

Palladium Books® Presents:

Super Summer Swimsuit Issue

THE RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®



Inside this Issue...

22 pages of pin-ups

Femme fatales across the Megaverse®

Special tribute to Erick Wujcik

• EVANS 03 •

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The Rifter® Number 43

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing – July 2008

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Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER #43



BRANDT-97

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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, 2008*

Contents – The Rifter® #43 – July, 2008

Page 6 – Art

This beautiful, commemorative illustration shows *Erick Wujcik* surrounded by just some of the role-playing characters and settings he created for Palladium Books. Starting from top left, down and back up: **After the Bomb®/TMNT®**, **Revised RECON®**, **Dragons & Gods™**, building worlds and unleashing your imagination, **Ninjas & Superspies™** and **Weapons and Assassins™**, **The Wolfen Empire™** (*Wolfen* were a favorite subject for Erick, who also helped create the *Coyles* and *Kankoran*), and **Palladium Fantasy RPG™** (Erick always loved fantasy settings, from the *Palladium RPG®* to *D&D*).

Artwork by the indomitable *Kent Burles*.

Page 7 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

A final farewell and tribute to our beloved friend, Erick Wujcik, who passed away June 7, 2008. He was 57 years old. Kevin and Erick were the closest of friends, and he shares some fond memories and recounts how Erick's death affected us all, and how Erick's creative legacy lives on in all of us. Lastly, he explains how this book is a *tribute* to Erick and a thank you to all of you who have played and enjoyed Erick's RPG worlds and creations for more than two decades.

Art by Kent Burles. Additional art by Apollo Okamura.

Page 9 – Palladium News

The formal press release about **Erick Wujcik's death** that appeared on the Palladium Books website. A reminder about **Murmurs from the Megaverse®**, **The Rifter® #0**, holding the line on price, **Project X** (it's really cool), and convention appearances for 2008.

Only attending three conventions in 2008: **Gen Con® Indy** in August, **GallowsCon** in October, and **Youmacon** in November. We're excited about all three for various reasons. Read about it and please come to one or all and join the fun with *Kevin Siembieda*, *Wayne Smith*, *Jason Marker* and other Palladium madmen.

Page 11 – 2009 Palladium Open House

The **2009 Palladium Open House** is well into the planning stage. If you've not come to one in the past, you don't know what you're missing. 60+ Palladium role-playing game events, 40+ Palladium creators, and fun like you've never had before. Read all about it here.

Page 12 – Coming Attractions

Many new RPG products in development at Palladium Books – four **Robotech®** titles, **Rifts®** Anthology, five **Rifts®** sourcebooks, **Dead Reign™** (zombie) RPG, **Dyval™**, **Dimensional Outbreak™**, **Warpath™**: Urban Jungle RPG, **Rifts®** T-shirts, and more.

Page 17 – The Rifter® Subscription Offer

Page 18 – Femme Fatale Pinups start here!

Doctor Feral™ & his Sex Kittens/Wildcats

Doctor Feral was one of Erick Wujcik's favorite villains, so we thought we'd start off his with latest feat in genetic engineering. Other **After the Bomb®** femme fatales follow. **Note:** All AtB characters are also suitable for use in *Heroes Unlimited™* and *Ninjas & Superspies™*.

Written by Kevin Siembieda.

Art by Kevin Siembieda.

Page 21 – Sumaiya – After the Bomb®

Written by Mark Hall.

Art by Mike Mumah.

Page 24 – B.E. Vollbier – After the Bomb®

Written by Jason Marker.

Art by Brian Manning.

Page 26 – Shelly Shocks – After the Bomb®

Written by Erin Lindsey.

Art by Erin Lindsey.

Page 28 – Candy Roux – After the Bomb®

New Mutant Animal Description: Candiru on page 31.

Written by Scott Leopold.

Art by Scott Leopold.

Page 33 – Thump – Heroes Unlimited™

Written by Josh Hilden.

Art by Jared Trulock.

Page 35 – Crimson Waters – Ninjas & Superspies™

Note: N&S characters are also suitable for use in *Heroes Unlimited™* and *After the Bomb®*.

Written by Josh Hilden.

Art by Mark Evans.

Page 38 – Shujumi and Hezikhiah – Ninjas & Superspies™

Written by Brandon Aten.

Art by Apollo Okamura.

Page 41 – Hanayome Ichibetsu – Ninjas & Superspies™

Written by Todd Yoho.

Art by Amy L. Ashbaugh.

Page 43 – Pyxee – Nightbane®

Written by Mark Oberle.

Art by Mike Mumah.

Page 46 – Mevka – The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Written by Jason Richards.

Art by Michael Dubisch.

Page 50 – Ma – The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Written by Mark Hall.

Art by Michael Wilson.

Page 52 – Cana Laurel & Jarrow the Basilisk – The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Written by Todd Yoho.

Art by Kent Burles.

Page 56 – Jinx and Alexander – Rifts®

Written by Carl Gleba.

Art by Larry Elmore.

Page 58 – Evie – Rifts®

Written by Mark Oberle.

Art by Mike Leonard.

Page 62 – Shana the Twin Axe – Rifts®

Written by Josh Sinsapaugh.

Art by Mike Leonard.

Page 65 – Shui Nu Ling, Chinese Water Maiden Spirit – Rifts®

Written by Taylor White. Art by Larry Elmore.

Page 68 – Mara & Xiang – Rifts®

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Zhong Xiang, page 71.
Written by John C. Philpott.
Art by Chuck Walton.

Page 73 – Calla – Rifts®

Aten, the Lesser Rune Weapon, page 75.
Written by Josh Hilden.
Art by Allen Manning.

Page 76 – Captain Moi Tse Hun – Rifts®

Note: The illustration shows, for the first time ever, what the “Hong Ying” Red Falcon flying power armor looks like! Its stats are found on pages 153 and 154 of *Rifts® World Book 25: China Two*, by Erick Wujcik.

Written by Mark Dudley & Joseph Cain. Assisted by Julius Rosenstein.

Art by Mark Dudley.

Page 79 – Queen Rahela of Worldgate™ – Rifts® Wormwood™

Written by Braden Campbell.
Art by Mike Mumah.

Page 81 – Senator Nicole Teigs – Splicers®

Medusa Host Armor, page 84.
Written by Chris Kluge & Charles Walton.
Art by Charles Walton.

Page 86 – Crystal & The Trans-D Tavern – Rifts®, Phase World®, AtB® & Other RPG Settings

The Trans-D Tavern, page 86
Crystal (a goddess), page 88.
“Tank” (mutant turtle), page 90.
“Hot Dog” (Metal Morph), page 92.
Edylwin (Eylor Imp), page 92.
Written by Kevin Siembieda.
Art by Nick Bradshaw.

Page 93 – The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter 43: The latest installment of *James M.G. Cannon's* epic tale set in the Three Galaxies.

The Theme for Issue 43

This is the third annual Swimsuit Issue and the second to include stats for the femme fatale pinups. You can't go wrong with beautiful women with a penchant for combat, danger and walking on the wild side. Included are almost thirty characters you can drop into your games and campaigns. Each is statted out for a particular Palladium RPG, but all are easily adaptable to any of Palladium's game settings.

The Rifter® #43 is also a tribute to Erick Wujcik, a creative genius and our dear friend who passed away much too soon. Many of the characters featured inside are inspired by the characters, settings and ideas Erick created for Palladium's role-playing games.

We hope you find this Swimsuit Issue to be another fun-filled issue that provokes your imagination and inspires you to try new ideas and expand your gaming Megaverse®. The idea of a swimsuit issue was the suggestion of Wayne Breaux Jr.

The Cover

The cover is by artist, *Mark Evans*. We realized we had never done a Rifter® cover inspired by the orient or martial arts. Since Erick Wujcik loved the Orient so much, living and working there for years, as well as writing a number of RPGs and sourcebooks inspired by it, we thought it was the perfect subject for this cover. Mark's lethal beauty sets the tone for this issue at a glance. You can see her story and stats starting on page 35.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

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

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

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

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

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The Rifter® #44

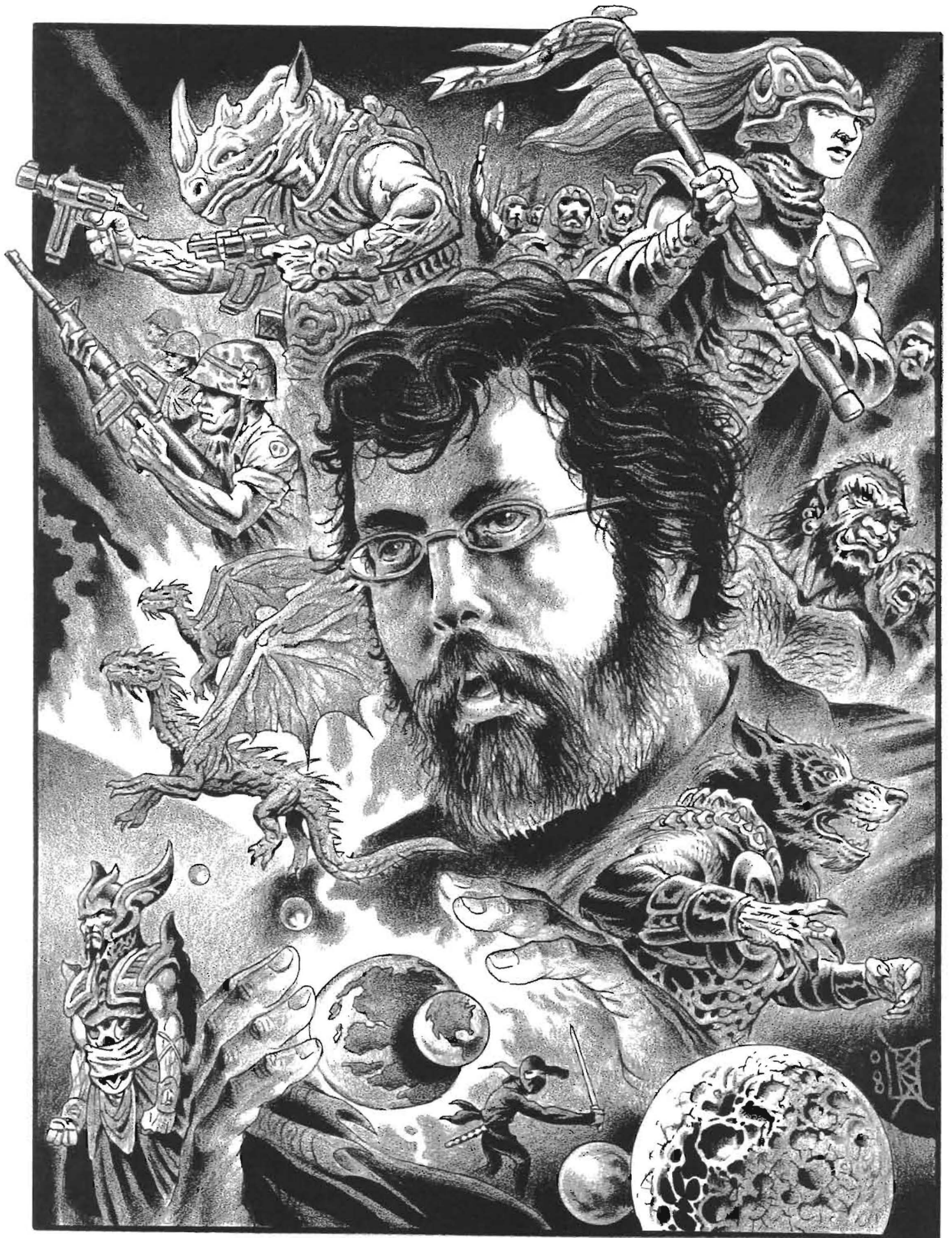
Special Monster Spectacular

Something fun and different, it will be a pinup book of monsters illustrated by Palladium's many artists and statted out by several different Palladium writers. Fun monstrosities for every taste.

- **Zombies and other dead things.**
- **Material for Wormwood™.**
- **Material for Nightbane®.**
- **The next, epic chapter of *The Hammer of the Forge™*.**
- **Latest news, coming attractions and fun.**

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From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

For those of you who might not have heard, writer, game designer, and dear friend, **Erick Wujcik**, passed away Saturday, June 7, 2008. Erick was 57 years old and died of complications from pancreatic and liver cancer. Palladium's official press release is located elsewhere in the News section of this issue, and it lists some of his very many accomplishments. For greater insight into the man and the profound impact Erick had on thousands of people's lives, go to erickwujcik.com – it's worth the read.

A deep wound

I won't kid you. The loss of Erick Wujcik is deep and heart-felt. Though we all knew it was coming, Erick's death still hit us all pretty hard. Erick was a *friend* to everyone at Palladium Books, as well as one of Palladium's greatest champions. When Palladium was in financial distress, Erick helped find people to lend us money to keep Palladium going. More importantly, Erick was an omnipresent force of encouragement, support, and friendship, always there to lend a hand, offer a suggestion, bounce off ideas or help in any way he could.

Personally, the loss of Erick has hit me much harder than I had imagined. He and I were super-close. The best of friends who were more like brothers than pals. We had no secrets and shared every facet of each other's lives. He was the founding, charter member of the Kevin Siembieda admiration society and I was the founding, charter member of his. He was my cheerleader and I was his, each of us encouraging the other to new heights.

Erick and I met on the advent of the *role-playing game explosion* back in 1979. Heck, maybe it was even 1978. Funny thing is, while I knew RPGs were fairly new, I didn't realize that Erick, Rene, Johnny, and the rest of his gaming group had only just discovered it a couple months before Julius introduced it to me via **D&D**. I thought they were all these experienced gaming gurus, especially Erick, not a bunch of *newbies* like me. I didn't find out the truth until something like 12 years later when Erick laughed and fessed up. ("What?! It was new to all of us. We'd only been playing for 6-8 weeks. Hah.")

Those were good days. We were all crazy college kids with a revolutionary, new type of game to exploit. We latched onto role-playing like hungry wolves and let our imaginations run wild. Erick Wujcik, Matt Balent, Rene Vega, Johnny Hill, myself and a few others joined forces to establish the **Detroit Gaming Center** – a hothouse environment where ideas and experimentation in gaming ran amok and unchecked. It was awesome. Every game, supplement and style of gaming was at the DGC. It's where I cut my teeth on game mastering and discovered my knack for game design and other creative areas in the blossoming RPG field. It's where **The Defilers** were born, and where all 32 players (26 on a regular, weekly basis) adventured for nearly three years. The DGC is also where I play-tested and built the Palladium Megaversal game system. It's also where a great many amazing friendships were born, with Erick Wujcik and Thom Bartold at the top of my list.

Erick and I hit it off instantly. Everything excited us and gave us ideas, and we were only too happy to share those ideas with each other and blither on about them for hours on end. Neither of us were afraid to try new things. And we both loved to talk and think about, hmm . . . well, *everything*. Every idea touched off more ideas and initiated more discussion and conjecture about game theory (though we didn't call it that back then), playability, game design elements, the use of art, marketing, pricing, production design/packaging, and more. We challenged everything that existed, studied every style and approach to gaming, and drew ideas from many sources outside the gaming industry (always have, always will).

Erick was more than my sounding board and fellow fledgling game designing maniac, we became fast friends who discussed everything from science, religion and philosophy, to writing, film, and comic books, to family, friends, hopes, fears and dreams. In short, we shared everything that popped into our heads, which was a considerable range of topics.

Erick and I challenged, stimulated and inspired each other to go beyond our own expectations and think outside the box. To outdo each other and ourselves with fabulous ideas and new approaches to gaming without actually being competitors, but supporters. Erick was an explorer always eager to learn new things, and I was a sponge who built on those ideas. We reveled in each other's individuality, celebrated each other's accomplishments and supported each other in mind and spirit. Together, we were like twin whirlwinds feeding off each other's ideas and enthusiasm. When we got together there was always a good chance brainstorming would spontaneously erupt a few minutes after "hello." We didn't plan for these explosions of ideas, they just happened without our ever trying. I honestly don't know how or why it worked like that, it just did. Put me and Erick together and it was like a chemical reaction with the same results: High energy and high concept.

Erick also helped build up my confidence. When you grow up poor, opportunity is slim pickings, and self-esteem is battered. Most other people tend to look down on you and treat you like trash. Other than my Mom and Alex (my bestest friend on Earth, since age 12), nobody encouraged and supported my ideas and dreams like Erick Wujcik. He helped me brush away the chip that had grown on my shoulder (you get that growing up poor) and helped me to believe in myself. Helped me realize I really was as good as anyone else. Told me I was brilliant and a creative genius, and kept hammering that notion home until I actually started to believe it and in myself. Don't get me wrong, I was always pretty self-confident, impudent and creative, but there was this fragile, uncertain side I kept hidden. A side that was filled with doubt and fear that I was stupid, and crazy to think I could be anything I imagined I could be. (A belief instilled by my idealistic parents.) Erick gave me that extra encouragement and nurturing I needed to push those doubts and fears aside and embrace everything I was and unleash myself onto the world. (That's right, you have Erick Wujcik, Alex Marciniszyn and my Mother to blame.) He assuaged my insecurities and challenged my already curious mind with new ideas

and thinking outside the box. Erick was a big influence in my life then, now and always.

Though I never thought about it, it turns out I was an equally big part of Erick's life. He made a point of reminding me of that in the months before he died. If nothing else, the dedication to me in **Amber Dicless** should have tipped me off when he wrote: "When a game simmers for over six years, there are a lot of people responsible for seeing it to print. I'm grateful to all of the following folks. Kevin Siembieda, best of friends, I owe him most of all." Wow. That dedication has always meant a great deal to me.

According to Erick I helped give him the encouragement, friendship and hounding he needed to get RPG books done. He insisted that without me he would never have finished half the RPG books he wrote. That he needed me to offer him valuable feedback, to discuss concepts, to assure him he was on the right track, and that gentle (and not so gentle) hounding him to *finish* them. He went on to tell me that I brought to him as much joy and inspiration as he gave me. That he cherished my friendship as greatly as I cherished his. That calling me to tell me he was dying was the hardest call he had to make. I cried. I'm crying now as I write this. But I don't want people to cry or feel empty, because Erick gave us all so much that lives on. Among them his legacy of games remain to continue to inspire and engage new generations of gamers and fill old-timers with nostalgia about their early days gaming.

A tribute to a creative genius

I thought it would be awesome to turn this issue of **The Rifter®** – yes, the swimsuit issue – into a **Tribute to Erick Wujcik**.

Two years ago, we printed our first Swimsuit Issue. It was so enjoyed and talked about that we made it a regular annual event. (By the way, the swimsuit idea is the brainchild of another creative force, *Wayne Breaux Jr.*, who I'd love to see get back into game design and artwork.) I knew Erick's time was short and I thought, this issue of **The Rifter®** would be the *perfect send-off* for our dear, sweet friend.

How? By making the majority of these femme fatales inspired by the RPGs, game settings and characters created or heavily influenced by Erick Wujcik.

Isn't this a little irreverent? You bet. Which is exactly why Erick would *love it*. You see, Erick and I also share the belief that games are first and foremost, *fun!* And that too many gamers (and even game designers) lose sight of that all important fact. Likewise, too many people take life way too seriously. Life is meant to be fun, enjoyed, shared and cherished. Laugh, use some of these characters in your games and enjoy the fun and camaraderie they breed in your gaming group.

Really? Yes. Erick loved games. Everywhere he went, Erick played games. He was the damn *Johnny Appleseed* of role-playing games!

Erick would love this. Gaming always brought Erick enjoyment, made him new friends, and opened up new realms of possibilities. He would love the idea that we are sending him off by presenting characters – hot babes, no less – inspired by his ingenuity and presented for thousands of gamers to play as his final farewell. He'd love it.

You should also know that the friendship, love and warm regard generated by the multitude of friends and gamers who posted on the *erickwujcik.com* blog, the Palladium Books message boards, and elsewhere on the Internet, helped Erick Wujcik die gently, without regret and full of joy.

So, in a very important way, this **Swimsuit Issue Erick Wujcik Tribute** is a way of saying *thank you to all of you* who cared enough to post a kind thought or share a Wujcik encounter, or who had the pleasure of playing with Erick, stopped at a convention to tell Erick thank you over the years, or simply enjoyed hours of fun as a mutant animal, martial arts master, ninja, spy, RECON® soldier, Wolfen, Kankoran, Eandroth, victim character, alien among us, heroic warrior, or Amberite. Thank you.

As long as Erick's games are played and enjoyed, he is still with us, laughing and encouraging us all to have fun, enjoy friends, enjoy life and share our dreams. Game on.

– Kevin Siembieda, June 2008



News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

Erick Wujcik Passes Quietly

Beloved role-playing game designer, **Erick Wujcik**, passed away Saturday evening, June 7, 2008. He died from complications related to pancreatic and liver cancer. Kathryn Kozora, his sweetheart of more than 31 years, and other loved ones were at his side.

Erick was diagnosed with cancer in late November, 2007 and given 6-8 weeks to live. True to Erick's indomitable spirit and zest for life, he proved the doctors wrong by lasting more than six months. Most of that time was spent with friends and loved ones.

Erick Wujcik's accomplishments are many.

To the role-playing game community, Erick is best known for his many RPG games and contributions to Palladium Books®, including **The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® RPG**, several **TMNT®** sourcebooks, **After the Bomb® RPG** and sourcebooks for it, **Ninjas & Superspies™**, **Mystic China™**, **Rifts® China One and Two**, **Revised RECON®**, **Deluxe RECON®**, **RECON® Sourcebook**, **Wolfen Empire™**, **Monsters and Animals, Dragons & Gods™** and many others. He is also famous for **Amber® Diceless**, the first truly "diceless" role-playing game, published under Erick's own label, **Phage Press**. Erick also published **Amberzine®** and founded **Ambercon™**, a series of conventions celebrating gaming, friendship and the world of Amber, hosted at numerous locations around the world.

Erick Wujcik was also the founder, heart and soul of the **Detroit Gaming Center**, served as **Adjunct Assistant Professor of Game Design** at Hong Kong Polytechnic University (2003-2008), and worked in the videogame industry for the last several years, including **UbiSoft China** and most recently, as Senior Game Design/Writer at **Totally Games**, Novato, California.

Erick Wujcik's greatest accomplishment, however, is his contagious joy for life and love of ideas and imagination that inspired people around the world. Whether they were his students at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, fellow game designers, or fans sitting in the audience at a convention or seminar listening to Erick speak, those who had the pleasure of gaming with Erick (he loved to run games at conventions and everywhere he went), those who knew him best, couldn't help but to love him. Even the millions who only knew him through his published works or communicated with him online, considered him a friend.

Erick is survived by Kathryn Kozora, Kate's granddaughter – his beloved Sara, mother Nora, sister Peggy, his Aunt Mary and Uncle Sam and Nancy, along with dozens of aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews.

Erick's last months of life were the same as he had always lived, full of friendship, joy, grace and beauty. He went quietly into the night, like a snowflake falling gently from the heavens.

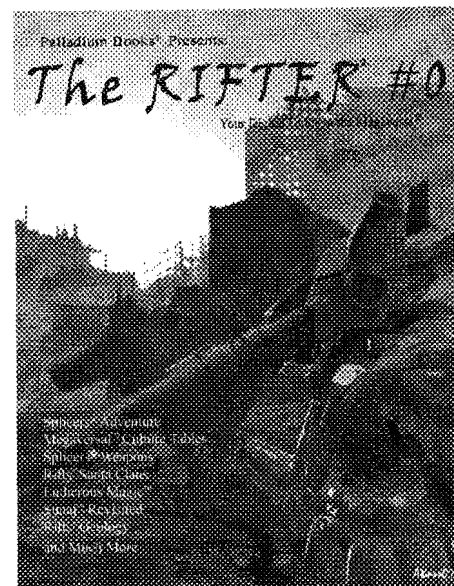
– Kevin Siembieda, Palladium Books®

Murmurs From the Megaverse®

This is your avenue to the inside track at Palladium Books®. Behind the scenes insight, info, and hints of things to come.

For those of you who haven't heard about it, **Murmurs From the Megaverse®** is a sort of online blog in which I, Publisher and Game Designer, Kevin Siembieda, present my personal thoughts, views and musings about products and events transpiring at Palladium Books. The Murmurs often provide an advanced or inside look at new products, upcoming projects, special events, and the thoughts, feelings, musings and opinions going through my mind.

The **Palladium website** (www.palladiumbooks.com) also offers many message boards, chat rooms, recent (often weekly) Press Releases and product updates, and a chance to meet and even game with Palladium fans around the globe.



Have you gotten your Rifter® Number Zero?

The Rifter® Number Zero is Palladium's first entirely digital product, available only for purchase online at our website, www.palladiumbooks.com, and only costs three bucks. It went up online early in June and is an instant hit with several hundred downloads.

Have you gotten your digital copy yet? If you have, and you enjoyed it, spread the word. If you haven't, what are you waiting for? Available only as a digital download! A must for ALL fans of **The Rifter®**.

- **Spells of the Arch Mage** – a big hunk 'o magic source material for **Rifts®** and other Palladium RPGs.
- **Santa Claus** – described and statted out by Josh Hilden.
- **Bio-Enhancements and Weapons for Splicers®**, by Chris Kluge.
- **Seven Years on Cerebus** – for **Splicers®**.
- **A Megaverse® of skills**. 'Nuff said.
- **Known Worlds of the Three Galaxies**, and more.
- **Cover by Adam Kass**. Compiled and produced by Matthew Daye.

- **\$3.00 retail** – available only as a digital download from Palladium Books – Cat. No. E000. Available now.

Note: The way our store is set up, you have to order it like you would a book, using a credit card. It may take up to 48 hours for the order to be processed and made available to you for download.

Palladium holds line on retail prices

It seems like the price of *everything* is going up these days. The cost of paper is no exception. Paper prices went up in February and are going up again in July. This raises the cost of printing, but Palladium has no plans to raise the price of its books. Out of print titles at old prices are simply being brought in line with modest price increases we instituted a year or two ago.

At Palladium Books we understand that, like most people in the world, gamers are suffering from the rising cost of gasoline, food prices, and other economic woes. We don't want to add to people's cash crunch, so Palladium will hold the line the retail price of our products for as long as we can.

Keep those imaginations burning bright and play Palladium.

Project X

Palladium is always looking for new places and means to spread the Palladium Megaverse®, and this is going to be one of them.

Project X began in the Fall of 2007. It started out as a question and quickly began to take hold of our imaginations. Erick Wujcik was consulted before and after he became ill and it has been one of the big secrets that have kept us busy behind the scenes.

I can't say anything more, now, without giving away too much, but this is going to be big, exciting, fun and a lot of hard work, but man oh man, it will be epic.

We will make the "official" announcement at **Gen Con Indy**.

Only three major convention appearances for Palladium in 2008

Gen Con® Indy – Indianapolis, Indiana – August 14-17

GallowsCon™ – Merrillville, Indiana – October 11

Youmacon 2008 – Dearborn, Michigan – October 30 - November 2

Gen Con® Indy – Booth 501 August 14-17, 2008

Gen Con. The big game convention of the year. We'll be there with new releases (at least four: *The Rifter® #43*, *Tales of the Chi-Town 'Burbs™*, *The Robotech® Deluxe Hardcover RPG* and *Robotech® Deluxe Gold Hardcover*, and maybe one or two other new items).

Palladium Books will also be revealing *Project X!* And offer the first look into our changing future.

We're at **Booth #501**, in the front, on the side where the videogames are located. It's a nice big, six booth island featur-

ing our new releases, back stock titles, original artwork, prints, T-shirts, and special guests and presentations. We'll also be giving away a thousand copies of **The Rifter®** while supplies last.

The following Palladium creators hope to be in attendance. All will be available to sign autographs and chat with fans, and some will be running Palladium gaming events.

Kevin Siembieda (publisher, writer, artist) – confirmed

Wayne Smith (editor) – confirmed

Jason Marker (writer) – confirmed

Apollo Okamura (artist) – confirmed

Josh Hilden (writer) – confirmed

Jason Richards (writer) – confirmed

Mark Oberle (writer; tentative)

Carl Gleba (writer; tentative)

Teresa Mead (sales) – confirmed

Paul Deckert (associate) – confirmed

James Brown (Megaversal Ambassador) – confirmed

And others . . .

Oh yeah, and we'll have that earthshattering announcement to make and . . . oh, you'll have to wait to hear for yourself.

Note: And for those of you who can't make it to Gen Con, I'll talk all about it on **Gateway to the Megaverse®**, *Matthew Daye's* live podcast, on Tuesday, August 19, 2008, starting at 6:00 PM Eastern Standard Time.

GallowsCon™

– Saturday, October 11, 2008

The Best One Day of Fun in Gaming

You might be wondering, is it really worth going to a one day event? The answer is a resounding **YES**, when it's **GallowsCon!**

Last year's **GallowsCon** was one of the most fun conventions Palladium has ever attended! Yes, that's **EVER ATTENDED**. The atmosphere is friendly and warm. The events are fun. The people are silly and kind. In fact, the atmosphere and pure gaming fun factor very much reminded us of Palladium's very own Open House.

This year, Palladium hopes to make **GallowsCon** even more fun by bringing *more Palladium guests*, running more Palladium gaming events and kicking up the gaming action several notches.

In fact, I (Kevin Siembieda) hope to make **GallowsCon** our surrogate *2008 Palladium Open House*. A taste of the fun you can expect at our place in 2009. That means I'll be running games at **GallowsCon**, chatting with fans, signing books, selling stuff, and bringing a bunch of "Palladium Guys" to also run games and have fun. I hope a lot of Palladium fans come and join the festivities. Heck, it's the only convention in 2008 where I'll be running games.

- **Kevin Siembieda** – G.M. running 2-3 RPG events. Palladium Fantasy® for sure. Maybe *Robotech®* and who knows what else.

- **Josh Hilden** – G.M. & co-author of *Dead Reign* RPG and will run at least one zombie game event.

- **Wayne Smith** – Editor of The Rifter®.
- **James Brown** – Game Master Supreme running 2 events.
- **Lonni Langston** – Game Master running 2 events.
- **Glen Evans** – Freelance Writer (tentative guest).
- **Brandon Aten** – Freelance Writer & G.M. (tentative guest).

- **Taylor White** – Freelance Writer (tentative guest).

- And we hope to add several others to the list. How about it, ladies and gents? Make us look good. They actually think having Palladium creators as guests will attract more gamers. Help!

Other GallowCon Events:

- A super-cool *charity raffle*. And I mean super-cool. Last year's raffle had something like 40 really great prizes, from swords, toys, model kits and game items to Palladium gold editions (which we'll be donating again). Not one clunker in the batch, and the proceeds all go to a good cause.

- Miniature gaming.
- Board games.
- CCG games.

Everyone in the Chicago, Fort Wayne, Valparaiso, Indianapolis area should join the fun! Please pre-register so we know how many folks we need to accommodate with gaming events. And tell 'em Palladium sent ya.

Seriously, **GallowsCon** is an *undiscovered gem*. Total fun. Please join us for gaming fun, one-on-one conversation, autographs, photo-ops and more. Start making plans now and order soon!

Location: FLC Banquet Hall, 7950 Marshall Street, Merrillville, Indiana, 46410

Admission Price: \$15 Pre-Registration (without a T-shirt).

Hours: 9:30 A.M. till 11:00 P.M. Non-stop gaming.

Contact/To Pre-Reg Go To: gallowscon.com

Youmacon 2008 – Anime Convention

October 30 - November 2, 2008

Michigan's biggest anime convention is **Youmacon**, and Palladium Books will be there represented by me, Alex, Julius, Wayne and probably others. We'll be available to chat and visit with fans, sign books, and offer Robotech® RPGs, sourcebooks and select other RPG titles and anime artwork for sale.

This anime celebration has grown from an already impressive 1,200 to nearly 4,000 in only three years!

Great costumes, cosplay, Royal Masquerade Ball, videogame tournament, anime guests, panel discussions, anime shown around the clock, dealers' room, parties and fun, fun, fun.

Location: Hyatt Regency Dearborn – special room rate \$97 per night.

Dates: October 30-November 2, 2008

Preregistration before Sept. 30th:

3-Days: \$40

Platinum 3-Days: \$100 (special privileges, priority seating, etc.)

At the Door:

3-Day registration: \$45

Friday or Sunday: \$20

Saturday Only: \$25

Contact: registration@youmacon.com

Website: www.youmacon.com

Palladium Open House

May 1-3, 2009

Plans for the **2009 Palladium Open House** are underway to make it more days, more games, more guests, more fun and even more special than ever.

What is the Palladium Open House? It's three days (four including V.I.P. Thursday) of nonstop role-playing. Palladium role-playing.

Yep, you heard right, *three days* of playing Palladium RPG gaming events, seminars, panel discussions, dealers' area, original art, costume contest, auction and more.

Not only that, but many of the game events are run by the very men and women who *design and write* the games and sourcebooks you play and love.

Writer guests and Game Masters at past Palladium Open House events have included *Erick Wujcik, Kevin Siembieda, Julius Rosenstein, Carmen Bellaire, Jason Marker, Carl Gleba, Jason Richards, Brandon Aten, Taylor White, Josh Sinsapaugh, John Philpott, Irvin Jackson*, and others.

Artist guests have included *John Zeleznik, Scott Johnson, Apollo Okamura, Brian Manning, Allen Manning, Mark Dudley, Chuck Walton, Comfort Love, Adam Withers*, and others.

Plus, the *Palladium staff* are at your disposal.

40+ Palladium creators gathered under one roof. More Palladium guests than at any convention anywhere in the world. And it happens right at the Palladium offices and warehouse! Best of all, every guest is at your disposal to sign autographs and chat. Many of the artists are willing to draw character sketches at reasonable prices, or sell prints and original artwork. And in 2009, we hope to get MORE GUESTS than ever, including artist, *Mark Evans*.

Meet fellow gamers from around the world! Gamers come from across North America, coast to coast and everywhere in-between. Some even come from as far away as Germany, England and Australia!

Unlike any convention you've ever attended. We call this gaming event the *Palladium Open House*, because we are opening our doors and our hearts to *you*. That means there is a sense of fun, family, intimacy and camaraderie that you do not find at most conventions. You'll have unparalleled access to game creators, and Kevin Siembieda is on the floor running games, hosting panel talks or just chatting and signing autographs all four days, from start till long into the night. EVERYONE who has attended a previous Open House has said they've never felt so welcomed or had so much fun at any convention they've ever attended. That's because the Palladium staff and creators are totally accessible, friendly and just like you, *gamers* out to have a good time with *you*.

Expanding the days of fun. Our first two Open Houses were only Saturday and Sunday (plus V.I.P. Friday), but so many fans

have asked us to expand the days of gaming, that in 2009, Palladium will host three full days of gaming – *Friday, Saturday and Sunday* – plus V.I.P. Thursday!

When: May 1, 2 & 3, 2009 (plus V.I.P. Thursday, April 30, for some).

Where: Palladium Books Inc.
39074 Webb Court
Westland, MI 48185

Hotel: A large number of inexpensive hotels and motels (\$89 and less) are within one or two miles of Palladium's office. Special rates will be arranged. More on that later. There are also a multitude of places to eat and shop literally down the street.

Event Hours:

V.I.P. Thursday: 4:00 P.M. to Midnight.

Friday & Saturday: 9:30 A.M. till Midnight or later.

Sunday: 9:30 A.M. till 5:00 P.M.

Cost:

- **Weekend Ticket (Friday, Saturday, Sunday):** \$40 – a weekend pass gets you admission ALL 3 days.

- **Friday (single day):** \$16.00

- **Saturday (single day):** \$16.00

- **Sunday (single day):** \$12.00

Order Today:

Online: www.palladiumbooks.com – all credit cards accepted.

By Telephone: (734) 721-2903, order line only.

By Mail: Send a check or money order to the address above, along with your current and correct contact information: The full, real name (not online name) of EACH person you are buying a ticket for, and the address and telephone number of the main contact person.

V.I.P. Thursday – April 30, 2009

V.I.P. Thursday is an extra, intimate and exclusive event that requires a separate admission.

The V.I.P. event includes a delicious buffet dinner, a presentation by Kevin Siembieda, an advance opportunity to meet many of the guests and make purchases before anyone else, and time to talk, one-on-one, with Kevin, Palladium staff members, and many of the other Palladium guests in intimate surroundings. This is followed by an evening of gaming before the Open House even officially starts, or a chance to spend a few hours talking with Kevin Siembieda and other Palladium creators.

V.I.P. Thursday is limited to approximately 55 guests. Tickets sold on a first-come, first served basis, and ALWAYS SELL OUT IN A MATTER OF WEEKS. Order by mail as soon as you read this or watch for when tickets go on sale online.

Date: Thursday, April 30, 2008.

Time: Starts at 4:00 P.M. Dinner served around 5:30 P.M.

Attendance: Exclusive and limited.

Cost: \$60 per person. Available on a first come, first served basis.

Notable Palladium Open House Events and Attractions

- 60+ gaming events by Siembieda and other Palladium creators, friends and Megaversal Ambassadors.

- Entirely Palladium RPG events: *Rifts*®, *Chaos Earth*™, *Robotech*®, *Heroes Unlimited*™, *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, *Ninjas & Superspies*™, *Splicers*®, *Beyond the Supernatural*™, *Nightbane*®, and others.
- 40+ guests. We want more guests than ever before.
- Costume contest.
- Panel talks and autograph sessions.
- Dealers' area of Palladium products, speciality items and collectibles.
- Artists selling original art and prints.
- Writers and other guests, 40-60 anticipated.
- Auction and more.

Start making your plans to join the fun NOW. The 2009 Palladium Open House is only 10 months away! Reservations should be placed by April 3, 2008 to get your commemorative Certificate of Admission and name tag.

Coming Attractions

Many new RPG products in the pipeline

The passing of Erick Wujcik, our dear friend, author and game design genius, affected us all deeply and contributed to delays in our production schedule. So did Palladium's move to our new warehouse and office the first week of April.

Palladium Books® Inc.

39074 Webb Court

Westland, MI 48185

www.palladiumbooks.com

We are mostly settled in at the new office and warehouse, and the place is really starting to look and feel like home.

We're also coming to grips with the profound loss of our friend, Erick Wujcik, and we have numerous projects in development as well as a number of manuscripts waiting to go into production. That means you are going to start seeing a lot of *new product* coming your way as Palladium kicks production into high gear. Everything from T-shirts, prints and novelty items to role-playing games and sourcebooks.

Here's a quick overview of key, upcoming releases:

- **Tales of the Chi-Town 'Burbs**™ is scheduled for a *July* release. It is a *Rifts*® anthology book containing *new short stories* by Kevin Siembieda and many of Palladium's most popular freelance writers. All stories take place in the Chi-Town 'Burbs and offer great insight into that part of the world, the Coalition States and more. A great read.

- **Deluxe Robotech® The Shadow Chronicles® RPG**, our 8½x11, hardcover edition (with more artwork, bigger artwork, superior reproduction quality, and some new text and game material) is done and at the printer. So is a very limited (500 signed and numbered copies) "Gold" Edition of **Deluxe Robotech® The Shadow Chronicles® RPG**.

- **Robotech sourcebooks.** Writing, artwork and research are well underway for the **Macross Saga™** and **The Robotech Masters Saga™** sourcebooks. We had hoped to have both out in time for Gen Con, but things are starting to look more like a late August and September release. We'll see.

- Final work on the next two Minion War™ books – **Dyval™** and **Dimensional Outbreak™** – will begin soon and both will be Fall releases.

- **The Rifter® #44** is quickly turning into a special Monster Issue, with art and stats by freelance artists and writers. It will be similar to the Swimsuit Issue you are holding in your hands, except the pinups will be *monsters* from across the Megaverse®, not beautiful women. Fun stuff and the result of collaborative efforts initiated by Palladium's freelance community. Cool!

- The manuscript for Palladium's new zombie RPG, **Dead Reign™** is done, and half the artwork finished.

- Jeffrey Scott Hansen and Carmen Bellaire are working on **Warpath: Urban Jungle™** for a possible Fall or Christmas release.

And that's just for starters. A great many other manuscripts are waiting to be green-lighted for production – a **Nightbane™** sourcebook, **Mysteries of Magic for Palladium Fantasy®**, several **Rifts®** titles – and other products are being developed. Excitement is high and that doesn't include a couple of *secret projects* in the works.

Our goal: To wow you with many of the role-playing games and sourcebooks you've been waiting for. (No, we haven't forgotten about **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Heroes Unlimited™, Nightbane®** or **Beyond the Supernatural™** either.)

Tales of the Chi-Town 'Burbs™

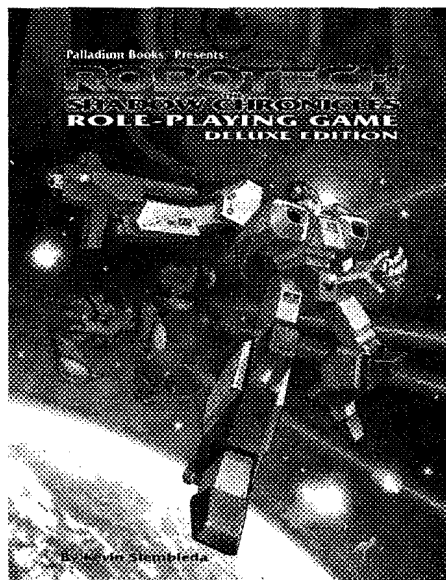
Short stories for Rifts®

This is a book of new and original short stories by Kevin Siembieda and a cavalcade of other Palladium writers. Each story delves into the life of a person who lives in the shadowy no-man's land of the *Chi-Town 'Burbs*. Some of these characters are heroes, some are villains, others are adventurers, and some innocent bystanders, but all are interesting.

The 'Burbs are a collection of people waiting for admission into one of the fortified city havens of the Coalition States. The Chi-Town 'Burbs are the most famous of these shanty towns, tent cities and sprawling megalopolises that do not officially exist, and therefore have no formal government or laws. Refugees, D-Bees, fugitives, adventurers, outlaws and dreamers of every stripe make their home in the 'Burbs or visit to sell their wares, get a little R&R, or cause some trouble. This also attracts opportunists and criminals who prey upon the innocent and the gullible.

- Trade paperback size (6 x 9 inches).
- Written by *Kevin Siembieda, Jason Marker, Braden Campbell, Carl Gleba, Josh Hilden, Jeffrey Scott Hansen, Josh Sinsapaugh, John Philpott, Brandon Aten, Taylor White* and other fan favorite Palladium authors.
- \$12.95 retail – 224 pages (tentative) – Cat. No. 304.

- **July, 2008.** If sales are strong (and we think they will be) this is likely to be the first of a series of new **Rifts®** novels and anthology books. At the printer.



Robotech®:

The Shadow Chronicles® RPG

– 8½ x 11 Deluxe Hardcover Edition

Robotech®: The Shadow Chronicles® RPG – 8½ x 11 inch Hardcover Deluxe Edition is done and at the printers.

It offers larger page size for larger illustrations and greater clarity, some new artwork, and some additional text.

- **New! Some artwork and larger illustrations throughout.**
- **New! Some additional text for weapons and vehicles.**
- **New! Select spacecraft and spaceship combat rules.**
- **Veritech Fighters, Cyclones, Bioroid Interceptor and more.**
- **Invid mecha and adventure ideas.**
- **Haydonites, the Wraith, Infiltrator and spaceships.**
- **Fast character creation, skills and options.**
- **Superior quality paper and reproduction.**
- **A complete role-playing game. Everything you need to play.**
- **8½ x 11 full book size, hardcover, core rules.**
- **224 pages – \$30.95 retail – Cat. No. 550HC.**
- **Early August release. At the printer.**

Robotech®:

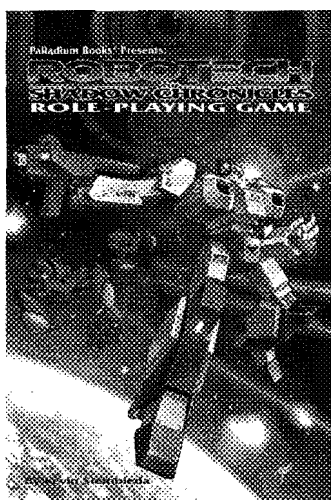
The Shadow Chronicles® RPG

– Deluxe Gold Limited Edition

At the printer! A number of gamers asked us to do it, so we are doing a very limited edition of 500 signed and numbered "Gold" editions of **Robotech®: The Shadow Chronicles® RPG**. In the past we've usually done 600-700 copies, and **Rifts® Ultimate Gold** saw 1,500 copies pressed, so this is truly a low number, guaranteed to become a collector's item. The text

and art in the book is exactly the same as the \$30.95 mass market edition, but it is signed, numbered, has a special, gold foil stamped cover and an exclusive signature card. **Note:** All previous Palladium “gold editions” have become collector items, many worth \$100 to \$500 on the collector’s market. Robotech is sure to follow suit.

- Limited to 500 signed and numbered copies.
- Special tip-in sheet signed by Tommy Yune, Kevin Siembieda, Jason Marker, Wayne Smith, Alex Marciniszyn and others.
- Black leatherette cover with gold foil printing.
- 8½ x 11 full book size, hardcover, core rules.
- 224 pages – \$70.00 retail – Cat. No. 5500HC. Available only from Palladium Books® on a first come, first served basis.
- Early August release. At the printer.



Robotech®: The Shadow Chronicles® RPG

– Manga-Sized Edition – Available now

Robotech® The Shadow Chronicles® is the hot selling RPG you’ve been hearing about for the past few months. It is packed with valuable information, new artwork, character sheets, new data, new character creation rules, character stats, M.O.S. skills, adventure and fun. Appeals to Robotech® fans and role-players of all generations.

This is the game everyone is talking about. Check it out!

- A complete role-playing game. Everything you need to play.
- Uses the Mega-Damage game system.
- Manga size for easy portability (5x7½ inches).
- 336 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 550. Available now!

Robotech®: Macross Saga™ Sourcebook

The mecha, vehicles, weapons and characters that made Robotech® famous. Packed with giant mecha, weapons, heroes, villains and fun.

- Veritech Fighters, Destroids, spaceships and more.
- Zentraedi enemy mecha and spacecraft.

- Detailed illustrations, comprehensive stats and information.
- Manga size for easy portability (5x7½ inches).
- 192 pages – \$15.95 retail – Cat. No. 551.
- August release.

Robotech®: The Masters Saga™ Sourcebook

In-depth coverage and updated information with fresh new artwork, including never-before-published mecha designs. Veteran RPG contributor Jason Marker has already begun research and development for this sourcebook.

- The Armies of the Southern Cross – Earth’s defenders.
- Hovortanks and other human mecha, vehicles and weapons.
- The Robotech Masters, Bioroids, spaceships and weapons.
- Manga size for easy portability (5x7½ inches).
- 192 pages – \$15.95 retail – Cat. No. 552.
- August or September release (tentative).

PROPERTY OF
THE
COALITION
STATES™



Property of the Coalition States™ T-Shirt

Black on grey T-shirt, this shirt could be a real world undergarment of a CS soldier. And now it can be yours!

- Palladium’s usual, quality 50/50 blend T-shirt and printing.
- Dynamic Coalition imagery.
- All sizes available from Small to 5X Large.
- Cat. No. 2528.
- Small, Medium, Large and X-Large are \$18.95.
- 2XL – \$20.95
- 3XL – \$22.95
- 4XL – \$24.95
- 5XL – \$26.95
- plus shipping and handling.

Triax™ Logo T-Shirt

Yellow/gold triangle with the word *Triax* in red on a black T-shirt. The first in a series of shirts that will offer company logos. (Naruni Enterprises, Northern Gun, Wilk's, and others will be coming.)

- Palladium's usual, quality 50/50 blend T-shirt and printing.
- All sizes available from Small to 5X Large.
- Cat. No. 2529.
- Small, Medium, Large and X-Large are \$18.95.
2XL – \$20.95
3XL – \$22.95
4XL – \$24.95
5XL – \$26.95
plus shipping and handling.



Dead Reign™ RPG

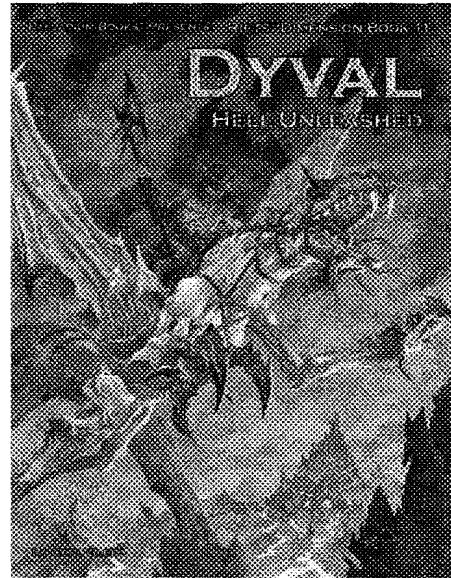
– The Zombie Apocalypse comes to Palladium Fall, 2008

You got your first look of *Dead Reign*™ in *The Rifter*® #40 – that's only a glimpse of what's to come. Bear in mind that this article was just a look at *part* of the proposed story and setting, with suggestions for using existing rules to play now. The final RPG will provide a rich, detailed post-apocalyptic world and the heroes who have managed to survive.

Dead Reign™ is a game of survival, rescue and revenge. Player characters are both the *hunted* and the *hunters* as they battle the creeping doom and pray for salvation.

- S.D.C. setting.
- Zombies have taken over the world.
- Zombies control the cities. Humans hide in remote wilderness areas.
- Zombies capture, keep and breed humans in food pens.
- Player characters are ordinary people fighting for their very existence or bent on revenge.
- Different types of Zombies.
- Humankind fights to rescue those they can, and destroy as many of the zombie abominations as they can.

- Is this the end of the world as we know it? Can Earth be reclaimed by humanity? Pick up a copy of *Dead Reign*™ and find out.
- Art by Nick Bradshaw and Amy L. Ashbaugh.
- Written by Josh Hilden and Joshua Sanford. Additional text, rules and ideas by Kevin Siembieda. Coming this Fall.
- Exact size, price and catalog number yet to be determined. Probably in the 224-256 page, \$22.95 to \$24.95 price range.

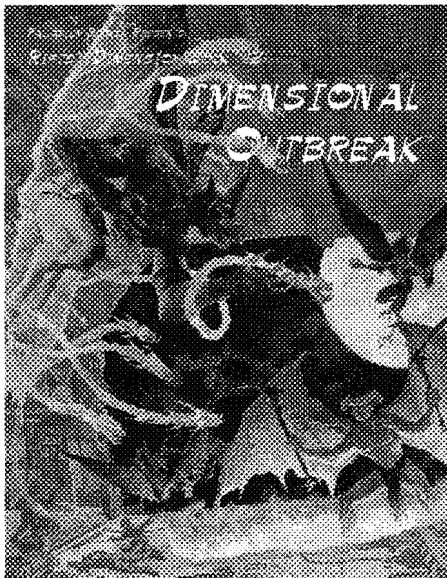


Rifts® Dimension Book™ 11:

Dyval™, Hell Unleashed

Dyval™, A place as dangerous as Hades and a whole lot stranger. It is the second book in the *Minion War*™ series, and is every bit as fantastic as Hades. The Deevil Host, evil monsters and minions, Deevil society, monstrous War Steeds, magic, adventure settings and more will make this another welcomed edition to the Palladium Megaverse®. Suitable for use with *The Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, *HU2*, *Nightbane*®, *BTS-2*, *Phase World*® and *Rifts*®.

- The hellish dimension of Dyval mapped and described.
- New Lesser and Greater Deevils along with all your old faves.
- Inhuman minions who serve as the Host.
- 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®.
- Companion to Hades and the next chapter in the *Minion War*™.
- Artwork by Nick Bradshaw, Mike Wilson, Mike Mumah, and others.
- Cover painting by John Zeleznik.
- Written by Carl Gleba and Kevin Siembieda.
- 192 pages – Cat. No. 873 – \$22.95 retail. A Fall release.



Rifts® Dimension Book™ 12:

Dimensional Outbreak™

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. A Fall, 2008 release.

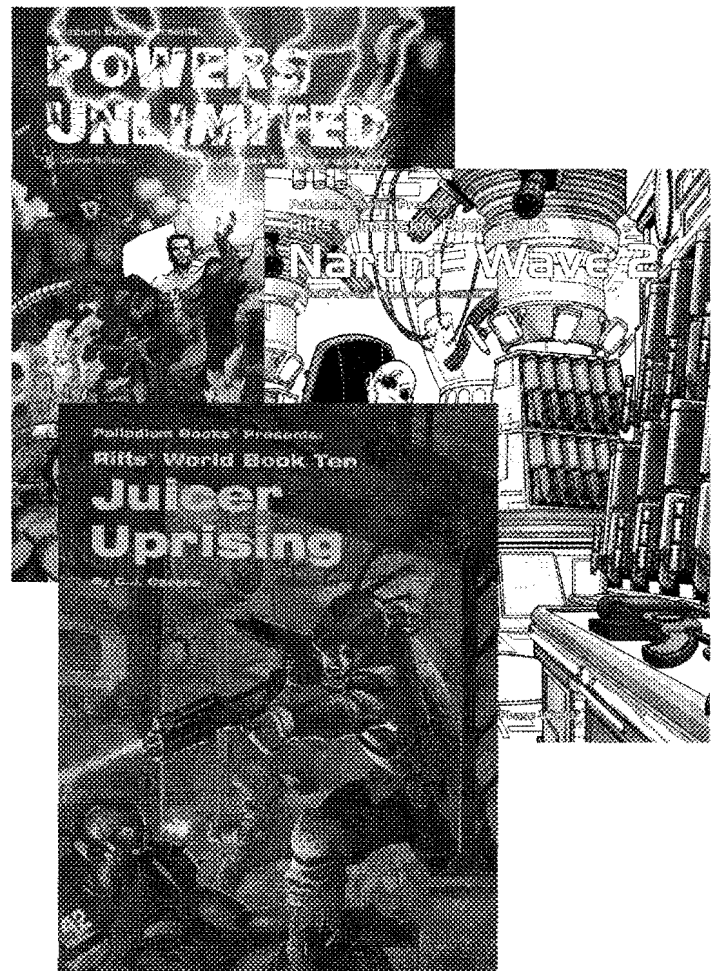
Back in Print

- **Powers Unlimited™ One** – More than 160 super abilities. Written by Carmen Bellaire. Cat. No. 521. \$14.95 retail and available now.
- **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 8: Naruni™ Wave Two** – Out of this world weapons, power armor, robot vehicles, hovercycles, tanks, aircraft and more. Perfect for mercenary campaigns. \$14.95 retail and available now.
- **Rifts® World Book 10: Juicer Uprising™** – A dozen different types of Juicers, Juicer armor, the city of Kingsdale, New Town, and Fort El Dorado, Coalition treachery, adven-

ture and insight into Juicer characters and their culture of death. \$18.95 retail and available now.

Coming Soon

- **Rifts® Anthology: Tales of the Chi-Town 'Burbs™** – Summer
- **Robotech® Macross Saga™ sourcebook** – Summer
- **Robotech® The Masters Saga™ sourcebook** – Summer
- **Robotech® The Shadow Chronicles® RPG “Deluxe Edition”** – Summer
- **Robotech® The Shadow Chronicles® RPG “Deluxe Gold Edition”** – Summer
- **The Rifter® #44** – October Monster Spectacular!
- **Dead Reign™ (Zombie) RPG** – Fall
- **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 11: Dyval™, Hell Unleashed** – Fall
- **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 12: Dimensional Outbreak™** – Fall
- **Rifts® Heroes of the Megaverse® (Minion War)** – Fall
- **Heroes Unlimited™/Rifts®: Armageddon Unlimited™ (Minion War™)** – Winter
- **Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™** – Winter
- **Mysteries of Magic™** – Fall or Winter
- **Nightbane® Sourcebook** – Fall or Winter
- **Warpath™: Urban Jungle RPG (modern combat)** – Fall or Winter



The Rifter® Subscription

The Rifter® is your doorway to unlimited imagination and numerous Palladium role-playing worlds. It offers new heroes, powers, weapons, magic and adventure for your games. It presents new villains, monsters and dangers to battle, and new ideas to consider.

It helps you unlock your imagination by showing you what gamers, just like *you*, have created. That's right, many of the articles and source material are written by ordinary gamers and fans like *you*. Other articles are by freelance writers and staff.

The Rifter® is made for you, our fans. Each issue presents unofficial (and sometimes official) source material, adventures, characters, monsters, villains, powers, weapons, equipment, ideas and fiction for **Rifts®**, **Chaos Earth™**, **Splicers®**, **Beyond the Supernatural™**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Ninjas & Superspies™**, **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, **Nightbane®**, and/or any variety of other Palladium games and world settings. It's also a place where we test new ideas, and showcase new games, like *Dead Reign* and the upcoming *Mechanoids® Space*.

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

Sourcebook

As a **sourcebook**, each issue of **The Rifter®** presents optional and/or official source material for a variety of Palladium's role-playing settings – **Rifts®**, **Phase World®**, **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Nightbane®**, **Beyond the Supernatural™**, and other titles such as **After the Bomb®**, **Ninjas & Superspies™**, **Rifts® Chaos Earth™**, **Splicers®**, and others. Every issue includes material for 3-6 different Palladium RPG lines.

Magazine

As a **magazine**, each issue includes the latest news and goings on at Palladium Books, information on new product, our schedule of releases, convention appearances, special offers, and even sneak previews and extra "official" material for new Palladium games or sourcebooks. The July issue has become our annual *Swimsuit Special*, with pinup art by a range of well known Palladium and RPG industry artists.

Talent Show

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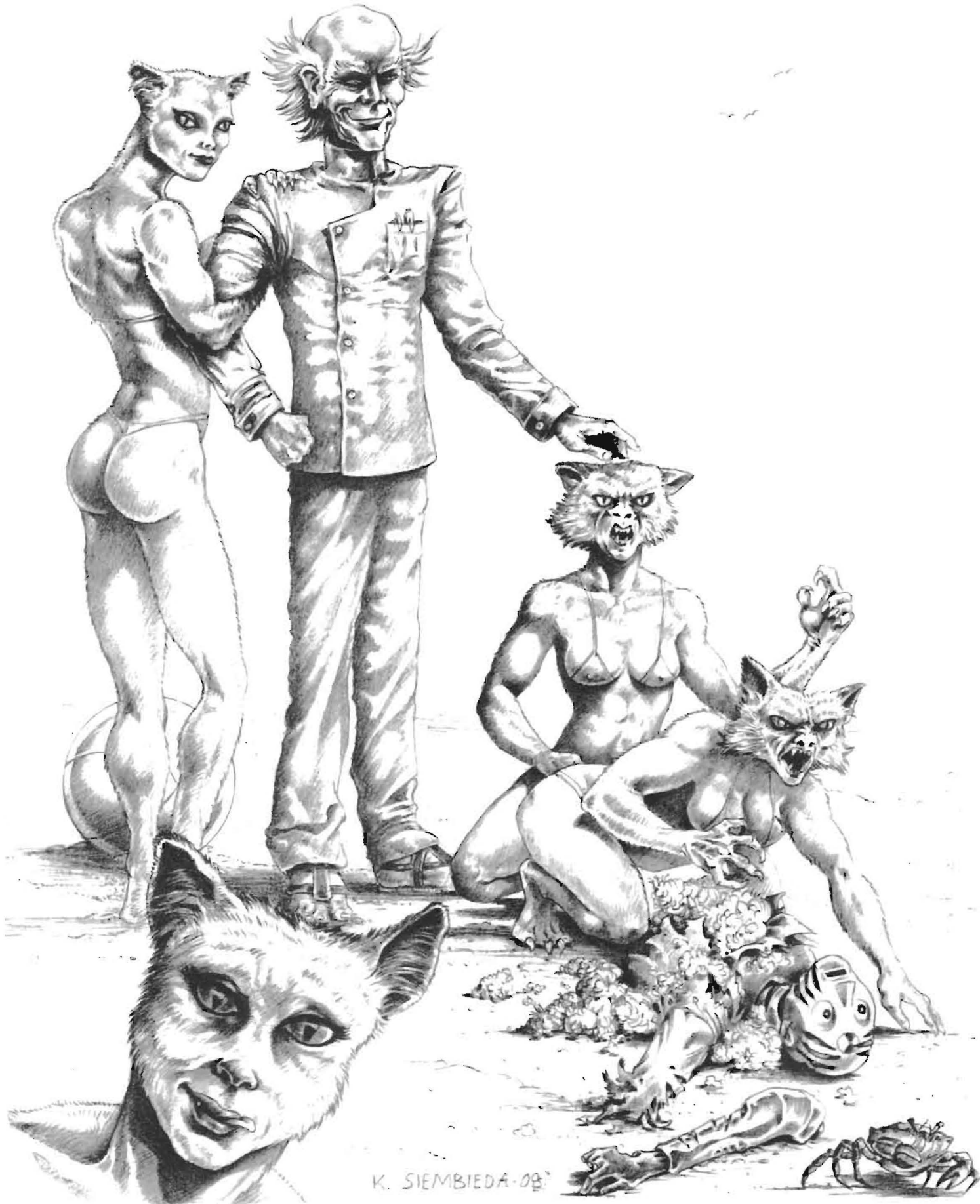
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K. SIEMBIEDA-08

Sex Kittens/ Wildcats

Mutant Felines for *After the Bomb*®,
Heroes Unlimited™, *Ninjas & Superspies*™,
and the old *TMNT*® RPG

By Kevin Siembieda

Inspired by the works of Erick Wujcik

The insidious and nefarious *Doctor Feral* is at it again. This time he has created a quartet of beautiful feline mutant humanoids who change into murderous monsters *on command*.

Doc Feral was inspired by comments from Igor, who was watching an old werewolf movie on his laptop and jokingly said, "That's what you need, Doctor, a mutant animal that seems innocent and playful one minute, but turns into a ferocious, murdering beast the next. Only unlike the werewolf, you need to have complete control over it."

Funny where ideas can come from.

Doctor Feral took what trusty Igor said and manipulated genes until he created his latest mutant masterpiece: **Sex Kittens**. Feline mutant animals who exude sexuality. Each is a sensuous mutant feline with near human looks. Their bodies are tall, slender and athletic, their eyes large and alluring, their noses small and cute. They have no tails and though the Doctor could have made them appear completely human, he chose to leave some feline features in the belief it would make them seem all the more *exotic* and *erotic*. As a result, their bodies are covered in soft, silky fur; their eyes are large and cat-like, suggesting innocence and their ears are those of a cat. As a final touch, he made certain they exude pheromones (a sort of natural, undetectable scent) that drive most male humans (and mutants) wild with desire. To make his illusion complete, he's made certain the Sex Kittens are sensuous, demure, sweet and playful. The mutant felines' apparent innocence, playfulness and sensuality arouses and attracts (read: distracts) males, even superheroes, taking men off their game. Most males can't take their eyes off these mutant felines, and when flirting – watch out – because men can't resist them. They feel great, smell wonderful, purr, nuzzle and cuddle in ways that drive males wild with desire. This allows the Sex Kittens to distract, seduce and entice anyone attracted to females, thus enabling the vixens to gain access to keys, codes, files, documents, people and places they shouldn't, as well as get characters to reveal secrets and create distractions.

The Sex Kittens' heightened sensuality would be dangerous enough all by itself, but there is an even darker and more dangerous side to these attractive female mutants: they can turn into feral killing machines at the command of Doc Feral, as well as when they are cornered, threatened or attacked.

The transformation from gentle, flirtatious Sex Kitten to murderous **Wildcat** is instant and frightening. With but a single word, whispered, spoken or shouted by Doctor Feral, the Sex Kitten(s) who hear it, transform from playful tease to murdering

monster(s) in six seconds (uses up two melee attacks/actions). The transformation is both *physical* and *behavioral* (responding like enraged predators). The hair on the feline's face grows longer like a wild mane, the eyes get a crazed look to them, a pair of fangs grow from the small pointed teeth, and retractable claws slide out from their fingertips. Furthermore, Wildcats possess *Supernatural Strength* and a host of different super-abilities.

All Wildcats are driven by a blood lust that can only be considered a killing frenzy in which the felines kill anything that gets in their way. Though feral and bestial, the killing rage is not mindless, and Wildcats are capable of following simple orders like, "Retrieve the data files," "Kill Charles Knakal," or "Bring me Paul Deckert." However, being more predatory animal than human or even domesticated animal, Wildcats generally maul and kill those who get in their way, attack them, or take action against them. Wildcats might as well be thought of as wild, man-eating tigers that hiss, growl and shriek. If one talks, it will be short, simple words and sentences like, "Give me the files." Or "Where is Deckert?" Or "Get out of my way or die."

In their *wild* manifestation, the felines should be considered predatory animals like a lion or tiger, only with greater intelligence. As such, the beasts can climb, prowl, hunt, stalk, tail, track, lay in ambush, and exhibit a certain amount of cunning as hunters, but little else. Wildcats can not drive a vehicle, operate machinery, or even fire a gun while in this feral state of mind. They might be able to remember how to turn a light switch on and off, or what common devices like a cell phone or gun can do, but not how to use them. When they fight, they fight with tooth, claw and Supernatural Strength. And they usually attack to kill, but will not fight to the death unless cornered.

Exactly how Doctor Feral intends to use them is unknown, but the felines certainly make wonderful seductresses and assassins – siren-like beings capable of luring men to their doom or stealing their secrets. Knowing Doc Feral, he may very well plan to mass produce these genetic super-cats and sell them to government agencies, criminal organizations and other villains around the world. Or he may, at least for now, keep them for his own amusement and nefarious purposes. Either way, these mutants spell trouble.

Super-Powered Feline Mutants

Alignment: Sex Kitten: Anarchist or Aberrant evil; they loyally serve Doctor Feral regardless of alignment.

Wildcat: Diabolic evil, because they are so vicious, cruel and bloodthirsty even though they remain loyal and obedient to Doc Feral.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+8 (7 when Wild), M.A. 1D6+20 (6 Wild), M.E. 1D6+8 (7 Wild), P.S. 2D4+20 (becomes Supernatural when Wild), P.P. 1D6+6 (Double when Wild), P.E. 1D6+13, P.B. 1D6+22 (reduce by half and that number counts as Horror Factor when Wild!), Spd 1D6+10 (triple when Wild).

Note: The appropriate change, up or down, for the Wildcat is in parenthesis.

Armor Rating: Sex Kitten: 8. Wildcat: 10.

Hit Points: 4D6+20, +2D4 Hit Points per level of experience (beginning at level one).

S.D.C.: 1D6x10 +1D6 per level of experience.

Growth Steps: 8

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches to 6 feet (1.75 to 1.8 m) on average.

Weight: Though they look thin and lithe, they weigh 130-150 lbs (58.5 to 67.5 kg); all muscle and sex appeal.

Age: Six months old, but look to be mature females in their twenties.

Life Expectancy: Unknown, estimated at 30 years.

Human Features:

Hands: Full as a Sex Kitten, Partial as a Wildcat with retractable feline claws (3D6 damage per claw attack; may use hands or feet).

Bipedal Stance: Full, but crouches on all fours.

Human Speech: Full.

Human Looks: Partial even as a Sex Kitten. Becomes more feral and animal-like in Wildcat form, but still Partial Human Looks.

Animal Powers: See Natural Abilities, below.

Sex Kitten

Disposition: As Sex Kittens, the felines are playful, flirtatious, sweet, comforting, and amorous. They like to touch, hug, cuddle, kiss, and purr when they talk and are always already for a sexual encounter. Despite their friendly and gentle demeanor, Sex Kittens hang on every word for a reason, they are trying to learn secrets and have a subtle way of getting people who find them attractive to talk too much, reveal secrets, and behave carelessly. Some victims are so smitten when seduced (see Seduction skill) that they will help the Sex Kittens even if it is dangerous or illegal, and say and do foolish things (hand over secrets, provide schedules, blueprints, keys, codes, etc.) when asked of them by their cuddly new love interest.

Sex Kitten Natural Abilities: Soft, playful, innocent, sexy, alluring; exhibits the behavior of a friendly, loving cat. Excellent memories, alert and perceptive.

1. Sexual Tension & Desire (special): Sex Kittens exude sexuality so that anyone who finds females attractive cannot resist. This means even if the Sex Kitten is simply standing at Doc Feral's side or sitting at a table, she is alluring. Her every movement, flutter of an eyelash, smirk or smile catches the attention of the males in the room. Furthermore, most aroused males are distracted and unable to focus with a Sex Kitten in the room, because they are so attracted to the Sex Kittens. The unspoken sexual tension makes most considerate and socially correct individuals (includes most Good, Unprincipled and Aberrant alignments) further distracted, embarrassed and awkward because of their unexpected feelings and powerful attraction to the feline women. Worse, most guys can't stop glancing over in the Sex Kitten's direction to see what she's doing (or if she wants him!). Being distracted and aroused makes most male characters distracted, forgetful, clumsy and off kilter.

Pheromone Penalties: Affects any character attracted to females. -3 on initiative, -4 on Perception Rolls, -1 to strike, -3 to parry and dodge, -2 to disarm and pull punch, -20% to skill performance. **Note:** Double the penalties of an individual character when the Sex Kitten is touching and flirting

with him directly, or when he is trying to question or protect one. They are a supremely effective distraction.

- 2. Reduce Men to Putty (special):** In addition to #1, above, all Sex Kittens have a *base skill* of 60%, +1% per P.B. point, and another +1% per level of experience (all are currently first level) for the skills *Seduction* and *Interrogation* (via sexuality and sweetness).
- 3. Skills in Sex Kitten Form:** Acrobatics 80%, Climb 70%/60%, Dance 72%, Pick Pockets 60%, Prowl 50%, and Swim 40%. All skills advance at a rate of 2% per level of experience unless noted otherwise. Also see Seduction and Interrogation as described under #2, above.
- 4. Super Abilities in Sex Kitten Form:**
 - Heightened Sense of Touch (Minor).
 - Mental Stun (Minor).
 - Mind Block (self; Animal Psionics).
 - Also see Special Abilities and Skills.
- 5. Attacks per Melee in Sex Kitten Form:** Four, +1 at levels 5 and 10.
- 6. Bonuses in Sex Kitten Form:** +1 on initiative, +3 on Perception Rolls, +2 to parry and dodge, +1 pull punch, +2 to roll with impact.

Wildcat

Disposition: Wildcats are aggressive, forceful, cruel and murderous. Their answer to most everything is violence. To shut someone up, first you threaten. If that doesn't work, next you kill him. Eyewitness? Kill her. Hero or lawman tries to stop you, kill him. If Doctor Feral wants someone murdered, beaten, framed, intimidated, family threatened or kidnaped, office trashed, secret formula stolen or destroyed, and enemies "removed," Wildcats are happy to comply. They love to hunt and kill more than anything else, and possess the instincts, stealth and patience of a feline predator. Their cat nature also means they enjoy cat and mouse games, and sometimes torment and torture their victim when they think they have the time.

Note: None of the Sex Kitten skills, super-abilities or bonuses are possessed by the Wildcat and vice versa, both are virtually different beings with a different set of powers and abilities.

Wildcat Hunter/Killer Natural Abilities: Coiled springs made of muscle, fur, tooth and claw, ready to pounce and kill on command or at the slightest provocation. Aggressive and violent in the extreme.

- 1. Leaping in Wildcat Form (special):** 30 feet (9.1 m) high and 20 feet (6.1 m) across; +3 feet (0.9 m) per level of experience. Can perform Leap Kick and Karate Kick.
- 2. Horror Factor in Wildcat Form (special):** Reduce the P.B. attribute of the Sex Kitten by half, and that number is the Wildcat's Horror Factor.
- 3. Wildcat Skills:** Climb 88%/78%, Detect Ambush 65%, Hunting, Prowl 62%, Swim 50%, Tailing 78%, Tracking 68% and Wilderness Survival 76%. All skills advance at a rate of 2% per level of experience unless noted otherwise.
- 4. Super Abilities in Wildcat Form:**
 - Supernatural Strength (Major).
 - Nightstalking (Minor).

Healing Factor (Minor).

Heightened Sense of Smell (Minor).

Psionic Claws (2D6+2 points of damage per level of experience; Animal Psionics).

5. Attacks per Melee in Wildcat Form: Seven, +1 at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12!

6. Bonuses in Wildcat Form (does not include attribute bonuses): +3 on initiative, +4 to strike, +3 to parry, +1 to dodge, +2 to disarm, and +3 to roll with impact.

Sumaiya

Optional Material for After the Bomb®

By Mark Hall

Illustration by Mike Mumah

Sumaiya grew up in India, renamed Ganesh since the Crash. There, the powerful elephant purebreeds known as the Ganeshi maintain a subcontinent-wide psychic network, speaking to their subjects each morning, noon, and night through a supercharged version of Telepathic Transmission, and sharing their own thoughts with each other through the same. The Ganeshi can, if they choose, even usurp the control a mutant (or human) has over his or her own thoughts and actions. They are aided in their theocratic benevolent tyranny by the Hyderabad, mutant baboons with a penchant for engineering.

In short, the carnivores of India are led by meat animals. Baboons? Meat. Elephants? Meat. None have – or even understand – the urges that drive a carnivore. The thrill of the hunt, the stale-sweat scent of a frightened beast as it realizes that it is your chosen prey, the orgiastic pleasures of taking the life of your prey in an explosion of blood and adrenaline... these are all as foreign to the leaders of Ganeshi as the thought of peaceful grazing is to the carnivores.

This profound disconnect between rulers and some of the ruled is almost always resolved in favor of the Ganeshi. Their vast mental powers and methodical military might can crush any uprising before it starts, can reprogram those whose natures do not fit with Ganesh's divinely inspired plans, and can even remove troublemakers beyond their borders with a wave of their trunks. However, in every tyranny, no matter how well-policed, no matter how benevolent, a resistance will grow.

Sumaiya was born to join that resistance. Her feline heritage granted her a taste for blood, and a need for the chase. The meditation and calm taught by the Ganeshi chafed her... how could she sit there, calm, when she needed to bring down enough food for today? Who cared about what happened before the Crash, or even before she was born? It... did... not... matter.

She learned, with practice, to tune out the Ganeshi, to shut them out of her mind. Her rough games, first with the meat children around her, then with other predators she met with in the jungle, gave her the beginnings of combat training. When around Ganeshi, she also learned to put up a false front – to make herself seem to be a good, attentive subject, when, in truth, she was contemplating the murder of enough meat to feed her for days. Her teachers began to praise her calm, her meditative skill; they did not realize that her meditation was to carve

them into steaks and cutlets, to imagine their bloody deaths in excruciating detail.

Sumaiya killed her first mutant animal when she was 13. A lost lamb, Geet, having strayed from a flock, led to a search party spreading out from her village. Sumaiya quickly evaded the teacher placed near her, and found the finger of fear-scent that wafted through the air. She found the lamb, his leg broken at the base of the tree he had failed to climb. She stalked slowly around Geet, tasting the scent of his fear and blood on the wind, watching as he faded in and out of consciousness, bleating with pain when he was awake.

When night was fully upon them, dark and velvety, Sumaiya slid closer. Geet's bleats had almost ceased; his exhaustion now floated with pain and fear on the wind. Sumaiya stood still, just behind the tree that the lamb had failed to climb. Her heart hammered against her chest, every nerve was taught... and this little beast smelled so good. She stepped from behind cover, a shadow detaching itself from the larger shadow of the tree. Geet turned as she approached, and gave a little bleat of happiness and recognition. Sumaiya, praised for her calm and patience. Sumaiya, who all knew had overcome her tiger's nature.

"Sumaiya, you've come! Please, go back to the village... my leg is broken, and I cannot move. Bring someone to fix my leg, please!"

Sumaiya stood impassive, as if she hadn't heard him. She watched him, listening to the pain in his voice as it mingled with relief. The jungle was silent, save for Geet's bleats.

"Sumaiya, please!" Geet's voice was near the breaking point, his relief becoming apprehension as she stood there, staring at him. "I've been here all day, and no one else has found me! If you cannot bring help, then carry me! Please!"

It was a drop of her head, a change in her stance, that told Geet he was about to die. An instant... something in his deepest brain that reminded him that he was a lamb before a tiger. He knew, then, that Sumaiya wasn't even aware that he'd spoken; she was regarding him as he might the evening salad, before they were allowed to eat. Then he knew pain, far beyond that of his leg, as Sumaiya took a step forward and removed his throat with her claws. She kicked his broken leg, and watched as he writhed in pain. Her claws darted out, causing blood to blossom along his fleece. He tried to drag himself away, but the loss of blood left him weak, and he was only able to reach oblivion.

Sumaiya feasted upon him... his meat, still warm, still doused in fear and pain, tasted sweeter than any food she had ever had. His feeble kicks as the last life left him were the best spice that had ever touched her lips. She feasted on the choicest meats until she felt gorged and bloated. She cracked the carcass's bones, sucking out marrow more delicious than those sweets they'd told her were the height of taste. She had found all she needed in the corpse of a childhood friend.

In the morning, she buried the remains, then washed carefully, removing all scent of blood from her fur. She returned to the village, claiming she had been lost in the night and found a safe place to hide. No, she hadn't seen Geet... she had hoped he had been found by now. She offered to help the search again, but she was ordered to sleep. She slept in her bed with a satisfied smile on her face, had any looked in on her.



Sumaiya killed again and again over the next three years, often once or twice a month. Not all her kills were intelligent, but always they were individuals who would not be missed – traders traveling alone, mutant monkeys who lived amongst their natural kin, cattle strayed too far from their herd – those who had made themselves vulnerable to her. She worked, too, for the resistance, kidnaping and assassinating lesser lights in the government – the Ganeshi were beyond her, but Hyderabad were not. The village she came from began to regard itself as cursed; too many children went missing, too few traders arrived, and what machines they had broke down as the Hyderabad began to refuse to come to Sumaiya's killing ground. And none suspected her. She was held up as a model to other carnivores, one who had conquered her need to chase and kill with meditation; one who had learned a calm that few could pierce. She was a role-model of Ganeshi virtues... and she was a brutal killer, the curse of her village. Her undoing came in her 17th year.

With all resistance movements, there comes a time when lesser acts of vandalism and minor assassination are not enough; when the movement *must* take a drastic action, or be left ineffective, its partisans having fled to those who promise to accomplish things, and have a shorter record of failing to achieve change. Sumaiya's cell resolved to kill a Ganeshi with its next visit to her region. She left home, claiming to need time and privacy to meditate, but met with the others of her cell; a pack of wolves, the human mutant they had raised, a bear, and an old, wise panther. They had planned that the human would lie, apparently injured, in the path of the Ganeshi. When it came close to examine his injuries, he would attack, as would the wolves, with the bear stepping from behind, and Sumaiya and the panther dropping from above. It was a good plan, but one that severely underestimated the might of the Ganeshi. The human was scooped from the ground with a mental hand; the wolves were scattered by trunk and mind power. The bear, too heavy for such treatment, savaged its back, but was dropped to the ground, his mind gone to a place where it could no longer control his body. She and the panther then ambushed the Ganeshi, claws and knives savaging its skull. The panther was thrown from its head and smashed into a tree, and Sumaiya, who evaded the trunk for some moments, savaging its back and neck, was sent elsewhere, her body flung thousands of miles by the frightened, enraged might of a psionic elephant.

From the dusk of India's jungles to the morning of North America's East Coast, Sumaiya jumped. The sudden calm and deep northern forest that surrounded her left her confused. She could feel in the air how far she had traveled, but she knew nothing of the world at large; she could not guess where she was. She quickly learned that humans, especially those who traveled with mutant dogs, were not to be trusted; she killed a patrol of Empire of Humanity soldiers on her first night after they fired upon her for being a mutant and talking funny. She killed others as she needed the meat, or the tools they carried. She kept others alive, spending enough time in their company to learn English, which was similar to the language spoken by the Hyderabad. She now stalks North America; she has no desire to return to Ganesh, but she has no clear plan. She will sometimes hire herself out as an assassin, working for the Rodents of Filly or individuals in Cardania. Her name is whispered where people seek assassins, but is seldom spoken aloud; she's considered by

some to be an evil spirit, and the superstition against speaking her name aloud has only enhanced her reputation.

Sumaiya

Real Name: Janaswamy Lahan Sumaiya.

Species: Tiger.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 16, M.A. 15, P.S. 19 (Brute Strength), P.P. 23, P.E. 18, P.B. 23, Spd 20.

Hit Points: 43

S.D.C.: 43

Age: 19

Sex: Female.

Size Level: 9

Height: 6 feet, 5 inches (1.9 m).

Weight: 165 lbs (74.25 kg).

Disposition: Outwardly, Sumaiya is calm and relaxed, a simple woman who wants very little. This masks a heartless killer who enjoys the pain of her prey. When well-fed, she's much more playful, lazily teasing others or smiling benignly at those who amuse her. When hungry (which is about every other day if feeding well), she becomes calmer and quieter. She has a habit of disappearing when she is finished with a conversation, whether the other person is or not.

Experience Level: 7th

Skills of Note: Wilderness Survival 60%, Prowl 60%, Camouflage 50%, Land Navigation 60%, Intelligence 56%, Interrogation 70%, Gymnastics (Sense of Balance 80%, Work Bars and Rings 90%, Climb Rope 72%, Climb 75%, Back Flip 82%), Motorcycle 84%, Detect Ambush 60%, Detect Concealment 55%, Escape Artist 60%, Swimming 80%, Language: English 70% (primary language is Hindi), Mathematics: Basic 88%, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides 60%, Fishing 90%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Assassin, 7th level; W.P. Knife (+3 to strike, +2 thrown, +3 to parry), W.P. Targeting (+4 to strike), W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike and parry).

Number of Attacks: 8 in the first melee, 7 in the second, 6 afterwards.

Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +1 to save vs insanity and psionic attack, +5 to roll with punch/fall, +8 to damage, +6 to strike, +7 to parry, +7 to dodge, +2 to entangle, +6% to save vs coma/death, +2 to save vs magic and poison, 65% chance to charm/impress, Knockout/Stun on a Natural 17-20.

Natural Abilities: Leap: Feline (13 feet/3.9 m across, 19 feet/5.8 m straight up; +50% with running start), Nightvision, Advanced Hearing, Advanced Smell (80% tracking, 72% sense emotional extremes), Predator Burst, Nocturnal, Diet: Carnivore.

Natural Weapons: 2D6 damage teeth, 3D6+2 damage claws.

Psionic Knowledge: Sumaiya does not have any animal psionics. Instead, she has achieved their equivalent through self-training and meditation. She has the powers of Alter Aura, Mind Block, and Invisible Haze. Each costs its normal

BIO-E cost in I.S.P. to activate, but otherwise functions as the animal psionic of the same name. I.S.P.: 85.

Weapons and Equipment: Sumaiya travels very light, frequently carrying little more than a “modesty robe” insisted upon by many communities. She may carry a few knives, but prefers to use her natural weapons.

Description: A beautiful tiger-woman, with a deep, almost growling voice and a pronounced accent.

Money: Rarely keeps much; finds it an annoyance and distraction. She likes to bet on events (especially bloodsports; she finds them exciting), and will frequently bet until she has nothing left. At any given time, she has 3D6x50 Bucks available, kept mostly in case she needs medical treatment or housing.

Campaign Use: Sumaiya is most likely to be encountered as an assassin targeting some member of the party. If they sufficiently offend the Cartels of Filly, she may be sent after them as a message. It is also possible to encounter her after a failed assassination, injured and needing aid. Does the party have the courage to tend to the wounds of this tiger? If so, do they remember the parable of the toad and the scorpion?

B.E. Vollbier

Agent 1516, Corporate Espionage Operative for International Beverage, Ltd.

Optional Material for After the Bomb®

By Jason Marker

Illustration by Brian Manning

Excerpt from mission debriefing of agent 1516 upon completion of mission 507P

TOP SECRET

Supervising Operator: You agree that it was necessary to keep the nature of the cargo a secret from the rest of the team, yes?

1516: Yes. The chance of capture, however small, by EmpBev agents necessitated the ruse. The New Recipe is too important and must be protected at any cost.

SO: Your assessment of the team we provided you?

1516: All of them were solid and trustworthy. Each member did their job exceedingly well, and I'd work with them again in a heartbeat.

SO: What was their reaction to the true nature of the cargo?

1516: At first they were upset, and understandably so. Once I explained the reasons they seemed to understand. Their first loyalties lie with the company, so they were dismayed with what they perceived as a betrayal of trust.

SO: Do you foresee any problems with the team members over this?

1516: Not at all. Like I said, their first loyalties are to the company. We shouldn't have anything to worry about.

SO: What are your feelings about the ruse? Do you believe it was successful?

1516: Absolutely. The EmpBev agents bought it, they expended a lot of effort and capital to capture the truck. You'll see in my report where we eliminated at least two of their top agents. The sand in the tanker was a nice touch, by the way.

SO: Thank you.

1516: Will there be anything else?

SO: No, that is all. Thank you 1516, and excellent work. We have more jobs in the pipeline for you.

1516: Thank you, sir. I serve at the company's pleasure.

Agent Number 1516

Real Name: Brigitte-Eva Vollbier.

Aliases: Too numerous to mention. As a corporate espionage operative, Brigitte has operated under hundreds of assumed names and faces in her time with International Beverage Ltd.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 26, P.S. 12, P.P. 27, P.E. 13, P.B. 25, Spd 18.

Age: 31

Sex: Female.

Size Level: 9

Height: 5 feet, 9 inches (1.75 m). **Weight:** 152 pounds (68 kg).

Hit Points: 33

S.D.C.: 35

Disposition: Brigitte projects a fun loving and carefree attitude that masks a calculating mind. She is cool under fire and can sell you anything from a six-pack to a full franchise and make it seem like the best idea you've ever had.

Powers & Psionics: (Powers ported from *Heroes Unlimited™*) Extraordinary Mental Affinity, Extraordinary Physical Beauty, Extraordinary Physical Prowess.

Level of Experience: 5th level Mutant Human.

Level of Education: Equivalent to a four year degree in marketing and an apprenticeship in espionage.

Occupation: Sales Rep, Beer Ambassador and Corporate Espionage Operative for International Beverage Ltd.

Skills of Note: Climbing 85%/75%, Concealment 75%, Disguise 75%, Demolitions 85%, Escape Artist 65%, Pick Locks 65%, Pick Pockets 75%, Safe Cracking 75%, Palming 65%, Seduction 95%, Computer Operation 85%, Computer Programming 75%, Computer Hacking 55%, Photography 75%, Detect Concealment 65%, Locate Secret Doors 65%, Brewing 75%.

Weapon Proficiencies: Pistol, Submachine-Gun, Knife.

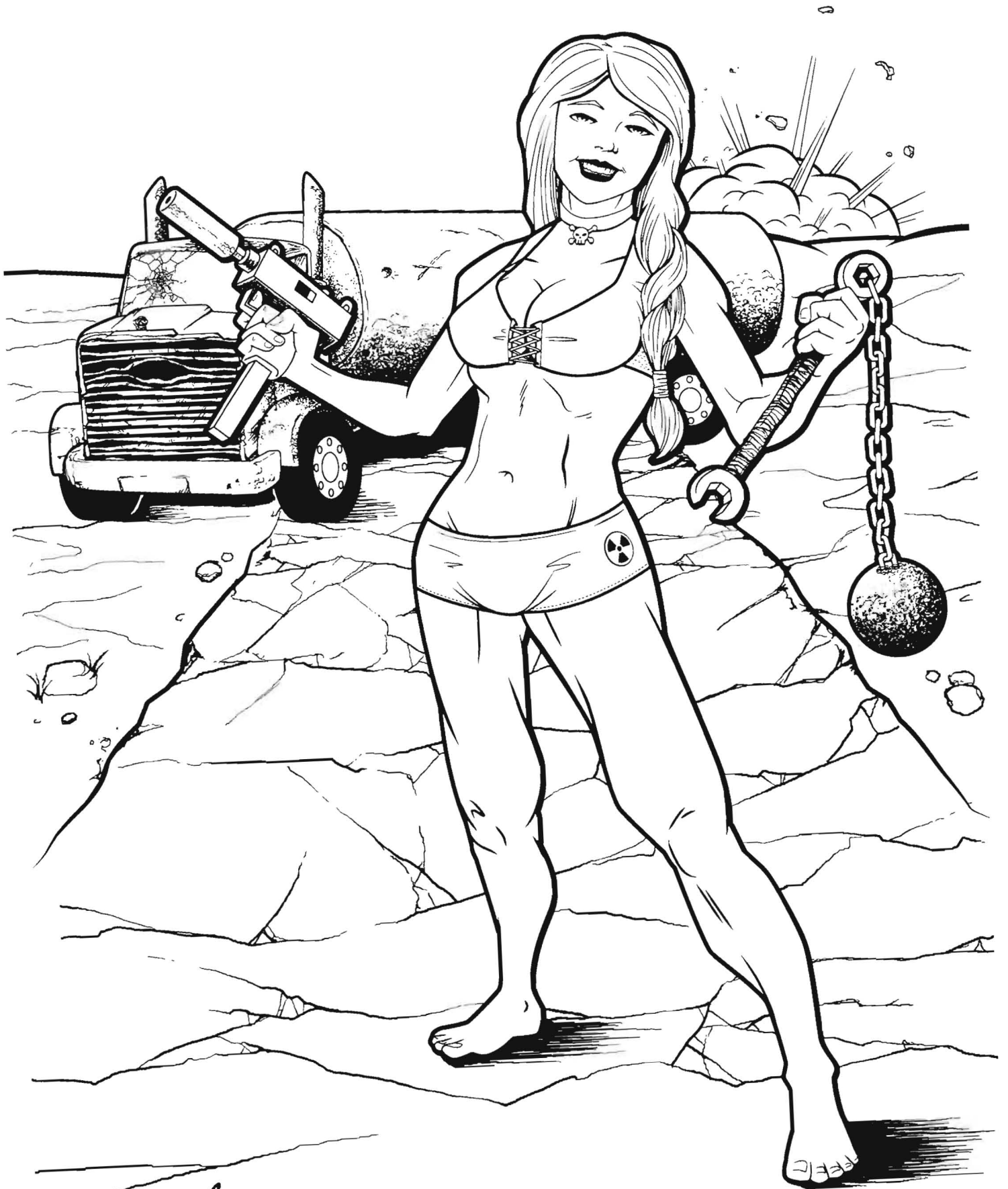
Secondary Skills: Prowl 65%, Athletics, Gymnastics.

Attacks per Melee: Hand to Hand: Assassin at fifth level. 6 attacks per melee, +1 to initiative, +4 to damage, +8 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, +3 to roll with punch/impact, +3 to pull punch, +4 to Perception Rolls.

Weapons: Silenced Cardanian 9mm Pistol, MP5K .40 caliber Submachine-Gun, Combat Knife.

Armor: Hardened Leather Riding Pants and an Armored Leather Rally Jacket. A.R. 12, S.D.C. 35.

Equipment of Note: Disguise kit, housebreaker harness, lock picks, safe-cracking kit, beer swag (hats, key chains, bottle



DRUM MANNA

openers, bottle and can cozies, collapsible coolers, stickers, etc.).

Description: Brigitte is one of the many corporate espionage operatives in the employ of International Beverage Ltd., Cardania's second largest beverage distributor. Beautiful and cunning, with thick, white-blond hair and a voluptuous figure, Brigitte travels mainly under her main cover as a sales rep and beer ambassador for IBL. Equally at home in a bierhaus as in a boardroom, her skills and charm have allowed her to gather personal and corporate secrets from CEOs and brewmeisters all over Cardania as well as the Empire.

Shelly Shocks

Optional Material for After the Bomb®

By Erin Lindsey

Illustration by Erin Lindsey

The Muddy Mississipp' isn't like the East Coast territories. Merchant marines and mercenaries share wharf space alongside river pirates and gamblers. Everyone's out for themselves, and willing to step on anyone smaller to get ahead. It's a lousy place to visit, and it's an even lousier place to be raised.

Maybe she was abandoned. Maybe her parents died trying to save her from bandits. Hell, in this day and age, maybe her parents were just... animals. Whatever her past, Shelly "Shell Game" Shocks has only ever been able to count on herself. The hard lessons she learned from Old Man River have made Shelly ruthless and manipulative. They've also earned her a place at the right hand of Muddy Warner, the self-proclaimed pirate king of the Muddy Mississipp'. Warner's pirate band, the Black Flag, has grown from a shoestring outfit into the most feared crew to sail the waterways of the Midwest, largely due to Shelly's beauty and guile.

A skilled saboteur, Shelly's MO is to gain passage on wealthy or well-stocked ships, posing as a passenger, a doxy, or a damsel in distress. Her skill with makeup allows her to appear as nearly any sort of reptile (or even on two occasions, a human dwarf). Once aboard, "Shell Game" collects and passes along information through dropped messages (easily retrieved by the Black Flag's aquatic members), tampers with machinery and weapons, and plants explosive charges, all to make the ship easier for her fellow pirates up-river to capture. One of her favorite techniques is to turn a ship's crewmates against each other through seduction and misinformation.

When the capture actually takes place, Shelly continues to play the panicked passenger unless things turn badly. She's not much of a fighter compared to most of the Black Flag, and if things go badly, she'll beg, plead, and extort mercy however possible. If she can, she'll pull the fight overboard and into the water, where she has the advantage.

Shelly has lived a short, hard life and trusts no one but herself. She knows the romances she pretends at are nothing but the strings she uses to make her puppets dance, even if she longs for something more genuine. For now, she's content with her place among the Black Flag, but wouldn't hesitate to betray them to

save her own shell. Having been raised among bandits and scalawags, she's never really known kindness, and simply assumes it's a flaw to be exploited.

Shelly "Shell Game" Shocks

Name: Shelly VeDub.

Aliases: Michelle DeVille, Shel of Mercedes, Jessica Hare.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 13, M.A. 22, P.S. 15, P.P. 15, P.E. 17, P.B. 19, Spd 15.

Age: 23

Sex: Female.

Size Level: 7

Weight: 92 lbs (41 kg). **Height:** 4 feet, 2 inches (1.27 m).

Species: Graptemys Geographica Sapiens (Common Map Turtle).

Hit Points: 53. **S.D.C.:** 66.

Disposition: Shelly wears any of a dozen different faces, depending on what she believes a person wants to see or what will make them more vulnerable. At her core she is playful, and just a little bit cruel. Life has been hard to her, and she has rarely, if ever, known kindness. She assumes everyone tries to get ahead however they can, and those who don't are suckers.

Shelly has a special hatred for Pleasure Bunnies, after an embarrassing contest from her younger days.

Human Features: Full Hands, Biped and Speech, No Looks.

Animal Powers: Advanced Swimming (98%), Advanced Vision, Hold Breath.

Psionics: Empathy.

Level of Experience: 8th

Level of Education: Raised by Bandits.

Occupation: River Pirate.

Skills of Note: Inspire Trust 70%, Charm/Impress 45%, Concealment 52%, Demolitions 84%, Intelligence 64%, Locate Secret Doors/Compartments 55%, Pick Pockets 65%, Pilot: Boating 92%, Streetwise 52%, Wrestling, Hand to Hand: Basic.

Secondary Skills of Note: Dance 70%, Mechanics: Basic 80%, Prowl 65%, W.P. Revolver, W.P. Blunt (+3 to Strike and Parry).

Attacks per Melee: 5

Bonuses: +1 to Strike, +2 to Parry, Dodge, Pull Punch, and Roll with Punch/Fall/Impact, +2 to Damage, Kick does 1D6 damage, Judo Flip does 1D6 damage, Critical Strike on a Natural 19-20, +5% to save vs Coma/Death, +1 to save vs Poison.

Special Weapons: Shelly carries a concealed Bantam .22 Revolver (2D4 damage). However, in a fight, she's just as likely to grab the heaviest blunt object around. She shows a special preference for chairs (1D6 damage) and fire extinguishers (2D4 damage).

Armor: None when "working" a potential target. When going on raids, Shelly dons a suit of Spider Silk armor (A.R. 12, S.D.C. 150) to compensate for her soft shell.





Candy Roux

Optional Material for After the Bomb®

By Scott Leopold

Illustration by Scott Leopold

The mutant who would one day be known as Candy Roux is a mutant Candiru – one of the infamous, parasitic catfish of the Amazon – who was born feral and found nearly lifeless in the Negro River, by a young Yanomami Indian girl. She brought the infant mutant home to her village and nursed her back to health. She grew quickly and enjoyed five idyllic years, raised as a member of the family, until one fateful night when the entire village was wiped out by a gang of mutant bandits. The young girls were taken back to the leader, an immense anaconda named Ernesto Onyare. Most were sold into slavery. The young mutant caught Ernesto's eye, however, and he decided to keep her as his own. As was their custom, she refused to tell him her Yanomami name, so he renamed her Kyuuketsuki Pirakutu, or "Kyu" for short, and declared her to be his daughter.

Ernesto was a wicked, ambitious creature. His gang was inconsequential at the time, and virtually unknown outside of their tiny sphere of operations on the Venezuelan/Brazilian border. He had grown up in the slums of the walled mega-city of Rio de Janeiro, and had been one of the millions of third-rate mutant citizens. Generally speaking, unless one *is* human, looks human, or is a primate, canine, feline or bird, there's little chance for a mutant in Rio to be anything other than a beggar or a criminal. Ernesto chose the latter. Despite his massive size and imposing physical presence, he never amounted to more than a street thug, committing simple assaults and muggings. The more powerful and prestigious criminals took no notice of him, but a young, human police officer by the name of Rodolfo Yamamoto, did. Time and again, Officer Yamamoto would capture and humiliate Ernesto. While the constant arrests bore into Ernesto's consciousness and assaulted his ego, to Rodolfo the slithering brute was simply part of his quota. The dashing young officer scarcely gave the big snake a second thought, at least not until Governor Nascimento's eleven-year-old daughter was shot and killed. After weeks without even a suspect, the police department was desperate and, facing mounting pressure from an outraged public, they began raiding the slums, street by street and block by block, bringing in every known criminal they could find for questioning. Ernesto practically volunteered to be taken in. It was well known that he had never needed a weapon, and he figured he would take his turn and be done with it. When Yamamoto saw him in the holding cell, his unbridled ambition took over. He asked to question Ernesto himself, and somehow produced a gun from Ernesto's pocket. With his fearsome appearance and an arrest record as long as his tail, Ernesto didn't stand a chance. The trial was swift, if nothing else, free from the hassles of evidence, witnesses, or any sort of a defense that would stand in the way of the inevitable guilty verdict. The death penalty was not an option in Rio, so Ernesto was given the harshest punishment available: banishment. Yamamoto himself accompanied the beast as he was delivered deep into the Amazon. Ernesto swore to him that he'd somehow make his way back into the city and expose or kill Yamamoto and every other

corrupt official involved in his case. The young officer smirked back at him, then shot him in the belly and left him bound and bleeding on the banks of the Branco River.

Ernesto was found near death by a small gang of mutant pirates who worked the Negro River. He eventually recovered, and with his retuning health he gained a new sense of ruthlessness and purpose. He soon challenged and defeated the leader, and won over the rest of the gang with his grandiose schemes to work their way down the river, taking over larger gangs as they went, until they eventually controlled the entire Amazon. Their first attempt failed, as did several more, and they eventually settled back to their role as small-time pirates on a backwater tributary. Ernesto held the gang together more through brute strength than anything else. Morale was low, but nobody could best him in single combat. He still spoke of his plans to control the river, but as time dragged on, the dwindling band viewed them as little more than delusions of grandeur. Aside from simple piracy and the occasional slave trade, Ernesto and his gang were unable to accomplish anything of note then. At least, not until Kyu reached her teens.

Although he called her his daughter, Kyu was little more than Ernesto's plaything. From the very first, she suffered unspeakable abuse at his hands, and from nearly everyone else in the gang. Only Ernesto's lackey, Saulo Cinco, showed her any compassion. Saulo was a mutant tayra, similar to a weasel, and the fifth of eight brothers. He was diminutive, even for a tayra, but he was an expert with knives. He would spend hours comforting Kyu and teaching her how to handle a blade. He wanted her to be able to defend herself, and she took to his lessons like they were second nature. Eventually, everyone in camp except Ernesto learned to fear her, knowing that if they tried so much as to even touch her, they could lose an ear, finger, tail or worse. Ernesto finally realized what a valuable commodity she could be when he awoke to find her picking mosquitoes off his hide with her knives from ten feet away. Although he killed Saulo for the transgression, he devoted the next six years to honing his new weapon, having the best fighters and killers in what was left of the gang train her at their various specialties, while he focused on developing her natural bloodlust. It was still a form of abuse, but she reveled in finally being able to dole out some of her own.

At the same time, Ernesto began developing even grander schemes, born of an older, deeper ambition. He saw Kyu as the key to all his goals. He began instilling in her an anti-human sentiment, filling her head with stories of how it was a group of humans – soldiers from Rio, in fact – who had killed her family. He claimed that humans had abused him, which is why he had no other choice than to mistreat her. He convinced her that humans, particularly those in Rio, were the greatest evil in the world. He told her of his plans to infiltrate Rio de Janeiro and wreak havoc on their current government. He explained to her that his plan to work his way up the food chain of the Amazonian gangs was simply the first step down the path to their ultimate goal. She was the key to his plans, he told her, and she found herself wanting to believe him. She finally had a purpose; her "father's" goals became her goals, and she embraced them with a cold-hearted determination.

Over the next few years, Ernesto had Kyu eliminate the heads of one gang after another, allowing him to move in and

assimilate them into his own. She would either seduce and murder them, or assassinate them outright. She had never forgotten her abuse, although now she found she could channel her anger and hatred, projecting it onto her target to help her accomplish her mission. Kyu found that killing suited her. She was unqualified with a knife, but she found greater pleasure in the more personal jobs, ripping a target's throat out with her needle-sharp teeth, and drinking in their hot blood. Each time, she imagined it was Ernesto's neck she was biting, his blood she was drinking, and that made her enjoy it even more. Once he had consolidated most of the gangs under his rule, he had Kyu kill the core members of the unified gang, his lieutenants and closest confidants, then he and Kyu seemed to vanish. The resulting chaos turned almost the entire Amazon Basin into a battleground. The rampant gang warfare was even worse than the piracy, with hundreds of innocents getting killed in the crossfire. In response, Rodolfo Yamamoto, now governor of Rio de Janeiro, had no choice but to tighten the city gates. With all the focus on the inner walls, Ernesto and Kyu had little trouble slipping into the city via the sea.

As they walked through the familiar streets that first night, Ernesto could scarcely contain himself, knowing that his goal was nearly in sight. But this was a more mature Ernesto than the one who'd been banished from the sprawling city two decades earlier. With the ill-gotten spoils he had smuggled in with him, he purchased a modest ocean-side mansion for Kyu and virtually confined himself to a small, upper room. He spread a healthy dose of bribes around, and helped Kyu establish herself as Candy Roux, an exotic, high-priced escort catering to the "scaly" or "fishy" crowd. She took in two dozen young mutant girls, all daughters, nieces or sisters of reptiles, amphibians, mollusks and fish Ernesto had known in his youth. Candy Roux's Parlor rapidly grew in fame and notoriety, with its unique array of girls, its virtual pharmacopoeia of narcotics, and its popularity among the city's leaders practically guaranteeing that the police would turn a perpetual blind eye to its goings-on. By day, Kyu worked on growing her business and cultivating her reputation as one of the most desirable, most exotic women in all of Rio. By night, she worked on carrying out Ernesto's plans. One by one, she began working her way through every official who had been involved with his conviction, and every policeman who had ever seemingly wronged him. She operated as she had while consolidating the gangs. Many were clients, others were chance encounters. The ones she couldn't seduce were killed outright – in their homes, while on patrol, or wherever she came across them. She didn't give the killings a second thought at first, at least not until she had the opportunity to take down Yamamoto.

Two years had passed since the opening of the Parlor. Yamamoto was well aware of Candy Roux's reputation, and had received first-hand reports of her skills and charms from several of his commissioners and close friends. He arranged a meeting through Ubiratã Medrado, a popular singer from Old Sao Paulo, who was also a regular client at the Parlor. Kyu met with the governor without telling Ernesto. She wanted a chance to get to know the man who had fueled Ernesto's hatred for so many years. She was instantly fascinated by him. He was certainly no saint, but he wasn't the monster Ernesto made him out to be. He was a family man, and an admitted specist, but Kyu had learned

that even the most outspoken human supremacists harbored a secret desire for mutant flesh. After their first meeting, Rodolfo told Kyu that he couldn't afford to see her again, but soon became a regular client, arranging to meet her at one of his various residences around the city on an almost weekly basis. After a long weekend in Cabo Frio, she became his mistress. She continued to hunt down and kill Ernesto's long list of enemies, but she no longer took clients. Rodolfo made promises, if not to leave his wife and family, then at least to take Kyu out of the Parlor and set her up in an elegant apartment near the capital building, overlooking Guanabara Bay. Kyu toyed with the idea, but knew at some point she would have to kill Rodolfo. She considered ruining him first, exposing their affair, driving him from office and shattering his family, then slaying him at his lowest point. She knew that the more pain she caused him, the more pleased Ernesto would be. She would spend long nights sitting next to him, watching him sleep, all the while struggling with her conflicting desires. On the one hand, she longed to abandon Ernesto and his quest for vengeance, and live something akin to a normal life. On the other hand, she yearned to sink her teeth into Rodolfo's jugular, to taste the hot blood gushing out of him while he struggled in her arms, gradually growing still. As the weeks wore on, though, she found the thought of killing him harder to bear.

Now, Kyu finds herself torn between the twisted loyalty she feels to Ernesto, her indoctrinated hatred of humans and the feelings she has for Rodolfo. She's struggling over the governor's promises to provide her a life of comfort and leisure, and her own desire to either cripple the human government and return with Ernesto to reclaim control of the gangs, or to slaughter them both and continue cultivating the Parlor and growing Candy Roux into one of the more influential citizens in Rio.

Candy Roux

Real Name: Kyuuketsuki "Kyu" Pirakutu.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 10, M.A. 17, P.S. 9, P.P. 20, P.E. 12, P.B. 23, Spd 19.

Age: 24. **Sex:** Female. **Size Level:** 8.

Height: 6 feet, 4 inches (1.93 m). **Weight:** 133 lbs (60 kg).

Species: Candiru.

Hit Points: 42. **S.D.C.:** 55.

Disposition: As Kyu's public persona, Candy Roux is brash, outgoing and straightforward. She is unapologetically confident and comfortable with her infamy; she doesn't hide who or what she is, but she doesn't flaunt it, either. She refuses to take any insult, real or perceived, lying down. She is ruthless in her business dealings, although she always leaves the other person feeling like they got the upper hand.

While on a mission, Kyu is cold, calculating and heartless. Although her kills are almost always "clean," with no detection by or interference from outside parties, she would not hesitate to kill an eyewitness or innocent bystander if they stood in the way of her completing her mission.

Privately, Kyu is much more soft-spoken, even timid at times. She is uncertain of her future and troubled by her conflicting emotions and loyalties. Despite her ambitions, she often yearns for the simple, carefree lifestyle she had among

the Yanomami. Although she can act defiant toward Ernesto at times, his is the stronger personality and she almost always gives in. Rodolfo is the only person around whom she feels she can be herself, even though she seldom lets her guard down. She still isn't certain she can trust him as fully as she would like to, which is one of the main reasons she still has doubts about her future. If she ever felt she could trust Rodolfo entirely, she would kill Ernesto in a heartbeat and abandon Candy Roux and the Parlor. However, if Rodolfo ever threatened to abandon her, or betrayed her outright, she would not hesitate to destroy him.

Human Features: Hands: Full. Biped: Full. Speech: Full. Looks: Partial.

Natural Weapons: 1D4 damage Gill Spines, 1D6 damage Teeth and Blood Drinking Bite.

Powers: Extra Physical Endurance, Aquatic Swimming, Lateral Line, Aquatic Advanced Taste, and Water Breathing: Dual Environment.

Vestigial Disadvantages: Webbed Hands & Feet, No Tail.

Psionics: None.

Level of Experience: 6th level.

Level of Education: Effectively "Raised by Bandits."

Occupation: Assassin/Madame.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Skills of Note: Language: English and Portuguese 95%, Language: Japanese and German 60%, Language: Yanomami 50%, Literacy: English and Portuguese 60%, Basic Math 88%, Card Shark 53%, Climbing 70/60%, Demolitions 78%, Escape Artist 60%, Interrogation 70%, Locate Secret Compartments/Doors 45%, Palming 50%, Pick Locks 60%, Pick Pockets 60%, Streetwise 44%, Trailing 60%, Recognize Amazonian Bandits/Pirates 35%, Recognize Criminals or Corrupt Officials/Police Officers in Rio 55%, W.P. Knife (+2 to strike, +3 to parry, +2 thrown), W.P. Paired Weapons and W.P. Targeting (+3 to strike).

Secondary Skills: Sing 70%, Play Piano 55%, Wilderness Survival 90%, Prowl 55%, Tracking 60%, W.P. Revolver, W.P. Bolt-Action Rifle and W.P. Submachine-Gun.

Attacks per Melee: 6

Bonuses: +5 to strike, +6 to parry/dodge, +3 to pull/roll with punch/fall, +4 to damage, +1 on initiative, +2 to save vs disease, poison and drugs, Trust/Intimidate 45%, Charm/Impress 65%.

Special Weapons: While on a mission, Kyu carries a pair of knives given to her by Saulo Cinco. These are of exceptional quality and do 2D4+2 damage. While entertaining at Candy Roux's Parlor, she will always have a handful (3D4) of small throwing knives (1D4 damage) somewhere on her person.

Special Equipment: While on a straight assassination mission, Kyu will wear a custom-made, padded leather body suit (A.R. 6, S.D.C. 20). This suit is entirely black and has numerous pockets and pouches to hold climbing claws, a small pair of nightvision goggles/binoculars, 8 throwing darts (1D4 damage), and any mission-specific items she may need. Otherwise, she has an extensive wardrobe of designer dresses and outfits, expensive lingerie and other accoutrements of her professions. She dresses sharply and professionally while at-

tending to business, and elegantly when appearing in public, but prefers to wear as little as possible at all other times, both for the aesthetic aspect and because, due to her early upbringing among the Yanomami, she feels most comfortable when unencumbered by clothing.

Money: Money is never an issue for Kyu. While she pays out thousands of Reais per week in bribes (the Real – plural: Reais – is the unit of currency in Rio), she still has enough left over from her illicit businesses to live a life of excess. Kyu is surprisingly frugal with her own money, however. Most of her extravagancies are gifts from one client or another. Although she has currently quit taking clients, Rodolfo still tends to lavish gifts upon her, from clothing to jewelry. She has numerous accounts at various banks throughout the city, and several caches of gems, precious metals and cash, most of which are still held over from her and Ernesto's days with the pirate gangs.

New Mutant Animal Description

Candiru

Original Animal Characteristics

Description: The Candiru, also known as the Canero or Vampire Catfish, is a small, parasitic fish that feeds on the blood of other fish. It has backward-facing spines on its gills, which it uses to attach itself to the gills of its victims. It draws blood both with its spines and long, sharp teeth, and feeds rapidly, gorging itself on the blood and soft gill tissue, often swelling up to two to three times its normal size in as little as 30-145 seconds. It then sinks to the bottom of the river and burrows into the sand or mud to digest its meal.

The Candiru is found mostly in the Amazon and Orinoco rivers in Brazil and Venezuela. It is a notorious and highly feared fish, even more so than the piranha, despite its small size (no more than 6.7 inches/17 cm, although 1 inch/2.5 cm is average). The terrible reputation comes from the fact that the Candiru finds its victims by tasting the water to find the water stream coming from a fish's gills. Once it detects a stream, it follows it to the source and imbeds its head into the opening. Unfortunately for both humans and other animals, the Candiru can not easily distinguish between the stream of nitrates coming from the gills, and that coming from a urinating animal or human. The Candiru has been known to imbed itself into the urethra of swimmers, causing great pain to its host as it extends its spines, slashes at the walls of the urethra with its teeth, and swells up as it feeds. Swollen up with spines extended, it is unable to remove itself from a human and will eventually die, leading to a severe infection and even more pain as it slowly decays. It can only be effectively removed via surgery. While numerous folk remedies exist that claim to kill and dissolve the fish, these remedies – or even worse, just yanking the fish out – can result in even greater pain, infection and even death.

The Candiru has a small, eel-shaped body, with skin ranging from a light, fleshy pink, to a pale bluish grey, to nearly transparent. It has tiny eyes, small fins, and up to four tiny barbels around its mouth. The teeth of its upper jaw are long and thin, and can protrude from its mouth. It has two tiny, retractable hooked spines at the top and bottom of its gill flaps, and as many as four more even smaller spines lining the edge of each gill.

Mutant Candiru are exceedingly rare, and very seldom found outside of the Amazon region. If recognized as a Candiru, mutants are often killed on sight, which just adds to their scarcity. Player Characters will have a difficult time among others, especially if their true nature is discovered, and would do best to avoid any areas from the Yucatan south.

Size Level: 1

Length: Up to 6.7 inches (17 cm), although 1 inch (2.5 cm) long and about 1/8 inch (3.2 mm) wide is average.

Weight: Less than 1 pound (.45 kg) at maximum length.

Build: Long.

Mutant Changes & Costs

Total BIO-E: 115

Attribute Bonuses: None.

Human Features

Hands: None. A pair of fins used for swimming.

10 BIO-E for Partial. Fins become "lobe-fins," or fins on the ends of limbs. Stronger, more developed fins that branch apart at the end to form a non-opposable thumb.

15 BIO-E for Full. Fully developed arms. Fins branch apart in three places to form fingers and an opposable thumb.

Biped: None. No legs, just a tail for swimming and a pair of rear fins. Helpless on land, unless alternative means of movement can be found. If the character has arms then he will be able to drag himself on land at a Spd of 1, or slither on his belly at one quarter his Spd attribute. Can swim three times faster than other mutants.

10 BIO-E for Partial. The pelvic fins develop into a pair of small legs. Character can now function on land by running on all fours, and will be most comfortable when on all fours. Will only stand up on the hind legs when necessary.

15 BIO-E for Full. Fully functioning set of legs. Equal to human.

Speech: 5 BIO-E for Partial, or 10 BIO-E for Full.

Looks: None. Long, eel-like body with a very long neck, tiny, somewhat flattened, oval head, and very short limbs. Skin is pale and smooth with no scales, and light to almost transparent in color. Tiny eyes and a small mouth with sharp, thin teeth, and four tiny, whisker-like barbels at the corners.

5 BIO-E for Partial. Tall, skinny humanoid with a thin, elongated torso and neck, short limbs, and a small, oval head. Small facial features, with a fleshy, thin moustache and long, sharp teeth.

10 BIO-E for Full. Extremely tall, skinny human with an exceptionally long neck, slender limbs and a pale complexion. Narrow, oval head with small facial features, tiny, fleshy whiskers at the corners of the mouth, and small, hooked spines at the corners of the jaw, and in front of the ears.

Natural Weapons:

5 BIO-E for 1D6 damage Teeth.

5 BIO-E for 1D4 damage *Gill Spines (Special)*. The character has tiny, hooked spines lining his gills (or jaw, if Human Looks: Full). These are designed to anchor the character into a host more than to cause damage, and can not be used offensively. In order to anchor himself into a victim, the character can be no more than 10% the size of the victim, and must

have clear access to an opening in the unsuspecting victim's body. Inserting one's head into a victim, whether gills or some other opening, requires a Called Shot at a small target, and even then carries an additional penalty of -2 to strike. The only exception would be if the victim was unconscious. Once anchored, the character extends his spines doing 1D4 points of damage direct to Hit Points, and is free to feed, but can only remain imbedded in the victim as long as he is able to hold his breath. Unlike the natural fish, mutant Candiru can retract their spines and remove themselves from a mammalian victim. Pulling the Candiru out is a dangerous and risky option, doing 2D6 points of damage direct to Hit Points if attached to the gills, and 4D6 points of Hit Point damage if attached anywhere else.

10 BIO-E for Blood Drinking Bite (must purchase Teeth and/or Gill Spines). A bite or spine attack from this character will do one Hit Point of damage in addition to the normal damage, plus one additional Hit Point of damage per melee action/attack. The attack can be maintained as long as the character can hold his breath, but generally lasts no longer than 2D4 melees. An opponent can be drained dry fairly quickly, although the character can not drain more than 5 Hit Points per Size Level in a single attack. Drinking the maximum amount of blood leaves the character bloated. Reduce speed, parry & dodge bonuses, and attacks per melee by half until the character can digest the meal, which takes 3D4x10 minutes.

Mutant Animal Powers:

Automatically receives Aquatic Swimming at 75%.

10 BIO-E for Lateral Line.

10 BIO-E for *Barbels (Special)*. The character has 4 whisker-like sensory barbels around his mouth, which provide the equivalent of Advanced Taste and Advanced Smell, and allow him to operate in total darkness or while blinded with half the normal penalties. If the character also has Lateral Line, he receives no penalties from blindness or total darkness.

5 BIO-E for *Aquatic Advanced Taste (Special)*. The character has an advanced sense of taste, and can track by taste while underwater. This is essentially the same as the Track by Smell ability, although the character gets a +5% bonus if he has Barbels, and a +10% bonus if his target is bleeding, or if it urinates in the water.

10 BIO-E for Extra Mental Endurance.

10 BIO-E for Extra Physical Endurance.

10 BIO-E for Digging.

5 BIO-E for Water Breathing: Freshwater.

15 BIO-E for Water Breathing: Dual Environment.

Vestigial Disadvantages:

-5 BIO-E for Color Blindness.

-10 BIO-E for Nearsightedness.

-10 BIO-E for Prey Eyes.

-5 BIO-E for Webbed Hands and Feet (only if character has Hands AND Feet).

-5 BIO-E for Vestigial Legs (must have Biped: None). The character has one or two small, useless limbs sprouting from the base of his tail.

- 20 BIO-E for No Tail (Human Looks: None or Partial only).
The character has no tail, loses any bonus to swimming speed, and has one half the normal depth tolerance.
- 15 BIO-E for Aquatic Vestigial Skin.
- 15 BIO-E for Aquatic Respiratory System.
- 10 BIO-E for Temperature Sensitivity.
- 10 BIO-E for Reptile Brain: Predator.
- 20 BIO-E for Diet: Hemavore: Character must drink blood to survive. Needs a number of pints of blood equal to size level each week. No other food will suffice for this character. Without blood the character will starve to death.

Thump

Optional Material for Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Ed.

By Josh Hilden

Illustration by Jared Trulock

Sandra “Sandy” Emerson began her life as Sandy Carson, one of the multitude of children left to the “tender mercies” of the Montgomery County Department of Child Protective Services in Dayton, Ohio. When Sandy was five years old her mother, a chronic alcoholic and borderline personality, killed her father and her two brothers after suffering a psychotic break. The break was apparently precipitated by the closing of the automotive factory her husband was employed at for more than ten years. The officers who responded to the shots fired at the Carson family home found Teresa Carson attempting to strangle her youngest child, Sandy, with her bare hands. It was assumed Teresa had used all of her ammunition in the murders of her husband and sons and was reduced to manual strangulation when it came to dispatching her daughter. The thought that she preferred to kill her daughter like that was too horrific for the officers to consider.

Before the valiant resuscitation of Sandy by the City of Dayton Fire Department, Sandy had been clinically dead for more than three minutes. Teresa Carson was deemed insane and sentenced to life in a mental hospital, leaving Sandy to be sent to live with strangers in the foster care system. Sandy went through four foster families in less than one year. It could be argued that if Sandy had found a stable foster home and lived a normal life, the persona of “Thump” might never have existed. But fate seemed to require the emergence of Thump into the world.

At the age of eleven Sandy was sent to live with a nice older couple, Peter and Mindy Emerson, who lived in the Dayton suburb of Moraine and owned a small family grocery store. For two years, Sandy finally seemed to have achieved a normal family life. During this time, Sandy discovered that she had a great affinity for animals, and was delighted when the Emersons allowed her to care for a small warren of rabbits living in the back of their property. It seemed that time was destined to heal Sandy Carson, and at her thirteenth birthday party the Emerson’s told her that they had filed the paperwork to adopt her. But this joy would only last a week.

Several days later, when Sandy came home from school, she walked in on her foster parents being tortured by two unknown

men who were demanding that her foster mother tell them “where the disk was hidden.” Sandy stepped into the room as the taller man slit her foster father’s throat from ear to ear. Sandy snapped when she saw this and attacked the men, kicking, hitting and biting at them. They laughed as they restrained her and then they threatened to cut her throat if her mother didn’t talk, but they never had the chance.

Sandy was washed in a wave of nausea, and she very nearly passed out. She felt her body change – her muscles expanded and the shape of her skeleton grew and rearranged itself. When she opened her eyes everything was clearer and more in focus than it had been before, and she felt unbelievably strong. Sandy turned on the taller man who was holding her from behind and drove her knee straight into his groin, he dropped and she kicked him in the head, killing him instantly. The second, shorter man attempted to flee but was set upon by Sandy, who beat him to a bloody pulp. Sandy was stunned by the level of destruction that she leveled upon her father’s murderers. Later, it would be explained to her that stress had triggered a genetic mutation lying dormant within her.

Sandy Emerson spent the night following the slaughter of the assassins in the Montgomery County Jail, and she fully expected to spend the rest of her life in prison. Early the next day, Mindy Emerson came to see her with a man who Sandy had never met before. They informed her that Mindy and Peter had worked as agents for the CIA, using their life in Moraine as a cover, and that the men who Sandy had killed had been foreign operatives looking for scientific data that had already been delivered to the United States government. They told Sandy that there would be no repercussions for the deaths of her father’s murderers, and they offered her the chance to work for the government, who would train her to use her powers for the good of the nation.

Over the next five years, Sandy received extensive military and intelligence training, and at the age of eighteen she became a full time CIA agent and was assigned to the Mutant Task Force (MTF). In the four years since she became a field agent, Sandy has become the top field operative in the MTF, and seems to be on her way to a position of high influence in the Task Force. Sandy has one quirk that worries her superiors: she will not endanger children, and more than one of her operations have been scrubbed due to the presence of children. Only time will tell if this lone moral “hiccup” will impede her work.

Thump

Real Name: Sandra Emerson.

Legal Status: Sandra is a citizen of the United States of America, and officially lives in the suburbs of Washington D.C. Sandra is a CIA Agent with a sealed juvenile criminal record, assigned to the Mutant Task Force (MTF).

Alignment: Aberrant (with a strict moral code).

Attributes: I.Q. 26, M.E. 12, M.A. 14, P.S. 23, P.P. 24, P.E. 33, P.B. 26, Spd 46 (due to her mutations she can run at 380 mph/608 km).

Hit Points: 121

S.D.C. 237

Height: 5 feet 8 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 135 lbs (60.7 kg).

Age: 22



RV OCK 2008

Disposition: When not on a job, Thump is a fun loving girl in her early twenties who enjoys rock and roll, and roller coasters. But when she is on a mission, Thump is made of ice. She doesn't waste her time on needless communication or compassion, except when it comes to children.

Experience Level: 8th

Combat Skills: See Super Power, *Natural Combat Ability*.

Attacks per Melee: 12

Bonuses (includes all): +4 damage for every 20 mph (32 km) she is moving (max +8 when standing still), +5 to parry, +12 to dodge, +5 to automatic dodge, +10 to initiative, +8 to damage (in addition to Spd bonus), +7 to strike, +8 to pull punch, +12 to roll with punch or fall, +4 to disarm or entangle, Exceptional Balance 86%, Back Flip 86%, Walk Tight Rope or High Wire 94%, Work Parallel Bars or Rings 94%, Punch 1D6+2, Power Punch (2 attacks) 2D6+16, Standard Kick 2D4, Karate Kick 2D6+2, Jump Kick (2 attacks) Automatic Critical Strike, Leap Attack is Automatic Critical Strike, Jump 10 feet (3 m) high and 15 feet (4.6 m) across (increase by 50% when running), Head Butt 1D6, Knockout or Stun on a Natural 19-20, Judo Style Flip/Throw 2D4 (opponent loses initiative and 1 attack).

Other Bonuses: 80% chance to Charm and Impress, +33% to save vs coma and death, +8 to save vs magic and poison, +5 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs possession and mind control.

Super Power Category: Mutant, Genetic Aberration and Ambidextrous.

Major Super Ability: Natural Combat Ability.

Minor Super Abilities: Extraordinary Physical Endurance, Extraordinary Physical Prowess, Extraordinary Speed.

Education Level: Military Specialist.

Skills of Note: Running, Climbing 98%/98%, Military Etiquette 98%, Radio: Basic 98%, Detect Ambush 90%, Intelligence 86%, Wilderness Survival 97%, Pick Locks 98%, Basic Electronics 98%, Basic Mechanics 98%, Demolition 98%, Demolitions Disposal 98%, Underwater Demolitions 98%, Prowl 98%, Computer Operation 92%, Computer Programming 82%, Computer Repair 77%, Streetwise 63%, Pick Pockets 77%, Computer Hacking 82%, Concealment 63%, Palming 72%, Acrobatics, Paired Weapons.

Secondary Skills: Athletics, Body Building, Gymnastics, Pilot Automobile 83%, General Repair/Maintenance 82%.

Weapon Proficiencies: All, see super power *Natural Combat Ability* (+2 to strike/shoot when aimed, and parry).

Appearance: Thump has manifested the appearance of a humanoid rabbit, and has short white fur covering her lean, well muscled body. She has rabbit ears that complement her human hair and rabbit-like facial features. Known to very few, Thump has an honest to god cotton tail.

Occupation: Special Agent with the CIA Mutant Task Force (MTF). Through her connections with the MTF, Thump has worked closely with several sanctioned Super Teams, including the Sentinels of Liberty and Justice, and the Century Station Centurions.

Body Armor: Thump avoids body armor because it hinders her movements.

Weapons and Equipment: Thump has access to almost any weapon from anywhere in the world, but she does carry one custom made weapon. Two years into her work with the MTF she secretly contacted the criminal genius the Fabricator and had him build her a unique automatic pistol, the Thumper.

The Thumper: The Thumper is a specially designed, semiautomatic handgun firing .50 caliber rounds. It is constructed completely out of synthetic and composite materials, rendering it very light and durable. **Cartridge:** .50. **Feed:** 10 round magazine. **Weight:** 2 pounds (0.9 kg). **Range:** 150 feet (45.72 meters). **Damage:** 1D4x10. **Bonuses:** +4 to strike due to superior design and balance.

Available Money: Thump earns \$45,000 a year, and has close to \$100,000 in savings.

Crimson Waters

Optional Material for Ninjas & Superspies™

By Josh Hilden

Illustration by Mark Evans

Janet Morimoto was born in the city of Phoenix, Arizona, the only child of first generation Japanese American immigrants. When she was ten years old her parents were killed in an apparent traffic accident, and Jennifer was sent back to Japan to live with her aunt and uncle. At the age of twelve an attempt was made to kill Jennifer while she was on her way home from school. In the aftermath of the botched assassination attempt, Jennifer's uncle revealed to her that she was in great danger, and that her parents had not died in a traffic accident. They had, in fact, been murdered. Jennifer's uncle, Kano Morimoto, told Jennifer the complete truth. The Morimoto family was an ancient family of warriors, they had been the secret guardians of powerful citizens of Japan for more than a thousand years. The Morimoto Family was never acknowledged in public, but always remained in the background in order to one day stop the blade, or arrow, or bullet that was meant to kill those they were charged with protecting. Jennifer's parents were killed because they were sworn to protect the leaders and scientists of the Masa Corporation, a Nanotechnology firm based in Japan and the United States.

Believing that she would always be a target of those who killed her parents, Jennifer petitioned her uncle to train her in the ways of the warrior so that she could carry on the work that her parents had died performing. For two years her uncle refused to train her, but on her fourteenth birthday he relented, and her true education began. What followed was four years of grueling and intensive training that honed Jennifer into the perfect, and beautiful, weapon she was destined to become.

On the day of Jennifer's "Graduation" from her training, she was led to a locked room in an abandoned warehouse. Inside the room were eight men armed with pipes and clubs. Uncle Kano told her that he had spent nine months locating these men and that they were the ones responsible for the deaths of her parents and the attempt on her life six years earlier. Kano then handed her a dull, short-bladed knife and left the room. Ten minutes



later, Uncle Kano opened the door and found Jennifer unscathed, and bathed in "the crimson water."

In the years since her graduation, Jennifer has worked for the Masa Corporation, protecting its personnel with her own life and honor.

Crimson Waters

Real Name: Janet Morimoto.

Legal Status: Janet has dual citizenship in the United States and Japan.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 23, M.A. 23, P.S. 31, P.P. 27, P.E. 26, P.B. 25, Spd 36.

Hit Points: 61. **S.D.C.** 121. **Chi:** 36.

Height: 5 feet, 1 inch (1.55 m). **Weight:** 100 lbs (45 kg).

Age: 20

Disposition: Janet is a quiet and reserved young woman who takes her job very seriously; to her the safety of the senior members of the Masa Corporation is the most important thing in the world. She is hyper-organized; some would claim her level of control borders on obsessive-compulsive. Crimson Waters has the soul of an accountant in the body of a warrior. Janet enjoys good food and fine wine, and has, in recent years, become somewhat obsessed with traditional Indian cuisine and plans to make a trip to the subcontinent when she can schedule the time.

O.C.C.: Worldly Martial Artist.

Experience Level: 7th

Combat Skills:

Primary Martial Arts Form – Zanji Shinjinken-Ryu (Swordsmanship).

Martial Arts Powers and Abilities – Wrist Hardening, Breaking, Awareness, Sword Drawing, "One Life, One Shot, One Hit, One Kill," Five Principles.

Weapon Katas – Daisho (paired), Bokken, Bo Staff, Spear, Naginata.

Attacks per Melee: Seven.

Combat Bonuses: +11 to parry, +10 to dodge, +12 to roll with punch/fall, +10 to strike, +3 to initiative, +16 to damage.

Other Bonuses: +4 to save versus hypnosis/mental attack/psychic phenomena, +15% to save versus coma/death/toxins, 82% to charm and impress, +1 to maintain balance, sense of balance 95%, climb rope 98%, leap 4 feet (1.2 m) high and 18 feet (5.5 m) across, pin/incapacitate on a Natural 18-20, crush/squeeze 1D4, Body Block 1D4, walk tightrope/high wire 98%, Back Flip 98%, fearless of heights, Critical Strike from behind, Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20, Death Blow on a Natural 20, +5% to escape arm holds.

Education Level: High School.

Skills of Note: Basic Mathematics 98%, Language & Literacy: English 98%, Language & Literacy: Chinese 98%, Language & Literacy: Japanese 98%, Language: Korean 98%, Climbing 98%/96%, Demolitions 92%, Demolitions Disposal 92%, Read Sensory Equipment 86%, Running, Boxing, Gymnastics, Athletics, Body Building, Swimming 90%, Bonsai 98%, Calligraphy 81%, Go 76%.

Secondary Skills: Prowl 84%, Wrestling, Acrobatics, Computer Operation 86%, Computer Programming 81%, Basic Electronics 81%, Escape Artist 66%, Palming 66%, Pick Locks 66%, Pick Pockets 76%, First Aid 81%, Basic Mechanics 64%.

Weapon Proficiencies: Automatic Rifles, Grenade Throwing, Large Sword, Short Sword, Knife; also see *Weapon Katas*.

Appearance: Janet Morimoto has the body of a super model, if super models were sculpted of steel instead of flesh. Her long, jet black hair and icy blue eyes offset the almost doll-like appearance of her face. Crimson Waters prefers red silk kimonos whenever possible, but even when forced into less preferable attire she manages to add a splash of color.

Occupation: Corporate bodyguard and special operative.

Body Armor: Normally none, but she will utilize body armor on a mission by mission basis.

Weapons and Equipment: Has access to the complete arsenal of the Masa Corporation, but always has her matched swords, the Star Blades, near her side (see description below).

Available Money: Access to the Masa Corporation bank accounts renders her resource base effectively unlimited. Crimson Waters has a personal fortune of 5 million dollars spread out in bank accounts all around the globe.

The Star Blades

The Star Blades are a matched set of ancient Japanese swords that have been handed down through the Morimoto clan for almost one thousand years. Legend says that the blades were forged from the core of a star (in reality, a meteor), which fell to the Earth outside the ancient city of Osaka. The blades are extremely hard and light, with superb balance. These properties increase the damage capability and combat bonuses of the weapons.

Damage: 4D6 each.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +3 to parry.



Shujumi and Hezikiah

Optional Material for Ninjas & Superspies™

By Brandon Aten

Illustration by Apollo Okamura

Noriko Shujumi and Rebekkah Hezikiah come from two different worlds, but were brought together by a common cause. One a career soldier, and the other an assassin trained in the tradition of her ancestors, but both fiercely independent, they never would have imagined they would be fighting side by side.

Noriko was born into a long line of ninja and her father, Horoku, the head of the clan, never let her forget it. The clan was an enforcement group for one of the largest Yakuza crime families in Japan, and had been for generations, and regularly operated as behind the scenes assassins killing anyone who opposed the Yakuza. Noriko started her training upon her twelfth birthday and took to it like a fish to water. Her natural grace and agility made combat training a simple exercise, yet her father always pushed her harder and harder than the rest of the members of her clan, helping her to become the most successful young ninja her clan had seen in generations. When she did something wrong, she was harshly scolded and her punishment was always twice as bad as it would have been for any other member of the clan. When she did something right, she was still lectured harshly and told that she was a disgrace to her family name and could have done better. By the time she was fourteen she had already killed a dozen men under assignment from her clan, helping to ensure the hold the Yakuza had on the island nation and its holdings in the black markets of Asia and the Middle East.

Rebekkah went through training as an infantry soldier in the Israeli Defense Forces, and was a promising soldier from her time as a recruit to when she retired as a lieutenant. By the time she retired, her record was so impressive that the MOSSAD had taken a keen interest in her. They extended an offer of employment and trained her as an operative agent, teaching her piloting, communications, engineering, weapons, and combat skills well beyond what she learned in the IDF. She and her operative team were sent on some of the most dangerous and explosive (sometimes quite literally) missions the MOSSAD had to offer, which frequently took her behind enemy lines and into the heart of danger. On one of these missions, Rebekkah and her team had been sent to destroy a terrorist bomb making cell in Southern Lebanon which was supplied by the black market. Under the cover of night, Rebekkah and her team located the house the terrorists were using, disabled the security systems, eliminated the exterior guards and proceeded to enter the house. That was the moment Rebekkah's life was changed entirely. The operation was considered a success since the terrorist safe house was destroyed in what was apparently a trap meant for the members of any team sent to attack the location. What the citizens of Israel never heard was that in the blast, one of their loyal defenders lost both of her arms and almost died... like the rest of her team. The MOSSAD paid for Rebekkah's hospitalization, rehabilitation, and even outfitted her with some cybernetic appendages in

return for her brave and valiant service. After that point, Rebekkah was kept on as a "consultant," free to do any work she deemed proper.

Noriko and Rebekkah both had made enemies of the black market and its mercenary protectors early in their careers. They met when both were on separate missions inside Pakistan to disrupt a mercenary arms bazaar and assassinate the black market mercenary in charge of the operation. Each discovered traces of the other when doing preliminary reconnaissance, but ignored the other's presence. After all, there were many people, on many sides, interested in this outfit. Both tried, and failed, to infiltrate the inner circles of the mercenaries running the black market operation, so the two both went against their better judgment and decided to track down each other in order to organize a mutually beneficial arrangement.

At first, each distrusted the other and they figured that they would get what use they could out of the other and then, upon the completion of their mission, leave the other to the black market mercs. But when the time came for their mission, it went smoother than silk. The two decided to strike fast and strike hard, and before the mercs could even raise an alarm, 43 men were dead, including their target, and Noriko and Rebekkah had vanished, leaving behind only dead bodies and a few bullet casings.

Since then, the two have been inseparable and continue to harass, disrupt, and destroy black market operations wherever they can be found. They primarily hire out their services to any nation, government, or entity that has a need for the removal of such organizations, and they have been around the world fighting everything from drug smugglers and slave traders, to African pirates and terrorists. Rebekkah provides a variety of skills and heavy firepower, and the occasional well placed sniper shot, while Noriko is more subtle and exact. In other words, to combat this illness that is the black market, Rebekkah is the general practitioner with her broad spectrum medicines, and Noriko is the surgeon, finding the parts that need to be removed, and doing so with utmost precision.

Noriko Shujumi, Ninja

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 15, M.A. 20, P.S. 14, P.P. 31, P.E. 16, P.B. 19, Spd 14.

Height: 5 feet, 4 inches (1.6 m). **Weight:** 105 pounds (47.25 kg).

Age: 26

Hit Points: 46

S.D.C.: 29

Experience Level: 8th level Dedicated Martial Artist.

Chi: 32

Skills of Note: Swimming 98%, Palming 60%, Mathematics: Basic 94%, Acrobatics, Archery, Climbing 98%, Qi Gong (see *The Rifter*® #7), Sense of Balance 95%, Walk Tightrope 95%, Climb Rope 94%, Back Flip 95%, Prowl 65%, W.P. Shuriken, W.P. Fukiya, W.P. Fukimi-Bari, W.P. Kawanga, W.P. Knife, W.P. Kusari-Gama, W.P. Kyoketsu-Shoge, W.P. Mariki-Gusari, W.P. Nekode, W.P. Shikomi-Zue.

Appearance: Noriko is a slim woman with exceptional agility. Her delicate features are only augmented by her physical grace. When not on an assignment, Noriko is usually in trendy clothes that would usually be seen on the club scene. Elements of this can be seen in her usual outfit for missions, which consists of a pair of knee high boots combined with a loose fitting silk outfit. For some missions Noriko is covered head to toe in the traditional black ninja outfit and is indistinguishable from other female ninjas.

Disposition: Noriko is a very fun loving and energetic young woman for the most part, but when she is given a mission, Noriko takes it with the utmost seriousness and executes it with almost surgical precision. The only things that Noriko values more than her friendship with Rebekkah are her family and her clan.

Psionics: None.

Magic Knowledge: Knows a bit about Chi Magic, but knows no spells.

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Ninjitsu.

Attacks per Melee: 6

Escape Moves: Roll, Leap, Back Flip.

Attack Moves: Leap, Cartwheel.

Basic Defensive Moves: Dodge, Parry, Automatic Parry.

Advanced Defenses: Multiple Dodge, Combination Parry/Attack.

Hand Attacks: Strike, Knife Hand, Palm Strike.

Foot Attacks: Kick Attack, Tripping/Leg Hooks, Snap Kick, Drop Kick.

Jumping Foot Attacks: Jump Kick.

Special Attacks: Death Blow, Leap Attack, Roll/Knockdown, Body Flip/Throw.

Holds/Locks: Arm Hold, Leg Hold, Body Hold, Neck Hold.

Weapon Katas: Ninja Sword, Kusari-Gama.

Modifiers to Attack: Pull Punch, KO/Stun, Critical Strike, Critical Attack from behind.

Arts of Invisibility: Chi Zoshiki 71%, Pi Mi Hsing Tung 71%, Jung Hua 84%.

Martial Arts Abilities: Falling Technique, Zanshin (range 20 feet/6.1 m), "One Life, One Shot, One Hit, One Kill."

Combat Bonuses: +6 to initiative, +10 to strike, +11 to parry, +11 to dodge, +8 to roll, +5% to save vs coma/death, +1 to save vs magic.

Other Combat Bonuses: Knockout/Stun on 19-20, Critical Strike on 18-20, Death Blow on a Natural 20, Leap 30 feet (9.1 m) high, Leap 31 feet (9.4 m) across, Fearless of Heights.

Rebekkah Hezikiah, MOSSAD Agent

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 14, M.A. 21, P.S. 21, P.P. 25, P.E. 17, P.B. 21, Spd 17.

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

Weight: 127 pounds (57 kg).

Age: 28

Hit Points: 51

S.D.C.: 67

Experience Level: 9th level Operative Agent.

Chi: 17

Skills of Note: Plyometrics (see *The Rifter*® #7), Detect Ambush 97%, Detect Concealment 92%, Escape Artist 82%, Optic Systems 98%, Sniper (with an additional +1 to strike), Surveillance Systems 97%, Tracking 87%, Computer Networks 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Cryptography 97%, Laser Communications 92%, Microfilm 89%, Radio: Basic 98%, Radio: Scramblers 97%, Disguise 97%, Forgery 82%, Interrogation 97%, Military Intelligence 93%, Helicopter Mechanics 92%/82%, Pilot Basic Helicopters 98%, Pilot Combat Helicopters 98%, Instrument Rating 82%, Aerial Navigation 82%, Read Sensory Equipment 92%, Weapon Systems 66%, Pilot Automobile 92%, Pilot Motorcycle 92%, Demolitions 17%, Demolitions Disposal 82%, Electronic Countermeasures 92%, Electronic Engineering 87%, Locksmith 97%, Mechanical Engineering 92%, Pick Locks 97%, Safe Cracking 76%, Swimming 87%, Prowl 67%, Climbing 92%/82%, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Rifle, W.P. Assault Rifle, W.P. Sub-Machinegun, W.P. Energy Weapons, W.P. Knife.

Appearance: Rebekkah is a strikingly beautiful woman with two noticeably bionic arms, dirty-blond hair, olive skin and hazel eyes. More often than not, she will wear her black trench coat and unitard in the field.

Disposition: While Noriko is the fun loving kid who never really got to have a childhood, Rebekkah is the one who never really wanted one. She knew she wanted to be a soldier since childhood and couldn't wait to enlist. Often, it seems that the only happiness Rebekkah gets is when she's in combat. When she's not, she can be the most charming person in the world, but often leaves people feeling like they are held at arm's length. The only person she has ever really opened up to has been Noriko, who is the only person to have ever heard the story about what happened to her arms.

Psionics: None.

Magic Knowledge: None.

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Krav Maga (see *The Rifter*® #7).

Attacks per Melee: 5

Escape Moves: Roll, Breakfall.

Basic Defensive Moves: Dodge, Parry, Automatic Parry.

Advanced Defenses: Combination Parry/Attack, Power Parry, Multiple Dodge.

Hand Attacks: Strike, Power Punch, Backhand, Double Knuckle Fist, Fingertip Attack, Claw Hand, Elbow, Forearm.

Foot Attacks: Kick, Roundhouse, Trip/Hook, Snap Kick, Knee, Drop Kick.

Special Attacks: Body Flip/Throw.

Modifiers to Attack: Pull Punch, KO/Stun, Death Blow, Jump Attack.

Martial Arts Abilities: None.

Combat Bonuses: +4 to initiative, +7 to strike, +11 to parry, +11 to dodge, +6 to roll, +5 to damage, +2 to pull punch, +7% to save vs coma/death, +2 to save vs magic, 70% chance to trust/intimidate, 65% chance to charm/impress.

Other Combat Bonuses: Knockout/Stun on 18-20, Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20, Death Blow on a Natural 19-20, can jump 15 feet (4.6 m) up and 20 feet (6.1 m) across.

Cybernetics: Two bionic arms, built-in E-Clip port, built-in particle beam (6D6+6), extendable arms (can extend three times their normal length).

Weapons of Note: Rebekkah has a variety of firearms at her disposal. She prefers her built-in particle beam, her Desert Eagle pistol (5D6), her Galil assault rifle, and her variety of Uzi sub-machineguns. Her long jacket actually provides her protection with an A.R. of 15 and 50 S.D.C. Her nano-mesh suit also slightly heightens her jumping and reflexes. These bonuses are already factored into her combat bonuses.

Hanayome

Ichibetsu

Optional Material for Ninjas and Superspies™

By Todd Yoho

Illustration by Amy L. Ashbaugh

Located at the base of Mt. Fuji are two of Japan's unclaimed beauties. The first is a frighteningly ancient forest overgrown with thick trees, brambles, and a maze of underbrush; Aokigahara Forest is a Japanese national treasure. The other is a young woman of unparalleled beauty, and unbelievable malice.

The forest itself is a well known place where people go to commit suicide, or to dump the elderly, infirm or infants that families can't afford to feed. This practice is so well established that local villages organize ghoulish expeditions into the forest once a year to find and remove the corpses of these discarded and dejected people. Oftentimes bodies will go undiscovered for years, making it the perfect spot to "lose" troublemakers for the Yakuza. It is here that Hanayome Ichibetsu earns her pay.

Hanayome is a tragic case of a hungry child, a poor family, and a brutally cold winter. Sometime around twenty years ago, for whatever reason, Hanayome's family decided that they either did not want her, or they could not afford to keep her. Whatever the reason, they abandoned her deep within the Aokigahara Forest and never looked back. Having set their course, her family spared no more thoughts or glances for her. Had they done so, they would have seen what they could only have described as a spirit swoop in from the brush and carry her away.

Folklore tells that the Aokigahara Forest is haunted. With the inordinate amount of deaths within its leafy borders, it's not hard to imagine why! Visitors, many of whom are hikers who appreciate the natural beauty of the forest without the suicidal tendencies, tell stories of the spirits of the forest. It's not unusual for a visitor to return to work with a tale of glimpsing a flitting, flouncing black, white, or gold apparition that was just on the edge of his vision. It was one of these spirits that rescued Hanayome from her brush with infanticide. However, things are not always what they seem.

The spirit that rescued Hanayome was not a spirit in the supernatural sense, but rather a reclusive, but overworked, assassin for the many underworld happenings in central Japan. The spirit was an elderly woman in the twilight of her life who went by the name of Shioshi. She was the last of her family, the last of her dojo, and the last of the "spirits" living in Aokigahara Forest. But in the frail form of Hanayome, her spirit would live on.

Descended from a long line of ninja warriors, the old woman raised and trained Hanayome as her daughter and student. She instructed her in the ways of stealth, subtlety, and assassination. She introduced her to her underworld contacts, stepped back from working as an active assassin and mentored young Hanayome, helping channel her orphaned rage into a powerful weapon. Eventually, Hanayome took her own missions, instructing her contacts to bring her targets to her. The forest provides the perfect cover for a murder, especially since her ninja training easily enables her to stage each assassination like a suicide. What's another 20, or 50, or 100 bodies lying in the underbrush? Hanayome is the perfect assassin in the perfect location; neat, tidy, and completely hidden in plain sight.

Hanayome Ichibetsu

Real Name: Unknown.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 9, M.A. 15, P.S. 17, P.P. 23, P.E. 17, P.B. 19, Spd 15.

Hit Points: 32

S.D.C.: 58

Chi: 17

Age: Unknown, appears to be in her early 20s.

Sex: Female.

Height: 5 feet (1.5 m).

Weight: 100 lbs (45 kg).

Disposition: Mean, cruel, playful, and vengeful.

Description: A slim, athletic, attractive, scantily-clad girl of about 20, armed with a sword and a smile.

Experience Level: 6th level Dedicated Martial Artist.

Occupation: Serial killer, assassin, self-proclaimed spirit of atonement.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Ninjitsu, 6 Attacks per Melee.

Bonuses: +6 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +2 damage, +9 to roll with impact, +2 to back flip, Knock Out/Stun on a Natural 19 or 20, Critical Strike on a Natural 20, Critical Strike from Behind, Leap 22 feet (6.7 m) high, 23 feet (7 m) long, Charm/Impress 55%.

Skills of Note: Language and Literacy: Japanese 98%, Mathematics: Basic 90%, Wilderness Survival 45%, Gardening 65%, Sing 50%, Floral Arrangement 33%, Acrobatics, Archery, Climbing 98%, Swimming 90%, Sense of Balance 85%, Walk Tight Rope 85%, Climb Rope 90%, Prowl 50%, W.P. Shuriken, W.P. Fukiya (Blow Gun), W.P. Fukimi-Bari (Mouth Darts), W.P. Kawanga (Rope/Grapple), W.P. Knife, W.P. Kusari-Gama, W.P. Kyoketsu-Shoge, W.P. Manriki-Gusari, W.P. Nekode (Cat Claws), W.P. Shikomi-Zue (Hidden Blade Staff).



Martial Arts Powers and Techniques: Art of Vanishing, Art of Evasion, Falling Technique, Stone Ox.

Weapon Katas: W.P. Kata Ninja Sword, W.P. Kata Knife.

Weapons and Equipment: Hanayome has little use for material goods, typically using her earnings to purchase what little supplies she needs and donating the rest to children's organizations. Her ninja equipment was inherited from her master upon her passing. It consists of a Ninja-to (1D6 S.D.C.), 6 Shuriken (1D4 S.D.C.), Tekagi climbing claws, several handfuls of Tetsubishi (caltrops), and a garrote. She lives in a small hut made of fallen trees and overgrown brambles in the deepest heart of the forest, where the magnetic interference is greatest. She has a small, but well tended garden and a bathing pool fed by a rock-lined irrigation canal. It is a small piece of paradise amid her forest of despair.

Pyxee

Optional Material for Nightbane®

By Mark Oberle

Illustration by Mike Mumah

"C'mon Josh, you act like you're scared or something."

The darkened cabin loomed beyond the moonlit clearing like a scene out of a horror movie.

"I ain't, I'm just makin' sure there's nobody around," came the reply.

This was a scene that had been repeated a handful of times in the past couple of years. The "Haunted Cabin" had become somewhat of a rite of passage in that time for young nobodies who wanted to prove themselves to be one of the cool kids. Joshua Spiker was one of those young nobodies trying to impress the three junior football players who had brought him out here on a full moon.

Josh was a pale, skinny "geek" who had just moved from the south of Nashville to the small tourist town of Gatlinburg. He'd been able to squeak by without too much notice in the large population of his old school. Here he had to do something to climb the social ladder... and quick. So when he overheard the conversation in the lunchroom about most people being afraid to go out to the Haunted Cabin deep in the thick woods of the Smoky Mountains, he leapt at the chance to become something more than "that new kid."

So here he was, scared out of his wits, but trying not to let his voice waver and give him away. After a few brief moments, he took a deep breath and set foot in the moonlight, creeping as low to the ground as possible even though it seemed no one was around. Halfway to the front porch, he thought he saw something move in one of the windows. He froze, ready and willing to bolt back to the safety of the dark woods.

Josh waited. Five heartbeats... ten heartbeats... twenty heartbeats, they each seemed like an hour even though his heart was racing like he'd just run a mile. A voice from the woods, barely above a harsh whisper, broke the eerie silence nearly causing Josh to jump out of his skin.

"Get a move on, wimp; we've got to get the truck back before my dad gets home from work."

When he turned to see which of the three guys had spoken, Josh realized just how exposed he truly was. He couldn't even see a foot into the woods for all the moonlight that streamed down on him. As Josh hesitantly turned back towards the cabin to make good on his word, he caught sight of movement in one of the other windows. That was all it took, Josh moved quicker than before... but in the opposite direction. He dove headlong into the bushes and the waiting arms of Braxton, one of the three "jocks" who had brought him here.

"Whoa there, little guy," his classmate whispered with feigned concern, "what's wrong?"

"There was something," Josh stammered, "something in the window!"

"No kidding," piped up Aaron, the smallest of the three friends at six feet tall and 170 pounds. "Why do you think it's called the Haunted Cabin?"

"I don't want to do this anymore, guys, let's just get out of here," Josh whimpered.

"I don't want to do this anymore, guys," Dave, the final member of the group, mocked.

"Time for Plan B?" queried Braxton.

"Plan B," the others echoed.

Producing a set of handcuffs from his belt, Aaron stood back as Braxton and Dave grabbed the unsuspecting target of their latest prank. Josh was too stunned at first to say anything, but as the two teenage boys hoisted him over their heads like some kind of trophy he began to squirm. As they stepped into the moonlit clearing, he began pleading with them to let him down. His captors simply laughed and kept moving closer to the cabin. When they finally made it to the porch, they cuffed Josh's right wrist to one of the bars of the wrought-iron railing.

"No, please don't leave me here!" he begged.

"Aww, don't worry little guy, we'll be back for ya' in the morning... or what's left of you," Braxton said in a low voice.

They laughed off more of Josh's pleas as they walked back across the clearing.

Stepping back into the tree line, Dave asked, "So, do you guys think that place is really haunted?"

Before Aaron or Braxton had time to answer, an eerie tittering laugh pierced the darkness.

"What the hell was that?" questioned Aaron in a panicked tone.

"The ghost, moron," a female voice whispered in his ear.

Aaron jumped sideways into Dave, sending them both sprawling.

"What the hell is wrong with you two?" a bewildered Braxton asked.

As the two fallen friends clamored back to their feet, Dave spotted a dark figure hovering just behind Braxton. Speechless, he pointed at the flitting form, trying to warn his confused comrade. A loud crack resounded through the clearing as a baseball bat-sized limb impacted the back of Braxton's skull, dropping him in a crumpled heap.

"Holy sh-" Aaron started to scream until he tripped over his own feet attempting to turn.



He found himself face first in a mud puddle before he knew what was happening. In his hysterical state, he didn't even register that it hadn't rained in the last week. Dave scrambled to Braxton's crumpled form as his other friend pulled himself from the impromptu urinal one of them had made just a few minutes before. As he stooped to lift Braxton onto his shoulders, he caught a sizeable cluster of brambles to the face. Howling in pain, he dropped to the ground and curled into a ball.

This torment continued for the next four minutes as Dave and Aaron dragged their friend the half mile back to the truck they had come in. By the time they fired up the engine and tore down the gravel road, all three of them had multiple lacerations, contusions, and even a fracture or two. As a parting shot, the "ghost" put a basketball-sized rock through the windshield, ensuring that whichever father it had been borrowed from without permission would be extremely angry come the next morning.

As the tail lights disappeared over the hill a mile away, a light came on in the cabin Josh was handcuffed to. He was out-and-out crying at this point, and failed to take notice until a gentle voice asked, "Are you all right, kid?"

Startled, Josh did his best to wipe his eyes and sniff back the sobs. Quickly turning towards the open doorway, he saw a backlit image of a young woman in a tee shirt and jeans looking quizzically at him. As he tried to come up with a good excuse for his presence, handcuffed to her porch in the middle of the night, she spoke again.

"Don't be upset, you're not the first one this kind of thing has happened to. In fact, last time the guy was bound and gagged. Just sit tight while I get the bolt cutters and my truck keys so we can get you home."

The only thing Josh could think to say was, "So this place isn't haunted?"

"No," Karen answered as she stepped back into the cabin. "Not for people like us."

Karen Gordon was always somewhat of a social outcast. Short, homely, and considered a nerd to boot, she was constantly teased by her peers. She tried to ignore it most of the time, doodling fairies in her notebook and pretending not to hear the insults hurled at her like daggers. Her parents and grandparents did all they could to bolster her self-confidence, but by her sophomore year in high school they decided home schooling was the best place for her. She seemed to adjust pretty well for the next couple of years, but still suffered silently in her seclusion. Despite the missing social aspect of school, Karen did well and gained entry to a local community college's legal aide program. However, just a couple of months before her graduation, Dark Day turned the world on its head.

Karen awoke that morning to her mother screaming bloody murder. As she jumped out from underneath what she thought was her covers, she discovered why. It wasn't her covers, but her bedclothes she was buried under. She had somehow metamorphosed into one of the fairies she sketched so often! By the end of the day, her parents had come to grips with her state, but felt it best if she were to stay at the cabin they used for vacationing until they could figure out what was going on.

Four years later, little has changed for Karen since Dark Day. She is still secluded, living in her parents' cabin, although she

now makes money as a freelance translator for legal documents and manga. Her parents visit her each month to bring her supplies, and love her "in spite of her condition." Recently they have stumbled onto mentions of similar people and their association with the word "Nightbane." However, continued digging may land them on an NSB watch-list.

Karen has adapted quite well to being a Nightbane in the past couple of years, enjoying her Morpheus as a shape she's always secretly wished for. She's taken to roaming the woods some nights in her Morpheus form and getting to know every nook and cranny of what she considers *her* territory now. Likewise, she has taken to her talents like a duck to water and regularly works to hone her abilities.

Pyxee has yet to make contact with another Nightbane, and for now the Nightlords and their minions have yet to set foot near her cabin. However, she has had to tangle with a vampire on one occasion and a couple of Hounds the first time she accidentally Mirror-Walked into the Nightlands. Both times she acquitted herself well, but she still prefers to avoid all-out combat. She would be a perfect fit as an Engineer in the Underground Railroad, especially given the remoteness of the cabin and the fact that it has room to spare. However, hiding as far out in the mountains as she does means that Pyxee flies under the radar of the various factions as well as their enemies.

Pyxee

Real Name: Karen Gordon.

Race/R.C.C.: Nightbane.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 13, M.A. 11, P.S. 14 (16), P.P. 19 (30), P.E. 21 (27), P.B. 13 (20), Spd 15 (27 on the ground, 54 in flight). The Attributes in parentheses are for her Morpheus form.

Height: 5 feet, 4 inches (1.63 m) in Facade, 1 foot (30.5 cm) in Morpheus.

Weight: 145 lbs (65 kg) in Facade, 20 lbs (9 kg) in Morpheus.

Hit Points: 34 in Facade, 78 in Morpheus.

S.D.C.: 36 in Facade, 127 in Morpheus.

Age: 24

Sex: Female.

Awe/Horror Factor: 10 in Morpheus form.

P.P.E.: 190

Experience Level: 4th

Disposition: Karen is a very soft-spoken, socially awkward, and introverted person. This stems directly from her insecurity with her body image and all the teasing she dealt with throughout her schooling. She has never really had any friends outside of the various Internet pen-pals she keeps in contact with, and has never been on a date. She keeps reading her romance manga and fantasizing about a heroic prince who will sweep her off her feet, though she doubts that will ever happen, especially given her reclusive lifestyle. In truth, she doesn't know how to socialize with everyday people, much less how to act around a guy that she likes.

As Pyxee, Karen is quite a contrast from herself in her Facade. Indeed, she is quite giggly and flirtatious with attractive males and authoritative (not to mention mischievous) with

anyone else who might trespass through her woods. When it comes to dealing with bullies and minions of the Nightlords, Pyxee can be downright ruthless and vindictive though, and shows them no quarter. While normal trespassers might be frightened away through various means, bullies may be beaten, stripped and left to wander a remote part of the woods. Minions of the Nightlords as well as most other Supernaturals (excluding fellow Nightbane) will be destroyed if at all possible!

Description: Karen is a somewhat frumpy young lady who doesn't put much effort into her appearance. This self-described geek tends to wear loose-fitting, tomboyish clothes (typically overalls and a work shirt) to hide the fact that she is slightly overweight. She has a bit of a hawk-nose set between two dark brown eyes, and ever-frazzled dirty blonde hair. She did wear glasses before her Becoming, but hasn't needed them since.

Pyxee, on the other hand, is like a pint-sized Victoria's Secret model with butterfly-like wings and pointed ears. Her long, free-flowing black hair and tan skin make her bright blue eyes stand out all the more. She'll often go nude when in the forest alone or dealing with adult males, though she shows a measure of restraint when dealing with underage individuals.

Primary Skills: Language: English 96%, Literacy: English 80%, Language: Japanese 64%, Literacy: Japanese 50%, Cook 55%, Computer Repair 50%, Camouflage 35%, Prowl 40%, Pilot: Automobile 66%, Netwise 32%, Math: Basic 75%, Computer Operation 70%, Law: General 70%, Research 80%, Technical Writing 60%, Land Navigation 49%, and Wilderness Survival 45%.

Secondary Skills: Creative Writing 40%, Sewing 55%, Swimming 65%, General Athletics, Art: Drawing 50%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 45%, I.D. Plants & Fruits 25%, and W.P. Knife at 1st level proficiency.

Special Abilities: Nightvision: 200 feet (61 m) in Facade, 500 feet (152 m) in Morphus. Sense Nightbane: 420 feet (128 m). Recovers 5 P.P.E. per hour of rest (10 P.P.E. per hour of meditation). Supernatural Strength and Endurance in Morphus form and heals 10 S.D.C. per melee (10 per hour in Facade). The ability to Mirror Walk self and 100 lbs (45 kg) of gear at the cost of 2 P.P.E., +1 P.P.E./2 lbs (0.9 kg) of weight of a passenger. Immune to all mind control and transformation.

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: 1D4, Full Strength Punch: 1D6, Power Punch: 2D6, Kick: 2D4, Power Kick: 4D4.

Combat Bonuses: +0 (2) to initiative, +2 (12) to strike, +5 (18) to parry and dodge (+20 in flight!), +2 (6) to pull punch, and +3 (7) to roll. Bonuses in parentheses are for Morphus form.

Other Combat Information: Pyxee prefers to scare people off using Shadows of Fear or Animate Shadow rather than harming them. If she is forced to engage a human opponent, she will tend to beat him into submission with her bare hands or a good-sized stick. When fighting a minion of the Nightlords

or other Supernatural, she will typically blast them into submission with her Shadow Blast Talent.

Other Bonuses: +5 (10) to save vs magic, +0 (3) to save vs psionics, +3 (6) to save vs toxins/poisons, +1 (3) to save vs Horror Factor, +1 (3) to save vs disease, and +2 vs Becoming speed. Also gets a +40% bonus to Prowl when in Morphus form.

Becoming Description: When transforming, Karen's physical features darken as she turns into somewhat of a living shadow. Her form then shrinks and takes on the likeness of a traditional fairy. Finally, the shadow lightens to reveal Karen as Pyxee.

Morphus Appearance: A one foot tall pixie with black hair, bright blue eyes, and gossamer wings. Attire ranges from scant bits of foliage to nothing at all.

Vulnerabilities: None other than her small size and relatively low strength (for a Nightbane) as Pyxee.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Talents: Animate Shadow, Nightbringer, Reshape Facade, Shadow Blast, Shadow Shield, The Shroud, and Shadows of Fear.

Weapons and Equipment: None other than the basic necessities to live. She routinely receives food and other basic supplies dropped off by her parents. She does have a 1989 Chevy 4x4 pickup truck that she uses on the off chance that she needs to go to town. Other than that, she doesn't carry any weapons other than a medium-sized boot knife (1D6 damage).

Money: What little she brings in from her work as a writing translator she gives to her parents to pay the utilities on the cabin and the food bill. The only things of real value she has are her computer (which she keeps state-of-the-art) and an heirloom silver letter opener that was her grandfather's.

Mevka

Optional Material for The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Jason Richards

Illustration by Mike Dubisch

Mevka is a powerful and controversial figure who has erupted onto the religious and political scene of the Eastern Territory in the last six months. She is a beautiful, yet wild creature who is either an Amazon-like human or else a human-like being of unknown race. If she is human, she possesses magical or otherwise supernatural powers, many of which are not recorded in the known world. For followers, and even Priests of Rurga to be warrior zealots is not at all uncommon, but the beautiful and controversial Mevka is a warrior unmatched by any mortal in the region, leading some to believe that she might be something more. Beyond the fact that she has skin as hard as iron, has no fear of flame, and wields a series of magical items, she seems to have, like the goddess Rurga herself, the ability to discern truth from lies. All of this has caused the people to stand up and take



notice, and to consider that a messenger from a god is walking among them.

She first gained notoriety in small villages in the East, spreading the word that Rurga had heard the cries of her faithful and would soon come to their aid personally on the battlefield. In the meantime, she says, all faithful followers should take the fight to their enemies and find either victory or an honored place in the ranks of the Dark Army. Reciting the sacred Ta'Palladia by heart and giving strong sermons of her own, she has created a frenzy amongst believers and a flurry of enlistment by the converted.

Despite her record of success, established Priests of Rurga take pause regarding Mevka and her message. Never before has Rurga's bodily presence on the battlefield been promised by the clergy, only offered as a chance and cause for hope. The established order is understandably vexed. On one hand this stranger could be an imposter seeking personal glory and acclaim. However, while Mevka does not comment on how she can make this promise, the possibility exists that her revelation is genuine. After all, as she possesses all the powers and virtues of a Holy Palladin of Rurga, it can be assumed that to violate that faith by telling falsehoods would result in her being stripped of that power and favor.

Mevka is silent on her origin except to say that she is a messenger from Rurga, herself, sent to pave the way for the god's descent to the mortal plane. She offers no proof or further history, only saying that Rurga's earthly army and the glorious dead will all come to stand with the great warrior goddess to destroy her enemies and establish a kingdom in the realm of Palladium's Eastern Territory.

Her own silence has done nothing to stop rumors and theories amongst enemies and the faithful from circulating, each with a different interpretation of the signs presented by Mevka. The most popular of these, discounting of course those that accept her as either a simple prophet or a lunatic (both valid possibilities), are the following:

1. The mortal incarnation of Rurga. Many of her abilities, most notably the ability to see through lies, do mirror those of the goddess as told in the Ta'Palladia. Either as a god fallen to earth or as some sort of avatar, many believe that Mevka is the embodiment of all that she, herself, prophesies.

This theory is possibly the most common amongst people of the Eastern Territory, especially the newly-converted. Many of these people seek desperately to atone for years of unbelief and fly to the ready for the next battle, no matter how ill-prepared they are. Alyse Marel (5th level Priestess of Light), a young Priestess of Lista operating a small temple in New Crest, has suggested that perhaps gifts to the treasury of the Pantheon of Rurga would be an advised alternative to seeking out warfare, and has begun accepting tithes from supplicants and offering in return prayers for Rurga's forgiveness to fall on them.

2. The demonic deceiver. Mevka has a number of abilities common to the demon hordes of Hel and Dyval, including her immunity to and affinity for fire. Would not an imposter, beating the drum of war, be the instrument of one of the enemies of Rurga? Of the Church of Light and Dark? Or worse yet, of an ally of the Wolfen or some other mortal threat?

Most espousing this view are skeptics toward Rurga in general, or follow Panath from Rurga's own pantheon of gods. It isn't surprising that the god of assassins and thieves would find fault with the idea of a glorious appearance of Rurga on the mortal realm, but the Assassins' Guild in the Eastern Territory is biding its time regarding this prophecy. If Rurga does not appear soon, the followers of Panath will seize the opportunity to decry Rurga and entreat her new converts to follow the way of Panath instead.

3. A devotee from across worlds. Could Mevka be a priestess brought by Rurga from another world? Perhaps one that is controlled fully by Rurga's armies and now will lend its aid to a new battle? Or, maybe even a long-dead warrior sent back to the living from the ranks of the Dark Army?

This theory is held strongly by a number of Rurga's famous Palladins, led in particular by Sir Jace of Finnal (9th level Holy Palladin of Rurga), a noted hero amongst Rurgan devotees. He travels with Mevka when she will have him, all the while trying to convince her to train the armies of followers that he could gather to her. So far, she has only said that martial skill is not what lacks in Rurga's followers on Palladium.

4. A lost daughter of Rurga. The Ta'Palladia hints that Rurga might have another daughter; one who would eventually cause her death. This is a less popular theory, as Lista is traditionally seen as responsible for her mother's prophesied drowning by way of her association with the sea. Skeptics to this theory also point out that while Mevka's powers and abilities are substantial, they are not necessarily approaching godlike. Supporters of this line of reasoning look to Mevka's near-invulnerability and her vast array of powers and suggest that nothing else like her has been seen before on the mortal realm.

This theory is supported heavily by followers of Lista, many of whom want desperately for their goddess to not be linked to the ultimate demise of Rurga as many see as written in the Ta'Palladia. Another daughter would possibly mean a different assassin, finally clearing the name of their beloved sea goddess.

Mevka

Real Name: Allia op'Mevka.

Alignment: Principled.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 14, M.A. 22, P.S. 24, P.P. 24, P.E. 22, P.S. 19, Spd 27 (18.5 mph/29.6 km).

Natural A.R.: 17

Hit Points: 127

S.D.C.: 255

M.D.C.: Combine Hit Points and S.D.C. to determine M.D.C. on Rifts Earth and other Mega-Damage worlds; maintain the Natural A.R., but reduce it to 12.

P.P.E.: 98

Horror/Awe Factor: 8

Size: 6 feet, 6 inches (2.0 m) tall.

Description: A lithe, beautiful, but wild-looking woman with a single vein of long, golden hair down the middle of her head, and emerald eyes. Her pale skin is offset with two flame-red runic tattoos on her face: one above her right eye and the other covering most of the left half of her face. On account of

her high impenetrable hide, she rarely wears more than minimal clothing or armor save for a few wrappings and a feathered cloak for the sake of modesty, but is never without her winged boots, silver braces, and Issinziba, her runic blade.

Experience Level: 12th level Holy Palladin of Rurga, 5th level Priest.

Natural Abilities:

Automatically Detect a Lie: This is an automatic psionic power in which Mevka, like her patron god Rurga, can always tell if she is hearing a falsehood, no matter how small. This doesn't mean that she can't be fooled (leaving out information is not the same as lying), but that she will always be able to tell when someone is telling something they know to be untrue. **P.P.E./I.S.P. Cost:** Zero.

Resistance to Fire: Mevka is completely impervious to all normal fire and heat (including Mega-Damage fire on M.D.C. worlds), and magical fire does half damage. **P.P.E./I.S.P. Cost:** Zero.

Communicate with Supplicants: Mevka can speak to any worshiper of Rurga as per the *Tongues* spell. Further, when reciting the Ta'Palladia, she can be understood by all hearers in their native language as per that spell. **P.P.E./I.S.P. Cost:** Zero.

Holy Palladin Powers: The Way of the Horse, The Way of the Lance, and the Palladin's Demon Death Blow, all as described on pages 88-89 of *The Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, 2nd Ed. Also possesses Rurga's Gifts in the Way of Truth and War: Truth is absolute, Globe of Daylight, Sense Supernatural Evil, and Words of Truth (6 times per day), and Immune to mind affecting magic (bonuses included below), all as found on page 23 of the *Eastern Territory™* sourcebook.

Priest/Healing Powers: Healing Touch, Exorcism, Remove Curse, Turn Dead, and Penance and Sacrifice, all at 5th level of experience. Does *not* have spell casting abilities as per a normal Priest, beyond what may be available via prayer.

Magic Powers: None.

Psionic Powers: 42 I.S.P., 10th level proficiency; a Major Psionic. Sense Evil, Sense Magic, Sixth Sense, and Mind Block Auto Defense.

Skills of Note: Horsemanship: Palladin, Dance, Play Musical Instrument: Pan Pipe, Land Navigation, Lore: Demons & Monsters, Lore: Culture & Customs, and Lore: Religion, all at 98%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Shield, and Hand to Hand: Martial Arts/Palladin, all at 12th level proficiency.

Attacks per Melee Round: 6

Combat Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses): +3 on initiative, +2 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +4 to damage, +2 to disarm, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +4 to pull punch. Critical Strike on an unmodified roll of 18, 19, or 20, paired weapons, body throw/flip, and all kick and leap attacks.

Other Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses): Impervious to possession, +4 to save versus magic that controls or confuses the mind, and +4 to save vs magical fear and Horror Factor.

Favorite Weapons: Mevka has only been seen to wield a dagger that she calls Issinziba, apparently a Rune Weapon of

considerable power. Issinziba's blade is always ablaze and is housed in a companion sheath that contains the magic fire. The nature of the weapon's intelligence is unknown, but Mevka speaks to it aloud. The blade does 5D6 S.D.C. damage, plus another 4D6 from the flame (both Mega-Damage on Rifts Earth). Any other powers are unknown.

Armor: Mevka doesn't wear armor on account of her iron-tough skin (and natural A.R.), but does wear two silver, rune-encrusted bracers on her forearms that she uses for parrying in hand to hand combat (use bonuses from W.P. Shield). They are lightweight, indestructible, and enchanted so that the wearer never drops her weapon. Subsequently, these bracers allow her to wield Issinziba without fear of being disarmed, though she is also prevented from throwing the blade or otherwise releasing it except into the scabbard. Whether or not this enchantment applies only to Issinziba, or any weapon, is unknown.

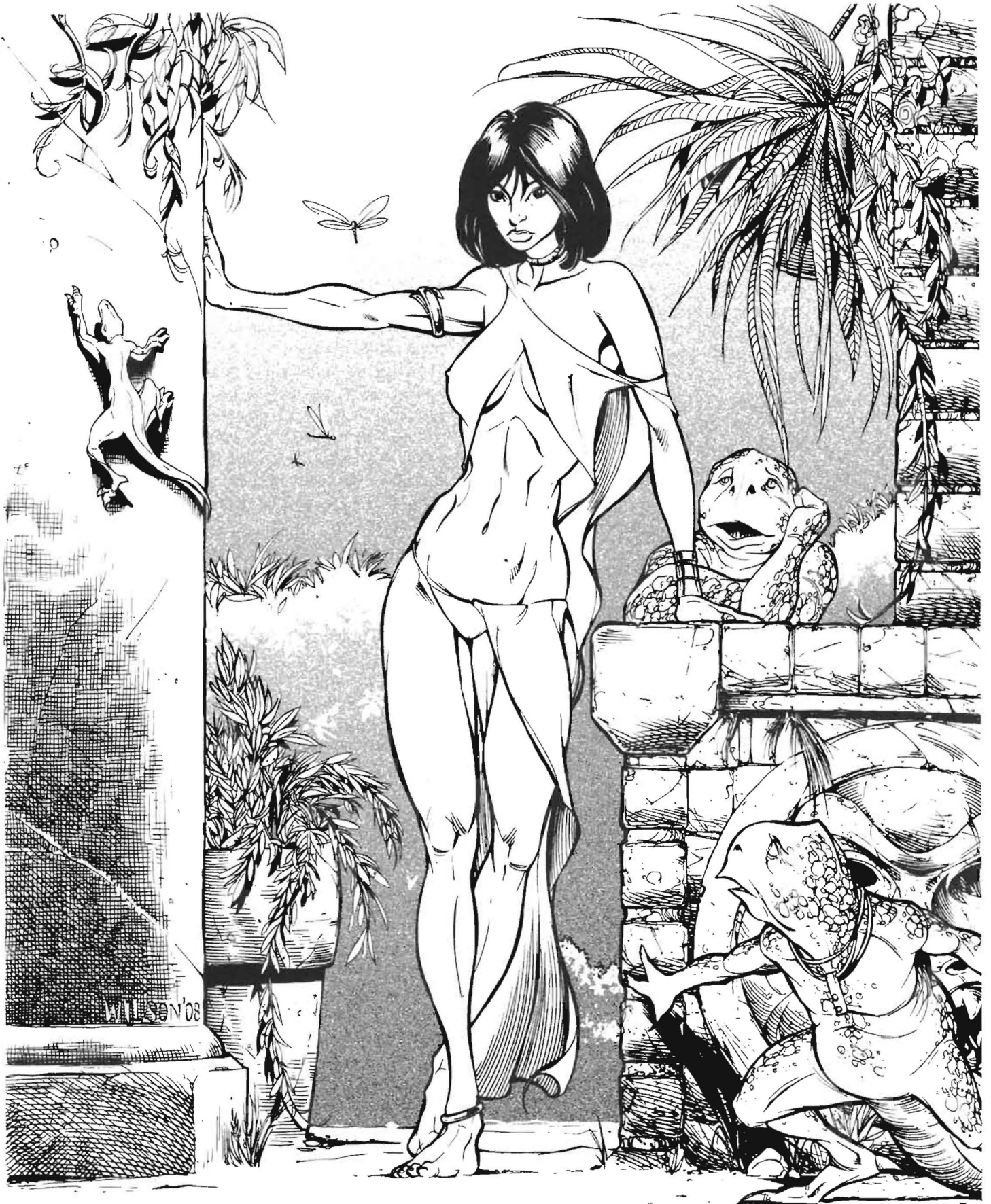
Mevka also wears a pair of winged boots that allow her to walk across water, quicksand, or other unstable surfaces with ease. The boots are immune to all environmental damage (natural and magical) and even protect Mevka from harm should she walk over magical flames. In combat, the boots also allow Mevka to double her number of attacks for one melee per minute, and to run at double her normal speed during that duration.

Other Equipment of Note: Mevka carries a field pack containing everything one would expect from a soldier going to war, including a bedroll, tent, cooking equipment, rations, lengths of rope, wooden stakes, etc. Her mount is an especially large black horse (apparently nameless) with a long, scarlet mane braided so that it can be used as reins; Mevka always rides bareback and without any sort of tack other than the field pack strapped across its back behind the rider.

Mevka also carries with her a large sack of huge, black walnuts that she buries wherever she finds new converts to the Sect of Rurga. These walnuts spring up seedlings in a matter of days and grow three times as fast and as large as a normal tree, in any climate. Believers usually turn the trees into makeshift shrines to Rurga (and many secretly to Mevka).

Alliances & Allies: While she is mysterious to most, she does seem to have a genuine desire to aid in the cause of Rurga, and in that of the Eastern Territory, and so has been embraced at least in some degree by most elements of both. Even those skeptical of her reputation and teachings can't deny her affinity for battle and her almost demigod-like abilities, and so take her seriously.

Enemies: As an ally to the Eastern Territory, she is a natural enemy of the Wolfen, and has slain more than a few of their champions on the battlefield in her limited encounters with the canine race. She has also made enemies amongst Priests and Palladins of Rurga who either fear that her message spreads false hope, or are jealous of her meteoric rise to prominence. She also opposes the gods and followers of rival churches that wish harm to the Sect of Rurga, most notably elements of the Church of Light and Dark. Few enemies dare to oppose her directly, however, due to her considerable influence and ability.



Ma

Optional Material for The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Mark Hall

Illustration by Mike Wilson

“Ssss-ennn-ma <thump>. Ssss-ennn-ma <thump>. Ssss-ennn-ma <thump>.” The drone of reptilian chanting filled the ancient ruin, each line ending with a thump upon a ceremonial drum. They approached the Shrine of the Sleeping Maiden, bearing up the body of their fallen comrade. Many were injured; the battle against the Grimbor had carried a heavy cost. As they had for generations, the Sqrr brought their wounded and dead to the Sleeping Maiden for healing and succor.

She lay upon a bier, her alabaster skin untouched by the centuries, her raven hair spilled about her. With great reverence, the shaman of the Sqrr raised her hand, laying it gently against the wounds of their comrades. These wounds closed, and the prayers raised in volume. The Maiden’s hand was placed upon the dead, and light flared across its reptilian body. It slowly choked to life, its crushed ribs knitting together whole.

“Ssss-ennn-MA! <thump> Ssss-ennn-MA! <thump> Ssss-ennn-MA! <thump>”

Light flowed from each of the Sqrr, enveloping the Sleeping Maiden. Her body, still and cold for millennia, warmed in the light of their life and worship, moved with each thump of the drums. Soon, she rose from the bier, moving with the rhythm of the drums. Her eyes swept across her gathering of followers... less than three-score, here, but she was revered by all of this race.

Ma, beloved of Wunja, second of the Z’kas, sister of Aco, had returned from her sleep.

Millennia ago, so long that only the gods remember – and not all of them – the Z’kas were the most powerful pantheon in Palladium. They stood against the Old Ones for long years before the Gods of Light and the Dragonwright rose against them. Most beloved was Aco, whose darkness shielded all who called upon her. Second, however, was Ma, the bringer of life. It was Ma who saw that life quickened, be it a seed in the ground or a baby in the womb. Her consort, Wunja, placed the seeds, but she made them into life.

During the Age of Light, people turned away from Z’kas. They had new gods to follow, gods they regarded as heroes in the war against the Old Ones. The pantheon of Z’kas waned in power, dropping off to sleep, one at a time. Only Aco, whose worship survived in the reverence given her dolls, remained strong enough to support herself and her consort.

Ma settled herself in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, sustained by the explosion of life around her. Wunja rested beneath the sea, close, as a god reckons distance. In time, the temple around Ma collapsed, leaving only her bier and a few columns. By the beginning of the Age of Elves, her shrine was found by a near-dead reptilian race known as the Sqrr. They combined two very unfortunate traits... they were small, and quite tasty to mammals. The Grimbor and Tezcat both hunted the Sqrr to

near-extinction. Finding what they came to call the Shrine of the Sleeping Maiden, they revered their protectress. Their eggs, who once hatched maybe one time in three, now only failed to hatch twice in a hundred. Their foods grew in abundance around her, and their wounds healed when they touched her; even their dead were brought back to life, if the Sleeping Maiden willed it.

The Sqrr prospered under the guidance of Ma; she came to shamans in dreams, to teach them her name. Centuries of their worship gave her the strength to rise again, but as a shadow of herself... barely a goddess, she could not reach out to Wunjo-beneath-the-sea, or Aco-between-the-stars, much less those of her pantheon who slept who knew where.

So she remains in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, nurturing the Sqrr as her worshipers, hoping that one day, their might will be sufficient to raise her from obscurity.

Ma

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 24, M.E. 29, M.A. 35, P.S. 20, P.P. 27, P.E. 25, P.B. 39, Spd 66 (45 mph/72 km).

Attribute Note: As beautiful as her sister-goddess, Aco, Ma causes awe in all who look upon her.

Hit Points: 673 (when she regains her power, this will quadruple).

S.D.C.: 700 (this will quintuple when she regains her strength).

Natural A.R.: 11

P.P.E.: 500 (this will sextuple when she regains her strength).

Horror/Awe Factor: 15

Size: 6 feet (1.83 m) tall; when she regains her strength, she will be nearly 12 feet (3.7 m) tall.

Description: Tall and slender, Ma has deeply bronzed skin, short black hair, and deep violet eyes.

Experience Levels: 20th level Priest of Light.

Natural Abilities: Astral Travel, nightvision and darkness sight (one mile/1.6 km), see aura, see the invisible, turn invisible at will (no limit), knows all languages, never fatigues and is always alert, impervious to disease, poison or cold. Sense location of ley lines 90%, Recognize enchantment and magic 85%.

Deific Powers: Ma’s deific powers are severely restricted. She is only capable of Banish, Consume P.P.E., and Display Deific Omen. All of these cost three times the normal cost. Ma, however, has the ability to engender life. The ability of Bio-Regeneration: Deific happens to her once every minute without cost. If she chooses, she may use this to heal others. Bio-Regeneration: Primal Deific only costs her 100 P.P.E.; she can perform Ressurrection: Deific for half cost. When she is reunited with Wunjo, the power of Create Minion will only require 100 P.P.E. and no body investment.

Priestly/Healing Powers: Exorcism 75%, Remove Curse 90%, Curse 40%, Healing Touch (6D6 S.D.C., may be used without limit; see also Deific Powers), Ressurrection 70%, Turn Dead 90%.

Magic Powers: All spells of healing and protection, including Spells of Legend. Understands all symbols, wards, curses and runes.

Psionic Powers: None.

Skills of Note: Ma has perfect understanding of medicine, plant and animal life.

Attacks per Round: 6

Special Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +3 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +9 to save vs Horror Factor, 99% chance to charm/impress.

Favorite Weapons: None.

Armor: She does not wear armor; any she may have had in ages past is long lost or destroyed.

Alliances and Allies: Currently, only the Sqrr are her allies. Should she find a way to contact Aco and the Juggernaut, they will be strong allies.

Enemies: Currently, none of note.

Vulnerabilities and Weaknesses:

Worshippers: Currently, Ma is sustained by the Sqrr of the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Anything that substantially affects the Sqrr will be reflected in her health and power; the destruction of the Sqrr would return her to slumber.

Necromancy: A creature of life, Ma is extremely vulnerable to any attack of Necromancy. Undead cause triple damage to her with their natural attacks, and any spell of Necromancy cast upon her is automatically successful, having double the full effect (so if a spell normally does 6D6 damage, Ma will take 72 points of damage). *Any* attack by a Necromancer does double damage.

Weakness: Compared to even Chantico, Ma is a pitifully weak goddess in her current state. While none currently know she is alive, that protection will not last forever, and she would then be vulnerable to those who seek to harness the power of a goddess. Furthermore, this weakness means that she sleeps frequently, sometimes for months at a time.

Technology: Ma has been asleep for many centuries, and knows of little in the way of technology. If it were encountered, its non-living nature would make her uncomfortable.

Manifestations or Avatars: Currently, no avatars; creating one would be too strenuous. However, she does appear to her followers in omens... flowers suddenly blooming, or a perfect-born animal.

Minions: Only the Sqrr.

Treatment of Worshipers: At this point, Ma is very solicitous towards her followers, and knows almost all of them by name.

The Sqrr

The Sqrr are a race of pygmy Lizard Men, or perhaps a type of Sallan, native to the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Where normal Lizard Men top out at five and a half feet (1.67 m), Sqrr tend to be only two to three feet tall (0.61-0.91 m), about the size of a Sallan. Unlike the Sallan, but like the Lizard Men, Sqrr are intelligent, smooth-headed, and semi-aquatic. They lay soft-shelled eggs in nests made alongside the river, and eat a diet made up of plants, bugs, and the rare fish. They will fight for their young, or to allow others to escape, but are otherwise timid. All revere Ma, the Sleeping Maiden.

O.C.C.s: Vagabond/Farmer, Shaman, or Priest of Light. A rare few become Beastmasters.

Alignments: Most are Scrupulous or Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+3, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 2D6, P.P. 3D6+6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd 3D6, twice that in the water.

Hit Points: P.E. + 1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 2D6, plus those gained from O.C.C. and skills.

Natural A.R.: 8

Horror Factor: None.

P.P.E.: 2D6

Natural Abilities: Breathe underwater as deep as 60 feet (18.3 m); beyond that, they have to surface after their P.E. attribute number in minutes. Swim 85%. Have beaks that do 1D6 damage on a bite.

Attacks per Melee: By O.C.C. and Hand to Hand skill.

Magic: Only through O.C.C.

Psionics: 25% of Sqrr are Minor Psychics; no Major or Master Psychics.

Average Life Span: Under the protection of Ma, they live 100-120 years. Those who live away from Ma usually only live 30-40 years.

Habitat: Rivers, swamps, and other places that border land and water.

Languages: Sqrr, which has many words in common with Elven/Dragonese.

Enemies: Most mammals find them delicious.

Allies: The Goddess Ma.

Physical Appearance: Sqrr are mud-brown to dirty-green colored, turtle-like humanoids, though they lack shells. Their eyes tend to be a quiet orange.

Size: 2½ to 3½ feet (0.76-1.07 m) tall.

Weight: 30-40 pounds (13.5-18 kg).

Notes: Sqrr tend to use spears and stone axes, with some becoming proficient in the use of a sling or thrown rock. They have very few contacts with the outside world, and limited opportunities for trade.

Cana Laurel and Jarrow the Basilisk

Optional Material for Rifts®

By Todd Yoho

Illustration by Kent Burles

Nestled deep within the mountains of what was once wild and wonderful West Virginia is a tantalizing and terrifying secret. High in the mountains is a geographically and climatically unique area known as Canaan Valley, tucked away in ancient Tucker County in the eastern panhandle. At an elevation of 3,200 feet (975.3 m) above sea level, it was a natural beauty long before the isolation granted by the Coming of the Rifts.



Due to its elevation and unique geography, the mountain valley is a misplaced tundra much more akin to the Canadian wilderness than the temperate climate of West Virginia. Before the Cataclysm, Canaan Valley was a cherished and protected park returned to pristine condition for the enjoyment of all. After the Cataclysm, Canaan Valley is a contradiction in life and tranquility.

This post-apocalyptic Garden of Eden is both a wilderness refuge and no-man's land, where plants and animals grow and run wild amid an ever increasing garden of rocks and statuary kept by a beautiful woman and her serpentine protector. However, if you listen closely enough beneath the wind, you can almost hear the statues sob.

Cana Laurel

All along the wilderness of the North American East Coast, rumors of the Shemarrian warriors run rampant like a wildfire. Little is known about these mysterious women, which helps feed those ever present rumors. One such rumor speaks of a stone skinned Shemarrian living deep within the Allegheny Mountains in what was once known as West Virginia. Rumor says that she rides a beast made of iridescent black glass and steals handsome men for her mountaintop menagerie. Some say that these men are granted immortality and live side by side as her consorts, conquests, and advisors. Others say that she whisks away only the most powerful warriors in order to recruit them for an army that is needed to fight a transdimensional war against a horde of stone-skinned dragons. Some rumors claim that she is a demon princess collecting warriors in a game of one-upmanship against her brother, and the one who collects the most has to serve the other for a century.

However, these rumors, like most rumors, are at best, half truths, and at worst, whiskey fueled travelers' tales. Unfortunately for anyone who happens to venture too deeply into the Allegheny Mountains, there is some truth to them. There is indeed a beautiful woman who lives deep in the mountains, cradled contently in a mysterious mountain valley, and her name is Cana Laurel.

Cana Laurel came to Canaan Valley as a child in the early days after the Coming of the Rifts. She is not one of the mysterious Shemarrian warriors, but she is, instead, the daughter of the Queen of the Gorgons, and unlike the rest of her kin, she is ravishingly beautiful! This was the result of a curse placed on her mother by a jilted and jealous demonic suitor, and it was the reason for Cana's coming to Rifts Earth. Her mother's subjects were insanely jealous of her because of her beauty, and plotted to maim, disfigure, or kill her from the time she was a small child.

So, fearing for her daughter's life, her mother entrusted her to one of her most loyal advisors, a Basilisk named Jarrow. Spirited away across the Megaverse, Cana came to Canaan Valley when she was a blossoming girl of 14. Growing up amid the beauty of the mountains, and with her natural gifts with stone, this lovely young woman was imprinted with an artistic and aesthetic soul. However, her beauty is truly only skin deep.

As the daughter of the Gorgon Queen, Cana has a soul as cold and as cruel as winter granite. She delights in capturing and turning trespassers to stone, slowly torturing them with her stone shaving Rune blade, and sculpting them in terrifying and

deforming ways. Woe to anyone who crosses over into her territory and falls victim to her charms. Cana therefore lives a life in protected isolation with only Jarrow, her woodland animal friends, and her stone formed menagerie to keep her company in her mountain paradise.

Real Name: Cana Laurel.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 16, M.A. 17, P.S. 33, P.P. 16, P.E. 17, P.B. 24, Spd 15. All attributes are considered Supernatural.

M.D.C.: 350

Horror Factor: 9

Age: Unknown, at least 300 years old.

Sex: Female.

Height: 5 feet, 6 inches (1.6 m).

Weight: 400 lbs (180 kg).

Disposition: Cool, flinty, lethally isolationist. Cana has a soft spot for cuddly animals and an eye for sculpture. Despite being over 300 years old, she is still somewhat childlike in her personality.

Description: A ravishing, well formed woman with pale, slate-colored skin, flowing light brown hair, and a wry, inviting smile.

Experience Level: 6th level Godling and Gorgon Princess.

Occupation: Wilderness protector, philosopher, and esoteric sculpture collector.

P.P.E.: 280

Magic Knowledge: Equal to a 6th level Stone Master.

I.S.P.: 96

Psionics: Minor Psionics. Alter Aura (6 hour duration) and Levitation (12 minute duration).

Combat: Hand to Hand: Basic, 6 attacks per melee round. Does 5D6 S.D.C. on a restrained punch, 4D6 M.D. on a full strength punch, and 1D4x10 M.D. on a power punch.

Bonuses: +4 to initiative, +2 to strike, +3 to parry, +3 to dodge, +18 damage, +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +3 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs poison, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, only takes half damage from fire, cold, poison, drugs, and toxins, Critical Strike on a Natural 19 or 20, Trust/Intimidate 45%, 70% Charm/Impress.

Natural Abilities: See the invisible, Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), Dimensional Teleport 45%, Regenerates 1D6x5 M.D.C. per minute.

Petrifying Gaze: Cana has the powerful gaze ability common to all Gorgons, however she has control over its use. Victims who look her directly in the eye must make a save vs magic at 18 or higher or be turned to stone! This power has a range of 400 feet (122 m). Avoiding looking at her is a safeguard against this power, but all combat rolls against her suffer a -8 penalty. Petrified victims are permanently turned to stone unless restored by Cana or by a Stone to Flesh spell. Using this power counts as one melee attack.

Skills of Note: Language & Literacy: Dragonese/Elven 98%, Language & Literacy: 98%, Language & Literacy: American 98%, Language: Faerie Speak 80%, Language: Gobblely 80%, Basic Math 90%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 75%, Land Navigation 66%, Gardening 66%, Art 70%, Gemology

60%, Mining 70%, Masonry 75%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Forked.

Weapons and Equipment: Cana has a Rune Dagger named Lil-lith that she uses to sculpt stone. Cutting stone with this blade is no more difficult than slicing flesh, leaving a perfectly milled surface behind. Lil-lith is a dark blue metal dagger with an I.Q. of 11, Miscreant alignment, and does 4D6 M.D. Inflicts double damage to rock and mineral creatures.

Jarrow the Basilisk

For Jarrow, his word is as solid as ocean basalt. A vein of responsibility runs through his backbone like an intrusion of the strongest granite. Rescued as a hatchling from certain death at the hands of a do-gooding adventuring group, Jarrow owed his life to the Queen of the Gorgons. For centuries he served her without question on any number of battlefields in uncountable alien dimensions. He accepted each mission with a stalwart determination to uphold the debt that he feels he will always owe to her. When she asked him to perform one last mission for her, he suspected that she was asking him to undertake a dangerous mission from which he would likely never return. He was, of course right, just not in the way that he thought! Rather than give his life in service to his Queen, Jarrow was asked to yield to a greater sacrifice. He was to go into exile with young Cana, never to return.

Because Cana was the blood of the Queen, his debt passed onto her as well. Jarrow was as much indebted to this beautiful little girl as he was to her hideous mother. For nearly a decade he had served double duty as protector to both the Queen and Cana, until the fateful day the Queen released him from his duty to her, and gave him the sole responsibility of keeping her beloved daughter safe. This was not a duty that would endear him to many of his brethren. Cana's beauty caused a rift among the monsters loyal to the Queen. There were many among the fighting ranks who urged Jarrow to use his access to the royal family to dash out young Cana's brains and be done with it. Jealousy spread through the Queen's forces and threatened to splinter one of the strongest demonic fighting forces in the Megaverse. The Queen knew that this was an unacceptable state of affairs, but she could no more kill her only daughter than kill herself. So, she summoned her most loyal warrior.

Jarrow was tasked with taking Cana far away to live in secluded exile for the rest of her life. She was to be comfortable, to be surrounded by things that made her happy, but most importantly, she was to be kept safe. So, under the cover of dark magicks used for a selfless purpose, Jarrow took Cana under his protection and turned his back on his fellow warriors, never to return. He lives a life of purpose and purity, knowing that every day that Cana is safe and smiling, he is doing his job.

Real Name: Jarrolithisk the Outcast.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 19, M.A. 10, P.S. 30, P.P. 20, P.E. 25, P.B. 11, Spd 24.

M.D.C.: 250

Horror Factor: 15

Age: Unknown, but around 600 years old.

Sex: Male.

Length: 12 feet (3.6 m) long, plus a 12 foot (3.6 m) long tail.

Weight: 1100 lbs (495 kg).

Disposition: A sinuous serpent with a mercurial mind. He is Cana's best friend and stand-in older brother, and is hyper-protective over her. He would give his life to save hers and would mercilessly hunt down anyone who caused her harm.

Description: Long and lean, Jarrow's scales have a slight glassy luster like obsidian glass. He has a toothy grin that Cana thinks is cute, and he is slightly embarrassed by that, but if anyone else called him cute, he'd turn them to stone and devour them one tiny morsel at a time.

Experience Level: 8th level Adult Basilisk Dragon.

Occupation: Protector and companion to Cana.

P.P.E.: 400

Magic Knowledge: Equal to an 8th level Stone Master.

Psionics: None.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Assassin, 8 attacks per melee round.

Restrained punch or bite does 4D6 S.D.C., full strength punch or bite does 3D6 M.D., power punch or bite does 6D6 M.D., kick or slashing tail attack does 3D6 M.D.

Bonuses: +6 to initiative, +5 to strike, +6 to parry, +6 to dodge, +19 damage, +5 to pull punch, +4 to roll with impact, +2 to entangle, +2 to save vs psionics, +2 to save vs insanity, +5 to save vs magic, +5 to save vs poison, an additional +4 to all saving throws, Knockout/Stun on a Natural 17-20.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 200 feet (61 m), see the invisible, turn invisible at will, track by smell 46%, bio-regenerates 4D6 M.D.C. per minute, magically knows all languages.

Petrifying Gaze: Victims who are struck by Jarrow's gaze must make a saving throw vs magic at 14 or higher or be turned to stone! This power has a range of 500 feet (152.4 m). Petrified victims are permanently turned to stone unless restored by Jarrow, Jarrow is slain, freeing all of his victims, or by a Stone to Flesh spell. Using this power counts as one melee attack.

Skills of Note: Basic Math 98%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 70%, Tracking 40%, Wilderness Survival 70%, Land Navigation 70%, Prowl 50%, Swim 80%, Climb 70%/60%, Art 65%, W.P. Paired Weapons.

Weapons and Equipment: None. Relies on his natural abilities and magical knowledge.



Jinx and Alexander

Optional Material for Rifts®

By Carl Gleba

Illustration by Larry Elmore

Jinx is a Silver Bell Faerie from the forests of England, and Alexander is a Millennium Druid who tends to the Millennium Trees of southern England. They have become best of friends over the years. While unusual, the pairing has been beneficial to both, as they met each other at the hands of the Splugorth. Jinx was captured by a Splugorth Minion known as a Hawrk-ka, and she would have ended up in Splynn if not for the timely intervention of Alexander. The Splugorth Slaver in charge of the raiding party was greedy and tried to take more Faeries than they could handle. Alexander used this to his advantage by tricking the Slaver and his minions, freeing all of the Faeries, the last of whom was Jinx. He was able to break her magical bonds, but he was fatigued and before he could get away, the aging Millennium Druid was captured by the Slaver's Warrior Women. Guilt and pity pulled at the heartstrings of the little Faerie. She couldn't let this big person become a prisoner like her, and so she used her Faerie Magic to confuse the Warrior Women and help the older man get away. The two spent the next several hours evading the angered Splugorth Slaver. After several close calls they finally lost him. They've become fast friends and inseparable ever since.

Jinx Morning Dew

Jinx is your typical happy-go-lucky Silver Bell Faerie. She loves to play in the flowers and swim in the ponds of the forests of England. She especially likes to play pranks on big people and when not playing, she is happy to drink and sing until the sun rises the next day. That was Jinx's life before she met Alexander. Her experience with the Splugorth has taught her the lesson that one is responsible for the consequences of one's actions. Oh, she still parties from time to time, but now she has Alexander to rein her in.

Jinx was aware that the Splugorth hunted Faeries in England, but she was too blind to see that they could pose a real danger to her people. Like any Faerie, she played pranks on the Slavers and their minions by leaving Faerie Food and hanging around to watch the results, or casting her magic spells on them and so on. On the day she met Alexander, she was harassing one particular Splugorth Slaver who would not relent, and kept following the small Faerie despite her pranks and the power of her magic. When she had exhausted her spells, she fled and the Splugorth followed. Jinx led them right into the heart of a small Faerie Mound with dozens of Faeries. She figured that with their combined might they could repel the invaders. That, however, was when the crafty Slaver unleashed his secret weapon, a half dozen Hawrk-ka. These D-Bees, who are immune to magic, were unaffected by the Faeries' spells and easily captured many of them, including Jinx. If not for the timely intervention of Al-

exander, Jinx would be a component in a Bio-Wizard device in Splynn.

Jinx took an immediate liking to Alexander, and the two talked for many hours after the rescue. She was able to learn about Millennium Trees and how Millennium Druids tend to the trees and that they too have a problem with the Splugorth trying to steal gifts from the Trees of Life. Jokingly, Alexander suggested that they team up and with their combined powers and abilities they could more effectively protect Faeries and Millennium Trees alike. Jinx loved the idea and the two have been working together for several years now.

Race: Silver Bell Faerie.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 7, M.A. 13, P.S. 6, P.P. 15, P.E. 11, P.B. 26, Spd 11, 150 flying (102 mph/163.2 km).

Disposition: Spirited, energetic and gregarious. She always seems full of energy and life and is always looking to conquer the next evil being just over the horizon. She has taken her responsibility to heart and is very dedicated to protecting "her forest" and "her Millennium Trees."

M.D.C.: 29

Height: Six inches tall (15 cm). **Weight:** Six ounces (0.17 kg).

Age: Unknown.

Sex: Female.

P.P.E.: 600

Experience Level: Not Applicable.

Natural Abilities: Fly and hover, nightvision 90 feet (27.4; can see in total darkness), see the invisible, keen normal vision, sense the location of water 50%, sense the location of ley lines 80%, and locate secret compartments/doors 54%.

Skills of Note: Climb 50%/60%, Dance 94%, Identify Plants and Fruits 60%, Land Navigation 82%, Languages: Faerie and Gobblely 98%, Lore: Faeries & Creatures of Magic 90%, Preserve Food 90%, Prowl 72%, Sing 98%, Track Animals 32%, Wilderness Survival 90%, and W.P. Spear.

Magic Spells: As per Faerie Magic, Jinx can cast the following spells at no P.P.E. cost: Befuddle, Charm, Love Charm, Sense Evil, Wind Rush, Tongues and the Faeries' Dance.

Psionic Powers: None.

Attacks per Melee: Three physical or two by magic.

Bonuses: +2 to parry and dodge in flight and +1 to save vs magic.

Notable Equipment: The Tree of Life has granted Jinx a Millennium Tree Leaf Poncho that is just her size. It only has 10 M.D.C., but it adds to her protection. She used to also have a Wand of Power but she was a little to... um... er, free with the wand's use. Alexander holds the wand and only gives it to Jinx when they really need it.

Alexander Wayland

Alexander was a farmer all his life. He lived on the farm with his family (his two sons, their wives and his five grandchildren) until the age of 50, when it all came to an end. His family and the nearby village were attacked by the minions of the Splugorth. Many people were killed while others were taken as slaves. Alexander was in his barn at the time of the attack and it

was toppled over by the Splugorth Slaver. He was trapped and unconscious, unable to help his family and neighbors. He would have died if not for a Millennium Druid who was passing by. The druid pulled Alexander from the collapsed structure and brought him back to his Millennium Tree to heal him. Alexander was in a deep depression for weeks, knowing that he was the only survivor. He found himself telling it all to the Tree of life. As months passed, Alexander was able to work through his grief and he wanted to once again be a productive member of society and wanted to farm for the druids. However, it was in a dream that the Tree of Life helped Alexander to choose a new life, one as a Millennium Druid. Alexander recognized that it was the Tree that helped him and asked the Millennium Druids if he could join them. They were happy to add him to their ranks, especially with an invitation from the Tree of Life. For the last 27 years Alexander has wandered the countryside, going from Millennium Tree to Millennium Tree tending to their grounds, delivering news and packages to other Druids, and in general defending the Trees when needed.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Principled.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 15, M.A. 19, P.S. 13, P.P. 13, P.E. 16, P.B. 11, Spd 14.

Hit Points: 43

S.D.C.: 28

M.D.C.: By armor only. Has a suit of Bark Armor that offers 120 M.D.C. It contains 10 P.P.E. that Alexander can draw on. It has good mobility and is only -5% to prowl. It takes one third damage from magic energy attacks, including fire, dragon's fire, lightning and magical energy blasts. Finally, it provides an additional +1 to save vs poison, toxins, and diseases.

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m). **Weight:** 177 lbs (79.7 kg).

Age: 77.

Sex: Male.

P.P.E.: 15.

Experience Level: 8th Level Millennium Druid.

Disposition: Kindly and fatherly to everyone he meets. He tends to be overprotective of Millennium Trees and forests in general. He has come to appreciate and revere all life and is willing to risk his own life in defense against all evils, especially the Splugorth. Finally, he sees Jinx as a daughter and is always trying to teach her the right thing to do, and tends to call her "my girl," as in, "That's my girl, well done!"

Skills of Note: Astronomy & Navigation 70%, Botany 70%, Brewing 65%/70%, Cook 85%, Dowsing 25%, Gardening 74%, Detect Ambush 80%, Hand to Hand: Basic, Holistic Medicine 80%/70%, Horsemanship: General 88%/68%, Identify Plants & Fruits 75%, Land Navigation 84%, Language Native Tongue: American 98%, Language: Faerie Speak and Euro 95%, Leather Working 50%, Lore: Faeries & Creatures of Magic 75%, Mathematics: Basic 95%, Preserve Food 75%, Prowl 45%, W.P. Blunt, Wilderness Survival 80%, Whittling & Sculpting 60%.

Secondary Skills: Carpentry 60%, Climbing 75%/65%, Outdoorsmanship and Swimming 85%.

Magic & Psionics: None.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses (includes attribute bonuses and bonuses from Millennium Tree items): +1 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with fall/impact, +1 to disarm, +2 to damage, +1 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs poison, toxins, and diseases, critical strike on an unmodified 18, 19, or 20, +4% to save vs coma/death, and Trust/Intimidate 55%.

Damage: Kick attack 1D8 and Judo style body flip/throw (does 1D6 damage and victim loses initiative and one attack).

Equipment: Alexander wears a camouflaged hooded cloak over bark armor (described above). For weapons he carries a Staff of the Wind (see *Rifts® World Book Three: England*), three magical throwing sticks, and two wooden Vampire Slaying Javelins. He also carries the following in his pack: medical kit with holistic herbs and remedies, four Blankets of Healing, flint and tinder, a small cooking kit, a flashlight, a lighter, 100 feet (30.5 m) of rope, an air filter, a metal knife, a wooden knife, and a change of robes. Alexander rides a chestnut brown horse that he calls "Woody."

Evie

Optional Material for Rifts®

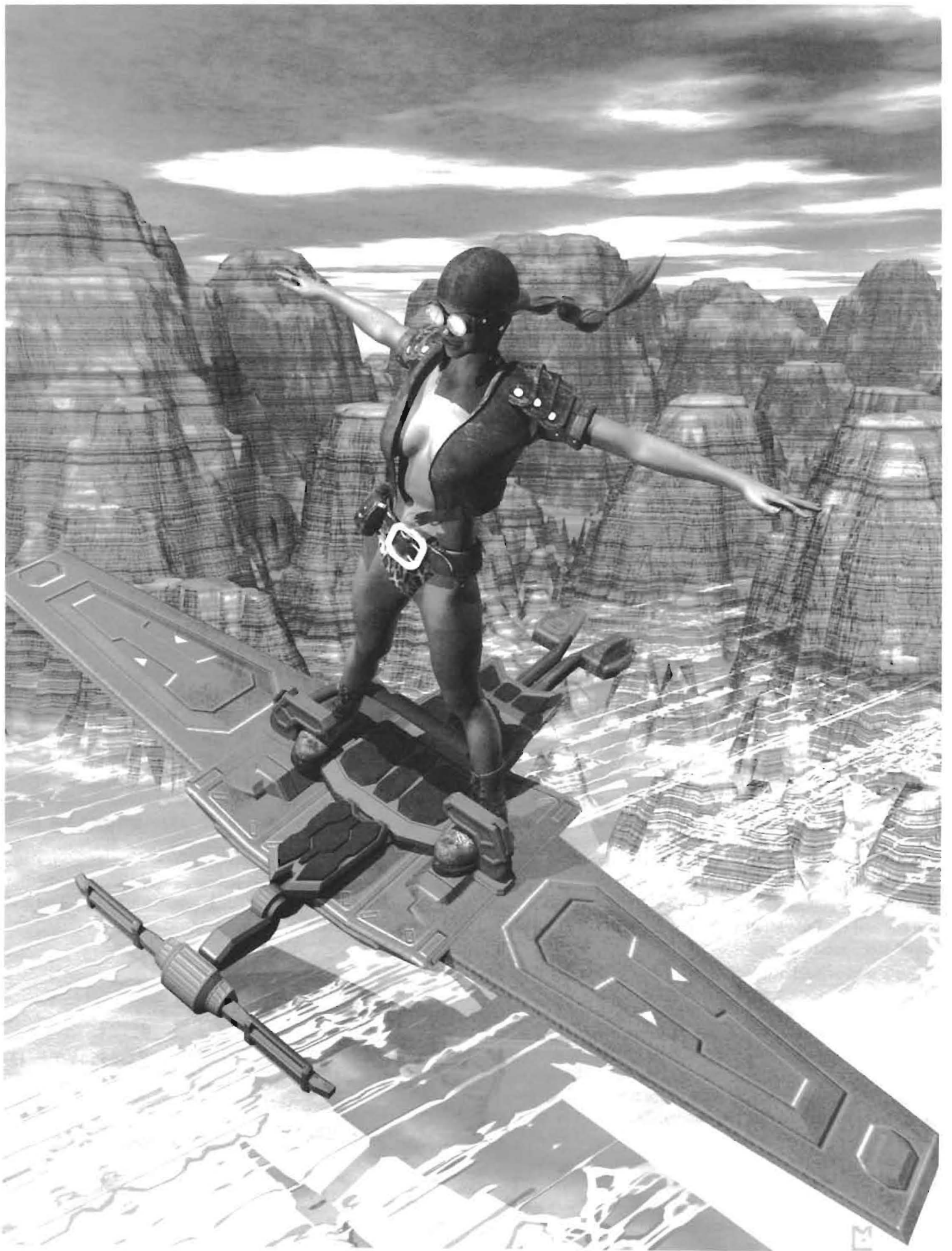
By Mark Oberle

Illustration by Mike Leonard

Explosions... screams in the darkness... blood... the Ley Line lashing out like a giant, blue demon... The memories seemed to have a physical form inside her skull, seeping up from the recesses of her mind and clawing at the back of her eyes. Evie Reynolds closed her eyes tight, as though that might stop the horrible recollections from escaping into the world and wreaking havoc anew. She grappled with the visions of black-skulled Coalition power armor blazing away at her friends, leaving little but a thick, red haze in their wake. Forcing them back to the dark crevasse they seemed to come from, Evie dipped the Wing Board lower toward the desert floor.

She had to remind herself that she was still alive, had to lose the depressing weight of her memories in the warm winds and sunshine. Opening her eyes, Evie found herself dangerously close to a large spire of rock that jutted up through the center of the Ley Line she was riding on. Crouching low and grabbing the front of the board, the young Techno-Wizard pulled into a sharp climb, close enough to the surface of the weather-worn rock to see what she could have sworn was an expression of surprise on a lizard's face as she passed over.

Once she had topped the rock formation, she brought the small flying platform to a stop and hovered over the vastness of sand and rock that was once the Arizona desert. In the distance, a couple of Lyn-Srial darted from cloud to cloud seemingly oblivious to her presence. As the adrenaline rush from her near-crash began to wear off, a new thought occurred to her. What if the Coalition came here? Arzno was a powerful force in the region and the Lyn-Srial surely would not tolerate the bigotry of the Coalition within their realm. But if the mighty kingdom of Tolkeen, her former home, hadn't been able to withstand their might... then fighting wouldn't work.



Would she run again? She felt like such a coward as it was, like she let down those who she had cared about and left them to be slaughtered by the merciless invaders. Where would she run to even if she had the chance? The Federation of Magic? No. They would stick her back in the labs building machines of war, or worse than that, on the front lines. What about Kingsdale, Lazlo, New Lazlo? All of them were just as close to the CS as the Federation and had their own conflicts with them that would surely suck her in. No, there was nowhere else for her now, Arzno was her new home. And while she had lost one to an expansionist empire of hatred, she wouldn't lose this one. So, something had to be done about the CS, they had to be discouraged from coming west... but what?

Evie shook her head as if to clear out the mental cobwebs that threatened to mire her in an overly serious contemplation of things. The defenders of Tolkeen had exacted a heavy toll from the Coalition forces for their crimes. Some reports even said that small groups of survivors still inhabited the ruins and harassed the Dead Boys' every step. Between them, the Xiticix, and all the other enemies the CS had surrounded themselves with, it would be quite a while until they came to her doorstep again. But when they did, she would be waiting for them. Then, they would pay dearly for the pain and misery they had caused her.

But she had plenty of time to worry about such things later. Today was such a beautiful day, and she owed it to herself to try and enjoy it. Forcing a devilish smile, she unclasped her loose-fitting flight jacket, peeled herself out of the khaki shorts she had on over her leopard-print swimsuit, and spread her arms like a child playing airplane. Kicking up the Wing Board as fast as it would go, she started trying to decide whether she would wear her little black dress or her little red dress out that night.

Eve Reynolds was born to relatively affluent parents in the former Kingdom of Tolkeen. Both her mother and father had been prominent Techno-Wizards and helped groom their only daughter for that same calling. So, Eve did what any dutiful daughter seeking admittance to high society would do. She spent almost every waking hour studying schematics, magical theory, and pre-Cataclysm engineering texts. The only respite she had from her magical and technical studies was the time she spent learning gymnastics, how to converse in Dragonese and Spanish, and the little bit of time she devoted to her own interests of dance and sculpting.

Eve's studies paid off, landing her a spot in one of the more prestigious TW academies in the City of Tolkeen. As was expected, she excelled there, too, and graduated at the top of her class even though the CS invasion had begun just months before. But by the time of Eve's graduation, the TW weapon manufacturing industry dominated the labs and production spaces of Tolkeen. No mage worth their salt had the time to help Eve live up to the potential that she had shown. Thus, her raw magical ability was put to work building resource-efficient knockoffs at a production facility in the city proper.

While somewhat disappointed, Eve still felt that she was part of the most important cause there was, defending her home and her loved ones. She approached her tedious and boring work with the same relentless zeal that she had once applied to her

studies. But unlike before, no one noticed that she consistently outperformed her coworkers in both quality and quantity of the items produced. She had become just another cog in the giant Techno-Wizard war machine.

After a few years, her drive had been sapped out of her, the penchant for the extraordinary beaten down by the relentless doldrums of war-time industry. By the time the Coalition had reached the city walls, Eve was a depressed shell of her former self. The bombing of the production facility's dormitory was what finally snapped her out of her sorry state and made her realize how much she wanted to live. But the portals out of the city were in disarray with the Ley Lines raging out of control. So, she managed to salvage some supplies from the facility, including her Wing Board, and hid out until she could fly herself out of the besieged city.

After narrowly avoiding several CS air patrols, Eve fell in with a group of refugees heading to Arzno. She was instrumental in guarding the lightly armed group on their perilous journey, slowly renewing her self-confidence. Once they made it to the city, Eve found work repairing and rebuilding TW devices, but only because it was the only way she knew to support herself. Her skills earned her a reputation as a highly proficient and cost-effective Techno-Wizard. Soon, she found herself inundated with requests for work and making quite a profit.

While trying to decide what to do with her sudden influx of money, Eve made a startling realization. She had never truly done much outside of her role as a dutiful daughter, excellent student, and patriotic Techno-Wizard. It was high time she started enjoying life, if for no other reason than she was lucky to have gotten a second chance to do so. Thus, for the past couple of months Evie has started building another reputation, that of a hard-partying fresh face in the Arzno night life. Rumors have linked her to several high-profile men in Arzno, but in truth she isn't keen on the idea of being in a serious relationship anytime soon.

Recently, Evie has taken up some thrill-seeking behaviors such as acrobatic stunts on her Wing Board and pick-pocketing the drunks who hit on her in the local bars in order to pay off her tab. Doing so seems to combat the mild depression she finds herself feeling as a result of the post-traumatic stress from surviving Tolkeen. If these behaviors continue, or even escalate, she could find herself in some serious danger rather quickly. But for the time being, Evie Reynolds is loving life to the fullest and enjoying it as much as possible.

Evie

Real Name: Eve Reynolds.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 22, M.E. 15, M.A. 12, P.S. 11, P.P. 11, P.E. 13, P.B. 19, Spd 11.

Height: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.7 m). **Weight:** 120 lbs (54 kg).

Hit Points: 32

S.D.C.: 29

Age: 20

Sex: Female.

I.S.P.: 50

P.P.E.: 173

Experience Level: 6th

Disposition: Evie (as she prefers to be called) is the very definition of a free spirit. Now that she's experienced life outside of the regimented structure of Tolkeen's former TW education and manufacturing system she's developed into quite the "wild child." She loves her newfound freedom and has silently vowed that she'll never let herself be tied down by responsibilities again. At the same time, she still feels a sense of loyalty to Tolkeen and its displaced people and does what she can to help the refugees on occasion. Likewise, if she comes across a Coalition soldier or sympathizer, he might very well not walk away from the encounter.

Before the fall of Tolkeen, her life was dedicated to her studies and her job, but the experience of being worked like a cheap mule to make arms for a failed war effort has left her somewhat indifferent towards her chosen profession. Now it is less of an art to her and more of a means with which to survive. If someone could only rekindle that creative spark, she could be one of the best Techno-Wizards in Arzno.

Description: Evie is a tall, athletic brunette with bright hazel eyes and a lightly sun-tanned complexion. In another place and time, she may even have been able to model. As is, she hadn't really noticed how attractive she was until she got to Arzno and started reexamining her life. Now, she often hides her gymnast's build under a set of coveralls when working, but when partying or out for a cruise in the wilderness she has begun to flaunt what Mother Nature gave her by wearing rather revealing clothing (as seen in the illustration). She tends to wear her hair in one long braid for most occasions, though she will sometimes let her hair down when she goes out on the town.

Primary Skills: Language: Native (American) 98%, Literacy: Native (American) 98%, Language: Elven/Dragonese 98%, Language: Spanish 98%, Radio: Basic 88%, Computer Operation 78%, Computer Programming 68%, Computer Repair 73%, Computer Hacking 28%, Basic Electronics 78%, Electrical Engineer 78%, Mechanical Engineer 78%, Weapons Engineer 68%, Robot Mechanics 63%, Techno-Wizardry Construction 98%, Sensory Equipment 73%, Math: Basic 98%, Math: Advanced 78%, Land Navigation 69%, Camouflage 43%, Detect Mines/Traps 43%, Pick Pockets 33%, Pilot: Automobile 83%, Pilot: Motorcycle 93%, Pilot: TW Vehicles 92%, Gymnastics, W.P. Energy Pistol, and W.P. Sword.

Secondary Skills: Dance 63%, First Aid 78%, Swimming 83%, Art: Sculpting 68%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 58%, and Wilderness Survival 48%.

Combat Training: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: 5

Damage: Punch: 2D4, Kick: 2D6, and all others standard.

Combat Bonuses: +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to pull punch, +4 to roll, +2 to disarm, and Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20.

Other Combat Information: Evie may be a party-loving free spirit who would rather be dancing and drinking than fighting, but that doesn't mean she can't handle herself in a scrap. She received basic combat training during her schooling and

the amount of magical firepower she can bring to bear catches most warriors off guard because she doesn't come off as the superb Techno-Wizard that she is. This is the way Evie likes it, as it gives her an edge when her opponents underestimate her.

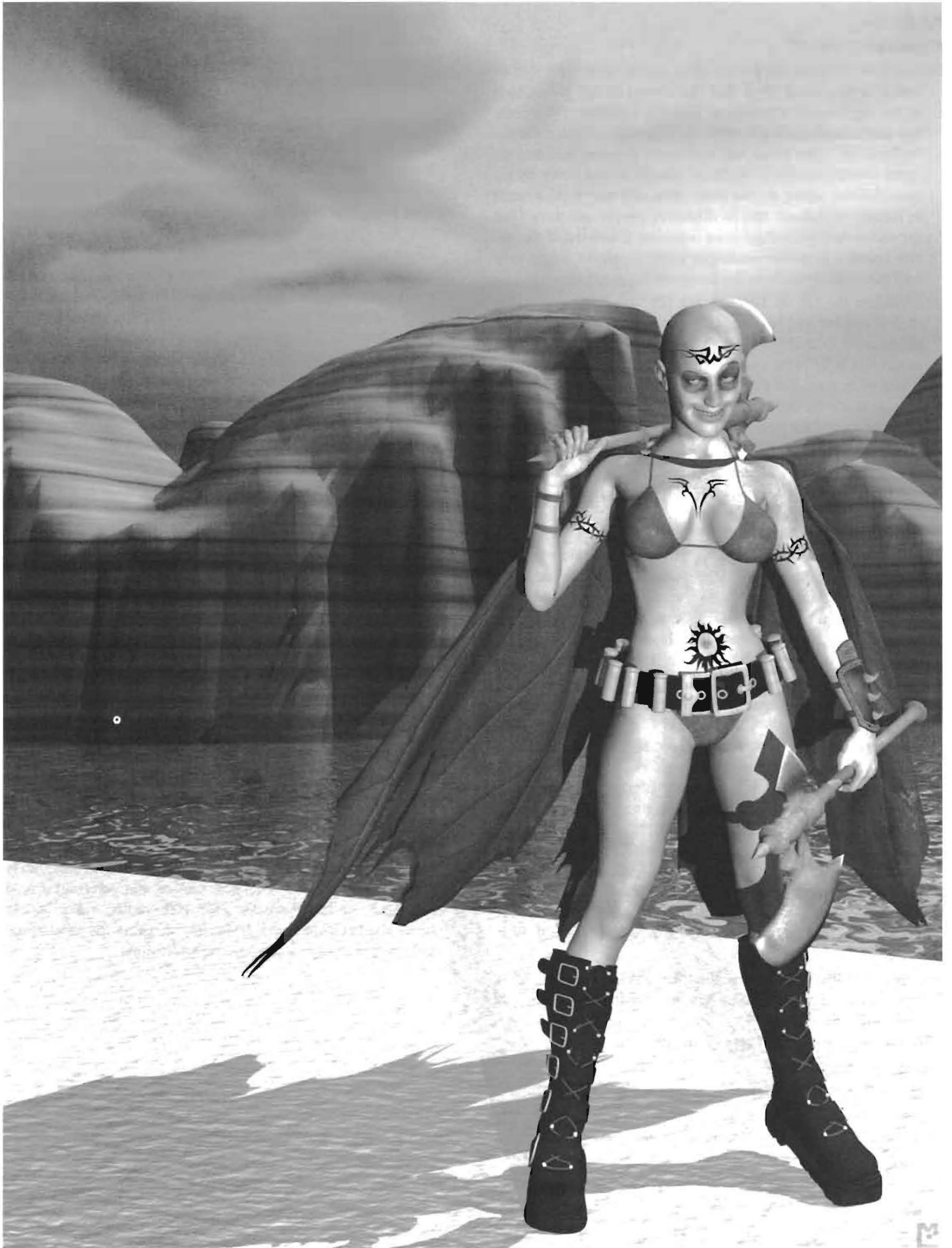
Other Bonuses: +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs possession and mind control, +1 to save vs magic, +1 to Spell Strength, and +3 to Perception Rolls that involve magic, machines, or a combination thereof. Charm/Impress at 45%.

Magic: Armor of Ithan (10), Blinding Flash (1), Breathe Without Air (5), Call Lightning (15), Charismatic Aura (10), Cloak of Darkness (6), Concealment (6), Deflect (10), Electric Arc (8), Energy Bolt (5), Energy Disruption (12), Energy Field (10), Fire Ball (10), Fire Bolt (7), Fuel Flame (5), Fly (15), Forcebonds (25), Globe of Daylight (2), Ignite Fire (6), Impervious to Energy (20), Impervious to Fire (5), Life Source (2+), Magic Net (7), Magic Shield (6), See the Invisible (4), Sense Magic (4), Shadow Meld (10), Superhuman Speed (10), Superhuman Strength (10), and Telekinesis (8).

Psionics: Machine Ghost (12), Mind Block (4), Object Read (6), Speed Reading (2), Telemechanics (10), and Total Recall (2).

Weapons and Equipment: Evie usually carries a TW Shard Pistol (Damage: 3D4/4D6 M.D., Range: 700 feet/213 m, Payload: 12) with three spare P.P.E. clips, and a TW Lightblade (Damage: 1D4X10 M.D., Payload: 5 minutes for 15 H.P.), with her wherever she goes. Her personal armor is a non-metallic knockoff of the Gladiator EBA (it has 65 M.D.C.) that she took with her when she fled Tolkeen. It is enchanted to be both lightweight and silent (no movement or Prowl penalties). Also, since it is non-metallic, it doesn't hinder her spellcasting! If that weren't enough, by using the shell of a salvaged Naruni force field it has the added benefit of a magical force field via Armor of Ithan (60 M.D.C. at the cost of 10 P.P.E.). Her transportation (seen in the illustration) is the standard TW Wing Board found on page 137 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**. Otherwise she has several stylish and work outfits, the tools of her trade, and various personal effects she managed to carry out of her fallen home.

Money: Although her freelance TW services are more than enough to support her, Evie burns through money as quickly as she makes it (mostly on new clothes and partying). So, at any time she has the basic 1D6x100 credits, 1D6x1000 in black market items, and 2D4x1000 in gems for repairs and tinkering with new devices on rare occasions.



Shana the Twin-Axe

Optional Material for Rifts®

By Josh Sinsapaugh

Illustration by Mike Leonard

The life of a Wild Psi-Stalker is never easy, even when running within one of the many Psi-Stalker tribes that exist within the confines of the Old American and Canadian Empires. The life of a tribal outcast though, shunned even by members of competing tribes, is even harder. Supposedly, few survive the rigors of a life in exile, with those who do becoming hardened individuals who can take anything that the savage lands of Rifts Earth can throw at them. One such individual is the daring Psi-Stalker exile known only as *Shana the Twin-Axe*.

Born in the wilds of what was once the Old American Empire State of Alabama, Shana was a member of the infamous Blacktooth Tribe of Wild Psi-Stalkers. The only tribe to actually live within the confines of the remote and enigmatic Dark Woods, the Blacktooth may in fact be the most overzealous and fanatical tribe of Psi-Stalkers in all of North America. Often as dark and despicable as those that they hunt, the Blacktooth Tribe is rumored to take part in all sorts of unsavory hunting rituals, and are reported to keep grisly trophies of their kills – sometimes even on their own bodies. It is thus no wonder that life amongst the very feral tribe had a profound effect on the young Shana.

From an early age, Shana displayed a level of bloodlust and savagery that rivaled that of even the most fanatical clan elders. Even at the age of twelve her hatred of the supernatural was legendary, and with her first real hunt at age fourteen she is said to have brought down a Vyarnect Sub-Demon singlehandedly. Early victories, notoriety, and even her heritage as a member of the Axe Clan (one of the most revered clans of the tribe) only seemed to further expand what was quickly becoming an equally notable ego. At age sixteen, arguments and fights with other “inferior” (as Shana would say) members of the tribe became commonplace, as did fights between Shana and her own father, who did not approve for a second the path that his daughter appeared to be going down. Many members of the tribe eagerly waited for the day when the “Little Princess” would finally get her comeuppance.

That day finally came shortly after Shana turned seventeen, during a fight between the young Psi-Stalker and a *Pale Horseman* by the name of William Zantzinger. Not only did the experienced practitioner of the dark arts defeat Shana easily, he also managed to break the girl’s left clavicle with a cane as she was left immobilized by one of Zantzinger’s spells. Although the encounter would result in much ridicule for Shana, it failed to humble her; instead it merely made her become much *more* fanatical and arrogant (“So what if Zantzinger defeated me? He was a real warrior, unlike *you*.”). Finally, things came to a head with her father when Shana dwelled far too much on something that the Pale Horseman had said when he departed – that he was from *the Hamlet of Clavicle*.

Regarded as an old wives’ tale by many members of the Blacktooth Tribe, Shana’s sudden obsession with finding the town did not sit well with her father. According to him, searching for the village was a quest for only the foolish, and was quite simply unsuitable for a Psi-Stalker of her breed and stock. Shana disagreed, and the two came to blows, a scuffle that quickly led to her father’s untimely death. Unapologetic for what she had just done, Shana took up her father’s axe and declared that she was now “Shana of the Twin-Axe,” only to be disowned by her clan and exiled from the entire tribe days later. Not only was killing your father (especially a tribal leader) a taboo amongst the entire Blacktooth Tribe, what she had done was also unforgivable by the Axe Clan, who held the tradition of cremating the remains of their brethren *with* the deceased’s axe. So, with an unquenchable rage beating within her heart, Shana left the Dark Woods of Alabama and the Blacktooth Tribe forever.

Since then, Shana has wandered throughout the Old American Empire, appearing in some of the most remote places in order to thwart supernatural evil whenever and wherever it rears its ugly head. She has been known to swoop in at the last moment and help adventurers defeat some preternatural menace, sometimes traveling with those who she has rescued for weeks afterwards. However, she always goes her separate way once enough time has passed; sometimes leaving a broken heart behind as she does so (she loves as flippantly as she slays supernatural evil). It’s been years since she saw any of her kinfolk, and without her tribal markings it is unlikely that any of them would even recognize her anyways – though she is still leery of other Psi-Stalkers, always treating them as rivals. She has no desire to return home ever again, and is content to wander the wilderness in order to test her skills and prove that she is the best Psi-Stalker that has ever lived.

Amazingly enough, tracking down William Zantzinger is not a top priority of Shana’s, as the Wild Psi-Stalker believes that she will cross that bridge whenever she comes to it. That is only what she tells herself in order to sleep at night, however. In reality, she is only looking toward the future while simultaneously running from her past.

Shana the Twin-Axe

Real Name: Shana Thyll of the Axe Clan.

Race: Psi-Stalker (Mutant Human).

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 20, M.A. 10, P.S. 13, P.P. 24, P.E. 18, P.B. 12, Spd 21 running, 3 digging.

Hit Points: 48

S.D.C.: 30

Age: 27

Sex: Female.

Height: 5 feet, 3 inches (1.6 m). **Weight:** 99 pounds (44.5 kg).

P.P.E.: 8.

Disposition: Although arrogant and savage to a fault, Shana is actually fairly focused due to her never-ending quest to test her skills and destroy supernatural evil. In fact, Shana actually believes that she is good, and will not consider for even a second that she has become just as evil as the monstrosities

that she routinely hunts down. One of the biggest braggarts on the continent, she can often be found starting arguments, and thus she makes and loses friends very quickly. This rarely fazes her though, as the Psi-Stalker cares little for the emotions and thoughts of others – especially those who disagree with her.

Appearance: Shana has slightly above average looks for a Psi-Stalker, and like most female Wild Psi-Stalkers, she is gifted with a comparatively lithe, but muscular, frame. She has abandoned the distinctive tribal markings of her former people (such as painting the top of the head black), though her body is graced by a few tattoos from her days as a member of the tribe. When not dressed in a swimsuit, Shana prefers to wear simple tunics, skirts, and dresses, always in dark tones – blacks, blues, browns and greens. She can also usually be found wearing her *SteelTree* leaf cloak, as well as a beat up old suit of dark green Bushman armor, the helmet modified to look like a demon.

Natural Abilities: Psionic Empathy with Animals. Feeds off of the P.P.E. and I.S.P. of practitioners of magic, psychics, supernatural beings and creatures of magic, with little need for physical nourishment (one pound/.45 kg of meat and 8 ounces/0.23 liters of water a week). Can go for up to three weeks without food or water without ill effect, though P.P.E. (50 points a week) is required weekly in order to sustain the mutant. Psionic empathy with animals, and becomes a minor Mega-Damage creature when fighting a supernatural being or creature of magic (Hit Points are converted into M.D.C., +50% on a ley line, doubled at a nexus). Shana can also leap six feet (1.8 m) high or 10 feet (3 m) long (add 20% to length with a running start), is ambidextrous and has an excellent sense of balance (94%).

Sense Psychic and Magic Energy: Similar to a human's sense of smell, Shana can sense the presence of psychic energies, both from fellow psychics and from magic users, creatures of magic and supernatural beings. Shana can also track psychic/magical "scents" of an individual at a 50% skill level (70% if she has clothes, hair, blood, or skin from the person/thing she is tracking). She can also track a magic or psionic ability currently in use to its source with a skill level of 90%, and will recognize that scent again with a skill level of 50%. **Range:** 170 feet (52 m) to track a psychic scent that is not in use, 1200 feet (366 m) to track a psychic scent that is using or has recently used psychic, magic or supernatural abilities.

Sense Supernatural Beings: Identical in function to the ability above, except that Shana is attuned to the distinctive psychic scent of the supernatural. Recognize scent: 70%, track via scent alone is 60% (88% if the being is actively using its psionics or magic, or if the being is a Greater Demon, Demon Lord, Alien Intelligence, or other powerful being). **Range:** 350 feet (107 m) if the being is not using its powers, 1600 feet (488 m) if the being is powerful (as noted above) or is simply making use of its powers.

Experience Level: 7th level Wild Psi-Stalker.

Combat: Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Attacks per Melee: Seven.

Bonuses: +5 on all Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +7 to strike, +9 to parry, +9 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, +3 to roll with impact, +2 to entangle, +4 to S.D.C. damage, needs only a six (6) or higher to save vs psionic attack, +6 to save vs magic, +8 to save vs Necro-Magic (and other forms of black magic such as Witchcraft), +5 to save vs possession, +3 to save vs insanity, +6 to save vs mind altering drugs, +6 to save vs mind control, +4 to save vs pain, +2 to save vs poison and disease, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, and +6% to save vs coma/death. Knockout/Stun on a Natural 17-20.

Damage: As per Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Magic Knowledge: Limited to lore and a fair understanding of magic principles (thanks to fighting practitioners of magic and the supernatural so much).

Psionics: Considered a Master Psychic with the following abilities (in addition to those previously noted): Clairvoyance (4), Intuitive Combat (10), Mind Block (4), Object Read (6), See the Invisible (4), and Sixth Sense (2). **I.S.P.:** 100 (regains I.S.P. at the rate of two per hour of activity or twelve per hour of sleep/rest or meditation).

Skills of Note: Native Language: American at 98%, Language: Demongogian at 93%, Athletics: General, Detect Ambush 65%, Escape Artist 65%, Prowl 75%, Climbing 75%/65%, Horsemanship: Cowboy 94%/78%, Horsemanship: Exotic Animals 75%/65%, Land Navigation 70%, Lore: Magic 60%, Lore: Necromancy and the Dark Arts 70%, Lore: Undead 65%, Tracking 65%, and Wilderness Survival at 90%. W.P. Knife, W.P. Sword, W.P. Axe, W.P. Rifle, and W.P. Energy Pistol all at seventh level experience. W.P. Energy Rifle at fifth level experience.

Weapons and Equipment: Shana's prized possessions are her two *SteelTree Forged Axes* (2D6+2 M.D.), which she often uses as paired weapons, and her old *L-20 Pulse Rifle* (2D6 M.D., 6D6 M.D. with a triple burst; 1600 feet/488 meter range, and a 40 shot payload). As far as she is concerned, other weapons are little more than a passing fancy, which quickly becomes evident to anyone who has met this Psi-Stalker more than once. Other equipment includes her *SteelTree Leaf Cape* (20 M.D.), her Bushman Armor (52 M.D.C., has been reduced from 60), and all the standard equipment normally available to a Wild Psi-Stalker.

Cybernetics and Bionics: None, and she will outright refuse bionic augmentation of any kind, *always* opting for Bio-System replacements if possible.

Money: Most of the time Shana is functionally broke, with only 1D4x100 credits in jewels and trade goods to her name. However, her constant traveling means that there are times (35% of the time) when Shana will have 3D6x1000 credits or more on her person, usually in trade goods (10% chance that she will have Universal Credits instead).

Shui Nu Ling

Chinese Water Maiden Spirit

Optional Material for Rifts® China

By Taylor White

Illustration by Larry Elmore

In China, it is known to Demon Quellers and others that demons and Infernals typically stay away from sources of water. They hate the sounds of rushing water, and places like rivers, streams, waterfalls, and babbling brooks are often sources of high Positive Chi, which are detested by demons and evil ghosts. The Shui Nu Ling are lesser-known ghosts that contradict that common knowledge. They are malicious ghosts who appear only in standing pools of water, swamps, marshes, and rice fields. Shui take great pleasure in tricking mortals into drinking or bathing in fetid water, often causing sickness or death. Sometimes, these ghosts are harbingers of greater dangers, as demons *are* attracted to poisonous water, and may be waiting in ambush.

Shui in their natural form are invisible and intangible energy beings, similar to common Entities. They find standing pools of water and merge themselves with the negative energy produced by such places. In their natural forms they are completely powerless, and simply float through the air until they find a place to their liking. Some hide in the earth until the rainy season, then spring forth to cause mayhem and spread sickness. They always stay in above-ground pools of water, the darker and more stagnant, the better. They are common in marshes and bogs, but absolutely love it in urban areas when the rains are too heavy and sewage flows out onto the open streets (which is common in slums and poor areas). They will also appear in rice fields or ponds if a battle has occurred there recently, or anywhere a large number of people were killed.

When a Shui finds a suitable location, it takes the form of a beautiful young woman in order to entice mortals into joining it in the water. Shui are expert seductresses, using a combination of illusions and psionics. If the image of a beautiful girl is not enough, they can also take the form of either a small child or a helpless animal, like a puppy, and then pretend to be drowning in hopes that someone will come save them. If they cannot seduce a victim into drinking from the poisonous water, they can become angry and will try to drown them instead.

Shui are easily avoided, if one knows how to deal with them. Unfortunately, they are somewhat rare, so there are few who are experienced enough to share the knowledge of their weaknesses. The most telling sign of a Shui is that they never leave the pool of water in which they are standing. No matter what is going on around them, they can never leave the pool. If they are in danger, or if the water is too shallow for them to be realistically inhabiting (they would look silly in a puddle only an inch or two deep), they go under the water and disappear, turning into an energy being. Then they simply wait for the danger to pass, or they move on to another body of water. The second most telling sign is that Shui have no feet! If one gets close enough to a Shui to notice, they simply see the girl's legs ending at the surface of

the water. They are constructs of pure Negative Chi, and need nothing else to support them. Although they appear to be wading or swimming in water, they are in fact sort of gliding along the Negative Chi emanating from the surface. Another interesting note is that Shui are completely deaf, and never speak. They communicate through telepathy, transmitting their thoughts through images, emotions, and of course, body language.

Shui Nu Ling – Demonic Ghost

Race: Supernatural Entity.

Alignment: Considered Mischief or Diabolic evil.

Attributes: (as a beautiful girl) I.Q. 1D4+2, M.A. 1D6+3, M.E. 2D4+6, P.S. 2D6+4, P.P. 2D6+6, P.E. not applicable, P.B. 15+2D4, Spd 10+3D6 moving through water.

As an energy being, most attributes are not applicable, but they do have a P.P. of 20+1D4 and a Spd of 2D4x10.

M.D.C.: 1D4x10+10, but eliminating all M.D.C. only makes the ghost disappear until the next rainy season.

Horror Factor: 11, but only once the victim realizes that this is a ghost and not a pretty girl.

Size: Looks to be a young woman between 5-6 feet (1.5-1.8 m) tall, though in reality they stand only 4-5 feet (1.2-1.5 m) above the surface of the water. As an energy being, they appear as a ball of blue light about a foot (0.3 m) in diameter.

Average Life Span: Presumably immortal.

P.P.E.: 6D6+64

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 1000 feet (305 m). Moves silently across the water (60% Prowl if moving, 70% if still, and completely unseen when underwater).

Impervious to possession, illusions, mind control, psionics, and Horror Factor.

Impervious to most physical weapons and attacks, fire, cold, energy, disease, and physical aspects of psionics because they are demonic spirits, not creatures of flesh and blood. Magic can be used to communicate with the Shui as well as to contain, hurt, and chase them away, however killing them is only temporary. They will reappear someplace else during the next rainy season.

Shui are not good fighters, though they are easily angered and spiteful, and if denied their fun, they will use their Water Elemental Magic to hurt the target of their ire, or if they can reach them, physically drag them under the water and drown them. **Note:** See Vulnerabilities for instructions on how to get rid of a Shui.

Limited Shapeshifting: Shui usually assume the form of a beautiful maiden (appears to be 15+1D4 years old) who is bathing or swimming playfully in a pool of water. Can also take the form of a child of either gender (2+1D6 years old), or a small animal like a puppy, kitten, or rabbit, and then pretend to be drowning (after 1D4 minutes of splashing around, they sink under the water and wait for someone to get close enough for them to drown them).

Natural Psionic Powers: Telepathy, Empathy, Empathic Transmission. No cost to use, equal to an 8th level psychic.

Water Illusion to Cause Sickness (special): The Shui can disguise the body of water it inhabits to appear fresh, clean, and drinkable, even though it may be standing in a marsh littered



with rotting bodies or a river of raw sewage. Anyone who can see the Shui and is within 1000 feet (305 m) must save vs illusory magic. A 16 or higher (with bonuses) is needed. Success means they see a beautiful, though wispy and slightly translucent (like a ghost) girl standing in a pool of disgusting water. Failing to save means the ghost has caught the character's attention and he is compelled to investigate further.

When the entranced character gets close, the ghost uses its psionics and natural seductive abilities to get the character to join her in the water. Once he gets close enough, it will pool the water in its hands and invite the character to drink from it. If it can get the character to disrobe and bathe in the filthy water, so much the better for it. Once the ghost has had its fun (usually after 1D10+5 minutes), it sinks under the water and seems to disappear. In reality, it has turned back into a being of Negative Chi, and is simply hanging around the water, awaiting another victim.

When the ghost disappears, the character finds himself no longer affected by the illusion, and is likely to be horrified and revolted by what he has done to himself (Horror Factor 17). The girl is nowhere to be seen, and now the character may very well have poisoned himself. The character must save vs disease immediately and again every day for 1D4 days. If the character saves, he feels slightly nauseous (-2 to all combat abilities, -5% to all skills), but can otherwise function alright. The effects last 2D4 days.

If the character fails, he will be extremely ill for the next 1D4 weeks! He will vomit uncontrollably for 1D6 minutes every 10 hours and every time he tries to eat, he'll take 2D4 damage direct to Hit Points (which cannot be normally healed until the disease is cured or passes on its own), be sluggish and tired all the time (-5 to all combat abilities, -20% to all skills), and sleep for 12+1D6 hours a day. **Note:** This is a pretty debilitating, but otherwise normal bacterial infection. It can be cured with high doses of antibiotics or magic.

Equivalent Skills: Land Navigation 75%, Seduction 80%, Swimming 90%, Pathology 60%, Biology 60%, Dowsing 90%. Skills do not improve with experience.

Vulnerabilities: 1. Impervious to most physical attacks, but vulnerable to salt and other desiccants. A handful of table salt does 3D6 M.D. and causes the ghost searing pain. Sea Salt or Rock Salt does 5D6 M.D., and other chemical desiccants do 8D6 M.D.

2. Susceptible to most forms of magic and psionics as well as magic weapons. Banishment, Exorcism, and Expel Demons will force the ghost to leave the area immediately and not return for 6+1D10 months. The spell Dessicate the Supernatural will do double damage, and is likely to instantly obliterate the ghost! Likewise, any spell magic that does double damage to Entities, Ghosts, or Water Elementals/Spirits will affect this ghost the same.

3. Equally powerful during the day or night, but their powers are greatly diminished in dry areas (or during the dry season). Halve the ghost's M.D.C. and the range of its special illusion magic, and all magic and psionic abilities are half normal effect. Completely unable to inhabit deserts (even desert rivers or oases).

4. The ghost is completely deaf. They rely more on their eyes, and as a result, are attracted to objects of great beauty. When encountering a group of travelers, they will usually seduce the most attractive of them first (highest P.B.). They will leave alone anyone they consider to be ugly (P.B. 9 or below), since looking at them is unpleasant. They can also be distracted by beautiful paintings, nice clothes, and even their own reflection! If a potential victim can get the ghost to look at itself in a mirror, in a photograph, or (on a bright, sunny day or under the light of the full moon) in the reflection of the water, the ghost will be captivated for 5+1D4 minutes, unable to do anything else but stare and marvel at the great beauty. When the ghost finally comes to its senses, it is likely to be angry that it was so easily fooled, and will be doubly mean to the next victim.

Equivalent Level of Experience: 1D4

Attacks per Melee: Four, regardless of experience.

Damage: As per Supernatural P.S., or magic.

R.C.C. Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute bonuses): +3 to initiative when coming up from the water, +2 to strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to parry, +3 to dodge (even in water).

Magic: Shui are only able to use Water Elemental Magic, leading some to believe they are some sort of Elemental spirit. That is not likely to be true, as Shui are far too deceiving and spiteful to be Elementals. Knows all Water Warlock spells levels 1-3, plus 1D4 spells taken from levels 4, 5, or 6.

Demonic Curses: Fever, Fleas, Headaches, Hunger (thirst, in this case, but same effects and penalties), Pox, Stomach Sickness.

Psionics: See Natural Abilities.

Enemies: All living intelligent beings are viewed as playthings and targets for seduction and sickness. Hates ugly creatures the most and either tries to destroy, curse, or shoo them away in case someone better-looking comes along. Also hates birds, for some reason.

Allies: None, they are totally self-absorbed beings.

Habitat: Found in the wet, marshy, low-lying areas of China, India, and Indonesia. Prefers ponds, swamps, and marshes in dark, wooded areas, but also appears in urban slums after heavy rainstorms.

Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Edition Note: In *Beyond the Supernatural™*, these beings are located in the same places as they are in *Rifts®*, but are even more rare. They have 6D6+8 Hit Points, and 6D6+30 P.P.E. **Discorporation:** The ghost falls beneath the surface of the water and disappears completely. It will take the ghost 5+1D6 years to rebuild itself out of ambient Negative Chi. **Threat Level:** x4, Hunter/Predator.



C- WALTON 08

Mara and Xiang

Optional Material for Rifts® China

By John C. Philpott

Illustration and Concepts by Chuck Walton

"Her skill is worthy," said the First.

"But her attitude is not!" countered the Second.

"She fights like a dragon," said the First.

"But behaves like a demon!" argued the Second.

"She could be the one," said the First.

"Yes... the one to betray us to the Yama Kings!" yelled the Second. "She is loud! She is unpredictable! She is chaotic! She is dangerous! She burns all she touches!"

"Yes," answered the First, "you are right. Loud, chaotic, dangerous... who better to serve the Lightning?!"

Mara and Xiang are a wandering duo of freelance demon fighters. Mara is a confident, scandalous Demon Queller (Fu Yao Da Chia) who defies all authority and leaves a trail of chaos and broken hearts. Xiang is an AWOL Lightning Geoborg who is hopelessly obsessed with his partner. Their partnership has only lasted a year, but already they are gaining renown and infamy across the Freelands and the 11 Hells... and the attentions of higher powers!

It's an unorthodox partnership, to say the least. Mara breaks every rule of proper etiquette and Confucian order, scandalous even for a Fu Yao Da Chia! She's far too confident and self-determined, far too intimate with talk and eye contact, and far too open in her attitudes and choice of clothing (or lack thereof). She walks boldly into town in various states of undress, leading behind her a string of bound demons and a plodding Geoborg. She drinks too much, flirts shamelessly and openly, and causes fights and disorder as smitten men vie for her charms. Meanwhile, Xiang slavishly follows her, as if bound and broken like one of her demons.

However, while the team is a menace in times of quiet, they are a godsend in times of trouble. Mara, despite appearances, is a skilled and dedicated opponent of the Yama Kings. She despises authority, and what authority is greater or more oppressive than the Yama Kings? Xiang is a bold and skilled warrior, bravely going into the heart of the fray to kill or subdue their foes. Together they have defeated many of Hell's minions and saved countless villages and people from horrible fates.

And all they ask in return is free food, drink, lodging, expenses, gambling, payment, Mara's whims fulfilled, forgiveness of debts and damages, constant attention for Mara, entertainment, and, well, anything else she can think of at the time!

Worse yet, even when they've gone the troubles may not be over, for a long string of pursuers may be close behind: jilted ex-lovers or obsessed admirers of Mara's, angry former enemies, gangsters and gamblers seeking debts or retribution, demons and Yama minions seeking revenge, Geofront authorities attempting to capture the AWOL Xiang, and any number of other disreputable and dangerous types. And most recently ap-

peared the Watchers... strange mystical beings who follow the duo and observe their actions.

Needless to say, Mara and Xiang are a mixed blessing to those they visit. They are as much menaces as heroes. They cause as much destruction as they do salvation. And as their reputation precedes them, one thing is certain: when Mara and Xiang arrive, *interesting times* are indeed ahead!

The Watchers

Mara and Xiang are just beginning to notice two mysterious figures among their usual pursuers: strange, distant beings of great power who merely watch and observe, a halo of wind and lightning about them. They stand aloof, typically from on high. Their clothing blows in the wind even on still days; their faces are hidden by their dou li hats. Through the thickest of battles or the most debauched of evening gambling sessions, the Watchers watch and do not interfere. If Mara or Xiang approach, they simply fade away in a shower of lightning. If Mara or Xiang shoot or attack, the attacks pass harmlessly through the beings. Who these Watchers are and what they want remains a mystery to all on this plane of existence.

Are they guardians? If so, why do they not assist in battle? Are they spies? If so for whom? Are they agents of some great power? If so, what? The mystery is a source of great anxiety for Xiang and great annoyance for Mara.

The Gift

Things grew even stranger one morning when The Gift appeared. In the place of Mara's Demon Hunter Defender sword was a strange new object: a mystical hovering crescent! The item crackled with electricity and glowed with mystical energy. Intuitively she knew it *was* her Defender sword... but new, changed. She could direct it, move it by thought, stand upon it and float through the air. She could command it to attack with its razor-sharp points or send bolts of lightning into her foes. It was everything her old sword was and more. But why? Who gave it to her? The Watchers?

The mystery grows. She learns more and more about the strange crescent, uncovering new powers and abilities all the time. She dubbed it the *Demon Thunder Moon*, but the frustration of not knowing what it is, why she received it, or for what purpose plagues her. Will all be revealed in time? Should she drop the possibly cursed object as soon as possible?

For the moment she waits... and wonders.

Mara

When Mara's mother first became pregnant, a fraudulent soothsayer told the family that the child would be a girl and that she'd be of exceptionally demure and humble demeanor, forever devoted to her family. He was right on one prediction: Cho An Xiao was definitely a girl. However, even from infancy An was anything but harmonious – she was a living terror! Nothing her harassed mother could do could keep the child in check! Punishments were shrugged off. Scolding was ignored. Even corporal punishments were met with impudent scowls! The Terrible Twos extended into Terrible Threes and Fours. Her first and favorite word was "No!" Childhood brought hours of trying to find the dastardly little thing or clean up her many messes. Ado-

lescence brought a living hell to the family no Yama King could match!

Young An ran away from her small traditional village in the Freelands at age 14, when it became apparent that her parents were willing to practically bankrupt the family and pay any dowry to anyone who'd marry the disgraceful young girl. The search for her was abandoned rather quickly and quietly. Changing her name to "Mara" in honor of the she-demons of the same name, she claimed to be 19 years old, and a trained mystic. She attempted various jobs in various villages or ran various scams, but always ran into a constant external push to be quiet, controlled, and above all, to *conform*. She grew not only to dislike people and society, but to despise Confucius and everything he wrote. So much so that she carefully read and memorized everything he and other scholars wrote on proper behavior in a young woman... and then proceeded to do the exact opposite! She talked loudly, she stared directly and invasively into people's eyes, she wore revealing clothes that exposed as much skin as possible, she drank and smoked in public, she eschewed any job and was openly insubordinate to any authorities. In short, she was a public menace!

Mara's attitude continued to get her into trouble as she fled village after village and job after job. She attracted unwanted attention from criminal elements and demonic agents alike. As she grew up and filled out, she also gained the attentions of every man, young and old! She learned quickly that her body was a weapon and used it as such. Her looks, charm, and audacity became a tool and she strung along countless admirers and shattered many hearts in pursuit of her needs, desires, and whims. Soon she was leaving a trail of heartbreak, anger, and annoyance in her wake and found herself on the run from an increasing number of pursuers: amorous and/or vengeful ex-lovers/admirers, demon-slayers-to-be who were *certain* she was an Infernal, criminals and gamblers after her for debts, authorities after her for petty crimes, and servants of the Yama Kings after her for punishment... or recruitment!

In the end, her chaotic ways would certainly have led to a very short life were it not for one old man: Jiu Nien Ya ("Nine Sticky Ducks" – it's a long story). "Ya" was a Demon Queller of much renown. He'd bested over a hundred demons and reformed twelve. He was also known as a drunken philanderer and a general pain in the rear. Perhaps this is what motivated him to take Mara under his wing as a student. Perhaps he was just a dirty old man. Either way, he soon decided that Mara would be his apprentice, whether she wanted that honor or not.

He began simply by "running into her" in the strangest of places. He'd take the opportunity to crassly mock and harass her, calling her a "stupid, clumsy girl" or other such demeaning insult. At first she thought him a harmless old drunk, but one day when she was jumped in the woods by three demons bent on revenge for some past slight, Jiu jumped out of a tree and defeated them all in humiliating ways. Impressed, she asked him to train her. He laughed and called her a disparaging name. She was outraged. Who was this old drunk to mock her? She screamed at him. She taunted and challenged him. She insulted him and questioned his manhood. He laughed and walked away.

Soon she was following him! No person had so insulted her! Many had called her unforgiving names or questioned her morals, but none had questioned her ability. None had openly in-

sulted her. And above all, none had refused her! Perhaps there was some wisdom in Jiu's actions, for soon she became obsessed with learning his secrets. Little by little he seemingly "re-lented" and told her a small secret or gave her a small pointer, all the while continuing to mock and insult her and question her abilities. "Give up, girl! You could never best a demon! Run along and fetch me a drink!" Every insult and questioning of her abilities merely fueled her ambition to succeed and prove the "old fool" wrong.

Despite all outward appearances, the unorthodox apprenticeship worked like a charm. By the time she reached her actual 19th birthday, she had mastered the art of Demon Quelling as a Fu Yao Da Chia Demon Catcher. She'd become tough, athletic, graceful, confident, and most importantly, cunning and patient. She and Jiu parted ways and she took up a career of her own, in a field where her strange ways were somewhat acceptable as long as she saved the village from the demon(s). Her fame increased, as did her infamy, for despite it all she was still the insubordinate and anti-authoritarian, scandalous woman who spoke too loud and stared too long and wore too little. She still mouthed off to elders and authorities (Jiu's "training" merely taught her more inventive insults!) and continued to leave a trail of broken hearts wherever she went. She was still the selfish brat she always was, only now her energies were turned to fighting that ultimate "authority": the Yama Kings!

Now, years later, she has built up quite the resume in demon quelling, having bested dozens, and is near reforming one (see below). She uses other humans as pawns, however, having few lasting friendships, but she is almost never deliberately cruel (just utterly self-absorbed). Currently, she associates with Zhong Xiang (see below), but how long this will last remains to be seen. While her skill, luck, and fame continue to keep her wealthy, active, and generally tolerated by even the most conservative societies, she's making enemies as quickly as she's making friends. In her short career she's built up a long list of disgruntled or obsessed former lovers and admirers, angry authorities, crossed criminal groups, and enraged demons and Yama Kings. And many wonder how long she can keep this life up before her past indiscretions catch up with her.

Could this be why The Watchers watch?

Mara's Demons

Over her career, Mara has established a large "stable" of demon prisoners and reform-project "initiates." They include:

An Ying Hai: [Searching for Path to Enlightenment] *Falcon Demon* far on the road to Enlightenment. Ironically, An is becoming aware of how "unenlightened" Mara's attitude is and is facing a choice between disillusionment and stepping up to save her savior!

Feng Ping: [Frightened Hater] *Pig Demon* who was rather benign and unobtrusive before being bound by Mara. Now he's disgruntled and, if he escapes, would be a true tormentor of humans.

Wan Lou: [Plays the Game] *Ox Head Demon* who delights in war. Currently feigning a desire for enlightenment even as he plots Mara's downfall.

Shun Kuei: [Plays the Game] *Fox Faerie* who plays confident and “sister” to Mara and attempts to engage Mara’s selfishness to engineer her corruption.

Shu Mo: [Belligerent Captive] *Monkey Wolf* angry at being bound, fighting to escape.

Tian Hong Huo: [Belligerent Captive] *Naga* who delights in the chaos Mara creates, but is more than ready to escape her control and devour her alive.

Mara

Real Name: Cho An Xiao (“Harmonious Devotion to the Family Cho”).

Race: Human.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 16, M.A. 18, P.S. 19, P.P. 20, P.E. 24, P.B. 25, Spd 14.

Hit Points: 69. **S.D.C.:** 132.

M.D.C.: 9 (Life Stone).

Horror Factor: 10 when in Demon Armor, none otherwise.

Age: 25. **Sex:** Female.

Size: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.78 m). **Weight:** 124 pounds (56 kg).

P.P.E.: 8

Disposition: Rebellious, ambitious, and bold, Mara lives for two things: action and insubordination. Long disgusted with the old Confucian order, Mara lives to poke her fingers in the eyes of the establishment... any establishment!

Appearance: Tall and well built, with a curvaceous body she loves to (shockingly!) show off. She has long, black hair, dark, intrusive eyes, and full lips. She is exceedingly attractive and scandalously aware of it!

Natural Abilities: Has the Demon Queller Body Hardening powers of Control Revulsion, Feign Death (72%), Laugh at Pain (82%), Life Stone, Resist Psychic Drain, and Yung Chin alcohol tolerance (52%). Can sense and manipulate Chi. Does M.D.C. damage with ordinary weapons. Curse Durations halved. Plus all special abilities from Demon Queller Body Hardening (see *Rifts® China 2*, page 92). No fear of heights.

Penalties: None, per se; penalties from alcohol are halved.

Curses and Insanities: No current Curses, though she has suffered a few in her day. She once suffered a *Curse of an Interesting Life*; ironically, no one noticed, including her! No full Insanities, but has an arrogant love of self that’s quickly slipping towards Megalomania.

Experience Level: 8th Level Fu Yao Da Chia Demon Queller.

Combat: Shao-Lin Kung Fu and Xian Pu Kung Fu (Drunken Style).

Attacks per Melee: Six (6).

Bonuses: +7 to initiative, +7 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +7 damage, +10 to roll w/ impact, +8 to pull punch, +2 to entangle, +1 to Back Flip/Leap, +6 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs psionics, +7 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 to save vs vomit/gag reflex, +4 to save vs pain, +1 to save vs insanity, +6 to save vs possession, +4 to save vs Demonic Curses, +2 to save vs Psychic Drain, +5 to save vs poison, +1 to save vs magic vapors/breath or magic illness, +33% to save vs

coma/death. 50% Charm/Intimidate, +24% Intimidate (Special; Laugh at Pain). 75% Charm/Impress. +2% to all skills. Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20.

Damage: Dragon Punch (3D4), Tiger Kick (2D8), Leopard Strike (2D4), Snake Kick (1D10), Crane Elbow (2D4).

Psionics/Chi Abilities: “Drunken Style” powers of Falling Technique, Drunken Staff, Mystic Slime, Neutralize Toxins, Belch Toxic Vapor, Drunken Stranger, and Blind Drunk (see *Rifts® China 2*, pages 39-40). **I.S.P. (Chi):** 84

Skills of Note: W.P. Gien Bian Whip (+2 to strike, +2 to parry, +3 M.D.), W.P. Small Sword, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Staff, W.P. Chain, W.P. Crossbow, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Demon Snare, Demon Wrestling 67%, Tiao Qi 69%, Languages: Chinese 97% and Demongogian 82%, Literacy: Chinese Ideograms 87%, Imperial Bureaucracy & Administration 42%, Lore: Chinese Mythology 92%, Lore: Classical Chinese Studies 97%, Meditation, Trap/Mine Detection 72%, Trap Construction 65%, Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Cardsharp 59%, Concealment 50%, Gambling 67%, Gambling (Dirty Tricks) 50%, Palming 57%, Prowl 62%, Rope Works 82%, Seduction 47%, Wilderness Survival 79%, Detect Ambush 77%, and Pilot Hovercraft 87%.

Weapons, Armor, and Equipment of Note: “Demon Thunder Moon”, a special hovering crescent-shaped Demon Hunter Defender Sword (3D6; hovers and attacks telekinetically; shoots lightning: 4D6 M.D. with a 500 foot/152 m range; casts Thunderclap three times daily, plus other powers Mara is slowly learning); gives +2 to disarm, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +5 to save vs Demonic Curses, +4 to save vs Demonic Disease/Illness, +5 to save vs poison, breath & vapor attacks, and +6 to save vs possession; user can not be bound, tied, or held with it hovering near), Gen Bien whip (2D4). Has the following Demon Catching Hero Artifacts: Wan Gui Yao Book, Demon Catching Mirror, assorted Binding Magic items, Fire Pearl, Pearl of Recuperation, Pearl of Demon Strength, Pink Cloud Pearl, Climbing Scarf, Scarf of Demon Binding, Scarf of Entrancement, and a Partial Suit of Demon Armor (A.R. 14, 60 M.D.C., Horror Factor 10).

Vehicles: A sleek custom hovercycle (M.D.C. 85, speed 150 mph/240 km, no weapons) or can ride Demon Thunder Moon as if it were a TW Wing Board (her only – attuned only to Mara).

Cybernetics: None. **Money:** 469,000 credits.

Zhong Xiang

Lim Chih Lang was born and raised in the Geofront, the middle child of a respected family (both parents were trusted party members). As almost the quintessential “middle child,” Lang felt at odds with the family being neither the “chosen successor” like his older brother or “family baby” like his little sister. From a young age his strong and sensitive mind was overlooked. His ambitious brother and athletic sister showed “great potential to the family and nation” while he was simply the “strange, moody, clumsy one.” His siblings soon dubbed him “Zhong Xiang,” the “middle elephant,” for his birth order, bad skin, and plodding gait.

As he grew he was plagued by a childhood illness that scarred his face, and by social dysfunction that pushed him

deeper into the books. While he excelled at classes he continued on a spiral of social displacement and unpopularity. Martial Arts training helped to overcome his total lack of confidence and childhood clumsiness (a clumsiness based more on his hesitation than on any physical disability), but his inner demon of self-doubt never completely went away. His studies and mastery of Maoist and Classical learning rocketed him to the top of his class and brought praise, but still his inner doubts made him question the sudden admiration.

Eventually, he continued on to training at a PLA academy and joined the Party. There, he gave himself fully over to the PLA and volunteered for the Lightning Geoborg program. He excelled at every test, even the psychological test. This latter he aced with near perfect answers – a more suspicious bureaucrat might have noticed they were a little *too* perfect.

As a Lightning Geoborg (M.O.M.), Xiang attained new, godly skills and abilities, but still the demons of doubt festered. He excelled at training and in the active service, gaining immediate recognition for his discipline and bravery, but still his feelings of inadequacy plagued him. He gained a reputation for quiet, meditative professionalism, but that was a facade. Inside he still hated his scarred face (rarely takes off his Geoborg mask) and loathed his weakness. It was a recipe for disaster in a Lightning Geoborg.

He was on a solo recon mission through the Freelands when he met and immediately fell for Mara. His inner doubts had led to a monk-like existence of isolation and celibacy his entire life. What others saw as restraint and composure was, in fact, a gnawing fear of success. Besides, women were either married to the Party or too demure for him. But Mara, this wild, demontaming, dripping-with-confidence woman, was unlike any he'd ever seen. She was strong. She was exciting. She was sure to break his heart and he knew it... and he needed that rejection.

It began as a simple teaming-up. Their missions coincided. Both hated the Yama Kings. Both saw a real strategic advantage in partnership. As always, Mara used her feminine charms and wiles and he fell madly and self-destructively in love with her. Perhaps she even felt a small bit of affection for him. Perhaps she still does. But as their brief affair burned hot, it burned out fast and Mara moved on to the next lover/victim/toy. But Xiang was still infatuated, still in love. It's an attraction that has grown from infatuation to love to full obsession – an obsession that may grow dangerous as his M.O.M.-damaged mind continues to deteriorate. In a “moth to the flame” enticement, he followed her, went AWOL, and turned his back on everything he once held dear to be next to her, even if he could no longer have her. She accepted his “partnership of friends and comrades” and the two formed a team.

Now he stands with her still, the junior partner and bodyguard to a woman who loves him not. In his mind he's convinced himself it's out of duty and friendship, but in his heart he knows he's hopelessly addicted to her, for in her he sees what he wishes to be, and finds the rejection he subconsciously so desperately needs.

Zhong Xiang (“Middle Elephant”)

Real Name: Lim Chih Lang (“Determined Waves of the Family Lim”).

Race: Human.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 8, M.A. 9, P.S. 28 (Augmented), P.P. 22, P.E. 23, P.B. 9, Spd 31.

Hit Points: 64. **S.D.C.:** 145.

M.D.C. (Mo Fuqian Demon Skin): 33 (heals 2D6 M.D.C. per 12 hours).

Horror Factor: None.

Age: 22. **Sex:** Male.

Size: 6 feet, 8 inches (2.03 m). **Weight:** 338 pounds (152 kg).

P.P.E.: 32

Disposition: Quiet, calm, and meditative on the surface, but secretly burns with doubts and emotions he can barely control. His devotion to Mara is obsessive and his internal fight with his emotions is ever more straining.

Appearance: Few see him outside of his Geoborg armor, and even those who do almost never see him without his mask. He is large with a well-toned body, but still has residual “baby fat” in his face, stomach, and limbs, giving him a Buddha-like or quasi “Sumo” look (the latter much to his irritation as a nationalistic Chinese man). His face is pockmarked with pox scars (childhood illness). His eyes seem distant and melancholy and are often downcast.

Natural Abilities: Can lift twice normal, has double normal endurance, 10 times normal exertion before exhaustion, can operate 72 hours at full activity, and needs only four hours of sleep per day. Enhanced Vision, Hearing, Smell, Taste, and Touch. Recognize Odors (65%), Recognize Person by Smell (25%), Track by Smell (30%), I.D. Poison, etc., by Taste (55%), +10% to skills requiring touch. Heals twice as fast as normal and feels no pain until down to 10 Hit Points or less. Bio-Regenerate (2D6 Hit Points & 3D6 S.D.C., close wounds in 2D4 minutes; restore all Hit Points and 4D6 S.D.C. over six hours rest).

Penalties: All those associated with his insanities and M.O.M. conversion.

Insanities: A life-long Fear of Success with feelings of severe inadequacy. Obsession: Mara (love/need – currently rather benign and dangerous only to those who would hurt her, but as time progresses this may turn deadly). Phobia: Caves (a subconscious fear of punishment if he ever returns to the Geofront). Bipolar Disorder, the mania-depression cycles linked invariably to Mara's treatment of him. Frenzy: Extreme Tension or Anxiety, typically linked to Mara-related stress.

Experience Level: 6th Level Lightning Geoborg.

Combat: Monkey Style Kung Fu with Boxing.

Attacks per Melee: Six.

Bonuses: +3 to initiative, +4 to strike, +11 to parry, +11 to dodge, +4 to automatic dodge, +14 damage, +9 to roll w/ impact, +2 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +20% to Maintain Balance, +3 to Perception Rolls, +2 to Leap/Somersault/Back Flip, +2 to save vs Psionics (saves at 12 or higher), +4 to save vs possession, +6 to save vs mind control, +4 to save vs magic, +8 to save vs poison, +4 to save vs toxic gases, drugs, and disease. +31% to save vs coma/death. +5% to all skills.

Has Automatic Dodge. Critical Strike from Behind. Knock Out/Stun on a Natural 20.

Demon Slaying Frenzy: +1 attack per melee, +1 to strike, +2 to automatic dodge, +5 to save vs possession, +3 to save vs Demonic Curses, +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

Monkey Moves: *Berserk Monkey* (+2 attacks, +4 to strike, +4 damage, +2 to roll w/ impact, -4 to parry, cannot dodge!), *Monkey One-Hand Climb*, and *Monkey Shriek* (save vs 12 or higher or lose initiative, one melee action, and -1 on all combat bonuses, or Ear Shriek: save vs 16 or higher or suffer 1D6 damage straight to Hit Points or Knock Out for 1D6 melee rounds plus double stun penalties).

Damage: 1D4 Strike, 1D6 Kick. Augmented Power Punch 1D6 M.D.

Psionics: Telekinetic Leap (8), Intuitive Combat (10), and Sense Evil (2). **I.S.P. (Chi)**: 56

Skills of Note: Language: Chinese 98%, Literacy: Chinese 75%, Mathematics: Basic 95%, Prowl 75%, Pilot: Hovercraft 90%, Motorcycle 95%, and Bicycle 79%, Disguise 70%, Impersonation 60%/46%, Gymnastics, Climbing 85%/75%, Escape Artist 60%, Land Navigation 71%, Wilderness Survival 75%, Detect Ambush 70%, Detect Concealment 70%, Streetwise 61%, Tailing 75%, Swimming 96%, Boxing, Body Building, Athletics (General), Basic Mechanics 60%, Basic Electronics 60%, Intelligence 67%, Interrogation 60%, Tracking 55%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 65%, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, W.P. Sword, W.P. Thrown Weapons, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Rifle, W.P. Pistol.

Weapons, Armor, and Equipment of note: Mo Fuqian Demon Skin (reflected in M.D.C.), Lightning Warrior Armor (M.D.C.: Main Body 78, Arms 35 each, Legs 35 each, Helmet/Face 80; no movement penalties). Vibro-Sword (Executioner's Sword style; 3D6 M.D.), Vibro-Claws (both hands; 2D6 M.D.), GHT-88 (3D6 M.D.), GHT-89 (3D6 S.D., 2D6 M.D., or 4D6 M.D. for mini-missile), GHT-95 (5D6 M.D.), GHT-93 (single shot: 1D8 M.D., three-shot burst: 3D8 M.D.), and "Vengeance" Chi Rifle (1D4x10 M.D.; 10-round burst vs Demons: 3D4x10 M.D.).

Vehicles: Geofront Cave Bike (military version).

Cybernetics: None, save the M.O.M. implants.

Money: 134,000 credits.

The Watchers

— Agents of the Celestial Court!

Little does Mara or Xiang suspect the true nature of The Watchers, and what they signify. Little can the two demon hunters understand what these two mysterious beings mean to their own future and to the future of the Middle Kingdom. For these beings are, in fact, direct agents of the Celestial Court! Specifically, they represent the Bureaucracy of Thunder, and answer directly to Raiden, the Thunder God.

They are *recruiters* for the Celestial Bureaucracy! And Mara is one of their final candidates.

The Celestial Court has begun to take notice of what the Yama Kings have wrought. Although the Court is unable to penetrate the Mist, and the full extent of the Hell on Earth is yet still a mystery to them, the circumstantial evidence is beginning to

pile up. The Celestial Emperor *knows* the Yama Kings are up to something, and he wants to know *what*. To this end he has tasked the Court with dispatching agents directly to Earth, and by recruiting mortals for direct service to the Bureaucracy. The Celestial Agents cannot penetrate the Mist, but perhaps human heroes can!

The Watchers are but two of these agent-recruiters, and they have chosen Mara as a final candidate for what may be the greatest service to the Celestial Court...

...the *Order of the Lightning Saints!*

Calla

Optional Material for Rifts®

By Josh Hilden

Illustration by Allen Manning

Calla Marie Campbell was born in the City of Lazlo to a single mother living in the neighborhood of Upper Lakeside. Calla's mother, Danica, was an employee at the local Armstrong Factory who had to work very hard to make ends meet. Calla's father was a man named Tor Nido, and he had been killed in a traffic accident three months after he and Danica had begun dating. Or so everyone believes.

There was a lot of love in the Campbell household, and it became clear to everyone that Calla was something special. Her impressive physical attributes, coupled with her prodigious mystical talents, tagged Calla at an early age for a future of incredible potential. If truth is to be told though, Calla wanted none of it. She was a girl of strong will and was determined to follow her own path. Calla's mother and the administrators of the school she attended assumed that Calla would accept a full scholarship to the Lazlo University of Mystic Arts upon graduation from high school. But instead Calla informed her mother she intended to see the world, and the day after graduation she booked passage to the Eternal City in England, and began almost twenty years of travel.

She traveled across Europe and Africa, went sight seeing in South America, fought vampires in Mexico, and romped all over North America. Things were great until she received word from a high school friend that her talents would be of use in the Kingdom of Tolkeen.

Calla went to Tolkeen.

The war in Tolkeen had its effects all over the continent of North America, and many who went to fight learned that they had darkness within them that they had never suspected. But Calla maintained her core goodness throughout the war, and during the Sorcerers' Revenge she refused to participate in the slaughter but she never abandoned her post. During the fall of the Kingdom of Tolkeen, Calla worked herself to exhaustion helping civilians escape the carnage. In the final hours, she depleted her magic and found herself surrounded by a company of Coalition Dead Boys. She knew this was the end. As she braced herself for the final battle, a portal opened and a man dressed as a viking warrior from the history books emerged and slew the CS troops with lightning and thunder. As Calla passed out she thought she heard the man say, "Sleep, my dearest heart, your duty here is done." But that had to be a dream... right?



When Calla awoke, she was with a group of refugees heading south to get around the CS forces besieging the remnants of the Kingdom. Three weeks later, they arrived on the shores of Lake Ontario and entered Lazlo. In the months following the end of the Tolkeen-CS War, Calla began agitating for the militarization of the Free State of Lazlo, and people listened to her. Recently, Chairman Plato himself authorized the formation of a Lazlo Special Operations Battalion and placed Calla in charge of organizing and commanding it, giving her the rank of Colonel.

Parentage: While Calla's mother was indeed a normal human woman, her father is, in fact, Thor the Asgardian god. Calla is unaware of her father's true nature, although she is suspecting that she is more than just a gifted human warrior. Thor takes great pride in the deeds of his only known daughter, and has kept a firm eye on her since her birth. It was her father that engineered Calla's possession of Aten. However, Thor's direct intervention to save his daughter's life during the Tolkeen War has had unforeseen repercussions – Lord Splynnrcryth had agents on the ground who became aware of the god's interference on the mortal plane, and discovered who it was that Thor came to aid.

Calla

Name: Calla Marie Campbell.

Rank: Major in the Army of the Kingdom of Tolkeen (retired), Colonel in the Lazlo Defense Forces Special Operations Battalion.

Race: Demigoddess (half human).

Attributes: I.Q. 21, M.E. 20, M.A. 21, P.S. 50 (Supernatural), P.P. 16, P.E. 28, P.B. 28, Spd 21.

Alignment: Principled.

M.D.C.: 338

S.D.C.: 226 (on S.D.C. worlds).

Hit Points: 136 (on S.D.C. worlds).

Attacks per Melee: 8

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m). **Weight:** 138 pounds (62 kg).

Age: 37. **Lifespan:** 1000-4000 years.

Disposition: Calla is warrior, and her first impulse when confronted with an obstacle is to knock it flat on its butt. But she is also a woman of great joy; she likes classical music (her love affair with Elvis Presley has lasted for more than 20 years), and is a closet groupie of Chairman Plato... his wings are sooo cute.

Description: Calla is a complete knockout. All through her school career she was surrounded by a crowd of admirers, but Calla hasn't allowed that to go to her head. Her long, dark hair frames a head of Elvish features; because the people of Lazlo know that her mother is a human, they believe that Calla has a genetic mutation that has led to positive results.

Horror Factor: 9 (when recognized as a Demigoddess).

Experience Level: 8th level Demigod (Ley Line Walker O.C.C.).

Natural Abilities: Fire and Cold Resistant (both do half damage), Regenerates 1D6X5 M.D.C. per minute, Super Strong, Super Tough, Trust and Intimidate 65%, Charm and Impress 86%.

Skills of Note: Language: American 98%, Language: Dragonese 98%, Language: Spanish 98%, Climbing 98%/82%, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Land Navigation 79%, Wilderness Survival 87%, Pilot Automobile 88%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 87%, Lore: D-Bees 82%, Lore: Indians 82%, Lore: Magic 82%, Lore: Religion 87%, Literacy: American 82%, Literacy: Spanish 82%, Literacy: Dragonese 82%, W.P. Sword, W.P. Paired Weapons.

Secondary Skills: Mythology 77%, Prowl 72%, Pick Locks 77%, Pick Pockets 72%, Streetwise 59%, Literacy: Gobblely 77%, Language: Gobblely 97%, Writing 72%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Boxing.

Combat Abilities: Restrained Punch 1D6x10 S.D.C., Normal Punch 6D6 M.D.C., Power Punch (counts as two attacks) 2D4x10 M.D.C., Back flip, Back Flip Escape, Body Flip/Throw 1D6 (opponent loses one attack and initiative), Karate Kick 2D6 M.D.C., Leap Kick (counts as two attacks) 3D8 M.D.C.

Bonuses: +3 to initiative, +5 to parry, +6 to dodge, +4 to roll with punch or fall, +5 to pull punch, +3 to strike, +2 to entangle, +2 to disarm, Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20, +11 to save vs magic, +4 to save vs psionics, +7 to save vs Horror Factor, +48% to save vs coma/death, +2 to save vs possession and mind control, +3 to save vs curses, and +3 to Perception Rolls.

Magical Knowledge: All Standard Ley Line Walker Abilities (see pages 113-116 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**).

Spell Knowledge: Globe of Daylight (2), See the Invisible (3), Thunderclap (4), Throwing Stones (5), Extinguish Fire (4), Concealment (6), Armor of Ithan (10), Energy Bolt (5), Impervious to Fire (5), Carpet of Adhesion (10), Fire Bolt (7), Magic Net (7), Superhuman Strength (10), Superhuman Endurance (12), Superhuman Speed (10), Call Lightning (15), Impervious to Energy (20), Teleport: Lesser (15), Fly as the Eagle (25), Invulnerability (25), Sub-Particle Acceleration (20), Eyes of the Wolf (25), Luck Curse (40), Magical Adrenal Rush (45).

Permanent P.P.E. Base: 248. **Spell Strength:** +2.

Psionic Knowledge: Mind Block (4), Object Read (6).

I.S.P.: 92 (Minor Psionic).

Weapons and Equipment: Calla relies entirely upon her magical abilities and her Rune Sword.

Aten – Lesser Rune Weapon

Aten is a newer Rune Weapon, less than five hundred years old, forged somewhere in the Three Galaxies by a colony of Asgardian Dwarves. The sword was presented to Grall Shalasha, a Wulfen warrior who had earned much honor amongst the powers that be of the United Worlds of Warlock (UWW). Grall wielded Aten through many heroic and famous adventures, until he was murdered by agents of the Splugorth and Aten was taken from him. Aten reappeared on Rifts Earth in the hands of an escaped elderly slave from Atlantis, who gave the weapon to Calla after meeting her and realizing that she had the blood of a god in her veins, specifically Thor, the Asgardian God of Thunder. Unknown to the slave, Aten had sensed the blood of Asgard flowing near him and influenced the slave to

travel to Lazlo and find Calla in hopes of eventually going home.

Aten's plans have changed since bonding with Calla. He has come to love her like a daughter and is fully committed to serving her. Aten has used his abilities to send word of his location and who he is serving to the realm of Asgard, but he has yet to receive instructions. Aten is unaware of Thor's plans regarding his daughter.

I.Q.: 24

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Personality: Aten is still a kid at heart; he enjoys a good joke and is the master of the witty come back. If truth be told, this facet of his personality can sometimes drive Calla a little crazy. In reality, Aten is a wise and noble person, in life he had been a Chiang-Ku Dragon who allowed himself to be bonded to the blade before he died. He loves Calla and has begun to think of her as his own daughter, and it is only a matter of time before Aten reveals Calla's past to her regardless of whether he receives orders from Asgard or not.

Description: A long, two-handed sword with a curving blade, colored blue and silver, with an ivory and gold pommel and hilt. The blade is covered in faint white runes.

Properties:

- Telepathy with wielder (5 mile/8 km range).
- Indestructible.
- Wielder and blade can sense one another's location (25 mile/40 km radius).
- +2 to all saving throws.
- +5 to strike.
- +3 to parry.
- 1D4x10 M.D.C. damage.
- Can fire 12 energy blasts (treat as magical fire) per 24 hour period, 1D6x10 M.D.C. damage, range 300 feet (91.4 km).
- Cast Armor of Ithan spell (equal to 12th level) on the wielder once every 6 hours.
- Can communicate with the realm of Asgard. Unknown to Aten, Thor receives all of his messages.

Captain Moi Tse Hun

Optional Material for Rifts® China

By Mark Dudley & Joseph Cain

Illustration by Mark Dudley

The young woman who would become the "Hero of Yunnan" was born Moi Tse Hun in Free Yunnan's "Village of a Thousand Pleasures." As its name suggests, the village is primarily known for the quality of its "leisurely activities." Tse Hun's father abandoned both her and her mother when he discovered that the mother's "night job" involved working in this industry. Her mother fell into deep despair, neglecting her duties as a parent and gradually losing the boisterous spirit with which she had come to be identified. One of the most beautiful women in the

village and one of the "star attractions" at the biggest brothel in town, Tse Hun's mother used the ambience of her job to escape from her reality. She created, in her subconscious, a refuge where she had no troubles and everything was alright. Without the benefit of a real parent, Tse Hun's precocious and curious nature often got her into trouble. Like her mother, Tse Hun also found a safe haven from the hellish situation she was born into. The child possessed a hunger for knowledge which helped to distract and shield her from most of the things that her mother did.

When the girl was 9 years of age, the White Monkey Gao Ju came to raze the village, as he did traditionally every year. As is customary of the species, upon entering the village, Gao Ju demanded beauties for his harem and welcomed anyone to try and stop him. A massive brawl took place which, due to the weaponry and savagery involved, leveled a portion of the town. When the dust settled, the monkey had absconded with 4 of the most beautiful women from the village's "pleasure industry." Mysteriously, the Madam's daughter and a few other well connected women in the village, all prizes in their own right, were left untouched. One of those taken was Tse Hun's mother, who seemed to be the only one who didn't put up a fight. Witnessing the women's abduction, and her mother's refusal to defend herself, left a deep and searing scar on Tse Hun's young and fragile psyche, destroying any regard that she might have had left for her mother. After claiming his new "property," Gao Ju smashed more of the village, burying many of the villagers under the wreckage, including Tse Hun.

Soon after Gao Ju's departure, a Geofront scouting party arrived at the village and began the task of assessing the damage from the demon monkey's latest rampage. While aiding the recovery efforts, the Gun Master known as Yu Hun Ja heard Tse Hun's cries coming from an inn blocked by debris and rescued her from the wreckage. Later, after hearing the villagers' tales concerning Gao Ju, Hun Ja sent a detachment to search for the demon monkey and his captives. After days of searching, Hun Ja's party was forced to leave the village. Yu Hun Ja, herself an orphan, was impressed with the young Tse Hun's indomitable spirit, so much so that she decided to raise the youngster as her own. The Geofront Arcology proved to be an excellent environment for eager youngsters like Tse Hun; the wealth of technology and knowledge fed her insatiable appetite for information. As she grew older, Tse tried to forget the horrors of her old life and the village she left behind. However, at the age of 17 a nightmare brought all of the old memories crashing into her conscious mind. After some cursory research on the nature of the White Monkey, she decided that Gao Ju and all his kind must be eradicated. As her obsession with the demon grew, Tse Hun devoured even more mystic lore concerning these creatures. Over the next year Tse Hun developed an acute phobia and hatred for monkeys. These feelings ran so deep that she actually developed a full-blown hatred for all monkeys, whether supernatural or not.

At 18, Moi Tse Hun prepared to fulfill the Geofront military requirement. Beginning with grueling martial arts training, Tse Hun began to formulate a strategy to combat Gao Ju. She realized that her martial training, while excellent, would still not make her a match for the White Monkey. She needed to find and destroy Gao Ju soon and the only way to deal with an enemy



DUD 08

like him is with firepower, something the Geofront has in abundance. As she observed the various weapon systems, Tse Hun gained an affinity for the small, compact power armor known as the Red Falcon. With her penchant for overachievement, Tse Hun mastered the piloting techniques needed to become a Red Falcon Ace. She also displayed an amazing talent as a mech mechanic, training to the point where she could completely field strip and maintain her own Red Falcon.

Over the next 5 years, Moi Tse Hun's goal to become one of the Geofront's best pilots began to bear fruit. She won sortie after sortie against the Yama Kings' demonic hordes and various other enemies. She was given command of a crack squad of all female pilots who shared her demon fighting, hard line philosophies. Yet Tse Hun's accomplishments proved empty to her as her quarry, Gao Ju, still managed to elude her.

Finally, in a chance flyover, Tse Hun spotted the White Monkey raiding a small fishing village. In an epic battle, Tse Hun and her squadron handed the demon the first defeat of his life. Though he managed to escape, Gao Ju did not take his defeat lightly and began to plot his revenge. Following the beast to one of his many lairs, Tse Hun came across her mother's prize possession, a jade comb, sitting atop a pile of bones. She was finally able to deal with the torrent of pent up emotions concerning her mother's abduction. Tse Hun laid her mother to rest and began to plan an ambush that would put an end to Gao Ju's rampaging.

Disguised as Japanese adventurers, Tse Hun and the squadron returned to the "Village of a Thousand Pleasures." Her plan was to lay in wait until the White Monkey returned to claim his yearly boon. Again, Tse Hun's curiosity got the better of her, as she discovered a terrible pact that the village elders and prominent business people made with Gao Ju a century prior. Tse Hun learned that the brothels were set up not only so that the village could take advantage of its abundance of beautiful women and attract more trade, but primarily to satiate the Demon Monkey's appetites so that no daughter of any of the village elders or business people would be taken by him. Furious, Tse Hun seized the village, placing it under her protection.

Her crusade against Gao Ju took her squadron into combat against a number of White Monkeys and their minions. The women's exploits against these legendary demons earned them the bawdy nickname "The Monkey Dusters." The village was eventually properly incorporated into the PRC and Tse Hun was placed in command of this new outpost. As a means of luring more White Monkeys to the village, Tse Hun encouraged the proliferation of brothels in the area. She was also given command of a larger, more permanent force of female spec-ops teams and specialists. As her achievements continued to grow, Moi Tse Hun's activities drew greater attention from her superiors in the Communist Party, setting her up as a poster child for the hardliners who wanted to bring Geofront power to bear against the Yama Kings.

Tse Hun and Gao Ju battled on many occasions. These battles have escalated over the years, with Gao Ju calling in more minions to aid him than is his usual tactic. In one of these pitched battles, Tse Hun and the squadron made the fatal mistake of showing themselves to Gao. Since then the monkey's tactics have taken a decided turn for the worse. No longer does Gao Ju want to kill the Monkey Dusters. He has seen that the

mecha are piloted by seven very beautiful young women, and now he covets them like no women before them. This revelation transformed the subsequent battles into games of cat and mouse as the monkey begins to employ more tactics that single out and attempt to separate each pilot from the group, making them easier to defeat. It is Gao Ju's greatest fantasy to add the Dusters to his harem so that he may break them to his will, to torture, humiliate and finally wear their skins as trophies. Until this comes to pass, Gao Ju and Moi Tse Hun continue to be the bitterest of foes.

Captain Moi Tse Hun

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 14, M.A. 16, P.S. 13, P.P. 14, P.E. 12, P.B. 17, Spd 27.

Hit Points: 29. **S.D.C.:** 28.

Permanent I.S.P. Base (Chi): 42

Disposition: Tse Hun is a dedicated soldier, always ready to stand for the beliefs of the people and the party. Extremely brash in her younger days, Tse Hun has learned to better focus her aggression and govern her passions, making her a better tactician. She still enjoys the adulation of the masses and loves her adopted mother, doing whatever she can to make her proud. Tse Hun sides with the hardliners who believe that the time has long passed that the Geofront should unleash its weapons of war against the demonic Yama Kings. Should this ever occur, you can bet that Tse Hun will be leading the vanguard.

Beneath her no-nonsense exterior lays a lonely and tortured young woman who secretly feels as if she didn't do enough to save her mother. She is determined to see the demonic Gao Ju's head on a pike, but she has learned to respect her adversary and do as he does, bide her time for the opportunity to finish him and the rest of his kind. She has no love for selfish or boastful men because of her father. She places him just a little above the Demon Monkey in terms of retribution to be meted out. Should she ever meet her old man, she plans to make him suffer the same way her mother did.

Level of Experience: 4th level Metal Warrior.

Combat Abilities:

Hand to Hand Combat: Shao-lin Kung Fu.

Standard Attacks: Dragon Power Punch (3D4 damage), Tiger Kick (2D8 damage), Leopard Hand Strike (2D4 damage), Snake Snap Kick (1D10 damage), Crane Elbow Strike (2D4 damage). **Note:** All of these attacks are S.D.C. based.

Mystic Martial Art Power: *Bok Pai Kung Fu* (Crane Style).

Special Attacks (see *Rifts® China 2*, page 28, for a more complete description of the following): Crane Fist (4D6 S.D.C./H.P. or 1D6 M.D. damage), Crescent Kick (3D6 S.D.C./H.P. or 2D4 M.D. damage), Immortal Crane Beak Fist (6D6 S.D.C./H.P. or 4D6 M.D. damage).

Special Feature: Mo Fuqian: Demon Skin (33 M.D.C.).

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +3 to strike, +1 to parry or dodge, +2 damage, +3 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, +4 to pull punch, Critical Strike on a Natural 19-20, 40% to inspire trust or intimidate, 35% to charm/impress.

O.C.C. Skills: Mathematics: Basic 80%, Language: Chinese at 95%, Literacy: Chinese 75%, Pilot: Bicycle 66%, Computer Operation 70%, Electronic Countermeasures 65%, Intelligence 54%, Read & Operate Sensory Equipment 65%, Pilot Robots & Power Armor 85%, Robot Combat Basic (all other types), Robot Combat Elite: Black Tiger & Red Falcon, Navigation 75%, Pilot Motorcycle 77%.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Aircraft Mechanics 50%, Basic Electronics 50%, Body Building and Weightlifting, First Aid 60%, Military Etiquette 60%, Radio: Basic 70%, Wardrobe & Grooming 62%.

Secondary Skills: Automotive Mechanic 40%, Camouflage 35%, Computer Repair 45%, Recognize Weapon Quality 40%, Athletics (General).

Standard Equipment:

Armor: M.D.C. Shadow Armor as a basic uniform plus an M.D.C. dress uniform and a suit of Standard Brigandine Armor (90 M.D.C. main body) for combat operations and missions on the surface.

Weapons: Black Tiger and Red Falcon power armor (of course only one can be used at a time), plus GHF-AK47 Hound's Fang Assault Rifle and a GHT-85 Hound's Tooth Auto-Mag pistol, and four ammo clips for each.

Other Equipment: Three signal flares, survival knife, utility belt, air filter and gas mask, walkie-talkie, combat boots, and canteen.

Money: 80,000 credits.

Cybernetics: Gyro-Compass, Clock Calendar and Security Clearance Access Chip (see *Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook*, pages 36-37, for a more detailed description).

Queen Rahela of Worldgate

Optional Material for Rifts® Wormwood™

By Braden Campbell

Illustration by Mike Mumah

In the year 997 of the Great Tribulation, a lavish marriage ceremony took place in the Royal Palace of Worldgate. The groom was the Free City's King, 76-year old Luke Shrombek. The bride was a widowed Countess from the Far Sovereignities named **Rahela Dolvanivish**. At the time, no one knew anything about her, besides the fact that she was very beautiful and considerably younger than the King. However, over the next three years the city's Ruling Council quietly made it its business to delve into her past and to spy on her current activities.

Rahela Dolvanivish was born thirty-three years ago in the balkanized lands northwest of the Kingdom of Light. Her mother was a princess, and her father was a voivod (a military commander whose reputation is so great that he is considered to be a member of the gentry). At age fifteen, she was forcibly engaged to one of her father's protégées, Count Gheorge Kostica, who was himself a renowned knight and minor landowner. His holdings consisted mainly of a large castle and the nearby town

of Ciprian. Located near the Northern Mountains, attacks along its border from the demon lands to the northeast were quite common. Indeed, battle was all the Count craved, and he constantly left his young wife alone for months at a time while he led his army against one foe or another.

Three years after their marriage, the Far Sovereignities launched a major effort to drive the demonic armies deep into the Great Barrier Desert. It was assumed that this would be a quick and simple task, and so the Count enthusiastically put most of his personal fortune towards it. He could never have known that the fight would drag on for nearly eleven years. By the time he was finally killed in battle, the estate was bankrupt. It was absorbed into a neighboring county and Rahela was left with next to nothing.

The Countess was nearly thirty years old, and although she was still beautiful, she was definitely past her prime. Not a single nobleman in the Far Sovereignities would marry her. They regarded her as a pitiable, penniless spinster. Determined to change her fortunes, Rahela put on her best long-trained dress and her fanciest crêpine. Then before she could be served the final humiliation of being evicted from her castle, she and her sole remaining manservant left for the only place that would possibly have them: Worldgate. The last of the Free Cities has a veritable open door, and it is said that anyone can make a new life for themselves within its walls. So that is exactly what the Countess did. She arrived in town with a splash and within a week was a regular fixture in the royal palace. Rahela was quite obviously on the prowl, searching for a new husband, and she created something of a stir because of it. The ladies-in-waiting called her a courtesan whenever they thought she was out of earshot, while the young men, struck by her looks and promiscuity, tripped over each other with boyish attempts to woo her. Yet Rahela was no longer content to marry into some minor nobility. She had set her sights much higher than that.

The King of Worldgate, Luke Shrombek, was a life-long bachelor in his mid-seventies. He was a retired Shifter, who in the fifty years of his reign had never been known to have had so much as a casual girlfriend. It came as a great shock therefore when he announced his engagement to none other than the Countess Rahela Dolvanivish. Following the wedding, she got right down to work.

Determined never to be poor or powerless again, Rahela began amassing her own wealth. Even though King Shrombek doted on her daily and gave in to her every whim, she would no longer entrust her future to any man. Her first act as Queen was to create her own private guard. Ostensibly, this group of twenty exotic warriors exists to protect her from assassins, shape-changing demons, kidnappers, and the like. In reality, they are a well dressed, well equipped band of thugs and thieves who are sent out to find and acquire treasures for the Queen. This might be as simple as mugging someone in the Dimensional Market (transdimensional visitors are especially great for this kind of thing, since most of them arrive here lost and innocently wide-eyed), but missions into other lands are not unheard of either. So far, they have staged robberies in the Kingdom of Light, Ezud, and even in the Dark Domains. Oddly enough, they never travel off-world or raid other dimensions. This is most likely because the Lords of the Exchequer, the nine mysterious beings who actually run the Free City, do so on a regular basis



using their own elite operatives, and not even Queen Rahela wants to offend the Lords by getting in the way of the Zacchaeans (see *The Rifter*® #39 for details).

Queen Rahela

Real Name: Rahela Shrombek (*nee* Dolvanivish).

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 13, M.A. 13, P.S. 8, P.P. 13, P.E. 7, P.B. 17 (25), Spd 11.

M.D.C.: 31

Size: Five feet, four inches (about 1.65 m) with a thin build.

Age: 33, middle-aged for a woman living in a medieval fantasy world.

P.P.E.: 11

Disposition: A schemer and gambler who likes to take chances.

Experience Level: 6th level Noble (adapted from *The Palladium Fantasy RPG*®).

Magic Knowledge: Although not a magic practitioner, Rahela has some academic knowledge of things arcane. She can recognize wards, runes, and circles with 40% accuracy, and can recognize an enchantment (items, people under a spell, etc.) 35% of the time. She can also study the movements of the stars and moons to predict future events with a skill level of 29%.

Psionic Powers: None. For some reason Wormwood suppresses the psionic development of everyone who lives there.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: 5

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll. Kick attack does 1D6 damage. Critical strike on a Natural 19-20.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Knife (+2 to strike, -3 to parry), and W.P. Paired.

Weapons of Note: *The Khandjar of Haroun*, a magical knife whose blade never dulls, is among her favorite weapons. The knife and its scabbard are very old, dating back to before the Great Tribulation. Both are made of resin, are superbly crafted, and for some reason have been enchanted to deal double damage to dragons. **Bonuses:** +2 to initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to strike when thrown, +1 to parry. **Damage:** 1D6+3 (double to dragons of all kinds). The scabbard bestows an immunity to fire (half damage from magical flames, no damage from all other sources) on whoever wears it.

Other Articles of Note: The Queen has an obsession for collecting powerful and unique treasures, but a few of her favorites are outlined below:

- *Amulet of Vanity*. This is a large necklace made of platinum into which is set a Bio-Booster stone. For two hours every day, it can increase the wearer's physical beauty by 50%. In the case of Queen Rahela, this transforms her already stunning looks into something superhuman. She wears the amulet constantly, but typically only activates its magic when going out in public or entertaining her myriad of lovers.
- *Consort Crown of Worldgate*. This jeweled headpiece was specially crafted at King Shrombek's request for the Queen to wear on their wedding day. Its amber-colored centerpiece

is a Spell Gem of Protection. The remainder is made of inter-linked resin pieces. The crown has been enchanted to continually glow with a soft light, and to feel completely weightless.

- *Chalice of St. Winoc.* This fine goblet is one of seven holy relics gone missing from the catacombs beneath Yorktown. Festooned with precious Wormwoodian stones, the cup has several magical powers. Firstly, it will purify any water or drink poured into it and provides the holder of the cup with a constant +1 to save against poisons and disease. Secondly, the chalice can instantly transform up to sixty gallons (227 liters) of water into an excellent wine simply by being dipped into it. Finally, by adding three drops of blood to a cupful of purified water, the chalice can create a healing tonic (restores 4D6 Hit Points or M.D.C. up to six times daily).

Skills of Note: Speaks Wormwoodian English and Barter (the common speech of Worldgate, a derivative of Berber) at 98%. Military/Court Etiquette at 75%. Dance, Play Musical Instrument (harp), and Literacy: English at 70%. Interrogation Techniques at 65%. Disguise, Recognize Weapon Quality, and Lore: Wormwood at 60%. Gemology and Lore: Magic at 55%. Heraldry at 55/60%.

Description: A petite yet curvaceous woman with skin the color of caramel and icy blue eyes. Her hair is a platinum blonde, and she has a noticeable beauty mark on her left cheek.

Allies: The closest thing she has to a friend is Segetorpe, a short, humanoid creature who has acted as her manservant for the past ten years. Segetorpe is a minor demon resembling a cloven-hoofed Goblin of some kind. He was captured by Count Kostica on one of his military campaigns and was given to Rahela as a gift. Segetorpe is completely loyal to the Queen, but will not hesitate to kill, maim, or torture anyone else who gives him cause. (**Quick stats:** Diabolic evil, 120 M.D.C. and can regenerate 2D6 per hour, Horror Factor of 11. Can turn invisible at will. Experience level is equal to a 4th level Vagabond.) The Queen also has her personal guard as mentioned previously. Normally, they number no more than twenty, but the actual members change often. Common O.C.C.s within the Queen's Guard include Temporal Warriors and Wizards, Freelancers, Symbiotic Warriors, and rogue Knights. Of course, since Worldgate is an interdimensional port, characters from all across the Megaverse could conceivably find employment with this band.

Enemies: The Ruling Council of Worldgate is largely indifferent to the Queen's activities and abuses of authority with one exception: Lashara Annthar. Like everyone else, she can plainly see that the Queen is an opportunistic gold digger. However, being the only council member of a good alignment, Lashara is alone when she actually tries to do anything about it. Rahela also has an unknown enemy in the form of Salome, the Queen of the Demon Goblins. The two have never actually met, but Salome has heard the stories and refuses to accept that there might be a woman on the Living Planet more beautiful than she. Currently, Salome has dispatched three of her best assassins (all 7th level) to travel to Worldgate and to scar Rahela horribly; Salome is not aware that it is only the *Amulet of Vanity* that turns Rahela into the most beautiful woman on Wormwood.

Senator Nicole Teigs

Optional Material for the Splicers® RPG

By Chris Kluge and Charles Walton

Illustration by Charles Walton

Nicole Teigs is one of the youngest Dreadguard to ever be appointed to the Great House Artemis Senate. Her acceptance into the Dreadguard at the age of 12 was an impressive accomplishment in itself (although her Dreadguard parents likely had a little something to do with it), but joining the Senate at the age of 18 was absolutely unprecedented. With average life spans as short as they are on this world, it is not uncommon for young people, even teenagers, to quickly rise through the military ranks, but it still takes a truly exceptional person to be accepted into Great House Artemis' highest military office before her twentieth birthday.

It was the combination of her incredible combat prowess, brilliant tactical mind, natural charisma, and skill with people that won over her fellow soldiers, made the beautiful young teen a beloved figure among the general populace, and caught the eye of Warlord Artemis and the Senate. They were greatly impressed by what they had already seen, but they still needed to see if the young Dreadguard had what it took to join the Senate. They placed her in command of a series of extremely dangerous missions that ranged from clandestine raids to full-scale assaults to test her combat and tactical abilities and to see her skills at leading both small squads of commandos and large companies of Roughnecks. She led her troops to victory on every occasion, and with only a handful of casualties. Word of her amazing fighting skills, perfectly executed strategies, and sincere concern for the welfare of the people under her command spread through the Splicers' ranks like wildfire and made her a hero of almost mythic proportions. Warlord Artemis and the Senate were extremely impressed with her as well, but even if they were not, they almost had no choice but to accept her into their ranks. This seemed apparent by the fact that she was appointed as the twenty-first member to the twenty member council so they did not have to wait for an opening.

Members of the Senate are assigned unofficial specialties based on their areas of expertise. Senators skilled in guerilla warfare and battlefield strategy are usually given a more direct hand in daily military planning, while those with a head for diplomacy and negotiation help mediate and settle disputes within the underground haven or between Great Houses. Senator Teigs was a skilled tactician and warrior, but Warlord Artemis wanted to make use of her natural charisma, stunning beauty, and talents for persuasion, seduction, and quickly building strong bonds among those around her, which is why he encouraged her to take up the role of diplomat between the Great Houses. At first, she did not like the idea of retiring her fearsome combat abilities so that she could sweet talk a bunch of foreign dignitaries, but she quickly learned that diplomacy was actually a minor aspect of the job. Diplomats are required to walk the dangerous line of maintaining the fragile peace between the Great Houses



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while simultaneously performing acts that could directly undermine that same peace if they were ever discovered. In addition to their official duties, diplomats are responsible for directing and supporting spies operating within the foreign Great Houses, seeking out and fostering new double agents within those organizations, and smuggling secrets and stolen information back home. Nearly all Great Houses use their diplomats in this manner. They figure if they are going to expose their people to the incredible risks of crossing the surface, they should get as much out of these missions as possible. The Machine controls the surface, and no matter how careful Senator Teigs and her escorts are, they still have to routinely fight their way through robot patrols, Waste Crawlers, and raiders from other Great Houses. Dreadguards who join the Senate do not actually leave their warrior lives behind them. It would be a waste of resources to take these talented warriors off of the battlefield, so no matter what role they are assigned, they all still see plenty of action on a regular basis.

In her eight years of service, Senator Teigs has excelled in her official role as a diplomatic envoy, and her talents for espionage surprised even her. As she became more comfortable in her role, Warlord Artemis began using her as the point person to plan and execute even more delicate operations against rival Great Houses, such as stealing Bio-Tech secrets, kidnappings, and assassinations. She was always good at seeing the big picture, so she had no problem with these morally gray assignments. Like Warlord Artemis, she loved humanity, but she loved the people from her Great House above all others, and she was willing to do whatever it took to ensure their survival. If she had to execute a dozen people to save one hundred, then she would do this little bit of evil without a moment's hesitation if it would ultimately serve the greater good. She still has the same concern for the people under her command that she had as a teen, but that does not prevent her from making the tough decisions. This is a brutal war and a brutal world. She has cried for every soldier and every civilian she has ever sacrificed, but that will never stop her from performing her duties and doing what must be done.

Senator Nicole Teigs

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 19, M.A. 25, P.S. 16, P.P. 24, P.E. 18, P.B. 26, Spd 32.

S.D.C.: 52

Hit Points: 57

Size: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m). 142 lbs (64 kg). **Age:** 36.

Appearance: Senator Nicole Teigs is a stunning beauty with a strong, athletic build, long black hair that flows down the entire length of her back, and piercing blue eyes. She does not have the usual pale complexion common among those living underground, but rather she has a rich tan from her frequent treks across the surface. She always takes a moment on every trip to walk about outside of her armor and just let her naked body soak up the glorious sun.

Disposition: She is charming, friendly, and outgoing to virtually everyone she meets. Her role as a diplomat requires this of her, but she still greatly loves interacting with people. She spends the limited amount of free time she has speaking with

the rank and file warriors from House Artemis. The Senators are basically celebrities throughout the underground haven and she loves how just a few words from her can often give the brave men and women fighting for mankind's survival a little bit of joy during even the darkest times. Few people realize that beneath her open and affable exterior is a cold, calculating strategist who boils human life down to a numbers game. Humanity is on the brink of extinction and she believes she must be willing to make the tough decisions to ensure that it survives.

Experience Level: 9th level Dreadguard.

Attacks per Melee: 7

Bonuses: +4 on initiative, +7 to strike, +10 to parry, +10 to dodge, +4 to entangle, +3 to strike with a body flip or body block/tackle, +3 to pin and incapacitate, +3 to disarm, +3 to pull punch, +5 to roll with punch, +2 to save vs poison, +4 to save vs insanity, 84% chance to invoke trust/intimidate, and 80% chance to charm/impress.

Combat Skill: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Damage: Axe Kick: 2D6 S.D.C., Elbow: 1D6 S.D.C., Forearm: 1D4 S.D.C., Kick: 2D4 S.D.C., Knee: 1D6 S.D.C., Jump Kick: 3D6x2 S.D.C., Punch: 1D6 S.D.C., Critical Strike on an Unmodified 18-20, Paired Weapons, Body Flip/Throw: 1D6 S.D.C. (plus victim loses one attack and initiative), Knockout/Stun on a Natural 20, Body Block/Tackle: 1D4, Pin/Incapacitate: 18-20, Crush/Squeeze: 1D4 S.D.C.

Skills of Note: Bartering 80%, Fast Talk 80%, Public Speaking 90%, Bio-Comms 98%, Boxing, Kick Boxing, Climbing 90%/80%, Detect Ambush 85%, Detect Concealment 80%, Intelligence 78%, Interrogation 85%, Seduction 85%, Streetwise 76%, Prowl 80%, Wilderness Survival 90%, Gambling 80%, Card Shark 65%, Land Navigation 77%, Forced March, Host Armor Combat 98%, Machine Lore 91%, Military Etiquette 98%, Operate Bio-Equipment 98%, Running, Sniper, Wrestling, W.P. Heavy Bio-Weapons, W.P. Light Bio-Weapons, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Targeting, W.P. Whip, W.P. Knife, and W.P. Sword.

Allies of Note: Warlord Artemis has mentored her for years and she thinks of him almost like a father. Even though she would like to rise to the position of Warlord, she does not want to take it from Warlord Artemis. However, if in the unlikely event that some other Senator challenges and successfully defeats him, she might make her move and challenge the new leader for control of the House. She has fostered thousands of allies and assets throughout not only her House, but many other Great Houses in the region. The majority owe her a handful of official favors, but most would gladly help her out anyway.

Enemies: She really does not see other humans as enemies or rivals. She just considers anyone who gets in her way as an obstacle she must remove in order to achieve her goal of protecting Great House Artemis and humanity from obliteration.

Money and Valuables: Senator Teigs has used a great deal of her personal fortune over the years to build up her enormous base of contacts throughout the Resistance, so she is not as wealthy as many of her fellow Senators (although she still lives rather comfortably). Her personal fortune is around

400,000 credits plus 500,000 credits in relics and trade goods.

Weapons and Equipment: As a member of the Senate, Nicole Teigs has access to all conventional and organic weapons and equipment manufactured by Great House Artemis, including top secret and experimental items. Below is the list of some of her favorite items that she uses on a regular basis.

Medusa: Her personal suit of Host Armor (see full description below).

Leatherback Armor with 95 M.D.C. and the following Bio-Enhancements: Enhanced Sight, Bio-Force Field with 300 M.D.C., Stealth Field, and Medium-Sized Claws.

Acid-Edged Knife with the following Bio-Enhancements: Signature Weapon, Razor Grip Defense, Acid Injectors, Lock Tight Tendrils, and Breakaway Blade.

Mass Impact Battle Axe with the following Bio-Enhancements: Signature Weapon, Razor Grip Defense, Electro-Shock, Lock Tight Tendrils, and Mega Upgrade.

Pod Rifle with the following Bio-Enhancements: Signature Weapon, Targeting Sight, Mega Upgrade, Ultra Upgrade, Omni Upgrade, and Lock Tight Tendrils.

Medusa Host Armor

Senator Nicole Teigs has been piloting the same suit of Host Armor since she was first inducted into the Dreadguard over 25 years ago. This is actually quite a rare feat within the Resistance and stands as a testimonial to her skill and prowess on the battlefield. It allowed her to continuously strengthen her armor over the years with a steady string of commonly available Bio-Enhancements and upgrades, but once Nicole became a Senator, her sudden access to dozens of top secret enhancements (as well as some unique ones created specifically for her) allowed her to turn her favorite armor into a nearly unstoppable force of destruction.

Medusa was built to be fast, agile, and utterly devastating in close combat. Senator Teigs had to sacrifice some armored protection to ensure the optimal level of mobility she required, but she was always so skilled at quickly closing the distance with her prey that this was rarely a concern. Still, she did eventually add a Bio-Force Field to the armor for a little extra defensive protection. On the offensive side, she preferred to equip her armor with melee weapons in order to supplement her already formidable close combat skills, but she also made sure to include a decent balance of long-range armaments. Her favorite weapons are the dual Mantis Blades mounted on her right forearm. The insect-like arms may just look like a way to retract the blades for when they are not in use, but this Bone Blade upgrade actually makes these organic blades far more versatile in battle. The legs automatically adjust the position of the blades to best coordinate with the actions of the pilot. This often takes opponents by surprise as the blades quickly shift unexpectedly to parry their strikes or deliver a slash that looked like it would originally miss. The legs can also grapple and entangle opponents to subdue or disarm them. Senator Teigs eventually became so proficient at tying up her opponents with this weapon that she decided to add a Bio-Energy Expulsion Vent to the right wrist so she could blast her entangled adversaries at point-blank range for massive damage.

Most of her other close-range weapons are also suited for grappling, like the back-mounted segmented whips and the nine venomous snakes connected to the helmet. The Librarians designed this special crown of serpents to really play off of the Medusa theme. Each snake can be used by the pilot as an articulated tentacle, or they can be left to operate on their own. Each tentacle is actually a separate symbiotic creature that is capable of thinking and fighting independently of the Host Ar-

mor. They constantly scan the area for potential threats, attack enemies on their own, and can even defend the armor if Senator Teigs is ever rendered unconscious. In another tribute to the Medusa mythology, each snake is equipped with a powerful Bio-Toxin that can instantly paralyze any M.D.C. creature or Bio-Tech device. This is not quite like the stone inducing stare of the real Medusa, but the armor is equipped with a few top secret enhancements that simulate this effect as well.

Mounted on the frontal portion of both shoulders are specially enhanced Viral Immobilizer sprayers that shoot blasts of liquid which quickly cover robotic targets with a super fast-growing coral that limits mobility and slowly devours them as it grows. Unfortunately, this devastating weapon is only useful against robotic adversaries, and Senator Teigs often needs to fend off attacks from Waste Crawlers and rival Great Houses as well. To deal with these threats, The Medusa armor possesses a special enhancement that causes severe disorientation in living targets.

The thick bone plating on the armor's skull can actually split open to reveal a special helmet beneath. This concealed head is equipped with a series of organic glow cells and sonic transmitters that release a dazzling array of light pulses and ultrasonic sound bursts that induce dizziness and disorientation in all living creatures within a 30 foot (9.1 m) radius. When used against Bio-Tech creations like suits of Host Armor, Gorehounds, and War Mounts, the mask also releases a special Bio-Comm signal that transmits a barrage of false readings that further confuse the target by interfering with their natural combat programming (instincts). This disorienting close-range assault combined with her blistering speed, paralyzing serpents, and deadly close-quarters armaments means that the only safe way to even dare challenge Senator Teigs is with a sniper rifle (and preferably, about a mile away).

Class: Host Armor.

Crew: Nicole Teigs.

Level: 9

M.D.C. by Location:

Hands (2) – 50 each

Arms (2) – 110 each

Feet (2) – 70 each

Legs (2) – 140 each

Mantis Blades (2) – 120 each

Segmented Whips (2) – 110 each

Serpent Tentacles (9) – 80 each

Devouring Stone Sprayers (2) – 50 each

Glimmer Guns (2) – 70 each

Head – 130 (+80 when the additional bone armor is in place)

Main Body – 302

Bio-Force Field – 250

Speed:

Running: 120 mph (192 km).

Leaping: 40 feet (12.2 m) high or 80 feet (24.4 m) across.

Digging: 20 mph (32 km). It takes 3D6 melee rounds to dig a hole large enough for concealment.

Swimming: 30 mph (48 km).

Underwater Depth: 800 feet (244 m).

Flying: Not Possible.

Statistical Data:

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

Width: 3 feet, 10 inches (1.15 m).

Length: 2 feet, 8 inches (0.8 m).

Weight: 455 lbs (204.7 kg) including the weight of the pilot.

Cargo: Only what she can carry or strap on her back.

Physical Strength: 34

Operational Lifetime: 50 years.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 2D6+3 M.D.C. per melee round.

Horror Factor: 13

Feeding: Medusa is a Carnivorous Host Armor. It needs to eat 20 to 50 pounds (9-22.5 kg) of animal matter a day, and may gorge on up to 90 pounds (40.5 kg) at one time. After gorging, the suit can go 1D4 days without feeding and without suffering any ill effects.

Color: The armor is stone grey in color, with white highlights.

Sleep Requirements: The Host Armor requires 2D4 hours of sleep/rest/inactivity per day, generally during the daylight hours.

Senses and Features:

- Acid Blood.
- Regeneration: Super.
- Radar: Maximum range is 6 miles (9.6 km) in open spaces.
- Enhanced Neurological Connections.
- Bio-Force Field: 250 M.D.C.

Combat Bonuses: +4 attacks per melee, +8 on initiative, +3 to strike, +7 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 auto-dodge, +5 to entangle, and +3 to disarm. Cannot be surprised from behind.

Weapon Systems:

- 1. Vertigo Mask:** This top secret, Anti-Splicer enhancement is only available to members of the Senate and their Royal Guards. The face mask of the armor is enhanced with a series of organic glow cells and sonic transmitters that release a dazzling array of light pulses and ultrasonic sound bursts that induce dizziness and disorientation in any living creature within a 30 foot (9.1 m) radius. Anyone within range of the attack must make a save vs mental attack of 12 or higher (bonuses from a high M.E. apply). On a failed roll, the victim experiences severe vertigo and suffers penalties of -2 on initiative, -3 to strike, parry, and dodge, and loses two attacks per melee round. When used against Bio-Tech creations like suits of Host Armor, Gorehounds, and War Mounts, the mask also releases a special Bio-Comm signal that causes even more debilitating results. The mask transmits a barrage of false readings that further confuse the target by interfering with their natural combat programming (instincts). Bio-Tech creatures must make a save vs mental attack of 15 or higher. On a failed roll, the target suffers penalties of -4 on initiative, -4 to strike, parry, and dodge, and loses three attacks per melee round.
- 2. Bone Crusher Mask:** The head of the Medusa Armor is basically two heads in one. The thick bone plating and crushing mandibles can actually split down the middle and open up to reveal the Vertigo Mask beneath. Since the Vertigo Mask enhancement is only useful against organic targets (not to mention top secret), Senator Teigs usually keeps the armored casing closed. It not only provides extra protection, but the powerful jaws are capable of delivering much more powerful bites than the armor's normal mouth. The carnivorous version of the Bone Crusher Mask adds an additional 80 M.D.C. to the head and inflicts 4D8 M.D. damage on a bite attack (instead of the normal 3D8 M.D.).
- 3. Forearm-Mounted Mantis Blades (2):** Mounted on the right forearm of the armor are a pair of Mantis Blades. Each weapon consists of a three foot (0.9 m) long serrated blade attached to an articulated insect leg that can move in nearly any direction. The pilot controls the movement of the blades for the most part, but each leg also possesses a small neurological bundle that automatically moves the blades in conjunction with the pilot's actions to maximize the power of strikes and the effectiveness of parries. It is difficult for opponents to adapt to the subtle movements of the Mantis Blades. Just a change of a few inches can mean the difference between an opponent's strike getting intercepted by the blades' defenses or the attacker's defenses being pierced by a blade. The legs are as articulate

as fingers and surprisingly strong. They can tie up and incapacitate the toughest of foes.

Mega-Damage: 12D6 M.D. for a single blade strike or 4D4x10 M.D. per dual strike (counts as one melee attack).

Bonuses: +3 to strike and parry and +2 to entangle and disarm.

Bio-Enhancements: Mega Upgrade.

4. Wrist-Mounted Bio-Energy Expulsion Vent: Senator Teigs added this energy blaster to the right forearm of the suit to further augment her close combat abilities. It is primarily used against targets that have already been entangled by the Mantis Blades. Once an opponent has been successfully entangled, this point-blank attack is considered an automatic critical strike (no strike roll required and inflicts double damage). The force of the blast breaks the target free of the hold, so this attack can only be performed once per entanglement.

Mega-Damage: 2D8+18 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one melee action.

Maximum Effective Range: 1800 feet (548.6 m)

Payload: Effectively unlimited. However, firing more than 20 blasts a minute weakens the pilot, causing her to lose two melee attacks per round and reduces all of her combat bonuses by half for the next 1D6 minutes.

Bonuses: +3 to strike on an aimed shot only.

5. Devouring Stone Sprayers (2): The tusk-like protrusions mounted on each shoulder are a pair of Viral Immobilizers that have received an experimental enhancement that allows the super-fast growing coral they create to not only immobilize the target, but consume it as well. The virus is slow to work, but it eats away at its inorganic prey for so long that it can eventually bring down even the largest targets.

Mega-Damage: In addition to the paralyzing effects listed under the Viral Immobilizer (see page 106 of the **Splicers® RPG**), the deadly virus also consumes any inorganic material it comes into contact with, inflicting 1D4 M.D. every melee round for 6D6 minutes.

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one melee action. Can only fire two blasts per melee round.

Maximum Effective Range: 500 feet (152 m).

Payload: 24 doses each (48 doses total). One spent dose is replenished every hour.

Bonuses: +4 to strike on a "Called Shot," and a strike of 8 or higher that hits will cause immediate infection and quick immobilization. Has no effect on the living nor organic materials.

6. Serpent Tentacles (9): The name Medusa was originally inspired by the series of tentacles that ran down the back of the helmet like hair. However, once Nicole became a Senator, the Librarians wanted to do something special to make the name even more appropriate. They started with the common Bio-Enhancements of Devouring Tentacles and Independence and then modified them slightly to turn the six foot long tentacles into a weaving mass of poisonous serpents. Each tentacle is now a symbiotic creature capable of thinking and fighting independently of the Host Armor. They can alert the pilot of potential threats, attack enemies on their own, and even defend the armor when the pilot is rendered unconscious. Of course, each serpent is still a part of the armor and cannot survive on its own. They know this and will fight to defend the Host Armor even over their own preservation. Since the brain of the symbiotic tentacle is actually located inside the suit of Host Armor, a severed tentacle can regenerate completely given enough time. This makes the serpents more likely to sacrifice themselves in order to protect the Host Armor. Senator Teigs can seize complete control over the serpents at any time and use them like an extension of her own body, but she prefers to simply let the tentacles do their own thing. To further enhance the Medusa theme, the Librarians equipped each serpent with a special Bio-Toxin that paralyzes M.D.C. creatures and

Bio-Tech creations. Their bite may only inflict 1D6 M.D. per strike, but any Mega-Damage creature bitten by one of the serpents must make a roll to save vs non-lethal poison of 16 or higher or else be completely paralyzed for 2D6 melee rounds. Bio-Tech weapons and devices are also paralyzed by the toxin and will not function. Suits of Host Armor can be paralyzed, but the toxin does not affect the pilot inside. He may be able to strip off his suit to escape the paralysis, although he will likely be trapped in the comatose Host Armor. The toxin has no effect on normal humans and other S.D.C. creatures.

Bonuses: Each serpent possesses two attacks per melee and bonuses of +4 on initiative, +4 to strike, +4 to parry, and +3 to dodge. Multiple symbiotic tentacles can engage the same target, but each tentacle must roll to strike independently. The pilot also receives a bonus of +4 on initiative and cannot be surprised from behind (already included in the suit's bonuses).

7. Segmented Whips (2): The two 9 foot (2.7 m) long appendages on the back of the suit that look like a pair of de-feathered angel wings are actually armored tentacles that are used as segmented whips. The tentacles themselves can hit with tremendous force, but the real damage comes from the cluster of small blades mounted on the tip. The blades can be used to slice and tear the target apart like a scourge, but they also have a more unconventional method of attack. Each blade contains a powerful explosive chemical that detonates when exposed to air. Senator Teigs can mentally command as few as one to as many as three blades to detach inside the target on impact. Once released, a small muscular vent in the base of the blade opens after two melee actions to allow air to rush in and trigger the blast. This makes for a somewhat short fuse, but it is more than enough time for a skilled user to get out of the way. Each blade is durable enough to survive the rigors of combat without fear of premature detonation. The only way to trigger an explosion is for the wielder to mentally command the blade to detach itself inside the target or to completely deplete the M.D.C. of the blade (each blade has 55 M.D.C., but the blade only takes damage when it is deliberately targeted).

Mega-Damage: 6D6 M.D. per strike with the blade cluster, or 2D6 M.D. per whip strike (generally used when the payload of blades is exhausted). Both whips cannot attack the same target simultaneously. Each blade that detonates in the target inflicts 1D4x10+20 M.D. directly to the target and 3D8 M.D. to a 5 foot (1.5 m) radius.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +1 to parry, +3 to entangle, and +2 to disarm.

Payload: 6 blades on each whip (12 blades total). Spent blades regenerate within 3D4 melee rounds.

8. Glimmer Guns (2): Mounted on the shoulders of the armor are a pair of experimental organic energy cannons called Glimmer Guns. They get their name from the brilliant stream of blue energy pulses they unleash. Observers have described it as a shower of blue sparks shot from a fire hose. This effect is achieved when the dozens of smaller barrels within each cannon fire their tiny energy "packets" of Bio-Energy in rapid succession. These energy packets explode on contact, causing tremendous damage. Each individual barrel is somewhat inaccurate, but the weapon unleashes such a tremendous amount of firepower that it does not matter. In fact, most users prefer this little flaw since it causes the blast to affect a larger area.

Mega-Damage: 6D8 M.D. to a 5 foot (1.5 m) area for a single burst or 2D4x10+20 M.D. to a 10 foot (3 m) area per dual burst from both cannons (counts as one melee attack).

Rate of Fire: Each burst counts as one melee action. Dual burst attacks from both cannons also count as one melee attack.

Maximum Effective Range: 2600 feet (792.5 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonuses: +3 to strike.

9. Needle Death Blossom: This is one of the first enhancements Senator Teigs ever selected for her armor, and she has used it many times over the years to extract herself from some tough situations when even her formidable hand to hand skills were not enough.

Mega-Damage: A small volley of needles inflicts 1D8 M.D., a medium volley does 2D8 M.D., and a large volley does 4D8 M.D. Releasing most (80-100%) at once is the Needle Death Blossom and it inflicts 1D12x10 M.D. to everything within a 30 foot (9.1 m) radius.

Rate of Fire: A directed burst counts as one melee action. A full blown Needle Death Blossom that fires all the needles counts as three melee attacks.

Maximum Effective Range: 30 feet (9.1 m).

Payload: Automatically regenerates the entire payload of needles every 6 hours. Enough needles for four full radius Needle Death Blossom attacks per day.

Bonuses: +3 to strike.

Crystal and the Trans-D Tavern

For use in Rifts®, Phase World®, After the Bomb® & other Palladium role-playing games

By Kevin Siembieda

Inspired by the works of Erick Wujcik and the artistry of Nick Bradshaw

Illustration by Nick Bradshaw

Trans-D Tavern

The Trans-D Tavern is much more than its name suggests, starting with the fact that it is more than the large, roomy bar it appears to be at first glance. For the people of Rifts Earth, Trans-D is located in the *Splynn Dimensional Market* on Atlantis, or so many people believe. In reality, the tavern is the insides of a pocket dimension with transdimensional properties. The Splugorth have made the portal to the Trans-D Tavern so smooth and flawless that visitors don't even realize they are being transported to another dimension god only knows where. They simply walk through the door and step inside as they would any establishment. However, when they step through the doorway they are walking through a dimensional portal that places them inside another realm of existence, the pocket dimension that is the Trans-D Tavern.

Trans-D Tavern is so famous and popular among people in certain circles (those who know, know), that it has its own "Dimensional Gate" on *Phase World*, and there are direct portals to it from a dozen other worlds across the Megaverse®. Most are intentional dimensional portals that Rift people inside the bar, but dimensional travelers, and victims of dimensional energies or magic gone awry, may also find themselves suddenly popping into the *Trans-D Tavern*. That's why there are a *mutant turtle* (from the Earth of *After the Bomb*®), a *Metal Morph* (mutant from *Madhaven* of Rifts Earth) and a weird, *eyeball creature* (from the planet *Eylor!*?) in the illustration. However, just as many visitors use magic and other means of dimensional travel to transport themselves to and from the Tavern without having to rely on a dimensional portal provided by a third party.

Like the casinos in Las Vegas, the Trans-D Tavern has no windows or obvious exit. Thus, visitors lose track of the passage of time, and have no idea about the weather or season, or even the location outside the building. Most exit the place the same way they arrived. Thus, one door out, when you can find it, leads back to the streets of the Splynn



bradshaw
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Dimensional Market, another to Center on Phase World, and another to a Phase World Transit Gate. There are said to be other dimensional doors, and one is rumored to lead directly to Hades, and another that is especially hard to find is said to appear as a dark room or closet. When the door to the closet is shut, it automatically sends the person or people inside to the world the first person initially thinks about (which could be good for some and terrible for others). There are probably other doors to other worlds, but they are concealed and lead to alien realms and planes of existence.

It is important to note that there is *no* door to the outside. Indeed, the entire tavern seems to be a labyrinth of rooms and chambers. The largest are on what most people consider to be the **ground floor**. This is where the main lounge (bar), premiere stage (where Crystal and other top acts perform), and a sprawling casino area with numerous games of chance are located. There are also a number of smaller rooms and bars where "elite" clients and "highrollers" can gather, hold private games, host private meetings, or enjoy private entertainment (including Crystal). The entire ground floor is usually bustling with patrons around the clock.

The premiere stage is a large theater with excellent acoustics. Star performances from singers, dancers and entertainers take place here, while second-rate and rising stars perform in other, smaller rooms. The ceilings of the main stage are 60 feet (18.3 m) high. Seven private balcony boxes that seat six are located along each side wall. A rear mezzanine balcony in the back of the theater has 50 seats in the front row and standing room for approximately 250. On the main floor there are two rows of seating for 100 at the foot of the stage and standing room for 1,300 patrons of varying sizes (there is room for nearly 1,800 if they were all human). The floor is angled in a downward slope toward the stage. Lighting is dim at all times. *Crystal* performs for an hour or so six times a day, as well as being available for private audiences willing to pay 100,000 credits for twenty minutes of her time in one of the smaller meeting rooms.

Upstairs on what most people consider the **second floor** are more private meeting rooms and small, high stakes gambling areas and lounges where the wealthy, royalty, gods, godlings, and Demon Lords usually hold audience and enjoy quieter surroundings.

For those who seek luxury accommodations there are 111 hotel-style rooms spread across the the third, fourth, and fifth floors, plus an executive wing with four Lord's/Lady's suites, and one Prince/Princess, Queen, King, Presidential and Penthouse/Emperor's suite. The average room costs 600 credits a night and comes with a bath, bed and sitting room of varying decor. The elite suites (01-80% likelihood of being already rented) cost 3,000, 5,000, 7,000, 15,000, 20,000 and 50,000 credits per night respectively. There is rumor of a *Heaven's suite* reserved for gods and the elite of the elite that costs two million credits per night, and comes standard with luxury accommodations, rooms for 100 retainers and guests, virtually unlimited servants and concubines to serve exalted guests, and a one hour private show or visit (with privileges?) by Crystal every night.

The basement offers the hard stone floor of a large open chamber where patrons may crash and sleep on the floor for the cost of 50 credits a night. Scores of patrons are found here in massive, drunken heaps. An equally large chamber with designated sleeping area provides a thin, but surprisingly comfortable padded mat, pillow and blanket for sleeping on the floor and is available for 100 credits per night. EVERYONE else is expected to be a paying customer actively engaged in gambling or spending money on libations and entertainment. Storage rooms, a large dungeon and torture chamber are also located in the basement.

Nobody knows who actually created or owns the Trans-D Tavern. Many people believe it is the Splugorth or a similar god or deific being. Others believe the original creator died or disappeared and the pocket dimension has been corrupted and exploited in decadent ways for

which it was never intended. Some suspect the siren performer known as Crystal is the owner, though she insists otherwise.

Most visitors are reasonably tolerant of other races, as the Tavern is packed around the clock with beings from several dozen worlds and dimensions. Visitors include demons and Deevils, other supernatural beings, dragons and even gods transformed into a humanoid to fit the confines of the Tavern, alongside humans, mutants, D-Bees, aliens and monsters galore from all over. Many are the type who enjoy dark pleasures and have unsavory occupations and disreputable origins.

The unspoken rule is to try to ignore or tolerate enemies and hostile races as much as possible. This is not an act of kindness. It is because a visitor never knows who else is visiting or how they might react to having their fun interrupted by a brawl or open attack. Upset a god, Demon Lord, experienced mage or other powerful being and you might find yourself facing his wrath or getting bounced through a dimensional portal to a world not your own. And many of these other worlds do NOT have obvious gateways back to Trans-D or the character's homeworld. The few worlds that do, like Phase World, charge a fee for passage through their dimensional portals. A fee the character might not be able to pay!

Troublemakers who get booted out are the lucky ones, because a drunk and angry god, dragon, or powerhouse being is just as likely to blast the troublemaker to atoms right on the spot! Don't expect anybody to come your aid, either. Most patrons of the Trans-D Tavern will be equally annoyed by the interruption of their relaxation and aren't going help some rabble-rousing upstart who can't control himself. Isolated brawls in the confines of a private room or which don't disrupt more than one small area, as well as friendly competitions and duels (all of which gather a crowd and spontaneous wagering), are all welcomed and common occurrences, but outright attacks, feuds, hate crimes and massive disruptions are not.

Most people come to Trans-D for a little R & R (Rest and Relaxation). Many patrons drink or drug themselves into oblivion (there are alcohol and drugs that can give a Juicer, dragon, godling or Demon Lord a buzz or euphoric experience), engage in serious gambling, and/or enjoy the carnal pleasures offered at Trans-D (dancing girls to prostitutes), but most come to see *Crystal* perform. And NOBODY had better cause a ruckus when she's on stage.

Tavern staff personnel come from as many different worlds as the patrons, and range from human to D-Bee and the supernatural.

Character Stats

Crystal

The leg in the illustration belongs to the famous performer/dancer/singer known only as Crystal. She is so beautiful that she couldn't be shown here without driving men wild! Furthermore, her unusual alien nature is such that she appears to be the *ultimate fantasy* of every man who looks upon her! That means every person sees a completely different woman. Different race, different body, different hair, different number and types of limbs, different measure of beauty, and so on. Hence, one of the reasons for the Trans-D Tavern's incredible, transdimensional popularity throughout the Megaverse – Crystal is *every* man's dream!

One of the more prevalent rumors (perhaps started and promoted by the performer herself) is that Crystal is a goddess of beauty with the power to awe and bedazzle all who gaze upon her. Indeed, even other females see an idealized woman of exceptional beauty, grace and appeal. Some patrons become obsessed with her to the point of selling off everything they own to come to Trans-D and experience her mesmerizing performances. Crystal is always fresh and beautiful, never seems to tire or sleep, and performs six times a day on the premiere stage as well as one or more private engagements for wealthy patrons in one of the private rooms.

Crystal may flirt and dance and act all sexy and playful, and while she is tolerant of people slapping her behind, touching and hugging her, she is NOT loose or easy and will not sleep with any patron for any price! She may choose to have an encounter or an affair *if* someone strikes her fancy (a rarity), but she is the one who does the choosing. This has angered a few powerful patrons of the Tavern, but most take no for an answer without further incident. Such is the charm of the mysterious Crystal.

Crystal – Supernatural Performer

Note: Crystal is a goddess of unknown origin, pantheon and power. She appears to be a selfish god of deception, trickery and greed. Her multitude of most ardent admirers and patrons, past and present, are effectively her worshippers (tens of thousands).

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 21 (brilliant and clever), M.A. 28 (captivating), M.E. 18, P.S. 20 (Supernatural), P.P. 25 (graceful), P.E. 21, P.B. 29 (incredibly beautiful and awe-inspiring to all races), Spd 11.

Armor Rating: 12 in S.D.C. environments.

Hit Points: 3,300, **S.D.C.:** 5640 in S.D.C. environments. (4470 M.D.C. in Mega-Damage environments, including the Trans-D Tavern!)

P.P.E.: 2,186

Size/Height/Weight & Appearance: All vary with the individual.

Age: Unknown, at least a thousand years old, but that's like a child for a god.

Life Expectancy: Immortal.

Experience Level: 18th level Performer (Dancer and Singer) and 8th level Wizard/Ley Line Walker.

Disposition: Friendly and welcoming, yet at the same time coy and elusive – an unattainable beauty. Crystal is sophisticated enough to entertain and talk with royalty, aristocrats and gods, yet can also be simple and pleasant on a level that appeals to the common man.

Crystal is a playful tease who takes great delight in manipulating, using and abusing others, particularly males. She understands the lust and other base desires of mortals and gods, and uses it to get what she wants. The goddess likes nothing more than to make men, be they kings or gods, Demon Lords, heroes, or common laborers, act on impulse, behave like fools, and shower her with their adoration and wealth in exchange for a playful touch, a tender hug, a soft kiss on the cheek and the ethereal promise of more. Crystal may be a goddess, but she behaves like a selfish, arrogant, petty, conning and manipulative teenager who uses her charm and beauty to get her way. She has no genuine compassion or interest in mortals, except as her pawns and playthings.

If the goddess has any schemes, goals or machinations above and beyond enticing males, gaining their worship, and making money, she keeps them to herself. Is she the true owner of the Trans-D Tavern? She says no, but then few question anything she says, and she is a consummate liar and mistress of deception.

Natural Abilities: Breathe without air, impervious to cold, impervious to disease, resistant to fire (half damage from M.D. fire and heat), Nightvision 1200 feet (365 m), see the invis-

ble, turn invisible at will (no time limit), metamorphosis: humanoid (no time limit), magically knows and speaks all languages, reads all languages, and can teleport (self) 78% and dimensional teleport 54% without expending any P.P.E. Automatically becomes an M.D.C. being in a Mega-Damage setting.

Change Size: As per realm and whatever the viewer believes she is.

Awe: Her tremendous beauty momentarily stuns those who see her for the first time and whenever she first enters a room, same as Horror Factor.

Captivating: Her deific Mental Affinity is such that people find her absolutely enchanting and captivating. Males are transfixed and suffer a penalty of -4 on initiative, -6 on Perception Rolls, -4 to strike, entangle or disarm when attacking her, -2 to parry and dodge, and -30% on skill performance, except when trying to impress her. Even females are impressed and intimidated, suffering penalties half those of the males.

Grace: Crystal seems the embodiment of grace and beauty, making her dancing and movement seem like poetry in motion and contributing to her awe and captivation.

Godlike Perception: See page 87 of **Dragons & Gods™**.

Supernatural P.S.: Does 3D6 S.D.C. on a restrained punch, 1D6 M.D. on a full strength punch, 2D6 M.D. from a power punch, 3D6 M.D. from a power kick, and 1D4 M.D. from her bite.

Bio-Regeneration: 4D6 S.D.C./M.D.C. per melee round.

Prototypical Deific Powers: The powers of a god.

Beguiling Beauty (special & new): Most mortals and even demons, creatures of magic, and gods are so taken by this seductive beauty that most males will consider doing almost anything she asks, especially when she frames the request to appeal to their ego, desire for her, or moral sensibilities (alignment). This may mean lies and deception on her part, but males seduced by her beauty and charm (fail to save vs Seduction skill) won't question anything she tells them, provided it doesn't strongly conflict with their alignment. This may include silly things like drawing her bath, buying her drinks and gifts, to fighting for her honor, going on quests, destroying her enemies and retrieving items of great value or power (artifacts, magic items, etc.). Selfish and evil characters are literally willing to lie, steal and kill for her, especially if they get some tangible reward in return, such as a share of treasure, revenge or even the promise of her favor or love. **Note:** Seduction skill suffers a penalty of -10% against creatures of magic and Master Psychics, Master Vampires, demigods, godlings and similar greater supernatural beings, -20% against ancient dragons, -30% against Demon Lords and similar beings, -30% against other females (except lesbians), and -40% against most true deities and Alien Intelligences.

All Things to All People: This is the power that enables Crystal to appear as every/any race of people and intelligent beings. All who look upon her see her as a beautiful, attractive, ideal version of their own race, be they a dragon, demon, alien or human. It is a power of deceit and deception (and a Severe Body Investment).

Display Deific Omen: See page 94 of **Dragons & Gods™**.

Hellfire Blasts: 1D4x100 S.D.C. or M.D., double damage to Demon and Deevil Lords. See page 94 of **Dragons & Gods™**.

Manifestation: See page 95 of **Dragons & Gods™**.

Notable Skills: All Domestic and Rogue skills at 90%, plus Barter 95%, Computer Operation 90%, Intelligence 70%, Interrogation 88%, Undercover Ops 75%, Math (all) 98%, Performance 95%, Public Speaking 95%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Handguns and W.P. Energy Rifle.

Attacks per Melee Round: Five.

Bonuses (in addition to those from attributes): +3 on initiative and Perception Rolls, +2 to strike and parry, +5 to dodge, +3 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +3 on all saving throws.

Magic Powers: All 1-4 level spell invocations, plus Aura of Doom (40), Calling (8), Charm (12), Compulsion (20), Crushing Fist (12), Dispel Magic Barriers (20), Distant Voice (10), Domination (10), Escape (8), Fly (15), Influence the Beast (12), Mask of Deceit (15), Negate Magic (30), Sleep (10), and Warped Space (90).

Psionics: None.

Vulnerabilities: Vain, overconfident, and vastly underestimates others, especially mortal males and other females.

Weapons made of silver do triple their S.D.C. damage in S.D.C. settings and double as M.D. in Mega-Damage settings. Magic and magic weapons inflict full damage.

Hates squalor, filth and ugliness, and becomes depressed when forced to live under those conditions.

Weapons of Note: None, relies on her natural abilities and powers.

Equipment of Note: She can acquire just about anything she wants.

Allies: Many would do anything for the enchanting Crystal.

Enemies: A few rejected lovers and jealous fools.

Planet of Origin: Unknown.

Money: Trillions, with 30 billion on account at the Trans-D Tavern.

Cybernetics: Not applicable.

Anton "Tank" Brutak

Mutant Turtle

"Tank" comes from the devastated America of **After the Bomb®** Earth. He fancies himself a patriot in the war against the Empire of Humanity, and as such, he has a disdain for all big governments and empires. However, while Tank likes to think of himself as a hero, he's more mercenary and bruiser than hero. Sure he's done his fair share of good deeds, but all he really knows how to do is fight. Being a hero doesn't generally pay, so he's a gun for hire who tries to take jobs and combat missions that hurt the Empire of Humanity, and help other mutant animals (this might include D-Bees) and the underdog. Still, he's been involved in his share of underhanded operations and sheer money making jobs. He's earned a spot on the Empire's Top 100 List of Enemies (Number 47) and is known throughout much of North America for his most notable exploits against them.

Tank's first visit to Trans-D was a complete accident, but he's since learned how to Rift back for return visits via a dimensional nexus on his Earth located at the ruins of the St. Louis Archway. The exact location is unknown to anyone but himself (or so he believes), as the earth energy necessary to dimension leap (as he calls it) is invisible and their properties unknown to the people of Earth. It's a *trick* a patron he befriended at Trans-D showed him. Though Tank would never consider himself a dimensional traveler, he has, in fact, traveled to a couple other worlds with the buddy who taught him how to Rift. Rifts Earth and Phase World are among the places he's visited. Tank recently hired out his services to a faction involved in something called the "Minion War." He's not sure what it is, but the pay is a king's ransom and they let him go on a four-day furlough to Trans-D before shipping out to a war front someplace in the Three Galaxies.

Tank is a rough and tumble warhorse unafraid to mix it up in a fight. His many war experiences, injuries and dimensional travels have, however, rattled his brains one too many times, leaving him, shall we say, a bit unfocused. In short, Tank's not all there. He's great in a fight and he seems to be able to size-up combat situations at a glance on an intuitive level, and respond appropriately with the best strategy or tactic. He is skilled in the use of a large range of weapons, can pilot hovercycles and giant robots, and loves to roughhouse and "play around." He's not a half bad leader, sergeant type, except that he gets distracted when the fighting stops and may forget about the soldiers under his charge. And that's just it, Tank's short term memory is terrible. He's forgetful, can't remember names, faces, the time of an appointment, the place to meet and sometimes even forgets why he's there, what he's supposed to do, when he's suppose to do it, and who his teammates are. To help alleviate this problem, he has taken to sticking Post-It Notes and taping photographs, and bits of paper scrawled with notes, to the front of his shell. That works to a point, provided a) he remembers to refer to his notes, and b) the note doesn't get knocked off or blown to shreds in combat. To complicate matters further, buddies, soldiers under his charge, and rivals who want to play a joke on Tank may tape notes on him that are confusing, silly, stupid, unkind or deliberately misleading. Things like "I'm a cat" and such. (Tank actually remembers he's a turtle.)

Ironically, Tank's long term memory is crystal clear, and his recollections of actual battles are also usually accurate, which means he can spin some great war stories. It's most everything before and after the fighting that he forgets the details.

There's something else strange about Tank. Somewhere, somehow, not that he remembers, something happened to him that elevated Tank from a heavily armored, strongman grunt, to something more. A being with a considerable amount of P.P.E. (which is how he can perform a Dimensional Rift at ley line nexuses and in and out of the Trans-D Tavern, which is about all he does with his P.P.E.; he has no interest in magic), who bioregenerates, and automatically transforms from a flesh and bone mutant into a Mega-Damage being depending on the environment he finds himself. Thus, on the Earth of After the Bomb he's a Hit Point/S.D.C. fella, and on Rifts Earth or Hades or at Trans-D and similar environments, he has M.D.C. and Robotic P.S. Tank just takes it all in stride. ("Don't ask me, brother, I just thank my lucky stars. Who are you again? Don't matter, just buy me a drink an' I'll tell you about the battle of . . .")

“Tank” the Mutant Turtle

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.A. 20, M.E. 9 (used to be higher), P.S. 26 (equal to Robotic P.S. in M.D.C. environments), P.P. 17, P.E. 21, P.B. 8 (14 to other turtle beings and reptilians), Spd 12 (triple when swimming).

Armor Rating: 16 in S.D.C. environments.

Hit Points: 87, **S.D.C.:** 364 in S.D.C. environments. (451 M.D.C. in Mega-Damage environments!)

P.P.E.: 836 +2D6x10 per each additional level of experience he might gain (he’s currently 7th level).

Size Level/Growth Steps: 9

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.75 m).

Weight: 205 lbs (92 kg); all muscle and shell.

Age: 31 years old, but has been fighting for 16 years.

Life Expectancy: Unknown, estimated at 120 years.

Experience Level: 7th

Human Features:

Hands: Full.

Bipedal Stance: Full.

Human Speech: Full.

Human Looks: None.

Animal Powers: See Natural Abilities, below.

Disposition: Tank is a good natured, rough and tumble career soldier to the day he dies. He’s a straight talker, no nonsense kind of fella who enjoys fighting, brawling, sports, physical roughhousing, girls, movies, good beer, drinking and good times with buddies (whoever they may be). He takes everything, good and bad, in his stride and tries to make the best of every situation. That includes his memory losses and forgetfulness. When an incident involving a memory lapse occurs, he tries to make the best of it and respond accordingly by taking quick action, apologizing, or trying to laugh about it. He tries to compensate with notes, instructions and reminders he tapes to his shell, but they only work to a point.

In combat, Tank is focused, direct and capable. He watches out for his teammates, makes good field decisions, is resourceful and thinks quickly on his feet. In battle he is a capable combatant, deadly, reliable, loyal and, except for pranks and a streak of petty larceny, trustworthy. It’s the quiet times that are forgotten and periods in which he forgets matters that don’t immediately affect him or don’t involve war.

When not fighting, Tank likes to relax, drink, tell stories, enjoy watching or playing sports, betting and roughhousing. He’s a brass tacks soldier who doesn’t mince words and tells it like it is.

Natural Abilities/Animal Powers:

Beastly Strength: (equivalent to Extraordinary/Augmented/Bionic P.S.) in S.D.C. environments, becomes equal to Robotic P.S. in Mega-Damage environments.

Hold Breath: 2D6+6 minutes at a time.

Natural Body Armor: A.R. 16, 364 S.D.C. (Turns into 451 M.D.C. in Mega-Damage settings.)

Unnatural Abilities: These are the abilities Tank acquired by means unknown.

Incredibly High P.P.E. (special): The mutant turtle has hundreds of P.P.E. points, but he is not, technically, a creature of magic, cannot cast magic spells, and has no interest in learning magic. However, Tank knows how to channel his P.P.E. to open a dimensional Rift, and he can use Techno-Wizard weapons and devices, and any magic item that requires an infusion of P.P.E. Ironically, Tank dislikes and distrusts magic (doesn’t think of TW weapons as magical) and has never allowed a practitioner of magic to draw upon his P.P.E. reservoir.

Magic Resistant (special): Tank is +5 to save vs all forms of magic attacks, +8 to save vs illusions and possession, and the effects of magic last half as long as usual.

Mega-Damage Transmutation (special): The character automatically turns from a being made of Hit Points and S.D.C. into a Mega-Damage creature the same as creatures of magic and supernatural beings.

Bio-Regeneration (special): Regenerates 3D6+12 Hit Points/S.D.C. or M.D.C. (depending on the environment) per melee round!

Notable Skills: Boxing, Fishing 80%, Forced March, Gambling (Standard) 75%, Hand to Hand: Expert, Language: English/Native 95%, Language: Japanese 75%, Literacy: English 85%, Literacy: Japanese 70%, Math: Basic 80%, Military Etiquette 85%, Pilot Automobile 90%, Pilot Hovercycles/Rocket Bikes 91%, Radio: Basic 95%, Swimming 85%, Wilderness Survival 80%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Handguns, W.P. Rifles, W.P. Energy Rifle, and W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons.

Attacks per Melee Round: Six.

Bonuses (including those from attributes): +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to parry and dodge, +2 to disarm, +3 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, paired weapons, +5 to save vs magic, and +8 to save vs illusions and possession. Tank is also impervious to disease and +6 to save vs poison and suffers only half damage when he is affected by poison and penalties for half their usual duration.

Magic: None per se, other than the ability to Dimensional Teleport and channel P.P.E. to power TW weapons.

Psionics: None.

Weapons of Note: In addition to those supplied by his employer, Tank has a Coalition Rocket Bike, Vibro-knife (1D6 M.D.), silver dagger (1D6 S.D.C. damage), Naruni NE-3 Slim-Line “Gambler” Revolver (3D6 M.D. per plasma round, holds three rounds, easy to conceal), Naruni NE-350 “Thumper” Plasma Cartridge Submachine-Gun (5D6 M.D. per round, 1D6x10 per three-round burst, 60 round “big banana” clip and two extra clips), an Uzi submachine-gun (4D6 S.D.C. damage per bullet or 1D4x10 per three round burst; 90 round clip), a 9mm pistol (5D6 S.D.C. damage per round, 15 shot clip, three extra clips plus to0 with silver bullets), and a silver crucifix.

Equipment of Note: His favorite American flag bandana (3 of them), a pair of sunglasses, a note pad, pack of Post-It Notes, roll of Scotch tape, roll of duct tape, 1D4 black markers, 1D4 pens, 2D4 cigars (each in an individual, sealed plastic tube), a lighter, two canteens, belt, backpack, flashlight, passive nightvision binoculars, pocket mirror, toothbrush, toothpaste, hand towel, combat boots, first-aid kit, 1D6 packs of spear-

mint chewing gum, a bag of gummy worms and some personal items.

Allies: Whoever's hired to watch his back and fight along side of him.

Enemies: Whoever he's hired to fight.

Planet of Origin: Earth in the **After the Bomb®** dimension.

Money: He usually carries 1D6x1,000 credits on him and has 28,000 credits on account at the Trans-D Tavern.

Cybernetics: None.

Mickey "Hot Dog" Craneneck

Mickey is your typical Metal Morph in most every way, except that he has discovered the infinite Megaverse and has become a dimensional traveler. He is intent on learning all he can about these other realms and alien sciences. Whether he actually ever returns to Rifts Earth is yet to be seen. For now, he is content exploring the people and places he can find his way to. Currently, that's the Trans-D Tavern. Next stop, Phase World.

A Metal Morph Adventurer

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 24, M.A. 18, M.E. 21, P.S. 7, P.P. 5, P.E. 7, P.B. 4 (12 to other Metal Morphs), Spd 3.

M.D.C.: 102

P.P.E.: 16

Height: 3 feet, 6 inches (1 m) tall and 5 feet (1.5 m) long.

Weight: 160 lbs (72 kg); metal.

Age: 23 years old.

Life Expectancy: 60 years.

Experience Level: 5th

Disposition: "Hot Dog" thinks he's smarter and more worldly than most other Metal Morphs and people in general. To a certain extent, his dimensional travels make that true, but he is still quite naive about life, let alone entire civilizations beyond the confines of Rifts Earth. This means if it's not his curiosity getting him into trouble, it's his arrogant attitude. He's nicknamed "Hot Dog" not just because he's an arrogant showoff, but because he loves to eat hot dogs!

Remaining Stats: Standard for Metal Morph R.C.C.; see **Rifts® World Book 29: Madhaven™**, pages 68-70.

Edylwin Nard

An Eylor Imp

The world known as Eylor is a place of magic and mystery under Splugorth occupation. The famous Eyes of Eylor are known as eerie, living components possessing great levels of P.P.E., magic and psionic powers the Splugorth use in the creation of Bio-Wizard Magic. According to legend, no living humanoid life forms are found on Eylor, the living planet. However, there are rare, mischievous beings with a giant, single eyeball for a head, who call themselves Eylor Imps and claim to be one of the wayward inhabitants of Eylor. Fewer than 10,000 Eylor Imps are believed to exist, though the Imps themselves claim there are millions. Despite that claim, there are dimensional travelers thousands of years old who have never seen one, and some people are convinced they are nothing but myth.

Edylwin (pronounced "idol win") Nard is one of these elusive and enigmatic creatures. Like all Eylor Imps, he hates the Splugorth and has a disdain for demons and Deevils. Edylwin has been drawn out of wherever Eylor Imps go by the escalating *Minion War*, though it is unclear which side he supports. Presumably, the people who oppose both the demons and infernals.

Although they are called Eylor Imps, they are not supernatural beings or demons, but mysterious creatures of magic.

"Edylwin" The Eylor Imp

Numbers in parenthesis are what's rolled to create other Eylor Imp characters.

Alignment: Unprincipled; was Scrupulous and strives to be so again. Eylor Imps can be any alignment but most lean toward good and selfish.

Attributes: I.Q. 20 (1D6+18), M.A. 18 (1D6+16), M.E. 21 (1D6+18), P.S. 8 (1D4+6), P.P. 10 (1D6+8), P.E. 12 (1D6+10), P.B. 5 (1D4+4, +10 to other Eylor beings), Spd 8 (1D6+4).

Armor Rating: 9 in S.D.C. environments.

Hit Points: 97 (1D4x10 + 2D6 per level of experience). **S.D.C.:** 29 (1D6 per level of experience). (Combine Hit Point and S.D.C. for M.D.C. in Mega-Damage environments.)

P.P.E.: Edylwin has 450 points (P.E. attribute number x10, +1D6x10 per level of experience).

Size: Two feet (0.6 m) tall (2-3 feet/0.6 to 0.9 m) and 60 lbs (27 kg)(1D4x10+40 lbs/22.5 to 36 kg).

Age: Edylwin is 161 years old.

Life Expectancy: Unknown, estimated at 1000 years but could be many times greater, like that of a dragon.

Experience Level: Edylwin is a 7th level Master Psionic, and 7th level Temporal Mage. Use the Dragon experience table. Eylor Imps are not recommended as a Player Character. If they are used, they should start at level one.

Disposition: Edylwin is a good natured, polite, and friendly fellow with a curious mind and a warm regard for humans and other mortals. He has a high regard for life, art, beauty, learning, wisdom, compassion, independence, freedom and personal expression. He has taken a liking to Tank, and told him that he's looking for somebody (or was it something) at Trans-D. Tank can't remember which.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 3000 feet (914 m), can see all spectrums of light including heat (effectively has thermal optics), see the invisible (including Astral Beings and ghosts), can see minute images and details, high intelligence and mental stability, bio-regenerates at a rate of 1D6x10 M.D.C. per every 12 hours.

Attacks per Melee Round: Six, usually via psionics or magic.

Bonuses (including those from attributes): +1 on initiative, +4 on Perception Rolls, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with impact, +5 to save vs magic, and +8 to save vs illusions and possession.

Magic: All Ley Line Magic and Temporal Magic (on par with Temporal Raiders), plus spell invocations levels 1-10, Energy Sphere, Re-Open Gateway, See in Magic Darkness, Swap Places, and Restoration. **Note:** It is said that some Eylor Imps command 1D6 Spells of Legend.

Psionics: All Sensitive and Physical powers plus one Super Psionic ability per level of experience as a Master Psionic without restriction. Edylwin has Bio-Manipulation (10), Empathic Transmission (6), Group Mind Block (22), Mind Bolt (varies), P.P.E. Shield (30), Telekinesis (Super), and Telekinetic Force Field (30).

Weapons of Note: Nothing apparent.

Equipment of Note: Nothing but a loincloth and small backpack.

Allies: Unknown. Most people who meet an Eylor Imp fear and distrust them, and everyone else thinks they are creatures of myth, not reality.

Enemies: Splugorth, demons, Deevils and other evil supernatural beings.

Planet of Origin: Presumably Eylor.

Money: Unknown.

Cybernetics: None.

The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter Forty-Three

“The Big Blue Auction”

By James M.G. Cannon

The streets were slick, with what Caleb couldn't tell, because this deep in the heart of Center, there wasn't any weather to generate rain. But slick the streets were, and they reflected garish neon signs in a dozen languages, giving the streets an additional sheen of light. It almost made them pretty, but the rest of the muck and grime and litter was enough to ruin the image and reminded Caleb that there were seven levels of city arcology over his head at the moment, and qrun always rolls downhill.

Here on level eight lived the poor, the destitute, the desperate, and the forgotten. Center was the most famous and possibly oldest city in the Three Galaxies, and it had attracted billions of visitors from across as many worlds and nearly as many alternate realities, but not all of them had made it big. In fact, most of them had not. Center was many things, but merciful it was not, and it held no pity for the city's failures. The failures just ended up on the lower levels, eking out their existences in the shadow of wealthier, more powerful beings. And beneath them, in the lowest levels, were the lost. . . and worse.

Level eight looked like a run-down city back home on Earth, like the slums of New York or Los Angeles Caleb used to see on television as a kid. Except the buildings didn't reach higher than ten stories, and beyond their roofs wasn't sky, but rafters and lights, and beyond that another city on top of this one, and six more over that one. And the cities of Earth didn't have aliens and 'bots and other creatures walking the streets.

“Actually,” Caleb said to his companion, “this place is nothing like Earth.”

The shadowy being in the trench coat and fedora, his only recognizable features a pair of orange lights that functioned as eyes, looked

askance at Caleb. “I never said it was,” Doctor Abbot said in cultured British tones. “Although I dare say a slum is a slum, wherever you go in the universe. That people are still forced to live like this in this day and age, in the wealthiest city in the Three Galaxies, really frosts my tundekker. We gallivant across the Three Galaxies fighting alien menaces and masterminds from beyond space and time, and yet what help do we ever give these people?”

“We do what we can, Doc,” Caleb said after a moment. But inside, he agreed with Abbott. The Cosmic Forge had granted Caleb Vulcan phenomenal cosmic power and charged him with a divine mission to aid the less fortunate and protect any he could. Yet all of his abilities were destructive in nature. He couldn't heal, couldn't create food or water or air, and couldn't even generate a force field to protect people from attack. It was strange, frustrating at times, but clearly the Forge worked in mysterious ways.

The two friends crossed a street and headed down an alleyway. Two forms materialized out of the shadows, cloaked and hooded but with wickedly curved knives held prominently on display. “Welcome to Society territory,” the taller one said, giving his knife a flourish. “You want to go any further, you got to pay the toll.”

“They got to pay the toll anyway,” the shorter one said with an irritating giggle. The taller one laughed as well, appreciating the joke.

Caleb and Abbott exchanged a look. “Don't be too hard on them,” Doctor Abbott said. “They're just doing their job.”

Thirty seconds later, the bruised and chastened Society of the Knife gang members escorted Caleb and Abbott down the alleyway, limping only a little. “We didn't know you was here fer the meeting,” the taller one said. “You could've just said.” The shorter one grunted in agreement.

Caleb smiled. “What can I say? I didn't care for your tone of voice. You should be more polite when mugging people. You never know who you're pulling a knife on, and some manners would go a long way.” Abbott tried and failed to suppress a chuckle, eliciting a dark look from the shorter gang member. “See, that's what I mean,” Caleb said. “You think I'm going to let you have your knife back after that?”

It only took them a few minutes to navigate the cluttered and filthy alley. The two gang members escorting Caleb and Abbott made hand gestures at several positions, and each time they did, Caleb noticed other Society members in the buildings around them, armed with weapons more costly and more deadly than mere knives. But whatever their escorts did, it seemed to mollify the Society members, and no shots were fired. Somehow, Caleb didn't think that getting out would be as easy as getting into the area was proving to be.

At the end of the alley was a dingy metal door, flanked by two more cloaked and hooded individuals, armed with swords and energy pistols. There was a hurried conversation amongst the four members in some kind of local dialect or cant that Caleb couldn't follow. But when the guns came out and the escorts scrambled out of the way, Caleb guessed that the conversation did not work in his favor.

“Invitations, please,” one of the gunmen said with a snarl.

Caleb frowned. “I think I would be more inclined to answer your question if you weren't pointing a gun in my face. Like I just told your friends, a little politeness goes a long way.” He took a step forward and both gunman focused on him, the muzzles of their blasters aimed squarely at Caleb's chest. With their attention diverted momentarily, Doctor Abbott acted. He swept his right hand up in a theatrical gesture, and a burst of colored lights erupted before the Society members' faces. Their eyes became unfocused, pupils dilated hugely, and their jaws dropped open, even as their guns dropped from suddenly nerveless fingers. As their bodies slumped forward, Caleb and Abbott caught them both and lowered them gently to the ground. Caleb shot a questioning look at the shadowy wizard.

“They'll come to in a few hours, after a nice rest and some marvelous dreams.”

Caleb nodded, rose, and checked the door. It was locked. He turned to find Abbott rummaging in the gangsters' pockets. Their escorts were nowhere to be seen. Perhaps they had melted into the shadows or gone to ground, but Caleb suspected they had simply gone for reinforcements. He frowned. He was beginning to doubt they would pull this off.

"Here we are," Abbott said, producing a keycard. He stood, slipped the key into the door's lock, and popped it open.

"We should hurry," Caleb said, ushering Abbott through the door. "Our friends will be back, no doubt in greater numbers."

Abbott smoothly locked the door behind them. "That will buy us a few moments."

That done, Caleb examined the room they had entered. The decor was slightly improved over the exterior. There wasn't as much shattered glass on the floor, for one, and the stench was less cloying in here, despite the close quarters. But the rest of the place was decorated in the same industrial post-apocalyptic style as the rest of level eight preferred. It was a small room, with corridors branching off to the left and right.

"There should be more guards," Caleb said.

"Urp," Abbott agreed. "Pardon me. Yes, I agree."

Caleb spared a glance at the wizard. "Everything okay?"

"Just a little indigestion. This way, I think." Abbott turned right and led the way along the hallway, down a short flight of steps, and around a corner. The corridor opened up into a larger room, with large doors on the left and right. On the right, the doors were glass, painted black and with tape stretched over them in large "X" shapes. Still, neon light from outside spilled through cracks in the glass. On the right, huge metal doors were bolted to the walls, rust pitted and marked with graffiti. A gap showed between them, and the low sound of voices on the other side could be heard.

"This seem a little too easy to you?"

Abbott nodded, but his orange eyes twinkled. "The other shoe will drop soon enough."

Cautiously they approached the doors. Glass crunched under foot, and Caleb accidentally sent a metal plank skittering across the floor with his foot. He winced at the noise, but kept moving. Abbott gave him a reproachful look, and held a finger up to his face. But since he had no lips and his hand blended in with the shadows of his face, the effect was largely lost on Caleb.

They reached the doors without an alarm being raised, despite Caleb's clumsiness, and eased one of them open. Beyond were the remnants of a theater. Dingy, rusted seats were arranged in a semicircular pattern, facing a low stage. Small pockets of viewers sat scattered around the seats, armed to the teeth and eyeing one another with suspicion and hostility. Caleb saw a smooth-featured Uteni flanked by Repo-Bots, representing the Naruni Corporation. A quartet of six-limbed, ape-like Conaigher guarded a golden-skinned humanoid, a Gundestrup from the S'hree Vek Confederacy. A pair of black-scaled Kreeghor stood rather than sat, looking dispassionate and nonplussed despite being surrounded by enemies. The two humans in black and red Imperial Guardsman armor standing near them probably had something to do with the Kreeghor's attitude. Close to the stage were a trio of women in biomechanical armor, looking demonic and dangerous; representatives of the Gun Brothers. In human-sized power armor sat a number of Kittani, their Vibro-weapons in prominent display. And sitting alone with steepled fingers and smoothed brow, studiously being ignored by the rest of the audience, was a near-human in a business suit. Caleb knew in his gut that this was Thraxus' proxy.

The audience was only half the show. Up on the stage stood another collection of strange and dangerous aliens, all but one of them clad in suits of armor that managed to look both archaic and highly technological. They held rifles, plasma ejectors, and a variety of other less sanguine equipment that Caleb didn't recognize, but trusted would hurt.

The centerpiece was a huge being, easily eight or nine feet tall, floating cross-legged a few feet off the stage-floor. Besides being tall, he was also enormously fat, with a huge, distended gut and a chubby, cherubic face. His head was shaved, but he wore a bristling black goatee, as well as a gold earring in his left ear. His eyes glowed with a cold malevolence. And he was bright blue. In all, Caleb thought he looked like a sinister, blue Buddha. This could only be Blue Bennie, the four-dimensional being who, until recently, had been incarcerated at a CCW prison on Hala.

There was no sign of Elias Harkonnen, the other escaped prisoner.

"Wow," Caleb whispered. "I figured the odds would be bad, but not this bad."

Abbott nodded. "It is not yet too late to retreat and rethink our options. Our plan is not exactly foolproof."

The plan, such as it was, had been hatched quickly and desperately. Caleb and his friends had arrived on Center behind Blue Bennie and his gang, and had to scramble to not only track them down, but find out the location of the auction they would be holding. When the gang busted Blue Bennie out of jail, they also stole some highly advanced and technically illegal CCW weapons in the experimental stage. They had come to Center to sell them to the highest bidder. Caleb hoped to catch the criminals before the auction, but Blue Bennie moved much faster than Caleb had anticipated. Only hours ago, Squiddy, a Monro-Tet information broker, had sold Caleb and his friends the information on the auction's time and place. They had been forced to concoct a plan largely on the fly.

"If we wait any longer, there's no telling what might happen."

Already, Blue Bennie and his cohorts were wheeling out the first offering, following the introductions. Blue Bennie's armored guards pushed a hover cart onto the stage, upon which sat a curious metal case with a blinking electronic lock. "Combat drugs," Blue Bennie said. "Several vials of an interesting liquid that is designed to boost speed, strength, and reaction time in humans and near humans. Effects on other humanoids unknown." His voice buzzed across the room, and it felt as though it echoed inside Caleb's skull as well.

Any one of the organizations in the audience could easily reverse engineer the objects on display. There was no time to waste. It was now or never.

With a grim smile at Abbott, Caleb pushed the metal doors open loudly and stepped into the room. The wizard followed closely, eyeing the congregation. As the two of them stepped across the threshold, Blue Bennie's patter trailed off and dozens of guns popped into dozens of hands and aimed themselves directly at Caleb and Abbott. Yellow electricity began to play across the face of one of the Imperial Guardsmen.

"Greetings fellow sapients," Caleb said, raising his voice so it would carry across the theater. "Sorry to interrupt, but we feel it is ungentlemanly to offer stolen goods for sale without at least notifying the original owner, and allowing them to make a counter offer."

Caleb heard the distinct whine of energy weapons powering up, and the low buzz of Vibro-weapons activating. Curiously, Thraxus' proxy had not risen from his seat like all the others, but rather sat calmly, observing the proceedings.

Blue Bennie smiled. Even his teeth were blue. "You represent the Consortium of Civilized Worlds?"

"On occasion," Caleb said. "Particularly in matters such as this one, when any other emissary of the CCW would be less likely to be heard."

"And what makes you think we shall listen to you?" Blue Bennie asked. He drifted forward, off the edge of the stage. Behind him, the armored guards looked very threatening. Somehow, while producing their weapons, they managed to make the metal case disappear. That was going to make recovering the property difficult.

Caleb allowed himself to be enveloped in crimson light, and he felt the comforting weight of his Centurion-themed Cosmo-Armor settle on to his body. "Because I also represent the interests of the Cosmic

Forge,” he said, unnecessarily. He heard energy weapons click off, and the audience members scrambled to find weapons that could prove effective against him. Blue Bennie’s smile faltered for a split second, but then widened.

On the floor, Thraxus’ proxy finally made a move. He stood up, smoothed his suit, and began walking towards a side exit.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Blue Bennie demanded. “You think the presence of this idiot is going to affect this auction? Cosmo-Knights die easy, my friend. This will only be a moment.”

But Thraxus’ agent just kept walking towards the exit, as if the gang lord had not spoken. Irritated, Blue Bennie raised a plump hand, waggled his fingers, and between one step and the next, Thraxus’ agent found himself walking in the opposite direction, back towards his seat. He paused, frowning at Blue Bennie.

“I didn’t give you permission to leave.”

“A four-dimensional being,” Doctor Abbott muttered. “A master of both time and space. Very impressive.” As he spoke, he eased his trench coat open. Most of the crowd was momentarily distracted by the altercation between Blue Bennie and Thraxus’ agent, and Abbott chose to act. A globule of shadow, about the size of a baseball, erupted from his chest and shot towards the stage in an arc. The globule grew the further it got from Abbott, becoming basketball sized when it was about a foot away, and about the size of a Buick when it reached the apex of its arc, all in the span of a few eye blinks. Blue Bennie’s people reacted first, blasting at the ball of shadow with high-powered rifles. Caleb sliced into them with blasts of his bright red eyebeams, drawing their fire and ruining their aim. Everyone else dove for cover.

Except Blue Bennie. He looked at the ball with amusement.

Then it exploded, showering the interior of the theater with gobbets of shadow-stuff and revealing the presence of the rest of Caleb’s team: Kassiopeia Acherean, Atlantean Undead Slayer, who wore a suit of black, rune-encrusted armor that displayed a great deal of flesh, intricately etched in blue-white tattoos; Joriel, a maroon-haired Celestine, a biomechanoid designed by the S’hree Vek Confederacy; Arwen Griffin, Celestial Monk, already shining violet and lavender as her personal force field enveloped her athletic frame; and Sammadar Orak, Galactic Tracer who possessed a suit of highly advanced power armor decorated in day-glo colors. All four of them were armed with quantum foam projectors, and they blasted Blue Bennie with them immediately.

But the fat man danced nimbly out of the way, as though he knew what they were going to do. Then he retaliated. He waved his hands and a wall of blue spectral force materialized in the air, slamming the foursome to the ground. And with that, the battle was joined in earnest.

Caleb saw the ladies from the Gun Brothers melt into the shadows, while the Conaigher quickly ushered the Gundestrup over chairs and aisles towards the door. The Repo Bots encircled the Uteni, who activated his force field belt, and the three of them headed for the exit as well. Thraxus’ proxy resumed his march towards the side door, moving substantially more quickly this time. But the Kittani and the Kreeghor showed no signs of abandoning the conflict.

Caleb blasted Blue Bennie with his eyebeams, but the energy appeared to pass through the fat man without any effect. Yellow electricity slammed into Caleb, but he ignored it. Energy blasts from Blue Bennie’s people pinged off Caleb’s armor, and a Kittani waving a Vibro-Ax leapt at Caleb.

Arwen smashed through Blue Bennie’s wall with two well placed punches, and as it dissipated around her, the other three leapt into action. Suddenly, a blue-white Gryphon materialized in the room and tackled one of Blue Bennie’s goons. Joriel’s wings brought him into the air, and with a snarl he slammed into another armored thug, a beam of bluish psychic energy flashing from his right hand. Sammadar rose, the right arm of her armor metamorphosing into the barrel of a massive gun. There was a loud “CHOOM” and the Imperial Guardsman with

the lightning powers dropped, a bowling ball sized dent in the center of his chest.

The Kreeghor opened up on Caleb’s friends, sending a continuous stream of plasma fire in their direction that spattered harmlessly off Arwen’s shield. Kassy called up a sword and shield of blue fire to deflect the attack, but Sammadar took several hits. Around them, the theater began to come apart.

Caleb called up his hammer and easily blocked the Vibro-Ax, then spun his weapon and knocked the Kittani to the ground.

Blue Bennie, giggling like a schoolgirl, blurred across the room until he was on top of Caleb. He reached out with a fat arm and his fingers passed seamlessly through Caleb’s chest. Caleb felt them close around his heart and begin to squeeze. He gasped as a terrible coldness seeped into his bones.

But Doctor Abbott was there. He had produced his cane, and now used it to knock Blue Bennie’s arm away. The fat man grimaced and looked sharply at Abbott, as if seeing him for the first time. And he didn’t like what he saw. In a flash, he zipped back to the stage, wringing his hand.

“Thanks, Doc,” Caleb said. His voice wheezed, and he fought to catch his breath for a half-second before remembering that he didn’t need to breathe. The Kittani had found his feet again, and swept his ax towards Caleb’s legs. Caleb blocked once more, looked redly at the ax until it turned to slag, then slammed the Kittani hard with his hammer, knocking him halfway across the room.

Arwen leapt into the air, through a haze of smoke and laser beams, and landed lightly on her feet between the two Kreeghor. She slammed one in the throat with the heel of her hand, knocking him off balance, and was prepared to sweep his legs out from under him when the other Imperial Guardsman acted. Moving with blinding speed, the Guardsman attacked Arwen, raining down a flurry of blows that caused Arwen’s force field to flicker and unbalanced the girl. Arwen reacted almost instantly, adjusting to block the new foe’s attacks, and attempted to get through his guard, but the Guardsman appeared to easily match Arwen’s speed. In fact, he looked like he could surpass it. Arwen began to give ground, a surprised look on her face.

There was a roar from the stage as Joriel bodily lifted one of Blue Bennie’s thugs and threw him into another one. Both crashed to the floor of the stage, even as Joriel pivoted, disarmed another thug with a sweep of his wings, and stepped forward to impale him with the Celestine’s blazer.

Another “CHOOM” echoed across the theater, but whatever Sammadar was aiming at survived, as the shot went wild and instead blew a hole in the ceiling. Debris rained down, and the theater shuddered. The old building would not survive this battle.

Doctor Abbott rose into the air on a summoned circle of shadow, and sent bolts of shadow flying towards Blue Bennie. The fat man deflected them with a wave of his hand, but he eyed Abbott warily. Abbott’s orange eyes glittered.

The Kittani closed with Kassy and Sammadar. Kassy’s blade burned hot enough to sheer through several layers of megasteel, and Sammadar quickly reconfigured her armor for close combat. The big cannon folded away, and instead a pair of long blades unfolded from her arms to extend past her wrists like swords. She moved with liquid grace, dodging the Kittani’s clumsy attacks and responding with sharp, brutal stings that wore steadily away at the their defenses.

Reinforcements arrived. Society of the Knife gang members and more of Blue Bennie’s thugs in their pseudo-archaic armor appeared at the side exits and from behind Caleb and Doctor Abbott. More laser fire lit the darkened room. A shot burned into Kassy’s back, and she flinched, allowing an opening that a Kittani took advantage of to tear a furrow across her belly. Kassy snarled and decapitated her attacker with a titanic blow. The Gryphon reacted, dropping the thug it was savaging

and leaping into the air to dive bomb the gunners on the other side of the theater.

One of the walls behind the stage collapsed, and another large chunk of the ceiling fell in, raining debris down on the conflict. Little bits of ferrocete bounced off of Caleb's armor as he flew across the room and body slammed one of the Kreeghor. The alien flew backwards into the side of the stage, and the metal framework buckled under the force of the blow. The other Kreeghor started to aim his plasma gun at Caleb, then chucked it aside and drew a knife. Caleb smashed him across the face with his hammer. Teeth clattered to the floor.

Nearby, a purple, red and black tornado whirled across the broken ground as Arwen and the super fast Guardsman fought. Sweat turned to steam almost instantly from Arwen's brow as she threw furious punches at her foe that the Guardsman laughingly blocked. The Guardsman's own punches and kicks were fast enough to connect, and strong enough to connect hard.

Caleb wondered how best he could help the young monk, when suddenly he felt a cold wind brush across his shoulders. He looked up, and saw Doctor Abbott and Blue Bennie locked in a wizard's duel.

The two figures, one dark and the other light, hovered in the air above the theater floor. Sorcerous energies bled off the two of them, and whipped around the room in an increasingly faster whirlwind. Shadowy shapes spun around Doctor Abbott and lashed out towards Blue Bennie, but the fat man was never quite where he seemed to be. He flickered in and out of place, just out of reach. Cold blue light enveloped his hands and burned from his eyes. Blasts of energy flashed towards Abbott. He deflected some with his cane, but one beam burned past his defenses and punched a hole through the shoulder of his jacket. His shadowy features fuzzed for a moment, but then darkened. A wave of black light erupted from Abbott's cane and washed towards Blue Bennie. The fat man suddenly doubled, then tripled, spreading out and laughing, but the wave of darkness just split, and slammed into each version. Two of them winked out, but the third one, on the left, howled with pain. Even as he fought to shake off the black wave, the other forks, having disintegrated the illusory Blue Bennies, converged on the original and connected with a thunderous crash.

Blue Bennie fought to recover, and Abbott pressed the attack. The shadowy shapes around him congealed into massive sharks that flew through the air and snapped their mighty jaws, clamping down on Blue Bennie's forearms. Abbott raised his cane, and from the head erupted a beam of dazzling darkness that flew straight for Blue Bennie's forehead. When it hit, Blue Bennie cried out, thrashing, and freed himself from the shadow sharks. He blocked Abbott's beam with one hand and sent spinning darts of blue light towards Abbott with the other.

Caleb felt a shadow fall across him, and instinctively moved out of the way, turning a strike that might have taken his head off into a glancing blow that merely sent him sprawling. The Kreeghor who had struck him stood gloating for a second, and then his head disintegrated with a loud "CHOOM."

Caleb risked a glance towards Kassy and Sammadar. The Kittani were down, or running, and a huge polar bear and an angry looking Water Elemental had joined the Gryphon to trounce the Society of the Knife and Blue Bennie's thugs. Sammadar didn't even pause after dropping the Kreeghor, but shifted her aim at the armored goons on the stage who were taking shots at Kassy's menagerie.

In the middle of the room, the wizard's duel still raged. The magical wind, byproduct of the tremendous energies that Abbott and Blue Bennie were hurling at one another, began to pick up little bits of rock and steel and whip them around. The few seat cushions left in the building soon joined, as well as other lightweight bits of trash and detritus. The walls of the theater groaned, and another section of ceiling came crashing down.

Something knocked against Caleb's armored shin, and he looked down to see one of the quantum foam canisters discarded by his friend had been nudged across the floor by the wind. Caleb reached down and

picked it up. The remaining Kreeghor lurched to his feet. Caleb shot him in the knee with his eyebeams, and the Kreeghor went down again. A sheet of paper flew into Caleb's face, and he tore it away irritably.

A ghost image of Blue Bennie flickered around the upper part of the room, whizzing around like the wind. Bolts of light hammered at Abbott, but the Shadowmage deflected each and every one, knocking them away with his cane. Huge sharks and mastiffs and raptors made of shadow flashed around the room, attacking each ghost image relentlessly. In the midst of the maelstrom, Doctor Abbott stood serene, his orange eyes twinkling.

Caleb searched the air, looking for a target. He sent a silent plea to Abbott.

And then Arwen's unconscious body crashed to the ground at Caleb's feet, and a red and black blur slapped the quantum foam canister from his hands. Then hard fists hammered against the carapace of his armor, denting cosmic forged steel and staggering Caleb. He stepped back, forced to do so by the relentless onslaught, and tried to find his target. He tried a swing, missed, and felt a dozen blows crash into his helmet. Caleb rocked on his feet and almost fell over backwards. Suddenly, he was disarmed, his hammer tugged from his hand almost effortlessly, and then his own hammer came flying at his head. And it connected, like a runaway freight train. Caleb crashed to the ground with a clatter that was lost in the general din of the combat. He rolled, and the hammer slammed into his shoulder, again and again and again. Caleb braced himself and slowly rose as the hammer struck his ribs and back and shoulders.

He found his feet and took a wild swing with his right hand that met only air. Then he felt his fingers crunch as the hammer connected. Caleb gritted his teeth and spun around, raking the air with his eyebeams, careful not to hit Arwen's prone body. He was rewarded with a yelp, and the crunch of his hammer hitting the floor. Caleb launched himself at the sound, and knocked the Guardsman to the ground. He wrapped his arms tightly around the Guardsman, pinning him, and began to slam his helmeted head into the Guardsman's face repeatedly. When the Guardsman reeled, dazed, Caleb loosed an arm long enough to give him a good right cross that finally sent him into dreamland.

Caleb levered himself to his feet once more, dispelled his hammer, and reached for the quantum foam canister. A stray energy blast knocked it out of his hand, sending it spinning across the floor. Caleb groaned. This was not turning out to be a good day.

Above the melee, the energy bleeding off of Abbott and Blue Bennie was beginning to take apart the building. Seats and bricks and metal spars disintegrated, turning into bursts of light and bleeding into the air. Swirls of energy arced from wizard to wizard, no longer taking on shapes or definition, just form and light. The energy orbited Abbott harmlessly, but as it spun around Blue Bennie, it tore at him. His ghost images winked out of existence, and his flesh form materialized before Abbott again, but the energy tore at that too, tearing away chunks of Blue Bennie's body. There was no blood. It looked like Blue Bennie was solid all the way through. He screamed something wordless at Abbott and tried to hurl energy at the Shadowmage, but Abbott batted it carelessly aside.

Caleb reached for the quantum foam canister, grabbed it, and launched himself into the middle of the storm. He pointed the nozzle at Blue Bennie's hunched, massive back, and let loose. Blue Bennie lurched forward, discarding chunks of himself with each movement, and tried to turn to face Caleb. Caleb continued to empty the quantum foam on Bennie, damping his temporal powers. The energy bleeding off of him lessened, as if a spigot had been turned off. The canister empty, Caleb discarded it. He grabbed Bennie by the shoulder, spun him around, and decked him.

Blue Bennie bounced when he hit the ground.

The rest was just clean up.



Erick Wujcik — 1951-2008

Erick Wujcik passed away June 7th. He was a true gaming genius.

Erick wrote and designed the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® RPG**, **After the Bomb® RPG**, **Ninjas & Superspies™ RPG**, **Amber® Diceless RPG**, wrote numerous sourcebooks and contributed to dozens of other games and supplements, among many other accomplishments.

Erick Wujcik was the dearest of friends to all of us at Palladium Books. He made our lives richer, challenged our imaginations and made us laugh. Erick is loved and will be deeply missed.

We dedicate this issue of **The Rifter®** to Erick's genius, role-playing creations for Palladium, and heartfelt friendship.

The photograph shows *Erick Wujcik* and *Kevin Siembieda* at the *2007 Palladium Open House*.

The Rifter® Number Forty-Three

This issue of **The Rifter®** is two things, our third annual Swimsuit Issue packed with pinup pages of and stats for sexy, dangerous femme fatales from across the Megaverse®, and a very special tribute to Erick Wujcik. Details of Erick's passing are given inside. Erick would love this tribute, because it honors him, his work and the joy of role-playing games. Enjoy.

The Rifter® is your doorway to unlimited imagination and numerous Palladium role-playing worlds. It offers new heroes, powers, weapons, magic and adventure for your games. It presents new villains, monsters and danger to battle, and new ideas to consider. And it helps you unlock your imagination by showing you what other gamers, just like *you*, have created.

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- Written by *Kevin Siembieda* and a host of other Palladium authors. Many characters are inspired by the works of *Erick Wujcik*.
- Art by *Larry Elmore*, *Apollo Okamura*, *Mark Evans*, *Mike Wilson*, and many others.
- Tribute to Erick Wujcik and official obituary.
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