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

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



**The Rifter® Number 48**

**Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!**

## **First Printing – October 2009**

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Palladium Books® Presents:

# THE RIFTER® #48



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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, 2009*

# Contents – The Rifter® #48 – October, 2009

## Page 6 – Art

The art on page six is the cover to **Mysteries of Magic™ Book One: The Heart of Magic™**. The artist is *David Martin*. We thought it perfectly captured the idea of magical mysteries, formulas and spell casting. The book itself is packed with information about the Palladium World, society, how magic works, apprenticeships and learning magic, two new O.C.C.s, 50 new spells and all kinds of other valuable information. Though written specifically for **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, the spells and much of the data are suitable for use in **Rifts®**, **Phase World®**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, and other world settings.

## Page 7 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Publisher Kevin Siembieda talks about Palladium's current financial situation, sales, layoffs, the global economy, Christmas Grab Bags, and hope.

Times are tough for everybody. We're all in this together and don't you forget that. Palladium is ready to do its part with the biggest, most fun Christmas Surprise Packages ever.

## Page 8 – News

Publisher Kevin Siembieda recounts notable events since the last issue of **The Rifter®** to a couple days before this issue was sent to the printer. It will certainly provide you with a clear idea of the whirlwind that life at Palladium Books can be at times. Don't worry, it ends on a positive note.

In other news, Hollywood keeps sniffing around Palladium Books, Kathy Simmons has started her own Halloween prop and decorations business, and the boss is busy writing, working and murmuring.

## Page 10 – Coming Attractions

Palladium continues to release books at a steady pace. **Mysteries of Magic™ Book One: The Heart of Magic™** just arrived as we were putting this issue to bed and it looks great. **The Rifter®** you are holding in your hand, the **Dead Reign™ Dark Places** sourcebook comes next, followed by **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 12: Dimensional Outbreak™**, **Heroes of the Megaverse®**, and **Robotech®: UEEF Marines™ Sourcebook**.

We also make note of recent releases and some titles available as special limited printings available directly from Palladium Books. Get all the juicy details. And don't forget the Open House is not that far off.

## Page 19 – 2009 Palladium Christmas Surprise Package

The Christmas Surprise Package is a holiday tradition that now spans 11 or 12 years, and this year it is even more spectacular than ever. \$80-\$100 worth of Palladium product for \$37 plus shipping and handling. Autographs if you want them. Items are handpicked by Kevin Siembieda from *your Holiday Wish List*. It is the only way many fans can get autographs from Kevin and other Palladium staff and creators. The details are all here. Order yours soon so you can get it in time for Christmas. Tell your friends, buy two! It makes a great gift for Christmas

and other occasions, as well as a way to fill in those holes in your collection. Limited time offer.

*Happy Holidays from all of us at Palladium Books.*

## Page 22 – “Official” Nightbane® Source Material Some Commonly Asked Questions

*Mark Oberle, Irvin Jackson and Kevin Siembieda* answer some commonly asked questions and provide official answers.

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Horror Factor – page 23

Experience tables for O.C.C.s and R.C.C.s in Nightlands – page 23

Kevin's "Maybe, let's see" rule – page 24

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## Page 25 – The NORAD Duology, Part Two:

### Return to N.O.R.A.D. – An epic adventure for *Rifts®*

*Ed Emmer* masterfully presents the conclusion of an adventure that spans 300 years! What started during the Great Cataclysm ends in the transformed North America of Rifts Earth. A horror that has lurked in the belly of forgotten N.O.R.A.D. threatens the world again, and a new generation of heroes must put an end to the nightmare.

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A.R.C.H.I.E. 2.5 – page 62

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Wrapping it All Up – page 63

Artwork by *Allen & Brian Manning*.

## Page 64 – Scared Spitless

### For all Palladium game settings, from Rifts® to Nightbane®

Winston Crutchfield presents fascinating “optional” Horror Factor Rules that take the “timid” out of intimidation. Not only do these rules and tables cover monsters, but also skills that involve intimidation, reputation, environment, and combat.

Artwork by *Kent Burles*.

## Page 77 – Impersonator Zombies™

### “Optional” source material for Dead Reign™

Steven Dawes shares with us the eerie Zombie Aberration known as the Impersonator Zombie.

Artwork by *Michael Mumah*.

## Page 80 – Of Cloth, Staff & Scripture

### “Unofficial” rules for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Reed Dees offers up some new and interesting ideas about clergy and religion in the Palladium Fantasy® setting. New Priest Class Options include the High Priest, Non-Spellcasting Priests, the Acolyte O.C.C., Spirit Monk, False Prophets and more. Plus Organization Rules. (For a new view of Priests in the Fantasy setting, see **Mysteries of Magic™ Book One**.)

## Page 93 – The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter 48: Creature of the Wheel. The latest installment of *James M.G. Cannon’s* epic tale set in the Three Galaxies. Things remain desperate as our heroes, scattered across the Megaverse, battle for survival.

## Page 96 – Rifter® Subscription Offer

### The Theme for Issue 48

The theme for every October issue is horror, monsters and the supernatural. This issue delivers them all in spades. The centerpiece to this issue is the grand finale of the N.O.R.A.D. Duology saga that starts in the Chaos Earth™ setting and ends on Rifts Earth 300 years later. But we tried to include a little something for everyone, from Nightbane® to Rifts®.

We think this is another concept-packed issue to provoke your imagination and inspire you to try new ideas and expand your gaming Megaverse®.

Fledgling writers and longtime gamers who think they are decent writers should think about sending in *your* own ideas for articles, adventures and source material for **The Rifter®**.

### The Rifter® Needs You

You do not need to be a professional writer to contribute to **The Rifter®**. This publication is like a “fanzine” written by fans for fans. A forum in which gamers just like *you* can submit articles, G.M. advice, player tips, house rules, adventures, new magic, new psionics, new super abilities, monsters, villains, high-tech weapons, vehicles, power armor, short works of fiction and more. So think about writing up something short (even something as small as 4-6 pages). Newcomers and regular contributors are always welcomed.

**The Rifter®** needs new material, especially when it comes to adventures and source material, for *all* of our game lines, especially *Rifts®*, *Chaos Earth™*, *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas and Superspies™*, *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Dead Reign™*, *Splicers®* and *Nightbane®*.

Pay is lousy, fame is dubious, but you get to share your ideas and adventures with fellow gamers and get four free copies to show to your friends and family.

### The Cover

The cover is by *Kent Burles* and depicts two strange looking Nightbane in Morphus Form. This is Kent’s first cover for Palladium. His black and white art appears in numerous Palladium games, including new release, **Mysteries of Magic™**, and most issues of **The Rifter®**.

### Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

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

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

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

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

### www.palladiumbooks.com – Palladium Online

## The Rifter® #49

The January issue will provide insight into new releases for the first half of the New Year as well as source material, adventures and ideas for Palladium’s many different role-playing game settings, including *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Nightbane®*, *Rifts®* and others.

- **Material for Rifts®.**
- **Material for Heroes Unlimited™.**
- **Material for Palladium Fantasy RPG®.**
- **Material for Dead Reign™.**
- **Additional source material not yet determined.**
- **The next chapter of *The Hammer of the Forge™*.**
- **Latest news, coming attractions and fun.**

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





Mysteries of Magic™ cover by David Martin

# From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

As I have talked about in previous issues of **The Rifter**® and many **Murmurs from the Megaverse**® (on the Palladium website), sales have been up, down and all over the place the entire year. Palladium will have a couple of good months, and then a couple of bad. It keeps your hair standing on end and your mind wondering: “Are we doing really well, or are we in trouble?”

September sales have always been bad. ALWAYS. But this year, they were in the absolute toilet. And that was following a weak August because we had no new product that month nor for the first two-thirds of September.

That meant on September 14 I had to “temporarily” layoff *Wayne Smith* and *Jason Marker* for what I expected to be 6-8 weeks. With a little luck and increased sales from new releases and Christmas Surprise Packages, I hoped that period would be shorter.

News of the layoffs touched off a firestorm of worry and concern among Palladium fans online.

## Should you be worried?

Maybe.

Interest in Palladium products remains high. We see many new customers ordering all the time (really), and there is a lot of positive buzz and excitement among our thousands of longtime fans and loyal customers.

So why are sales so lousy?

That’s an easy question, the economic conditions around the world have hurt us badly, and changes in postal shipping rates have crushed foreign sales.

Online and mail order sales to **Canada** have dropped by 60% and sales **overseas** have plunged by 90%! This is due in part to the “global” cash crunch, but a much bigger villain is changes made by the United States Post Office a year ago. There is no longer *any type of inexpensive* means to ship books outside the USA. A \$60 order with three large books, to England or Europe costs \$43 to ship via *Priority Mail International* (\$22 to Canada). Any package over 4 pounds (1.8 kg) must ship via International Priority Mail. The overseas customer is getting hammered with the shipping cost, and that extreme cost is crippling Palladium’s sales outside the USA. And there is nothing Palladium can do to get around that. It stinks.

**Back home, money is tight for the majority of our fans.**

As I discussed in one of my September **Murmurs from the Megaverse**® postings, I see loyal fans struggling with the decision of which *one* or *two* books to purchase out of the 8-10 they want. I saw this at a recent store promotion and book signing where Palladium products were on sale at a *40% discount*. Even with the big discount, I saw fans agonize – and I mean agonize for 20 minutes – over which 1-3 books they should get. In every case, the gamer walked in with X to spend, not a penny more, and was wary of spending even that. I see it time and time again at stores and in our online sales and mail order. We are seeing customers who used to purchase a book the second it was available, and now waiting 1-6 months to make their purchase. Since

Palladium Books has a close rapport with many of its fans, we are constantly hearing worried stories from gamers who have lost their job, been laid off, forced to take a pay cut or reduced hours of work, fear being laid off or losing their job, have a spouse who has been laid off, are having mortgage problems, or suffering some other financial setback. I can not begin to count the number of fans who have apologized to me for not being able to buy more or support Palladium better.

Times are tough for almost everybody.

**What you need to know is that we, at Palladium, understand that.** There is no reason to apologize for not having the money to buy the books you might want from us. It is okay. YOU need to take care of yourselves and your families. If Palladium wasn’t already hurt and still recovering from the specter of the *Crisis of Treachery*, we’d almost certainly be fine, but we aren’t. Palladium is not in immediate danger of going out of business, but, yeah, we are hurting at the moment. And that’s the frustrating thing, we’ve had some months where we were doing great, others where we’ve been doing fair and some that have been . . . well, just plain terrible.

That having been said, Autumn and Christmas sales (including the sale of *new releases* and *Christmas Surprise Packages*) have ALWAYS been fantastic. If – and in these scary times, that *may* be a big “if” – we see the usual range of sales, we should recover at least for the next several months. Our next hurdle is the slow months of February, March and April. After that, we pray the economy strengthens and sales get back to normal and remain fairly strong.

## We can help each other

We can help each other with the **2009 Palladium Christmas Surprise Package**, also known as the Palladium “grab bag.” I am increasing the value of the goods in each Surprise Package by \$10-\$20 and may even include MORE in some. That means instead of the \$70+ worth of product in past **Christmas Surprise Packages** for \$35 (plus shipping), you can expect to see \$80, \$90, and even \$100 worth of Palladium product in the ones for 2009.

This is something I want to do. This is something I have been planning on doing since July. It is a way I can help you get the many Palladium RPGs, sourcebooks, non-book products (coffee mugs, magnets, sticky notes, dice bags, T-shirts, art prints, etc.) and things that you’ve been wanting but really can’t afford. It is a way for you to purchase *a LOT* to give to the special gamer in your life (spouse, brother, parent, G.M., buddy, etc.) for less. Or a way to get a lot and divvy it up as gifts for several friends.

PLEASE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY.

We are so pumped up about wanting to make Christmas special during these very tough times, that the Palladium crew is stepping up and going beyond the call of duty.

1. My father, *Henry Siembieda*, ailing and undergoing treatment for bladder cancer, insisted on coming in and signing books. He signed more than 600 over a two day period as well as helped with some prep work. That’s a bigger deal than you

might think, because in addition to feeling under the weather, Hank has always hated signing books.

2. Brian and Allen Manning, other artists and I will be doing quick, *convention style sketches* to drop into **Christmas Surprise Packages** so fans of original art can get something special. The sketches can't be anything specific like your character, and they will be quick, simple pencil or ink drawings, but they'll be original, one-of-a-kind art. And they are being done by artists who want to make your Christmas special. This was **Brian Manning's** idea. Don't I have the best crew of people working for me?

3. I'll be packing those Christmas Grab Bags full of goodies.

**You will be helping Palladium too**, by purchasing our product, spreading the joy, and playing our games. Even though the books in the grab bags are selling at a discount, I'd rather be selling them and getting them into the hands of gamers who want them, than letting them sit in our warehouse gathering dust until people can afford them. Games are meant to be played.

It is a win, win situation. It is what Christmas and family are all about. We help each other, show our appreciation, and spread joy.

When things get better for you, keep on buying our books as they come out.

\*\*\*\*\*

I wish I could tell you everything will be fine. Certainly Palladium's potential is as tremendous as ever (I wish they'd make that darn Rifts movie, don't you?) and we have a zillion ideas for new books. I guess time will tell. Let's hope the economy picks up soon. In the meantime, try to stay positive, appreciate what you have and enjoy the upcoming holiday season with friends and loved ones. Oh yeah, and squeeze in a little role-playing. Take care.

– Kevin Siembieda, October 2009

# News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

## It has been a whirlwind of events since the last issue of **The Rifter**<sup>®</sup>

We released **Nightbane**<sup>®</sup> **Survival Guide** in July, Jason Marker finished writing **Robotech**<sup>®</sup> **Expeditionary Force Marines**, I finished work on **Mysteries of Magic**<sup>™</sup> **Book One: The Heart of Magic**<sup>™</sup> (shipped the last week of September; and I have notes for at least 6 additional books), we finished this issue of **The Rifter**<sup>®</sup>, and we are working on getting **Dead Reign**<sup>™</sup> **Sourcebook Two: Dark Places, Dimensional Outbreak**<sup>™</sup>, **Heroes of the Megaverse**<sup>®</sup>, and **Robotech**<sup>®</sup> **Expeditionary Force Marines**<sup>™</sup> all released by the end of the year!

Meanwhile . . .

- We helped *Kathy Simmons* launch her **Queen of Ghouls**<sup>™</sup> business and Ebay store, selling indoor and outdoor Halloween props, capes and decorations with a focus on “life-sized Ghouls” that look lifelike, fun and scary.

- My daughter, *Monica*, got married August 7th and I spent a wonderful week with her and Steven in Seattle, Washington.

- Gen Con – We skipped this year's event to work on books, but artist, *Amy Ashbaugh*, attended and won first place for “Black & White” art. Her work appears in the **Nightbane**<sup>®</sup> **Survival Guide**, **Mysteries of Magic**<sup>™</sup> **Book One** and **Dead Reign**<sup>™</sup> **RPG**, among others.

- My Dad, *Henry Siembieda* had 2-3 small tumors removed from his bladder (the second time this year), August 25th.

- I did a store signing at Comics Archives on August 29.

- Dad was diagnosed with bladder cancer, August 31.

- Freelancer *Brandon Aten* got married to *Sarah* on September 5th. We are pals, and Wayne and I were supposed to be there. In fact, I was to give a wedding toast. Unfortunately, with things going on with Dad I decide I couldn't go. Wayne went, and had a great time.

- My father's girlfriend *Arlene* was rushed to the hospital September 11th, but I wouldn't find out until the next day while I was in the middle of an outdoor tent sale (selling toys and helping Kathy sell her “ghouls”).

- I was a exhibitor at a tent sale, September 12 (lousy turnout and sales), and got the news that Arlene was in the hospital and Dad needed to move in with me – immediately! Dad moved in with me at my apartment, later that afternoon.

- **Robotech**<sup>®</sup>: **The Shadow Chronicles**<sup>®</sup> **RPG**, manga edition, is down to its last 80 or so copies, so I sent it to the printer for its second printing on September 14.

- On Monday, September 14, online weekend sales were a historic low, after coming off several weeks of poor sales. A sluggish economy and no new release in August did not help.

- The September 14th Layoffs I made the difficult choice of having to layoff *Wayne Smith* and *Jason Marker* for what I anticipated to be 6-8 weeks. If *new releases* and *Christmas Surprise Package* boosted sales are as strong as anticipated, that time off could be much shorter.

Jason Marker announced his layoff on Facebook and that he was looking for work elsewhere (his decision) and the rumors flew.

The Internet postings, emails, private messages, and phone calls came fast and furious into the Palladium offices. I spent all of Monday afternoon and evening, *till Midnight*, dispelling rumors that the two were “fired” or that the layoffs were permanent and that Palladium is going out of business.

- Tuesday, September 15 was, more or less, a continuation of Monday evening.

- Dad's chemotherapy started on September 16th. He had been coming to work with me and was a tortured wreck. He was worried about Arlene, his chemotherapy (he had no idea what to expect), cancer, Palladium Books and me. I took the entire day off to spend with him. Chemo was quick and easy. We visited with Arlene in the hospital where we found out she was doing better, the Palladium furor had quieted down, and Dad is feeling more at ease. We spent the afternoon and evening watching old movies. It was a nice day.

- Thursday and through the weekend was a combination of taking care of Dad and trying to take care of business, writing, editing, and assigning artwork. It was difficult, but we were



hopeful on all fronts. It was one hell of a week. Felt more like three weeks had passed.

- Sunday afternoon Dad got to go home. Arlene was waiting for him. Both were feeling better. The crisis has passed, but both remain under close doctor scrutiny.

- Monday, sales over the weekend were much better. Monday evening we posted the **2009 Christmas Surprise Package** deal and let people know that while their orders would not ship before October 9, they could place their orders right away. For more info about this great deal where you get books for roughly half-price, autographs, and surprises, read my **From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda** and see the **Christmas Surprise Package advertisement** elsewhere in this issue.

- Tuesday, September 22, I'm writing this for **The Rifter®** you are reading. Sales remain a bit below the level we need to see, but have been up significantly. Waaaaay up compared to the previous few weeks. Part of that is the result of a major new release. There is a ton of excitement about **Mysteries of Magic™ Book One: The Heart of Magic™**. Part of the sales increase is undoubtedly worried fans showing their support. Thank you very much. Your efforts are welcomed and appreciated, and they are making a difference.

The initial Surprise Package sales, overnight, are fast and strong. We are feeling even more hopeful, but we need to see if the sales momentum continues. With any luck, Wayne will be back working at Palladium by October 12, a four week layoff. Cool.

- Wednesday, September 23, I spent the morning with my Dad. Took him out to breakfast, then to his second chemotherapy treatment and back home. I stayed with him chatting till about 2:30 PM and got back to the office later that afternoon.

- Thursday, **Mysteries of Magic™** arrived a day early and without any advanced notice. We prepped the book for shipping on Friday, as scheduled. The book looks great.

- Friday, we'll be shipping out **Mysteries of Magic™** to those who pre-ordered and to distributors. I think people are going to love this book. I wanted to get the **The Rifter®** (the one in your hands) to the printer today (it is Friday, September 25, as I update this news block), but it will have to go in on Monday.

- **What's next?** We need to stay focused on getting all those books out by the end of the year, we need to get Wayne back and I need to be there for my Dad and the guys. We already have 53 *Christmas Surprise Package* orders and hoping for a big weekend. With any luck, sales of new books and the Christmas Surprise Packages will remain strong and Palladium will be rockin' n' rollin' into the New Year full steam ahead.

You can follow what's going on by reading our *weekly online Press Releases* and my even more frequent postings on **Murmurs from the Megaverse**.

As I've stated elsewhere in this book and online, it seems like almost everybody is experiencing difficult and uncertain times. We all need to keep our heads, try to stay positive, do what we can to make things better, and most importantly, never lose sight of what's most important: our health and our loved ones. Be there with a smile and a kind word for your out of work buddy. Don't take out your frustration on your spouse or the people who love you. Never lose sight of the fact that you are loved and

life offers plenty to enjoy, share and smile about. Stay frosty, keep those imaginations burning bright and game on.

## Murmurs from the Megaverse®

### A continuing blog by Kevin Siembieda

If you want *regular updates* of events, happenings, progress reports, thoughts and mutterings from me about what's going on at Palladium Books, follow my **Murmurs from the Megaverse®** online. I post at least twice a week and often 3-6 times a week, sometimes more depending on what's going on and my available time. Editor Alex Marciniszyn posts from time to time as well. Palladium's web address is [www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com).

## Gateway to the Megaverse® Podcast

<http://www.talkshoe.com/talkshoe/web/talkCast.jsp?masterId=50867>

*Matthew Daye* hosts a "live" podcast program, **Gateway to the Megaverse®**, most every Monday at 6:00 or 7:00 PM Eastern Time (depending on his work schedule and guests). Also available as recorded downloads.

I'll probably speak on a show at least once each month of October, November and December, and there are other guests and fun topics of discussion.

Don't forget about *Chris Perrin's Echos from the Rifts®*, with various reports and interviews.

## Rifts® & Hollywood

Palladium got a call on Monday, September 21, from a small, independent film producer who wanted to know if he could option **Rifts®** for film. I explained that **Rifts®** was currently under option with **Walt Disney Pictures** for **Jerry Bruckheimer Films** to develop. Apparently, this gent had looked into acquiring the film rights to **Rifts®** back in 2003 and was surprised the option was still in place. He made the comment that *JB Films* must be very interested in the property if they were holding onto it for so many years, and that sometimes it takes 10-12 years to get a picture off the ground.

I suggested he might want to consider some of Palladium's other game lines. He didn't know about them, and he asked me to send him some samples of our other role-playing games for his review and consideration.

It was nice to see somebody interested in **Rifts®** for such a long period, and it was comforting to have another Hollywood producer confirm that it is a good sign that *Disney* and *JB Films* have hung onto the option for so many years. It suggests **Rifts®** is a film they really want to make. Let's hope so, eh?

Alex and I packed up a selection of Palladium RPG settings for this gent to review. The effort will probably go nowhere, but who knows? With the success of *G.I. Joe* and superhero movies, I could see a film producer being interested in **Ninjas & Superspies™** or **Heroes Unlimited™**. Horror is always popular, leaving the door open for **Nightbane®**, **Beyond the Supernatural™** or **Dead Reign™**, and there's always **After the Bomb®**, **The Mechanoids®** and **Splicers®**.

There is no news from *JB Films* about the *Rifts® Movie* at this time. We expect to know something, one way or the other, by March or April 2010, maybe sooner. When we know something, you'll know something.



## Queen of Ghouls™

Palladium's own *Kathy Simmons*, who processes orders and does the bookkeeping at the company, started her own side business making life-size Halloween props/figures for display on lawns or inside the house. She calls the company **Queen of Ghouls**, and has created an array of figures that she calls her "ghouls." Personally, I love the *Tombstone Ghouls* and many of her life-sized figures, particularly her vampires, witches, and wizards, as well as some of the unique figures like *The Fly*. She has sold "ghouls" across the country and has even gotten order requests from Canada and Australia.

A typical ghouls sells for \$79-\$139, each is handmade, and often one (or two) of a kind. No two are exactly alike and Kathy deliberately tries to make each one unique and different even when they are similar. Each is sturdy but lightweight (under 12 lbs), and breaks down to half the size for easy storage. She plans to add *capas* and other items in the weeks to come. Check out her Ebay store at [queenofghouls.com](http://queenofghouls.com). We wish her well.

## Select Palladium RPG titles available as PDFs at DriveThruRPG.com

90+ Palladium titles are available as PDF digital downloads from [DriveThruRPG.com](http://DriveThruRPG.com) at below the cover price.

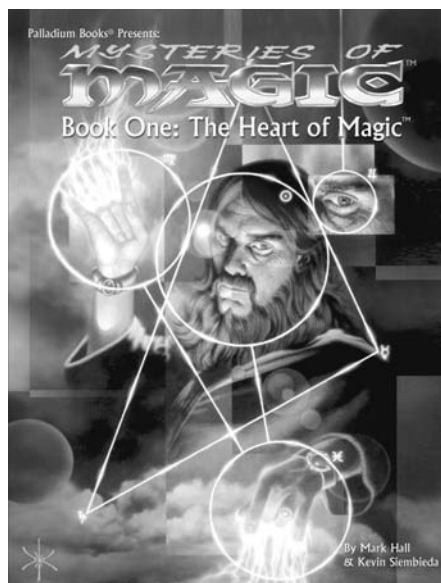
Out of print titles such as **Nightbane® Book Four: Shadows of Light™**, the original **Mechanoids® RPGs**, **Boxed Nightmares™** for BTS First Edition, the **Rifts® Coalition Wars®: Siege on Tolkeen™** series, the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** 1st Edition RPG and sourcebooks, the **Palladium Weapon series**, **The Rifter® #1-40**, and many others are available.

## Free Palladium Catalog

The catalog is FREE upon request to gamers, stores and distributors. All you gotta do is ask.

# Coming Attractions

The following are scheduled for release in the last months of 2009.



## Mysteries of Magic™ Book One: The Heart of Magic™

**NEW! The Heart of Magic™** is packed with new information, details and insight about magic, P.P.E., the Palladium World, Men of Magic, Wizards, Warlocks, Priests, Familiars, true names, apprenticeship, scroll conversion, learning magic, new and different magic O.C.C.s, new Wizard and Warlock spells, and data that expands, defines and clarifies a number of aspects about the practice of magic in the Palladium Fantasy setting. Easy to adapt to **Rifts®** (just change S.D.C. damage to M.D. and you are ready to go).

- **50 new Wizard and Warlock spells.**
- **The Forsaken Mage O.C.C., a Jack of all magicks and an outcast.**
- **Half-Wizard O.C.C., a split-class spell caster.**
- **Priest Variant O.C.C.s: Healer, Scholar and Warrior.**
- **New details about the Goblin Cobbler and Psi-Mystic.**
- **New details about Familiars, their secrets, and special abilities.**
- **True names, the mystery behind them, the danger of revealing them, and how to change them.**
- **Secrets of how magic is learned, how it works, and the apprenticeship process (what is learned).**
- **New insights about magic, the Palladium World, and Men of Magic.**

- A closer look at the Wizard O.C.C., scroll conversion, spell books, auras, jobs, guilds, and the effects of metal and minerals on magic.
- Unstable and weak spell magic, learning new spells, and more.
- For the Palladium Fantasy® world, but suitable for any S.D.C. setting, and is easy to adapt to Rifts® and any Mega-Damage setting.
- Cover and logo by David Martin.
- Art by Ashbaugh, Mumah, Burles and others.
- Written by Mark Hall and Kevin Siembieda.
- 96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 472. Available now!

## Dead Reign™ Sourcebook Two:

### Dark Places™

When there is no place to hide and the dead are everywhere, where do you go? Who can you turn to? What happens next? What lurks in dark places?

Artwork and cover has been assigned and the book will be out by the end of October if I have anything to say about it.

- **Dark places: Haven or death trap, or both?**
- **A variant zombie or two.**
- **New resources, hiding places and travel tips.**
- **Adventure ideas and more.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Illustrated by Amy Ashbaugh, Nick Bradshaw and others.**
- **Cover by E.M. Gist.**
- **64 pages – \$12.95 retail – Cat. No. 232. October release.**

## Robotech®

### Expeditionary Force Marines™

The book is completely written and undergoing its final re-write, edit, and approval process. We intend to have **Robotech® Expeditionary Force Marines™** in your hands before Christmas.

This is another sourcebook jam-packed with new O.C.C.s, mecha, weapons, gear, and ideas to send your characters on amazing new adventures.

- **UEEF Marine Corps O.C.C. and M.O.S. skills.**
- **New weapons.**
- **New Mecha.**
- **New Marine ground vehicles.**
- **New Marine aircraft.**
- **New Marine specific spacecraft.**
- **History, training, and organization of the UEEF Marines.**
- **Cat. No. 553, manga size & format** – final page count not yet determined, but we are thinking 128-192 pages, \$14.95 retail and a November release.

### Robotech® RPG Checklist:

- **Robotech®: The Shadow Chronicles® RPG** – manga size – core rule book – 336 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 550.

- **Robotech®: The Shadow Chronicles® RPG** – 8½ x 11 Deluxe Hardcover Edition – 224 pages – \$30.95 retail – Cat. No. 550HC. **Note:** Features new and additional art and text, including space combat rules.
- **Robotech®: The Shadow Chronicles® RPG “Collector’s” Gold Edition** – 8½ x 11 Deluxe Hardcover Edition – 224 pages – \$70 retail – Cat. No. 5500HC. **Note:** Limited to 500 signed and numbered copies, with 8 signatures including Kevin Siembieda, Jason Marker, Apollo Okamura and Tommy Yune. Makes a *wonderful gift*.
- **Robotech® Macross® Saga Sourcebook** – manga size – 256 pages – \$15.95 retail – Cat. No. 551.
- **Robotech®: The Masters Saga™ Sourcebook** – manga size – 256 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 552.
- **Robotech®: UEEF Marines Sourcebook™** – manga size – coming November, 2009.
- **Robotech®: New Generation™ Sourcebook** – manga size – coming early 2010.



## Rifts® Dimension Book™ 12:

### Dimensional Outbreak™

Author Carl Gleba has created another masterpiece brimming with ideas, new demons, new Deevils, new whacked out spaceships, new magic spells, more about Phase World, Center, the escalating Minion War and much more. **Dimensional Outbreak™** is another exciting and surprise filled book in the Minion War™ series as 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 Splugorh 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.**



- **Demon Magic (new).**
- **Spaceships, power armor and other gear.**
- **The plot for conquering the Three Galaxies and more.**
- **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, Nick Bradshaw, Mark Dudley, Mike Mumah, and others.**
- **John Zeleznik cover painting.**
- **Written by Carl Gleba.**
- **192-224 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 875. Ships in November.**
- **Don't forget about the other books in this series: Hades and Dyval.**

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

Most agree the *Book of Heroes* is one of the greatest magic artifacts in the Megaverse. Only one copy is known to exist, and everyone wants to get their hands on it – Demons, Deevils, the Splugorth, the Dominators, the Kreeghor, the United Worlds of Warlock and everyone in between. For it is said that he who wields the “Power of the 2000” can rule the universe.

Once protected by the Cosmo-Knights, the book has gone missing. No one knows its fate or the true power contained within its *List of Heroes*. No one except YOU – the new keepers of this legendary Rune book.

- **Minion War tie-in adventure sourcebook.**
- **Contains the names of 2000 real life fans who purchased that special print during the Crisis of Treachery.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Illustrated by various Palladium heroes.**
- **96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 877. October or November release.**

### And a whole lot more is coming in 2010

We have ideas and plans for all kinds of new product. Some you already know about and are anxiously awaiting, others that will tickle you pink when you hear about them.

More **Mysteries of Magic™** (we already have ideas for six books).

More **Robotech®: New Generation** and others.

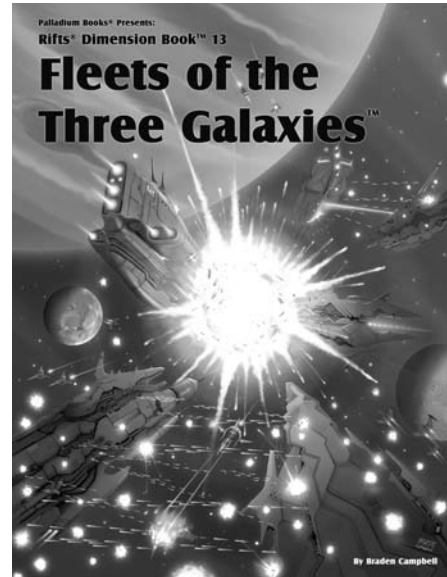
More **Minion War™: Armageddon Unlimited™** (Minion War HU2 crossover) and **Megaverse® in Flames** (Minion War finale).

More **Dead Reign™**.

More **Rifts®**, including **Triax & the NGR™ Two** and the **Thundercloud Galaxy™**.

More of everything.

## Recent Releases & Special Printings



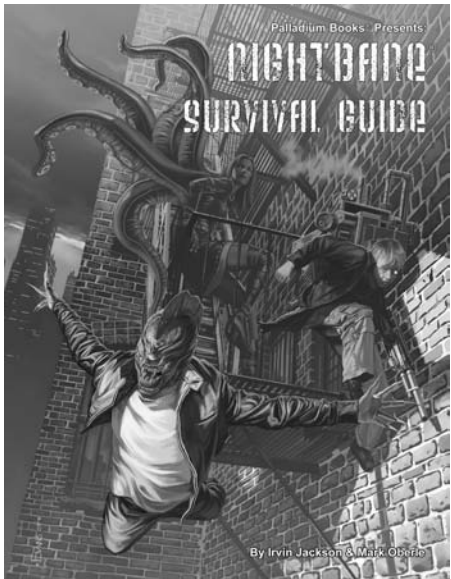
### Rifts® Dimension Book™ 13: Fleets of the Three Galaxies™

With the *Minion War™* heating up and a lot of action taking place at *Phase World* and spilling into the *Three Galaxies*, we thought releasing this book about the spaceships and warships of the Three Galaxies was good timing. Suitable for use with most other **Rifts® Dimension Books** set in *Phase World®* or outer space. Not only does *Fleets* provide a bunch of cool spaceships and gear, but there is a lot of history, information and adventure ideas for the Three Galaxies™.

We plan to do much more with this popular part of the Palladium Megaverse in the months to come.

- **Spaceship creation guidelines.**
- **Ship classifications by size, features common to starships and more.**
- **Fleet formations and notable spacecraft of the Consortium (CCW), Imperial Armada (TGE), the Warlock Navy (UWW), the Altess Armoria, the Republikan Argosy, Splugorth, and others. More than 20 different spacecraft, from fighters to cruisers and battleships.**
- **Missiles and weapon systems.**
- **Random damage tables.**
- **Space tugs, lifeboats and special gear.**
- **Three Galaxies time-line and more.**
- **A stand-alone Dimension Book suitable for use with Phase World® and other Dimension Books set in the Three Galaxies™.**
- **Written by Braden Campbell.**
- **128 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 880. Available now.**





## Nightbane® Survival Guide

An epic sourcebook that is jam-packed with new ideas and revelations about the Nightbane, their psychology, motives, fears, new Morphus tables, why the Morphus looks the way it does, new Talents, new insanity table, new skills, making (and keeping) contacts, espionage tactics, a fully fleshed out adventure and many additional adventure hooks and ideas, information, background info and more. Can also be used with **Dead Reign™**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Ninjas & Superspies™**, and any S.D.C. setting.

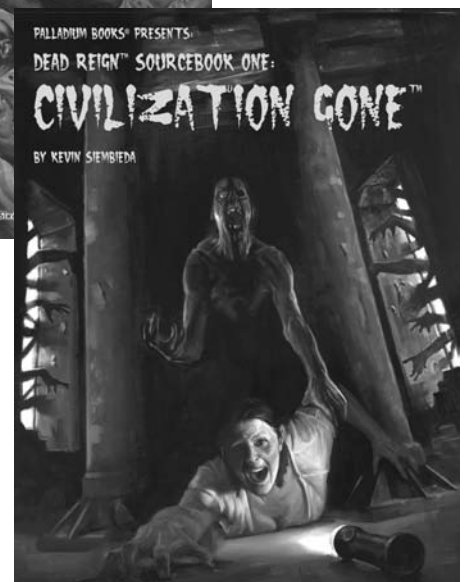
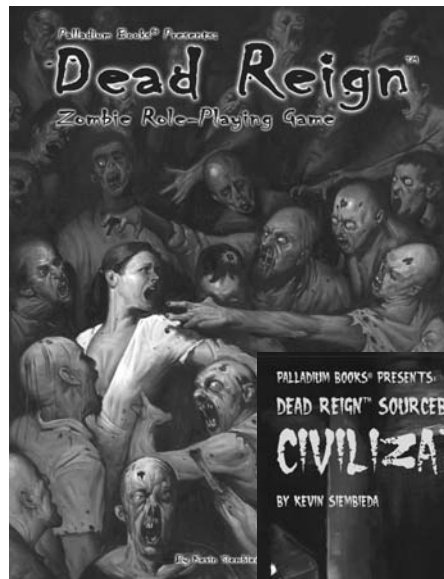
- **Nightbane Psychology and origin theories.**
- **25 New Nightbane Morphus Tables.**
- **7 New Nightbane Talents.**
- **15 New Elite Nightbane Talents.**
- **42 New Skills.**
- **Making Contacts.**
- **NPC Faction creation rules and recruiting tactics.**
- **New Nightbane Creation Guideline Tables.**
- **Random Nightbane Character Background Tables.**
- **Nightlords and Anti-Nightbane operations.**
- **A complete adventure, adventure ideas and world information.**
- **Written by Mark Oberle, Irvin Jackson & Kevin Siembieda.**
- **160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 735. Available now.**
- **Additional Nightbane® sourcebooks are currently in development.**

## Dead Reign™ RPG

### The Zombie Apocalypse

**Dead Reign™** is a role-playing game where the dead have risen, civilization has crumbled, and brave *human survivors* refuse to lie down and die! They battle the walking dead on all fronts, watch each other's backs, struggle to forge safe havens away from the zombie infested cities, rescue other survivors, and fight without respite.

- **Everything you wanted to know about zombies but were afraid to ask.**
- **Seven types of zombies plus the *Half-Living*.**
- **Six Apocalyptic character classes including “ordinary people.”**
- **Tips on fighting zombies and point-blank zombie combat rules.**
- **Death cults, adventure ideas and a powerful setting.**
- **101 Random Scenarios, Encounter Tables, and much more.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda, with Josh Hilden & Joshua Sanford.**
- **224 pages – \$22.95 retail – Cat. No. 230. Available now.**

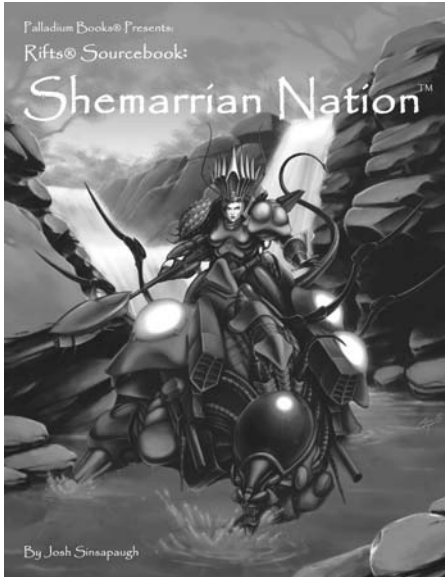


## Dead Reign™ Sourcebook One: Civilization Gone™

This sourcebook explores what happens when civilization is literally gone overnight, how people cope, where to find resources, ways to survive, and other menaces in addition to a few billion zombies! It was a smash hit at the Open House.

- **More resources and survival advice from Brad Ashley.**
- **More information on the world and zombies.**
- **Street gangs and protectors.**
- **Madmen & Psychopaths – new dangers and trouble.**
- **A few new zombie variants.**

- Many random tables, including Random Building Searches, Available Resources, Building a Survivor's Camp, and more.
- Adventure ideas galore.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda, additional text by Hilden and Sanford.
- 64 pages – \$12.95 retail – Cat. No. 231. Available now.



## Rifts® Sourcebook: The Shemarrian Nation™

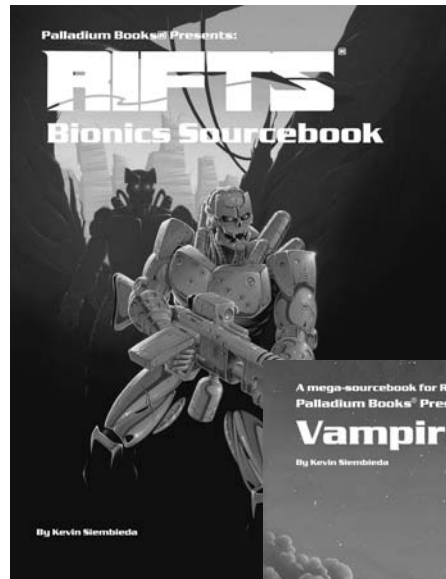
**Shemarrians** are the phantom right arm of A.R.C.H.I.E. Three and a force to be reckoned with in the Eastern Wildlands. An in-depth look at the fabricated warrior women, their false society, and the schemes and dreams that Archie and Hagan have in store for them and the world. Plenty of source material and adventure ideas.

- 7 types of Shemarrians, including the Shemarrian Warrior, Berserker, War Chief, War Goddess, Pariah, Spinster, and Male Shemarrian Hunter.
- New Shemarrian war mounts.
- New weapons, from energy rifles to Vibro-Blades (all Archie tech).
- Shemarrian history, society, culture and rumors.
- Shemarrian Secrets: Androids fabricated by Archie Three.
- Other Archie robots.
- Random Encounter Tables and many adventure ideas.
- The secret war against the Minions of Splugorth & Horune Pirates.
- The Shemarrians' declaration of the "Shemarrian Nation."
- Written by Josh Sinsapaugh. Additional text by Kevin Siembieda and Jason Marker.
- 96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 878. Available now.

## Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook

The ultimate **Rifts®** guide to bionics and cybernetics in North America, plus information on Cyborgs, City Rats, and the Chi-Town 'Burbs. Currently available as a special, limited printing.

- 250+ Cybernetic and Bionic items!
- Techno-Wizard Bionics.
- 7 City Rat O.C.C.s.
- Cyborg O.C.C. revisited.
- Cyber-Snatcher O.C.C. villain.
- Tool kits, bionic countermeasures to magic, and more!
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 112 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 850. Available now.



## Rifts® World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms™

**Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™** – one of the best selling Rifts® World Books of all time – is back in print.

We had been holding back on reprinting it because Kevin Siembieda wants to do a new and improved edition. However, with his current schedule we don't know when he'll be able to get around to it (probably the end of 2010 at the soonest). So many gamers have been requesting the book, we decided to do a short, special printing to hold us over. Currently available only directly from Palladium Books.

- Comprehensive data about vampires, their pecking order, how they come into being, their powers and their goals.
- The Vampire Alien Intelligence revealed.
- The Vampire Kingdoms of Mexico and related world information.
- How to kill Vampires, and Reid's Rangers, Vampire Hunters.
- The cities of El Paso and Ciudad Juarez (and their vampire problem), complete with maps.
- Creation rules for Freak Shows, Circuses & Traveling Shows.
- World overview and maps for the Yucatan.
- Ancient gods, demons, monsters, freaks, D-Bees and more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Cover by Kevin Long.
- Art by Tim Truman, Kevin Long, and Kevin Siembieda.
- 176 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 802. Available now.

### Rifts® World Book 5:

## Triax™ and the NGR™

One of the best selling and most beloved World Books ever, Triax is back in stock. It outlines the New German Republic and its war machines, the Gargoyle Empire, and other surrounding areas, and is jam-packed with high-tech weapons, gear, armor, power armor, robots and vehicles. Currently available as a special, limited printing.

- 20 O.C.C.s and overview of the New German Republic.
- 17 types of Triax power armor and robot vehicles.
- 19 high-tech combat vehicles.
- 8 types of Triax body armor.
- 8 Triax robot drones.
- 9 Triax Cyborgs.
- 18 human weapons, plus explosives and other gear.
- Comic strips by Kevin Long and Kevin Siembieda.
- Overview of the Gargoyle Empire.



- Gargoyles, their weapons, adventure ideas, and more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda. Art by Kevin Long.
- 224 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 810. Available now.

### Rifts® World Book 8:

## Rifts® Japan

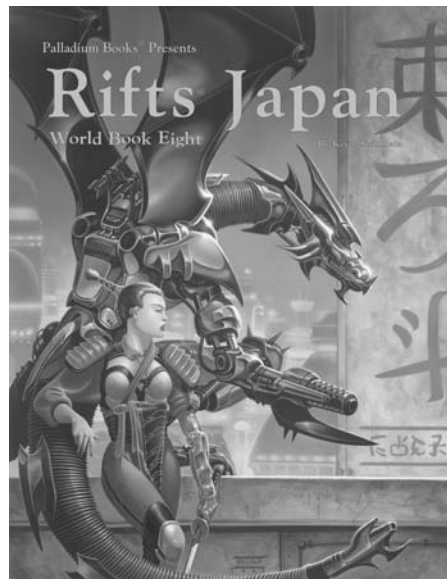
This fan favorite title is absolutely brimming with high-tech weapons, power armor, and giant robots, magic weapons and items, TW weapons, Glitter Boys, Ninja, Samurai, Japanese demons, history, world information and everything you would expect from **Rifts® Japan**. No wonder fans have been screaming for us to bring it back in print!

- 20+ unique O.C.C.s including the Demon Queller, Ronin, Mystic Ninja, Tech-Ninja, Ninja Juicer, Ninja Cyborg, Traditional Samurai, & more.
- 50+ types of weapons, including tech, TW and magic items.
- 23 types of power armor and robots!
- Five Martial Art types of Hand to Hand Combat.
- 19 Mystic Martial Arts Powers!
- Dragon Cyborgs and other cyborgs and bionics of Japan.
- ArmaTech Industries and H-Brand high-tech manufacturers.
- Monsters, world information and MORE!
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 216 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 818. Available now.

## Rifts® Mercenaries™

An all-time favorite, **Rifts® Mercenaries™** is back as a short-run printing available online. This book is crammed with details about mercenaries, mercenary companies and the weapons manufacturers that provide them with combat vehicles, tanks, aircraft, watercraft, weapons, explosives, armor, force fields, special ammunition and more! This book has it all. Back in print as a special, limited printing.

- 9 Mercenary O.C.C.s including Assassin, Bounty Hunter, Professional Thief, Smuggler, Super-Spy, and others.





- Notable mercenary groups, including Larsen's Brigade.
- Rules for creating your own Mercenary Company.
- Golden Age Weaponsmiths' weapons and vehicles sold to mercs.
- Wellington Industries' weapons they sell on the open market.
- Iron Heart Armaments' weapons and combat vehicles.
- Naruni Enterprises and their weapons, armor, vehicles & gear.
- Overview of mercenaries in North America.
- Ancient gods, demons, monsters, freaks, D-Bees and more.
- Written by C.J. Carella. Cover by Kevin Long.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 813. Available now.

### Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook:

## The Black Vault™

It has been rumored for decades that the Coalition States collect and lock up magic weapons and magic items in some place called the **Black Vault**. Many don't believe such a place is real, but it is, and this book reveals its secrets. Back in print as a special, limited printing.

- 101 fully statted out magic items – magic weapons, potions, TW devices, and more.
- The Black Vault itself.
- CS Anti-Magic Recovery Squads and traps.
- Overview and history of the Coalition's relationship with magic.
- Magic in the 'Burbs, adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 48 pages – \$9.95 retail – Cat. No. 855. Available now.

## Rifts® Megaverse® Builder

Rifts® Megaverse® Builder helps explain how the Megaverse works. Create your own worlds and dimensions,

travel across the Megaverse. A perfect companion for the *Minion War™* series and *Phase World®* campaigns. Back in print as a special, limited printing.

- Dimension creation rules.
- Dimensional Storms and anomalies.
- Tolkeen Artifact Hunter and Scavenger O.C.C.s, plus more on the Shifter and Dimension Riders.
- Exotic new Familiars and dangerous dimensional monsters.
- New Summoning Tables.
- The Great Machine dimensional setting.
- The Dimension of Spires.
- The Garbage Pit dimension.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 859. Available now.

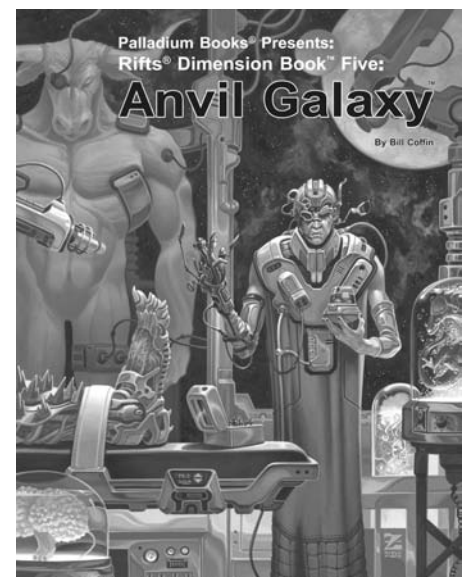
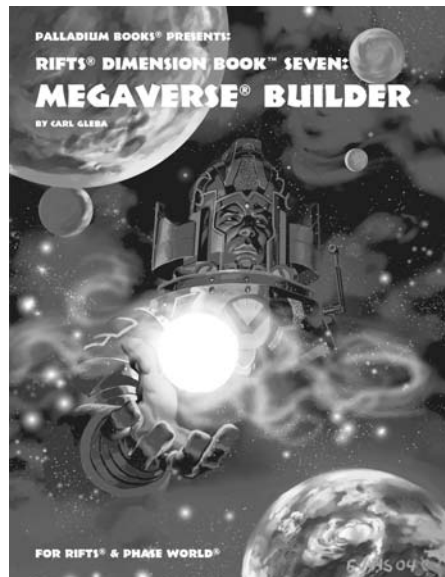
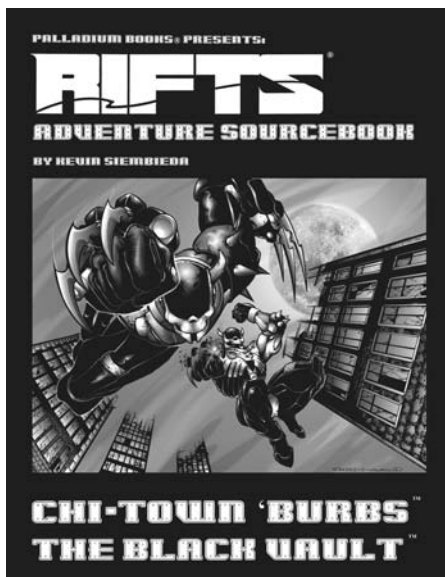
### Rifts® Dimension™ Book 5:

## Anvil Galaxy™

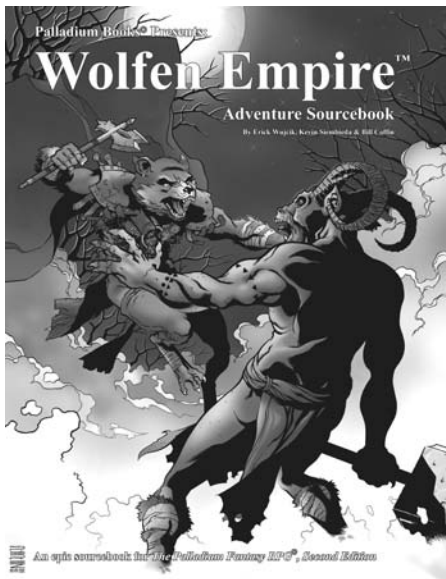
With the Minion War heating up (Hades, Dyval, Dimensional Outbreak/Phase World®, and more), we figured we had better bring this key book in the *Three Galaxies* back in print, at least as a short printing available online.

An entire galaxy is put at your fingertips, offering additional alien races and countless adventure ideas.

- Nearly 20 alien races, including the Ratanoid and Star Elves.
- Overview of the Anvil Galaxy.
- Key planets, races & civilizations (scores of them).
- The mysterious Threshold and Core.
- More on the Trans-Galactic Empire & Consortium of Civilized Worlds.
- Legends of the Cosmic Forge.
- Planet creation rules and more.
- Written by Bill Coffin. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 847. Available now.







## Wolfen Empire™

### For Palladium Fantasy RPG®

This ever popular *Palladium Fantasy RPG® sourcebook* by Siembieda, Wujcik and Coffin is back as a special printing for Palladium's online store. It is truly an adventure sourcebook with monsters, adventures, adventure ideas, history and info about the Wolfen and more.

- The history of the Wolfen and their Empire.
- Wolfen government, military, rank, religion and more.
- 13 notable animals/monsters common to the north.
- The Great Northern Wilderness and Killer Winters.
- Six fully fleshed out adventures.
- 101 Adventures Table.
- The Village of Wrijin – mapped and described.
- The Town of Badd Land, a bandit's paradise.
- Written by Erick Wujcik, Kevin Siembieda, Bill Coffin & others.
- Cover by Ramon Perez.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 471. Available now.



## “Rifts® Logo” Baseball Cap

A quality and comfortable baseball cap with Velcro adjustment for maximum comfort. A black **Rifts® Logo** is printed on a khaki baseball cap with stylish black trim. Looks great, feels great! Makes a great gift.

- Cotton cloth fabric, khaki color with black trim and black Rifts logo.

- Soft and comfortable, cloth Velcro strap for size adjustment.
- \$14.95 per cap – Cat. No. 2544 – available now!

## “Rifts® Logo” Dice Bags

A gorgeous, sturdy, and well made drawstring bag, with a gold Rifts® Logo imprint. Perfect size to hold most gamers dice. Folks went crazy for both colors at the Open House. Looks gorgeous and makes a great gift.

- Gold Rifts Logo imprint.
- A big 7x9 inches, can hold a lot of dice.
- Navy Blue Dice Bag: \$8.00 per bag – Cat. No. 2538 – Available now.
- Black Dice Bag: \$8.00 per bag – Cat. No. 2539 – Available now.

## “Rifts® Logo” Pocket Calculator

What gamer doesn't need a pocket calculator? This small, reliable pocket calculator is black and gray with a silver Rifts® Logo imprint. Even cooler, press a button and the logo plate slides back to create an elevated angle for the calculator and reveals the screen. Nice, fun, useful and inexpensive.

- Silver Rifts® Logo imprint.
- A compact 3x4 inches.
- Black calculator with gray, soft side grips for a firm, comfortable grip in the palm of your hand.
- \$5.00 per calculator – Cat. No. 2541 – Available now.



## Palladium Coffee Mugs

Our fans requested them so we made them. A nice, deep, attractive black coffee mug with crisp, attractive printing.

**Rifts® Logo** – Cat. No. 2536

**Property of the Coalition** – Cat. No. 2543

**Gamer Logo** – Cat. No. 2537

**Dead Reign™** (red imprint on black) – Cat. No. 2545

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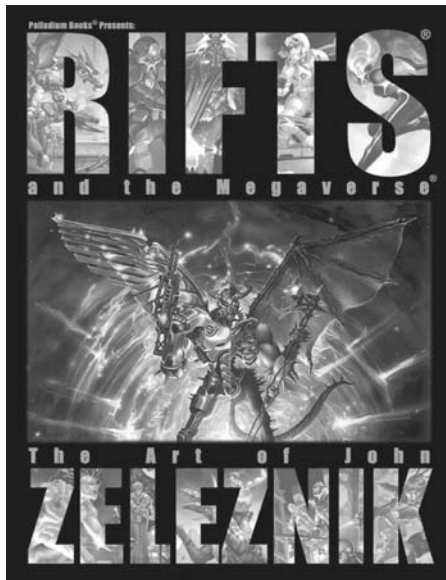
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## 2010 Palladium Open House

April 29 - May 2, 2010

Don't forget about the **2010 Palladium Open House – April 29 - May 2, 2010**. It is going to be another fun, memorable event.

**Dates:** Thursday through Sunday, April 29-May 2.

### Cost:

3 Day Weekend: \$40 per person (Friday thru Sunday).

Friday Only: \$16 per person.

Saturday Only: \$16 per person.

Sunday Only: \$12 per person.

V.I.P. Thursday: \$60 per person.

**Location:** The Palladium Warehouse at 39074 Webb Court, Westland, Michigan, 48185-7606. (734) 271-2903 order line only.

**Attendance:** Limited to around 300. Available on a first come, first served basis.

### Hours:

Thursday VIP ONLY Hours: 4:00 PM doors open. 5:30 PM dinner. 7:00 PM Kevin Siembieda talks. 8:00 PM (or so) V.I.P.s can play in various gaming events or gather and talk with Kevin Siembieda, Palladium staff members and other Palladium creators.

Friday Hours: 9:00 A.M. doors open. 9:30 A.M. till midnight gaming and other events. Gaming hours may be extended; plus all-night gaming rooms at the hotel.

Saturday Hours: 9:30 A.M. doors open. 10:00 A.M. till midnight gaming and other events. Live auction and costume com-

petition are part of Saturday's evening events. Gaming hours may be extended; plus all-night gaming rooms at the hotel.

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#### 2010 V.I.P. Thursday Tickets are available:

With the poor economy, people are hesitant to travel or spend money, but we guarantee the 2010 Open House will be worth every penny, starting with V.I.P. Thursday. Fifty have already sold and we are allowing a few extra to become available in our online store every couple of weeks so they are constantly available (until sold out). We will hold back 20 to be offered in February, 2010, in an attempt to give EVERYONE who wants to attend a chance at reserving V.I.P. tickets.

V.I.P. Night (4:00 P.M. to 11:00+ P.M.): An evening with Kevin Siembieda, the Palladium staff and dozens of other Palladium creators and contributors, dinner catered by Kathy Simmons, soft drinks, first opportunity to make purchases, an open talk with Kevin Siembieda, and then an evening of gaming or chatting with Kevin and other Palladium personalities, one on one. Limited to around *65 lucky paying guests* plus Palladium staff and creators.

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# 2009 Christmas Surprise Package

**Available now till December 23, 2009**

Every year for the last 11 or 12 years now, Palladium has been doing its **Christmas Surprise Package** – our way of saying thank you to our fans and making their Christmas a little more special.

This year is bigger than ever!

#### What is a Palladium Christmas Surprise Package?

**\$80-\$90** worth of Palladium Books product (or more!) for only *\$37 plus shipping!* A minimum of *eighty dollars (\$80) retail*. Sometimes much more! Santa Kevin has pledged to make the 2009 Christmas Surprise Packages the biggest and best ever in hopes of lifting everyone's spirits in these gloomy and uncertain times.

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● **Impress your friends with a gift worth \$80 or more** for a cost of only \$37 (plus shipping and handling).

● **Fill holes in your own collection** or get books and product you've been meaning to get or have been eyeballing longingly.

**It's a surprise package** because you never know exactly what you're going to get or who will sign your books. We try to include *many* of the items on your "wish list," but we will surprise you with stuff you are not expecting. Extra items may include other *RPG books, The Rifter®, posters, prints, art books, greeting cards, magnets, Rifts® calculator, Rifts® Sticky Note pads, back stock items*, and other items. Some items may be slightly damaged so we can send you more.

**Spread the word.** The Christmas Surprise Package is only being publicized by word of mouth, to readers of **The Rifter®** and on **Palladium's Web Site – [www.palladiumbooks.com](http://www.palladiumbooks.com)** – so tell your friends, buy one for *every gamer you know* and *have a very Merry Christmas*.

**Multiple orders WILL result in some duplication.**



## The Cost

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PLEASE do *not* ask for books you *know* are not yet available or out of print like *Tome Grotesque*, *Armageddon Unlimited*, or *Mechanoid Space*®.

**Note:** Santa Kev and his elves are NOT mind readers. If you do not give us a clear idea of your wants, you *may* be disappointed by what comes in your Surprise Package. You do NOT make our job easier when you say something like “I own every-

thing, surprise me.” Provide a list of 8-12 books and other items!

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● For Rifts®: **Shemarrian Nation™**, **Fleets of the Three Galaxies™**, **Tales of the Chi-Town ‘Burbs™** (short stories), **Rifts® Machinations of Doom™** (graphic novel and awesome sourcebook), **Rifts® & the Megaverse® – the Art of John Zeleznik** (soft cover art book or the \$50 hardcover, color throughout), **the Zeleznik Coloring Book**, **Rifts® Sourcebook One Revised** (has lots of adventures and new material), **Three Galaxies™** (back in print), **Hades**, **Dyval™**, **Dimensional Outbreak™** (not available till November), **Naruni Wave 2™** (back in print), **World Book 10: Juicer Uprising™** (back in print), **WB 11: Coalition War Campaign™** (back in print), **WB 12: Pyscape™**, **WB 14: Rifts® New West™** (back in print), **WB 15: Rifts® Spirit West™** (back in print), **WB 26: Rifts® Dinosaur Swamp™** and/or **WB 27: Rifts® Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp™**, **Rifts® Atlantis**, **Rifts® Australia**, **Rifts® South America**, **Rifts® Mercenaries**, **Rifts® MercTown™**, **Rifts® Merc Ops™**, **Rifts® Merc Adventures**, **Rifts® WB 28: Arzno™**, **Rifts® WB 29: Madhaven™**, **Rifts® WB 30: D-Bees™ of North America** (86 D-Bees!), **Rifts® Chaos Earth™ RPG** (and sourcebooks), etc.

● **Dimension Books** like **Fleets of the Three Galaxies™** (Minion War™ and standalone title), **Hades** (Minion War™), **Dyval™** (Minion War™), **Naruni Wave 2™**, **Wormwood™** (weird demonic horror), **Skraypers™** (alien superheroes), **Phase World®**, **Phase World® Sourcebook**, **The Three Galaxies™**, **The Anvil Galaxy™**, **Megaverse® Builder™** and others. **Dimensional Outbreak™** (Minion War™) and **Heroes of the Megaverse™** (Minion War™) will not be available until November.

● **Rifts® Conversion Books**. All three are great references: **Rifts® Conversion Book One** and **Rifts® Conversion Book 2: Pantheons of the Megaverse®** are available. (**Rifts® Dark Conversions™** is temporarily out of print.)

● **Rifts® Ultimate Gold (limited and signed)**. We have approximately 30 copies put aside special for the 2009 Grab Bags. It has a value of \$100+ and it is the *ONLY item* you are likely to get in your X-Mas Surprise Package.

● **Robotech® RPG – Manga Edition and Hardcover Edition**. Manga Edition is \$16.95, the hardcover has a \$30.95 value.

● **Robotech® Sourcebooks** include **Macross Saga™**, **The Masters Saga™**, and **Robotech® UEEF Marines™** sourcebook (not available till November).

● **Heroes Unlimited™ and sourcebooks:** Any of the following make for great superhero gaming! **Heroes Unlimited™ G.M.’s Guide**, **Powers Unlimited™ One** (back in print), **Powers Unlimited™ Two**, **Powers Unlimited™ Three**, **Villains Unlimited™ Revised**, **Century Station™**, **Gramercy Island™**, **Aliens Unlimited Galaxy Guide™**, **Compendium of Contemporary Weapons**, **Ninjas & Superspies™ RPG**, and **Mystic China™**, among others. **Skraypers™** with alien superheroes and villains, though designed as a Rifts® Dimen-



sion Book, it is easy to adapt to HU2 and could make an exciting alien world or alien invasion campaign.

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- **Dead Reign™ RPG** is Palladium's zombie apocalypse game. There is also the **Civilization Gone** sourcebook (came out this spring) and the new **Dark Places** sourcebook (out in October).

- **Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG:** Modern day horror and weirdness reminiscent of the new, hit TV show, **Fringe**. Can be used with *Dead Reign™* and *Nightbane®*. New sourcebooks coming for BTS-2 in 2010.

- **Nightbane® RPG and sourcebooks.** New **Nightbane® Survival Guide**. All *Nightbane®* titles are in stock except the discontinued *Shadows of Light* (which is available as a PDF from DriveThruRPG.com). Did you know *Nightbane characters* can be used in *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, *Beyond the Supernatural™ 2nd Ed.* and even *Dead Reign™*?

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

- **Rifter® back issues** numbers 1-13 are available only in the X-Mas Surprise Package and Open House. Some issues are sold out (including issues #4, #8, #21-26, #28-30, #32-35).

- **Original sketch** by select artists including *Brian Manning*, *Allen Manning*, *Kevin Siembieda*, *Mark Dudley*, *Nick Bradshaw*, *Kent Burtles* and possibly other artists. These are made possible only because Palladium's artists have VOLUNTEERED to do them for you. These are simple, convention sketch style drawings. Each is an original, signed, one-of-a-kind sketch with an estimated \$20+ value. Other artists may be added later. *Only people who request a sketch will be considered.*

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- **Rifts® Christmas Cards!** – Hey it's Christmas time (okay soon), order some Rifts Christmas cards! One is the Rifts® Ultimate cover with Christmas hats on the heads of the Alien Intelligence. Another is the famous Kevin Long Rifts® ley line scene. Plus we have two birthday cards, a Rifts® "Thinking of You" and a fun Fantasy piece. Get a mixed set of six different cards, or six of the same (we have two different Christmas cards ideal for Rifts® players, two birthday cards, one thinking of you and

one, um, funny Fantasy card). Value: \$9 per set of six. They look GREAT!

- **Non-Book Palladium Products and Novelty items.** Don't forget about the various **coffee mugs**, **Rifts® calculator (very cool)**, **Rifts® Sticky Note pads**, **Rifts® blue dice bag (gold imprint)**, **magnets**, **art prints (many)**, **A+Plus comics** (out of print for decades, \$10+ value each) and other items. Remember, most of these items are limited to less than 500 total pieces and are, in effect, collector items.

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# Nightbane®

## Some Commonly Asked Questions

By Mark Oberle, Irvin Jackson & Kevin Siembieda

**“Official” answers to some commonly asked questions regarding the rules and world of Nightbane®**

**Question:** If I’m a Nightbane, does that mean other members of my family are, or can “Become,” Nightbane too?

**Answer:** No one knows for certain. The origin of the Nightbane is unknown, and even the Nightbane themselves don’t know why one person may be a Nightbane and another is not. That having been said, if your character is a Nightbane, it seems *likely* that other, *younger members* of the family, especially siblings under the age of 30, could also become Nightbane (a 33% chance). Or at least, that has been the case since *Dark Day*. Prior to *Dark Day*, the answer would have been no (only a 3% chance).

**Question:** Can Nightbane reproduce? You know, bear Nightbane offspring?

**Answer:** Again, no one knows for certain. It is assumed they can not reproduce with each other or with other humans because no one has ever heard of it happening. In some cases, *the Morphus* does not even have the proper ... um ... equipment ... to reproduce, so if it were possible it would likely be in *Facade form*. Some have speculated that a female Nightbane who became pregnant would have to avoid changing into her Morphus for the duration of the pregnancy to come to full term, but there have been no documented cases of a female Nightbane ever getting pregnant, which tends to support the belief that all Nightbane are sterile or can only mate in their *Human Facade*. If they can only mate in Human Facade, some believe the Nightbane trait is a recessive one.

However, genetics may not even play a role with the Nightbane. Remember, they are somehow tied to magic and the supernatural, so becoming a ‘Bane may have as much or more to do with one’s state of mind and magic as it does biology and genetics.

**Question:** In several places, it mentions the Nightlords’ minion known as the *Hound* as having the ability to use mirrors to travel between the Nightlands and Earth, but there is no listing of such a power under the Hound description. Do they have the ability to Mirrorwalk and how would such a power work?

**Answer:** *Hounds*, *Hunters* and *Houndmasters* have the Mirrorwalk ability, the same as Nightbane. However, Doppel-



gangers, illustrations aside, do not (though they still may be taken through by someone with the ability or possibly be granted the power by some external source such as a magical artifact).

**Question: Do Nightbane retain their 10 Hit Points/S.D.C. per melee healing rate in their Facade? How does being damaged in one form affect them if they change into their other form?**

**Answer:** The main rule book indicates that the *Facade* form is not supernatural, but does mention that they still heal faster than normal humans. In Facade, Nightbane heal 10 Hit Points/S.D.C. per hour. However, damage taken in Morpheus does not cross over to Facade or vice versa. Both forms heal at their normal rates even when the Nightbane is in his other form. So a Nightbane who took 20 points of damage to his Facade could transform to his Morpheus and have no damage, but it would take two hours before he could go back to his Facade and be fully healed.

**Question: How many times must someone face a particular monster before its Horror Factor no longer affects them?**

**Answer:** As a general rule, you should be able to ignore a creature's Horror Factor if you have faced it four times SUCCESSFULLY in combat (meaning you kicked its butt), before its Horror Factor no longer affects you. For creatures that are not very individualistic, like *Hunters* and *Hounds*, this means facing any Hounds successfully four times in combat (doesn't count if you hid under the bed or saw them from a distance) effectively makes the character immune to its Horror Factor most of the time. HOWEVER, even if usually immune to the monster's Horror Factor, the H.F. applies whenever that creature catches a character *by surprise* (i.e. the character is not expecting it, the monster leaps out from a hiding place or from behind, and similar).

When encountering species that have a high Horror Factor and/or are much more unique from one individual to the next, such as Nightbane, Ashmedai, Master and Secondary Vampires, Nightlords and other Demon Lords, a character is affected by its Horror Factor EVERY time unless that specific person/individual monster has been encountered numerous times – at least 6 – and even then the character is likely to fall to the individual's Horror Factor every time it becomes angry, directs its displeasure or ire at the character, faces the character in a life and death or other seriously threatening situation, or rages at anyone.

*Immunity to Horror Factor* applies to NPC villains and monsters facing down the player characters as well. If that vampire or Night Prince has kicked your character's butt a few times, the player character's Horror Factor stops working on his *old adversary*, except under deadly and extreme circumstances in which the player character might have the upper hand.

**Note:** Immunity to a creature's Horror Factor does *not* apply in certain situations, such as being taken by surprise, or if under the effects of certain mind-affecting spells, drugs, magic or psychic abilities, such as Empathic Transmission. Furthermore, one *never* becomes immune to the Horror Factor of deific beings, Alien Intelligences, or truly alien and horrific monstrosities even if they have encountered the creature and survived 100 times.

Likewise, suffering mental trauma such as torture or a near death experience, *may* make the character even more afraid and vulnerable to such creatures and could result in a phobia.

**Question: Under the Nightbane Talent *Darksong*, it says an unsuccessful save means the victim is stunned. What does that mean as far as game mechanics?**

**Answer:** Unless specifically stated otherwise under a specific power or ability, victims who are *stunned* suffer the following penalties: No initiative. No Perception Roll. Reduce Spd, skill performance, the number of attacks per melee and all combat bonuses (strike, parry, dodge, etc.) by *half* for 1D6 melee rounds.

**Question: There are no experience charts in Nightbane World Book Two: Nightlands. Were these printed somewhere else?**

**Answer:** Here you go, at last. – *Kevin Seimbieda*

	Flint People R.C.C. & Hell Rider O.C.C.
<u>Doppelganger Warlord R.C.C.</u>	
Level 1: 0,000-2,400	Level 1: 0,000-2,240
Level 2: 2,401-4,600	Level 2: 2,241-4,480
Level 3: 4,601-9,200	Level 3: 4,481-8,960
Level 4: 9,201-18,400	Level 4: 8,961-17,920
Level 5: 18,401-28,300	Level 5: 17,921-25,920
Level 6: 28,301-48,000	Level 6: 25,921-35,920
Level 7: 48,001-78,000	Level 7: 35,921-50,920
Level 8: 78,001-110,000	Level 8: 50,921-70,920
Level 9: 110,001-150,000	Level 9: 70,921-95,920
Level 10: 150,001-200,000	Level 10: 95,921-135,920
Level 11: 200,001-250,000	Level 11: 135,921-185,920
Level 12: 250,001-310,000	Level 12: 185,921-225,920
Level 13: 310,001-380,000	Level 13: 225,921-275,920
Level 14: 380,001-470,000	Level 14: 275,921-335,920
Level 15: 470,001-600,000	Level 15: 335,921-395,920
<u>Geo-Immortal O.C.C.</u>	<u>Shadow Warlock O.C.C.</u>
Level 1: 0,000-2,245	Level 1: 0,000-2,450
Level 2: 2,246-5,000	Level 2: 2,451-4,700
Level 3: 5,001-10,000	Level 3: 4,701-9,700
Level 4: 10,001-20,000	Level 4: 9,701-19,100
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Level 7: 50,001-80,000	Level 7: 49,201-79,300
Level 8: 80,001-112,000	Level 8: 79,301-111,500
Level 9: 112,001-152,000	Level 9: 111,501-151,700
Level 10: 152,001-224,000	Level 10: 151,701-202,000
Level 11: 224,001-300,000	Level 11: 202,001-253,000
Level 12: 300,001-370,000	Level 12: 253,001-314,000
Level 13: 370,001-440,000	Level 13: 314,001-385,000
Level 14: 440,001-500,000	Level 14: 385,001-476,000
Level 15: 500,001-600,000	Level 15: 476,001-606,000

### Sword Bearer O.C.C.

Level 1: 0,000-3,000  
Level 2: 3,001-6,000  
Level 3: 6,001-12,000  
Level 4: 12,001-24,000  
Level 5: 24,001-50,000  
Level 6: 50,001-80,000  
Level 7: 80,001-120,000  
Level 8: 120,001-170,000  
Level 9: 170,001-220,000  
Level 10: 220,001-290,000  
Level 11: 290,001-375,000  
Level 12: 375,001-450,000  
Level 13: 450,001-550,000  
Level 14: 550,001-700,000  
Level 15: 700,001-850,000

### Question: What is the starting Physical Strength of the Darkwhip Talent?

**Answer:** The Darkwhip has the same strength as the Nightbane if created just using the initial 4 P.P.E. required, because the Supernatural Physical Strength of the wielder *overrides* the whip unless enough P.P.E. is pumped into it to give it a higher P.S. than the wielder. This means someone with a Supernatural P.S. of 30 will inflict damage equal to his own P.S. (4D6+15) with a Darkwhip, even if he only spent the initial 4 P.P.E.

*To inflict more damage*, he must spend 31+, equal to the P.S. he wishes to attain. Why? Because the greater Supernatural P.S. of the wielder overrides the whip's strength until the whip's P.S. is raised above the user's own.

However, this means that a *Shadow Warlock* who does not have Supernatural P.S., who creates a Darkwhip with 4 P.P.E. would have a whip with a Supernatural P.S. equal to 4 (the P.P.E. he spent to create the Dark Whip). His *normal strength* does not override the Supernatural Strength of the whip like a Nightbane's does.

### Question: Only the Mystic O.C.C. is listed as getting bonuses to Spell Strength. What about other magic-using classes?

**Answer:** All magic users, including Sorcerers, Cybermages, Geo-Immortals, Shadow Warlocks, etc., receive the *same bonuses* to spell strength as the *Mystic O.C.C.*: +1 to Spell Strength at levels 4, 8 and 12. The only exceptions are the Priests of Night and Channellers, who receive their powers as boons from otherworldly supernatural sources.

### Question: For someone who does not have a basic skill they need in an emergency, such as *Sense of Balance* when avoiding a fall, can they somehow make a roll using an attribute score? And if so, how?

**Answer:** Maybe for something like "balance," in which case the G.M. might have the character roll under his P.P. attribute

number on a percentile – or may divide the P.P. attribute number by half and roll under the character's halved P.P. attribute on a D20.

*For skills* like Swimming, Prowl, or driving a car: **NO**. Absolutely not.

For example, if you do not know how to drive a car, you cannot drive! Yes, you *might* be able to turn it on and get it to go forward, but little else. Heck, it might take several minutes for a non-driver to figure out how to even turn the headlights or window wipers on. More importantly, the character is not familiar with how a vehicle handles, its pacing, momentum, time and distance to stop, making sharp turns (making any turn), traffic signals, traffic flow, and so on, and is likely to *crash* within one melee round while pulling out of the driveway. The basics of driving a car may all sound like simple, easy, intuitive stuff to those of you who already know how to drive, but it is not. Think about when you were first learning to drive. Remember how nervous, maybe even terrified, you were? How slow you went? Your first fender bender or near collision? Driving is NOT something a character can fake or learn on a fundamental level, *especially not* in an "emergency" situation, combat or other high stress or panic situation!

Hey, I would like to think that if I fell off a boat into water I could tread water long enough to be rescued, but it is a fantasy. I can't swim. If I fell into water I would panic, sink, and drown, probably in less than a minute. Allowing a character to have a base skill in anything, even a simple skill like cooking (ever heard of burning toast?), is crazy, and I say, NO WAY. – *Kevin Siembieda*

Kevin's "Maybe, let's see" rule: Here's a house rule that I've used since I started gaming, but never put in any of my books (don't know why). It's a simple Game Master device that can be applied when the G.M. doesn't know the answer to something basic or fun, like, can my character maintain his balance, hold on to the back of the truck, etc., or did the thug or cop believe the character's lies, did a character notice X, and so on. *I roll 1D20*. 1-10 is yes. 11-20 is no. Simple. Fast. Fun. And it seems frighteningly accurate and appropriate to any given situation regardless of the outcome of the die roll. Give it a try. – *Kevin Siembieda*

### Question: What are the damages for non-standard strikes used with Supernatural Strength?

**Answer:** For non-standard attacks, such as body blocks, tackles, and judo throws, characters with Supernatural P.S. do an amount of damage equal to a *Pulled Punch*, meaning half damage to a single point of damage, or anything desired in between. (P.S. damage bonuses may apply, but they too are no more than half and apply only if the character is trying to inflict maximum damage with that attack.)

Unless stated otherwise, punches, kicks, and other such striking attacks inflict the same damage as a punch as per the Supernatural Strength Damage chart on page 35 of the *Nightbane® RPG*.



**Question: Can a character with normal strength parry an opponent with Supernatural Strength?**

**Answer:** Yes. Parrying works on the principle of redirecting energy, not absorbing it, so strength is generally not an issue. There may be specific instances where the target of a Supernatural Strength attack cannot parry in a way as to redirect the force of the blow (like fighting in a very confined space), in which case he could parry, but the weapon he used to parry with (or himself if parried with a forearm) takes one third damage.

**Question: Are Nightbane considered supernatural creatures, creatures of magic, demons, monsters, or something else?**

**Answer:** For game purposes, they would be classified as supernatural creatures, but only in their Morphus Form. In their Facade, they are human; well, mostly.

**Question: Are Nightbane affected by terminal illnesses such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, etc.?**

**Answer:** Since Nightbane have specific bonuses to resist disease, it should be assumed that it is *rare* for a Nightbane to develop a disease, even an aggressive one like cancer. However, they can contract a communicable disease just like anyone else if they fail their saving throw (don't forget their bonuses). They can avoid the terminal nature of such diseases by switching to their Morphus, but in advanced cases this means that they may be forced to stay in their Nightbane Morphus *permanently*.

Also keep in mind that many *Nightbane Mystics* come from shamanic traditions that have an emphasis on healing, and it is possible to cure such diseases via magic. If the Nightbane is aligned with a particular faction it may be possible to find another member who can cure him. Finding that person and/or collecting the necessary reagents for a ritual that would cure the disease is a great opportunity for adventure.

**Question: Can Nightbane select a magic using class other than Nightbane Mystic or Nightbane Sorcerer?**

**Answer:** No, not even if the 'Bane studies a school of magic such as Elemental Magic or some other specialized type of magic before his Becoming. Casting their first successful spell will trigger the Becoming for most Nightbane, allowing them to choose either the Nightbane Mystic or Nightbane Sorcerer R.C.C. (whichever is most appropriate).

On the off chance that spell casting does not trigger the Becoming, the potential Nightbane never undergoes his Becoming and ends up with a magic using character class appropriate for the school of magic the character was studying. Potential and standard Nightbane can never link to a being such as an Alien Intelligence or a force such as the Elemental Plane, so magic O.C.C.s (including Witches and Channellers) dependent on such a connection can *never* be selected by them. **Note:** There may be new magic using R.C.C.s presented in future sourcebooks that will be available to Nightbane, but for now the Mystic and Sorcerer are the only possibilities for magic-using 'Bane.

# Return to N.O.R.A.D.

## The N.O.R.A.D. Duology, Part Two

### A Chaos Earth™/Rifts® Crossover Adventure

#### Optional Material for Rifts®

By Ed Emmer

## Overview

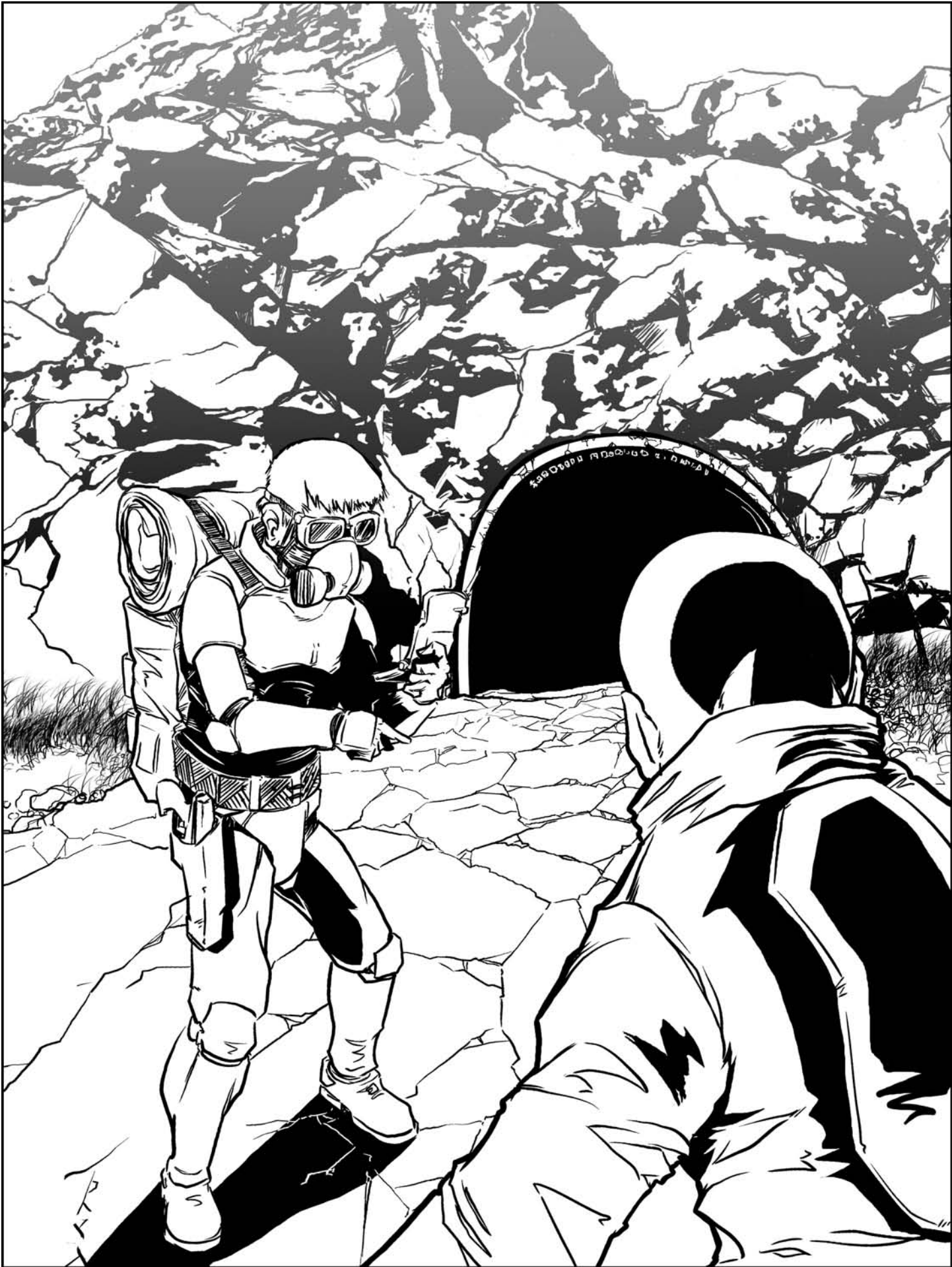
While resting and recuperating after their latest series of exploits in the New West, the players are hired by a Rogue Scholar as muscle to help him and his team explore the recently discovered ruins of N.O.R.A.D.

This adventure is set in the mountains southwest of the Colorado Baronies. It can take place anytime in the Rifts time line, before or after the Tolkeen Invasion. It is designed for a mid-level party (4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> level) of 6 to 8 characters.

Though this adventure starts in a sequential layout of events, once the expedition discovers the ruins, it is up to the Game Master which of the suggested encounters and events for each sublevel are used. Depending upon the desires of the Game Master, this outline may be used as a single-night adventure or an entire campaign revolving around exploring the many sublevels and challenges of N.O.R.A.D. This could include challenges to overcome the haunted Sublevel Two, the Tribal War between the D'yar and the Enoch, the treachery of the Renegade D'yar, and ultimately becoming caught in the Necrophim's plots for escape and domination. The overall atmosphere of the setting should be suspenseful and ultimately terrifying. Game Masters should use the various dangers and horrors within the Cheyenne Mountain complex in a subtle manner, building the suspense with hidden dangers, false leads, narrow escapes and terrifying ambushes.

## Prelude to Terror

It has been a week since the players helped the citizens of the small Colorado mountain town of Morris Pass. As a result of their heroic service, the town's sheriff has allowed the players to recharge their E-Clips at the town garage free of charge and the local mechanic (4<sup>th</sup> level Operator) has patched any armor and made minor repairs to their vehicles and power armor/robots. On the eve of leaving Morris Pass in search of greener pastures of opportunity, the players have congregated in the Silver Dog Saloon, the local "hot spot," when a burly man enters. He silently approaches the bar, orders a drink and exchanges a few quiet words with Jimmy, the old barkeep and the saloon's owner



(a 12<sup>th</sup> level Saddle Tramp who had managed to make a mint in a poker match and decided to buy the saloon he won his fortune in). He then turns to the players. Eyeing them for a minute, he approaches, takes a seat without being offered one, and claims that he has just heard from the barkeep that they might be just the people he is looking for.

Identifying himself as William “Billy” Brooks, he goes on to explain how he is putting together a group of adventurers to help him explore the ruins of some pre-Rifts installation he has recently uncovered. So far, he has rounded up most of the personnel for his expedition; all he still requires is a group of seasoned adventurers to act as “muscle and protection” for the rest of his men. The deal he is willing to offer includes a 1000 credit a day wage and a 10% cut of whatever salvage they manage to find. If asked why he needs them, he will indicate that his operation is fairly small and that he does not want to attract too much attention, lest other parties become interested in his find. If the characters ask him why he doesn’t already have a team of defenders, he will explain that with the situation in Tolkeen (depending upon the timing of this adventure this could mean the build up to war, the Siege on Tolkeen, or the resistance movement against the Coalition occupation following the war), most of his regular hires have headed east to Minnesota.

If the players don’t seem too interested at this point, he will produce two artifacts that should pique their interest. The first is a piece of a metal sign, most of which has been sheared off and discolored with age, but part of this still bears the following recognizable characters: “Sublev...” “...S.A.F.” “N.O.R...” “...tegic Air Comm...” The second artifact is from a piece of armor plating bearing the unmistakable name “N.E.M.A.” If the players don’t figure out the significance of this, Billy will explain that it is widely believed to have some connection to the *Neemans* who defended the Earth during the Coming of the Rifts, and that all manner of pre-Rifts weapons might still lie hidden in the sealed sections of the complex.

If asked how he came across the artifacts, he will explain that an agent of his, a Legacy Scout by the name of Larry Jackson, discovered the ruins while exploring the mountains southwest of the Baronies. Though parts look as if they had been thoroughly ransacked already, his agent reported that the ruins appeared to be extensive.

Any successful attempt to object read the artifacts, which Billy will allow as long as they do not leave the surface of the table, will reveal the following pieces of information: They definitely come from a military installation (images of soldiers in uniform, a sense of secrecy and urgency) that fell to something shortly after the Coming of the Rifts (a sense of dread coupled with an image of bloody tentacles). If the Game Master wishes to tantalize the players further, the exact lettering of the damaged sign may be revealed through such psychic probing. Across four lines it once read: “Sublevel Seven. U.S.A.F. N.O.R.A.D. Strategic Air Command.” If asked what these images might mean, Billy will shrug, saying that his scout did get the feeling that something inhabited the ruins, but that he never saw any sign of it. After all, that is why he wants to hire them in the first place.

If the players agree to his terms, then Billy will lead them outside to meet the rest of his team. If not, Billy will go as high

as 1500 credits a day and a 20% share of whatever is salvaged from the ruins. Billy will entice them further by explaining that he has a buyer already lined up in the Colorado Barony of Hope who has agreed to give them top credit on anything they return with (this is true... to a degree; Billy’s contact has agreed to look the items over, nothing more). Given that this could include salvaged pre-Rifts military hardware, this could make the characters quite a bit of money. If he gets the impression that they are anti-Coalition, he will appeal to this by reminding them that it is rumored that the Coalition military is built upon salvaged technology from the past and that this could give others an edge over them.

## Billy’s Team (quick stats)

Most of these are friends and associates of the Rogue Scholar who have accompanied him on previous expeditions throughout the New West. Only a few are recent hires, like the players.

### William “Billy” Brooks

#### 6th level Rogue Scholar

William is a large, stocky man, though this is more a result of his tall, muscular frame and not obesity. He has a mane of bushy light brown hair (beginning to gray slightly), a full beard and mustache, and always wears a cowboy hat. Billy drives one of the group’s Mountaineer ATVs and is usually accompanied by Grynshlack and David Keb.

Growing up in Arzno, William Brooks is no stranger to the New West. In his life, he has traveled much of North America, though he has deliberately avoided straying too close to Tolkeen or the Magic Zone (while he doesn’t fear magic or those who wield it, he does not entirely trust them, with the exception of the Elf Kalack Ven, who has just joined his team). He has befriended many on his travels, though he seldom lingers long in any one place, always looking for some newly discovered set of ruins to explore. People tend to trust the friendly man, who is always quick with a laugh and a round of drinks. With the notable exception of Arielle King, most of his close teammates would likely die to protect their boss. He would do likewise.

Any attempt to probe Billy’s thoughts during the negotiation will reveal that he is a man of his word (mostly) and that he truly intends to honor his end of the contract and see that the characters are fairly compensated for their services.

**Quick Stats:** Human Male. Alignment: Scrupulous. I.Q. 24, M.E. 10, M.A. 23, P.S. 19, P.P. 10, P.E. 18, P.B. 14, Spd 14. Hit Points: 39. S.D.C.: 22. Skills of Note: Find Books and Artifacts (91%), Recognize Authenticity (83%), Languages: American, Dragonese, Spanish and French (98%), Literacy: American (98%), Dragonese, Spanish and French (95%), Appraise Goods (85%), Computer Operation (95%), Computer Programming (80%), Find Contraband (71%), History: Pre-Rifts (89%/81%), History: Post-Apocalypse (90%/85%), Research (98%), Excavation (90%), Salvage (85%), Lore: Demons and Monsters (80%), Lore: Psychics and Psionics (80%), Anthropology (75%), Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Energy Pistol (+3 to strike), W.P. Energy Rifle (+3 to strike), W.P. Knife (+2 to strike, +3 to parry and throw). Attacks per melee: Five. Bonuses: +10% I.Q. skill bonus (already factored in), 75% to invoke trust or intimidate, +4 S.D.C. damage, +2 to save vs poison and magic, +2 to pull



punch, +2 to roll with punch, +2 to parry and dodge, +1 to strike, +1 to disarm, +5 on Perception Rolls.

**Weapons and Equipment:** Wears Bandito Armor with a long coat (66 M.D.C. protection), carries a pair (2) of Wilk's-Remi 137 "Kingdom Come" heavy laser pulse pistols (3D6 M.D., 15 shots per E-Clip), a Wilk's-Remi 150 "Volcanic" laser rifle (3D6 M.D. single shot or 6D6 M.D. double shot, 34 shots per E-Clip), a Vibro-Blade (1D6 M.D.) and a Survival Knife (1D6+1 S.D.C.). Always has a satchel slung over his shoulder in which he carries many of his smaller excavation tools (brushes, small tools, specimen bags, etc.) and a portable computer loaded with numerous reference data disks. He has a utility belt slung with 6 extra E-Clips, 2 smoke grenades and a pair of canteens.

## Larry Jackson

### 5th level Legacy Scout (see *Rifts World Book 26: Dinosaur Swamp* for details) and frequent associate of Billy Brooks

Larry Jackson is a handsome, wiry man with weathered, tan skin and a few scars. He is surprisingly strong and agile for this thin frame. Like all Legacy Scouts, Larry is more interested in the details and facts about the past, not its treasures. However, he recognizes William Brooks as a man of his word and worth working for from time to time. Though he does travel often with Billy and his team, Larry considers himself something of a loner, and will often disappear for months at a time before turning up with some new lead for Billy to follow. Larry has explored the wilderness of North America extensively, though he tends to avoid the more populated areas (such the CS, Tolkeen, Lazlo, and Free Quebec). Even the Colorado Baronies and Arzno are too "civilized" for this wilderness explorer, though he likes their rough and tumble atmosphere more than most other places. Larry is only truly at ease in the saddle of his robot horse, riding point for Billy's expedition.

**Quick Stats:** Human Male. Alignment: Unprincipled. I.Q. 12, M.E. 10, M.A. 15, P.S. 25, P.P. 22, P.E. 18, P.B. 14, Spd 15. Hit Points: 30. S.D.C.: 36. Skills of Note: Anthropology (60%), Archaeology (70%/60%), Languages: American (98%) and Spanish (77%), Literacy: American (80%), Climbing (70%/60%), Detect Concealment (60%), History: Pre-Rifts (73%/65%), History: Post-Apocalypse (75%/70%), Find Contraband (57%), Research (70%), Excavation (70%), Salvage (65%), Mining (70%), Wilderness Survival (65%), Land Navigation (67%), Spelunking (80%), Lore: Dinosaurs (55%), Hand to Hand: Basic, W.P. Energy Pistol (+3 to strike), W.P. Knife (+2 to strike, parry and throw), W.P. Sword (+2 to strike and parry). Attacks per melee: Five. Bonuses: +10 S.D.C. damage, +2 to save vs poison and magic, +2 to pull punch, +3 to roll with punch, +7 to parry and dodge, +5 to strike, +1 to disarm, +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Weapons and Equipment:** Wears a banged up suit of EBA armor that is actually a repaired and restored suit of standard NEMA armor (120 M.D.C. protection), NG-45LP "Long Pistol" (5D6 M.D., 13 shots per long E-Clip), a Vibro-Blade (1D6 M.D.) and an authentic NEMA Vibro-Sword (2D6 M.D.). Wears a small knapsack on his back in which he carries numerous small tools for aiding in excavation. He has a utility belt slung with 4 extra long E-Clips, 1 smoke grenade, 2 light explosive grenades (3D6 M.D.) and a canteen. Larry more often than

not rides a RH1001-A robot horse disguised to look and act like the real thing.

## Grynshlack

### 4th level Heavy Weapons Mercenary

#### and longtime friend of Billy Brooks

Grynshlack lived in and explored the wilderness of Canada and was a heavy weapons soldier for a small mercenary unit until he was imprisoned by soldiers of the Free Quebec army. Slated for execution, he was rescued by Billy on one of the scholar's earlier forays into Canada. From that moment on, the Grackle Tooth has never left Billy's side, swearing a blood oath to protect his friend even at the cost of his own life. Grynshlack loves playing cards and throwing knives. Within minutes of settling down somewhere (usually while everyone else is still unpacking or setting up camp), the D-Bee will be shuffling his deck of cards (he has one dog-eared deck that he considers lucky) and waiting for someone, usually Billy or Larry Jackson, to join him. Like all Grackle Tooth, Grynshlack is big (10 feet/3.05 m tall) and loves heavy weapons. The D-Bee is never seen without a smoldering cigar clenched in his teeth, even while sleeping.

**Quick Stats:** Grackle Tooth Male. Alignment: Scrupulous. I.Q. 12, M.E. 14, M.A. 21, P.S. 35 (Supernatural), P.P. 22, P.E. 23 (Supernatural), P.B. 10, Spd 31. M.D.C.: 169. Natural Abilities: Sharp vision, supernatural physical stats, impervious to heat and carcinogens, recovers M.D.C. at a rate of 2D6 per 12 hours, prehensile tail. Skills of Note: Recognize Weapons Quality (60%), Weapon Systems (65%), Demolitions (74%), Demolitions Disposal (74%), Languages: Grackle Tooth (98%), American and French (69%), Literacy: American (45%), Climbing (65%/55%), Military Etiquette (60%), Gambling (45%), Boxing, Wrestling, Physical Labor, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, W.P. Energy Pistol (+2 to strike), W.P. Energy Rifle (+2 to strike), W.P. Rifles (+2 to strike), W.P. Heavy Military Weapons (+2 to strike), W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons (+2 to strike), W.P. Submachine-Guns (+2 to strike), W.P. Knife (+2 to strike, parry and throw), W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike and parry). Attacks per melee: 7 with prehensile tail. Bonuses: 65% to invoke trust or intimidate, +20 S.D.C. damage, +4 to save vs poison and magic, +3 on initiative, +6 to pull punch, +8 to roll with punch, +12 to parry and dodge, +7 to strike, +5 to save vs Horror Factor. Supernatural Damage: Bite 2D6 M.D., Punch 4D6 M.D., Tail Swipe 4D6 M.D., Power Punch 1D4x10 M.D. (counts as two attacks), Kick 4D6 M.D.

**Weapons and Equipment:** Wears a Bandito Arms M.D.C. Overcoat (28 M.D.C. protection), carries a Q1-02 "Stopper" Ion Pistol (4D6+6 M.D., 12 shots per E-Clip), a CP-40 Pulse Laser Rifle (2D6 or 6D6 M.D., 3D6 or 1D6x10 S.D.C., 30 shots per long E-Clip, +1 to strike), a NG-E4 Plasma Ejector (6D6 M.D., 12 shots per long E-Clip) an NG-202 Rail Gun (1D4x10 M.D. per 40 round burst, 300 round belt), a Vibro-Blade (1D6 M.D.) and a Neural Mace (inflicts same damage as Supernatural P.S. plus stun). He has a utility belt slung with 10 extra long E-Clips, 4 light explosive grenades (3D6 M.D.), 4 heavy explosive grenades (4D6 M.D.) and three canteens. Locked in one of the Mountaineer ATVs are 3 light fusion blocks (1D4x10 M.D.) and one heavy fusion block (4D6x10 M.D.). Grynshlack rides "shotgun" with Billy Brooks in one of the Mountaineer ATVs.

## Arielle King

**6th level Republican Intel-Agent Spy;  
recent addition to Billy's team**

Arielle King has recently charmed her way onto Billy's team through a combination of her sexuality (seduction) and "knack" for getting things that the team needs. Having gone out with Billy on one other expedition, she has proven her worth as a "jack of all trades" when it comes to breaking into hard to reach places, as well as getting information from uncooperative sources. Normally an upstanding person, Billy turns a blind eye to the attractive and charming Arielle's often unsavory methods as he is slowly falling in love with her. Larry sees nothing wrong with her use of skills to get the job done but Grynshlack doesn't trust her (though he can't put his finger on why; so far he has chalked it up to his overprotective tendencies towards his friend). Arielle is a zealous Republican obsessed with finding a means to defeat Archie Three and help restore America to its former glory. She is a deep-cover operative whose mission is to infiltrate teams that might have a chance of leading the Republicans to resources that will help them in their war against the insane A.I. (For more details on Archie Three and the Republicans, see *Rifts® Sourcebook One, Revised & Expanded*.)

**Quick Stats:** Human Female. Alignment: Aberrant. I.Q. 14, M.E. 14, M.A. 21, P.S. 17, P.P. 16, P.E. 23, P.B. 22, Spd 18. Hit Points: 40. S.D.C.: 28. Skills of Note: Disguise (70%), Interrogation (67%), Imitate Voices (76%/70%), Prowl (60%), Seduction (52%), Streetwise (54%), Surveillance Systems and Tailing (70%), Concealment (52%), Languages: American (98%), French and Spanish (80%), Literacy: American (85%) and French (65%), Intelligence (72%), Sniper (+2 to strike on aimed shots), Computer Operation (80%), Pick Pockets (60%), Pick Locks (65%), Computer Programming (55%), Computer Hacking (55%), Tracking (60%), Wilderness Survival (65%), Land Navigation (66%), History: Pre-Rifts (52%/44%), Gymnastics, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, W.P. Energy Pistol (+3 to strike), W.P. Energy Rifle (+3 to strike), W.P. Pistol (+3 to strike), W.P. Knife (+2 to strike, +3 to parry and throw). Attacks per melee: 5. Bonuses: 65% to invoke trust or intimidate, 60% to charm and impress, +2 S.D.C. damage, +4 to save vs poison and magic, +3 to pull punch, +6 to roll with punch, +5 to parry and dodge, +3 to strike.

**Weapons and Equipment:** Wears a disguised suit of Republican Infantry Armor (112 M.D.C. protection), carries an R-22 Patriot Maxi-Ion Pistol (3D6 M.D. per blast or 1D4x10 M.D. triple burst, 28 shots per E-Clip, +1 to strike), a Wilk's 457 Laser Pulse Rifle (3D6+2 M.D. per shot or 1D6x10 M.D. triple burst, 30 shots per long E-Clip, +1 to strike), a Vibro-Blade (1D6 M.D.) and a Survival Knife (1D6+1 S.D.C.). She has knapsack on her back with a variety of "tools" in it, including 2 smoke grenades, 3 flash grenades (flash blinds for 1D4 melee rounds), a lock pick gun, a mini-computer, specimen bags, and a garrote wire. She also wears a standard utility belt slung with 8 extra long E-Clips, a flashlight and a canteen. Arielle pilots the other Mountaineer ATV, usually alone or occasionally with Larry riding "shotgun."

## Tobias and Jeremiah Ackle

**4th level Mining 'Borgs;  
brothers and recent additions to the team**

These Full Conversion Cyborgs possess all of the basic skills associated with Mining 'Borgs (described on pages 113-115 of *Rifts® World Book 14: New West*). The brothers are moderately armed as 'Borgs go and tend to keep to themselves. They are a recent addition to Billy's team after he lost his previous heavy digging team in an accident on a previous expedition. The brothers used to work for a powerful and unscrupulous family out of the Colorado Barony of Charity. Fed up with degrading and dangerous work conditions and harsh treatment by their employer, the two fled, heading west in hopes of finding a new employer who would treat them better. As luck would have it, they were hired by William Brooks. Both have learned to trust their new employer, though they have not revealed that they are on the run from their former boss (something that Billy suspects but will not press them about). While Tobias is Unprincipled and Jeremiah is Anarchist, both are extremely loyal to one another and would die to protect each other. Jeremiah is the older brother.

## David Keb

**5th level Operator and longtime associate of Billy Brooks**

David Keb is a young (17 years old), exceptionally gifted Operator (I.Q. 20) who seems to have an almost supernatural talent with machines (all Mechanical and Electrical skills 26% higher than they would ordinarily be for a 5<sup>th</sup> level Operator, even considering his near genius I.Q.). This is because David is borderline autistic with a natural affinity for mechanics. When around machines, he seems to intuitively understand what is wrong with them and how to fix them (usually better than how they started). He possesses a wide range of mechanical and electrical skills along with the psionic powers of Object Read (6), Electrokinetics (varies) and Telemechanics (10). His base I.S.P. is unusually high for a Major Psychic (101), perhaps as a result of his borderline autism. His social skills, however, are lacking. He seems only to be able to function on something of a normal social level whenever he is interacting with Billy or Grynshlack (the D-Bee has taken a great liking to David and is as overprotective of the boy as he is with Billy). In all other settings, David is withdrawn and will usually pass the time tinkering with some small electronic device. What no one knows is that David is William Brooks' nephew. He took the boy under his wing after his sister (David's mother) was killed by bandits.

## Kalack Ven

**4th level, female Elf Techno-Wizard;  
recent addition to Billy's team**

Kalack Ven only recently offered her services to Billy and his team after she had fled the violence of the invasion of Tolkeen (if this is set prior to the Tolkeen War – 105 to 109 P.A. – then she is fleeing the Coalition siege that has cut off the kingdom; if this is during or after the war, then she is fleeing the destruction of her land and the Coalition occupation that followed). While she harbors deep resentment bordering on hatred for the Coalition, she also sees that the leaders of Tolkeen have

brought this war upon themselves. As such, she has fled to somewhere that she feels her skills as a Techno-Wizard will not be used to create killing machines (she is something of a pacifist and only fights in self defense). She saw the Colorado Baronies as this place, with its strong Techno-Wizard industry. Here she met Billy and saw an idealism in him that she had lost as Tolkeen fell from grace. Kalack carries only a TW Flame Dagger (2D6 M.D.) and a TW Energy Pistol (3D6 M.D.), as well as a variety of non-weapon TW devices useful for exploration and survival. She wears light M.D. TW mage armor enhanced with Chameleon, Superhuman Speed, and Breathe without Air. She travels light, carrying most of her possessions on her person, and flying on a TW Crescent Wing Board.

In addition to these key characters, Billy has about two dozen hired workers whose main task will be to help the Mining 'Borgs clear debris and perform heavy labor in the excavation of the ruins. All of the workers are roughly 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> level Vagabonds with some wilderness experience. Many of these workers have been employed by Billy and his team in the past.

Most of Billy's team, with the notable exception of Grynshlack and Arielle King, have little combat experience and will typically only fight to defend themselves or run. They are not exactly cowardly; they simply prefer to leave the fighting to the hired guns (i.e. the players). The characters will be required to sign a contract (or make their mark) to solidify whatever arrangements are worked out with Billy over the terms of their employment. Their role in the expedition is laid out in the contract and includes:

- Lead the way in exploring any areas of the ruins that have not been cleared of possible threats.
- Guard base camp and vehicles both en route to the site and while within the ruins.
- Defend the members of the expedition force against any threat that might be encountered.
- Follow the orders given to them by William Brooks, Grynshlack, Larry Jackson or any other member of the expedition designated by one of these three individuals, so long as the orders do not require the players to place their lives in jeopardy above and beyond the terms outlined above.

With the exceptions as noted above, the members of Billy's team will be friendly towards the characters. After all, these are the people being hired to protect them. Billy and Grynshlack in particular will often consult with whoever is perceived as the leader of the characters' team when it comes to matters of defense or exploration into potentially hostile or dangerous territory.

Billy's team operates out of two Mountaineer ATVs modified with enlarged cargo capacity for hauling excavation equipment and storing salvaged materials. One is driven by Billy Brooks and the other by Arielle King. A third large vehicle, an older model Northern Gun troop transport, has been modified to transport not only the workers but also any large items salvaged from the ruins. The rest of the team rides or drives a variety of other vehicles, listed above with each NPC.

The trip down the mountain pass and the subsequent trek across the plains will be relatively uneventful (unless the Game Master wishes to make it difficult), with occasional sightings of

herds of dinosaurs and a few other wild animals and monsters, most of which withdraw from the convoy either on sight or after a few shots are fired in their direction.

For most of the trek through the wilderness, the various team members will either sleep in their vehicles or, if riding a hover cycle, will set up a small, one or two person tent. In order to avoid attracting attention, campsites will be selected by Larry Jackson and will usually be in fairly isolated areas (against a secluded outcrop of rock or concealed in a cluster of trees) rather than out in the open, and will be relatively small. Player characters will need to provide whatever accommodations they need for camping in the wilderness, and as per their contract, they will also need to rotate guard duty throughout the night.

Several days out, they will come across the partial remains of a large dinosaur carcass; a juvenile Sauropod. The carcass will be crawling with around 3 dozen (36) Coelophysis (small, Scamper-type dinosaurs) that will flee when approached or fired upon by the players.

### Coelophysis Quick Stats

M.D.C.: 12, P.P.E.: 14. High animal intelligence, excellent vision, good hearing, nightvision (15 feet/4.6 m), track by smell (45% +15% to follow blood or rotting flesh). Five attacks per melee, +4 on initiative, +5 to strike, +9 dodge, -3 to save versus Horror Factor. Bite: 2D6 S.D.C., Claws: 1D6+2 S.D.C. Possesses the following magical abilities and can perform any of them without expending P.P.E. once per day: Death Trance, Chameleon, Cleanse, Mystic Fulcrum, and Armor of Ithan. Although technically not psychic, the Coelophysis does possess the following psionic powers and can use them once per day at no I.S.P. cost: Resist Thirst, Resist Hunger, Resist Fatigue and Impervious to Fire. The Coelophysis is a scamper-type dinosaur that flourished during the Triassic period and once again roams the New West in search of easy prey (injured or sick) and carrion. This tiny dinosaur is about the size of a small dog or large cat and travels in large packs; though even in large numbers, these dinosaurs are cowardly and will flee from a kill until the aggressor has his fill. They stand on their hind legs, balancing with their long tails, and have brown and green mottled skin. Horror Factor: Not applicable unless their prey is sick, injured or otherwise unable to escape, then a swarm of 20+ will have a Horror Factor of 9 or 10.

A successful Lore: Dinosaur or Lore: Demons and Monsters skill roll or the use of psychic powers such as Object Read or Clairvoyance while examining the carcass will suggest that there is a large predator in the region, most likely a Tyrannosaurus Rex or similar monster that has claimed the valley that cuts across the party's path (a detailed medical examination of the carcass with successful skill rolls in Pathology, Biology, or Forensics will reveal that some large predator brought down the Sauropod). As the range of such large predators can extend many miles, the group will have two choices: either to find a way to circumvent the valley ahead, which will take days, or cut across and risk an encounter with the predator.

### Tyrannosaurus Rex Quick Stats

Main Body M.D.C.: 600, Head M.D.C.: 280, Underbelly M.D.C.: 300. P.P.E.: 16. High animal intelligence, P.S. 54, P.P.





16, P.E. 29, Spd 48, excellent hearing and outstanding sense of smell (smells blood and decaying flesh up to 1.5 miles/2.4 km away), track by smell (80%), can run at full speed for only about 15 minutes before exhaustion. Four attacks per melee, +3 on initiative, +3 to strike, +1 to parry, +1 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch, +7 to save vs magic, +12 to save vs poison, +10 to save vs Horror Factor. Head Butt: 3D6 M.D., Bite: 2D4x10 M.D., Hind Claws: 1D6x10 M.D., Kick: 6D6 M.D., Slashing Tail: 1D4x10 M.D. There seems little need to describe this most popular, well known dinosaur. This particular T-Rex hunts the entire valley that lies across the expedition's path and will consider any incursion into its domain as hostile action. The dinosaur will stalk the party for the better part of the first day before attacking the next morning. Horror Factor: 18.

While crossing the plains should take just under 2 days, the players will ultimately be stalked and ambushed by the T-Rex at some point. If the players trek around the valley, they will avoid the T-Rex entirely but will add four days to their journey. This not something Billy is too keen on doing as it increases the likelihood that another group might find the site of the ruins first (Game Master's option).

## A Ghostly Warning

After a few more days in the wilderness, punctuated by increasingly frequent stops to check bearings and often seemingly random changes in direction by Larry Jackson, the expedition will arrive at the end of a rocky valley, relatively well sheltered

from the surrounding countryside so much so that without the Legacy Scout's guidance, they would most certainly have missed it entirely. Most of the valley seems to be choked with debris, including signs of burial by a thick layer of volcanic ash (from the eruption of the Yellowstone Super-Volcano in the days following the coming of the Rifts). This will make it impossible for any larger vehicles to safely navigate further into the valley, including the modified transport vehicle. Even the team's Mountaineer ATVs will have difficulty heading into the dangerous mountain valley. Billy will order that they set up a temporary camp for the night until they decide how to proceed. What, if anything, happens this first night near the ruins is up to the Game Master (perhaps some random monster or animals attacking the campsite after dark, or some ominous warning in the form of a psychic flash of the impending encounter in the ruins). The following morning, Billy will order that any vehicle that cannot successfully navigate the valley be left near the entrance. Players may assist in successfully camouflaging the vehicles (successful Camouflage skill rolls required) to avoid detection; remember that the valley itself is already fairly secluded to begin with. From this point on, the team will move either on foot or in the smaller vehicles that can travel up the choked valley.

The trek up the valley will be slow going, as even the ATVs will be hard pressed to safely navigate the narrow river valley at any speed greater than a crawl. Players with vehicles and the ability to fly can scout ahead, though Larry Jackson will warn against it as mountain valleys are often home to all manner of flying predators: Leatherwings, Pterosaurs, Demons, Perytons, and maybe even a hatchling dragon (though he will say that an

adult dragon is unlikely as such a monster would have already sensed their invasion and challenged the team). Besides, the heavily wooded mountainside will make it impossible to locate the entrance to the ruins from anywhere but along the riverbed. Game Masters are welcome to add any natural or supernatural challenges to this trek, though close calls with loose rubble and struggling to get the ATVs through some of the tighter spots would offer a different sort of challenge for the players. At this slow pace, the party will travel only a dozen or so miles (19.2 km) that first day.

By nightfall, the team will have reached a point where the valley opens up enough to set up camp. Any psychic in the party, as well as one in the company of the Vagabond workers, will feel uneasy as they pitch tents for the night. As usual, the players will keep guard over the site, taking shifts throughout the evening. At some point, one of the players on watch will notice a flickering of light in the woods further up the valley. Whether or not the players call for help, alert the camp or investigate the light, the apparition will approach, revealing itself to be a ghostly figure of some alien-looking female D-Bee. Players witnessing the vision will suddenly see the following images flash through their minds.

- Dark, abandoned passages of twisted metal and debris.
- A giant, shadowy monster with flailing tentacles and a gaping maw.
- Dozens of ghostly figures; some pleading, some lost, some angry.
- Tall, noble-looking primitive warriors engaging in savage acts of brutal killing.
- More debris-choked dark passageways, this time partially submerged.
- A demonic, skeletal figure with tentacles for arms waiting patiently.

These visions will be accompanied by a strong (Empathic Transmission) sense of danger, betrayal, sorrow and urgency.

The apparition was actually the Astral Projection of an Enoch, a virtually unheard of race of psychic D-Bees that dwell within the sublevels of the N.O.R.A.D. ruins. Because this race is 100% telepathic and empathic, they do not have a written or spoken language. As such, they can only communicate through implanting psychic images and impressions into the minds of others. A successful Lore: Psychics and Psionics roll will suggest that this might have been an Astral Projection, though most likely the players (and any of William's team who witness the vision) will believe it to be a ghost. There will be no further encounters that night, though psychics in the party (there are no other psychics either amongst the workers or in Billy's own team) will also report having had an uneasy sleep, though no specific dreams or visions can be recalled.

With the dawn, the camp will be awakened to the sounds of shouting coming from the workers' tents. One of the workers, the psychic who also felt uneasy the night before, is missing. His gear and sleeping bag are still present and were clearly slept in at some point during the night. Tracks lead from the tent into the rocky wilderness further up the valley, though once they head more than 100 feet (30.5 m), they get lost on the barren rock.

**Game Master Note:** Even if you have this adventure take place in the winter, the worker will still escape detection as the heavily wooded canopy overhead will have prevented most of the snow from reaching the narrow river valley. Furthermore, the tracks will lead to an area of hard rock clear of snow, making the trail impossible to follow.

Back in the tent, lying beside his gear, the searchers will find a torn sheet of paper with writing scrawled on it (he was one of the few workers who possessed very limited literacy skills): Written all over the page, copied several dozen times, the worker has written: *the dark lady calls me the dark lady calls me the dark lady calls me the dark lady calls me the dark lady calls me the dark lady calls me the dark lady calls me...*

## Setting Up Camp

At the head of the valley, Larry will announce that they have reached the site of the ruins, though there is no evident entrance or ruins. On the bank of the small stream which seems to issue from the rocks at the head of the valley, there is a wide enough spot to set up camp and Billy will order that they set up a pair of large structures that were being hauled on the two ATVs. These large, lightweight metallic structures are erected mechanically in a matter of minutes (sort of like a collapsible building). Billy had the pair custom made in the Colorado Baronies for his expeditions. Inside is a metallic floor with approximately 1000 square feet (92.9 m<sup>2</sup>) that is then arranged to meet the needs of the expedition. One of the structures is left wide open and acts as a field lab, complete with portable computers, analytical equipment, and storage containers to quarantine materials for examination. The only partition in this one (in addition to a small bathroom area) is a trio of closed sleeping areas for Billy, Arielle and Larry Jackson. The other structure is divided into small living quarters for the rest of the expedition team (except for Grynshlack, who prefers to sleep in one of the ATVs) as well as the workers. It includes a small kitchen and dining area and small, closet-sized bathroom with a shower and toilet (about the size of what you typically find in a travel trailer). Each structure has eight small, armored windows, two on each wall (40 M.D.C. each that can be covered by 100 M.D.C. shields in the event of an emergency), and two doors (75 M.D.C. each), one of which exits to the outside, while the other is linked to the adjacent structure by a tunnel made of lightweight M.D.C. fabric (50 M.D.C. total) suspended over a frame. Although a useful tool for the serious explorer, the greatest weakness of the structure is its vulnerability. The M.D.C. of the structure is only 100 per 10 square feet (0.93 m<sup>2</sup>), making it relatively easy for anything with Supernatural Strength to tear it or even for concentrated laser fire to burn through it. Rail gun fire would shred the building in a matter of seconds. Because of this, Billy has outfitted his two portable labs with a pair of modified Naruni force field generators. They provide an additional 500 M.D.C. of protection for each structure and are powered by the same micro-fusion power unit that powers the lab equipment in the lab.

### Quick-Camp Field Structure (Basic Features)

**Manufacturer:** Colorado Barony of Hope.

**Class:** Portable Field Building.



**Size: Unfolded:** 1000 square feet (92.9 m<sup>2</sup>) with a 25 foot (7.6 m) ceiling. **Folded:** 10 x 10 x 10 foot cube (28.3 m<sup>3</sup>).

**Weight:** 1 ton.

**Crew:** As a portable barrack, the structure can accommodate up to 20 in cramped conditions.

**M.D.C. by Location:**

Walls – 100 per 10 square feet (0.93 m<sup>2</sup>)

Windows (8) – 40 each

Armored Shutters (8) – 100 each

Doors (2) – 75 each

Pass-through Tunnel (optional) – 50

**Facilities:** The basic setup is a single large, empty chamber with eight rigid support beams running from the floor to ceiling, eight windows (two per wall) and two doors (one front and one side). The units come standard with basic ventilation, air recirculation, and climate control (nothing fancy, basic air and heat). Basic models can be made airtight with an air supply of 48 hours. They are designed to withstand basic weather and climate conditions comfortably from 120° to -50° F (48.9° to -45.6° C), as well as storm winds up to 120 mph (192 km). Unfortunately, while this means that it can withstand most storms (the unit is grounded to harmlessly channel lightning strikes), extremely strong hurricane force winds, tornadoes, blizzards or severe sandstorms will flatten the structure. While the damage sustained will actually be minimal, the supports cannot withstand such strain and will buckle, resulting in a pile of relatively undamaged panels with crushed bodies within. It will not survive earthquakes of 6.0 or greater on the Richter scale. The standard model is not radiation shielded.

**Power:** The basic unit is powered by a gasoline generator that provides 72 hours of continual use (this can be doubled or even tripled if the environmental controls are used only minimally). Active use of customized equipment will exhaust power supplies twice as fast (unless they have an independent power supply). Upgraded models come with an electrical generator (augmented with a solar collectors) that will extend the life up to 1 week of continual use (tripled if power conservation is used and allowed to recharge during the day). Advanced models (typically when customized for lab use) come with a micro-fusion reactor that will provide 5 years of continual use. Colorado Barony Techno-Wizards have created a TW power source that will provide 24 hours of continual use per 30 P.P.E. or 60 I.S.P. spent. In every case, the generator is located inside the structure once it is set up (the gasoline generator is designed to vent fumes to the outside).

**Weapon Systems:** None standard. There are no hardpoints for mounting weapons.

**Defensive Systems:** Other than armored doors and window shutters, none standard. Doors are designed to lock from the inside. Locks are either keys or simple electronic (like an electronic car key). More secure locks would need to be part of a customized package (see below). Units powered by TW or micro-fusion reactors can purchase a customized force field (see below).

**Cost:** The basic unit (with the gasoline generator and no customization) costs 200,000 credits.

While the Quick Camp Field Structure is officially manufactured in the Colorado Barony of Hope, it represents the cobbling together of various technologies from across the continent, including Northern Gun, Wilk's Lasers, the Naruni, and the Black Market. As such, the units are typically customized according to the needs of the buyer. "Standard" customizations include:

- Electric Power Generator with Solar Collectors (described above). Adds 50,000 credits to cost.
- Micro-fusion Power Generator (described above). Adds 500,000 credits to cost.
- TW Power Generator (described above). Adds 300,000 credits to cost.
- Naruni Force Field Generator: 500 M.D.C. (recharges in 2 hours). Requires the micro-fusion reactor or TW power generator. Adds 2 million credits to the cost.
- Basic Living Accommodations: Lightweight (S.D.C.) walls partition off sections to make a pair of semi-private barracks along with a communal latrine and washroom. Unless additional measures are taken (such as adding a storage tank or digging a catch pit), waste simply runs off away from the structure (smelly!). Requires water supply. Adds 200,000 credits to cost. Adds 400 pounds (180 kg).
- Storage Tanks. 100 gallon (378.5 liter) collapsible storage tank located inside structure (used typically for water or waste storage). Cannot be filled until structure is erected. Structure cannot be folded until tank is empty. Adds 10,000 credits to cost. Adds 50 pounds (22.5 kg) to the weight.
- Severe Weather Reinforcement: Allows the structure to withstand most natural disasters (including tornadoes, hurricanes, sandstorms, thunderstorms, blizzards, and spells that mimic these disasters). Does not protect against earthquakes greater than 6.0 on the Richter scale. Adds 70,000 credits to cost. Adds 650 pounds (292.5 kg) to the weight.
- Additional Armor: Increase the M.D.C. of all locations by 50%. Adds 150,000 credits to cost. Adds 1000 pounds (450 kg) to the weight.
- Combat Armor: Double all M.D.C. Adds 350,000 credits to cost. Double weight to 2 tons.
- Radiation Shielding: Protects against radiation and extreme heat (same as basic EBA environmental armor). Adds 125,000 credits to cost.
- Security Locks: Windows and shutters automatically lock when not deliberately opened from inside. Doors are protected with either a key pad or key card. Adds 50,000 credits to cost.

Additional equipment, such as bunks, lab facilities, kitchen facilities, etc. must be carried separately and placed within the Quick Camp once the building has been erected.

When setting up camp, the characters will not be asked to help in the manual labor of erecting and outfitting the shelters. Instead, they are expected to stand guard and patrol the perimeter. Remember that while the members of Billy's team are not cowards and will fight to defend themselves, most are not experienced warriors and will rely on the players to manage the bulk of the fighting. While this is all going on, Larry and Grynshlack will be scouting around the rubble near where the stream issues.



Shortly after the base camp is established, Larry and Grynshlack will return to announce that they have located the entrance. Leaving the workers to finish outfitting the structures, the team (including the players) will be guided to a partially concealed cave entrance. Most of the cave entrance is buried by volcanic ash and rubble (some of it recently removed by Larry and Grynshlack). However, after some of the debris is removed, a detailed examination will reveal that the debris conceals a partially corroded, heavy metal door. Whatever markings might have been on the door at one time have long since weathered away. Still, it is obvious by the size and strength of the blast door that this must have once been the entrance to some heavily fortified complex. Only a small fissure near the base of the door, barely big enough for Grynshlack to crawl through, reveals any break in the structure. Any player in power armor larger than a SAMAS or Glitter Boy will be unable to fit through the fissure in the door. Billy will order Kalack Ven, David Keb and the Mining 'Borg brothers to begin excavating enough of the door to enlarge the opening with the help of the workers. Meanwhile, the rest of the expedition (himself, Larry Jackson, Arielle King and the players) will squeeze through the existing opening to begin exploring the complex. Grynshlack will be left to oversee the excavations, something the overprotective Grackle Tooth will protest about.

**Note:** If any player thinks to use a Tracking (humans) skill, they might notice that something or someone has recently managed to squeeze through the opening not long ago (the missing worker).

## Possible Surface Encounters

- As long as there is a surface camp, there will be a general feeling of unease that permeates the encampment every evening, though there will be no further ghostly visions or warnings.
- 1D4+1 mountain predators have been watching the camp from a distance and have chosen their time to strike when the workers are most vulnerable (when walking to or from the main entrance to the ruins, especially unescorted). These could be Grigleapers, Leatherwings, or Panthera-Tereon mountain lions.
- 1D4+1 D'yar warriors have managed to sneak past the workers on the Main Level and have been waiting until nightfall to ambush the encampment (for stats on the D'yar, see **Sublevel Three**). They will attempt to capture some of the workers but will fight to the death if attacked by superior numbers.

The Dark Behemoth has burrowed its way around the excavation on the Main Level and is waiting in ambush for when the workers retire for the night and head back to camp outside the main entrance. It will snatch one or two before dragging their bodies back through its tunnels to its lair.

- The unmistakable high-pitched sound of SAMAS engine roars overhead. Too fast to identify, there is no way to tell who the SAMAS belongs to, much less if their encampment was spotted. The SAMAS could be a Coalition patrol scouting for Tolkeen refugees, mercenaries using one of the Bandito Arms SAMAS variants, or even a Golden Eagle SAMAS scouting for the Republicans (support for Arielle King).

- The only warning to the coming catastrophe is the rumble that turns heads to look up the mountainside. A flash flood triggered by a summer thunderstorm or snow avalanche (depending upon the season) rockets down the mountainside towards the narrow valley. Anyone caught at the encampment will have only 1D4 melee rounds to reach the shelter of the ruins before caught. If this were the worst of it, the M.D.C. shelters would most likely survive (though most of the vehicles would be swept away and deposited miles down the valley). However, a rockslide triggered by the flood or avalanche will both bury the entrance to the ruins and crush the field camp buildings. If this happens when the players are topside, they will have the same 1D4 melee rounds to escape into the ruins or be killed (only extreme magic or psionic measures will enable them to survive). If they are in the ruins when it happens, they feel only a distant shaking depending on how deep they are and hear panicked radio calls. It will take 1D6+2 days for the surviving members of the expedition to tunnel their way back out of the ruins (three times as long if the Mining 'Borg brothers were killed in the rock slide). While this turn of events is clearly a disaster, if enough of the expedition members have survived, Billy Brooks will want to continue to explore the ruins.

## N.O.R.A.D. Main Level

Originally, the Main Level of N.O.R.A.D. consisted of armories, garages and a pair of small hangars for V.T.O.L. aircraft. Being the least protected of the levels, there were few secure facilities or offices on the Main Level. When the earthquakes that leveled much of the Rocky Mountains in the wake of the Great Cataclysm struck, most of this level was buried under thousands of tons of rock and rubble. Though NEMA and Air Force survivors did manage to salvage a few vehicles, most of the garages and hangars were completely destroyed. Now, very little can be salvaged from this mass of rock and rubble. What few artifacts might be discovered include minor objects such as rusted staplers, mangled and rusted office furniture, smashed computer terminals, rotting personal effects (a broken picture frame with an almost completely faded picture, a set of dog tags, etc.), broken energy weapons (a successful pre-Rifts History skill roll will identify them as possibly belong to the Old American Empire's military), pieces of armor plating, and smashed pieces of mostly buried vehicles. There is nothing of real military value on this level as when NEMA evacuated Cheyenne Mountain following the events of December 25<sup>th</sup> on Sublevel Seven, any military hardware that was not sent into Sublevel Seven would either have been buried already in the earthquakes or been salvaged and taken with the survivors when they abandoned N.O.R.A.D. The only things dwelling on this level would be small, scavenger-like monsters and animals that were using the ruins as shelter. Exploration of this level should be relatively uneventful.

After the recon team does a preliminary search of the Main Level and determines that there is little to be salvaged without major excavation efforts, Billy will order the Mining 'Borgs and David Keb, the Operator, to begin to excavate what he believes was once one of the larger hangars to serve as a base of operations within the ruins. This will take at least a day or two to ac-

comply. By now, the entrance to the ruins will have been enlarged to allow characters and vehicles less than 20 feet (6.1 m) in height access to the ruins. Despite his protests, Grynshlack will be left to oversee the excavations in the hangar.

It will take two days to completely excavate a large enough area within one of the old hangars to serve as a base of operations within the ruin. Throughout the course of the excavation, the workers will discover the crushed and ruined remains of what look like aircraft of some design (Air Force Sky Hawk Rocket Bikes), though without a detailed study, it will be impossible to determine their exact design. A second hangar bay elsewhere on the Main Level conceals the remains of several larger aircraft, including a pair of large high-tech bombers (equivalent to Air Castle Bombers described in the *Rifts® Mercenaries* sourcebook), though this will only be discovered after a week of further excavation on the Main Level, something that may or may not happen depending on the outcome of the events as they unfold.

Scattered throughout the navigable sections of the Main Level (i.e. those passageways only choked with debris rather than completely buried under tons of rock) are a variety of more mundane artifacts. Billy will order the workers to collect what they find and store the items in the mobile lab outside the ruins. Finding these items does not take much effort (mainly taking the time to sift through loose rubble) and they can be easily collected, though if Billy, Larry or Arielle notice the players taking too much time doing this, they will remind them that they were hired to help explore the ruins and protect the excavation team, not to collect the artifacts. Billy will remind them that they will still get paid their 10% cut of the profits from the sale of the items they find.

- Personal effects that might have been in a locker or desk drawer (faded pictures, car keys, broken coffee mugs, etc.): 4D6 to 6D6 credits per item.
- Useless, rusted or smashed office supplies (staplers, scissors, pens, pencils, etc. 10% chance of still working): 3D6 to 5D6 credits per item.
- Smashed computer equipment (monitors, keyboards, printers; most are damaged beyond repair, 5% chance that it could be repaired): 1D6x10 credits per item (1D4x100 if it can be repaired).
- Smashed furniture: 3D6 to 5D6 credits per item as scrap.
- Broken file cabinets filled with faded and crumbling documents (useless, mostly clerical information): 1D4x100 credits if documents can be carefully salvaged.
- Rusted tools (simple tools like screwdrivers, wrenches, hammers, nothing high tech. 25% chance of being salvageable): 4D6 to 1D4x10 credits.
- Damaged NEMA or Air Force energy rifles and pistols (only 5% chance that it can be studied for reverse engineering): 2D4x10 credits.
- Damaged NEMA or Air Force S.D.C. firearms (only 10% chance that it can be studied for reverse engineering): 1D4x10 credits.
- Pieces of M.D.C. armor plating, no more than 4D6 M.D.C. remaining. There is a small chance (10% per item) that it will bear the logo of either the U.S.A.F. or NEMA. This would

effectively double the value of the scrap from 1D4x10 to 2D4x10 credits per item.

Buried beneath the rock and rubble from the cave-ins, a few more interesting items might be discovered in addition to the more mundane items already described above. These items can only be found after several days of extensive excavation with heavy equipment. Armor and items of clothing will likely (75% chance) still have the skeletal remains of their former owners still wearing them. If an item or article of clothing still bears a recognizable U.S.A.F. or NEMA insignia, the value could be 50% to 100% greater to collectors. Note that a salvageable computer found in one of the buried hangars might have technical information about military hardware on its hard drive and could fetch millions if the data could be retrieved (very small chance).

- Smashed but full suits of NEMA or Air Force body armor (still possess 2D4x10 M.D.C., but electrical components are damaged beyond repair): 1D4x100 credits.
- Intact but severely damaged S.D.C. weapons (same as above but 15% chance that they can be studied for reverse engineering): 2D4x100 credits.
- Intact but severely damaged M.D. energy weapons (same as above but 10% chance that they can be studied for reverse engineering): 3D4x100 credits.
- Tattered remains of rotting clothing: 5D6 credits.
- Smashed but clearly more advanced tools (used mainly in the hangars; 10% chance of being repaired): 3D4x10 credits.
- Crushed civilian vehicles (good for scrap, nothing else): 1D6x10 credits.
- Crushed military hover vehicles (15% chance that it is salvageable): 1D6x100 credits.
- Crushed pieces of a Sky Hawk Rocket Bike (there were two dozen in the various hangars at the time of the earthquake that buried much of the Main Level). None are salvageable, but there is a 15% chance that it might be intact enough to be reverse engineered. Smashed pieces sell for scrap at 1D4x100 credits. If one is found that could be reverse engineered, it could sell for as much 1D4x100,000 credits to the right buyer. The hangar currently under excavation contains eight of these buried and crushed Rocket Bikes. The other sixteen crushed Rocket Bikes are found in the second, larger hangar (see below).
- One dozen combat helicopters and six attack jets were present when the hangars collapsed. All are buried and crushed beyond repair. However, the scrap alone could net 1D4x1000 credits per vehicle and there is a small (5% chance) that electrical and computer components within the aircraft might be salvageable and could be worth 1D4x10,000 if they could be reverse engineered. Three helicopters and one attack jet are located in the small hangar currently being excavated. The rest are in the larger hangar on the opposite side of the Main Level.
- Buried in a hangar on the far side of the Main Level from where the team is currently excavating are a pair of Air Castle VTOL Bombers. These high-tech aircraft are in no condition to operate. One of them is severely damaged and is mostly good for scrap (though it would provide enough M.D.C. alloy to make even the scrap worth 1D4x10,000



credits). The other, however, was only partially buried. Though too damaged to be repaired, enough of the vehicle's components are intact that would make reverse engineering the aircraft feasible (would still take years or study). This find, if it is made by the team, will net the expedition 1D6x1,000,000 credits. Even if the team is not driven from the site by the forthcoming events, they will still not discover this hanger until after weeks of excavation.

## Possible Main Level Encounters

- While digging through some loose rock and debris, the nest of a species of giant cave spider is disturbed. Only dangerous to someone not in M.D.C. armor, the bite of these spiders inflicts 6D6 damage direct to Hit Points and causes paralysis for 1D4 hours to anyone who fails to save vs poison (14+). There are 5 adult spiders in this nest guarding 12 egg sacks (perhaps of value to an Alchemist or Body Fixer for medicinal purposes). They will not back down, though they are easily killed by M.D. weapons (each spider only has 1D4x10 S.D.C. and 4D6 Hit Points).
- A distant rumbling warns that these mountains still occasionally shake with earthquakes. A few rocks slip and dust rains from the ceiling but nothing else happens... this time.
- A short stretch of a ruined hall is submerged under a few inches of dark water. This water comes from an underground spring, connected to the same spring that feeds the stream on the surface at the entrance to the ruins. Though the spring water is usually fresh and pure, this tributary has mingled with a leaking fuel canister buried beneath the adjacent rubble and is toxic. Anyone tasting the water must save vs poison (14+) or suffer 1D4x10 S.D.C. damage direct to Hit Points. If this does not kill the individual, the victim will suffer from sickness (vomiting and diarrhea for 1D4+12 hours before the toxic water passes from his system).
- A lone Poltergeist Entity has wandered up from Sublevel Two and is tailing the party. More curious than evil, it will begin to cause mischief after a while via Telekinesis. If discovered, the Entity will immediately flee rather than fight.
- The Dark Behemoth from Sublevel One has tunneled up to the Main Level and is waiting in ambush near where the workers are taking breaks. When only one or two are present, it will strike, dragging the screaming worker(s) down into its tunnel network with its long tentacles.
- A swarm of bats is disturbed by the expedition. Though potentially frightening, they are no real threat and will clear the area within 2D4 minutes. However, if present, the workers will be terrified and will consider it a bad sign, considering that one of their number (if not more by this point) has already vanished.
- The general sense of uneasiness will be greater if anyone makes camp inside the ruins, especially after the rockslide buries the entrance (see above). Any psychic may experience a vision that could include pale, bloody tentacles, the same mysterious D-Bee that issued the warning, or an attractive though somewhat ragged and dirty human female silently exploring them for help.



After they have explored the bulk of the Main Level (at least the parts not buried under the mountain), the team will have discovered that the only access to Sublevel One is by carefully climbing down the main elevator shaft. Both the Main Reactor access shaft and the access ramps on this level are clogged with debris and will require the efforts of the 'Borgs to clear them. With excavations on the Main Level underway, Billy will want to lead the recon team deeper into the ruins through the partially cleared main elevator shaft.

## N.O.R.A.D. Sublevel One

Like the Main Level, Sublevel One will be mostly buried beneath tons of mountain rock. This level was also hit hard by the massive series of earthquakes that shook the Rocky Mountains at the onset of the Great Cataclysm. Sublevel One mainly consisted of secondary aircraft hangars and maintenance bays that were reached by service elevators from the larger hangars on the Main Level. This was also where the U.S.A.F. had their power armor hangar for their small but elite squads of Silent Soldier and Griffin SAMAS Power Armor units. Like the main hangars above, both of these are mostly buried under several thousand tons of rock. To fully excavate this level will take weeks of additional work, provided the team is not driven off. Like the Main Level, there are choked but navigable passageways, but over half of the level is buried.

The buried sections of Sublevel One are likely to contain many of the same gruesome treasures as those described for the Main Level. However, in addition to finding aircraft maintenance bays which might contain some partially salvageable equipment (no intact aircraft), additional hangars housed some of the Air Force's power armor units. Unfortunately, by the time the massive series of quakes buried much of Sublevel One, most of these units had already been dispatched to Sublevel Seven to help in the defense of the facility against the creatures emerging from the dimensional rupture. Still, a few suits of power armor were still in the hangars when the mountain collapsed. What is found (if anything) is up to the Game Master, but could be either of the U.S.A.F. power armor units or perhaps even NEMA power armor or robot vehicles. Owing to the resilience of these vehicles, there is a comparatively good chance (50%) that such units would be salvageable if not in working order (10%) if discovered (remember that it will take weeks to excavate these buried hangars).

Unlike the Main Level, which is only sparsely inhabited by cavern dwelling animals, Sublevel One is home to a Dark Behemoth (see *Rifts® WB 12: Psyscape*, pages 92-94, for details). This monster will stalk the team as they explore portions of Sublevel One, though it will only attack if it finds that a small number have fallen behind (perhaps to search for artifacts while the main party moves on). If it is not killed prior to the rockslide on the surface, once the expedition team moves into the smaller hangar on the Main Level, it will begin to capture and sneak off with some of the workers.

### Dark Behemoth Quick Stats

M.D.C.: 620, P.P.E.: 50. High animal intelligence, Supernatural P.S. 40, Supernatural P.E. 20, Running Spd 56 (double for 1D4+1 melee round spurts), tunneling Spd 19, nightvision (300

feet/91.4 m), excellent hearing, exceptional sense of smell, track by smell (77%), sense seismic vibrations (62%), Concealment (self, 88%), Climb (60%/10%), heals 3D6 M.D. per hour, leap 20 feet (6 m) high and 40 feet (12.2 m) long, eleven face tentacles (Supernatural P.S. 17) that can reach up to 20 feet (6 m). Five attacks per melee, +5 on initiative, +4 to strike, +4 to entangle with face tentacles, +5 to save vs magic and poison, +2 to roll with punch, +6 to save vs Horror Factor. Bite: 1D4x10+10 M.D., Claws: 6D6 M.D., Power Punch: 2D4x10 M.D. (counts as two attacks), Mule Kick: 7D6 M.D. but only to targets behind it, Death Bite: 2D4x10+20 M.D. and requires a combined Supernatural or Robotic P.S. of 60 to pry the dead jaws loose. The Dark Behemoth is a giant subterranean creature that vaguely resembles a hairless demonic dog the size of a large ATV (12 feet/3.6 m tall and 25 feet/7.6 m long). It has three tiny black eyes, two huge jaws on either side of its face and a cluster of eleven long tentacles where its nose should be. Horror Factor: 15.

## Possible Sublevel One Encounters

- A section of rubble collapses revealing a large though crudely dug tunnel. Following this tunnel through the loose rock and debris will reveal that it connects to a series of similar tunnels. The good news is that this may make reaching some of the more valuable treasures (such as the buried power armor or weapons) easier. The bad news is that in addition to the fact that the tunnels are unstable (prone to collapse on a roll of 01-25% every 20 feet/6.1 m), if not blocked, they will ultimately lead to the Dark Behemoth's lair.
- What at first looks like a pile of debris turns out to be the torn and mangled pieces of armor of some earlier expedition that had found the ruins of N.O.R.A.D. A detailed examination of the armor will reveal that something tore the M.D.C. material to shreds before dismembering whoever was inside. If reassembled, it will look like the remains of six to nine people. Though difficult to recognize at first due to the age and styling, a close examination will indicate that the armor is Coalition, though not any design seen recently. A successful History: Post-Apocalypse skill roll will indicate that this styling of CS armor has not been seen since shortly after the Bloody Campaign and the fall of the first Federation of Magic. A successful Object Read on the armor will indicate that the soldiers were on a mission to search for the fabled ruins of N.O.R.A.D. nearly 100 years ago when they were slain by a large, dark creature (the Dark Behemoth).
- After breaking through a blocked passage, the hall opens up into a relatively clear chamber. Against one wall, a large, demonic-looking skeleton is strapped. Rather than having been imprisoned, it looks as if the skeleton was arranged as an idol for worship. A small collection of trinkets and personal items (faded pictures in frames, dog tags, wedding rings, etc.; all Pre-Rifts personal items) lie clustered at its bony feet. Were these items collected by some D-Bee race that later inhabited Sublevel One, or could human survivors trapped within N.O.R.A.D. following the events that lead to its fall nearly 300 years ago have taken to worshipping some demonic entity in hopes of deliverance? Other clues around the room include several rotting cots and what might have been bundles

of clothing made into beds. But with the room sealed until the players arrived, what was the fate of the worshipers?

- The Dark Behemoth attacks the last member of the party with the intent of dragging him or her into its tunnels to feed. A quick show of force will drive the beast off before it can finish the job. However, any attempts to pursue will result in the Dark Behemoth collapsing its tunnels behind it, blocking their pursuit.
- A D'yar Hunting Party sent to investigate the presence of the expedition stumbles across the party's path. Both are surprised to find each other. It will come down to an initiative roll to see who acts first. A D'yar hunting party typically consists of 2D4 warriors (roughly 3<sup>rd</sup> level) with a 4<sup>th</sup> level D'yar Warlock (either Fire or Earth). They will be armed with M.D. melee weapons (inflict 3D6 or 4D6 M.D. when combined with their supernatural P.S.) and scraps of armor strapped to their bodies (provides an additional 6D6 M.D. of protection). While the D'yar will attempt to capture some of the party, these hunters consider it an honor to die on the hunt and will not back down from a fight, even if it is obvious they are losing (for more details on the D'yar, see **Sublevel Three**).
- After a series of "natural" looking tunnels that lead off from the ruins, the party comes across an enlarged cave. There are several tunnels exiting it in different directions. Clustering in one corner, there is a pile of bones, discarded bits of armor and weapons, and miscellaneous equipment. Most of it will be broken beyond repair, though there is a small chance (01-05%) that there might be a functioning energy weapon amongst the debris. This is the lair of the Dark Behemoth. There is a 01-45% chance that it will be present when the players arrive, though through its hypersensitive seismic senses, it will be aware of their approach and will most likely have buried itself in one of the side passages in order to ambush them after they arrive. If it is not present, then it is most likely out hunting either the other members of the expedition on the Main Level or surface (if the rockslide has not yet occurred), or a wandering D'yar hunting party. If the Dark Behemoth has already begun to attack the workers on the Main Level, then the players might discover some recognizable "parts" amongst the littered bones and gear.

The only way to go deep to Sublevel Two is through a partially cleared access shaft (actually the Main Reactor shaft). A detailed examination of the shaft (requires a successful Tracking (humans) skill roll) will indicate that others have also used this shaft (past D'yar hunting parties). The shaft is blocked directly below Sublevel Two.

## N.O.R.A.D. Sublevel Two

Sublevel Two once housed a large U.S.A.F. Barracks complex. The entire sublevel was once a maze of hallways, dorm-style rooms, large barracks for enlisted men and women, recreation facilities, mess halls, etc. Now, it holds only ghosts.

Unlike the previous sublevels, Sublevel Two suffered far less structural damage. Though the tunnels of this level are littered with debris, oftentimes completely choked off, only little of the sublevel lies buried under rock. This makes Sublevel Two the

first fairly open area within the ruins for exploration. However, as a result of this level harboring so many random memories of the men and women who were stationed here (and many of whom died somewhere in N.O.R.A.D. at the onset of the Great Cataclysm), this level is inhabited with all manner of Entities, mainly Haunting Entities as well as a smaller number of other, more sinister types. Psychics on this level will feel an omnipresent sense of dread, sadness and anger that seems to literally hang in the air like a fog. Magic and psionic abilities designed to sense the presence of the supernatural will only work 50% of the time due to the overwhelmingly powerful emotions radiating from the Entities on Sublevel Two. This includes the sensing powers of Psi-Stalkers and Psi-Hounds.

Many of the same mundane items as those found on the Main Level can also be found throughout Sublevel Two along with a few more personal items:

- Personal effects found in someone's barracks or quarters (random pieces of clothing, dog tags, pictures of loved ones, etc.): 4D6 credits.
- Jewelry (also found in barracks or quarters, nothing too fancy; broken watches, rings, necklaces, etc.): 2D6x100 credits.
- Books (mainly for pleasure reading, though some may include technical manuals on the military or mechanical hardware). Value ranges from 1D4x100 for entertainment to 2D6x10,000 for technical manuals. Note that books will be moldy and in poor condition and must be handled carefully.
- Discs, mainly music, movies, audio books, and video games; there is a small chance (as with the books) that a disc containing a basic military manual or mechanical reference book might be found in someone's quarters. Values range from 1D4x10 to 2D6x1000 credits depending upon the content, if it can be salvaged.

## Possible Sublevel Two Encounters

- A panicked D'yar hunting party (4 warriors remain of the original party) has just come running past the players, completely ignoring them unless fired upon or otherwise hindered in their flight. Even if the players attempt to engage them, the D'yar, who are normally aggressive in the extreme and would rather fight to the death against interlopers, will only fight until they can break free and run. Whether the players engage, hinder or allow them to pass, after the D'yar flee, there will be several moments of tense silence after which it will seem like nothing is coming. Exactly what scared these normally aggressive hunters is not known. Nothing emerges from the other direction in pursuit.
- Sometime later (a while after they encounter the panicked hunting party), the party comes across several small piles of dust lying on the ground in the corner of a larger chamber. Amidst the dust are obvious pieces of D'yar armor and weapons. Off to one side, a D'yar warrior lies, impaled on his own blade. It is obvious from the way the corpse is holding the blade that the fatal wound was self-inflicted. A successful Object Read (or the use of a similar power) will indicate that the state of mind of this D'yar was panicked to the point of madness. A brief image of lashing ghostly tentacles followed by others of his party crumbling to dust is accompanied by

the sounds of screaming, not only from the D'yar but from something that sounds like a multitude of voices. The image will end with the D'yar plunging his own blade into his gut. A successful Lore: Demons and Monsters skill roll (-15% due to the rare nature of this Entity) will determine that the creature that attacked the D'yar party was a Conglomerate Entity.

- If at any time the party is foolish enough to set up camp on Sublevel Two, they will be haunted throughout the night by numerous Entities, mainly Haunting Entities pleading with them for release. Without constant measures to drive off such ghostly Entities, there will be no rest on Sublevel Two.
- Behind a locked metal door the party will discover a series of seven rooms that appear to have been locked since the fall of N.O.R.A.D. The walls are all charred black. Other than bits of melted metal slag, there is nothing in these rooms or the connecting hallways. Shortly after the players enter the area, however, they will feel an overwhelming sense of fear and dread. They will also begin to notice odd things happening with their electronics. They are being stalked by a powerful Entity known as a Harmful Ghost (see *Rifts® WB 29: Madhaven*, pages 112-114, for complete details). This Entity has assumed the persona of an Air Force soldier who was trapped in this area when an intense blaze broke out during the first hours of the Great Cataclysm. Feeling betrayed when he was locked within (the doors had to be closed even though he was still inside to prevent the flames from spreading), this Entity feels that everyone it sees, especially those who are obvious soldiers of some kind, are responsible for its horrible fate. After a few taunting accusations (along the lines of “you were the ones who locked me in!” or “if you had only left the door open a little longer, I could have escaped!”), the Entity will attack. While most Harmful Ghosts are tied to a few sentimental objects that can be a source of weakness for the ghost, this one is tied to the location of its death. This means that while immensely powerful and dangerous within the seven burned out rooms, it has no power beyond their confines.

**Harmful Ghost Quick Stats:** Entity M.D.C.: 59, P.P.E.: 50. Entity is impervious to all physical and energy attacks, drugs, poisons, gases, cold, heat, fire, Horror Factor, illusion and mind control. Can only be affected by magic, psionics or sunlight (including Globe of Daylight; inflicts 1 M.D. of damage per melee and prevents the Entity from using any of its magic). In its natural form, the Entity is invisible and intangible and can fly at Spd 16. Possesses nightvision 2000 feet (610 m) and recovers 3D6 M.D.C. per hour. Three psionic or magic attacks per melee round. +6 to save vs magic, +3 to save vs psionics. Possesses the following psionic abilities at 5<sup>th</sup> level strength: Telepathy (4), Empathy (4), Telekinesis (varies), Telekinetic Punch (6), Telekinetic Push (4), and Bio-Manipulation (10). I.S.P.: 36+ the ability to draw 4 P.P.E. or 12 I.S.P. Also knows the following magic spells at 5<sup>th</sup> level strength: Horror (10), Fear (5), Shadow Meld (10), Heavy Breathing (5), Fingers of the Wind (5), Seal (7), Horrific Illusion (10), Hallucination (30), Shatter (5), Wither Plants (10) and Spoil Food and Water (30). Two Special Powers: Radiates an Aura of Fear up to a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius that results in a -5 to save vs Horror Factor,

and radiates an Electromagnetic Disturbance up to a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius that interferes with electronic devices (causes displays to give odd information, hear menacing whispers on radios, see static or ghostly images on monitors, etc.). The Harmful Ghost has taken on the persona of an Air Force officer who was burned alive when a fire broke out in the complex. This means that his manifestation is that of a horribly charred corpse with charred hair, burned out eye sockets and cracked, black skin that oozes blood. Horror Factor: 15.

- While the party is exploring a series of barracks on Sublevel Two, they begin to notice random bits of junk and debris floating around. A group (1D6+2) of playful Poltergeists have decided that it would be fun to “entertain” the party. Of course, what the Poltergeists think of as entertainment includes throwing heavy objects at the characters, dropping large chunks of rubble on heads and otherwise frightening the party. They will not fight to the death and will flee if the players put up a fight.

**Poltergeist Quick Stats:** Entity M.D.C.: 20, P.P.E.: 4. Entity is impervious to all physical and energy attacks, drugs, poisons, gases, cold, heat and fire and can only be affected by magic or psionics. Entity is invisible and intangible in its natural form and can fly at a speed of 30 mph (48 km). Two psionic attacks per melee round. +2 to dodge, +10 to save versus Horror Factor. Possesses the following psionic abilities at 4<sup>th</sup> level strength: Empathy (0), See the Invisible (4), See Aura (6), Sense Magic (3), Levitation (varies) and Telekinesis (varies). I.S.P.: 10+ the ability to draw 1D4 P.P.E. from a target and convert it to four I.S.P. per one P.P.E. The Entity looks like a translucent sphere of energy about the size of a soccer ball (though this will only be visible to characters who can see the invisible). Horror Factor: 10.

- A D'yar hunting party (same stats as described under **Sublevel One**) ambushes the players from a number of nearby dark doorways. This could be the same party that later runs from the Conglomerate Entity (that is if they survive the encounter with the players), or a different one.
- Throughout the entire sublevel there is a fairly good chance that the party will encounter any number of ghostly Entities. These are the psychic impressions of many of the soldiers and civilians killed in N.O.R.A.D. during the Great Cataclysm. Some will be mournful, begging the players for release. Others will act as if they are still alive (demanding that the players account for their presence in a high security, restricted military complex). Still others will be outright hostile, blaming the members of the expedition for their unfortunate fate. In any case, the presence of these Haunting Entities will result in a palpable sense of terror that will be distracting to the party at best and down right terrifying at worst. There is nothing that the players can do for them short of some form of exorcism or psychic attack. However, despite the desire most of these ghosts have for ending their torment, none of them will willingly allow themselves to be destroyed. If directly attacked, the spirits will flee, only to be replaced by others later.
- A Tectonic Entity lying in ambush assembles a body for itself out of the mountain of debris and attacks. It will not back down and will give chase even if the party flees.



**Tectonic Entity Quick Stats:** Debris M.D.C.: 200, Entity M.D.C.: 90, P.P.E.: 10, debris body is impervious to pain, cold, disease, poison, gases and does not need air. Entity is impervious to all physical and energy attacks and can only be affected by magic or psionics. Entity is invisible and intangible in its natural form and can fly at a speed of 20 mph (32 km). Four physical attacks or three psionic attacks per melee round. +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +2 to parry, +2 to dodge, +2 to pull punch, +2 to save versus magic, +1 to save versus psionics, +10 to save versus Horror Factor. Punch: 5D6 M.D., Power Punch: 1D6x10 M.D. (counts as two melee attacks), Kick: 5D6 M.D. Once its drone body is destroyed, the Entity cannot inhabit or create a new body for 12 hours. Possesses the following psionic abilities at 4<sup>th</sup> level strength: Empathy (4), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), See the Invisible (4), See Aura (6), Sixth Sense (2), and Telekinesis (varies). I.S.P.: 20+ the ability to draw 1D4 P.P.E. from a target and convert it to four I.S.P. per one P.P.E. Animated body resembles a walking pile of twisted metal and M.D.C. concrete. The Entity itself looks like a translucent sphere of energy (though this will only be visible to characters who can see the invisible). Horror Factor: 14.

- In an area strangely devoid of other spirits, the players will hear what sounds like distant conversations. As the party approaches, they spy a glowing translucent blob of flesh and energy. Resembling a floating tangle of twisted arms and contorted faces, features seem to melt into the blob before reforming once again. Each face seems to be crying out for help or in anger or fear. If the players do nothing, the Entity will spot them, turn and address the party. In a multitude of voices it will explain that, “There is danger below! The ugly will offer aid while the beautiful will offer only death! Beware the golden lady and her minions! The sleeper seeks escape. They all seek escape! Escape! ESCAPE!” Before the players can respond or even ask the Entity any questions, it will scream in rage and attack. For a full description of the Conglomerate Entity, see pages 117-119 of *Rifts® WB 29: Madhaven*.

**Conglomerate Entity Quick Stats:** Ectoplasmic Body M.D.C.: 296, P.P.E.: 25. In its natural state, the Entity is impervious to all physical and energy attacks and can only be affected by magic or psionics. However, the insane Conglomerate Entity never turns invisible or hides its true nature. Instead it constructs an ectoplasmic body (described above) in order to attack the living. In this form it is somewhat vulnerable to physical and energy attacks (all doing half damage, even if magical in nature). As a Greater Entity, it cannot be controlled by magic that typically affects Entities. Even Rune and magical weapons inflict only half damage. Only truly vulnerable to weapons made of silver (inflicts M.D. to the Entity), psionics and holy weapons (double damage). Flies at Spd 17, regenerates M.D.C. at a rate of 2D6 per melee round and instantly gains another 1D6x10+10 when it kills a human or D-Bee. Nine physical attacks per melee round. +4 to strike, +8 to parry, +2 to dodge, +6 to disarm, +2 to save versus magic and psionics, +6 to save versus Horror Factor, +10 to save vs mind control and impervious to possession. Supernatural P.S. Punch: 2D6 M.D., Power Punch: 4D6 M.D. (counts as two melee attacks). Special at-

tacks: Striking with its ectoplasmic tentacles can cause the following spell effects at 5<sup>th</sup> level strength: Agony (10 P.P.E.), Burning Touch (3D6 M.D.; 5 P.P.E.), Electric Shock (4D6 M.D.; 7 P.P.E.), and Life Drain (1D6x10 to Hit Points or M.D. per melee round that it entangles its prey; 25 P.P.E.). If killed by Life Drain, the victim’s body crumbles to dust and its “soul” is absorbed into the Entity. Possesses the following psionic abilities at 6<sup>th</sup> level strength: Bio-Manipulation (10), Electrokinesis (varies), Pyrokinesis (varies), Telekinesis (varies), Telekinetic Lift (6), Telekinetic Punch (6) and Telekinetic Push (4). I.S.P.: 100 (too hostile and insane to draw upon P.P.E. or I.S.P. from others). The Entity’s ectoplasmic body is an amalgamation of dozens of snarling faces, grasping arms and lashing tendrils. It is composed of the memory essence of dozens of people who all died quickly when sections of N.O.R.A.D. collapsed during the onset of the Great Cataclysm. Horror Factor: 1.

- Half hanging from a nearby wall, a tarnished sign indicates what facilities were on the various levels of the N.O.R.A.D. complex. It reads:
  - ▶ Main Level: Aircraft Hangars.
  - ▶ Sublevel One: Maintenance Bays and U.S.A.F. Power Armor Hangars.
  - ▶ Sublevel Two: U.S.A.F. Barracks and Personnel Quarters.
  - ▶ Sublevel Three: N.O.R.A.D. Strategic Air Command.
  - ▶ Sublevel Four: NEMA United States Headquarters.
  - ▶ Sublevel Five: NEMA Power Armor and Robot Hangars.
  - ▶ Sublevel Six: NEMA Barracks and Personnel Quarters.
  - ▶ Sublevel Seven: Research and Development.
  - ▶ Sublevel Eight: Maintenance and Fusion Reactors.

Just a little something to entice the party as they delve deeper into the ruins of N.O.R.A.D.

There are two ways off Sublevel Two. One is through the Main Access Ramp and the other is through a Secondary Elevator Shaft. The Main Access Ramp is guarded at all times by a group of D’yar, though as there is seldom a threat coming from the upper levels, this group would be easily caught off guard if the recon party is careful and cunning. Unknown to the D’yar, part of one of the Secondary Elevator Shafts is clear enough for a cautious party to carefully descend not only to Sublevel Three but also Sublevel Four.

## N.O.R.A.D. Sublevel Three

Once home to the N.O.R.A.D. strategic command center (used to track aircraft throughout North American Airspace), this level is now home to the D’yar, the primitive D-Bees who are fighting a tribal war with the Enoch on Sublevel Five. The D’yar, themselves physically attractive despite their warlike nature, worship the Necrophim in the form of the Beautiful Angel, a guise the demon uses when interacting with these war-like D-Bees. The D’yar have been urged into war with the Enoch by the demon in the hopes that they will be able to defeat them and destroy the enchanted talisman that binds the Necrophim to the ruins and prevents its escape. Even without the urging of the demon, however, the D’yar are still a very warlike race who

would have fought the Enoch for no other reason than that they exist in the same ruins.

## D'Yar R.C.C.

### NPC and Optional Player Character

**Alignment:** Typically Miscreant (40%), Diabolic (30%) or Anarchist (25%). Less than 5% are other alignments. Optional Player Characters are typically among the few who possess a good or Unprincipled alignment and have been driven from their home in the N.O.R.A.D. complex to seek their fortune in the wider world.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 2D4+4, M.E. 2D6+6, M.A. 2D6+6, P.S. 3D6+16, P.P. 2D6+13, P.E. 3D6+12, P.B. 3D6+5, Spd 3D6+12. Physical Strength and Physical Endurance are both Supernatural.

**Size:** 6-7 feet (1.8-2.1 m) tall.

**Weight:** 180-210 pounds (81-94.5 kg).

**M.D.C.:** P.E. +2D4x10. Earns 2D6 M.D.C. per level of experience. (On S.D.C. worlds, the D'yar have an A.R. of 8, 6D6 plus their P.E. attribute number in Hit Points, and 1D4x10+20 S.D.C.)

**Horror Factor:** None.

**Average Life Span:** Barring violence (which is more likely), a D'yar could live upwards of 200 years.

**Average Level of Experience:** 1D4+1

**P.P.E.:** 5D6 (D'yar Warlocks possess P.E. + 2D4x20 P.P.E. and earn 2D6 P.P.E. per level of experience).

**R.C.C. Skills:** Instinctive hunters and warriors with the following skills: Language: American (45%; see below), Brewing (+10%), Detect Ambush (+15%), Tracking (people; +15%), Camouflage (+10%), Prowl (+15%), Athletics: General, Physical Labor, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Knife, Hunting, Wilderness Survival (+20%), Spelunking (+10%) and Hand to Hand: Expert. Select eight additional skills from the following list: Barter (+10%), Cook (+5%), Sewing (+10%), Intelligence (+5%), Holistic Medicine (+15%), First Aid (+25%), any Physical except Fencing, Gymnastics, SCUBA or Hand to Hand Combat, Concealment (+5%), Palming (+10%), any non-technology Technical skill (+5%), any Ancient W.P., any Wilderness (+10%). Adventurers who have been driven out of the ruins to seek their fortune may learn an additional five Secondary Skills (from the skill list on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*), including more modern skills they may have learned from others once outside the N.O.R.A.D. ruins.

**Natural Abilities:** Supernatural Strength and Endurance, an unearthly beauty, advanced hearing (can hear very faint sounds with ease), superior nightvision 600 feet (182.9 m) and can see in total darkness, naturally bold and nearly fearless, natural leapers (can leap up to 15 feet/4.6 m high and 30 feet/9.1 m across from a standstill, double with a running start), Bio-regenerate 3D6 M.D. per melee round, impervious to disease, poison, toxins and gases.

**Magic:** Approximately one in every 35 possesses Elemental Magic. While not true Warlocks, these rare D'yar possess the equivalent number of spells at the appropriate level. They do



not, however, possess any of the other Elemental abilities common to a true Warlock. Most instinctively develop Earth or Water magic, while a small number (roughly 10%) develop Fire or Air magic. These magic wielding D'yar are viewed as holy figures by the clan. However, as a result, they only receive half of the additional skills and Hand to Hand Combat is at Basic level instead of Expert.

**Psionics:** None.

**Attacks per Melee Round:** As per Hand to Hand: Expert, plus one attack (typically has 5 to 6 attacks per melee round).

**Damage:** As per Supernatural P.S., plus retractable claws that inflict an additional 2D6 M.D.; retractable fangs inflict 2D6 M.D. per bite.

**Bonuses:** All bonuses are in addition to likely attribute bonuses: +3 on initiative, +2 to strike, +1 to parry and dodge, +4 to roll with punch or impact, +1 to pull punch, +1 to disarm and entangle, +3 to save vs insanity, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs possession.

**Available O.C.C.s:** None

**Standard Equipment:** Members of the D'yar clan living in the ruins of Sublevel Three will typically only carry a few personal trinkets on their person as well as some M.D.C. melee weapon (typically an improvised blade or blunt weapon made from a sharpened piece of M.D.C. armor that inflicts 2D6 M.D. in addition to supernatural P.S. damage) and scraps of M.D.C. armor worn for a little extra protection (adds 6D6 M.D.C. of protection). Typical D'yar clothing consists of torn rags and animal skins and hides. This can make them appear particularly seductive looking given their high P.B., though this only belies their extremely hostile and territorial natures.

D'yar adventurers who have been driven from the ruins of N.O.R.A.D. may adopt the manners of humans or D-Bees they come into contact with. They might even acquire a modern weapon or piece of equipment (if learned as a Secondary Skill), though they still tend to operate on more of a primitive, instinctive level.

**Money:** None. D'yar in the ruins have no need for money. D'yar adventurers who are driven from the ruins start with 6D6x100 credits worth of tradable gear that they have managed to acquire.

**Cybernetics:** None, and their natural Bio-regeneration would reject any attempts to implant cybernetic or bionic augmentations.

**Allies:** D'yar in the N.O.R.A.D. ruins have none, though they worship a deity they called the "Beautiful Angel," who is actually the Necrophim from Sublevel Seven in disguise. Adventuring D'yar are likely to ally themselves with like-minded individuals and will tend to have disdain for non-Elemental magic, psionics, and high technology.

**Enemies:** The Enoch of Sublevel Five.

**Habitat:** Other than the few adventurers who have been driven out, these D-Bees are exclusive to the N.O.R.A.D. ruins, having arrived on Rifts Earth through a random Rift from the dimensional rupture on Sublevel Seven generations ago.

**Physical Appearance:** The appearance of the D'yar is the complete antithesis of their warlike, chaotic nature. Their race having been genetically engineered to possess stunning physical beauty and grace, in addition to natural combat abilities, the D'yar are tall and slender, though their muscles are evident despite their thin frames. They possess light colored hair (typically blond, light brown, or white), pale eyes (usually blue or gray, occasionally stark white), and gold colored skin with silvery highlights. At a glance, they might appear to be related to Elves, though they do not possess the pointed ears or upswept eyebrows. Their long, slender, almost delicate fingers conceal six-inch (15.24 cm) retractable claws capable of slicing through M.D.C. armor. Their jaws can also elongate to reveal a series of sharp teeth that can bite through M.D.C. hide.

gate to reveal a series of sharp teeth that can bite through M.D.C. hide.

The D'yar are the last surviving remnants of a once technologically advanced race of physically beautiful beings that inhabited a planet in another dimension of the Megaverse. While advanced in many areas of technology, this race's greatest achievements were in the area of genetics and DNA manipulation. When an advanced race of transdimensional raiders invaded their world, this race used their genetic super-science to alter the most physically perfect specimens of their race into highly skilled warriors. Not wishing to lose the physical grace and beauty that set them apart from the grotesque invaders, they shielded the aspects of their DNA that gave them their physical appearance. Though savage in war, these beautiful warriors overwhelmed their enemy, driving them back to whatever dimension had spawned them. The genetically manipulated super warriors were the heroes of their world. **Game Master Note:** Whether or not this alien world was once an alternate Earth is entirely up to the Game Master. The D'yar speak a form of broken English or American, which would lend credence to this theory.

Considered an overwhelming success, attempts were made to integrate these heroes back into society. At first, this worked and the heroes were welcomed back. However, as the returning warriors began to mix back into society, their savage natures could not be contained for long. Violent crimes, for so long negligible on this world, began to emerge. At first, a blind eye was turned towards these incidences as no one wanted to call to question the integrity of the warriors who had saved their world. However, as incidents of violence increased, growing from assault, to crimes of passion, to premeditated murder, to serial killings, it was obvious that the returning heroes were beginning to tear apart from within the society they had fought to preserve.

As an enlightened race, attempts were made to address the various psychological sources of this growing antisocial violent behavior. However, as time went on, it became obvious that it was the very nature of these genetic super warriors that was the cause of the violence, and not some case of war-induced trauma. Worse, it soon became apparent that not only were the "heroes" committing acts of violence, so, too, were their offspring. It seemed that in the short period of time since their reintegration into society, the war heroes had quickly reproduced, and that the enhancements that had made them superior yet savage fighting machines were passed on to their young.

Within two generations following the war, this once peaceful, enlightened society was at war with itself. Fifty years later, nothing was left on this once advanced world except battling tribes of savage yet physically beautiful warriors. It was one of these tribes that would be sucked through a random dimensional anomaly and deposited in the heart of the N.O.R.A.D. ruins 100 years ago, just as the rest of the world was beginning to climb out of the Dark Age. Since that time, the clan has grown to over 220 living in the N.O.R.A.D. ruins. Their numbers would probably swell to much greater if not for their conflict with the Enoch on Sublevel Five and the manipulations of the Necrophim on Sublevel Seven.

Seeing these savage warriors as potential pawns to be manipulated, the Necrophim on Sublevel Seven used its usual arsenal



of subterfuge and trickery to appear as a god-like figure to the displaced D'yar. Through an Astral Avatar (trapped on Sublevel Seven, the Necrophim can only directly interact with the D'yar through Astral Projection), the Necrophim has assumed the persona of the "Beautiful Angel," an object of worship the primitive savages already venerated from their home world. Through this "Angel," the Necrophim has manipulated the D'yar into a war against the psychically superior though physically weaker Enoch on Sublevel Five (for more detail on the Enoch and their connection to the Necrophim, see **Sublevel Five**).

Since their arrival on Rifts Earth, an unprecedented change has begun to occur within the D'yar race. Whether as a result of the mutating magical energies of Rifts Earth or an inherent fault in the genetic structure of the engineered race, a small percentage (less than 10%) of those born in the last two generations (a D'yar generation is only 17 years as a result of their rapid maturation rate) are exhibiting some form of mutation. While still possessing supernatural physical attributes, these mutants are pale skinned, dark haired, and physically less attractive. So far, none have exhibited any naturally occurring Elemental Magic, though they all seem to possess some degree of psionic ability. Most of these D'yar mutants are exiled to a previously uninhabited section of Sublevel Three. However, when a small number attempted to overthrow the D'yar High Priestess, she had them exiled to Sublevel Four, where it was hoped they would die at the hands of the Enoch (not something likely to happen unless these renegades directly attack the peaceful Enoch). For more details on these Renegade D'yar, see **Sublevel Four**.

## Main Features of Sublevel Three and the D'yar Tribe

Prior to the Great Cataclysm, Sublevel Three housed the main N.O.R.A.D. facilities – that is this level was dedicated to monitoring air and space traffic primarily over North America (in reality, with their extensive high-tech satellites and radar station network, N.O.R.A.D. and, by extension, NEMA was able to monitor global air and space traffic patterns). This included not only numerous facilities dedicated to radar coverage, but also air-traffic control facilities for the U.S.A.F. units that flew out of Cheyenne Mountain (as well as other Air Force and NEMA facilities). Other than these facilities, this level consisted of several offices, a few conference rooms, a small number of plush quarters for the N.O.R.A.D. high brass and visiting officials (such as the U.S. President or Canadian Prime Minister), and a small cafeteria for Sublevel Three staff.

Now, the function of most of these rooms will be nearly impossible to determine, not only as a result of the devastation of the Great Cataclysm, but also over 200 years of abandonment. Furthermore, the D'yar have had nearly 100 years themselves to customize the various rooms to suit the needs of their tribe. As a result, there is little in the line of artifacts or salvageable equipment to be discovered on Sublevel Three. Detailed below are a few of the more important D'yar highlights.

**1. Main Access Ramp:** One of two navigable access points to Sublevel Three from the upper levels, this is the only one known to the D'yar. As a result, a group of four warriors (all 2<sup>nd</sup> level) and one D'yar Earth Warlock (3<sup>rd</sup> level) remain on guard at this post. However, as there is seldom ever a threat from the

upper levels (most of the Entities keep to themselves on Sublevel Two and the Dark Behemoth seldom ever hunts below Sublevel One), these guards are fairly relaxed and usually engaged in some game of chance (the D'yar equivalent of throwing dice) or physical prowess (combat sparring). As such, a quiet, careful party could easily surprise these guards and gain the initiative on them.

**2. Main Access Hall and Secondary Passageways:** The long main hallway is kept relatively clear by the D'yar. Most of the debris that has littered the hall since the Great Cataclysm has been cleared since the D-Bees took up residence on Sublevel Three. At any given time, there will be a 01-25% chance that 1D4+2 D'yar will be present in the hall, though at least half of them will be adolescents. The secondary passageways that connect the various habitats and tribal areas are also fairly clear of debris. However, nearly two-thirds of Sublevel Three is still unoccupied. While accessible, the D'yar have had no need to expand further into the ruins.

**3. Main and Secondary Elevator Shafts:** The three large, main elevator shafts and two of the secondary elevator shafts are completely clogged with debris. It will take a day of labor to clear the shafts enough to allow easy travel up and down the passages.

**4. Tribal Congregation Area:** Located in what was once the large open chamber where N.O.R.A.D. monitored the skies above the planet Earth, this centrally located massive room is now the main congregation hall for the D'yar tribe. What was once the main monitoring station (the massive wall-sized screen that showed the locations of countless objects in the Earth's atmosphere and near-Earth orbit) is now dark and cracked. Additional banks of monitors have also been cracked and smashed beyond recognition. Rows of monitoring stations once stood here and there, but the D'yar have smashed them and shoved the debris into other rooms elsewhere on Sublevel Three. Now, the room resembles an open worship hall. Dominating the center of this room is a shiny silver figure or statue adorned with all manner of primitive decoration (bone necklaces, beads made of small shiny objects salvaged in the ruins, etc.). The statue is adorned with so many objects that at first glance, it is difficult to tell what it really is. A closer examination, however, will reveal that the statue is actually an undamaged NEMA Chromium Guardsman (a.k.a. Glitter Boy). Finding this in the ruins, the D'yar believed it to be the physical manifestation of their "Beautiful Angel" and moved it to their central place of worship. Here they adorn it with all manner of junk and worship it like a goddess. It is typically here that the Necrophim will manifest itself in Astral Form when communicating her wishes to the D'yar tribe. There will always be at least ten D'yar warriors present at any time, along with another three D'yar Warlocks. During times of prayer (once a day), the hall fills with over 100 D'yar.

**5. Sacrificial Chamber:** In what was once a conference room overlooking the main monitoring room, the D'yar High Priestess Linsal performs her ritualistic killings of prisoners. These victims can be renegade D'yar who are actively engaged against the tribe, explorers who are captured by D'yar hunting parties, or Enoch who are unfortunate enough to be taken alive by the D-Bees. The large conference table has been transformed

into a makeshift altar. The bones of a variety of different humanoid beings adorn the walls of the room and dark stains of a variety of different shades (mostly red but some stains look to be green, yellow, and black) cover over 90% of the table and the floor around it. Unless there is a ritual currently in progress, this room will most likely be empty. In order to allow her tribe to witness these ritual killings, the D'yar have knocked out the observation window and broken out most of the wall, allowing for a nearly unobstructed view from the room below (#4).

**6. High Priestess Chambers:** The current spiritual leader of the D'yar tribe is a 10<sup>th</sup> level D'yar Earth Warlock named Linsal. Her chamber is in what was once a director's office adjacent to the Main Monitoring Chamber, now the Tribal Congregation Hall. Linsal is always accompanied by three male D'yar acolytes, all 5<sup>th</sup> level Warlocks (two Earth, one Air). The entrance to her room is guarded by two 6<sup>th</sup> level warriors at all times. Any commotion from the Main Chamber will bring her and her acolytes running within 1D4+2 melee rounds.

Linsal Quick Stats: Female D'yar. Alignment: Diabolic. I.Q. 8, M.E. 14, M.A. 15, P.S. 24, P.P. 24, P.E. 23, P.B. 21, Spd 22. M.D.C.: 149. P.P.E.: 149. Spells: Chameleon (5), Dust Storm (5), Mystic Fulcrum (3), Create Dirt and Clay (6), Throwing Stones (4), Wall of Clay (8), Crumble Stone (10), Dig (8), Earth Rumble (10), Quicksand (15), Sand Storm (15), Mend Stone (15), Chasm (25), Travel through Walls (20), Close Fissures (30), Create Steel (34), Mend Metal (30), Travel through Stone (35), Earthquake (50), Metal to Clay (40), River of Lava (50), Firequake (80), Magnetism (40), Animate Object (12), Wall of Stone (15), Grow Plants (8), Clay or Stone to Iron (40/60), Shatter (3), Wall of Thorns (15), Track (6). Attacks per melee: Seven. Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +8 to strike, +9 to parry and dodge, +10 to roll with punch or impact, +5 to pull punch, +2 to disarm, +1 to entangle, +3 to save vs insanity, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs possession, +4 to save vs poison and magic. Damage: Punch 2D6 M.D., Power Punch 4D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks), Claw Strike 4D6 M.D., Bite 2D6 M.D., Staff 4D6 M.D.

Weapons and Equipment: Linsal does not wear armor unless combat is anticipated, in which case she dons a banged up chest-plate fashioned from pieces of old NEMA and Air Force body armor (adds 15 M.D.C. of protection). She wields a highly decorated M.D.C. staff (made from a piece of reinforced pipe salvaged from the complex) as both her symbol of office as well as a weapon (W.P. staff, 10<sup>th</sup> level; 2D6 M.D. + Supernatural P.S.).

**7. Warrior Chief's Chambers:** While Linsal functions as the supreme leader of the D'yar tribe, dealing with all matters spiritual, Hak'nar is the Warrior Chief who deals with the day to day duties of waging their holy war against the Enoch on Sublevel Five. His living quarters was once one of the V.I.P. apartments. He lives here with his two wives and five children (three are adolescents; two are still too young to be trained as warriors). However, at any given time, Hak'nar is off leading his warriors on Sublevel Four or developing strategies against the Enoch. As such he is seldom present in his chambers, though one of his wives and the two youngest children will typically be there. Hak'nar is an 8<sup>th</sup> level D'yar warrior who serves his people first and foremost. While the War Chief enjoys waging a

campaign against the resourceful Enoch (Hak'nar admires them as worthy foes), he is not particularly thrilled about having to follow the commandments issued by the "Beautiful Angel" through the High Priestess Linsal. He does not understand why the High Priestess feels it necessary to meddle in the waging of their war. While he does not trust the powerful Warlock, he would never consider making a move against her unless her commands begin to put all of the D'yar in jeopardy. He will regard any intruder who battles with honor and skill to be a worthy opponent, but will show no mercy regardless.

Hak'nar Quick Stats: Male D'yar. Alignment: Aberrant. I.Q. 11, M.E. 11, M.A. 13, P.S. 32, P.P. 21, P.E. 26, P.B. 20, Spd 22. M.D.C.: 143. P.P.E.: 26. Skills of Note: Prowl (75%), Camouflage (65%), Tracking (people; 75%), Detect Ambush (80%), Spelunking (80%). Attacks per melee: Six. Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +7 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +6 to roll with punch or impact, +4 to pull punch, +3 to disarm, +1 to entangle, +3 to save vs insanity, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs possession, +6 to save vs magic and poison. Damage: Punch 4D6 M.D., Power Punch 1D4x10 M.D. (counts as two attacks), Claw Strike 6D6 M.D., Bite 2D6 M.D., Vibro-Axe 7D6 M.D., M.D.C. Club 6D6 M.D.

Weapons and Equipment: Hak'nar wears a chest plate made of banged up pieces of old NEMA and Air Force body armor (adds 30 M.D.C. of protection). He wields an M.D.C. club (2D6 M.D. + supernatural P.S.) and an ancient Vibro-Axe as paired weapons (the Vibro-Axe no longer works, but with Hak'nar's Supernatural P.S., it still inflicts considerable damage: 3D6 M.D. + Supernatural P.S.).

**8. D'yar Family Rooms:** In a series of nearby former offices, smaller monitoring rooms, and equipment storage lockers, the bulk of the D'yar tribe resides. A typical dwelling will be a 15 x 20 foot (4.6 x 6.1 m) space in which two or three adult D'yar and three to five adolescent D'yar live. Though cramped, the D'yar are usually only found in their dwellings when sick, injured, sleeping or caring for the very young. The adolescent D'yar are quickly assimilated into the warrior society (they mature very quickly, becoming capable warriors at half the strength of the adults within 3 years – an intentional design of their bio-engineered past). As a result, these dwellings will only be occupied roughly 01-33% of the time, and then by a few sleeping D'yar, a mother caring for an infant, or a sick/injured D'yar. There is nothing of real value in these chambers except for random bits of shiny objects that the D'yar might have collected throughout the ruins (dog tags, personal jewelry, etc., worth 4D6 credits each).

**9. Secondary Elevator Shaft:** Though this shaft was originally completely blocked, an earthquake not too long ago recently dislodged some of the debris, clearing a small shaft of this passage. The D'yar have not investigated this shaft since they initially came to inhabit the ruins, as it is far from their main habitation area, and are not aware that it is now accessible. Not only is the shaft partially clear up to Sublevel Two, it also provides access to Sublevel Four. The Enoch are also unaware of this potential weakness in the D'yar defenses, though as they are mainly passive, they would not likely exploit it anyway. The exiled Renegade D'yar are aware of the weakness and have used it to travel back up to Sublevel Three from their exile on

Sublevel Four. However, as their numbers are too small, they are in no position to mount an invasion.

**10. Mutant D'yar:** Roughly 10-15% of the D'yar born in the past 50 years have been born with some sort of mutation that makes them outcasts amongst their own tribe (for more details on these D'yar Renegades, see **Sublevel Four**). Originally, most of these D'yar were exiled into the uninhabited portions of Sublevel Three. Only those Renegades who attempted to subvert the D'yar rulers were either killed or driven into Sublevel Four. After a recent earthquake, however, an access shaft to Sublevel Four was partially cleared. This shaft (#9) leads right into a section of the ruins unclaimed by the D'yar tribe. As a result, the Renegades who were exiled to Sublevel Four have begun to use it to "deliver" their fellow mutants from the D'yar on Sublevel Three. This has served to increase this small but growing number of Renegades. Now, only twelve Mutant D'yar remain on Sublevel Three, primarily to keep tabs on the D'yar tribe (nine are Major Psychics and three are Master – one Burster, one Mind Melter and one Zapper). The D'yar are unaware of this turn of events, as they seldom explore the rest of Sublevel Three (thinking it to be uninhabited except by the mutants they exile there).

**11. Prisoners:** Those intruders not slain by the D'yar are taken to this holding room. This is also where those captured by D'yar hunters will end up. Possessions are taken and stored in a nearby room (#12). Prisoners will wait until taken to either be killed and eaten by the cannibalistic D'yar or sacrificed by Linsal. The prisoner holding room is guarded by six D'yar Warriors at all times. At present, there are three prisoners in this room: One female Renegade D'yar, one male human (a Vagabond who wandered into the ruins shortly before the expedition arrived), and an escaped mutant rat from the Lone Star Complex. The human is terrified to the point of near insanity and the mutant rat is almost completely feral. Only the Renegade D'yar is in any position to tell the players anything. Her name is S'lar and she is the daughter of Kronn, the leader of the mutant D'yar on Sublevel Four. If treated with kindness and aided in her escape, she can provide much information about Sublevels Three and Four, as well as guide the party to her father on Sublevel Four. S'lar is a major psionic who possesses primarily Healing and Sensitive powers.

**12. Item Storage Room:** This room contains random pieces of equipment taken from other explorers who were captured by the D'yar. While some of the equipment will be taken by the tribe, either as possible tools or weapons or as trophies from the hunt, much of the gear will be left behind (remember that despite their origins, the D'yar are now a primitive race who would not know the value of modern weapons or electronic equipment, much less how to use them). As such, a small but varied collection of equipment litters this small room (along with any weapons and items taken from recent prisoners), though much of it will most likely be broken (but not necessarily beyond repair). Items could include energy weapons (no E-Clips), optical equipment, modern medical equipment (more mundane items will have been taken by the D'yar), computers, etc.

**13. Mushroom Fields:** The presence of the mushroom fields is given away long before they are actually approached. Using

dirt created by Elemental Magic and fertilized by the waste of the D'yar (as well as corpses not consumed by the D-Bees), several large conference rooms and adjacent halls have been turned into fields where edible mushrooms are grown. This, along with captured intruders (both animal and humanoid), provides the bulk of the D'yar tribe's nourishment. These fields are typically worked by adolescent D'yar before they become full-fledged warriors, and they are overseen by the few elderly D'yar who are not killed before they reach old age. At any given time, there will be some twelve adolescent D'yar in the area accompanied by two low level Earth Warlock D'yar and four elderly D'yar.

**14. Main Reactor Shaft:** Some distance from the tribe's main habitation, this is the only access to Sublevel Four that the D'yar tribe are aware of. A makeshift ladder constructed by the tribe allows fairly safe access to the lower sublevel. Below Sublevel Four, the shaft is once again too clogged with debris to permit access (the D'yar have tried to clear it to allow for a second access point to the Enoch on Sublevel Five, but their efforts have been hampered by their enemy and they have since given up). Expecting the Enoch to ultimately attack the tribe from the Main Reactor Shaft, ten D'yar warriors and two Warlocks (one Fire, one Earth) are present at all times and are always on alert.

If the players explore Sublevel Three, they will need to be careful to avoid attack and capture by the D'yar. Intruders who are captured will be interrogated by Hak'nar about the Enoch threat and what they were doing in the ruins in the first place. Ultimately, they will be locked up (#11) and will either be killed and eaten (the D'yar are cannibalistic hunters), or sacrificed by Linsal, the High Priestess. However, as the D'yar seldom experience intruders, they are not on any sort of alert and a careful party could easily slip around the inhabited areas. If they explore the uninhabited parts of the ruins, it will only be a matter of time before they are ambushed by Renegade D'yar. However, these D'yar will not attack unless attacked first. Instead, they will attempt to subdue the intruders and take them to Sublevel Four for interrogation. There is also a small chance that one or two escaped Enoch might be discovered wandering the uninhabited sections of Sublevel Three in search of a way down.

## N.O.R.A.D. Sublevel Four

In many respects, Sublevel Four was very similar to Sublevel Three. While the upper level served as N.O.R.A.D.'s main operations hub, this sublevel served as the NEMA headquarters in Cheyenne Mountain. Therefore, it had many of the same facilities, including several large facilities for monitoring potential threats, not only to North America but on a global scale. What few artifacts might have once been scattered throughout this sublevel have long since been scavenged by the D'yar or Enoch. Those items not already salvaged lie crushed under tons of rock. It would take weeks of excavation to unearth anything of even remote value.

Now, Sublevel Four has become a war zone as the D'yar use it to launch raid after raid against the Enoch on Sublevel Five. The Enoch, in turn, occasionally send parties into Sublevel Four to prevent the D'yar from establishing a permanent presence. While much of the level is under debris and rubble (part of the sublevel was buried during the series of earthquakes triggered



by the Yellowstone eruption), there is a maze of corridors and rooms, giving the D'yar and Enoch numerous places to hide and lie in ambush.

In addition to the two warring D-Bee tribes, a small clan of Renegade Mutant D'yar also dwell in a secluded corner of Sublevel Four. Numbering only 37 (15 female adults, 11 male adults and 11 adolescent mutants), these Renegades seek to supplant Hak'nar and Linsal as the rulers of the tribe and abandon the worship of the Beautiful Angel (who they have rightly guessed is not a goddess but a being manipulating them). Ironically, they also want to defeat the Enoch, though for no other reason than their instinctive territorial nature. These Renegade Mutant D'yar are led by a powerful psychic warrior named Kronn. Not only was he the first Renegade exiled by Hak'nar to Sublevel Four, unknown to most, he is also the D'yar War Chief's half brother.

### Renegade D'yar Mutants

**Alignment:** Same as D'yar.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 3D4+4, M.E. 3D6+6, M.A. 2D6+2, P.S. 3D6+10, P.P. 2D6+13, P.E. 3D6+8, P.B. 3D6+2, Spd 3D6+16. Physical Strength and Physical Endurance are both Supernatural.

**Size:** Same as D'yar.

**Weight:** Same as D'yar.

**M.D.C.:** Same as D'yar.

**Horror Factor:** Same as D'yar.

**Average Life Span:** Same as D'yar.

**Average Level of Experience:** Same as D'yar.

**P.P.E.:** 2D6

**R.C.C. Skills:** Same as D'yar but can only select four "additional skills" and three Secondary Skills. Always receives Hand to Hand Combat: Basic.

**Natural Abilities:** Same as D'yar.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** All Mutant D'yar possess some degree of psionics (two-thirds are Major, the remaining one-third are Master). So far, 20 of the exiled D'yar Mutants are Major Psychics (select 8 psionic powers from any of the three minor categories; no Super or Mind Bleeder psionics). I.S.P. for these Major Psychics is the D'yar's M.E. +1D4x10, plus 2D6 per level of experience.

The other 17 Renegade D'yar are Master Psychics. These include four Bursters, two Mind Melters, one Nega-Psychic, three Psi-Ghosts, two Psi-Nullifiers, one Psi-Slayer, one instinctive Psi-Warrior and three Zappers. There are no Psi-Druids, Psi-Techs or Mind Bleeders amongst the Mutant D'yar.

**Attacks per Melee Round:** As per Hand to Hand: Basic, plus one attack (typically has 5 to 6 attacks per melee round).

**Damage** Same as D'yar.

**Bonuses:** All bonuses are in addition to likely attribute bonuses: +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +2 to parry and dodge, +4 to roll with punch or impact, +1 to pull punch, +2 to disarm and entangle, +4 to save vs insanity, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs mind control and possession.

**Available O.C.C.s:** None.

**Standard Equipment:** Same as D'yar. However, with so many psychics, those who possess the psionic ability to Object Read may have learned how to operate modern weapons scavenged from explorers. As a result, it is more likely that a Renegade D'yar might be able to use a salvaged modern weapon (at least until it runs out of energy or ammunition). This makes the Item Storage Room (#12) on Sublevel Three a lucrative target for Renegade raiding parties. Furthermore, this willingness to use modern technology will eventually result in the evolution of a Psi-Tech Master Psionic amongst the Renegade D'Yar.

**Money:** Same as D'yar.

**Cybernetics:** Same as D'yar.

**Allies:** The Renegade D'yar will ally themselves with anyone who will help them in their struggle against the D'yar. This alliance, however, is one of convenience and will only last until the Renegade D'yar get what they want from the other party.

**Enemies:** The non-Mutant D'yar and Enoch.

**Habitat:** Same as D'yar. Even fewer of these Mutant D'yar are likely to have escaped to the surface.

**Physical Appearance:** Identical to the D'yar with the following exceptions: Their hair is always black and their skin is pale white with none of the metallic highlights. Eyes are always either pitch black or stark white.

### Possible Sublevel Four Encounters

- Four D'yar warriors spoiling for a fight. Looking for Enoch but will not back down from the party.
- A large party of twenty-five D'yar (twenty warriors and five Warlocks). If they discover the expedition party, they will only fight long enough to drive them off. This party is part of a major offensive against an Enoch party guarding what is believed to be another entrance to Sublevel Five, and will not waste time with intruders.
- A party of three wounded D'yar struggling to return to the Main Reactor Shaft and Sublevel Three. They will not fight the players unless attacked first.
- Three Renegade D'yar (two Major Psychics plus a Psi-Ghost) are tracking the party. They will try to find out what they are searching for and Telepathically relay that to the rest of the Renegades before luring them into an ambush (see below). If discovered and attacked first, the three will attempt to flee before reuniting with the main ambush.
- Renegade D'yar ambush. Four Major Psychics, two Bursters and one Zapper are led by a Mind Melter. They have been alerted to the presence of the party by psychic spies who had been following them. The objective of the ambush is to subdue and capture, not kill the party, though they will use deadly force if necessary. Prisoners will be brought before Kronn for interrogation.
- If taken prisoner, the party will be led to Kronn, a 7<sup>th</sup> level Mind Melter and leader of the Renegade Mutant D'yar clan. Through direct questioning and psionic probes, he will seek to learn who the intruders are and what they want. Though an uncommon occurrence, he is familiar with the fact that sur-

face dwellers often come in search of the ruins to find and loot artifacts from the past. He will be willing to release the party if they are willing to perform some task for him. This could be anything from raiding the Item Storage Room on Sublevel Three to attacking a large group of D'yar warriors stationed on Sublevel Four. Or it could be that Kronn wants the party to attack a group of Enoch guarding one of the access points to Sublevel Five. Through psionic probes, he has also learned how certain high-tech weapons work and will be more than willing to trade their freedom for weapons and E-Clips. Despite being primitive, Kronn is no fool and the players will find it difficult to trick or swindle him.

If the players have not managed to rescue his daughter S'lar from the D'yar on Sublevel Three, he will want them to aid in her rescue. If she has already been rescued and has led them to Kronn, he will be far more willing to share information with them. He will warn them of his belief that the "Beautiful Angel" worshipped by the D'yar is a terrible monster that he believes resides in the deep recesses of the mountain (he does not know that it is a Necrophim). He will explain that this "Angel" is driving the D'yar to war with the Enoch in order to search for something they possess, though what it is he does not know, nor why it is so important to the "Angel."

**Kronn Quick Stats:** Male Mutant D'yar. Alignment: Anarchist. I.Q. 13, M.E. 20, M.A. 11, P.S. 19, P.P. 21, P.E. 20, P.B. 12, Spd 29. M.D.C.: 133. P.P.E.: 26. Psionics: Alter Aura (4), Mind Block (4), See Aura (6), Sixth Sense (2), Suppress Fear (8), Induce Sleep (4), Meditation (0), Impervious to Fire (4), Telekinesis (varies), Telekinetic Punch (6), Empathy (4), Telepathy (4), Object Read (6), Bio-Manipulation (10), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Electrokinetics (varies), Resist Fatigue (4), Levitation (varies), Sense Magic (3), Mind Bolt (varies), Exorcism (10), Deaden Senses (4), Clairvoyance (4), Psi-Sword (30), Radiate Horror Factor (8), Super Telekinesis (10+), Total Recall (2), Telemechanics (10), Telekinetic Force Field (30), Impervious to Cold (2). I.S.P.: 200. Attacks per melee: Six. Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +5 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +6 to roll with punch or impact, +3 to pull punch, +3 to disarm, +2 to entangle, +7 to save vs insanity, +3 to save vs psionics, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs mind control and possession, +3 to save vs magic and poison. Damage: Punch 1D6 M.D., Power Punch 2D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks), Claw Strike 3D6 M.D., Bite 2D6 M.D.

**Weapons and Equipment:** Kronn does not wear armor, preferring to rely on his psionics for protection. He also wields his Psi-Sword as his primary melee weapon. He has recently discovered a pair of NEMA firearms: a PLP-20 Laser Pistol and an LSR 250 Laser Rifle along with a small supply of twelve long E-Clips. While he has used Object Read and Telemechanics to determine how to use them, he uses them without skill.

- Two Enoch approach the party openly. If not attacked, they will use psionics to communicate to them that they are in grave danger and that they should return to the surface. If attacked, the Enoch will defend themselves until they can escape.

- The sounds of conflict warn the party of a battle up ahead. Rounding the corner, they see a large, open room where twelve D'yar are steadily driving back three Enoch. Another seven D'yar already lie on the ground (most are merely unconscious, a few are dead). Two Enoch are also dead on the ground. If the players do nothing, it will only be a matter of another 2D4+4 melee rounds before the exhausted Enoch surrender to the D'yar (in the hopes that before being killed, they can recover enough I.S.P. to escape captivity). If the players help drive off the D'yar, the surviving Enoch will beckon for them to follow and will lead them to Sublevel Five.
- A shimmering figure of a fairly attractive though ragged and dirty human female will appear before the party (if any of the players have already received a premonition of this figure, they will recognize her as being the same person). A successful Lore: Psychics and Psionics skill roll will indicate that this is an Astral Projection and not an Entity. The figure will communicate Telepathically with the party.

"My god! I can't believe this worked! Can you see me? Can you hear me?" Regardless of how they respond or what the players try to ask, the image will continue.

"I am not sure what is happening or what these... these powers are that I am using, but it was the only way I could contact you. It took me so long to master these abilities. I've tried before, but it never seemed to work. Humans. It seems like it has been so long..." she will trail off for a moment.

If asked who she is, she will respond in the following way: "I am Dr. Karen Howe. I am a scientist working with NEMA... or at least I was before all hell broke loose in here."

If asked how she managed to survive for 300 years, she will reply: "300 years... my god, has it been that long? It is so difficult to tell. The process worked. I survived. There may be others as well."

If asked who the others are, she will continue: "The others like me. Scientists and engineers. A few NEMA and Air Force personnel as well. We survived in the..." The image will flicker and vanish. Psychics familiar with Astral Projection may conclude that she lost focus or that the duration of her projection had elapsed.

**Game Master Note:** Obviously, this is the Necrophim in her guise as Dr. Howe, using Astral Projection to attempt to contact the explorers and lure them to Sublevel Seven to help her escape.

- Partially buried under a huge pile of rock and rubble is a mostly crushed skeleton of someone who was once clearly human. Although most of the clothing is tattered and rotted beyond recognition, if enough of the corpse is carefully unearthed the party might discover some rather unique personal items and insignia around the remains. It just so happens that the NEMA Headquarters on Sublevel Four was where the President of the United States was when the Yellowstone Super-Volcano erupted. He, along with most of the NEMA High Command, was killed instantly and buried beneath tons of rubble. However, for anyone from Rifts Earth to recognize the significance of any of the recognizable artifacts unearthed with this partially crushed skeleton, they will be required to make a successful History: Pre-Rifts skill roll. If the body is

recognized and the team is able to convince a buyer of the legitimacy of their claim on who this was, they could easily make one million credits from the skeleton and clothing alone (such claims would need to be verified magically or psionically using powers that would allow for a proper identification of the remains).

The only way down to Sublevel Five is through the Main Access Ramp. This entrance is blocked by three pieces of M.D.C. steel plate (250 M.D.C. each) and guarded by four Enoch at all times. They use their Telekinetic powers to lift the steel barrier to let others through. The Enoch always remain on the inside of the barrier, though through psychic probes they are constantly alert to dangers or intruders from Sublevel Four.

## N.O.R.A.D. Sublevel Five

Sublevel Five once housed a wide array of NEMA robots and power armor units. Had the circumstances on Sublevel Seven not been as dire as they turned out to be, then there might very well have been a treasure trove of pre-Rifts NEMA armor waiting to be plundered. Unfortunately for Rifts era treasure hunters, the vast majority of the NEMA armor was sent into Sublevel Seven to stem the tide of demons emerging from the dimensional rupture that tore through the Dimensional Vortex Generator (for a full accounting of the events that transpired within Cheyenne Mountain during the first few days of the Great Cataclysm, see **Part One: The Fall of N.O.R.A.D.** in *The Rifter*® #47). Those that were not trapped on Sublevel Seven when the demon hordes were locked within were taken by the survivors when they abandoned N.O.R.A.D. in search of other surviving NEMA or U.S. military units to join.

As a result, there is little that can be salvaged from the power armor and robot hangars, although there is a small chance that there may be some surviving computer files that, if they can be accessed and decoded (requires successful Computer Operation, Programming and Hacking skill rolls) they might yield valuable technical information that could be sold to Bandito Arms, Wilk's, Northern Gun or any other arms manufacturer.

Now, Sublevel Five is home to the Enoch, a race of bizarre-looking D-Bees who were amongst some of the earliest inhabitants of the ruins following the Great Cataclysm. These peaceful aliens come from the same world from which the Soul Snakes originate. It is likely that both evolved on the same world as natural enemies. For while the Enoch are nowhere near as magically powerful as the Soul Snakes, or Necrophim the Snakes become when they take humanoid hosts, the Enoch do possess two natural defenses against the supernatural monsters: They are immune to Mind Bleeder powers, and they cannot become hosts to the vile Soul Snakes. This, coupled with a naturally high resistance to psionics and their own formidable psychic powers, made the Enoch an unlikely match against the Soul Snake. Though, over time, most of the Soul Snakes abandoned their home world to explore the Megaverse in search of lesser beings to manipulate and conquer, the Enoch remained.

The tribe of 63 Enoch that currently inhabit Sublevel Five appeared as a result of a random dimensional Rift that tore them from their home. Realizing that they were in an alien world with no apparent means of escape, they searched the ruins until they

discovered the Necrophim that had taken control of Dr. Karen Howe. Recognizing the fiend as an ancient enemy, the Enoch escaped Sublevel Seven and fled. They would have ultimately escaped the ruins to explore their new home if they had not discovered a dying being on Sublevel Five. The being claimed to be a Godling who had fallen in battle against the Necrophim. However, though he knew he was dying, he had managed to impose a curse upon the demon, tying its life essence to a personal object that had once belonged to Dr. Howe. The dying Godling claimed that as long as the item, a small metal picture frame with a faded picture of an older man (her father), survived and remained in the ruins, the Necrophim would be trapped within and prevented from spreading its evil to the rest of the world. Sensing that they possessed a natural resistance to the Soul Snake, the dying Godling begged the Enoch to take up the task of guarding the token lest the demon find it and, by destroying it, gain its freedom. Being a peaceful, noble race, the Enoch decided that they had been brought to this world for this very purpose and agreed. Ever since, for nearly 300 years, this tribe has guarded the enchanted picture frame while at the same time attempted to prevent others from reaching Sublevel Seven.

When the D'yar appeared around 100 years ago, the Enoch allowed them to slip by, hoping that the race would ultimately find a way out of the ruins. They could not have anticipated that the Necrophim would be able to entice them into waging a war against the Enoch.

## Enoch R.C.C.

### NPC and Optional Player Character

**Alignment:** 90% are either Principled or Scrupulous. Less than 10% are either Unprincipled or Aberrant. All possess a fierce sense of duty and tribal loyalty. There is simply no such thing as a truly evil Enoch. Optional Player Characters should be extremely rare, and would represent an Enoch plucked from their home world by a random Rift, not a renegade from Sublevel Five.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 3D6+6, M.E. 2D6+10, M.A. 2D6+8, P.S. 2D6, P.P. 2D6+9, P.E. 2D4+4, P.B. 1D4+2, Spd 2D6+5.

**Size:** 8-9 feet (2.4-2.7 m) tall.

**Weight:** 150 pounds (67.5 kg).

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

**S.D.C.:** 6D6

**Horror Factor:** 10

**Average Life Span:** Enoch live upwards of 500 years barring injury or violence.

**Average Level of Experience:** 2D4+2

**P.P.E.:** 2D6

**R.C.C. Skills:** Instinctive Psychic Sensitives and Healers who rely more on their formidable psionic powers than skills. Enoch start with the following skills: Detect Concealment (+5%), Escape Artist (+10%), Wilderness Survival (+15%), Brewing (+15%), Holistic Medicine (+20%), Psychology (+10%), Basic Math (+5%), Lore: Demons and Monsters (+10%), Spelunking (+5%) and Hand to Hand: Eno (a unique form of defensive combat not unlike the martial art form Ai-



kido). Select six additional skills from the following list: Barter (+15%), Cook (+10%), Sewing (+15%), any Physical except Boxing, Fencing, Forced March, Kick Boxing, Physical Labor, Gymnastics, SCUBA, Wrestling or any other Hand to Hand Combat, any non-technology Technical skill (+5%), any Ancient W.P., any Wilderness (+5%). Enoch who came to Rifts Earth directly from their home world and not Sublevel Five may learn an additional four Secondary Skills (from the skill list on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*) including more modern skills they may have learned from others once outside the N.O.R.A.D. ruins.

**Natural Abilities:** Superior nightvision 600 feet (182.9 m) and can see in total darkness, increased healing (3D6 Hit Points or S.D.C. per hour), impervious to disease, poison, toxins and gases. Also impervious to Mind Bleeder psionic powers and incapable of becoming a host to a Soul Snake. Furthermore, they can automatically see through the Necrophim's disguises. Naturally Empathic and Telepathic (same as the ordinary psionic Sensitive powers but at 0 cost; indefinite duration). Highly resistant to psionics.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** All Enoch are Master Psychics similar to Mind Melters. All Enoch start off with the following psionic powers: Detect Psionics (6), Increased Healing (10), Mind Block (4), Sixth Sense (2) and Intuitive Combat (10). At level one, select five powers from the Sensitive category and five powers from the Healing category, along with three each from the Physical and Super categories. At each successive level, the Enoch can select another two from either Healing or Sensitive, and one from either Physical or Super.

**Attacks per Melee Round:** Four at level one, plus one additional attack or action at levels seven and fourteen.

**Combat (special):** Hand to Hand Combat: Eno specializes in defensive moves and as a result, has few attack moves (only the basic hand strike and simple kick). Starts with +4 to disarm, entangle and pull punch, +3 to roll with punch or impact, +1 to parry at levels 1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12 and 14. +1 to dodge at levels 1, 4, 7, 9, 12 and 15. +1 to strike at levels 5 and 10 only. Can pin/incapacitate on a Natural 17-20, +2 to body flip/throw. +1 to Automatic Dodge at levels 3, 8 and 13 (the act of dodging does not use a character's action).

**Bonuses:** All bonuses are in addition to likely attribute and skill bonuses: +4 on initiative, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch or impact, +2 to pull punch, +2 to disarm and entangle, +4 to save vs insanity, +7 to save vs Horror Factor, +4 to save vs possession and mind control, +1 to save vs psionics.

**Available O.C.C.s:** None

**Standard Equipment:** Dressing in simple robes, the Enoch seldom use anything apart from their natural psionic powers. As a result of their ongoing war against the D'yar and their mission to prevent the Necrophim from escaping, most develop the Psi-Sword Super Psionic power and use it as their primary offensive weapon in addition to their other formidable psionic powers. Also, hidden beneath their robes, at least when anticipating conflict with the D'yar, the Enoch will wear pieces of salvaged NEMA body armor (average 60-80 M.D.C. protection).

Enoch adventurers who dwell on the surface may adopt the manners of humans or D-Bees they come into contact with, though most would still shy away from using modern equipment in favor of their psionic talents.

**Money:** None. Enoch in the ruins have no need for money. Enoch adventurers who dwell on the surface start with 6D6x100 credits worth of tradable gear that they have managed to acquire.

**Cybernetics:** None and would be unlikely to get any lest it disrupt their natural psionic talents.

**Allies:** The Enoch in the N.O.R.A.D. ruins have none, though they will befriend any obvious champion of good that might reach Sublevel Five. Adventuring Enoch are likely to ally themselves with like-minded individuals.

**Enemies:** The D'yar of Sublevel Three and the Necrophim/Soul Snakes.

**Habitat:** These D-Bees are virtually exclusive to the N.O.R.A.D. ruins, having arrived on Rifts Earth through a random Rift from the dimensional rupture on Sublevel Seven nearly 300 years ago.

**Physical Appearance:** The Enoch are truly alien in nature. They possess slender, tall bodies that are completely hairless. Their skin is a pale shade of blue and their eyes are wide and a shade of deep green. They possess no visible nose, though they seem to be able to smell, and only have a thin, narrow mouth. Tiny ears rest against their oblong heads, which taper to a rounded tip high above their foreheads. Whoever received the ghostly vision on the surface prior to entering the ruins will instantly recognize these D-Bees as being of the same race.

The Enoch do not speak, and communicate only through Empathy and Telepathy, implanting thoughts, ideas and emotions into the heads of those they wish to communicate with. They are normally pacifist, fighting only to defend themselves from the D'yar and to prevent the Necrophim from escaping. Males and females are indistinguishable (at least to non-Enoch), and their offspring mature very quickly into adulthood. Despite this rapid maturation, however, Enoch typically only bear young once every hundred years, so most of the Enoch dwelling on Sublevel Five are from the original tribe that was Rifted to Cheyenne Mountain nearly 300 years ago. Only about 15 have been born since arriving on Rifts Earth.

There is little point in describing Sublevel Five. Regardless of how the party manages to arrive at this level, they will be met by a number of Enoch psychics and brought before their council leaders (five Enoch who seem to "speak" for the whole tribe). They will be psychically probed to determine their intentions (only Mind Block will prevent these probes). Then the Enoch will try their best to impress upon the exploration party that only danger, pain and death await them. Being pacifist, however, they will not prevent the players from exploring further if it is obvious from their own thoughts that they intend to explore the deeper levels, and they will show them to the set of stairs that leads to Sublevel Six. If asked about Dr. Howe or any human survivors on Sublevel Seven, the Enoch will respond with feelings of confusion and doubt. If asked about the D'yar, the Enoch will respond with only sadness and regret. If asked about the

Beautiful Angel the D'yar worship or the "thing" that the D'yar are looking for, the Enoch will forcibly shield their thoughts with such effort that any psychics will feel as if they were physically pushed back. No attempt to get information about this will succeed and the Enoch will use Mind Block to prevent any psionic probes.

Remember, although pacifist, the Enoch will fight if attacked by the players and will attempt to incapacitate the party before depositing them back on Sublevel Four. If this happens, they will not be allowed to return to Sublevel Five (at least not through the only known entrance at the Access Ramp).

**Game Masters:** Remember that the Enoch do not communicate with words, so you will need to impress upon the players the feelings and images the Enoch are attempting to convey to them through their psychic powers.

The only way down to Sublevel Six is through one of the stairs that once served as emergency exits from the various levels. These stairs are guarded by six Enoch at all times.

## N.O.R.A.D. Sublevel Six

Like Sublevel Two, Sublevel Six housed an extensive barracks and personnel quarters complex. Numerous hallways crisscross throughout the level. Side passages lead to large barracks, dorm-style quarters, recreation facilities (a natatorium, two gyms, a firing range, two theaters, and five "rec-rooms"), mess halls, an infirmary, etc. Prior to the Great Cataclysm, this sublevel was a buzz of activity and life.

Now, as a result of an underground spring issuing into the sublevel from a fracture in the structure, the entire complex is flooded. In some places it is nearly ten feet (3.05 m) deep. In others, it is less than 3 feet (0.9 m) deep. The water is deepest where the flooded level washed over the pools in the natatorium (20 feet/6.1 m). The average depth throughout the sublevel is five feet deep (1.5 m).

The stairs from Sublevel Five descend into a section of the flooded level that is around five feet (1.5 m) deep. It also happens to be one of the furthest sets of stairs from the Access Ramp that leads to Sublevel Seven. The access ramp is the only way to reach Sublevel Seven and is one of the few parts of Sublevel Six above water.

Game Masters should make the slosh through Sublevel Six a frightening experience. After all, what can be more terrifying than wading through ice cold, pitch black, chest-deep water in a lightless, maze-like complex of subterranean ruins complete with submerged pitfalls, unseen obstacles, and mysterious dripping, sloshing noises? Well, on top of this, there is also an underwater predator that prowls this submerged maze in search of prey; either creatures that emerge from the Dimensional Rupture on Sublevel Seven and escape to the flooded ruins from below, or unfortunate explorers who manage to make it this far from above. Few other creatures beyond blind cave fish dwell on this sublevel, as most animals that find their way here quickly fall prey to the Aquatic Ruins Serpent. The monster is itself a victim of a random dimensional Rift from the Rupture that deposited it on Sublevel Seven. Fortunately for the monster (and unfortunately for everyone else), it quickly found its way to the flooded passageways of Sublevel Six.

## Aquatic Ruins Serpent

### Aquatic, Cavern-Dwelling Predator

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D4+4 (cunning animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+8, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 2D6+20 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+10, P.E. 1D6+18 (Supernatural), P.B. 2D4, Spd 1D6+2 (on land)/2D4x10+20 (swimming).

**Size:** 50 feet (15.2 m) long, 1000 pounds (450 kg).

**M.D.C.:** P.E. number x2 +4D4x10 M.D. (On S.D.C. worlds, the Ruins Serpent has an A.R. of 12, 2D6x10 + P.E. attribute number in Hit Points, and 2D6x10 S.D.C.)

**P.P.E.:** 1D4x10

**I.S.P.:** 4D6

**Horror Factor:** 15

**Equivalent Level of Experience:** 1D4+2

**Attacks per Melee:** 7

**Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute bonuses):** +4 on initiative, +2 to strike, +4 to parry with mouth tentacles, +1 to dodge, +5 to dodge underwater, +4 to roll with punch, +4 to save vs possession, +10 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Bite: 3D6 M.D., Tail Strike: As per Supernatural P.S., Head Butt: As per Supernatural P.S. + 2D6 M.D., Power Head Butt (rears up before striking with full force): 1D4x10+10 M.D. (counts as two attacks), High-Speed Ram (from a distance, swims at full speed to ram): 2D4x10+20 M.D. (counts as three attacks), Full Body Constriction: 3D6 M.D. per melee action, Restrained Mouth Tentacle Strike: 3D6+10 S.D.C. Full Strength Tentacle Strike: As per Supernatural P.S. number for each tentacle. Tentacle Constriction: 1D6 M.D. per melee action. Grappling: No damage but the victim is grabbed with two or more tentacles.

**Natural Abilities:** Bio-regenerates 2D6 M.D.C. per melee, poor day vision, excellent Nightvision 2000 feet (610 m), can see in total darkness. See the Invisible, Impervious to Cold (normal and magical cold), Maximum Depth Tolerance: 2000 feet (610 m), Swim (98%), Prowl underwater (75%), Underwater Camouflage (80%), can survive underwater indefinitely, sense movement underwater: one mile (1.6 km), sense the location of water (98%) up to 2 miles away (3.2 km), cold-blooded: will not show up on infrared or thermo-imaging.

**Mouth Tentacles (special):** The Aquatic Ruins Serpent can dislocate its lower jaw and reveal 1D6+2 tentacles. These tentacles can reach up to 25 feet (7.6 m) and are used to grasp and snare prey.

**Vulnerabilities:** 1) Fire: Ordinary fires inflict Mega-Damage to the demon, while Mega-Damage plasma, nuclear and magical fires inflict double damage.

2) Bright Light: Being a creature that dwells in perpetual darkness, bright bursts of light directed at the monster's head and eyes will stun it, reducing its attacks and bonuses by half for 1D4 melee rounds. Spells like Blinding Flash are more potent against the Ruins Serpent (-2 to save against them, double duration).

3) Dry Land: After two hours on dry land, the monster will begin to die, losing 4D6 M.D. per minute after two

hours, reducing attacks to one and losing all bonuses. This damage cannot be regenerated until the monster returns to water.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Considered a Minor Psychic with the abilities of Presence Sense (4) and Sixth Sense (2).

**Appearance:** At first glance, the Aquatic Ruins Serpent appears to be nothing more than a giant version of the Water Serpent (see pages 110-111 in *Rifts® Sourcebook Four: Coalition Navy*) with its long, serpentine body. However, in addition to its sheer size, there are several differences that make this creature far deadlier. The serpent has a long, black, eel-like body, stretching up to 50 feet (15.2 m) in length, though its body is a mere four feet (1.2 m) in diameter. One end tapers to a slender prehensile tail, while the other ends in a dragon-like head with a wide mouth full of razor-sharp teeth. While it lacks the horns on its head that the Water Serpent possesses, the Ruins Serpent does have a boney plate that runs from its snout to the back of its skull. Lined with small protrusions, this boney ridge is used to ram larger opponents. Perhaps the greatest difference between this beast and the smaller Water Serpent is that its lower jaw can dislocate. This is not only so the monster can engulf larger prey but so that it can release a tangle of 1D6+2 tentacles. These black tentacles can reach up to 25 feet (7.6 m) and are used to snare unsuspecting prey before they are even aware of the threat. The Aquatic Ruins Serpent prefers to ambush its prey, attacking from dark water, snaring a victim or two and then dragging them off to its lair. Should its prey prove too difficult to take down in a surprise attack, it will attack for a melee round or two before retreating into the dark waters of the ruins to regenerate and attack again from a different position.

The Aquatic Ruins Serpent will lurk unseen through the waters of Sublevel Six, stalking the players until it has the advantage (in deeper water). Its first attack should come without warning (unless the person attacked possesses Sixth Sense). If driven off, the monster will retreat long enough to regenerate its damage before attacking again. Game Masters should use the presence of a nearly undetectable ambush predator prowling the menacing dark to heighten the suspense and terror of the trek through the waters of Sublevel Six.

As stated above, the only way to reach Sublevel Seven is through the Main Access Ramp, which is at the shallow end of Sublevel Six.

## N.O.R.A.D. Sublevel Seven

As detailed in **Part One: The Fall of N.O.R.A.D.**, Sublevel Seven is a series of barracks, labs and research facilities designed for both NEMA and U.S.A.F. Research and Development. As described in Part One, it was the events in Sublevel Seven that would ultimately spell doom for the Cheyenne Mountain Complex, despite the valiant efforts of the NEMA and Air Force personnel stationed there. Now, the R&D labs of Sublevel Seven serve as the haunted maze of the Necrophim, the demon created by the merging of a Soul Snake with the arrogant, brilliant and ultimately evil Dr. Karen Howe. While a few

other monsters and demons lurk on Sublevel Seven, it is largely the domain of this Necrophim.

## P.P.E. Note about Sublevel Seven

As a result of classified experiments conducted in N.O.R.A.D. prior to the coming of the Rifts (i.e. the Dimensional Vortex Generator), there has been a general weakening of the dimensional fabric of time and space in the entire sublevel that has created an effect similar to a Ley Line, while the exact event horizon of the rupture behaves like a Ley Line Nexus. In the 300 years since the Great Cataclysm, the Ley Line energies on the Earth have subsided, calming the dimensional instability greatly within the complex. Still, the energies do create the effect of being on or near a Ley Line while within the previously sealed sections of N.O.R.A.D. (in terms of P.P.E. use, and the augmentation of psionic and magical powers, as well as clouding the sensing abilities of such beings as Dog Boys and Psi-Stalkers).

### Dr. Karen Howe

#### 7<sup>th</sup> level Necrophim and Host to Akara the Soul Snake

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 24, M.E. 16, M.A. 4 (10 as Dr. Howe), P.S. 39 (Supernatural), P.P. 14, P.E. 20 (Supernatural), P.B. 5 (25 as Dr. Howe), Spd 18.

**Size:** 7.5 feet (2.3 m) tall, 500 pounds (225 kg).

**M.D.C.:** 550

**P.P.E.:** 14

**I.S.P.:** 0

**Horror Factor:** 15 (not applicable as Dr. Howe).

**Attacks per Melee:** 8 (3 as Dr. Howe).

**Bonuses:** +4 on initiative, +4 to strike, +1 to parry, +10 to save vs Horror Factor, +1 to save vs psionics and insanity, +3 to save vs magic and poison. Impervious to possession.

**Damage:** Bite: 4D6 M.D., Restrained Punch/Tentacle Strike: 6D6+24 S.D.C., Punch: 5D6 M.D., Power Punch: 1D6x10 M.D. (counts as two attacks), Tentacle Strangle: 3D6 M.D. per melee action.

**Natural Abilities:** Nightvision 500 feet (152 m), exceptional hearing, prehensile tentacles, Climb (95%/85%), leap 10 feet (3 m) high and 12 feet (3.6 m) across (50% greater with a running start), smell blood up to one mile (1.6 km), track by blood scent (72%).

**Metamorphosis (special):** Can assume her original form as Dr. Karen Howe for up to 12 hours out of every 24 hours. She can also assume the guise of any attractive human female (P.B. 22+1D6). This guise reduces her physical attacks to 3 per melee round and reduces the Soul Snake's actions to three psionic or one magic attack per melee. The Necrophim must assume her true form (see below) to gain the benefit of all of her attacks.

**Skills of Note:** Retained some of the skills she knew as a 10<sup>th</sup> level Civilian Scientist prior to her transformation: Astronomy, Astrophysics, Physics, Read Sensory Equipment, Math: Advanced, Computer Operation, Research, and Electrical Engineering, all at 98%, Mechanical Engineering (95%), Theoretical Dimensional Physics (85%). Also acquired the





following skills as a 7<sup>th</sup> level Necrophim: Seduction (94%), Detect Ambush (98%), Interrogation (98%), Concealment (89%), Prowl (98%).

**Magic:** None. All magic knowledge is exclusively known by Akara the Soul Snake.

**Psionics:** None. All psionic powers are exclusively possessed by Akara the Soul Snake.

**Appearance:** As Dr. Karen Howe, the Necrophim is a physically attractive, athletic human woman with piercing blue eyes, a cascade of blonde hair that stops halfway down her back, and an air of conceit and arrogance about her. Despite being dressed in the torn and ragged clothing of a NEMA scientist, there is something alluring about her. To complete the illusion of human frailty, when in her guise as Karen Howe, the Necrophim will wear pieces of NEMA body armor (only provides 50 M.D.C. of protection). Even before her transformation, Dr. Howe already knew how to use her sexuality to take advantage of the males she considered beneath her, especially those in the military she was forced to work with in order to have access to the cutting edge technology she needed to prove her theories about dimensional travel. Now, as a Necrophim, her skills at sexual manipulation are even greater, something she will use to its fullest extent as she begins to manipulate the party.

As a Necrophim, Dr. Howe stands taller than the average human and takes on the appearance of a monstrous demon. Her hair falls out and her face becomes skeletal with her skin stretching tight across her skull, baring her teeth in an inhuman grimace. Her arms turn into long, lashing tentacles (20 feet/6.1 m long), and another three tentacles grow from her lower back (12 feet/3.6 m long). A pair of smaller tentacles protrude from the Necrophim's ear holes and curve to the back of the skull, where a spiny tentacle protrudes from the base of skull and runs down the length of her spine. In actuality, these smaller tentacles are part of the Soul Snake's body. Only in extreme anger will the entire Soul Snake emerge from the Necrophim's body (though it is still physically attached), raising her Horror Factor to 18.

**Insanities:** Karen Howe always possessed a borderline god syndrome psychosis even prior to her bonding with the Soul Snake. Now, she truly believes herself to be a god. This is fueled not only by the power she now commands as a Necrophim but also by the fact that she has asserted her will over that of Akara, the Soul Snake symbiote. Her psychosis, coupled with her own overbearing arrogance, will cause her to misjudge and constantly underestimate those she believes are beneath her (which is just about everyone).

## Akara

### 7<sup>th</sup> level Soul Snake and Symbiote to the Necrophim Dr.

#### Karen Howe

**Alignment:** Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 21, M.E. 23, M.A. 14, P.S. 14 (Supernatural), P.P. 15, P.E. 19 (Supernatural), P.B. 2, Spd 20 (slithering and climbing). Note that the Soul Snake's physical attributes are irrelevant while Akara is still bonded to Dr. Howe as a Necrophim.

**Size:** 7 feet (2.1 m) long, 25 pounds (11 kg).

**M.D.C.:** 319

**P.P.E.:** 570

**I.S.P.:** 460

**Horror Factor:** 15

**Attacks per Melee:** Five psionic or two by magic (reduced to three psionic or one by magic when the Necrophim assumes the form of Dr. Howe).

**Bonuses:** +2 initiative, +2 to strike, +5 to save vs Horror Factor, +4 to save vs psionics and insanity, +2 to save vs magic. Impervious to possession, poisons, drugs and disease.

**Damage:** Restrained Tentacle Strike: 1D6 S.D.C., Full Strength Strike: 4D6 S.D.C., Power Strike: 1D4 M.D. (counts as two attacks), Constriction Attack: 1D6 M.D. per melee round. Only applicable if the Soul Snake is separated from the Necrophim.

**Natural Abilities (only apply when not bonded to a host):** Fly 30 mph (48 km; maximum altitude is 1000 feet/305 m), Swim (90%), Climb (80%/60%), Prowl (80%), Bio-Regenerate 1D6x10 M.D.C. per minute, turn invisible at will, Dimensional Teleport (70%), reduce size by 50%.

**Magic:** Knows the following spells at 7<sup>th</sup> level strength: Tongues (12), Repel Animals (7), Blind (6), Mute (50), Agony (20), Life Drain (25), Calling (8), Domination (10), Compulsion (20), Sickness (50), Spoil (30), Control/Enslave Entity (80), Create Zombie (250), Turn Dead (6), Dimensional Portal (1000), Close Rift (200+), Energy Disruption (12), Electric Arc (8), Power Bolt (20), Armor Bizarre (15), Aura of Death (12), Death Curse (104), Deathword (70), Curse of the World Bizarre (100), Desiccate the Supernatural (50).

**Psionics:** All Sensitive Psionics: Astral Projection (8), Clairvoyance (4), Commune with Spirits (6), Empathy (4), Intuitive Combat (10), Machine Ghost (12), Mask I.S.P. and Psionics (7), Mask P.P.E. (4), Mind Block (4), Object Read (6), Presence Sense (4), See Aura (6), See the Invisible (4), Read Dimensional Portal (6), Remote Viewing (10), Sense Dimensional Anomaly (4), Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (3), Sense Time (2), Sixth Sense (2), Speed Reading (2), Telepathy (4), Total Recall (2).

All Super Psionics: Astral Golem (50+), Bio-Manipulation (10), Bio-Regeneration: Super (20), Electrokinetics (varies), Empathic Transmission (6), Group Mind Block (22), Group Trance (15), Hydrokinetics (varies), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Mentally Possess Others (30), Mind Block Auto-Defense (special), Mind Bolt (varies), Mind Bond (10), Mind Wipe (special), P.P.E. Shield (10), Psionic Invisibility (10), Psi-Shield (30), Psi-Sword (30), Psychic Body Field (30), Psychic Omni-Sight (15), Psychosomatic Disease (30), Pyrokinesis (varies), Telekinesis: Super (10+), Telekinetic Force Field (30), Telemechanic Mental Operation (12), Telemechanic Paralysis (20), Telemechanic Possession (50), Telemechanics (10).

All Mind Bleeder Powers: Bleed Aura (6), Bleed P.E. Energy (10), Bleed Memory (6), Bleed Skills (15), Bleed Truth (8), Brain Bleed (10), Brain Scan (10), Day Dream (8), Healing Leech (6), Impervious to Bio-Manipulation (10), Mental Block (10 or 30), Mental Block Removal (12 to 200), Mind Trip (6), Neuro-Touch (4 to 14), Neural Strike (25).

**Appearance:** The Soul Snake is a monstrous, spiny serpent with numerous small tentacles. However, this form is seldom seen as the Soul Snake usually resides inside its Necrophim host.

**Insanities:** Akara is obsessed with the destruction of the Enoch, the retrieval of the token that binds it to the ruins and escape. To this end it would do almost anything to achieve these goals. This makes it blind to whatever else is going on around it that does not pertain to achieving these ends. As a result, the Karen Howe persona of the Necrophim has managed to assert itself as the dominant will between the two, constantly feeding the Soul Snake lies and information designed to delude it into thinking that if it follows her lead, she will achieve their freedom. This is all a lie; Karen Howe really wants to find a way to free herself from the bonding that has merged her with the Soul Snake. She knows that if the Necrophim were killed, this would only free the Soul Snake. So she feeds Akara whatever its demented mind wants to hear to further her own goals of ultimately attaining her freedom from both Sublevel Seven and the Soul Snake.

**Combat Note:** Because the Necrophim is effectively two sentient creatures bonded together towards a common purpose, they should be treated as two distinctly different threats in combat situations. This means rolling separate initiatives for each and keeping track of their actions separately. As the Necrophim, Karen Howe possesses formidable physical attacks, though she lacks any magical or psionic abilities. Akara the Soul Snake possesses only psionic and magic attacks and cannot physically attack without being freed from the Necrophim first. Remember that while the Soul Snake is an independent entity that could, if it wished, withhold its powers if it wanted to, it totally believes the lies fed to it by Karen Howe and follows her lead in all things.

To briefly recap the events that led to the creation of the Karen Howe Necrophim, one needs to go back to the first few days of the Great Cataclysm (as detailed in Part One, in *The Rifter*® #47). When the Dimensional Rupture first occurred in the Dimensional Vortex Generator Chamber, Akara the Soul Snake “popped” into the complex. Fleeing from a Godling and champion of light, the Soul Snake was desperate to bond with another mortal host (it had just lost its previous host to the pursuing Godling). Sensing an arrogant, self-serving, evil soul in Karen Howe, Akara convinced the scientist that only through bonding with it could she hope to survive the coming storm of the Great Cataclysm. She agreed, and both creatures’ fates were sealed. Dr. Howe became a Necrophim, and used her knowledge to permanently open the dimensional rupture and allow a horde of demons to flood Sublevel Seven. Had it not been for the valiant efforts of a few stalwart adventurers who managed to seal Sublevel Seven even as NEMA and Air Force soldiers battled against the never-ending flood of demons, all of N.O.R.A.D. would have been overrun, and the Cheyenne Mountain Complex would have become a major nexus from which a demon plague would have emerged. Had this happened, the already stressed NEMA forces that would battle against the Demon Plagues would have been overwhelmed far sooner than they ultimately were, as a flood of demons would have continued to pour forth from the Rocky Mountains.

When Sublevel Seven was sealed, there were still dozens of NEMA and Air Force soldiers trapped behind the nearly impenetrable blast doors. For a short while, this provided both the Necrophim and the host of demons with a trapped population of humans to feast upon. However, once this supply of food was exhausted, the demons turned on one another. It seemed that since the dimensional rupture was not a true Ley Line or Nexus, two-way Rifts seldom opened to allow any of them to escape. Ultimately, those powerful enough to dimensionally teleport escaped on their own while the rest fell upon one another. The Necrophim, being one of the strongest of the demons, easily outlasted the others, but now that Akara had bonded with a human host, it was trapped within the complex, unable to use any of its dimensional teleport powers while in a host and unable to leave its host until it was killed, freeing the Soul Snake. As a result, the transformed Karen Howe was trapped within the complex, seemingly forever.

Shortly after the bulk of the demon horde had either escaped or killed one another off, the pursuing Godling finally caught up with Akara. Though his own powers were increased by the transformed Earth of the Great Cataclysm, the champion was unprepared for the powerful Necrophim. The battle was fierce, with both beings suffering grievous injuries. However, having become more familiar with its new home, the Necrophim had the advantage and ultimately overpowered the Godling. This would have spelled doom for the champion of light and allowed Karen Howe to escape if the Godling, in a final act of self sacrifice, had not used his own draining life energies to curse the Necrophim. Binding the creature’s twin-souls to a personal item that once belonged to Karen Howe, a picture of her father (the only person Karen truly loved and admired), the Godling ensured even with his death that the Necrophim could not escape as long as the cursed token remained intact. As the weakened Necrophim healed its injuries, the dying Godling escaped to hide the cursed item somewhere else within the complex (by this point the continuing quakes as the Earth shuddered under the weight of the coming of the Rifts had breached Sublevel Seven’s otherwise impregnable defenses).

As luck would have it, as Karen Howe healed her injuries in anticipation of a final battle against the Godling, a clan of Enoch were Rifted into the complex. Sensing the presence of the Soul Snake, the tribe escaped before the demon could attack. Finding the dying Godling, they listened to his plea that they take up guardianship of the token, and prevent the demon from escaping to wreak havoc upon a world already struggling on the brink of extinction.

From time to time, the Necrophim has managed to lure the unwary into the depths of the ruins in search of treasure from the past in the hopes that such explorers would reach her so that she could use them to capture or destroy the enchanted token guarded by the Enoch. Though physically bound to Sublevel Seven, in Astral form, the demon could reach out and, in the guise of the beautiful Karen Howe, attempt to lure unsuspecting explorers into the complex. Seldom, however, would any ever survive all the way to Sublevel Seven (most perished at the hands of the Entities on Sublevel Two or were turned back by the Enoch). Even after the arrival of the D’yar and their subsequent manipulation into fighting the Enoch, the Necrophim is still trapped.



After nearly three centuries of isolation, unable to escape Sublevel Seven, the Soul Snake has been driven nearly insane with its desire to destroy the Enoch, destroy the token that binds it to Sublevel Seven and escape. As a result of this mental instability, coupled with Dr. Howe's strong will and genius intelligence, Akara is no longer in complete control of the Necrophim. In fact, it is Dr. Howe who now exerts the commanding influence over the symbiotic relationship. Though still evil and completely self-serving, Dr. Howe wishes to be free of the inhuman thing she has become. This does not mean that she will deliberately throw a fight (she knows that such an action would ultimately mean her death as well); however, she would be open to discussion about finding a way to separate her from the Soul Snake. Whether this is even possible without destroying both is ultimately up to the Game Master.

## The Necrophim's Plan

When the party ultimately arrives on Sublevel Seven, the Necrophim will observe the party from a distance to size up their various strengths and weaknesses. She will wait until they have been attacked at least once by the Cave Ray as well as explore some of the abandoned labs to get an idea of the potential treasures in technology that they might be able to plunder if given the chance. She will then reveal herself to them, continuing her guise as Karen Howe (remember, she can maintain this form for 12 hours before being forced to resume her natural Necrophim form). She will employ a number of psionic powers to maintain the illusion that she is only a Minor Psychic and nothing more (Bleed Aura, Mask P.P.E., Mask I.S.P. and Psionics, Mind Block). With the clouding influence of the dimensional rupture, even Dog Boys and Psi-Stalkers will be unable to sense her demonic supernatural nature.

She will use her twelve hours to explain her story to the party. She will claim that she survived the Great Cataclysm by using an experimental cryogenics pod which preserved her body for several centuries and that she only recently awoke (she will claim not to be sure how long ago it was as she has no sense of time deep underground). She will ply them with questions (feigning ignorance about what has happened to the Earth over the past 300 years). She will tantalize them with her own knowledge of the events that transpired (at least from her point of view) during the onset of the Great Cataclysm. She will claim that she believes that others might also be preserved, though she is not sure, as part of the Cryogenics Chamber was buried under rubble.

She will warn the party that there are "monsters" prowling Sublevel Seven and that she has only barely escaped them on a couple of occasions. So far, she will claim, she has been trying to find systems that might still be working, saying that Sublevel Seven had its own dedicated reactor system independent from the main power supply, which is exhausted by now. She will try to subtly (through psionics and seduction) manipulate the party into splitting up to search the complex for artifacts and working computers while she and one or two others (NPCs) remain behind to try to unearth the other survivors from the buried cryogenic pods.

Once separated, she will prey upon them one at a time, using guile to divert their attention from the possibility that it might have been her doing the killing. After she has had her fill and

fun, she will need to reveal her true nature to them. Her plan is to capture some of them (NPCs) and hold them hostage against the rest in order to get them to steal the enchanted token from the Enoch. If the players seem like they are unlikely to fall for this ruse, the hostage can be David Keb (William's autistic nephew). It would have been an easy matter for the Necrophim to use Astral Projection to manipulate the boy into wandering off into the complex and then use her other powers to ensure his safe passage through the ruins to become her prisoner.

How this ultimately plays out will depend on the resourcefulness of the players. William will never abandon his nephew to the Necrophim, even if no one else will aid him (with David gone missing, Grynshlack will have entered the ruins in pursuit and may arrive some time later at Sublevel Seven). If the players directly attack the Necrophim, they will be in for a difficult fight. The demon is very powerful and deadly, not to mention desperate to escape. Furthermore, there is the safety of the hostage to consider. Finally, if the players seem particularly powerful and bent on confronting the demon directly, Karen has placed 1D4+2 zombies in the buried cryogenic pods. Being semi-intelligent, these zombies might at first be used by Karen to convince the players that they are other survivors who were rescued from the pods (claiming that their disoriented state of mind is the result of their being preserved for so long) until she is ready to attack. If she uses them against the players, she will arm them with working NEMA Vibro-weapons (2D6 M.D.) and protect them with NEMA body armor (120 M.D.C. of protection).

If the players retrieve the enchanted picture from the Enoch (who will not surrender it willingly, even if the hostage situation is explained to them), the Necrophim will destroy it, then turn on the players. If the players prove still too powerful, the demon will seek to escape (which she can now do, thanks to the players). However, since the picture is a token of power with the demon's soul bound to it, the players might be able to use it against the monster. Such clever schemes are left to the ingenuity of the players.

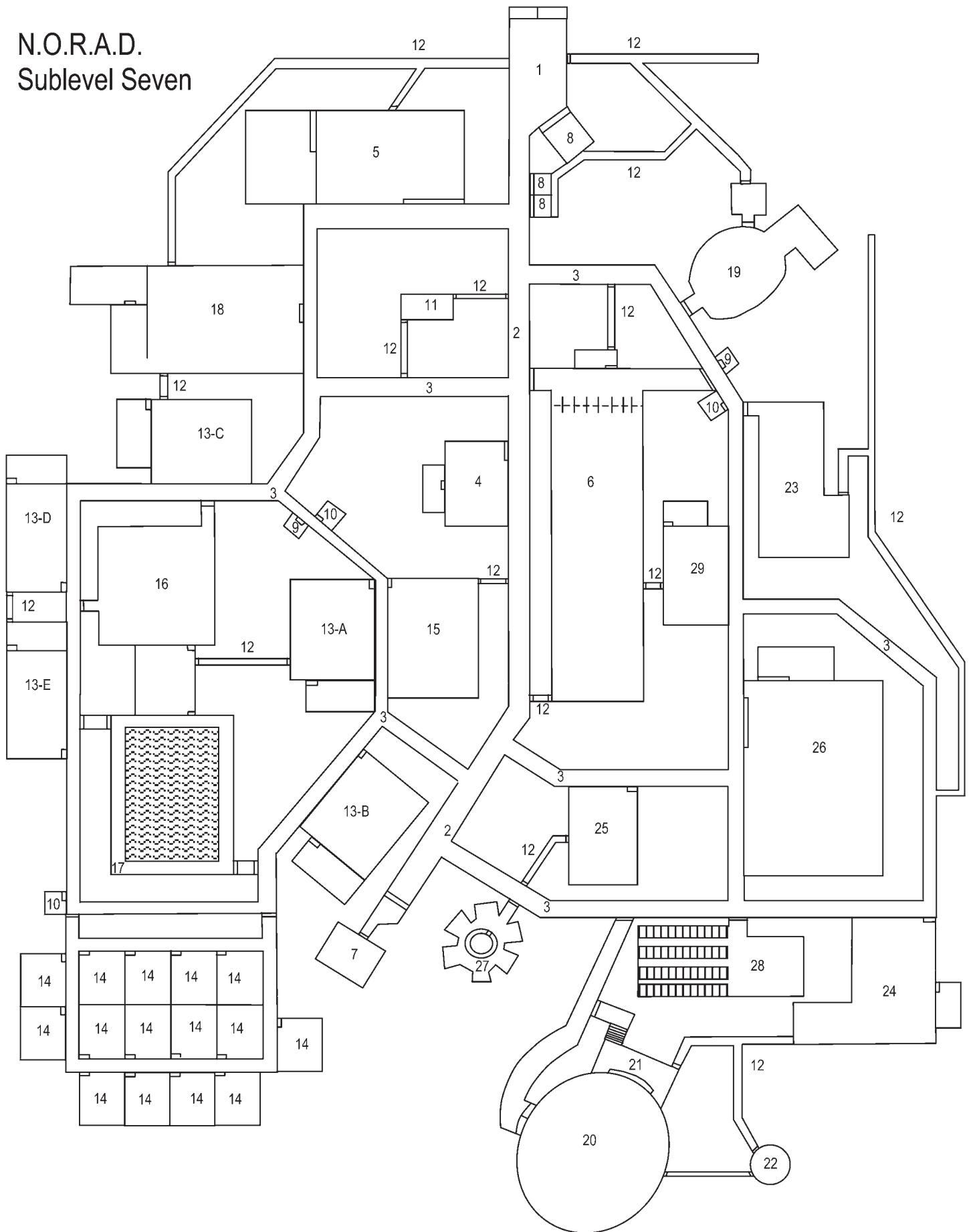
## Main Features of Sublevel Seven

There are two dominant creatures dwelling on Sublevel Seven. One is the Necrophim Karen Howe. The demon's territory is mainly the R&D labs. The other creature is the Cave Ray, a flying creature similar to a manta ray, that prowls the ruins of the barracks. Other than these two predators and a few Entities, only small, harmless subterranean rodents and insects prowl these halls, most of which fall prey to one monster or the other.

**1. Ramp to Sublevel Six:** Most of the massive blast door remains intact. Only a fissure on one side of the door allows passage into Sublevel Seven. This crack is wide enough and tall enough to allow most human-sized characters to get through, though larger characters, including those in power armor, will only fit through with some difficulty.

**2. Main Access Hall:** This passage still runs the length of Sublevel Seven, separating the barracks complex from the bulk of the R&D labs. The hall is littered with debris and is partially blocked off at some points. Only a short distance down the hall, the players will find the mutilated corpse of the worker who first

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Sublevel Seven



disappeared on the surface. A detailed examination of the body (or what is left of it) will reveal that before being torn limb from limb, the body was drained of blood. If asked about the body, the Necrophim (as Karen Howe) will deny any knowledge of his death.

**3. Secondary Halls:** Like the main access hall, sections of these halls are littered with debris, oftentimes choked off completely.

**4. Armory:** Few items remain in the Armory. Most were used by the defenders or scavenged by D-Bees who were Rifted into the complex through the dimensional rupture. The following items remain:

- 4 Vibro-Knives
- 1 Vibro-Saber
- 1 Vibro-Sword
- 5 NEMA Automag Pistols (48 clips)
- 2 NEMA 5.56 mm Assault Rifles (30 clips)
- 3 U.S.A.F. P95 Sub-Machineguns (80 magazines)
- 4 NEMA PLP-20 Laser Pistols
- 2 NEMA MIP-21 Maxi-Ion Pistols
- 8 NEMA LSR-250 Laser Rifles
- 2 U.S.A.F. P101 Heavy Sub-Machineguns (80 magazines)
- 1 NEMA PR-470 Plasma Rifle
- 1 NEMA GLR-540 Grenade Rifle
- 24 Standard E-Clips
- 4 Power Packs
- 6 Armor Piercing Mini-Missiles
- 3 suits of Standard NEMA Body Armor
- 2 suits of U.S.A.F. HCBA Heavy Combat Body Armor
- 1 suit of U.S.A.F. LPBA Light Pilot Body Armor
- 1 suit of Fire & Rescue Enhanced Body Armor

The weapons locker is still locked and jammed shut. It will require 300 M.D.C. worth of damage to blast through, though such a direct approach will result in the destruction of 20% of the weapons and armor. Careful cutting through with the right tools will not damage any of the gear within but will take 30 minutes to an hour depending upon the skill of the person doing the work. As this locker lies within the range of the Cave Ray's lair, there is a 20% chance every 20 minutes that the creature will discover them. If they blast their way through, the Cave Ray will arrive within 1D4 minutes to investigate.

A note on NEMA ammunition and power sources: Any salvageable ammunition found within the complex will need to be modified to function in Rifts-era weapons and armor and vice versa. An Operator, or other character with the Electrical Engineer and Weapons Engineer skills, will take 1D4 hours to figure out how to make the necessary modifications for a given type of ammunition or power source with successful rolls under both of those skills. Once he figures out how to convert the ammunition or power source, the actual conversion of additional supplies takes from 1D6 to 3D4 minutes, depending upon the complexity of the ammunition involved.

**5. Power Armor and Drone Hangar:** Most of the power armor units housed on Sublevel Seven were used in the final push

against the invading demon hordes when N.O.R.A.D. fell. A search of this hangar will unearth one damaged Combat Drone Soldier, two undamaged flying probes, one undamaged Pup Scout robot, and a damaged Combat Hound. There are no undamaged power armor units. However, there were two under repair at the time of the Great Cataclysm. Game Master's option as to which ones they were, but one should be a NEMA unit (either a Chromium Guardsman or Silver Eagle SAMAS) and one should be one of the U.S.A.F. units (either a Silent Soldier or a Griffon SAMAS; see **Part One: The Fall of N.O.R.A.D.**, in *The® Rifter #47*). Part of this hangar is buried under rubble and a more detailed excavation should reveal not only the damaged but repairable power armor units, but also stores of ammunition and possibly even schematics (on encoded computer disks) for NEMA and Air Force designs (a potential treasure worth millions if it is recovered and decoded). Like the Armory, the hangar is in the Cave Ray's territory.

**6. Weapons Test Range:** This room is empty except for numerous skeletal remains. This was one of the halls where the NEMA defenders made their last stand after the blast doors had been sealed. There are several Haunting Entities present who will implore the players to flee while they can. Karen Howe will not enter this room for fear of being revealed (the Entities will immediately recognize her for what she is: a monstrous demon responsible for their demise). Unfortunately, other than providing warnings to flee, these ghosts can tell the players nothing else about what lives on Sublevel Seven. If the players manage to communicate with the Entities, they will hear a first-hand account of the fall of N.O.R.A.D., at least from their point of view (though they do know that a team was sent to attempt to close the rupture, they will know nothing of the events that transpired in the DVG Control Room).

**7. Access Shaft to Fusion Reactors:** This shaft is completely filled in with debris and is inaccessible, either up or down.

**8. Main Elevators to Upper Levels:** Like the reactor access shaft, the main elevator shafts have long been choked with debris, making them inaccessible.

**9. Secondary Elevators to Upper Levels:** Like the reactor access shaft, the secondary elevator shafts have long been choked with debris, making them inaccessible.

**10. Stairs to Upper Levels:** Like the reactor access shaft, the emergency stairs have long been choked with debris, making them inaccessible.

**11. Main Ventilation Access Shaft:** Though this shaft is also completely choked with debris, making it impossible to use it to escape Sublevel Seven, this is the lair of the Cave Ray. This subterranean predator is a powerful monster that was Rifted into the complex through the rupture over 100 years ago. Feeding off of both other Rifted creatures and ambient P.P.E. from the rupture, this predator is physically powerful enough to give the Necrophim a run for its money. Both the Cave Ray and the Necrophim tend to give each other a wide berth as they stick to their respective territories.



## Cave Ray

### Subterranean Predator

**Alignment:** Miscreant (more like a cunning, cruel animal than a truly evil being).

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D4+2 (cunning animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+4, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 2D6+22 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+12, P.E. 1D6+20 (Supernatural), P.B. 2D6, Spd 2D6 (on land, crawling with its insect-like appendages)/1D6x10+15 (flying).

**Size:** 10 foot (3.05 m) long body with a 25 foot (7.6 m) tail and a 30 foot (9.1 m) wingspan. Weighs 1500 pounds (675 kg).

**M.D.C.:** 150 +1D4x100

**P.P.E.:** 6D6

**I.S.P.:** 0

**Horror Factor:** 14

**Attacks per Melee:** 6

**Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute bonuses):** +3 on initiative, +1 to strike with its mouth, +2 to strike with its tail, +2 to parry with its tail, +4 to dodge in flight, +3 to roll with punch, +6 to save vs mind control, +4 to save vs possession, +10 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Bite: 1D6 M.D., Slashing with its Barbed Tail: 5D6 M.D., Body Block: 3D6 M.D., Power Ram: 6D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks), High-Speed Ram (from a distance, flies at full speed to ram): 1D6x10 M.D. (counts as three attacks), Insect Pincer Strike: 1D6 M.D. or 4D6+10 S.D.C. (used primarily for ripping into the soft flesh of slain prey or attacking a pinned foe).

**Natural Abilities:** Bio-Regenerates 1D6 M.D.C. per melee, sense heat: 1000 feet (305 m), is blind (impervious to attacks and powers that impair vision, including most types of illusions), senses through echolocation (200 foot/61 m range), fire and cold resistant (normal fire and cold do no damage, half damage from Mega-Damage fire, cold and plasma, including magical fire and cold), Prowl (60%), can use its insect-like legs to crawl on vertical surfaces or even hang upside down from a ceiling. Highly resistant to magic (as per high P.E. saving throw vs magic bonuses), impervious to psychic manipulations (such as Bio-Manipulation, Empathic Transmission, etc.), but can still be harmed by physical psionic attacks (such as Pyrokinesis, Psi-Sword, Mind Bolt, etc.).

**Vulnerabilities:** Echolocation: Relying on echolocation as its main sense means that using suspended particles in the air will reduce the Cave Ray's senses. Smoke, dust, or similar phenomena will reduce the ray's echolocation range by 90% and cut all bonuses and number of attacks in half. The monster will most likely retreat and look for another chance to ambush its prey later.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** While it possesses no true psychic abilities, it possesses a natural Levitation and Telekinetic ability that allows it to maneuver through the narrow passageways of ruins and caves where normally a creature with such a wide wingspan would be incapable of flying. These powers only affect the Cave Ray and are automatic and indefinite.

**Appearance:** At first glance, the Cave Ray resembles a massive marine manta ray, except that its tail is barbed down its entire length and its underside is completely black instead of white like that of its aquatic counterpart. Furthermore, the Cave Ray is not an aquatic animal, but rather a vicious, flying monster that enjoys stalking and slaying its prey. Along its underside are a dozen insect-like legs, each ending in small, razor-sharp pincers that are used for carving up prey. The Cave Ray is a true predatory monster, preferring to stalk and ambush its prey rather than directly confront it. The Cave Ray's territory extends throughout the northern half of Sublevel Seven (the Barracks Complex), as well as the Armory (#4) and Power Armor Hangar (#5). It will seldom ever venture into the Necrophim's territory in the R&D Labs.

**12. Service Access Tunnels:** Throughout the complex, these access tunnels were used to access conduit and power lines between the various facilities on Sublevel Seven. Being fairly small and sturdy (10 feet/3 m high and 4 feet/1.2 m wide), they survived the 300+ years fairly intact, with only a few sections completely caved in. Both the Cave Ray (with its wings curled in) and the Necrophim will use these to navigate quickly through their respective territories.

## Barracks Complex:

**13. Barracks A-E:** The five main barracks are in various states of destruction, some mostly buried, others only partially caved in. Being in the domain of the Cave Ray, these rooms are often patrolled by the predator in search of prey.

**14. Officers and Private Quarters:** Once home to the officers and civilian scientists stationed on Sublevel Seven, now these rooms make up the nest of several spider-like predators. Despite the fact that the Cave Ray preys on these spiders regularly, they breed at an astronomical rate. In fact, if it were not for the efforts of the Cave Ray, the hive would probably have expanded throughout all of Sublevels Six and Seven and threaten the upper levels. The current hive is centered on the back hallway of this section of the complex and is home to nearly 100 Tantala Spiders, though any given section of the web will only have 2D4 present.

## Tantala Spiders

### Subterranean Predators

**Alignment:** Anarchist (more like a cunning animal than a truly evil being).

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D4+3 (cunning animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+4, M.A. 1D4, P.S. 2D6+10, P.P. 3D6+10, P.E. 2D6+4, P.B. 1D6, Spd 3D6+12.

**Size:** 2 foot (0.6 m) diameter body with 3 foot (0.9 m) long legs. Weighs 50 pounds (22.5 kg).

**M.D.C.:** P.E. + 15

**P.P.E.:** 4D6+30

**I.S.P.:** M.E. + 4D4

**Horror Factor:** 11

**Attacks per Melee:** 4

**Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute bonuses):** +4 on initiative, +2 to strike, +2 to automatic dodge, +5 to roll with punch, +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Killing Bite: 1D6 M.D., Restrained Bite: 5D6 S.D.C. + poison (see below).

**Natural Abilities:** Nightvision 500 feet (152 m), can see in total darkness, Prowl (85%), Camouflage (95%), can use its spider legs to crawl on vertical surfaces or even hang upside down from a ceiling.

**Poison (special):** When seeking to incapacitate a foe, the Tantala Spider can inject a powerful poison into its prey's bloodstream. Victims of a bite who fail a saving throw vs poison (14+) will feel a burning sensation spread throughout their limbs (takes four melee rounds). Each melee round, the pain grows progressively worse, resulting in a penalty of -1 to all combat bonuses for each round as well as -1 attack per melee for each round until it feels like the victim's entire bloodstream is on fire. At this point, the victim must make a second saving throw (12+) to avoid being overwhelmed by the intense pain (only M.E. bonuses apply). Those who fail this second saving throw will fall to the ground screaming in agony and are unaware of anything going on around them. This is usually when the Tantala Spider covers its prey with its webbing and hauls it off to its lair to slowly feed. Those who pass this second saving throw will still feel unbearable pain for another four melees before the poison runs its course (still suffers -4 to strike, parry and dodge and -4 attacks). After the second minute, the pain abruptly stops and the victim cannot be re-infected for 24 hours. Those who make their first saving throw vs poison will feel a mild tingling but nothing more and are immune to further bites for 24 hours.

**Webbing (special):** The webbing of the Tantala Spider is incredibly strong, each strand requiring 7 points of M.D. before snapping. This makes it very difficult to cut through without a great deal of effort. While individual cords may require only a few M.D. points to sever, an entire web of the material would possess 1D6x10+20 M.D. per 10 square feet (0.92 m<sup>2</sup>). However, it also makes for useful natural cords and ropes, as it is very flexible and has a remarkable tensile strength (equal to Mega-Damage cabling). With proper preservation techniques, the webbing could last for years (instead of decaying away after only 1D6 months).

**Magic:** None, though they do possess a very high P.P.E. for non-magical predators.

**Psionics:** Considered a Minor Psychic with the following powers: Sixth Sense (2), See the Invisible (4) and Death Trance (1).

**Appearance:** Resembles a large, hairy spider with gray and red markings, eight long legs, two clusters of luminous yellow eyes, and a pair of large, menacing pincers.

**15. Recreation Hall:** Like the Barracks, this hall is in the territory of the Cave Ray and is frequently patrolled by the predator. It is also not unusual for 1D4 Tantala Spiders to be present.

**16. Gym:** Like the Barracks, this hall is in the territory of the Cave Ray and is frequently patrolled by the predator. It is also not unusual for 1D4 Tantala Spiders to be present.

**17. Natatorium:** Once home to a Cephalo-Arachon Greater Demon, only dried, broken resin cocoons now hang eerily from the ceiling. Though nothing now inhabits this room, the pool is still filled with dark water and sludge. There is a menacing aura about this room that keeps both the Cave Ray and the Tantala Spiders away.

**18. Mess Hall:** Like the Barracks, this hall is in the territory of the Cave Ray and is frequently patrolled by the predator. It is also not unusual for 1D4 Tantala Spiders to be present.

## Research Labs

**A Note about Computers in the Research Complex:** While most of the N.O.R.A.D. computers were linked directly to the A.R.C.H.I.E. Two super computer and therefore are offline as a result of that system crashing during the Great Cataclysm, the computers in the Research Labs of Sublevel Seven often had dedicated CPUs and memory storage hard drives, as a result of the need for dedicated computing power that would neither tie up the base's central computer nor be dependent upon it. This means that if power can be restored to an undamaged computer on Sublevel Seven in the R&D labs, there is a chance that useful data might be retrieved. Such efforts would require the following:

- A still functioning computer needs to be found (10% likelihood given that Sublevel Seven was overwhelmed by demon hordes who delighted in destroying anything they came across). A successful Computer Repair skill roll would be needed.
- Power needs to be restored. This can be done either through a portable, compatible power supply or by linking it to the micro-fusion reactors that were once dedicated to the DVG Chamber. Either such efforts would require successful Electrical Engineering and Computer Repair skill rolls.
- Successful Computer Operation and Computer Hacking skill rolls need to be made once the system is brought back online (after all, these were top-secret government projects; they were protected by high level computer encryptions).
- If some of the data has been lost over the centuries, additional skill rolls under Computer Operation and Computer Programming will need to be made to attempt to recover any usable data.
- A compatible means of transferring data from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century NEMA or Air Force computer to a Rifts-era computer system will need to be engineered (again, more successful Computer skill rolls).
- Finally, the Game Master should feel free to impose any appropriate modifiers to reflect the difficulty of the task.
- Ultimately, it is entirely up to the Game Master to decide if any computer information can even be recovered. If the Game Master feels that NEMA and Air Force files would seriously unbalance the Rifts setting, then the computers might simply be damaged beyond repair and the information too degraded for even psychic retrieval (such as through Machine Ghost) to be successful.

**19. Genetics Lab Complex:** These labs were completely destroyed by demons and the animated corpses of the mutant creatures they once studied here. Little remains but smashed work

stations, shattered specimen pods, and old bones. At the Game Master's option, small scavenging creatures might be present, but they will most likely flee at the first sight of intruders.

**20. Dimensional Vortex Generator (DVG) Main Chamber:** Psychic and magic using characters who enter this large, circular chamber will immediately feel as if they were on a Ley Line Nexus, although it is evident that there are no Ley Lines present in the complex. This is the chamber in which the dimensional barrier was ruptured during the Great Cataclysm and continues to occasionally burst, letting in a small number of extra-dimensional creatures from time to time. The chamber is littered with the bones of hundreds of various alien life forms. Despite most of these bones having come from creatures that emerged from the dimensional rupture, only 01-05% belong to demonic creatures and could be worth anything to an Alchemist or Necromancer. Most are merely the bones of various monsters and D-Bees that have emerged from the Rift. A few scattered fragments of horribly damaged NEMA or Air Force hardware can be found amongst the bones, the remnants of the NORAD defenders who waged their last stand battle against the demon hordes during the Great Cataclysm. Lurking within the bones, a wormlike scavenger remains hidden, only emerging when something comes through the rupture that is either weak or dying. Since there are countless dimensions that could link to the rupture, many of which do not have atmospheres or environmental conditions similar to those within the DVG Chamber, many creatures die within the first few minutes of emerging from the rupture. The Bone Worm feeds upon these dead and dying, as well as anyone who disturbs its pile of bones.

## Bone Worm

### Otherworldly Scavenger

**Alignment:** Anarchist animal.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D4, M.E. 1D6, M.A. 1D4, P.S. 3D6+8, P.P. 2D6+8, P.E. 4D6+12, P.B. 1D4, Spd 2D6+10.

**Size:** 25 foot (7.6 m) long body. Weighs 600 pounds (270 kg).

**M.D.C.:** P.E. +1D4x10+30.

**P.P.E.:** 2D6

**I.S.P.:** 0

**Horror Factor:** 14

**Attacks per Melee:** 3

**Bonuses (in addition to likely attribute bonuses):** +2 on initiative, +2 to strike, +4 to dodge, +1 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus psionics, +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

**Damage:** Bite: 2D6 M.D., Tail Constriction: 3D6 per melee attack, Latching Bite: 5D6 M.D. per melee action once the worm has latched onto its prey (first requires a successful constriction attack followed by a successful bite attack).

**Natural Abilities:** Impervious to fire and cold attacks (including magic and Mega-Damage attacks), Bio-Regenerates 1D6 M.D.C. per melee, takes double damage from electrical attacks (normal electricity inflicts M.D. to the Bone Worm), sightless: senses by vibrations and sound, excellent sense of smell, natural Camouflage (90%), Prowl (75%). A successful Prowl or Camouflage skill roll can be followed by an ambush (+6 to initiative), against which the target can make no defensive response against the first attack.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Appearance:** A long worm with bone-white skin, no eyes, and a circular mouth filled with several circles of razor-sharp teeth designed for severing M.D.C. bone. The Bone Worm will not fight to the death and will retreat back into the pile of bones if it is near death.

**21. DVG Observation and Control Room:** If any psychics are present, this room presents perhaps the greatest threat to the Necrophim, as it was here that Karen Howe, now bonded with the Soul Snake, murdered her fellow scientists and betrayed the NEMA and Air Force defenders. As such, if Karen Howe has already approached the party by the time they discover this room, she will do her best to divert their attention away from here. Otherwise, the room is filled with smashed monitors and a broken observation window that looks out over the DVG Chamber.

**22. DVG Micro-Fusion Reactor Unit:** When Dr. Karen Howe reconfigured the Dimensional Vortex Generators to create a wider, permanent dimensional breach, she inadvertently fused the generators to the rupture itself, creating a limitless source of power for the DVG to feed off of. As a result, the micro-fusion reactors have been on standby for over 300 years. With some effort, the reactors can be reinitialized and power can be brought back on to much of the R&D labs, though such efforts would require a skilled Electrical and Mechanical Engineer/Operator.

**23. Advanced Weapons Development:** If the computers in this lab could be accessed (see above), they would provide a wealth of advanced weapon technical data. However, most of the systems in this room were smashed by Gremlins and other demons long ago. The chance of finding a functioning prototype is slim (ultimately up to the Game Master).

**24. Infirmary:** Since she knew a party of explorers were on their way and might find their way to Sublevel Seven, the Necrophim made efforts to make this chamber look like Dr. Howe has been living in it for the past few weeks. This illusion includes a rumpled pile of clothing used for a sleeping mat, cans of food (both opened and closed) scavenged from the Cafeteria, a NEMA laser pistol, a few random tools collected from various labs, and a set of scribbled notes on a stack of paper with a pencil. She will not show these willingly to the players, but if read, they include a fictional journal of what she has done and observed since emerging from a cryogenics pod (Game Masters, use your imagination), including feelings of loneliness, terror, sadness, encounters with strange monsters, hallucinations, speculations on what happened, etc.

**25. Deep Space Tracking Center:** This room, if any of the equipment could be brought online, could hold perhaps the greatest treasure for the explorers. If a functioning computer could be brought back online and somehow accessed, it could be used to access a functioning pre-Rifts satellite still in orbit around the Earth. While the likelihood of this happening is slim, it could be a neat way to introduce elements of Rifts space into a setting (see the *Mutants in Orbit*<sup>TM</sup> sourcebook for details on the thriving orbital community that exists beyond the knowledge of the inhabitants of Rifts Earth).



## 26. Robot and Power Armor Development and Testing:

At first, it appears as if this entire chamber has been buried under tons of rock and debris. However, only the immediate area beyond the door is buried. Shortly after being trapped on Sublevel Seven, the Necrophim was challenged by a Master Vampire that had appeared through the dimensional rupture. After a lengthy battle, the Necrophim managed to trap the vampire in this room by collapsing a section of the ceiling. As fate would have it, other damage during the earthquakes of the Great Cataclysm had sealed off all other air vents and exits to this lab. With the airtight collapse of the ceiling by the Necrophim, the vampire was trapped within this room. While the undead cannot die, it has been driven insane by centuries of starvation. No longer capable of the cunning of a “typical” Master Vampire, this undead is more like a savage Wild Vampire but with the physical attributes of a Master. It will attack the first thing that comes through the wall of rubble. If asked about this, Karen Howe will explain that she managed to use explosives to trap a “monster” inside that lab shortly after she first emerged from suspended animation, though a detailed examination of the room will suggest that this monster has been trapped inside for centuries. If the players manage to defeat the vampire and explore this room, they will find that centuries of captivity and insanity have driven the vampire to utterly destroy anything of potential value in this room. The chance of finding even a computer that can be accessed with data files on pre-Rifts robot and power armor designs is a minuscule 5% (or less).

### “Wild” Master Vampire

**5<sup>th</sup> level Vampire. It has long since forgotten its true name.**

**Alignment:** Diabolic (totally insane and feral).

**Attributes:** I.Q. 7, M.E. 8, M.A. 4, P.S. 31, P.P. 23, P.E. 21, P.B. 3, Spd 32.

**Size:** 6 feet (1.8 m) tall. Weighs 125 pounds (56.25 kg).

**Hit Points:** 150

**P.P.E.:** 30

**I.S.P.:** 90

**Horror Factor:** 16 (the feral appearance makes this vampire all the more frightening).

**Attacks per Melee:** 6

**Bonuses (including attribute bonuses):** +3 on initiative, +4 to strike, parry and dodge, +3 to save vs magic, +5 to save vs Horror Factor, impervious to mind control, magic and psionic sleep and paralysis.

**Damage:** Killing Bite: 3D6 M.D., Punch: 4D6 M.D., Power Punch: 1D4x10 M.D. (counts as two attacks), Kick: 5D6 M.D.

**Natural Abilities:** Nightvision 1600 feet (488 m), impervious to normal and M.D. weapons, energy weapons, explosives, fire, cold, disease, drugs, gases and most forms of psionics and magic, vulnerable to weapons made of silver and wood (full damage direct to Hit Points) as well as running water, true sunlight (including Globe of Daylight, but not artificial light), half damage from magical energy attacks, held at bay by garlic, wolfbay, and holy symbols of light, regenerates 2D6 Hit Points per melee round, can function until -20 Hit Points, will rise again unless special steps are taken (burned

by sunlight, melted by running water, staked through the heart with wood or silver then having head severed and both head and body burned separately), metamorphosis into a bat, wolf or mist. Possesses numerous other powers, but is too insane and feral to use them.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** Possesses the following powers: Death Trance (1), Alter Aura (2), Empathy (4), Mind Block (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2), Deaden Pain (4), Induce Sleep (4), Super Hypnosis (20). However, it is unlikely to use any of these as it is completely feral and insane.

**Appearance:** Once a handsome and noble looking vampire, now this vampire resembles some wild, emaciated creature with long claws, fangs, pale skin and red eyes. It is completely savage and insane. As such, the undead will not use any of its formidable psionic or supernatural powers against the party that discovers it, preferring to act in a savage, animal-like manner. Nor will it attempt to turn anyone into a vampire or use its formidable mind control powers. It will only use its shape shifting powers instinctively to escape if the party proves too powerful for it. If they manage to slay the undead but don't take the proper measures to permanently destroy it, the vampire will rise again and stalk them, though once it has fed, it will direct its initial attack against Karen Howe, recognizing her as the monster that imprisoned it in the first place.

**27. Artificial Intelligence Research Center:** Originally, this chamber housed an experimental prototype super computer, A.R.C.H.I.E. Two-point-Five. This was installed and being studied by Cyberworks Engineers to try to work out some of the problems that had begun to emerge with their A.R.C.H.I.E. Three computer in Maryland. Now, any psychic who enters this room will be assailed by a deafening psychic scream. Psychics who do not save vs psionics will feel a piercing pain in their brain and will be unable to enter the room again. Those who do save can enter, but will suffer a penalty of -3 to all combat bonuses and -25% to all skill rolls. The only way to prevent hearing this scream is to maintain a Mind Block while in the room. Non-psychics will feel uneasy and jumpy in the room, but suffer no penalties. The reason for this is that the A.R.C.H.I.E. 2.5 computer has existed in isolation for nearly 300 years. Possessing its own independent power supply (much like Archie Three), this computer has remained online for three centuries. At the time of the Great Cataclysm, the super computer had already begun to demonstrate some of the same self-awareness problems that Archie Three developed as well. However, at that point, these problems were in their infancy and the computer was much like a super intelligent child. When the Great Cataclysm struck and N.O.R.A.D. was abandoned, the computer found itself in total isolation, cut off from all external stimuli. This has driven it completely insane.

Much like the more advanced Archie Three, this model has also mutated over time. As a result of centuries of exposure to the mutating energies of the dimensional rupture, the A.R.C.H.I.E. 2.5 entity has developed a number of psionic abilities. Though limited in scope, the super computer does possess the ability to communicate and even temporarily possess anyone coming into physical contact with its housing unit. Much like

Archie Three, the housing unit for A.R.C.H.I.E. 2.5 is a small, armored box about the size of a couple of DVD players. Housed in the central core of this room and accessible through a locked, armored panel (100 M.D.C.), anyone entering this chamber will see the small box connected with a multitude of wires. Labeled Omnibus Cortex, this houses the small brain that is A.R.C.H.I.E. 2.5. Anyone physically touching the box will immediately hear the screaming in his or her head (even non-psionics). At the same time, the victim must make a saving throw vs possession or psionics. This will happen as well to any psychic who attempts to use Empathy or Telepathy to make contact with the screaming mind.

If he or she fails, then the super computer entity will temporarily possess that person's body. This possession will last only 2D4+5 minutes, though in that time, the entity will attempt to use its new body to run away. If it can be restrained and calmed (will require the use of psionics and a successful Psychology skill roll), there is a small chance that the party may learn at least a little about the first few days of the Great Cataclysm (nothing strategically useful, but from a historic point of view, the super computer did observe through satellite link-ups the unfolding of the end of the world). The A.R.C.H.I.E. 2.5 entity will beg, bargain and threaten for a chance to escape and live out its life in this new body. No matter what happens, however, when the time elapses, the entity will be forced back into its tiny box, where it will once again begin to scream for release.

Arielle King will be most interested in studying this chamber and the super computer therein, instantly recognizing the connection between this prototype and the nemesis of the Republicans: Archie Three.

## **A.R.C.H.I.E. Two-point-Five**

### **Insane Neural Intelligence Super Computer**

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 5 (originally 19 and growing, now childlike and totally insane), M.E. 2 (originally 23), M.A. 9 (originally 16).

**Size:** 18 inches (0.45 m) long. Weighs 5 pounds (2.3 kg).

**Hit Points:** 350

**M.D.C. of the Housing:** 300

**P.P.E.:** 18

**I.S.P.:** 150

**Psionic Attacks per Melee:** 1

**Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +4 to save versus magic, +4 to save versus psionics, impervious to mind control and possession.

**Natural Abilities:** Communicates through Telepathy (automatic and constant; 0 I.S.P.). Possesses a limited form of psionic possession. This works identical to the ordinary Super Psionic power of Mentally Possess Others, except the duration is limited to 2D4+5 minutes, no longer. This can be performed once per 12 hours at no I.S.P. cost. At one time, this super computer was connected to several stations and, through them, networks throughout the complex (most of this represented passive connections and not the ability to control, though this may have changed over time). Now, it is isolated and alone (nearly 300 years of sensory deprivation). If the super computer's sanity could be restored, it might be able to

assert limited control over the complex, though this is unlikely. On the other hand, if somehow the housing were removed and placed inside a robot body, A.R.C.H.I.E. 2.5 might be able to explore the world, though it still possesses a childlike intelligence and naivete.

**Skill Programs:** Communications: Technical (90%), Communications: Languages and Literacy: all major pre-Rifts languages (95%), Medical: Basic (85%), Science: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Astronomy and Astrophysics (85%), Technical: Computer Operation and Programming (98%). Has not learned any Secondary skills or any skills that relate to Rifts Earth (magic and monster lore, etc.).

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** In addition to its natural possession and telepathic abilities, the super computer entity also possesses the following psionic talents: Bio-Regenerate (6), Empathy (4), Mind Block (4), Empathic Transmissions (6), and Machine Ghost (12).

**Appearance:** A.R.C.H.I.E. 2.5's housing looks like a small, rectangular armored metal box with additional connections radiating outward from it.

**28. Cryogenics:** All but a few of the cryogenics pods lie buried under rubble (or so it seems). The half dozen that are visible are all empty, though one lies open. Karen Howe will explain that this was the one she emerged from. She will show working display monitors that indicate that another four appear to be functioning beyond the rubble, but none of their occupants are alive. As described earlier, the Necrophim is responsible for the burial of these pods after she placed four zombies within them. Her plan is to convince the players that if they can rescue them, there will be four more pre-Rifts scientists to save. Her zombies are instructed to behave as groggy, confused survivors until such time as she reveals her true nature.

**Zombie Quick Stats:** Former NEMA scientists, now undead slaves of the Necrophim. I.Q. 7, P.S. 20, Spd 10. S.D.C.: 150. P.P.E.: 0. Natural Abilities: Fearless (impervious to Horror Factor). Large fires will hold them at bay. Impervious to bullets, knives, clubs and other physical attacks. Can be harmed by fire, silver, and magical energy attacks. Lasers and energy weapons inflict half damage, impervious to mental assaults (magic, psionic or illusions). Regenerates 48 hours after being slain unless its head is severed and both head and body are buried separately. Attacks per Melee: Two. Bonuses: +2 to parry and dodge. Damage: Punch 2D4 S.D.C. Horror Factor: 12.

**Weapons and Equipment:** Initially, the zombies will be dressed in lab coats and modern clothing. However, once her guise is dropped, Karen Howe will arm each Zombie with NEMA body armor (120 M.D.C.) and Vibro-Swords (2D6 M.D.).

**29. Cafeteria:** An earthquake sometime in the past 300 years has completely buried this room.

Ultimately, the players will need to decide how to deal with the Necrophim. This monster is very powerful, extremely evil and coupled with the mind of a brilliant pre-Rifts scientist. If the fiend manages to escape, there is no telling how it will affect things on a wider scale on Rifts Earth. Karen Howe will have grand plans once she sees the scope of what the world has be-

come and how her supernatural powers make her nearly godlike in this setting. She will ultimately reconsider severing her bond with Akara considering the power it gives her and the fact that she has become the dominant persona anyway.

Furthermore, if she has managed to lure the gentle David Keb into the ruins, any player of good alignment will feel compelled to do something to rescue the young man. Certainly, Billy Brooks will not abandon his nephew, though without the aid of the players, even with his own party and the unexpected appearance of Grynshlack, he will die at the hands of the Necrophim.

If the players attempt a direct confrontation with the Necrophim, they will find her a formidable opponent. Furthermore, she will use her zombies as fodder to further weaken the party. Remember that she has had almost 300 years to explore the ruins and will use this knowledge to her fullest, luring them into potential traps, ambush settings, and confrontations with the other denizens of the sublevel in an effort to weaken them before she goes in for the kill. She will not destroy them outright, preferring to first use them to steal the enchanted token that binds her to Sublevel Seven.

Should the players agree to bargain with the monster and retrieve the enchanted picture that binds the monster to the ruins, Dr. Howe will demand that the players destroy it (she cannot directly harm the item as a result of the enchantment). Once destroyed, she will unleash her fury upon the party. If she is not strong enough to kill them outright, she will flee to the surface, though her first plan once free will be to kill her liberators before exploring the wider world.

Should the players attempt to acquire the token from the Enoch and find another way to use it to defeat the Necrophim, they will find the Enoch unwilling to part with it as they see it as the only way they can prevent the demon from escaping. How this is resolved is up to the players. Attempts to peacefully persuade the Enoch to surrender the item will depend greatly upon the role-playing skills of the players and their ability to convince the peaceful D-Bees that they have a plan that will ensure the destruction of the demon and/or freedom of any hostages without jeopardizing the trap that holds the monster in place.

One interesting thing about the enchanted picture (something that might be learned through an Object Read or similar power or spell) is that the Necrophim is bound to its location. This means that if the object moves, Dr. Howe will be inexorably drawn along with the picture against her will. This could be used to the players' advantage if they can find a way to send the item (via dimensional magic or the rupture in the DVG Chamber) to someplace else. While this may ultimately give the Necrophim the opportunity to escape if she can find others who can destroy the item, it will at least resolve the present situation (whether or not the Necrophim ultimately escapes and comes after the players is left to the Game Master).

## Enchanted Picture

The token of Power that binds the Necrophim Dr. Karen Howe to Sublevel Seven.

When the Godling appeared through the dimensional rupture and battled the Necrophim, he realized that ultimately the powerful demon would win. Sensing defeat, the Godling discovered an item of sentimental attachment to the host of the Soul Snake,

a picture frame containing a picture of Karen Howe's father, and cast an enchantment upon it, infusing it with his dying life force and binding the host to the artifact. Ironically, if the Necrophim is destroyed, Akara the Soul Snake will be able to escape, as it is Karen Howe who is bound to the picture.

The picture will radiate magic if an attempt is made to detect magic. The S.D.C. of the picture and frame is a mere 10 S.D.C. However, the Necrophim (and by extension, the Soul Snake's magic or psionics) cannot harm the item. Furthermore, anyone knowledgeable in magic or psionics can use the item to cast spells or use psionics against the Necrophim through the artifact. The monster is -3 to save against magic or psionics cast through the picture. However, destructive magic cast through the picture will automatically destroy the item instead. This means that manipulative magic or psionics cast through the picture will have a greater chance of affecting the monster. However, casting a Power Bolt through the picture, for example, will instead destroy the frame rather than harming the Necrophim.

At the Game Master's option, the use of psionic Object Read or Telepathy might allow the player to come into contact with the life essence of the dead Godling. This may also be used to reveal clues about the weaknesses of the Necrophim.

## N.O.R.A.D. Sublevel Eight

Originally housing the complex's fusion reactor system, this sublevel is all but in ruins. While most of the equipment is actually intact and could be salvaged for parts and technology, earthquakes and dimensional disturbances over the past centuries have taken their toll on this level, burying most of the facilities under tons of rock. Originally accessible through the main reactor access shaft, the main elevators and the access ramps, now without the aid of Elemental Magic or heavy excavation equipment, the advanced fusion technology will remain buried for all time. Nothing dwells on this sublevel.

## Wrapping it All Up

Ultimately, the ruins of N.O.R.A.D. will not prove to be the technological treasure trove so many hoped that it would be. Few pieces of high-tech armor and weapons were left behind when the facility was abandoned during the Great Cataclysm. What remained has either been buried or destroyed after 300 years of earthquakes, shifting mountains and invasion by demonic hordes. William Brooks will ultimately decide to cut his losses after the harrowing experiences on Sublevel Seven. At best, he will confine his excavation efforts to the upper levels. The Entities on Sublevel Two will make exploring beyond there difficult at best without extensive and costly magical protection. The D'yar on Sublevel Three are too well entrenched and too hostile to overcome without their total destruction (though the Renegade D'yar would be far more willing to leave if the D'yar are destroyed and if suitable compensation is offered for their peaceful retreat). Only the Enoch would willingly depart, though not if the Necrophim still lives on Sublevel Seven.

The potential treasures on the Main Level hangars and the power armor hangars on Sublevel One may make it worthwhile if the expedition is not driven off before then, though not with the vast wealth most were hoping for.



Another danger lies in the potential for discovery by other explorers and treasure hunters. The Coalition States have been searching the New West for the elusive pre-Rifts military facility for decades. The presence of Arielle King illustrates that the Republicans are also in search of the theorized treasure trove of technology. If she survives, despite the obstacles, she will covertly make contact with other Republican spies and recommend an expedition be launched to flush out the compound and claim it for themselves. On top of these two well supported organizations, numerous other treasure hunters and explorers search the New West yearly for the legendary Cheyenne Mountain complex. With the wreckage of Brooks' encampment washed down the canyon and out onto the plains, it is only a matter of time before someone else discovers the wreckage and follows the trail back upstream to the now exposed entrance to N.O.R.A.D.

# Scared Spitless

## Taking the Timid out of Intimidation

### Optional Horror Factor Rules

#### By Winston Crutchfield

*"Okay, guys, your last torch flickers against the walls of the slime-covered tunnel, acrid smoke choking your nostrils and stinging your eyes. The party's shadows jump and lunge at each other in the glow, and you find yourself hoping fervently they stay on the walls where they belong. A sudden gust of fetid air makes you gag, and finally puts out the last of your light. Blindly, you grope what you hope is only fungus and feel your way through to a faint glow at the end of the crevice.*

*"The party stumbles gratefully from the crushing confines of the cave into a cavern lit by torchlight, but thankfully empty. You check your gear and collapse against the rock, exhausted by the journey and your recent fight. Something clanks gently from behind a nearby formation; when you approach you can hear a soft rumble. Someone investigates, yes?"*

"Yeah, I'll go."

*"Peeking around the rock, you see a bronze-skinned humanoid twice your size, apparently manacled to the wall and snoring softly. Even asleep, its jagged ears and cruel features speak of unrepentant evil."*

"It's a Baal-Rog, guys, plus it's chained and sleeping."

*"Not anymore. Demonic yellow eyes flash open; it grabs at the chain you assumed was binding it to brandish a spiked club still caked with the gore of its last victim. In a flash, the demon is around the rock and upon the party, blood-lust raging for bat-*

*tle and bellowing an ear-splitting howl of hate. Roll your saving throw vs Horror Factor."*

And this is where it all breaks down. Typically, half the party will make a successful saving throw and charge into battle already arguing over who gets to keep that obviously enchanted weapon. The other half falls back out of range and begins strategizing about how best to use their remaining three (or more) attacks and where best to flank the creature once melee recycles. It can all be more than a tad frustrating for the Game Master who's spent the past ten minutes layering on the supernatural horror and gory splash of this creature's existence. What happened to the soul-crushing terror that used to fall upon players at the mention of *dragonfear*? Where is the mind-numbing paralysis that makes the party dread confronting the thing in the dark lest they actually see it? Even given that the average gaming group is filled with Fearless Monster Stompers™, something within me rebels at the thought of a character standing his ground amidst the unnatural and the unknowable without a thin stream of pee running down his leg.

Sure, I know the drill. Show, don't tell. Hint, don't show. Mislead. Isolate. Weaken. True horror comes from impotence, loneliness, confusion, and revulsion. I also know that characters hear very little of the descriptive nuances that Game Masters lavish upon their players. Watching my friends calmly reduce my nameless Cthuloid horror to a two-word adjective and flank him while the psychics use his presence to boost their energy reserves makes me want to speak in tongues. The unutterable kind reserved for those spellbooks bound in skin.

It's not just the Game Masters who suffer. Who doesn't pity Shadowslaver the Skulker when he drops upon a group of thugs about to beat up a little old lady for her Zoloft prescription, only to have one stubborn cuss out of the four punks make his Horror Factor saving throw and utterly destroy an otherwise perfectly dramatic entrance? Shouldn't characters be afraid to approach a being or situation that is genuinely scary? Why don't non-player characters properly quake in fear at the mention of my dark avenger's name? Even experienced gamers who aren't just here to kick butt and chew bubblegum fall easy victim to a ruleset that doesn't translate atmosphere and role-playing into dice penalties, so that a scared character is only marginally less effective than one in his right mind. I want a more robust ruleset! I want monsters that matter! I want a cheese sandwich!

## A More Robust Ruleset

One thing at a time, I suppose. What are the rules for? Just as the combat rules tell us when a character has taken damage, and how severe that damage is, so should the Horror Factor rules describe in what way a character is frightened, and exactly what that means.

At the moment, all rules for fear are encapsulated in the Horror Factor attribute. This number assigned to a monster reflects its aura of supernatural scariness or physical repugnance. At the beginning of the first encounter, players get to make a saving throw against this number. Success yields no consequence; failure costs them initiative for the round and the loss of a single attack in the first melee. This is fine for your average closet monster or lurking slasher, but loses much when confronting ancient deities and gods of fear. To further muddy the waters, the



same mechanic is applied to non-supernatural cases, such as the New West Gunfighter O.C.C. wielding his big-bore pistol. The first gets a Horror Factor as part of his reputation, and the latter simply for being an impressive weapon. Clearly, some further demarcation is needed here. As are tables. I love rolling on the many tables that pepper Palladium game books.

The first thing we need to do is expand the basics. Some O.C.C.s get a bonus to their saving throw versus Horror Factor, but most will forever rely on the luck of a twenty-sider. This seems especially unfair to soldiers and government agents who have presumably undergone some form of training designed to inure them to the horrors of war and the depravity of serial killers. We reflect this training in the following skill:

**(Military/Secondary) Desensitization:** The character is subjected to a series of graphically violent images and simulations designed to condition his or her responses to deal calmly with extremely threatening, repulsive, or offensive situations. This skill primarily reflects the training given to law enforcement agents who must deal with disturbing crime scenes, soldiers who face deployment to an active combat zone, and emergency medical personnel who deal with the extremes of human suffering. When taken as a Secondary Skill, this usually indicates a hardcore horror movie fan, special effects artist, gang banger, or extreme athlete. **Bonuses:** +1 to saving throw vs Horror Factor at levels 1, 4, 7, 10 and 13. If this is taken as an O.C.C. Skill, the character also gets to add the bonus from an exceptional M.E. attribute, if applicable.

Knowledge is power; when facing down fear, robbing your opponents of the element of surprise can strip the effectiveness from their howl of fury when jumping down out of the treetops. The Prowl skill is used to represent skill with concealment and the ability to attack from ambush; a stealthy monster can drool on the back of your character's neck before you realize it's there. The official rules don't include a method for defeating this kind of ability, as the convention of reflexive perception rolls common to many games is done away with in favor of relying on the skill of the active party. This seems to let out the Sherlock Holmes style characters from the running, but a quick adjustment of perspective reminds us that Holmes was *always actively observing* his environs. Hence, the following skill:

**(Espionage/Secondary) Observation:** The character has trained himself to pick out details from the general wash of information, and to correlate those details on the fly. This skill would be common to detectives examining evidence at a crime scene, field agents surveilling a suspect, hunters attempting to spot game, and insurance adjusters searching for grounds to deny a claim. Characters using this skill should declare what they are searching for and why. A successful roll yields the information desired; generally speaking, the better the roll, the more relevant the information becomes. A failed roll not only fails to uncover the object of the search, but a badly failed roll may reveal misleading information. When taken as a Secondary Skill, it represents the avid puzzle solver, bird watcher, or conspiracy theorist. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level. If this is taken as an O.C.C. Skill, it adds +5% to Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment, Tracking, Trap/Mine Detection, Find Contraband, Photography, and Track Animals.

Now that your characters are armed with the ability to detect that shambling horror from the telltale ooze seeping through the crack under the closet door, one bright spark is eventually going to try it. Opposed skill checks are over way too quickly if you simply take the greatest margin of success and hand over the victory. The extended treatment pits two skills against each other, say Prowl vs Detect Ambush, and they roll the dice in turns until either one party fails and the other succeeds, or someone gives up in disgust. This can indeed lead to two woodsmen straining their craft and the design of their ghillie suits as they engage in a tense sequence of move-search-move in an attempt to get the drop on their victim and avoid paintball bruises because they forgot their friggin' armor ... but I digress.

Our final weapon against the darkness is fear itself. Characters with an exceptional M.A. get an automatic bonus to invoke trust and intimidation in others, but nowhere is this staggering ability detailed. Generally speaking, personal interactions are left to the act of role-playing itself. The concept of trust is nebulous at best, and is primarily useful when attempting to alter the attitude of a non-player character to a more favorable state. (Hey, *trust* me. We're in this together.) Perhaps the best way to represent this is with a variation on the Seduction skill.

**(Rogue/Secondary) Manipulation:** A character skilled in the art of manipulating others turns emotions and logic to putty in his hands. The skill can be used in one of two ways depending on the situation. Trust/Seduce: By saying what his victim wants to hear, and playing to his victim's vices, a character can worm his way into his victim's good graces. This can involve physical seduction so that the target is blinded by emotion, but also may appeal to loyalty, honor, or even enlightened self-interest. The target of a successful Manipulation attempt will often set aside considerations of cost, consequence, and even common sense when listening to the words of someone he trusts. Scare/Intimidate: Threatening gestures and words play to the fear and insecurity of the victim to unsettle him and prevent him from thinking clearly. When combined with a little play-acting, the effect can cause the bravest knight to reconsider the strength of his armor, an arrogant politician to cave in to demands, or the weak of heart to faint dead away. The victim of Intimidation ceases to think logically or rely on his training, instead reverting to the reptile-brain *fight-or-flight* response. In both cases, the victim is so focused on the character that the rest of the world simply doesn't enter into his thinking while his manipulator is nearby to impose his will on the victim. This depth of focus means that in a combat situation the victim has no initiative score, combat bonuses and skills are halved, and he will not fight back in the first melee of combat (loses all his attacks per melee). In a non-combat situation, the victim will go out of his way to satisfy his manipulator, to the point of great inconvenience or expense. People who contradict the manipulator are seen as base and self-serving, if not outright enemies. Additionally, when this skill is used on the same victim with consistency, it grows in power. Add +1% to the effective skill for every consecutive day this skill is used by the same person on the same victim. By the same token, bonuses fade at the same rate they accumulate; if the chain of influence is broken, it takes a full day to reestablish authority and begin to accumulate bonuses once again. **Base Skill:** 10% +3% per level. If this is taken as an O.C.C. Skill, it enjoys a +5% bonus if the character



also has Imitate Voices/Impersonation, Streetwise, or Psychology (only one bonus, even if the character has all three skills). Characters with a high M.A. may use this skill without selecting it, using only their attribute bonus; if the skill is selected, the attribute bonus is added to the base skill.

Now that we have a baseline for dealing with and possibly inflicting a little horror, it's time to break down the origins of this primal instinct and deal with it on a case by case basis.

## From Whence Cometh the Horror?

We are dealing with four primary sources of fear in this article. For our purposes, Horror Factor is generated through four progressively severe conditions: Reputation, Environment, Combat, and the Supernatural. Each of these impresses on a character's psyche certain reactions appropriate to the stimulus. Curiously, the response of fear is primarily a healthy reaction to an unhealthy situation, so we are also going to examine the benefits to being properly frightened as well as the entertaining side effects. Horror Factor is no longer a character attribute, it is now a game mechanic that applies to heroes as well as villains. Perspective is vital when responding to intense situations; hero worship is every bit as valid a response as fleeing in terror. "*Justice, like lightning, should ever appear/ to all men swift/ to few men fear.*" The average citizen does not quake in fear when that red and blue caped hero descends from the skies, but this makes him no less impressive. We refer to this impact of power and personality as Horror Factor, even though awe or worship may be a more appropriate response. Remember that the evildoers in this scenario are every bit as impressed, but for entirely different reasons. The key element is that of *unease*.

## Reputation

Some O.C.C.s grant a character Horror Factor as part of their ability package. There is no doubt that some occupations carry a certain air of mystery or danger about them. The kind of unease a reputation generates begins well before its source is ever encountered, and can often do a character's job for him. This is where Shadowslaver the Skulker puts a reputational Horror Factor to good use – striking fear into the hearts of criminals, who are, by nature, a cowardly and superstitious lot. On the flip side, a Game Master may use an adversary's reputation to make the party more than a little nervous over their upcoming encounter. A character who gets rattled by his opponent's reputation is likely to make mistakes, forget his preparations, or simply call his plans off entirely if it means the possibility of an encounter with a fearsome foe. This mechanic is an attribute and is always attached to individuals, so that while vampires in general may enjoy a Supernatural Horror Factor 14, Bloodfang the Malicious has earned Reputation 15 – a touch more intimidating than his lackey Egbert with Reputation 10.

Characters may earn a Reputation in game simply through level advancement. Your party, after all, is composed of heroes, and heroes do heroic deeds recorded in heroic annals of heroes. A character's Reputation begins at 0 and gains +2 at levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15. Reputation bonuses may be handed out at the conclusion of a campaign, or in reward for some especially heroic (or villainous) deed. The insubstantial nature of this attribute

means it is not always a reliable measure of actual skill and power. A player may enhance this attribute with the following skill:

**(Espionage) Information Management:** More than just the art of self-promotion, this skill enables a character to spread information through public and covert channels to those people who need to know. For the super-spy, this may be disinformation designed to weaken an enemy's infrastructure. For the super hero, this may be signal lights atop police headquarters, or villains bound and gagged in a signature chemical designed to imitate spider's silk. A successful use of this skill against an individual or organization will force the target to roll on the chart below as if he had failed a Reputation check. Skilled characters may adjust the result of this roll by 10%. **Base Skill:** 20% +3% per level. **Bonuses:** +1 to Reputation at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14.

Reputation checks are made before the object of the Reputation is ever encountered. The subject of a Reputation check must roll a twenty-sider and get a result equal to or greater than the Reputation - add the character's own Reputation as a bonus to the roll. A successful roll means the subject is suitably impressed and perhaps a bit cautious. Manipulation skill rolls against him are made at a -10% penalty, and he enjoys a +2 bonus to saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor in his next encounter with the owner of the Reputation. A failed check results in a roll on the Reputation Reaction Table. This can be a bit cumbersome when dealing with an entire party, so non-player characters only check once against the highest Reputation in the party. In a similar way, when making the party roll a Reputation check, the character with the weakest Reputation makes the roll. A Reputation check is made every time the party gains new information. Public perception is a fickle thing, and new checks always supersede old ones. Passing a Reputation check once is no guarantee of future success; the effectiveness of this mechanic may be measured in the fact that the Reputation check must be passed multiple times without fail, allowing canny heroes and sneaky Game Masters to lay on the build-up before ever indulging in the big reveal.

### Reputation Reaction Table

**01-08% Call the Whole Thing Off:** Cancel whatever plans have been made, and make every effort to avoid him. Make no threatening gestures towards him, and hope he doesn't decide to come looking for you. The character may not use any skills in preparation for an encounter, and the next saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor against the owner of the Reputation fails automatically.

**09-17% Resigned:** Clearly whatever preparations you make are going to be woefully inadequate. Make peace with your gods, and be prepared to surrender at the first opportunity or hope for a quick death. Skills used in preparation against the owner of the Reputation are made at -10%, and the next saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor fails automatically.

**18-25% Fake It:** You may be outclassed and outgunned, but you're not a quitter. You may not be able to win, but you're going to give it a shot and rely on luck and wits to get away when it all goes south. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are

made at -4 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered.

**26-33% Rattled:** If half of what you've heard is true, you've got a real fight on your hands. Your training may not be up to the task, but it's really all you've got to rely on. Any plans the party may have been making go out the window, except for the most basic preparations. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are made at -2 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered.

**34-42% Clever Plan:** A failure to plan is a plan for failure. You're going to have to provide a distraction, a clever getaway, or ingenious backup plan if you hope to succeed. The party doubles the amount of time they would ordinarily spend in planning for this encounter, even if that would take them uncomfortably close to an important deadline. The confrontation is postponed for as long as possible if it cannot be avoided altogether. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are made at -2 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered.

**43-50% Underestimated:** Surely most of what you've heard is rumor, superstition, or just plain nonsense. The reality can't be half as bad as people are saying. No special plans are made in preparation for a confrontation, even in the face of plain information and opportunity. The party will have to make do with the equipment they have on hand. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are made at -2 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered.

**51-58% Prepared to Intimidate:** He's big, he's bad. But so are you. Get ready to fight fire with fire and show your opponent who's boss right off the bat. The party reloads and double-checks their preparations; their blood is up and they are ready to get into it. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are made at +2 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered.

**59-66% Misinformed:** So the big baddie is hairy, drools, eats his victims, and howls at the moon. Obviously, this is a werewolf. Never mind the details, pass the silver bullets. The party draws some bad conclusions about the nature and potential weaknesses of their target. At this point, the Game Master should feel free to mix the patently false with the deceptively true so that the party is thoroughly confused as to the truth of the matter. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are made at -2 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered.

**67-75% Baseless Assumption:** Oh yeah, pass the wolfsbane as well. And garlic. Werewolves are allergic to garlic. Don't forget the sunflower seeds. If we throw them at him, he has to stop and pick them up. Not only has truth been intermingled with falsehood, but with potentially deadly consequences. The party is woefully unprepared for the encounter they're facing, to the point of bringing ineffective weaponry suited for an entirely different situation. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are made at -4 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered.

**76-83% Overprepared:** Armor up! Stakes! Crucifix! Sword! Holy water! Garlic! Calico cat! Mail shirt! Leather greaves! Full plate chest-piece! A little help here! The party spends more time and resources on preparation than are strictly necessary, to the point of redundant duplication. The party will be encumbered with all manner of useless weaponry and devices

and feeling some measure of intimidation. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are made at -2 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered, and results on the Combat Horror Factor Reaction table are adjusted by +20%.

**84-91% Overkill Mindset:** So it lives in the forest, no problem. We scatter torchbearers to every corner of the grove and light the whole thing on fire. Burn it to the ground. Station crossbowmen with silver-tipped bolts at every checkpoint, and back them up with the town militia. Not only is the party firmly convinced of their target's prowess, but they begin to get others involved in their own preparations. No solution will be seen as adequate unless it covers every possible circumstance. Such drastic measures are likely to force a confrontation long before the party is actually ready. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are made at -4 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered; results on the Combat Horror Factor Reaction table are adjusted by +10%.

**92-00% Blinding Obsession:** That solves that problem. Did anyone get bitten? Scratched? Tom, I see blood on your shirt, and you're looking awful hairy. I sure hope you've just forgotten to shave for a couple of days. We better not take any chances... Cooperation breaks down at this point, and the party is just as likely to work against each other as to prepare for an encounter with their target. Even after the confrontation, tensions will continue to run high and there is a 20% chance the party engages in several rounds of infighting. Saving throws vs Combat Horror Factor are made at -4 when the owner of the Reputation is next encountered.

## Environment

This is the favorite of verbose Game Masters everywhere. It's wonderful to have your cave walls dripping with slime and ichor, to shroud that haunted house in noisy creaks and noisome smells, to layer voices into the wind and shapes into the shadows. Don'tcha just wish players took it a little more seriously? Time to fix that.

The real thrill of great description comes from seeing that little shiver run down your friend's spine, or that light in his eyes when something unexpected flits across the full moon. With a little effort, we can translate that into numbers that can make characters sweat as well. First we have to recognize a few sources of Horror Factor within this category and treat them slightly differently. On the low end of the scale, it's all about atmosphere. A foggy night, unidentifiable noises, illusion of depth and perspective all contribute to create an absolutely natural feeling of unease and disquiet. The mind interprets the situation as unsafe, uncomfortable, or unstable. Midway through, we get to encounter visceral scenes of gore, violence, and brutality. This kind of thing is found as routinely in hospital emergency rooms as it is in serial killer dungeons. While it is easy to discount the reaction to evidence of bloodshed or violence as simply the vagaries of a weak constitution, the biology of the matter is that the sight of blood and injury causes a physical reaction in the human body, starting the rush of adrenaline and constricting the flow of blood through the brain. This is why a small percentage of people actually faint at the sight of blood. Finally, a place may evoke a sense of horror because of supernatural enchantment. Murder houses haunted by the ghosts of countless victims,





necromantic castles in the crags of the mountains, and temples designed for the dark rituals of darker gods all prey upon the human soul in a way that defies measure ... except that's what we're going to do.

Quantify the scene. Does the location possess a reputation for spooky happenings, violence, or unexplained phenomena? Every neighborhood has the abandoned house that everyone *knows* is haunted. John Holmes' "murder house" in Chicago was torn down because of the depravity of his actions, and who doesn't feel just a twinge of excitement or unease when speculating on disappearances within the Bermuda Triangle? Does the location evoke a sense of isolation or is it unsafe? Neighborhood haunted houses are always at the far end of the *cul-de-sac* surrounded by tall groves of trees. They're probably abandoned and condemned as well, full of rotten fixtures, poisonous snakes, and stairways just waiting to collapse beneath a person's weight. Finally, is there an actual supernatural presence in the area? Stonehenge channels massive amounts of P.P.E. through its standing stones. Poltergeists and Possessing Entities cavort around Native American burial grounds and leave a tangible psychic residue. Fairy Rings appear and vanish in the Ozark Mountains without a trace, protecting wayward hikers from mountain lions and other less natural predators. Any of these things is worth a base Horror Factor of 8.

### **Modifiers: +2 to Environmental Horror Factor**

**Unreliable/Overwhelming Perceptions:** The absence or overwhelming presence of visual and auditory cues to danger is a key element in evoking unease. An intense surrounding with

poor lighting, tricks of perspective, odd noises, and plenty of hiding spots naturally sets people on edge. The barrage of light and sound from the battlefield, mosh pit, or Festival of Set can make it hard to think clearly.

**Failure of Natural Law:** People encounter a location within a certain frame of reference, a fact used to great effect by fun house designers. Gothic architecture is unquestionably out of place in a modern high-rise. Mirrors present a certain perspective. Furniture stays on the ground instead of the wall or ceiling. More subtly, the modern mind expects to see circular curves and geometric shapes in the architecture and environment. Forest trees leaning to odd angles or structures built with parabolic shapes and skewed planes all contribute to a sense of unease.

**Subliminal Messages:** The human mind forces parallels on shapes, causing people to see bodies in the forms of lamp stands, faces in shadows, and the texture of flesh on rock walls. The temple of Athena dwarfs its supplicants with reminders of their place in the cosmos; de Sade's dungeon speaks of the frail and failing nature of the flesh.

**Evidence of Suffering:** Splashes of gore, evidence of violence, and instruments of torture adorn the halls of dungeons and abattoirs. Skeletal hands still manacled to blood-stained galley benches bear mute testimony to the reward of a slave. Toothmarks on iron bars tell a madman's story. Disgusting, repulsive, and offensive scenes all add to a place's horror. No one really wants to explore the sewers for the albino alligators, or plunge into the viscous excrement of swamps or putrid moats. It speaks of disease, infection, and rotting death.

**Imminent Danger:** The reason soldiers hesitate to charge over their trench into No-Man's Land is that they know there is a very good possibility they'll be killed. Only the most foolish or desperate adventurers enter a dungeon full of traps and beasts without extraordinarily good reason. Common sense is a great protector when it prevents us from charging through a minefield, or forces us to duck for cover in a firefight.

**Supernatural Aura:** Actual supernatural enchantment or other-dimensional physics at work in the area always leave an impression on the minds of mere mortals. The laws of nature break down in the presence of gods that exist apart from time and space; such beings impose themselves on our world, but the world cannot bear their touch. The mortal mind rebels against the ephemeral touch of spirits and refuses to acknowledge the laws of a plane of existence which is wholly *other*.

Force the action. Player characters don't make Horror Factor saving throws willy-nilly just for adventuring somewhere against all common sense. There is always an instigator of some kind that provokes tense nerves into a forced reaction. The sudden appearance of an imagined threat (real ones are covered later), the shocking discovery of a brutalized victim, or even simply a failed skill roll might all set off the nervous tic on your character's face. Whatever the prompt, make it a good one; characters only need to overcome a place's Horror Factor once for the duration of their stay. Penalties last as long as the character remains in the scary location; multiple checks for the same location replace penalties rather than combine them. Scared characters are by definition not thinking rationally, or even consistently. Mind the number of checks players have to pass; a single success means they swallow their gorge and tough it out,



making them immune to further Horror Factor rolls in this location at this time.

Milk the result. Horror Factor checks need not be made *en masse*. A key pillar of horror is isolation; force the party to make their checks one at a time and at different provocations. Not only is this in keeping with the genre, but can lead to a healthy round of “Did you see that?!?” Another benefit to this approach is that the results of failed checks apply for longer time periods, and allow more opportunity for good role-playing. Human nature is revealed in ugly ways when people succumb to stress; heroes are characters at their best dealing with scenarios no one else can handle. Failed Horror Factor roles are grand opportunities to show characters at their worst, reverting to behaviors suppressed by civilized society. Long after the source of horror has passed, characters will have to deal with the revelation of the selfish, fearful nature within themselves.

### Environmental Horror Factor Reaction Table

**01-14% Let’s Get Out of Here!:** Whatever’s here can stay here, you’re ready to go! Seek to leave by any means possible, with or without the horse you rode in on. Chances are this will either be impractical or against the wishes of the rest of the party, which means your character remains utterly against his wishes and in total preoccupation with leaving. Skills suffer a -20% penalty, and further saving throws vs Horror Factor are made at -4.

**15-29% This Isn’t Happening:** No, I didn’t see that, and neither did you. Whether the real horror lies ahead or only in your mind, the bottom line is that this place is getting to you. Only focus will keep you from panicking. The character’s state of denial leaves him vulnerable to other things. Further saving throws vs Horror Factor, as well as his first initiative roll, are made at -4.

**30-43% My OCD Is Acting Up:** People overcome by stressful situations retreat into those behaviors they find instinctively comforting. Pick up your favorite Palladium core rule book and roll on the Affective Disorders Table found in those wonderful Random Insanity pages. This condition is only temporary. Further saving throws vs Horror Factor are made at -2.

**44-57% Blowin’ Chunks:** Everything tenses up all at once and lets go unexpectedly. Reactions appropriate to this kind of loss of control include involuntary vomiting, the voiding of the bowels, or fainting dead away if your character’s P.E. is low enough. The character will be embarrassed, and probably smell bad as well. Since this is primarily a physical reaction, the character may roll a twenty-sider against his P.E. in order to keep from soiling himself. The relief is palpable, however, and further saving throws vs Horror Factor are made at +2.

**58-72% I’m Too Old for This Stuff:** You’ve had it up to the gills with shadows and sounds and sneaking around. Pump the action on your shotgun, break out the halogen floodlights and drag these monsters out of the darkness into the light of day. The character will be antsy and jumping at shadows, impatient for a confrontation and generally not thinking clearly about his situation. Skills suffer a -30% penalty, but further saving throws vs Horror Factor are made at +2.

**73-86% Trust No One:** I’m not going first, the first one always gets eaten. I’m not going last, things sneak up on the last

one in line. I’m not staying in the middle of everyone either, ‘cuz I can’t run away with all you people around me! The character is in no position to do anything not directly related to his own personal survival. At this point, the rest of the party fades in consideration, and he is concerned only for his own well-being. The character may not use any skills or take any actions that would benefit others unless it is a side effect of helping himself. Further saving throws vs Horror Factor are made at -2.

**87-00% Die! Die! Die!:** There’s only one way to deal with this, lift off and nuke it from orbit. It’s the only way to be sure. Draw your weapon if you don’t have it out already and make sure everything is really safe here. Weapon or spell already ready? Blast the first thing that moves! The character has been so badly rattled that he lets fly with whatever spell or weapon is ready to hand, and at whatever provoked the failed saving throw vs Horror Factor. He will be snappy and irritable when dealing with the rest of the party, and convinced that he is the only one acting rationally, to the point of discounting and utterly ignoring the rest of the party. His blood is up; the next saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor is made at +4.

### Monsters That Matter

Up to now we’ve dealt with implied threats and spooky places, but there’s nothing quite like the silent advance of a masked serial killer or the deafening roar of suppressive fire to get the blood pumping. It’s time to take Horror Factor from a game mechanic to a strategic advantage and intrinsic element of character. We only have two kinds of horror left: Combat and the Supernatural.

Combat Horror is fear based on a reasoned evaluation of perceived threats. The SWAT team getting ready to kick in a drug dealer’s door has so far dealt only with the dealer’s reputation and the environment of his crack-house. Having tracked him down and kicked in the door, the officers now face the very real threat of semi-automatic weapon fire chewing up the furniture around them. Until they can overcome their entirely justified fear of being shot to death, no one is going to return fire. Likewise, the fact that gang bangers are shooting up the joint indicates they’ve already gotten over the shock of having armored cops break down the front door.

Supernatural Horror is where it’s really at, for me. This is the kind of horror that touches the back of your neck when your Paladin walks in on the Necromantic ritual in the final stages of completion. This is what causes your National Guardsman to wet himself when the terrorist he’s chasing claws off his own face and transforms into a slaving, 12-foot man-beast. This fear drops devotees of foreign faiths to their knees mouthing blasphemies against their gods when a hated foe’s stone idol shifts and calls their name. This is the horror that drives men mad at the sight of dead gods dreaming in strange dimensions that touch the borderlands of reality.

It seems only right at this point to introduce a final defense mechanism against the encroaching darkness. Emergency management specialists have studied survivor responses to extreme situations and discovered some interesting statistics. Of those involved in an emergency, 10% panic and make the situation worse, 80% look for someone to follow and defer to their appar-

ent authority or experience, and 10% react with calm and reason in a way that allows themselves and others to increase their chances of survival. Of this last 10%, all of them, 100% of people studied, said they believed fervently in a religion or philosophy, and that this firm belief was what enabled them to behave appropriately. This held as true for the atheist as for the Christian and Muslim. The existence of *exceptional* conviction, and not the substance of the conviction, allowed them to react reasonably in an unreasonable situation. We reflect this firm conviction in the face of terror with the following ability, available to all classes at a cost of 3 permanent P.P.E.:

**True Faith:** Your character has a system of belief so firm and so devout that it shapes his core values even in the face of overwhelming horror. This need not be a real-world religion, or even a religion at all; the character has learned to rely on his faith, his training, or the solidity of reason and logic. The chosen philosophy or cosmology need not even be “true” within the setting of the game. (This is still a game, recall.) An atheist Nega-Psychic may deny the supernatural nature of an Alien Intelligence without doubting its existence or power. By spending 3 P.P.E. (or I.S.P., or Hit Points if he is completely drained of all other stamina), a character may choose to ignore the result of a failed Horror Factor check and select a different consequence from the table appropriate to the source of horror. This ability also allows the character to attempt a saving throw vs Horror Factor when it would not otherwise be permitted.

## Combat Horror

Most supernatural adversaries come with a Horror Factor attribute already in their stat block; we will take this number as their “base” Combat Horror Factor. For ordinary, mortal opponents we need to determine if Horror Factor is appropriate and then describe its severity with several modifiers.

First we need to decide when an opponent merits a Horror Factor. Sleeping monsters aren’t ordinarily very scary, so the opponent must be attacking or hostile. Is the opponent outside the character’s ordinary sphere of experience? Inner city police officers deal with gang bangers, drug dealers, and lawyers routinely; alien and demonic drug dealers – not so much. Is the character meeting with overwhelming force or brutality, or is the opponent acting in an irrational or incomprehensible manner? SWAT teams expect their targets to be armed and dangerous; seldom do they expect their targets to be armed with RPGs and carving mystic circles into their own flesh. If any of these apply, the characters are facing something on the extremes of their experience and training; their adversary has earned a Horror Factor base value of 10.

Now that you have a base value, it’s time to apply some modifiers and see just how scary is scary; most of these conditions will increase an opponent’s apparent or actual threat. Don’t forget that this cuts both ways; a party of player characters storming the Goblin horde with berserker frenzy is likely to give even the thickest sub-humanoid pause. These modifiers are





in addition to any gained from the influence of Reputation or Environment.

Finally, not all reactions are appropriate to a given situation or character. Tactical police, for instance, are unlikely to flee or faint simply because they are caught in an unexpected firefight. Characters with an M.E. attribute equal to or higher than the Combat Horror Factor may adjust the result of a roll on the Combat Horror Factor Reaction table by 10%.

### **Modifiers: +2 to Combat Horror Factor**

**Surprise Attack:** The most effective attackers use the element of surprise, leaping from concealment, hiding in shadows, and striking from behind in an effort to demoralize their foe and penetrate his defenses.

**Excessive Force:** Whether in combination with stealth or in place of it, there is something to be said for toting a rail gun in one hand while shells glance harmlessly from your glittering power armor. Apply this when the attacker clearly outguns or outclasses their target.

**Irrational Behavior:** People behave in certain ways. Enemy soldiers, street toughs, and even hit men behave in predictable patterns. They do not giggle softly and hold conversations with invisible friends. They do guard against personal injury. And they certainly do not dress like a bat and growl when they talk.

**Attrition:** You know you had six guys with you when you came in. Now you only count three. Bob didn't see that last trap; Fred got his throat cut by that maniac's shuriken. No one's sure where Tom is. And *that guy* is still out there! Apply this when the party or opponents are reduced to half strength.

**Outnumbered:** When the first enemy soldier crests the hill, you realize the battle is joined. When the first thousand follow behind him, you realize the battle is lost. Apply this when multiple attackers outnumber the defenders at least two to one.

**Superior Ground:** You know what they say: location, location, location. Victory goes to the combatant with higher ground, intimate knowledge of the battlefield, and the most options for concealment. There's something to be said for home field advantage.

**Supernatural Nature:** Although most supernatural creatures start with their Horror Factor advantage over the base value, an especially disturbing or out of place creature may rate additional bonuses. The same principle applies if the creature is alien, other-dimensional, or otherwise radically removed from the target's ordinary sphere of experience.

Now that we have a final Horror Factor value, it's time to apply it to our strategic advantage. We could just have the monster jump out of the closet and start throwing twenty-siders, but let's consider drawing things out a bit. Rather than force the Horror Factor check when an opponent is first encountered, we wait until a given character comes under direct attack. If the whole party faces off against a group of opponents, have 'em roll the bones. But if instead the lone psycho starts picking them off one at a time, each character checks when he gets attacked. This really puts the teeth into a strike and fade approach, as it enables characters to be dealt with individually and possibly rack up that +2 bonus for Attrition, making it even harder on the rest of the party. On the flip side, players who take advantage of the same

strategy enjoy the satisfaction of an intimate scare. At the beginning of every new melee round, characters must attempt a saving throw vs Horror Factor, until they have made a single successful saving throw. Penalties from failed saving throws normally last for the duration of the melee round.

For example: Our SWAT team kicks in the door of a drug den and begins taking heavy fire (assuming all of their opponents have already passed their own Horror Factor check at the SWAT team's percussive arrival). The cops expected armed resistance going in, so no Horror Factor would normally apply. Unfortunately, they weren't expecting quite this volume of armed hoods, so the gang bangers have a base value of 10, +2 for Superior Ground since they are fighting in their own lair, +2 for Outnumbered since there are more than twice the number of bangers the cops expected – final Horror Factor is 14. They get no other bonuses, as SWAT is equipped with similar weapons and armor. The SWAT team relies on their training to overcome fear, average character level 5, they get a bonus of +2 to saving throws. In about two melees, all of the officers will have passed their checks and act normally for the rest of the engagement. Further into the house, they finally encounter Dragtooth the Druglord, about whom they have heard so much. Armed with a successful Reputation check earlier, SWAT is ready for the filthy basement lit only by bare bulbs and decorated with instruments of torture, and pass the Horror Factor 12 with no difficulty. The power goes out mysteriously, and the team clicks on lights and descends into the dark. At the back of the pack, one officer suddenly goes silent, and when one team member turns to check, someone grabs him from behind and drags sharpened nails across his arms and neck. The attacked officer attempts a saving throw against Horror Factor 16 (base 10, +6 for Surprise Attack, Irrational Behavior, and Superior Ground) and fails. He's going to be at a disadvantage for the rest of the engagement, and the rest of the team still hasn't even seen their obviously psychotic attacker!

### **Combat Horror Factor Reaction Table**

**01-11% Scared Spitless:** The victim stands his ground and refuses to budge. Weapons and held items are clenched tightly in grips of iron, but not used in any way. He may close his eyes and mutter prayers, but not actually cast spells or take any kind of action. Characters with an especially weak constitution may actually faint dead away or momentarily lose control of bodily functions. The next saving throw is made at a -4 penalty, and if failed, at -20% on the Reaction Table.

**12-22% The Coward Within:** Rooted to the spot, the victim drops all pretense of trying to fight or flee and simply begs for mercy. He cannot run away, and will refuse to fight back. The victim may attempt to make a bargain, or otherwise plead with his attacker, even if the attacker can't understand him. The next saving throw is made at -2 penalty. Defensive actions during this melee are made with no bonuses at all, and the victim may not move.

**23-33% The Devil's on Your Heels:** This fight was a bad choice to begin with, and the victim is getting out of here as fast as possible and by any means necessary. He drops anything he's holding (or possibly throws it at the source of horror) and high-tails it for the exit if at all possible. If the source of horror is between him and the exit, then directly away from it will do just



fine, even if that happens to be deeper into the abandoned mine shaft. He cannot fight back effectively, as he is focused on fleeing. The character may take only actions that help him to escape; all combat actions are made with no bonuses at all.

**34-44% Fightin' Wild:** Panic and disciplined combat do not mix; the victim is jumping at shadows and swinging wildly. Even friends may be mistaken for enemies and are likely to get hit if they are between the victim and the source of horror. He has no initiative score, and all combat actions are made at -6 penalty. The victim loses his first 2 attacks and may not use Automatic Parry or Automatic Dodge.

**45-55% Off Kilter:** Startled and off balance, the victim is badly rattled and off his game. He knows friend from foe, though, and will not blindly lash out around himself. Reduce initiative by half and combat actions are made at -4 penalty. The victim loses his first attack and may not use Automatic Parry or Automatic Dodge.

**56-66% Gut Reactions:** Fight reactions take over, but the victim is letting reactions dictate his attacks rather than reason. Initiative and all combat actions are made at a -2 penalty. He retains all his attacks per melee, but may not use Automatic Parry or Automatic Dodge.

**67-77% Blind Fury:** Caution gives way to zeal as the fighter puts everything into his most devastating attacks. Friends are once again in danger as the victim will not hesitate to use area effect attacks (such as fireballs or grenades) if those are the most devastating available to him. He attacks with whichever weapons deal the most damage. Bonuses to strike are cut in half, but a successful hit does double damage.

**78-88% Cautious Advance:** Still willing to fight, the victim trades damage potential for ability to hit in combat. Bonuses to strike are doubled, but damage is cut in half. The next saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor is made at a +2 bonus.

**89-00% Defensive Posture:** Clearly a bit more caution is called for in dealing with this opponent. The victim enjoys a +4 bonus to defend and may move as normal, but may not make any attacks in this melee round. The next saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor is made with a +4 bonus.

## The Supernatural Horror

Finally, the bloody, beating heart of the matter. Most supernatural creatures have a Horror Factor attribute that quantifies the alien nature of their existence; it's time to put that to good use. First off, a creature that possesses its own Horror Factor automatically generates a Combat Horror Factor as well. The usual modifiers apply, and once the first saving throw has been made, a character's adrenaline is pumping and no further checks are necessary.

Supernatural Horror is another animal entirely.

Creatures with a Supernatural Horror Factor come from a place that is utterly alien to a character's frame of reference. Their very existence is an abomination to the natural order of things, a manifestation of the violation of natural law. Supernatural Horror Factor is the result of other-dimensional energies encroaching on a foreign plane of reality; creatures with this attribute are either from another layer of existence, or are channeling P.P.E. energies in a way that negates one or more laws of

nature. For example: the vampire is a conduit for an Alien Intelligence of unspeakable evil; Faeries are creatures composed of solidified magic; a Werewolf blends two natural and mundane forms in a way that cannot possibly exist. All of these creatures possess their own Supernatural Horror Factor. In contrast, a supervillain with an uncontrollable thirst for blood, and a genetically modified mutant wolf are both completely mundane – if somewhat disturbing. While these latter two creatures might have a Combat Horror Factor, they are not supernatural in nature. If they are not attacking, they are not quite as scary.



## Aura of Fear

Time to put that supernatural aura of fear or awe to good use. Aura is the key here; Supernatural Horror Factor extends from its source and lingers over any place where the creature habitually goes. The aura of fear penetrates solid matter, and does not depend on line of sight; adventurers prowling a dungeon for the dragon's hoard are going to feel its presence long before they actually see the beast. The extent of this aura varies with the creature's habits. A vampire's influence may only extend to its lair and hunting grounds. A zombie may only influence its immediate surroundings, but you can be sure that a Demon Lord's entire rotting, infested dungeon practically reeks with its foul presence. Those entering the influence of an Aura of Fear need attempt a saving throw only once for each encounter with the creature; pass or fail, the result of that saving throw stands for the duration of the encounter. Due to the effects of Supernatural

Authority, when multiple auras overlap, the strongest one drowns out all the rest, and only one saving throw need be attempted. Creatures with their own Supernatural Horror Factor may add half its value as a bonus to resist the effects of Aura of Fear.

To those without supernatural senses, this Aura of Fear appears to be a change in the environment around them, so that cold chills run down a character's spine moments before he hears the low moan of the zombie horde in the hallway. These types of characters will be unable to distinguish the effects of an Aura of Fear from those of ordinary Environmental Horror Factor, complicated by the fact that the psychic residue of this aura contributes to a location's own Horror Factor. Players should not be able to rely on the Game Master calling for saving throws to indicate the presence of a monster in the area.

A creature's Aura of Fear leaves a psychic residue in an area that persists for an extended period of time and fades only slowly. An aura persists for an amount of time equal to the time its owner spent in the area, multiplied by the strength of the Horror Factor. For example: a vampire spends two years in the same abandoned slum, stalking the neighborhood and feeding on vagrants. Even after he departs, his Supernatural Horror Factor 14 means the place will experience the psychic residue of his reign of terror for 28 years to come (2 years x 14 = 28 years).

This psychic residue acts to increase the Environmental Horror Factor of an area, as well as drawing other supernatural creatures to the area. Additionally, it registers on Sense Evil, Sense Supernatural, Sense P.P.E., and similar spells and abilities. Creatures that are drawn to sources of P.P.E. (especially near mindless ones such as Haunting Entities and Poltergeists) frequently mistake this psychic residue for an ambient P.P.E. source. Intelligent creatures who are sensitive to this kind of thing (Psi-Stalkers, Dog Boys, etc.) will readily notice the difference once they investigate; skilled investigators may even be able to deduce the general source of the aura, and how long it has been there. This kind of psychic residue isn't readily quantified, and serves primarily as setting, flavor, and clue material for the Game Master. Although the residue of this aura persists for some time, no saving throw is needed against the psychic residue.

## Aura of Fear Reaction Table

**01-09% I've Got a Bad Feeling About This:** Coming here was a bad idea, and the character is determined to let everyone know that he said so from the beginning – even if he didn't. Everything he confronts generates a feeling of preordained failure, and omens loom in every happenstance. He will resist any plan that seems to lead to direct confrontation, and generally contribute nothing creative to the party's efforts. Skill checks are made at a -10% penalty. The character is at -2 in his first saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor in every encounter, as well as to resist the effects of Supernatural Authority.

**10-18% Alone in the Dark:** Enemies are all around, and even some of the party may have been compromised. The affected character will not fight in concert with anyone else, believing them to be foolish, weak, or possibly even mind controlled. He is likely to enact plans without consulting others, and dismiss or question the plans of the rest of the party – even and especially if those plans are sound. That's the most suspi-

cious thing of all. The character is at -2 to his first saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor in every encounter, as well as to resist the effects of Supernatural Authority.

**19-27% No Need to See:** The character will do everything in his power to avoid confrontation with the source of horror. Since the decision to enter the lair has usually already been made, this often translates into a preference for traps and clever plans rather than a headlong rush into combat. He will be reluctant to take part in any plan that involves direct combat, and will seek the path least likely to lead to confrontation with the supernatural. The character is at -2 to his first saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor in every encounter, as well as to resist the effects of Supernatural Authority.

**28-36% We're Doomed:** Everyone is doomed; he can feel it in the air. The character anticipates the worst-case scenario in every encounter, and plans accordingly. Ironically, this leads to him making the safest possible choice in any given situation, and taking a bit of extra time to arrive at that conclusion. He will seek to delay action for as long as possible, and cover all the circumstances that might arise. Skill checks will never be made hastily, and enjoy a +10% bonus. The character is at -2 to his first saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor in every encounter, as well as to resist the effects of Supernatural Authority.

**37-45% This Is Not Reality:** The character has such a tight grip on his own fear that it affects everything else he's doing. Swallowing his gorge doesn't mean he rises to the occasion, instead resulting in a combination of denial and dismissal. He will be slow to react to combat, and dull in perceiving threats. The character is at -4 to initiative in every encounter. He will refuse to believe the evidence of supernatural senses and skills that interpret or yield information, rendering those abilities useless to him.

**46-55% The Zen Master:** Feeling fear is no reason to yield to it. Fear is a healthy reaction to an unhealthy situation, and he knew that from the beginning. Fear must be dismissed so that the source of fear may be addressed. Fear is nothing. Courage is nothing. All that is is that which is. An unnatural calm steals over the character, and he enjoys a +4 bonus to initiative in every encounter.

**56-64% Leave Nothing to Chance:** The familiar trumps the foreign. Every moment not spent in planning or in combat must be filled with some other form of activity. Equipment must be checked; evidence must be reexamined. Attention must be paid to every detail so that nothing is overlooked. Preparation is the key to survival. Preoccupation means this character is at -4 to initiative in every encounter. He will not leave any location without a thorough search, and will spend extra time after combat ensuring that any opponents will not be able to attack again.

**65-73% Into the Black:** Supernatural lairs are often breeding grounds for filth and vermin. Infection and disease follow. The touch and smell of these things overwhelms the character, and he responds by embracing the filth and mire. Reckless choices now seem foolishly cautious, and he is convinced that the only way past the horror is directly through the source of it. Other party members are likely to begin avoiding the character after his first combat, if only because of the gore and bile that cling to him. Skill checks are made at a -10% penalty. The character is at +2 to his first saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor in every encounter.

**74-82% The Razor's Edge:** Snap judgments seldom yield the best results, but the character has begun to rely on wits and instinct rather than training and reason. Gut reactions rule every situation, causing to the character to plunge ahead without evaluating location or threat. He triggers traps, charges enemies, and takes everything at face value. He may not use any skills that require information analysis or evaluation, cannot detect lies, and generally believes his dexterity and constitution proof against physical harm. The character is at +2 to his first saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor in every encounter.

**83-91% With Me or Against Me:** The only good spook is a dead spook, and there is no situation that cannot be resolved by the application of extreme force. Pushed to the very edge of his reason, the character has ceased looking for subtle and imaginative ways of dealing with problems. All of his resources will be brought to bear in the most direct, and often the most destructive, way possible. He does not throw caution to the wind, but has generally dismissed the idea of retreat as impractical or impossible. Party members who disagree are likely to be viewed as obstacles or even enemies. The character is at +4 to his first saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor in every encounter. Attempts by party members to dissuade or argue with the character have a 30% chance of provoking a hostile response leading to combat between player characters!

**92-00% We Who Are About to Die:** If the party doesn't take down this menace, no one will. Steely resolve and hardened willpower come to bear in a dangerous combination for the source of horror. The character is determined to see the end of this threat and will take any measure towards that goal. Unfortunately, all his plans seem tinged with the aura of martyrdom; the character is resigned to die, and to take the source of horror with him. He will be the first one in, the last one out, and quickest to seize upon a course of action that although successful, will certainly lead to his own death. The character is at +4 to his first saving throw vs Combat Horror Factor in every encounter.

## Supernatural Authority

In addition to the effect on the environment, a creature may use the strength of its supernatural aura as an effective means to cow and subjugate mortals and other lesser beings. Only characters with an M.E. at least equal to the Horror Factor, or who possess a Supernatural Horror Factor themselves, may even attempt a saving throw. All others *automatically* fail. The upshot is that we have a growling demonic entity facing down a squad of blooded combat veterans, and these professional tough guys are wetting their pants. This has a secondary effect of establishing a sort of pecking order, in which the scarier monsters rule the weaker by virtue of Supernatural Authority. Unlike other authority figures, familiarity does not breed contempt. Even creatures who come and go from the presence of supernatural evil on a regular basis never quite get used to it.

A supernatural creature may impose its will on lesser supernaturals through sheer force of magic, an authority over fundamental forces of the universe as quantified by their Horror Factor. This ability functions exactly like the Manipulation skill previously described, but is not dependent on clear lines of communication. The two creatures need not share a common language; intentions and purpose are transmitted through interlocking P.P.E. auras. The creature wishing to assert its au-

thority need not even target a single individual, merely the expression of this ability extends to the full limit of its supernatural aura, affecting everyone within the radius. With a bellow of rage, a glance of cold contempt, the invisible shrug of a supernatural shoulder, or by simply dreaming it so, waves of magic rush outwards, engulfing those near enough to feel them, and twisting their insides on a foundational level. Most mortals and creatures without a supernatural Horror Factor are automatically overcome without even the chance to save themselves; only those with an M.E. equal to or greater than the Horror Factor may attempt a saving throw *with no bonuses*. Supernatural creatures who possess their own Horror Factor may attempt a saving throw with a bonus equal to half its value.

The true power of this ability comes from the fact that it is actually impossible to overcome this kind of fear. This isn't a product of reason, or chemical processes within the body. This aura of Supernatural Authority is fundamental to the nature of the universe itself. Creatures who exist apart from the laws of the universe provoke reactions on a level so basic and primal that mortal man simply does not have the tools to deal with it; certain coping mechanisms are his only defense. Only creatures who possess their own Supernatural Horror Factor equal to or greater than the one being exercised are immune to the effects of this twisting of reality.

Characters with the ability to resist may attempt a saving throw once per confrontation; once a successful saving throw is made, that character need never attempt another in regards to this individual creature. The downside is that such a saving throw can never truly overcome a creature's Horror Factor. A successful die roll simply allows the character to choose any reaction on the table. A failed roll means the character rolls on the table as normal; another save must be attempted the next time the character confronts this individual creature. The aura of Supernatural Authority is such that no two creatures will ever be mistaken for one another, and a character who has successfully saved against a creature's Supernatural Horror Factor will readily be able to identify that individual creature in future encounters. Those who continually fail this roll are still too scared to know the difference, and not likely to stay sane enough to care.

In a dungeon or temple stocked with creatures of supernatural evil, drama suffers when players must resist the supernatural aura of everything they encounter. The ability to exercise Supernatural Authority is reserved for the one to whom all the others answer. As with Aura of Fear, the strongest source of evil drowns out all others. A roll on the Supernatural Authority Reaction Table is appropriate only when confronting a creature with an unmodified Horror Factor of at least 18. Other failed checks roll on the Aura of Fear table and apply the result for the rest of the encounter.

No one comes away from an encounter with greater supernatural beings unscarred; all changes from the Supernatural Authority Reaction Table are *permanent*. Characters rightly balk at confronting the unknown – players should as well.

## Supernatural Authority Reaction Table

**01-13% That Which Is Not:** There are things from outside time and space, things man was not meant to know. Merely the glimpse of unseemly realities can lodge in one's brain and de-



vous him from the inside. What rest is there for one who has trod the decaying pilgrimage through strange eons to Wormwood? Who would close their eyes once departed from the presence of Thoth, but instead gouge out those orbs lest anything else happen before them? What blood could taste as sweet as the oozing ichor of the voice which calls in dreams and wakes to devour its own flesh? There is no place for this thing which is not, which can be neither embraced nor denied. Roll twice on the Random Insanity tables from your favorite Palladium core book.

**14-26% The Abomination:** This creature may not exist, nor must any evidence of it be allowed to continue. The character gains an irrational hatred for the source of horror, mixed with a strange fascination for everything it represents. He is consumed by the desire to destroy it, depose it, and take its place in the cosmos. All that it has will be wiped away and replaced with himself. All that worship this thing will bow to him instead. He will tear out its core and consume its essence, transcending the depths of depravity and reaches of power that it represents. He will never rest until its very name is forgotten, and only his own is spoken in its place. This is the same effect as the Obsession Insanity, with the source of horror as an object of both love and hate.

**27-39% The Mad Prophet:** Courage has failed. Faith has failed. Let the world crumble to dust, for it matters not. The character will seek someplace far from the presence of the source of horror, hidden from its gaze and beyond the reach of its tooth and claw. Escape may be sought in death if that would not consign his soul to the creature's maw. The alarm must be raised in all lands. Heroes must be sought, though hope be abandoned. Roll once on the Psychosis table from your favorite Palladium core book. The character's outlook is forever colored by the existence of the source of horror.

**40-61% Fear and Trembling:** The mind can handle that which is *other*, by framing it within the context of a threat. Already well prepared to deal with physical threats, the mind simply refuses to acknowledge the nature of the source of horror. The character brings this creature down to his own frame of reference and deals with it on that basis and that basis alone. Suggestions as to any other response will likely be met with violent opposition. Roll once on the Aura of Fear table, and once on the Combat Horror Factor table. These results apply whenever the character faces this individual creature or other creatures clearly aligned with it.

**62-74% Damned and Deceived:** The source of horror cannot be fought, but perhaps it may be placated. Perhaps it may be bargained with. Sovereigns need supplicants, and this character may be able to fill that role. He will admit the error of his ways, repent of hostile intent toward the source of horror, and offer it anything within his power to give. This can lead to a character surrendering his own P.P.E. reserve, letting his blood in a ritual display, or perhaps even slaying his friends in an unquestionable display of devotion. The motivation behind such action is always selfish, a combination of the depravity of human nature and a basic misunderstanding of the supernatural. This encounter has rocked the character's entire world view and radically altered his perceptions of life. Shift the character's alignment one "step" toward Diabolic. (E.g., Principled becomes Scrupulous, Anarchist becomes Miscreant, etc.) If the source of horror is ca-

pable of creating a link to the supernatural, the character has the opportunity to change the class of his character to Shifter, Witch, Warlock, or another appropriate O.C.C. Of course, lesser supernaturals mistaken for sources of great power are likely to make great promises in return for servitude as well.



**75-87% Sackcloth and Ashes:** The presence of the supernatural encroaches so completely on the character's life that everything else fades from importance. A sort of cosmic awareness descends upon him, and the character suddenly understands the nature of the universe and the interdependency of all things within it. Individuals are meaningless next to the cosmic balance, as is the struggle between life and death, chaos and order. Harmony must be sought in all things, and that which disrupts the harmony of balance must be utterly eradicated. At the same time, no sacrifice is too great to right the scales of the cosmos, and no life is too important to sacrifice. The character gains the Insanity of Obsession with the concept of cosmic balance, and his alignment shifts one "step" toward Principled. (E.g., Diabolic becomes Aberrant, Anarchist becomes Unprincipled, etc.)

**88-00% A Dark Veil:** The alien nature of the supernatural is seen as a higher or more powerful state of existence than that of the character. The character develops a sort of manic-depressive fixation on the source of horror, so that things relating to this supernatural source fuel his energy to new heights. On the other hand, once removed from the source of power, the character lapses into despair and brooding. While dealing with things re-

lated to the source of horror, the character enjoys a +2 to all combat actions, +2 to all saving throws not originating from the source of horror, and +10% bonus to all skills. While not involved with the source of horror, he suffers from -3 to all combat actions, -3 to all saving throws, and -15% penalty to all skills. If this result is obtained multiple times, the new source of horror replaces the previous as the manic-depressive fixation, and the character rolls once on the Affective Disorders Insanity table. The character recognizes the source of his energy on an unconscious level, and will sabotage the efforts of others and himself to do away with the focus of his obsession for good. There is a 30% chance the character will turn to drugs or alcohol as a means of dealing with what he knows to be an unhealthy fixation.

## The Cheese Sandwich

Having dealt with so many sources of intimidation, one yet remains to be conquered. No rule mechanic in the world is going to scare players that are determined to tickle the snot out of your monsters and check their backs for zippers. A creature's Reputation and Horror Factor are not meant as a way to bludgeon your players into attitudes of craven fear. These rules are meant to increase the challenge rating in front of those Fearless Monster Stompers™ and perhaps provide a little concrete definition to a somewhat nebulous number.

Remember that the essence of horror doesn't come from the rules, or even from the most talented Game Master. The essence of a horror role-playing experience comes from the combination of players who are in the spirit of the game and a Game Master equipped with the right rules and imagination. This article should have provided the rules. The imagination is up to you.

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# Impersonator Zombies

## Optional Material for Dead Reign™

By Steven Dawes

## Impersonators

### A Zombie Aberration

*"I can come up with a lot of reasons as to why I got suckered the first time I met one. I could say that I was a rookie zombie slayer, that I wasn't aware that there were other kinds of zombies besides Slouchers and Crawlers at the time, that as a paramedic before the wave I ran on an instinct to help people, or even the simple fact that I'm a sucker for helping a woman in need... take your pick. The point is that I was suckered by a zombie and not only did it cost me, it still haunts me just how close I came to enlisting in the undead army that day.*

*"A few months back, before the Street Gang Protectors started banding together and I joined them, I was a solo survivor, hunting for food and supplies in one of the many suburbs outside Chicago. I'd done really good at staying out of trouble and had yet to take any real punishment from a zombie since I'd started scrounging. This particular morning I was walking down a street of some subdivision whose name I don't recall (not that it matters now anyway) when I heard what sounded like a woman crying in one of the many homes.*

*"Most of these homes had already been rummaged through by their looks, so I was cherry picking houses to dig through and I would have passed this house if I hadn't heard someone crying inside. My thoughts were that there was a woman in need of help, possibly injured, and naturally I went to investigate. To my credit, I already had my old man's shotgun in hand when I approached the front door.*

*"The door wasn't kicked in or broken off its hinges, it was just wide open. The screen door was still intact and looked undamaged, so in my inexperience I let my guard down. I even had the foolishness to close and lock the front door behind me... I didn't want to be ambushed by someone (or something) from outdoors, ya know? All the while I could hear the woman crying, she was upstairs somewhere. I at least had enough sense at the time not to call out to her and let the whole zombie neighborhood know that an 'idiot supper' was wandering through the house.*

*"I followed her cries up the stairs, finding the master bedroom door, linen closet door, bathroom door and attic door were all closed. The cries were coming from the master bedroom. While I crept to the door I stepped on a creaky floorboard. In that instant I heard her crying stop short and heard the sound of a door shutting inside the bedroom, a closet door maybe. I thought perhaps she was worried that I was a zombie and went into hiding. I had to say something so she wouldn't shoot the door down with me behind it or be waiting with a baseball bat or something.*

*"'Lady?' I called out as I slowly opened the door. The room was a complete disaster, the top mattress had been mostly pulled off the box springs, the dresser drawers had all been pulled out and clothing was strewn all over the floor. There were pictures of a family on top of the dresser, which included two teenage boys and a man and woman who looked to be in their late 40s or early 50s. I thought perhaps this was the woman I heard crying. Then, amongst the clothing and drawers I saw a small blood trail; it led to the closet door, and just as I made that assumption her sobbing started again.*

*"'Ma'am... I'm not going to hurt you; I came up here to help you... I could hear you crying from outside. Ma'am?' But she kept on crying as I repeated that I wanted to help her a few*





more times. Then she finally stopped and said a single word... 'Help.' That was it for me at that point, I told her that I was opening the closet door and to not attack me. I still honestly expected to find a woman sitting or lying on the closet floor injured, but instead what met me was a male zombie, standing and lunging out at me!

"Under all the gore and rotting skin, this zombie had vaguely looked like the man in the picture on the dresser, but I wasn't interested in his details at the time, I was more interested in using my shotgun as a barricade and blunt weapon to get his hands off my coat. That's when he started that hideous moaning that still sends shivers up my spine to this day, but having one inches from my face and moaning out with that putrid breath was nearly too much. Finally, I got lucky and pushed him back into the closet, shutting the door on him. But by then the trap had already been sprung; I heard several moans begin to echo throughout the house, two of them in the bedroom behind me!

"From under the half cocked mattress on the floor and under the bed itself came two Crawlers. Both moaning, they resembled the woman and one of the boys who stood next to her in the picture. I turned and ran, but in my hasty retreat, the woman zombie grabbed my boot just enough to trip me. I fell into the wall adjacent to the bedroom doorway. While rising to my feet, I had a moment to see the Crawlers coming at me and the closet door opening, allowing my ambusher to come at me again. I scrambled into the hallway and headed downstairs but was stopped short. Three Slouchers were coming up the stairs towards me!

"The long and short of this story goes that I did manage to escape with my life, but it cost me all my shells, some nasty scratches on my legs (one of them left a mean scar as a me-

mento of the experience) and my clothing and coat were caked in blood and gore; it was days before I found a clean lake to wash them off. Ironically, I would have gotten out of the house faster and with less trouble, but I locked the damn front door when I came in, giving the Runner who came at me from the kitchen just enough time to catch me and hold me back long enough for the others to catch up.

"Since then I've learned about the various zombies and I think I'm a hell of a lot smarter about how I do things. I've heard a few other stories since then about the Impersonators; they've made sounds like a baby crying, a dog whimpering, cries for help and other signs of needing some sort of assistance. They seem to be related to the Thinkers in that they are good at setting up ambushes with other zombies and then they'll impersonate sounds and voices to get their prey's attention.

"As a member of the Street Gang Protectors now, I still help those in need and so I'm still a sucker for answering cries for help. But you can bet your ass that I'm a lot more careful about answering those calls these days. Fool me once... shame on you, fool me twice... shame on me."

- Benjamin Foster, Ex-Paramedic and Street Gang Protector

From a visual standpoint, Impersonators look just like any other Sloucher or Thinker you'll come across in your daily life on the streets. They even act identical to the Thinkers in that they seem to have retained a sense of self awareness and intelligence, use tools and notice things in their surrounding environment. The main difference with an Impersonator is its talent for mimicking sounds of distress. Crying, sobbing, shouts of pain, cries for help, whimpering like an injured dog and other sounds



are used by the Impersonators to get the attention of their human prey.

Like the Thinkers, they are adept at setting up simple ambushes and traps, but once the trap is set they'll use their impersonation ability to lure their prey closer to them. With their ability to communicate with other zombies and give them simple instructions, they can make their traps that much more deadly. Also like the Thinkers, they are smart enough to hunt in locations where humans commonly travel and set up traps that place humans at a disadvantage.

Another unique aspect that separates them from Thinkers is that their ability to sense life energy has a greater range than other zombies, even when dormant. This gives them the ability to wake up when a human gets close enough and begin to perform whatever impersonation they choose at the moment while other dormant zombies in the area stay dormant until the trap is sprung.

Not surprisingly, the Impersonators are a problem and nuisance to Scroungers, Shepherds of the Damned, Street Gang Protectors and others who actively seek out and help survivors. It's nearly a guarantee that these people will run into an Impersonator at some point and will more than likely make the mistake of answering their cries and moving in on their location, springing their trap. Even the most experienced parties may still fall for an Impersonator's cry for help from time to time.

## Impersonator Zombie R.C.C.

**Note:** Not available nor appropriate as a player character. Considered to be part of the 4% Thinker Zombie category due to their similarities.

**Also known as:** Sobbing S.O.B.s, Mimics and Chick Flickers.

**Alignment:** Considered Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D4+8, M.E. 1D4+8, M.A. 1D4+6, P.S. 2x Strength when alive (typically 2D6+14), P.P. 1D6+3, P.E. 1D6+15, P.B. 2D4, Spd 1D4+8.

**Hit Points:** P.E. attribute number +6, but all Main Body S.D.C. must be depleted first before Hit Points can be affected.

**Note:** See S.D.C. by Location and Hit Points for more details.

### S.D.C. by Location:

- \* Hands (2) – 1D6+6 each
- \* Arms (2) – 1D8+8 each
- \* Feet (2) – 1D6+6 each
- \* Legs (2) – 2D6+10 each
- \* Lower Jaw – 1D6+6
- \*\* Neck – 1D6+14
- \*\* Head – 2D6+16
- \*\*\* Main Body – 3D6+30

**Armor Rating:** 14

**Horror Factor:** 13

**P.P.E.** 1D4+2

## Special Abilities of the Impersonator:

**Simple Awareness and Reasoning:** Same as described under the *Thinker Zombie R.C.C.* on page 48 of the **Dead Reign™ RPG**.

**Use Simple Weapons and Tools:** Same as described in the *Thinker Zombie R.C.C.* on pages 48-49 of the **Dead Reign™ RPG**.

**Simple Communication with Zombies:** Same as described in the *Thinker Zombie R.C.C.* on page 49 of the **Dead Reign™ RPG**.

**Imitate/Impersonate Sounds of Distress:** The Impersonator has a unique ability to emit sounds of anguish, sorrow, pain, misery and similar sounds of duress to attract human prey. No one is entirely sure how they do it, but the popular theory is that when the human was killed by a zombie, its vocal cords mutated during the process of becoming the undead, enabling it to emit a variety of sounds. There is a rumor going around that says a Thinker Zombie has to kill the human who becomes an Impersonator Zombie, but there has been no proof to substantiate this.

It's important to note that the Impersonator Zombie cannot truly speak human languages (although like the Thinker, they can recognize and understand what people are saying on a basic level). However, like a parrot they have the ability to mimic a few choice words to help sell their duress facade. Words like "help," "help me," "I'm trapped," "it hurts," "this way," "over here," and other similar words can be used. Impersonation of either an animal, female or male voice is performed at a skill percentage of 70%. A failed roll means that the words are garbled and unintelligible, or sound synthetic and may tip off those with experience in dealing with Impersonators.

**Natural Abilities:** Standard as previously described in the **Dead Reign™ RPG**.

**See Life Energy (P.P.E.):** 9000 feet (2,743.2 m) at night or in darkness.

**Sense Life Energy (P.P.E.):** 100 feet, no matter how many humans are present. Note that this range is in effect even when the Impersonator Zombie is dormant.

**Recognize Humans by Scent:** 83%. This also tells the zombie that humans are nearby, or have been present recently.

**Track Humans by Scent:** 18% chance, +10% if the human is sweaty or hasn't bathed in three or more days, +10% to follow the scent of blood, +5% if there is more than one human present in the same area, +5% to smell perfume, cologne or aftershave. All bonuses are accumulative.

**Smell Fear in Humans:** Makes zombies more aggressive: +1 on initiative and +1 to strike or disarm. If the level of fear is fever pitched or five or more people are terrified, the zombie is also +1 attack per melee round.

**Zombies Can See Without Eyes:** The eyes glow with a red light inside empty eye sockets.

**Keen Sense of Hearing:** Can pinpoint location of a Zombie Moan after hearing it for only 30 seconds.

**Impervious to Most Everything:** Only decapitation, destroying a zombie's brain, and fire can kill a zombie. Does not need to breathe, and survives underwater and in a vacuum.

**S.D.C. and Hit Point Regeneration:** 1D6+3 S.D.C. and 2 Hit Points are automatically restored every hour. Extra P.P.E. may also restore S.D.C. and Hit Points at a rate of 1D6+2

S.D.C. and one Hit Point per extra P.P.E. point. See S.D.C. and Hit Points for details.

No Life Energy of Their Own: Zombies are cold, dark creatures without body heat or an aura. They cannot be seen by infrared and thermal imaging optic systems. Rather, zombies register the same as a piece of timber.

Go Dormant: A stasis sleep that keeps zombies from decaying. Walking dead hide when they go dormant and can be waiting anywhere.

People Slain by the Zombie Rise as One: Victims slain in a zombie attack, their P.P.E. absorbed, rise as the walking dead within 2D4+4 minutes after expiration.

**Skills of Note:** Climb 45%/30%, Detect Ambush 45%, Detect Concealment 35%, Land Navigation 60%, Language: Native Tongue (understand only) 50%, Prowl 40%, Tailing 50%, and Tracking (People) 50%.

**Attacks per Melee:** Three and may use simple weapons.

**Damage (S.D.C./Hit Points):**

Bite: 2D6 damage (and a chance of infection if the wound isn't treated shortly after receiving it), P.S. damage bonus does NOT apply to bite attacks.

Head Butt: 2D4 damage + P.S. damage bonus (if any).

Punch/Claw Attack: 1D6 damage + P.S. damage bonus (if any).

Power Punch: 2D6 damage + P.S. damage bonus (if any), but counts as two melee attacks.

Kick Attack: 2D4 damage + P.S. damage bonus (if any).

Weapon: May use simple weapons and tools. See Special Abilities.

Note: Leap kick, other kicks, body flip, and martial art attacks are NOT possible by Impersonators.

**Bonuses:** +1 on initiative, +2 on Perception Rolls, +1 to strike, parry and dodge, +1 to disarm, and pull punch, and +2 to roll with impact; also see *Special Abilities* and *Natural Abilities*.

**Penalties:** Impersonators fire guns and other long-range weapons with a penalty of -2 to strike, and the zombie does not know, nor is it able to figure out, how to reload a gun, or recharge/refuel tools and devices, and may even try to use them a few times before realizing they are out of fuel/ammunition and abandoning them.

**Vulnerabilities:** The usual: Slow moving, can't swim and poor climber. Head shots, decapitation and fire kill it, severe cold reduces speed. Fear of fire is as strong in an Impersonator as any zombie and holds it at bay; Horror Factor 16. Plus: Impersonators have only the most rudimentary powers of reason and the ability to recognize patterns, figure out puzzles and formulate simple ideas; cannot read. Some exhibit a sardonic sense of humor or irony.

# Of Cloth, Staff, and Scripture

## Optional and Unofficial Rules for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Reed Dees

*The brilliant yellow sun of Palladium slowly rose above the Roc's Claw Mountain range in the Old Kingdom. As the first rays of light struck the white stone temple, an old Elven Priestess and a human Priest of Dragonwright walked slowly through the great hall. The dim sanctuary contrasted their topic of conversation.*

*"The new acolytes will be ordained tonight. I love this day of the year; everybody dressed in their best regalia, parties, and fellowship."*

*"So many preparations still need to be taken care of. Sister Sommer started cooking with her protégés about twenty minutes ago. They won't be out of that kitchen until the ceremony."*

*"Father Graysen is finishing up his lessons with some last minute advice. It's soon to be a harrowing time for the initiates, because they now have a direct link to the gods. They need comfort and guidance to help them acclimate to the power coursing through their veins."*

*The two friends continued planning as they made their way to the Sanctuary for morning rites. Membership had steadily decreased since the Church of Light and Dark moved into the city some months back, shrinking from over one hundred to just under twenty. That church just had more to offer and when combined with high nobility conversions, the once great dragon temple became an empty non-entity. Yet all were hopeful. The new three new converts and a fresh class of acolytes offered renewed hope for the future.*

Gods and their messengers have been part of legends since recorded history, starting with the Epic of Gilgamesh and continuing throughout time. The gods sent their men and women to intercede on their behalf. In the world of Palladium Fantasy, the gods are a real, palpable presence, acting as they see fit. People choose to worship a deity that directly affects their lives, and the beings of the Palladium World venerate multiple deities on a daily basis. Why would a Dwarf in a mountain home want to worship Algor, god of the sea? How does one choose with so many options? How does a god treat the clergy spreading his or her name across the lands?

The following is an expansion for the Priest of Light, Warrior Monk, and the Priest of Darkness classes, seeking to answer those very questions.

# Who Seeks Deeper Faith?

It is hard to quantify a person's reasoning for seeking a deeper relationship with his or her god, and impossible to completely understand the motivation for joining the religious establishment. Some reasons are fame, glory, money, power, prestige, compassion, duty, and the list continues. However, the motivations can be boiled down into five broad categories.

**Family/Duty.** Many clergy are multi-generational families, continuing the trends set by their ancestors. In these traditions, the first born is initiated at a very early age, 1D6 years, and is raised by the church. They are taught exactly what is expected of them, and where they will end up, and most will never see the outside of the walls of the congregation. They are rooted in that spot. What is the upside? They become great leaders and gain powerful positions to maintain familial prestige.

These men and women are most prevalent with ancient ruling classes and family dependent societies such as the Western Empire and most Dwarven cities. In the Eastern Territory, second and later children commonly join the clergy. The first born inherits the full title and the familial wealth, leaving him or her with the good life. The later children are left with next to nothing and most fend for themselves; many see the churches as a way to maintain their power in addition to saving face, creating a life in the ranks of the faithful.

**Glory/Power/Fame.** For many, religion offers an alluring face. Money flows through churches as water down the South Winds rivers, and money equals power. Some individuals join to cash in, seeking high position within the hierarchy or the local governments if the church is state sponsored. The glory seekers tend toward the wandering clergy ideal. These people take quests and seek vague clues hoping to be written in the annals of legend. Some are zealots, some are determined, and all are restless souls seeking what lies beyond the last horizon. Most never find their great fame but will accomplish good work along their journey. These men and women are most common in the Great Northern Wilderness, the Western Empire, and the Old Kingdom.

**Altruism.** The altruistic character is the true opiate of the people. These beings join churches to relieve suffering. Many were victims of tragedies of their own. They are doctors, nurses, herbalists, and caregivers who use their Healing Touch, Exorcism, and Resurrection abilities to the nth degree, and always seek the downtrodden and forgotten to usher them to the fold. Many try their best to avoid taking up arms, but if provoked, they fight harder than experienced men of war. If the altruistic Priest joins an adventuring group, he may have problems with his comrades' methods, but stands firm in the worst of times. These people exist in equal quantities across the continent.

**Knowledge.** For some, nothing offers more promise than knowledge. Knowing more than your neighbor is fine and dandy, however understanding the mysteries of the universe can bring true greatness (or madness). The seeker journeys to the ends of Palladium in his pursuit, looking for an unknown sage, rummaging through back street bookshops, and enduring horrible eyestrain in the great libraries. This character sticks his nose into any book, scroll, or tablet he can find. People see them as

aloof and distant, sometimes preferring the company of parchment over their traveling companions. For them, a journey offers the best chance for learning. They are the most likely to abandon their companions if circumstances catch their attention, and are frequently found in the Old Kingdom and the Western Empire.

**True Faith.** The great irony of it all is that true faith is the smallest category of clergy. Many people focus on what the god can give them in return for service and choose the best benefits. The one of true faith believes what he does while expecting nothing in return. These men and women know their way is the correct way and anyone who says otherwise is a heretic to be converted. They are zealots, fanatically devoted to their cause. They believe often because of supernatural or extraordinary events, such as a personal visit by the god. Strangely enough, a great many Dark Priests fall into this category, as one would have to be a true believer, or insane, to worship death, destruction, chaos, and carnage. A majority of true believers hail from the Baalgor Wastelands, the Yin-Sloth Jungles, and the Northern Wilderness, places of extreme harshness.

## Joining and Training

Gods want P.P.E., and accept anyone willing to give it to them. Most are not picky about who wants to follow them, although many restrict their worshipers' actions and morals. The followers create the training one must endure before they call themselves shepherds of the flock. Training differs between each of the churches and gods, but they follow the same patterns.

**Trial Period.** A trial period typically lasts anywhere from one month to many years. During this time, currently ordained clergy test the new charge's determination. Hardships, pain, punishment, discipline, and trials are leveled. The seniors do everything in their power to make the student give up. If the initiate survives, the teachers completely change their tune. They know that person is serious about his or her future, and they then bestow the title of acolyte.

## Classical Holy Literature

**Tristine Chronicles:** What should be said about the book? The Chronicles are THE defining piece of writing for the Palladium World. Every scholar knows this work and most can recite entire sections verbatim. All religions consider this work sacred and go to great lengths, even warring with each other, to recover an original.

**Books of Stone, Metal, Fire, Family and Rune:** These are a series of five books describing the Dwarven culture in excruciating detail and are sacred to the Dwarves. They will only be transcribed in their language; any other tongue is considered heresy. The Books of Stone and Fire are dated but cover all aspects of crafting, offering in-depth treatises on architecture, mining, masonry, and metalworking. The Book of Metal contains detailed diagrams and information on tactics of war, combat training in traditional weaponry, and construction of siege instruments. Family holds rituals for the veneration of ancestors and the strengthening of the family. Dwarven tradition places the house



above everything else; without the family their society would crumble. Every Dwarf holds a copy of this book. The final manuscript, the Book of Rune, contained the Dwarves' knowledge of magic. No original copies are known to exist. If one was rumored to surface, the Dwarves may resort to military action to destroy it. The tome still "exists" with the set of five. As a completion and a reminder of past offenses, the copy is bound similar to the other four but the parchment contained within is blank save for the words "Never again" on the first and last pages. The first four books cost 1D4 gold each; a legitimate copy of the Book of Rune would fetch 100 million gold, if a person could find a buyer and a copy.

**Chaos Arcanum:** This work is better titled Demonology 101. To all outward appearances, its pages provide detailed instructions for Summoning, written side by side in Elven, Dwarven, and multiple human tongues, giving advice on the best times to gather material components, basic protection circle theory, advanced Summoning theory, care for your servants, and even the best creatures to summon in over one hundred different scenarios. The true meaning within the text was originally obscured by psychotic Diabolists, who created a system where the reader would need to spill blood over the pages (1D4 pints). Upon contact, the text shifts to reveal blasphemous rights for demon worship. Things men are not meant to meddle in; human sacrifice, enslavement, torture for siphoning P.P.E. and keeping a victim alive as long as possible. Even reading the true form of the manual permanently causes 1D4 random insanities. Priests of Light have tried, since the Time of Chaos, to eliminate this literature. Unfortunately, a new volume or two pops back into existence every fifty years or so. A single volume could fetch upwards of one to two million from the right buyer.

**Manual of Heaven and Earth:** The "Manual of Heaven and Earth" is the colloquial nickname for a scroll that is the foundation of every monk's training. The full name is the "Techniques for Obtaining Harmony between the Heavens, the Earth, and the Soul," and it dates back to the Elf-Dwarf War. There is no need to translate it since it contains no script, only diagrams. The trainees are expected to study, while the masters correct. The illustrations display basic staff and spear practices, correct posture for meditation, and methods of body strengthening. Copies of this scroll run from 1D6 gold to 1D6x1000 for an ancient version greater than 1000 years old, and an original would fetch millions.

## Early Instruction

**Battle Training:** Most clergy learn some form of hand to hand combat mainly for self-defense, and many see the focus and concentration as a way to clear the mind, meditating through physical and mental training.

The typical Priest of Light has alignment reservations about taking a life, although this is not to say it won't happen. Clergy of warrior deities and evil deities do not have these reservations. Warriors view combat in one of three ways: necessary, honorable, or bloodlust. The necessary view advocates monster and undead hunting. They fight to rid the world of their ilk and firmly believe in the inevitable battle between good and evil. One must be ready to do what is required.

An honorable outlook follows thought closer to Knights or Palladins. Combat and dueling prove worth, and one brings honor to himself by fighting and dying well. A man subscribing to an ideology of bloodlust looks for the next adrenaline rush, so he can lose himself in the frenzy of the moment, finding the screams of suffering as music to his ears. In combat, he feels most alive and most fulfilled.

For most, modified combat training suffices, focusing on self-defense, incapacitation and disarmament instead of killing. If desired, this variant on Hand to Hand: Basic may be used: At third level, replace the kick attack with a +2 to body flip/throw and replace the Critical Strike on 19-20 at level six with a Knockout on 18-20.

**Life Skills:** The lay people complain, "Holy Men have no idea how we live and what we need. They separate themselves in their cloister, shut off from the world, shut off from the plight of those they are sent to save." The success of a church in a particular location hinges on the ability of clergy to relate to the common people. Priests grow up in a monastery/convent and are taught how to behave in normal society, but others are luckier; they join the church later in life and have developed acceptable social skills. People want someone who does not treat them with an air of superiority, a holy man who is willing to get his hands dirty.

**Sacred Vows:** Oaths are taken most seriously. Many people cannot read and the best form of a contract is by word, with an arbiter who can interact if the bond is broken. Clerical vows are set to a standard far above the layman. Consequences for breaking vows range from minor chastisement to death. A Priest who swears on his god and breaks his bond not only shames himself but his god's name. There is no choice but to cut the offender off until he or she atones.

**Afterlife:** The soul of a typical non-worshiper goes to the defile realm which most closely matches his or her alignment. For example, a Principled character may find his final resting place among the pantheon of Rugra or the Gods of Light. A selfish alignment is harder to qualify and will be sent to a location Utu feels the soul is best suited, judged by his acts in life.

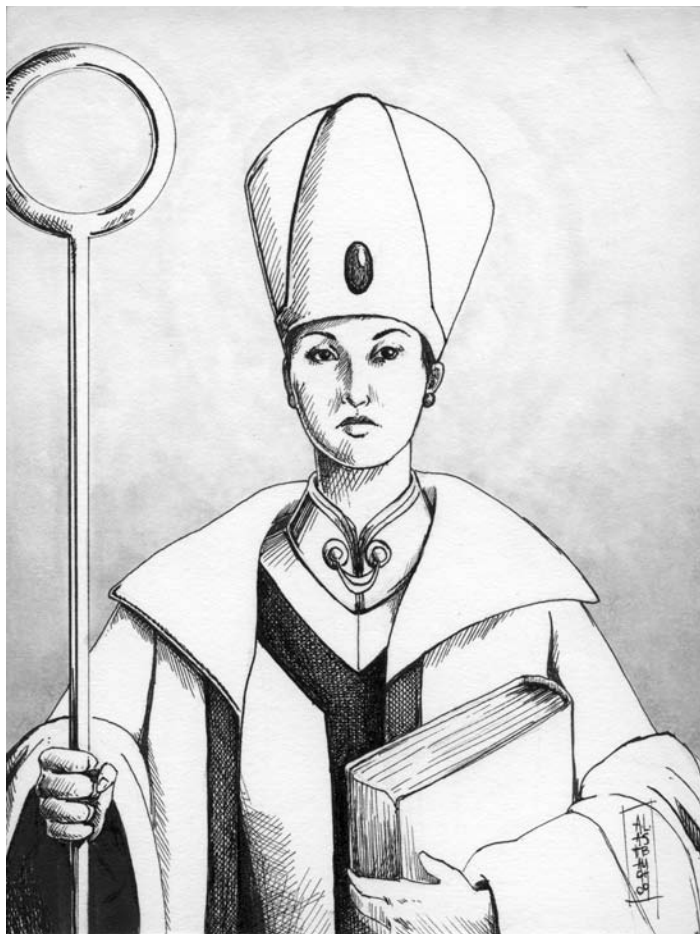
Believers have more to fear, because they have promised to live their life according to the code set down by their god. Utu will judge these individuals according to their code in addition to their acts in life. Depending on the discrepancy, he will proclaim paradise or eternal damnation.

## New Class Options

This section grants new options to expand the Priest of Light, Priest of Darkness, and the Warrior Monk.

### High Priest

Since the beginning of society, beings have tried to elevate themselves beyond their peers, whether through money, power, or experiences. The church is no different, creating such positions as the Archbishop in the Church of Light and Dark, or a High Priest of Rurga, but they are the same thing, a man or



woman who, through actions, displayed dedication and loyalty. In return, the deity grants true power.

Once a Priest of Light or a Priest of Darkness reaches fifth level, he may opt to undergo a trial given by his elders, and upon completion, the charge is promoted to the rank of High Priest. The deity grants a new prayer that transforms the character into an earthy visage of the god. There is no mistaking who the person is at this point; people know he is a messenger of the gods.

**Prayer of Deific Transformation:** The character takes on the visage of his or her deity, gaining qualities (claws, horns) and improved abilities from the infusion of power. For example, a human High Priest of Kym-Nark-Mar can change into a humanoid dragon of approximately the same size and proportions as a human. **Success Ratio:** 30%, +5% per level of experience, and lasts 10 minute per level of experience.

**Bonuses:** Add +1D6 to all stats, which then become Supernatural. The High Priest gains a Natural Armor Rating of 13, grows 1D6 inches, and is bestowed with a Horror/Awe Factor of 12. Finally, the character receives +40 S.D.C., +15 Hit Points, +1 attack per melee round, +2 to strike, and +2 to parry. The body sprouts physical features of the idol, such as claws (deal 2D6 S.D.C. damage), horns (deal 2D4 S.D.C. damage), and breath weapons (deal 3D6 S.D.C. damage to a 10 by 10 foot/3 x 3 m area). G.M.s, have fun with the metamorphosis, as the character can take on an exalted form or a damned, gruesome visage.

## Non-Spellcasting Priests

Some Priests are limited in their abilities because of the deity's power. When a player is offered the choice between a god who has spell casting abilities and one who offers no spell casting, the majority choose the former so they have use of the full range of Priestly powers. So what is a G.M. to do? Offer more options. **Note:** These options may be substituted for the normal spell casting and scroll making granted by the Prayer of Intervention. I separated the deities which do not cast spells into five different categories: War, Nature, Stealth/Trickery, Diabolism, and Summoning.

**War:** Gods include Rurga and the Juggernaut. Their teaching tends to be hard, emphasizing self-sufficiency and protection of the weak, and the Priest or Priestess automatically receives Hand to Hand: Expert and two W.P.s. They may also call upon the Chant of Battle.

**Chant of Battle:** This mantra turns the Priest into a highly capable man of arms for a time. The Priest is endowed with +2 on initiative, +1 attack per melee round, +2 to strike, +4 to parry, and +3 to roll with punch, fall, or impact, and +2D6 to P.S. **Success Ratio:** 25% at level one, +5% per level of experience, and the gift lasts five minutes per level of experience.

**Nature:** Clergy of nature gods gain two new powers:

**Prayer of Shapeshifting:** The request transforms the character into an ordinary animal (see *Monsters & Animals*<sup>TM</sup>), as per the Metamorphosis: Animal spell. It costs the Priest no P.P.E. and lasts twice as long as the normal spell. **Success Ratio:** 25% at level one, +5% per level of experience.

**Animal Familiar:** The Priest gains a Familiar at fifth level, same as the Familiar Link spell, and the animal is entrusted to the clergy. If the animal is killed, a new Familiar can only be obtained by atoning for the sin through a trial. If successful, a new animal may be called at the next level of experience.

**Stealth/Trickery:** The Priest gains one W.P. of choice, two Rogue skills (+5%), and the following prayer:

**Prayer of Invisibility:** This chant allows the holy man to blend in with the surrounding environment (if in wilderness, similar to Chameleon spell), granting a Prowl skill of 90%. People will forget the look of his face and are unable to pick him out of a crowd. Furthermore, his opponents forget why they were after the character in the first place. He will continue to go unnoticed until hostile action is taken. **Success Ratio:** 25%, +5% per level of experience.

**Diabolism:** The clergy of a god who practices Diabolism do not gain new prayers, but are granted a small bit of the knowledge the deity possesses, starting at level one with Literacy: Runes at 90% and Recognize Magic at 50%; percentages do not increase per level. At level three, they instinctively know 3D6 Wards chosen from the categories listed on page 126 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG**®, but cannot learn more. The god will take the knowledge away if the character abuses it.

**Summoning:** Similar to the Diabolism option, the Priest of a Summoner is granted special knowledge. At level one, he can recognize all circles but will not be able to activate and use them, and the clergy recognizes magic at 50%. Beginning at level two, the enlightened one may instinctively use 1D6 Protec-

tion Circles and 1D4 Summoning Circles, and can control a single slave. This understanding does not increase with experience, and more circles cannot be learned. He is not a true Summoner; the god may revoke the powers if he feels they are being abused.

## Improved Healing

The healing ability of the Priest has been interesting to me. The idea of experience in a roleplaying game is growth. Powers, skills, and abilities grow with age and time. The Healing Touch does the opposite. It stagnates, becoming less and less effective as the character gets more powerful. To a first level character with 15 Hit Points and 35 S.D.C., an eight S.D.C. healing means the difference between winning and becoming daisy fertilizer. However, to the same character at seventh level with 45 Hit Points and 50 S.D.C. thanks to a Physical skill and some in-game happenings, eight S.D.C. healing is laughable. To remedy the problem, the Healing Touch skill should scale with the Priest of Light, with the amount of healing increasing by 1D4 every other level starting at three. By fifteenth level, the Priest can heal 36 S.D.C. maximum. The Priest of Darkness should increase by 1D6 every four levels starting at level four, maxing out at 24 S.D.C. This maintains the difference between the two Priests and yet allows them to contribute meaningful healing late in their careers.

## The Acolyte O.C.C.: Optional

The Acolyte is an early initiate into a religious organization. These men and women come from every walk of life, but one thing is certain, they hear the call. The trainees are taught to read, research, and are instructed in every nuance and tenet of the faith while being prepared for the great power they will wield. To aid in the transition, the learner is bestowed with a small glimpse of the gift.

**1. Healing Touch:** The Healing Touch restores 1D4+1 Hit Points or S.D.C. (1 M.D.C. to supernatural beings when on a Mega-Damage world). Acolytes can perform Healing Touch once every other melee round, but cannot use it on themselves.

Acolytes are *forbidden* to sell the Healing Touch. If discovered, the student is instantly expelled from training and never allowed to return. The Touch is a test to see if the student will use the ability for personal gain.

**Alignments:** Any.

**Attribute Requirements:** High M.E. and M.A. are helpful, but not required. Churches accept any motivated spirit.

### O.C.C. Skills:

Languages: Native at 98% and two of choice (+20%).

Literacy: One of choice, usually Elven or native (+10%).

Basic Mathematics (+20%)

Lore: Religion (+15%)

Lore: Demon & Monster (+10%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+10%)

Dance (+15%)

W.P.: One of choice, may reflect pantheon.

Hand to Hand: None to start.

Hand to Hand may be changed to Basic for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, to Expert for the cost of three, or to Martial Arts for the cost of five.

**O.C.C. Related Skills:** Select a total of eight other skills, plus two additional skills at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Espionage: None.

Horsemanship: General and Exotic only.

Medical: Any (+10%).

Military: Heraldry only (+5%).

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

Rogue: Any, with a +5% bonus to Streetwise if chosen.

Science: Any (+5%).

Scholar/Technical; Any (+5%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any except Seige, Lance, and Long-bow.

Wilderness: Any.

**Secondary Skills:** The character also gets five Secondary Skills from the previous list at level one, and two additional skills at levels two, five, seven, ten and twelve. These additional areas do not get the bonus listed in parentheses. All skills start at the base skill level, and are limited (any, only, none) as indicated by the list.

**Starting Equipment:** Novice cloak, set of traveling robes, ceremonial vestment, backpack, bedroll, purse or satchel, 2 large sacks, 2 medium sacks, 1D4 vials of holy water, waterskin, flint and steel, a couple of holy symbols, 1D6 wooden stakes, a mallet, and 30 feet (9 m) of rope.

**Armor:** Starts with soft leather (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20).

**Weapons:** Begins with a knife or hand axe for utility, and a weapon of choice. All are basic S.D.C. weapons of good quality. Magical weapons must be acquired later.

**Money:** Starts with 120 gold. Money can be spent on equipment now or saved for later. Much of the wealth the character gains will be donated to the church. Some Acolytes gain an appreciation for the finer things in life; others tend to be frugal, spending only what is needed.

## Warrior Monk: Optional

### Spirit Monk

Some Monks see their own bodies as the best sacrifice to the gods, retreating to perfect themselves. The journey is only the first part of their education, since the two best schools exist deep within Fern Swamp in the Land of the South Winds and high along the Razor Spine in the Old Kingdom Mountains. At least five others are known to exist (two in the Eastern Territory, one in the Western Empire, and two in the Northern Wilderness), however they do not possess the excellent reputations. All temples accept any dedicated applicant. Fanatical is what one must



be. The monasteries are known to be veritable hells with dropout rates shifting between 80 and 90 percent depending on teacher-student pairings. Lessons are all one on one and students are not allowed to complain, or they are dropped from the program. The student learns to channel his P.P.E. through the body to strengthen from the inside, at the same time enduring grueling physical training. The end result of the torture is one of the greatest warriors around. These men and women wade into the middle of battle unarmed and unarmored then walk out on the other side.

The Monks may use weapons and armor freely, but many will not because their powers rely on them going without, while others simply will not use the items, viewing such as a crutch.

As for duties, the Spirit Monk is a fully ordained member of the clergy and can perform all the duties granted to that position.

## Spirit Monk Mastery

**1. Inner Fire:** The Spirit Monk's premier ability. The warrior's skin grows tougher than tempered steel and grants him the strength of the gods.

**Bonuses:** The monk gains a Natural Armor Rating of 14, meaning strike rolls of 14 or under do no damage; any roll above 14 does damage normally. The Armor Rating allows the Monk to parry weapons unarmed, without fear of harm. He gains +35 S.D.C., +5 S.D.C. per level, any damage done to the Monk comes from this bonus S.D.C. first. Finally, he gains +2D6 to P.S. and his Strength becomes Supernatural. The Monk must expend 15 P.P.E. for this ability to work, and he must be wearing no armor. The power lasts for 5 minutes per level of experience.

**2. Eternal Clarity:** The Monk normally feels the flow of P.P.E. through his own body. This ability opens the senses to the subtle ebb and flow around him. He now "sees" the ambient P.P.E. and the energy currents in others, and thanks to this knowledge, he can modify his body to reject outside influence, granting a defense against magic. **Note:** The Monk cannot draw on ley lines, only see them. This "sight" range is as far as the Monk's natural vision.

**Bonuses:** He can see invisible beings and things with high stores of P.P.E. He gains +7 to save vs magic, psionics, and poisons in addition to any P.E. and M.E. bonuses, and his base psychic save becomes a 12, as if a Major Psychic. In addition, the Monk takes half damage from all sources of magic and psionics, including magic weapons. The power costs 10 P.P.E. to activate, lasts for 5 minutes per level of experience, and *cannot* be used alongside Inner Fire.

**3. Spirit Strike:** Same as the Warrior Monk.

**4. Permanent P.P.E. Base:** P.E. x5, +2D4 P.P.E. per level of experience. The Monk cannot cast spells or use any Priest abilities.

**5. Permanent I.S.P. Base:** M.E. x2. +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience if a psychic, otherwise no increase per level. The high I.S.P. is the result of training.

**6. Other O.C.C. Bonuses:** Same as Warrior Monk.

**7. Monks, Armor, and Combat:** Same as Warrior Monk.

**8. Allegiance to God:** Same as Warrior Monk.

**9. Temple Skills:** Same as Warrior Monk.

## Spirit Monk O.C.C.

**Alignments:** Any alignment, 55% are good, 35% are selfish, and 10% are evil.

**Attribute Minimum Requirements:** M.E. of 12 and P.E. of 11 or higher. A high P.S. and P.P. are helpful but not mandatory.

**Racial Requirements:** None.

### O.C.C. Skills:

Languages: Native at 98% and two languages of choice (+20%).

Literacy: One of choice (+15%).

Basic Mathematics (+20%)

Lore: Religion (+20%)

Lore: Demon & Monster (+15%)

Climb/Scale Walls (+10%)

Swim (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+15%)

Play Musical Instrument: One of choice (+20%).

Body Building & Weight Lifting or Running Wrestling

Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (no changes)

**O.C.C. Related Skills:** Same as Warrior Monk.

**Secondary Skills:** Same as Warrior Monk.

**Starting Equipment:** Same as Warrior Monk.

**Armor:** Starts with none.

**Weapons:** Starts with a knife or hand axe for utility purposes. If he takes any Weapon Proficiencies, a good quality weapon for each skill is given to the Monk as he graduates.

**Money:** Same as Warrior Monk.

## Rites

Rites signify the passage of time, a transition into a different stage; some recognize a single life whereas other customs are weeks long celebrations with entire towns. Every deity has his or her individual ceremonies, but they follow these same themes and confer the equivalent blessing. G.M.s, please feel free to give whatever description you wish. Monks may perform nearly all of the Rites, but do not bestow any of the bonuses.

**Birth:** A Priest blesses the baby shortly after birth (1D4 hours), performing in song as the child's true name is bestowed. This is one of two rituals to cross pantheons, because believers from one pantheon will often seek a fertility goddess in another pantheon if a Priest from their original faith is unavailable. The Rite of Birth can produce problems if the child dies before he or she is given a rightful name; the child may become a haunting type of spirit called Blue Children (see below; 1D6x10% chance depending on circumstances surrounding the death).

The blessing confers a +1 to save vs disease for the next month for the mother and baby. Ladies normally perform the ritual, however it's not gender exclusive, and the Priestess receives a small donation of 2D4 gold, half of which goes to the sponsoring congregation.

**Death:** Death is the second most important Rite next to Birth. The ceremony may only be ministered by a man (most

pantheons say female clergy touching the dead makes them unclean), and only by Priests or High Priests. The Priest prays over the deceased's grave or funeral pyre and consecrates the area (even evil Priests can consecrate ground to their deity). If the Priest is of a good alignment, grave scavengers may not approach the area for a month and Necromancers cannot use the body for their magic. If performed by an evil Priest, none of the above applies and the body has a 10% chance to rise as a Damned Soul by the next new moon (double the chance if buried at a ley line, quadrupled if at a nexus).

**Battle:** A Priest or Priestess summons the soldier and convenes with him in solitude, uttering a small poem and encouraging valor, before lighting a Vigil Candle that will burn continuously until one of three things takes place: the soldier returns from battle, news is received of the warrior's demise, or his term of service ends. All Priests can perform this ceremony, however most beings ask Priests/Priestesses of warrior deities to initiate the Rite. Some temples have entire buildings dedicated to these candles. The initial blessing confers +2 P.E. for 2D4 weeks. A donation of 7 gold is customary.

**Holy Item: Vigil Candle:** A Vigil Candle is fashioned when the Rite of Battle is initiated. The soldier heading to war asks the clergy to petition the god on his behalf, and the clergy then retreats to meditate, taking a small, mundane votive candle. The deity grants power to imbue the wax with magic, creating a new holy item that never burns out until the terms are met. The candle will only be produced for men and women in an army or navy. The average Jane Dragonhunter adventurer cannot have a votive made for her.

**Passage:** The Rite of Passage can be the most joyful of all the rituals. It signifies the change from childhood to adulthood. The pastor gathers all of the family that can be located and begins in the great hall of the church, where the family takes turns roasting and giving gifts to the honoree. Gifts typically range from blankets to tools the adult will need. The roasted is then prayed over, bound to the chair he sits in, and carried through the streets to a favorite bar, where the first drink the new adult will enjoy is on the church. After any alcohol effects have worn off, a bonus of +2 to I.Q. for 2D4 weeks is enjoyed.

**Marriage:** Marriage is a favorite Rite of most Priestesses of Light. Similar to the Rite of Passage, the family and friends are ushered into the church. The Priestess (yes, this ritual is performed exclusively by females), sings a grand blessing to the couple, who then share a goblet of new white wine. Each participant then lights a stick of incense as an offering to the god. At this point, the relatives then shower the couple with gold (literally throwing pieces of gold). Depending on the number of family members, this can be anywhere from 10 gold to 10,000. The blessing takes effect as the betrothed step out of the temple hall, conferring good luck that causes any income earned to double for the next 2D4 weeks.

**Oracle:** Fear of the unknown causes men and women to seek out sages and soothsayers for personal divination. Much of the time the Priest or Priestess confirms suspicions and recommends a course of action without consulting his or her god. If the holy man consults a deity, the Priest retreats to meditate over the question, averaging approximately an hour, after which an answer is returned and a customary payment of 25-100 gold is given.

**Harvest:** Who wants to get fat? The Ritual of the Harvest is the largest of all the Rites. Just before the reaping, the church gathers all clergy it has on hand and sends them for food, which they spend the next week preparing. The membership parties after the fields have given their produce. Song, dance, drink, and fun are the order of business, culminating in two special events. The latest class of Acolytes are promoted to full-fledged clergy with all the duties and powers granted their station, and those fresh shepherds choose a single lucky farmer (randomly drawn from a hat or similar method) and bless his field, so the next harvest magically produces double.

## Problems

Every religion carries its own set of problems, whether it is pressure from the outside or internal disease itching to fester. Some tribulations are universal, created by mistakes of holy men, while others grasp to the last little connection to the divine/damned realms. Everyone needs to take heed lest the sins of the fathers come to claim them.

## Blue Children

Tragically, death knows no age. The Blue Children are newborns who died before the naming ritual was completed. Their souls are left to drift along like the water in a river since the god of death will not take a person who does not know himself.

They have no true form, appearing as grayish-blue, misty, two to five year olds. Clergy of Utu believe the kids take the vague appearance of what they would look like, however some appear as direct replicas of the parents who gave them a short life.

Blue Children have no set area; they are as likely to be seen in the Western Empire cities as wandering Ophid's Grasslands. They follow anything that catches their fancy or earns their hatred. Their alignments follow two paths depending on the nature of their death. Those who died gruesomely hate every living thing, attacking on sight. In contrast, natural deaths are good aligned, trying to help and play with animals and people who happen upon them, but they will attack if provoked. Travelers try to stay away whenever possible, as one of these poor things can be quite annoying and hard to get rid of.

**Alignment:** Principled or Diabolic.

**The Eight Attributes:** I.Q. 2D6, M.E. 1D6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 1D6, P.P. 5D6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 3D6, Spd 4D6 running, 1D4x10 in flight. Attributes are Supernatural.

**Hit Points:** P.E.x5

**S.D.C.:** None.

**Natural A.R.:** 15

**Horror Factor:** 10 for good, 13 for evil.

**P.P.E.:** 1D6x100

**Natural Abilities:** Nightvision 100 feet, See the Invisible, Turn Invisible at will, Fly and Hover. Immune to physical attacks and takes ½ damage from magic. Psionics deal full damage.

**Magic Spells:** Thunderclap, Wind Rush, Circle of Rain, Summon and Control Storm, Create Fog, Create Water, Hurri-

cane, Calm Waters, Water to Wine, Calm Storms, Create Mild Wind, Stop Wind, and Wind Rush.

**Psionics:** None.

**Combat and Bonuses:** Four attacks per melee. Punch, kick, or slap deals 2D6, +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +4 to dodge in flight, and 4 to roll with punch, fall, or impact. +3 to save vs magic, immune to Horror Factor. All bonuses are in addition to attribute bonuses.

**R.C.C. Skills:** Skills are very limited. Speak one Language of choice 98%, Sing 80%, Dance 80%, Prowl 90%, and Pick Pockets 50%. Skills do not increase.

**Notes:** These beings are mischievous just like a young kid. They like to play games, pick on people (even the good ones), and are extremely egocentric. Somewhere in the back of their minds, they want real life but are lost thanks to irresponsibility, and all will attack clergy on sight.

## False Prophets

False Prophets are men and women who, for whatever reason, have been abandoned by their god. They continue teaching as if nothing had happened; they do not want to give the deific power back, and they have found a way to tap into the divine realms, sapping their power like a leech. In the beginning, the power trickles as a cut, barely noticeable. A small, blank patch may appear. However, the ex-clergy walks a spiral staircase that ends in destruction. The Priest must draw greater amounts of P.P.E. from the realm. In the end, the leech must draw hundreds of P.P.E. a day to survive.

Needless to say, the god who discovers his realm disappearing is not thrilled, and most will kill the parasite on sight to recoup their losses; but there are some who have better plans for their unwanted guest. Imprisonment, torture, and curses happen to the lucky ones. One poor sap, found by the northern gods and given to Belimar the Dwarf, was turned into a Rune item no one wanted. The sword injures the user with every hit, dealing twice the damage done back to the wielder. The magic item sits dusty and abandoned in a shrine along the edge of the Eastern Territory, the trapped clergy long since driven insane by loneliness.

**Notes:** The False Prophet is intended as an evil NPC, but could make an interesting but troubled player character. Most do not make it past level five. Roll as a Priest character with the following modifications.

**Alignment:** Any, but most are selfish. Many believe they are doing the right thing, but in the end are misguided fools.

**Attributes:** Roll race as usual and add +2D6 to P.S., +1D6 to P.E., +1D4 to P.P. and P.B., and +2D6 to Spd.

**Hit Points:** Normal.

**S.D.C.:** Normal.

**P.P.E.:** +2D4x10 to base.

**Horror Factor:** None.

**Height:** Per race.

**Natural Abilities:** The False Prophet's abilities grow as he increases in level, but unfortunately so does his lust for P.P.E. He retains all the traditional Priest abilities, except for prayers, blessings, and miracles.

**Level 2:** Increased Toughness: The character gains +6 to P.E., +50 S.D.C. and his Endurance becomes Supernatural. The Prophet must draw 20 P.P.E. per week.

**Level 3:** Spells: The leech chooses one Element. He gains 10 spells chosen from levels 1-4 from that Element. The Prophet must draw 40 P.P.E. per week.

**Level 4:** Limited Invulnerability: He cannot be harmed by normal weapons such as swords and fists, but takes double damage from magic and psionics. He must draw 80 P.P.E. per week.

**Level 5:** Limited Immortality: As long as the character can maintain the lifeline, he will not die by natural means, but can still be killed in extremely violent ways. He will continue to age at one-quarter the normal rate. The Prophet must siphon 160 P.P.E. per week.

**Level 6:** Personal Construct: The character can create an avatar which he can direct as a puppet, and the Prophet experiences everything it encounters. The construct can be of any form, but once the form is chosen it cannot be changed. The thing uses the stats of a Golem found in the Create Golem spell description. The draw grows to 320 P.P.E. per week.

**Level 7:** Precognition: Every day the ex-Priest has Clairvoyant dreams (same as the psionic power); they are sometimes of him but more often are of others. He cannot be surprised and is +3 on initiative, +2 to parry, and +3 to dodge. He now suffers from the Paranoia insanity, and must draw 640 P.P.E. *per day*.

**Level 8:** Godly Strength: His P.S. increases by 15 and becomes Supernatural. He now suffers from the God Syndrome insanity, and steals 1280 P.P.E. per day.

**Level 11:** Limited Deific Control: The character gains one Minor Deific Ability found in the pages of *Dragons and Gods*<sup>TM</sup>. He now takes 2560 P.P.E. per day.

**Level 14:** Damnation: The character is completely lost, all abilities gained disappear. He is completely helpless as every hour of every day is spent maintaining the link. All of his physical and mental effort is put toward the consumption of deific power. The character cares for nothing now. The total draw becomes 5120 P.P.E. a day.

**Magic Spells:** Special.

**Psionics:** None.

**Combat and Bonuses:** At level 7, they gain +2 to strike, and +2 to roll with punch, fall, or impact. The Prophet is +2 to save vs magic, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, and +4 to save vs possession, starting at level 1.

**Skills:** As per normal Priest.

## Damned Souls

Damned Souls are beings who did not receive the correct Death Rites, and rise on the night of the new moon. Their soul cannot find the peace and rest it wants, and many seek revenge on all living things (65%), while some seek vengeance on those who caused their wretched state (35%). The rush of the hunt and the thrill of revenge motivate their actions.

The beings "feed" on living flesh, animal or human, it does not matter. Technically, they do not need to eat anything since



they are magically sustained by the cursed energy flowing through them. The soul will stalk its prey, waiting in the shadows until the time is right. It then lashes out furiously, going for extremities first. Once dead, the thing rips its victim into pieces and takes its time to feast.

Ironically, a Priest created it and a Priest can best defeat it. Turn Dead works slightly differently on these beasts. Instead of turning 6D6 dead, the Priest rolls for the number of dead and divides it by two, which becomes the amount of Hit Point/S.D.C. damage. The Healing Touch from a Priest of Light causes equivalent damage to the cursed being, but the Priest must get into melee range, an interesting proposition to say the least.

**Alignment:** Evil only, usually Miscreant or Diabolic.

**The Eight Attributes:** I.Q. 1D6, M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 5D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 4D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd 3D6.

**Hit Points:** P.E. + 6D6.

**S.D.C.:** P.E.x4

**Natural A.R.:** 10

**Horror Factor:** 11

**P.P.E.:** 1D4x10

**O.C.C.:** Not applicable.

**Natural Abilities:** Sensory Attunement: The damned soul's senses have changed. Although it can no longer see (eyes are gone), it can make its way in the living world just fine. It can hear, feel, and smell the blood coursing through a living being's body. This allows the being to perfectly sense the location of any living thing within one mile (1.6 km). Its senses act as sonar, allowing the thing to know the location and movements of everything around it.

Limited Invulnerability: The creature is immune to mundane weapons and attacks, but takes normal damage from magic and psionics. The only way to completely kill the Damned Soul is to deplete all its Hit Points and S.D.C., then burn the body.

Increased Regeneration: The magic energies coursing through the Damned Soul take the place of and enhance natural regenerative processes, causing the thing to heal at a rate of 3D6 S.D.C. per melee round.

**Attacks per Melee:** Four.

**Bonuses:** +2 on initiative and +2 to strike.

**Damage:** Claws 2D6 + P.S., Bite 2D4 (P.S. bonus is not included).

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Average life span:** Immortal until killed.

**Value:** None.

**Habitat:** Any, commonly found in graveyards, back alleys, and wastelands.

**Skills:** Understands two Languages at 80%, Prowl 90%, Tracking (Animals and People) 75%.

**Enemies:** Any living being.

**Allies:** None.

**Size:** Same as original race.

**Weight:** Same as original race minus 35%.

# Organization Rules

Churches vary in size, structure, and composition, and each clerical body has its own names for these places. No two sites of worship are alike even within the same religion, and each enclave will have its own backing from inside the region, and some are fortunate enough to have global support. Funds may be from the parishioners' contributions or they may be a tax collected by the theocracy. Size does not always mean power. Many small congregations have extensive political networks or rare tomes useful to the general public. Even the same church in a different location on Palladium will have varying resources at their disposal.

The following are rules and guidelines for creating religious organizations. They can be used to create entirely new faiths or to flesh out existing ones. **Note:** Some options may be selected more than once.

## Step One: Size

This determines the amount of overall power and influence the society possesses. The G.M. may roll randomly to determine the size, or he should pick one if he has an idea already in his mind. Remember, these are only guidelines and are not rules set in stone.

1. Hole in the Wall: 50 points.
2. Small Shrine: 100 points.
3. Small Temple: 200 points.
4. Modest Temple: 275 points.
5. Grand Hall: 325 points.
6. Religious Campus: 400 points.

## Step Two: Equipment

**1. None:** The Priests must provide their own equipment. 0 points.

**2. Basic:** The church gives the Priests basic, mundane equipment. This will include items such as rope, rations, sacks, tool kits, etc. These items do not have to be returned and are theirs to use as they please. 2 points.

**3. Medical:** The church will supply the Priests with needed equipment. This may include special herbs, drugs, and possibly Faerie Foods if a weird need arises. Items also include any magical components needed for rituals and rites. 5 points.

**4. Special:** Priests may obtain odd and eclectic items. The equipment is the best available, of the highest manufacture, and will include minor magic rings, potions, and rare herbs and drugs. Equipment in this category is expected to be returned to the church unless the article is one time use. 10 points.

**5. Open Bag:** The Priests will be given 1D4 minor magic items. They will be of limited to good availability and excellent quality. The Priests are not expected to return the equipment, it is theirs to keep. 30 points.

**6. Sack of Unending:** The sky is the limit with this option. The Priests are given the best available for any objects they request. Almost everything is available short of Rune items and

holy items. Rare to poor availability items can be selected. 50 points.

## Step Three: Clothing

**1. None:** The Priests must provide their own clothes. Not even the ceremonial vestments are bestowed. 0 points.

**2. Basic:** The clergy are provided with the ceremonial garb and a single set of everyday clothes. They will be made of basic materials such as wool or cotton and look very plain. Replacements are provided upon request. 2 points.

**3. Nice:** The Priests are given 1D4 elegant sets of ceremonial garb; each is for the ceremonies they are expected to perform often. A week's wardrobe is also presented as a gift. These clothes are nothing special but give the Priests more options than the same brown robe. 5 points.

**4. Special:** The clothing in this category is different from the others because they are tailored for the specific religion and assist the ministers in their duties. Examples of options for these garments include secret pockets for concealment of items (base Concealment skill of 60% upon inspection), places for holding scrolls or spell components, and pouches for healing items. 10 points.

**5. Wealthy:** The church bestows its shepherds with the finest garments locally available, made with fine linens and silk. Regal ceremonial vestments are dyed in expensive purples, blues, and reds and their traveling clothes grant an appearance on par with a well to do merchant or low level nobleman. 30 points.

**6. Dripping with Style:** The best of the best is available at the whims of the clergy. All clothes are created with the finest silks imported from around the world, are crafted by the most reputable tailors, and have 1D6x1000 gold worth of jewels and gold thread sewn into the garment. These characters will be noticed wherever they go and they will be counted among the nobility whether they are or not. 50 points.

## Step Four: Weaponry

**1. None:** Clergy must provide their own weaponry. 0 points.

**2. Mundane:** The Priests are given one basic S.D.C. weapon of their choice. The weapons in this section are theirs to keep. 2 points.

**3. Quality:** The church will give its clergy one S.D.C. weapon of their choice. All are Kobold or Dwarven quality, with one mundane enhancement such as +1 to damage or +1 to parry. 5 points.

**4. Superior:** Priests are presented with 1D4 weapons, and they are Dwarven quality with at least two mundane enhancements of +2 or greater. 10 points.

**5. Minor Magic:** One Dwarven quality weapon with two mundane enhancements of +2 or greater, and one magical enhancement (pages 249-250 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**), is presented to a Priest for outstanding service. 20 points.

**6. The Arsenal:** Who wants cutlery? Just about anything is available at this level. All Priests are given 1D4 superior quality mundane weapons and two magic weapons (one enchantment) as per the previous category. In addition, the holy men may forego the previous options to gain one minor Holy Weapon. The weapon deals 3D6+3 damage and is enchanted with two

powers from those listed on page 252 of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**. 50 points.

## Step Five: Magic

**1. None:** The only magic service available is what the current clergy can muster. 0 points.

**2. Basic:** One friendly Wizard or Warlock who knows an assortment of spells from levels 1-6 will perform one or two favors a month for free. 2 points.

**3. Specialized:** A Diabolist works for the clergy on an as needed basis. He is only available during certain times, about 1D6 days a month, and cannot help the rest of the time. 5 points.

**4. Summoning:** A Summoner, or a Wizard with summoning spells, will help the church for the cost of materials, if the need arises. 10 points.

**5. Rare:** A Wizard or Warlock who knows spells from levels 1-8 will perform multiple favors each month. However, he cannot be called on at any time, as he is busy with his own studies or guild. 30 points.

**6. On Call:** A Wizard, Warlock, and Diabolist will come to the clergy's aid whenever requested. These characters will drop what they are working on at the time to serve the church. 50 points.

## Step Six: Political Power

**1. Hated:** The local police want the clergy members for questioning in assorted crimes. These charges may or may not be trumped up. The congregation has moved underground. 0 points.

**2. None:** The church has no power in the local government. 2 points.

**3. Ignored:** The church represents a minor player in the local governing body, and no one pays attention to their wants or needs. There will be a 10% chance of sympathizers. 5 points.

**4. Some:** Church leaders hold minor positions and exert some influence in the local government. There is a 30% chance of sympathizers to back the lawmaking requests of the church. 10 points.

**5. Influential:** The leadership of the city consists of multiple clergy members who hold large amounts of influence over law policy. Many are family members of the local noble houses. There is a 40% chance of rule making sympathizers among the lay. 30 points.

**6. Lawmakers:** The city is under a theocracy of this particular church. They hold all power and make all law decisions. This can be good or bad, depending on the ethics of the leaders. 50 points.

## Step Seven: Warriors on Call

**1. None:** The Priests do not have paid warriors on staff; they must provide their own defense in case of attack. 0 points.

**2. Tiny:** The church hired 2D6 warriors, who can be Soldiers, Longbowmen or Mercenary Warriors. These men and women will live in or near the monastery, maintain a constant vigil, have their basic living expenses met, and will be able to keep a percentage of spoils. 2 points.

**3. Small Task Force:** 6D6 fighters defend Priests in their charge. They may be Soldiers, Longbowmen, or Mercenary Warriors and must provide their own gear, but are nicely paid. 5 points.

**4. Militia:** A paid private army of 1D4x10 Soldiers, Longbowmen, or Mercenary Warriors. As the previous options, they are used mainly for defense but can and will be included in a larger state funded force if the leaders ask, since the clergy know that victories in the field bring glory and converts. 10 points.

**5. Special Forces:** The church's force is 1D6x10 strong and made of Knights, psychics, Rangers, and Assassins. The force is used almost exclusively in offense maneuvers, seeking to improve the holdings and standing of the church. 30 points.

**6. Standing Army:** The church maintains a fighting force of 1D4x100 men and women who come from any O.C.C. except mages and psychics. This force is under the direction of the highest leaders of the church and will be used as they see fit. Jobs range from defense against attackers, to offensive ventures aiming to create converts by the sword. 50 points.

## Step Eight: Follower Community

**1. None:** The church is just starting or is a pariah in the community. They have no following and are actively searching for potential faithful people, and they should be careful where they tread to avoid angering the other churches in town. 0 points.

**2. Familial:** A few small families and individuals attend the congregation. They are dedicated and will not be easily swayed. 2 points.

**3. Small:** 25% of the community follows the religion. They are dedicated to their god and actively attempt to recruit, with a 30% success rate. 5 points.

**4. Devoted:** Approximately 40% of the town believes. This group is on the verge of becoming the majority religion, and there is a 50% chance they will soon overtake any others in the city. When this happens, political upheaval may result. 10 points.

**5. Fanatical:** The religion is the majority at 60% of the community and they show no signs of giving up the title. The church may or may not be religiously repressive of others based on their philosophy, although most religious majorities will attempt small acts of bigotry against competing religions. 30 points.

**6. Complete:** All of the community attends this congregation and will likely look down on anyone who is not. The Priests and members attempt to convert anyone who enters the town and will exile nonbelievers (or worse). 50 points.

## Step Nine: Diocese Wealth

**1. In Debt:** The church is owned by local banks and a few wealthy donors and can not make enough to pay them back. The clergy live on borrowed time and are in danger of being thrown into prison. The membership meets in homes to avoid detection. 0 points.

**2. Scraping By:** Enough funds trickle in to pay for the daily operations. Their temple is small and rundown. Leaders maintain the current facilities and feed their clergy, but they cannot take action within the community to draw in new members, re-

lying only on their Priests' and Monks' evangelizing power. 2 points.

**3. Poor:** The church can afford to spend money more freely, enjoying activities and outreach into the community. Depending on the religion, they will run a small orphanage or free hospital. Their facilities are adequate for all current needs. 5 points.

**4. Good:** Finances are good. The church stays afloat through any hardships that face it. They spend their money on building projects within the community, hoping to improve the standard of living. The temple is nice and well kept, with a small garden and a few recently commissioned works of art. 10 points.

**5. Lush:** The monastery is newly renovated with quality stone, and the Monks maintain a botanical and statue garden for meditation. New tapestries and art fill the halls; however, they do not possess any fine art older than 2D6x10 years. The church maintains multiple service centers around the city, offering everything from hospitals to public baths. 30 points.

**6. Extravagant:** The clergy live in the lap of luxury. The finest food, the best wines, the top of everything is available. The temple grounds are adorned with ancient works of art, Dwarven hewn stone, and the finest marble. Every inch of their abbey drips with style and it is highly possible the compound is the biggest thing in town. The church maintains multiple projects around the city, hosting numerous free services. 50 points.

## Step Ten: Knowledge Base

**1. None:** The monastery does not keep public literature. The tiny personal collections of individual members are the only scholarly works in the temple. 0 points.

**2. Small Private Collections:** The church book and scroll collections originate from a single previous member. All literature deeply covers a single subject. There is a 50% chance of finding useful, specific knowledge of that subject. 2 points.

**3. Small Universal Collection:** The library is the collection of previous Monks and current purchases. The books and scrolls briefly cover a range of topics, and there is a 30% chance that any topic will be covered, but not in any depth. 5 points.

**4. Good Universal Collection:** The collections come from multiple private donors that are more detailed and cover a variety of topics. There is a 40% chance that a certain subject is covered. 10 points.

**5. Excellent Research Collection:** The archives are the gift of multiple donors and deeply explore a broad range of topics. There is a 60% chance of a certain topic being covered. 30 points.

**6. It Can Be found:** The church owns a massive collection spanning multiple subjects, times and authors. An entire wing of the campus is dedicated to the papers, with a 90% chance of a topic being covered in some detail. 50 points.

## Step Eleven: Employees

**1. None:** The abbey is staffed only by the clergy, no additional help is available. 0 points.

**2. Slaves/Laborers:** The church owns 1D6 slaves, if they approve of such things. If not, they have 1D6 laborers (Vagabond O.C.C.). These people live at the monastery. 2 points.



**3. Acolytes:** The church constantly staffs 2D4 Acolytes and 1D6 slaves/laborers. 5 points.

**4. Monks:** 3D6 Warrior Monks make up the working staff, in addition to any Priests or Priestesses. 10 points.

**5. Scholars and Merchants:** 4D6 scholars or merchants are employed by the church. The scholars handle most mundane tasks and the merchants assist with the financial aspects of the church. 30 points.

**6. Full Staff:** The monastery employs 3D4 Acolytes, 2D6 Monks, 1D6 scholars or merchants, and 2D6 slaves/laborers, in addition to any clergy. 50 points.

## Step Twelve: Priest Payment

**1. None:** Priests are all volunteers who hold second jobs on the side, because the church cannot or does not compensate them. 0 points.

**2. Meager:** The church pays 2D6 gold per month, which is barely enough to live on. Many clergy will do other odd jobs to subsist. 2 points.

**3. Average:** Salary is 6D6 gold per month. The amount is always enough to live on in the town or city they reside in. Their living is good, but not extravagant. 5 points.

**4. Good:** Pay equals 1D6x10 gold per month. This is more than enough for anyone to live comfortably. There should be enough left over every month that the character can save for wants and not just needs. 10 points.

**5. Outstanding:** At 1D6x100 gold per month, the clergy can afford to live as nobility. Many in this pay range come from that estate and will not accept any less. Many are Priests of outstanding ability or experience and deserve every gold piece. 30 points.

**6. I'm in the Money:** 1D6x1000 per month is the top of the pay scale. Clergy of this level fall into one of two categories: they are heroes and are living in retirement, or they are the top leaders of their church and take the amount because of a sense of entitlement. 50 points.

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# The Hammer of the Forge™

## Chapter Forty-Eight

### “Creature of the Wheel”

By James M. G. Cannon

The rain began to slacken, and once again Caleb grew nervous.

A Knight of the Cosmic Forge, Caleb was not used to anxiety. But this was not hubris at work. This was knowledge of his own Forge-granted strength and abilities, wedded to complete faith and appreciation of his companions' strengths and weaknesses. Caleb had weathered many trials and survived many dangers thanks to his friends and allies. But here, on this world of eternally cloudy skies and chthonic darkness, where vampires in their hundreds stalked every alleyway, Caleb knew fear, but he did not fear for himself. Always he had defended those weaker than himself against evil, but now he faced creatures immune to his every weapon, and he feared he would not be able to protect those he loved.

Doctor Abbott, a shadowy figure in a fedora and trench coat, tapping the flagstones with his cane, had used his magical abilities to summon a rainstorm. It was a feeble thing, but it had so far kept the vampires back, allowing the group to follow Abbott's preternatural senses to a place where this world's ley lines just stopped.

Kassiopaia Acherean, Atlantean Undead Slayer, was the only other member of the party besides Abbott who was equipped to deal with the bloodsuckers. She guarded their rear, a blue sword wreathed in white fire held in her hands.

Between them moved the rest of the group, warily watching the shadows, soaked but uncomplaining. Joriel stood half a foot taller than Caleb, and the maroon of his feathery wings matched the color of his hair and eyes. An artificial being – grown, not built – Joriel had the ability to summon a sword of psychic energy. The vampires flinched when cut by Joriel's blazer, but the weapon did not slow them for long. Arwen Griffin, Abbott's young charge, with green skin and blue hair, wore the garb of a martial artist, and possessed the ability to encase herself in a violet field of light that protected her while also giving her enhanced strength and speed. Caleb had seen her dismantle robots encased in megasteel in seconds. The vampires were knocked back and down by her blows, but their regenerative abilities had them up and on their feet again in moments. Sammadar Orak, Galactic Tracer, wore a suit of insect-like power armor, painted a riot of day-glo colors, that completely obscured her features. In fact, Caleb was the only one who knew she was female at all. Despite the fact that Sam had acquired the armor from the highly advanced K!ozn Continuum, and few civilizations in the Three Galaxies could field its match for speed, firepower, and protective ability, Sam had yet to so much as scratch a single vampire.

All of them save Arwen were jumpy, a little paranoid, and beginning to fray at the edges. They were surrounded by a virtually invulnerable and apparently innumerable foe, and unless they could decipher the strange story of this world, they would all of them soon be dead.

Abbott suddenly raised his hand, virtually invisible against the darkness, and the party halted.

“What is it?” Caleb asked.

Abbott turned to look at him, and beneath the brim of the wizard's hat his orange eyes tightened with concern. "Something I have never encountered before. We have reached the end of the ley line, and yet the path goes on."

Caleb stepped to Abbott's side. They stood in the midst of a broad street. Around them loomed massive buildings fashioned from stone blocks, carved with the likenesses of jaguars, eagles, and dragons. Although not a trace of vegetation marred their surfaces, they reminded Caleb of pictures he had seen of Mayan ruins in *National Geographic* back home. The road stretched back the way they had come, seventeen miles by Caleb's estimate, and stretched on before them. The dead city seemed endless.

A flash of red lightning illuminated the street, and for a moment Caleb thought he saw an image before them, but it was gone in a split second.

"The rain is dying," Joriel said. "Do we press on or make our stand here?"

"Nothing so dramatic," Abbott said. "I can whisk us back to our home dimension in a moment or two."

"Or three," Kassy added from the back.

Abbott ignored her. "What has me concerned is that the ley lines simply stop here. They should extend as the city does." He stretched out his hand to encompass the path before him, then stopped. "That's odd."

Caleb looked at Abbott sharply. "What?"

"There's something here." Abbott stretched out his hand, flattening his long and delicate fingers against something invisible. He traced his fingertips along it, orange eyes focused intently.

"Here they come," Kassy said from behind them all. Caleb looked up sharply. The rain had stopped completely, and the street behind them was rapidly filling with vampires once more. Kassy planted her feet and began to touch the network of blue and white tattoos that decorated her arms. A polar bear and a Gryphon materialized at her side. Near Caleb, Arwen suffused herself in violet light, while Joriel ignited his blazer. Sammadar took a few steps off to the side, and several panels opened up in her armor, revealing more than a dozen mini-missile warheads waiting to fire. "Stay behind me," Kassy said. "I'll hold them off as long as I can." She touched another tattoo, this one at the base of her neck, almost hidden by the thick fall of her black hair, and suddenly a ten foot column of blue water stood beside her. A Water Elemental, one of her most powerful tattoos, a veritable vampire-killing machine. The Elemental flowed in the direction of the vampires, followed closely by the bear and the Gryphon.

Things were about to get very ugly.

Caleb turned back to Abbott. "Figured it out yet?"

"There's some kind of force field or ward here, probably designed to keep the vampires in check. So powerful that it even cages the magic of this realm. Extraordinary."

"Can we get through it?"

Abbott's eyes thinned for a moment. "I'm not sure. There's nothing magical about the barrier. My senses can't penetrate it at all. In fact, if I couldn't feel it with my hands, I would hardly know it was here at all."

Behind them came the screams and hisses of vampires, followed by the bellowing roar of the polar bear, the screech of the Gryphon, and a tremendous roaring sound like a wave striking shore. Caleb forced himself to focus on Abbott and the problem at hand. He trusted Kassy, more than most beings in the Megaverse. He stepped up beside Abbott and reached out his own hands to touch the surface of the barrier. It felt cold and smooth, like a mirror.

Caleb heard the *whump whump whump* of Sammadar's missiles exploding somewhere behind him. Flames and smoke and shattered stone would only slow the rapacious killers for a few seconds.

Caleb risked a glance behind him, and saw his friends being overrun by the vampire horde. Arwen and Joriel fought valiantly, while Sammadar fired blast after blast from her normally devastating guns, and Kassy wove a web of death with her flaming blade and a succession of stakes that she summoned using her tattoos. But her bear and Gryphon were already gone, absorbed by the tide, and the Elemental, while smashing through the vampire line, was itself surrounded and isolated.

Suddenly, there was no time to solve the riddle of the barrier. Pinned against it, they would all die quickly and messily.

Caleb opened his right hand and a bar of red energy appeared there, coalescing into the shape of his chosen weapon, a massive hammer. He hefted the weapon and took a swing at the barrier, just as Abbott turned and began to cast a spell, just as Joriel and Kassy were both buried beneath a tidal wave of vampire flesh.

Caleb grunted in surprise as his hammer met only a paltry resistance. The barrier shattered like glass, exploding in a shower of glistening black shards that danced for a second before Caleb's startled eyes. And then light erupted before him, through the opening, bathing him with warmth, momentarily blinding him. Instinctively, he dropped to one knee even as shards of glass continued to rain down, shattering with tinkling sounds upon the street. The light washed over him, past him, and now the air was filled with shrieks of agony as the vampires began to *burn*.

Caleb bounced to his feet, turned, and raced back to where Kassy lay, stunned and bleeding, surrounded by dunes of ash. Joriel rose shakily from another such mound. His wings extended and shook dust into the air. Kassy reached out a hand and Caleb grasped it, pulling her to her feet. To the question in her blue eyes, he had no answer. Wordlessly, he gathered up his friends and urged them through the hole in reality.

They stepped out of darkness and stone, and stepped down onto a grassy surface, with trees turning red-gold and low bushes, the buzz of insects and the smell of growing things. Caleb dispelled his armor and took a deep, deep breath. His eyes widened as he looked around, and saw paved city streets and houses and cars.

The six of them stood at the edge of a park in a quiet suburban neighborhood, in what looked to be a place very similar to Earth. Caleb didn't recognize the models of the cars parked by the side of the road, but he recognized a Chevrolet cross and the ram's head of a Dodge pickup. While his friends caught their breath and looked around, Caleb slowly crossed the patch of grass to the sidewalk and the curb beyond and looked at the nearest car. The license plate said "Atomic City," a place that

sounded familiar but he couldn't place, and it was also embossed with the Statue of Liberty. He looked back at his companions, and almost flinched at the gaping dark wound behind them that separated this realm from that of the vampires. Then a thought occurred to him – it was mid-morning here at the moment, but what would happen when the sun set?

“Abbott,” he started to say, but as usual the wizard was ahead of him. With a wave of his cane and the flicker of his eyes, Abbott directed the shards of glass to sweep themselves up and combine back together, sealing the gate. After he had done so, the barrier once more became invisible. Behind the party stretched what looked like the rest of the park, dense with trees and tall grass.

“I didn't expect something like this,” Abbott admitted as he approached Caleb. “I thought we'd see more of that stone city.” He pointed past Caleb's shoulder. “But I only see one of steel and glass.”

Caleb turned, following Abbott's finger, and saw for the first time skyscrapers in the distance. He looked back at his rag-tag band of alien friends. Getting about in this place would present its own dangers and problems. Maybe they would get lucky, and it would be close to Halloween.

“I see signs of civilization,” Kassy said, “but no signs of people moving about. Our arrival should have brought some kind of attention, surely.”

She was right, Caleb realized. No one had come out of any of the homes lining the street. He heard no police sirens in the distance. In fact, he heard nothing besides the chirps of birds and the buzzing of insects. No traffic noises, no hum of electricity, no sounds of people moving about.

His initial relief at finding something so familiar now twisted into something darker.

“Maybe the vampires already got here,” Joriel mused aloud.

“I certainly hope not,” said Abbott.

Kassy walked to where Caleb and Abbott stood. “This doesn't make much sense. We were pulled through a gate, a Rift, into that vampire world. But my senses tell me we've stepped into another dimension here – without using a Rift. Abbott, just what in Hades' name is going on?”

The wizard shrugged. “I'm not yet ready to guess.”

“Let's have a look around, then,” Caleb said. “Hopefully we'll find someone with answers.”

They walked down the street, most of them with weapons ready despite Caleb's admonitions to the contrary. The quiet, the lack of activity, and the emptiness began to make Caleb feel even more uncomfortable than the vampires. The fact that so much of this place looked familiar, yet felt so alien, made the hackles on the back of his neck rise.

The residential neighborhood gave way to urban sprawl, which gave way to highways and freeways and the long commute into the city. It was there that they found the first bodies. Men, women, and children sprawled across the road, sitting in cars, lying in the midst of half open doorways. The bodies were gray, dried out, mummified despite the prevailing wet climate.

“These people have been dead a long time,” Sammadar said, after taking a few readings. “But something has preserved them.”

“A warning?” Joriel suggested. No one had an answer.

The closer they got to the city, the more the chaos grew. Cars wrecked, smashed into one another or through storefronts. The remnants of fires, long since smoldered to ashes. Broken glass and broken bodies, scattered across the landscape. They picked their way across the charnel field, each of them growing more and more disturbed with every step. Caleb and Joriel could fly under their own power, and both Kassy and Abbott had magic that could lift them up, but no one left the ground. No one separated from the party. They stayed together, talking softly when at all, trying to take in the monumental, quiet horror of the dead city.

It took several hours to make their way into the city proper, where the streets were clogged with bumper to bumper traffic. Bodies everywhere, trash and detritus in heaps on the sidewalks and alleys, a city in ruins. Nothing moved, nothing made a sound, except the six of them.

Then they rounded a towering skyscraper and came upon a broad plaza the size of a city block. In the center stood a huge statue of a broad shouldered man wearing a cape and a skintight costume, with a shield-shaped emblem on his chest emblazoned with the letter “D.”

All at once, Caleb knew exactly where they were. And he felt a frisson of fear and uncertainty travel up his spine.

“Atomic City,” he said. “Of course.” The others looked at him, drawn more by his tone than by his actual words. “I remember now. When I was a kid, I used to read about Atomic City's greatest heroes. The Defender. Aqualung. Glamazon. Cat-Man and Kitten.”

“Have we arrived on your home world, Caleb?” Kassy asked.

Caleb shook his head. “You don't understand. They were comic books. Fiction. Cartoons. These people never existed, they were just a couple lines and dots of color on cheap newsprint, beating the hell out of Commander Tyranny and the League of Evil for thirty-five cents a pop. This place is a monument to a place that never existed.”

Abbott's eyes twinkled in his version of a frown. “The Megaverse is infinite, Caleb. It contains even those universes that some would consider ‘fictional.’ Indeed, it could be that inspiration and fiction are but bleed-throughs from across space and time to particularly sensitive individuals.”

“Crackpot theories aside,” Kassy interjected, “I think I see something at the base of the statue.”

They made their way across the plaza, packed tight with bodies, until they reached the cleared space in front of the Defender's statue. A half-dozen bodies lay sprawled in that space, clad in tight clothes and primary colors. The Defender himself lay at the very feet of his statue, his blue, red, and yellow costume scorched in places. His eyes were black pits, and his heroic features were contorted into a look of sheer agony.

“This is damn eerie,” Joriel said after a long, quiet moment.

“What happened here? Who could have done this?” Arwen's voice was drawn, thin. Very unlike her. The young girl was deeply affected by everything they had so far seen.

“At a guess,” Abbott said, “whatever created the gate that abducted us in the first place. Whatever is keeping the vampires imprisoned in their dead city. If these people were indeed



heroes, then they could only have resisted such power, and they paid the ultimate price.”

“Then why,” Arwen said, “are all the vehicles pointed towards this plaza? Why are all the bodies spread out as if reaching for this place? Wouldn’t all these normal people have run and hidden from such terrible power?”

“No,” Caleb said. “Their heroes, their guardians, the men and women who had saved them time and again, were under attack. They needed help. And Atomic City rose to the challenge. They came to save their heroes – and they were all killed for their audacity. For their compassion, their courage.”

“Zeus and Hera,” Kassy said.

“This will not go unanswered,” Caleb said.

\* \* \*

Elsewhere . . .

With the help of the enigmatic Romana and her Singularity Watch, a high-tech device attached to her wrist where a personal chron would go, Vodal Kee and the four CAFFCO marines assigned as his escort had navigated through the city of lizard people, across the desert surrounding it, and across some kind of dimensional barrier. Now, with the marines Quick and Silent in the lead and carving a path, the six of them made their way through a thick jungle. The canopy overhead was a welcome respite from the last world’s burning sun, and as a Sinestrian, Vodal felt more at home in the rainforest than in the sandy desert. Although the constant cries and roars of creatures in the trees made him more than a little nervous.

Sarge and Hacker kept close to Vodal and Romana, weapons at the ready. But the marines were beginning to show signs of the strain brought by constant vigilance. Even their near super-human endurance was being taxed by the pace that Romana set. The time-traveling woman had guided them out of the desert and across the dimensional threshold. Her wrist-chron had warped time and space for them, compressing a journey that should have taken days into a handful of hours.

Yet Vodal still felt exhausted. He wasn’t sure how much longer he could stay on his tail.

“I need rest,” he said at last. Vodal felt guilty admitting it, given that the Altess woman looked barely perturbed and the marines were clearly game for anything, despite all that had already transpired.

“We’re aware of that, Doctor,” Sarge said. “We’re looking for somewhere safe to stop, set up a camp.”

“Oh.” Vodal’s waldos fluttered ineffectually in the air. “Is it that obvious?”

Sarge grunted. “It’s been a long day, Doctor. You’re not the only one that needs sack time.”

“Do you think it’s safe?”

Hacker muttered something under his breath, which earned a sharp look from Sarge. “Safe enough,” Sarge said. “Safer than the lizard town. Where did you say we were, Ms. Vorishcenko ne Usckios?”

The Altess, a few steps ahead of the marines and clambering over a fallen log, paused and looked back. “I didn’t, Sergeant. The Singularity Watch has been taking readings since I first ap-

peared in this system, but I still don’t know exactly where we are. Also, there is no need for formality. ‘Romana’ will do fine.”

“We traveled through one Rift to get here,” Vodal said, “but we just passed into this realm like stepping onto a plexball field. This place defies all known dimensional physics.”

“Not exactly, Doctor,” Romana said. She reached out and helped him clamber over the log. “Where I come from, time and space are considerably more fluid.”

“So you have claimed. Do you have an explanation for this situation?”

Romana sighed. “Just a theory. No way to test it yet. But I think what we have here is a series of networked or latticed dimensional sections, perhaps even pocket dimensions. Each one sequenced next to one another, existing on the same vibrational frequency, separated and contained by only a thin membrane of dimensional energy.”

Vodal thought for a few minutes. “Pocket dimensions. I’ve heard the theory, but they’re usually part of some larger continuum, like the Astral Plane. But then, the manner in which these pockets are strung together would suggest the existence of a larger continuum.”

“Indeed. But even ‘naturally’ occurring pocket dimensions don’t bind themselves together. Someone built this place, Doctor Vodal. Someone is maintaining it. And maintenance, I am sure, requires a considerable amount of power. Consider this – I have passed through three realms in this network. How many more have been nested together to form the whole?”

A thought occurred to Vodal. “Hold on. Is it not possible, in all the infinite variety of the Megaverse, for us to have stumbled across a naturally existing collection of pocket universes? Perhaps they are simply so tightly packed together that they appear to be side by side, perceptually speaking.”

“I thought of that. But you would still need to jump from universe to universe using a Rift, or some kind of border plane. Naturally occurring dimensions maintain a buffer between one another, to keep out unwanted rifferaff like us.” Romana held up her wrist-chron. “The Singularity Watch is searching for the power source driving this network of realities. As soon as it latches on to a signal, we’ll find our builders and we’ll get some answers.”

“What if they don’t want to talk to us? By all accounts, we’d be little more than rats in a maze to them. Indeed, if there are beings controlling the gates and this collection of realities, as you call it, they probably put us here for a reason.” Vodal sighed, and rubbed at his brow with a waldo, something he’d picked up by being around humans too long. “Seven Hells, they’re probably gods or worse.”

“Not necessarily, Doctor. They could simply be scientists. We may be able to learn a lot from them.”

Vodal looked at the Altess keenly. “You’re just trying to cheer me up. You don’t actually believe that.”

Romana tried to smile, but it faltered. “No, I guess I don’t. But there is an opportunity to gain knowledge, here.”

Silent appeared ahead, materializing out of the jungle. “Found a clearing with a spring. We should be able to make camp.”

Vodal felt a surge of relief, followed by a brief surge of energy, just enough to get him across the uneven jungle terrain to the spot that Silent and Quick had found. While the marines unpacked supplies, including a three-person tent, filled their canteens, and shared a bit of food, Vodal found a suitable patch of ground and coiled himself upon it. He was asleep in moments, despite the grave thoughts his discussion with Romana conjured.

\* \* \*

Elsewhere . . .

Ariel of Titan hung suspended a meter above the floor, bound to an X-frame and encased within a cage which dampened her Cosmo-Knight abilities. She was still a Titan, however, and trusted that she would be able to free herself in time. But her attention was not focused on her bonds, but rather on the human standing before her.

Sol Vyking was tall for a human, but still only about two meters in height. He had dark hair, a neatly trimmed beard and blue eyes that were normally cold, but now burned with the glow of madness. He wore a flower print shirt, cargo shorts, and sandals. Once, he could have encased himself in a formidable suit of metallic blue cosmic armor. But no longer. Sol had Fallen, and the blessings of the Forge were no longer his to command.

Ariel had not seen Vyking in months. But it appeared that for him, time had moved much more quickly.

“A thousand years!” Vyking roared. “A thousand years I have waited to see my *friends* again.”

“You said that. But only a fraction of that time has passed for me. We didn’t abandon you, Sol.”

“Hah! You expect me to believe that? Of course you’d say that. Try to placate me, trick me into freeing you. And then what? Cut me down with your eyebeams, or cleave me in two with your sword?” Vyking turned and stalked over to a pedestal, upon which was placed a set of glowing crystals.

Vyking reached out and placed a palm upon the crystals. The light within them began to pulsate, and a mirror light flickered in Vyking’s mad blue eyes. “It wouldn’t work, anyway. I have internalized the energies of this system. I am more powerful than I was when I was a mere Cosmo-Knight. Not powerful enough to challenge the Forge itself . . . not yet anyway. But more than a match for you.”

Vyking released the crystals and whirled, pointing a finger at Ariel. “So cease your struggling. There’s no point to it. You cannot stop me. I’ve surpassed you.”

Ariel tightened her lips. *If that is so, then why am I bound?* she thought.

Aloud, she said, “What happened to you, Sol? What is this place? What have you become?”

“Something your feeble mind could hardly comprehend.” He touched the crystals again, and they reacted. “A thousand years ago. You remember the *Shadowstar*? How we penetrated Transgalactic space and attacked their black hole generating ship? You remember the singularity it created to destroy us? While Caleb kept the fighters and troops busy outside, you and I managed to get aboard the ship. You headed for the bridge, I recall, and I for the engine room. I destroyed the engine, but found myself trapped as the dead ship spiraled into the black hole.”

“I do remember, Sol. I went into the black hole myself. When I came out on the other side, I was on a jungle world. I fought the remnants of the *Shadowstar*’s crew.”

“Lies!” Vyking roared. “You and Caleb escaped, left me behind, to be sucked down into Hell itself. I survived. Barely.”

“I came to in a prison like the one you wear. But it was the vampires who held me. Fed off me.” Vyking wrapped his arms around his trunk, suppressing a shudder. “I escaped. Killed the head vampire, rescued a little girl. But then . . . but then . . . the rest of them stormed the mansion. Burst through. She died. I was nearly killed myself. I escaped. Flew away. Up. Up, into the clouds, dodging bolts of red lightning, until I smashed through the roof of the world.

“And found myself somewhere else.”

Vyking paused, reached out both hands to touch the crystals, and slowly his muscles relaxed. “I wandered through dead worlds and deadly worlds for ages. I fought and killed and nearly died. I was captured, and tortured, and fed upon. But always I escaped and revenged myself on my captors. And finally, I found the heart of the universe. Here, in this citadel. And I took the power for myself.

“I looked for allies. Some of them refused my offer, and those I destroyed. But some recognized my greatness, and now they serve me. My horde.”

Ariel recalled the demons that had overwhelmed her after she had stepped through the gate, and suppressed a shudder of her own. Vyking had indeed Fallen, and fallen very far.

“That’s when you went looking for us? More revenge?”

“Justice,” Vyking said coldly. “Knights of the Cosmic Forge are tasked with protecting the less fortunate throughout the Three Galaxies. But where was my protection when I needed it? Where were my *friends* when I lay trapped, a vampire’s plaything? Where – ”

Vyking broke off, suddenly distracted. His hands tightened around the crystals, and they began to pulse more brightly, more quickly. “They’ve gone off track. They’ve jumped between realms! Already? Unheard of. They must be stopped.

“Kill them all. Well, bring Caleb and the Watch to me. Everyone else must be destroyed.”

The light in Vyking’s eyes flashed, red and angry and cruel, and Ariel once more sought the leverage she needed to tear herself free. But the cage held fast. She said a silent prayer to Athena, to protect her friends, and redoubled her efforts.

Vyking’s head turned, and his glowing eyes regarded her. Slowly, he smiled.

\* \* \*

In the heart of Atomic City, Caleb and his friends heard a rumbling sound. Caleb looked up, away from the corpse of the Defender, and saw a dark cloud forming in the sky. It moved quickly, unnaturally.

“That’s no cloud,” Caleb said. It was a horde of winged monstrosities, huge and misshapen, with multi-faceted eyes and fangs that dripped venom. He summoned his armor and his hammer, and felt the others around him prepare for battle.

This was going to be ugly.

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