

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE

RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®



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Nightbane®: Vampires!

Rifts®: Free State of Lazlo™

Heroes Unlimited™: Stage Magic

Palladium Fantasy RPG®: Regomancy

Hammer of the Forge™

Fiction, News & Coming Attractions

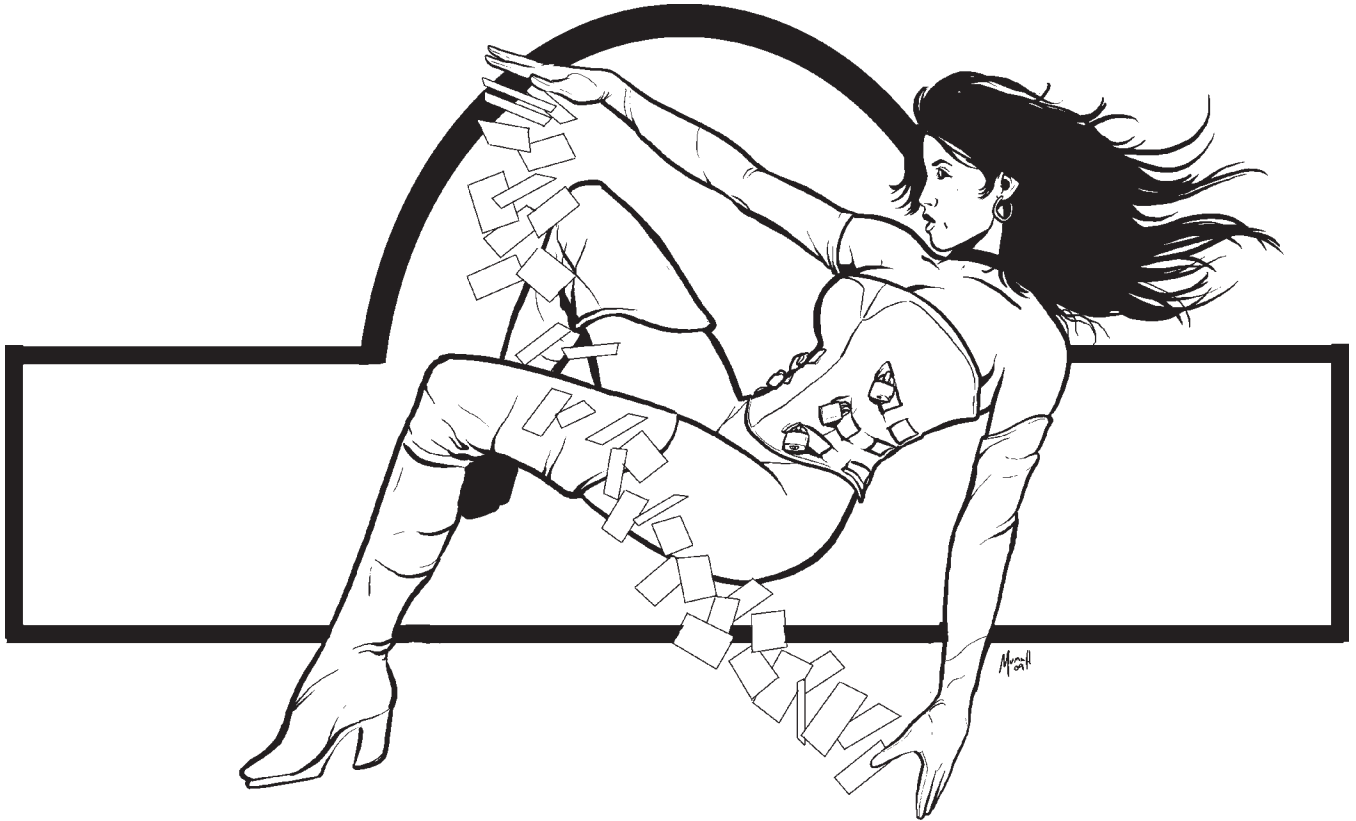
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The fictional worlds of Palladium Books® are violent, deadly and filled with supernatural monsters. Other-dimensional beings, often referred to as “demons,” torment, stalk and prey on humans. Other alien life forms, monsters, gods and demigods, as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

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

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



The Rifter® Number 49

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing – January 2010

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Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER #49



Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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

– *Kevin Siembieda, 2010*

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Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Publisher Kevin Siembieda talks a little about Palladium's past year and the potential good and bad 2010 may have to offer. Much of 2009 was rough for Palladium, but the last quarter saw significant sales growth and fan excitement for upcoming books.

Our fearless leader sees two likely, if extreme, possible futures for Palladium Books. One is a dark future of declining sales and going out of business. The other is a bright future of growing sales, numerous hotly anticipated releases, a Rifts® movie, and great success for years to come. Which will it be? Is there anything you can do to help? Read all about it here.

Page 9 – News

Publisher Kevin Siembieda covers various bits of news and updates including sales, plans to license Palladium's intellectual properties for new mediums and markets, the 2010 Palladium Open House (less than four months away!), Big Plans for Robotech, Live Podcasts, and more.

Did you know **The Rifter®** is 12 years old? Hard to believe? Isn't it. It's also hard to believe Kevin didn't talk about it in the News section. He claims that it will be the subject of his issue #50 From the Desk, which makes sense. Issue number fifty will be a special expanded, landmark issue of 128 pages (maybe more) and filled with "official" source material written by Palladium freelance writers. It will have a higher retail cover price of \$14.95, but subscribers will get it at no extra charge.

The **Rifts® RPG** turns 20 years old this year, and we'll be celebrating with new **Rifts®** books, an *Open House Birthday Party* and more! Kev will talk about that more next issue too. Yep, 2010 should be an exciting year.

Page 12 – Coming Attractions

The first six months of anticipated releases are laid out before you. Palladium Books has many exciting new releases planned for 2010, and the first six months are just the beginning. Since **Rifts®** is turning 20 this year, there is a focus on **Rifts®** titles, but Palladium will also continue to support ALL of its game lines with products planned for **Rifts®, Robotech®, Chaos Earth™, Heroes Unlimited™, Palladium Fantasy RPG®/Mysteries of Magic™, Dead Reign™, Phase World®** and others.

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 2010 *Open House* is going to be a massive celebration and it is less than four months away.

Page 17 – The Rifter® Super-Subscription Offer

The Rifter® just keeps getting better. We encourage people to buy *The Rifter®* and other Palladium products at their favorite retail stores. However, if you have trouble finding *The Rifter®* in stores, or want the convenience of having it delivered right to your door, then you'll want to check this out.

Page 18 – 2009 Palladium Open House

It's fun. It's intimate. It's three days of *role-playing games* at Palladium Books. Many games run by Kevin Siembieda, Julius Rosenstein, Carmen Bellaire, Carl Gleba, and a host of other Palladium creators.

Not only can you game, game, game, but you get to meet Kevin, the Palladium staff and dozens of Palladium writers and artists who are around all weekend to chat and sign autographs. Plus, you get a chance to *game with some of them*. The entire event is ALL Palladium role-playing games, many run by the very people who write them. You are treated like a long-time friend and the event is held at the Palladium warehouse!

How can you attend? The details are all right here.

Page 20 – Evil G.M. Strats

Game Mastering suggestions and ideas

Chris Fox presents some interesting strategies and ideas about leveling life and death situations at player characters and keeping the game fun and fair.

Artwork by *Allen and Brian Manning*.

Page 22 – Princes of the Universe – Regomancy

Optional rules for Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Mark Hall offers up a type of magic that benefits royalty and helps them in leading, protecting and influencing their people. What are the responsibilities of leaders? Can a sort of magic help them be better leaders? Find out.

Artwork by *Michael Mumah*.

Page 27 – The Free State of Lazlo

Optional Source Material for Rifts®

Jeff Woodman takes a look at the history of the famed City-State of Lazlo, one of the great, magical kingdoms of Rifts North America. He details its founding, its government, notable political factions, notable laws, Lazlo's Defense Force, and education. It is a fun and enlightening read.

Artwork by *Allen and Brian Manning*.

Page 36 – Stage Magic Unlimited™

“Optional” source material for Heroes Unlimited™

Jake Marsh takes a look at how Stage Magicians can use their powers to emulate true super abilities and psionics. He also looks at the value of having a Magician's assistant/partner, the use of trained animals, special gimmicks, and pyrotechnics.

Artwork by *Michael Mumah*.

Page 43 – Silent Saint

A short story for Heroes Unlimited™

Frederic Christie offers up a tale of chaos, demonic invasion, heroics, fame and adventure.

Artwork by *Mark Dudley*.

Page 54 – Vampires Revisited

“Optional” rules & material for Nightbane®

Ed Woodward III presents an in-depth look at, and optional rules, powers and abilities for, vampires in the **Nightbane®** setting.

Types of Vampires – Page 54

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Natural Abilities Common to All – Page 72

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Vampire Nutrition: Drinking Blood – Page 86

Optional Rules & Tables – Page 87

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Artwork by *Nick Bradshaw, Kent Burles and Michael Mumah*.

Page 91 – The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter 49: Last Stand. The latest installment of *James M.G. Cannon's* epic tale set in the Three Galaxies is action packed with plenty of carnage, treachery and . . . death!?

The Theme for Issue 49

The theme for this issue is powers, secrets, magic and vampires. It also tackles subject matter that you probably thought you already knew all about, and gives it twists that are fun, new and provocative. Thus, this issue is another celebration of imagination.

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

It is written by gamers and fans like you. Which means YOU should think about contributing to future issues. You fledgling writers and longtime gamers who think you 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 fic-

tion 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 *Michael “Madman” Leonard* who is working hard at becoming a digital artist. Mostly, Mike is a storyteller and the digital medium is just another way for the Game Master to weave new stories and tickle the imagination of others.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

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

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

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

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

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The Rifter® #50

– Special Anniversary Issue – April, 2010

- **More pages.**
- **More contributors.**
- **All (or mostly) official source material from across the Megaverse®.**
- Brandon K. Aten and Matt Orr – **Splicers®**.
- Jason Richards – **Chaos Earth™**.
- Braden Campbell – **Phase World®**.
- Josh Sinsapaugh – **Beyond the Supernatural™**.
- Irvin Jackson – **Nightbane®**.
- Carl Gleba – **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**.
- Taylor White – **Ninjas and Superspies™**.
- Brandon K. Aten – **Rifts® Robot Merchants’ Guide..**
- **The latest chapter of Hammer of the Forge™, fiction.**
- **News, coming attractions and more.**
- **\$14.95 retail (no extra cost to subscribers) – 128 pages (maybe more!). Celebrating 12 years of adventure and imagination.**

From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

I can't believe another year has gone by, and this one seemed to shoot by faster than ever.

The global economic crisis made 2009 a strange year with sometimes daily ups and downs. Sales started out strong in the first part of the year, dropped into the toilet in the Summer and climbed back out by the end of the year. In fact, October and November sales were better than last year by 3% and 8% respectively, and in December sales were through the roof at 18% higher than the same time 2008. Of course, we were offering the best Christmas Surprise Package ever with \$85-\$95 worth of product on average and sometimes more.

That amazing sales growth is very encouraging as we enter 2010. Which is good, because I don't know if Palladium can survive another year like 2009. The following is a retool of what I posted online on Christmas Eve. It is repeated here for those who have not seen it and because it is an accurate portrayal of the coming year.

The future of Palladium Books in 2010

Some days, I wish I had crystal ball to see into the future, don't you?

These past several years have been hard ones. There have been a lot of changes and sacrifices by everyone at Palladium for a long time now. Despite the trials and tribulations, we haven't given up. My long-time staff and stalwart freelancers have been with me every step of the way. No matter what has been thrown our way, we try to stay positive and keep moving forward. So yeah, it would be nice to have a crystal ball to see if all that hard work and perseverance pays off. And when.

What does 2010 hold for Palladium Books?

Good question. I see two distinct and very different 2010 scenarios. It's disturbing, but at this stage, both extremes seem equally plausible. One is dark and unwanted. The other is amazing.

A brief overview of events

Palladium has faced some crushing obstacles and challenges the past few years, and while we've managed to *survive*, the company has never gotten completely back on its feet before having to face another challenge that knocks us back on our knees. *The Crisis of Treachery*, the deeply felt loss of *Erick Wujcik*, and the *global economic meltdown* are just three of the most notable. Each hit Palladium hard. Each time we refused to go down. With your help, we stayed on our feet and stepped forward.

Some people have wondered, how much more can Palladium take before it goes down and out? *We* ask ourselves, what do we need to do to help Palladium finally turn the corner and be strong again?

2008 was hard on Palladium. The move to a new location was a necessity but cost time and resources. The sudden loss of beloved friend and ally Erick Wujcik to cancer was an unex-

pected and devastating blow. His passing impacted everyone at Palladium in ways we never imagined. Our latest, secret MMOG deal couldn't get off the ground, and the global economic collapse erased the progress we had made from two years of recovery efforts following the *Crisis of Treachery*.

2009 offered more challenges. We limped into 2009 with big plans, and they worked the first five months of the year, allowing us to make some headway and culminating into a riotous fun time at the **2009 Palladium Open House**. Then the Summer slump came.

Summer is usually good for sales, but not in 2009. At least not for Palladium. Sales were terrible. The worst we have ever seen, and it kept getting worse with every month that went by. In September, I had to *temporarily lay off* two of Palladium's six full-time employees, including *Wayne Smith*. Thankfully, new releases and Christmas sales allowed me to bring Wayne back four weeks later and strong sales helped us catch up on bills, though not completely. That means we go into 2010 still in the hole. Worse, the first quarter is notorious for bad sales. Thus, we enter 2010 with some trepidation.

Palladium's 2010 Dark Future Scenario

As I plot our releases and marketing strategy for 2010, two likely futures appear. Here's the one you aren't going to like.

The possible dark future. The economy remains sluggish. *Palladium fans* very much want old and new products but can't afford to buy them. (We saw that a great deal in 2009.) *New gamers* continue to discover Palladium and fall in love with the game system and settings (as many did in 2008 and 2009), but they too lack the cash to buy all they want. *Retail stores* continue to struggle and cut back on the RPG products they carry. A flock of stores go out of business. Other retail stores, crippled with poor cash flow, are afraid to try new titles like **Dead Reign™** or even **Robotech®**, making it increasingly difficult for gamers to find the sourcebooks and games they desire. Stores, like the *Compleat Strategist* in New York City, that carry a company's entire game line (or most of it), are increasingly rare gems in a role-playing game desert. They are to be cherished and supported.

Rumblings suggest some game/RPG distributors are struggling and cutting back too. Even the big distributors. *If* one or more top tier distributors go out of business or dramatically cut back on role-playing games (as some distributors already have in 2009), it will cut deep. It means gamers will have even more trouble finding RPG products in the stores. Sure they can buy direct from Palladium Books, online outlets, and rare full service stores, but it reduces the opportunity to examine new books before purchasing them, and prevents new gamers from being enticed to make a purchase based on what they can hold in their hands and examine.

That puts a lot of pressure on gamers to find alternative ways to get RPG products. How many will take the time? How many will just walk away from the hobby? Sad.

A small success story. According to many industry insiders, sales of games dropped in 2009. The sharpest drop was among

role-playing games. Personally, I bristle whenever I hear this, because I believe it is a self-fulfilling prophecy and that the market isn't nearly as "weak" or "dead" as some seem to believe it is. Here are two reasons why I say that. **One**, Palladium's sales in the last quarter of 2009 were impressive. **Two**, the **Dead Reign™ RPG** is not Palladium's top selling role-playing game, yet it sold nearly *3,000 copies* over a one year period since its 2008 release. Those numbers are a far cry from the good ol' days where we sold 3000-10,000 copies of a new release day one, but today, 3,000 copies sold in a year's time is a strong seller. Approximately *half* of those sales were made online because gamers couldn't find the **Dead Reign™** game and sourcebooks in stores. I can't help wondering how many more we would have sold if more stores were in a position to carry the book. Tough times limits availability and everybody suffers for it. It makes me want to scream.

More bad trends. Industry support and promotion of role-playing games continued to shrink in 2009. Nobody knows yet what might happen in 2010. This is a scary situation that has already caused many game companies to go out of business or to move away from role-playing games. Not Palladium Books, we continue to focus on RPGs. And while our overall sales were down in 2009, *Palladium ended the year* with very strong sales. Sales were up 3% in October, 8% in November, and a whopping 18% in December compared to the same time last year. That's incredibly promising and encouraging, but it was not enough to completely offset Palladium's losses from earlier in the year. Thus, we limp into 2010.

We need to see our sales stay strong in the months to come. If sales slide back down or if Palladium can't find some new revenue stream — it could be bad for us. Real bad.

Palladium's 2010 Bright Future Scenario

"Difficult to see. Always in motion is the future."

— *Yoda, The Empire Strikes Back*

Our battle isn't over yet. Not by a long shot.

We're ending the year with a bang, and hope to start the New Year with another bang that keeps sales strong. With your continued support, Palladium's future could be a bright and vibrant one.

Palladium's December sales — at an 18% increase over last year — were *EIGHTEEN times higher* than the USA's national average for Christmas retail sales. That's . . . that's amazing! I had a good feeling about fourth quarter sales, but I dared not hope for more than 5-10%. 18% is . . . wow.

Not only that, but we've shown three consecutive months of impressive sales growth.

There is an excitement in the air about Palladium Books and its new releases. We've seen new gamers discover us for the first time and veteran gamers return to role-playing for 3 years in a row. Meanwhile, I have put things in motion behind the scenes that, if even one should bear fruit, could transform Palladium Books overnight.

● **If the global economy improves**, so should Palladium's sales. As noted in other *2009 Press Releases* and *Murmurs from the Megaverse*, we know gamers are loving the new books, people are returning to Palladium RPGs, and we are attracting new

gamers. If the up and down sales roller coaster of 2009 evens out, stays strong, and we see a return to even 2007 sales levels, Palladium would be doing reasonably well.

● **The changing tide of distribution.** While some distributors have cut back, others have expanded. Palladium knows of at least two distributors who have expanded their selection of Palladium products, and we are happy to say that most (as in 95%) carry our ENTIRE game line.

● **Pulse-pounding new products bring new sales and excitement.** We have an array of hotly anticipated books in the pipeline, and many additional ideas for RPGs and sourcebooks in development. Our focus in 2010 will remain on supporting all of Palladium's game lines and getting out a slew of new books to make our fans and newcomers smile with glee. Of course, if the economy and sales don't improve from last year, even hotly anticipated products may not make a big enough difference. Time will tell.

The trick is getting books out and on time. That's harder to do than it may seem. It takes a lot of time, people and hard work to make the high quality products we know you want. We'll do our best to get them done and in your hands throughout 2010. In fact, I have been approached by nearly a dozen Palladium creators, from staff to freelancers, who have suggested Palladium skip going to conventions again in 2010 to focus on releasing a large quantity of product. I haven't decided yet, but I'm considering it. That tactic was certainly successful in 2009.

● **The Rifts® Movie.** Maybe it's wishful thinking, but we have good vibes about the **Rifts®** movie. If *Jerry Bruckheimer* decides to make an epic sci-fi **Rifts®** **Movie**, everything changes. It's been 8 years since the option was signed, and JB Films liked *Rawson Marshall Thurber's* first draft screenplay. Could a major motion picture be part of Palladium's future? We hope so.

● **Could there be more than one Palladium based film?** We sure hope so. There has been some interest in **Nightbane®**. This is an exciting new development. I can't talk about it yet, namely because there's really nothing to talk about at this stage, but there is interest and excitement about **Nightbane®** from a few different markets. Fingers crossed.

● **Licensing Palladium's intellectual properties (I.P.s).** We've had some interest in other Palladium I.P.s as well. If Palladium could branch out into some other market areas it would help the company on many fronts and support our efforts to keep role-playing games alive and well.

Heck, one of the first things the folks at **Blizzard Entertainment®** asked me at my speaking engagement there was, "Why haven't we seen an MMOG or videogame for **Rifts®** or other Palladium games? They are perfect for the electronic medium."

While many people don't seem to realize it, we've been trying to license Palladium's I.P.s for years. We've come close to signing a number of agreements, but even the few we've signed have met with an unfortunate end through no fault of Palladium's. The ill-fated *Rifts® CCG* and *Rifts® Promise of Power* game for the *N-Gage* immediately come to mind. I can't begin to tell you how many times we thought we had an MMOG deal in place that never got off the ground.

We'd love to see videogames, online games, toys, miniatures, comic books, novels, films, TV shows, and all sorts of quality

products from third party licensees in other markets. Even small licenses would be a start.

If we can get the right business people looking at Palladium's intellectual properties (I.P.s), who knows what might unfold. A couple of things the Blizzard people reminded me about are that most of Palladium's RPGs are known by two or three generations of gamers and have been shepherded along by one main creative force – me – which they saw as a positive factor creating a continuity and clarity of vision that few game companies can offer. I hadn't considered that. **(FYI: Most other RPG companies create game product by committee using numerous contributors and do dramatic overhauls every few years, usually by a new set of designers that change not just the rules, but often the setting, the storyline and the characters, which can work against the property.)**

It's funny, but sometimes all you need is that ONE license to get the ball rolling – it's the snowball rolling down the hill effect. So now we need to ink some deals! Palladium's agent, Mark Freedman of **Surge Licensing**, is actively shopping Palladium's I.P.s around.

Rifts®

Chaos Earth™

The Mechanoids®

Nightbane®

Dead Reign™

Beyond the Supernatural™

Palladium Fantasy RPG®

After the Bomb®

Heroes Unlimited™

Ninjas & Superspies™

Wormwood™

Phase World®

Skrapers™ and the rest are all strong I.P.s.

• **The Palladium Open House** is a powerful tool and resource wrapped into a weekend of fun. It lets people from the outside get a glimpse of Palladium from the inside. The gamers who attend get to see us for who we really are. That creates a great sense of connection and it helps dispel crazy rumors about me and the Palladium crew. More importantly, it promotes fun, imagination, camaraderie and excitement. Actually, the Open House is nothing short of fantastic get together, and those of you who can make the event should come on down.

Which will come to pass?

Dark future or bright?

I'd like to think that's up to me and you.

We can't take for granted that Palladium's future is bright. We need to continue to work hard at making the bright future a reality, and trust me, threatening clouds loom on the horizon. We need to release quality product and we need to see strong sales.

Just remember, you can make a difference and help us achieve the bright future. You've heard it before, but here's how.

A) Please continue to support the company in word, deed and purchases. We can't do this alone. We need your support.

B) Spread the word about the Palladium games you enjoy. Talk about them in positive ways online and elsewhere, encourage people to play, point them to the Palladium website, and make sure people know they can buy books online from Palladium directly if they can't find them in the stores. Those of you so inclined, may even volunteer to run events at conventions or game stores to introduce new people to the Palladium Megaverse®.

C) Don't forget us throughout the year. Pick up the new products you want shortly after their release. Again, talk about the books you like, why you like them, and encourage others to take a look for themselves.

D) Tell your contacts in the videogame and film industry about Palladium's intellectual properties. Seriously, let game companies you like and respect know that you think Palladium RPG "X" would make a great videogame, MMOG, CCG, miniature game, etc. You might spark an idea for somebody.

E) Keep gaming. Keep those imaginations burning and enjoy the role-playing game experience. There is nothing like it.

F) Keep the faith. We continue to fight the good fight. We work hard and do our best every single day. Hang in there with us and dare to reach for the stars. On a good day – on a day that seems full of promise – we dream of a bright future, infinite possibilities, and another 28 years of even greater achievement in fun and games for Palladium Books. On a bad day, we battle the blues and try our best to stay the course.

That's where we stand. I know, not the great news you'd like to hear. Palladium is entering an uncertain period. We see greater potential for growth and recovery than we've seen in years. Palladium's future seems to hold nothing but promise, and it feels like we've made significant headway these past few months. But it is much too soon to tell. We still have a fight ahead of us. We can't relax for a minute. We need to keep producing books you'll want to buy. We need to improve sales and keep moving forward no matter what challenges come our way or how tired we may feel. Let me tell you, that battle is easier knowing you, our fans, have our backs and are rooting for Palladium to succeed. You give us strength and inspire us to keep going, especially on the bad days. Please stay with us for another year and dare to dream of the bright future. Perhaps, together, we can make it happen. And make it happen in 2010.

May 2010 be a year filled with good health, prosperity, joy and wonder for us all. Keep those imaginations burning bright and game on.

– Kevin Siembieda, January 2010

News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

As noted in my *From the Desk of*, we have big plans for 2010. It will be a rough start, because Palladium has some cash flow issues as we go into the New Year, but we are full of enthusiasm. Despite our concerns about the economy and our future, there is an energy and high expectations among EVERYONE at Palladium. There's something in the air and a sense that big things are coming our way in 2010.

Palladium plans to start the year off with a bang. That means one great, new game release after another, plus the *Rifter Super-Subscription drive* (which starts now), the *2010 Palladium Open House*, and a number of landmarks to celebrate all year long.

The Rifter® Super-Subscription Offer

The Rifter® just seems to get better and better, and with the big, **The Rifter® #50 Special Anniversary Issue** (128 pages and full of official source material), there is no better time to subscribe – or renew your subscription – than now.

What? You need more convincing? Here are six more reasons to subscribe:

1. You get each issue at below cover price.
2. In the event of a price increase, your subscription price is locked in for the duration of your subscription.
3. You get your choice of a *FREE gift* worth \$13-\$24 (there is a small cost for shipping and handling).
4. You get the expanded, **Anniversary Issue #50** at no extra cost.
5. The Rifter is delivered to your door.
6. The Rifter® is consistently fun, imaginative, and presents source material and adventures for *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Rifts®*, *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, *Nightbane®*, *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Chaos Earth™* and other game settings.

The Rifter® subscription drive starts now. See complete details elsewhere in this issue or on the Palladium website (www.palladiumbooks.com). Order yours today.

2010 Palladium Open House

– April 29 & 30, May 1 & 2

We invite you into our home – the Palladium warehouse and offices – where we treat you like friends and welcomed guests. Palladium staff and freelance writers and artists are available to you all day long, every day! Play games with us. Talk with us. Get autographs, inside information, our thoughts and opinions on things, and have a blast! What other gaming event can make that claim? And we're talking dozens of Palladium creators! It is an experience you'll remember and cherish for years.

And this year, the Open House is going to be celebrating **Rifts®** turning 20 years old, **The Rifter®** turning 12 and hitting issue fifty, and more. This is going to be the biggest, best organized, most fun Palladium Open House ever.

Those of you who live close by in Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Ontario, in particular, should consider joining the fun.

We keep the cost minimal, have excellent hotel rates, and offer a weekend of gaming and fun. **Note:** Greater details and information are presented elsewhere in this issue and on the Palladium website. Join the fun.

2010 V.I.P. Thursday, April 29, 2010

Orders can be placed on February 1st

In an effort to enable everyone a fair chance to attend V.I.P. Night at the Palladium Open House, we held back 20 slots to be made available in February 1, 2010.

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 *70 lucky paying guests* plus Palladium staff and creators.

Cost: \$60 – sold on a first come, first served basis.

Hotel Accommodations: Comfort Inn Plymouth Clock Tower Hotel, Plymouth, Michigan, five minutes from the Palladium office. **Call 734-455-8100 TO MAKE A RESERVATION** at the \$69.95 price, but you *MUST* tell them you want a room in the ***Block Reserved for Palladium Books.***

Rifts® Movie Update

Honestly, there is nothing new to report, and yet there's a growing sense of excitement. Maybe with the release of *Avatar* it just feels like **Rifts'** time has arrived and the movie needs to be made. Bruckheimer has waited nearly a decade to find the right script, hopefully the talented *Rawson Marshall Thurber* can deliver the goods. My gut tells me he can. My gut is telling me a number of things are going to break Palladium's way this year. Hmmm, I hope that "gut feeling" is a premonition of things to come and not gas. (That's a joke.) We hope to know something by Summer.

Venturing into new markets

Palladium has a small handful of talented people looking over its intellectual properties and working to get them translated into other media and markets. **Nightbane®** seems to be the one that's stirring up the most interest at the moment, but others are being kicked around too. Keep your fingers crossed.

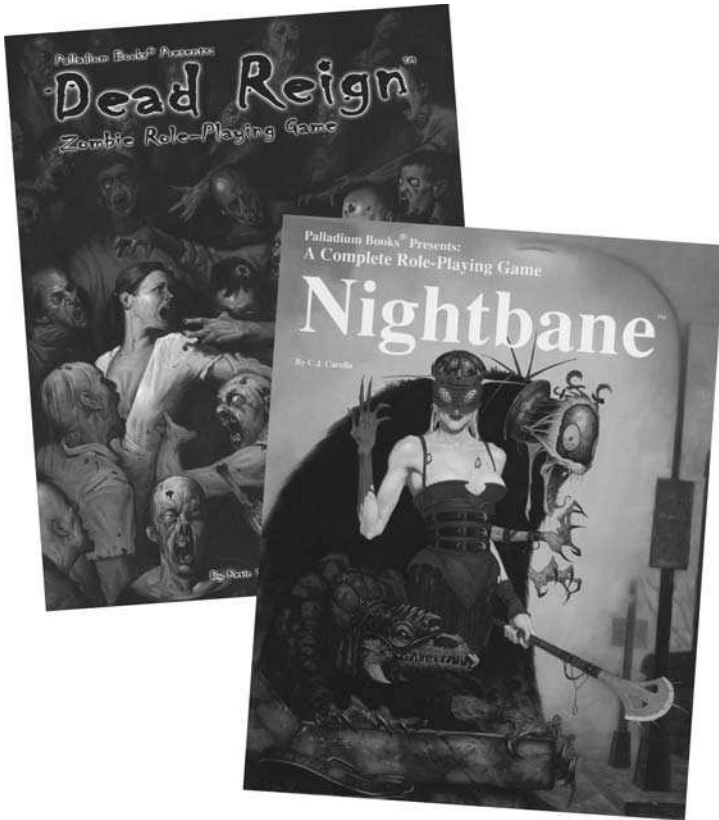
Christmas Grab Bags a huge success

Our annual Christmas Surprise Package offer was a huge success. It felt like we shipped out a zillion of them. We got rants and raves about them from scores of happy customers. That was nice, because we aim to please and, with so many people struggling, I wanted to make this year's Surprise Packages extra special. It appears we have succeeded. It was our pleasure.

Mysteries of Magic™ is a success

Mysteries of Magic™ Book One: The Heart of Magic™ has been welcomed with open arms. It is selling well and was one of the top ten most requested items in the Christmas Sur-

prise Packages. Many have expressed their desire to see more in the series, and soon. We hope to accommodate that request.



Dead Reign™ and Nightbane® grow in popularity

Dead Reign™ and **Nightbane®** titles were also among the most requested in Christmas Surprise Packages and are selling well. We intend to offer at least one or two new sourcebooks for both in 2010 as we try to support all our game lines.

Big Plans for Robotech®

With Jason Marker choosing to leave Palladium Books, it seems some fans feared **Robotech®** will be left to flounder. Nothing could be further from the truth. We have BIG plans for Robotech®.

Talented artists like *Apollo Okamura*, *Brian Manning*, *Allen Manning*, *Mike Majestic* and *Nick Maradin* have been lined up, and I've been talking with a couple of freelance writers who are fired up about taking **Robotech®** to new levels of adventure. One in particular is *Irvin Jackson*. I've had a few brainstorming sessions with Irvin and, boy oh boy, are you going to like what he and I are whipping up for you.

Robotech® Expeditionary Force Marines™ should be released in March and **Robotech® New Generation™** 2-3 months later.

The Queen of Ghouls™

Palladium's own *Kathy Simmons* launched her **Queen of Ghouls™** business and Ebay store. She makes and sells one of a kind, life-sized Halloween props. You know, killer clowns,

vampires, werewolves, witches, wizards, zombies and more for displaying on your front lawn. She hit a couple of speed bumps due to the economy, but word of mouth spreads, and her sales have started to pick up. Her work is imaginative, original and the craftsmanship is impressive. If you think the photos online look good you should see them in person. Wow. A typical "ghoul," as she calls her creations, costs \$89-\$150. You can see some of her work (available off-season at lower prices) at her **Queen of Ghouls™ Ebay store** – queenofghouls.com

Murmurs from the Megaverse®

A continuing blog by me, 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 main web page is www.palladiumbooks.com. Otherwise, check out our weekly, online press releases.

Gateway to the Megaverse® Podcast

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 be back on the show on a regular basis and will try to maintain a monthly appearance. Topics vary and I answer questions from the listeners.

For a link to the podcast, visit our website at www.palladiumbooks.com.

Out of print titles available as PDFs at DriveThruRPG.com

Palladium has made several out of print titles and the first 40 issues of **The Rifter®** available as PDF digital downloads from **DriveThruRPG.com**. We are regularly asked if out of print titles such as **Nightbane® Book Four: Shadows of Light™**, the original **Mechanoids® RPGs**, **Boxed Nightmares™**, **BTS First Edition**, etc. are available, and they are, at **DriveThruRPG.com**. Check 'em out. And sometime in 2010, **DriveThruRPG.com** expects to be able to offer complete print on demand features so you can get a pdf of the game or an actual, printed book. Cool, eh?

No Conventions in 2010?

Last year, Palladium skipped attending conventions so we could focus on releasing new product. That plan worked so well that a number of freelancers, friends and even fans, have suggested we do the same in 2010. I haven't decided yet, but I'm considering it. So if you don't see us around at Gen Con and other game conventions, you'll know why.

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2010 Release Schedule

All release dates are tentative, but these are the dates Palladium is shooting for. All titles listed either have been turned in as final manuscripts or are in various stages of final development.

- **The Rifter® #49** – Now available
- **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 12: Dimensional Outbreak™** – January 2010
- **Rifts®/Phase World® Sourcebook: Heroes of the Megaverse®** – February
- **Rifts® World Book 31: Triax™ Two** – February or March
- **Robotech® UEEF Marines** – March
- **Rifts® World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms™, Expanded & Updated** – March
- **Rifts® Dimension Book™: Thundercloud Galaxy™** – March
- **The Rifter® #50** (expanded, anniversary issue) – April
- **Rifts® Vampire Sourcebook™** – April
- **Rifts® World Book™: Lemuria** – April
- **2010 Palladium Open House Event** – April 29 thru May 2.
- **Armageddon Unlimited™** – May
- **Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames** – June
- **Robotech® New Generation** – June
- Plus more **Robotech® sourcebooks**, more **Mysteries of Magic™ sourcebooks** (hoping to slot one in before June), more **Nightbane® sourcebooks**, more **Dead Reign™ sourcebooks**, **Warpath™** and other good stuff.

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 12: Dimensional Outbreak™

By the time you read this, Outbreak should be at the printer.

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 Splugorth and Naruni are involved.

- **Phase World's Center described and mapped.** Four new levels, including the Gateland, Central Station, the Spaceport,



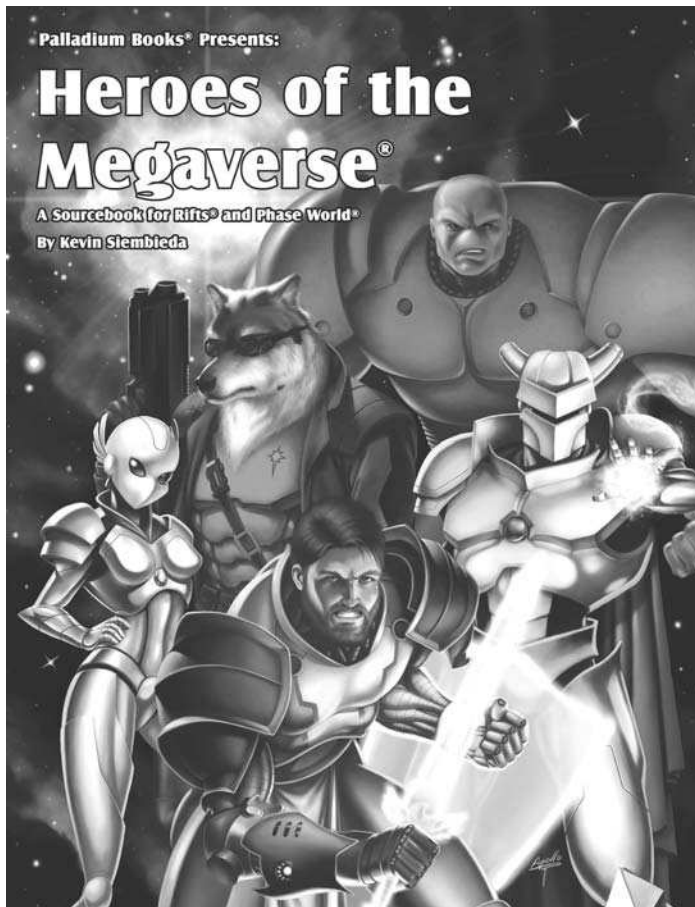
Repo-Yards, Free Trade Zone, Warlock Market, notable merchants and places of business, and much more.

- **Demon Knights, Star Slayers, demonic legions and more.**
- **Demonic spaceships, magic weapons and new horrors.**
- **Deevil fortifications and defenses.**
- **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 January.**

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

The *Book of Heroes* is said to be 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.

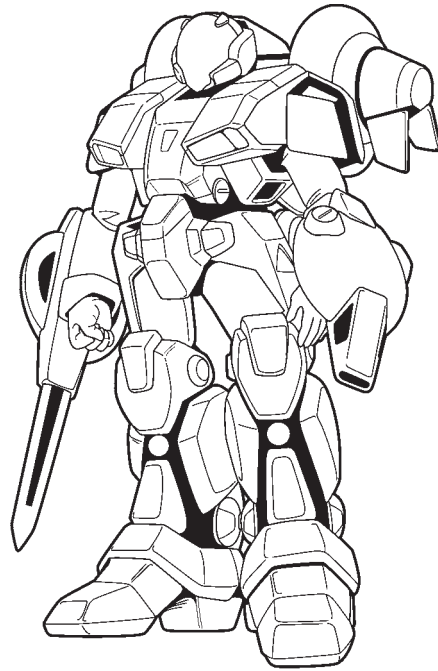
- **The Book of Heroes described.**
- **The incredible magic powers the Book contains.**
- **Notable heroes and the powers bestowed when their names are invoked.**
- **The dangers of the Book of Heroes, and why it must never fall into the hands of any Lord of Hell.**
- **The protectors of the Book of Heroes, and the adventure setting around keeping it safe. Has the book chosen you to defend it?**
- **Minion War tie-in adventure sourcebook or stand-alone sourcebook for Rifts® or Phase World®/The Three Galaxies.**
- **Contains the 2000 names of real life gamers who purchased the special print during Palladium's Crisis of Treachery (and other heroes).**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 877. Ships in February.**

Rifts® World Book 31: Triax™ Two

This book is exactly what you'd imagine it would be. In short:

- **More Triax weapons and vehicles.**
- **More Triax robots and power armor.**
- **More data about the New German Republic.**
- **Update on the Gargoyle Empire.**
- **More ideas for battle and adventure.**

- **Written by Brandon Aten and Taylor White.**
- **192 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 881. Ships in February or March.**



Robotech®

Expeditionary Force Marines™

An in-depth look at the Expeditionary Force Marines, their history, strategies and tactics, M.O.S. skill packages, operations and missions.

- **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.**
- **Written by Jason Marker. Additional text by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Cat. No. 553, manga size & format – final page count not yet determined, but we are thinking 128-192 pages, \$14.95 retail. Ships in March.**

Rifts® World Book One:

Vampire Kingdoms™, Expanded & Updated

Kevin is updating, tweaking, expanding and updating one of the most popular **Rifts® World Books** ever published. This will include some new artwork and an expanded page count. The book will be updated and expanded in much the same way as Kevin did with **Rifts® Sourcebook One** a couple years ago. Best of all, it's just the prelude to a **Rifts® Vampire Sourcebook** that will follow a month or two later.

- **Vampires: Their strengths, weaknesses and powers.**
- **The Vampire Kingdoms expanded.**
- **Vampire strategies and plans for conquest.**
- **Vampire hunters and Techno-Wizard slayer devices (new and old).**
- **Key locations including Juarez and El Paso.**
- **The mystery of the Yucatan Peninsula.**
- **Traveling Shows, Freak Shows and Circuses.**
- **Monsters, D-Bees, and adventure ideas galore.**
- **Updated and revised to 110 P.A.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **192 to 224 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 802. Ships in March.**

Rifts® Dimension Book™:

Thundercloud Galaxy™

Palladium intends to support all of its games lines and that includes the setting of the Three Galaxies. The **Thundercloud Galaxy™** is just the second of several books crafted by the talented Braden Campbell to expand your gaming Megaverse in the Three Galaxies. History, aliens, weapons, spacecraft, and adventure in a galaxy far, far away.

- **The galaxy described; history and timeline.**
- **16 new alien R.C.C.s, plus notes on the Exiles and Dominators.**
- **6 new O.C.C.s.**
- **Monster and Animal Creation Tables.**
- **Guidelines for Magic Weapon Making.**
- **Notable weapons and technology.**
- **Notable organizations and secret societies.**
- **The Trensik Mercenaries.**
- **The Vortex Region.**
- **The Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth and many other notable worlds.**
- **New worlds of adventure.**
- **Written by Braden Campbell.**
- **160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 883. Ships in March, 2010.**

The Rifter® #50

Special Anniversary Issue

To celebrate **The Rifter®** turning 12 years old this year and reaching issue number fifty, we present an issue filled with *official* source material and adventures from a list of guest freelance writers that you all know and love. Plus an expanded page count.

- **More pages.**
- **Official source material.**
- **Contributors include** Brandon K. Aten, Braden Campbell, Greg Diaczyk, Carl Gleba, Irvin Jackson, Jason Richards, Kevin Siembieda, Josh Sinsapaugh, Taylor White and others.
- **The latest chapter of Hammer of the Forge™, fiction.**
- **News, coming attractions and more.**

- **\$14.95 retail (no extra cost to subscribers) – 128 pages (maybe more!) – Cat. No. 150. Ships April.**



Rifts® Vampire Sourcebook™

Trouble is stirring in the Vampire Kingdoms as ambitious vampire lords, ladies and misanthropes seek to expand their power to dominate more mortal life forms.

Written by Kevin Siembieda and a handpicked selection of other writers, this sourcebook explores the vampires of Mexico and their kingdoms in ways you never imagined. Much new data, adventure ideas and revelations.

- **Vampire protectors and guardians.**
- **Vampires rogues, mercenaries and warlords.**
- **Vampire operations away from the Kingdoms.**
- **Vampire incursions along the southern borderlands.**
- **Other vampire hunters and vampire hunter exterminators.**
- **Frightful revelations, secrets, adventure ideas, and more.**
- **Written by Siembieda, Aten, Campbell, Dudley, White and others.**
- **128 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 884. Ships in April, 2010. Note:** The page count might be expanded to 160. If so, the price will increase to \$20.95.

Rifts® World Book: Lemuria™

At last, the underwater realm of Lemuria. The people and history of Lemuria, new magic, sea herbs and healing, monsters, the New Navy, and much, much more.

- The Lemurians, their race, history and society.
- New O.C.C.s including the Serpent Hunter, Shriekers, Oceanic Guardsman, Aquatic Biomancer and others.
- The Stone Guardians of Easter Island and other mysteries.
- Biomancer Gardens and Aquatic Biomancy.
- Bio-Armor, Bio-Weapons and Bio-Construct Symbiotes.
- New Psionic abilities.
- Sea Serpents, monsters, adventure ideas, and more.
- Written by Greg Diaczyk.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 885. Ships in April, 2010. Final page count and price may be subject to expansion and increase.

Armageddon Unlimited™

– for Heroes Unlimited™

Demons and Deevils are trying to turn Earth into one of their playgrounds. It's worse than you think. The plan is to bring about Armageddon to unleash a powerful force that could change the tide of the Minion War™. Only Earth's greatest superheroes (that's your characters) stand in their way. Can be played as a Minion War™ crossover bringing in heroes from across the Megaverse, or as a stand-alone adventure setting for Heroes Unlimited™.

- New super abilities and enchanted weapons.
- The Demon Hunter power category.
- Hellion monster creation table – NPC villain.
- Crusader of Light power category and abilities.
- Demon Weapons of Chaos.
- Arcane orders and secret societies.
- The Chaos Generator and the coming of Armageddon.
- Notable people and places.
- The Armageddon scenario and adventure ideas.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 527. Ships April or May.

Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™

The Minion War spills across Rifts Earth, where demons and infernals hope to recruit allies and use the Rifts as gateways of destruction. Their influence shakes things up across the planet, especially at locations where demons and Deevils already have a strong presence. More details to follow, but for now, 'nuff said.

- Soulmancer and Blood Magic.
- The Seven Deadly Plagues.
- The Demon Plagues across the globe.
- War ground: Earth – as demons and infernals amass their legions.

- Rifts Calgary – also known as Hell's Pit; the kingdom described.
- Ciudad de Diablo, Harpies' Island and other notable Hell holes on Earth.
- Lord Doom, Pain and other demonic leaders.
- Horune treachery, Dimension Stormers and other villains.
- Global chaos and the places most dramatically effected by the Demon Plagues.
- Notable demonic Generals, mercenaries, people and places.
- Many adventure ideas.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 192 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 876. Ships June.



Robotech® New Generation™

The Robotech® core sourcebook you've been waiting for . . . only it's going to be more than you imagine.

- Rules for using mecha, power armor and technology from all four eras of Robotech.
- Kit-bashed mecha and rules for jury-rigging and combining parts from different generations of mecha.
- Freedom Fighter O.C.C.s and resistance organizations.
- Rogues and misfits from the three Robotech Wars.
- New weapons, vehicles, mecha and more.
- Villains, traitors, bandits, Invid henchmen, adventure and adventure ideas galore.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Irvin Jackson.
- 224+ pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 554. Ships June or July.

Rifts® Chaos Earth™ Sourcebook:

First Responders

Data about the chaos and madness of the early days of the Great Apocalypse, and the brave men and women who tried to stem the tide of destruction and save lives, the First Responders.

- Apocalypse Plagues: Strange diseases, symbiotes and mutations that transform, torment, harm and kill Earth's survivors.

- First Responder O.C.C.s, skills and special equipment.
- Civilian O.C.C.s, skills and orientation.
- Notable rescue vehicles, robot drones, and technology.
- New weapons, vehicles, mecha and more.
- Character modification and enhancement rules.
- Creatures from the Rifts and adventure ideas galore.
- Written by Jason Richards & Kevin Siembieda.
- 96 to 128 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 665. Not yet scheduled.

Also coming in 2010

The following are in the pipeline, but are not yet scheduled. Most are likely to be released after those previously described, but a couple might get slotted into release sooner.

Robotech® New Generation™ Freedom Fighters Sourcebook (and others)

More Rifts® Chaos Earth™ sourcebooks

More Rifts® sourcebooks

More Phase World®/Three Galaxies™ sourcebooks

Nightbane® Sourcebook Six

Mysteries of Magic™ Three

Dead Reign™ Sourcebook Three

The Rifter® Number 51 & 52

Warpath™ Urban Jungle™

and more . . .

Recent Releases & Special Printings

Aliens Unlimited™, Revised

– Back in Print – Available now

Aliens Unlimited™, Revised is back as a special printing currently available exclusively via Palladium's online store. We are making it available to meet the demand of our fans who have been requesting this fan-favorite sourcebook for a long while now. It is ideal for space based campaigns, alien invasion scenarios, and can be easily adapted to *Rifts®* and *Phase World®/The Three Galaxies™*.

- More than 100 alien races/R.C.C.s.
- Alien creation rules and tables.
- 15 Galactic monsters and evil beings.
- Spaceships and spacecraft creation rules.
- High-tech weapons and equipment including Kisentite weapons.
- Earth UFO watch groups and secret organizations.
- Rifts® conversion notes throughout and more.
- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr.
- 208 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 515. Available now.



Palladium Fantasy RPG® Book 2:

Old Ones™

Old Ones™ is back in print as a special printing currently available exclusively via Palladium's online store.

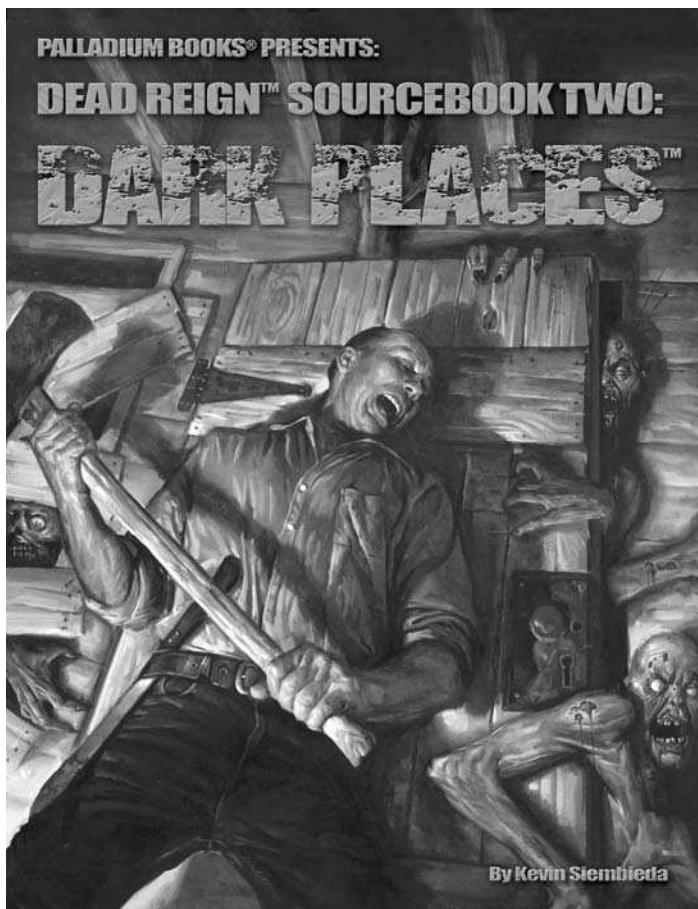
Old Ones™ is an epic sourcebook packed full of information, people, places and ideas. Details about the Old Ones, the Minotaur R.C.C. (an ancient minion of the Old Ones), the Monk Scholar and Illusionist, 50 cities and towns mapped and described, adventure ideas and the epic Place of Magic adventure.

- **Minotaur R.C.C.**
- **Minotaur Chaos Priest R.C.C.**
- **Monk Scholar O.C.C.**
- **The Illusionist P.C.C.**
- **50 cities, towns and forts described. All 33 cities and towns are mapped. Each offers an avenue for adventure.**
- **7 adventures plus adventure ideas.**
- **The Place of Magic: An epic adventure, mapped and described.**
- **World information, the Enchanted Forest, the secret complex of the Old Ones, the Contagion, magic weapons, monsters and more.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **224 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 453. Available now.**

Dead Reign™ Sourcebook Two:

Dark Places™

Dead Reign™: Dark Places™ presents four new, gruesome zombies that will make your skin crawl, plus more survivor secrets, using railroad tracks and the urban underground – sewers, storm drains, steam tunnels and other subterranean labyrinths – to travel unseen and undetected by the walking dead. Of course, these “secret highways” of the human survivors have their own dangers and problems.



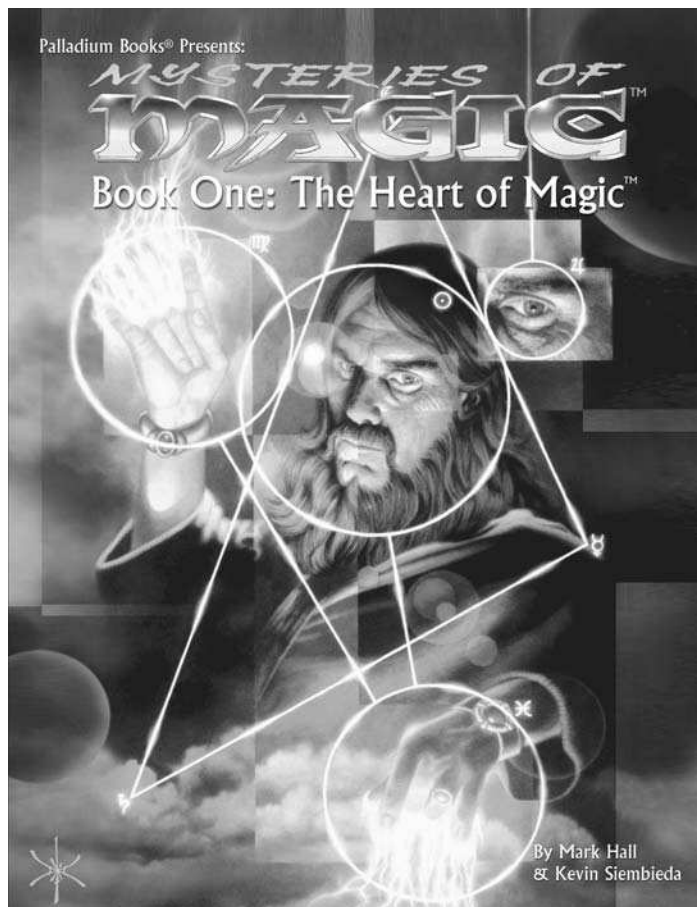
- Four new zombies that are different and terrifying: Worm Meat, Bug Boys, Sewer Crawlers and Impersonator Zombies.
- “Live Bait” zombie lures that use human beings as bait.
- Traveling along railroad tracks and zombie encounter tables.
- Boxcar encounters and 101 boxcar contents table.
- The urban underground – traveling through sewers, storm drains, steam tunnels and other dark places.
- The pitfalls and dangers of the urban underground.
- Diseases, infection and insect infestation.
- Random encounter tables and more.
- Many, many ideas for new adventure.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 64 pages – \$12.95 retail – Cat. No. 232. Available now.

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

The Heart of Magic™ is packed with new information, details and new 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).
- 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.
- Written by Mark Hall and Kevin Siembieda.
- 96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 472. Available now.



2010 Palladium Open House

April 29 & 30, May 1 & 2, 2010

- **Three days of role-playing events and fun . . .**
Rifts®
Chaos Earth™
Robotech®
Heroes Unlimited™
Palladium Fantasy®
Nightbane®
Dead Reign™
Ninjas & Superspies™
After the Bomb®
Beyond the Supernatural™ and more . . .
- **Game with Kevin Siembieda & other Palladium creators.**
- **Panel talks & special events.**
- **Live auction of Palladium art & collectibles.**
- **Costume contest & prizes.**
- **Special events and items to celebrate Rifts® 20 year anniversary.**
- **Have total access to Palladium staff and creators.**
- **Meet and chat with dozens of Palladium writers & artists.**
- **Game with many Palladium writers, artists and staff.**
- **Meet gamers from around the world.**
- **Game in the Palladium warehouse!**
- **Get a tour of the Palladium offices.**
- **Get autographs.**
- **Get books, prints, T-shirts, art & more.**
- **Three days of fun.**

More info online at
www.palladiumbooks.com

– or call – (734) 721-2903 for more info

There is too much to tell and describe about the *Open House* in these two pages, but you do NOT want to miss it, especially if

you love Palladium's games and live in Michigan or a neighboring state.

**The Palladium Open House
is truly unlike anything
you've ever experienced.**

Play games run by the very people who *created them!*

You actually play at *Palladium Books*.

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Kevin Siembieda will be running 5-7 games! *Julius Rosenstein* (writer, proofreader) will be running 5-6, *Carmen Bellaire*, *Carl Gleba*, *Greg Diaczyk*, *Brandon Aten*, *Jason Richards* and many, many others will all be running games! How often do you get to game with the creators?! Not often! How often do you get hang and play games with them for an entire weekend? Never, except at the Palladium Open House!

Palladium Creators

The following Palladium creators are confirmed to attend the 2010 Palladium Open House:

Kevin Siembieda
Kathy Simmons
Wayne Smith
Julius Rosenstein
Alex Marciniszyn
Amy Ashbaugh
Brandon Aten
Carmen Bellaire
Nick Bradshaw
Braden Campbell
Randi Cartier
Roger Cartier
Greg Diaczyk
Mark Dudley
Michael Leonard
Allen Manning
Brian Manning
Michael Mumah
Apollo Okamura
Chuck Walton

with many others tentative but yet to confirm.

2010 Palladium Open House

Dates: Thursday through Sunday, April 29 thru 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.

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. **Note:** 20 openings will be made available February 1, 2010, on a first come, first served basis. They'll go fast so order right away on February 1st.

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

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Evil G.M. Strats

Wipe 'em out and get away with it

By Chris Fox

As a Game Master, there are some things you *can* get away with, and some you *can't*. Most experienced G.M.s will tell you that the worst crime you can commit is killing off a character. G.M.s often go out of their way to avoid player character death, because we know how intense the backlash can be. Players will throw dice, kill your cat and cut your brake lines if you whack the character they've spent time and effort building.

What if I could give you a way to kill *the whole party* without being held down and having your eyebrows shaved? Intrigued? Read on! I'll show you how I did it in my campaign. Afterwards we'll modify the technique to work in yours.

A quick note before we begin. Killing characters can be a touchy subject, and should be addressed carefully. If you think one of your players might get upset you have two options. Either take him aside before the game and tell him his character isn't really going to die. Or, pass him a note when he dies letting him know his character isn't really dead.

Just remember that your players having fun is paramount. Now, on to the strat.

How I Implemented the Strat

I pioneered this strat in my game world, which is similar to Palladium. The party was unscrupulous and more concerned about the accumulation of power than in helping others. They swore allegiance to a Necromancer in exchange for becoming vampires. Since the party worked for the Necromancer, they also worked for *the Council*.

The Council had been overthrown in a massive uprising some twenty years ago, and were forced to retreat into the Blood Wood where no one could reach them. Since then they've been searching for a way to return to power, but feared an attack by the neighboring nation of Hasra should they emerge.

The Council found their opportunity when Hasra was torn apart in a massive civil war. House Valys was losing and was desperate for any help they could find. They eagerly signed a pact with the Council, and as part of the deal the player characters were dispatched to help win the war.

The party's first mission was to wipe out a legion of troops who were besieging one of Valys' castles. We role-played a strategy meeting before launching the assault (remember this meeting, it will be important later). My players came up with a solid plan and were confident of its success.

Their master gave them an artifact called the Standard of Olivanticus that caused anyone killed within a hundred yards to reanimate as the undead. They planned to plant the Standard in the midst of the legion, killing as many troops as they could.

The fallen would rise to fight their companions, creating more undead with every death. If all went well it would be like a scene from *Night of the Living Dead*, with the undead overrunning everything.

When the party arrived, the enemy was already waiting. The commander was a powerful Wizard who'd been forewarned of the party's arrival by a spy in House Valys. Invisible, he floated above the battlefield waiting for them to appear. On the first round of combat their brawny warrior type charged in carrying the Standard, completely unaware of the Wizard above.

VOOMMMPP. A beam of energy stabbed down from the night sky, disintegrating the warrior. The look on the player's face was priceless, like a child who's just had an ice cream cone smacked out of his hand. His character had a ton of Hit Points, was skilled in combat and had never met a challenge he couldn't overcome. After months of game play he was suddenly dead. I told the player we'd discuss his new character after this session.

The rest of the players eyed each other nervously. Nervousness turned to despair as the evil Wizard wiped them out one by one. The few survivors had no choice but to flee. When the dust had settled, four player characters were dead, leaving the players wide-eyed and speechless. How could I wipe out the characters they care so much about? Had I eaten bad Chinese the night before? Been dumped by my girlfriend? Was this a not-very-subtle way of ending the campaign?

I let them worry for a bit before setting the next scene. The entire party was seated around the council table where they'd originally planned the battle. I handed one of the players a scrap of paper, which instructed her to stand up and scream. She did so, scaring the crap out of the rest of the players.

The player's note explained that her character had experienced a vision of the future. The battle their characters lost was the vision she'd seen. Now, instead of being wiped out, they had the chance to plan a new strategy. They knew what forces the Wizard would use, and even which spells he'd cast. Further, they knew that their enemy was expecting them and had a rough idea of their capabilities.

The party's new plan was brilliant, and they enjoyed coming up with it immensely. They used an artifact to reflect the Wizard's first spell back at him, killing him instantly. Then the group systematically wiped out the entire legion, raising them as undead under their command. Their victory couldn't have been more complete.

A Right Way and a Wrong Way

There was another way I *could* have approached this session. I could have run the council meeting only once, with the character in question experiencing her vision. She'd have warned the other players about the Wizard and the ambush.

There are a lot of problems with this method. The biggest is that it's boring. In my experience, players don't appreciate divination magic. Usually it's a contrived way to propel the story forward, or to present a piece of information you want the party to have. When players realize this, it tends to break their suspension of disbelief, which you should always strive to avoid.

I'm not saying divination doesn't have its uses, especially if you consider prophecy to be divination. Prophecy, when well used, can be an enormously useful tool. Other creative uses for

divination can certainly be found, as this strategy demonstrates. Just be sure you avoid overusing it.

Use of this strat allowed me to overcome the inherent potential lameness of divination magic for the first time, and I can't express how cool it felt seeing the look on the players' faces. In killing their characters I let them *experience* the vision instead of just telling them about it. As a result, the second planning session was much more fun. They really enjoyed plotting the attack, and the discussion about the Wizard was both intense and memorable.

They went from the horrified loss of their characters, to elated victory over a very tough opponent. It was definitely the best session of the campaign and they still talk about it years later.

Implementing the Strat in Your Game

Now that you've heard how I used this strat, let's insert it into your game. The first thing you'll need is someone we'll call *the Oracle*. *The Oracle* can be a player or an NPC, depending on whether someone in your group would manifest visions of the future. You could even make *the Oracle* an item, like an intelligent magic sword. Just make sure whoever or whatever you choose is interesting.

After you've come up with an *Oracle*, now you need *the Battle*. This can be anything from the party fighting a Splugorth Slave Barge, to pulling a lever that awakens a powerful minion of the Old Ones. Anything that fits your campaign will work, but whichever *Battle* you choose, there are a few guidelines you should follow.

First, *the Battle* should involve an ambush. There needs to be something that would normally wipe out the whole party, but if they knew about it in advance they'd be able to deal with it. Maybe the Splugorth Slaver knows they are coming, and has his Warrior Women fanned out in the jungle waiting in ambush.

The specifics of *the Battle* don't matter as long as your players care about the outcome. There has to be something big on the line, something they'll be excited about when they later win in the last step of this strat.

Next, you'll need to plan *the Meeting*. The party will attend *the Meeting* twice, once before the vision and once after. The initial purpose is two-fold. First, it gives you a chance to see your group's strategy. If they come up with anything you weren't expecting, you have time to modify the encounter accordingly. There shouldn't be any way they can succeed without the critical knowledge provided by *the Oracle's* vision, no matter what they do.

This might sound harsh, and you might be cringing. Doesn't this strat smack of a plot wagon? Not if you do it right. The players should be completely unaware that you are exploiting their plan, or they'll get upset. If they come up with a good plan, don't make your attempt to derail it too obvious. If it's especially creative, let them kill whichever villain you're using, but make sure they take casualties. That way they'll still get some use out of the vision *the Oracle* has.

Once they've finished planning, have them run through *the Battle*. Keep things tense until you spring the ambush. Ideally, your players will have a chance to fight back, because if they don't, they'll smell a rat. Make sure they inflict as many casual-

ties as they take. The encounter should be tough, but one they *might* have won had they not been ambushed.

Once *the Battle* is over, rewind back to *the Meeting*, but this time have *the Oracle* give his or her vision. I'd suggest handing them a pre-prepared note with any details you want them to have about the vision. If possible, choose a player who would enjoy playing *the Oracle*.

This leads you to the part the players love the most. They've had time to make a second plan. They're upset about losing the battle, and have a grudge against whichever villain you used. Now it's time for payback. Armed with the vision, your party should crush *the Battle*, winning completely and coming out covered in glory, magic items, or possibly syrup depending on how crazy your game is.

Conclusion

You've seen how I used the strat and you've learned how to implement it in your own game. If you're a new G.M., I'm hoping this trick will teach your players to fear you. If you're an experienced G.M., hopefully this technique will add a new weapon to your arsenal.

If this strat is used correctly, your players should be relieved at the end of the session. They'll get a glimpse at the mortality of their characters, without actually losing them. They'll also think you're an evil bastard, but if you're a G.M. and your players *don't* think you're evil, you're not doing it right. Long live Evil G.M.s!

Princes of the Universe

Optional Rules and Source Material for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Mark Hall

His Majesty, King Frederick Mercurius XXIII, strode slowly down the central carpet of his throne room. Every seventh step, he spoke a phrase, prescribed by ancient ritual. He stated the powers of the throne, an office he would assume when the sun reached its zenith in an hour's time. Each phrase spoke of the fealty of the realm to the king, of the king's power of high and low justice, of the treasury and the tax, the gaol and the axe. All these powers he took to himself, king of the land.

Every seventeenth step, he assumed a piece of regalia, taking ancient advice from a member of his staff. A cloak from the steward of his castle, and the advice, "Let your law settle lightly on the people, and they will wear it well." A key from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said, "Tax lightly in peace, so your people will stay rich." An orb from the Justicer; "Judge innocence and guilt carefully, and execute with a heavy heart; heads, once doffed, are not lightly returned." A scepter from the General of his armies, and the admonishment that, "Wars ruin lands and slay your subjects, but give no ground to conquerors." From his queen, grave in her youth and pale in her wedding gown, he received his crown. "Be king, and father of kings. Uneasy rests the kingdom without an heir; uneasy rests the king who raises his heir to sloth and ignorance."

King Frederick knelt a moment before the throne. In a phrasing so old that none knew the origin, he stood before the assembled throng, noble and common alike, and intoned an ancient oath.

"I am Frederick, son of John, son of Dean, son of Brian, King of Rhye. I pledge myself to the prosperity of the realm and the safety of its people. I will give justice to those wronged, comfort to those bereaved, and uphold the rights of peers of the realm and all those who defend it. I pledge to this by my Life, my Fortune, and my sacred Honor."

As he settled onto the throne, the noontide sun shone down upon the land, and a roar rose throughout the hall, the city, and the kingdom. It was a roar of a free people, whose liberty would flow from the throne for another generation.

Regomancy is the magic of kingship. Wielding it, a monarch can bring victory to his armies, prosperity to his realm, and obedience to his laws. In practice, it is an art of ritual; formulas which must be strictly followed to be successful. It draws its strength from the regard of the people for their king; their love for a good king, or their fear of a cruel one. Its effects, however, are subtle; people of a Regomantic land do not become mindless zombies, unable to disobey their lord. Instead, the realm itself comes to obey the monarch, bringing forth prosperity, even in times of hardship.

One Vision

Regomancy comes from deep in the Age of Light, soon after the Chaos Wars. Early kings were often those with magical power, as the great magical energy of the time rendered most threats impervious to weapons not empowered by spell, Alchemy, or more esoteric arts. These Men of Magic knew that Potential Psychic Energy could flow from worshiper to deity, granting potency to all the god's arts. Alone, each strove to incorporate rituals into the lives of their kingdoms which would grant them similar gifts. Over generations, rituals were refined, granting greater and greater powers to the kings of Elves, Titans, and lost races. When kingdoms conquered each other, their books of kingship were combined, leading to more powerful kingdoms.

As the art of Regomancy grew more complex, it demanded specialists; not kings themselves, but men and women who learned the rituals of kingship. These Masters of Ceremonies knew the proper ritual for the opening of an embassy, for the acceptance of gifts, and for the pronouncements of high justice. While sovereigns would learn many of these through rote and repetition, ceremonies involving rarer events would fall to the Masters of Ceremonies and their apprentices to instruct the monarch in his role in the rituals.

Sometime before the Age of a Thousand Magicks, one Regomancer (popularly, he is presented as being a beardless, dark-skinned and dark-haired Gnome, the third or fourth son of



a king) began a study of the fractured art, taking magical oaths in many kingdoms to share the accumulated knowledge with all, once he had codified the knowledge of several kingdoms. He compiled it into a tome known as “The Book of Diamonds and Pearls,” which became the standard text of Regomancy throughout the known world. As its knowledge spread, kingdoms prospered, and any king who did not have a Regomancer in his entourage was doomed to failure and ignomy.

These arts continued to be practiced until the beginning of the Elf-Dwarf War. While the Dwarves possessed many of the rites, they believed that the Elves were holding many of the secrets of Regomancy from them. The Elves, for their part, were not; the Dwarven use of Regomancy was circumscribed, not by a lack of knowledge (they had the same Book of Diamonds and Pearls that the Elves had), but by circumstance. The rituals were designed to be used in certain astrological conditions which could not be replicated in halls of stone. How does one have a birth blessing under an open sky when one lives beneath a half a mile of earth? How do you ensure that a coronation takes place on a sunny day if you’ve seen the sun fewer times than you have fingers? The short span of the Dwarven empire – only a few thousand years, seeing perhaps eight or ten Dwarven generations – meant that they had little time to adapt the rituals to their own circumstances.

To minimize the advantage that Regomancy gave the Elves, Dwarven assassins struck quickly in the first years of the war, stealing many copies of the Book of Diamonds and Pearls and killing the Masters of Ceremonies. In response, the Masters of Ceremonies went underground, disguising their art as mawkish aping of kings and heroes. Some disfigured themselves to hide from assassins, and played the fool at the courts of their sovereigns. In short, they became clowns, and their art disappeared into the rituals of the Guild of Kleintro.

Much of the art of Regomancy has disappeared through the centuries. All known copies of the Book of Diamonds and Pearls have been destroyed; those few that were written in silver runes on parchment were unbound, their pages scattered and defaced (if you can’t erase it, just write a bigger rune, in silver, over the whole lot). The rituals preserved by the Guild of Kleintro are corrupted, and far less effective than they could be; some simply do not work because some crucial detail has been lost, or because the clown learned his lessons imperfectly. The hope that the magic can be restored keeps Kleintro going, and protected by the rulers of the various monarchies. A monarch empowered by Regomancy would have a great advantage over other nations, and especially over nations without monarchs (such as the Wolfen Empire).

A Kind of Magic

Regomancy is not a flashy art in effect. By necessity, its rituals are ornate, the definition of pomp and circumstance, but its effects are subtle, expressed in tendencies and probabilities. An edict of an anointed king is not followed slavishly, but it is more likely to be followed; its good points are noticed, its lesser points glossed over by those who don’t directly feel their impact. The queen is more likely to survive an assassination attempt; guards are slightly more alert, she favors a courtier or hero with a choice cut of meat or a drink from her goblet. Those

who rule in Regomancy live longer, and keep their wits longer. It does not make sane the mad king, whole the son of generations of inbreeding, or wise the imbecile. At best, it lessens these flaws, while keeping them on the throne.

Most events in the life of a kingdom have Regomantic rituals associated with them; a monarch whose rule is enhanced by Regomancy can spend entire days in a series of rituals designed to keep his reign secure, while still allowing him to rule effectively. Some rituals, such as the opening and closing of court, are open-ended, allowing a king to conduct business in their midst. Court opens at noon, and closes at sundown. Each petitioner is introduced to the king formally, in certain terms, but can freely present their business, without need for additional ceremony. Other rituals are tightly controlled. Coronations involve a certain number of steps, must take place at certain moments, and with ritual words spoken at each point. Significant deviations from these rituals break the magic, which depends on the precision of formulas, force of tradition and the fact of kingship. In anointing a king, a Regomancer creates a focus for all the emotions and spiritual energy people put into their nations.

It is not the type of emotion that grants the monarch his power, it is the intensity, and a loved monarch has no more Regomantic power than a hated one. If people love their king, if they fear their queen, if they hate their nation, all of these feed into the magical power of Regomancy. It is similar to, and based upon, the power that deities draw from their worshipers, making properly anointed kings into the least of deities – mortal, constrained by ritual, but more than their own accomplishments would make them.

As a ritual magic, everything to do with Regomancy takes time. It is known that the number seventeen is important in Regomancy, and it figures prominently in the few rituals that survive. Most rituals require seventeen minutes, or a multiple thereof. The longest, the coronation, is thought to have taken seventeen minutes *cubed*, or almost three and a half days, and ended in a fifty-one minute ritual.

Coronation

The coronation procession of a Regomantic monarch is the most important aspect of Regomancy. While other rituals will function in the face of a botched coronation, every act a king undertakes is affected by the success of his coronation. It is also the only part of Regomancy that is not directly affected by the rest of Regomancy. While anointing a successor can delay the necessity of a coronation, it does not make coronation itself more successful.

The coronation has a wide variety of requirements. It must take place in the throne room precisely at noon. It must be done within seventeen days of the death of the old monarch. At least 68% of the regalia used in the previous coronation must be used in the new. The phrasing of each statement must be perfect; transposing words, especially if the intent of the statement is changed, may ruin the magic completely. If these requirements are not met, then the magic is less effective; instead of being the next monarch in a line stretching backwards into antiquity, he is a parvenu, who may not stand the test of history. For this reason, heirs to the throne are drilled in the proper forms of coronation until they know it perfectly. The ceremony itself is a recitation

of proper behavior; the monarch is in no way obligated to follow these best practices, but he is reminded of them in the ritual.

If the coronation is successful, then a new monarch (one who is founding a dynasty, or for whom the regalia or throne room of his predecessors has been destroyed) has a +3% to all skills undertaken as part of his official duties (if the action is rolled on a D20, this translates into a +1 whenever the die roll is odd). A king who is the next in an established dynasty gains the same benefit, but the bonus is considered to be Natural (so a dynastic king cannot roll a Natural 1, and a Natural 19 is counted as a Natural 20). This bonus only applies when undertaking official duties; a king in war will be a better general and a more competent soldier, but on the practice field will not gain any particular advantage. When speaking to a foreign dignitary, his accent will smooth out, but he'll have a slightly more noticeable one when discussing tournament results with his guards.

Few of these rituals survive today. They were practiced infrequently, and are incredibly complex, meaning they are more subject to corruption. No king on Palladium today has been inaugurated through a properly completed Regomantic ritual, but it is hoped that the elements are close enough that some of the benefits accrue.

Seven Seas of Rye

A monarch's responsibility to his people includes ensuring that they are well fed. Regomancy includes a variety of rituals for agricultural purposes, such as ceremonial openings of the ground, plantings of first crops, and receiving the first fruits of harvest. A monarch doesn't need to be at every field for there to be an effect across his kingdom; the ceremonial act ensures that its influence is spread throughout the realm. By turning over the first shovelful, or plowing the first row of a field or garden, the king increases its yield by 10% (13% if the coronation was successful). By planting the first seed, the negative effects of weather are reduced by 10% (13% if properly coronated); it's less likely that there will be a late frost, a long drought, or a drowning rain. Cutting the first of the harvest increases the speed of the harvest by 10% (13%), and holds off the first frosts another half-moon. Closing the harvest properly reduces grain and food spoilage over the course of a winter by a like amount. Participating in the lambing and calving rituals makes the herds healthier; there are even rituals for the birth of hunting dogs to make them fitter and healthier, generally resulting in a point or two more of Speed, P.E., and S.D.C., and a keenness in tracking.

There is a negative side effect to these rituals, and that is that if they are not performed, their benefits stop. This is especially bad if the country has outgrown its non-enhanced carrying capacity, or is in the midst of a war and needs additional resources. It is, in fact, most common that the magic will fail in wartime, when the monarch is otherwise occupied and cannot spare the time for days of ritual. In the modern day, some of these rituals have survived; many have been corrupted enough that the bonus is half or less. Their use is scattered throughout the Eastern kingdoms, with some being preserved in Timiro and the Land of the South Winds; the West has almost none of these rituals outside of the Elven protectorates, and none have a complete set.

Laws of the Land

Regomancy covers the publishing of laws and the welcoming of official visitors. Laws published using the proper forms are more likely to be followed, resulting in a 10-13% decrease in crime, and a 5-8% increase in tax revenue. Regomancy does not force people to follow laws, but makes them more inclined to do so, and more willing to consider the positive aspects of such a law, especially when it doesn't directly harm them. Such edicts would last for the life of a monarch, though many monarchs would publish, early in their reigns, an edict that they intended to follow the laws of their predecessor, proroguing those laws. Rituals also circumscribe the behavior of court, helping monarchs to make correct decisions and giving nudges in the correct direction; this results in far more satisfaction with the monarch's actions than may otherwise be evident.

Welcoming a foreign envoy is known to have been extremely time-limited; it is unclear if they must be welcomed at sundown, or within seventeen hours of their arrival, or both. Some records show that a particular envoy arrived in such a way as to make proper welcoming impossible, but the details are unclear, aside from the fact that it was considered a great insult to the receiving monarch. However, when properly performed, the magic makes the envoy slightly more positively inclined towards the monarch and his staff; more likely to listen to proposals, without being charmed or compelled to work against the interests of his own nation, while similarly working upon the monarch and their staff.

Most of these rituals are lost. A few rituals associated with taxation survive, as does one regarding legislating the sale of slaves, but a huge variety of rituals, covering a vast array of actions, are known to be lost.

Acts of War

As there are rites for peace, so are there rites of war. If war is properly declared, monarchs find recruitment easier, with more veterans and mercenaries coming to the banners (about 5-8%). While prices are not substantially reduced, proper reviewing of the troops increases morale and reduces training time by that same 5-8%. Those directly led personally by their monarch have an additional 5-8% S.D.C.; seldom even a complete hit, but enough to help more survive and make more of an impact. This is usually only a score of troops; while the king may participate in the battle, he does not directly lead every soldier. Each of these, declarations of war, reviewing of troops, and taking the field as a commander, had its own ritual. Many of these are lost, but most survive in corrupted form. These corruptions generally reduce the efficacy to less than half, and frequently down to a quarter of their usual effectiveness.

Birth and Succession

There are several rituals regarding the life, death, and succession of Regomantic monarchs. The acknowledgment of a royal child takes place on the 17th day after birth, at dawn. The child is named and installed in the family. The magic of the rituals protects the child from disease and reduces the effects of childhood and congenital ailments (though they will still be affected, it will not be as severe). Monarchs may also appoint a successor.

While this is frequently the son or daughter of the ruler, it can also be a sibling, cousin, or favored counselor of the monarch. Whoever is designated heir gains no immediate benefit, but can perform the coronation ritual up to seventeen years after the death of the monarch and still reap the benefits of a continued dynasty, even if a usurper performed a coronation in the meantime. This has the added benefit of making a monarch's choice very clear, though it carries the detriment of making the heir designate a more attractive target for assassination. He or she, unfortunately, gains no protection from being the heir.

Gods Save the Queen

As mentioned above, modern Regomancy is a shattered art, with the few fragments bloodied and spread across a hundred courts and a thousand members of the Guild of Kleintro. The Guild leaders travel the land, trying to scrape together these remnants, hoping that those who have magical training can take these fragments and assemble them into a more comprehensive and effective school of magic again. This secret is kept from the majority of the Guild, but many kings know that the Guild of Kleintro is involved, in some fashion, with reinforcing royal power. Occasional high-placed, secret clowns encourage this, and some kings with an interest in magical history know the truth. This secret magic is why the guild is so well supported in the halls of power.

The flip side of this is that true clowns can gain favors from monarchs who know the Guild's purpose. These are seldom large favors, but release on a minor crime, a place to rest and heal, a few meals, or some information can be invaluable. A false clown may prevail upon an unwitting monarch for favors, embarrassing them. Even worse, a false clown may perform falsely, improvising where things must be exact, further corrupting the art, and making everyone's task more difficult. To this end, true clowns are carefully vetted and tested, ensuring their loyalty to the guild and the cause of reconstructing a lost magical art, and false clowns are hunted ruthlessly. In a way, false clowns imperil every person on Palladium, as the leaders of Kleintro fear that too much corruption in the rituals may result in negative effects. A false clown, unaffiliated with the guild, will not learn the improvements that have been devised, or any new lore that may have been uncovered. If he makes any personal changes to the mystery plays, or teaches his deviant ways to students, he will further corrupt the art with those who are not dedicated to the guild. While not all guild clowns know the purposes of their guild, they do know the importance of maintaining faithfulness to the guild leader's wishes in the performance of the art... and that significant deviation can mean expulsion from the guild.

Members of the Guild of Kleintro are apprentices of current or retired members. As a guild, Kleintro is concerned with the propagation of their art, not nepotism. As such, while an apprentice may be a certain clown's relative, it is not necessary. Instead, apprentices are chosen for ability to deal with people and to keep secrets (higher M.A.s and M.E.s are preferred). The most common O.C.C.s of the guild are Assassins, Wizards and Diabolists. A fair number are psychic, usually Minor Psychics or P.C.C.s, and there are a large number of Scholars in their midst. The least common O.C.C.s are those that are directly from nobility (such as Knights, Palladins, Nobles and Squires)

or the clergy, and any member who becomes a Witch is slain as a betrayer of the guild (since they have no secrets from their dark masters). Most are human or Elven, with a good-sized minority that are Gnomes, and a rare few who are Goblins or Dwarves. Many Dwarves react with horror when they learn that clowning is an attempt to preserve a kind of magic, and so are rarely taken as apprentices to avoid the eventual necessity of murdering them. Changelings may be members, and there are no official rules against them; they usually serve as assassins, especially given their ability to show or hide marks of membership as they wish. It is a guild requirement to wear clown gloves while acting as a member of the guild (when performing, advertising, or negotiating fees for the performance), but the tattoos of a clown mouth are not a guild requirement (and, indeed, few of the most senior members bear them). In recent generations, tattoos have become almost the sole province of Changelings in the guild, who can cause them to appear and disappear at will.

The guild is very even-handed in sharing information. They do not, as an organization, favor one kingdom over another, or good monarchs over bad. A poor or evil king ruling through Regomancy is not, officially, abhorrent to the guild, so long as he is sharing any information he gains regarding Regomancy with the guild and does not mistreat guild members. While individual guild members may disapprove, the guild itself will take no hand, and will murder any guildsman who, in following his conscience, causes information about the art to be lost.

Socially, clowning is regarded as a fairly respectable profession. Since monarchs frequently employ clowns to "entertain" them, having a troupe of clowns to entertain at a party is a mark of sophistication and nobility. Thus, social climbers also frequently employ clowns. While the guild is known to be very protective of its secrets, very few outside the nobility know of the lengths to which the guild goes to conceal them. It's well known that being outside of guild protection will get you the cold shoulder from more respectable clients, but the demand for clowns is high enough that a few try to imitate them, or break away from the guild despite the costs.

Diamonds and Pearls

The ultimate goal of the Guild of Kleintro is, of course, finding an intact, unmutilated copy of the Book of Diamonds and Pearls. This is harder than it would first seem. First of all, most were not written in silver runes on indestructible parchment; few read runes, and thus doing so was a waste of money. Those that were constructed that way were torn apart, vandalized, and thrown away. Many more were written in normal ink on parchment made indestructible by the application of a silver rune, but these were frequently ruined by covering the writing in ink, obscuring their instructions. The vast majority of the books, however, were simply written in normal ink on normal paper or parchment, and have faded or disintegrated over the centuries. The Dwarves were very thorough in their destruction of the books they found in the opening years of the War, and a good number of the books which survived the War were destroyed in the Millennium of Purification.

In the hopes of finding a copy, the guild will hire adventurers (through intermediaries) to seek out old libraries and bring them the contents. A genuine, unmutilated page of the Book of Diamonds and Pearls is worth hundreds of gold to the guild; an en-

tire book would be worth thousands, or even hundreds of thousands (though the guild would try to low-ball the price – just because it’s valuable to the guild doesn’t mean it’s of any value to the person who found it). The guild will also hire adventurers to attack the Zealotry and similar anti-magic forces, because the leaders fear that, in their quest to destroy all writing and magic, such fools will destroy a copy (the last?) of the Book of Diamonds and Pearls.

The guild does fear that their secret will get out. If an adventurer finds enough of the right part of the book, and has a good

familiarity with clowning (such as if he was raised at a noble court, or some place where clowns perform frequently), he may connect the two. This is mostly paranoia, but not entirely out of the realm of possibility. Therefore, they frequently use intermediaries and dupes to hire the adventurers, while providing the funding themselves (although it’s not impossible to convince a monarch to loan one of his retainers to hire adventurers with borrowed money, it is quite another to expect a monarch to fund the expedition himself and still share the information found).



The Free State of Lazlo

Optional and Unofficial Rules and Setting Information for Rifts®

By J. Woodman

Foundation and History

The City of Lazlo, not to mention the associated towns and villages that make up the Free State, is perhaps the most unique place in all of *Rifts Earth*. Not because of its magical power or its military might, and not even because of its fusion of science and sorcery. Other lands and nations are far more powerful, and other places accept and practice Techno-Wizardry. No, what makes Lazlo unique is its adherence to an ideal, a belief that be-

ings of all races and species can work and live together in peace and cooperation. Where other nations, kingdoms and communities exclude, exterminate and enslave, Lazlo is perhaps the last beacon of inclusiveness, tolerance and understanding, a place where all can be welcome and make their contribution. D-Bee and human, psychic and practitioner of magic, scholar and scientist; in Lazlo, all peace-loving, justice-upholding individuals can find a place where they are not alone.

Lazlo’s contemporaries in North America make this claim easy to support. The Coalition States has branded all D-Bees as unwelcome and all practitioners of magic for execution, but they

are hardly the only nation to uphold such a policy. Free Quebec is even more rabidly human supremacist, not even trusting the psychics and Dog Boys that are found throughout the remaining Coalition States. In the Magic Zone, the Federation of Magic is all about control, whether that control is Alistair Dunscon whipping his followers into a frenzy for the blood of CS soldiers, or Dweomer's Lords of Magic ruling in hidden isolation and burying their collective heads in the sand. In the Southwest, the Pecos Empire may be accepting of all peoples, but that is only providing they can carve a violent niche for themselves from the chaos of that land. Tolkeen was once a city Lazlo was proud to call an ally, and shared many of their philosophies, but when the Coalition war machine came calling, they chose a different path and fell to darkness.

Many outsiders look at Lazlo, its government and its citizens, and call them ineffectual, or blind to the realities of the modern world. In an age of growing darkness and cynicism, it is easy to give in to violence, fear and anger, to lash out at a world that promises nothing, neither happiness nor security. What is hard is holding on to the vision that inspires, the ideal that defines, the philosophy that encourages *despite* knowing the hardships of daily life. Even before the Coming of the Rifts, a great many people associated goodness and optimism with blindness or self-delusion; as the times since have been harsher and more desperate, that tendency has only grown. Skepticism and doubt are easy; holding onto hope in a world gone mad is the difficult part. The truth of the matter is that Lazlo is neither blind nor out of touch, but reasoned discourse and measured, appropriate action are never as dramatic as a charge into battle or taking an us-versus-them view of problems.

Others look to Lazlo and see a community dominated by non-humans, missing the fact that Rifts Earth no longer belongs to humanity alone. No matter how some might wish it were not so, that time is gone. Lazlo is simply representative of the variety of peoples that call this world home *now*, and doesn't mistreat, banish or execute anyone simply for inhabiting the planet. Within Lazlo, humanity may not be the majority, but they remain the single largest minority of intelligent beings, and play an important role in every part of Lazlo. While demagogues and rabble-rousers point to the presence of creatures of magic and supernatural beings among the Lazlo government as signs of alien control, Lazlo is possibly the last place to remember and truly practice values of pre-Rifts North America like democracy and multiculturalism.

Though Lazlo is one of the older communities in North America, change has come rapidly to the Free State in the last few years. Since the Coalition declaration of the *Campaign of Unity*, many in Lazlo have seen dark tidings for the future, and the CS war with Tolkeen only confirmed what many already believed. Even though Lazlo has not been directly targeted by the Coalition States, many within the city feel that it is only a matter of time before the CS or Free Quebec starts eyeing their community for destruction. For that reason, defense and security are two areas that have leapt upwards in importance among many of the citizens, particularly while much of Lazlo's fighting strength has been waging an ongoing battle against the Xiticix horde. Crime rates have also skyrocketed in Lazlo, particularly among the disaffected refugees and survivors from Tolkeen, and while still low compared to places like the Chi-Town 'Burbs, the in-

crease is alarming. On top of that, there have also been a handful of particularly worrying terrorist attacks in the Free State, carried out by Tolkeen Retribution Squads who blame Lazlo for not coming to that fallen kingdom's aid. They have been particularly difficult to filter out of the other refugees who only want peace and a chance to move on, and could easily develop into a long term problem.

Not all that has changed in Lazlo is dark, however. Though the conclusion of the Tolkeen War was tragic, tens of thousands of refugees have poured into Lazlo since the fighting ended and that is merely the tip of the iceberg! Throughout the long years of the war, many citizens of Tolkeen made the move to Lazlo while it was still possible to get out with more than the shirt on your back. Along with the Tolkeenites, others who lived independently or in smaller, isolated communities have moved to Lazlo for the greater security offered by a major city. Lazlo is also the major contact point in North America for the *Liberated Underground*, an organization dedicated to freeing Atlantean slaves, thousands of whom have been relocated to the Free State. Because of all this, Lazlo has seen a population explosion over the past five years, and the population has broken *two million*! Housing construction has been greatly expanded, along with medical facilities and schools, and the economy boomed. Unfortunately, the last flood of refugees, arriving with almost nothing and often lacking desirable skills, have largely been unable to find legitimate work. This has driven up unemployment, and is the source of most of Lazlo's increased crime.

The History of Lazlo

Lazlo was founded on the ruins of pre-Rifts Toronto, the greatest city of the Old Canadian Empire. Little remains of that city now, but that was not the case when a small community of magic-users gathered there towards the end of the Dark Age, drawn by the powerful ley line nexus, and a desire to work and teach with like-minded individuals. To avoid the worst of the ruined skyscrapers and rubble, they gathered on the banks of the Don River, sheltered by a valley that had run through the pre-Rifts city like a small corridor of wilderness. It had been spared the worst of the devastation, and was now an oasis in a sea of broken and overgrown concrete and steel. Soon a small community grew up around the mages, supplying them with food and other survival skills in exchange for the protection and advantages that magic could provide. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement, but one that would ultimately prove the start of something so much more.

Those early settlers had no idea, of course; to them, magic was useful, if a little frightening, but nothing more. Combined with some technology salvaged from the ruins of Toronto, the village by the river was a pleasant and secure place to live, particularly compared to so much of Rifts Earth. By this time the village had a population of almost two thousand, not including the hundred or so practitioners of magic, and they had little cause to fear. They had not yet seen the extent of the power at the command of that small community of mages – there had been no need for it. Small bands of raiders and lesser monsters had occasionally harassed the community, but nothing that could not be easily defeated or driven off by relatively simple magic and the technology available.



What changed this wizards' community forever was the arrival of a force that could *not* be easily defeated or driven off: a pair of adult dragons eager to make the community their kingdom, and its citizens their slaves! The initial defense by the settlers was no match for the dragons; the small militia was quickly overwhelmed, and their light M.D.C. weapons unable to do much more than irritate the powerful creatures of magic. The battle appeared to be over for the fledgling community until a practitioner of magic known only as *Plato* arrived at the scene of devastation. Unbeknownst to the other settlers, Plato was an ancient dragon disguised in human form for years to that point, and posing as just another human mage. Plato assumed his true form in front of the struggling village defenders, and plunged into battle against the pair of dragons. Their struggle was titanic, the three tremendous beings smashing through the rubble of the pre-Rifts city, clawing and biting each other, as well as calling down magic that scorched the air itself. Even a being as powerful as Plato was not enough to defeat two of his own kind, however. Though both of the invading dragons were badly injured, it was Plato who fell, near death, at the feet of his rivals. This could have been the end of Lazlo before it ever really began, but, of course, that was not how history would play out.

Plato's struggle had given the rest of the community's mages time to gather and prepare. They struck in concert, attacking the pair of dragons with bolts of lightning, balls of energy, gouts of flame, rivers of lava – destruction on a scale that the simple community had never seen nor imagined was possible! The villagers had lived among these magic users for years, never imagining such power was at their command, and now it was being unveiled in their defense. Energy shields and magic armor protected the mages as they fought the dragons, though some still fell before the battle's end. When it finally came, one of the invading dragons lay dead and the other was chased off, while Plato lay injured on the ground. Most of the villagers withdrew to tend to their own injured and dead, leaving the magic users to do the same. Plato was already recovering from his wounds, blessed with the amazing recuperative powers of a dragon, though others in the small community were not so lucky.

That night, a large party from the village approached the wizards' enclave, more than a thousand in number, and the magic users prepared to defend their retreat from this place that had been their home. As practitioners of magic, it was not so difficult for them to accept the presence of a dragon, but they feared the villagers would not be so willing. The mages also realized that given such a display of their own power, they might be just as feared, and rather than defeat and kill those who had been their friends and neighbors, they prepared to leave. They gave the villagers too little credit.

Leaders from the village wanted to thank Plato and the magic users, and make sure they were all right. While the sudden battle and the revelations that came with it had been shocking, the villagers had quickly realized that Plato and the wizards had had little to fear from the pair of dragons; it would have been a simple matter for them to leave, or even come to some sort of deal with the invaders. No, the villagers had realized that Plato and the magic users had fought for *them*, for the villagers who would have had no chance against the invaders. What had appeared to be a tense and desperate situation soon became a cele-

bration, both of the averted danger, and of the true foundation of their community's greatest strengths: trust and understanding.

The openness, acceptance and honest pursuit of knowledge at the small haven on the river began to gain a reputation for itself in those early years of the Post-Apocalyptic calendar. While the fledgling state of Chi-Town was warring with the first incarnation of the Federation of Magic, the city that would become Lazlo was swelling with new arrivals. Imagination, inquisitiveness, integrity – these were the values they promoted as the village became a town, and then a city. More and more of the ruined city of Toronto was cleared or restored as the haven on the river grew, work that was made easier with the magic, technology and superhuman abilities the collective citizenry could employ. Others would trouble the fledgling city as it grew, from violent rabble-rousers up from the Magic Zone, to supernatural monsters, to tech-based human supremacists, but none were able to deter or destroy what was growing there.

By 49 P.A., the Haven by the River, as Lazlo was largely known at the time, had topped a hundred thousand inhabitants. Developments in magic research had led to the birth of a new field: Techno-Wizardry. By combining technology salvaged from the city of Toronto and other locations in the old Province of Ontario with the magic known to so many in the community, they were able to create devices that combined the advantages of both to work wonders! Magic could be put into the hands of the average person, and turn a ley line nexus into the means of powering a city. The new Techno-Wizards spread their knowledge and experience out into North America, where it has flourished in the cities of the Magic Zone, Tolkeen, the Colorado Baronies and places even farther flung.

By 62 P.A., the population had crested 250,000 and construction had begun on a variety of the civic buildings that are landmarks of Lazlo today. The fabled city still had no official name, however. "Haven by the River" was used by many, with simply "Haven" a common form; still others knew it as the City of Magic. The arrival of Erin Tarn, the famous writer and historian, that year would bring one major change for the city: the writings of 20th century scholar and paranormal researcher Victor Lazlo. The popularity and influence of Lazlo's writings raced through the city, and a new name was soon proposed. The *Free State of Lazlo* became official in 65 P.A.

Surrounding Environs

Lazlo was founded well north of the shores of Lake Ontario, sheltered in a valley on the western bank of the Don River. This area had been largely undeveloped by the pre-Rifts City of Toronto, and so was relatively free of the debris, rubble and overgrowth choking what remained of that Canadian city. Since that time, Lazlo has spread out in all directions, and now extends to the shores of Lake Ontario in the south, west past the Humber River, and onto the eastern bank of the Don as well. Outlying settlements affiliated with the Free State reach north as far as the shores of Lake Simcoe, 40 miles (64 km) away. Most of the outlying towns and villages are farming communities who support Lazlo through the sale of their produce in the city, and the countryside for miles is a rolling farmland dotted with large tracts of forest where the land hasn't been cleared for farming or pasture. The trees make up a mixed forest, with maple, oak, red pine,

white pine, birch and poplar dominating. In the summer months, temperatures in Lazlo can reach as high as 95 degrees Fahrenheit (35 C), while winter temperatures average below freezing. Lazlo is typically hit by three or four major snowstorms per winter, and dozens of minor snowfalls.

Beyond the Free State's borders, Lazlo's nearest independent neighbor is the tiny kingdom of *Perez*, only 19 miles (30 km) away. *The Relic*, 47 miles (75 km) away on the western shore of Lake Ontario, is next in distance, and the largest of the nearby communities. *Trapper's Cove* is another local settlement, though it is little more than a way station for wilderness scouts, hunters and trappers that make the forests of Ontario their home. It is approximately 56 miles (90 km) from Lazlo, and sits northwest of the Relic near the ruins of Guelph. Also nearby are the tiny settlements of *Fowlerville*, *Burleston* and *Okeemo*; all are scarcely more than villages, and are primarily supported by farming, hunting and trapping. Okeemo and most of the land surrounding Lake Simcoe are claimed by the Okeemogar Wild Psi-Stalker tribe, but they have little direct contact with the Free State.

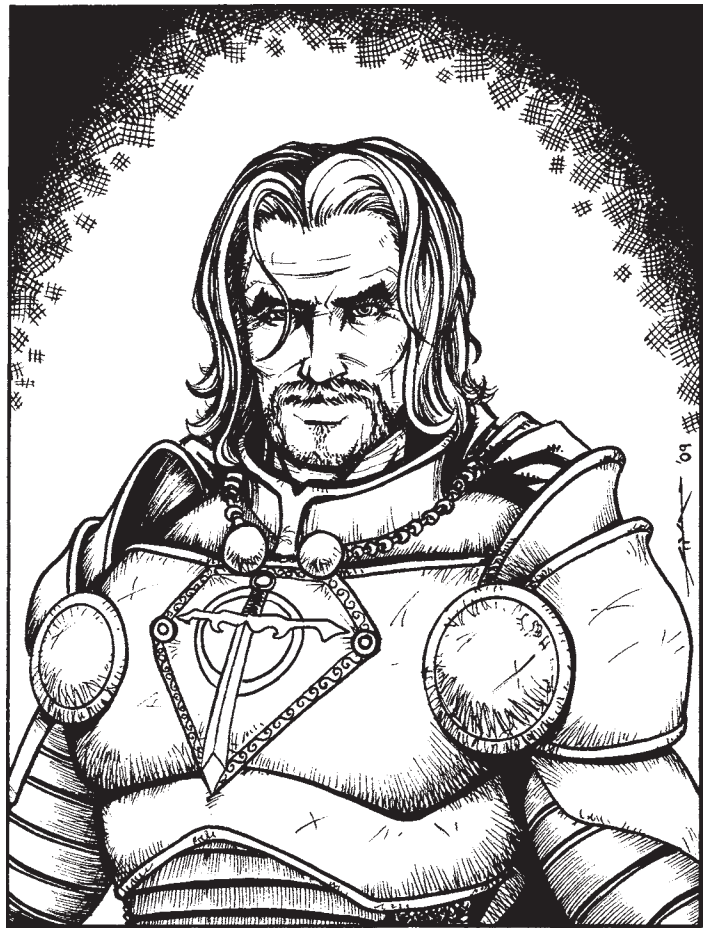
To the east of Lazlo are two small problem towns: *New Hope* and *Unity*. Both are small settlements on the shores of Lake Ontario, 62 and 69 miles (100 and 110 km) east of the Free State respectively, and both are run by militant human supremacists. Neither is significant enough to actually threaten Lazlo, having a combined population less than 3,000, but they are willing to attack small groups of D-Bees in their territory, which can make travel that much more dangerous for D-Bees going east. Travelers and D-Bee-hunting parties from both towns live in terror of the Free State, however, and will not voluntarily travel more than 30 miles (48 km) to the west for fear of the place.

For more information on all of these settlements and communities, see **Rifts® World Book 20: Canada**.

Government

The government of Lazlo is part of what makes it such a unique community: it is one of the only *democracies* left in North America, or indeed, all of Rifts Earth! The style of democracy practiced is a mix of Old American and Canadian traditions combined with ideas unique to Lazlo. There are two government bodies, the **Congress of the Electorate** and the **Council of Learning**. Representatives are elected to both bodies from districts throughout the Free State, with each representing 10,000 people. Representatives serve four year terms, but there is no limit to the number of times they can stand for re-election. Most of those representatives belong to a political party, of which there are many, but independents can be elected. Every citizen can vote upon reaching the age of majority (there is some legal variation for species that mature very quickly or very slowly, but the default is 18), and as of 109 P.A., there are 208 districts. The political party that has the most members elected to the Congress forms the government, with the head of that party becoming the head of state or **Premier**.

The Congress of the Electorate is the primary branch of the government of Lazlo, and meets in the Lazlo Legislative Assembly. It is the branch with executive power, and its elected leader is Lazlo's Premier. The current Premier is Sir Thomm, a human Cyber-Knight who has held the position for the last nine



years, having won two subsequent elections. Though Sir Thomm is in his late sixties and his adventuring days are behind him, he looks forward to many years of political service, and will presumably stand for re-election in 110 P.A. His popularity and that of his **New Progressive Party** have wavered in the past year, but his prospects in the coming political race are by no means finished.

It is Sir Thomm's political party that runs the government in Congress, as it holds the majority of the seats. The Premier is supported in the operation of the government by his cabinet ministers – fellow elected officials of his party chosen by the Premier to oversee specific branches of government, such as the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Magical Practice. The rest of the party members are sometimes known as “back-benchers” because, aside from representing their constituents and voting on measures proposed in the Congress, they have few official duties in government. The New Progressives are seen as politically moderate among most citizens of Lazlo, which helps them appeal to a wide voter base. Though some accuse the party of “fence-sitting” on major issues, it has generally been a popular strategy, as they have been the predominant party for the last 15 years. The many recent upheavals, such as the influx of Tolkeen refugees, increased Coalition aggression and the ongoing Xiticix war have all taken a toll on their popularity, however. Though Sir Thomm remains quite liked among the populace, many believe his party will lose the next election.

The party with the second-highest number of seats takes the place of the **Official Opposition**, and generally presents a viewpoint contrary to that of the elected government, essentially playing the role of devil's advocate. Any flaws or oversights in

government policies are jumped on by members of the Opposition, hoping to draw the public's attention and ultimately correct those problems. The current Opposition is the **Lazlo Labor Party**. They are a political party whose focus is on the concerns of the working class, such as improving pay rates, working conditions and standard of living for those in Lazlo without extensive education or magical training. They have also championed the position of many Tolkeen refugees, which is the main reason for the recent growth of their popularity.

When new laws or amendments to existing laws are proposed, it is traditionally done by the Premier's cabinet members, though that is not strictly necessary, and they can be introduced by any member of the Congress. Proposed bills are then debated among all the members of the Congress and put up for a vote. Since Sir Thomm's party is in the majority, bills pass or fail largely depending on what he and his party want – except in certain, critical situations where all members are directed to vote according to their conscience, rather than follow the strictures of their political party (such was the case for the vote to attack the Xiticix Hive Lands). If a bill successfully passes its vote in the Congress of the Electorate, it is passed to the second branch of government, the Council of Learning.

The Council of Learning is the secondary branch of the government, and meets in the Tower of Higher Learning. It serves as an advisory and review body to the decisions of the Congress, and serves as a check to the power of the Congress. The Council members are also elected from districts distributed by population, but they belong to no political parties, and are meant to serve as the conscience of the nation. The leader of the Council is known as the **Speaker**, and is chosen amongst the council members after every election. Plato the Great Horned Dragon has served as Speaker of the Council of Learning since the government's inception, and looks poised to keep being elected to that position well into the future (he could easily have been elected Premier, but feels a being with his lifespan could end up stagnating the very democracy that Lazlo is trying to nurture). The Speaker moderates the operation of the Council, as well as conferring the Council's recommendations to the Premier and governing party.

The Council is involved in the creation of new legislation in the following manner: a bill that succeeds in its vote in Congress passes to the Council, where it is again debated. Any potential amendments or alterations are proposed; if they are considered necessary by a majority of the Council members, the bill is returned to the Congress with recommendations for the changes to be made. At that point another vote in Congress occurs, either to make the changes, or ratify the bill as is. Theoretically, the Council could continually return a bill to Congress and stall the progress of the government indefinitely, but it is unheard of for the Council to continually refuse Congress; the Council is meant to be a source of revision and restraint, not governance. If no changes are thought necessary and the bill successfully passes a vote in the Council, it becomes a new law that will be implemented by the governing party in Congress.

Note: Beyond his official duties as Speaker of the Council, Plato often serves as spokesperson for the Free State of Lazlo, particularly on issues of Foreign Affairs, due to his immense personal knowledge and reputation in certain parts of the world. The Premier actually encouraged Plato to take up this role, as

Sir Thomm wanted to avoid the spotlight it would place him under.

The government of Lazlo is funded through a 5 percent sales tax on most goods beyond necessities, and property tax/utilities fees paid by all residents for the use of electricity, P.P.E. and water. There is no income tax in the Free State, but government costs are low for a number of reasons. First, magical alternatives to technology are generally much cheaper to operate, and second, Lazlo doesn't maintain a large standing army or technological fighting force.

Other Political Parties

A number of other, minor political parties are currently represented in the Congress of the Electorate or repeatedly stand for election without success. Their scant numbers vote with the government or the Opposition according to their views on the particular issue at hand, but they are rarely critical to the success or failure of any proposed legislation. Many represent interests of small portions of the community, while others represent the lunatic fringe.

The **Reform Party** is more conservative than the average citizen of Lazlo; they argue for an increased military presence, stronger defenses, and a greater scrutiny on those allowed to take up residence in the Free State. Though still not very popular – it has only a handful of seats in the Congress – with all of the recent concerns affecting Lazlo, support for the Reform Party is growing.

The **United Farmers of Lazlo** focuses on the needs and interests of the rural Free State citizens, and simply tries to keep those needs in the public consciousness. It is a party with a small, but consistent base of support, and is never likely to form a government.

The **Draconian Rule Party** holds that political authority should be taken out of the hands of humanity and mortal D-Bees, and placed in the talons of a greater power: dragons. If elected, the Draconian Rule Party would suspend Congress and appoint dragons to all important positions of government power in perpetuity. This remains a party with little support, and only a single, human, member has been elected to the Congress of the Electorate. This party is openly supported by the Church of Dragonwright, though most are *not* aware of the church's connection with Atlantis.

The **Human Unity Party** is another fringe group advocating restrictions on D-Bee rights, and wants to see the government solely in human hands. In Lazlo, this is tantamount to fascism, and the party's headquarters (a small, relatively nondescript office) is a frequent site of protesters. They have not actually succeeded in getting a single member elected to the Congress, but never seem to be short of funding despite this. Many suspect money to support their campaigns comes from outside the Free State, possibly from the *Society of Sages*, a group of human supremacist practitioners of magic.

Law and Order

The Free State of Lazlo has a reputation for being very permissive, but this is because so much of what is outlawed by the Coalition is easily available there: magic, books, and pre-Rifts

learning. In other areas, the government takes its duty to protect the citizenry very seriously, even in the case of protecting it from itself. Punishments range from fines and community service to banishment, imprisonment or execution. Minor crimes are typically the subject of summary judgement, and are resolved by paying a fine or performing community service, while major crimes are subject to trial by jury.

Gambling is restricted to a handful of government-authorized casinos and gaming parlors, where the betting is fair, the events are monitored, and a portion of the profits goes to the government. Illegal betting is shut down by the government whenever found, and the proceeds seized.

Drugs used for enhancing performance or altering perception are considered controlled substances, and can only be prescribed by medical professionals; this includes Psi-Cola, and all of the designer drugs typically used by Juicer Wannabes. Violations for unauthorized possession result in fines and seizure of the drugs, while those found manufacturing or importing these substances illegally may face serious criminal charges.

Prostitution is legal, though it is strictly regulated by the government. Sex workers have access to all available health and social services, must be of the age of majority, and only work in specific sections of the city. Profiting from the prostitution of another is illegal, as are attempts to coerce others into prostitution; both are punishable criminal offenses (see below).

Illegal Magic includes Bio-Wizard items (which are to be turned over to the Lazlo Defense Force upon entering the city), the sale of corpses or body parts of intelligent creatures, and any magic used in the commission of a crime. The practice of Necromancy is not technically illegal, but the use of many Necromancy abilities is a crime due to the previously-mentioned ban.

Personal weaponry, like body armor, pistols and melee weapons are permitted to be carried within the city limits, but rifles or heavy weapons are not (that *any* weapons and armor are permitted is largely due to the significant presence of magic and naturally M.D.C. beings). Power armor and giant robots may not be operated within city limits by anyone other than the Lazlo Defense Force, or authorized members of the Volunteer Militia.

Other major crimes include **theft, assault, sexual assault, kidnaping, slave-trading, misuse of psionic/magical control, the consumption of intelligent beings, manslaughter and murder**. All are considered punishable criminal offenses and cannot be resolved by paying a fine or community service. Other crimes in this category include trafficking in Bio-Wizardry, drug trafficking, performing M.O.M. conversions and unauthorized Juicer or Bionic conversions, Cyber-Snatching, and racketeering. Arrests are made by the Lazlo Defense Force, and suspects are held awaiting trial.

Trials involve a jury of the suspect's peers, though in Lazlo that is likely to include practitioners of magic, psychics, as well as creatures of magic and the supernatural, and a judge. Jurors are chosen from among the citizenry at random, while judges are appointed to the judiciary by the Congress of the Electorate. Testimony may include expert witnesses like scientists, practitioners of magic and master psychics, as well as the more traditional eyewitnesses, investigating officers and victims. Lazlo's holding cells and courthouses are enchanted to prevent magic

teleportation, and suspects are kept under psychic, magic and technological surveillance while in custody. The accused is represented by a public defender, while the state/victim is represented by a Lazlo prosecutor (both are typically Rogue Scholars with a keen understanding of Lazlo law).

Sentencing for serious crimes is at the discretion of the judge trying the case. The isolation of criminals from society, victim restitution and criminal rehabilitation are the main goals of sentencing, but imprisonment, fines and counseling are not the only punitive measures in use in the Free State. Serial sexual assault, the consumption of intelligent beings and first and second degree murder are all potentially eligible charges to receive the *death penalty*. This remains controversial among citizens of Lazlo, though doubt as to the guilt of a suspect can be greatly reduced through magical and psionic evidence gathering. Other convicted criminals are held at the Lazlo Penitentiary, a prison on the eastern outskirts of the city. The penitentiary uses a combination of technological and Techno-Wizard restraints to hold its prisoners, such as psionic dampeners and anti-magic bracelets, in addition to M.D.C. walls and cells, guard towers and a sophisticated prisoner monitoring system.

Crime rates in Lazlo remain low compared to many communities such as Kingsdale, Ishpeming and Manistique, or the 'Burbs of any Coalition fortress city (data for the fortress cities themselves are not available). This is attributed to a number of factors: the high level of education among the citizenry, low rates of poverty, the skill of the Lazlo Defense Force, and the high level of personal power many citizens possess (this last factor may be surprisingly important; no one wants to rob a Mind Melter, high-level magic user or a shape-shifted dragon). The influx of refugees has led to a terrible increase in crime rates however, as some, unable to find honest work, turn to robbery, drugs, smuggling, etc., to make ends meet. Others, emotionally hardened by the Tolkeen War and disaffected with the hope and idealism on display in Lazlo, have turned to crime as a type of revenge on the world at large. Then there are the Tolkeen Retribution Squads, terrorists using random violence to punish Lazlo for refusing military assistance to their fallen kingdom. All together, crime has risen by almost 300% in the past five years, and the reaction among citizens in Lazlo is not favorable. Calls for stiffer penalties and more police are common, and many resent the Tolkeen refugees for bringing the crime with them. The police *are* cracking down, with frequent patrols through poorer sections of the city, but it is not the only solution. Additional social counseling programs are being developed to help ease Tolkeen refugees into their new lives, find work, and make peace with the tragedies of the war.

Law in the Free State is enforced and upheld by the **Lazlo Defense Force**, an organization created to police and protect the citizens. It is led by a humanoid canine D-Bee by the name of Arl Xzznyi, who came to Rifts Earth as a young male and is now well past middle age. He has held the position of Chief of the LDF for the past 11 years, and served in the force for another 20-odd years before that. Arl Xzznyi also oversees training and recruitment for the LDF, two areas that have been greatly increased in the past five years. Where the LDF once employed 2,500 officers, that number has been quadrupled to almost 10,000! Many in the Free State see this as still not enough

given the current escalation of crime, and the number of officers may swell even higher until the crime rate drops back down.

The LDF includes men at arms from a variety of O.C.C.s as well as Wilderness Scouts (typically employed in associated rural communities), practitioners of magic and master psychics, as well as a variety of creatures of magic and supernatural beings like dragons (mostly hatchlings). Most street cops are inexperienced (levels 1 to 4), but this is not true of detectives, members of the Tactical Response Unit or higher ranking officers (likely to be level 5 or higher). Pay rates are a little less than service in the Coalition military (1200 credits/month starting wage), but most don't get into police work for the money. The vast majority of officers are Principled or Scrupulous, though there are always a handful with selfish and evil alignments, since no screening process can be entirely foolproof. Police corruption is treated with the utmost severity however, and when proven, results in a dismissal from the force and possible criminal charges.

City street patrols are typically two-person squads, and always include one man-at-arms and one practitioner of magic, creature of magic or psychic. Officers may be on foot, using TW Turbo or Crescent Wing-Boards, or driving a hovercraft squad car. Wilderness/rural patrols are typically four-person squads, and always include at least one Wilderness Scout and one practitioner of magic or psychic. Tactical Response Units are eight-person teams with at least two practitioners of magic/psychics (preferably one of each) with an emphasis on combat spells/abilities. Naturally M.D.C. beings with Supernatural Strength are highly desired for these positions, but are not members of the force in such numbers that it can be a mandatory requirement. Tactical Response Units are only called into action for situations beyond the capabilities of standard officers, like heavy combat, hostage situations, or to apprehend extremely powerful suspects. For these emergencies, Tactical Response Units may be inserted by magical teleportation. Detectives typically work with a partner, but focus more on investigation than patrolling or combat, and can be promoted to the position regardless of O.C.C., training or special abilities.

In addition to having a significant number of mages and psychics on the force, LDF officers are all equipped with TW weapons, and trained with tactics for dealing with the supernatural. Almost all have a working knowledge of magic and psionics (Lore: Magic and Lore: Psionics), and a working knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of common monsters (Lore: Demons & Monsters). Detectives are generally experts on the abilities and habits of common supernatural beings as well as standard criminals.

Lazlo Defense Force Standard Equipment

Members of the LDF on duty are all equipped with the following:

1 suit of M.D.C. body armor in the style of a police uniform. (Some members go without armor or provide their own; they must *always* display some means of police identification while on duty, however.)

1 S.D.C. firearm loaded with silver rounds.

1 M.D.C. side arm (typically a TW pistol, but can be a common manufacturer like Northern Gun or Wilk's).

1 TW Magic Net Rifle.

A 2-way radio.

A pair of M.D.C. handcuffs.

1 Neural Mace or TW Stun Baton.

Notes: Police vehicles are supplied as needed, and are typically TW Turbo or Crescent Wing-Boards, or TW-converted hovercraft or hover-cycles.

LDF Tactical Response Unit Equipment

Members of the LDF Tactical Response Unit are all equipped with the following when sent into action:

1 suit of heavy M.D.C. body armor with clear TR Unit and LDF markings. (Some members go without armor or provide their own; they must *always* display some means of police identification while on duty, however.)

1 S.D.C. firearm loaded with silver rounds.

1 M.D.C. side arm (typically a TW pistol, but can be a common manufacturer like Northern Gun or Wilk's).

1 TW Heavy Weapon (typically a Nova Rifle, Force Cannon, Storm Rifle, TK Assault Rifle, Lava Thrower, etc., depending on user's P.S. and weapon availability).

A 2-way radio.

A pair of M.D.C. handcuffs.

1 Neural Mace or TW Stun Baton.

Note: The Tactical Response Unit also makes extensive use of power armor with Techno-Wizard modifications for dangerous assignments.

Education

Perhaps even more than magic, *education* is what defines Lazlo, and is at the root of the Free State's ideological differences with the Coalition. Whereas the Coalition States keep the vast majority of their citizens illiterate and ignorant as a means of control, Lazlo has always held the philosophy that a properly educated and informed citizenry will make the right decisions for itself. Humanity has always feared the unknown, and so Lazlo has worked to make magic, psionics, D-Bees, and many of the strange changes that Rifts Earth has witnessed understood, robbing them of their power to terrify. From its earliest days, Lazlo was a haven for scholars and scientists *as well as* practitioners of magic, and they have been instrumental in developing the society of the Free State into what it is today.

For these reasons, education is one of the major components of life in Lazlo. Children of citizens are expected to attend classes from the age of 6 until 16 (or the age equivalents in D-Bees with different life spans), and instruction is offered in two languages: English and Dragonese. Literacy in the primary language is taught early, as well as the fundamentals of magic, but the curriculum also includes Basic Mathematics, Pre-Rifts and Post-Apocalyptic History, Computer Operation, as well as D-Bee, Magic and Psionic Lore. At 16, most students apply to specialized training with either the **University of Learning** or

the **University of Magic**, though there are always some who stop their education at this time.

The University of Learning is geared around more scholarly pursuits. Students work towards a degree in the arts (*Rogue Scholars*), the sciences (*Rogue Scientists*), medicine (*Body Fixers and Cyber-Docs*) and engineering (*Operators*). The Lazlo University of Learning is one of the most respected institutions of its kind in North America, but that accomplishment isn't as meaningful as it would once have been, as it's also one of the only universities left willing to teach anyone! In the Coalition States, only the uppermost elite are eligible for this kind of education, and in most of North America this type of education is unheard of. Elsewhere, scholars, scientists, doctors and engineers take apprentices almost like knights-errant, training them in the ways of their profession while living rough and eking out a living. In Lazlo, a remnant of an earlier time has been remembered. The focus of the university is on recovering, preserving and studying pre-Rifts history, philosophy, culture, art, language and science, particularly in areas of medicine, agriculture and communication. They are also highly involved in cataloging, studying and debating the political thought, philosophy, art and science that has developed since the Cataclysm, as well as that brought to Rifts Earth from other dimensions.

The University of Magic offers training in the major schools of magical thought common to North America. This includes Ley Line Walking, Techno-Wizardry (a joint program with the University of Learning, students attend classes on both campuses), Mysticism, Elementalism (spells for both of these areas aren't taught, instead the focus is on self-discovery, the natural world and magical theory), and Shifting (though somewhat disreputable, it is still common, and the focus is on dimensional travel rather than summoning). Guest lectures are also held by rarer types of magic users, most of whom in Lazlo are affiliated with the university, even if not trained by it. There are also graduate programs for research into new or unique types of magic, such as Temporal Magic, Atlantean Tattoo Magic, Stone Magic and Bio-Wizardry (chiefly to try and reverse or undo its effects). New forms of Techno-Wizardry are constantly being experimented with as well (in times prior to the destruction of Tolkeen, these focused on power generation, improving living standards and providing convenience items; since that city's defeat by the Coalition the focus has shifted partially to defensive magic and weapons), and there is extensive public funding for useful Techno-Wizard design projects.

Both universities have programs studying psychics and psionic abilities, and there is something of an academic rivalry between the two for funding, researchers and results. Students with Minor or Major Psionic abilities may be able to make some money participating in studies while studying at either university. Master Psychics are unlikely to devote much time to formal study, but rather spend the time developing their natural abilities.

For citizens of the Free State of Lazlo, tuition at both schools is free (though not everyone meets the academic requirements); for non-citizens, tuition is typically 10,000 credits per semester. This fee goes towards staff salaries, school equipment and resources, and student housing. The two universities are major employers in the Free State, with a huge staff of professors, educational assistants and administrators, as well as custodians, se-

curity, etc. Combined with the many teachers of the childhood education program, education is one of Lazlo's largest industries. Most degree programs run two semesters a year for five years with a break each summer, but it is possible to "fast-track" through the system and take an additional semester over each summer break. Students who fast-track will graduate in three and a half years instead of five, but this is uncommon.

Those who do not attend one of Lazlo's universities typically enroll in one of the Defense Force training programs (equivalents of *Mercenary Soldier*, *Robot Pilot* or *Wilderness Scout* O.C.C.s). These programs take 2 years, and include training and practical experience policing the streets and territory of the Free State of Lazlo. Others pick up what skills they can on the street or with self-training; this includes most Master Psychics, City Rats and Vagabonds.

Lazlo Citizen Education Program

Player characters, regardless of O.C.C., who were raised and educated in Lazlo, gain the following skills:

Native Language: English or Dragonese.

Literacy: English or Literacy: Dragonese (player's choice) at +15%.

Lore: Magic

Lore: Psionics

History: Pre-Rifts

History: Post-Apocalyptic

Mathematics: Basic

Computer Operation

Note: If any of these skills are part of a character's O.C.C. skills or O.C.C. Related Skills, they receive a +15% bonus in addition to their O.C.C. description.

Player characters who were raised and educated in Lazlo also receive the following bonuses:

+2 to I.Q. attribute.

+1 to save versus Horror Factor when encountering unknown D-Bees.

+1D6 to permanent base P.P.E. if a *non-magic* class, and the ability to use Techno-Wizard items regardless of O.C.C. (though still requiring the necessary P.P.E.).

+4D6 to permanent base P.P.E. if a *magic-using* class.

+5% to all Technical skills taken as O.C.C. or O.C.C. Related Skills.

+5% to all Science skills taken as O.C.C. or O.C.C. Related Skills.

Trained practitioners of magic such as Ley Line Walkers, Shifters, Techno-Wizards, etc., *may* know an additional 1D6 spells from levels 1-5, **G.M.'s discretion**.

Intuitive practitioners of magic such as Mystics *may* discover/learn 1D4 spells from schools of magic other than standard invocations (Temporal Magic, Elemental Magic, etc.) over the course of their careers, though still only upon reaching the appropriate level of experience, **G.M.'s discretion**.



Stage Magic Unlimited

Optional Rules & Source Material for Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition

By Jake Marsh

"Where is that old man?" Butch growled. "It's freezin' out here!"

"He'll be here. He just don't move too fast. He's like a hunnert years old." Stony laughed. The two hoods waited in the garbage-strewn alley for their "prey" to come by. They knew that Mr. Fontaine always made the night deposit for his little pawnshop at 10:00 P.M., and that he would walk past this alley.

"Yeah, his brains must be old, too," Butch said. "He ought to know the streets are dangerous."

"It ain't safe to carry cash around here. There's criminals in this town," Stony added. The two lowlifes guffawed, already counting the money from their score. "I am gonna get so loaded tonight!"

"Right there with ya, bro," Butch added. "Hey, is it gettin' foggy?" Stony looked down, and he too noticed the thick layer of fog already up to their knees.

"Weird. It looks kinda blue. Is somethin' burnin'?"

"Don't smell like smoke."

"Pretty thick for fog." As they watched, the strange mist rapidly expanded to completely envelop the two thugs.

"This ain't right!" Butch said, panic rising in his voice.

"It is right," an eerie voice called from beyond the fog. "It is justice!"

"What the –" Stony was cut off as a foot shot out of the roiling fog and connected solidly with his jaw. The man went down, dazed but still conscious. The fog cleared a bit, and he and his partner saw a woman, dressed from head to toe in a midnight-blue bodysuit, accessorized with an orange sash around her waist. Her piercing dark eyes glared at them.

"Shoulda stayed at the circus, freak!" Butch said, drawing a switchblade. He slashed clumsily at the woman, who deftly parried his arm aside with her own arm, knocking the knife loose. Her other hand instantly produced a thin steel hoop, seemingly from thin air, which she dropped over Butch's shoulders, pinning his arms at his sides. A quick leg sweep brought him to the ground, and the woman used another hoop to restrain his ankles. The thug squirmed like a worm dancing on a hook, but couldn't get free.

Stony staggered to his feet, pulling a small revolver from his coat. "Game's over, doll!" The woman froze. Butch fired. The woman seemed to shift her weight slightly to the side, but was unfazed. "It ain't possible!" At point-blank range, he couldn't have missed.

"Correct. It is impossible," the woman said, again in that weird monotone, like something from beyond the grave. In an instant, she stepped right in front of him, and poked her single outstretched index finger into his chest, sending Stony flying backwards into the wall. The two-bit criminal slid to the ground,

conscious, but too stunned to move. The woman expertly handcuffed Stony to the still wriggling Butch.

“This neighborhood is under my protection. You are not welcome here. Do you understand?” the woman said. The two thugs nodded fearfully.

Meanwhile, Mr. Fontaine slowly shuffled past the alley, headed to the bank, and was blissfully unaware.

It is well known that the superheroic Stage Magician is a master of sleight of hand, contortionism, disguise and the art of escape. The Magician is certainly all of these things; however, they are only a part of what he is. As many criminals and even some other heroes have learned, these Lords and Ladies of Illusion have found ways to duplicate the super abilities of those who thought themselves unique: the Aliens, Experiments, Mutants, Psychics and other beings with powers beyond the realm of normal men. But of course, it is all mere trickery, right? Perhaps; but often, it is the perception of power, as much as the reality of it, that can carry the day against the forces of evil.

The Stage Magician, as described under the Special Training Power Category, is a highly skilled and specialized character. His expertise in sleight of hand and escape is very useful in fighting crime (or committing it, as the case may be). However, as anyone who has seen a stage magician perform in real life can tell you, a magician can appear to accomplish feats that can only be described as, well, “magic,” but more appropriate to the Heroes Unlimited context, as superhuman abilities.

In game terms, the Stage Magician has the ability to emulate certain superhuman abilities normally possessed only by certain categories of superbeings. Not all super abilities can be emulated, of course; even the world’s greatest Stage Magician is not going to manage to fake Superluminal Flight. In addition, the Magician’s emulated powers generally do not function as effectively or as frequently as those actually possessed by other superbeings. Nevertheless, the Stage Magician has the advantage of utilizing a very broad range and number of emulated super abilities and psionics, and his opponents never know exactly what’s “up his sleeve.” Indeed, an experienced Stage Magician might be able to emulate two dozen or more super abilities at any time. How can a supervillain, much less a run-of-the mill thug, prepare for *that*?

Power Emulation

The Stage Magician’s Power Emulation is a combination of gimmickry, deception, athleticism, ingenuity, and even psychology, to some degree. For purposes of the game, it is not necessary for either the Stage Magician’s player or the Game Master to explain exactly how an emulation is accomplished. It should be sufficient that the character has somehow managed the feat. After all, a magician never reveals his secrets, does he?

At first level, the Stage Magician receives any combination of four Minor Power and Psionic Emulations from the list below (player’s choice or random). Each power, except as noted in the individual descriptions, may only be used once in any given situation. Once the Magician has performed his “trick,” he must return to his headquarters/lair/home to “reset” his power; i.e. recharge, refill or replace the gadgets that make the emulation

possible. Besides, what kind of magician would perform the same trick twice for the same audience? That’s just bad showmanship. If the Magician doesn’t have time to return to his lair, he simply has to do without that particular trick for the time being. Alternatively, those characters who use a vehicle to aid in their crimefighting may be allowed to store the necessary items for their emulations in the vehicle, eliminating the need to return all the way to the lair. Of course, the vehicle may not always be accessible, either.

Starting at second level, the Stage Magician gains 1D4 new “powers” each level (only 1 of these may be a Major Ability; again, choice or random). It can be assumed that the Magician is constantly researching new tricks in his downtime, and once he reaches a new experience level, these tricks are ready for public performance, so to speak.

The list of powers and psionics which may be emulated is fairly extensive, and even high level Stage Magicians will be hard-pressed to learn them all. Be that as it may, Game Masters may wish to allow Stage Magicians to emulate other powers, as well. Do what works for your game, but keep a few things in mind. For one thing, very few of the emulated powers are offensive in nature. Stage Magicians are performers and showmen, not direct brawlers or blasters. Also, some powers will just be beyond the possibility of effectively emulating. A Magician may be able to make it appear that he has turned into a puddle of water, but that puddle is not going to start attacking anyone or firing water blasts, as a character with Alter Physical Structure: Liquid can do. Just use common sense and your own best judgment.

Abbreviations

- HU2 = Heroes Unlimited, 2nd Edition
- PU 1 = Powers Unlimited One
- PU 2 = Powers Unlimited Two
- PU 3 = Powers Unlimited Three

Minor Powers Which Can Be Emulated:

- Adhesion (HU2)
- Alter Physical Body (HU2)
- Awe Factor (PU 3)
- Bend Light (HU2)
- Conduct Electricity (PU 1)
- Corrosive Spray (PU 3)
- Density Walking (PU 1)
- Exceptional Physical Strength (HU2)
- Fireworks (PU 3)
- Flight: Glide (HU2)
- Focused Touch (PU 3)
- Glow Bug (PU 1)
- Harmonic Resonance (PU 3)
- Heightened Sense of Balance (PU 1)
- Heightened Sense of Touch (HU2)
- Hold Breath (PU 1)
- Instant Weapon (PU 1)
- Shadow Meld (PU 1)
- Sidestep (PU 2)

Spit Spikes (PU 2)
Transfixing Gaze (PU 3)
Vocalization (PU 3)

Psionics Which May Be Emulated:

Deaden Pain (HU2)
Death Trance (HU2)
Float (HU2)
Hypnotic Suggestion (HU2)
Impervious to Cold (HU2)
Impervious to Fire (HU2)
Induce Sleep (HU2)
Levitation (HU2)
Resist Fatigue (HU2)
Resist Hunger (HU2)
Resist Thirst (HU2)
Spontaneous Combustion (HU2)
Telekinesis (HU2)
Teleport Object (HU2)

Major Powers Which Can Be Emulated:

Alter Metabolism (HU2)
Animal Metamorphosis (HU2)
Bulletproof (PU 3)
Chameleon (HU2)
Chemical Secretion (PU 1)
Generate Fog & Smoke (PU 1)
Holographic Memory Projection (HU2)
Intangibility (HU2)
Invisibility (HU2)
Magnetism (HU2)
Teleport (HU2)

Minor Powers & Psionics (Random Chart)

01-03 Adhesion (HU2)
04-05 Alter Physical Body (HU2)
06-08 Awe Factor (PU 3)
09-10 Bend Light (HU2)
11-13 Conduct Electricity (PU 1)
14-16 Corrosive Spray (PU 3)
17-19 Deaden Pain (Psionic)
20-21 Death Trance (Psionic)
22-23 Density Walking (PU 1)
24-26 Exceptional Physical Strength (HU2)
27-29 Fireworks (PU 3)
30-32 Flight: Glide (HU2)
33-34 Float (Psionic) (HU2)
35-36 Focused Touch (PU 3)
37-39 Glow Bug (PU 1)
40-42 Harmonic Resonance (PU 3)
43-45 Heightened Sense of Balance (PU 1)
46-48 Heightened Sense of Touch (HU2)

49-51 Hold Breath (PU 1)
52-54 Hypnotic Suggestion (Psionic)
55-57 Impervious to Cold (Psionic)
58-60 Impervious to Fire (Psionic)
61-63 Induce Sleep (Psionic)
64-66 Instant Weapon (PU 1)
67-69 Levitation (Psionic)
70-72 Resist Fatigue (Psionic)
73-75 Resist Hunger (Psionic)
76-78 Resist Thirst (Psionic)
79-81 Shadow Meld (PU 1)
82-84 Sidestep (PU 2)
85-87 Spit Spikes (PU 2)
88-90 Spontaneous Combustion (Psionic)
91-93 Telekinesis (Psionic)
94-95 Teleport Object (Psionic)
96-97 Transfixing Gaze (PU 3)
98-00 Vocalization (PU 3)

Major Powers (Random Chart)

01-09 Alter Metabolism (HU2)
10-18 Animal Metamorphosis (HU2)
19-27 Bulletproof (PU 3)
28-36 Chameleon (HU2)
37-45 Chemical Secretion (PU 1)
46-55 Generate Fog & Smoke (PU 1)
56-64 Holographic Memory Projection (HU2)
65-73 Intangibility (HU2)
74-82 Invisibility (HU2)
83-91 Magnetism (HU2)
92-00 Teleport (HU2)

Emulated powers generally function in a similar manner to the powers as described in the books, as modified below. Remember, all power emulations are limited to one use per situation, unless otherwise stated.

Modifications to Minor Powers

Adhesion (HU2, page 228): Automatic climbing skill is only equal to 80% proficiency; the Magician does not get the +1 bonus to P.P.; otherwise unchanged.

Alter Physical Body (HU2, page 228): Changes are not instant, with the exception of eye color; takes 1D6 rounds to complete an alteration, if rushed or in an emergency; effects are otherwise unchanged. A Magician with this emulation receives +30% to the Disguise skill.

Awe Factor (PU 3, page 7): Awe Factor is limited to 10, +1 at levels 4, 8 and 12, but otherwise unchanged. This power is particularly appropriate for Magicians who like to make a grand entrance.

Bend Light (HU2, page 229): The Magician cannot see infrared or ultraviolet; otherwise unchanged.

Conduct Electricity (PU 1, page 18): Duration is one melee round per level of experience, and the Magician cannot Sense

Electricity; otherwise unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter. The Magician may use any of the sub-powers, but the use of any one counts as his one use of the Conduct Electricity power (e.g., if he emulates Toss Electrical Bolts, he cannot then use Stop Electrical Devices until he has a chance to return to his lair).

Corrosive Spray (PU 3, page 9): Unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter.

Density Walking (PU 1, page 20): Unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter. The Magician is limited by experience level as per the power description.

Exceptional Physical Strength (HU2, page 231): Limited to lifting weights only; not applicable to hand to hand combat damage.

Fireworks (PU 3, page 13): Unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter. The Magician may use any of the sub-powers, but the use of any one counts as his one use of the Fireworks power (e.g., if he emulates Fireworks Display, he cannot then use Flare Burst until he has a chance to return to his lair).

Flight: Glide (HU2, page 232): No bonuses provided; otherwise unchanged.

Focused Touch (PU 3, page 14): Unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter.

Glow Bug (PU 1, page 29): Duration is limited to one melee round; otherwise unchanged.

Harmonic Resonance (PU 3, page 14): The Magician is not resistant to vibration and sound-based attacks; otherwise unchanged.

Heightened Sense of Balance (PU 1, page 30): Unchanged. This power may be emulated at will.

Heightened Sense of Touch (HU2, page 234): Skill percentages start 10% lower than listed; otherwise unchanged. This power may be emulated at will.

Hold Breath (PU 1, page 31): The Magician does not receive the bonuses to P.E. and S.D.C.; otherwise unchanged. This power may be emulated at will.

Instant Weapon (PU 1, page 33): Illusory, essentially an enhanced Concealment skill; the Magician gains a +45% bonus to his Concealment skill roll, but only for purposes of producing a concealed weapon; the Magician may never have more than two small weapons or one large weapon concealed at a time, at least for purposes of emulation of Instant Weapon; other weapons may be concealed at the Magician's normal Concealment skill percentage.

Shadow Meld (PU 1, page 40): Unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter.

Sidestep (PU 2, page 95): Usable at will, but the Magician only gets the +8 bonus the first time he attempts to use the ability in a particular combat; each subsequent attempt to Sidestep

is only made with a bonus of +2 to automatic dodge; otherwise unchanged.

Spit Spikes (PU 2, page 95): Unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter.

Transfixing Gaze (PU 3, page 22): Usable at will with the following limitations: The Magician can never transfix more than one victim at a time; range is limited to 10 feet (3 m); the Magician does not receive the bonuses provided by the actual power; otherwise unchanged.

Vocalization (PU 3, page 23): Unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter. The Magician may use any of the sub-powers, but the use of any one sub-power is his one use of the Vocalization power (e.g., if he emulates Amplify Speaking Voice, he cannot then use Power of Command until he has a chance to return to his lair).

Modifications to Psionics

Deaden Pain (HU2, page 298): Duration is 30 minutes per level of experience; otherwise unchanged. This power may be used at will.

Death Trance (HU2, page 300): Duration limited to 1 day; otherwise unchanged.

Float (HU2, page 302): Duration is 20 minutes; otherwise unchanged.

Hypnotic Suggestion (HU2, page 311): Unwilling victims save vs psychic attack at +2; willing volunteers have no save bonus; otherwise unchanged.

Impervious to Cold (HU2, page 302): Duration is 10 minutes per level of experience; otherwise unchanged.

Impervious to Fire (HU2, page 302): Duration is 1 minute per level of experience; otherwise unchanged.

Induce Sleep (HU2, page 299): Duration is 30 minutes per level of experience; unwilling victims can save vs non-lethal poison, and get +7 to save; otherwise unchanged.

Levitation (HU2, page 302): Duration is 1 minute per level of experience; weight limit is 50 lbs (22.5 kg); otherwise unchanged.

Resist Fatigue (HU2, page 300 or 303): Duration is 30 minutes plus 10 minutes per level of experience; otherwise unchanged.

Resist Hunger (HU2, page 303): Duration is 3 hours; may be used up to 4 times in a 24 hour period; the character will die after 30 days of starvation; otherwise unchanged.

Resist Thirst (HU2, page 303): Duration is 3 hours; may be used up to 4 times in a 24 hour period; the character will die after 10 days without water; otherwise unchanged.

Spontaneous Combustion (HU2, page 303): Unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter.

Telekinesis (HU2, page 303): Weight is limited to 20 lbs (9 kg); no bonuses to strike or parry; otherwise unchanged.

Teleport Object (HU2, page 304): Illusion, essentially very accomplished palming or sleight of hand; range is limited to 10

feet (3 m), and object must be teleported within the Magician's sight; otherwise unchanged.

Modifications to Major Powers

Alter Metabolism (HU2, page 240): The Magician is limited to use of only one power at a time, rather than four; otherwise unchanged; this power may be emulated at will.

Animal Metamorphosis (HU2, page 253): Purely illusory; the Magician only appears to become the animal; the animal is a trained pet, but obviously does not acquire the Magician's intelligence. Generally used as a decoy or for misdirection, though large, trained animals might be used for combat (tigers, dogs, etc.).

Bulletproof (PU 3, page 52): Illusory, as the Magician actually dodges the attack, while making it appear that he "absorbed" the bullets; limited to emulation of Bulletproof Skin only, and the bonus S.D.C. are not gained. The Magician may automatically avoid any one attack by gunfire (burst or single shot), per combat, and he must announce his intention to do so after a successful strike, but before damage is rolled. In addition, the Magician must be aware of the attack; Bulletproof cannot be emulated against surprise attacks.

Chameleon (HU2, page 255): All chances of being unseen are reduced by 10% from the listed numbers; the sub-abilities of Adhesion, Hold Breath and Feign Death are not gained (though they can be learned separately); otherwise unchanged.

Chemical Secretion (PU 1, page 64): The Magician does not receive the bonus to save vs poisons, drugs and chemicals; otherwise unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter. The Magician may use any of the sub-powers, but the use of any one counts as his one use of the Chemical Secretion power (e.g., if he emulates Acid, he cannot then use Putrid until he has a chance to return to his lair).

Generate Fog & Smoke (PU 1, page 73): The Magician is not impervious to the effects of smoke (though he may utilize artificial means to do so), does not receive a bonus to save vs gas attacks, and cannot sense fire; otherwise unchanged, with the normal exception that the power may only be emulated by the Magician once per encounter.

Holographic Memory Projection (HU2, page 275): Not true memory projection; the Magician must physically record events to replay them; the Magician has no immunity to other illusions; there is no time limit for how long images may be retained, since they are simply recorded on some form of storage media (e.g. a DVD or computer drive); otherwise unchanged. The Game Master should decide whether or not the Magician has to declare what he's recorded ahead of time, or if he can simply state what's been recorded when he wants to use it. The first option is more realistic, but the second is certainly appropriate in superheroic stories. Of course, anything explicitly recorded during gameplay is useable.

Intangibility (HU2, page 276): Purely illusory; only limited invulnerability and walking through substances may be emulated. On the other hand, combat is unaffected, as the Magician is not truly intangible.

Invisibility (HU2, page 277): 30 lb (13.5 kg) weight limit for worn and carried objects, rather than 100 lbs (45 kg); cannot see the invisible; no S.D.C. bonus; the Invisibility effect lasts more or less indefinitely, but if used to enter combat, the illusion is broken once an opponent makes a successful strike roll; the Magician has then been discovered, but until that point, Invisibility is quite useful in combat, as the opponent suffers the usual penalties; otherwise unchanged.

Magnetism (HU2, page 280): Maximum affected weight is 200 lbs (90 kg); cannot sense magnetic north; cannot sense magnets or magnetism; cannot sense iron; is not impervious to other superbeings' Magnetism; power can only be maintained for 1D6 melee rounds; otherwise unchanged.

Teleport (HU2, page 295): Purely illusory; weight limitation is self plus 250 lbs (112.5 kg); range is limited to 75 feet (22.8 m); chance of successful teleport is 88%, failure simply indicates a botched trick; the unsuccessful teleport chart does not apply, as no actual teleportation occurs. The Magician must also have some means of concealing himself to perform the teleport, even if it's just a curtain or table; he cannot simply vanish into thin air from an open field or room.

Other Companions

Very often, Stage Magicians will work with one or more additional people in performing their shows. This is true of the superheroic Stage Magician as well, though he must choose his colleagues carefully, as fighting crime is a far more dangerous pursuit than performing for a crowd (not that the latter activity is without risk, either). On stage, a magician's helpers are often spouses or significant others. When the same is true for crime fighters, there is an added element of danger (and role-playing drama).

Human colleagues fall into three categories: Partners, who are of the same caliber as the Stage Magician and the two will pool their talents; Assistants, who are essentially the Minor Hero version of the Stage Magician; and Apprentices, who are lower level Stage Magicians learning the skills from a more experienced mentor. These individuals may be either player characters or NPCs, but players should keep in mind that the Assistant and Apprentice will be less powerful and likely less effective than their mentor.

Trained animals make up a fourth category of "helper," and have aided in stage magic spectacles for decades, if not centuries. Normal animals are NPCs, of course, but it is certainly possible in a Heroes Unlimited game for the animal to be an intelligent mutant, in which case he may be a player character, as well. Such mutants will not typically have any human features, so role-playing one would be a challenge, but some players may be interested in doing so.

Partners

A Stage Magician character is limited to one Partner. Any more than that tends to lead to "too many cooks in the kitchen" syndrome. However, for those two, there are benefits to working with a Partner. Both Partners combine their ingenuity and talent,

which allows each to gain the same power emulations, but they also gain an additional bonus emulation each level, for a minimum of 2 per level. The new emulations are gained whenever the first Partner reaches a new level; e.g. new emulations are gained when either Partner reaches 2nd level, but no additional emulations are gained until one of them reaches 3rd level. If one Partner ever exceeds the other's level by more than one, the partnership ends (for example, if one Partner reaches 5th level before the second one reaches 4th level). In such a case, the more experienced Partner has "outgrown" the partnership. The two may still be friends and even work together, but they no longer receive the benefits of partnership, in game terms. At the Game Master's option, the partnership may be restored if the less experienced Partner "catches up" in experience.



Assistant

Unlike Partners, a Stage Magician may have numerous Assistants. The Assistant is the Stage Magician's version of the Minor Hero Category from Powers Unlimited Two. The Assistant must be at least one level lower than the player character Stage Magician to start (so a Stage Magician may not have any Assistants until at least 2nd level). The Assistant may only learn emulations already known by the Magician, and he does not provide any bonus emulations. For NPC Assistants, no more than one or two attributes should be higher than those of the player character Magician. Most often, this will be P.B. ("Please watch as I saw this beautiful woman in half!"), but it can be any. Player character Assistants are not so limited in their attributes, but are still considered to be a Minor Hero, and must follow the rules of that Power Category.

Apprentice

A Stage Magician may have up to three Apprentices at one time. Any more than that, and it is too difficult to properly teach them all. An Apprentice must start at 1st level. Note that a 1st level Stage Magician is not an Apprentice unless he wishes to be; even at 1st level, the Stage Magician character is plenty capable of performing (and fighting crime) on his own. Those individuals who do apprentice themselves to a mentor gain 1D6 emulations per level rather than 1D4, but they are limited to those known by the mentor. A character may only serve as an Apprentice for the first 3 levels of experience. He must strike out on his own by 4th level, though he can leave earlier. Whenever the Apprentice does leave his mentor, he stops receiving 1D6 emulations per level and reverts to the normal 1D4, of course. Mentors must be at least 4th level themselves to take on Apprentices (but they are often much higher). Mentors receive no mechanical bonuses for taking on Apprentices, but they do receive prestige from their peers, and teaching pupils is the sign of a Stage Magician who has mastered his craft.

Animals

Animals trained to perform on stage (or on the streets, as the case may be) include birds, rabbits, dogs, and big cats. One type of animal may be chosen at the cost of one power emulation (except rabbits, which are free). The cost represents the training time, though the Stage Magician may have numerous trained individuals of the same animal type without additional cost; i.e. whether one bird or a flock, it still costs one power emulation. If the Stage Magician's companion is a mutant animal, there is no emulation cost, as the intelligent creature is much easier to train. Of course, the mutant will have its own personality and desires, so it may or may not always do what it's supposed to. The Magician is limited only by the number of animals he can reasonably care for. This is particularly true of big cats; birds, rabbits and dogs might be fine in an urban apartment, but a tiger is certainly not! Dogs and big cats may engage in combat, though Magicians are typically wary of endangering a valuable, highly trained (and possibly rare) animal. Birds do not engage in combat with humans, though they are useful for carrying messages. Rabbits can't be trained for much practical use, though they might gnaw through a rope. Note that an animal is required for use of the Animal Metamorphosis power emulation.

Animal Stats (adapted from *Monsters & Animals*, 2nd Edition, for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®):

Rabbits: Hit Points & S.D.C. combined: 2D4. Attacks per Melee: 2. Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +5 to dodge. Damage: One point, but only if frightened and attempting to escape (may also gnaw through ropes, cloth, etc.). Speed: 25, and can reach a speed of 50 in bursts of up to 2D4 minutes. Natural Abilities: Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), prowl 65%, can leap 3 feet (0.9 m) high and 12 feet (3.6 m) long.

Birds: Hit Points & S.D.C. combined: 1D6. Attacks per Melee: 2. Bonuses: +5 to dodge. Damage: One point, but generally only occurs in tight spaces when the bird is trying to fly away or when it's thrown in someone's face. Speed: 70 flying or 2 running.

Dogs: Hit Points: 2D6, S.D.C. 3D6. Attacks per Melee: 2. Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +3 to strike, +4 to dodge, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor. Damage: Bite does 1D6+1 points of damage. Speed: 50. Natural Abilities: Nightvision 30 feet (9 m), prowl 45%, track by smell 75%, swim 65%, can leap 3 feet (0.9 m) high and 6 feet (1.8 m) long, and can perform a leaping pounce.

Leopards: Hit Points: 4D6+10, S.D.C. 3D6+16. Attacks per Melee: 3. Bonuses: +4 on initiative, +5 to strike, +3 to parry, +4 to dodge, and +4 to save vs Horror Factor. Damage: Bite does 1D6+2 points of damage, claws do 2D4+4 points of damage. Speed: 22, with spurts of speed up to 50 for 1D4 minutes. Natural Abilities: Nightvision 600 feet (183 m), climb 90%, prowl 90%, track by smell or sight 50%, exceptional hearing and eyesight, can leap 12 feet (3.6 m) high and 40 feet (12.2 m) long, and can perform a leaping pounce.

Tigers: Hit Points: 4D6+24, S.D.C. 4D6+30. Attacks per Melee: 4. Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +5 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, and +7 to save vs Horror Factor. Damage: Bite does 2D6+2 points of damage, claws do 2D6+8 points of damage. Speed: 22, but can reach speeds of 50 for short bursts. Natural Abilities: Nightvision 400 feet (122 m), climb 50%, swim 80%, prowl 70%, track by smell or sight 60%, can leap 15 feet (4.6 m) high and 30 feet (9 m) long, and can perform a leaping pounce.

New Special Skills

(Automatic for All Stage Magicians)

Ambidexterity (adapted from *Rifts*® *Lone Star*™, page 97): The character can use both hands with equal skill and coordination. Automatically gets the Paired Weapons skill, add one additional attack per melee round, +10% to Climbing skill, and +5% to the Pick Locks, Pick Pockets, Palming, and Concealment skills.

Pyrotechnics: Essentially a “civilian” Demolitions skill. The character is knowledgeable in the safe use of fireworks and the like in stage shows and public performances, including the ability to make such devices himself. Though not the primary purpose of the skill, the character can use it for small scale demolitions, such as blowing open door locks (basic locks, not safes). Base Skill: 50% +5% per level of experience. (The Stage Magician receives Pyrotechnics as a standard skill, but for those Game Masters who wish to allow other characters to have it, it should be considered a skill in the Technical category.)

New Special Gimmicks

1. Cape: The traditional magician’s cape typically contains numerous small pockets and secret panels for concealment of various items. If used as a weapon, the cape is +2 to entangle. **Cost:** A basic cape can cost anywhere from \$50 to \$5,000 or more (expensive fabrics, elaborate embroidery, jeweled designs, etc.). Add \$25 for each pocket/compartment. **Damage:** 1D4 if weighted, otherwise none.

2. Entangling Rings: Generally used like rope or handcuffs, but with more flair. In combat, rings are +2 to entangle and do

no damage. Entangling rings have 30 S.D.C., which must be depleted to break free. They can be automatically broken at the cost of one attack by characters with a normal P.S. of 28 or higher, Superhuman P.S. of 23 or higher, or Supernatural P.S. of 18 or higher. Even if the rings are broken, the entangled victim still loses initiative. **Cost:** \$10 each.

3. “Hypnotic” Coin or Pocket Watch: A shiny object on a chain used with the Hypnotic Suggestion emulation. Victims receive a -1 penalty to their save vs Hypnotic Suggestion when the coin/watch is used. **Cost:** Essentially free for an ordinary coin; \$20 for a simple watch. If desired, custom made or elaborate coins or watches may be acquired for hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

4. Playing Cards: Modified playing cards utilized for various means, such as a weapon, tracking, surveillance or adhesive device. Razor-edged cards may be used in combat as melee or thrown weapons, or as simple cutting tools. Tracer cards contain a concealed tracer bug, as described on page 344 of HU2. Microphone cards contain a concealed audio mike, equivalent to the wireless microphone described on page 344 of HU2. Still and video camera cards are equivalent to the mini-telephoto document camera and video wall mount described on page 345 of HU2. Adhesive cards can have a surprising variety of uses, such as sticking a person’s fingers together, jamming the mechanisms of a firearm, sticking a foot to the floor, sealing a pouch, box or door shut, and similar. Removing the adhesive card takes 1D4 actions, and the victim loses initiative. **Cost:** About \$2 or \$3 for a deck of cards, but specific modifications each have their own costs: Razor card: \$5 each (Damage: 1D4, melee or thrown). Tracer card: \$400 each. Microphone card: \$600 each. Camera card: \$400 each for still, \$3,500 each for video. Adhesive card: \$2 each.

5. Scarf: The classic long magician’s scarf, which may be used as a whip, lasso or bola. The Magician is +4 to strike, entangle or disarm on the initial attack with the scarf; only normal bonuses apply after that. **Cost:** \$5 for a simple scarf to \$200 or more for exotic fabrics with elaborate designs. **Damage:** 1D4 if weighted; otherwise none.

6. Sword Cane: An elegant, but concealed weapon. The cane may also have up to six compartments for concealing very small items (lock picks, a single bullet, etc.). **Cost:** \$200 for a basic version; antique or custom versions made with master craftsmanship may cost hundreds or thousands of dollars. Add \$50 for each secret compartment. The Magician may also have a secret locking mechanism in his sword cane to prevent others from using it (or at least the sword blade) against him. Add \$100 to the cost for the locking mechanism. **Damage:** 2D6 damage as a sword, 1D6 used as a blunt cane.

7. Top Hat or Turban: Classic magician’s headgear which may contain up to four secret compartments. **Cost:** \$50 for a basic top hat, or \$20 for a simple turban. Custom or versions made from exotic materials may cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Add \$20 for each secret compartment. “Helmet” models are also available, with armor plating concealed in the hat or turban (only applies to attacks to the head; A.R. 12, S.D.C. 25). Add \$100 to the cost for the helmet version.

8. Weighted Wand: Essentially a fancy club or nightstick. The wand may also contain up to four secret compartments, like the sword cane. In lieu of empty compartments, the Magician

may elect to use the wand as a means to spray mace, tear gas, smoke or the like, with effects as described in the equipment section of the **Heroes Unlimited™ RPG**. **Cost:** \$10 for a basic wand; hundreds or thousands for custom, elaborate versions. Add \$50 for each secret compartment, or \$75 for each spray mechanism. Cost of spray substances is as described in HU2. **Damage:** 2D6.

Silent Saint

A Short Story Set in Heroes Unlimited™

By Frederic Christie

Chapter 1

People don't notice me.

I know what you must be thinking. "Now, Marty," you say, "Marty Goldstein, surely *someone* must have noticed you in your life."

Sure, sure, sure. That's not my point. People notice me, but they don't *notice me*.

I walk down the streets of Manhattan eating a jumbo dog with the relish and the mustard (all kosher, of course), and I spill a bit on my leather shoe and some lady's Pomeranian. No one cares.

Case in point. When I was in high school, my friends (few of those I had) dared me to go into the girls' locker room. After a little pushing of a verbal and a physical variety, I agreed. I forgot when I went in that the girls' volleyball team got in a bit earlier than everyone else. I suddenly hear giggling down the hall. There's only one exit. So I hide in a tall locker. Now, there must be twenty beautiful blondes and brunettes and redheads within breathing distance of me. They go about their business, and (God help me) I feel myself being aroused. Still no one notices. My breathing gets hot and fast. Someone asks out loud if there's a draft. They leave, and after checking to make sure I didn't have a heart attack, I leave too.

Heck, I was the friggin' *quarterback* of my school's football team. Did that do anything for me? No. I throw a touchdown pass, and the article in the newspaper reads, "Excellent Pass Intercepted by Star Receiver." Thanks.

Today I'm walking to work. I like to walk through my city. New York, New York. It gives me a sense of perspective. Not one eye looks at me, not even to say "Hey, nice shirt!" or a surreptitious glance at my bagel with horseradish and cream cheese. By now, I don't mind. It's nice to not have your mind cluttered with a lot of activity.

Suddenly, the early morning traffic is interrupted by the crunching of concrete and explosions.

It's actually not that bad. I'm used to it. All these superheroes and super villains. Pfaw!

Whenever I think that, I neglect to remember that I'm one of them.

Whatever's coming up looks like someone welded a tank onto a rototiller. The churning blades rumbled through concrete. Some hoodlums dressed in all sorts of garish outfits hooted.

"Fear us, Manhattan! For we got *Shredder Panzer!*"

Then from above, a beautiful woman with one blue wing fell. She carried a blue hammer, gleaming in the young sunlight. She smashed onto the tank over and over, flying away from the panicking counter-fire. Bursts of magnesium filled the air as the tracer fire failed miserably to track her motions. Everyone hit the deck, but I was already late to work. I couldn't afford it. I kept walking forward. A bullet passed, must have been five feet (about a meter and a half, for those of you who like metric), in front of me.

All right, I ducked a little bit.

One of the geniuses yelled, "Fire over there!" Apparently they were trying to get Half Fallen (the heroine) to try to stop the casualties so she'd stop smashing their tank. The massive turret fired, the shell crashing a few feet to my left.

I tried moving forward, but I can't outrun a shell under normal conditions. So I got thrown like a soccer ball.

Half Fallen landed in front of me. "Are you all right? Sir?!" I just realized that I was the only person who was hit.

"Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine."

"That was a direct hit. How did you survi..."

More whirring of a turret, more sounds of combustion from the mechanical juggernaut, and an explosion. Half Fallen looked straight back, betraying only the slightest hint of fear, but knowing full well she was probably going to die. Her powers were to fly, hit hard and make force weapons and constructs, not get hit by tank shells.

I rolled my eyes. The turret recoiled as if it were one of those little boxing robot toys, and the shell inside it exploded. The top ripped off and the spinning tillers buckled, clashing into each other and shattering. The villains (I later found out they were the "Mayhem Bonus Army") ran from the crumpling vehicle, but still couldn't escape the concussion from the tank starting to intermittently self-destruct, and were knocked senseless.

"How did that...? That was a miracle!"

I stood up and brushed myself off, as she stood there dazed. "Miracles do happen sometimes." I looked around for my bagel. All I found was smeared cream cheese. I grumbled and kept walking to work.



DUDLEY09

I was running by the time I reached the Times building. Huffing and puffing, I ran into the elevator and came up to the Metro floor. I was expecting my boss to wring my neck. The door opened and I said, "I can explain..."

Nothing. People typing away. An inbox with papers rising far above the edges of the box, filled to the brim even before noon. I shrugged. No point in apologizing, I guessed. So being easily forgettable helps me sometimes.

As I went to my desk, Earl came around. Earl was one of those guys who could notice a smudge on your carpet underneath a rug if that smudge could get him in good with the boss. And I thought I was home clear.

"Whoa there, Mart! Either you were invisible or you were in the bathroom... or you're late." In a faux-friendly manner, he patted my back. "Man, I heard the Mayhem Bonus Army hit where you normally walk. Is that true?"

"Yeah, Half Fallen took care of it."

"But I heard..."

"Well, I was there, Earl. You're a press man. The first thing you need to know is: Never trust the press."

I managed to distance myself from the tapeworm and get into my office. An incoming stack higher than the pancakes of my Nana's Friday breakfast, and an interview with the Mayor instead of a lunch break... I had work to do. I steadied myself, looked at my title ("Marty Goldstein: Metro Editor"), smiled, sighed, and got to work. I did love my job.

After I did some clerical stuff and went over Earl's articles (give him one thing: he knew how to write), I gathered my pen and pad, put them into my briefcase, called up the front desk and told them to send an audio crew, headed to the break room and warmed up some macaroni and cheese and drank a Diet Pepsi, straightened my corduroy slacks and nice wool shirt, took a deep breath, and gathered my thoughts.

Mayor Wallace was a dyed-in-the-wool conservative: tough on crime, tough on the welfare state, tough on special interests, tough like bad beef jerky. People called him "Tough Wally." His attitude towards the press was notoriously confrontational. He always tried to appeal to what he called "the little guy" instead of the big city liberals running the media.

But he always had time to interview me. All the candidates had time to interview me. I helped bring down a Colorado State Senator; half of the stuff I used was in interviews I gave with him. It was how I got a job at the New York Times. And yet, no candidate was afraid of me.

I went to the elevator, met the crew, got into a company car, and headed off. I looked at my city.

A tingling at the base of my neck and spine went off. Some would call it my danger sense; me, I called it a cramp I spent thousands of dollars rubbing down with all sorts of lotions. It hurt more than rheumatism. Something was very wrong. There was a palpable sense of danger throbbing in the air.

We arrived at City Hall and were escorted by the Mayor's rough-necked types. Rumors were they were cybernetically modified. Or maybe juiced up on designer drugs. Or maybe just piles of inhuman muscle. Whatever they were, no one liked them.

"Well, Marty! Good to see you."

"Glad to see you too, Mayor Wallace. Are you okay if this interview's recorded?"

"Oh, come on, Goldstein. I've done this for longer than you have. Why, in Wisconsin..."

The audio guys set up a body mic and let him get comfortable.

"All right, Mayor. The first topic of business is your attempt to, in your words, 'clean the streets of the homeless.' You say they are, quote, 'drug dealers, doers, and stealers, and all manner of bad guys.' What do you say to civil libertarians who call this a violation of human rights?"

"Listen, son. No one gave them the right to lower property values and scare people. And before you say it: I am not a racist, I don't want to dump them off in Queens or Harlem either. I just want them out of my city. We give them a hundred dollars and a bus ride to cities that say that they need good workers. They're met by unemployment agents and eager employers. Even fancy liberals should like this program."

That's weird. Most employers don't want to hire bums, either in New York or anywhere else. Who would be hiring these guys?

"All right, Mayor. The second topic of discussion has been the scandal wherein a criminal about to be transferred to another jurisdiction for an execution was ritually murdered with Satanic overtones. Can you..."

"Oh, come on, Marty. You know I'm not going to give you a response that you haven't heard elsewhere – and don't you put that quote in your story. But I will explain myself a little bit better because I like you, bleeding heart and all. One: I categorically deny any involvement from this office in such affairs. There is a departmental review ongoing, and all conclusions will be released as they are found. I mean, come on, my biggest constituency is other God-fearing Christians. You think I want Satanic sacrifices in my prisons? Two: The victim in question, much as it may hurt some people to say it, was a filthy bastard who deserved to fry. Sending him off to Hell a day early isn't going to cause any wet eyes at this office. We're too busy dabbing our tears from the thirteen victims that Pike-Stab Pete killed in New York and the three new bodies found in Texas. There is no broader pattern here, just a few bad apples, hopefully not involved with the Department of Corrections."

Now *that* was like a breath of bad air in a minty room. Why did he deny any broader pattern? No mainstream critic made allegations that there were more crimes of this sort. Then again, in a world where super villains write the front page stories, I guess crackpots are just as reliable as anyone else.

"Finally, Mayor. Turning to your comments on what you call the 'parahuman' question. Could you more fully explain your position on super powers?"

"People may be closing their eyes, but there is an anti-hero backlash in this country, Marty. Look at Century Station: Some of the finest superheroes in the country, some of the angriest citizens in the country. I think that's what you statisticians out there call a 'positive correlation.' And I think that I'm trying to keep my mind open and look at both sides. I see that many parahumans are upstanding members of the community. Many of them are in fact paragons of their field, masters of various

arts. Heck, as a gun-toting conservative, I can't deny the right of Dr. Panther to own firearms and bring down crooks who are threatening this city. All we want is some notion of what abilities each superhero has. None of them has to tell us anything about their private lives or identities, if they have any; it's none of our business what goes on in their homes. But they have public personae. Bear in mind, Marty, that I can't sue you for defamation a quarter as easy as some nickel-and-dime redneck can, because I am a public figure. So if one volunteers to be a public figure, one should be answerable to the public, it seems to me. The citizens get to sleep safer knowing that the abilities of the superheroes (and villains) they have are being tracked. Scientists get to understand what makes these parahumans tick, and that could ease concerns of those like the Reverend Parshaw, not to mention folks like Warden Harker. And superhumans? Why, let's say that a shapeshifter impersonates one of 'em. We can tell with their precise 'resonance signature,' as my tech boys call it, that they're innocent and let 'em off, saving them and the taxpayers time and money. Let's say that one of their powers is stolen. We can figure out who took it. And on and on. I just can't see any problem with this. Yeah, some people have to lose some to gain more: that's what a compromise means."

I nodded. "Well, those were all the issues we wanted to cover, Mayor. In fact..."

"I got something else for you, Marty. And you'll love this scoop. You know Sir Nemesis?"

During the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Sir Nemesis used his fastidious physical training to lead a revolution against the corrupt Communist rulers that he called "The Scorching Fist." Once in power, he made himself a virtual dictator, instituted a pseudo-feudal army replete with high-flying Codes of Chivalry, and began work on hideous experiments, pouring himself into forbidden magic. He even exposed himself to cosmic flame, but the backlash hideously burnt his body. A Rabbi named Woel was kidnapped by him and forced to do some experimental treatment to save Nemesis' life.

"You see, Sir Nemesis recently tried to take over a Dakota Senator with a mind control device. You probably heard that the dragon hero Karhal took 'im down, made one of his short little comments, then left. But Sir Nemesis got away... and straight into the hands of some Minutemen agents I had sent."

I dropped my pen. He had captured one of the foremost super villains of the planet. The Magnificent Seven, Dr. Panther, Squidboy, the Centurions, the Schwa and the Z-Omegas had all failed to get him, almost losing portions of their membership and still failing to do anything besides inflict grievous injuries. Even Karhal, about as strong as Alpha Prime, would lose about as often as he won.

How did this Mayor succeed where they failed?

As I walked out, I said, "Oh, by the way, nice haircut, Mr. Mayor."

He looked uncomfortable. "Why, thank you. I just wish they hadn't messed up and hit this spot."

* * *

I dropped by the Staff Editor, Mr. Veldengaard's, desk, and waited for about a minute. To think I was holding onto the scoop of the year and...

"Oh, hi Marty! Sorry I didn't notice you. You're always so quiet. What can I do for you? How did the interview go?"

"This is how it went." I put the folder down and pointed to my copy, the one with the bombshell highlighted.

He read through it like a blizzard falls in Maine: fast and over and over. "Oh... wow. I knew I didn't make a mistake putting you on the Metro desk, Marty! I don't know how you do it, but this is front page news. I can just see this... Now, we'll have to be careful. I don't want you editing this; give you some plausible deniability in case something gets poorly worded. This version is great, but our legal team will need to pick through this with a fine-toothed comb. But I can just see it now..."

He had said this before when I got the scoops (like when I found the evidence that the DA admitted publicly was key to even indicting Pike-Stab Pete), and I was still in Metro. I sighed. He'd get dreamy and pretty much forget I got it for him. But I still had to admire the man. Most successful people in this world don't do that, don't let their dreams take hold and throttle every front page to a thing of beauty. He immediately got to work, making call after call.

I couldn't resist putting a Post-It on his desk saying, "Remember me. - Marty." Hey, it was worth a shot.

* * *

"How many times do I have to tell you, Marty?! Marty, you have to remember: The glory, it is not for you. Your job is to get in and - BAM! - fix the problem. Upon your back the world rests."

That was Rabbi Woel. Yes, the Rabbi Woel captured by Sir Nemesis. I was only two degrees removed from Nemesis. Small world.

"Rabbi, I know I'm not supposed to take credit, but come on! This was the scoop of the year, given to me on a silver platter because of my skills. Not the powers God gave me, my own charisma, my brains, my journalistic skill. Don't I deserve something for it?"

"God has given us all a path, little one. He gave you your charisma, your brains, your journalistic whatzit. You've been given a special path. Let me tell you this again."

"Rabbi..."

"Hush! At all times, there are 36 pure Tzaddikim. Saints of learning, reason and good, they follow God's Word and are faithful and loving. The very contemplation of their acts, seemingly miraculous, is a way to reaffirm all of our faith. There are also lesser Tzaddikim at all times, including one who is supposed to capture each generation's pulse. You are that Tzaddik, Marty. The one who is the breath and soul of this generation. This is a world where there are many Tzaddik and many Rasha, people like... Sir Nemesis." Every time he said that name, a look in his eyes of some kind of combination of fear and respect and hate always flashed. It was clear that they had had many skirmishes, and each had let the other live at least once.

"I understand that. And I understand that, for reasons only God alone knows, I have been granted a mist that keeps me unimportant and powers that make me important."

"Then what is the problem?!"

"It's just... I would like to finally amount to something."

The Rabbi put his arm around my shoulder. "You already do. You amount to far more than you know. Already this morning, you saved an innocent life and taught a woman who had lost her faith that miracles can happen. Not to mention the business with the newspaper, huh? Marty, my boychick, we do the right thing because God sees it and smiles, not because of any person who does the same."

"But Rabbi, don't you see the problems with it? Fine, me wanting some glory may be selfish, but now the media will assume that Half Fallen did some trick to win the day and everyone will be expecting her to do something she can't. It'll get her in trouble, in danger. Don't people have the right to know what really happened?"

"There are costs to everything, Marty. Your power gives you the ultimate defense: No one thinks you're a threat. And I have a feeling that you will be needing it soon."

At that moment, the roof shattered.

Chapter 2

As the stone of the temple crumbled, down came what looked like a man. But no man had that skin of black marble, that breath of sulfur and acid, those eyes of flame.

"I thought demons like you couldn't enter consecrated ground!"

"That's churches, Rabbi. Synagogues are fair game." The creature laughed hideously.

"Why you little..." The Rabbi chanted in Hebrew. A white ring appeared on the creature and threw it out through the door. "We were worshiping the God of Moses and Abraham before the Christians were in short pants! You insolent thing!"

The Rabbi's Kabbalistic powers were something to be feared. A man who could restore a human burnt by cosmic flame could do much else under Heaven.

"Marty! There's never only one cockroach. Find the rest and break them!"

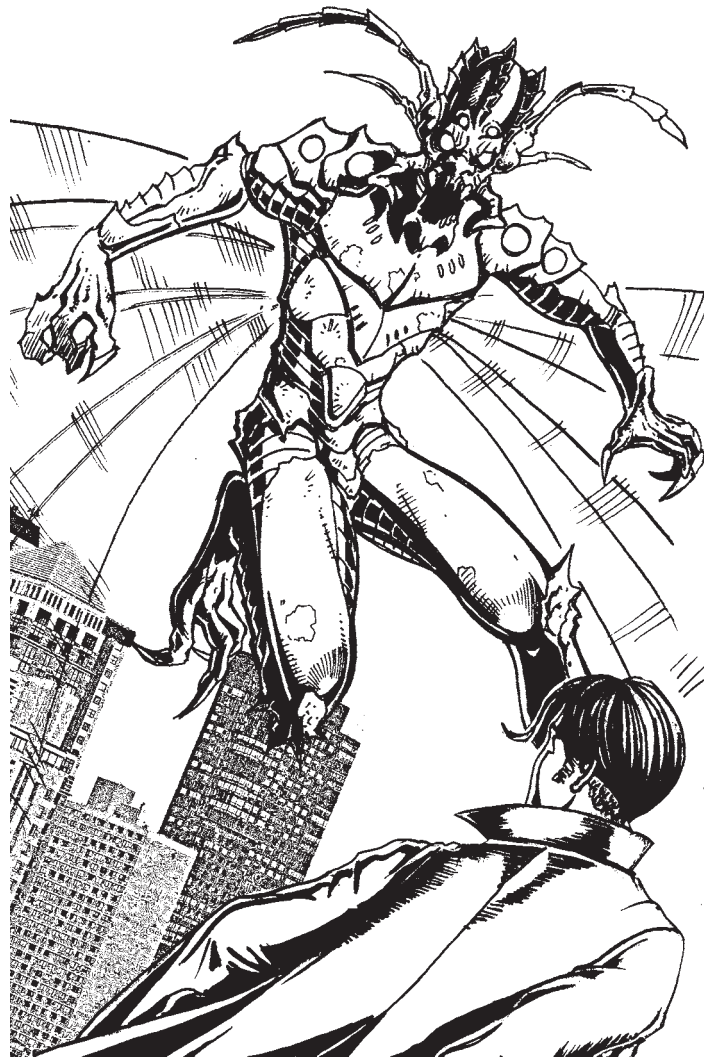
I came out through the rear door. Rabbi Woel had everything under control on his end. I just hoped everything would be as easy on mine. I looked about. Where could they have gone...

Then I saw something, some activity in a dumpster. Most New Yorkers would dismiss it as some skels dumpster diving, but I noticed that bananas were leaving the trash can, as were some plenty comfortable boxes. Not to mention the dumpster was actually shaking, like the dump truck was picking it up.

"Get the hell out of there!" I yelled as confidently as I could. Demons always bugged me.

A segmented head with antennae, something like a mix between a cockroach and a stag beetle, turned around and looked at me. "Foolisssshh human! You dare challenge Gravewing?! Bah! I don't haaavveee time for this. I must find sustenance! I must find grave soil!" It sniffed in the air. Then it tore the dumpster in half and ran straight over me.

It probably thought it crushed me like an Amtrak train going off the rails, but all it did was knock me down and smudge my nice wool shirt. (In the past, I had worn a blazing red outfit to do my superheroing. The only person who noticed was my Nana. She thought I was gay.)



I stood back up. The thing had sniffed around in the middle of a busy street and taken flight. All eyes were looking up. Fine with me. I was flying up in a moment too. I didn't have time to switch to anything else, but trust me, no one was going to notice. They would think I was some new superhero.

The thing looked back at me. "Huummm?! Stop getting in my way!" From its crushing jaws came a green mist that filled the air around me. Fair enough, it'd block out my ability and make me harder to see.

Suddenly, from behind it came rocket fire and laser blasts, searing the air hot enough to make the distinct, foul stench of ozone rise up. It was the New York City Minutemen, the Mayor's new anti-parahuman law enforcement organization. Each was in a blue exoskeleton with NYPD regalia. The creature reeled, but scarcely seemed fazed. It raised a hand and tossed a great green sphere at the Minutemen seemingly formed out of something that smelled like methane and looked like a human face, and blew them off the building they had situated themselves on.

How did these idiots capture Nemesis? Well, I'd have time to think about it later.

It turned around again, smiling as best it could... until its open mouth was filled with a bolt of white flame. That was one of my favorites. The thing bubbled up, the gasses inside of it from eating so much rotten meat igniting, and it exploded. Chunks flew across the street, bits of meat from under its shell

charred and were strewn onto the buildings, and a hissing cloud of green gas flew into the air.

I went down into the nearest alley, whistling as nonchalantly (and thereby suspiciously) as I could. No one gave me a second look.

* * *

After looking for more demons, I finally went home, taking off my sweaty socks and throwing them into my Laundromat. I took out some leftover chicken fried rice and Mongolian beef and ate with chopsticks, dropping one piece of beef onto my couch and cursing a bit.

The news was full of stories about my scoop (they mentioned me once – a new record!), and then the sudden rash of demon attacks that had plagued the city. Wall and Street had been hurt pretty badly in the fighting (the heroes, not the street itself). Half Fallen had recuperated fairly well and beaten some kind of bird demon. The Minutemen had generally disgraced themselves, though they did manage to save Wall and Street. There were cell-phone clips of them being tossed around like rag dolls by a Gargoyle. Then they came around to my demon.

“Narcis Valiant alleged that he fired the blast that destroyed the monster. No one could quite see the hero.” A black woman was being interviewed. “He was too fast for me to see!” An Asian man was next. “That *youki*... demon was covered in what must have been foul ki... I mean, bad gas.” Back to the anchor. “Though eyewitness accounts do not match Valiant’s profile, and Valiant has refused to replicate the ability used to destroy the creature, authorities are at a loss as to who else could have slain the monster. One thing is for sure, though: Whoever did kill the thing that witnesses are referring to as ‘the Devil Roach,’ his or her skills will be needed by the city.”

I almost threw the remote. That smug, vain, blond-haired, blue-eyed idiot was stealing credit from me too! All for the girls and glamor. He could care less about the innocent people his attention-hogging, *prima donna* shtick would hurt.

“Thank you, Cindy. The Mayor released a statement saying that this was the best evidence for more investment into the Minutemen, who he said were constrained by poor equipment and bad training mandated by stingy city officials. He also continued to propose his program for ability identification and ‘resonance monitoring’ of the known parahumans of this city. For a round table discussion, we have...”

I turned the channel to Jeopardy. But something didn’t sit right with me. It was all too easy. No one was even killed. It may have been a miracle.

Or it may have been something far worse.

* * *

Reporters are taught to ask not just the questions (Why, When, Where, What, Who, How) but also to see the patterns. And something wasn’t fitting here. I couldn’t quite put my finger on it yet, but that feeling in the back of my neck was getting worse.

In the morning, I called Veldengaard and told him I was going to be doing some investigative journalism of my own. At least he remembered what I did yesterday. He was on Cloud Nine.

“Marty, you can do anything you want today. We beat everyone to the Nemesis story! Keep dredging stuff like that and you may be replacing me at this desk one day.”

I sat there bleary eyed in my boxers. Today was Wednesday. Every day was like this. I would work from nine to five, then visit the Rabbi and hit the streets. I had brought down drug cartels, corrupt politicians and serial murderers, and still less than a thousand people in the world would even remember my name.

I looked at my body in the mirror. I was nothing to write home about. Nana always told me I had nice features, but she’s Nana. I had a sad sucker face, wimpy-looking arms, wimpy-looking legs... at least my upper body was rather nicely defined. I looked like Woody Allen. My last girlfriend dumped me for a construction worker. (Don’t you go and think Marty Goldstein is a loser, now. I dumped the three ones before her.) My high school glory wasn’t behind me, though: I didn’t have an ounce of fat on me.

I guess I must have got my body from my dad. He was a great man, a doctor and scientist who in his brief time on Earth was praised as the next Jonas Salk. But then his life was taken, when I was a very young boy, by some *momzer* supervillain.

The only days I had to meet new people (people who probably wouldn’t remember me unless I gave them a call) were my Sabbath day, Friday, and a few weekends here and there when I got sick of the heroing thing. And when I wasn’t working on Fridays I’d go to temple or eat with Mom, or Nana. Speaking of, I had a message from her.

“Marty Ruben Goldstein! You didn’t call me last night! We had dinner plans to work on for this weekend. Well, I understand, son. You have your big journalist job to deal with, with your Berkeley degree. Just give me a call sometime before Friday, all right?”

I yawned and got dressed. Today I was going to look nice: black pants, black jacket, red shirt, black tie, the works. I put on my best cologne. And I headed onto the streets.

Something was coming together in my head, after a miserable night. Who was strong enough to summon demons of that caliber? How could the Minutemen beat a villain who had threatened the world at least thrice and yet not beat a Gargoyle, among the lowest of demons? Why the sacrifice of Pike-Stab Pete? Why the registration? Where was all this going and who was behind it?

What was going on?

I decided to visit the Internal Affairs Bureau first. “They might have something,” I reasoned. I walked into the nearest precinct, got directions to IAB, and went there. Behind the desk was a lazy-looking cop, probably reassigned to desk duty for bad behavior.

“Hello.”

The guy flipped his paper, then said, “How can I help you?”

“My name is Marty Goldstein, and...”

“Marty Goldstein? New York Times Marty Goldstein?”

“Yeah.”

“I think they edit you too much.”

“What?!”

“They edit you too much. I can tell your stories that no one edits and they’re good. The other ones, I can hear you, but it’s

like you're being drowned out and you're screaming to be heard."

"Oh. Well, maybe you can help me with that. You see, I'm investigating Pike-Stab Pete, and..."

"You understand I can only give you publicly available evidence."

"Sure."

The guy went into the back room, found some files (obviously freshly made), and dumped the whole box in front of me. A number of folders were marked "Confidential." He got back to reading his newspaper.

I looked through everything. There was a cover-up here. There had been a bunch of these; the only reason the Pike-Stab case managed to break through the wall of silence was because it was a Death Row transfer, and those get watched by the media. The rest had been shuffled under the table like dust bunnies. This was incredible: I had two scoops in a row.

I looked up to the TV, filled with static and poorly colored, and saw the percentages of known parahumans profiled. 80% had submitted to the procedure. They probably were as scared as anyone else of the backlash that would come from refusal. A few well-known ones were openly refusing the procedure and had given press releases, though. There was also a story of the Minutemen securing more funding (given their success at beating Nemesis), and purchasing experimental technology from a company called Unity Inc.

I looked back at the files and saw something. And the pieces all fit together. I looked through my wallet.

Sergeant Orhol was recently hired from Bulgaria. He was a well-known policeman who managed to reform the Bulgarian prisons to be both more humane and more effective, reducing overcrowding and cutting back on torture. He was now facing charges of covering up or even facilitating the rituals.

But there was no Sergeant Orhol. Followers of the news would know that he had been killed in a scuffle three months ago. This was a fake. And a notorious fake too.

Looking at a picture given me a long time ago, when Woel and Sir Nemesis were still friends, I saw the man calling himself Sergeant Orhol. It was in fact Colonel Maitren Arkhon, Sir Nemesis' most faithful (and most secret) follower.

I had noticed the Mayor's haircut. That Dakota Senator also had a drastic hairstyle change right before he was taken over by Sir Nemesis. The change of haircut was to hide the fact that there was a bald spot where the mind-control chip was installed.

Sir Nemesis never *wanted* Dakota. He wanted to control the Mayor of New York.

And those sacrifices were part of his plan: to trade human lives for demon ones in this world.

But why the registration? And what was with the homeless men and women? They could have been more sacrificial bait or perhaps slave workers. Or maybe it was another red herring to throw me and anyone else off the path.

In the background: "Astronomers continue to wonder about the gravity spike that seems to have approached the planet then stop. 'It behaves like any other object, yet we can't see it. It might be some exotic form of dark matter.'"

That tingling at the base of my spine... it told me that whatever was happening would culminate tonight.

Which meant I needed to be ready. And I had a strange feeling that being easy to pass over would finally be a virtue.

I smiled at the policeman and returned the files. "You've been more helpful than you know."

"Just doing my job. For once."

Next order of business: Find a patsy to cover for me. And I had the perfect man.

* * *

"Narcis Valiant, the Prince of Pride, has once again saved the day!" Narcis was preening himself in front of some TV cameras to get himself more coverage. He was a tall, immaculately chiseled man with a jaw that you could hang a coat off of. Blond hair, tanned skin and blue eyes met the viewer with a cocky grin. His costume was a green outfit with a thin, detachable yellow cape.

"Narcis, what do you say to allegations of..."

"Allegations?! Bah! At this point, my fair lady, I must bid you adieu." He kissed the hand of the reporter, flung his silk whip into the air to grab onto a lamppost, and began to head away.

He must have been as surprised as she had been when, after a few swings and away from any observers, the surface on which his whip was stuck was melted away.

He fell down and rubbed his posterior. "Now, listen, whoever you..."

I didn't have time for games. Cold rushed from my body outwards, filling the whole alley with an instant fog. I walked from behind cover, the fog masking my entire body.

"You. You... I can explain."

"Save it. Narcis Prince, you're an egomaniacal, attention-craving, show-stealing exhibitionist. You have some acrobatic skill and a few good tricks to make yourself look good, and impeccable timing. And for once, that's exactly what you'll need to finally do some good." I held up my hand. A rush of wind blew off his mask. He rushed behind to get it, moving fast... but not fast enough. The flash of the camera went off.

"Listen! I don't get any attention at work, at school... I just want people to finally notice me. Please don't reveal my identity..." He was a handsome boy, yet he had an aura not at all like his flamboyant persona. Seeing him made me realize just how silly I had been too, being jealous of what was just a scared, lonely little kid who was actually managing to do some good in the world rather than shooting up smack or something.

"Narcis. I don't care about your identity. Trust me, I get the idea that you don't get enough attention. I'm a single Jewish man in his thirties who works the Metro desk, for Pete's sake. And I want to help you. Every generation, there is a new tzaddik, a saint who will protect the world and cause the faithfulness of God to fill others. Each of these tzaddiks, and there are hundreds all over the world of varying degrees of righteousness, are silent saints whose unknown and unloved actions support the world. We do the right thing because it's worth it to do things right, Narcis, not because other people are watching and pointing their cameras. Being a superhero is a rare privilege to

be such a tzaddik. And maybe no one will notice you, maybe no one will care what you did, but you will, and God will, and that's all that matters." I flung three hundred dollars at him. "If you want to be a hero, tonight's going to be your time. All I need you to do is cover for me and look like you're doing the things I'm doing. The longer you can do that, the better you can help me... and hopefully, the world."

Narcis said, "Doesn't that mean that I'll be hogging the lime-light from you?"

I chuckled, more to myself than to Narcis. "Trust me, Narcis, the limelight isn't the best place to be when you're trying to fight an enemy in the shadows."

* * *

It might just be time to explain my powers.

I don't quite know how they work. I don't know if they come from within me or are granted from God (though the former is basically the latter).

What I do know is that there is a veil around me that prevents others in most situations from viewing me as important, dangerous, scary or impressive in any respect. Even cameras seem to view me as unimportant, and the people reviewing those cameras will never think of me as a serious problem. There's limits, of course: If I tap-danced naked on the White House lawn with a sign saying "Kill the President," Secret Service would notice. But as long as I'm behaving remotely normally, or if my identity is questionable, I don't leave a trace.

The souls of righteous men speak to me, giving me insights. It helps both as a reporter and as a superhero. But more importantly, the power of righteousness fills my body. I can fly faster than the greatest winds, throw blasts stronger than the magic of any demon, heal others with the power, create shields to protect myself, enhance my strength and speed, create weapons, secure momentary blessings... it's a powerful ability that has a variety of facets. But my power is only as strong as my faith, and my faith has been taking some blows recently.

I went to my temple, praying all the way. "Oh ye Lord, only Lord, of whose name I am forbidden to speak lest I be struck down with celestial lightning, I ask not for forgiveness nor for guidance. I do not wish anything upon you. I simply wish to tell you, Lord of my people, that tonight I think you shall be proud of me. My faith is telling me to be a silent saint, that I must not be known lest the forces of evil swell over me like a tide over an unprepared levee. I thank you, Lord."

When my prayer was done, I felt strangely at peace. For others the glory; tonight, I would save the world and gain glory in the only eyes that mattered, my God's. Probably.

Hey, a man can be a skeptic, can't he?

* * *

When the door of the synagogue closed, I felt like I walked into a morgue. My eyes glanced up the empty seats to the podium, where I saw Rabbi Woel, held by a large man in a uniform. The man had a Warsaw Pact-era submachine-gun, obviously customized, to my Rabbi's head. Arkhon.

"So. You are the Rabbi's pupil. We were wondering who incinerated Gravewing."

I sneered. Something was filling me: it was like my body was being recast in iron and stone. "A piece of advice, Arkhon: Next time, you might want to disguise yourself, and for the sake of all that is evil, don't use the word 'we.' It tells me you have conspirators."

"Please, Mr. Goldstein. We knew that Woel and whoever he had taken under his wing would figure it out. Now, Woel may be too much of a stubborn goat to consider it, but you seem like a pragmatic man to me, Mr. Goldstein. Can you not see that one world united under Nemesis, with his knowledge and respect of your faith, would be the best not only for the world but for the Jews? Israel could be safe. The people of Israel could be safe. Jews the world over could be safe. And you could finally be famous, as one of the people who made utopia possible!"

Woel screamed, "Marty, for the sake of our Lord don't listen to him! He is a *rasha* and his tricks are many!"

I looked down. It seemed like I was considering the offer, but really, I was just thinking how silly it would be. Me on TV. Me with doting women around me. Me living the life of mammon. No, while being known for heroism would be fine, being known for tyranny, no matter how gilded, was another thing altogether. I didn't want it. I wanted to kill him for even suggesting it.

"Your master, Nemesis, is no great hero, but a two-bit tyrant. He knows no more about running a government than Regis Philbin. And I am disgusted that you would dare to try to appeal to the Holocaust, to Israel, or to my desire for a little well-deserved attention to get me to support a new Hitler! I won't sacrifice millions of innocent people for all of the Twelve Tribes. I am God's servant. You are a servant of evil."

Arkhon shrugged. "Woel's student to the last. Well, put your hands up, put down any weapons you have – slowly! Keep your eyes on me! - and stay here. Nemesis ordered me not to kill either of you for some reason. And I can detect superpowers, so don't try anything... not that a sad sack loser like you would have any."

I smiled. Always underestimated. Always dangerous. I put my hands up and looked directly at him. Oh, if he hadn't said that...

Arkhon smiled. Then a strange look came over his face. He tottered to one side, as a floorboard underneath him collapsed. In a moment, he went from in command of the situation to having his thigh stuck in an old synagogue's undoubtedly splintered wood. God works in mysterious and sometimes minimal ways.

Woel frowned and said, "Marty..." What was going to come next was undoubtedly some spiel about how he was a putz and he could die and what not. But my Rabbi is certainly not suicidal, and he stepped to the side with preternatural speed rare for a man as old and worn as him. An embracing white shield settled around him as he chanted in the language of our ancestors.

Arkhon depressed the trigger at Woel. The staccato of gunfire filled the empty synagogue. I wondered if anyone outside even noticed. Bullets and their casings alike fell harmlessly, some around Arkhon, some around Woel. "The weapons of the unrighteous don't harm me, you tin-horn butcher," Woel called out.

I looked around me. Boy, would it be nice if I could rip up some of the floor or furniture... but the Rabbi would make me pay for damages. (He didn't love me *that* much.) So I screamed.

Boy, was it nice to let out some of that pent-up rage. In New York, there's a lot less healthy ways to do that. The gun in Arkhon's hands shattered into pieces. He turned to me and said, "You insolent fool!" A black power coursed around him and rushed at me. "Try doing that again!"

I was only too happy to oblige. In what I'd guess to be two seconds after he said that (as you can probably tell I wasn't looking at my Rolex), my foot had collided with his face. Nothing fancy, just a roundhouse. I took some self-defense classes once, but I really don't like getting that sweaty. Arkhon's face turned to the side, and there was a spatter of white and red. He was ground through the floorboards and up into the rear wall.

I recoiled. My foot burned, as if someone just dropped a firecracker on it. (I knew. Funny... But that's for another time.) I looked down. My good leather shoes were sizzling! Woel said, "This little goy is a living bomb! Marty! Nemesis will be in Times Square! He will want to see what he's doing to the city! I'll show this man what for, you find him!" A crackling white blade formed in his hand, a glowing shield in his other, and a glimmering horse underneath him. "Go!"

I ran past the seats and shoved open the doors. The whole time, only one name was on my mind. *Nemesis*.

Chapter 3

Outside was pandemonium. People ran every which way. The traffic was even worse than usual. In the air and on the ground, demons advanced forward. Some scattered resistance from heroes, vigilantes, and villains, as well as token fighting from the Minutemen and courageous stands and roadblocks taken by the NYPD existed. Amazingly, the city was fighting back. I didn't know the old girl had it in her.

I rushed through city streets, heading to Times Square. I shoved through people, who would look at each other as if confused by what just happened. One intersection to my left, the Mayhem Bonus Army had surrounded a squid-like demon and were raining down bursts of napalm, energy fire, missiles and practical artillery. One locked eyes with me, first confused for a brief moment, then smiling. For a moment, we weren't hero and villain, we were just New Yorkers.

I was taken from my patriotic daze by a smashing sound in front of me. Towering in my way was a demon who looked like, well, zit popcorn. "Where do you think you're going, little man?!" Then the demon crumpled sideways. A scepter-like energy rod returned from it and came into the hand of a fully green-costumed individual. "How dare you prevent this man from doing his business? Especially with such a horrible skin condition!"

Narcis cast me a gaze. For a moment, I didn't know how it would turn out. Then he smiled and winked. I nodded back. He said, in a somewhat softer voice (the voice of the boy underneath the mask), "You go save the world. I have your back." Then he made a grandiose flip forward, recovering his rod and swinging again at the demon.

As I ran forward, quickly the pandemonium turned into utter silence. The demons made a thin perimeter: not very effective for an invasion, but very good for a distraction. Some people hid in dumpsters, apartments, wherever they could. One woman ac-

tually noticed me and said, "Are you crazy?!" I shrugged and said, "I lost something in Times Square. See you."

The lights were coming. The tall buildings were coming. The heart of New York was coming. And in the center, observing the madness silently, was a man.

Black eyes revealed a soul as cutting and incisive as it was cruel and vile. Some had a bad seed; this was a bad flower. Woel told me that Nemesis had some good left in him. Maybe that was so: All of his plans, while grandiose and evil, never actually took many human lives. But that may have been because doing so was a waste of energy, inefficient, not out of any decency he had left. Black hair was brushed over thinly. He wore a red military uniform, complete with intricate buttons and pockets. A halo of flame was scarcely behind him, and what little skin of his showed was oddly textured, as if it were clay.

"I have to give you credit, Marty Goldstein: I never could find what was impeding my plans, what killed Gravewing, who stopped Arkhon. I knew it could not be your little pawn, Narcis. Very nice work there, I wish I had thought of it: Fake superheroes and super villains, covering my plans just as one covered yours."

He pressed a button. I felt a shock wave palpably through the air. All around the city, superhumans' powers began to fail. Half Fallen fell into a dumpster, avoiding the metal edge and her death by an inch. The Mayhem Bonus Army, Dr. Panther, and New York's finest were largely unaffected, but so were the demons. Without the superpowered muscle, the demons would hold off the conventional fighters for hours.

"I see now that I could never have negated your powers. Arkhon's ability was far better honed than this ever was. But all of the superheroes of this city are not so lucky. They may survive their battles against the demons; the one thing they won't do is stop the oncoming onslaught."

"That's why you had their powers registered!"

"Very perceptive." He began to unbutton his lapel. Slowly his uniform came down, replaced by a thin, black, sleeveless undershirt and pants. I wondered why he was eschewing his armor... until I saw it. The word *Emet*, Truth, on his chest.

"...You are a Golem?!"

Nemesis chuckled. The laugh that came out was one that indicated only a bemusement as the perceived stupidity of the world, no true joy. "That is a common misconception. Woel and I were once friends, you know. It is why I knew I could turn to him in my hour of need. When I began to experiment with magic, I discovered that I could imbue myself with many powers by calling not only upon the demonic but the evil powers of the human body itself. One was to conjure a cascade of flame. But the first time I did this, I could not cease the power. By the time they applied an industrial extinguishing agent, my whole body was covered in third degree burns. In the contemporary era I would have paid for a cybernetic skin graft, which indicates that sometimes surpassing one's limitations leaves one better off. For I knew that with the power of Truth, controlled by a master of Kabbala, I could surround myself in the same clay from which I was birthed in your quaint mythology. Ironically, I am both a testament to the power of your faith and its fundamental fallacy. For I have remade myself as God and yet I have not been struck down; or, possibly, he tried and failed."

I snarled. "Perhaps God saw fit to forgive you. But let me tell you, people get struck down in any number of ways, and for you, today, that's going to be me. I feel obligated to give you one chance to stop this. If you don't take it, I can't guarantee you won't die. So do you feel lucky, punk?" Ah, channeling Dirty Harry. I had wanted to do that for awhile.

Nemesis did not deign to respond. He stepped onto a disc a little wider than he was. As he did so, it glowed blue and began to float into the air. A hover-disc: Surprisingly ungrandiose for someone as arrogant as him. "As a gesture of respect, I will tell you my plan. You see, I own a controlling interest in a company that sells powerful weapons and shields designed to defend against comet or extraterrestrial attacks, Unity Inc. Unity is also providing the Minutemen with the new equipment that will let them stave off the demon invasion. And they have been benefitting from the Mayor's new program for the homeless." He paused to point upwards. "This comet, previously invisible but the cause of the gravitational readings, will crash into your city, killing tens of millions. The propulsion units I installed onto it will guarantee that. Unless, of course, my company is given a healthy compensation. All the facts about it being cloaked, it generating no dust but simply smashing New York... All will further confuse the issue. The truth will be my cover. Then the politicians who I also own a controlling interest in will propose a global space defense initiative, purchased from my company with taxpayer dollars, and my doomsday weapons will be set up. For what prevents such mighty machines from being targeted back upon those who provided the funds?"

He rose up on his hover platform. "The first target of my weaponry will be Gramercy Island Penitentiary. That will be the demonstration shot. The next will be the center of world finance, where the world is arguably run. So, you see, even stopping the comet won't save New York, Mr. Goldstein."

My city. New York. And not only that, but the minions of evil released. The Slaughterhouse Seven. The Fun Bunch. Obzelon. Afterburner. The Denizen. Megasaur. Pantagruel. All killing and plundering. And at the center of it all, the only person who could institute order, Nemesis.

I jumped into the air after Nemesis. My rage had finally caught up to me. He said, "Now, you die." In his hand surged a curling offset oval of flame, rolling downwards with its outermost plume circling around its edge. I had never encountered something that fast and that large. By the time the adrenaline had hit, catching up to my emotions, I was tumbling into the ground. The flame plumed outwards and melted the ground. The smell of burnt concrete permeated everywhere like grease in a pizzeria.

I rose. The melted ground below me felt like gelatin. I looked into a piece of broken glass and saw myself. I was as living lightning, my body white and blue and filling the area around me with light. Twelve candlelight wicks of flame and storm, one for each of the Tribes, formed a corona behind me. In my hands, a staff formed of the very material I had become was created, shaped as the Lawgiver Moses' staff was millennia ago.

I looked about. I saw the... problems of the city, all the misfortunes great and small, tangible as if they were strings floating throughout the sky. I could see the good and the bad that all had done, the blemishes and bright spots upon their soul. All my perceptions focused, spiritual and physical, onto Nemesis. Nem-

esis was a shadow of black in front of me. There had been misfortunes in his soul, but it was not the cause of the shadow: Nemesis had chosen his path.

Nemesis was attempting to float away, clearly trying to leave the city before the meteor struck. My hand and its fingers stretched outwards, and leisurely, a bolt of celestial light collided with Nemesis. The hover disc fluttered, pushing only to one side, spinning around uselessly and depositing Nemesis down a building, plummeting downwards.

Nemesis' elbows flared with flame, and he rappelled from the building, coming with a brutal fist at me. An explosion as if ten barrels of dynamite struck and pushed me slightly as if I were in an airplane rising off the ground: I would have no time to wisecrack; his speed was so preternatural and leisurely in its catastrophic power that I may not even have time to fight.

Another bolt connected from me to Nemesis...and crackled around a shield of sheer miraging heat around his body. The fist was brought down square on my chest; I could only back up that much to prevent my skull from being smashed. It threw me into the ground. I called out in pain. Nemesis was no sadist: He did not smile, only glared. I swung my staff violently and his legs buckled outwards. As he came down with his other fist, I flew backwards away from him and regained my footing, floating an inch above the ground for twenty feet before coming up.

Drawn from Nemesis' belt came an exquisite longsword, marked with the flag of Nemesis' nation. The blade swung down, and my staff came up to meet it. Red and white exploded laterally outwards. Nemesis backed away and assaulted from a different angle. The blurring of his motion was masked by the heat he generated. Yet that illusion would not work on me... but the sheer fact of the speed might. In a straight fight, I would lose. So I stood still and held my staff above me. This would require split-second timing.

Nemesis leapt from side to side, building from building, all directions and all angles... He figured I would bring the staff onto his head. He was wrong.

Finally, the moment of truth. Nemesis charged with the blade directly for my neck. He was in a position such that even a successful strike with the staff cracking over his head would not save my life. But my staff instead came straight down, between Nemesis and I. The sword impaled itself into it like an ax in wood, and the staff collided with the ground. Lightning in spheres and rays went in every direction. Nemesis jittered like a bad Broadway play. I was winning. He left his sword behind as he backed up. "I would expect no less from a student of the man who designed my body."

Nemesis began to make flowing motions with his hands and chanted in a deep baritone. Latin, Hebrew, ancient Norse, Hindi and languages even a New Yorker wouldn't recognize were parsed with form and function, flowing seamlessly as if those were all one language.

I didn't even know what to say: I wasn't that trained in Kabbala. Nemesis' magic was so powerful; the flame and invisible power came from all directions. So I just thought. I thought about the problems of the city. I thought about the *mitzvahs* I could perform. And the lightning and my own soul came out. A web of colliding energy formed. It slowly came to me, all the

lessons and all the magic I had seen Woel perform, and as I learned, the web pushed further and further into him.

Nemesis' voice began to become more hurried and angry. Coming from his hands was one last burst of flame.

I was sick of all this crap. I was tired of fighting. And that fatigue came into my hands... and the flame came back as if attracted by a magnet, and struck him in the chest, in his Truth. His body burned.

My power began to raise. My faith was soaring. "In fire you were cleansed once. In water you will be cleansed again!" My hands embraced the sky, and the pipes and hydrants of the city intersected and collided with Nemesis. He was gone.

But now, in the sky above, there was a new fire. A fire that dwarfed all of us. That dwarfed even the Big Apple.

The meteor.

* * *

Half Fallen. Wallace. Earl. Veldengaard. The officer at the evidence desk. All must have stood transfixed, knowing that the demons were now the least of their concerns. Even the co-conspirators of Nemesis' plan would die, unless someone stopped that comet. And it wasn't going to be Unity, Inc. They had orders not to fire unless they were paid.

The meteor and I faced each other, no less adversaries than God and Satan or myself and Nemesis just a moment ago. Its inhumanity made it more, not less, my enemy.

My hands raised. I felt the power of the city flow through me. I may not be recognized, but I would be recognized by the only person that mattered: My conscience. Yet all New York would see this anyways. For lightning, and force, and flame, and all I could muster came upwards, smashing into the comet, a sound like a supersonic plane breaking the sound barrier shattering every window for blocks. I knew somehow that only I could see the meteor, that only I could target it. The rock, ice and sheer weight met the energy I put out... and constantly came forward, slowing not a whit.

Every part of me fought a battle against fear, against doubt, against exhaustion. More of the power came. I could hear the silence of a city that never slept or stopped.

The comet passed through the clouds, now technically a meteor as it fell through the atmosphere. It would hit soon. Without thinking, I leapt forward, rushing in the air to meet it. It didn't pass through my head that I was going to punch something that weighed more than the Empire State Building.

My fist collided with the comet. I felt nothing. I was beyond pain. The meteor began to slow... but it pushed into me, shoving me into the ground, into death, into the destruction of the five boroughs and the world. My left arm, my salvation, lay weak by my side. I moved my body, shifted my weight, did all I could, exerted every effort... yet the arm stayed still.

God, far be it from this little creation of yours to ask your design. You fixed the firmament of the sky and stoked the stars. Questioning you would be like a cell questioning why it was in a body. I don't know what you are and I don't always know if you're really there or really listening. But I do know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we weren't meant to die, not like this. If

it is your will that we die from this meteor, so be it. If it is not your will, I am the instrument of that will.

I felt a second wind... and a third, and a fourth. It was as if I had energy enough to do all of this and eat a sandwich. Mmm, roast beef... but never mind. My dead arm finally brought itself up and collided with the meteor, palm pressing into it, cracking the surface.

The motion stopped. My breath stopped. And the great hunk of apocalypse flew backwards, and disappeared into dust, pushed apart by the titanic strength I had finally managed to conjure.

I fell into... well, I have no clue, I just blacked out.

* * *

I got found by some aid workers. As the city recuperated, with the help of the Feds and so on, hospitals were filled to the brim, yet fatalities were minimal. No one asked why I was in the center of Times Square, the lone body in the area: they shot me up with some morphine, remarked about my spiral fracture, and walked off.

Sir Nemesis survived, of course. Those villain types always do. But he never told my secret to the world. I felt proud that I was glad he didn't. Maybe it was respect, or a plan for blackmail, or some such. Maybe all of the above. Nemesis was my rasha, and it would take many a trial and tribulation to finally finish our conflict... whatever form that would take.

Unity Inc.'s backing was discovered and the company's assets were seized by the US government. Unfortunately, most of that was petty cash: Nemesis' money guys had done their jobs beautifully, making sure that his investment wasn't lost. The homeless men were compensated standard wages for their work.

Wallace was impeached and replaced. The process was fast-tracked so he could face trial. The New York Supreme Court, the Feds and international authorities had a turf war-cum-pissing match to get him in their jurisdictions. It's questionable as to what he actually did that was *illegal*, of course, but few people were concerned about that.

Woel had mopped the floor with Arkhon until police could take him into custody. With Arkhon out of the way, the Death Row Rituals scandal blew over and the investigation got past its roadblocks. Arkhon was sent without any fuss to the Hague to stand trial.

Pictures of the thing that saved the city were surprisingly hard to come by. Narcis did his job well enough: he claimed loudly that it was him all along. Yet there was the one picture, of the angel bringing up its other fist and striking the face of the meteor. People debated for weeks: New superhero? An angel? A devil?

I walked across the bridge as I always had, bagel with cream cheese and horseradish still there, listening to Coltrane and Davis on my earphones. (All right, fine, there was some Elvis in there too.) I came into work late again, and again I got off scot free. Again the inbox was overflowing.

I sat down in front of my computer. And then a thought hit me. Maybe the Tzaddikim would get some attention finally.

I began to type. "Exclusive Interview with the Saint!"

Oh, yeah, this was gonna be good.

Vampires Revisited

Optional Rules & Source Material for Nightbane®

By Ed Woodward III

When I first took a look at the vampires in the Palladium system, I found myself somewhat dissatisfied with the way they were presented, and especially with the concept of the Vampire Intelligence. However, after much consideration, I saw how nicely the vampires fit into the Lovecraftian world of Alien Intelligences that is the Palladium Megaverse. Making the vampires the minions of an Alien Intelligence raises them above the level of simple blood suckers, and instead places them into a power struggle with godlike beings, which seems to me an appropriate place for vampires, especially in the world of **Rifts®**.

That being said, you probably are wondering why, if I like Palladium's vampires so much, I have written up a new way of handling vampires. The answer is simple: **Nightbane®**. As a setting of horror, rather than heroic adventure, Nightbane is different in flavor from the other games Palladium has produced. Not that there isn't heroism in Nightbane, if anything the heroism in a horror setting is more starkly defined against a backdrop of encroaching evil. In such a setting, the setting that vampires were originally created for, the villains should be men and women who were perverted by dark powers, and thereby became monsters. That is one of the things which gives Nightbane its unique flavor when it is handled properly. The Nightlords, the primary villains, are not incomprehensible, alien monsters; they are normal people who due to greed and ambition trafficked in dark powers and became twisted and evil. It is not alien invaders or demons who are the primary threat to humanity in Nightbane, but rather it is humanity itself, in the form of the Nightlords, which represents the greatest threat.

In such a world, I think it is only fitting that the rulers of vampires be handled in the same way, as men and women who were so twisted by their evils that they became monsters, with power gained through centuries of battle against the Nightlords and humankind alike. In short, vampirism should be dominated by beings closer to Dracula than to the Alien Intelligences which dominate it in **Rifts®**.

Drawing on a wide variety of sources, including novels by Anne Rice and Bram Stoker, movies both good and bad, a few documentaries I've watched, and even comic books and video games, I have created a Vampire R.C.C. for **Nightbane®** which I hope will satisfy everyone and remain relatively true to the general vampire mythology. Enjoy.

Types of Vampires

As one may guess having read any vampire novel, not all vampires are created equally, nor are they all created in the same manner. They range in power, from the weakest being

barely stronger than a human, to ancient and powerful Vampire Lords whom it would be suicide to confront directly. But for our purposes, we shall divide them into three basic categories: True Vampires, Flawed Vampires, and Near Vampires.

True Vampires

True Vampires are, for lack of a better description, perfect vampires. There is nothing wrong with them, they look and act exactly as they did in life, and have the full powers of a vampire. Within the vast multitude of possibilities of vampires, there are only three types of true vampires: The Vampire Lord, the Master Vampire, and the Common Vampire.

Vampire Lord

The ultimate rulers of vampire kind, Vampire Lords were not turned like other vampires. Instead, they committed acts so evil and unforgivable that they were cursed with undeath. Usually a Vampire Lord was a priest, or a high ranking member of a religious order of some kind, who offended his god, but occasionally they are ordinary people who through some mishap managed to accidentally fall under the curse of vampirism. Because a Vampire Lord is cursed with vampirism rather than turned like other vampires, they will often harbor an intense hatred for the being or beings they see as responsible for their transformation. The Vampire Lord is not only the creator of other vampires, but he is also linked to them, granting him several powers relating to his "children." The Vampire Lord will automatically sense which vampires are his "children" and which belong to another Vampire Lord. He can, if desired, locate any specific vampire "descended" from him within a hundred miles (160 km), sometimes further for ancient Vampire Lords. In most cases, this link means that when the Vampire Lord dies, so too will his "children," however this is not always the case, and sometimes one or more of his offspring will survive him, particularly in the cases of ancient Master and Common Vampires.

Vampire Lords

Note: Vampire Lords are extremely powerful, on par with such beings as Nightlords, and as such are not recommended as player characters.

Alignment: Generally, Vampire Lords are evil, with Aberrant alignment being the most common, but occasionally there will be a selfish or even good aligned Vampire Lord. These rare beings still see humans as cattle for the most part, but are never cruel to them, and will usually prey only on criminals and those who wish to die.

Horror Factor: 18 when revealed as a vampire, otherwise none.

Attributes: As in life, with the following bonuses: I.Q. +10, M.E. +14, M.A. +10, P.S. +30, P.P. +12, P.E. +12, P.B. +10, Spd +40.

Hit Points: As in life plus 2D6x100.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: As in life plus 2D6x100

I.S.P.: As in life plus 1D4x100.

Magic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Psionic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Natural Powers of a Vampire Lord:

Know His Children: A Vampire Lord will automatically recognize vampires that were created from his line of vampirism. No matter how far removed from those he himself created, the Vampire Lord automatically recognizes them as his. The Vampire Lord can also use this ability to try to identify the lord of a vampire who is not one of his “children.” The Vampire Lord must have heard of the Vampire Lord who created the vampire he is looking at, or at least have met one of his children on a previous occasion, to identify the line of descent that the vampire follows. If he has met the Vampire Lord, he can automatically recognize that vampire’s children; otherwise he has a base chance of 30% +5% per level of experience to identify the line of descent of the vampire he is examining. **Note:** This power is fully effective against Near Vampires.

Sense His Children: The Vampire Lord is able to sense the presence of vampires descended from himself with a range of 100 miles +10 miles per century of life. Within that radius the Vampire Lord can sense not only the presence of his children, but he can sense their exact numbers and relative strength. Furthermore, if the Vampire Lord is searching for a particular one of his children he can automatically sense the location and general condition of that vampire. Even if the vampire he is searching for has been destroyed, this power will lead him to its remains. **Note:** This power does not allow the Vampire Lord to sense the presence of Near Vampires because they are not linked to him, even if they were created by him.

Other Powers: See Vampire Powers below.

Experience Level: Rarely lower than 15th, unless the Vampire Lord is under fifty years old. Vampire Lords use the Nightlord experience table presented in the **Nightbane® RPG** (page 233).

Combat Abilities: As in life, plus four attacks per melee (generally 8 attacks per melee).

Damage: Vampires possess Supernatural Strength; see the **Nightbane® RPG** to determine the damage inflicted in hand to hand combat. This damage affects other vampires, meaning that one vampire can kill and permanently destroy another with its bare hands, although their regeneration will make this a difficult feat. The Killing Bite of a Vampire Lord inflicts 6D6 plus P.S. bonus. All hand to hand and magic/psionic attacks made by a Vampire Lord inflict triple damage to other vampires, making them greatly feared by rival vampires, as well as by their own “children.”

Bonuses: +10 to save vs Horror Factor, +6 on initiative, +1 to strike parry and dodge, +5 to Perception Rolls, impervious to all forms of mind control, psionic and magical sleep, and paralysis.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, vampires do not age from the point of their transformation.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: See the Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations section below.



Skills: The vampire will retain full knowledge of the skills he possessed in life, with full bonuses still applicable. These skills are frozen at the level the vampire was at before transformation, until the vampire reaches that level in his new R.C.C. (vampire), at which point the skills will increase in level as the vampire does. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the vampire originally lived in, and the personal history of that particular vampire.

New Skills: The vampire gains new skills as he advances in levels according to the O.C.C. he had prior to becoming a vampire. These skills begin at first level proficiency and increase normally.

Alliances and Allies: Tend to work best with other vampires, especially those of their own “family,” however most vampires will work with anyone who can help them achieve their objectives. Generally however, people don’t work with Vampire Lords. For the most part, anyone associated with a Vampire Lord is either a pawn or a dupe, who will be used by the Vampire Lord until he is no longer needed or becomes dangerous, at which point the Vampire Lord will either kill him or have him turned into a vampire.

Weapons and Equipment: Most vampires consider weapons to be crutches for the weak, and will rarely use them, favoring their natural powers. However, this varies and will depend on the individual vampire.



Master Vampire

Master Vampires are the generals within the ranks of vampires. They were once human, but traded their humanity in exchange for power. These monsters willingly gave themselves to a Vampire Lord to be his servants in exchange for immortality. Unlike the lesser forms of vampire discussed later, these beings served the Vampire Lord for years, possibly decades, before he granted them immortality, and they knew exactly what they were getting into. On the third night of the Slow Kill, the Vam-

pire Lord opened his wrist and allowed his minion to feed on his blood, infusing him with a portion of his power. This creates a vampire of great power who can command the armies of the undead for the Vampire Lord.

Occasionally when a Vampire Lord has just fallen under the curse, he will transform a close friend or a lover from his former life into a Master Vampire. Because of how soon after the curse this is done, the Master Vampire will not know what he or she is getting into, in fact even the Vampire Lord himself may not fully understand what has been done. The resulting Master may often resent the Vampire Lord for placing him or her under this curse. Such beings may become powerful allies for anyone opposing the Vampire Lord and his minions.

Master Vampires

Alignment: Generally evil, but any alignment is possible.

Horror Factor: 14 when revealed as a vampire, otherwise none.

Attributes: As in life, plus: I.Q. +8, M.E. +10, M.A. +12, P.S. +18, P.P. +10, P.E. +6, P.B. +10, Spd +16.

Hit Points: As in life plus 3D6x10.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: As in life plus 1D6x10.

I.S.P.: As in life plus 3D6x10.

Magic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Psionic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below.

Experience Level: Average 1D6+4, Master Vampires use the Vampire experience table presented in the **Nightbane® RPG** (page 233).

Combat Abilities: As in life, plus 2 attacks per melee (generally 6 attacks per melee).

Damage: Vampires possess Supernatural Strength; see the **Nightbane® RPG** to determine the damage inflicted in hand to hand combat. The Killing Bite of a Master Vampire inflicts 3D6 plus P.S. bonus. This damage affects other vampires, meaning that one vampire can kill and permanently destroy another with its bare hands, although their regeneration will make this a difficult feat.

Bonuses: +5 to save vs Horror Factor, +3 on initiative, +5 on Perception Rolls, impervious to all forms of mind control, psionic and magical sleep, and paralysis.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, vampires do not age from the point of their transformation.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: See the Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations section below.

Skills: The vampire will retain full knowledge of the skills he possessed in life, with full bonuses still applicable. These skills are frozen at the level the vampire was at before transformation, until the vampire reaches that level in his new R.C.C. (vampire), at which point the skills will increase in level as the vampire does. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the vampire originally lived in, and the personal history of that particular vampire.

New Skills: The vampire gains new skills as he advances in levels according to the O.C.C. he had prior to becoming a vampire. These skills begin at first level proficiency and increase normally.

Alliances and Allies: Tend to work best with other vampires, especially those of their own “family,” however most vampires will work with anyone who can help them achieve their objectives.

Weapons and Equipment: Most vampires consider weapons to be crutches for the weak, and will rarely use them, favoring their natural powers. However, this varies and will depend on the individual vampire.



Secondary Vampire

Sometimes called Common Vampires, Secondary Vampires represent the vast majority of vampires, and while not as powerful as Master Vampires they are still significantly more powerful than a normal human. Secondary Vampires fall into two basic categories; they are either innocent victims of a vampire, or they are servants of the vampire who have been rewarded with immortality. Either way, the same method is used to transform them: A vampire with the ability to turn humans into vampires will visit the person on three consecutive nights, feeding on him each night and finally killing them on the third and final night. Three nights after that, the person is reborn as a vampire. He will retain all the knowledge he possessed in life and his per-

sonality will be unchanged, but now he will require blood to stay alive.

Secondary Vampires

Alignment: As in life.

Horror Factor: 12 when revealed as a vampire, otherwise none.

Attributes: As in life, plus: I.Q. +2, M.E. +6, M.A. +6, P.S. +14, P.P. +8, P.E. +4, P.B. no change, Spd +10.

Hit Points: As in life plus 3D4x10.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: As in life plus 1D4x10.

I.S.P.: As in life plus 3D6x10.

Magic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Psionic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below.

Experience Level: Generally 2nd to 7th (1D6+1); player characters begin at first level. Secondary Vampires use the Vampire experience table presented in the *Nightbane® RPG* (page 233).

Combat Abilities: As in life, plus 1 attack per melee (generally 5 attacks per melee).

Damage: Vampires possess Supernatural Strength; see the *Nightbane® RPG* to determine the damage inflicted in hand to hand combat. This damage affects other vampires, meaning that one vampire can kill and permanently destroy another with its bare hands, although their regeneration will make this a difficult feat. The Killing Bite of a Secondary Vampire inflicts 2D6 plus P.S. bonus.

Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 on initiative, +3 on Perception Rolls, impervious to all forms of psionic and magic sleeps and paralysis, and +3 to save vs magic or psionic mind control.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, vampires do not age from the point of their transformation.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: See the Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations section below.

Skills: The vampire will retain full knowledge of the skills he possessed in life, with full bonuses still applicable. These skills are frozen at the level the vampire was at before transformation, until the vampire reaches that level in his new R.C.C. (vampire), at which point the skills will increase in level as the vampire does. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the vampire originally lived in, and the personal history of that particular vampire.

New Skills: The vampire gains new skills as he advances in levels according to the O.C.C. he had prior to becoming a vampire. These skills begin at first level proficiency and increase normally.

Alliances and Allies: Tend to work best with other vampires, especially those of their own “family,” however most vampires will work with anyone who can help them achieve their objectives.

Weapons and Equipment: Most vampires consider weapons to be crutches for the weak, and will rarely use them, favoring

their natural powers. However this varies and will depend on the individual vampire.

Flawed Vampires

Flawed Vampires are vampires that were damaged in some way during the process of becoming vampires. It is not known what causes a vampire to be created with a flaw, but it is a plague on their species. Flawed Vampires fall into different categories based on the nature of the flaw: Wild Vampires, Shades, and Vampire Ghouls. Flawed Vampires are generally attacked and killed by true vampires when they are discovered; the only common exception to this is Wild Vampires, who are often used as guard dogs, as long as they behave themselves.



Wild Vampire

Wild Vampires are the archetypal B movie vampire; having little self control and a violent temper, they tend to be thugs at best and mindless predators at worst. They are created in exactly the same manner as Common Vampires, but for some unknown reason, be it a weakness in the victim's personality, a strange alignment of mystical forces, or perhaps simply bad luck, they are flawed. Their personality becomes twisted, making them sadistic monsters who enjoy hunting and killing humans, even when they don't need to feed.

Wild Vampires

Alignment: Anarchist or evil; only those who were of Principled alignment in life may be Aberrant; the rest have little morality and even less self control.

Horror Factor: 12 when revealed as a vampire, otherwise none.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+3, M.E. 3D6+4, M.A. 2D6+2 P.S. 3D6+14, P.P. 3D6+8, P.E. 1D6+16, P.B. 2D6+4, Spd 5D6+10.

Hit Points: As in life plus 2D4x10.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: As in life plus 6D6.

I.S.P.: As in life plus 1D6x10.

Magic Powers: None. The concentration required for casting spells is beyond Wild Vampires; they simply don't have the patience for it.

Psionic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below.

Experience Level: Generally, Wild Vampires are between 1st and 4th level; they rarely exceed 6th level. Wild Vampires use the Vampire experience table presented in the **Nightbane® RPG** (page 233).

Combat Abilities: As in life, plus 1 attack per melee (generally 5 attacks per melee).

Damage: Vampires possess Supernatural Strength; see the **Nightbane® RPG** to determine the damage inflicted in hand to hand combat. This damage affects other vampires, meaning that one vampire can kill and permanently destroy another with its bare hands, although their regeneration will make this a difficult feat. The Killing Bite of a Wild Vampire inflicts 2D6 plus P.S. bonus.

Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 on initiative, impervious to all forms of psionic and magic sleeps and paralysis, and +1 to save vs all forms of mind control.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, vampires do not age from the point of their transformation.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: See the Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations section below.

Skills: The Wild Vampire will retain full knowledge of the skills he possessed in life, however due to his twisted nature he will no longer have the patience to perform any skills not directly related to stalking and killing his prey. Any skills which are not directly involved in the vampire's hunting suffer a -50% penalty, and do not ever increase in ability. Skills that do help the vampire catch his victims, however, suffer no penalty and advance normally without any pause. Which skills do or do not aid a vampire in hunting will vary with the hunting habits of the particular vampire, and are completely up to the G.M. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the vampire originally lived in, and the personal history of that particular vampire.

New Skills: The vampire gains new skills as he advances in levels according to the O.C.C. he had prior to becoming a vampire, however the Wild Vampire may only select new skills

that will aid the vampire in the hunt or are necessary to his survival. All skills begin at first level proficiency and increase normally.

Alliances and Allies: Wild Vampires will always be subservient to the vampire who created them, and their Vampire Lord, as well as to any Master Vampires created by their Vampire Lord. They have a pack mentality like wolves, and as long as they know who is above them (who is stronger than them) and who is beneath them (who is weaker than them), they can function in fairly organized groups so long as there are plenty of humans to hunt. If there are no vampires of greater power to control them, Wild Vampires will form their own packs and go on random killing sprees until either a more powerful vampire takes control, or they are destroyed. Remember, Wild Vampires are not stupid, they just have no self control; they can lay traps and ambush the best of them when they want to.

Weapons and Equipment: Wild Vampires prefer to use their natural abilities in combat, or hunting, however they find it very amusing to kill vampire hunters with their own weapons.



Shade

Like the Wild Vampire, these pathetic creatures were humans who, for some unknown reason, were unable to transform properly into a Secondary Vampire. Shades are the weakest of vampires, barely stronger than a normal human, and they are terribly vulnerable to anything that will harm their more powerful brethren.

Generally, these vampires are destroyed by their creators or by other vampires, when they are discovered, either out of pity or disgust, however a few still manage by some miracle to survive.

Shades

Alignment: As in life.

Horror Factor: 11 when revealed as a vampire, otherwise none.

Attributes: As in life.

Hit Points: Only possesses the Hit Points that were possessed in life.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: Half what was possessed in life.

I.S.P.: Half what was possessed in life.

Magic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Psionic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below.

Experience Level: Rarely higher than first level; Shades don't usually survive their first year of undeath. Shades use the Nightbane experience table presented in the **Nightbane® RPG** (page 233).

Combat Abilities: As in life.

Damage: Shades do not possess Supernatural Strength. Shades cannot harm other vampires with their hand to hand attacks. Killing Bite inflicts 1D6 damage.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, vampires do not age from the point of their transformation.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: See the Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations section below. Anything that will normally harm a vampire inflicts triple damage to a Shade, and anything that holds a normal vampire at bay (e.g. crosses, Globe of Daylight) will burn them as if they were being exposed to sunlight. In addition to this, exposure to the light of dawn, or entering a church or other holy place (even if invited) will instantly reduce them to ashes, utterly destroying them. Similarly, staking, decapitation, and attacks from magic, psionics, and the supernatural can permanently destroy a Shade.

Skills: The vampire will retain full knowledge of the skills he possessed in life, with full bonuses still applicable. These skills are frozen at the level the vampire was at before transformation, until the vampire reaches that level in his new R.C.C. (vampire), at which point the skills will increase in level as the vampire does. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the vampire originally lived in, and the personal history of that particular vampire.

New Skills: The vampire gains new skills as he advances in levels according to the O.C.C. he had prior to becoming a vampire. These skills begin at first level proficiency and increase normally.

Alliances and Allies: Shades are outcasts from vampire society, and are considered to be little more than annoying pests. As such, they will work with (or for) anyone who can help them stay alive long enough to achieve some measure of power.

Weapons and Equipment: Most Shades realize their weakness and will take whatever advantage they can get.

Vampire Ghoul

The last type of Flawed Vampire, Vampire Ghouls are also among the flawed and weak. They have the strength and power of a Secondary Vampire, and often the intelligence, but for some reason they did not rise from their grave within the usual three days, but continued to lie there and rot, for weeks, months, or even years before they awoke to unlife. Of all the vampires, these vary the most in appearance, some looking like fresh corpses, while others are little more than putrefied flesh stretched over a skeleton. In most cases, the Vampire Ghoul's mind is as decayed as its body, but sometimes the mind is perfectly preserved, cursed to live eternally as a rotted corpse, and remember what it was like to be human. These poor creatures tend to become the cruelest of all, hating all life, because of what they have become. Even other vampires can't stand the existence of Vampire Ghouls, and most will destroy them on sight.

Time in the Grave

01-25% 4D6 weeks.

26-65% 3D6 months.

66-80% 1D20 years.

81-94% 2D6 decades.

95-00% 1D4 centuries.

Decomposition Table

01-10% Perfect Condition: By some miracle the Vampire Ghoul's body is perfectly preserved and he looks as he did in life, and if his mind is not obviously deteriorated he will be accepted into vampire society. M.A. and P.B. are what they were in life, and when revealed to be a vampire he has a Horror Factor of 12.

11-35% Fresh Corpse: The Vampire Ghoul looks... dead, but he hasn't started to rot yet so he can still pass himself as human. He will be pale and his veins will be visible through his skin if he has fed recently, but nothing a little makeup can't fix. M.A. 2D6+4, P.B. 2D6+4, and when revealed to be a vampire he has a Horror Factor of 12.

36-65% Deteriorated: The Vampire Ghoul is obviously undead, his skin and eyes are an unhealthy yellow color, and all his hair has turned white. M.A. 2D6, P.B. 1D4+2, Horror Factor 13.

66-75% Decayed: All of the fat in the Vampire Ghoul's body has rotted away, leaving him a shriveled wreck. Much of his hair has fallen out, leaving large bald patches. To make matters worse, the Vampire Ghoul stinks of rotting flesh; the stench is so bad that anyone within 20 feet (6 m) must make a saving throw vs non-lethal poison to avoid retching. M.A. 2D4, P.B. 1D4, Horror Factor 14.

76-85% Mummified: This Vampire Ghoul is completely dried out. He is nothing but skin and bones, and nearly all of his hair has fallen out. On the good side, he doesn't smell. M.A. 2D6, P.B. 1D4, Horror Factor 14.

86-00% Special Environment for Decay: The Vampire Ghoul's exact state of decay is left up to the player, however he



was not buried in the usual manner and this caused him to decay in a different way. Perhaps the Ghoul was thrown into a peat bog, causing him to have blackened, leathery skin and twisted bones; maybe water leaked into his coffin, making the Vampire Ghoul's skin bloated and clammy; or he could just be eternally infested with maggots. Whatever it is, the unusual environment is likely to have given the Ghoul an especially horrifying and alien appearance. M.A., P.B. and Horror Factor are determined by the G.M.

Mental Decay

01-05% No Mental Decay: The Vampire Ghoul retains all of his skills and mental attributes that he possessed in life.

06-25% Minor Decay: Time in the grave has taken its toll. Reduce the Vampire Ghoul's skills by 10%; his I.Q. is 2D6+2.

26-45% Major Decay: The Vampire Ghoul's brain has rotted extensively. Reduce all skills by 30%, and any skills reduced to zero or less percent are permanently lost; his I.Q. is now 1D6+4.

46-65% Serious Decay: Large portions of the Vampire Ghoul's brain have rotted away, leaving him mentally crippled. Reduce all skills by 50%, and any skills reduced to zero percent or less are permanently lost; I.Q. is 1D4+2.

66-85% Dumb as a Stump: Most of the Vampire Ghoul's brain has rotted away. He is still able to speak, but barely, he loses all but three other skills, and his I.Q. is reduced to 3.

86-95% Conscious in Grave: The Vampire Ghoul's brain did not rot, but rather it was active and aware from the point of death, and as a result he is seriously disturbed. Roll 1D4+3 times on the random insanity table. In addition, if the Vampire Ghoul was buried for less than a year, he becomes afraid of enclosed spaces ("Don't lock me in that coffin again!"); however if he has been buried for more than a year, he has a phobia of wide open spaces, and it may take several attempts for him to leave his coffin the first time once he becomes able.

95-00% No Past: The Vampire Ghoul's mind works fine, and he retains all of his skills, but he cannot remember his past, and has no knowledge of who or what he is. This can be comical (mummified Ghoul walks up to hero and asks, "Do you know me?") or dangerous (Ghoul decides to watch a sunrise). The Vampire Ghoul must learn what he is quickly if he is to survive, and will probably spend years searching for his past.

Vampire Ghouls

Alignment: As in life; however, rolling higher than a 35 on the decomposition table will require a saving throw vs insanity once the Vampire Ghoul discovers what he looks like.

Horror Factor: Varies with state of decay, see above.

Attributes: As in life with the following changes: I.Q. see above, M.E. 1D20+4, M.A. see above, P.S. +14, P.P. +8, P.E. +4, P.B. see above, Spd +22.

Hit Points: As in life plus 2D4x10+10.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: As in life plus 6D6.

I.S.P.: As in life plus 1D6x10.

Magic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Psionic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below.

Experience Level: Generally between 1st and 3rd level; some particularly gifted Vampire Ghouls will be of much higher levels. Vampire Ghouls use the Vampire experience table presented in the **Nightbane® RPG** (page 233).

Combat Abilities: As in life, plus 1 attack per melee.

Damage: Vampires possess Supernatural Strength; see the **Nightbane® RPG** to determine the damage inflicted in hand to hand combat. This damage affects other vampires, meaning that one vampire can kill and permanently destroy another with its bare hands, although their regeneration will make this a difficult feat. The Killing Bite of a Vampire Ghoul inflicts 2D6 plus P.S. bonus. If the Vampire Ghoul rolled higher than a 10 on the deterioration table, then in addition to the initial damage inflicted by his bite, the victim must make a saving throw vs disease or the wound will become infected and will not heal without medical attention. If the wound is not treated in a week, the limb that was bitten will have to be amputated. If the wound is left to fester for longer than a week, or is on the neck, the victim of the bite will lose 1D4 Hit Points every day until hospitalized, and even then there is only a 50% chance of saving the victim's life and the Hit Point loss is permanent. Only magical and psionic healing may be able to restore the lost Hit Points.

Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 on initiative, impervious to all forms of psionic and magical sleep and paralysis, and +1 to save vs all forms of mind control.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, vampires do not age from the point of their transformation.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: See the Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations section below.

Skills: Unless his mind has deteriorated, the Vampire Ghoul will retain full knowledge of the skills he possessed in life, with full bonuses still applicable. These skills are frozen at the level the vampire was at before transformation, until the vampire reaches that level in his new R.C.C. (vampire), at which point the skills will increase in level as the Vampire Ghoul does. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the Vampire Ghoul originally lived in, and the personal history of that particular Vampire Ghoul.

New Skills: The vampire gains new skills as he advances in levels according to the O.C.C. he had prior to becoming a vampire. These skills begin at first level proficiency and increase normally.

Alliances and Allies: Vampire Ghouls tend to be loners, as even other vampires consider them to be abominations, however they will work with anyone who can help them achieve their objectives.

Weapons and Equipment: Most Vampire Ghouls prefer to rely on their natural abilities, however they have no particular dislike for weapons and will use them when expedient.

Near Vampires

Near Vampires are a strange collection of beings, and are incredibly rare. They are called Near Vampires because while they were created by vampires and possess much of the power of a vampire, they are not truly vampires. There are six known types of Near Vampires: Wampyrs, the Damned, Scourges, Blood Wraiths, Dhampirs, and Vampiriks. Vampire reactions to Near Vampires vary greatly depending on the nature of the Near Vampire. **Note:** Near Vampires do not share all of a vampire's strengths and weaknesses; most notably, Near Vampires are not affected by the death of their Vampire Lord.

Wampyr

Largely unchanged from how they are presented in the **Nightbane® RPG**, pages 188-189, however they can gain additional Vampire Powers with age (see below). Vampire Powers acquired function at the same strength as a Common Vampire. Wampyrs cannot acquire the following powers: Correct the Flaw, Create Vampires, Survive Lord's Death (not needed).



The Damned

Many people believe that what transforms a person into a vampire is drinking the blood of a vampire. The Damned are poor souls who, for whatever reason, tried it and were transformed into a kind of living vampires. The Damned possess all of the powers of a vampire except their immortality and undead status, but suffer from all of the vulnerabilities of a vampire except that they have no connection to a Vampire Lord. The Damned have all the power of a vampire but a human lifespan, during which they age and eventually die like any other mortal.

The Damned

Alignment: As in life.

Horror Factor: 12 when revealed as something other than human, otherwise none.

Attributes: As before transformation, plus: I.Q. +2, M.E. +6, M.A. +6, P.S. +14, P.P. +8, P.E. +4, P.B. no change, Spd +10.

Hit Points: As before transformation plus 3D4x10.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: As before transformation plus 1D4x10.

I.S.P.: As before transformation plus 3D6x10.

Magic Powers: As before transformation, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Psionic Powers: As before transformation, plus see Vampire Powers below.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below; the Damned gain Age Points and use powers as a Common Vampire. The Damned cannot possess the following Vampire Powers: Correct the Flaw, Create Vampires, Survive Lord's Death, and Sleep of Ages.

Natural Abilities Common to All Vampires: Possesses numbers One, Six, Seven, and Eight.

Experience Level: Generally 2nd to 7th (1D6+1); player characters begin at first level. The Damned use the Vampire experience table presented in the **Nightbane® RPG** (page 233).

Combat Abilities: As before transformation, plus 1 attack per melee (generally 5 attacks per melee).

Damage: The Damned possess Supernatural Strength; see the **Nightbane® RPG** to determine the damage inflicted in hand to hand combat. This damage affects vampires, meaning that a Damned can kill and permanently destroy a vampire with its bare hands, although their regeneration will make this a difficult feat. The Killing Bite of the Damned inflicts 2D6 plus P.S. bonus.

Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 on initiative, +3 on Perception Rolls, impervious to all forms of psionic and magic sleep and paralysis, and +3 to save vs magic or psionic mind control.

Lifespan: As a normal human; the Damned age normally and will eventually die of old age in the same amount of time a normal human would.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: See the Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations section below. The Damned are not harmed by the death of their Vampire Lord, as the connection is tenuous at best, nor will that Lord be able to sense and command the Damned as he would his undead children.

Skills: The Damned will retain full knowledge of the skills he possessed before transformation, with full bonuses still applicable. These skills are frozen at the level the Damned was at before transformation, until the Damned reaches that level in his new R.C.C. (Damned), at which point the skills will increase in level as the Damned does, and the Damned will gain additional skills as his old O.C.C. would. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the personal history of that particular Damned.

Alliances and Allies: Tend to work best alone or with the vampire who helped create them (if they didn't steal the vampire's blood). However, like many Near Vampires, they are often hunted by both vampire hunters and vampires, so their options for allies are quite limited.

Reproduction: The Damned are living beings and can mate and reproduce with humans. The offspring of one of the Damned will be normal humans, except they are completely impervious to vampire mind control and cannot be turned into a vampire.

Weapons and Equipment: Most Damned consider weapons to be crutches for the weak, and will rarely use them, favoring their natural powers. However this varies and will depend on the individual Damned.



Scourge

It is not known whether the Scourge is simply a horrible accident, or if it is actually part of the curse of vampirism. Whichever the case is, these creatures were intended to be vampires, but something went horribly wrong. Instead of becoming beings who drink the blood of the living, they became creatures who eat the flesh of the undead. All undead creatures who know of Scourges fear them, because these creatures have all of the power of a vampire, but they prey on the living dead.

Vampires and Scourges are mortal enemies, and vampires will nearly always attack them as soon as they are identified, be-

cause just as vampires prey on humans, Scourges prey on vampires. A Scourge appears in all respects to be a vampire from the family that created him, and only the Vampire Lord and Master Vampires of that family can tell that he is not from that family (they will know what he is automatically). No other vampires can sense this deception, not even other Vampire Lords.

Scourges

Alignment: As in life.

Horror Factor: 12 when revealed as undead, 17 to vampires when revealed to be a Scourge, otherwise none.

Attributes: As in life, plus: I.Q. +2, M.E. +6, M.A. +6, P.S. +14, P.P. +8, P.E. +4, P.B. no change, Spd +10.

Hit Points: As in life plus 3D4x10.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: As in life plus 1D4x10.

I.S.P.: As in life plus 3D6x10.

Magic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers.

Psionic Powers: As in life, plus see Vampire Powers.

Age Points: 6D6 Age Points to start, plus they gain 5 points every century of life or level of experience.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below; Scourges use powers at the same strength as a Common Vampire.

Identify Other Scourges: Just as a vampire can recognize another vampire, a Scourge will know another Scourge when he sees one. A Scourge can also identify vampires on sight.

Limitations: A Scourge cannot select the following Vampire Powers: Correct the Flaw, Survive Lord's Death, Create Vampires, Resist Blood Lust, Live on Animal Blood, Blood Fasting.

Natural Abilities Common to All Vampires: Possesses all the natural abilities of a vampire.

Experience Level: Generally 2nd to 7th (1D6+1); player characters begin at first level. Scourges use the Vampire experience table presented in the **Nightbane® RPG** (page 233).

Combat Abilities: As in life, plus 1 attack per melee (generally 5 attacks per melee).

Damage: Scourges possess Supernatural Strength; see the **Nightbane® RPG** to determine the damage inflicted in hand to hand combat. This damage affects vampires, meaning that a Scourge can kill and permanently destroy a vampire (or any other form of undead) with its bare hands, although a vampire's regeneration will make this a difficult feat. The bite of a Scourge inflicts 2D6 plus P.S. bonus. All hand to hand attacks made by a Scourge inflict double damage to vampires and other forms of undead. **Note:** In the case of nearly un-killable undead creatures such as vampires, the Scourge must remove and eat the heart of the undead creature to permanently kill it. If the undead creature in question does not have a heart, the closest equivalent, or a chunk of the chest will do. **Note 2:** Yes, Scourges can harm non-corporeal undead such as ghosts and Blood Wraiths, and yes, they can rip their hearts out and eat them, permanently killing such creatures.

Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 on initiative, +3 on Perception Rolls, impervious

to all forms of psionic and magic sleep and paralysis, and +3 to save vs magic or psionic mind control.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, Scourges do not age from the point of their transformation.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: Exactly the same as those of a vampire, except that they will not die if their Vampire Lord is killed, and instead of being dependant on blood, Scourges subsist on the flesh of dead and undead creatures. See below for diet.

Skills: The Scourge will retain full knowledge of the skills he possessed in life, with full bonuses still applicable. These skills are frozen at the level the Scourge was at before transformation, until the Scourge reaches that level in his new R.C.C. (Scourge), at which point the skills will increase in level as the Scourge does. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the Scourge originally lived in, and the personal history of that particular Scourge.

New Skills: The Scourge gains new skills as he advances in levels according to the O.C.C. he had prior to becoming a Scourge. These skills begin at first level proficiency and increase normally.

Alliances and Allies: Tend to work alone, although they occasionally will team up with vampire hunters and they will work with almost anyone who is hunting the undead.

Weapons and Equipment: Most Scourges attempt to blend in with vampire society, and will generally use the weapons favored by the family that created them. Usually this means that they don't carry any weapons, however this will depend on the individual Scourge and the vampires he is impersonating.

Diet: As stated above, a Scourge must eat the flesh of other undead creatures to survive, however a Scourge does not need to feed every night. They require a pound of undead flesh once every month. They can take it in small pieces, and they do not necessarily have to kill the undead creature they are feeding on, although most Scourges will anyhow. When denied the flesh of undead creatures for over a month, they will suffer the same Blood Lust problems as vampires (saves as a Common Vampire), except when they enter a frenzy they will attempt to eat the flesh of corpses or of the living (neither will do them any good). However instead of the usual daily penalties for hunger, the Scourge only suffers a -1 cumulative penalty for each week without food. Scourges suffer prolonged starvation as if they were Master Vampires.

Blood Wraith

Blood Wraiths are incorporeal vampires. They are sometimes called Specters, but they are actually true undead and have no relation with those Entities. Blood Wraiths are sometimes created when an ancient and powerful vampire is destroyed, but somehow through long forgotten methods manages to preserve his spirit. Other times, it simply happens for no apparent reason. Three nights after his destruction, the vampire's spirit rises from his ashes. The new Blood Wraith must immediately find a living host to possess, and if the Wraith is not in a body at dawn it is instantly destroyed, never to rise again. **Vampire Lord Note:** If a Vampire Lord is destroyed and becomes a Blood Wraith, the



children of that Vampire Lord are not destroyed until the Blood Wraith is destroyed.

Blood Wraiths

Alignment: As in life.

Horror Factor: 12 when revealed as something other than human, otherwise none.

Attributes: Identical to those the Blood Wraith had as a vampire.

Hit Points: Possesses the full Hit Points the Blood Wraith possessed as a vampire.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: As he possessed while a vampire, plus that of the host.

I.S.P.: As he possessed while a vampire, plus that of the host.

Magic Powers: As possessed while a vampire.

Psionic Powers: As possessed while a vampire.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below. A Blood Wraith's powers function as they did while he was a vampire. The Blood Wraith retains all powers and Age Points he possessed as a vampire.

Natural Abilities Common to All Vampires: Possesses all the natural abilities of a vampire.

Outside a Host: Because Blood Wraiths have no physical form, they cannot be struck by any physical attacks while they are outside of a host. Nor will the normal things all vampires are vulnerable to kill them in this form; generally speaking, only sunlight can kill them. Sunlight inflicts triple the normal damage to a Blood Wraith outside a host, and dawn will instantly destroy them. While outside a host, the Blood Wraith cannot use any magic, psychic, or vampire powers, and cannot touch or affect the world around him in any way, except to possess a host. Weapons which are normally able to damage insubstantial beings or Astral bodies can inflict damage to them, but cannot permanently slay them. Scourges can also harm them, and if the Blood Wraith

is brought down to zero Hit Points while outside a body, the Scourge can rip out its heart and eat it, permanently slaying the Blood Wraith.

Possessing a Host: Blood Wraiths have no physical form of their own, therefore they must possess the body of some unsuspecting mortal. While possessed, the mortal looks as he would if he were a vampire, including having fangs, and the Blood Wraith has all of the attributes and abilities of its former vampire self. For all intents and purposes, the possessed host is a vampire, with the same powers and vulnerabilities as the Blood Wraith had while a vampire. However, if the host body is killed, the Wraith is not harmed, he simply must find another host. Unlike a true vampire, the Blood Wraith does not need to return to the soil of its grave, however it does need to sleep during the day as a normal vampire would. While sleeping, it relinquishes control of the host, and it can only be awakened during the day if the host is attacked (it may or may not choose to take control at that time). **Note:** While possessed by a Blood Wraith, the host does not age.

Releasing Control: At any moment, the Blood Wraith can release his control over the host without abandoning him. During these times, the host will return to his natural state, retaining none of the Blood Wraith's powers or attributes, nor will the host suffer from the normal vampire vulnerabilities. While the Blood Wraith has released control, the host is an ordinary human and remembers nothing of his time controlled by the Wraith.

Special Vulnerabilities: An Exorcism can force the Wraith from its host, even in the daytime, and the Blood Wraith must then find another host before he is destroyed by sunlight (normal rules for possession).

Experience Level: Varies according to the type of vampire he was, however they are never less than 10th level. Not available as a player character. Blood Wraiths continue to use the experience table appropriate for the type of vampire they once were (e.g. a Blood Wraith who was a Master Vampire continues to use the Vampire experience table after becoming a Blood Wraith).

Combat Abilities: As possessed while a vampire.

Damage: As while a vampire.

Bonuses: As possessed while a vampire.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, vampires do not age from the point of their transformation.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: See the Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations section below.

Skills: The vampire will retain full knowledge of the skills he possessed in life, with full bonuses still applicable. These skills are frozen at the level the vampire was at before transformation, until the vampire reaches that level in his new R.C.C. (vampire), at which point the skills will increase in level as the vampire does. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the vampire originally lived in, and the personal history of that particular vampire.

Alliances and Allies: Tend to work best with other vampires, especially those of their own "family," however most vampires will work with anyone who can help them achieve their objectives.

Weapons and Equipment: Most vampires consider weapons to be crutches for the weak, and will rarely use them, favoring their natural powers. However this varies and will depend on the individual vampire.



Dhampir

The Dhampir are born to a mixed blessing. A Dhampir is gifted with nearly all of a vampire's powers, and only a few of its weaknesses, however the Dhampir is also born inhuman. They show obvious signs of their nature, and as a result they are condemned to be shunned by humans. Dhampirs, however, are natural vampire hunters, a role they instinctively seek out, making them the target of any vampire who finds them. Most Dhampirs never live to adulthood because they are found and slaughtered by fearful vampires, however those who do reach maturity become the most feared vampire slayers of all. Walking both the day and night, armed with fearful weapons and the powers of a vampire, meeting a Dhampir is a vampire's worst nightmare.

Often believed to be the offspring of the mating of a human and a vampire, however the true nature of a Dhampir's origin is somewhat more complicated. A Dhampir is created when a vampire attempts to turn a woman who is pregnant into a vampire, something most vampires would only do by accident. In most situations like this, the woman herself does not even know she is pregnant. If the vampire succeeds in transforming the woman, the child is born a Vampirik (see below), however should the woman be rescued from the vampire before the final

night, she will recover from the ordeal and eventually give birth to a Dhampir.

The Dhampir will immediately be recognized for something unusual, as the child will be born with teeth, as well as whatever unusual characteristics may be possessed by the family of vampires from which he comes. As the child ages, he will slowly grow into his powers, and feel an instinctive drive to protect humans from supernatural creatures, especially vampires.

Dhampirs

Alignment: Any, although good alignments are the most common.

Horror Factor: 12, 18 to vampires when revealed to be a Dhampir, otherwise none.

Attributes: As a normal human, plus: I.Q. +8, M.E. +10, M.A. +12, P.S. +18, P.P. +10, P.E. +6, P.B. +10, Spd +16.

Hit Points: 3D6x10.

S.D.C.: 50 plus whatever is granted by O.C.C. and Physical skills.

P.P.E.: 2D6x10, +1D6 per level of experience. (**Note:** If a magic using O.C.C. is selected, add 1D6x10 to this base P.P.E. and increase the per level bonus to +2D6, ignore the P.P.E. listed for the O.C.C.)

I.S.P.: 3D6x10, +1D6 per level of experience. (**Note:** If a psychic O.C.C. is selected, add 1D6x10 to this base I.S.P. and increase the per level bonus to +2D6, ignore the I.S.P. listed for the O.C.C.)

Magic Powers: As O.C.C., plus see Vampire Powers below.

Psionic Powers: As O.C.C., plus see Vampire Powers below.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below. Dhampirs count as the type of vampire that created them with regards to Age Points and the strength of their powers. So a Dhampir created by a Shade will have very weak powers and few points, while a Dhampir created by a Master Vampire would have much more power. Dhampirs cannot possess the following Vampire Powers: Correct the Flaw, Survive Lord's Death, Sleep of Ages.

Natural Abilities Common to All Vampires: Possesses numbers Two, Six, and Seven.

Dhampir Invulnerability: Dhampirs are not anywhere near as invulnerable as a vampire, but they are far tougher than normal humans. Dhampirs take half damage from all attacks that would not harm a vampire, plus they have a Natural A.R. of 19, making them incredibly difficult to injure. However, Dhampirs are not harmed by things that vampires are vulnerable to that humans are not; for example, sunlight and religious symbols don't harm a Dhampir any more than an ordinary person.

Dhampir Regeneration: Dhampirs regenerate damage at the same rate as vampires, however it should be noted that Dhampirs are living beings rather than undead, therefore decapitation, burning to death, and being reduced to below zero Hit Points will kill them.

Recognize Vampires: A Dhampir will instantly recognize vampires and their minions/allies on sight, and know whether or not they are from the same "family" that created him.

A Dhampir can actually smell the presence of vampires in an area, and he will instantly know when he has entered the hunting grounds of a vampire or when he is within a mile (1.6 km) of a vampire's lair. However, this scenting ability is not accurate enough to tell the Dhampir how many vampires there are, nor can he use it to track them; it only lets him know they operate or reside in the area.

A Dhampir can also see and recognize vampires and the works of vampires, regardless of how they are disguised. He will instantly know if the fog that suddenly rolled in was summoned by a vampire or something else; even if the vampire used spells or a magic artifact to create the fog, the Dhampir will know that a vampire was behind it.

Even invisibility is no shelter from the eye of the Dhampir, and regardless of what method of invisibility the vampire has at his disposal, the Dhampir can always see invisible vampires and their minions (weather the servants of the vampire were turned invisible by the vampire's power or their own is irrelevant, their connection with the vampire makes them visible to the Dhampir).

Blood Lust: Dhampirs can subsist on normal food like a human, however what they really crave is blood, particularly human blood. Normally they can suppress this urge, however during periods of starvation a Dhampir will begin to suffer the same effects of Blood Lust as a normal vampire. The vampire can put an end to this at any time with a big meal (a nice rare steak maybe), assuming he is able to get a meal. Dhampirs are +1 to save vs Blood Lust.

Experience Level: Generally 2nd to 7th (1D6+1); player characters begin at first level. Dhampirs use the same experience table as the vampire type that created them (e.g. a Dhampir created by a Master Vampire uses the Vampire experience table).

Combat Abilities: As with hand to hand, plus 1 attack per melee (generally 5 attacks per melee).

Damage: Dhampirs possess Supernatural Strength; see the **Nightbane® RPG** to determine the damage inflicted in hand to hand combat. This damage affects vampires, meaning that a Dhampir can kill and permanently destroy a vampire with its bare hands, although their regeneration will make this a difficult feat. The Killing Bite of a Dhampir inflicts 1D6 plus P.S. bonus.

Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 on initiative, +3 on Perception Rolls, impervious to all forms of psionic and magic sleep and paralysis, and +3 to save vs magic or psionic mind control.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, Dhampirs do not age once they reach maturity.

Skills: The skills of a Dhampir will depend entirely on his O.C.C., which is usually a vampire hunter O.C.C. of some kind, however it could be nearly any O.C.C. available to un-augmented humans. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the Dhampir was born, and his personal history. Regardless of what O.C.C. is chosen, a Dhampir uses the same experience table as the vampire who created him.

Alliances and Allies: Tend to work best with other vampire hunters, although they will rarely work with Scourges and Wampyrs because they generally don't trust any of the undead, and rarely even trust other Dhampirs.

Reproduction: Dhampirs are living beings and can mate with humans and produce offspring. The children of a Dhampir will retain his abilities to see and sense vampires, but will not possess any of his other abilities. Later generations will not possess even this power.

Weapons and Equipment: Most Dhampirs will take any advantage over a vampire they can get.



Vampirik

Similar to the Dhampir, the Vampirik is the result of a vampire's attempt to turn a pregnant woman into a vampire, however unlike the Dhampir, the Vampirik is the child of a woman who was not rescued in time. Born undead, the Vampirik grows and matures at the same rate as a human child, but instead of growing into a normal human adult, the Vampirik grows into a vampire-like being of enormous potential.

Vampiriks

Alignment: Any, but tends toward Anarchist or evil.

Horror Factor: As his creator.

Attributes: Roll 4D6 for each attribute, plus add any bonuses that are granted by the type of vampire that turned his

mother, including any family bonuses (e.g., if the mother was turned into a vampire by a Common Vampire, the Vampirik will gain those bonuses; if the mother was turned by a Master then it will be those bonuses).

Hit Points: 1D4x10 plus whatever bonus is applicable to his creator.

S.D.C.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: 4D6 plus whatever bonus is applicable to his creator.

I.S.P.: 1D6x10 plus whatever bonus is applicable to his creator.

Magic Powers: See Vampire Powers below.

Psionic Powers: See Vampire Powers below.

Natural Powers: See Vampire Powers below. For use of powers, the Vampirik counts as the type of vampire responsible for his creation.

Natural Abilities Common to All Vampires: Possesses all the natural abilities of a vampire.

Experience Level: Generally 2nd to 7th (1D6+1); player characters begin at first level. Vampiriks use the same experience table as the vampire type that created them (e.g. a Vampirik created by a Master Vampire uses the Vampire experience table).

Combat Abilities: As hand to hand combat, plus the bonus of his creator.

Damage: Vampiriks possess Supernatural Strength; see the **Nightbane® RPG** to determine the damage inflicted in hand to hand combat. This damage affects other vampires, meaning that a Vampirik can kill and permanently destroy a vampire with its bare hands, although their regeneration will make this a difficult feat. The Killing Bite of a Vampirik inflicts the same damage as the vampire who created him.

Bonuses: In addition to attribute bonuses, the Vampirik has the normal bonuses applicable to the type of vampire that created him.

Lifespan: Effectively immortal, Vampiriks do not age once they reach maturity.

Vulnerabilities/Penalties: See the Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations section below. A Vampirik has all of the vulnerabilities of a vampire, except that he does not need to return to the soil of his grave (any place out of the sun will do), and they are unaffected by their Lord's death.

Skills: The skills of a Vampirik will depend entirely on his O.C.C., which is usually a vampire hunter O.C.C. of some kind, however it could be nearly any O.C.C. available to un-augmented humans. Available O.C.C.s should be determined by the G.M., based upon the time period in which the Vampirik was born, and his personal history. Regardless of what O.C.C. is chosen, a Vampirik uses the same experience table as the vampire who created him.

Alliances and Allies: Tend to work best with vampires of their own "family," particularly their parents, however most Vampiriks will work with anyone who can help them achieve their objectives.

Weapons and Equipment: Unlike most vampires, who consider weapons to be crutches for the weak, Vampiriks tend to have a more balanced view, and will use anything that will help them in a fight.

Vampire Weaknesses and Limitations

Despite their vast power and their apparent invulnerability, vampires are vulnerable to attacks from a few relatively common objects, some of which can slay a vampire with incredible ease. There are no magic spells or psychic powers that can protect a vampire from his weaknesses, regardless of the protection that power would have given a human. Only a handful of very powerful vampire abilities can shield them from these weaknesses (see below).

The Need for Blood

Not often seen as a vulnerability, the vampire's need for blood is, however, its greatest vulnerability. If the vampire did not need the blood of living human beings to sustain its unholy existence, it could easily stay clear of mortals and the societies of living beings, and thereby avoid its only natural enemies. However, it is this need for blood that defines a vampire, and it is this gruesome aspect of their curse which makes them the monsters they are. After all, how long could even the purest of souls remain noble when forced to commit repeated acts of murder and cannibalism in order to survive?

Vampires must feed on a daily basis in order to sustain their strength, however should the vampire choose for whatever reason not to feed, he will have a constant, gnawing hunger which can only be satisfied with the blood of a mortal. A healthy vampire can resist feeding for two days without difficulty, however every day beyond two that they resist the urge to feed, they suffer agonizing pains. The vampire can continue to resist without great difficulty (as long as he can endure the pain) for a third day, however on the fourth day when the vampire rises he will be in terrible shape. His skin will be pasty and corpse-like, and his body will look withered and dried out as if he were beginning to mummify. At this point, the vampire suffers a -1 on all combat rolls and -10% on all skills, and every time the vampire encounters a human (or other suitable prey) he must save vs Blood Lust (10 or higher) or immediately attempt to feed. The following bonuses and penalties may apply to the save (all bonuses and penalties are cumulative):

- Every day beyond 4 without feeding: -1
- The prey encountered is a loved one: +5
- The prey encountered is hated by the vampire: -3
- Blood is drawn in the vampire's presence: -4
- Vampire's alignment is Diabolic: -2
- Vampire's alignment is Unprincipled: +1
- Vampire's alignment is scrupulous: +2
- Vampire's alignment is Aberrant: +3
- Vampire's alignment is Principled: +4
- Vampire is using the Resist Hunger psionic power: +3
- Vampire is wounded: -1 to -5 depending on the severity (G.M.'s call).
- Shade or Wild Vampire: -4
- Master Vampire: +2
- Vampire Lord: +10

High mental endurance: M.E. bonuses are applied to this save.

Prolonged Starvation

If a vampire is prevented from feeding for a period of 6 months or more, he will become permanently weakened by the experience. The effects of the weakening vary with the type of vampire.

Vampire Lords: Vampire Lords are not permanently weakened, however they will suffer a -2 penalty to all attributes and all combat rolls, and a -20% penalty on all skills for one year after a prolonged period of starvation.

Master Vampires: All attributes are permanently reduced by 1D4, I.S.P. and P.P.E. are reduced by 10%, and all unspent Age Points possessed are permanently lost.

Secondary Vampires: Same as a Master, with a 30%, +2% per month over 6 months of starvation, chance of degenerating into a Wild Vampire (no loss of powers gained through spent Age Points though).

Wild Vampires: Same as a Master, with a 30%, +2% per month over 6 months of starvation, chance of Decomposition (roll on the Decomposition table from the Vampire Ghoul; it is still a Wild Vampire, but now looks like a Ghoul).

Wampyrs: See Wampyr R.C.C. for details on their blood needs. Prolonged starvation will inflict the same penalties as with a Master, with a 30%, +2% per month over 6 months of starvation, chance of killing the Wampyr.

Shades: Prolonged starvation automatically kills a Shade after 3 months +1D6 weeks. Anything after 1 month will cause the Shade to suffer the penalties that a Master suffers for prolonged starvation.

Vampire Ghouls: Strangely, Vampire Ghouls suffer the least from prolonged starvation. There is no permanent damage, although for 1D6 months after a period of starvation they will be one place higher on the Decomposition table, and will suffer a -1 penalty to all combat rolls and a -10% penalty to all skills.

Why? This is the primary part of the vampire's curse: that they will always be monsters, forced into murder and cannibalism in order to survive. Often these tortured souls are driven to kill those they love by their cravings for human blood. This is the curse of a vampire, to never be able to have normal contact with a human being again without being tempted to injure or kill them. This is the ultimate torment for the undead, and even evil and depraved vampires will feel the weight of not being able to have any friends but other vampires. Their only company is beings who remind them constantly of the horrors that they have become.

Nocturnal

Most Vampires must sleep during the day. If awakened while the sun is shining, they will be disoriented and sluggish. If prevented from sleeping, the vampire will be tired and slow the following night. Long term deprivation has much the same effects it does in humans, including hallucinations and temporary psychosis. While this will not kill the vampire, it will make him sloppy and careless, which could result in his discovery. Also, while in a deranged state, the vampire may forget that he is a



vampire, and do something that can be fatal, like going out to watch the sun rise (unlikely, but possible in extreme circumstances). Penalties for sleep deprivation are left to the G.M.

Why? Simple, even the dead require rest.

Sunlight

Sunlight is the deadliest weapon a vampire hunter has against the undead, when it is available. The rays of the sun will reduce most vampires to ashes in minutes, inflicting 1D6x10 damage to the vampire every melee round (15 seconds). In addition to the damage it inflicts, sunlight blinds the vampire and nearly paralyzes him with pain. The vampire has only a third of his normal attacks, and cannot move faster than a third of his normal speed. In addition to this, the vampire is completely blind (with all appropriate penalties). Death by sunlight will permanently destroy a vampire.

Dawn is especially deadly to a vampire, and its light is far more damaging to them than any other. At the very instant that the disk of the sun starts to rise above the horizon (not the glow before it, but the sun itself), the vampire instantly loses 80% of his total healthy Hit Points. This will usually destroy any vampire who has taken some damage, and will likely doom the rest who, now severely damaged, must escape the sun's harmful rays.

Globe of Daylight does generate true sunlight, but it is not powerful enough to harm most vampires. However, it will hold them at bay, preventing the vampire from entering its light. The only exceptions to this are Vampire Lords, who will not be ham-

pered in the least by a Globe of Daylight spell, and Shades, who can be destroyed by it as if it were full sunlight.

Why? No one really knows why sunlight harms vampires, but there are several theories. The most common theory is that as creatures of the night, vampires cannot withstand the sun simply because like the shadows of night they are unable to exist in the light. A more accurate theory, however, would be that innate mystical properties of the sun, combined with the centuries of human belief in its power, have combined to make the sun an incredibly powerful symbol of divine power. Or perhaps it is simply the fact that, like most things which harm a vampire, the sun is an ancient symbol of life and purity. Whatever the reason, only real sunlight will work; artificial light has no effect on vampires, nor will the light of a thermonuclear explosion. Whatever the reason for the damage, it is in no way related to the intensity or spectrum of light waves given off by the sun, and therefore cannot be reproduced technologically.

Running Water

Another way to destroy a vampire is to drown one. This can only be done in a body of running water large enough to fully immerse the vampire; just dunking his head under wont work. Once completely underwater, the vampire will drown like a normal living person. While in or touching a body of running water, the vampire will be unable to use his natural abilities to transform, summon aid, fly, or control the minds of others, nor can a vampire swim in running water, which makes him extremely

vulnerable to his foes. Drowning will permanently destroy a vampire.

Running water is any body of continuously moving water that moves in one direction, including rivers, aqueducts, waterfalls, streams and similar natural and manmade bodies of moving water. Running water does not include such things as lakes, showers, water pistols, rain, fire hoses, or the ocean, and must be deep enough to fully submerge the vampire in order to drown him.

Why? Running water in the form of rivers and streams is one of the ancient symbols of life and purity to which vampires are vulnerable, however unlike sunlight, manmade rivers and streams will affect a vampire. It is the water moving in a single direction and giving life to the surrounding area which makes it effective, so any river that has not been where it is for at least a week will not harm vampires. The water does not need to be fresh, and salt water and brackish water will work fine, however chlorinated water does not work (sorry, luring the vampire into the water park won't do it).

Religious Symbols

Religious symbols held or worn by believers in the god the symbol represents will prevent a vampire from touching or attacking the bearer of the symbol. They can still order their allies and slaves to attack the bearer of the symbol, but cannot do it themselves. Should the bearer of the symbol advance on the vampire in a forceful manner, the vampire will be forced back. Should the symbol or even the shadow of the symbol touch the vampire, he will be burned as if by sunlight on the place where he is touched, and will suffer the penalties of being in sunlight until this contact is broken. Should the symbol be hidden (worn under clothes, etc.), the vampire may touch the bearer but cannot feed on him; however even the vampire will not know he cannot bite the bearer of a concealed symbol until he tries. If the vampire is not able to escape contact with the symbol, he can be destroyed permanently as if by sunlight.

Symbols are only an effective defense for the worshipers of the god or gods they represent, so a person cannot receive protection from a symbol that is not of his faith, and people who have no faith cannot protect themselves with religious symbols. Attending the religious services of a religion and mumbling a few prayers is not enough; the person must honestly believe in the god he worships, or the symbol will have no power for him.

Why? Holding a religious symbol boldly to fend off a vampire is calling on the power of the god the symbol represents to protect you from him. Whether it is the god who defends his worshiper or the worshiper's own faith which protects him is unknown, but a person can only be shielded by a symbol of his own religion, and must truly believe or it will not work.

Holy/Blessed Water

Holy water, like religious symbols, can be used against vampires and even destroy them. Holy water burns vampires like acid, and is usable by anyone, regardless of faith, because its power comes from the blessing bestowed on it rather than the faith of its user. Holy water can only be created by people who can call for their god's blessing according to the practices of their religion. This is usually, but not always, restricted to the

priesthood (or that religion's equivalent), but in some very rare cases extends to all members of the religion. The blessing of the water also requires the person have the level of faith required to use a holy symbol against a vampire (just because you are a priest does not mean you honestly believe). Once these requirements are met, the person can, by whatever rituals the religion requires, bless water for use against vampires (or whatever else you want holy water for). Being splashed with holy water (or shot with it from a water pistol) will generally inflict between 1D6 and 6D6 damage, depending on the amount of water used (G.M.'s call).

Why? Once again, like religious symbols, holy water calls on the power of a god. Whether its effect is a manifestation of divine power or the result of the worshiper's faith is unknown.

Holy/Blessed Weapons Note: If you have holy or blessed weapons in your campaign, these will generally be able to injure and even kill a vampire. The exact effect will vary with the weapon, however any weapon drawing on the power of a god or the faith of a religion should be considered extremely dangerous to a vampire.

Herbs

Garlic and wolfsbane will keep a vampire away. If worn around the neck, these herbs will prevent the vampire from approaching, and will prevent a vampire from entering a building or room if hung above all the entrances. If forced to consume these herbs, a vampire will vomit; likewise if a person eats excessive amounts of either herb, the vampire will be unable to drink their blood without becoming ill.

Why? In ancient time these herbs were believed to have power to ward off evil and evil spirits. Whether or not they actually possess this power in and of themselves or it is due to the faith their users have placed into them over the centuries, no one knows.

Silver and Wood

Weapons made of wood or nearly pure silver (85% or better) will inflict full damage to a vampire, and will even appear to kill him. In most cases, such weapons cannot truly kill a vampire, the damage inflicted in this way will heal quickly, and the vampire will seek revenge.

Why? Silver is an ancient symbol of purity, and the metal itself is believed to have mystical properties. Trees, on the other hand, are symbols of life, something diametrically opposed to the forces that animate a vampire. The symbolic properties of these substances grant them power to harm a vampire.

Stakes

Wooden, silver or magical stakes can be used to incapacitate, but not kill, a vampire. In order to stake a vampire, the stake must be driven through a part of the vampire's body and into the ground or a nearby large object (table, wall, tree, etc.). There are two ways to stake a vampire. The first is to drive the stake through one of the vampire's limbs, usually a hand or a foot. This has the effect of holding the vampire in place and rendering the limb that is staked useless. The vampire cannot remove the stake by himself and will be unable to move anywhere unless he

can drag the object he is staked to with him (which is why the ground or a large object are preferred). The second way is to drive the stake through the vampire's heart. Once the stake has been driven through the vampire's heart and into the ground (or a large, immobile object), the vampire is completely immobilized and will appear dead until the stake is removed. If the stake is removed, the vampire will instantly awaken and go into a feeding frenzy.

A natural strike roll of 16 or higher is needed to drive the stake through the vampire and into the object behind (or under) him. In addition, the attacker must inflict damage equal to 10% of the vampire's remaining Hit Points, plus 5% of the total damage of the object the stake is driven into. For this reason, most vampire hunters will strike the stake with a hammer rather than simply thrusting it in. If the stake does not pierce both the vampire and the object he is against, he will not be incapacitated and will probably be very angry.

Why? Driving a stake through the vampire is an ancient ritual designed to bind him to the earth (or whatever object is handy). This is perhaps the only mystical ritual which can be performed by anyone. The ritual is powered by the collective belief of ancient and modern peoples that driving a stake through a vampire will paralyze it.

Fire

Vampires can be burned by fire. While vampires are not especially combustible, they will burn, and can be killed by burning. Vampires take half damage from all types of natural and magical fire, and will appear to die when reduced to zero Hit Points, however the vampire is not truly dead at this point and can regenerate fully from this state. In order to kill a vampire by burning, he must be completely reduced to ash, otherwise he will eventually regenerate to seek revenge. In order to be reduced to ash, the vampire must be reduced to as far below zero Hit Points as his healthy maximum is above zero. In other words, if a Secondary Vampire with 71 Hit Points were burned, he would need to be reduced to -71 to be killed; if he was only reduced to -70 he would survive and eventually regenerate. Likewise, a Vampire Lord with 900 Hit Points would need to be reduced to -900 Hit Points in order to be killed by fire.

In ancient times, vampires would be staked and then burned, the staking was intended to hold the vampire in place so that it could be burned without it escaping from the fire as its ropes or other bindings burned away. In our modern age of flame throwers and gasoline, it is rarely necessary to stake a vampire in order to burn him, however doing so will make burning him a much safer task.

Why? In addition to its destructive aspects, fire was viewed as a life giving and purifying force in the ancient world. Like most ancient symbols of life and purity, it is an effective weapon against vampires. However, it is unknown whether fire has any innate properties to combat vampires, or if it is simply empowered by the belief of the billions of human beings who have lived in fear of vampires over the centuries.

Decapitation

Like a stake through the heart, decapitation will totally immobilize a vampire. Without its head, the vampire cannot move

or act in any way. He cannot even cast spells or use his special powers, and he will appear to be completely dead. A beheaded vampire is not dead, and will recover from such a state when his head is brought within ten feet (3 m) of his body, at which point it will be drawn back to him, and reattach itself within a single minute. A vampire can remain alive in this decapitated state indefinitely, in fact some have remained in this state for centuries. However, if either the body or the head of the vampire is ever destroyed, the vampire will fully regenerate within 24 hours, and awaken. In order to kill a beheaded vampire, the body and the head must be destroyed on the same day, without bringing them within ten feet (3 m) of each other. The traditional way of destroying a beheaded vampire is to burn the head and the body on separate pyres (remember, they must be reduced to ash).

To decapitate a vampire, the player must first declare his intention to do so (it is a Called Shot), then he must in a single attack with a bladed weapon that is capable of damaging a vampire inflict damage equal to 25% of the vampire's total healthy Hit Points. (E.g. a vampire hunter armed with a silver-bladed axe attempts to behead a Secondary Vampire with 80 Hit Points. In order to succeed, the vampire hunter needs to inflict 20 points of damage to the vampire in a single Called Shot to the neck. Even if he had first beaten the vampire down to 1 Hit Point, he would still need to inflict 20 Hit Points damage to decapitate it.) **Note:** If a player wishes, he can dismember a vampire, cutting off arms and legs in the same manner as he would decapitate him. This will slow a vampire down until it has a chance to recover his missing limb, but it will not immobilize the vampire. Lost limbs can be recovered and reattached by holding them in place for 2 attacks, or they can be regenerated within 24 hours.

Why? Decapitation separates the vampire's body from the control of its brain, so the vampire cannot make the body act, and without the body to sustain it the head stops functioning until they are reunited.

Soil of the Grave

When a vampire is buried after being killed and transformed by another vampire, a link forms between the vampire and the soil of its grave. From the time the vampire awakens to its new life till the time that it is destroyed, this link remains and cannot be broken. Every day while the sun is up, the vampire must rest on the soil of his grave. The vampire need not lie directly on it, he could put it in the lining of his coffin or in a false bottom in his coffin, but if there is no layer of earth from the vampire's grave beneath him, he cannot sleep. See above for the results of a vampire not sleeping.

The soil of the grave is defined as any dirt from anywhere within one mile (1.6 km) of where the vampire was originally buried before he awoke as a vampire. Should the soil be lost, stolen, or polluted with holy water or one of the herbs which can repel a vampire, it becomes useless, and the vampire cannot sleep until it is replaced with new soil from his grave.

Why? Vampirism is a curse. The victims of it are neither truly alive nor truly dead, but exist in a state of undeath, unable to walk in the sun or live as a mortal. The need for sleeping on the soil of their graves is an aspect of this curse. It is a constant

and painful reminder of what the vampire is, forcing him to return to his graves and lie “dead” while mortals walk in daylight.

Limited Entry

In order to enter a home or a church (or other religious building), a vampire must have the permission of someone who lives there (a priest, in the case of a church). Without this permission, the vampire is physically unable to enter the building (or apartment), nor can he use his powers against anyone inside. However, this does not prevent the vampire from sending his slaves in, or from throwing objects through windows, setting fire to the building, or other equally destructive things. This protection does not extend to public buildings, stores, restaurants, schools, malls, hotels, or vehicles. Once inside, the vampire can do whatever he likes until he leaves, at which point he will need permission to enter again from a person who lives there. This also does not apply to a place where the vampire lives, since he already has permission to enter.

Vampires never attempt to enter without the permission of someone inside, so it is unknown what would happen if one attempted this. If someone were to suggest that a vampire enter a home without permission, he would probably inform that person that it can't be done. The idea of entering a church without permission seems to frighten them a great deal though, implying that there is some kind of very unpleasant result to this.

Why? This is probably another aspect of the curse, designed to protect people to some extent from attacks by the vampire. However, it may also be a result of the belief that ancient people had (and most modern people still have) that they are safe at home, this belief creating some kind of protection from vampires. Similarly, churches are in a sense the property of the deity they are dedicated to, and vampires seem to be particularly vulnerable to the power of gods.

Casts No Reflection

Vampires cast no reflection in mirrors or other polished surfaces. As a result, they cannot be photographed or filmed, do not show up on surveillance cameras, and cannot be seen through night vision goggles and similar devices, including binoculars and telescopes that use mirrors (many don't, but some do). This makes vampires fairly easy to identify in a modern world, where a great deal of our optical technology is based on mirrors.

Why? No one is quite certain why vampires cast no reflection. It could be that the lack of a reflection is an aspect of the vampire's curse put in place as a constant reminder that the vampire is no longer human. Or it may be that it is a feature to enable mortals to detect a vampire and thereby protect themselves. Whatever the reason for this strange condition, it is a boon to vampire hunters, and a bane to the undead.

Other Supernatural Beings, Magic and Psionics

Vampires are susceptible to harm from the physical attacks of supernatural creatures, including other vampires. The natural weapons (claws, fangs, fists, etc.) of any supernatural creature or creature of magic will inflict full damage to a vampire. Should such attacks reduce the vampire to zero or less Hit

Points, he will fall to the ground immobilized, until such time as he is able to regenerate back up to 1 Hit Point. Once the vampire is immobilized by this damage, he can be destroyed using one of the methods described above.

Like attacks from a supernatural creature, magic and psionic attacks can do harm to a vampire, and some powers can even kill one. All attacks of this nature, from magical weapons, to spells, to psychic powers, will inflict full damage to a vampire, and when he is reduced to zero or less Hit Points he will be immobilized until he regenerates as described above.

Why? Supernatural creatures are the equal of a vampire. It only makes sense that they can harm them, it would be a mystery if they couldn't. As for magic and psionics, they are wild cards in the world of the supernatural, and often a mortal's best defense against it. Since vampires are to some degree mystically empowered, it is perfectly understandable that magic should be able to harm them.

The Death of the Vampire Lord

The only relatively certain way to destroy a “family” of vampires is to destroy the Vampire Lord who created them. This is a dangerous and foolhardy thing to attempt, even for well equipped and experienced vampire hunters, as the Vampire Lord has vast, unholy powers, armies of undead and living minions, and the knowledge of centuries of life. However, should the vampire hunters succeed in slaying a Vampire Lord, all of the vampires he created will also die. It does not matter where they are or even if they are in another dimension, they will all die instantly upon the death of the Vampire Lord who created them.

Why? The Vampire Lord is the source of vampirism. Destroying him cuts the vampires he created off from their source of unlife and immortality, instantly killing them.

Natural Abilities

Common to All Vampires

1. Near Invulnerability: All Vampires, from the powerful Vampire Lord down to the lowly Shade, will appear to be harmed by physical attacks. Swords will cut them, fists will bruise them, and being hit by a bus will break their bones. However, this does not actually harm the vampire, and such damage will not even slow them down. It doesn't matter how much damage is inflicted with mundane weapons or human hands, the vampire will be completely unharmed, although some vampires may act injured to catch an enemy off guard. Generally, the only things that can harm a vampire are those things listed above in its weaknesses; there are always exceptions, but those are the only substances and methods commonly known to be effective.

2. Immortality: A vampire does not age after his rebirth as one of the undead. He can live forever, provided he is not killed.

3. Impervious to Knockout/Stun: Hand to hand combat techniques designed to knock out, stun, or instantly kill an opponent are ineffective against a vampire and do not harm him. Judo style throws and leg sweeps are effective for knocking a vampire down, but do not inflict any damage to him, even if performed by a supernatural creature.

4. Does Not Breathe: Vampires do not need to breathe to live, so they are impervious to the effects of being in a vacuum or other environment where there is no breathable air. Likewise, a vampire cannot be choked to death. The only exception to this is running water, which can drown them; see above.



5. Unaffected by Heat or Cold: Being dead, a vampire is perfectly comfortable in any degree of heat or cold, and can live comfortably in any earthly environment. However, a vampire is vulnerable to fire, so they could not live on a lava flow or in the midst of a forest fire.

6. Recognize Other Vampires: A vampire will instantly recognize another vampire on sight, and know whether or not they are from the same “family.” However, a vampire cannot sense the presence of other vampires, and he must actually see them to know for certain.

7. Nightvision: Vampires have an incredible ability to see in near total darkness, enabling them to see clearly in the dimmest light as if it were as bright as noon. Furthermore, a vampire can see perfectly in total darkness up to 2,000 feet (610 m) away.

8. Regeneration: Vampires heal at the phenomenal rate of 2D6 Hit Points every melee round, they can re-grow lost limbs in minutes, and regenerate from near total destruction of their bodies after a single day of sleep.

9. Partial Invisibility to Infrared and Thermal Imaging: A vampire who has not fed recently will have a body temperature that is the same as the air temperature around him, however when the vampire feeds, the warm blood of his victim runs through his veins, raising his body temperature to nearly that of his victim for

a few minutes. A vampire who has fed will also bleed when cut, but if a vampire has not fed yet that night, he will not bleed when cut and will not register on heat detection devices.

Vampire Powers

Not all vampires have the same powers, or even the same amount of powers. A Shade might have only one or two powers, while an ancient Vampire Lord would have a vast arsenal of abilities.

Saving Throws vs Vampire Powers

Some powers of a vampire, particularly the powers which allow the vampire to manipulate the minds of others, as well as any spells or psionic powers, allow the victim to make a saving throw. The nature of the saving throw will be determined by the power (or spell if the vampire can use magic).

The powers of a Vampire Lord are so much more powerful than those of other vampires that the victims of a Vampire Lord suffer a -5 penalty to all saving throws vs any powers or spells he uses. The victims of a Master Vampire suffer a -1 penalty to saving throws vs his powers and spells. A Shade, on the other hand, is so weak that his victims will actually gain a +3 bonus to resist his powers or spells.

The Power of Centuries

The description of Dracula, that he had the power of centuries, was not merely a statement of his experience, but rather a statement of his raw power compared to other, younger, vampires. As a vampire lives, his power grows, and the longer a vampire has been alive, the more powerful he becomes. For every century a vampire lives, he gains a number of Age Points depending on his relative power, which he can spend to gain new powers, or to enhance powers he already possesses.

Each type of vampire will start with a number of Age Points according to the type of vampire he is, and then gain additional Age Points for every century he lives. Age Points not expended on powers can be saved as long as the vampire wishes until he has enough points to purchase the desired power. Points used to gain a power are permanently lost, and powers gained cannot be traded for a different power later; they are permanent.

Vampire Lords: 4D6x10 Age Points to start, plus they gain 25 points every century of life or level of experience (remember that most Vampire Lords start at 15th level).

Master Vampires: 2D6x10 +50 Age Points to start, plus they gain 10 points every century of life or level of experience.

Secondary Vampires: 2D4x10 +20 Age Points to start, plus they gain 5 points every century of life or level of experience.

Wild Vampires: 2D4x10 Age Points to start, plus they gain 3 points every century of life or level of experience.

Shades: 3D6 Age Points to start, plus they gain 1 point every century of life or level of experience.

Vampire Ghouls: 2D4x10 +20 Age Points to start, plus they gain 5 points every century of life or level of experience.

Wampyrs: None to begin with (see the **Nightbane® RPG**, page 189, for Wampyr powers), but they gain 3 Age Points every century of life or level of experience.

The Damned: 2D4x10 +20 Age Points to start, plus they gain 5 points every level of experience.

Scourges: 2D4x10 +20 Age Points to start, plus they gain 5 points every century of life or level of experience.

Blood Wraiths: As per the type of vampire he used to be.

Dhampirs: 2D6x10 +50 Age Points to start, plus they gain 10 points every century of life or level of experience.

Vampiriks: As per the type of vampire that created him.

Gaining Additional Powers

At any point during his life when the vampire has sufficient Age Points to gain the ability he desires, he can spend those points to gain new abilities. The new abilities appear while the vampire is sleeping, and he will have full access to them upon awakening.

There is no limit to the number or types of powers that a vampire can have, other than the points he has available to spend on them, and any restrictions as noted below.

Vampire Powers

Hypnotic Suggestion

Range: Line of sight.

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 10 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 20 I.S.P.

Saving Throw: Standard.

This power is exactly like the power of Super-Hypnotic Suggestion listed in the Vampire Powers section of the Nightbane rule book.

Mesmerism

Range: Line of sight.

Duration: Two minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 20 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 40 I.S.P.

Saving Throw: Standard.

Requirements: Must have the Hypnotic Suggestion power, must have bitten the victim.

This is a much more powerful version of the Hypnotic Suggestion power. It allows a vampire to completely suppress the will of any person he has ever bitten within his sight. Once the victim of this power has failed the saving throw, the vampire can command that person to do anything he desires, and the victim has no chance of resisting his will unless the vampire orders him to harm a loved one or do something that the victim knows will kill him. In these cases, and only in these cases, the victim is allowed a saving throw, which if successful will break the vampire's control over him. However, should the save fail, he will be unable to resist the vampire's command and will do whatever he orders him to. The vampire can release his victim at any time he desires, and the death of the vampire will instantly free him.

Note: This power can only be used on people the vampire has fed on. A bite in combat is not sufficient; the vampire must

drink at least a pint of his victim's blood. However, once the victim's blood has been drunk by the vampire, he is forever vulnerable to that particular vampire using this power (or other powers that require a bite) on him.

Enslavement

Range: Bite.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost to Acquire: 40 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 20 I.S.P. (see below).

Saving Throw: Standard.

Requirements: Must have the Mesmerism power; must have bitten the victim on three consecutive nights like a Slow Kill.

This power allows the vampire to transform a normal, healthy person into an utterly loyal slave with no will of his own, who will obey the vampire in everything. Those enslaved by a vampire will remain enslaved for as long as the vampire lives. Even if they are taken away from the vampire's influence, they will want to serve him, and will attempt to return to him. The vampire can command his slaves to do anything he desires, and they have no chance of resisting his will unless he orders them to harm a loved one or do something that they know will kill them. In these cases, and only in these cases, the slave is allowed a saving throw, which if successful will allow the slave to disobey that one command. However, should the save fail, he will be unable to resist the vampire's command and will do whatever he orders him to. Resisting a command does not break the vampire's control over the slave.

A vampire with this power can have as many slaves as he desires, however each slave causes the vampire to lose 5 I.S.P. from his permanent base for as long as that slave lives. So if a Secondary Vampire with 60 I.S.P. were to create a slave, then he would only have 55 I.S.P. to use for his other powers. This lost I.S.P. is recovered when the slave dies, however if the vampire kills his slave or orders him to kill himself, the I.S.P. is permanently lost.

Enslavement is a painful process which often takes a heavy toll on the victim, and there is a chance that the victim will be damaged by the enslavement process. This chance varies according to the type of vampire doing the enslavement:

Vampire Lords have a 25% chance of creating a defective slave.

Master Vampires have a 40% chance of creating a defective slave.

Secondary Vampires have a 60% chance of creating a defective slave.

Wild Vampires have a 90% chance of creating a defective slave.

Wampyrs have a 70% chance of creating a defective slave.

Shades have a 95% chance of creating a defective slave.

Vampire Ghouls have a 99% chance of creating a defective slave.

Side Effects

Roll on the following table to determine what side effects, if any, plague the enslaved victim. These effects are permanent



and will remain with the slave for the rest of his life, even if he is freed by the death of the vampire.

01-10% Sickly: The enslavement process somehow damaged the victim's immune system. He now suffers a permanent -5 penalty to save vs disease, poisons & drugs. This slave will have a runny nose and a cough about 90% of the time, and will catch the flu at least twice a year.

11-20% Lifeless: The enslavement process seems to have drained all the life out of the victim. The slave is always seems pale and corpse-like, his voice has no emotion, and his face is completely blank. If he sits still, the slave is likely to be mistaken for a corpse, however despite his appearance the slave is very much alive and in good health.

21-30% Listless: The slave has no initiative whatsoever and won't do anything unless ordered to. Even then, the slave moves like he is still asleep. When not commanded to do anything, the slave will stand or sit in the position he is in since his last command; he will only move when ordered to or when he becomes too tired to stand there, and then he will only move as much as necessary to sit down or obey the new orders.

31-40% Brain Damage: The slave's I.Q. is permanently reduced by 1D6+3, he loses all of his Secondary Skills, and is -20% to all skill checks. If the slave's I.Q. drops to 3 or less, he loses all but 2D4 skills and suffers a -40% penalty to the performance of those skills. Should his I.Q. be reduced to 0 or less (possible with slaves whose starting I.Q. was less than 9), he will lapse into a coma and will remain that way until he dies.

41-50% Aged: The slave ages 10 years upon enslavement.

51-60% Blood Drinker: Believing that he is becoming a vampire, the slave begins to drink the blood of living creatures whenever he can. The slave will even resort to eating bugs, but will try to drink the blood of higher animals, and even humans if given a chance.

61-90% Random Insanity: Roll on the random insanity table on page 45 of the *Nightbane® RPG*.

91-96% Two Defects: Roll again on this table twice, ignoring any rolls higher than 90.

97-00% Three Defects: Roll again on this table three times, ignoring any rolls higher than 90.

After-Effects

If the slave is freed by the death of the vampire controlling him, roll on the following table.

01-05% Restored to Normal: Not only is the slave now free, but he is healed of any defects inflicted by his enslavement. The slave is restored to the state he was in before the vampire enslaved him, and even his age is restored to that point. The slave remembers everything that happened while he was being controlled by the vampire, but is somehow not affected by it psychologically.

06-15% Amnesia: The slave's memories of the time he was under the vampire's control are completely gone, and nothing can ever bring them back. The last thing he remembers before the vampire's death is the vampire drinking his blood before enslaving him.

16-25% Obsessed with Destroying Vampires: Because of his experiences, the slave becomes obsessed with hunting and

destroying vampires. Whether he is actually any good at it depends entirely on the character.

26-35% Believes He Is a Vampire: After the vampire's death, the slave believes he has become a vampire. He will have hallucinations that he has all of the powers he saw the vampire who enslaved him using, and will believe that he is vulnerable to things that would hurt a vampire. None of this is true, and the slave is now little more than a raving lunatic.

36-45% Transfers Slavery: The death of the vampire does not free his slave, but rather it causes the slave to become the slave of whoever killed his master, whether they want him or not. The slave will serve his new master with the same devotion he served the vampire with, as if the new master were that vampire.

46-55% Refuses to Believe the Vampire Is Dead: Refusing to believe the vampire is dead, the slave goes insane. He continues to pursue what he believes are his master's objectives, and even hears voices (well, one voice), which he believes is his master giving him orders.

56-57% Possessed by the Vampire's Spirit: The spirit and powers of the dead vampire are transferred into the body of his slave, transforming it into a new undead body for the vampire. In effect, the slave dies and the vampire who was killed lives on in his body. The body has all of the power and the personality of the vampire, but still looks like the slave.

58-63% Reforged: Due to his experiences, the slave is reborn stronger than before. He finds his M.E. increased by 5, and becomes completely impervious to all forms of mind control and possession.

64-73% Alignment Changed: The slave's alignment is changed (but not necessarily reversed) by his experiences. Choose a new alignment.

74-75% Vampire Powers: Some of the vampire's powers are transferred to the slave. The slave gains 1D4 Vampire Powers from his undead master. This does not transform the slave into a vampire, it merely grants him some of the powers of one.

76-85% Random Insanities: Roll 1D4 times on the random insanity table on page 45 of the **Nightbane® RPG**.

86-94% Phobia of Vampires: The slave becomes absolutely terrified of vampires, and will panic if he ever encounters one, or any person or animal he thinks could be a vampire.

95-97% Obsessed with Getting Revenge: Filled with a seething hatred for those who killed his master, the slave dedicates his life to getting revenge on them for it.

98-99% Obsessed with Becoming a Vampire Himself: The slave becomes obsessed with finding a way to become a vampire, and dedicates his life to serving the undead in the hope that one of them will make him into a vampire.

00% Roll again on this table 1D4 times.

Bind the Supernatural

Range: Bite.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost to Acquire: 60 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 200 I.S.P., 200 P.P.E., and 15 Age Points. (Age Points are only lost if attempt is successful, the rest is expended regardless. Also, the Age Points are permanently gone when this is used, and will never be recovered even if the creature dies.)

Saving Throw: Standard.

Requirements: Must have the Enslavement power; must have bitten the victim on three consecutive nights like a Slow Kill.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

Perhaps the ultimate development of the vampire's mind controlling abilities is the power to bind a supernatural creature to their will. Nearly any supernatural being may be bound, provided that at the time of the binding the creature's total healthy Hit Points and S.D.C. combined are less than the Hit Points of the vampire, and that the supernatural creature's level at the time of the binding is less than half that of the vampire. (So for example, a level 6 Common Vampire with 80 Hit Points could not enslave a supernatural creature with any more than 79 combined S.D.C. and Hit Points, and no higher than 3rd level, however a 15th level Vampire Lord with 1,000 Hit Points could enslave a 7th level supernatural creature with as much as 999 points of combined S.D.C. and Hit Points.)

Once bound, the creature becomes utterly loyal to the vampire, and will do anything that he is commanded to do, though he may attempt to find ways of obeying that do not violate his alignment. The only thing that can free the bound creature from the vampire's control is the destruction of that vampire. **Note:** This can only be performed on a creature who is bound (or willing), and is in perfect health aside from the vampire's bites. So, the more powerful the creature is, the more difficult this will be.

Telepathic Link with Slave

Range: 1 mile (1.6 km).

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: Varies, see below.

Cost to Use: 1 I.S.P. per 5 minutes of use.

Saving Throw: None.

Requirements: Must have the Enslavement power.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to contact one of his slaves telepathically from as far away as one mile (1.6 km). The messages sent can be anything the vampire desires. Depending upon the amount of energy expended on this power, it can have greater range and additional uses. For 5 Age Points, this power will allow the vampire to send messages at a range of one mile (1.6 km). For an additional 3 Age Points, two way communication with the slave is possible. And for an additional 5 Age Points, the vampire gains the ability to read his slave's thoughts and see through his eyes. The range of this power can be increased by one mile (1.6 km) for every point spent on it beyond those used to gain additional abilities. So for example, a vampire who wanted to purchase the ability to converse with his slave at a range of ten miles (16 km) would need to pay 17 points into this power (5 to send, +3 to receive replies, +9 for an additional 9 miles of range).

Metamorphosis: Bat

Duration: Indefinite.

Cost to Acquire: 5 Age Points.

Cost to Use: None.

This power allows the vampire to transform himself into a bat. While in this form the vampire cannot speak, or perform



most skills, but can cast spells, use psionic abilities, and use any of his other powers. The metamorphosis takes one action/attack to complete, and during that time the vampire can take no actions except dodging.

Powers in Bat Form:

Flight: Can fly at twice the vampire's Spd.

Sonar/Echolocation: Can maneuver in total darkness and detect invisible creatures.

Ultrasonic Hearing: The vampire can hear ultrasonic sounds and subsonic sounds, as well as being able to hear sounds that are too quiet for a normal.

Combat: Half normal number of attacks, +2 to strike, +3 to dodge, +8 to dodge in flight, +5% to Prowl. Bites inflict 1D6 S.D.C., claws inflict 1D4 S.D.C. The vampire may drink blood and create other vampires while in bat form.

Metamorphosis: Wolf

Duration: Indefinite.

Cost to Acquire: 7 Age Points.

Cost to Use: None.

This power allows the vampire to transform himself into a large wolf. While in this form the vampire cannot speak, or perform most skills, but can cast spells, use psionic abilities, and use any of his other powers. The metamorphosis takes one action/attack to complete, and during that time the vampire can take no actions except dodging.

Powers in Wolf Form:

Sprinting: Can run double the vampire's normal Spd indefinitely, and he can run at triple his normal Spd for 1 minute per level of experience.

Track by Scent: 60% +5% per level of experience.

Leap: 20 feet (6.1 m) across and 6 feet (1.8 m) high with a short run, only half that distance without a run.

Combat: Increase the normal number of attacks by one, +2 to strike, +1 to parry, +4 to dodge, +1 to initiative, +15% to Prowl. Bites inflict 5D6 S.D.C. The vampire may drink blood and create other vampires while transformed.

Metamorphosis: Mist

Duration: Indefinite.

Cost to Acquire: 7 Age Points.

Cost to Use: None.

This power allows the vampire to transform himself into a cloud of mist. While in this form the vampire cannot speak, or perform most skills, cast spells, use psionic abilities, or use any of his other powers. The metamorphosis takes one action/attack to complete, and during that time the vampire can take no actions except dodging.

Powers in Mist Form:

Flight: Can fly at half the vampire's Spd.

Full Normal Senses: Can see hear and use his other senses normally, even though the mist has no eyes or ears.

Impervious to Some Forms of Attack: The vampire is impervious to all forms of physical attack from anything that can normally harm him, unless that form of attack specifically states that it can harm a vampire in mist form. While in this form he is still vulnerable to sunlight, fire, religious symbols (will still burn him if he touches them), and the vampire cannot cross running water while in mist form.

Combat: Combat is impossible in mist form, the vampire is only able to move and observe. However, the mist gains a +10% to Prowl (it's silent but relatively easy to spot). The vampire cannot drink blood or create other vampires while in mist form.

Metamorphosis: Shadow

Duration: Indefinite.

Cost to Acquire: 10 Age Points.

Cost to Use: None.

Requirements: Must have the Metamorphosis: Mist Power.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to transform himself into an insubstantial shadow. While in this form, the vampire cannot speak, or perform most skills, cast spells, use psionic abilities, or use any of his other powers. The metamorphosis takes one action/attack to complete, and during that time the vampire can take no actions except dodging.

Powers in Shadow Form:

Movement: Can slide along any surface, even along walls and ceilings, at the vampire's normal Spd.

Full Normal Senses: Can see hear and use his other senses normally, even though the shadow has no eyes or ears.

Impervious to Some Forms of Attack: The vampire is impervious to all forms of physical attack from anything that can normally harm him, unless that form of attack specifically states that it can harm a vampire in shadow (or mist) form. While in this form he is still vulnerable to sunlight, fire, and religious symbols (will still burn him if he touches them), and the vampire cannot cross running water while in shadow form. Also, while it does not damage him, driving a stake through the shadow will hold it in place (not paralyzed, just held).

Combat: The vampire cannot attack in shadow form, but he gains a +6 to dodge, and a +20% to prowl (silent and relatively difficult to spot unless the vampire is out in the open). The vam-

pire cannot drink blood or create other vampires while in shadow form.

Metamorphosis: Swarm of Insects

Duration: Indefinite.

Cost to Acquire: 15 Age Points.

Cost to Use: None.

Requirements: Must have the Metamorphosis: Mist Power.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to transform himself into a swarm of flying insects. While in this form the vampire cannot speak, perform most skills, cast spells, use psionic abilities, or use any of his other powers. The metamorphosis takes one action/attack to complete, and during that time the vampire can take no actions except dodging.

Powers While an Insect Swarm:

Flight: Can fly at the vampire's Spd.

Movement: Can crawl along any surface, even along walls and ceilings, at half the vampire's normal Spd.

Insects: The vampire transforms into a number of insects (whatever kind he likes) equal to his current Hit Points (so a wounded vampire will become a smaller swarm than a healthy one). Each insect will have a single Hit Point and will crumble to dust if it is killed. The vampire may separate the swarm, sending each insect off on its own (presumably to reform later), he can have the swarm remain together, or he can separate it into several smaller swarms. Individual insects are small targets and are attacked with a -5 to strike, however groups of 5 or more can be attacked as a whole (each point of damage kills one of the insects in the swarm) with no penalties to strike.

Special Vulnerability: Sunlight affects every insect in the swarm individually, so assuming this form during the day is instant suicide. This does not apply to Guardian energy blasts (they are focused and will only hit part of the swarm), but will apply to the Shade's vulnerability to Globe of Daylight spells.

Every insect killed is a Hit Point lost by the vampire when he resumes his true form. This damage cannot be regenerated while a swarm, but will regenerate normally once the vampire resumes his true form. Should all of the insects be killed, the vampire is destroyed. The insects are only vulnerable to attacks capable of harming the vampire.

Combat: Each insect or swarm of insects can attack once per melee with the full bonuses of the vampire. Single insects can inflict 1 S.D.C. damage per attack, while a swarm inflicts 1D6 S.D.C. for every 10 insects in it. Prowling is impossible as a cloud of insects (the buzzing from the wings and the size of the cloud make them too easy to spot), however a single insect (perhaps sent as a spy) can prowl with a +10% bonus. The vampire may drink blood, but not create other vampires, while transformed.

Metamorphosis: Swarm of Bats

Duration: Indefinite.

Cost to Acquire: 25 Age Points.

Cost to Use: None.

Requirements: Must have the Metamorphosis: Mist and Metamorphosis: Bat powers.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to transform himself into a swarm of bats. While in this form the vampire cannot speak, perform most skills, cast spells, use psionic abilities, or use any of his other powers. The metamorphosis takes one action/attack to complete, and during that time the vampire can take no actions except dodging.

Powers While a Swarm of Bats:

Flight: Can fly at twice the vampire's Spd.

Sonar/Echolocation: Can maneuver in total darkness and detect invisible creatures.

Ultrasonic Hearing: The vampire can hear ultrasonic sounds and subsonic sounds, as well as being able to hear sounds that are too quiet for a normal human to hear.

Bats: The vampire transforms into a cloud containing one bat for every 10 Hit Points he currently possesses (so a vampire with 72 Hit Points would become 7 bats); any points less than a full 10 points are not counted (but are not lost when the vampire resumes his true form). Each bat will have 10 Hit Points and will crumble to dust if it is killed. The vampire may separate the swarm, sending each bat off on its own (presumably to reform later), he can have the swarm remain together, or he can separate it into several smaller swarms. Individual bats are attacked individually, however groups of bats can be attacked as a whole as if they were a single creature. Every time a group loses 10 Hit Points, one of the bats in that swarm dies.

Damage inflicted to the bats carries over to the vampire when he resumes his true form. This damage cannot be regenerated while a swarm, but will regenerate normally once the vampire resumes his true form. Should all of the bats be killed, the vampire is destroyed. The bats are only vulnerable to attacks capable of harming the vampire.

Special Vulnerability: Sunlight affects every bat in the swarm individually, so assuming this form during the day is incredibly dangerous. This does not apply to Guardian energy blasts (they are focused and will only hit part of the swarm), but will apply to the Shade's vulnerability to Globe of Daylight spells.

Combat: Each bat or swarm of bats can attack twice per melee with the full bonuses of the vampire. Single bats can inflict 1D4 S.D.C. damage per attack, while a swarm inflicts 1D6 S.D.C. for every 2 bats in it. Prowling is impossible as a cloud of bats (the sound of their wings and the size of the cloud make them too easy to spot), however a single bat (perhaps sent as a spy) can prowl with a +5% bonus. The vampire may drink blood, but not create other vampires, while transformed.

Metamorphosis: Human

Duration: Indefinite.

Cost to Acquire: 20 Age Points.

Cost to Use: None.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to disguise himself as a normal human. While in this form the vampire can cast spells, use psionic abilities, and use any of his other powers. However, he will appear fully human, so he will not have any fangs in this form, which means that he cannot bite people to drink their blood or create other vampires.

While transformed into a human, the vampire possesses all outward signs of being human. He breathes, has a pulse, radiates heat, and cannot be detected by powers that sense vampires or the undead (he will be detected as a normal human). However, while in this form he will still possess all of his vampire powers and vulnerabilities, so he will be burned by sunlight, cast no reflection, be repelled by garlic, etc. This can often (even if the vampire is careful) tip off vampire hunters to his true nature despite the perfection of this disguise.

The metamorphosis takes one action/attack to complete, and during that time the vampire can take no actions except dodging.

Metamorphosis: Monstrous Form

Duration: Varies.

Cost to Acquire: 60 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 100 I.S.P.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to transform himself into a horrifying engine of destruction, though the exact appearance the vampire takes in this other form is left to the player. In this form the vampire's bite damage is doubled, and he grows wicked claws that inflict damage equal to his enhanced bite. P.S. is increased by 10%, Spd is doubled, and Hit Points are increased by 50% (damage suffered is taken first from these additional Hit Points, and damage to these Hit Points is not counted when the vampire resumes his natural form, however damage inflicted to the vampire's normal Hit Points will remain).

Vampire Lords: **Duration:** 5 minutes per level of experience.

Master Vampires: **Duration:** 1 minute per level of experience.

Secondary Vampires: **Duration:** 2 melees per level of experience.

Wampyrs: **Duration:** 1 melee per level of experience.

Shades: **Duration:** 1 melee per 3 levels of experience.

Vampire Ghouls: **Duration:** 2 melees per level of experience.

Summon Fog

Range: Varies.

Duration: Varies.

Cost to Acquire: 15 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 80 I.S.P.

The vampire is able to call up a thick blanket of fog, impairing the vision of those around him. Except as noted, this ability is identical to the spell Summon Fog. The size of the cloud and its duration vary depending on the type of vampire summoning it; consult the table below:

Vampire Lords: **Size:** 10 mile (16 km) radius per century of life. **Duration:** 1 day per level of experience.

Master Vampires: **Size:** 1 mile (1.6 km) radius per century of life. **Duration:** 1 hour per level of experience.

Secondary Vampires: **Size:** ½ mile (0.8 km) radius per century of life. **Duration:** 20 minutes per level of experience.

Wild Vampires: **Size:** 1,000 foot (305 m) radius per century of life. **Duration:** 10 minutes per level of experience.

Wampyrs: **Size:** ½ mile (0.8 km) radius per century of life. **Duration:** 20 minutes per level of experience.

Shades: **Size:** 100 foot (30.5 m) radius per century of life. **Duration:** 1 minute per level of experience.

Vampire Ghouls: **Size:** ½ mile (0.8 km) radius per century of life. **Duration:** 20 minutes per level of experience.

Summon Canines

Duration: Varies.

Cost to Acquire: 10 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 20 I.S.P.

The vampire is able to summon wolves or wild dogs to help him. These dogs will obey any spoken command that the vampire gives them, even suicidal ones. Domesticated dogs and guard dogs are never summoned, only wild dogs. The attributes and abilities of some sample types of dog can be found in *Through the Glass Darkly*TM, page 47. Once the vampire's control over the canines expires or he dismisses them, the dogs depart peacefully unless someone attacks them, at which point they will react normally. The number of canines summoned and the duration of the vampire's control over them vary depending on the type of vampire; consult the table below:

Vampire Lords: **Number:** 1D4x10 per century of life. **Duration:** The dogs will remain under the control of the Vampire Lord until he dismisses them, be it minutes or years later.

Master Vampires: **Number:** 2D6 per century of life. **Duration:** 1 hour per level of experience.

Secondary Vampires: **Number:** 1D6 per century of life. **Duration:** 20 minutes per level of experience.

Wild Vampires: **Number:** 1D6 per century of life. **Duration:** 10 minutes per level of experience.

Wampyrs: **Number:** 1D4 per century of life. **Duration:** 20 minutes per level of experience.

Shades: **Number:** 1 per century of life. **Duration:** 1 minute per level of experience. **Note:** There is a 30% chance that any canines summoned by a Shade will not depart peacefully, but will instead be angry with the Shade and attack him.

Vampire Ghouls: **Number:** 1D4 per century of life. **Duration:** 20 minutes per level of experience.

Summon Insects

Range: Varies.

Duration: Control lasts 20 minutes per level of experience. Insects may remain longer.

Cost to Acquire: 7 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 10 I.S.P.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to summon a huge swarm of hundreds of flies, gnats, and roaches. This swarm of insects can engulf people or even a car, blinding everyone inside it. The cloud of insects is disgusting and has a Horror Factor of 6 (9 for roaches). The insects buzz loudly, deafening those around them, fly into people's faces, and crawl on skin, into clothes, and into open mouths. They crawl on everything within the cloud and make disgusting crunching sounds when stepped on. Everyone within the cloud loses 1 attack per melee, and is -4 to initiative,

-2 to parry and dodge, and -1 to all other combat rolls. Vision and hearing are reduced by 75%.

The size of the cloud of insects varies depending on the type of vampire summoning it; consult the table below:

Vampire Lords: 200 foot (61 m) radius per century of life.

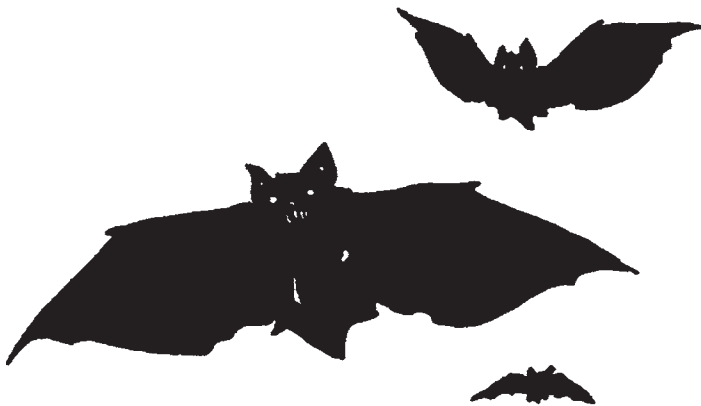
Master Vampires: 75 foot (22.8 m) radius per century of life.

Secondary Vampires: 25 foot (7.6 m) radius per century of life.

Wampyrs: 15 foot (4.6 m) radius per century of life.

Shades: 1 foot (0.3 m) radius per century of life.

Vampire Ghouls: 30 foot (9.1 m) radius per century of life.



Summon Bats

Duration: Varies.

Cost to Acquire: 8 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 20 I.S.P.

The vampire is able to summon a flock of bats to help him. These bats will obey any spoken command that the vampire gives them, even suicidal ones. The attributes and abilities of some sample types of bat can be found in *Through the Glass Darkly*TM, page 48. Once the vampire's control over the bats expires or he dismisses them, the bats depart peacefully unless someone attacks them, at which point they will react normally. The number of bats summoned and the duration of the vampire's control over them vary depending on the type of vampire; consult the table below:

Vampire Lords: **Number:** 1D4x10 per century of life. **Duration:** The bats will remain under the control of the Vampire Lord until he dismisses them, be it minutes or years later.

Master Vampires: **Number:** 2D6 per century of life. **Duration:** 1 hour per level of experience.

Secondary Vampires: **Number:** 1D6 per century of life. **Duration:** 20 minutes per level of experience.

Wild Vampires: **Number:** 1D6 per century of life. **Duration:** 10 minutes per level of experience.

Wampyrs: **Number:** 1D4 per century of life. **Duration:** 20 minutes per level of experience.

Shades: **Number:** 1 per century of life. **Duration:** 1 minute per level of experience.

Vampire Ghouls: **Number:** 1D4 per century of life. **Duration:** 20 minutes per level of experience.

Summon Rodents

Range: Varies.

Duration: Control lasts 20 minutes per level of experience, but rodents may remain longer.

Cost to Acquire: 7 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 10 I.S.P.

This power allows the vampire to summon a huge swarm of hundreds of rats, mice, and other rodents (vampires cannot summon capybaras or similar giant rodents). These rodents will obey any spoken command that the vampire gives them, even suicidal ones. The attributes and abilities of black rats can be found in *Through the Glass Darkly*TM, page 48. Once the vampire's control over the swarm expires or he dismisses them, the rodents depart peacefully unless someone attacks them, at which point they will react normally. The swarm of rodents has a Horror Factor of 10, and inflict 1D4 S.D.C. to anyone they are crawling over/around (damage is inflicted 1D6+1 times per melee), triple damage to anyone who falls into the swarm of rats (a maintain balance check or a sense of balance skill roll must be made every melee spent walking through the swarm to avoid falling; no check is necessary if standing still). The rats make a good deal of noise and make movement and combat difficult, but aside from the chance of falling, they don't cause any real penalties.

The size of the swarm of rodents varies depending on the type of vampire summoning them; consult the table below:

Vampire Lords: 200 foot radius per century of life.

Master Vampires: 75 foot (61 m) radius per century of life.

Secondary Vampires: 25 foot (7.6 m) radius per century of life.

Wild Vampires: 10 foot (3 m) radius per century of life.

Wampyrs: 15 foot (4.6 m) radius per century of life.

Shades: Two rodents per century of life.

Vampire Ghouls: 30 foot (9.1 m) radius per century of life.

Resist Sunlight

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 70 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 20 I.S.P.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

While this power is in effect, the vampire takes half the normal damage from sunlight, allowing him a better chance of survival. This power offers no protection whatsoever against the hideous damage inflicted by dawn.

Survive Sunlight

Duration: 1 hour.

Cost to Acquire: 200 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 100 I.S.P.

Requirements: Must have the Resist Sunlight power.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

While this power is in effect, the vampire takes no damage from sunlight, allowing him to move freely in the daytime with-



out being burned to ash. This power offers no protection whatsoever against the hideous damage inflicted by dawn.

Indomitable Will

Cost to Acquire: 45 Age Points.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

Vampires with this power become impervious to all forms of mind control and possession. Even their Vampire Lord cannot control them (although they will probably still follow his orders if they are smart).

Impervious to Physical Harm

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 2 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 5 I.S.P.

As stated above, vampires will appear to be harmed by mundane weapons that cannot actually harm them. A sword will cut them, bullets will put holes in them, etc. However, vampires who possess this power will not appear damaged by any weapon

that does not truly harm them. Swords will not cut them, bullets will bounce off harmlessly (unless they are made of silver, or are enchanted), etc. The vampire will seem utterly invulnerable to people fighting it without the proper weapons.

Superior Regeneration

Cost to Acquire: 60 Age Points.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power doubles the vampire's rate of regeneration, increasing it permanently to 4D6 Hit Points per melee round.

Telepathic Link with "Children"

Range: Varies, generally 1 mile (1.6 km).

Duration: 2 minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 5 Age Points; additional points may be spent to improve this power.

Cost to Use: 20 I.S.P.

Requirements: Must have the Create Vampires power.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to contact other vampires that he created telepathically from as far away as one mile (1.6 km). The messages sent can be anything the vampire desires. Depending upon the amount of energy expended on this power, it can have greater range and additional uses.

For an additional 3 Age Points, two-way communication with the vampire's "children" is possible. The range of this power can also be increased by one mile (1.6 km) for every point spent on it beyond the initial cost. So for example, a vampire who wanted to purchase the ability to converse with his children at a range of ten miles (16 km) would need to invest 17 Age Points into this power (5 to start, +3 for two-way communication, +9 for additional range). **Note:** This power does not grant the vampire the ability to read the thoughts of his children, nor does it allow communication with vampires he did not create.

Survive Lord's Death

Cost to Acquire: 100 Age Points.

Cost to Use: Permanent expenditure of 20 I.S.P. and 6 Hit Points.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires, Wampyrs, Scourges, Dhampirs or the Damned.

This power allows the vampire to continue living after the death of the Vampire Lord who created him. This power can only be used once, and it is used automatically when the Vampire Lord dies. However, without this power, the vampire would die when his Lord is killed.

Flight

Cost to Acquire: 25 Age Points to acquire; more points can be spent to increase the vampire's flight speed.

Cost to Use: 4 I.S.P. per melee of flight.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power enables the vampire to levitate and fly in his natural form. While flying, he can move through the air at his nor-

mal running speed. For every 2 additional Age Points the vampire spends on this power, he gains +10 to his flying Spd.

Social Invisibility

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 5 Age Points, 30 for Vampire Ghouls.

Cost to Use: 3 I.S.P., 10 I.S.P. for Vampire Ghouls.

Saving Throw: Perception Roll.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power does not make the vampire invisible, but rather it makes him not attract any notice. So long as he does nothing to attract attention to himself, no one will notice him as being anything unusual. So a rotted, foul smelling Vampire Ghoul could wander the mall and attract no more notice than a normal person, however if he tried to talk to someone they would immediately notice what he is (or at least what he appears to be) and react appropriately. People actively looking for a vampire must roll a Perception Roll of 18 to notice the vampire, or only a 15 to notice Vampire Ghouls (and the saving throw penalties for Vampire Lord and Master Vampire powers do apply to this roll). This power cannot be used while the vampire is already visible; he must get out of the view of the people he wishes to hide from or else it does not work (they have already noticed him; being less noticeable doesn't matter at that point). However, if the vampire is being chased and he can slip away from his pursuers (out of sight), he can use this power to try to hide from them.

Create Vampires

Range: Bite.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost to Acquire: 6 Age Points.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wampyrs, Scourges or the Damned.

This power allows a vampire to create more vampires. To create a vampire, the vampire with this power must bite his victim and drink his blood on three consecutive nights. On the third night, the vampire drains all of the victim's blood, killing him. Once slain by the vampire after three consecutive nights of feeding, the victim will lie dead for three days, then will rise from his grave (or wherever) as a vampire.

Roll on the following table to determine the type of vampire created. Vampire Lords gain a +30% bonus when rolling on this table, Master Vampires gain +10%. Flawed Vampires with this power suffer a -30% penalty, except for Shades, who suffer a -40% penalty. **Note:** This table extends above 100% and below 01% to take into account the bonuses and penalties of the different vampire types.

-39 to -30% Disaster: (*only possible for a Shade*) Both the victim and the Shade attempting to turn him into a vampire die.

-29 to Zero% Failure: (*only possible for a Flawed Vampire*) The victim dies, no vampire is created.

01-10% Failure: It seems to work, but instead of becoming a vampire, the victim becomes a Scourge.

11-20% Flawed: Shade.

21-35% Flawed: Vampire Ghoul.

36-40% Flawed: Wampyr.

41-70% Flawed: Wild Vampire.

71-99% Success: Secondary Vampire.

100-120% Success: The Secondary Vampire created is stronger than normal. Add 1D6 to one attribute and +20% to his Age Points, including Age Points gained in the future.

121-130% Success: (*only possible for a Vampire Lord*) The Secondary Vampire created is vastly more powerful than normal. Add 10 to any two attributes and increase his Age Points by 50%, including Age Points gained in the future.

Cast Reflection

Range: Line of sight.

Duration: Indefinite, can last as long as I.S.P. is being spent.

Cost to Acquire: 30 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 10 I.S.P. per minute.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to cast a reflection in mirrors and other reflective surfaces. This is used by vampires to help disguise their true nature. The reflection cast is normal in every way, giving a vampire hunter no reason to suspect that it is the reflection of a vampire.

Control Undead

Range: Line of sight to initiate control, unlimited once control is established.

Duration: Varies, see below.

Cost to Acquire: 40 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 80 I.S.P.

Saving Throw: Vampires and other powerful undead get a save vs psionics; otherwise no save is allowed.

Requirements: Must have the Mesmerism power.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to impose his will on undead beings, including other vampires, and force them to serve him for a period of time. To use this power, the vampire simply issues a command to the undead creature that he wishes to control and expends the I.S.P. necessary to activate the power. Animated dead, lesser undead and Shades are not permitted a saving throw, and are automatically under the vampire's control. More powerful undead creatures, and most vampires, must make a saving throw vs psionics to resist or they will fall under the vampire's power.

Once under the power of the vampire, the undead can be commanded to do anything the vampire wishes, short of destroying themselves (or hurting loved ones if they have any). Commands that are against the alignment of the undead creature will grant them a saving throw vs psionics to resist that command. If the save succeeds, they can refuse to obey that command; if not, they must do whatever they have been ordered to. Even if the save is successful, control is not lost; only that one command is not followed.

The time this control lasts varies depending on the type of vampire. Consult the following table to determine the duration of the control:

Vampire Lords: 1 week per century of life.

Master Vampires: 1 day per century of life.

Secondary Vampires: 2 hours per century of life.

Wild Vampires: 5 minutes per century of life.

Wampyrs: 15 minutes per century of life.

Shades: 1 minute per century of life.

Vampire Ghouls: 1 hour per century of life.

Enter Without Permission

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 60 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 40 I.S.P.

Saving Throw: The owner of the house is permitted a save vs psionics, which prevents the vampire from entering. The owner need not know that the vampire is entering to save.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power enables a vampire to enter a house (but not a church or other holy site) without the permission of one of its residents. The vampire can only remain inside for a short period of time, and must leave as soon as the duration of this power has ended. However, while inside, the vampire can threaten or attack the residents of the house in order to gain their permission to stay, at which point he can remain as long as he likes. This power does not work for churches or other holy places, and will do nothing to allow a vampire into a room or building protected by garlic or wolfsbane.

Resist Burning

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 200 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 20 I.S.P.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

While this power is in effect, the vampire takes half the normal damage from fire. This is the only ability that can protect a vampire from fire.

Rise During the Day

Duration: 1 hour per century of life.

Cost to Acquire: 60 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 50 I.S.P.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power allows the vampire to function in the daytime without being groggy or slow. With this power, the vampire can function without ill effect for the full duration, even if the duration spans many days (or even weeks for very old vampires). While this power is in effect, the vampire is impervious to the effects of sleep deprivation and does not need to rest on the soil of his grave, however, there are disadvantages to using this power. The vampire cannot recover any P.P.E. or I.S.P. while using this power. Also, once the duration expires, the vampire cannot use this power again for the same amount of time that it was used for (e.g., if the vampire used this power for 12 hours, he would not be able to use it again for another 12 hours). **Note:** This power *does not* protect the vampire from the damage caused by sunlight.

Resist Garlic

Duration: 1 minute per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 45 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 20 I.S.P.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This strange ability allows the vampire to temporarily switch off his natural aversion to garlic. While this power is active, the vampire is not bothered in the least by the presence of garlic, and can even eat garlic if he wishes.

Resist Religious Symbols

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience (or less; see Cost of Use).

Cost to Acquire: 200 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 75 I.S.P. *per minute*. The vampire can cancel this ability at any time.

Saving Throw: 10 or better; M.E. bonuses and bonuses for religious devotion (determined by G.M.) are applied to this roll.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power grants the vampire a limited resistance to the power of religious symbols, allowing him a chance to approach someone holding a religious symbol, or bite a person wearing one and feed on him or her (holder/wearer of the symbol is allowed a saving throw to keep the vampire back). In addition, while this power is active, the vampire only takes half damage from contact with a religious symbol or holy water.

Swim in Running Water

Cost to Acquire: 500 Age Points.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power increases the vampire's chances of surviving being drowned in running water by granting him the ability to swim in it. However, he cannot swim any better than a normal human would be able to (sorry, no advantages for Supernatural Strength; while in contact with the running water the vampire's strength is not considered Supernatural), and can be held under as easily as any normal human (more than about 50 lbs/22.5 kg of weight that doesn't float will do it easily). Remember that while in contact with running water, the vampire cannot use any of his powers or abilities, so he will have only his reduced strength and his wits to save him from drowning; all this power does is prevent him from automatically sinking like a stone.

Enhanced Strength

Cost to Acquire: 7 Age Points.

This ability permanently enhances the vampire's P.S. attribute by 2. This ability may be purchased multiple times to further augment the vampire's strength.

Enhanced Speed

Cost to Acquire: 5 Age Points.

This ability permanently enhances the vampire's Spd attribute by 10. This ability may be purchased multiple times to further augment the vampire's speed.

Enhanced Agility

Cost to Acquire: 10 Age Points.

This ability permanently enhances the vampire's P.P. attribute by 1. This ability may be purchased multiple times to further augment the vampire's agility.

Unearthly Beauty

Cost to Acquire: 10 Age Points.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Vampire Ghouls.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This ability permanently enhances the vampire's P.B. attribute by 5. This ability may be purchased up to three times to further augment the vampire's beauty.

Mental Power

Cost to Acquire: 200 Age Points; additional points may be spent on this power later to gain additional psionic powers.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power grants the vampire the ability to learn psychic powers, and automatically grants the vampire one Master Psionic power and two Minor Psionic powers. Every additional experience level, the vampire gains one Minor Psionic power, and every century the vampire gains one Master Psionic power. The vampire may also expend additional Age Points to gain new psychic abilities at any time. It costs 5 additional Age Points for every additional Minor Psionic ability the vampire selects, and 15 Age Points for every additional Master Psionic ability.

Note: Vampires who already possess psionic abilities from their life as a mortal do not need to acquire this ability. They will continue to acquire psychic powers as according to their former O.C.C. However, they may purchase this ability and gain the additional psychic powers it offers.

Sorcerous Power

Cost to Acquire: 350 Age Points; may be purchased multiple times to acquire multiple types of magic.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This ability grants the vampire the power to learn magic. The vampire can choose to study any type of magic he desires, however he must pay the initial cost again for each new type of magic he learns. Once the vampire acquires this power, he immediately understands magic as if he were a Sorcerer and immediately gains half the starting spells of the Sorcerer O.C.C. The vampire does not automatically learn new spells as he increases in levels, but rather he must seek out those who have knowledge of the spells he desires and learn the spells from them. Alternately, the vampire can study books and scrolls to acquire mystical knowledge.

Note: Vampires who already possess scholastic magical knowledge (i.e. Sorcerers, not Mystics) do not need to purchase this power in order to learn additional spells of the type they know. However, if they wish to acquire knowledge of an addi-

tional type of magic (Fleshsculptor Magic, for example), they will need to purchase this power to have access to that magic.

Great Magical Potential

Cost to Acquire: 15 Age Points; may be purchased multiple times.

Requirements: Must have Sorcerous Power.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power augments the vampire's personal P.P.E. reserve, granting the vampire additional P.P.E. to spend on spells. The amount of P.P.E. this ability provides varies depending on the type of vampire acquiring it. Consult the table below to determine the amount of P.P.E. gained by each type of vampire:

Vampire Lords: +100 P.P.E.

Master Vampires: +50 P.P.E.

Secondary Vampires: +25 P.P.E.

Wampyrs: +25 P.P.E.

Shades: +5 P.P.E.

Vampire Ghouls: +25 P.P.E.

Great Psychic Potential

Cost to Acquire: 15 Age Points.

Requirements: Must have Mental Power.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power augments the vampire's personal I.S.P. reserve, granting the vampire additional energy to empower Psionic and Vampire Powers. The amount of I.S.P. this ability provides varies depending on the type of vampire acquiring it. Consult the table below to determine the amount of I.S.P. gained by each type of vampire:

Vampire Lords: +100 I.S.P.

Master Vampires: +50 I.S.P.

Secondary Vampires: +25 I.S.P.

Wampyrs: +25 I.S.P.

Shades: +5 I.S.P.

Vampire Ghouls: +25 I.S.P.

Blood Scenting

Range: Varies, see below.

Cost to Acquire: 4 Age Points; additional points may be spent to increase the range.

This power enhances the vampire's ability to smell the scent of blood. A vampire with this power can smell the presence of a living being (any kind that has blood) within 1,000 feet (305 m). Spilled blood can be detected up to a mile (1.6 km) away. Identify creature by scent alone: 50% +4% per level of experience. Track living creatures by scent alone: 20% +5% per level (+20% if tracking spilled blood). Determine a person's or animal's diet by scent: 40% +5% per level. Determine a person's or animal's health by scent: 20% +5% per level.

For every 2 additional Age Points spent on this power, the vampire gains +1,000 feet (305 m) to smell living creatures, and

+1 mile (1.6 km) to smell spilled blood. The maximum number of additional points that can be spent on this power is 20.

Superior Nightvision

Range: See below.

Cost to Acquire: 1 per 100 feet (30.5 m) of range increase.

Selecting this power allows the vampire to increase the range of his already formidable nightvision. For every Age Point spent on this power, the range of the vampire's nightvision is increased by 100 feet (30.5 m). The vampire can spend as many points as he likes on this power, and can pay additional points into it later to improve his nightvision as much as he likes.

Eat Mortal Food

Cost to Acquire: 1 Age Point.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power enables the vampire to eat food like a normal human. The vampire does not gain any nutrition from this food, but being able to eat goes a long way to helping the vampire disguise himself as a mortal. Some vampires take this power simply to be able to once again taste the foods they liked as a mortal.

Death Scenting

Range: Varies, see below.

Cost to Acquire: 26 Age Points; additional points may be spent to increase the range.

This power enhances the vampire's sense of smell, however the enhanced sense is attuned to one thing: the scent of the undead. A vampire with this power can smell the presence of any kind of undead creature within 1,000 feet (305 m). Identify type and age of undead by scent alone: 50% +4% per level of experience. Track undead creatures by scent alone: 20% +5% per level. Both rolls gain a +10% if bonus if the undead that is smelled is another vampire, and a +20% if it is a type of undead that smells bad (Vampire Ghouls, zombies, etc.).

For every 2 additional Age Points spent on this power, the vampire gains +1,000 feet (305 m) to smell undead creatures. The maximum number of additional points that can be spent on this power is 100.

Correct the Flaw

Range: Line of sight.

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience.

Cost to Acquire: 60 Age Points for Shades, 200 points for Wild Vampires and Vampire Ghouls.

Requirements: Must be a "Flawed Vampire," either a Wild Vampire, a Shade or a Vampire Ghoul, and must be at least 12th level and 300 years old as a vampire.

This ability has but one purpose: it transforms a Flawed Vampire into a Secondary Vampire. Upon becoming a Secondary Vampire, the Flawed Vampire gains all of the attributes and abilities common to Secondary Vampires, however he does not gain any additional Age Points until his next century of age, at which point the vampire gains Age Points as a Secondary Vampire from then on.

Sleep of Ages

Duration: Up to 1 century per level of experience. Must sleep for at least 10 years.

Cost to Acquire: 75 Age Points.

Cost to Use: All I.S.P. are expended during the sleep and must be recovered through rest or meditation once the vampire awakens.

Requirements: Must be at least 400 years old before this power can be taken.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires, Dhampirs or the Damned.

This strange power allows the vampire to place himself in a state of suspended animation, sleeping away years, sometimes centuries. While in this state the vampire is extremely vulnerable to attack, as the only thing that can awaken the vampire before he has slept as long as he initially decided is physical damage, and then it will usually be too late for the vampire to do anything to protect himself (vampire hunters encountering a sleeping vampire generally will drive a stake through his heart before doing anything else). Generally, this power is only used by a vampire who wishes to escape from a powerful enemy in such a way that the enemy will believe he is dead, although occasionally the vampire will do it out of sheer boredom with the hope of awakening to a more interesting age.

When a vampire decides to use this power, he lays in his coffin (or even just buries himself in the ground near his original grave) and goes to sleep just as he normally would. However in this case, the vampire uses his I.S.P. to place himself in a state of suspended animation for a period of time he chooses while he is entering this state. While sleeping like this, the vampire does not need to feed, and will not suffer the penalties of prolonged starvation when he awakes. Instead it will seem to the vampire as if he had slept but a single day. Even better, the vampire still ages and grows in power while sleeping, so he will gain Age Points for time spent asleep, which he can spend to gain new abilities upon awakening.

This sleep is not as great an idea as it initially sounds, however. First, as stated above, the vampire is extremely vulnerable in this state. Even with loyal followers and a well hidden lair, there is a good chance that the vampire may be killed before awakening. There is also a chance that the vampire's Lord may be killed while he sleeps, and if the vampire does not already possess the Survive Lord's Death power, that will kill him instantly. Finally, there is the fact that the vampire will be awakening to a strange and alien world. The vampire will be out of step with the world he finds himself in, ignorant of a great many potentially deadly things. The Sleep of Ages is not an activity to be undertaken thoughtlessly; the vampire must be well prepared, and even then may still be killed.

When a vampire uses this power, roll on the following table to determine if he awakens when he planned to or if he oversleeps. Oversleeping may extend beyond the normal duration of this power without ill effect to the vampire (aside from the dangers of sleeping far too long). Master Vampires gain a +10% bonus to this roll, and Vampire Lords *never* oversleep so they don't need to roll at all.

01-05% Never Awakens: The power eventually fails to sustain the vampire and he dies.

06-10% Never Awakens: The vampire cannot awaken on his own; only physical damage will rouse him.

11-19% Oversleeps: Sleeps 2D6 centuries longer than planned.

20-28% Oversleeps: Sleeps 1D6 centuries longer than planned.

29-37% Oversleeps: Sleeps 4D6 decades longer than planned.

38-46% Oversleeps: Sleeps 2D6 decades longer than planned.

47-55% Oversleeps: Sleeps 1D6 decades longer than planned.

56-64% Oversleeps: Sleeps 4D6 years longer than planned.

65-73% Oversleeps: Sleeps 2D6 years longer than planned.

74-82% Oversleeps: Sleeps 1D6 years longer than planned.

83-00% Awakens Normally: At the exact time planned.

Resist Blood Lust

Cost to Acquire: 10 Age Points.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires or Scourges.

Grants a +1 to all saving throws vs Blood Lust for every century the vampire has lived, and an additional +1 for every level of experience.

Live on Animal Blood

Cost to Acquire: 250 Age Points.

Requirements: Must be at least 200 years old before this power can be taken.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires or Scourges.

This power grants the vampire the ability to drink the blood of animals instead of the blood of intelligent beings. While subsisting on animal blood, the vampire will need twice as much blood as he normally would require to satisfy himself were he drinking human blood.

Blood Fasting

Duration: 1 day per level of experience. +1 day per century of life.

Cost to Acquire: 200 Age Points.

Cost to Use: 400 I.S.P.

Requirements: Must be at least 400 years old before this power can be taken.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires or Scourges.

This power enables the vampire to resist his body's need for blood. Once this power is activated, the vampire will not need to feed for the full duration. When the duration expires, the vampire is only as hungry as he would normally be had he been feeding the whole time this power was active. This power cannot be used again after it expires until the vampire has had a full two weeks of normal feeding.

Scholarly Mind

Cost to Acquire: 100 Age Points; may be purchased multiple times to gain additional skills.

Restriction: Cannot be taken by Wild Vampires.

This power represents the vampire setting aside extra time and effort to learn new skills. Vampires who acquire this power

will usually be those who have the least trouble adapting to the changing times. This power makes the vampire in some ways more dangerous, because he will have an increased understanding of the time and culture that he is currently living in (this is basically a vampire with a college education).

Selecting this power grants the vampire six new O.C.C. Related Skills. (Alternately, if you are using *Heroes Unlimited*TM or *Ninjas & Superspies*TM, this power grants one additional Skill Program.) The skills gained through this power begin at first level proficiency, and have no bonuses other than the vampire's I.Q. bonus.

Insect Walking

Duration: Continual, may be used at will.

Cost to Acquire: 30 Age Points.

Restriction: Cannot be used during the day, or over running water.

This strange power allows the vampire to walk on walls or ceilings as easily as he walks on level ground. Gravity will still effect him, and if he loses contact with the surface he is walking on, or it is broken, then the vampire will fall. The vampire can only carry half what he normally can while using this ability or he will fall. If he falls, the vampire may attempt to roll a dodge (P.P. bonuses only) vs a target number of 14 to land on his feet. **Note:** The vampire cannot roll to land on his feet if someone of equal or greater strength is holding onto him.

Vampire Nutrition, Drinking Blood

When considering the diet of a vampire, it is important to consider just how many different types of blood are out there for the vampire to choose from, and what the benefits of each type of blood are.

Animal Blood

Generally speaking, only Wampyrs can drink animal blood and expect to gain any nutrition from it (unless they have the Live on Animal Blood power). Typically a Wampyr requires only a single pint of blood every three days. Vampires with the Live on Animal Blood power will require 2 pints of animal blood every night to remain healthy, but animal blood never fully satisfies the thirst of a vampire (or a Wampyr).

Human Blood

The blood of humans (or non-supernatural humanoids) is the main food in a vampire's diet, and while not the best blood a vampire can have, this is what the vampire truly craves. A typical vampire requires only a single pint of blood every night (or 2 every other night) to remain healthy, however his thirst is such that he desires far more than is really needed to survive. The average vampire will need between 8 and 16 pints of blood a night to fully satisfy his thirst – that's one or two victims every night to keep the vampire happy.

Nightbane Blood

Despite their inability to become undead themselves, Nightbane find themselves the targets of the undead because their blood is even more satisfying than that of a normal human. Vampires describe the blood of a Nightbane as being “thick” or “heavy,” and while it has the same nutritional properties of human blood, it is more filling, and a vampire only requires 2 to 4 pints of Nightbane blood to fully satisfy his thirst.

Doppelganger Blood

The blood of Doppelgangers is not only less filling than human blood, but it is also less nutritious, requiring the vampire to drink 2 pints a night to remain healthy, and at least 16 pints to satisfy his thirst, often twice that much.

Vampire Blood

Drinking the blood of another vampire has no increased nutritional value beyond that of a normal human, but the vampire will gain +1 to all combat rolls and +5% on all skills for 1 day for every pint of vampire blood that he drinks. Completely draining and then killing a non-Flawed Vampire will grant the vampire drinking his blood +1 Age Point. **Note:** It does a vampire no good whatsoever to drink his own blood.

Vampire Lord Blood

It is very rare that a Vampire Lord lets anyone drink his blood, and when it does happen it is usually as a reward for *centuries* of faithful service. Any vampire, regardless of his type, who drinks the blood of a Vampire Lord will instantly be raised to the status of a Master Vampire after drinking a single pint, and for every additional pint they are allowed to drink they will gain a full century’s worth of Age Points. A vampire will not need to feed for 1 month after drinking the blood of a Vampire Lord.

Nightlord Blood

Nightlords never willingly let a vampire drink their blood, however should a vampire (perhaps an ancient Vampire Lord could manage it) drink the blood of a Nightlord, he will gain 2 centuries worth of Age Points (regardless of how many pints he drinks at once). The blood of an Avatar will grant the vampire 4 Age Points. This blood only grants the listed amount if at least a single pint is drunk, however it does not matter how much more than a single pint the vampire drinks, the result is the same. A vampire can only gain the advantages of drinking these kinds of blood once from each individual Nightlord (or Avatar); draining the same being’s blood multiple times, even centuries apart, will not grant additional bonuses (however, the blood from a different Nightlord is an entirely different matter).

Dragon Blood

The blood of dragons (if they exist in your campaign) is incredibly toxic to vampires. If a vampire drinks dragon blood, he will suffer 1D6 Hit Points of damage every melee round for 3D6 melees, and completely lose his ability to regenerate for three days.

The Blood of Other Supernatural Creatures

The blood of other supernatural creatures cannot be consumed. If the vampire tries, he will vomit.



Optional Rules and Material for Vampires

Additional Vampire Family Traits Table

Not only are the powers of every vampire unique, but vampires will often have a trait or collection of traits that is common to their family. Roll on the table below to determine which traits are common to a vampire’s family; all vampires in the family will have these traits (with the possible exception of Vampire Ghouls).

01-05% Retractable Fangs: The vampire’s fangs retract into his jaw whenever the vampire wishes it. This makes it easier for the vampire to pass himself as a normal human, since he doesn’t have to worry about someone noticing his fangs.

06-10% Marble-Like Flesh: The vampire’s skin is pale, almost white, resembling polished marble. It is also hard and cold to the touch, feeling like stone rather than flesh. This trait makes

the vampire much easier to spot, but the hardness of his skin adds +5 damage to all hand to hand attacks.

11-15% Glowing Eyes: The vampire's eyes glow whenever he is angry or using one of his powers. This makes the vampire easier to spot as a vampire, but it also gives him a +1 to Horror Factor while his eyes are glowing. The color the eyes glow is up to the player or G.M., however all vampires in his family will have the same color glow.

16-20% Long, Sharp Fingernails: The vampire has exceptionally long fingernails which can be used as claws. This does not automatically mark him as a vampire to those who see him, but it is very noticeable. The fingernails add 2D6 to hand to hand attacks when used to scratch or gouge, or similar attacks that employ fingernails.

21-25% Visible Veins: The vampire's skin is slightly transparent, and purple veins are clearly visible beneath it, making the vampire look inhuman. This feature reduces the vampire's P.B. by 1, but it increases his Horror Factor by 1.

26-30% Strange Eyes: The vampire's eyes are somehow unusual. It could be that the vampire has cat-like or wolf-like eyes, or that they are an unusual color, but whatever it is makes the vampire obviously inhuman while his eyes are visible.

31-35% Feral Appearance: The vampire's face and body are distorted in some inhuman way, making him look like a monster. The exact appearance of the vampire is left to the player, but all vampires of this family will have a similar appearance. -2 to P.B., +2 to Horror Factor.

36-40% Grace and Beauty: Vampires in this family are all unusually attractive and agile. Often vampires in this family will select humans who are already beautiful to transform, however this is not always the case. Vampires from this family gain a bonus of +2 to P.B. & P.P. **Note:** Vampire Ghouls gain no P.B. bonus from this trait.

41-45% Pointed Ears: The vampire's ears are strangely shaped and come to a point at the tips. The exact appearance of the vampire's ears and how extremely they are pointed is left to the player, but all vampires in this family have ears that look the same.

46-50% Protruding Fangs: The vampire has a strange overbite, causing his fangs to stick out of his mouth in an odd way. The vampire's fangs protrude over his lower lip (as is shown in many pictures of vampires) and are obvious to everyone who sees him, making it nearly impossible for him to pass himself as a normal human.

51-55% Four Fangs: This vampire not only has fangs on the top, but he also has a pair on the bottom, giving him a wild appearance. Bites from this vampire inflict double damage.

56-60% Bite Marks Remain Forever: Vampires from this family always bear the marks of the bite that made them into a vampire. These marks look like an unhealed wound, but cause the vampire no discomfort and are usually easy to conceal. The only vampire in this family who will not have bite marks on him will be the Vampire Lord.

61-65% Mummified While Sleeping: While the vampire is sleeping in his coffin, his body takes on a withered, mummified appearance. This will fade the instant the vampire awakes, but while he is asleep, he looks like he has been dead for centuries, and will only be recognizable as himself to someone with the

Criminal Science & Forensics skill (-30% penalty to do this, and the examination has a 50% chance of waking up the vampire).

66-70% Insanity: Roll on the following sub-table to determine the exact nature of the insanity. All vampires from the same family will have the same insanity.

01-10% Obsession, Counting Things: Whenever the vampire encounters a group of identical small objects, such as seeds, beads, coins, marbles, or the like, he is compelled to stop and count them. This weakness, if known, may buy the vampire's victims the time they need to escape. Vampires with this obsession, however, are very fast at counting, and can count at a rate of 10 objects per level of experience every second (that's 30 per level of experience for every attack), so you will need to have a vast number of the small objects if you wish to significantly slow the vampire. Master Vampires count at double this rate, and Vampire Lords count at ten times the normal rate, while Wild Vampires and Shades only count 1 object per level of experience every second. Vampires with this trait are also +15% on all Mathematics skills. A vampire cannot be made to count during combat, however once the combat ends, he will immediately count the objects, even above pursuing his enemies (they count fast, so they can usually catch up). **Note:** As silly as this seems, it is one of the traditional weaknesses of a vampire. I've included it in this section because it is a vampire trait, but it was just too silly to apply to all vampires.

11-20% Obsession, Untying Knots: The vampire is obsessed with untying knots, and will do so whenever he encounters them. This obsession could be used to slow a vampire down, since the vampire always stops to untie a knot. The vampire, however, is inhumanly quick at untying knots, and can do it at a rate of 1 knot, per century of life, every second. Master Vampires can untie knots at twice this rate, and Vampire Lords can untie them at ten times this rate, while Shades and Wild Vampires can only untie knots at a rate of 1 knot per *two* melee attacks. Vampires with this trait are also +15% on all skills involving tying and untying knots (Rope Works, Escape Artist, etc.). A vampire cannot be made to untie knots during combat, however once the combat ends he will immediately do so, even above pursuing his enemies. A trained vampire hunter will be able to identify vampires with this trait easily, because all of their victims will be found with their shoelaces untied. **Note:** As silly as this seems, it is one of the traditional weaknesses of a vampire. I've included it in this section because it is a vampire trait, but it was too silly to apply to all vampires.

21-30% Obsession, Feeds Only on Attractive Members of the Opposite Sex: Unless starving, this vampire will not select a victim who has a P.B. less than 12.

31-40% Phobia, Mirrors: The vampire hates and fears mirrors, and the sight of one will repel him as if someone were holding a holy symbol. Unless the vampire makes a successful saving throw vs insanity, he cannot approach the mirror or even look at it. If his saving throw is successful, however, the vampire will immediately smash the mirror.

41-50% Phobia, the Symbol of a Particular God: When confronted with a particular symbol of a certain god (e.g., a Celtic cross, an eye of Ra, etc.), the vampire is not only held at bay, but is forced to flee unless he makes a successful sav-

ing throw vs insanity, in which case it has only the same effect as an ordinary holy symbol.

51-60% Phobia, Crowing Roosters: The sound of a rooster crowing fills the vampire with dread, and he will fear the imminent approach of dawn. Unless he makes a successful saving throw vs insanity, he must immediately flee to his daytime resting place. No, a recording won't work; the vampire will know the difference.

61-70% Phobia, Priests of a Particular Faith: He cannot approach or attack a priest of this faith unless he first makes a saving throw vs insanity.

71-80% Phobia, Bright Lights: The vampire is repelled by bright light, and held at bay as if by a holy symbol. He may only approach on a successful saving throw vs insanity.

81-90% Phobia, Open Water: The vampire cannot cross any body of water unless he makes a successful saving throw vs insanity.

91-00% Random Insanity: Roll once on the random insanity table found on page 45 of the **Nightbane® RPG**.

71-75% Silent Footsteps: The vampire makes absolutely no sound when walking or running. His clothes don't swish, his shoes don't squeak, floors don't creak, twigs don't snap, and leaves don't rustle. In short, he makes no sound at all unless he deliberately chooses to. Vampires with this trait automatically possess the Prowl skill at +15%.

76-80% Enormous Sexual Appeal: The vampire has a tremendous appeal to the opposite sex. The vampire is not only beautiful, but is also incredibly charming. The vampire gains a bonus of +3 to P.B. and M.A., and automatically possesses the Seduction skill at +15%.

81-85% Aura of Dread: The vampire exudes an aura of fear that can be felt by all around him. Animals and children panic when he approaches, babies cry, dogs whimper, and even the bravest of people feel uneasy around him. The vampire gains a +2 to his Horror Factor, and +10% to all attempts to Intimidate. He also gains a +15% to the Interrogation skill, because the people he is interrogating are terrified of what he might do.

86-90% New Unique Trait: The vampires of this family have a trait that is entirely unique to them. This could be nearly anything, however it is subject to the G.M.'s approval, and generally should not give a bonus higher than +3 or 15%.

91-95% Roll twice, ignoring results of 91 or higher.

96-00% Roll three times, ignoring results of 91 or higher.

Vampire Q & A

Here are a few questions about vampires that I have seen people ask that I feel need to be addressed.

Q: The sun is basically a huge, ongoing thermonuclear reaction. Since hydrogen bombs are essentially the same natural process as the sun, will the light from an H-bomb kill a vampire?

A: No. The sun damages vampires due to its own mystical properties, not due to any natural properties of the light it is generating or the nuclear reaction that it uses to generate that light. It is magic, not science, and therefore cannot be duplicated scientifically. Sorry, no nuclear flash frying vampires, and no UV lamp sun guns either.

However, that being said, a nuclear reaction of any kind, in fact most any explosion, generates quite a bit of fire. Vampires are vulnerable to fire, so any vampire caught in a nuclear firestorm would be instantly killed. (You won't even have to scatter the ashes, the shockwave will do that for you.)

Q: Vampires don't need to breathe and aren't affected by cold, so can they live in space?

A: Generally no. There is a lot of sunlight in space, and the sun never sets up there, either. In order to survive in space, the vampire would require some kind of protective capsule that completely shielded him from the sun, and he could never leave the capsule except while it was in the shadow of a large object (like the moon).

On the other hand, a vampire could survive on the moon, as long as he managed to stay out of sunlight (just like on Earth) but there is that little problem of needing blood to drink, and I doubt very much that there will be enough people on the moon to support even one vampire for very long.

Q: Vampires take full damage from magic, and full damage from fire. Does that mean they take double damage from magical fire?

A: No. Humans also take full damage from both magic and fire; do they take double damage from magic fire? No, of course not. So why should vampires?

Q: How much would it cost to have my character's katana silver plated so I can kill vampires with it?

A: Probably about \$100 every time you need to re-plate it. That isn't too bad the first time, but it will get expensive since every time you hit something hard (like bone), every time your weapon is parried with another weapon, and every time you sharpen it, the silver plating will start to peel off (sharpening it will take it all off; otherwise it will stay on for about 2D6 good hits or parries). Plus, plating the blade with anything will thicken the blade a tiny bit, making the edge duller, so that the blade suffers a -2 penalty to the damage it inflicts.

The only weapons that would really do well in the long term are blunt weapons with heads completely made of silver, or silver weapons that are somehow magically strengthened. Other than that, your best bet would be silver bullets, although wooden bullets would be cheaper and have the same effect. Silver is, generally speaking, too soft a metal to make an effective weapon. (Weapons made entirely of silver would have half the normal S.D.C. and would take damage every time they parried or were parried by a weapon made of a harder metal, such as steel or iron.)

Q: Can I kill a vampire by shooting it with a water pistol?

A: Not unless the water pistol is loaded with holy water. If it's just plain tap water, you'll just make the vampire laugh at you before he kills you.

Q: Can I create a rainstorm and melt the vampire away with the rain, since it is running water?

A: No. Rain, showers, fire hydrants, garden hoses, and water pistols are not running water, and even if they were, running water does not melt a vampire, it's holy water that does that. Unless the water is deep enough to drown in, the vampire has nothing to fear from running water. So no, rain, magical or oth-

erwise, will not harm a vampire. In fact, vampires like the rain; it darkens the sky and lets them go out during the day relatively safely (though still suffering from the other effects of daytime; see above).

That being said, there is one, and only one, situation where rain can harm a vampire. If the rain is a result of direct divine intervention, caused by a god using the god's Deific Powers, then the rain is considered to be holy water, since it was blessed by a god's power. In that one, extremely rare situation, a vampire can be harmed and even killed by rain.

Q: My vampire learned Gymnastics and Wrestling before becoming a vampire. Does he get the bonuses from them or not?

A: Any Physical skills learned *before* becoming a vampire provide their full normal bonuses, because the character's body was changed by them while he was still alive. However, Physical skills learned *after* becoming a vampire will only provide combat bonuses, not attribute bonuses, because the character's body is dead, so it will not react to exercise the way a living body would.

Vampires and the Martial Arts

The following are *optional* rules for resolving the effects of various Martial Arts Powers from *Ninjas & Superspies™* and *Mystic China™* with regard to their effects on vampires. If you do not intend to use elements of *Ninjas & Superspies™* in your *Nightbane®* campaign, then feel free to skip over this section entirely.

Chi

Vampires are undead, and therefore are Negative Chi creatures. As such, they are vulnerable to damage and complete destruction from Positive Chi attacks, however they are slightly less vulnerable to it than Infernals and Undead Immortals are.

Most vampires have no knowledge of martial arts, and are therefore vulnerable to Chi based attacks without any defense. The only protection a vampire is likely to have is a Mind Block, which will fully protect them from attacks to their Chi, however it will not protect them from physical damage inflicted by Chi based attacks.

Vampires possess a Negative Chi base equal to their healthy Hit Points. This base will increase as their Hit Points do, but is not reduced by injury (likewise, Hit Points are not lost due to a loss of Chi). If the vampire was a martial artist before being turned into a vampire, the Chi base he possessed in life is added to the Chi gained from being a vampire, however once he becomes a vampire, martial arts skills he possesses cannot raise his Chi any further. Chi can now only be increased by gaining additional Hit Points.

Should a vampire be reduced to zero Chi, or worse, become infected with Positive Chi, he will lose all ability to regenerate. If he is brought to zero or less Hit Points while in this state, he will be permanently destroyed. If the vampire is brought into a state of Positive Chi, he will not only be unable to regenerate,

but he will lose 1 Hit Point every hour he is filled with Positive Chi, until either he is able to rid himself of it or he dies from it.

The vampire recovers Chi in much the same way a normal human would; the only real difference is that the vampire requires Negative Chi rather than Positive. The rules for Chi recovery are found on page 16 of *Ninjas & Superspies™*. Remember that most vampires have no Chi Mastery abilities, and if infected with too much Positive Chi they may require the assistance of a Chi Master to have their Chi corrected before they die from it.

Chi attacks that inflict physical damage will inflict full damage to the vampire, however they cannot permanently destroy him unless his Negative Chi is reduced to zero or he is infected with Positive Chi. Such Chi attacks include but are not limited to Body Chi (boost strength), Hardened Chi, One Finger Chi, Tamashiwara (same as using it on a normal human), Kaijutsu, and any other attacks the G.M. finds appropriate.

Finally, the Chi Mastery ability of Radiate Positive Chi is a special consideration that must be noted, as it allows the Chi Master to generate true sunlight. This ability damages vampires in exactly the same way as true sunlight does. This is all stated under the special ability, but it is something important to keep in mind during any confrontation between vampires and Chi Masters.

Atemi

Most Atemi attacks are geared towards using the structure and function of the human body against their victims. As a result, most Atemi abilities have no effect on vampires. The Open Hand Atemi, Enlightenment Strike, and Chi Block will affect a vampire normally, but other Atemi abilities have no effect on them. The Dim Mak has absolutely no effect on a vampire.

Zenjoriki

Any Chi based Zenjoriki will have full effect on the vampire. Calm Minds can be used to calm a vampire who is in a feeding frenzy. Vibrating Palm can only damage vampires who are either staked through the heart or beheaded, and cannot permanently destroy them.

Other Martial Arts Powers

Arts of Invisibility and Martial Arts Techniques are fully effective against a vampire, and the Yin Yang Kata will allow a martial artist to harm and kill a vampire as if he were a supernatural creature.

Vampire Martial Artists

If the vampire had a Martial Arts O.C.C. before becoming a vampire, he retains all of the bonuses and abilities he gained from that O.C.C. as any other vampire would (see above). However, there are some changes in the powers a vampire can gain and use. This has nothing to do with any change in the skills possessed, and everything to do with the radical changes in the martial artist's basic nature resulting from his becoming one of the undead.

Chi Powers

A vampire, even one who was a great Chi Master, loses the ability to use any of the Positive Chi powers he possesses. All other Chi powers function normally, but the vampire can no longer use or even safely hold Positive Chi in his body.

A vampire also cannot use any other martial arts power that specifically requires the use of Positive Chi, so Sword Chi, for example, would be unusable.

Body Hardening

Body Hardening exercises taken before the martial artist became a vampire will still grant full bonuses to attributes, and S.D.C. bonuses will become Hit Points. However, any learned after his transformation offer no such bonuses, and only provide skills and combat bonuses. This is because a vampire's body is biologically dead, and no longer reacts to exercise as a living body would. No amount of lifting weights will make any difference.

Any other martial arts powers that grant permanent attribute bonuses or S.D.C./Hit Point bonuses would only grant those bonuses if they were gained while the vampire was alive. Such abilities gained after becoming undead will not grant any bonus to the vampire's attributes or S.D.C./Hit Points.

Discorporate

This ability requires special notice, because it is a *cure for vampirism*. Any vampire who knows the Discorporate Zenjoriki and actually uses it becomes mortal again, losing all of his vampiric powers and invulnerability. It does not matter how long the martial artist was a vampire, or how powerful a vampire he was;

using Discorporate will instantly restore him to life and strip him of the powers granted by his former un-life.

Exceptions

Of all the Vampire and Near Vampire types listed above, there are only two which do not follow the above rules regarding the use of martial arts powers. They are the Dhampir and the Damned, both of which are alive and are Positive Chi beings.

A Dhampir is alive, and is born a Dhampir. As such, a Dhampir martial artist uses his powers exactly like a human martial artist. He can use any Positive Chi powers or Negative Chi powers he might learn, and gains full attribute bonuses from any martial arts powers he learns. The nature of a Dhampir is also unchanged if he uses the Discorporate power; such usage affects him exactly as it would a normal human.

The Damned, like a Dhampir, is alive and a Positive Chi being, and is able to use martial arts powers like a human martial artist. However, his status as one of the Damned is an affliction brought on by drinking the blood of a vampire. This is not a natural state for the Damned, and if he uses Discorporate he will be cured of it, losing his vampiric powers and vulnerabilities, becoming an ordinary human once again.

It should also be noted that while the Dhampir and the Damned are less vulnerable to Positive Chi attacks than a vampire would be, as they are Positive Chi creatures, their nature as living beings makes them vulnerable to all Atemi abilities, most of which have no effect on a vampire.

The Damned also are vulnerable to the Radiate Positive Chi power, since they are still as vulnerable to sunlight as a true vampire.

The Hammer of the Forge

Chapter Forty-Nine

“Last Stand”

By James M. G. Cannon

Atomic City was built in the 1950s, put together by a pair of mad geniuses named Art Ditko and Jerry Lee. They laid out the city like a wheel grid, with streets radiating outward like wheel spokes and avenues crossing the blocks in between. At the hub of the wheel stood Atomic Tower. At its base stretched out a large, open air park with cherry blossoms ringing a pond, rolling hills, and a broad plaza featuring monuments to Atomic City's greatest and most celebrated citizens: the Atomic League, the band of super powered do-gooders who operated out of Atomic Tower, but whose influence was felt all around the world. None was more loved and respected than the League's leader, the “Man of Molybdenum,” the Defender.

But of course, Atomic City never existed. Not outside of the cheaply printed comic books published by Holyoke Comics, at any rate.

Until now.

Caleb Vulcan, Knight of the Cosmic Forge, grew up in Arizona in the 1950s. He devoured comic books, science fiction stories, and cartoons avidly. One might say he was primed from an early age to spend his life in space, defending life and liberty, even if those fictional tales absorbed at an early age were only half-recalled and never really dwelled upon. Still, they were coming back to him as he stood in the middle of Defender Plaza in the heart of Atomic City, a place that never existed. And he was beginning to realize how much of his basic morality had been formed by those silly little comic books about men and women in long underwear, risking their lives to protect civilization.

Caleb and his companions had been drawn through a mysterious gate into a world of darkness and vampires. They survived and passed into another realm without utilizing a Rift, passing through a wall of mirrors into a sunlit, idyllic and strangely empty suburbia.

In the heart of the city, in Defender Plaza, they found the bodies of the Atomic League. And ringed around them, stretching back, block by block, lay the city's population. All dead.

The civilians had died while rushing to protect their heroes, trying to pay them back for years if not decades of selfless service.

The scene was surreal, sinister, and deeply disturbing for Caleb. To see the city he had read about as a child, tangible and glorious and yet savagely ripped apart, stirred something deep and dark within the Cosmo-Knight's breast. He doubted that Commander Tyranny or the League of Evil could have done something like this. For evil geniuses and megalomaniacs, their evil schemes were, in retrospect, more mischievous than malevolent. No, Caleb was certain that whatever force or power had created that first gate and somehow knit two dimensions together had laid waste to this silly, brightly colored city.

Caleb forced himself to focus on the present. He looked around at his friends and allies. Kassiopaea Acherean, Atlantean Undead Slayer, stood beside Joriel, the Celestine Warrior. Joriel stood nearly seven feet tall, a massively built android being with long, maroon hair, and a huge pair of feathered wings the same color. Kassy looked small beside him, despite her Atlantean physiology, and beneath her dark hair her face looked drawn and pale. The blue and white, stylized tattoos winding along her bare arms looked dull, washed out. The team had survived the vampire world largely because of Kassy, and she had not yet recovered fully.

Crouching over the fallen body of Defender, Doctor Abbot examined the hero closely. A being of shadow, Doctor Abbot's only physical features were a pair of orange eyes. He wore a battered old trench coat and fedora to soften his alien look. Abbott sighed and, leaning on his cane, slowly rose.

Across the plaza, Arwen Griffin, blue haired and green skinned martial artist, stood alone, her arms wrapped around her trunk and a stricken look on her features. Caleb had never seen her looking so lost.

The sixth member of the crew, Sammadar Orak, waited at the edge of the plaza. The Galactic Tracer wore a powerful battlesuit built in the K!ozn Continuum, a device bristling with weaponry and seeded with nanomachinery. Only Caleb knew that the insectoid carapace of the armor hid a pretty, infuriating, and greedy young woman. Everyone else assumed Sam to be male, and the suit's voice modulator helped maintain the fiction. Sammadar suddenly stiffened, then turned on her heels and scanned the sky.

Caleb followed her gaze. A large, dark cloud moved rapidly across the sky, draping a shadow across Atomic City's skyscrapers. But the cloud looked strange . . .

"Multiple bogies," Sammadar shouted. She started running across the plaza. "Looks like the army that ran through here is back for more."

At once, everyone began moving. Joriel's psionic weapon, his blazer, ignited in his hand. Blue-black steel wrapped itself around Kassy, and a huge rifle appeared in her hands. Arwen erupted in violet light, encased in the field that protected her from harm and increased her physical abilities. Caleb hefted his hammer and scanned the sky.

A horde of demonic beings, winged and horned and armor plated, with slathering jaws and wicked fangs and curving claws, roared over the city. They began to drop, landing on two legs or four or sometimes six, and stormed across the plaza.

Caleb unleashed his eye beams, crimson streams of light that scythed through the horde and burned a dozen of the creatures in an instant. But hundreds more stood behind them, rushing forward. "Sam and Joriel, protect Kassy," he said. "Abbott, we need some cover. Arwen, keep those things off the doc."

Kassy made as if to protest, but Joriel said, "You kept us alive against the vamps, honey. Our turn now." He stepped in front of her, flexed his wings, and set his mouth in a grim line.

Sammadar bounded across the plaza and landed beside Kassy and Joriel. "I don't remember electing you boss, Caleb." Her right arm reconfigured itself into a cannon with a very large muzzle, while her shoulder plates opened up to reveal dozens of mini-missiles. "Hey, who's protecting your flank?"

Caleb ignored her and cut loose with his eye beams once more. Around him, shadows began to stir and take shape. They rose up and formed walls and bulwarks, directed by Doctor Abbott. Explosions erupted in the middle of the horde as Sammadar's first volley of missiles detonated. The demons did not slow. They continued to charge, up and over Abbott's makeshift barricades. Caleb and Sam picked them off one by one at range, aided here and there by a mystic bolt or two from Abbott, but there were so many of them. The horde ignored their dead and dying, trampling over them in their zeal to reach their targets.

And then the demons were upon them. Bodies slammed into Caleb with an audible crunch. He threw them back with Forge enhanced strength and swung his massive hammer. The impact of the blow shivered up the weapon's haft and into his arms, and another demon went down. Two more took its place. Their claws skittered across Caleb's armor, tearing shallow furrows in the metallic red substance. One clamped its jaws around his left wrist and bit down hard. Caleb cleaned it off with a burst of red energy from his eyes. He punched and kicked and slammed his helmeted head forward. He aimed his hammer at arms and legs and heads, and cut loose with energy blasts that sheared through ranks of the foul beasts. Still they came.

Cut off from his friends, Caleb stood alone, an island of red and black in a sea of multicolored demon flesh. He risked a glance over his shoulder to check on his friends.

Abbott stood in the midst of a cleared space on the plaza, gesturing with his cane, setting off spells and magicks that slammed into the demons, pinned them to the earth, tore them apart, or gave them madness-inducing visions. A violet blur whirled around Abbott, creating that bare patch of cobblestones encircling the mage. Arwen moved at a dizzying speed, seeming to be in a dozen places at once. Her incredible strength and finely honed martial arts abilities allowed her to cripple a demon with a single blow. Bodies began to pile up around her, creating a grisly bulwark.

Joriel was nearly as buried as Caleb, and looked to be wading through a pile of demons. His blazer burned white hot, an avenging angel's sword in his hands, that sheared through demon flesh with appalling ease. He used all his limbs, including his enormous wings, to keep the demons as far from Kassy as possible. Joriel roared a wordless cry and threw a demon one-handed. The creature flew a dozen feet and knocked down two other demons. But all three were up in an instant and back in the fray.



Beside Joriel, Sammdar was a brightly colored whirlwind. Her cannon blew demons apart, while her missile pods cycled through missile after missile. The highly advanced K!ozn nanomachinery in her armor manufactured the projectiles almost as quickly as they were launched. But how long could it keep up that rate of production, with nothing to feed it?

Caleb's helm rang as a demon with massive fists slammed his head. Stupid, to let himself get distracted. He focused an energy blast on the demon that hit him, then swept three more aside with one blow from his hammer. They all went down easily, but there were so many of them.

Caleb smashed one with his left hand, kicked one off his right leg, and crushed a skull with his hammer, then raked the floor around him with energy beams. The air filled with the stench of scorched flesh, the cries of the wounded and dying, and the roars and howls of the demons as they rushed to attack. Flames and lightning flashed around Caleb, some of it unleashed by the demons themselves, but most coming from Abbott. None of it so much as singed Caleb, but his friends did not share his invulnerability to energy. Caleb shouldered demons aside and sought out the energy projectors. They were big things, slightly larger than the clawed and fanged monstrosities tearing at Caleb, and they had big, glowing eyes or wide, gaping mouths, out of which came lightning and fire respectively.

Caleb launched himself into the air, throwing demons aside, and flew straight towards the nearest lightning projector. He hit hard, knocking the beast off its feet. His visor glowed red as energy beams speared the beast. The hammer shot from his hand, smashing a fire-breather in the gullet. The creature swallowed his own fireball and inexplicably exploded.

And so it went. Death after senseless, savage death. And still they came. Armor plates were torn from Caleb's body. Fist-sized dents appeared in Caleb's breastplate, and a swipe from a demon's claw tore the crest from his helm. His energy blasts lessened in intensity as the cosmic furnace within him began to lose potency. The muscles in his arms and shoulders ached, and underneath his armor's protection, he felt bruises forming across the entire surface of his body.

Caleb didn't see Joriel and Kassy go down beneath a pile of demons. He was too busy fighting for his life. He didn't see Doctor Abbott's hat and coat torn to shreds, or the shadowy form beneath ripped apart by demonic claws. He heard Arwen's cry of anguish, but could do nothing as the girl hurled herself into the press of demons and began to shatter them to pieces with titanic blows. Huge demons pressed in upon her, hemming her in, reducing her mobility. Huge fists rained hammering blows upon her force field, until it too flickered and died. And then Arwen was gone as well.

Then it was just Sammadar and Caleb. But Sam's armor was growing thin as the nanomachinery cannibalized the armor itself to fuel her weaponry, and the demons began to tear fragments from her suit. Sammadar went down, firing her cannon, and then it was silenced.

For several heartbeats more, Caleb continued to fight, but they were too many. His armor was torn from his body, and then demonic claws and teeth tore into his flesh. His hammer was torn from his hands, and then massive fists struck his head again and again and again. Caleb's vision swam, and then blackness took him.

The demons gathered Caleb up and returned from whence they came, a long, shuddering spiral of them lifting into the sky. Back over the city they flew, without looking back. Not that any of their tiny, savage minds would have noticed that only two bodies had been added to the final toll in the plaza. Nor would any of them have seen that the shadows seemed to pool in the midst of such a sunny day.

* * *

Elsewhere . . .

Vodal Kee, Sinestrian scientist, woke to the face of a scowling marine. "We got to get a move on, Doc," said Silent. "Romana has a bee in her bonnet."

Vodal dragged himself up, groaning all the while. Sleeping on the ground had left kinks in his tail, and he was sure that he had bruised some ribs on roots. His waldoes dusted himself off while he tentatively tasted the air. Around him, the rest of the camp had broken. He was the last to wake.

Sarge, Quick, and Hacker, the other CCW marines, were strapping themselves into their armor, checking weapons, and re-packing their bedrolls. Romana, the Altess with the magical wrist-chron, stood nearby, examining the device on her left arm.

"No breakfast?" Vodal asked. Silent pushed a power bar into one of Vodal's waldo hands. Vodal frowned. He doubted the CCW designed field rations with Sinestrian biology in mind. He took a careful bite, and only just managed to keep from spitting it out. He forced himself to eat it, knowing that it would probably be the only food he would see until midday. Vodal washed the horrid biscuit down with a few swigs of tepid water from Silent's canteen.

Then they were off. Romana led, chopping through the jungle undergrowth with a Vibro-Blade, while periodically checking the device she called a "Singularity Watch." According to her, the chronometer was one of the most powerful artifacts in the Megaverse. She declined to comment on how it came to be in her possession, but Vodal wasn't complaining. The Singularity Watch's ability to stop time had saved all their lives several times already, despite the fact that Romana had joined their group only a day ago.

They trudged in relative silence through the jungle. Sarge and Hacker flanked Vodal as they marched, while Quick and Silent ranged up and down the trail, keeping eyes open for danger in front of them or from behind. Thankfully, this world appeared to be relatively benign compared to the last one they had traveled through, or the first one Romana had visited. No armies to attack them, no giants trying to smash them, no lizard beings trying to blast them. Occasionally they would be forced to stop, to

allow Romana to re-calibrate her watch. For the first time in days, Vodal began to relax.

The jungle was truly beautiful. It reminded him a little bit of his home world in the TGE. This world had tall trees, a thick canopy, and climbing vines, as well as a plethora of animal life, including a wide variety of reptiles and several hundred different species of insects. No birds, however; they seemed to have been replaced by winged reptiles with multicolored scales and strange, warbling calls. It rained off and on as they marched, a welcome change from the desert they had left behind.

Naturally, it didn't last.

Towards mid-afternoon, Romana paused, consulted her chron, and said, "We're very close. Another few hundred meters in that direction, and we should reach it."

Vodal's waldoes clacked as he folded the hands. "And what is it we're looking for? I hope you're going to say 'a gate home.'"

Romana smiled. "As we discussed yesterday, Dr. Vodal, I've programmed the Singularity Watch to track power sources. Whoever or whatever has created this lattice of dimensions has to possess a massive power source to keep this whole network from fragmenting. I believe I have found what we've been looking for."

"And then what happens?" Vodal asked. "They're probably inscrutable gods or Alien Intelligences and they'll smite us all."

"You're such a worry-wart."

"You're just learning this now?"

And then, over Romana's shoulder, Vodal saw a tree limb uncoil and wrap itself around Silent's waist, while the marine stood at ease. Silent yelped as she was raised into the air and brought her rifle around to fire at her attacker. Sarge and Hacker filled their hands as well, and laser fire erupted at the tree. Quick came running up double time from the rear, tossing a grenade on the run. Romana whirled, and Vodal instinctively grabbed her with a waldo and pulled her away from the fray.

Romana cried "No!" and fumbled for her chron. Vodal's hearts froze as the tree ripped Silent into two pieces, and flung the bloody halves to the jungle floor.

All around them, trees came to life. More limbs reached out to grab at the rest of the marines, Romana, and Vodal. And then suddenly Vodal's stomach flipped, and he was looking at Silent in the tree's grip once more, whole and unharmed. Romana flung her Vibro-Blade two-handed, and the weapon whirled through the air to shear through the limb wrapped around Silent. The marine plummeted to the ground, but her armor absorbed the blow. She was on her feet in an instant, firing her weapon.

All around them, trees came to life.

"What just happened?" Vodal shouted.

"Five second rule," Romana snapped. "Now run!"

The six of them followed Romana as she leapt over a fallen log and raced across the ground. Vodal couldn't jump, and he quickly fell behind as his snake-like body slithered as fast as possible after his companions. Silent noticed him lagging and slowed her pace. Had Vodal any breath in his body, he would have urged her to leave him behind. He couldn't countenance seeing her die again.

All around them, the trees began to move of their own volition, reaching out with leaf-heavy limbs or lashing at them with vines and branches. Vodal risked a glance behind him, and saw that the first trees to move were beginning to drag themselves free of the earth, crawling after them on nests of roots.

The marines unleashed every ounce of firepower at their command. Luckily, the animated trees were no more resistant to megawatt lasers than normal trees. The marines' rifles blasted trees apart, sending splinters and chunks of wood flying everywhere. Silent tried to protect Vodal from the shrapnel, but he still felt several sharp stings in his back, and knew he had been speared. Quick launched grenades in their wake, and explosions rocked the jungle.

And then they were clear. Romana skidded to a halt and the marines drew up beside her. Silent and Vodal arrived last, Vodal gasping for breath. His waldoes gripped Silent's arm and side for support.

"The trees have stopped," Sarge noted.

"I'm sure we can expect worse," Romana said.

Sarge snorted. "You're full of good news."

Romana said, "Whatever we're tracking doesn't want to be found. The trees were a weak attempt to slow us down. But there will be more guardians . . . if we linger here. We should get moving."

"Doc's been hit," Silent said. "And to be honest, I don't feel so great myself. Thanks for saving me, Romana. It's great to be alive, but I do feel like warmed over qrun."

Quick and Hacker moved in towards Vodal, and rapidly field dressed his wounds. "Sorry about that, Doc," Sarge said. "I guess we panicked a little there. Conduct unbecoming a marine, but seeing Silent go down like that, well, I think it shook us up."

"Perfectly understandable, Sarge," Vodal gasped.

"I'm putting you in for a purple heart, Doc," Quick said. He handed Vodal a chunk of wood seven centimeters long and half as thick. It was red with Vodal's blood. "Want a souvenir?"

Vodal shook his head. "Thank you, no. Perhaps we should heed Romana's warning, and proceed with all haste towards our destination?"

"Okay," Sarge said. "No more daydreaming. We treat this world as hostile, like we should have been doing. No more letting our guard down."

The marines formed up, Hacker and Quick flanking Vodal, who still leaned on Silent. With Sarge and Romana in the lead, they began their march once more. This time, they moved much more quickly.

They had marched for nearly twenty minutes when something on Hacker dinged. He produced a device from his web belt, shook his head, and scanned the canopy overhead with it. "Massive life readings headed our way, Sarge, moving at speed and from above us. Could be a native migration, could be something else."

Sarge swore. He looked to Romana. "How much farther?"

Romana checked her chron. "Only five hundred meters or so."

"At this pace, the life forms will intercept before then," Hacker said.

"Time to run again," Sarge said. He looped his rifle over his shoulder, then reached for Vodal. With a yelp, Vodal found himself unceremoniously thrown over Sarge's broad shoulders. Romana and the marines began to run. Vodal bounced on Sarge's armored frame, trying to keep from twisting or crying out. From his vantage, he could see through the tree canopy overhead. Vodal saw a dark cloud forming overhead, a cloud that moved unnaturally quickly. He squinted, trying to make it out better.

But the cloud was dropping even as he watched, and Vodal slowly realized that the cloud was made up of hundreds if not thousands of twisted, malformed alien creatures. It looked as if the entirety of the Seven Hells had emptied itself and was now following them. Vodal couldn't keep from whimpering.

"I see them," he said loudly. "I advise you to run faster."

Instead, they came to an abrupt halt. Sarge lowered Vodal to the ground, where the Sinestrian all but collapsed in a boneless heap. He really wasn't built for these kinds of adventures. He belonged in a lab, doing science, research, living a life of quiet contemplation.

"Up you go," Sarge said, awkwardly pulling Vodal upright.

Vodal looked around, risking glances up and behind them to note the approach of the demonic looking creatures. They stood in a sort of clearing, ringed by trees and vines and undergrowth. Nothing remarkable about it, save that Romana's chron beeped loudly. She stood stock still and examined the screen closely. Then she reached out in mid-air, never taking her eyes off the chron, and traced some kind of sigil. A glowing trail followed the tip of her finger, creating a "Æ" that shimmered blue and green for a moment, and then they all heard a grinding noise, and a door opened up where the symbol hung in the air.

It created the appearance of a metallic corridor appearing in the middle of the clearing. Looking at it made Vodal's head hurt.

Romana hurried everyone through. The demonic creatures were just beginning to land in the clearing, crying out loudly and unleashing bursts of flame and lightning, as Romana jumped into the corridor and keyed the door closed. It slammed shut with a resounding clang.

"That was a close one," Hacker said. "Actually, it's been nothing but close ones since we hooked up with you, Dr. Vodal. No offense."

"None taken," Vodal said. He knew the feeling.

Sarge turned to Romana, who picked herself up off the mirror-shen bright floor of the corridor. "What next?"

Vodal realized that, at some point he did not recognize, Romana had become the *de facto* leader of their small band. And he found himself relieved at that realization.

Romana smiled crookedly. "We explore," she said.

* * *

Elsewhere . . .

In the midst of a large, dark room hung a cage in the shape of an X, and encased in that cage lay Ariel of Titan, Knight of the Cosmic Forge. Arms, legs, neck, and waist were bound to the frame, and the sigils and signs carved in the surface of the device served to neatly sever the Titan's connection to the Cosmic

Forge. Ariel could not summon the strength, endurance, or energy blasts gifted her by the Forge. However, as a Titan, she still had other gifts.

She hoped that her captor would continue to forget that. Since awakening in this hellish place, she had struggled against her bonds. The bindings on her right wrist were beginning to weaken.

Below her, Sol Vyking stood nearby. Clad in a floral print shirt, cargo shorts, and sandals, he looked neither like a Fallen Cosmo-Knight nor like a megalomaniacal manipulator of dimensional reality. Yet he was both. Now he leaned over a pedestal, upon which were set glowing crystals. The light flickered and shimmered, arranging itself in patterns. Ariel couldn't read them, but clearly Vyking could.

"Excellent. Excellent!" he said. "My horde has successfully captured my old friend Caleb and slaughtered his friends. Now, I just need the Singularity Watch."

"What do you need that for?" Ariel said through gritted teeth. She tugged hard on the metal clasp containing her right wrist, and felt it give a little.

"Wouldn't you like to know," Vyking said. He looked up at her over his shoulder. "Didn't I tell you to cease struggling? It won't do any good."

"I do not give up, Sol. I do not give in." Ariel wrenched her arm, feeling a stabbing pain travel up from her wrist.

Vyking frowned and turned to face her. "And you're saying I did? That's why I fell? Not enough misplaced faith in my own abilities, perhaps. Too much faith that my 'friends' would find me. Bah. You are naive and misguided, Ariel. No one is coming to save you, and you have not the strength to save yourself. You are doomed." He smiled coldly.

Ariel narrowed her eyes. She wished she could slam him with blasts of silver light. She twisted her arm again, tugging at the clasp. She felt moisture, and realized that she was bleeding.

The crystals hummed, dragging Vyking's attention back to the pedestal. "Ah, excellent. The horde has found the time traveler and – oh, how rich. That useless scientist, Vodal Kee. Two for the price of one. It's almost sad, really. Even Caleb and his powerful friends had no chance against my horde. These pathetic creatures will be torn to pieces in seconds. I almost feel bad for them."

Too late, too weak, to help Caleb. But innocents were in danger. Ariel focused all her strength and effort, and with the sound of snapping metal she tore her right arm free. She didn't pause, but hammered at the frame around her wrist. It crumpled, but she felt her hand bruising.

Still, it was enough. The circuit was broken.

Ariel felt strength flood through her body, as her connection to the Forge reasserted itself. She unleashed a blast of silver fire and tore her way through the cage. A silver bar appeared in her hands, coalescing into her two-handed sword.

Vyking tore himself away from his viewing crystals. His handsome face contorted into something ugly and evil. He raised his hand and a stream of energy flashed from his palm. It slammed into Ariel, and instead of absorbing and dispersing it as her body normally did with energy, it burned her. She cried out despite herself as her every atom was suddenly on fire. She dropped to the floor with a resounding crash. Her sword clattered, falling from her hands. Ariel pulled herself into a ball and writhed on the floor.

Vyking's eyes burned as he sent another stream of energy at Ariel. And another. Again and again, he lanced her with liquid pain, only relenting finally when she stopped moving. He wondered if she was dead, but didn't bother to check. With a disdainful shrug, he turned back to the pedestal.

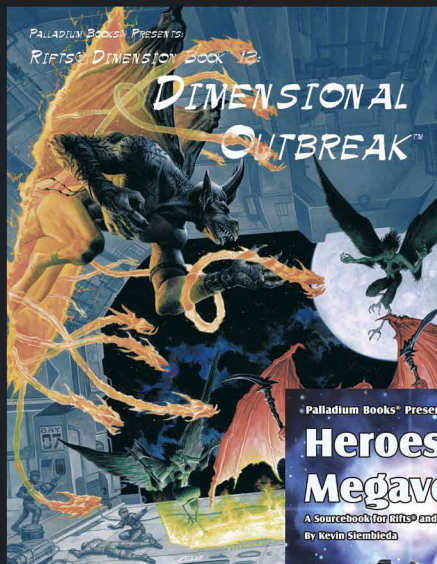
The lights told him that the Time Councilor, Vodal Kee, and Kee's escort had escaped the horde while Vyking was distracted. Vyking's hands flew across the crystals, directing the system's extranormal senses to track down his prey. But they appeared in none of the bound dimensions. He went through them again, his anger and frustration mounting as each dimension flickered past and the same result came up again and again.

They were gone. They had disappeared. Which was impossible.

Vyking howled in frustration. He shattered the pedestal with one sweep of his hands. His eyes flickered with blue-white light. Vyking turned once more to Ariel's prostrate form and unleashed another stream of energy. It slammed into her, and Ariel's body twitched.

This time, he wouldn't stop until he was certain she was dead.

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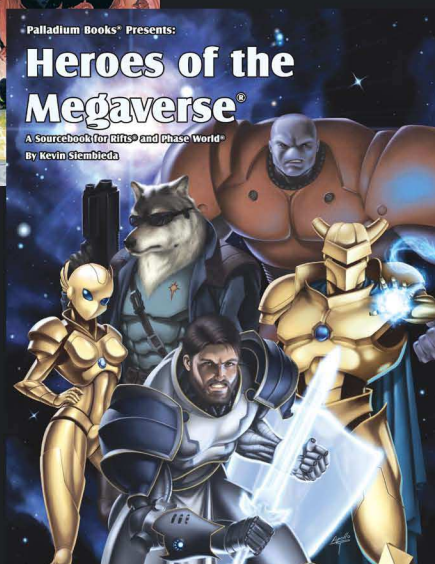
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