumably the only example of its kind on Earth. Once the Anchians are safely transported, Sirina will provide the hidden location, somewhere along the miles and miles and miles of rivers and lakes along the Trinity.

Can Sirina be trusted? Is the sample that she provides for appraisal representative of the whole stash? Does the slave population get left behind, or does Sirina want the couriers to transport them as well? Will the new destination suit the Anchians?

Captured!

The Player Characters are traveling on the Trinity River or along the bank when they are seized by an Anchian slaver party and pulled into the water. Characters ill-equipped to fight an underwater battle, especially those not wearing environmental body armor, likely aren't a match for the psionic, aquatic D-Bees.

The purpose of the kidnaping could be an effort to gather high-tech supplies to help control the slave population, or simply to gather more capable workers for the fisheries and farms. Or, a group of Anchians might have decided that they don't like what they've become and are enlisting help in staging a coup against Sirina. In any case, the characters may find themselves vulnerable and looking for a way out. Can they cut a deal? If they are taken to the slave villages, can they inspire the humans there to fight for their own freedom?

The Least of Evils

Traveling on or near the Trinity River (or even in the region, contacted by a messenger), the characters encounter a rare plea for help from the Anchians. The slave population has been overwhelmed by some sort of plague, and things are looking dim. The Anchians themselves are immune, but without the slave laborers, most of them will starve to death, as they simply are not able to gather up the amount of food that they need to consume every day on their own. Sirina seeks medical help for her slaves for the greater benefit of her people.

Can the characters help a slave master? What is the best thing for the humans under Sirina's boot? If the humans actually die off, the Anchians will either have to find more slaves or else will die off themselves, making the characters a party to seeing these people wiped off the Earth. Plus, in this condition, Sirina may be willing to bargain. Maybe she could offer Anchian crystal, or the location to some treasure trove of pre-Rifts artifacts found in a container ship buried under centuries of silt in the riverbed.

Lucretia Anteri

Optional Material for Rifts® Wormwood

Illustration by Kent Burles

By Braden Campbell

In the 983rd year of the Great Tribulation, High Priest Matthew Pentecost was elevated to the rank of Cardinal. This made him the second most powerful man in the Kingdom of Light, so, naturally, he immediately set about destroying his enemies. Foremost among them was Pachjo Anteri, who was at that time the Grand Master of the Knights of the Hospital. Pentecost had little trouble in declaring Pachjo guilty of heresy; stripping him of his title, his property, and his right to bear arms. The Anteri family left Cathedral Stronghold under a cloud of shame, and went to live in Worldgate. Destitute, Pachjo and his wife could no longer provide for their only daughter, Lucretia. Since they were unable to marry her off (she was only ten years old at the time), they were forced to give her up into the care of the Lords of the Exchequer.

The Lords, nine mysterious beings, had financed and run Worldgate for a thousand years. It was rumored that they had founded the city, and that both King Shrombek and the Ruling Council were but puppets to them. No one had ever seen their faces, for the Lords were always robed and hidden. Still, it was proclaimed that they would take in and care for any child left on the steps of their palace, so long as they were under the age of twelve. Pachjo Anteri left his daughter there, kissed her on the forehead, and wandered back down into the crowded streets. He would never see her again.

Lucretia was indeed taken in, and spent the next ten years living within the cloistered walls of the Lords' keep. She was educated in several languages, many of which were not native to Wormwood. She was taught both marksmanship and how to fight in deadly melee combat. Finally, by the time she was twenty years old, she was ready to take her place as a member of *the Zacchaeans*: the elite dimensional raiders of Worldgate.

The men and women of the Zacchaeans (though over 80% of them are women, since wayward boys on the streets of Worldgate are almost always impressed into a conscript army and sent off to fight the Unholy) have one simple mandate. They travel to other worlds in the Megaverse, and steal things. Yet, they do not simply pop out of a Rift, tear up the place, and grab what they can. The Zacchaeans prefer to operate more craftily than that. They will go to an alien world and find a team of adventurers, partnering up with them for a time. They may even go on one or more quests or assignments with them, all the while taking careful note of their collective treasure, weapons, and equipment. When the time is right, they steal the most valuable or useful things the group has, open a Rift, and vanish. Then they bring their ill-gotten goods back to the Lords of Exchequer, who resell it to those who fight against the Forces of Darkness.

Lucretia is one of the rising stars within the Zacchaeans organization. For the past seven years, she has traveled from world to world, charming men with her looks, and then robbing them blind. She has yet to be caught or captured during a raid, and has brought millions of credits worth of supplies back to Worldgate. What's more, she has had fun doing it. Her two favorite ports of call are the city of Center on Phase World, and MercTown on Rifts Earth. Both of these places are just filled with adventuring groups looking to take on new members, and are so crowded and busy that no one will remember her face when she comes back months later to start a new raid.

Although Lucretia loves her work, recently she finds it a bit boring and repetitive. It seems that no matter where in the Megaverse she goes, men are all the same; catch their eye, pout your lips, let them buy you a drink, show some cleavage and they're yours. Even the most battle-hardened and intelligent mercenary soldier is a complete idiot when it comes to women. She has a power over men, and is reveling in that power. Her favorite tactic is to get two or more good friends to fight over her, destroying all sense of camaraderie within the group. As a result, she has begun to focus more on playing "the game" than she does on acquiring new goods to take back to Wormwood. It's really just a matter of time before she gets caught in the act of robbing an adventuring team blind, or worse yet, is followed back to Worldgate.

Real Name: Lucretia Anteri.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 10, M.A. 14, P.S. 15, P.P. 11, P.E. 8, P.B. 18, Spd 17.

M.D.C.: 64

Size: Five feet, seven inches (1.65 m), with a thin build.

Age: 27

P.P.E.: 5

Disposition: Overconfident in her own abilities. Takes unnecessary risks because she has been so successful in the past.

Experience Level: 7th level Smuggler.

Magic Knowledge: No formal training, although she does know how to use the magical stones, crystals and symbiotes of Wormwood.

Psionic Knowledge: None. For some reason, Wormwood suppresses the psionic development of everyone who lives there.



Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert, and Elite Power Armor
Combat: Flying Titan.

Attacks per Melee: 5

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll, Critical Strike on a natural 18-20.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Knife, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Energy Rifle (+3 to strike), W.P. Heavy (+3 to strike), and W.P. Black Powder Weapons (+4 to strike Aimed. Can also reload a flintlock pistol or rifle in 8 seconds by using up 2 melee actions.).

Weapons of Note: Phase knife (1D6 damage and ignores armor), modified NG-IP7 Ion Pulse Rifle (extended barrel and customized grip – adds 50 feet/15.2 m to the weapon's range, and a +1 to strike, even when fired wild).

Equipment of Note: All Zacchaeon operatives carry one scroll of Dimensional Teleport, given to them by the Lords of the Exchequer (11th level). This is their ticket home. If it is lost, they will have to find a way back to Wormwood at their own expense. Unfortunately, because they are often away from Wormwood for weeks or months at a time, they cannot take any crystals, stones, or symbiotes with them.

Armor: A half suit of Wormwood resin plate and chain (50 M.D.C. but -5% to Prowl), or her stripped down suit of Flying Titan power armor (jet pack and shoulder wings only).

Skills of Note: Speaks Trade One, Demongogian, Dragonese/Elven, and Trade Four fluently (98%). Pilot: Motorcycle at 89%. Literacy: American at 80%. Detect Ambush at 75%. Detect Concealment, Escape Artist, and Disguise at 65%. Palming and Streetwise at 60%. Wardrobe and Grooming at 59%, and Seduction at 38%.

Description: A lovely woman with tanned skin, blonde hair, and emerald green eyes. She enjoys motorcycle racing, and watching Deadball games. She is allergic to dogs (and Dog Boys). Turn-offs include: the Cathedral, organized religion in general, and zombies.

The Slingin' Banditas

Optional Material for Rifts®

By Josh Sinsapaugh

Illustrations by Brian Manning and Mike Mumah

Consisting of only three female members, the **Slingin' Banditas** might just be the smallest hovercycle gang operating within the Badlands of the Pecos Empire and the northern reaches of the Mexican Frontier. However, despite their small size, the three women are infamous in the southern reaches of the Empire for being "Vampire Bandits." No, this does not mean that they are all Vampires (only their leader is); it means that they are bandits who prey on other bandits!

It wasn't always this way, though. Once upon a time, the three women were members of a much larger, but at the same time, less notable gang known as the *Slingin' Armadillos*. At the time, *Amanita the Midnight Star* was the unlikely fiancé of the Armadillos' leader, as well as the gang's second-in-command, while Dave and Sarah held ranking positions only a few steps

below their trusted friend. This quickly changed though, during a routine trip to Monterrey in 103 P.A. While the gang was refueling in the small and filthy town, Amanita simply disappeared without a trace. Though they searched for days, they could not find her, and thus made the tough decision to move on without the young woman. Much to their surprise, she was not lost altogether. Six weeks later she resurfaced, entering the Armadillos' camp one night, covered in dust and sand, a shadow of her former self.

The joy and surprise of the return of their old comrade was short-lived though, quickly turning into shock and horror. Amanita had been turned into a Vampire, and even though the transformation was against her will, her fiancé and much of the group rejected her. Kicked back out into the Mexican Frontier, she was warned to never return. She was not alone though, as her longtime friends, *Twenty-Four Shot Dave* and Sarah "*Quiet Shot*" Behar, protested Amanita's exile, and found themselves cast out of the group as well. Glad to be rid of the former second-in-command and her supporters, the power vacuum was quickly filled by other ambitious members of the Slingin' Armadillos, and the gang moving on once again. Soon, both Amanita's former fiancé and everyone else pushed the memories of their former friends to the back of their minds and focused on their careers as bandits.

However, their life without Amanita, Dave, and Sarah would be short. The trio snuck into the Armadillos' camp one night and made quick work of their treacherous comrades, rounding up and restraining those who survived the surprise attack. After the fifteen minutes of conflict was resolved, Amanita the Midnight Star stood above her ex-fiancé, blood freshly stained on her cheeks, and proclaimed that she was now *Amanita the Falling Star*, and that she and her comrades were now the Slingin' Banditas. The following day, Dave and Sarah turned their former comrades in for the various bounties that had been placed on their heads, and hocked any possessions of theirs that they did not keep for themselves. Then, once the sun had set and it was safe for Amanita to come out, the trio hopped back onto their hovercycles and rode off into the night.

Ever since then, the Slingin' Banditas have been preying on their fellow bandits in a similar manner, quickly gaining notoriety in the southern regions of the Empire and the northern regions of the Mexican Frontier. Despite their gang's small size (three members), they have an easy time robbing other bandits as all three are highly skilled, employ guerilla warfare and skullduggery, and have no qualms about seducing their would-be prey. The trio are also less likely to go in "with both guns blazing" against larger bandit groups, and are usually content with swiping the loot and kidnapping one or two members of the opposing band. The women are far from the likes of Robin Hood though, and don't rob their fellow bandits out of any sense of justice or charity. Instead, they simply rob other bandits so they don't have to go through the trouble of doing the work themselves, and because their fellow thieves usually have juicy bounties on their heads.

Amanita the Falling Star

Illustration by Brian Manning

Amanita may be the most notable member of the group, simply because it was the conflict over her "transformation" that



split up the Slingin' Armadillos and forced the formation of the Slingin' Banditas. She is also notable because she is a fairly independent *Secondary Vampire*, and is thus permanently on the lam from her would-be masters.

Before her conversion into a creature of the night, Amanita Alejandra Rueda Rivera, better known as Amanita the Midnight Star, was a skilled Gunslinger and bandit, and a bit of an oddball. She was known as the "Midnight Star" because she always loved the night, the stars, and adored wearing dark clothing and makeup. To many, she looked more like a Shifter than a Gunslinger, and if she had lived in the Twentieth or Twenty-First Century then she would have been a member of a so-called subculture: a Goth and/or (ironically) a vampire enthusiast. However, unlike most members of such subcultures, her "look" was not an attempt to stand out or a reflection of her personality – it was merely her look, and nothing more. Unfortunately, it was probably her unique style that caused the Vampires lurking in the shadows of the frontier town of Monterrey to notice her.

Amanita doesn't like to talk about her experiences at the hands of the Monterrey Vampires, and leaves much of what happened to her a secret, one that she won't even tell to her compatriots. All that she lets anyone know is that they turned her into a Vampire and that she escaped, fleeing into the wilderness. Supposedly, she spent the following six weeks tracking down her old friends, burrowing into the ground during the day in order to avoid the sun and sleep. What she doesn't tell her friends is that during that time she had fallen in with a band of *Wild Vampires*, giving into her undead urges, as she believed the Slingin' Armadillos were dead (it was a lie that she was told by the Vampires that had converted her). The only thing that saved her from an undignified life amongst the Wild Vampires was that she had caught a glimpse of her old gang from a distance one night.

She also has neglected to tell her friends that in order to escape the Monterrey Vampires she had to resist their mind control, and is thus forever in danger of falling under their sway if they should ever meet. In fact, she *has* taken orders from the Monterrey Vampires and other Vampires that she has come across on a few occasions, a fact that Dave and Sarah remain oblivious to. The Vampires of Monterrey consider Amanita and the Slingin' Banditas to be their pawns, and generally have them run "errands" that either they find too dangerous or they don't want to do themselves. The girls' proficiency as pawns is so great that the Vampires will simply back off when Amanita defies or resists them, pursuing other avenues to get their work done. Amanita realizes that her sometimes masters will rarely hurt her, but she doesn't like to take chances (or orders) anyway, and is thus constantly trying to outrun and hide from them. Unfortunately, her Vampire nature prevents her from heading too far north (too many people would try to destroy her), and she cannot easily cross the Rio Grande regardless. Thus, the Vampire Gunslinger is always precariously close to those that wish to control her.

Even with all this being said, Amanita the Falling Star is still a capable and strong leader. She is well liked by both Dave and Sarah, and is content with preying on other bandits with them. She enjoys preying on her fellow thieves, as not only is her fiancé's betrayal always fresh in her mind when dealing with opposing bandits, but also because she can *feed* on such dregs

without feeling guilty or like a monster. Amanita has become accustomed to being a Vampire these past six years, and – although she would be loath to admit it – she wouldn't want to "go back" even if she could. She does miss the sun though, and finds all of the problems that come with being a Vampire to be an annoying hassle. Feeding, in particular, bothers her, and because a meal is not guaranteed every night, she feels (and fears) that it is only a matter of time before being a Vampire twists her enough that she tries to feed on Dave or Sarah.

Amanita – Vampire Gunslinger

Real Name: Amanita Alejandra Rueda Rivera.

Race: Secondary Vampire, formerly human.

Alignment: Unprincipled, though she is slowly shifting toward Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 20, M.A. 21, Supernatural P.S. 24, P.P. 25, Supernatural P.E. 18, P.B. 19, Spd 19 (50 as a bat, 58 as a wolf, and 11 as mist).

Hit Points: 80

Horror Factor: 12 if her Vampire nature is revealed or she uses her powers, 12 based solely on her reputation as a Gunslinger in the Mexican Frontier, and 14 based solely on her reputation when dealing with peasants and other common folk.

Age: 33, has been a Vampire for six years.

Sex: Female.

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 125 lbs (56 kg).

P.P.E.: 30

Disposition: Amanita, despite her choice of fashion, was once a high-spirited, happy-go-lucky young woman with a warm personality and boundless confidence. Since her transformation, she has become much more serious, and much less confident, though she does manage to keep her spirits up most of the time. She is as warm and compassionate as ever, and makes a strong leader as long as her undead urges don't get the best of her (in which case she becomes wild). She secretly loves being a Vampire, and is thus content most of the time, though any reminder of what she has lost or what her limitations are will cause her to quickly spiral into depression. Luckily for her, Dave and Sarah are always there to cheer her up and keep her grounded. Unfortunately, not even her friends can stop her from slowly giving in to being an undead monster.

Appearance: Amanita appears to be a young woman of mixed Anglo and Mexican descent, with jet-black hair and somber brown eyes (glowing red if she is using her powers). In life, she had lightly tanned skin (a mark of her mixed heritage), though as a Vampire her skin is now milky white. She appears to be in her mid to late twenties, and will look this way for the rest of her unlife, never aging.

Thanks to her Vampire nature, Amanita doesn't need to worry about wearing armor even in the stickiest of situations, and is thus free to wear clothing instead of a drab armored suit (though many times she will wear an armored chest plate under her clothes). Just like in life, her clothing is always black, dark purple, and/or navy blue, with a few highlights of white or light purple here and there. She tends to wear stylish and frilly gowns and dresses – made out of or with leather is possible – like those that a debutante or saloon girl might

wear, along with rhinestone and leather jewelry. Her choice of style seems unbecoming of a bandit, let alone life in the desert, though it seems to fit her flair as a Gunslinger.

Natural Abilities: Limited invulnerability; vulnerable only to wood, silver, garlic, wolfbane, holy water, holy symbols (specifically a crucifix), running water, and sunlight, and must sleep on a bed made from the soil of her homeland. Limited metamorphosis (bat, wolf, or mist), super regeneration 2D6 H.P. per melee – will regenerate back from negative 21 H.P.), feeds on blood, create Secondary or Wild Vampire via a “Slow Kill,” create a Mind Slave via a “Controlling Bite,” smell blood up to a mile away (1.6 km), nightvision 1600 feet (488 m), does not breathe, summon rodents, and summon vermin. Echolocation in bat form. For full details on Vampires, please refer to *Rifts® World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms™*.

Experience Level: 7th level Gunslinger and 3rd level Secondary Vampire. As a Gunslinger, she can never advance beyond seventh level.

Combat: Natural. Amanita’s combat abilities come to her naturally as part of being a Vampire.

Attacks per Melee: 6 normally, 8 if Amanita uses handguns, revolvers, or energy pistols exclusively during that melee round. In bat form, Amanita has only 3 attacks, and in wolf form she has 7.

Bonuses (Humanoid Form): +2 on initiative normally, or +10 on Quick-Draw Initiative with revolvers and pistols of any kind (+6 when using other non-heavy firearms or knives). +2 to pull punch, +2 to disarm on a Called Shot, +5 to strike and parry (+8 with a blunt weapon thanks to W.P. Blunt), and +5 to dodge, +9 to S.D.C. damage, +3 to save vs psionics, +6 to save vs mind control, +3 to save vs insanity, +2 to save vs magic (usually not applicable), +3 on all Perception Rolls, and +8 to save vs Horror Factor. Amanita stands a 65% chance to evoke feelings of trust or intimidation, and a 45% chance to charm or impress based on her appearance.

When using the *Aimed Shot*, *Called Shot*, and “*Aimed Called Shot*” with Handguns, Revolvers, and Energy Pistols, refer to the bonuses (and attacks per melee) below and *not* the bonuses on page 361 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*. Amanita is +3 to strike with an Energy Rifle (via W.P.).

Sharpshooter’s Aimed Shot: +5 to strike (+6 with Energy Pistols), counts as one attack (instead of two like it normally would). +7 to strike (+8 with Energy Pistols) if Amanita spends two melee attacks lining up her shot. W.P. bonuses have already been included.

Sharpshooter’s Called Shot: +6 to strike (+7 with Energy Pistols), counts as two attacks and enables Amanita to get a bead on a specific and small or difficult target (such as a hand, head, or antennae); cannot be used with a burst. +8 to strike (+9 with Energy Pistols) if Amanita spends three melee attacks lining up an “*Aimed Called Shot*.” W.P. bonuses have already been included.

Trick Shooting: All Trick Shooting tricks and maneuvers.

Paired Weapons: Energy Pistols, Handguns, and Revolvers: As a Gunslinger, Amanita can use two handguns at once – one in each hand – as paired weapons. She can fire both at one time (counts as *one* melee attack), at one or two targets

(in the latter case, she must roll two strike rolls, with her bonus to strike halved for each).

Bonuses (Animal Forms): Like all Secondary Vampires, Amanita can undergo metamorphosis into two different animal forms: bat or wolf. In either form, Amanita is +9 to S.D.C. damage, +3 to save vs psionics, +6 to save vs mind control, +3 to save vs insanity, +2 to save vs magic (usually not applicable), +3 on all Perception Rolls, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor. Other bonuses are as follows:

Bonuses When in Bat Form: +7 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +13 to dodge in flight, and Prowls at 63%. Bite inflicts 2D6 S.D.C. damage; claws inflict 1D6 S.D.C. damage. Amanita is able to inflict the Vampire “Slow Kill” and drink blood in bat form. Mainly used to escape or for espionage; NEVER used for combat.

Bonuses When in Wolf Form: +3 on initiative, +7 to strike, +6 to parry, +9 to dodge, and Prowls at 73%. Bite inflicts 5D6 S.D.C. damage. Amanita CANNOT inflict the Vampire “Slow Kill” or drink blood in wolf form.

DO NOT add these bonuses to Amanita’s bonuses for her humanoid form.

Damage: Amanita has Supernatural Strength due to her transformation into a Secondary Vampire, and thus deals Mega-Damage with her bare hands and fangs. A restrained punch inflicts 3D6 S.D.C. damage (1D4 H.P. to other vampires), a full strength punch inflicts 2D6 M.D. (2D6 H.P. to Vampires), and a power punch inflicts 4D6 M.D. (4D6 H.P. to vampires), but counts as two attacks. A “Killing Bite” inflicts 2D6 M.D. (2D6 H.P. to other vampires, 1D6x10 M.D. to dragons).

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionics: As a Vampire, Amanita is a Major Psychic (requires a 12 or higher to save vs psionics) with the ability to attempt mind control over other vampires at no I.S.P. cost, as well as the following abilities: Alter Aura (2), Deaden Pain (4), Empathy (4), Induce Sleep (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Mind Block (2), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2), and Super Hypnotic Suggestion (20). Use of psionic abilities takes two melee attacks instead of one. Psionic Powers cannot be used in mist form. I.S.P.: 145.

Skills of Note: Language: Native: Spanish at 98%, Language: Other: American at 98%, Basic Electronics 63%, Basic Mechanics 33%, Basic Math 63%, Find Contraband 53%, Interrogation 68%, Palming 53%, Pilot: Hovercycle 91%, Prowl 58%, Radio: Basic 78%, Recognize Weapon Quality 58%, Seduction 51%, Streetwise 47%, and Wilderness Survival 33%. Amanita has the following W.P.s: Blunt, Handguns (including Revolvers), Energy Pistol, and Energy Rifle; W.P. Sharpshooting: Handguns (and Revolvers) and Energy Pistols. Amanita is illiterate.

Weapons and Equipment: Amanita has a soft spot for her *Wilk’s 320 “Classic” Laser Pistol* (1D6 M.D., 20 shot payload, 1000 feet/305 m, +2 to strike aimed, and weighs 2 lbs/0.9 kg), and still uses it as her main side arm despite the fact that it is outdated. She also has a pair of *Wilk’s 237 “Backup” Heavy Laser Pistols* (3D6 M.D. single blast/6D6 M.D. double pulse blast, 16 single shot/8 double shot payload, 500 feet/152 m, +2 to strike aimed, and weigh 3 lbs/1.4

kg each) that she uses when heavier firepower is needed, and an NG-IP7 Ion Pulse Rifle (3D6 M.D. single shot/1D4x10 M.D. triple burst, 30 shot payload, 1600 feet/488 m, and weighs 7 lbs/3.15 kg) for when she requires greater range. Amanita also owns a pair of ornately designed, replica *1863 Remington .45 Revolvers* (4D6+3 S.D.C., 6 round cylinder, 130 feet/39.6 m, and weigh 3 lbs/1.5 kg each) for when she requires a more delicate touch. Amanita usually carries 1D4+6 E-Clips for each weapon, and a dozen speed loaders for her revolvers, along with 288 rounds of ammunition, half of which are silver.

Other equipment includes an armored chest plate (30 M.D.; worn under her clothes), a wardrobe of stylish clothing, a pair of leather gloves, survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.), gun cleaning kit, cigarette lighter, two-holster gun belt (for her 237's), sunglasses (for old time's sake), walkie-talkie, a sturdy leather body-bag filled with a lining of Mexican dirt (in place of a coffin), backpack, satchel, saddlebags (for her hovercycle), collapsible shovel, and a smattering of simple jewelry (mainly black leather and rhinestone chokers).

Amanita, like Dave and Sarah, pilots an *MI-1010 Desert Fox Hovercycle* (85 M.D.C. on the Main Body, 170 mph/272 km, combustion engine with a range of 700 miles/1120 km, and handles like a dream: +10% to piloting skill). The deluxe model, Amanita's Desert Fox has increased M.D.C. (85 instead of 65 on the Main Body, other areas increased by 30%), though she hasn't outfitted it with weapons. For full details on the Desert Fox, refer to page 56 of *Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star™* or page 95 of *Rifts® Machinations of Doom™*.

Bionics and Cybernetics: None. Though she did have a multi-optic eye, clock calendar, and an amplified hearing implant before her transformation into a Vampire, they were expelled from her body during the transformation process.

Money: 55,000 in Universal Credits on her, and 112,000 credits in savings stored at the "Juarez National Bank" in Ciudad Juarez. "Vampire" Banditry can be a lucrative career, though most of the money that Amanita "earns" winds up being spent on ammo, fuel for her hovercycle, repairs, or on cheap thrills.

Twenty-Four Shot Dave

Illustration by Mike Mumah

"Dave's a boy's name? Well I just happen to have twenty-four ready-to-fire reasons why it is not."

Twenty-Four Shot Dave is the Slingin' Banditas eternal optimist, a girl who is out to have fun or die trying. A *CyberSlinger* (a light cyborg fine-tuned with gunplay in mind), she is easily the most technologically oriented member of the gang, who – unlike Amanita and Sarah – has received her Slingin' abilities and powers through mechanical augmentation.

Dave was born David Angel Williamson to peasant farmers living near the independent kingdom of Los Alamo. Apparently, Dave's father must have heard Johnny Cash and Shel Silverstein's *A Boy Named Sue* when his wife was pregnant, because he adopted a similarly unorthodox approach to parenting by giving his daughter a boy's name. Thanks to her Pa's clever parenting technique, Dave has had to live with constant sneers

and jeers from other people her entire life, and as a result, she has grown up to be a rather tough woman. Amazingly, she has not grown up bitter or resentful for her name, and has actually embraced it to an extent, adopting an optimistic attitude and a razor sharp wit. At the same time, her name is actually responsible for her conversion into a cyborg and her life as a career bandit.

Having a boy's name, and constantly being reminded of it, toughened Dave up to the point that the preordained life of being the wife of a dirt farmer simply became unacceptable. So, when she turned sixteen, the peasant girl left her parents' ranch for Los Alamo and cut a deal with a Black Market syndicate for ten years of service in exchange for conversion into a *CyberSlinger*. Once converted into a cyborg, Dave happily served six years of her service as an enforcer for the Los Alamo Black Market before skipping town and the remaining four years on her contract. She then headed south for the Mexican Frontier, dodging her former employer's henchmen on the way – though not before she stopped by her parents' farm in order to drop off some money, supplies, and a new energy rifle for her Pa. Once in the frontier, she joined up with the Slingin' *Armadillos*, becoming a career bandit, the manliest... err... toughest profession that she could think of.

Always the optimist who lives by the code of "when life gives you lemons, make lemonade," it was Twenty-Four Shot Dave's idea to turn on the Slingin' *Armadillos* when Amanita, Sarah, and herself were thrown out after Amanita's Vampire transformation. It was also her idea to prey on other bandits as well, and thus she has taken most enthusiastically to her "Vampire Bandit" lifestyle these last six years. Of course, subterfuge and skullduggery are not her cup of tea, and she would prefer it if the group "kicked the damn door in" more often, though she does realize that because of her gang's small size that usually isn't an option. As usual, she is still more than happy to employ such tactics, and has even quipped: "dirty, underhanded, no good tricks are fun too, just not as fun as standing up and shooting."

Even with all this being said, Dave has not forgotten where she comes from. Unlike Amanita and Sarah, banditry serves a purpose to her beyond just being a way to make a living. Sure, it is fun and sometimes it is easy, but for Dave, there is more to it than that. As evidence of this, once every few months a pile of food, medical supplies, plant seeds, and gold or silver bits winds up on the front porch of a certain farm not too far from Los Alamo. The delivery always manages to arrive in the early morning hours, just before dawn, and just who is dropping off the load is never seen. Dave loves her parents, and despite her optimism, believes that they are disappointed in her and the choices she has made. Nothing could be further from the truth, as Mr. and Mrs. Williamson couldn't be more proud of their "little" girl.

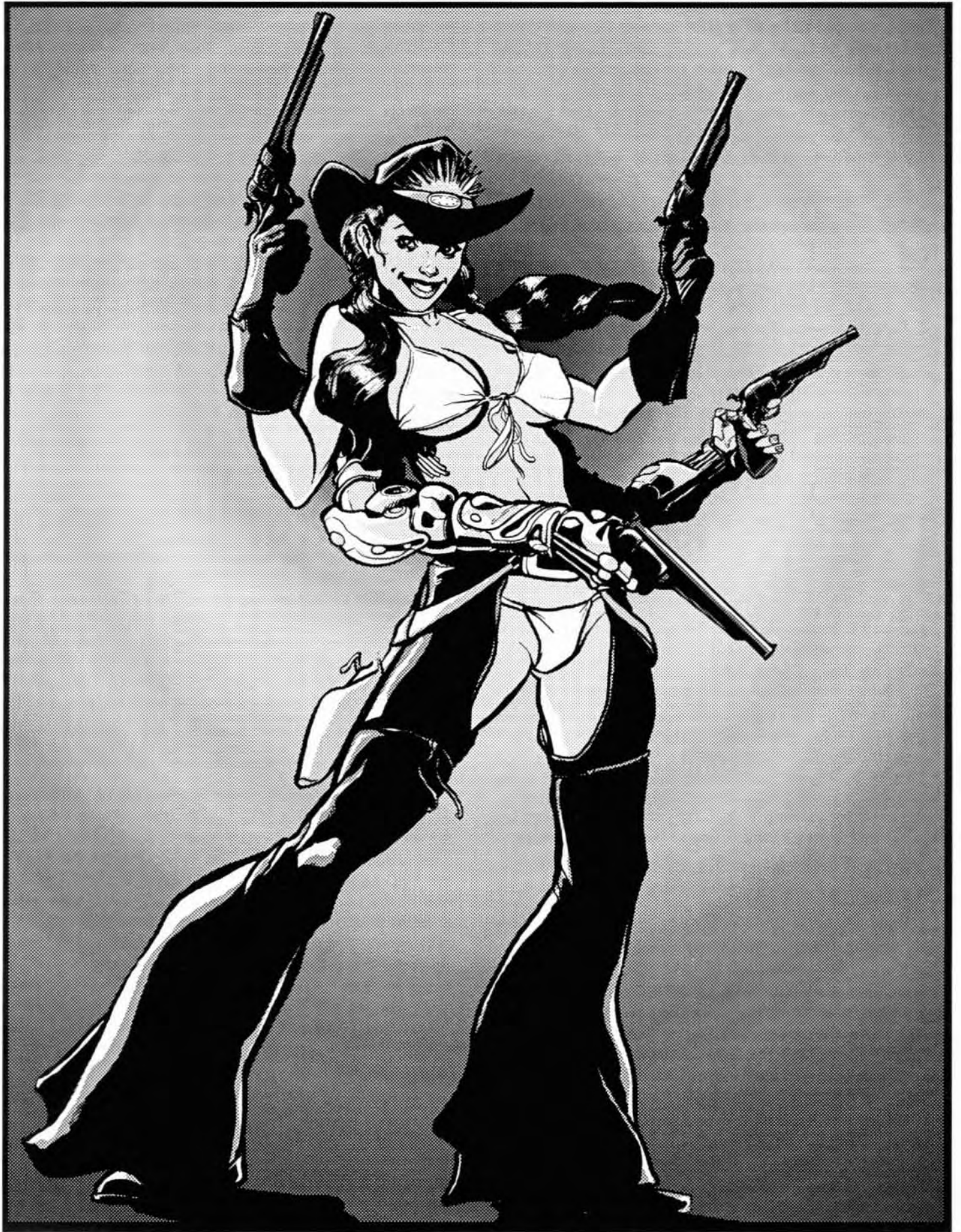
Dave – CyberSlinger

Real Name: David Angel Williamson.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 19, Augmented P.S. 22, Bionic P.P. 24, P.E. *not applicable*, P.B. 19, Bionic Spd 132.



M.D.C. by Location:

*Head (1) – 45 (reinforced)

*Hands (4) – 15 each

Arms (4) – 60 each

Forearm Vibro-Blades (2; retractable) – 50 each

Legs (2) – 120 each

**Main Body – 190

* Difficult target: -4 to strike on a Called Shot. Destroying the head will kill Dave.

** Reducing the M.D.C. of the main body to zero effectively destroys the cyborg chassis. However, emergency systems will keep Dave's brain alive for 4D6 hours before it fails and dies (she can be saved if her brain is hooked into a more permanent life support system or another cyborg body before the 4D6 hours are up). Relatively human sized, Dave can wear normal body armor as well as cyborg armor.

Horror Factor: 12 based solely on her reputation as a CyberSlinger in the Mexican Frontier, and 14 based solely on her reputation when dealing with peasants and other common folk.

Age: 32. She has been a CyberSlinger for sixteen years.

Sex: Female.

Height: 6 feet, 8 inches (2.03 m). **Weight:** 600 lbs (270 kg) of compact bionic hardware (disguised under synthetic skin), though she appears to weigh much less.

P.P.E.: 2

Disposition: Dave is generally happy-go-lucky, optimistic, and very boisterous. Years of being taunted for having a boy's name have given her a very sharp wit and sense of humor when dealing with others, to the point that it is common for her to crack jokes in the heat of combat. She is *always* animated and talkative, the kind of person who (as Sarah put it) "can have a conversation with six people when there are only four in the room." Somehow though, she is rarely perceived as annoying by those she meets, even when she is cutting somebody down with a witty backhanded compliment or two. By no means a blithering idiot, she does know how to show restraint and is able to get serious when the need arises. However, despite her general demeanor, she is still touchy about her name, though she rarely comes to blows over it. The exception is when it comes to enemies and opponents, as they have hell to pay when they mention, "Dave is a boy's name." Loyal to her friends, she doesn't care that Amanita is a Vampire ("it may have changed what she is, but not *who* she is"), and would gladly lay her life down for either of her teammates.

Appearance: Dave, thanks to her bionic augmentation, is a beautiful Amazon standing nearly seven feet tall and graced with four arms. Much of her cyborg body has been overlain with synthetic flesh, allowing Dave to look almost completely human. Only her lower pair of arms, her quick-draw holsters (in her legs), and her vertebrae remain uncovered by the synthetic skin, mainly because the CyberSlinger likes people to believe that she is a Partial Conversion 'Borg and not a Cyber-Humanoid (light Full Conversion 'Borg). Her lower pair of arms are also thicker than her upper pair, both so that they can house her retractable Vibro-Blades, and to further the illusion that she is a partial cyborg. Dave appears

to have Caucasian skin with a very light tan (never fades), long, "dirty blonde" hair (often done up into long pigtailed), and beautiful green eyes.

Like Amanita, Dave generally does not need to worry about wearing armor, and only wears armor if heavy combat is expected. Thus, she usually appears to be unarmored, usually in western style clothing. She fancies herself a cowgirl, and thus likes to wear cowboy hats, cowboy boots, rawhide gloves, blue jeans, riding chaps, and cotton blouses. She has no real preference for color, but tends to wear a variety of light blues and browns. A tomboy at heart, she rarely wears dresses or other "girly" clothing, and often teases Amanita over her love of frilly dresses.

Natural Abilities: Highly adaptive and resourceful. Bionic augmentation has provided her with advanced reflexes, incredible speed, a Mega-Damage body, and super strength (Augmented Strength category). Dave can leap 20 feet (6 m) high or lengthwise; double with a running start.

Experience Level: 9th level Cyber-Humanoid (CyberSlinger).

Combat: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 7 normally, 8 when she uses handguns (or revolvers) exclusively.

Bonuses: +5 on initiative normally, or +8 (+9 with leg holsters) on Quick-Draw Initiative with revolvers and pistols of any kind. +5 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +4 to disarm, +7 to strike (+11 to strike with a sword thanks to W.P.), +11 to parry and dodge (+14 to parry with a sword thanks to W.P.), +7 to S.D.C. damage, +3 to save versus magic, and +5 to save versus possession. W.P. Paired Weapons and Critical Strike on a Natural 18, 19, or 20. Dave stands a 55% chance to evoke feelings of trust or intimidation, and a 45% chance to charm or impress based on her appearance. Bonuses from her cybernetic and bionic implants have already been figured in.

When using the *Aimed Shot*, *Called Shot*, and "*Aimed*" *Called Shot* with Handguns and Revolvers (including CFT Revolvers), refer to the bonuses (and attacks per melee) below and *not* the bonuses on page 361 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*. Dave is +3 to strike with Heavy Mega-Damage Weapons, +4 to strike with an Energy Rifle, and +5 to strike with an Energy Pistol (all via W.P.).

Sharpshooter's Aimed Shot: +5 to strike, counts as one attack (instead of two like it normally would). +7 to strike if Dave spends an extra melee attack lining up her shot. W.P. bonuses have already been included.

Sharpshooter's Called Shot: +7 to strike, counts as two attacks and enables Dave to get a bead on a specific and small or difficult target (such as a hand, head, or antennae); cannot be used with a burst. +9 to strike if Dave spends three melee attacks on an "*Aimed*" *Called Shot*. W.P. bonuses have already been included.

Trick Shooting: Dave is able to fire a traditional two-handed weapon, like a rifle, one handed without penalty.

Paired Weapons: Energy Pistols, Handguns, and Revolvers: Thanks to her attuned reflexes and combat computer, Dave can use two or four handguns at once – one in each hand – as paired weapons. She can fire two at one time (counts as *one* melee attack) or all four at one time (counts as *two* melee at-

tacks). Unlike Amanita, she cannot split her attacks and aim her guns at multiple targets.

Damage: Thanks to her full bionic conversion, Dave has Augmented Strength, and thus her power punches and kicks (counts as two attacks) deal one point of Mega-Damage.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionics: None.

Skills of Note: Language: Native: American at 98%, Language: Other: Spanish at 94%, Language: Other: Gobblely at 89%, Automotive Mechanics 72%, Basic Electronics 77%, Basic Math 95%, Basic Mechanics 77%, Disguise 80%, Escape Artist 82%, Imitate Voices & Impersonation 92/82%, Land Navigation 78%, Pilot: Hovercycle 98%, Radio: Basic 95%, Seduction 55%, and Streetwise 65%. Dave also has the following W.P.s: Handguns (including Revolvers), Heavy M.D. Weapons, Energy Pistol, Energy Rifle, and Sword; W.P. Sharpshooting: Handguns (and Revolvers, including CFT weapons). Dave is illiterate.

Weapons and Equipment: Dave loves CFT Energy-6 Weapons, laser pistols that use “energy cartridges” instead of E-Clips (and W.P. Handguns instead of W.P. Energy Pistols). Currently, she owns four CFT “Peacebringer” Laser Pistols (2D6+3 M.D., 6 shot cylinder, 500 feet/152 m, and weigh 3 lbs/1.4 kg each), which are her general use side arms, and a single CFT “1886er” Laser Pistol (3D6 M.D., 6 shot cylinder, 300 feet/91.5 m, and weighs 3 lbs/1.4 kg), which she uses when she wants to make a statement. Other weapons include her bionic Vibro-Sabers (2D6 M.D.; one in each lower arm), a pair of S.D.C. 1863 Remington .45 Revolvers (same as Amanita’s), and a Coalition CTT-P40 Particle Beam Cannon (1D6x10 M.D., 40 blasts, 2000/610 m, 89 lbs/40 kg) that she breaks out when things get intense. Dave usually carries 576 Energy-Six cartridges for her CFT weapons and 288 rounds of conventional revolver ammunition (all of which is silver), along with a dozen speed loaders; she only has one rechargeable Energy Cell for the PB cannon.

Other equipment includes a suit of *Bushman Trooper Armor* (90 M.D.) for when heavy combat is expected, a modest wardrobe of clothing, three ponchos, a pair of rawhide gloves, two pairs of leather riding chaps, survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.), two gun cleaning kits, cigarette lighter, four-holster gun belt, utility belt, tinted goggles, sunglasses, walkie-talkie, hover skiff, large backpack, saddlebags (for her hovercycle), and a smattering of mechanic’s tools.

Dave, like Amanita and Sarah, pilots an *MI-1010 Desert Fox Hovercycle*, a deluxe model with increased M.D.C., yet lacking weapons. Her hovercycle is also souped-up in order to compensate for her greater weight and because it is usually her duty to tug a hover skiff (used to carry their booty, prisoners, and/or Amanita in her body bag during the day) and Amanita’s hovercycle when she is sleeping.

Bionics and Cybernetics: Bandito Arms CSLNGR Mark II Cyborg Chassis, Amplified Hearing with Sound Filtration, Bionic Lung, Climbing Cord, Clock Calendar, Combat Computer, Cyber-Breasts, Energy-Clip Arm Port (lower right arm), Fingerjack (lower left hand), Headjack, Gyro-Compass, Laser Finger (lower right hand; 1D6 M.D.; 300 feet/91.5 m range), Multi-Optic Eyes, Quick-Draw Holsters (in her legs), and Retractable Vibro-Sabers (2D6 M.D.; lower forearms).

Money: 28,000 in Universal Credits on her, and 89,000 credits in savings stored at the “Juarez National Bank” in Ciudad Juarez. Most of the money that Dave earns is spent on ammo, fuel, repairs, supplies, and on her parents back at home near Los Alamo.

Note: Dave’s nuclear power supply needs to be replaced once every twenty-five years or so. She has yet to need a replacement: her current power supply has about nine years of life left.

Sarah “Quiet Shot” Behar

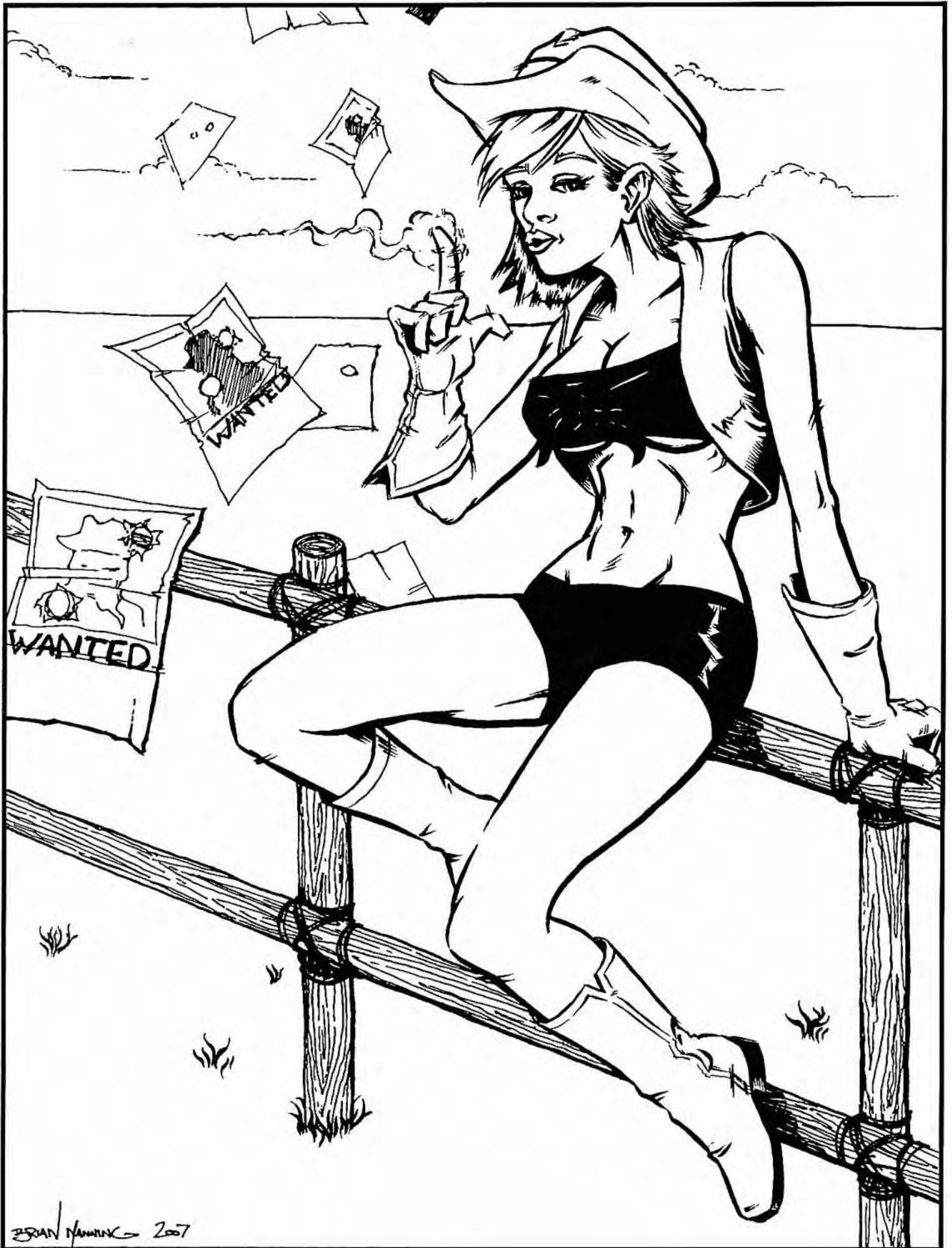
Illustration by Brian Manning

Oddly enough, the gang’s most ruthless member is not its resident Vampire or its resident Cyborg. Instead it is the group’s resident *Psi-Slinger*, unassuming Sarah “Quiet Shot” Behar. Bounty hunter turned bandit, turned “bandit bounty hunter,” she has had the widest range of experience of any member of the Slingin’ Banditas.

Like Amanita, Sarah grew up in the Mexican Frontier, and grew up poor. However, when faced with the choice of being a dirt farmer, nun, or bandit (the traditional choices of peasants in the region), Sarah instead chose to become a bounty hunter, aided by her developing psionic powers. Bounty hunting was a good choice for the young woman, as her small – almost frail – appearance caused many to underestimate her, with few realizing that she was a Psi-Slinger (a psychic who has affinity with and the ability to “charge” firearms) until it was too late. In time, several notable bandits of the Mexican Frontier and the southern Pecos Empire fell to Sarah’s skills, and with every achievement, she became more zealous and more ruthless. Eventually, she adopted a “might makes right” philosophy, and started to use her psychic abilities to get whatever she wanted, whenever she wanted it. It wasn’t long before she became a full fledged bandit and fell in with the Slingin’ Armadillos.

It was with the Slingin’ Armadillos that Sarah Behar earned the title “Quiet Shot,” in reference to her abilities as a Psi-Slinger. The name also referred to her ability as a covert killer, as the young woman could still kill people even when in areas where all other weapons were banned, again thanks to her psionic powers. Unfortunately for those who she would rob and kill in such a way, few establishments in the Mexican Frontier and southern Pecos Empire had (or have) definitive ways to weed out psychics from a crowd, a fact that made (and continues to make) Sarah’s job much easier. As a result, Sarah “Quiet Shot” Behar quickly became infamous throughout Ciudad Juarez, El Paso, Laredo, Monterrey, and New Del Rio, even though her gang’s notoriety was next to nonexistent.

Years later, when Sarah found herself cast out of the Slingin’ Armadillos with her two companions, she quickly and eagerly agreed to Dave’s suggestion of turning on their former comrades, as well as the idea of preying on other bandits. In fact, out of all the Slingin’ Banditas, she has been the most enthusiastic about “Vampire Bandity,” and takes a great deal of joy from the lifestyle. The act of turning other bandits in for their bounties especially appeals to her, as she sees it as the old mixed with the new. To Sarah, bounty hunting mixed with bandity is an exhilarating combination that allows her to feel both comfortable and on edge at the same time. Her new profession also fits snugly into her “might makes right” outlook on life, while at the



same time providing her with a wide range of challenges to overcome.

Make no mistake though, Sarah *is not* a heartless monster who has been consumed by her “survival of the fittest” mentality. If this were true, she wouldn’t have cared when Amanita was cast out of the gang, and wouldn’t have protested. No, she is not heartless, rather she maintains a twisted code of honor and ethics that, although far from noble, keeps her from becoming the kind of person who would steal candy from a baby just because she could. Dave and Amanita are important to her, as is being loyal to them and their cause. To the Psi-Slinger, her life is a shared one, and thus she will stick by her friends no matter what bad luck or pains befall them. Sure, Dave is too gung-ho for her tastes, and Amanita’s limitations as a vampire are a near constant pain, but those are things that she can overlook – or at the very least, things that she can overcome.

Sarah – Psi-Slinger

Real Name: Sarah Alicia Cabrera Behar.

Race: Human Psychic/Mutant.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 14, M.A. 22, P.S. 15, P.P. 21, P.E. 17, P.B. 17, Spd 14.

Hit Points: 46. **S.D.C.:** 46.

Horror Factor: 12 based solely on her reputation as a Psi-Slinger in the Mexican Frontier, and 14 based solely on her reputation when dealing with peasants and other common folk.

Age: 28. She left home to become a bounty hunter thirteen years ago.

Sex: Female.

Height: 5 feet, 3 inches (1.6 m). **Weight:** 109 lbs (49 kg).

P.P.E.: 10

Disposition: Cool and collected, Sarah “Quiet Shot” Behar is the personification of patience and cunning. She has a very laid back demeanor, and tends to keep quiet when not in the company of friends (unless, of course, she is trying to “play a part”). Those who have never been in the company of this Psi-Slinger often assume that she is just a shy little girl, or that she is naïve, when, in reality, she usually remains quiet in order to throw others off and so that she can observe and calculate a plan (whatever that may be). Unfortunately for their sake, her opponents often underestimate her due to her disposition, especially considering that under the quiet resides a ruthless woman who believes firmly in “might makes right.” In fact, she can be downright cruel, and is always scheming how to better the position of herself and her teammates. Even with that being said, Sarah still maintains what seems to be a code of honor and ethics (Aberrant alignment).

Appearance: Sarah appears to be a short, unassuming (but nonetheless pretty) woman in her late twenties, with dusty brown hair and green eyes. Like Amanita, her background is a mixed one: Anglo and Mexican, though the Anglo part of her heritage shows through the most (probably because her Mexican blood comes from her grandfather). Aside from being short, she is also thin, though not to the point of seeming sickly, and usually comes across as having an athletic build.

Unlike Dave and Amanita, Sarah *does* need to worry about wearing armor, and thus is often seen wearing her brown Branaghan Trench Coat or her sandy Triax Explorer Armor (or both), though she usually wears the latter only when combat is expected. Otherwise, Sarah tends to dress in Western and/or Mexican style clothing, usually in earthen tones with flashes of red and blue. However, she is not obsessed with fashion like Dave or (especially) Amanita, and will wear whatever is comfortable. Furthermore, because of her fondness for going undercover, she will wear just about anything that will help her in her mission.

Natural Abilities: Highly adaptive and resourceful. Also see *Psionics*.

Experience Level: 6th level Psi-Slinger.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 5 normally, 6 if Sarah uses handguns or revolvers that she is linked to exclusively during that melee round.

Bonuses: +2 on Quick-Draw Initiative with revolvers and pistols of any kind (+1 when using other non-heavy firearms or knives), +4 on Quick-Draw Initiative when using a gun that Sarah is psionically “linked” to. +4 to roll with impact/fall, +5 to pull punch, +2 to disarm, +4 to disarm on a Called Shot, +5 to strike, +6 to parry, +8 to strike and parry with a sword (thanks to W.P. Sword), +6 to dodge, +2 to save vs possession, +1 on all Perception Rolls, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +5% to save vs Coma/Death, and +1 to save vs magic, poison, or other P.E. saving throws. Critical Strike on an unmodified 18, 19, or 20. Sarah stands a 70% chance to evoke feelings of trust or intimidation, and a 35% chance to charm or impress based on her appearance.

When using the *Aimed Shot*, *Called Shot*, and “*Aimed*” *Called Shot* with Handguns and Revolvers that Sarah is psionically linked to, refer to the bonuses (and attacks per melee) below and *not* the bonuses on page 361 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*. Amanita is +3 to strike with an Energy Pistol, Energy Rifle or Handgun (via W.P.).

Sharpshooter’s Aimed Shot: +4 to strike, counts as one attack (instead of two like it normally would). +6 to strike if Sarah spends an extra melee attack lining up her shot. W.P. Bonuses have already been included.

Sharpshooter’s Called Shot: +5 to strike, counts as two attacks and enables Sarah to get a bead on a specific and small or difficult target (such as a hand, head, or antennae); cannot be used with a burst. +7 to strike if Sarah spends three melee attacks on an “*Aimed*” *Called Shot*. W.P. Bonuses have already been included.

Trick Shooting: *All* Trick Shooting tricks and maneuvers.

Paired Weapons: Energy Pistols, Handguns, and Revolvers: As a Psi-Slinger, Sarah can use two handguns at once – one in each hand – as paired weapons. She can fire both at one time (counts as *one* melee attack), at one or two targets (in the latter case, she must roll two strike rolls, with her bonus to strike halved for each).

Damage: Unlike Amanita and Dave, Sarah cannot inflict Mega-Damage with her punches or kicks. The Psi-Slinger inflicts 1D4 S.D.C. with a full strength punch and 2D4 S.D.C. with a gymnast’s kick. Other kick attacks include: Knee Strike (1D8

S.D.C.), Karate Kick (2D6 S.D.C.), Axe Kick (2D8 S.D.C.), Roundhouse Kick (3D6 S.D.C.), and Leap Kick (3D8 S.D.C., counts as two attacks). The only way for Sarah to inflict Mega-Damage is via psionics or a weapon.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionics: As a Psi-Slinger, Sarah is a Master Psychic (requires a 10 or higher to save vs psionics), and has the following abilities: Astral Projection (8), Ectoplasmic Disguise (12; 84% proficiency), Machine Ghost (12), Mind Block (4), Mind Bolt (varies), Nightvision (4), Presence Sense (4), Psi-Sword (30; 6D6 M.D.), Sixth Sense (2), Telekinesis (varies), Telekinetic Push (6), and she can sense the amount of energy left in an E-Clip or battery for the cost of one I.S.P. point. **I.S.P.:** 88.

Energy Expulsion: Sarah is capable of firing bolts of energy from her fingertips or via touch. **I.S.P. Cost and Damage:** 1D6 S.D.C. for 1 I.S.P., 3D6 S.D.C. for 2 I.S.P., 6D6 S.D.C. costs 3 I.S.P., and 1D4 M.D. costs 6 I.S.P. **Range:** Touch or up to 45 feet (13.7 m).

Psychic Weapons: Sarah can *link* to up to three conventional S.D.C. firearms, and psionically charge the weapons to inflict Mega-Damage! **I.S.P. Cost and Damage:** Up to 15 rounds of ammunition can be charged per every expenditure of 10 I.S.P., inflicting 1D6 M.D. per round. **Range:** Same as the ordinary weapon.

Brandish Gun Psionically: Sarah can make any of the psionic weapons that are linked to her fly into her hands. **I.S.P. Cost:** 1. **Range:** 15 feet (4.5 m).

Energy Conversion: Sarah can transmute Mega-Damage energy blasts that are directed at her into S.D.C. energy (10 M.D. becomes 10 S.D.C., which means the blast will be harmless if she is wearing armor). This conversion is automatic, and will affect any energy blast (lasers, ion, particle beam, tri-beam, etc.) that does less than 30 Mega-Damage. **I.S.P. Cost:** None; Automatic.

Skills of Note: Language: Native: Spanish at 96%, Language: Other: American at 96%, Basic Electronics 75%, Basic Math 80%, Camouflage 35%, Climbing 70%/60%, Disguise 40%, Find Contraband 56%, Gymnastics, Kick Boxing, Interrogation 65%, Palming 55%, Pilot: Hovercycle 95%, Prowl 65%, Recognize Weapon Quality 70%, Seduction 42%, Streetwise 50%, Swimming 65%, Undercover Ops 65%, and Wilderness Survival 60%. Sarah has the following W.P.s: Handguns (including Revolvers), Energy Pistol, Energy Rifle, and Sword; W.P. Sharpshooting: Handguns (and Revolvers) and Energy Pistols. Sarah is illiterate.

Weapons and Equipment: Sarah's main side arms of choice are a pair of replica *1860 Colt .44 Revolvers* (5D6 S.D.C./1D6 M.D. when psionically charged, 6 round cylinder, 130 feet/39.6 m, and weigh 3 lbs/1.4 kg each) that she is psionically linked to. She adores the weapons, as she can get them into places where M.D. weapons are banned, and yet still deal Mega-Damage. Sarah also owns a pair of *Bandit IP-10 Ion Pistols* (3D6 M.D., 10 blast payload, 400 feet/122 m, +1 to strike, 3 lbs/1.4 kg each) for when she needs to deal higher amounts of damage, and a *Wilk's 457 Laser Pulse Rifle* (3D6+2 M.D. single shot, 1D6x10 M.D. triple pulse shot, 36 shot payload, 2000 feet/610 m, +1 to strike, and weighs 6 lbs/2.7 kg) for when she needs range or heavy firepower. Sa-

rah typically carries 288 rounds of conventional revolver ammunition, 288 rounds of silver ammunition, and 1D4+6 E-Clips for each of her weapons that needs one.

Other equipment includes a *Branaghan M.D.C. Trench Coat* (28 M.D.C.), a suit of *Triax Explorer Armor* (70 M.D.) for when combat is expected, a modest wardrobe of clothing, a pair of rawhide gloves, a pair of leather riding chaps, survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.), gun cleaning kit, cigarette lighter, two-holster gun belt, tinted goggles, binoculars, multi-optics band, laser distancer, pocket language translator, flashlight, sunglasses, walkie-talkie, backpack, saddlebags (for her hovercycle), and two canteens.

Sarah, like Dave and Amanita, pilots an *MI-1010 Desert Fox Hovercycle*, a deluxe model with increased M.D.C., yet lacking weapons.

Bionics and Cybernetics: None.

Money: 60,000 in Universal Credits on her, and 118,000 credits in savings stored at the "Juarez National Bank" in Ciudad Juarez. Sarah is only slightly better at saving her money than Amanita.

Artemis

Optional Material for Rifts®

By John C. Philpott

Illustration by John Zeleznik

Artemis is a woman consumed by hate. Once she was a hero of the Coalition States, but now she is filled with dark thoughts of hate and vengeance. A dubious arrest and court-martial by CS authorities sent her down the dark path of vengeance and vendetta. Burning with hate, Artemis now lives only to enact revenge upon those whom she sees as guilty or complicit in her undeserved dishonor.

Artemis' story begins as Natalia Murinski, once a loyal and decorated follower of the Coalition States. Born in Chi-Town to a loyalist family, Natalia's natural grace, charm, and beauty assured success in any field. Childhood loyalty to the Coalition shaped her ambition and, after reaching adulthood, young Natalia eagerly enlisted in the Coalition Army, becoming a Ranger. Though charming and beautiful, she never relied on these attributes, honing her skills instead. Her physical aptitude, initiative, and unwavering dedication to the Coalition States soon garnered the attention of her superiors, who began to send her on missions both more dangerous and more important. Soon she was performing solo operations throughout the wilderness of the Tolkeen Front and Magic Zone, collecting valuable intelligence and claiming many kills as a sniper. Promotion and honors followed. Sgt. Murinski swiftly rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant and earned the coveted Iron Star for her actions. The Ranger seemed destined for success in the Coalition Army, or at least for a valiant martyr's death in its service.

Her true fate, however, was sealed in the latter years of the War. While monitoring reports of growing Tolkeen Army mobilizations, Sgt. Murinski reported an alarming gathering of "cyber-enhanced demons" (Daemonix). Unfortunately for her comrades, the message was miss-relayed by Forward Command.



2007

Sgt. Murinski's sector of the front was alone and unsupported for the assault that would later be known as the Sorcerers' Revenge. In the chaotic aftermath of the Revenge, worn down from a fighting retreat, Sgt. Murinski made her way back to the refuge of Coalition lines. She returned, however, not to a survivor-heroine's welcome, but to charges of dereliction of duty. While Sgt. Murinski fought for her nation, the Communications Officer of the Forward Command Center (Major Anthony Kennesaw) covered up his own failure of duty and falsified Sgt. Murinski's report of enemy activity in that sector. Bureaucratic connections within the Judge Advocate General staff – and the eagerness of Theater High Command to find a low-ranking scapegoat for the Sorcerers' Revenge debacle – made it easy for Major Kennesaw to have Sgt. Murinski convicted and imprisoned for his own negligence.

Wrongfully imprisoned and demoted to Private, Murinski seethed with bitterness over her fate. Over the months of incarceration, her bitter hatred for Major Kennesaw and his cronies grew. These individuals came to represent the whole of the Coalition Army and soon, in Natalia's mind, the Coalition States government itself! The same ardent single-mindedness that created a fiercely loyal Coalition Sergeant now fueled the prisoner's dark thoughts. Vengeance schemes grew ever grander in the mind of Private Murinski. She plotted years' worth of carnage in the few months before finding an opportunity to escape the CS military prison.

Living in the wilderness, she made a living as a bandit, specifically targeting Coalition patrols when possible. Her larceny built up credits to cover weapons and armor and, eventually, Hyperion Juicer conversion! Her first action after conversion was to track down Major Kennesaw and the others involved in her court-martial and imprisonment. This was just the beginning of her ultimate vengeance!

CS authorities couldn't ignore the specter of their former prisoner when, one by one, those involved in the Murinski court-martial – JAG prosecutors, judges, intermediaries, and Major Kennesaw himself – went missing. All were found in public places, dead, with their hearts stuffed into their mouths.

Her vengeance temporarily sated, Natalia Murinski went freelance. Assuming the professional name Artemis (the Greek Goddess of the moon and the hunt), she built up a reputation as a savagely effective spy, assassin, and mercenary. The bow became her weapon of choice, and her deadly reputation grew. She soon commanded high prices, yet offered major discounts on any missions that opposed the Coalition States. Her lust for vengeance still burned just beneath the surface of a businesslike persona.

Artemis is now infamous in MercTown and elsewhere for her captivating beauty and deadly skill as a hired killer. Once too professional to take advantage of her natural looks and charm, Artemis now uses her seductive beauty to great effect. Both potential employers and potential victims had best be wary, for like a proverbial Black Widow, she lulls victims into complacency for the kill. Ever mobile and adaptable, she slips between forest and city, into and out of the Chi Town 'Burbs, seeking opportunities for another small piece of vengeance on her former compatriots.

Vendetta ever lives in Artemis, CS Ranger turned Juicer assassin. Though many, many of her former Coalition comrades

have fallen to her blade, her lust for retribution is never sated. Her schemes for reprisal grow ever bolder and more audacious, as if taunting fate. She lives a dark yet fervent existence, consumed by the very fire that drives her revenge.

Real Name: Natalia Murinski.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Miscreant shifting towards Diabolic (was once Aberrant).

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 21, P.S. 23, P.P. 28, P.E. 26, P.B. 23, Spd 92.

Hit Points: 69. **S.D.C.:** 396.

Horror Factor: None.

Age: 25.

Sex: Female.

Height: 6 feet, 3 inches (1.9 m). **Weight:** 110 lbs (49.5 kg).

P.P.E.: 8

Disposition: Artemis is consumed by thoughts of revenge against her Coalition "betrayers," and will stop at nothing to destroy the Coalition States. Every action she takes is done with this vendetta in mind, living in a clouded existence where all her visible emotions are an act meant to conceal her inner bitterness. On the outside she may appear serious and determined, playful and whimsical, innocent and naïve, or any other emotional façade. However, her driving emotions remain bitterness and anger, her vendetta consuming her actions.

Appearance: A tall, well-built, and attractive brunette with a thin, aquiline nose, high cheekbones, and almond eyes. Her athletic figure is lithe and sultry, and her skin exhibits a few small tattoos. She can be amazingly beautiful when acting cordial, seductive, and/or friendly, or can be frighteningly menacing when her inner hatred shows itself. In keeping with her new "persona" as a Juicer seductress, Artemis tends to dress in revealing clothing that enhances and draws attention to her physical beauty.

Natural Abilities: All standard Hyperion Juicer abilities and bonuses: can leap 50 feet (15.2 m) across/lengthwise & 25 feet (7.6 m) straight up after a short run (half from a dead stop). Automatic Parry/Dodge on all attacks (even from behind/surprise). Four times normal lift/carry capacity and can go for five times as long without fatigue. Normally needs four hours of sleep per day, but can go up to four days without sleep. Heals twice as fast as normal and is virtually impervious to pain. See pages 31-32 of *Rifts® World Book 10, Juicer Uprising™* for more information.

Penalties: All standard Hyperion Juicer penalties: overreacts to noises/surprises (30% chance she will instinctively punch/kick/etc. anyone sneaking up on her from behind). Requires 4000 calories per day or suffers 50% penalty on all bonuses, compounded daily. See pages 31-32 of *Rifts® World Book 10, Juicer Uprising™* for more information. **Note:** Artemis does not suffer from Metabolic Induced Voracity (MIV).

Insanities: Obsession: Hatred of the Coalition States, acute Paranoia, Superman Syndrome, and perhaps a Death Wish. Retains her old Coalition prejudices against D-Bees and magic users, but suppresses them in mixed company and is

more than willing to use either against her "true enemies" in the Coalition.

Life Span Note: Artemis is one and a half years into her Juicer conversion. As consumed by hatred and vengeance as she is, it is very unlikely she will ever attempt Detox. Her Body Fixer estimates she will enter "Last Call" in another four years.

Experience Level: 3rd Level CS Ranger, 4th Level Hyperion Juicer.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Attacks per Melee: Eight (8).

Bonuses: +12 on initiative, +6 to Perception Rolls, +10 to strike, +1 to strike with thrown weapons, +12 to parry, +13 to dodge, +2 to entangle, +12 to damage, +3 to pull punch, +8 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +4 to save vs psionics, +4 to save vs mind control (psionic or chemical), +11 to save vs disease, toxic gases, poisons, and other drugs, +1 to save vs Horror Factor, +6 to save vs magic, and +52% to save vs coma/death. 65% chance of charming, impressing, or evoking feelings of trust or intimidation in others. Knockout/Stun on an unmodified 17-20.

Damage: Standard Hand to Hand: Assassin damage plus kick attack does 3D6 S.D. and power kick does 1D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks)!

Magic Knowledge: None.

Psionics: None.

Skills of Note: Language: Native: American at 95%, Language: Other: Spanish at 76% and Dragonesse at 96% (learned in Ranger School for operations in the Magic Zone). Seduction 36%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 50% (frozen), Lore: Faeries & Creatures of Magic 45% (frozen), Acrobatics (4th level; +5% where applicable), Gymnastics (7th level), Climb 90%/80%, Prowl 72%, Land Navigation 84%, Wilderness Survival 90%, Track Animals 70%/80%, Track Humanoids 75%, Trap Construction 63%, Trap/Mine Detection 65%, Camouflage 65%, Hunting, Identify Plants 85%, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides 85%, Outdoorsmanship, Horsemanship: General 73%/53%, Pilot Hovercraft 98%, Sniper, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Knife, W.P. Sword, Archery/Targeting, W.P. Energy Pistol, and W.P. Energy Rifle at seventh level experience.

Weapons, Armor, and Equipment of Note: Compound bow with assorted S.D. and M.D. arrows, Vibro-Knife, Vibro-Saber, WI-FT1 Plasma Flamethrower, NG-11S "Sawed Off," JA-11 Energy Rifle, & NG-45LP. Juicer Assassin Plate armor. Multi-optic goggles, communicator, PDD, gas mask, grappling hook & line, refillable lighter, tent, sleeping bag, and a large backpack. She also still possesses her Iron Star medal, which she wears in a mocking salute to her former days in the Coalition Rangers.

Vehicles: W.I. Assault Hover Bike named "Luna."

Cybernetics: Augmented Hearing and a Gyro-Compass. Plus her Juicer harness and accessories.

Money: 360,000 credits in savings. Generally spends all earnings on new ways to destroy the CS.

Nysha Karillith

Optional Material for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Levi Johnstone

Illustration by Adam Withers

For travelers in the ever dangerous Old Kingdoms, it is rare to find honorable heroes who do what is right simply because it is the right thing to do. Most of the denizens in this harsh region are selfish and are only willing to help themselves. Even more uncommon is to run into a hero who is a drop dead gorgeous Elven woman. But that is exactly who Nysha is. Strangers are always taken aback by her deep blue eyes, beautifully tanned skin, and blonde hair. The rare combination of blonde hair and dark skin on an Elf give her enthralling looks an almost angelic quality. Although she is not very friendly and often snippy and impatient, she genuinely cares about people and is almost always ready to come to the aid of her community or travelers.

Born into a noble family, Nysha spent most of her youth under the watchful eye of her great grandmother. Her mother and father were always busy trying to rebuild the ancient city-state of Lothrel on the eastern edge of the Old Kingdom Mountains, a pursuit she has now joined herself. Her great grandmother, Shalla, a skilled warrior and fabled Ranger, taught her the ways of the sword and bow, and how to become one with nature. Nysha hopes that one day she will be as respected and revered as her great grandmother. Although the idea of the attention it would bring makes her a little uncomfortable.

Nysha spends most of her time stalking the wilderness around the kingdom. Always on the watch for bandits and roving Goblins and Orcs, she is trying to prove to herself that she is as great a warrior as Shalla. Nysha has personally charged herself with the protection of travelers, farmers, and the land itself in the kingdom, a duty far greater than anyone could possibly fulfill. This often leaves her depressed and disappointed with herself that she cannot protect everyone all of the time.

Despite Nysha's snippy attitude and reclusive behavior, she has begun to build a great reputation as a heroine of the land. Many call her the "Hottie Huntress" or the "Angelic Ranger." Both references bring her unwanted attention that she feels is not yet deserved. Many travelers will spend days waiting for her to return to the castle in hope that the Angelic Ranger will lead them safely to their next destination. Although she loves protecting people and keeping them safe while in the kingdom, traveling with her is an honor that few get. She just doesn't have the time to protect everyone.

When she is not out hunting down the evils in the land or protecting travelers, Nysha enjoys reading or sunbathing at one of the many beautiful waterfalls near the Lothrel castle. These streams of crystal clear water tumbling down rocking gorges are her most cherished places and where she goes for privacy and tranquility. There are a couple of these falls that no one else knows about, and she treats them as her own land, jealously guarding them and their location.

Name: Nysha Karillith.

Race: Elf.



Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 10, M.A. 6, P.S. 14, P.P. 24, P.E. 11, P.B. 26, Spd 12.

Hit Points: 36, S.D.C.: 21.

Height: 6 feet, 5 inches (1.9 m). **Weight:** 190 pounds (85.5 kg).

Physical Appearance: Tall and thin, and very fit. Wears her hair long and straight with a slight curl under, and likes to bleach it. The blonde hair set against her well tanned skin and deep, dark blue eyes gives her an almost ethereal look, which is complemented by her angelic voice and graceful movements.

P.P.E.: 24

Experience Level: 7th level Ranger and 11th level Hottie.

Disposition: Extremely shy and introverted. Often is snippy and has little patience. She always seems to be on the hunt and moves with an almost impossibly swift grace. Loves to get into close combat with evil Goblins and Orcs to prove to herself that she can do it. She wants to be more courageous, and often gets down on herself for not being willing to take bigger risks and hunt down more powerful supernatural beings that stalk the land.

Attacks per Melee: 5

Bonuses: +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to damage, +6 to strike, +7 to parry and dodge, and +2 to roll with punches, falls, or impact.

Skills of Note: Speaks Elven 98%, Animal Husbandry 75%, Land Navigation 74%, Identify Plants & Fruits, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides, Track and Trap Animals, Track Humanoids, and Wilderness Survival, all at 75%, Languages: Western, Eastern, and Faerie, all at 85%, W.P.s include Knife, Throwing Weapons, Swords, and Longbow, and also knows Carpentry, Boat Building, Cooking, and Fishing 70%, and has Hand to Hand: Basic.

Notable Weapons & Armor: Nysha carries a large claymore that has been passed down to her from her great grandmother, who is a famous huntress and warrior. This is a prized possession that she rarely actually fights with, but almost always has with her. She also carries a pair of smaller battle axes for fighting at close range, her longbow, and at least half a dozen throwing knives.

She has a very expensive suit of dark forest green, studded leather armor that has been enchanted with Chameleon and is noiseless.

Note: She hates Orcs and Goblins, and can easily be provoked by them to fight. Also, for an Elf, she gets along relatively well with most Dwarves.

La Mort Venus™

Official source material for Rifts®, Palladium Fantasy RPG® and most Palladium game settings.

By Kevin Siembieda

Illustrated by David Martin

This malevolent supernatural being is known across the Megaverse by many names.

On Rifts® Earth she is **La Mort Venus** – the “*Death Venus*.” The murderous maiden was first reported in the Quebec, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick region of North America, and though she is most often found in that part of the country, she may be encountered in *any* woodland on the continent. The **Death Venus** is also known to be found in France and England, and rumors suggests she inhabits the forests of India where she is known as *Kahli’s Handmaiden*, and in China and Southeast Asia, where she is called the *Deadly Blossom* and *Beckoning Flower*, as well as other names.

On Wormwood she is known simply as the *Man-eater* and may be found in any woodland. In some cases, she helps to create the forested area to attract unsuspecting mortals. Then again, any region of beauty on the planet Wormwood should be viewed with suspicion.

On the Palladium World she is found in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, where she is known as the *Jungle Siren*. In the Land of the South Winds she is known as *Beautiful Death*, and sailors warn that the Beautiful Death sometimes inhabits the southern islands and lures unsuspecting sailors to their doom.

On the Earths of Beyond the Supernatural™ and Heroes Unlimited™, there are myths that warn about an ancient *Earth Demon* said to originate from China and/or Indonesia. There she is known as a cruel trickster and temptress of men, who likes to haunt and tease males, only to eventually seduce, slay and devour the men who covet her. Though she originates in the East, she is said to have followed the Silk Road to the West – Europe, India, Africa and eventually, the Americas. She is known by many names, but the most common are *Deadly Blossom* (China), the *Rose Glen Temptress* and *Demon Maiden* (Europe), the *Devil Vine Woman* (South America), and *Morning Death Maiden* (North American Indian).

Like the demons of Hades and Deevils of Dyval, there are myths and tales that suggests the *Death Venus* may also have visited **Phase World** and other planets within the **Three Galaxies** as well as other parts of the Megaverse.

Regardless of her name or location, there can be no doubt of her demonic nature and cruel heart. La Mort Venus is evil through and through. She delights in the seduction, misfortune and destruction of men. The Death Venus is neither maternal nor sympathetic toward women, but never attacks children or females unless they try to thwart her in some manner or dare to attack her first. *Men* are always this demon’s target.

The evil temptress likes to appear to a lone hunter or a male separated from his companions, seldom to an entire group, or in a crowded place, and rarely appears to a woman. At first, she is a tease, appearing in the distance or suddenly appearing from a thicket, freezing for a moment like a frightened doe (so the man can get a good look at her sensuous, naked body), only to rush off into the woods. Even if the man was close by or fast moving,



the young maiden manages to elude him, as if she were a ghost. Other times, La Mort Venus may appear and point or gesture in some way that might help the man or alert him to danger (a ploy to win his confidence or to save him for herself). Other times, she may dance and frolic as if she is unaware that anyone is watching. She is always nude or clad in a mere wisp of clothing. Whenever the lovely temptress appears, it is startling and unexpected, as no huntsman, warrior or traveler expects to find such a pretty young woman out in the middle of nowhere.

Young, naked and unarmed, most men believe they have nothing to fear from such a beautiful maiden. Indeed, the woman appears to be in the blush of her youth, 19-23 years of age. She is shapely, her skin smooth and silky, the cheeks flush with red, her lips plump and beckoning, and the maiden's eyes a deep, warm brown or an alluring green. She has no weapons or possessions, save for one or more flowers worn in her long, silky, black hair. To further put her intended victim at ease, the Deadly Blossom selects beautiful, serene, and isolated places to make direct contact – such as a glen, glade, field of flowers or a thicket of tall reeds or trees. Any other prior appearances are tricks, temptations and teasing. Once she makes physical contact, she is moving in for *the kill*.

La Mort Venus almost always appears in the *early morning* before the dew dries and the morning mist is completely burned away by the full light of day. She may also appear at *dusk*, in that last hour of sunlight as the sun sinks, filtered behind the trees in hazy hues of orange, red, pink, or purple. These are the hours where she will make contact with men and seduce them. These times are ideal, because they are soft, beautiful times of day. There is still light, so mortal males are not on edge or as wary as they are at night, and it all adds to the romance and sparkle of the moment. In short, it helps to beguile, seduce and distract the male from the monster's murderous intent.

When a victim is selected, he is lured away to her "special place" nearby. It is always a secluded area of the woods, where vines and flowers grow. Although the Demon Maiden can mind control men completely with magic, she never uses magic on her intended lover and victim. That is reserved for other games and self-defense. Instead, she uses her *unnatural charm and beauty* to get the male to succumb to her. Seduction and foreplay are all part of the *game* the Death Venus enjoys playing. Once she gets the male to disrobe, they roll around in the soft grass and cool vines, giggling, touching and kissing. If the demon truly finds the male attractive, she *may* make love with him, but whether their flirtation is consummated or not, at some point the man finds himself entangled in vines and bitten. Bitten repeatedly, not by the Demon Maiden herself, but by her monstrous versions of *Venus Fly Trap blossoms*. The vines and the biting flowers are all a living part of La Mort Venus. The male is her prey, her food. Eaten alive, one chunk at a time. His cries of horror are silenced by vines that wrap around the throat to strangle and prevent his screams. It is a horrible way to die.

Any body armor, clothing and possessions her victim may have had are pulled underneath a web of vines, dragged out of sight and concealed. Over time, they rot or get buried in the dirt and roots. The Death Venus has no use for the "toys of men" (even magic ones) and simply hides them so her next victim is none the wiser. Likewise, the blood she spills seeps into the ground and is absorbed by the roots of the vines. The flesh and bones of the victim are devoured, leaving no trace of the body to

be recovered. Sadistic and cruel, La Mort Venus seldom kills her prey instantly, and victims remain alive and suffering for 1D6+4 biting attacks spread out and savored over 1D4 minutes, before dying from blood loss or a final, fatal bite. The monster can go without feeding for six months, but most develop a taste for the flesh and blood of men, and feed once or twice a week. Some may even gorge themselves, killing and devouring 3-6 men in a single night or weekend.

The doubled P.P.E. of the victim at the moment of death is absorbed by La Mort Venus and added to her own P.P.E. Base. It may be kept and used at any time over the next 24 hours or until expended, whichever comes first.

The Deadly Blossom is more *man-eating demon* than "Earth Spirit." She has no concern about wildlife or ecology and doesn't care if a forest is stripped bare or otherwise laid to waste. Likewise, she has little concern for the welfare of any mortal being or fellow demon. Consequently, La Mort Venus despises being forced into servitude by greater, supernatural powers.

Like most women, the Death Venus cherishes her independence and freedom. Unlike other demonic beings, the Deadly Blossom has no Demon Lord or pantheon of demons she calls her master, nor domain of Hell she calls home. This makes her something of a wandering, independent agent. It also means she can be a loose cannon who comes, goes and does pretty much as she pleases, including interfering with the plans of other supernatural beings. Only a *Demon Lord* or *deity* has the power to force a Death Venus to do his (or her) bidding, but the defiant minx will not be happy about it, and will do whatever she can to make her "Lord and Master" suffer for the insult of bound servitude. It is under such circumstances that she may actually help a mortal male escape, defy or even destroy her master. Once her master is slain, she is free to go about her own business. Of course, if the mortal male isn't careful, she'll repay him by eating him alive!

Like the fable of the Frog and the Scorpion, it is in the nature of La Mort Venus to seduce, manipulate and devour men. Even if she should actually like a male and have no initial desire to do him harm, sooner or later, she *will* try to seduce, kill and consume him. This killer instinct consumes La Mort Venus during sex, so even if she didn't plan to (or even want to) kill her male consort, she will do so in the throes of passion, or immediately thereafter. It's what she is and what she does.

When not stalking males for food, La Mort Venus enjoys tempting, tricking, robbing and using men. She especially enjoys making men bend to her will, spend their money on her, fight for her honor and act like fools. She finds great sport in enticing males to lie, cheat, steal and murder on her request or behalf. The demon considers all men to be *treacherous swine* and likes to prove it by inciting them to reveal their secrets, and betray their teammates, partner, spouse, master or code of ethics. She is a master of suggestion and manipulation, skilled at making empty promises and alluding to favors and rewards that never come to pass. As a rule, the *physical items* she may ask for (money, gems, jewelry, magic items, artwork, the head of so and so!) have no genuine value to her. They are just the means to use, manipulate and torment stupid men and cause them to do evil.

La Mort Venus may also pretend to be a secret confidant in whom a frustrated or angry man can confide. Under this circumstance, the Deadly Blossom poses as the caring secret love who commiserates with her man. ("Oh, my darling, how cruel" or "wrong" or "unfair.") She fuels his angst and anger, sweetly en-

couraging revenge or other evil acts or bloody justice. (“I don’t know how you can stand it. He doesn’t appreciate you, my love. He’s a beast taking advantage of you. Don’t take it, sweetheart. Somebody should strike him down! Why, you would make a better leader than him. You don’t need him. I bet if you stood up against him, the others would side with you. I love a man who is strong and powerful. Why, if you slew him, I could no longer hold my love back.”) La Mort Venus loves to cause dissension among the ranks of men, incite rebellion, duels, brawls and betrayal. If “her man” gets himself killed in the process, so what? If he’s triumphant, she finally gives in and offers herself as his reward, and, of course, kills him and devours him without remorse. Ultimately, only La Mort Venus is the winner in these games.

When there is no man to tempt, beguile and manipulate like a puppet, La Mort Venus may sleep for weeks at a time, happily wander the land or engage in acts of cruelty. She may slaughter cattle, kill a stray pet, or lead a lost child or woman away from help or into the deep woods and leave them there, hopelessly lost. The demon is attracted to places of magic and the habitats of *Faerie Folk*. Little People are immune to her charms and see her for the monster she is. Likewise, the Deadly Blossom is immune to Faerie magic, so when bored, she may capture and pluck the wings off Faeries and Sprites, break the arms and legs of Pixies, pull the hair off Brownies, ride a Kelpie or Toadstool till it collapses from exhaustion, tease Pucks, eat Faerie Food, steal treasure, and capture and sell Faerie Folk to slavers.

La Mort Venus can’t stand to be spurned, turned down or turned away by a man. Such an action makes the she-monster angry and bloodthirsty. She instantly hates the one who rejected her advances and seeks to hurt him in some manner. This may spell an outright attack, but is more likely to be feminine revenge. That means she’ll manipulate other stupid men to frame him, blackmail, rob or attack the man who spurned her. **HOWEVER,** a man who can successfully resist her charm/charisma/beauty and Seduction and save against her magic or seduction three times in a row, becomes *impervious* to future magic attacks and seduction attempts made by that particular Death Venus. Furthermore, that man retains all of his wits and bonuses when facing La Mort Venus, while the Death Venus sees all of her combat bonuses and attacks per *melee reduced by half* when she engages him in combat. Such a rare man actually makes her feel naked, flustered and helpless.

La Mort Venus - NPC Demon/Monster/Villain

Also known by many other names.

Race: An elder, archaic demon; considered a Greater Demon.

Alignment: Miscreant (50%) or Diabolic (50%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D4+6, M.E. 2D4+7, M.A. 2D4+22, P.S. 3D4+13 (Supernatural), P.P. 1D4+13, P.E. 1D4+13 (Supernatural), P.B. 1D4+25, Spd 3D4+13.

Size: Mutable, she can adjust her size to match it to the size of the male she is seducing; 4-12 feet (1.2 to 3.6 m) tall.

Weight: Slender and shapely as per race.

M.D.C.: P.E. attribute number x10 +40, and an additional 10 M.D.C. per level of experience. Her vines have their own M.D.C.

In S.D.C. Environments: The Death Venus has 2D4x10+34 Hit Points plus 2D6 per level of experience, and 1D6x10+40 S.D.C.; Natural A.R. of 15. Also see natural abilities.

Awe Factor: La Mort Venus is a hot, young babe who makes men drool. When she flirts with a guy he is awestruck, roll the same as Horror Factor with similar results; needs a 17 or higher to save!

Horror Factor: 19, but applies only when the potential victim realizes the sweet, young thing is a demon and finds himself entangled and being eaten alive.

P.P.E.: P.E. attribute x10 +5 P.P.E. per level of experience.

Appearance: An attractive and seductively innocent looking young woman around the age of 19-23. Usually makes her appearance in the nude or scantily clad. She has that alluring, shy, helpless attitude and feigns naivety and innocence very well.

In the Palladium World, “Beautiful Death” typically appears as an Elf (55%) or human (35%), but may also take the appearance of a Dwarf, Goblin, Orc, Ogre, or even Troll, but not a Wolfen or other outwardly animalistic or monstrous looking race.

Average Life Span: Presumably immortal. When slain, she turns into a cloud of *honey bees* that fly off into the air and vanish within a few seconds.

Natural Abilities: Supernatural Strength and Endurance, unearthly charm and beauty, Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), perfect 20/20 day vision, see the invisible, impervious to ordinary S.D.C. weapons and takes one third damage from Mega-Damage weapons. Impervious to poison, disease, heat and cold, but dislikes bitter cold. Bio-Regenerates 3D6+4 per melee round, double on ley lines and places of magic that radiate negative energy.

1. Metamorphosis Human & Humanoids (special): The natural appearance of La Mort Venus is that of a beautiful, young, woman with black hair and almond-shaped eyes. However, she can alter her appearance to look like any variety of human-like races and species including Dwarves, Elves, Ogres, and similar. The more beautiful the race, the more likely she is to use that appearance to seduce other members of that race, but *human* is favored above all others. The Deadly Blossom NEVER copies the identity of a specific, living woman; her vanity won’t allow it. (She’s better than any mortal wench.)

2. Seduction (special): There is more to La Mort Venus than just a high M.A. and P.B., she radiates seductive innocence most men cannot resist. A half smile or the bat of her long eyelashes leave most men panting and racing to her side. She has the equivalent of the *Seduction skill at 96%*.

3. Forest Meld (special): In addition to the Chameleon spell, she can actually step into the body of a large tree and vanish like a ghost, only to emerge later, at will. While inside the tree, she hears and sees everything within a 50 foot (15.2 m) radius of it.

4. Rooted Attack (special): Roots and vines grow from her feet and lower legs to root her to the ground. When this happens, it is nearly impossible to move her from that spot; requires a combined Supernatural P.S. of 70 or greater.

Furthermore, she can make vines grow from her fingers and attack by entangling (+5), whipping (4D4 M.D.C. per attack), or strangulation. **Damage:** In the latter case, the vines encircle the throat and squeeze, cutting off the air supply to cause asphyxiation. A typical human will lose consciousness in 1D4+4 melee rounds and die from strangulation within 1D4+4 additional melee rounds. **Range:** Strangle or Whip at-

tack up to 20 feet (6.1 m); line of sight. **Equivalent P.S. of Vines:** 6 points per each vine to accumulative effect; one vine P.S. 6, two = P.S. 12, three = P.S. 18, four = P.S. 24 up to eight total vines (four each hand). **M.D.C.:** 1D6 each.

While rooted, she can grow and control vines to create lattice-work to block movement and entangle the legs of all who enter the area. The result, even against M.D.C. cyborgs and Juicers, is to reduce their Spd and number of attacks by 50%, and inflict penalties of -2 to all combat maneuvers. More powerful beings, such as demons and robots, see their Spd reduced by 20% and are -1 on initiative, and to strike, parry and dodge. **Note:** Vines may also be used to make camouflage netting to conceal a hiding place, captive, evidence of murder or a large vehicle or robot. **Range:** Can cover or sprout up and attack within a 10 foot (3 m) diameter per level of the demon's experience.

Grow and Control Man-Eating Plants (special). She can grow a bed of Killer Vines with maw-like, biting plants reminiscent of a Venus Fly Trap. This deadly bed of vines contains 1D6+3 Killer Vines per level of her experience. **Striking Range:** Each biting plant is coiled to conceal its true length and reach, which is 5 feet (1.5 m) per level of the demon's experience. So a 5th level Death Venus can send one or more of her Killer Vines crawling or shooting out up to 25 feet (7.6 m). That's 25 feet (7.6m) from where the vine is rooted, and they typically blanket a wide area around the monster. **Killer Vine Damage:** Blunt damage is like a punch doing 1D6 M.D.; a bite attack does 3D6 M.D. per bite, per plant. **Multiple Simultaneous Attacks:** La Mort Venus can have as many as three Killer Vines attack at the same time. Each multiple attack or volley counts as ONE of her attacks and only characters with the *W.P. Paired Weapons* skill (and using paired weapons or a weapon and a shield) can try to parry all three (roll for each man-eater). All other characters can only try to parry and dodge two of the three. The third will hit and do damage, provided its attack roll was 7 or higher. **G.M. Note:** Roll once, same as a volley, to determine the success of the attack for ALL of the Killer Vines. That one number to strike applies to all the victim's rolls to parry or dodge. Thus, if the Demon Maiden's roll is 13 the defender must roll 13 or higher to parry/block or dodge each of the incoming vines. When Armor Rating (A.R.) applies, the demon's roll to strike must be higher than the A.R., otherwise the damage is to the armor, not the person inside of it. **Extra Melee Attacks:** +5 to the demon's usual five. **Vine Bonuses:** +5 to strike, +2 to parry, +4 to dodge, +3 to disarm; used to kill, not entangle. **M.D.C. of Each Killer Vine:** 1D6 +6 per level of the demon. **Size of the Vine Bed:** 12 foot (3.6 m) diameter per level of experience.

Create Woodland Hideaway (special): La Mort Venus has the ability to create a forest of vegetation *50 feet (15.2 m) in diameter per level of experience.* This is her secluded glen composed mostly of vines, wildflowers and tall grass, surrounded by a thicket of young trees, bamboo and reeds (typically 10% of the overall area) that surround the hideaway like a wall or privacy fence around her lovely inner sanctum. The vegetation may be similar to indigenous plant life on the planet or distinctively Earth-like. Of course, the Man-eating Killer Vines located within this hideaway always look strange even in this exotic setting. However, they don't look dangerous until they open up to reveal their toothy maws; oth-

erwise they look like large seed pods. This Woodland Hideaway blends in perfectly within an existing forest or jungle, but can also be used to create an alluring oasis in desolate areas such as a desert, blasted ruins, open plains, etc.

Equivalent Skills: Understands and speaks all languages, but cannot read. Basic Math 92%, Begging 90%, Camouflage 95%, Climb 95%/85%, Dance 90%, Land Navigation 90%, Pick Pockets 60%, Prowl 70%, Seduction (see above), Swim 50%, Tailing 90%, Tracking (people) 70%.

Equivalent Level of Experience: 1D6+4 or as set by the G.M.

Attacks per Melee: Five physical as a 'helpless' beauty, 10 when among her Killer Vines (the vines are a part of her and add to her total number of attacks); or by magic.

Damage: As per Supernatural P.S. or as listed. **Note:** Damage in S.D.C. settings is the same as the M.D. number, except it is Hit Points/S.D.C. damage rather than M.D. So if an attack does 4D4 M.D. on Rifts® Earth, it would do 4D4 S.D.C./Hit Point damage in Palladium Fantasy, HU2, or BTS-2. Bonuses, ranges and duration are unchanged.

Bonuses for the Maiden Only (in addition to likely attribute and skill bonuses): +2 on Perception Rolls, +4 on initiative, +2 to strike, +4 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack), +2 to disarm, +6 to entangle, +1 to roll with impact, +6 to pull punch, +4 to save vs spell magic, +3 to save vs psionic mind control, and +6 to save vs possession and magic illusions. Also see Killer Vines.

Psionics: I.S.P.: M.E. attribute x11 plus 1D6 per level of experience. Psionic Invisibility (10), Psychic Omni-Sight (15), Remote Viewing (10), Sense Magic (4), and Sense Time (2).

Magic: Calling (8), Chameleon (6), Charm (12), Cleanse (6), Death Trance (1), Distant Voice (10), Domination (10), Extinguish Fire (4), Familiar Link (55), Lantern Light (1), Light Healing (6), Paralysis: Lesser (5), Repel Animals (7), Spoil (Water/Food; 30), and Trance (10).

Vulnerabilities: In addition to being overconfident when dealing with men, and dismissive of other females . . .

1. S.D.C. weapons made of *stone* or from the *wood of a peach tree* inflict *double* their S.D.C. damage as M.D., so a stone knife that normally does 1D6 S.D.C. does 2D6 M.D. to the demon.

In S.D.C. settings, the weapon does double its usual damage, where most other S.D.C. weapons have no effect.

2. A man who can resist the Death Venus' charms is also immune to the magic and has a distinct advantage over her (reduce her bonuses and attacks per melee by half).

3. Magic weapons do their normal damage, but La Mort Venus is resistant to spell magic and illusions.

Standard Equipment & Money: None, except, perhaps as additional bait to lure men to her lair of death.

Habitat: May be encountered at any forest in the world, but seems to be most common in places where lines of magic are strong and Faerie Folk reside.

Alliances and Allies: As a rule, none. On rare occasions, she may willingly associate with other evil forces, usually to exact revenge, and is sometimes forced to serve a Demon Lord. Otherwise, they even avoid associating with their own kind.

Rivals and Enemies: Mortal males are the demon's prey and victim. Dislikes other demons, Faerie Folk, and most other people.

The Hammer of the Forge

Chapter Thirty-Nine

Safari

By James M.G. Cannon

Her eyes fluttered open and she stared up at a blue, cloudless sky, framed by twining green branches of a jungle canopy.

With a groan, Ariel of Titan levered her elbows under her and slowly raised herself up. She lay in the bottom of a burned and blasted crater. The ground was scorched so badly in places it had fused to glass. Yet she appeared unharmed, and a quick check proved her initial assessment accurate. She was also unarmored, which made little sense.

Ariel frowned. This entire scene made little sense.

Her last memory was of the black hole, sucking her in, swallowing her and her fellow Cosmo-Knights and the Kreeghor dreadnought called *Shadowstar*. The ship had created the black hole, a deadly new weapon devised by the Kreeghor, a weapon that threatened every civilization of the Three Galaxies. Vyking had learned of its existence, alerted the Consortium of Civilized Worlds, and formed a strike team to go into the Transgalactic Empire and destroy the weapon. The core of his team consisted of himself, Ariel, and their fellow Knight Caleb Vulcan, the strange human from a backwater world called Earth. The Cosmo-Knights had assaulted the *Shadowstar*, slipped under its deadly guns, and were prepared to board the ship when it dropped its shields and fired up the main weapon. As the black hole appeared, Ariel and the other knights were separated, forced to battle Flying Fang interceptors and power armor pilots. She herself was swept away by a dozen armored foes and nearly killed, but one of her friends, either Vyking or Caleb, managed to get aboard the *Shadowstar* and destroy some vital piece of machinery inside. Even as Ariel drifted towards the black hole, her armor torn and fractured and her life's blood crystallizing as it seeped into the vacuum of space, the mighty *Shadowstar* began to list and drift towards the singularity it had created.

Now where was she? Not in space, not crushed by the tremendous gravitational pull of a black hole, not anywhere familiar. For a moment, Ariel thought she might be in Elysium, the afterlife, but no. This was definitely a world. The jungle around her was alive with noise and sound and color. The buzz of insects, the raucous cries of animals, and the shuddering crash of something heavy moving through the brush. Ariel cocked her head. Several somethings heavy, by the sound of it.

Ariel got her feet under her and slowly stood. A Titan, she stood over three and a half meters tall and weighed in at a shade over three hundred kilograms. Not an ounce of it was excess; like all Titans, Ariel possessed a preternatural beauty and a perfectly proportioned form, athletically built and lightly muscled. Her eyes were a piercing green and her long, auburn hair fell in waves down her back. Although at the moment it was in need of



a good brushing and washing. How long had she laid at the bottom of the crater?

She felt dizzy for a moment, and checked again for any sign of wounds. While unconscious, however long that might have been, her Forge fueled body had repaired itself. She had no doubt that her armor recovered as well, although she hesitated to summon it just yet.

Several winged shapes appeared in the sky, growing larger. They had the look of raptors, but as they drew closer, Ariel saw that they were covered in scales rather than feathers. Too small to be dragons, but some kind of reptile, surely.

Ariel surveyed her immediate surroundings. The crater – which she had presumably created by falling to this world – extended about fifteen meters in radius from her. The jungle encircled her, and the freshly fallen trees and branches, scorched and shattered, testified to the force of her descent. She listened, and behind the animal sounds she detected the roar of water. She decided to head in that direction, picking her way carefully on foot rather than flying. She still didn't know where she was, and until she knew more, it might not be a good idea to advertise her cosmic abilities.

Again she wondered how long she had been unconscious and why no one had investigated the crash. Peripherally, she wondered why her toga and sandals, while dirty, looked otherwise unharmed. Perhaps she had arrived in her armor and dispelled it while unconscious? That had never happened before.

Small lizards on two legs skittered by under Ariel's feet. They eyed her warily and darted under the branches of a massive fern. Huge insects nearly the size of Ariel's palm buzzed past her on translucent wings. One paused to settle on her shoulder and she brushed it off absently, knowing its proboscis couldn't pierce her Forge-strengthened skin but irritated by it anyway. The jungle was an old one by the look of it. Massive trees climbed hundreds of meters into the sky, their thick canopy blocking the sun from reaching lesser plants on the ground. The jungle floor was carpeted with a thick layer of humus, out of which grew an untold variety of fungus, ferns, and other plants that needed less direct sunlight to live. Ariel saw legions of ants and other insects, thick frogs and salamanders, small, four-legged lizards, and more of the two-legged variety. Many of them preyed upon one another, and the rest lived off the jungle.

The ground sloped downward slightly as the sounds of water grew louder. The ground shook lightly with the tread of some gigantic creature. In the middle distance, almost completely obscured by the tall trees, moved a huge, scaled beast with legs as thick as the trees around it. In fact, Ariel could only see the legs and part of the belly. Tree tops rustled as the creature moved and presumably fed. She hoped it wasn't carnivorous. She would probably have to fly in order to escape it, and that could draw unwanted attention.

Gradually, the jungle thinned and the slope sharpened. Ariel now stood on the bank of a mighty river several hundred meters wide that sawed its way through the forest. To her right, the earth dropped, creating a huge waterfall and the sound that drew Ariel to the spot. Along the river's edge stood a herd of the huge reptiles Ariel had glimpsed in the jungle. They were truly enormous, larger than some dragons, with massive limbs and stout bodies. Long necks stretched out a dozen meters or more, ending in almost comically small heads. They carried their tails

straight and high, but their necks were sinuous, dipping down to drink from the river.

Ariel watched them for a few moments, marveling. She had never seen such large land animals, not in such numbers. It was amazing to see. Another day in the life of a Cosmo-Knight; never once had Ariel regretted her decision to join the celestial order. As far as she knew, she was the only Titan who had ever accepted the Forge's offer in all the history of the Three Galaxies. She wasn't so foolish as to think she was the first to ever be asked. But she did wonder why no other Titan had ever taken up the Forge's banner. The Forge was a force for good, justice, and life in the Megaverse, all things that her parents and friends and teachers held dear. And yet they all looked at her differently when she became a Knight.

Fear rippled through the herd. Hoots and calls echoed from them, and the bulls and cows drifted down river, encircling the few calves. Ariel's reverie broken, she looked around, doubting that her presence could have elicited the herd's reaction.

She was right. Stepping out of the jungle near the waterfall came a pair of two-legged lizards, but these ones were more to the scale of the herd than the little ones Ariel had seen before. The newcomers were just as massively built as their prey, thick-boned and well armored, with crests of horn erupting from their huge heads. Their eyes looked tiny and cold, but their noses scented the air and their lipless mouths parted to show rows of razor sharp teeth. Their forearms were almost comically small, held tightly against their chests, three fingered and sharply clawed. The hunters leaned forward and began to stalk, and Ariel noted that their long tails were held upright, as if to balance their heavy skulls.

They moved silently and nimbly for such large beasts, and they were almost upon her before Ariel realized she stood between them and the herd. And she was no doubt much more appetizing than several tons of angry bull lizard. She took a step back, but the lead beast was already lunging. Huge jaws snapped at Ariel and though she moved quickly, the beast managed to bite down on her arm. Not for the first time Ariel wished she had Caleb's speed. Still, the lizard couldn't hurt her, she reminded herself. Even without her armor, Ariel was as strong as megasteel.

Then the teeth sawed into her flesh and she released an involuntary shout. Sizzling beams of silver light erupted from her eyes just as instinctively. They should have sheared the lizard's head clean off. Instead they burned scorch marks across its muzzle. Startled, the beast let go of Ariel and she fell backwards onto the ground. She tucked her left arm against her breast and sucked in a breath she didn't need as she surveyed the damage.

Another error. She should have gotten away while she could, but as she lay there, still assuming the lizards were no real threat, the second one thundered forward and pinned her to the ground with one massive foot. Its claws tore at her exposed skin, while the weight of the beast pressed down upon her and ground her into the dust. Ariel gritted her teeth. She might not be as fast as Caleb Vulcan or as ferocious as Sol Vyking, but she was much stronger than either of them.

Forge-enhanced Titanian muscles flexed, and the beast was thrown backward. Off-balance, it tumbled to the ground with a crash. Ariel was on her feet and moving, just as the first lizard darted forward again. Huge jaws snapped at empty air. Ariel had

learned her lesson, and wouldn't give them a second chance. She danced out of the beast's range, letting it extend itself, then moved in and gave it a good right hook. Teeth splintered and the huge lizard spun around. It staggered but did not fall.

The second one tried to get back on its feet, but it was hampered by the tiny arms. Then it lurched in the right direction and it was upright once more. The two of them began to circle Ariel. They parted their jaws, one showing a gap-toothed grin.

In the distance, the herd stampeded away, moving with all possible haste away from the melee. Ariel thought she might join them. Nothing could be gained from fighting animals. All she had done was ruin their hunt, and by knocking loose teeth, affected the success of future hunts. She was just about to take to the air when she heard a whistling sound, and a spear suddenly blossomed from the eye of one of the beasts. It bellowed in pain and reached up frantically with its tiny arms to pull the spear free. Both Ariel and the remaining lizard turned to the jungle in surprise as a scaled humanoid ran out of the forest towards them, waving another spear and roaring.

This had gone on quite long enough, Ariel decided. In a flash she lifted off the ground and flew past the startled lizard, then grabbed her would be rescuer and angled her body straight up. She looped around and landed on the opposite side of the river, depositing the humanoid on the ground with a thump. On the other side, the lizards had managed to pull the spear free, and the first lizard was licking at the other's wound while it made pained sounds.

Ariel turned to regard the scaled humanoid. He looked male, but that could be difficult to determine with some reptilian humanoids. He stood a little over a meter shorter than Ariel, but probably weighed about the same. He was massively muscled, with a broad chest and thick arms. His scales were fine and small, colored in a vivid pattern of greens, yellows, and blacks. Large, golden eyes looked up at Ariel over a short muzzle with broad nostrils and a grin filled with sharp teeth. He wore a breechcloth fashioned from some kind of lizard skin, and from his belt hung a sharp-looking knife. Aside from that and the one spear he still held, the humanoid looked to be unarmed.

As Ariel looked the humanoid over, he was giving her a similar look. Finally, he began to speak. It took Ariel a moment to realize he was speaking an archaic form of Dragonese. "If I had known you could do that, I would not have wasted my spear. It seems you had the longtooths where you wanted them." He looked back across the river, where the lizards were limping back to the jungle. "A shame to let them escape, though."

"Why is that?" Ariel asked. Or thought she asked. Her Dragonese was more than passable, but she wasn't an expert on this particular dialect.

The reptilian looked at her sharply. "You speak the Sacred Tongue? I have never seen a mammal speak the Sacred Tongue before."

"My uncle Horus made sure I understood the language of dragons." She didn't bother to add that Horus was himself a dragon.

"Amazing," her new friend said. He levered himself to his feet and thumped his right hand against his chest. "I am Sorekh of the Suresshi, the Green People. To answer your question, the longtooths often prey upon our villages. Fewer of them mean more of us."

"I see," Ariel said. Foreign world, foreign ecology. Now she almost regretted letting the lizards go. But no one had been in any real, immediate danger, and she couldn't countenance the slaughter of animals because they might prove a threat in the future. But she said, "I am sorry if I interrupted your hunt. I did not mean to offend."

"Ha!" Sorekh barked. "I am one of the bravest hunters of our people, and I still wouldn't have attacked two longtooths by myself if I had not seen a female in danger. You are female, aren't you? You have the look of a female mammal."

Ariel blushed. "Right. Yes. But I wasn't in any danger. Not really. I'm a Cosmo-Knight. I'm much stronger than I look."

"Cosmo-Knight." Sorekh tried the strange word around in his muzzle. It wasn't a word that translated well into Dragonese. The Dragonese word literally meant "sword-warrior-born-of-stars," which didn't quite convey Ariel's meaning. Sorekh's golden eyes narrowed, and his stance shifted. For some reason he was suddenly wary of her. "You fell from the sky like the others."

"What others?" Ariel asked with a frown.

* * *

They traveled swiftly through the jungle. Sorekh led the way with Ariel following close behind. Around them the jungle echoed with the sounds of life. Ariel saw other varieties of giant lizards; some with narrow snouts like duck bills, others with huge horns and frilled shields of bone on their heads, animals like the longtooths but as small as humans and moving in packs through the ferns and trees of the jungle. Rain clouds formed overhead and inundated the travelers with brief showers, only to let the sun peek through again.

Hours passed. Sorekh kept up a steady chatter in archaic Dragonese. He identified plants and animals, discussed the rain gods and the plant gods and the dragon gods, talked of the villages of the Green People, and in particular of his own folk. His mate was getting ready to hatch their first brood, and they would be a mighty clutch, for among the Green People Sorekh was the greatest hunter and his mate Turrosh gathered the most food. The Green People, Ariel realized, were omnivores, most unusual amongst reptilian species. She asked him questions as they walked, learning of his world and his ways while they traveled.

Of the "others," Sorekh was strangely silent and Ariel did not press him. It was enough that he agreed to guide her to them. She did not know what to expect, but something told her to be on her guard. Before she awoke on this jungle world, she had been deep within Transgalactic Imperial Space. Even if she had passed through a black hole – although it was more likely, she reasoned, that the singularity had fizzled out without the *Shadowstar* to fuel it – she could still be within TGE borders. Or she could be heading towards the crashed *Shadowstar* itself. Or she might be rendezvousing with Sammadar Orak and the CCW marines who had escorted Ariel and the other Knights to the *Shadowstar's* location.

Either way, she would be ready.

A loud roar echoed across the trees as another shower began to fall. "A longtooth has made a kill," Sorekh said solemnly. "If the rain gods are merciful, he does not feast on one of the Green People."

Ariel tried to smile reassuringly, but she was at a loss to frame a reply. As she struggled to come up with something that would be supportive without sounding hollow, a terrible wind whipped past them. Trees shivered, rain drops spattered them both and the humus and detritus on the jungle floor flew through the air.

Ariel's eyes narrowed. Wind didn't do that.

Then it was swirling around them both, tearing up the ground around them, buffeting at them with wispy fingers. Sorekh blinked hard and gasped, his fang-toothed mouth hanging open wide as he struggled to breathe. Ariel dropped low and lashed out with her leg, straight as an iron bar. Something slammed into her limb at several hundred kilometers an hour, nearly shattering her leg. Ariel cried out and crashed to the jungle floor, but their attacker landed beside her.

But he scrambled to his feet in an instant and edged away before Ariel could react. He moved quickly, almost too fast for the eye to follow, but what Ariel did see did not hearten her. The being was human-sized, about half her height, clad in the red and black megasteel armor of the Invincible Guard, the super-powered elite warriors of the Transgalactic Empire. His chest plate was dented where Ariel's leg had struck him, but the Guardsman otherwise looked unharmed. As he backed away, he wrenched his helmet from his head, revealing a dark-haired human with pale skin and eyes who greedily sucked in deep gasps of air.

The Guardsman's body blurred as he moved. Ariel grimaced. This one had speed. This wouldn't be an easy fight.

Already, even as Ariel rose from her crouch, the Guardsman had his breathing under control and in less than two blinks of Ariel's eye, had his helmet securely fastened once more. The next instant he had a huge, curving blade in his hands and he was hurtling towards Ariel.

Ariel was not fast. But she could summon her armor in a heartbeat, and before the blade found its mark she was encased in mirror-bright silver hoplite armor. It would save her from being disemboweled, but she knew his attack would connect and it would hurt.

Then Sorekh was between them, forgotten by Cosmo-Knight and Guardsman alike. The green man's spear flashed and, amazingly, the Guardsman's sword went spinning through the air to embed itself in the trunk of a tree. The three of them stood frozen for a moment. Even Sorekh looked surprised that it had worked. Then Ariel sent silver bolts of light from the visor of her crested helm, and the speedster dodged them, blurring again. He whipped up a wind once more as he made tracks, retreating into the jungle, in the direction that Sorekh had been leading Ariel.

The tree behind the speedster crashed to the ground, shattered by Ariel's eyebeams. Sorekh looked at her, at the tree, and at the torn up trail the Guardsman left. "You have brought your conflict of stars to my world, sword-warrior," he said. "That hunter knew you, and knew how to kill you."

"I am sorry to have involved you," Ariel said truthfully. "I will do what I can to resolve this without any harm coming to the Green People."

Sorekh shook his head sadly. "You are but one, sword-warrior. The others are many. I have seen them with my own eyes.

They did not see me." He paused. "Until now," he added ruefully. "But you will need my spear again before your foes are finished."

There was at least one Imperial Guardsman. There could be more. And any number of TGE soldiers, with rifles and grenades and weapons to set this whole world afire.

"I appreciate the offer, Sorekh," Ariel said, "but some things are best done alone." She rose into the air like a silver missile, and once clear of the trees, aimed herself in the direction the speedster had gone. He wouldn't be able to get up to top speed in the jungle, not with all the roots, deadfall, and animals in the way. There was a slim chance she would beat him back to the TGE camp.

She saw it as soon as she cleared the tree tops. A great, dark scar carved through the jungle, at its heart a shattered, broken bulkhead from the Kreeghor dreadnought, *Shadowstar*. It looked like the black hole had sheared off a flank of the ship and sent it tumbling to this world, where it slammed into the jungle floor. The impact crater was hundreds of feet wide, the earth fused to glass at the heart, and blackened from end to end. Huge trees that must have been centuries old were snapped like twigs by the impact, and Ariel could see that fires had raged in a number of areas around the crater before the tenacity of the rainforest had quenched them. On the ground, she saw dozens of Imperial Legionnaires scurrying to and fro. Armored from head to toe, it appeared that the impact of the crash had harmed few of them, though their suits of armor looked battered and damaged in places. They had already set up a few foxholes and mounted gun emplacements in them, while others were sharpening stakes to plant in the ground. At the center of the chaos stood another Imperial Guardsman, notable only for the style of his armor rather than the color. Instead of the distinctive red and black duo-tone, this one was clad only in the darkest color. The winged helmet and cape also gave the Guardsman the look of some predatory, nocturnal beast.

But it was midafternoon, the sun high in the sky, and Ariel had the high ground.

She blasted towards the camp at full speed, the air screaming in her ears. The scattered TGE forces looked up in alarm as she dropped, and only a bare handful had the presence of mind to go for their weapons. That was a good sign; they were shaken, and it was just possible that they might listen to reason.

Ariel slowed her descent even as the Legionnaires gathered their wits and regrouped. She noticed that the Guardsman stood his ground, apparently nonplused at nearly four meters of Cosmo-Knight dropping from the sky.

"Legionnaires," Ariel shouted, her voice booming across the crater. "Surrender yourselves to me, and I shall see that you are taken care of."

"Surrender?" the Guardsman said. His voice was amplified by the helm he wore, but it still came out as a kind of sibilant whisper. "You are outnumbered. I think it is you who should surrender. Although I do not promise you will be dealt with fairly."

Ariel grimaced behind the faceless mask of her helm. The rank and file troops might have been willing to give up, especially if she put on a show of force, but she knew the Guardsmen would not. Even as she contemplated her next move, the

speedster appeared at the edge of the crater, moving quickly but still picking his way through the jungle.

Ariel felt a slight impact on her chest and looked down to see a hunk of metal in the shape of a black dragon magnetically clinging to her armor. A bright red light blinked rapidly, and then the charge detonated. She was thrown to the ground by the impact of the explosion, shaken but essentially unharmed. She cursed herself for a fool and leapt to her feet. Plasma beams erupted across the field, falling harmlessly upon her armor, as the Legionnaires opened up. It was a futile gesture, and they must have known it, but perhaps they hoped it would distract her.

The speedster surged forward, dodging energy beams effortlessly. He produced a pair of Vibro-Knives from somewhere in his uniform and pounced, but Ariel was already airborne again. She ignored the speedster, searching for the one in the cape. He was the dangerous one – and he had apparently disappeared. But even as she searched, another Imperial Guardsman in red and black, some kind of aquatic humanoid by the look of him, appeared at the jungle's edge. He was flanked by two soldiers in Mark II Warlord combat suits. Ariel's aerial superiority was now officially moot. The Warlords looked as though the ride through the black hole had given them a beating, but they functioned well enough.

The two Warlords launched into the air with the whine of turbines and aimed their gravity autocannons in Ariel's direction. Not for the first time in her life, she lamented being such a big target.

Bullets sprayed past her as she charged towards them. Silver lances erupted from Ariel's helm and burned holes in the Warlords' armor. Ariel focused her concentration, and a huge beam of silver light formed between her hands, forming into the shape of a massive two-handed sword as long as she was tall. The Warlords broke formation and scudded low across the crater, each one desperately hoping to avoid that vicious blade. But she marked one and sped after him. Faster and more maneuverable than the Warlord in an atmosphere, she closed the distance rapidly, even as the other sent slugs into her back and shoulder that stung like angry bees.

Then she was on the first Warlord. Her sword sang through the air, shearing through metal and leather. The autocannon and its belt feed fell in fragments to the crater floor. The flat of her blade came around on the backswing and connected with the Warlord's helmet. The impact crunched metal and sent the pilot reeling. He slammed into the ground and did not rise.

Explosions hammered Ariel. Missiles impacted her armored frame or exploded in the air nearby. The other Warlord had gone to the heavy ordnance, but it was enough only to shake Ariel. It didn't slow her. She spun and heaved her sword at the Warlord. It spun like liquid silver through the air, seeming almost to hang for a moment, before slamming into the Warlord edge-first. As the fragmented combat suit plummeted from the sky, the sword flashed back into Ariel's hands.

On the ground, the Legionnaires were breaking out the heavy guns as well, cracking open two cases of shoulder-mounted missile launchers. The speedster gesticulated and swore at her from the ground, but seemed incapable of offering more trouble than that. The aquatic Guardsman still stood at the jungle's edge, but

now he held his head in his hands, and a strange blue-green glow seemed to envelop his crown.

The ground rumbled. Trees shook. The bellows of the huge native beasts echoed across the jungle, and then they were there. The long-necked lizards, the duck-bills, the horned quadrupeds, and the longtooths, all thundered out of the jungle, their eyes alight with a blue-green glow. In the sky, the leather winged draconic creatures glided towards Ariel, long beaks snapping.

She dodged out of the way of one just as a fist-sized chunk of her left bicep exploded in a spray of red mist. Ariel howled despite herself, but bit back the pain and whirled, focusing on the source of the attack. She spotted the caped Guardsman atop the bulkhead, all but hidden in the shadows, a wicked-looking sniper rifle in his hands. He fired again even as she saw him, but she was already moving, and the bullet merely took down one of the scaled raptors.

The caped Guardsman stepped back into the shadows, but not before Ariel tagged him back with her silver eyebeams. She scorched a line across his chest, hot enough to burn through his armor, and she heard him yelp as he disappeared into the shadow.

Her body would repair itself, but for the moment her left arm was too weak to hold her sword. She switched to a one-handed grip, awkward but possible with her prodigious strength, and swatted another raptor out of the sky. Ariel looked around wildly, trying to spot the shadow that the caped Guardsman would step out from, but all around her was chaos. Giant lizards and TGE Legionnaires scrambled on the ground, while the speedster had raced up to join his aquatic companion and appeared to be conferring with him. A trio of Legionnaires successfully loaded a shoulder-mounted missile launcher, but couldn't aim it at her because they were too busy trying to keep from being trampled.

The next bullet took her in the midsection. Silver armor shattered under the impact and the bullet burrowed through the flesh beneath. Ariel was almost knocked from the sky. She clutched at her midsection with her wounded arm and tried to pinpoint the correct shadow. Ariel spotted him next to the trunk of a huge tree just as another bullet clipped her shoulder, this time taking nothing but armor with it.

But even as Ariel focused her energy and prepared to pepper the sniper with blasts of silver light, the jungle around the Guardsman seemed to ripple, and the sniper rifle was knocked from his hands. A length of wood sprouted from the Guardsman's chest, and Ariel realized that Sorekh had followed after all. His scales seemed to let him blend into the jungle somehow. Green People indeed, Ariel thought.

Ariel aimed herself for the two remaining Guardsmen. The speedster bolted as she flew in their direction, but the aquatic one held his ground. He drew a pistol with one hand and gestured at his scaled minions with the other. Two longtooths raced to his side as Ariel drew close, and before she could decapitate him, one of the great beasts slammed its head into her, knocking her to the ground. The other pounced immediately, huge jaws snapping. Slaver splattered across her armor, but that was all. Ariel rolled clear and the jaws clamped shut on empty air.

She turned her tumble into a rise and swung her blade clumsily at the same time, catching the nearest beast on the snout.

The blade sheared through flesh and bone and teeth and gristle. The mighty beast roared in pain and fell backwards, tiny forelimbs flailing. The other, still compelled by the Guardsman, rushed forward, and behind it Ariel could see the rest beginning to charge.

Ariel dove under the longtooth's belly as it lunged, somersaulted and bounced to her feet. Twin beams of silver light flashed, burning through the aquatic Guardsman's helmet. He slumped to the ground, and the blue-green glow died with him. Suddenly bereft of his psionic command, the animals panicked and exploded for the safety of the jungle, whipping up a cloud of dust and plant particles that swirled around Ariel and hid her from view.

Quickly she took stock. Her arm was mostly healed, but the wound in her gut hurt worse. She feared there was something special about the round sunk deep in her flesh. She might have to dig the bullet out.

Even as that unpleasant thought passed through her mind, the speedster appeared out of the dust and chaos and slammed a Vibro-Knife home in the wound before she could react. He danced away, laughing a grating laugh that was distorted by the helm he wore. He tossed the blade in his left hand to his right as Ariel dropped to one knee, clutching at her midsection.

The dust cloud parted and Sorekh appeared, leaping towards the speedster with his own knife drawn. But the Guardsman was too quick by far, easily side-stepping the attack. He planted his own blade between Sorekh's shoulders while the lizard man was still falling to the ground.

The Guardsman's attention was diverted for a split second. Just long enough for Ariel to flash her sword forward. Titanian muscles, fueled by cosmic energy, made her swing as fast as Caleb and as fiercely as Vyking. The speedster fell to the ground in two uneven chunks.

Sorekh levered himself to his feet as Ariel found her own. He reached behind him and plucked the Vibro-Knife from his back. "Barely a scratch," he said. "You do not look so well, sword-warrior-born-of-stars."

"It's only a flesh wound," Ariel said. She looked down at the knife sticking out of her abdomen and pulled it free. "Ugh."

With the Imperial Guardsmen dead, the Legionnaires proved much more willing to surrender. They were also clearly shaken and traumatized, both by the stampede and their arrival on this strange world. Many of them were wounded, including the two in the Warlord combat suits, and seemed willing to throw down their weapons in return for some kind of medical care. Sorekh promised that the villages of the Green People would aid them.

Ariel surveyed the battlefield and wondered just what she was going to do with all her prisoners. And just where in the Three Galaxies were they, anyway?

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