

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®



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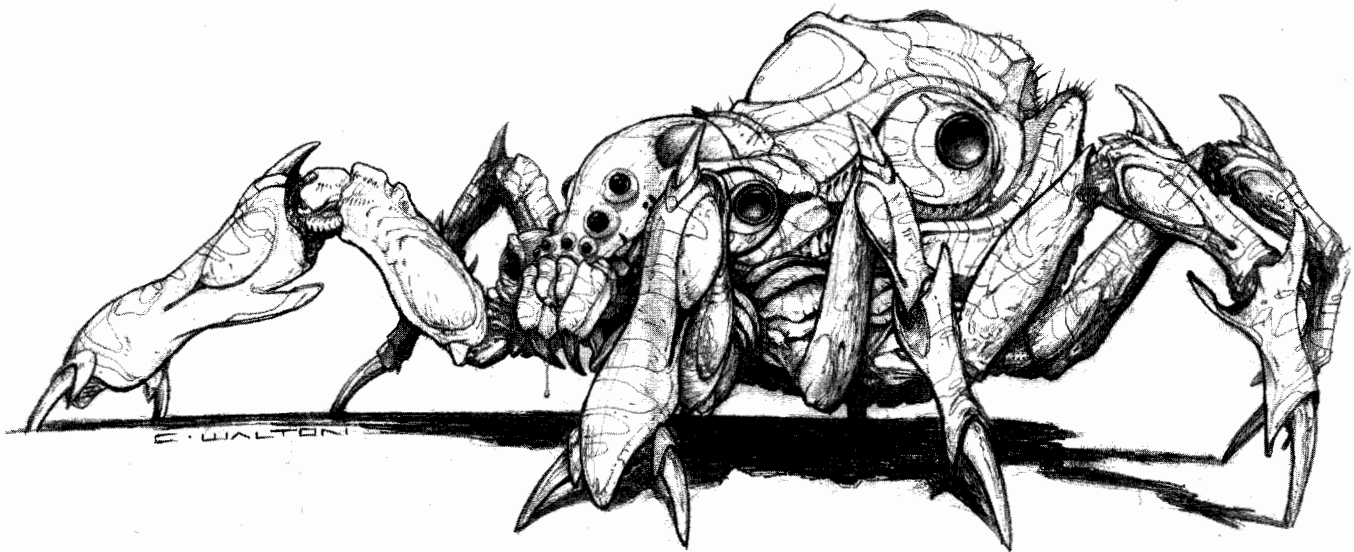
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Some parents may find the violence, magic and supernatural elements of the games inappropriate for young readers/players. We suggest parental discretion.

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



The Rifter® Number 51

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing – July 2010

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The Rifter® #51 RPG sourcebook series is published by Palladium Books Inc., 39074 Webb Court, Westland, MI 48185. Printed in the USA.

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #51



BRANDT - 97

Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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Special Thanks to all our contributors, writers and artists to this special issue. Your support and contributions are valued and appreciated. Our apologies to anybody who may have gotten accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

– *Kevin Siembieda, 2010*

Contents – The Rifter® #51 – July, 2010

Page 6 – Art

The illustration on page six is the winner of Palladium's first **Rifts® Art Contest** in the Black and White category. This category of the contest was very tight, with the winning illustration landing first place by something like two votes (one of which was Kevin Siembieda's). The next three runners up were all within one vote of each other and a couple of them may appear in a future issue of **The Rifter®**. (Yes, the artists will get paid if their art is used in the future.)

This dynamic illustration is by **Rossana Berretta** of Italy. Congratulations Rossana, nice work. Keep that imagination burning bright.

Page 7 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

These are wild and exciting times at Palladium Books®. After years of challenges and strife, the company appears to be turning the corner and there are a number of exciting prospects coming Palladium's way, as well as exciting new releases coming YOUR way. Publisher Kevin Siembieda talks about some of them. It's a fun read that is likely to get your adrenaline flowing. Keep the faith true believers, we predict big things are in Palladium's future.

Page 8 – News

There is a lot of news this issue. Like what, you ask? Get a load of these headlines:

- Palladium to Design Facebook Games?
- Rifts® Videogames
- Another Path to Hollywood
- Expanding into New Mediums
- Palladium Auctions
- Wedding Bells
- Queen of Ghouls
- Rifts® Triax 2 is a hit . . .

You can read all about them and more, starting on page eight. You'd better be sitting down when you do, because you might not be able to handle the excitement.

Written by Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know.

Page 10 – Coming Attractions

You'd better remain sitting, because we have one new great RPG release after another in production and coming your way. Read all about them right here.

And if you haven't picked up your copy of **Rifts® Triax™ 2**, what are you waiting for? The Triax article in this issue is only a hint at what awaits you in **Rifts® World Book 31: Triax™ 2**.

Likewise, we hope you are making your plans to buy **Rifts® Heroes of the Megaverse®**, and **Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™ Expanded**, and the **Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook**, and **Rifts® Lemuria**, and **Armageddon Unlimited™**, and well, see for yourself.

Page 16 – Role-Playing with Younger Players Game Master Tips for All Game Systems

Writer *William Wymouth II* offers insightful and interesting advice for Game Masters on how to run the RPG experience for young gamers.

As many "experienced" gamers have children of their own, there will come a time when youngsters may want to role-play with Mom and Dad, big brother, Uncle Ted or Aunt Sheila. That's great! Embrace it. But there are elements and aspects that should be considered when gaming with youngsters. This article offers some insight and observations on them.

Note: The views and opinions expressed in this article are entirely those of the author, and are NOT necessarily shared by Palladium Books Inc., its publisher, employees or freelancers.

Artwork by *Mark Dudley*.

Page 19 – Living Weapons

Optional Source Material for Splicers®

Writer and Splicers® fanatic, *Chris Kluge*, with additional concepts and ideas by *Charles Walton*, whip up a **Splicers®** tour de force of source material to make your games more varied, dynamic and fun.

It includes two awesome new O.C.C.s, namely the **Metamorph**, a Splicer shapeshifter, and the wicked new **Swarm Lord**, which utilizes insects as part of the armor's design and powers.

Splicer: Metamorph O.C.C. (page 19) – a new Splicer that can change into a multitude of forms.

Transformation Rules – page 21

The Forms of the Metamorph – page 22

Human Form – page 22

Combat Form – page 22

Armored Form – page 23

Close Combat (Predator) Form – page 23

Runner Form – page 24

Centaur Form – page 24

Aquatic Form – page 25

Bruiser Form – page 26

Battle Ram Form – page 26

Heavy Assault Form – page 27

Angel Flying Form – page 27

Devil Flying Form – page 28

Spider Form – page 28

Digger Form – page 29

Eagle Form – page 29

Splicer: Swarm Lord O.C.C. (page 30) – a new Splicer that incorporates bio-engineered insects as weapons and tools.

Hive Insects – page 33

Types of Hive Insects – page 34

Artwork by *Charles Walton II*.

Page 40 – Mundane Doesn't Mean Boring!

Suggestions Suitable for ALL Game Settings

First time contributor, *Leamon Crafton Jr.* presents sharp and fun observations and tips on how to make what may seem like the mundane and ordinary, into an adventure that is challenging, clever, suspenseful and fun. Includes new skills, scientists, attitude, skepticism, armor, trauma, and flexibility.

Art by *Michael Mumah*.

Page 53 – Wolf Blood

Optional Source Material for Rifts®

Shawn Arbuckle presents an interesting look at an ancient group of humans known as the Vulbund, their culture, secret knowledge and abilities. The Vulbund O.C.C. stats are found on page 56.

Art by *Amy L. Ashbaugh*.

Page 58 – Rifts® Triax™ 2 Weapons Locker

“Official” Source Material for Rifts®

Writers Brandon Aten and Kevin Siembieda present MORE Triax weapons, robot drones, and cyborgs to add to the wealth of weapons, gear and information already found in the pages of **Rifts® World Books 5 & 31** for the *Triax and the New German Republic* setting.

New Triax Weapons – page 58

New Triax Weapon Attachments (page 60) – bayonets and such.

Triax Rifle Grenades – page 61

New Jaeger Interchangeable Devices – page 62

New Triax Mobile Sentries – page 63

New Triax Cyborgs – page 67

VXC-550 Chromium Cyborg – page 67

VX-3000 Cyborg Soldier: Bombardier – page 69

Art for Weapons and Mobile Sentry by *Allen and Brian Manning*.

Art for the Cyborgs by *Nicholas Maradin*.

Page 72 – Rifts® Vehicle Construction Rules, Part 2

Optional Rules and Source Material for Rifts®

Greg Diaczyk concludes his suggestions for making, building and modifying vehicles in the Rifts® setting.

Rare Vehicle Customization Options – page 83

Repairing Vehicles – page 84

Artwork by *Mark Dudley*.

Page 88 – The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter 51: Roman Holiday. The latest installment of *James M.G. Cannon's* epic tale set in the Three Galaxies. A nice, quiet vacation? Yeah, right.

Artwork by *Apollo Okamura*.

The Theme for Issue 51

This issue of **The Rifter®** focuses on **Rifts®**. That's fair considering 2010 celebrates the *Rifts® 20 year anniversary*. Yep, Rifts® hit the public in August, 1990, debuting at Gen Con, and became an instant best selling RPG and an instant classic. Twenty years later, Rifts® remains a fan favorite and is poised to explode into other mediums and markets like film, videogames, computer games and comic books.

The Rifter® Needs You

We need new writers and artists to fill the next 12 years of **The Rifter®**. You do not need to be a professional writer to contribute to **The Rifter®**. This publication is like a “fanzine” written by fans for fans. A forum in which gamers just like *you* can submit

articles, G.M. advice, player tips, house rules, adventures, new magic, new psionics, new super abilities, monsters, villains, high-tech weapons, vehicles, power armor, short works of fiction and more. So think about writing up something short (even something as small as 4-6 pages). Newcomers and regular contributors are always welcomed.

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

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

The Cover

The cover is by newcomer, **Darren Quah**, winner of Palladium's first **Rifts® Art Contest** in the Color/Cover category. Darren's cover was the runaway fan favorite, with twice as many votes as the nearest competitor. The cover depicts a Coalition SAMAS in flight. Mr. Quah heralds from Australia. Congratulations Darren, nice work. Keep that imagination burning bright.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

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

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

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

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

www.palladiumbooks.com – Palladium Online

The Rifter® #52

The October Rifter is the annual *Horror/Halloween issue*, so it is sure to contain chills, thrills and monsters for a variety of Palladium's RPG settings. It's not too late to contribute to this issue, but get your submissions in fast – by the end of July.

Plus:

- **The latest chapter of Hammer of the Forge™, fiction.**
- **News, coming attractions and more.**

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



From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

The winds of change are upon us.

At the beginning of this year I reported that 2010 was likely to be Palladium's "make it or break it" year. Well, I'm happy to report that 2010 appears to be Palladium's "make it" year. Our turnaround won't be anything gigantic, and it won't be raining millions of dollars at the Palladium offices (I wish!), but a number of important steps forward are taking place. We have the feeling this is just the beginning, too. Whatever good things happen in 2010, we believe 2011 will be even better.

I can't go into details about business deals at this point, though I do touch upon a number of them in the *News Section* of this issue, but exciting opportunities seem to be coming Palladium's way, one after another. Whether they become everything we hope is yet to be seen.

Like what? All kinds of people and businesses outside of Palladium are stepping forward saying, "Hi, maybe we can work together." On top of that, sales – while still down from a few years ago – are slowly climbing up, fans are excited and hungry for new RPG products, freelance writers and artists are pumped up, and ideas are flying like wild.

Why is this happening now?

As I posted in one of our online Weekly Updates, there are a few contributing factors. One reason is all of us at Palladium have been working toward this for YEARS. You need to have a plan and stick to it. It's just slow going sometimes, and you need to be understanding, flexible and patient. In fact, I now have a great appreciation for why *patience is truly a virtue*.

Another reason is *we never quit* at Palladium Books. We never give up. Palladium has had more than its fair share of hardship and struggles these past several years, but we've tried to stay positive, keep pressing forward no matter how difficult and dark things became, and never skimp on the quality in our books that has made us famous. It was a challenge (and still is) at times, but that tenacity, hard work and YOUR continuing love and support have kept us going. Well, that faith and effort may finally be starting to pay off!

It's all about building momentum.

Sometimes it takes a while to build momentum. When everything came crashing down around us during the Crisis of Treachery, it took time to *rebuild*. That's a tough job when you've suffered the losses Palladium did. It crushes your spirit and it not only stops you dead in your tracks, but drops you down a *deep, dark hole*. A hole you have to crawl out of before you can even start to rebuild. That takes time, smarts, plenty of hard work and patience. All of which is starting to pay off for us, and we see momentum building.

Are there big things in Palladium's future?

We sure hope so. But momentum is rather like the old steam engine trains you see in movies about the Old West, chugging along and picking up speed as it goes along. That's Palladium right now: chugging along and picking up steam (and momentum) as we go along. With any luck, we'll be rocketing down the rails any time now, provided we don't get derailed.

Not everything is sunshine and roses. We're dealing with at least one matter that is messing with our momentum and progress, but we hope it will all work out in the end. As always, we are doing everything we can to do what's right and best for you, us and the company.

Epic RPG sourcebooks are coming!

All of us at Palladium Books are focused on getting new books finished and into your hands. This issue of *The Rifter* is one such new release, **Rifts® Heroes of the Megaverse®** is next and . . . well, read on. Just know morale has been high. Ideas are flying fast and furious and our imaginations are working overtime.

UPDATE: The Rifter® #52. The next issue of **The Rifter®** is the traditional horror/monster theme. We're looking for material to include right now.

UPDATE: Rifts® Heroes of the Megaverse®. By the time you are reading this, the long awaited **Rifts® Heroes of the Megaverse®** sourcebook should be done, at the printers and hitting store shelves in a few weeks. I think this sourcebook will surprise, please and bolster the spirits of everyone who reads it.

UPDATE: Armageddon Unlimited™ (for *Heroes Unlimited™* and ties into the *Minion War™*) is next. The cover sketch by *Mark Evans* looks great, and the book is part of the *Minion War™* but also stands alone as a separate sourcebook for **Heroes Unlimited™**.

UPDATE: Rifts® Thundercloud Galaxy™. John Zeleznik is doing the cover, Mike Mumah the artwork and the final edit is coming soon.

UPDATE: Rifts® Lemuria. This is another title that is currently in production. It is also a book that will surprise and please.

UPDATE: Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™. By the time you read this, the cover by E.M. Gist should be in our hands and we should be working on the final rewrite.

UPDATE: Rifts® Vampire Sourcebook™. This sourcebook reveals more about the vampires of Mexico, their society, their plans and the growing danger they represent. I'm dying to write my portions of this book and the new, updated and expanded **Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™**. Yahoo, it's one nonstop project after another.

UPDATE: Robotech®. No, *Robotech®* is not forgotten. We have a couple of books in development right now.

UPDATE: Dead Reign™. We plan to come out with at least one new sourcebook for this epic zombie series by October. Watch for it.

UPDATE: Mysteries of Magic™. Hope to have one more book of magic for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®* series by the end of the year, with several fantasy titles released in 2011.

Palladium Auctions. We'll be hosting a number of Palladium collectibles auctions throughout the year. There should be 2-3 more this summer. Then a short break with 2-4 auctions resuming in the Fall. Great deals, rare items and fun for all involved. Find out when they are happening on the Palladium website, palladiumbooks.com.

2010 has been a crazy, busy year for Palladium Books. We have an ambitious schedule and are working hard to get out all the books you've been waiting for. Keep buying them as they are released. Keep an eye on the pages of **The Rifter®** and the Palladium website to get the latest news and product updates. And game on. We have some pulse pounding books and other products in the pipeline for 2010.

– Kevin Siembieda, July 2010

News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know



Rifts® Crossover Comic to Appear

in Heavy Metal® Magazine

RC and Dominic Aradio are the gents doing the **Rifts®/Colt the Outlander™** crossover comic strip to appear in **Heavy Metal® Magazine**. By the way, this two part story is pretty sweet and looks great.

Part One appears in the September issue of Heavy Metal, “on sale” this month – July, 2010.

Palladium’s relationship with the **Aradio Brothers** means RC and Dominic are likely to be found working on future Rifts® and Palladium projects. We are actively looking into a few right now, including an upcoming cover by RC.

Palladium to Design

Facebook Games?

Palladium has been making some serious moves to get into developing and designing **Facebook games**. Yep, we are actively looking to expand into other mediums to tell our stories and spread the Palladium gaming experience. We tentatively have a publisher lined up, and our “in house” design team is selected. We are waiting to formalize the deal. More on this front as it develops, but we hope to start work on our first Facebook game within a few months.

Rifts® Movie

This is still a work in progress, but we are getting good vibes and are optimistic. That’s all I can say at this time.

Rifts® Videogames

In recent months, Palladium has been approached by a few name videogame companies. There are no deals in place at this time, but there is a good amount of interest. Again, we are very optimistic about something happening in the near future.

Another Path to Hollywood

Palladium Books® is currently talking with a local, *Michigan filmmaker* about developing some of their IPs into role-playing games and other good things. More on this as things develop.

Expanding into New Mediums

Palladium continues to explore all possibilities and we have a lot of ideas percolating or in development. Like what do you think of a line of comic books based on **Rifts®** and other Palladium games? We like the idea and are exploring our options. We’re looking at getting games developed in all kinds of *new mediums* and expanding into a variety of different markets along with our usual pen and paper games.

Battle to Defend

the Rifts® Trademark

By now, many of you may have heard **Palladium Books®** has filed a trademark infringement lawsuit against a company named *Trion Worlds* over their MMORPG renamed **Rift: Planes of Talaria**.

For me the issues are simple and self-evident. See for yourself: riftgame.com.

My apologies, but for a variety of reasons and legal concerns I cannot discuss anything about the lawsuit. I can tell you that it is the one dark cloud hanging over Palladium’s head, when everything else seems to be bright and filled with promise.

The Rifts® trademark is very important to Palladium and we’ll keep fighting the good fight to protect and preserve it. With your support, we’ll get through this challenge like we have all the others in recent years.

Palladium Auctions

Mean Bargains for You

Palladium has been hosting online auctions. Go to the Palladium website – www.palladiumbooks.com – for links and formation about the latest auction. Auctions are fun, give one a try. Palladium’s online **Weekly Updates** offer details and links about the latest auction (been holding one about every two weeks), special sales events, the latest news and release information.

If you have not been to the Palladium Books® website lately, you may be missing out. We’ve been making improvements to the website and plan on doing much, much more in the months to come.

My Father, Henry

I’m afraid I have some bad news about my Dad. His bladder cancer is back and it’s more aggressive than ever. At the time I’m writing this, he’s undergoing a number of tests. If the cancer has not spread, the doctor plans to remove my father’s bladder.

My poor Dad is taking the news surprisingly well and is fairly optimistic.

Remember to love the people who matter most to you. Tell them they matter. Show them you love them. Be strong in these tough times when everyone seems to be struggling on one level or another. Find joy where you can find it. Embrace those you love. Live bold and vibrant lives. Keep those imaginations burning bright, seek new adventures, and game on with friends, family and brave, joyful hearts! We'll do likewise.

Wedding Bells for a Rifter® Contributor

Here's some happy news: First time Rifter® contributor *Leamon Crafton Jr.* is getting married the very week this issue with his article is scheduled to ship. We wanted to extend our congratulations to Leamon and his betroved, *Svetlana Demidova*. We hope your marriage is filled with lasting love and joy.

Summer Office Help

Matthew Clements is Palladium's newest unpaid, Summer intern lending us a hand. He's done some cleaning, labeling of books, helped in the warehouse, offered his thoughts on a couple of submissions, done some research and is working on developing an idea for a possible *Rifts®* World Book or two. And he has ideas for much more. Matthew, you see, is a budding, local writer. Screenwriter to be exact, and he's pretty darn good from what we've seen. He won my attention.



Queen of Ghouls

Kathy Simmons' Halloween Props are lifelike and amazing. What many people don't know is, behind that facade of sweetness, Kathy has a dark side. It comes out as her *alter ego*, the **Queen of Ghouls, Mistress of Halloween**.

The Queen of Ghouls makes *one-of-a-kind, life-size Halloween props* from masks, PVC pipe and fabric. Think "life-sized action figures" and you get the idea. They are awesome. Kathy sews most of the costumes/clothing, though some – particularly her epic *zombies* – are garbed in clothing acquired at garage sales and the Salvation Army then tattered and bloodied up with paint.

The life-sized Halloween props come with a large, metal lawn stake so they can be stood up in the front yard to scare, thrill and delight Halloween goers. They hold up great in the worst weather and once dried out from October rain showers, they can be broken down to be stored in the bag or box they are shipped in.

You can see photos of Kathy's own massive Halloween display on the Palladium website (www.palladiumbooks.com) to get an idea. Even one, two or three of these human-sized figures can take your traditional Halloween display up several notches. People love them.

And now they can be yours! Go to Kathy's online store – **queenofghouls.com** – to see her current range of offerings; most selling in the \$89-\$150 price range. Sold throughout the country.

Of the 25 on display at the **Palladium Open House** this past April, half have been sold. Fear not, the Queen of Ghouls is busy making more wickedly delightful, life-sized, Halloween props including *a crazed butcher, zombies, a ghoulish butler, wizards, witches, vampires, werewolves, devils, demons, grave ghouls, executioners, killer clowns, mad doctors, scarecrows, monsters and madmen*.

I get into the act by painting up some of the masks, hands and clothing (I'm a blood splatter specialist at this point) and helping Kathy tatter up zombie clothes. Hey, Halloween is only three months away!

Rifts® Triax™ 2 is a hit

Rifts® Triax™ 2 is another title **Rifts®** fans have gone wild over. How could they not, when it is packed with great art, great ideas, and a slew of weapons, power armors, robots, robot drones, aircraft and much more? If you have not purchased a copy yet, you don't know what you are missing.

The Minion War™ Continues

Rifts® Dimensional Outbreak™ was just the first, epic book for it this year. We still plan to wrap up the main saga of the Minion War™ sweeping across the Megaverse by the end of 2010. The remaining three books in the series are:

Heroes of the Megaverse® – good for any setting.

Armageddon Unlimited™ – for the Heroes Unlimited setting.

Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™ – Rifts Earth!

And ripples from the Minion War™ will continue to be felt for a long time to come.

Robotech® products are coming

We have big plans for Robotech. Books should start to appear by Fall. 'Nuff said.

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?

New Books are Coming

The main focus at Palladium is getting out new pen and paper role-playing games and sourcebooks for existing games. The following titles are all in the pipeline and listed in a rough order of tentative release.

- **Rifts®/Phase World®: Heroes of the Megaverse®**
 - **Armageddon Unlimited™**
 - **Rifts® World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms™, Expanded/Updated**
 - **Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook™**
 - **Rifts® World Book: Lemuria**
 - **Rifts® Dimension Book™: Thundercloud Galaxy™**
 - **Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames**
 - **Robotech® New Generation™ Sourcebook**
 - **Rifts® Chaos Earth™ – First Responders Sourcebook**
 - **Dead Reign™ Sourcebook Three**
 - **Mysteries of Magic™ Two**
 - Plus more **Robotech®** sourcebooks, more **Mysteries of Magic™** sourcebooks, more **Nightbane®** sourcebooks, more **Dead Reign™** sourcebooks, **Warpath™** and other good stuff.
- Note: Order of release, as listed, may be altered.
See Coming Attractions for details.

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2010 Release Checklist

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™** – Now available.
- **The Rifter® #50** (expanded, anniversary issue) – Now available.
- **Rifts® World Book 31: Triax™ Two** – Now available.
- **Rifts® Hoodies** (2 styles) – Now available.
- **Rifts® 20 Year Anniversary T-Shirt** – Now available.
- **Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms** – “Death is for the Weak” **T-Shirt** – Now available.
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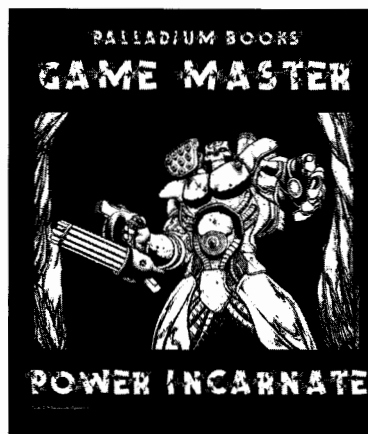
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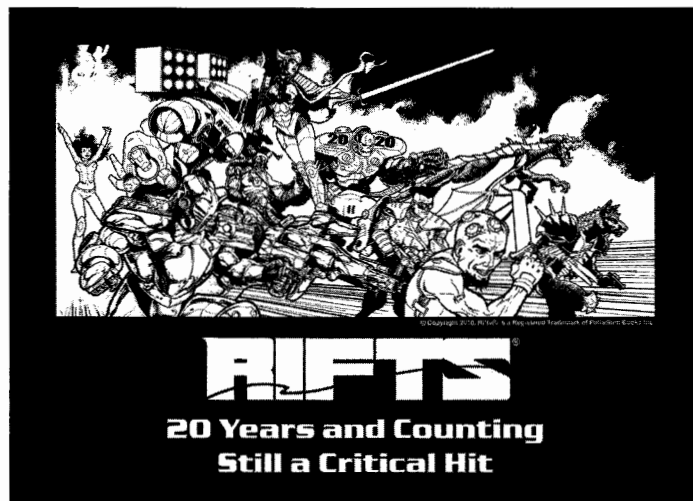
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DUDLEY 2010

Role-Playing with Younger Players

A Bit of Optional Game Master Advice

By William Waymouth II

This article is for all ages.

There you sit at your gaming table, and you see your 9-year-old brother wants to join in your weekly exertion into the Old Kingdom. Or, you have a table at the bookstore you bought your games from, and a younger player wants to know what's going on in your *Rifts*® game, and gets interested. What did you do to deserve this?

Not to worry, I've run a few games with younger players, and learned what works. First off, relax, you did not do anything wrong. Congratulations! You are going to help introduce another soul, out of the world of TV and video games, into a hobby as mentally stimulating as reading. Paper and pencil role-playing games teach imagination, creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking, social interaction (every gaming group has rules for paying attention, calling attention to yourself, etc.), math, responsibility and discipline (learning to keep appointments, keeping track of materials), and delayed gratification (it takes longer to level up in a sit-down-with-other-people game than on a computer, but the boost in power is much greater). This article is not to show you how to send the youngster screaming away from your game, but to include him or her for your whole group's mutual enjoyment, whether for a new campaign or an ongoing one.

Fortunately, there is common ground when dealing with adult role-players and teenage and pre-teen role-players.

Know Your Audience

This includes comfortable topics, preferred role-playing style, and temperament (very easy to figure out in role-playing games). This does not mean you have to "cutesy" it up when you have a young player; he may be insulted. Someone used to playing first person shooters may be remarkably jaded when it comes to violence. If you have a group of ten year olds, keep out the "mushy stuff."

Make it clear to the new player that you are giving him or her an *opportunity* to play, not a guarantee. If he fails to measure up to the behavioral standards of the group, he is out. Be up front and consistent with your rulings; children seem to have a built in hypocrisy detector. (Yeah, I know it's called something else, but I don't know who's reading this.)

Patience

You must develop patience if you want to do anything with children, or with anyone else. Remember, the young player is not an adult and it may take a little longer to do math or decide on something, especially if he is still learning how to play.

Minimize Distractions

Turn the TV off, put away the portable video games, and put away the cell phone. For 9- or 10-year-olds, you may have to seat them with their backs to the window.

Real World Concerns

There are a few basic issues you need to take into consideration when role-playing with younger players.

Curfews

These are important to young players. You may have to take him home after the game. Or maybe he has school tomorrow morning and has to leave early. School comes first; it's just like having a job. For best results, schedule the game for Friday evening or any time Saturday.

Schedules

Children have less control over their daily schedules than adults. If Aunt Mildred died and your young gamer's parents are going to the funeral, guess what? She's going too, whether she likes it or not. On the other hand, insist on showing up on time, and try to schedule the game for the same time each week.

Money, and the Lack Thereof

Younger players may not have the money to get all of their own supplies, especially if they are less than 14 years old. They may have to borrow supplies. Sean, one of my gaming friends, recommends that you buy extra copies of the main rule book of any game you regularly run. They will come in handy, and so will lots of dice. Some game stores sell dice by the pound. And a young player's own set of dice, in his favorite colors, makes an appreciated present.

Parents

If they don't want him playing with you, don't let him play with you. Maybe he needs extra sleep for school. Maybe he's grounded, and taking away his role-playing games is his punishment; this is surprisingly effective. Maybe they haven't reached a level of trust with you, yet. Maybe his parents still think we conjure demons. In this case, see if you can get his parents to sit in and watch – hey, maybe they'll find a new family activity. It was my father who introduced me to role-playing games. If your game is too mature for the young prospect, now you have two reasons to say "no." Most important, make sure the parents know what you are both doing. If it's night, do you drop off the young player, or do his parents pick him up?

Maturity Levels

There is quite a bit of difference between a 14-year-old and a 16-year-old. There is even more difference between a 14-year-old and a 12-year-old. The young player's temperament will also matter. Those more introverted seem to be more mature.

Under Seven Years Old: I feel they should not be playing role-playing games. In my experience, most do not have the reasoning, focus, and maturity. They might even think that what you are talking about is real. If you are stuck babysitting them, find something else to do.

Seven to Ten Years Old: They now understand that their actions have consequences, and they have a firm grasp of the difference between reality and make-believe. They may also have played a console RPG or an MMORPG. Keep it simple, keep it clean; and you may have to simplify the rules system. If their attention spans are too short, you may have to either allow for that, especially if you also have older players, or have shorter ses-

sions. And remember, homework comes first. Still, most may be too immature for role-playing games. Their characters will not be interested in romance. Mostly though, they may find a paper and pencil role-playing game too complex. They put that “intended for ages 12 and up” notice in these types of games for a reason. On the other hand, I did have a surprisingly consistent nine-year-old player when I ran a game at a friend’s apartment. Use your judgment; kids grow up fast, and some mature faster than others.

Eleven to Twelve Years Old: Now you have a significant increase in maturity, relatively speaking. They can usually stay focused with some reminders, make plans, and cooperate if needed. Their attention spans have increased. Many at this age have read *Harry Potter* or *Artemis Fowl* and similar books of their own will. Boys, especially, will look forward to combat.

Thirteen to Fifteen: Like eleven to twelve, but with better focus and emotion control. They are also starting to notice the opposite sex, and you can begin to introduce them to romantic elements in your game. They are also more capable of independent action, so you will not have to hold their hands.

Sixteen to Seventeen: You can treat them pretty much like adults; they’ll respect you more. Bear in mind, they may not be able to drive themselves at all times. My first car didn’t start in the rain. And not everyone learns to drive.

Character Creation

If this is your young player’s first time playing a role-playing game, be patient. The best thing to do is to book an appointment at some other time and help him or her create the character. If this is not possible, set aside a period before the game starts – you may have to rush things a little. If he is just sampling the game or is just curious, some simple to play pre-generated characters may be helpful. If he likes the game, you can either give him the character to play as his own, or help him make his own character. Another option is to have a “Master of Novices.” This is another player who is very familiar with character creation and your house rules. He helps make characters while you run the game. Delaying a game for hours to help one new guy make his character does wear on the nerves.

Try to find out what your young player likes and what interests him in real life. This will help you frame your explanations in terms he can understand. You don’t have to be an expert. If he wants to play an anime-inspired, blond-haired Ninja with magical powers, and you don’t know what he’s talking about, just ask him. With enough explanation from the young player, you can create any character from his favorite show. (In this example, if playing *Heroes Unlimited*TM, start with the Mystic Study power category, then select Prowl, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, and spells to match the powers. Mystically Bestowed might work, too.) I’ve also noticed that the stronger the character concept, the more the dice will conform to that concept.

When recommending O.C.C.s, super powers, or whatever, go with simplicity. Go with powers that are either “always on,” or can be “turned on” and “off” as needed. Having a young, new player play an Athanatos in *Nightbane*, with the ability to apply any part of his powers and bonuses at any time, may be a little overwhelming. I recommend, instead, a *Nightbane*. Their powers are either “on” or “off.” Instantaneous effects are great, too. Teenage players can handle more complex characters. If in doubt, it’s generally wise to stick with main rule book. You can introduce the neat stuff in the sourcebooks later.

Such Power!

Now you have a 10-year-old playing a grown-up (most likely) with special powers, in a bar, looking for an informant. He decides to start a fight and goes hog wild, or threatens the barkeeper with death. Do you stop him? No. Warn him, and if he persists, let him suffer the consequences. Don’t be too harsh. I once brought a fifteen-year-old almost to tears when I had him roll on a random insanity chart after he used a Mega-Damage Laser Grenade in a street fight and took out a whole bar. He would hear phantom voices yell “No!” whenever he pulled out a Laser Grenade. If the player is too dense to understand that actions bring consequences (like the rest of the player group wasting his character within 15 seconds, twice), maybe he should not be playing in your game.

Watch Your Mouth

Anything you say will be repeated, back to you, his friends, and his parents. If you gleefully talk about eviscerations in your game, or lots of dirty sex jokes, your young player’s parents will hear about it. And then you will.

Subject Matter

Let’s face it, most role-playing games talk about death. Your young player may approach death like a video game, or may be haunted by it. Be careful. Younger young players don’t “get” love scenes; everyone knows girls are full of cooties and boys are stinky. Even the slightest hint of sexual innuendo may come back to haunt you.

Discipline

Your young charge may suddenly become bratty or snotty, and ignore your warnings, and you will have to discipline him in front of others. The best method I have found is to temporarily not allow him into the game. He may plead, whine or even cry. Be firm, stick to your decision. It will be better for him and for you. If you are his parent, he is in deeper trouble. The rules of etiquette apply in role-playing games and out of role-playing games, right? Yeah, and he’s not getting away with it either, you saw him and have witnesses.

The Player Group

There are two basic situations when dealing with younger players: You have mostly adults or teenagers and a minority of younger players, or you have mostly children and/or teenagers.

The One Kid: You have your mostly mature group, and then you see, barely able to peek above your screen, the new kid. Or maybe he got into the game room first.

The Young G.M.: It happens. A 14-year-old showed you up in personal initiative, and got the game room first. Or that “new Rifts campaign starting at my house” announcement didn’t tell you the G.M. was 15. And you don’t care if you’re the only grown-up in the room. Respect the G.M. and encourage the others to, as well. Offer advice, if asked for it. To me, it sounds a little creepy to visit a young stranger’s house when his parents are not around. That’s why many of those announcements have an age range.

If you are a young player, I would play role-playing games at the home of someone you know, or a public place. There are some evil and twisted people out there.

Mostly Young Group: You got the game room want to run *Dead Reign*TM, and it turns out the local teenagers like zombie games. Or you are running an after-school activity role-playing game. I'm surprised how often I've seen one.

The Other Grown-Up: There you are, with your middle-school friends. You got the bookstore's only gaming room because you asked first. This *Heroes Unlimited*TM game is going to be so awesome. Then you see a grown-up sitting at your table, with a *Heroes Unlimited* book. Or you're a grown-up running a game for younger players and have one or two other grown-ups amidst a table full of 13- and 14-year-olds. Good, you have an ally. He can help maintain order and focus. If he knows the rules, he can be your Master of Novices.

Basic Tips

Keep it Simple: You don't need a recycled cookie-cutter plot, you can be original. Your adventure should have a simple hook (you can't go wrong with money or orders), and a definite ending. It's okay if the ending has unanswered questions; this will keep them coming back each week for more. Stay focused on one plot for the adventure; the next adventure can deal with another plot thread. The older your players, the more complex and epic you can get.

Choices: They should be there and they should matter. For someone whose life is more dominated by authority figures than yours probably is, choices can be a refreshing feature, even if it's "do we take the right hall or the left hall first?" Use positive or neutral choices: Do we guard the caravan or fight the dragon? Do we go to the crypt to get the magic weapons, or the dungeon for the pile of gold? This also applies for character creation.

Allow for Failure: You don't need to protect your young gaming buddy from failure. Let him fail. This will teach him a valuable lesson for later in life. Just don't make failure automatically fatal. Let his character get lost, captured, or lectured. Failure is a natural part of life and growing up. Encourage him to try again.

Military campaigns, or some other organization, are a great idea for a mostly young gaming group. You get an adventure – I mean mission – with a clear goal, a start, and an ending. Don't worry, children are used to authority figures. Still, let them make choices, like how to accomplish the mission. If you are playing *Rifts*[®], check out the sourcebook *Mercenary Adventures*; it has a Boot Camp adventure that lets you teach the players how to play *Rifts* and how to work together as a mercenary unit.

Other Issues

The Mature Game: Some little kid wants to join in your game. But it's a really gritty game, with drug abuse, morally reprehensible villains, high stakes, harsh choices, and shades-of-gray morality all around. It's your game. You have the right to refuse admittance. Politely tell him it's a nasty game that is not appropriate for him. Then help him find or start a more suitable game. If there is none available, maybe a good versus evil morality, save the world game may be what it takes to keep your gritty creative batteries charged.

Which Game? You're starting a new campaign for your young players. Palladium offers a lot of choices. If in doubt or you can't get a consensus, go with *Heroes Unlimited*TM. It is fairly simple, and superheroes seem to be popular with all ages. If your group really likes anime, try *Robotech*[®], *Ninjas and Superspies*TM,

Rifts[®], or *Nightbane*[®] (for older kids). If they like massive online role-playing games or console RPGs, I would recommend *Palladium Fantasy*[®]. I found *After the Bomb*[®] was popular, too. *Dead Reign*TM and *Beyond the Supernatural*TM may scare really young players, especially if your game has a high Player Character attrition rate. Mostly it's a matter of asking what kind of game your group wants, or announcing the game you want to run and taking everyone who shows up.

So having a young player at your table is no cause for alarm or frustration. Relax, and have fun. And kids do grow up fast. You'll be amazed at how fast he or she matures – and you helped make it happen.

Living Weapons

Optional Source Material for Splicers[®]

By Chris Kluge

Illustrations and Some Concepts by Charles Walton

In the beginning, Bio-Technology basically just consisted of different species of animals combined into new and lethal creations that were powerful enough to go toe-to-toe with heavy combat robots. In time, the Librarians learned how to mold and craft living tissue into an amazing array of items such as firearms, missiles, and even giant suits of powered body armor. They chose to model the majority of their creations after the human technology of old to help people adjust to this bizarre new science. The early Resistance leaders also decreed that Bio-Technology should not be used to modify humans' genes directly. However, as the years rolled by and the war grew more desperate, many Great Houses began to relax this policy. The Librarians took these openings and used the opportunity to really push the concept of "living weaponry" to the next level. As the stigmas and forced limitations against Bio-Technology were slowly removed, Librarians throughout the Resistance really unleashed their creative energies, not only with new Host Armor designs, but with new human augmentations as well.

Metamorph

No one would deny the incredible power possessed by the Biotics, Scarecrows, or Skinjobs, but still comparatively few people are willing to subject themselves to the conversion process. While members of the Resistance understand that these dedicated warriors sacrificed their very humanity in order to protect their fellow man, they still cannot help but view them as monsters. The experimental Biotic variation known as the Metamorph was an attempt to augment human beings with the awesome power of Bio-Technology without forcing them to permanently surrender their humanity. The idea was that the subject would retain his human form and physiology when interacting with civilians back at home, but before entering the field, he would be able to quickly transform his body into a powerful Bio-Tech war machine. The design exceeded the Librarians' expectations, but even they had to admit that the transformation process might be a bit too gruesome for the often-times squeamish human population to accept. Their creations may not always be monsters, but they are far from normal.



Metamorphs can assume various forms. Some are larger than their human forms, some are smaller. Watching a Metamorph change into a larger form is somewhat disgusting, but witnessing one transform into a smaller creature is truly horrifying. In order to change into a larger combat form, the Metamorph must first consume enough animal matter so that his total weight is double that of the form he wishes to become. For example, if a Metamorph in his 180 pound (81 kg) human form wishes to change into his 450 pound (202.5 kg) Armored Form, he must first consume 720 pounds (324 kg) of meat ($450 \times 2 = 900 - 180 = 720$)! This is obviously a difficult proposition for the average 180 pound human being, but the Metamorph quickly grows large storage sacks along his stomach, back, and limbs to hold the excess matter for the next step of the process. Witnessing these bloated, translucent sacks filled with half-digested meat form all across the Metamorph's body is somewhat unnerving to witness, as is the next step, the cocoon phase.

Once the Metamorph has consumed enough raw materials to change into a larger form, his skin begins to break down into a sticky, resin-like material, as if his entire body is melting. This gooey layer then quickly hardens into a stretchy membrane that acts as the outer layer of the cocoon. From within this semi-transparent shell, outsiders can watch as the Metamorph's body is reduced into genetic soup and then quickly rebuilt into a completely new form. The new creature then bursts free of its old skin, ready for battle. This transformation is relatively quick (one to three

days) and a tad unnerving, but it is the process of transforming into a *smaller* form that is most horrific to witness.

While transforming into a larger form may take several days, the process of turning into a smaller creature only takes minutes. The current form provides all of the raw materials needed for the change, so no extra consumption is required. The old body also makes an excellent cocoon, so there is no time required to form a new one. The Metamorph simply stands still and starts quickly restructuring his internal structure. To observers, the Metamorph looks comatose or even deceased as his body writhes and convulses from within. The sickening sound of bones popping and cracking and flesh tearing is just a prelude to what is to come. When the new form is ready to emerge from this makeshift cocoon, it rips the old body apart in a terrifying spray of blood and gore. The leftover shell then breaks down into genetic sludge to prevent any rival Houses from analyzing the Metamorph's genetic code. The entire process is quick, efficient, and absolutely nauseating. The humans of the Resistance have grown accustomed to some pretty disturbing things, but watching a naked man emerge from the back of a monstrous suit of Host Armor is far different from seeing one rip out of its chest in an explosion of blood, flesh, and shattered bones. The Librarians are convinced that Metamorphs could be accepted, in time, as long as their introduction to the general public is handled properly (and slowly). They advise new Metamorphs that for the time being, they should transform in seclusion, especially while in the underground havens.

The Metamorph design was originally meant to be a way to create Biotics without permanently turning men into monsters, but the Librarians really liked the potential of their creation and experimented with many different forms. Each Metamorph starts off with just two forms (a human form and the Biotic-like Combat Form), but as he grows in power and experience, his body can be modified in a Gene Pool to accept additional forms. Not only that, but each form can be further augmented with additional Bio-Weapons and enhancements. Each enhancement is generally tied to one particular form, but if the Metamorph is willing to spend double the normal Bio-E cost, then the enhancement is applied across every form (except for the human form, of course).

Metamorphs are incredibly versatile combatants, but the design is not without its shortcomings. For one, the human body can only endure so many enhancements, and modifying subjects with various types of forms is very taxing. This tends to limit the number of Bio-Enhancements Metamorphs can receive. This means that each form will never be quite as strong as a dedicated creation like a Biotic or a War Mount, but the versatility provided by the different forms more than makes up for it.

Another downside is that the transformation process itself is not without its risks. Transforming into a larger form takes a long time to complete, and the Metamorph is incredibly vulnerable during the entire process. The thin cocoon does not provide any real protection, and if this membrane is pierced before the transformation is complete, then the half-formed body of the Metamorph spills out onto the ground in a pool of his own blood and fluids. This disruption is usually not fatal, but the Metamorph is left in such a weakened condition that it takes very little to finish him off. The pitiful creature is in horrible pain, barely has the strength to move, and only has a few Hit Points. If given enough time, the Metamorph can stabilize his body enough to regain normal function. He will still need to enter another cocoon phase or morph into a smaller form (if one is available) in order to get

back to full strength. Metamorphs are warned of these dangers and are advised to take great care before attempting to enter the cocoon phase.

The Librarians are pushing the current test subjects to their physical and mental limits to see just how many forms and enhancements the subjects can receive before their systems break down completely. This has resulted in shorter life spans for the current batch of Metamorphs, but few people live past their forties on this violent world anyway. A few Metamorphs have also experienced some mental instability due to the rigors placed on their bodies and minds, but this is usually towards the end of their lives. The Librarians will likely recommend lower Bio-E limits in the future to prevent any negative side effects, but right now they want to see what their creations can do.

Alignment: Any, but typically good or selfish.

Attribute Requirements: M.E. 12 and P.E. 12 or higher.

Attribute Bonuses: +1D4 to M.E., +1D4 to P.S., and +2 to P.E.

O.C.C. Bonuses: None.

Base S.D.C.: 20, plus any from Physical Skills.

Common Skills: Standard.

O.C.C. Skill Programs: Basic Military (+20%), Bio-Technology (+10%), and Weapons Training.

Elective Skills: Select five additional skills from the following list at first level, plus one additional at levels 2, 5, 8, 11 and 13. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any.

Domestic: Any.

Espionage: Any.

Medical: Any.

Military: Any.

Physical: Any.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any.

Technical: Any.

Transportation: Any.

Wilderness Survival: Any.

W.P.s: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character gets to select three Secondary Skills at level one and one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not receive any special O.C.C. bonuses.

Additional Forms and Enhancements: Metamorphs start off with two forms: a human form and a Biotic-like Combat Form. Additional forms can be purchased using Bio-E in a Gene Pool, or the Metamorph can spend his Bio-E on Bio-Weapons and enhancements for any of his various forms (with the exception of the human form). In the alternative, the Metamorph can spend double the amount of Bio-E for any weapon or enhancement in order to apply it across all of his forms (including any forms that are purchased in the future). Once again, enhancements applied across all forms *do not* apply to the human form. Available Bio-Energy points for the Metamorph is M.E. attribute number, plus P.E. attribute number, plus 3D6x10+60 points at level one, plus an additional 5D6+10 Bio-E at each level of experience, starting with level two.

Penalties: The high amount of Bio-E available to Metamorphs comes at a price. Their bodies can only endure the taxing nature of this many modifications for so long. This has shortened the Metamorph's life span to only 4D6+20 years. In the last

year of life, each transformation causes permanent damage to the Metamorph's body. Each time the Metamorph transforms into a new form, his M.D.C. (or S.D.C. and H.P.), attributes, and bonuses are *all* reduced by 25 percent. These penalties are permanent and cumulative with every transformation. Once the Metamorph's M.E. drops below 10, he must then roll on the Biotic Insanities table with every transformation as well.

Standard Equipment: Military fatigues, dress clothing, survival knife, utility belt, first aid kit, Face Wrap, tinted goggles, hatchet for cutting wood, one light or heavy Bio-Weapon of choice, one weapon for each W.P. with appropriate ammunition for heavy combat, tent, knapsack, backpack, two water skins, a two week supply of emergency food rations, and some personal items.

M.D.C. "Living" Body Armor: Metamorphs can wear any type of body armor in their human form, but they rarely do. They prefer having the flexibility to alter their form at any time, and restrictive armor would prevent that. The Librarians also prefer that they test their natural abilities rather than any known armor designs. As a result, they are not issued a personal suit of Living Body Armor.

Handheld Weapon Bio-Enhancements: Metamorphs receive 5D6 Bio-E points at level one plus an additional 7 Bio-E at each level of experience, starting with level two, exclusively for handheld weapon Bio-Enhancements. This Bio-E can be distributed between all or some of the weapons in the character's personal armory, or applied to one favorite item.

Money: Has 1D6x100 credits in precious metals, relics or trade items, as well as 6D6x10 in available credits. Money can be spent now on additional equipment or saved for later.

The Upside: You have been given the best of both worlds. Your body has been turned into a living weapon of war, and yet you can still live your life as a normal human. You have the versatility to adapt to nearly any conditions you may face in the field. You can grow to the size of a War Mount or shrink down to the size of a cat. You can take to the skies or dive down to the deepest depths. Your forms provide you with a range of abilities that few other Splicers can match, and unlike your fellow warriors, your power is not housed in external armor, it is contained within your own body.

The Downside: The downside of being good at everything is that you are great at nothing. You may be able to turn into a Biotic-like form and a War Mount-like form, but you will never possess the sheer amount of power wielded by either. Of course, they are both monsters, and you still have a choice. You may not always appear monstrous, but you are far from human. It has yet to be determined how your fellow Splicers will accept you, but history has shown it will likely not go over well. Although, as one of the first pioneers, whether the Resistance ultimately accepts Metamorphs or not will largely be due to your efforts. You need to take care to hide the transformation process from others. Not just to shield your squeamish brethren from this rather gruesome affair, but also because you are unbelievably vulnerable during the transformation.

Transformation Rules

Every form has a Size Level, and the rules concerning the transformation depend on whether the Metamorph is transforming into a larger form or a smaller one.

Transforming to a Larger Form: When moving from a smaller Size Level to a larger one, the Metamorph must first consume enough food to fuel the change and then enter a cocoon phase so that his body can restructure itself. No matter what type of metabolism the current form possesses, the Metamorph must first realign his digestive system into a Carnivorous metabolism. This process takes roughly 1D4 minutes and does not impact the Metamorph in any way. The character must then consume enough protein to become twice the weight of the form he wishes to assume. For example, if a Metamorph in his 320 pound (144 kg) Close Combat Form wishes to transform into his 450 pound (202.5 kg) Armored Form, then he would first need to consume 580 pounds (261 kg) of meat ($450 \times 2 = 900 - 320 = 580$). The Metamorph forms elastic storage sacks along his stomach, back, and limbs to hold this tremendous amount of matter. These heavy, bulky sacks drastically impair movement. If the Metamorph consumes half his own body weight then Speed is reduced by 75 percent, he loses 3 attacks per melee round, and is -5 to strike, parry, and dodge. If the Metamorph consumes as much as his own body weight, then he can barely move (Speed is reduced to 3), he only has one attack per melee round, and is -10 to strike, parry, and dodge. Consuming more than twice the Metamorph's current body weight means he will be completely immobile, even before entering the cocoon phase. Once the Metamorph has eaten enough, he will enter the cocoon phase 1D4 hours later. It takes roughly 4D4 minutes to form a protective cocoon. During this time, the Metamorph is completely defenseless. He cannot see, hear, feel, or move. This outer shell does not offer the greatest protection, but it does possess 5D6 M.D.C. Once cocooned, the time it takes to transform is dependent on how many Size Levels the Metamorph is trying to grow. It takes 12 hours to increase one Size Level, so going from a Size Level of 2 to a Size Level of 5 would take 36 hours. If the cocoon is destroyed before the process is completed, then the half-formed Metamorph spills out onto the ground in a pained and weakened state. All attributes are reduced to 1D4 and Hit Points are reduced to only 2D4. The extraordinary pain and weakness for this disruption leaves the Metamorph with only one attack per melee round and penalties of -10 to strike, parry and dodge. After 1D4 hours, the pain subsides and the penalties are reduced by half, but the Metamorph is still left in an incredibly weakened state until he can re-enter the cocoon phase or transform into a smaller form (if one is available).

Transforming into a Similar Sized Form: The process of transforming into a form with the same Size Level is like transforming into a larger one, only much faster. The Metamorph needs to consume far less organic material – twice the *difference* in weight between the two forms (regardless of whether it is an increase or a decrease in weight) – and then enters the cocoon phase 1D4 hours later. For example, to transform from the 330 pound (148.5 kg) Aquatic Form to the 450 pound (202.5 kg) Armored Form (both Size Level 4) would require the consumption of only 240 pounds (108 kg) of organic material ($450 - 330 = 120 \times 2 = 240$). Unfortunately, this consumption and subsequent cocoon phase are necessary even if the new form is lighter, as long as the two forms are of the same Size Level, so the above example would have the same cost even if performed in reverse. In any case, it only takes 2D4 hours to complete the transformation.

Transforming into a Smaller Form: Transforming into a smaller form takes much less time and does not expose the Metamorph to as much risk. The Metamorph's current body provides

all the materials necessary for the transformation so no additional consumption is required. The old body also acts as the cocoon for the transformation, so no new shell is required. If someone wanted to crack open this cocoon, they would need to deplete the M.D.C. of the main body of the old form. If this occurred then the half-formed new creature would spill out in the same pitiful state as what was listed above. The time required to transform into a smaller form is also based on how many Size Levels are being crossed, but in this case, the process is *faster* when more Size Levels are crossed. It only takes 1D4 minutes, *minus* the change in Size Levels (in minutes), to transform into a smaller form. For example, changing from Size Level 4 to Size Level 1 would take 1D4-3 minutes (minimum time of 30 seconds or two melee rounds).

The Forms

Roll up the parameters for each form the first time only. Once set, use these same stats every time the Metamorph changes into that particular form.

Human Form

This is the character's default human form. It possesses no special abilities or powers. This form looks completely normal, other than strange, iris-less eyes. See the character creation stats above. The only important note is that the human form has a Size Level of 3. The average Metamorph is 5 feet plus 3D6 inches (1.6-2 m) tall and weighs 2D4x10+140 pounds (72-99 kg).

Combat Form



The Metamorph's Combat Form is basically the same as a standard Biotic. It looks like a larger, more powerful version of the character's human form. It comes with no Bio-Enhancements to start other than increased speed, strength, and durability. Any senses, features, and Bio-Weapons must be purchased separately.

Size Level: 4

M.D.C.: P.E.x10 M.D.C., +1D8 M.D.C. per level of experience

Weight: 350 pounds (157.5 kg).

Dimensions: 7 feet (2.1 m) tall.

Special Abilities: Increased Endurance: The Combat Form can last ten times longer than normal during strenuous activity before feeling the effects of exhaustion, and can remain alert and operate at full efficiency for three entire days without sleep.

Bonuses: +1D8 to P.S., and it becomes Splicer Strength, +2D4 to P.P., +1D6 to P.E.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

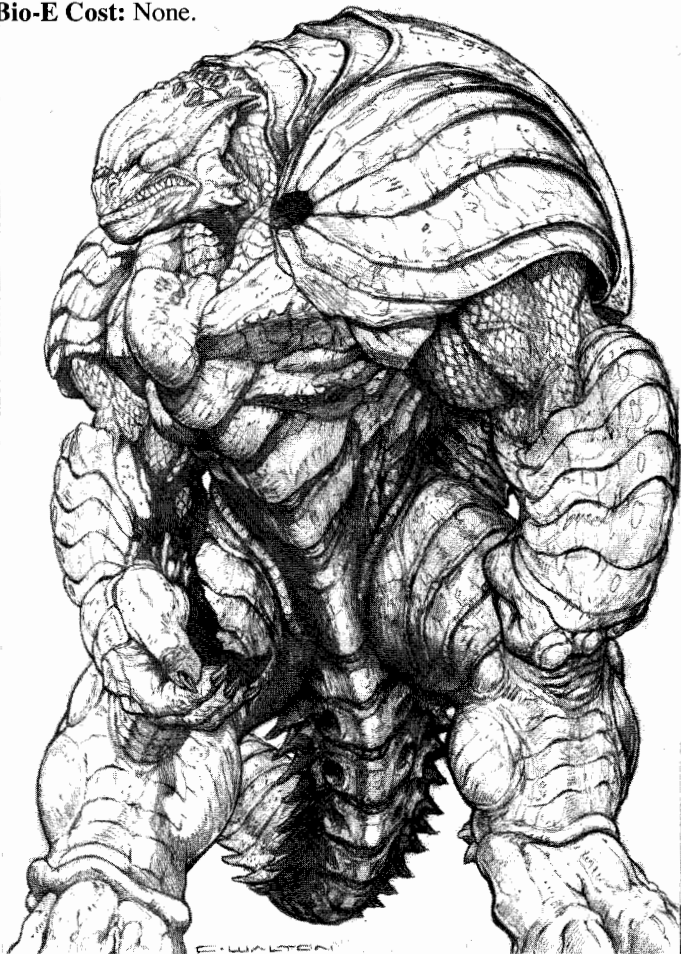
Horror Factor: 6

Feeding: The Combat Form is an Omnivore. It needs to eat 30 pounds of vegetation and animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** Based on Spd attribute.
- **Leaping:** 20 feet (6.1 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.
- **Digging:** Not possible.
- **Swimming:** Based on skills.
- **Flying:** Not possible.
- **Combat Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, and +1 to dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** Punch damage determined by Splicer P.S.
- **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** None.

Bio-E Cost: None.



Armored Form

This form was designed to maximize defensive protection at the expense of pretty much everything else. The thick, armored shell substantially limits mobility and the form does not really possess much in the way of natural weapons, but it can really absorb punishment. The back and limbs have a sort of rounded ap-

pearance. This is to allow the Armored Form to pull in his limbs and fold his body into a tight ball. When tucked into this armored ball, the Metamorph is even more resistant to impact weapons and concussive forces like explosions and rail gun rounds (takes half damage).

Size Level: 4

M.D.C.: 7D6x10+80 M.D.C., +3D8 M.D.C. per level of experience.

Weight: 450 pounds (202.5 kg).

Dimensions: 6 feet (1.8 m) tall.

Special Abilities: When the Metamorph pulls in his limbs and squeezes his body into a tight ball, he becomes more resistant to impact damage. Any damage from kinetic attacks like punches, kicks, rail gun rounds, and explosions inflict half damage. It takes two melee actions to compress his body into an armored ball.

Bonuses and Penalties: P.S. becomes Splicer Strength, +1D6 to P.E., -3 to P.P., and -2D4 to Spd.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 2D4 M.D.C. per melee round.

Horror Factor: 8

Feeding: The Armored Form is an Omnivore. It needs to eat 30 pounds (13.5 kg) of vegetation and animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** Based on Spd attribute.
- **Leaping:** 5 feet (1.5 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.
- **Digging:** Not possible.
- **Swimming:** Not possible (sinks like a stone).
- **Flying:** Not possible.
- **Combat Penalties:** -2 to dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** Punch damage determined by Splicer P.S.
- **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** None.

Bio-E Cost: 50 points.

Close Combat Form (Predator Form)

The Close Combat Form is a heavily armored, bipedal monstrosity that specializes in hand to hand combat. The form is Carnivorous, with a mouth full of razor sharp teeth and wicked, taloned claws instead of hands. This form cannot use hand-held weapons, but that is not really what it was designed for. It is powerfully built to allow it to deliver devastating blows, and it is fast and agile, which makes it difficult to hit. This form is also known as the Predator Form because it is not only a fierce close quarters combatant, but it is also a natural hunter. The form possesses instinctive skills that give the Metamorph expertise in climbing, tracking, and stealth (if the character already possesses these skills, then add half the form's amount to the character's base skill). These skills help the Metamorph close in on its prey quickly and safely before delivering the killing blow.

Size Level: 3

M.D.C.: 3D4x10+20 M.D.C., +2D4 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 320 pounds (144 kg).

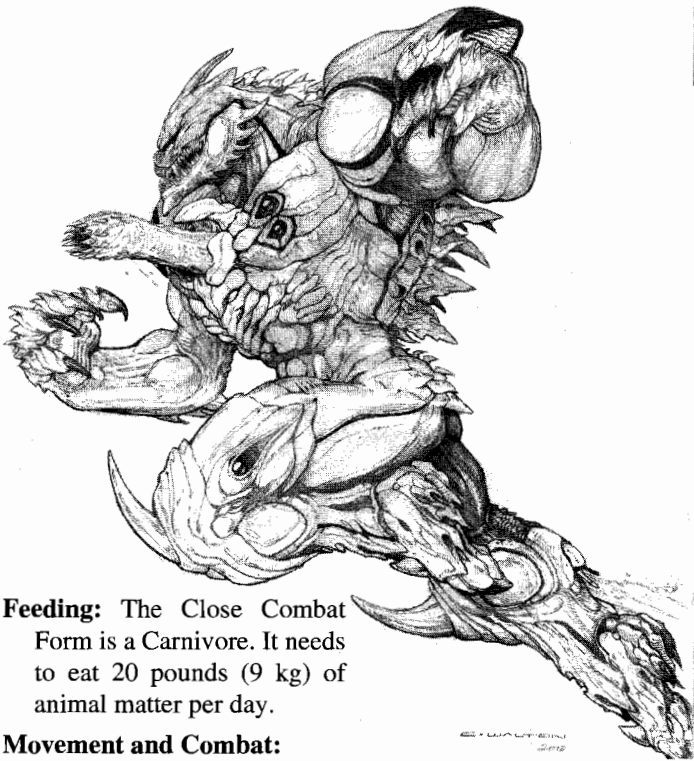
Dimensions: 7 feet (2.1 m) tall.

Special Abilities: None.

Bonuses: +2D6 to P.S. and it becomes Splicer Strength, +2D4 to P.P., +1D6 to P.E.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 2D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Horror Factor: 14

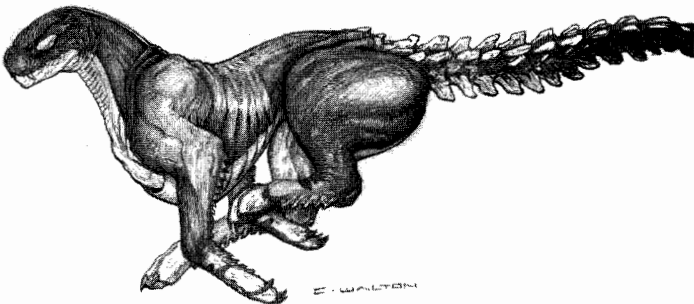


Feeding: The Close Combat Form is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 20 pounds (9 kg) of animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** 60 mph (96 km).
- **Leaping:** 20 feet (6.1 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.
- **Digging:** 10 mph (16 km) through sand or dirt. 5 mph (8 km) through clay, rock or stone.
- **Swimming:** Not possible (sinks like a stone).
- **Flying:** Not possible.
- **Combat Bonuses:** +4 attacks per melee, +5 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +4 to dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** Punch damage determined by Splicer P.S., Bite 3D8 M.D., Claw Strike +2D6 M.D. to Punch damage, Power Claw Strike +4D6 M.D. to Power Punch damage (counts as two melee attacks). Bite from the concealed mouth tentacle in the chest does 2D8 M.D. (counts as an additional attack per melee).
- **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** Climb 90%, Land Navigation 90%, Tracking 70%, Hunting 95%, Prowl 75%, and Track by Scent 90%.

Bio-E Cost: 120 points.



Runner Form

The Runner Form is basically a cheetah with a thick, armored hide and a long, bony tail that helps it maintain its balance at great speeds. This form possesses some combat abilities, but what it was built for (as the name implies) is tremendous running speed. Natural cheetahs are incredibly fast, but only for short distances.

The same is true of this form, in a sense. It can reach incredible speeds for only a short period of time, but its cruising speed is so fast that it rarely needs to push itself to this exhausting level. Since this form is on the smaller side, most Metamorphs select it as a sort of escape pod. If a larger form is taking too great of a pounding, the Metamorph can quickly transform into the Runner Form and flee the scene.

Size Level: 2

M.D.C.: 2D4x10 M.D.C., +1D4 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 150 pounds (67.5 kg).

Dimensions: 3 feet (0.9 m) tall at the shoulders and 5 feet (1.5 m) long with a 6 foot (1.8 m) tail.

Special Abilities: None.

Bonuses: +1D6 to P.S. and it becomes Splicer Strength, +1D4 to P.P., +1D6 to P.E.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D6 M.D.C. per minute.

Horror Factor: 14

Feeding: The Runner Form is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 20 pounds (9 kg) of animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** 420 mph (672 km) maximum, but normal cruising speed is "only" 190 mph (304 km). The Runner Form can run at top speed for up to 30 minutes straight before needing to rest for 1D6x10+30 minutes. However, it can fight or trot along at cruising speed almost all day (20 hours) without needing rest.
- **Leaping:** 80 feet (24.4 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.
- **Digging:** 20 mph (32 km) through sand or dirt. 10 mph (16 km) through clay, rock or stone.
- **Swimming:** About 20 mph (32 km).
- **Flying:** Not possible.
- **Combat Bonuses:** +2 attacks per melee, +6 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to parry, +7 to dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** Punch damage determined by Splicer P.S., Bite 3D6 M.D., Claw Strike +1D6 M.D. to Punch damage, Power Claw Strike +2D6 M.D. to Power Punch damage (counts as two melee attacks).
- **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** Land Navigation 75% and Prowl 60%.

Bio-E Cost: 60 points.

Centaur Form

The Centaur Form is a hybrid form that provides the Metamorph with impressive running speed while still allowing him to use handheld weapons. The lower body is an odd mix of a lion in the front and a horse in the back, and the upper body looks like a more muscular version of the Metamorph's human form.

Size Level: 5

M.D.C.: 4D6x10+20 M.D.C., +2D6 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 800 pounds.

Dimensions: 6 feet (1.8 m) tall at the shoulders of the horse body, 9 feet (2.7 m) to the top of the head, and 8 feet (2.4 m) long.

Special Abilities: None.

Bonuses: +2D6 to P.S. and it becomes Splicer Strength, +2D4 to P.P., +1D6 to P.E.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 2D6 M.D.C. per minute.



Horror Factor: None.

Feeding: The Centaur Form is an Omnivore. It needs to eat 40 pounds (18 kg) of animal matter and vegetation per day.

Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** 180 mph (288 km).
- **Leaping:** 35 feet (10.6 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.
- **Digging:** Not possible.
- **Swimming:** Not possible (sinks like a stone).
- **Flying:** Not possible.
- **Combat Bonuses:** +2 attacks per melee, +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to parry, +2 to dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** Punch damage determined by Splicer P.S., Front Claw Strike +1D6 M.D. to Punch damage, Rear Kick 4D6 M.D., Rear Double Kick 1D4x10+10 M.D. (counts as two melee attacks).
- **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** Land Navigation 95%.

Bio-E Cost: 80 points.

Aquatic Form

The Librarians designed the Aquatic Form to be a little larger than necessary so that the Metamorph could quickly transform into a land form once it reached its destination. Since no Machine targets exist in the Great Ocean, this form is really just meant to get the Metamorph where he needs to go, but it still needs to be able to defend itself. The Librarians designed a tough, capable form that could dish out punishment or absorb it in kind, yet was

still incredibly fast and agile underwater. They based the design on a seal but gave it human arms so that it could handle Bio-Tech firearms. The entire body has a thick hide and overlapping layers of armor plating that resembles a lobster shell, and the seal head has a hard, armored dome that houses the echolocation organ. The Aquatic Form can breathe above water but it can barely move when on land. It can only drag itself along the ground at a speed of 5.

Size Level: 4

M.D.C.: 4D6x10+20 M.D.C., +2D6 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 330 pounds (148.5 kg).

Dimensions: 8 feet (2.4 m) long.

Special Abilities: Gills, Echolocation, and Underwater Eyes.

Bonuses: +2D6 to P.S. and it becomes Splicer Strength.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Horror Factor: None.

Feeding: The Aquatic Form is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 40 pounds (18 kg) of animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** Not possible.
- **Leaping:** Can leap 35 feet (10.6 m) out of the water.
- **Digging:** Not possible.
- **Swimming:** 150 mph (240 km) but can perform short bursts of 300 mph (480 km) for 15 seconds at a time (one melee round). After such a burst, the Aquatic Form can only reach speeds of 80 mph (128 km) for the next 1D4 minutes.
- **Flying:** Not possible.
- **Combat Bonuses (only apply while underwater):** +3 attacks per melee, +4 on initiative, +3 to strike, +2 to parry, +4 to automatic dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** Punch damage determined by Splicer P.S., Bite 3D8 M.D.



- Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note: Swimming 98% and Underwater Navigation 90%.

Bio-E Cost: 50 points.



Bruiser Form

The Bruiser Form is basically an amped-up version of the Combat Form – a very amped-up version. Like the Combat Form, this form looks like a standard Biotic, only much, much larger. This beast is a hulking mass of muscle. Its purpose is to batter its enemies into submission with its bare hands. The Bruiser Form is too large to use average handheld Bio-Weapons, but it can wield Heavy Bio-Weapons with ease.

Size Level: 5

M.D.C.: 5D6x10+40 M.D.C., +3D6 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 700 pounds (315 kg).

Dimensions: 12 feet (3.7 m) tall.

Special Abilities: None.

Bonuses: +3D6 to P.S. and it becomes Supernatural Strength, +2D6 to P.E.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 2D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Horror Factor: 12

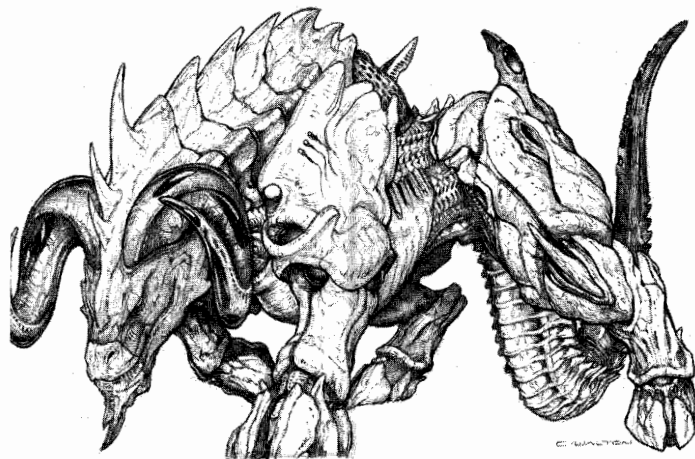
Feeding: The Bruiser Form is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 40 pounds (18 kg) of animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

- Running: Based on Spd attribute.
- Leaping: 40 feet (12.2 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.

- Digging: 20 mph (32 km) through sand or dirt. 10 mph (16 km) through clay, rock or stone.
- Swimming: Not possible (sinks like a stone).
- Flying: Not possible.
- Combat Bonuses: +1 attack per melee, +1 to strike, and +1 to parry.
- Combat Capabilities: Punch damage determined by Supernatural P.S., Bite 3D8 M.D.
- Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note: None.

Bio-E Cost: 200 points.



Battle Ram Form

This heavy, four-legged beast was built to be an unstoppable force of destruction. It looks like a cross between a carnivorous dinosaur and a Brahma Bull, with two massive ram's horns mounted on its Velociraptor-like head. It can smash headfirst through a wall or a platoon of Steel Troopers without slowing down. The Battle Ram moves with decent speed but it is far from agile. It was designed to charge straight ahead and mow down all in its path.

Size Level: 6

M.D.C.: 6D6x10+40 M.D.C., +3D6 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 1,600 pounds (720 kg).

Dimensions: 10 feet (3 m) tall and 15 feet (4.6 m) long.

Special Abilities: None.

Bonuses: +3D6 to P.S. and it becomes Supernatural Strength, +1D8 to P.E., and -2 P.P.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 2D6 M.D.C. per minute.

Horror Factor: 14

Feeding: The Battle Ram Form is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 60 pounds (27 kg) of animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

- Running: 120 mph (192 km).
- Leaping: 20 feet high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.
- Digging: 20 mph (32 km) through sand or dirt. 10 mph (16 km) through clay, rock or stone.
- Swimming: Not possible (sinks like a stone).
- Flying: Not possible.
- Combat Bonuses: +1 attack per melee, +3 on initiative, and +3 to strike.
- Combat Capabilities: Punch damage determined by Supernatural P.S., Bite 3D8+3 M.D., Body Block/Ram: 5D8 M.D. and has a 01-70% likelihood of knocking an opponent as large

as 20 feet (6.1 m) tall off of his feet and onto his back. If knocked off his feet, the victim loses initiative and two melee attacks. A ram counts as two attacks.

· Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note: None.

Bio-E Cost: 180 points.



Heavy Assault Form

The Heavy Assault Form is a walking cannon, literally. It truly is just a massive Bio-Tech cannon mounted on two powerful legs. It has no head, no arms, no real torso to speak of; it just consists of the cannon, an Organic Rocket pod mounted on each side of it, a sensor pod attached to the top, and two tentacles mounted on the hips that each end in a devouring maw. The main gun is an Omega Cannon that can obliterate enemies from an impressive distance. The rocket pods can engage targets from nearly any angle, but they too are meant to bombard enemies from afar. The only weapons that are meant for close quarters combat are the Devouring Tentacles. These tentacles are used to defend the Metamorph from enemies that get too close as well as for nourishment. All things considered, the Heavy Assault Form is one of the least natural looking creatures the Librarians have ever come up with.

Size Level: 6

M.D.C.: 4D6x10+60 M.D.C., +3D6 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 1300 pounds (585 kg).

Dimensions: 12 feet (3.6 m) tall. The cannon barrel is 13 feet (4 m) long and the counter-balance tail is 8 feet (2.4 m) long.

Special Abilities: None.

Bonuses: +2D6 to P.S. and it becomes Splicer Strength, +1D6 to P.E.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 2D6 M.D.C. per minute.

Horror Factor: 10

Feeding: The Heavy Assault Form is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 50 pounds (22.5 kg) of animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

· Running: 40 mph (64 km).

· Leaping: 10 feet (3 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.

· Digging: Not possible.

· Swimming: Not possible (sinks like a stone).

· Flying: Not possible.

· Combat Bonuses: +2 on initiative, and +4 to strike.

· Combat Capabilities: Kick damage determined by Splicer P.S., Tentacle Bite 3D8 M.D. Both tentacles can attack the same target simultaneously 6D8 M.D. (but counts as two melee attacks). Omega Cannon: Damage: 3D8x10 M.D. per blast, Range: 6,000 feet (1,829 m), Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as two attacks per melee, Payload: Effectively unlimited. Organic Rocket Pods (2): Damage: 5D10 M.D. to a 10 foot (3 m) radius, Range: About one mile (1.6 km), Payload: 15 rockets each (30 rockets total).

· Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note: None.

Bio-E Cost: 240 points.



Angel Flying Form

The Angel Flying Form is somewhat different from most Bio-Tech creations, in that instead of looking monstrous it is actually quite beautiful. The Librarians hoped this would help the Metamorph acclimate into Splicer society a bit easier. It looks like a much more attractive version of the Metamorph's human form, with white feathered wings. The form looks like a living angel.

Speed and agility are all enhanced, but this form is rather delicate compared to most. The form relies on evasiveness over brute force, but it is still quite effective in combat.

Size Level: 3

M.D.C.: 4D6 M.D.C., +1D4 M.D.C. per level of experience. The wings have 3D4 M.D.C. each.

Weight: 20 pounds (9 kg) heavier than the Metamorph's human form.

Dimensions: 3 inches (7.6 cm) taller than the Metamorph's human form, with a wingspan of 12 feet (3.6 m).

Special Abilities: Advanced Eyes.

Bonuses: +1D6 to P.S., +2D4 to P.P., +1D6 to P.E., +1D6+2 P.B., and +2D4 to Spd.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Horror Factor: None.

Feeding: The flying form is an Omnivore. It needs to eat 5 pounds (2.25 kg) of vegetation and animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** Based on Spd attribute.
- **Leaping:** 5 feet (1.5 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.
- **Digging:** Not possible.
- **Swimming:** Not possible (the wings get in the way).
- **Flying:** Top speed of 250 mph (400 km). Cruising speed is typically 140 mph (224 km). Increase top speed and cruising speed by 2D4 mph at each additional level of experience.
- **Combat Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee, +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to parry, and +1 to dodge when on the ground. Additional bonuses while in flight: +2 attacks per melee, +3 to strike, +2 to parry, and +4 to automatic dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** The flying form *cannot* inflict M.D. damage with punches and kicks.
- **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** None.

Bio-E Cost: 60 points.

Devil Flying Form

Not every Metamorph who takes to the skies wants to do it with beauty and grace. Some prefer to get their hands dirty, and the Devil Flying Form fits their needs perfectly. It is also a humanoid form with large wings, but instead of looking angelic, this form looks like a demon or gargoyle. The oversized arms end in wicked, clawed hands and the legs are somewhat short to reduce drag. It has a more pronounced muzzle like a gargoyle, and the large horns mounted on its head complete the devil look. It is much stronger and more durable than the Angel Form, but it is also slower and less maneuverable.

Size Level: 3

M.D.C.: 2D4x10+20 M.D.C., +1D8 M.D.C. per level of experience. The wings have 1D4x10+10 M.D.C. each.

Weight: 300 pounds (135 kg).

Dimensions: 7 feet (2.1 m) tall with a wingspan of 14 feet (4.2 m) and a 5 foot (1.5 m) tail.

Special Abilities: Advanced Eyes.

Bonuses: +2D4 to P.S. and it becomes Splicer Strength, +1D6 to P.E.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Horror Factor: 13

Feeding: The Devil Flying Form is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 20 pounds (9 kg) of animal matter per day.



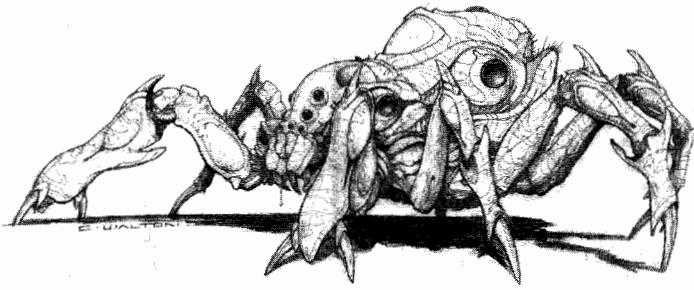
Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** Based on Spd attribute.
- **Leaping:** 10 feet (3 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.
- **Digging:** 6 mph (9.6 km) through sand or dirt. 3 mph (4.8 km) through clay, rock or stone.
- **Swimming:** Not possible (the wings get in the way).
- **Flying:** Top speed of 140 mph (224 km). Cruising speed is typically 60 mph (96 km). Increase top speed and cruising speed by 1D4 mph at each additional level of experience.
- **Combat Bonuses:** +1 to strike, +1 to parry, and +1 to dodge when on the ground. Additional bonuses while in flight: +1 attack per melee, +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to parry, and +3 to dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** Punch damage determined by Splicer P.S., Bite 3D8 M.D., Claw Strike +1D6 M.D. to Punch damage, Power Claw Strike +2D6 M.D. to Power Punch damage (counts as two melee attacks).
- **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** Climb 90% and Track by Scent 90%.

Bio-E Cost: 90 points.

Spider Form

The Spider Form is a Size Level 1 form; the absolute smallest size that a Metamorph can reach. This form has rudimentary combat abilities, but it is mainly used for spying, escape, or to gain access to difficult locations. It is roughly twice the size of a house cat (so it is not exactly invisible), but it can scale any surface or squeeze through openings about half its size, which



enables it to pierce the toughest security. The downside of Size Level 1 forms is that they cannot be enhanced with most Bio-Weapons. Only small weapons like Fire Weapons or Super Light Cells can be added. Large firearms with an obvious gun barrel like Bore Rifles or Casting Cannons will not work at all.

Size Level: 1

M.D.C.: 3D6+20 M.D.C., +1D4 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 30 pounds (13.5 kg).

Dimensions: About 18 inches (46 cm) tall and 2 feet (61 cm) long.

Special Abilities: Spinneret Web Launcher, and Gripping Hairs on the feet.

Bonuses: +1D4 to P.P. and +1D4 to P.E.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D4 M.D.C. per melee.

Horror Factor: 14

Feeding: The Spider Form is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 4 pounds (1.8 kg) of animal matter per day.

Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** 30 mph (48 km) and can run along walls and ceilings at full speed.
- **Leaping:** 30 feet (9.1 m) high or across.
- **Digging:** Not possible.
- **Swimming:** Not possible (sinks like a stone).
- **Flying:** Not possible.
- **Combat Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee, +3 on initiative, +3 to strike, and +4 to dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** Bite 1D6 M.D. By spending 5 points of Bio-E, the bite can be enhanced to deliver a dose of acid that is devastating to metal and plastic yet harmless to organic tissue. It inflicts an additional 1D6 M.D. per melee round for 1D4+1 melee rounds.
- **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** Climbing 98%.

Bio-E Cost: 30 points.

Digger Form

This is another Size Level 1 form with spying, escape, and infiltration in mind. It looks like a large ferret with a thick, armored hide. The Digger Form is the ultimate escape pod for a Metamorph. It can burrow deep into the earth in seconds where virtually no machine can follow. This form also possesses the Lithovore metabolism, which allows the Metamorph to survive indefinitely off of the land (literally) if need be.

Size Level: 1

M.D.C.: 4D6+10 M.D.C., +1D4 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 35 pounds (15.7 kg).

Dimensions: About 12 inches (30.5 cm) tall and 3 feet (91 cm) long.

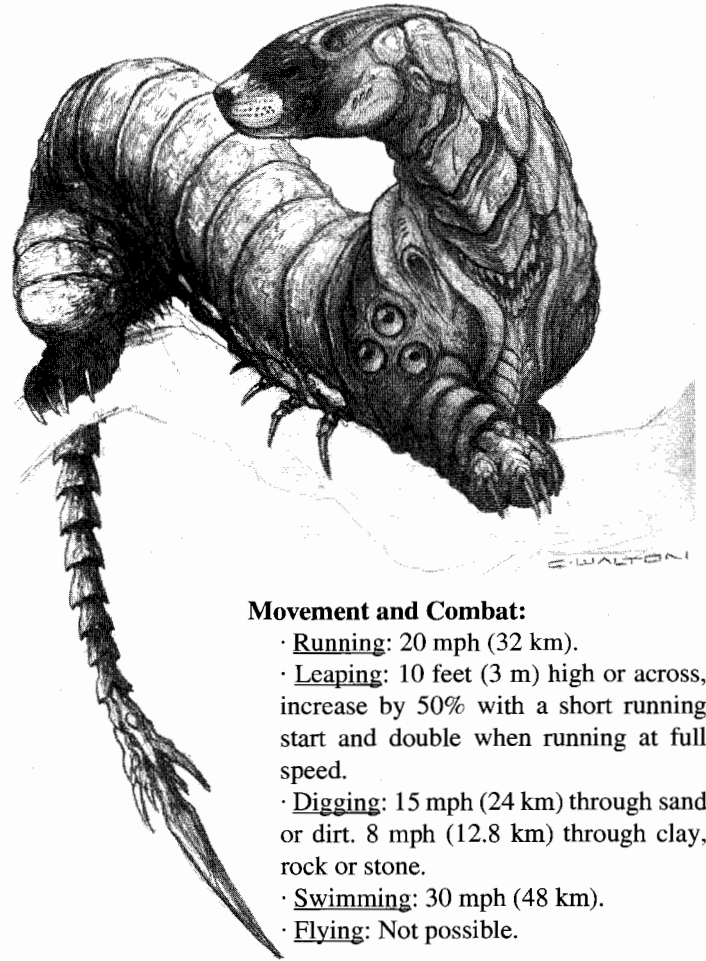
Special Abilities: None.

Bonuses: -4 to P.S., but it becomes Splicer Strength, +1D4 to P.P.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D4 M.D.C. per melee.

Horror Factor: 6

Feeding: The Digger Form is a Lithovore. It needs to eat 10 pounds (4.5 kg) of dirt, rocks, and minerals each day.



Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** 20 mph (32 km).
- **Leaping:** 10 feet (3 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start and double when running at full speed.
- **Digging:** 15 mph (24 km) through sand or dirt. 8 mph (12.8 km) through clay, rock or stone.
- **Swimming:** 30 mph (48 km).
- **Flying:** Not possible.

· **Combat Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee, +3 on initiative, +2 to strike, and +4 to dodge.

· **Combat Capabilities:** Bite 2D6 M.D.

· **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** Land Navigation 90%.

Bio-E Cost: 20 points.

Eagle Form

This form looks like a Black Talon War Hawk or a Golden Eagle. It is far better suited towards spying than combat. Like the Black Talon, this form looks like a natural animal, so it tends to be ignored by the Machine (as long as it is not given any obvious Bio-Enhancements).

Size Level: 1

M.D.C.: 2D6+10 M.D.C., +1D4 M.D.C. every level of experience.

Weight: 30 pounds (13.5 kg).

Dimensions: About 30 inches (76 cm) long with a 60 inch (152 cm) wingspan.

Special Abilities: Enhanced Sight.

Bonuses: +1 to P.P.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 1D4 M.D.C. per melee.

Horror Factor: None.



Librarians, however, have experimented with designs that take the idea of “living weaponry” to the next level.

One such design is known as Hive Armor. This bulky suit of armor is similar to standard Host Armor, except it has a large insect hive mounted on its back. From this honeycombed mound, the suit can produce a seemingly endless supply of powerful Bio-Tech bugs called Hive Insects that the pilot directs as weapons. These living rounds possess a rudimentary intelligence that allows them to track down their prey like tiny cruise missiles. Each individual bug is capable of inflicting considerable damage for its small size, but the true power of this suit becomes apparent when the pilot unleashes his insects in large swarms. The devastating swarms released by even one suit of Hive Armor can ravage a small platoon of robots.

These experimental suits of Host Armor are piloted by a special breed of warriors known as Swarm Lords. The hive can produce hundreds of insects, but it is not large enough to house them all. This means that the majority of the bugs are constantly crawling all across the surface of the armor. This is the major reason why Hive Armor has only achieved limited popularity among the Resistance. Most humans cannot stand being near these suits, much less wearing one. The writhing mass of insects covering the armor is a truly disturbing sight, and Hive Armor (like all Host Armor) passes all physical sensation experienced by the armor through to the pilot. This means that anyone wearing Hive Armor constantly feels as though hundreds of insects are crawling over every inch of his or her bare skin. Experiencing this sensation for even a few minutes can drive the most strong-willed person insane, so pilots need to adapt to the feeling before they can even hope to command Hive Insects.

Swarm Lords endure a tortuous, six month training regimen in order to prepare them to don their Hive Armor. They spend every waking moment covered in insects. They begin their training handling just a few at a time, and then slowly add more and more bugs until they can sit naked in a pile of thousands of insects without thinking twice. In time, they not only learn to tolerate the feeling, they learn to love it. This is another reason why Swarm Lords are not very common among the Resistance. Most people simply find them creepy, which does not inspire many to follow in their footsteps. Of course, these same people will gladly fight at the side of these powerful warriors.

Swarm Lords can strengthen their armor with the standard Bio-Enhancements available for Host Armor, but the real power comes from the various types of insects they grow within the hive on their back. Hive Armor can house multiple types of insects simultaneously. All the bugs recognize the other species as part of the same hive, and they all work together to protect their “queen,” the Hive Armor pilot. They patrol the area in search of danger (robots), attack any man or machine that threatens the armor, and destroy any target the pilot commands. The hive looks like a low profile turtle shell on younger suits, but as the armor matures, the hive grows into an enormous mound. It eventually grows so large that the Hive Armor must lean forward in order to support the weight. This hunched posture slows the armor down somewhat, but most Swarm Lords gladly trade the decreased mobility for the increased payload of powerful Bio-Tech Hive Insects.

Alignment: Any, but typically good or selfish.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 13, M.E. 14, and P.S. 14 or higher.

Feeding: The Eagle Form is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 6 pounds (2.7 kg) of animal matter each day.

Movement and Combat:

- **Running:** 10 mph (16 km).
- **Leaping:** The legs are only capable of tiny, two foot (0.6 m) leaps.
- **Digging:** Not possible.
- **Swimming:** Not possible.
- **Flying:** 170 mph (272 km) maximum, but the form can reach speeds of up to 300 mph (480 km) in a power dive.
- **Combat Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee, +4 on initiative, +1 to strike, and +4 to dodge.
- **Combat Capabilities:** Peck 1D4 M.D., Claw Strike 1D6 M.D.
- **Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** None.

Bio-E Cost: 15 points.

Swarm Lord O.C.C.

The Bio-Technology of the Resistance may sometimes seem alien and strange, but it was designed to mimic the inorganic technology of old. Organic rifles and melee weapons looked and worked like their mechanical equivalents, and Host Armor and War Mounts were modeled after the robot vehicles and power armor that the humans were comfortable with. It helped them quickly adapt to this bizarre new technology when the Nanobot Plague rendered their previous armaments useless. Subsequent generations that grew up with Bio-Technology saw it as perfectly normal, and the mechanical-like designs became standard templates used by all Great Houses throughout the Resistance. Some

Attribute Bonuses: +1 to I.Q., +1D6 to M.E., and +2D4 to P.S.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +2 to save vs insanity, and +6 to save vs Horror Factor.

Base S.D.C.: 50, plus any from Physical Skills.

Common Skills: Standard.

O.C.C. Skill Program: Basic Military (+20%), Athletics (+10%), Bio-Technology (+10%), and Infantryman (+10%) or Man-Hunter (+10%).

Elective Skills: Select any one Wilderness Skill and three Electives from the following list at first level. Select another two Elective Skills at levels 2, 4, 8 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+5%).

Physical: Any.

Rogue: Gambling and Find Contraband only.

Science: Any (+5%).

Technical: Any.

Transportation: Any, except Pilot Wing Packs.

Wilderness Survival: Any (+10%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character gets to select four Secondary Skills at level one and one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not receive any special O.C.C. bonuses.

Swarm Lord Hive Armor: The Swarm Lord receives an experimental Host Armor design known as Hive Armor, the Bio-Tech equivalent of living power armor, brimming with weapons, Bio-Enhancements, and a special organic hive that continuously spawns powerful Bio-Tech insects. The Swarm Lord is genetically bonded to one specific Hive Armor.

Step One: Standard for Host Armor, except for the following changes: M.D.C. of the Hive is 2D6x10+30, speed and leaping ability are reduced by 15 percent, and weight is increased by 4D4x10 lbs (18-72 kg).

Step Two: Determining Metabolism. Hive Armor is always a Lithovore. All aspects are identical for normal Host Armor, except that Hive Armor must consume twice the usual amount of minerals each day. This is necessary to sustain the various types of metal-eating insects that grow within the hive.

Step Three: Available Bio-Energy points for the Swarm Lord is M.E. attribute number, plus P.E. attribute number, +1D4x10 points, plus an additional 20 points for the Lithovore metabolism. These Bio-E points can be used to purchase Bio-Enhancements from any category except Ranged Bio-Weapons. In addition, the Swarm Lord starts with 5D4x10 Bio-E points that are used to purchase Hive Insects for the character's personal swarm. Each level of advancement, starting with level two, the Swarm Lord gets an additional 1D6 Bio-E to add to the capabilities of the actual Host Armor, and 4D10 Bio-E points to be used to strengthen the hive. These Bio-E points can be spent as soon as they are acquired, or saved and combined with points from subsequent levels of experience.

If the Swarm Lord's Hive Armor is destroyed, another will be bonded to him. It will only have the most basic Bio-Enhancements, but it will have 5D4x10 Bio-E points available to

purchase Hive Insects. Swarm Lords are just too rare, and the Resistance does not want to squander their training.

Step Four: Biological Enhancements, Weapons, and Hive Insects. Bio-E points allocated for Bio-Enhancements and Hive Insects must be spent separately. Selections can be made from any of the categories, except Ranged Bio-Weapons. The energies of the suit are dedicated to manufacturing Hive Insects, and trying to create ammunition for other Bio-Weapons proves to be just too much for the suit (and the pilot) to handle. Besides, Swarm Lords consider their Hive Insects to be far superior weapons to any Bio-Weapon available for "lesser" suits of Host Armor, so they do not see this as a limitation at all.

Special Hive Armor Bonuses: +6 on initiative and the pilot cannot be surprised from behind, +1 to strike and parry, and +5 to Horror Factor. The hundreds of insects crawling all across the Hive Armor also offer a limited amount of defensive protection. Area effect weapons like grenades and missiles, as well as impact weapons like fists, clubs, and blades, will have to first get through the thick layer of insects in order to damage the armor beneath. When these types of weapons strike the armor, the damage inflicted is only half. The other half of the damage is soaked up by the Hive Insects crawling on the surface. The bugs may blunt the effect, but they suffer the consequences. Every time this layer of bugs absorbs damage for the armor, a number of insects are killed, equal to one quarter of the total damage inflicted (rounded down; e.g. 18 M.D. would kill four insects). Precision weapons like lasers, particle beam blasts, and even rail gun rounds may hit one or two bugs, but the majority of the damage will travel through to the armor. *Flamethrower weapons* inflict major damage to the Hive Insects. In this case, take the total amount of damage inflicted and divide it in half. One half of the amount damages the armor, and the other half represents how many insects were destroyed.

In addition to physically shielding the armor, Hive Insects will also attack anything that threatens the Hive Armor. Any robot, drone, animal, or even human that attacks the Hive Armor in hand to hand combat will be assaulted by 2D4 Hive Insects every time the opponent successfully strikes the armor (just select the most abundant insect in the character's personal swarm in order to determine damage).

Hive Insect Generation: The organic hive constantly spawns new Hive Insects to replace bugs that die in combat or from old age. The amount of insects the hive can create is proportional to the total size of the character's personal swarm. For every 200 insects in the swarm, the hive can generate 2D6 new insects every 10 minutes.

Penalties: As the character adds more insects to his swarm, the organic hive mounted on the armor grows larger as well. For every 200 insects, add another 4D6 M.D.C. to the hive and 50 pounds (22.5 kg) to the weight of the armor. This increased weight decreases speed and leaping ability by 10 percent. For every 400 insects, the Swarm Lord suffers additional penalties of -2 to parry and dodge. Once the swarm reaches 800 insects, the hive becomes so heavy it forces the Hive Armor to hunch forward in order to support the weight. When the armor is forced to assume this posture, all penalties from increasing the size of the swarm are doubled. At this point, most Swarm Lords enhance their Hive Armor with Elongated Arms in or-



der to keep the suit more stable (in which case future penalties are not doubled, but increase at the standard rate).

Standard Equipment: Military fatigues, dress clothing, survival knife, utility belt, first aid kit, Face Wrap, tinted goggles, hatchet for cutting wood, one light or heavy Bio-Weapon of choice and one weapon for each W.P. with appropriate ammunition for heavy combat, tent, knapsack, backpack, two water

skins, a two week supply of emergency food rations, and some personal items.

Money: Has 1D6x100 credits in precious metals, relics or trade items, as well as 6D6x10 in available credits. Money can be spent now on additional equipment or saved for later.

The Upside: You control a massive army of hundreds of intelligent Bio-Tech weapons. Despite their size, these tiny little

insects pack tremendous destructive power. They allow you to take on dozens of opponents singlehandedly and prevail.

The Downside: Your hive may be strong, but it dramatically slows down your Hive Armor. The buzzing insects constantly whirling around your armor also make stealth impossible. For all the Hive Armor's strength, it is nearly worthless once all the Hive Insects are exhausted, so you need to be careful not to exhaust your Bio-Tech insects too quickly or you will be a sitting duck for the Machine. Furthermore, most people find the massive swarm of insects crawling across your armor creepy; the rest find it absolutely terrifying. Few people can tolerate being near you, but they generally make an exception in battle. Of course, after the day is won, they go right back to politely avoiding you.

Hive Insects

The true power of the Swarm Lord lies in his loyal army of Bio-Tech insects. There are nine types of Hive Insects that the character can choose from in order to build his personal swarm. The different species work together in perfect harmony and view each other as members of the same hive. This lets the Swarm Lord add insects of every type to his swarm if he chooses to do so.

Each Bio-Tech insect is surprisingly powerful on its own, but their true power is revealed when they combine their attacks as large swarms. A single Swarm Lord can devastate a platoon of robots in minutes, but he must be careful not to exhaust his supply of insects too quickly. Most Hive Insects quickly die after attacking a target (or on impact), plus they are designed to have limited life spans. Hive Insects only live for 48 hours before they die and dissolve into sludge. This is a safety measure built into their genetic code to ensure Hive Insects never grow out of control and threaten the environment. When they are nearing the end of their lives, the bugs will crawl back into the hive so their remains can feed the rest of the swarm. This prevents the Swarm Lord from leaving a trail of dead bugs everywhere he goes, and it helps nourish the hive. The organic hive constantly spawns new insects to replace lost bugs, but this takes time.

Swarm Lords communicate with their insects through a neurological connection formed when the bugs' feet are in contact with the Hive Armor. Their simplistic and alien minds can only communicate basic ideas like whether danger is near or the direction of a target, but this is often more than enough. The hundreds of Hive Insects crawling all across the armor make it impossible for anyone to sneak up on a Swarm Lord, and they can send out scores of insects in all directions to scout out trouble. The bugs cannot communicate the type of threat or number of opponents, but they can lead their Swarm Lord master right to the target or warn him which direction to avoid. Another major limitation is that Hive Insects can only identify robotic adversaries. They cannot distinguish between Waste Crawlers and other humans from the Resistance, and they cannot tell the difference between loyal War Mounts and the deadly alien predators released by the Gaia personality. This significant limitation is why they will never replace Gorehounds or Black Talon War Hawks as scouts.

Unless stated otherwise, all Hive Insects are roughly two to three inches (5-7.5 cm) long and possess thick, chitinous armor like a beetle or cockroach. Beneath their armored shells are four insect wings that allow them to fly at impressive speeds. Their

compound eyes give them a good field of vision, but the range is average at best (although they can see into the ultraviolet spectrum). All Hive Insects are Lithovores, which means they eat pure minerals and metallic alloys (of course, the Nanobot Plague quickly kills these bugs after they consume metal). They were designed to find the taste of metal delicious and the taste of organic material repulsive. Even if commanded to eat a living target, Hive Insects will only take small bites before the repellent taste forces them to break off their attack. This is another safety measure built into the insects to ensure they never become a danger to humans. Hive Insects mainly eat a mineral-rich paste secreted within the hive, or the remains of other Hive Insects that have died of old age. This is more than enough to sustain the entire hive indefinitely, so it is unnecessary for the bugs to seek additional food from external sources. The only time they consume anything else is when they are attacking robotic targets.

Rules for Swarm Attacks

Swarm Lords telepathically direct their insects through a neurological connection formed between the skin of their Hive Armor and the feet of their insects. This means that once the Hive Insects break contact with the armor, the pilot can no longer communicate with them in any way. The bugs will follow the last command issued by the Swarm Lord to the best of their ability, but if they cannot complete their mission, they will return to the hive for further instructions. Communicating with so many minds at once (even such simple and primitive minds) requires a great deal of concentration. The character must spend one melee action for every 20 Hive Insects that he issues a command. So if a Swarm Lord wanted to launch a swarm of 100 insects, it would cost 5 melee attacks. The character can also choose to launch smaller swarms at multiple targets. In this case, each swarm costs at least one melee attack (even if all the swarms combined total fewer than 20 insects).

Swarm attacks are nearly impossible to evade unless the target is able to move faster than the flight speed of the Hive Insects. If the target cannot travel faster than the swarm, then it can only dodge the attack if it rolls a Natural 18 or higher. If the target is faster than the swarm, then the Swarm Lord must make a strike roll. Each swarm attack (no matter how large) only requires one roll to strike. Either the entire swarm reaches its target, or the entire swarm misses. However, if the swarm does initially miss its target, it will continue to track down its target until the insects finally succeed or the target retreats out of visual range (1,200 feet/366 m). The target can continue to dodge the swarm, but the persistent little insects will never give up until their prey falls. Actually, they do not even stop when this happens. The Hive Insects will continue to attack the fallen robot until they expend all of their energy and die or they finally succumb to the Nanobot Plague. The swarm has two attacks per melee as it continuously tries to track down its prey. The only bonuses that apply are the strike bonuses listed under each individual Hive Insect. If the target does escape, then the swarm will return to the hive for new instructions.

The only way to completely dodge a swarm attack is to either flee out of visual range (1,200 feet/366 m) or destroy the swarm. Unfortunately, unless the target has a flamethrower or some other area effect weapon, this is a very difficult proposition. Firing into the swarm with a precision weapon like a laser only has a small chance of hitting more than a few insects. Anyone attempting to

do this must roll an 18 or higher (with strike bonuses). However, on a successful strike, the attacker only succeeds in destroying 1D4 insects (even if the swarm contains hundreds of bugs). To make a significant dent in a swarm requires a flamethrower or some other kind of area effect weapon. Grenades and missiles work if the swarm has landed on an object, but it is impossible (or at least extremely difficult) to strike the swarm with these types of weapons when they are airborne. When attacking the swarm with a flamethrower (or similar weapon), roll to strike as normal. The swarm will perform evasive maneuvers when it is assaulted, by rolling to dodge the attack (include bonuses listed under each insect, high roll wins). The swarm cannot completely dodge an attack, but it can reduce the number of insects that are lost. On a successful strike, roll damage for that weapon as normal, but now this number represents how many insects were destroyed. If the swarm successfully dodges the attack, this just means that the number lost is only half. For example, an Incinerator Robot fires its Plasma Napalm Launcher at an approaching swarm of 20 Locusts. It rolls a 14, which means the strike is successful. However, the swarm also rolls a 14 (with bonuses), which means the dodge was also successful (ties always go to the defender). The robot then rolls 3D6 to determine damage. It rolls a 12, which would normally mean 12 of the bugs are fried in midair, but since the swarm was able to evade the attack, only 6 of the insects are destroyed and the remaining 14 reach their target and begin to feast on the combat robot.

Obviously, swarms that have suffered losses will also lose some of their destructive potential. To calculate damage inflicted by a weakened swarm, roll damage as normal, and then reduce the damage by the equivalent ratio. The reduction ratios should be calculated by quarters (one quarter, half, and three quarters; always round down). Of course, if the swarm is reduced to a few insects, just use logic and calculate damage based on each individual bug.

Types of Hive Insects

Swarm Lords generally have a mixture of all types of Hive Insects within their personal swarms. They are primarily designed for combat, but creative Swarm Lords have discovered many inventive uses for their bugs. Below is a list of all the different types of Hive Insects available to the Swarm Lord.

Locusts

Locusts were the first Hive Insects designed by the Librarians. These small, armored beetles were modeled after the ravenous grubs used in Bore Cannons. The Librarians hoped to create flying versions of these powerful living rounds that were intelligent enough to seek out and destroy robotic adversaries on their own. They may require the direction of a Swarm Lord, but they are still incredibly effective weapons. These vicious bugs are like flying piranhas. They can consume several times their own weight in metal before they burst from overeating or are killed by the Nanobot Plague. Their destructive power makes them the preferred Hive Insects of most Swarm Lords.

M.D.C. of Each Insect: 2 M.D.C. each.

Flight Speed: 80 mph (128 km).

Bonuses: +5 to strike and +3 to dodge.

Color: Light brown with dark green accents.

Mega-Damage from a Single Insect: 1D4 M.D. per melee round for 1D4 melees.

Additional Abilities: None.

Mega-Damage from a Swarm Attack:

- A swarm of 20 Locusts inflict 5D8 M.D. per melee round for 1D6 melees.
- A swarm of 40 Locusts inflict 8D8 M.D. per melee round for 1D6 melees.
- A swarm of 60 Locusts inflict 5D8+20 M.D. per melee round for 2D4 melees.
- A swarm of 80 Locusts inflict 6D8+30 M.D. per melee round for 2D4 melees.
- A swarm of 100 Locusts inflict 7D8+40 M.D. per melee round for 2D4 melees.
- Every additional 20 Locusts added to a swarm adds one additional melee round to the duration of damage.

Additional Swarm Effects: None.

Bio-E Cost: 35 points for every 50 Locusts.

Bio-Enhancements:

- **Regurgitation:** Locusts can be enhanced with a reflex that forces them to regurgitate periodically when they consume metallic alloys. This allows the voracious bugs to actually eat longer before they finally gorge to death. Increase the duration that damage is inflicted by 50 percent. In other words, calculate duration normally then multiply by 1.5 (round fractions up), so 2 melees becomes 3 melee rounds, or 3 melees becomes 5 melee rounds.

Bio-E Cost: 20 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Acidic Regurgitation:** Once Locusts receive the Regurgitation Bio-Enhancement, they can be further modified so that when they do regurgitate, they disgorge a powerful acid. The acid is incredibly damaging to inorganic material, but nearly harmless to humans (no damage at all, just mild skin irritation). This increases the damage done by a Locust (or Locust swarm) by 50 percent.

Bio-E Cost: 20 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: Regurgitation.

- **Enhanced Flight Speed:** Locusts can receive larger, more powerful wings that allow them to achieve much greater flight speeds. Increase flight speed to 120 mph (192 km).

Bonuses: +1 to strike and +1 to dodge.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

Flybys

Flybys have a rather unique body design and method of attack. Their arrowhead-shaped carapaces flare out on the sides to form two razor-sharp blades. Flybys use these deadly protrusions to slash enemy targets during high speed strafing runs. These speedy little insects move from target to target, attacking again and again until the stress of these high speed impacts rips the insects apart. Swarms of Flybys are ideal against large groups of enemies. They never slow down and can cover a very large area with a blinding cloud of slashing death. Alone they inflict minimal damage, but the thousands of cuts delivered by Flyby swarms can bring down even the toughest foes.

M.D.C. of Each Insect: 2 M.D.C. each.

Flight Speed: 100 mph (160 km).

Bonuses: +6 to strike and +4 to dodge.

Color: Dark red with black highlights.

Mega-Damage from a Single Insect: 1 M.D. per melee round for 1D4 melees to everything within a 10 foot (3 m) area.

Additional Abilities: None.

Mega-Damage from a Swarm Attack:

- A swarm of 20 Flybys inflict 3D4 M.D. per melee round for 1D4 melees to everything within a 25 foot (7.6 m) area.
- A swarm of 40 Flybys inflict 4D4 M.D. per melee round for 1D4 melees to everything within a 40 foot (12.2 m) area.
- A swarm of 60 Flybys inflict 5D4 M.D. per melee round for 1D4+1 melees to everything within a 50 foot (15.2 m) area.
- A swarm of 80 Flybys inflict 4D6 M.D. per melee round for 1D4+1 melees to everything within a 60 foot (18.3 m) area.
- A swarm of 100 Flybys inflict 4D6+4 M.D. per melee round for 1D4+2 melees to everything within a 75 foot (22.9 m) area.
- Every additional 20 Flybys added to a swarm adds an additional 15 feet (4.6 m) to the area of effect.

Additional Swarm Effects: None.

Bio-E Cost: 25 points for every 50 Flybys.

Bio-Enhancements:

- **High Frequency Blades:** The sharp blades mounted on the Flyby's sides can be Bio-Enhanced with high-frequency fields. This allows them to make longer, more penetrating cuts with every strike. Double the damage inflicted per melee round by a Flyby (or a swarm of Flybys).

Bio-E Cost: 20 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Hardened Carapace:** Flybys can also be enhanced with thicker armored carapaces (increase M.D.C. by 50 percent). This extra reinforcement for side-mounted blades enables the insects to make more strafing attacks before ripping their own bodies apart. Increase the duration that damage is inflicted by 50 percent.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Increased Size:** The size of each Flyby can be drastically increased, from two to three inches (5-7.5 cm) up to eight to ten inches (20-25 cm). These massive bugs are much stronger and more durable than their smaller brethren, but they are also far slower. M.D.C. and damage are doubled, but speed is reduced by half.

Penalties: -1 to strike and dodge.

Bonuses: When swarms of these enhanced insects are attacked directly, only half the normal amount are destroyed with each successful strike.

Bio-E Cost: 20 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Enhanced Flight Speed:** Flybys can receive larger, more powerful wings that allow them to achieve much greater flight speeds. Increase flight speed to 140 mph (224 km).

Bonuses: +1 to strike.

Bio-E Cost: 5 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

Fire Flies

These fat little bugs are about one inch (2.5 cm) longer than the average Hive Insect and nearly twice as fat. They can perform multiple functions, but their main role is to act as miniature, self-

guided plasma grenades. Fire Flies are able to generate a small amount of super-heated plasma within their abdomens. They can douse or ignite their internal fires at will and can even control the intensity. When lit, this bright orange flame can illuminate a three foot (0.9 m) area around the bug. The internal plasma furnace also gives off a good deal of heat, but the heat resistant carapace that each fly possesses limits the amount of heat released. They feel warm to the touch, but they can still be safely handled by an unarmored human. Many Swarm Lords like to use Fire Flies to confound the Thermographic Optics used by the Machine. One Fire Fly appears as a three foot (0.9 m) wide blotch on a thermal imager that is roughly the same temperature as a human being, and multiple insects can create a heat screen that makes these advanced optics almost useless. However, while Fire Flies make excellent lanterns and radiators, their true purpose is combat. Once these Hive Insects chase down and land on their prey, they overload their internal plasma furnaces and detonate. The tiny, six inch (15 cm) explosion from a lone bug inflicts decent damage, but when Fire Flies combine their power in swarms, they are utterly devastating.

M.D.C. of Each Insect: 3 M.D.C. each.

Flight Speed: 60 mph (96 km).

Bonuses: +3 to strike and +3 to dodge.

Color: Black with bright orange highlights.

Mega-Damage from a Single Insect: 2D4 M.D.

Additional Abilities: Each Fire Fly can light a three foot (0.9 m) area and can also radiate temperatures up to 120 degrees Fahrenheit (49 C) within the same three foot area. Resistant to heat and fire (takes half damage).

Mega-Damage from a Swarm Attack:

- A swarm of 20 Fire Flies inflict 6D10 M.D. to a 10 foot (3 m) area.
- A swarm of 40 Fire Flies inflict 8D10+10 M.D. to a 15 foot (4.6 m) area.
- A swarm of 60 Fire Flies inflict 10D10+20 M.D. to a 20 foot (6.1 m) area.
- A swarm of 80 Fire Flies inflict 10D10+50 M.D. to a 25 foot (7.6 m) area.
- A swarm of 100 Fire Flies inflict 10D10+100 M.D. to a 30 foot (9.1 m) area.
- Every additional 20 Fire Flies added to a swarm adds an additional 5 feet (1.5 m) to the blast area.

Additional Swarm Effects: Every 20 Fire Flies creates a thermal "blind spot" that covers a 100 foot (30.5 m) area. Robots relying on these sensors will be unable to accurately target the swarm (-4 to strike the swarm) or see anything beyond it. The light from their internal plasma furnaces illuminates the same 100 foot area for every 20 Fire Flies. Swarms of Fire Flies are resistant to flame weapons (only half the normal amount of insects are destroyed on a successful strike, and one quarter if the swarm dodges).

Bio-E Cost: 40 points for every 50 Fire Flies.

Bio-Enhancements:

- **Increased Intensity:** Fire Flies can have their internal plasma furnace Bio-Enhanced so that it burns much hotter. Damage is increased by 50 percent, as is the area that the bugs can illuminate and heat. Each Fire Fly can now radiate temperatures up to 150 degrees F (66 C).

Bio-E Cost: 30 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Increased Size:** The size of each Fire Fly can be drastically increased, from three to four inches (7.5-10 cm) up to eight to ten inches (20-25 cm). These massive bugs are much stronger and more durable than their smaller brethren, but they are also far slower. M.D.C., damage, and area of effect are all doubled, but speed is reduced by half.

Penalties: -2 to strike and dodge.

Bonuses: When swarms of these enhanced insects are attacked directly, only half the normal amount are destroyed with each successful strike.

Bio-E Cost: 25 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Enhanced Flight Speed:** Fire Flies can receive larger, more powerful wings that allow them to achieve much greater flight speeds. Increase flight speed to 80 mph (128 km).

Bonuses: +1 to strike.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

Lightning Bugs

Much like Fire Flies, Lightning Bugs are capable of generating intense energies within their abdomens. Unlike Fire Flies, which create high-intensity plasma, Lightning Bugs generate a powerful electrical charge. Once they make contact with their target, they release this charge as a powerful blast that fries the delicate circuitry of the Machine's legions (along with the Lightning Bug). Most robots created by N.E.X.U.S. have multiple redundant systems and self-repair subroutines that quickly reroute or repair damaged systems, so these effects are only temporary. This electrical discharge does little damage compared to some other Hive Insects, but it is more than enough to temporarily stun most opponents. Lightning Bugs are faster than the average Hive Insect, which allows them to catch and stun difficult prey so that the slower Hive Insects can take them down. Single insects can only stun smaller robots, but swarms of Lightning Bugs can combine their electrical attacks to overwhelm large targets (penalties and damage are identical for robotic and organic targets). Also, much like Fire Flies, Lightning Bugs can generate a bright light that can illuminate a four foot (1.2 m) area.

M.D.C. of Each Insect: 2 M.D.C. each.

Flight Speed: 140 mph (224 km).

Bonuses: +6 to strike and +5 to dodge.

Color: Bright blue with white highlights.

Mega-Damage from a Single Insect: 1 point of M.D., plus any target with 30 M.D.C. or less is stunned for 1D4 melees. Stunned targets are -1 attack per melee, -1 to strike, parry, and dodge, and reduce speed by 25 percent.

Additional Abilities: Each Lightning Bug can light a four foot (1.2 m) area. Resistant to electricity (takes half damage).

Mega-Damage from a Swarm Attack:

- A swarm of 20 Lightning Bugs inflict 3D4 M.D., plus any target with 180 M.D.C. or less is stunned for 1D4+1 melees. Stunned targets are -1 attack per melee, -1 to strike, parry, and dodge, and reduce speed by 30 percent.
- A swarm of 40 Lightning Bugs inflict 5D4 M.D., plus any target with 250 M.D.C. or less is stunned for 1D4+2 melees. Stunned targets are -1 attack per melee, -2 to strike, parry, and dodge, and reduce speed by 35 percent.

- A swarm of 60 Lightning Bugs inflict 4D8 M.D., plus any target with 400 M.D.C. or less is stunned for 1D6+1 melees. Stunned targets are -2 attacks per melee, -2 to strike, parry, and dodge, and reduce speed by 40 percent.
- A swarm of 80 Lightning Bugs inflict 5D8 M.D., plus any target with 600 M.D.C. or less is stunned for 1D6+2 melees. Stunned targets are -2 attacks per melee, -3 to strike, parry, and dodge, and reduce speed by 50 percent.
- A swarm of 100 Lightning Bugs inflict 6D8 M.D., plus any target with 900 M.D.C. or less is stunned for 2D4+2 melees. Stunned targets are -3 attacks per melee, -3 to strike, parry, and dodge, and reduce speed by 60 percent.
- Every additional 20 Lightning Bugs added to a swarm means it is capable of affecting a target with an additional 300 M.D.C.

Additional Swarm Effects: The light from their abdomens can illuminate a 150 foot (45.7 m) area for every 20 Lightning Bugs. Swarms of Lightning Bugs are resistant to electrical weapons (only half the normal amount of insects are destroyed on a successful strike).

Bio-E Cost: 30 points for every 50 Lightning Bugs.

Bio-Enhancements:

- **Ranged Discharge:** Lightning Bugs can be Bio-Enhanced so that their powerful electrical discharge can be delivered at a distance. The range is limited to a few feet, but it makes it much more difficult for targets to evade their attacks. Opponents are -4 to dodge the swarm.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **High-Intensity Discharge:** Lightning Bugs can be further Bio-Enhanced in order to dramatically increase the power of their electrical discharge. Damage, stun penalties, and duration are all doubled.

Bio-E Cost: 25 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: Ranged Discharge.

- **Increased Size:** The size of each Lightning Bug can be drastically increased, from two to three inches (5-7.5 cm) up to eight to ten inches (20-25 cm). These massive bugs are much stronger and more durable than their smaller brethren, but they are also far slower. M.D.C. and damage (including stun penalties) are doubled, but speed is reduced by half.

Penalties: -1 to strike and dodge.

Bonuses: When swarms of these enhanced insects are attacked directly, only half the normal amount are destroyed with each successful strike.

Bio-E Cost: 15 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Enhanced Flight Speed:** Lightning Bugs can receive larger, more powerful wings that allow them to achieve much greater flight speeds. Increase flight speed to 200 mph (320 km).

Bonuses: +1 to strike and +1 to dodge.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

Stingers

Stingers are shaped a little bit different from normal Hive Insects. The hard carapace covering the insect's back comes to a single hard point above its head. This razor sharp spike is actually a hollow tube that allows the Stinger to inject its target with a powerful organic acid. The acid is incredibly damaging to me-

tallic alloys and inorganic materials, but is relatively harmless to living tissue (no damage, just mild skin irritation). The acid acts like the insect's blood, so this complete disgorging of all the bug's vital fluids is always fatal. The acidic blood is also the reason why Stingers are more likely to inflict damage. Even if the target swats and kills scores of bugs before they can inject their stinger, their blood will still eat away at their prey.

M.D.C. of Each Insect: 2 M.D.C. each.

Flight Speed: 70 mph (112 km).

Bonuses: +5 to strike and +3 to dodge.

Color: Bright yellow with black stripes like a hornet.

Mega-Damage from a Single Insect: 1D6 M.D. per melee round for 2 melees.

Additional Abilities: None.

Mega-Damage from a Swarm Attack:

- A swarm of 20 Stingers inflict 4D8+2 M.D. per melee round for 1D4+2 melees.
- A swarm of 40 Stingers inflict 6D8+6 M.D. per melee round for 1D4+2 melees.
- A swarm of 60 Stingers inflict 4D8+15 M.D. per melee round for 1D6+2 melees.
- A swarm of 80 Stingers inflict 5D8+25 M.D. per melee round for 1D6+2 melees.
- A swarm of 100 Stingers inflict 6D8+35 M.D. per melee round for 1D6+2 melees.
- Every additional 20 Stingers added to a swarm adds one additional melee round to the duration of damage.

Additional Swarm Effects: None.

Bio-E Cost: 30 points for every 50 Stingers.

Bio-Enhancements:

- **High Frequency Stinger Blade:** The sharp spike the Stingers use to inject their acid payload can be Bio-Enhanced with a high-frequency field. This allows the little bugs to stab the injection tube deeper into their target before they release their corrosive liquid. Increase damage inflicted by a Stinger (or a swarm of Stingers) by 50 percent.

Bio-E Cost: 20 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Increased Size:** The size of each Stinger can be drastically increased, from two to three inches (5-7.5 cm) up to eight to ten inches (20-25 cm). These massive bugs are much stronger and more durable than their smaller brethren, but they are also far slower. M.D.C. and damage are doubled, but speed is reduced by half.

Penalties: -2 to strike and dodge.

Bonuses: When swarms of these enhanced insects are attacked directly, only half the normal amount are destroyed with each successful strike.

Bio-E Cost: 15 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Enhanced Flight Speed:** Stingers can receive larger, more powerful wings that allow them to achieve much greater flight speeds. Increase flight speed to 100 mph (160 km).

Bonuses: +1 to strike and +1 to dodge.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

Weavers

Weavers look like two inch (5 cm) long spiders with wings. Despite their small size, they can create a Mega-Damage webbing that is strong enough to hold the most powerful opponents. Their sole purpose is to quickly immobilize difficult prey so that it can be dealt with by allies. Just a handful of Weavers can incapacitate a human-sized target in seconds, and large swarms can even disable giant hunter/killer robots like Assault Slayers and Battle Tracks. Lone Weavers are nearly worthless, but swarms of them are incredibly effective. On a successful strike, the swarm begins to wrap the target in super-strong webbing. Larger targets take longer to incapacitate, but once the Weavers begin, it is nearly impossible to stop them. The only way to interrupt the process is to quickly kill the insects with a flamethrower or similar weapon. Of course, this may be more likely to destroy the target than free it. These Hive Insects can also quickly weave barriers and seal shut doors, windows, or other access points. Weavers do not perform suicidal attacks like most Hive Insects, but they have no idea when the job is done. They will dutifully continue to apply webbing, even to a fallen opponent, until they eventually die of old age or are individually recollected by the Swarm Lord.

M.D.C. of Each Insect: 2 M.D.C. each.

Flight Speed: 70 mph (112 km).

Bonuses: +5 to strike and +3 to dodge.

Color: Light brown hair with black accents.

Mega-Damage from a Single Insect: None. Can immobilize a target the size of a cat within 2D4 melee rounds. The webbing dissolves after 2D6 minutes, but Weavers continue to apply new webbing until they eventually die of old age (unless recollected by the Swarm Lord).

Additional Abilities: Can weave a trip wire that is strong enough to trip a target with a Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 20. The webbing can support 400 pounds (180 kg) and has 1 M.D.C. per 10 foot (3 m) length.

Mega-Damage from a Swarm Attack: Weavers cannot hurt their prey, but they can immobilize them. Targets with a P.S. less than those listed below will eventually be incapacitated at the end of the duration (no matter how much they struggle). Targets with a P.S. higher than the listed amount will simply keep breaking new web strands as they are applied. They will never be immobilized, but the act of breaking free does distract the target, which means it loses 2 attacks every melee round.

- A swarm of 20 Weavers can immobilize a target with a Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 25. It only takes one melee round for every 200 lbs (90 kg) of the target. The webbing cocoon has 30 M.D.C.
- A swarm of 40 Weavers can immobilize a target with a Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 35. It only takes one melee round for every 400 lbs (180 kg) of the target. The webbing cocoon has 50 M.D.C.
- A swarm of 60 Weavers can immobilize a target with a Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 45. It only takes one melee round for every 700 lbs (315 kg) of the target. The webbing cocoon has 70 M.D.C.
- A swarm of 80 Weavers can immobilize a target with a Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 50. It only takes one melee round for every 1,000 lbs (450 kg) of the target. The webbing cocoon has 90 M.D.C.

- A swarm of 100 Weavers can immobilize a target with a Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 60. It only takes one melee round for every 2,000 lbs (900 kg) of the target. The webbing cocoon has 120 M.D.C.
- Every additional 20 Weavers added to a swarm means it is capable of affecting a target with an additional 5 points of Robotic/Splicer P.S., it increases the amount of weight that can be affected each melee round by 1,000 pounds (450 kg), and it also adds another 20 M.D.C. to the webbing cocoon.

Additional Swarm Effects: Twenty Weavers can seal an entry-way shut in only one minute. Every additional 20 insects added to the swarm decreases the time it takes by one melee round. It requires a Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 35 to break the seal or 20 M.D. to cut through. Every additional 20 insects increases the P.S. requirement by 5 and the M.D.C. of the seal by 10. For every 20 Weavers in a swarm, they can create a thin web wall that covers a 50 foot (15.2 m) area and has 25 M.D.C.

Bio-E Cost: 25 points for every 50 Weavers.

Bio-Enhancements:

- **Speed Weaving:** Weavers can receive a Bio-Enhancement that allows them to expel their webbing faster. This means the time it takes to immobilize an opponent is reduced by half. For example, a swarm of 20 Weavers would be able to cocoon 400 lbs (180 kg) every melee round.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Increased Size:** The size of each Weaver can be drastically increased, from two to three inches (5-7.5 cm) up to eight to ten inches (20-25 cm). These massive bugs are much stronger and more durable than their smaller brethren, but they are also far slower. The M.D.C. of both the insect and its web line are both doubled, but its speed is reduced by half. The larger Weavers are also capable of subduing stronger targets. Increase the P.S. number the swarm can immobilize by 20. For example, a swarm of 20 enhanced Weavers can immobilize a target that possesses a Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 45.

Penalties: -1 to strike and dodge.

Bonuses: When swarms of these enhanced insects are attacked directly, only half the normal amount are destroyed with each successful strike.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Enhanced Flight Speed:** Weavers can receive larger, more powerful wings that allow them to achieve much greater flight speeds. Increase flight speed to 100 mph (160 km).

Bonuses: +1 to strike and +1 to dodge.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 50 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

Impact Beetles

Impact Beetles are the pinnacle of Hive Insect bio-engineering. These hard-shelled beetles are able to manipulate their internal Bio-Energies in order to create powerful, if somewhat limited, effects. They can either use this energy to project a tiny, one square foot (0.092 sq. m) force field, or they can actually propel themselves at supersonic speeds like a living rail gun round. Their destructive power is impressive, but most Swarm Lords prefer to use Impact Beetles for their defensive abilities. Individually, their tiny force fields can only deflect a few points of Mega-Damage,

but swarms of Impact Beetles can create powerful defensive barriers. Impact Beetles are also much more versatile than standard Bio-Force Fields. They can crawl all across the Hive Armor to create a form fitting shield, or they can fly off the suit and create mobile walls or domes. Swarm Lords can even lend their bugs to other humans or Bio-Tech creations in order to provide them with a personal force field. However, most people are uncomfortable with Hive Insects crawling across their skin, and will often panic. Unless the recipients of the bugs roll a 14 or higher to save vs Horror Factor, they will panic and brush off the protective insects. Impact Beetles can also attack targets as swarms, but they project themselves so fast that it makes it difficult for more than a handful to coordinate their assault.

M.D.C. of Each Insect: 2 M.D.C. each.

Flight Speed: 60 mph (96 km), but can reach speeds of Mach 2 (1,522 mph/2,435 km) when they are attacking a target.

Bonuses: +6 to strike and +2 to dodge.

Color: Solid black.

Mega-Damage from a Single Insect: 3D6 M.D. Maximum effective range is 1,500 feet (457 m).

Additional Abilities: Each beetle can project a flat, one square foot (0.092 sq. m) force field up to two feet (0.6 m) away. The force field has 4 points of M.D.C. and lasts for 3D4+10 minutes. Once the duration elapses, the beetle cannot reactivate a new field for 24 hours. If the field is destroyed in combat, the energy feedback kills the beetle.

Mega-Damage from a Swarm Attack: Only small swarms of Impact Beetles can attempt to strike a single target. A swarm of 10 Impact Beetles inflict 2D6x10 M.D., and a swarm of 20 Impact Beetles inflict 5D4x10 M.D. Maximum effective range is 1,500 feet (457 m).

Additional Swarm Effects: Impact Beetles can combine their tiny Bio-Energy barriers into powerful force fields. Every beetle adds 4 points to the total M.D.C. of the energy field. The beetles can form a force field of any shape. The size of the field is determined by the number of insects. Each bug can project a one square foot (0.092 sq. m) barrier, so 20 Impact Beetles can create a 20 square foot (1.86 sq. m) force field.

Unfortunately, combat causes a massive energy feedback that kills the insects. One beetle is killed for every 4 points of M.D.C. depleted from the field.

Bio-E Cost: 20 points for every 10 Impact Beetles.

Bio-Enhancements:

- **Increased Accuracy:** Impact Beetles can be Bio-Enhanced so that they can better track their prey at high speeds. Double maximum effective range.

Bonuses: +2 to strike.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 10 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Increased Size:** The size of each Impact Beetle can be drastically increased, from two to three inches (5-7.5 cm) up to eight to ten inches (20-25 cm). These massive bugs are much stronger and more durable than their smaller brethren, but they are also far slower. They inflict double damage from attacks, and the M.D.C. of the insect and the force field it generates is also doubled. The size of the force field it generates is tripled.

Bonuses: When swarms of these enhanced insects are attacked directly, only half the normal amount are destroyed with each successful strike.

Bio-E Cost: 20 points for every 10 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

● **Enhanced Projectile Speed:** Impact Beetles can also be Bio-Enhanced so that their kinetic attack is much faster and thus, more powerful. Attack speed is increased to Mach 3 (2,283 mph/3,653 km) and damage is increased by 50 percent.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 10 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

Stink Bugs

Stink Bugs, in their basic form, are not designed for combat, but rather to help the Swarm Lord better direct the hive. Each insect is capable of spraying two distinct chemicals up to three feet (0.9 m) away. One chemical is a scent marker that helps other Hive Insects (and other Splicers) track down opponents even when they retreat out of visual range. All Hive Insects can track this scent up to half a mile (0.8 km) away, and Gorehounds, War Mounts, and suits of Host Armor with Enhanced Senses can track the scent for two miles (3.2 km). This is mainly used when the Swarm Lord wants to ensure a particular opponent is dealt with, or when he wants to secretly follow a target to its home base. The other chemical the Stink Bug can release is called the “recall spray.” When this chemical is sprayed on any Hive Insect, it will immediately stop what it is doing and return to the hive. Each Hive Armor has its own unique recall scent, so there is never any confusion. This chemical is useful for recalling Weavers that have successfully immobilized an opponent and do not realize their job is done, but it is mainly used to order swarms to break off their attack. This can be done for many reasons, but most Swarm Lords do this when it becomes apparent their bugs are unable to catch their prey and are just wasting their time and energy chasing it. Once the Stink Bugs deliver their “message,” they immediately return to the hive. They can spray each chemical three times per 24 hour period, so Swarm Lords generally keep them in reserve until absolutely necessary.

M.D.C. of Each Insect: 2 M.D. each.

Flight Speed: 100 mph (160 km).

Bonuses: +2 to strike and +4 to dodge.

Color: Light green with yellow highlights.

Mega-Damage from a Single Insect: None.

Additional Abilities: Can spray a three foot (0.9 m) radius with either type of chemical. The recall spray will generally affect 1D4 insects. The recall chemical dissipates after one melee round and the scent marker spray dissipates after 4D4 minutes.

Mega-Damage from a Swarm Attack: None.

Additional Swarm Effects: A swarm of 20 Stink Bugs can cover a 100 foot (30.5 m) area with either type of chemical. In the case of the recall chemical, this area is large enough to affect 4D10 insects.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 20 Stink Bugs.

Bio-Enhancements: Stink Bugs do not have to limit themselves to just two types of chemicals. By reducing the payload of their other chemical attacks, they can add one additional chemical spray. Stink Bugs with three different chemical sprays can use each type twice per 24 hour period.

● **Paralysis Chemical (Minor):** Stink Bugs can be enhanced with a chemical that can cause paralysis on contact. The chemical is absorbed through the skin, so gas masks and Face

Wraps are ineffective. It only affects unarmored humans and other S.D.C. creatures. Anyone within the area of effect must make a roll to save vs non-lethal poison of 14 or higher or else be completely paralyzed for 2D6 melee rounds. The chemical dissipates immediately after it is sprayed.

Bio-E Cost: 30 points for every 20 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

● **Paralysis Chemical (Major):** The Paralysis Chemical Bio-Enhancement can be further enhanced so that it will affect M.D.C. creatures and even Bio-Tech creations. Anyone within the area of effect must make a roll to save vs non-lethal poison of 14 or higher or else be completely paralyzed for 2D6 melee rounds. Bio-Tech weapons and devices are also paralyzed by the spray and will not function unless they save vs non-lethal poison as well. Suits of Host Armor can be paralyzed, but the spray does not pass through to the pilot (although he will likely be trapped inside). The only creatures that are immune to the spray are the Stink Bugs, so they must be careful not to harm any of the other Hive Insects or the Hive Armor. The chemical dissipates immediately after it is sprayed.

Bio-E Cost: 40 points for every 20 insects.

Prerequisite: Paralysis Chemical (Minor).

● **Burning Vapors:** This is the only enhancement that allows Stink Bugs to actually damage machines. The corrosive spray is destructive to inorganic material, but nearly harmless to living tissue (no damage, just mild skin irritation). The spray inflicts 2D6+3 M.D. every melee round for 1D4 melees. Multiple insects increase the area affected, but not the damage. The chemical dissipates immediately after it is sprayed.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 20 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

● **Stench Chemical:** This noxious chemical spray irritates the eyes and causes the victim to cough and gag. The spray only affects people who are not wearing a gas mask or some other type of environmental helmet. The spray dissipates after 2D6 melees. Any unshielded people or animals within the area of effect will be -4 to strike, parry, and dodge until they leave the toxic cloud.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 20 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

● **Increased Size:** The size of each Stink Bug can be drastically increased, from two to three inches (5-7.5 cm) up to eight to ten inches (20-25 cm). These massive bugs are much stronger and more durable than their smaller brethren, but they are also far slower. M.D.C. is doubled, as is the area of effect of the chemical cloud, but speed is reduced by half.

Penalties: -1 to strike and dodge.

Bonuses: When swarms of these enhanced insects are attacked directly, only half the normal amount are destroyed with each successful strike.

Bio-E Cost: 7 points for every 20 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

● **Enhanced Flight Speed:** Stink Bugs can receive larger, more powerful wings that allow them to achieve much greater flight speeds. Increase flight speed to 140 mph (224 km).

Bonuses: +1 to dodge.

Bio-E Cost: 2 points for every 20 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

Spy Flies

All Hive Insects can be used as miniature spies and scouts, but none are better suited to the job than Spy Flies. These tiny bugs are half the size of a normal Hive Insect, which makes them even harder to spot than usual, and they possess a mild version of Chameleon Skin that allows them to change colors to match the primary color in the background. Spy Flies are also incredibly fast. They can scout out trouble and deliver the news back to the hive faster than any other Hive Insect. In addition, all Spy Flies possess Enhanced Sight. They can see infrared spotlights used by the Machine and can spot the heat signatures of hidden robots, humans, and animals. Spy Flies are the only Hive Insects that are not released in coherent swarms. Once they leave the hive, they scatter in all directions to search for trouble. Once they spot a robot, they rush back to the hive to warn the Swarm Lord. They cannot communicate the exact nature of a threat, but they are still an excellent resource for sniffing out ambushes and concealment. Their sense of smell is also twice as acute as other Hive Insects. This means Spy Flies can still track the scent marker left by Stink Bugs even when the target moves out of range of the rest of the hive (one mile/1.6 km range).

M.D.C. of Each Insect: 1 M.D.C. each.

Flight Speed: 180 mph (288 km).

Bonuses: +6 to dodge.

Color: Solid black, but they can change color at will.

Mega-Damage from a Single Insect: None.

Additional Abilities: Enhanced Sight, Enhanced Sense of Smell, and Chameleon Skin.

Mega-Damage from a Swarm Attack: None.

Additional Swarm Effects: Spy Flies provide their Swarm Lord master with the equivalent skills of Detect Ambush and Detect Concealment. 20 Spy Flies provide a base skill of 30% for each or a bonus of +15% to each skill if the Swarm Lord already possessed them. Every additional 20 Spy Flies released into the environment provides a bonus of +15% to both skills. In addition, every 20 Spy Flies scouring the area for trouble gives the Swarm Lord a bonus of +1 on initiative and every 40 Spy Flies provides a bonus of +1 to dodge.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 20 Spy Flies.

Bio-Enhancements:

- **Electromagnetic Vision:** Spy Flies can be enhanced with Electromagnetic Vision. This allows the tiny insects to see robots through walls or around corners. In addition, it allows Spy Flies to detect Nex-Androids that are attempting to pass themselves off as human. Range is only five feet (1.5 m), so the Spy Fly usually has to land on the target in order to be sure.

Bio-E Cost: 10 points for every 20 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

- **Enhanced Flight Speed:** Spy Flies can receive larger, more powerful wings that allow them to achieve much greater flight speeds. Increase flight speed to 250 mph (400 km).

Bonuses: +1 to dodge.

Bio-E Cost: 2 points for every 20 insects.

Prerequisite: None.

Mundane Doesn't Mean Boring!

Ways to Use the Mundane in Palladium Books® Games to Make Them More Interesting, Insightful, and Dangerous

By Leamon Crafton Jr.

The mundane doesn't have to be boring. By "mundane," I mean not supernatural, not magical, not divine, and not psionic. When you, as the Game Master or as a player, use skills, attributes, knowledge, and everyday equipment to succeed in your goals, it can be just as exciting as when you use magical and psychic powers. I present some enhancements to the "mundane" aspects of Player Characters. These alternate rules are presented with **Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Edition (BTS-2)** in mind, although they can easily be used for **Heroes Unlimited™, Ninjas & Superspies™, Dead Reign™**, or any "modern" setting. With a little alteration, they can be incorporated into **Rifts®** or any other games in the Megaverse® of Palladium Books®.

Anthropologists/Archaeologists and Forensic Criminalists in Greater Detail

"Frustra fit per plura quod potest fieri per pauciora"

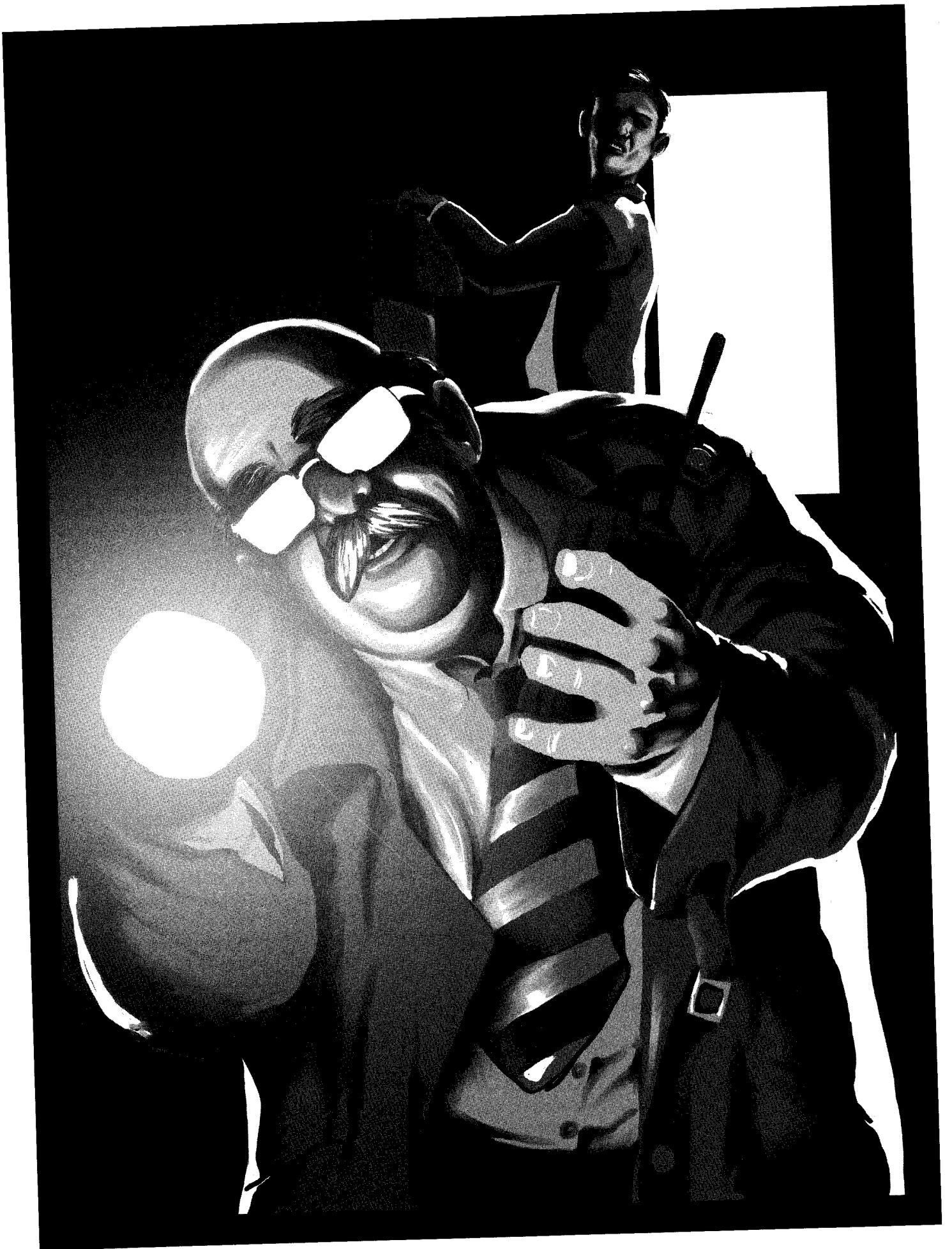
"It is futile to do with more things that which can be done with fewer."

– William Ockham

"Wherever he steps, whatever he touches, whatever he leaves, even unconsciously, will serve as a silent witness against him. Not only his fingerprints or his footprints, but his hair, the fibers from his clothes, the glass he breaks, the tool mark he leaves, the paint he scratches, the blood or semen he deposits or collects. All of these and more, bear mute witness against him. This is evidence that does not forget. It is not confused by the excitement of the moment. It is not absent because human witnesses are. It is factual evidence. Physical evidence cannot be wrong, it cannot perjure itself, it cannot be wholly absent. Only human failure to find it, study and understand it, can diminish its value."

– Professor Edmond Locard

The purpose of this article is to expand a little on the Occupational, skill, and Armor Rating systems and to give a little pep and spice to the mundane, adding a new and exciting tool kit for BTS-2 investigations as well as giving some hints and tips for using natural science and skepticism as a useful tool in investigations (rather than just as excuses to be used as jokes and pig-headed stubbornness). To go so far beyond the supernatural that we come full circle back to the natural, and all the excitement that can be had even if there is no "big bad" monster or sorcerer at each stage of the adventure, or even at its end. It will also present information to the Game Master (G.M.) so he can take the players' own actions (and possible consequences) into consideration. BTS-2, even more so than the first edition, makes it clear throughout the book that normal everyday people put the supernatural into categories of pseudo-science and quackery. The general populace, society, law enforcement, etc., do not take kindly to those who proclaim it is in fact real. Various Occupations, the



I.S.P. multiplier rules, as well as the text itself, show this outlook. Even if the group does not have a Nega-Psychic in it, the law is not going to take kindly to Player Characters pointing at a gruesome crime scene and saying, “Dybbuk demon done it. We go now?” For most of the population in the BTS-2 world, what the Player Characters deal with is nothing more than supernatural mumbo-jumbo. Even those who are religious or believe in spirits and ghosts are going to have a hard time being convinced that a demon is on the loose and is the thing responsible for crimes and murders that just happen to occur at the same relative place and time that the Player Characters are there. The Player Characters will need to use wit and cunning to stay on the right side of the law as well as do their duty to mankind by battling the forces of the supernatural. In BTS-2, the psychic is represented as an “evolutionary response” to supernatural predators and psychic powers are not needed by the human race when the supernatural is not present. So, in normal day-to-day life, the player characters deal with mysteries and natural phenomena with skills based on science, reason, and logic. The Player Characters must carefully balance their investigations into the bizarre with their “normal” daytime lives in order that they not be ridiculed, defamed, fired from their jobs, put in jail, or worse (such as being accused of a crime or murder that was done by something supernatural). Also, since using psychic powers in a low supernatural setting will drastically reduce both a Player Character’s available and potential I.S.P. (due to a future higher threat level), any mundane way to figure something out has no “future cost” associated with it. A psychic who uses just 1 I.S.P. to solve a mystery has a potential 10 I.S.P. deficit when finally facing the main horror, if he has not rested between its use and encountering an alien intelligence or ancient evil. Solving mysteries with skills and reason keeps his own paranormal potential with him.

New Mystery Solving Occupations

I have personally found that in almost every game that allows it, someone wants to be a detective-like mystery solver. Most people completely understand a private or police detective. But there are other interesting solvers of mystery that I find common in games; the Archaeologist and Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) type Player Character. Watching some of the hottest current TV shows gives players all kinds of reasons for choosing one of these as the “day job” occupation for their BTS-2 Player Character. And even on these hit shows, there are two polar opposite views. Those shows that portray the supernatural as real, and the others which show confidence artists and delusional people as only pretending (or falsely believing) it is real, when it is in fact not. If the G.M. only throws supernatural occurrences at the Player Characters, the game will quickly degenerate into a “monster of the week” campaign. Mixing things up, to where the players and Player Characters do not always know what it is they face, or even if it is really magical/supernatural/etc., provides much more diversity and flavor.

The Archaeologist character is the guy who knows all the old histories and legends of the past. The CSI character is the guy using the bleeding edge of technology to solve crimes. A big appeal to both is that at the core, they are investigators, mystery solvers, and since BTS-2 deals with many mysteries, these two occupations are natural shoe-ins for Player Character occupations. They can use their day life knowledge and skills to solve the mysteries

of both the natural and supernatural kind. Then, armed with this knowledge, they are able to fight it.

So, I want to present more flavor to these occupations, flesh them out and give the G.M. a host of ideas for his campaign. So, what are my credentials, you ask? What makes me knowledgeable enough to write a supplemental rule-set on these professions? My own degree in Anthropology and my brother’s actual occupation as a firearms examiner in a crime lab gives me a fairly solid position to go messing with the BTS-2 occupation and skill system in these two areas. My brother role-plays Palladium’s games too, so all the information given is both as true to the sciences and as true to the spirit of the game as can be managed. There is always going to be some discrepancy between reality and rules, but I am confident that the following shows a fair and balanced way to present both.

OK, so first I’m going to discuss Anthropology/Archaeology. So, as you can see, I put the two words side by side. Why? You might say to yourself, “*Palladium has them separate. Anthropology is the study of ‘tribal cultures,’ while Archaeology is ancient ruins and artifacts. They’re completely separate.*” Well, yes and no. Anthropology being “modern primitive cultures” and Archaeology being “ruins and artifacts” is actually a non-American way of splitting up some studies of humans. Here, in the United States of America, Anthropology is the study of **all** things human; past, present, and future. Yes, a very huge field of study. At a university, it gets broken down into 4 main fields of study. The first is Cultural Anthropology. This is basically what the Anthropology skill covers, but covers both past as well as present cultures. Linguistics is the second. There is no Linguistics skill in the Palladium system. Linguistics is not a separate language, but the study of languages and communication, both verbal and nonverbal and all that it entails. Thirdly, there is Anthropological Biology. In general it is related to the Biology skill, but is more concerned with humans (past as well as present), hominids, and primates. Lastly, there is Archaeology, the study of artifacts (anything physically made by a human). So as you can see, Anthropology takes on the whole range of human studies. For the point of this article, I will use Anthropology and Anthropologist to refer to any of the 4 fields.

New Occupation

Anthropologist: In BTS-2, the Occupation presented as *Scholar/University Professor/Engineer or Scientist* would seem the logical occupation to choose for an anthropologist. One problem with trying to use this occupation for the Anthropologist is that it requires 4 skills to be chosen from the same skill category as its main skill bonus. But an actual Anthropologist is given at least a base training in all 4 anthropological areas. A Linguistics skill would probably fall under Communications (and one is given below as a new skill). Anthropology, Archaeology, and Biology are given as being from the Science category, but very closely related skills of Research, Philosophy, History, Appraise Antiques, and Excavation are Technical skills and the various Lore skills that many anthropologists would know are in Paranormal Studies.

Occupational Skills: Linguistics (*new skill*, +5%), Anthropology (+5%), Archaeology (+5%), and Biology (+5%), Research (+15%), History (+10%), and Technical Writing (+10%). The Anthropologist then chooses 2 fields of study. He then gets either

one field at a +25% and the other at a +0%, or he may choose to have a +10% in each. This extra bonus should be also added to the 2 skills that apply to the anthropologist's chosen fields (from the first 4 skills listed above). So an anthropologist who chooses Linguist and Archaeologist (at +10% to each) would also add the +10% to the Linguistics and Archaeology skills (for a total of +15% to each).

Linguist:

Any Communication skill (may be modern or ancient depending on the focus of the Anthropologist).

Language: Other: Choose one.

Literacy: Other: Choose *two*.

Cultural Anthropologist:

Philosophy

Psychology

Lore: Superstitions

Lore: Cults and Secret Societies

Lore: Religion

Archaeologist:

Appraise Antiques

Lore: American Indians

Lore: Mythology

Lore: Demons and Monsters

Excavation

Biological Anthropologist:

Botany

Advanced Mathematics

Chemistry

Genetics

Elective Skills: Select seven total from the standard available categories plus Science. The character gets a +10% Bonus on Domestic, Communications, Paranormal Studies, Science, and Technical skills.

Secondary Skills Available: Select two from the standard available categories at levels 1, 3, 7, 11, and 14.

Special Bonus: An additional +5% on any two skills; the character's areas of expertise or special interest.

Advantages: The anthropologist is a very well-rounded and knowledgeable scholar. His dealings with all things human, even if some are on a small scale, will allow him to be able to find a reference for something or at least where to find information that might lead to a reference (people, books, places, etc.). Because an anthropologist may study remote and "primitive" cultures of the past and present, research into occult and paranormal matters will not be seen by superiors as anything out of the ordinary (actual proclamation of belief is a different story).

Disadvantages: The anthropologist, being so knowledgeable, must constantly guard himself against either thinking he knows everything and thus being either a cynic, disbelieving anything and everything primitive or mythical or becoming so absorbed in his field of study that he sees it as the best, ignores its faults, and perhaps even "goes native." This doesn't only apply to cultural anthropologists; even those of other fields may think "their" ancient civilization, primate species, or studied language "best."

Pay: Use the *Scholar/University Professor/Engineer or Scientist* for pay.

Forensic Science and the Crime Lab

OK, now that we have dealt with Anthropology, let's get into Crime Scene Investigation and Forensic Science. What it is and what it is not, and who does what and where. First, forget a lot of what you've seen from most TV series on the subject. *No one person* goes around to homicides, works the crime scene, bags everything up, takes it back to the lab, does the needed lab testing and processing and paperwork filing, takes the results, thinks about it all to find a solution, then goes out and finally finds the bad guy, and puts the bad guy in jail (or kills the bad guy). Why? There are many reasons and here are a few that stand out:

1) It is too much for one person to be knowledgeable in every field of Forensic Science.

2) The evidence needs to be analyzed by a person who is neutral and has no personal ties to the case (such as the investigator who already may have a theory). The evidence must "speak for itself" and not be shoehorned into an existing theory.

3) There are too many cases for one person to handle; doing the crime scene work, doing the lab work/analysis, and going to court to testify would result in very few cases being worked and completed.

4) Lab work would be stymied because the forensic scientist would be getting called out to crime scenes all the time. Therefore, little to no lab work would be done and cases would never have the evidence processed to actually prosecute the criminal.

So first, there are two separate fields: the detectives who go to the crime scene and do the actual collection of evidence, and those who actually process the evidence. The first is where the occupation Police Detective/Crime Scene Investigator comes into play. That occupation remains unchanged from how it is presented in BTS-2. But there is also the actual Forensic Scientist, the one who does all the actual processing of evidence. Forensic Science is the study and application of natural science principles with matters involving law.

Crime Labs and CSI teams are not all cookie-cutter/copy-pasted. The size of the police force and crime lab will determine how many people are involved and in what capacity. Smaller crime labs will have to have people performing two or three different roles. Some of the smaller labs around the country have the Firearm/Toolmark unit process crime scenes. There are quite a few labs that only allow sworn officers as their firearm examiners. The mode of thinking on this is that since officers carry a gun, they know everything there is to know about firearms and that civilians would not. Civilian firearm and toolmark examiners would disagree. Sometimes a forensic scientist will be needed to go to the actual crime scene for evidence processing if the circumstances may harm/contaminate/destroy the evidence in such a way as to make it useless if it was to be removed from the scene and taken to the crime lab.

A real life example of a small lab would be the St. Charles County Sheriff's Office near St. Louis, MO. This office is rather small, having a three person crime lab. They handle DNA, Drug Chemistry, some Trace analysis, and they also perform test firing of firearms. The Sheriff's Office has a separate Crime Scene unit that also handles Fingerprints. This means that the CSI unit will go and collect evidence, and do any needed fingerprint work, but their crime lab will process any DNA, Drug Chemistry, and Trace analysis. They will also determine if a gun can actually fire

(but they will not compare bullets, or determine if a bullet/cartridge was fired from a certain gun). Anything else will be sent to a larger lab that has the specialties needed.

A larger lab will process everything. The Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Lab, in Jefferson City, MO, deals with anything the smaller Missouri labs cannot do, as well as process evidence from the surrounding areas. They can do anything related to Firearms and Toolmarks, DNA, Drug Chemistry, Trace analysis, Fingerprints, Questioned Documents, and Toxicology. The smallest department, Firearms and Toolmarks, has 3 people working in it. Their largest department, DNA, has 8 people.

What this means to the G.M. and group is that if it is wanted, the character group itself could be centered around a crime lab, its scientists, and those who interact with it, such as police officers, detectives, lawyers, etc. The G.M. and players can also set it up using Palladium's organization rules to be as small or big as needed by the campaign.

New Occupation

Forensic Scientist: An expert at analyzing physical evidence using natural science principles that involve law. *Note:* The Forensics skill as stated is more akin to what a coroner/doctor would do to find cause of death from evidence on the corpse and the corpse itself. The Forensic Scientist occupation deals with evidence after being separated from the corpse or at a crime scene/taken from a crime scene.

Occupational Skills: Crime Scene Investigation (+20%), Law (+10%), Literacy (+10%), Mathematics: Basic (+10%), Mathematics: Advanced, Computer Operation (+10%), Photography (+10%), Technical Writing (+15%), and choose *one* of the following fields in Forensic Science at +25% or two at +10%:

DNA: Use Genetics (Science).

Drug Chemistry: Use Chemistry: Analytical (Science).

Trace Elements: **New Skill.**

Firearms and Toolmark Examination: **New Skill.**

Fingerprints: **New Skill.**

Questioned Documents: Use Forgery (Espionage, -20% to forgery, +20% to detect forgery).

Toxicology: Use Toxicology (Medical).

Odentology (bite marks): **New Skill.**

Anthropological Forensics (bones): Use Biology (Science).

Elective Skills: Select ten total from the standard available categories, but the character gets a +10% bonus on Communications, Science, Medical, and Technical skills.

Secondary Skills Available: Select four from the standard available categories at level one, plus one at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Special Bonuses: +3 to Perception Rolls.

Advantages: Besides being able to process evidence and knowing how to properly collect and gather evidence at a scene, the forensic scientist also has access to lab equipment and other people (in different departments) who might be able to help if something is not specifically in their own field. The forensic scientist also knows how to testify in court and is aware of various legal procedures. Also, they may have contacts throughout various law enforcement agencies at all levels (local, state, and federal, perhaps even internationally). They normally do not have to go to crime scenes (unless the evidence will be destroyed if

removed) and thus are not usually in any danger like an actual police officer.

Disadvantages: Forensic scientists, being natural scientists, must be wary of letting any belief in paranormal activities and participation in paranormal investigations become known by their colleagues and superiors (if they are not part of the investigation "team"). Discovery may lead to reprimands and/or loss of job. Also, the forensic scientist may be subpoenaed to court, and usually there is a backlog of cases that need to be processed. From watching various TV programs, many people expect the forensic scientist to be able to solve any problems with little or no evidence. This is specially true of DNA evidence. So unwarranted, high expectations may be placed upon the criminal scientist.

Pay: Use the *Scholar/University Professor/Engineer or Scientist* for pay.

New Skills

Communications

Linguistics. Linguistics is not a skill that gives the Player Character knowledge of a specific language. The Linguistics skill gives the Character knowledge on how language is formed and used in a cultural and biological context. Linguistics also allows the character to understand how nonverbal communications can work (body language, art, etc.), as well as the meaning behind communications, such as sarcasm, propaganda, etc.

The linguist can also determine various "castes" or "classes" in speech, such as dialects, and differences in the speech of upper, middle, and lower class, and differences between prose, and poetry. The Linguist can also use this skill to understand or figure out basic meanings from languages with similar vocabularies (e.g. Spanish, Italian and French) or use correct forms of words if they know a similar grammar structure (Russian, Latin, Greek). The linguist understands the various structures of languages, which gives a +5% to Cryptography if the code is language based. **Base Skill:** 30% +6% per level of experience.

Technical

Trace Elements (aka Trace Analysis). Trace elements is the field where pieces of evidence are found at the crime scene and matched against others from elsewhere. This includes things like paint, hair, fabric threads, tape, or any other thing that might link a suspect to the crime scene that does not fall under the other fields of forensic science. Examples would include hair found on the clothes of a victim that is matched to the suspect's dog; chips of paint left on a wall that was hit by a car and a car with a bent front bumper and chipped paint job; duct tape used to bind a victim's hands and the end of the tape can be physically matched to a roll of duct tape in the suspect's garage. Solving arson cases also uses trace elements. **Base Skill:** 40% +5% per level of experience.

Firearms and Toolmark Examination. This is a much more specific skill than the basic Crime Scene Investigation skill. That skill would deal with the proper securing and transportation of evidence and figuring out trajectory, movement, and speed. This skill is used in 2 main ways:

Firearms: Test firing of firearms (seeing if they can actually fire properly), matching bullets and casings with a firearm and/

or each other, determining individual characteristics (those that appear on the casing, bullets, etc., that cannot be caused by any other firearm), etc.

Toolmarks: This skill is also used to match imprints of a tool with the tool that did the imprinting, such as identifying if a pair of bolt cutters were used to cut a lock on a shed.

Note: G.M.s may want to know that this is usually the very last process used when a firearm is being examined. DNA, Trace Elements, Fingerprinting, etc., will be done before the gun actually goes to the firearm department. Consideration for the safety of the examiner requires that the firearm be cleaned before test firing, so any evidence on the actual firearm will be destroyed in the cleaning process.

Impressions Note: In some labs, impressions are processed by the Firearms and Toolmark division and not the Fingerprints division due to workload/backlog/logistics. The G.M. should determine which division in his own game processes impressions. I have it under the Fingerprints skill, below, as the basic concepts and actual processing are the same (or almost the same) as that of fingerprinting. If the G.M. allows, a Firearms and Toolmark specialist may have the impressions part of that skill at an equal level as his Firearms and Toolmark Examination skill.

Base Skill: 30% +5% per level of experience. (40%+4% per level of experience for Impressions.)

Fingerprints. This skill is a more specific skill than the basic Crime Scene Investigation skill. That skill would deal with the proper securing and transportation of evidence, as well as possible basic “dusting” of fingerprints at a crime scene. This skill is used when the fingerprinted item can be taken to the lab, or more careful fingerprinting is needed (such as fingerprinting a gun thought to have been used in a crime, or fingerprinting a corpse which has been in water and is too bloated to have normal fingerprint methods applied). It also applies to the matching of fingerprints through visual or computer means. It applies to hand prints, footprints, toe prints, etc.

Fingerprints is also the skill used in matching Impressions*: Matching tracks and impressions to shoes, tires, gloves, etc. A “classic example” of this is if a criminal breaks into a store to steal something. He cuts his arm on the glass and steps in his own blood. He then enters the building and leaves a footprint on a white piece of poster-board, which was lying on the ground.

Note: Fingerprints should be the second to last department to look at a firearm (and the last with other evidence) as the chemicals and processes used to lift the prints will contaminate, damage, or destroy any other evidence, such as DNA and trace elements.

* In some labs, impressions are processed by the Firearms and Toolmark division and not the Fingerprints division due to workload/backlog/logistics. The G.M. should determine which division in his own game processes impressions. I have it under the Fingerprints skill, as the basic concepts and actual processing are the same (or almost the same) as that of fingerprinting. If the G.M. allows, a Firearms and Toolmark specialist may have the impressions part of this skill at an equal level as his Firearms and Toolmark Examination skill, but using the percentages of the Fingerprint skill.

Base Skill: 40% +4% per level of experience

Odontology. This skill uses teeth and bite marks as evidence. If a criminal takes a bite out of a steak in a victim’s refrigerator,

this skill can be used to make that link. It can also be used to identify a victim whose other parts cannot be analyzed (such as no fingerprints, missing fingers, etc.) by using dental records/x-rays to match teeth to victim or criminal. The skill also can be used if either the criminal or victim bites the other. Can apply to animals as well. **Base Skill:** 40% +4% per level of experience.

Game Master Tips on Using Anthropologists and CSI Investigators

1) I highly recommend that G.M.s and players carefully read *Weapons and the Player Characters* on BTS-2, page 168. It cannot be stressed enough that sloppy investigation will land the characters in jail or worse.

2) Always remember that evidence collecting at crime scenes and archaeological sites is a destructive process. If you take an artifact, it is no longer there. Digging up dirt to expose something moves anything that happens to not be immediately seen in the dirt, and taking a blood sample removes part of the blood at a crime scene. And just walking around will leave parts of the investigator (hair, dried skin, etc.) at the site or crime scene. Player Characters who are not extremely careful when performing “unofficial” investigations may very well be discovered, and possible consequences could include loss of job, fines, prison, defamation, etc.

3) Imagine the scene: the Player Characters spend a lot of time/research solving a mystery in which something supernatural is killing people. They track it to its lair and after a gruesome fight, kill it. Discorporation happens and no evidence of the monster is left. But now, there are countless empty bullet casings on the ground, possible blood of characters, bodies of those who might have died in the fight, etc., bearing witness against them. Dealing with the scene after the monster is defeated will be almost as important as all the prep work that led to its defeat.

4) Contrary to a first thought, analyzing and piecing together a site or scene is never a “reconstruction.” It is a new construction. It may be similar, almost perfect, but can never be exactly the same as what it was if the original was not completely known and complete records do not still exist.

5) Remember there are always various “factions.” Rivals and people with opposed theories having equal (maybe even better) credentials than the Player Characters. They will love to “disprove” the Player Characters’ theories. If the Player Characters stumble across a natural site/crime scene, they can work as normal. It is when they start to discover a possible supernatural involvement that things become tricky. When the monster is defeated, do they frame a rival? Leave it an “unsolved mystery”? Or do they actually try to change society’s view that the supernatural does not exist by holding a press conference on their “discovery”? Is it accepted? Are they laughed at, mocked, and discredited? There are so many choices, and each has possible repercussions.

6) It’s also interesting that these two fields of study can actually help each other. I’ll give you a real world example of Anthropology and Forensic Science working together, which could easily spark an adventure Hook. I include BTS-2 occupations (in parentheses), to give an idea of what possible information/work can be given to a player character. Psychic occupations should not be the only ones that lead to BTS-2 adventures!

In January 2009, the remains of a homeless person were found in a burned tool-shed. The wooded area had 3 sheds and 2 tents

and had been used for some time by the homeless as a shelter. When the remains were found, it was thought that the fire was possibly caused by a hot plate or similar heating device, even though a knife was found nearby. The police didn't have a reason or motivation to rule it a homicide at that time. DNA taken from the body was matched to the man's father, so after some investigation, his identity was discovered (Forensic Scientist: DNA, Detective). The body was given to the Anthropology Department at the University of Missouri-Columbia. An anthropologist (Anthropologist) was boiling the body (to remove soft tissue from bone) and recognized marks around vertebrae as possible stab wounds. Anthropologists are interested in ways people lived and died, and study bones for traces of disease, animal bites, and human weapons (all the way back to pointed sticks and stone tools). The anthropologist wanted to make sure what she thought was correct was, in fact, correct, and called the Police Department (Detective). The police officer called the crime lab and asked if someone could look into this directly, so if the anthropologist was incorrect, there wouldn't be so much paperwork and red tape to go through for no result. Two forensic scientists (Forensic Scientist: Firearms and Toolmarks) went and looked at the tool marks and determined the anthropologist was correct. The case was then re-labeled as a homicide.

So, taking this real world example, a G.M. could turn it into a story by putting a BTS-2 twist on it. You have 3 player characters (or contacts of the player characters): a Police Detective, a Forensic Scientist, and an Anthropologist. The anthropologist player character gets a body donated to his department. It is from a homeless person, so it did not go through the normal process of being buried/cremated. The anthropologist finds marks, possibly from a knife or even a claw, on one of the bones. The police are called and the detective player character is assigned to the case. He brings in the forensic scientist player character, who determines that, yes, indeed it was a claw mark. Further looking at the evidence shows that this was most likely what killed the homeless man.

The G.M. now has 3 of the player characters involved, and there might even be talk of supernatural reasons; some creature did it. The place where the victim's body was found can be further explored, and more clues given. The G.M. now has a whole adventure created "BTS-2 style" that was inspired by a true incident. That's one reason that makes BTS-2 so compelling. It's just like our own world, but "twisted" ever so subtly. Linguists could come into play when dealing with ancient codes and mystical spells. A cultural anthropologist might be helpful if a monster is from an obscure civilization that he has dealt with before. And different occupations will be needed. G.M.s remember, occupations should be at least as important in a BTS-2 game as the Player Characters' P.C.C.s.

Using Skepticism, Debunking, and Stage Magic as Useful Tools in Investigations

I highly recommend G.M.s to read BTS-2, pages 61-62, about explanations that Skeptics/Debunkers/Nega-Psychics give, even if they do not have any Nega-Psychics in their game. In the BTS-2 world, psychic powers and magic are real. In the background, yes, but real. But this is not to say that all scientific explanations

are wrong in every situation, or that every incident in a BTS-2 game needs to have a supernatural origin. As with the above commentary on anthropology and criminal forensics, there are a lot of ways that a character's skills and occupation can help him in investigations. For the not so straightforward game, the G.M. can plant twists and turns in the plot and allow the characters to use mundane methods, as well as psychic and magical. Why would the player characters want this? Continue reading and find the answer.

First, skepticism and debunking are not the same as cynicism and stubborn disbelief. They can make for a reasonable Nega-Psychic P.C.C. Occupation, but Nega-Psychics take it a further step into **NEVER** changing their belief, no matter what the evidence is. The skeptic only asks for one thing for belief: Evidence. Real evidence. Testable evidence. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence, not just anecdotes and eyewitness accounts. People's eyes deceive them, and even *Scooby-Doo* ended each mystery with a person de-masked. You say there are psychic powers. The skeptic doesn't care (at this moment) about all your reasons, thoughts about them, or your theories on why they are there. First you have to *prove* they exist. Let's do some tests. Make sure they are unbiased, clinical, and double-blind. Make sure there are protocols that both sides can agree to, and they are followed to the letter. Anything else allows cheating and allows con artists and tricksters to fool the public, the scientists studying them, etc.

These traits offer great tools in investigation. What does the evidence *itself* point towards? Is it a supernatural or a non-supernatural source? Use Ockham's razor. Is it simpler for that picture of the furry thing in the woods to be a bear (of which there are millions of verifiable accounts) or a person in an ape suit, than to be a bigfoot? Saying it is a bigfoot, you start bringing more variables into the equation. The more convoluted a story becomes, the less a skeptic is going to accept it. Each "hole" is going to require another explanation, which adds more possible holes. As for the "bigfoot" in the grainy picture, why are the pictures never clear? Why have they never been found before? Why has no physical evidence been left behind by them that can not have been easily faked? Each of these adds to the evidence pointing away from it being a bigfoot. So many stories and explanations to describe one picture, instead of a simple "it's a bear" or "guy in a monkey suit." As the G.M., sometimes it is fun to throw the man in an ape suit at the players. Make them start to question what the "thing" actually is. The more they think, question, and plan, the less embarrassment they will have to deal with later on. Remember, skeptics are not hellbent on disbelieving. They are hellbent on exposing fraud. They have seen so many forms of fraud and so many scam artists, they become sick of those who prey on others in order to get fame and profit. Show the skeptics true and real evidence beyond your grandma's old yarn about seeing her papa's ghost, or voices heard on an old tape recorder, and the skeptics can and will change their view. That is the charm about skeptics. New and real **evidence** will change their view. Otherwise they wouldn't be skeptics.

As mentioned in the occupation of Skeptic/Debunker, some of them are or were professional magicians. Why? Because magicians of the entertainment variety understand that the eye is not quicker than the hand and that people tend to look where they are directed and not where they should. They can use their training to find the charlatans that prey on the bereaved for money and

fame. And this is what drives the skeptic mad. The sham miracle healers that use a magician's sleight of hand to deceive people into thinking they can perform psychic surgery, for a price. The phony psychics who cold read people into believing they can see their auras, for a price. The parlor channelers who dim the lights and convince people that the table was moved by ghosts, again, for a price. The stage magician knows how these tricks are done, as he's done them for entertainment in the past. His skills and knowledge can help tell if an investigation is really about the supernatural or not.

Also consider, as stated above, the majority of the population considers psychic powers and magic just flim-flam and woo. The police detective trying to solve a homicide isn't going to publicly announce he was able to track the killer by using his Object Read psychic power, no matter what programs about psychic detectives might claim. It would almost certainly be career suicide. If the police are going to arrest a person (or kill him while apprehending him), they are going to need solid and "real" evidence that is accepted by the law. Aura viewing, Astral Projection, and all the *supernatural* skills, powers, and abilities that a Player Character may have in the game, do not mean jack when it comes to the authorities. So even if the evidence points to the supernatural, the skeptic, debunker, and even the self-delusional Nega-Psychic can come up with a plausible, non-supernatural scenario which can be used by the group as the "official reason." A nice tool kit indeed.

Another real life example of how this can be used in a game is the following event: A couple of amateur magicians were asked to apply to psychic testing at a major prestigious university in the 1970s. They used simple magic tricks to fake psychic powers. The parapsychologists in charge of the experiments allowed protocols to be changed by the "psychics." They were never asked if they faked it. The parapsychologists wanted to believe too much, and the quality of their experiments suffered. Parapsychology itself took a huge blow when the farce was revealed. Parapsychologists now may wish to bring in a magician as an observer to make sure no trickery or deception is being performed. This adds credibility to any successes. Do an internet search on *Project Alpha* to get more information.

G.M.s should also think about what is actually "real" and not in their specific BTS-2 world. What things actually exist, and which do not. Is everything that could be paranormal really paranormal? I suggest the G.M. look at the Player Character P.C.C.s and decide which things may best work in his game. This is especially true when using modern technology to detect the paranormal, such as that used in various ghost investigation TV programs. Does Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) actually work in your world? Why or why not? What benefits or damage may happen to your game because you decided to answer this with a yes or no? I ask G.M.s to think about this because certain character P.C.C.s could become obsolete when technological detection is allowed. If ghosts can be communicated with through the white noise of a TV set or radio, it may give the group a tool that they would not have access to otherwise. But if there is a player character with Commune with Spirits, now he may feel bad if a TV/radio can do the same thing without I.S.P. expenditure. Kirlian cameras and video recorders may give a party of Parapsychologists and Ghost Hunters a chance at finding the Entity they are searching for. But if your game is filled with Psychic Sensitives, Diviners, and Psi-Mechanics, allowing these devices to actually detect the

paranormal could have a negative impact on your game. They allow mundane ways of connecting with the paranormal. And since they do not require I.S.P. to use, it has the potential to make characters feel their powers are not worth using and that any normal person can do the same as they can do. This is especially true for the Psi-Mechanic; why build a device and use P.P.E. to make a device, when a Ouija board does the same thing? Also, think about how fun it is for things to be unknown. Maybe that white noise in the radio spouting clues to the mystery is really a ghost, maybe it's just coincidence, or maybe it is another psychic or even an evil creature using Mental Electronic Message on the radio to give the party false clues. So G.M.s, put some thought into the whys, whats, and hows for each piece of normal technology you allow to react to the supernatural in the game. Make sure you don't leave the group without all hope by not allowing some technological interaction, but make sure you don't lessen the usefulness of any P.C.C. by doing it, either. Think about and find the right combination for your group.

Making a BTS-2™ Team

I'll provide an example of how to get a BTS-2 team together "logically." I know it can be daunting for G.M.s to get seemingly random characters from various occupations to actually work together and want to do it. I would strongly advise letting the players come up with their occupations and then thinking of a way to get everyone at least introduced to another character early on, and if possible, have a few of them be acquaintances who already know each other.

Example Group:

- Police Detective/Psi-Mechanic
- Stage Magician/Firewalker
- Archaeologist/Diviner
- Child/Autistic Savant
- Professor/Parapsychologist
- Museum Curator/Psychic Sensitive
- SWAT Officer/Ghost Hunter

The setting takes place in modern St. Louis, specifically around Washington University (where Project Alpha, mentioned earlier, took place). All of the Player Characters kept the fact that they were psychic secret, so they would not lose credibility in their various occupations. Unknown to all but the Ghost Hunter, the city's SWAT team moonlighted as supernatural hunters. The group's Ghost Hunter was the latest recruit, and they were eyeing the police detective (that entire group consisted of police members). But their last "mission" went horribly wrong. The lead officer told the Ghost Hunter to flee, and the entire rest of the group was killed off. The fate of the "big bad" is unknown. So that is the background story; a lone Ghost Hunter without a team.

In many jurisdictions, police officers must take and pass regular psychological evaluations and at their base, Parapsychologists are psychologists. The Ghost Hunter changed some forms and soon the police detective/Psi-Mechanic was going to his psych evaluation, which was referred to the group's Parapsychologist. The Parapsychologist, on the other hand, was setting up a double blind experiment on aura detection and *thought* the police detective had signed up to perform it. He had brought in the stage magician as an observer to look for any trickery. After confusion between the Parapsychologist and the police detective on what

the purpose of the meeting was, they agreed to a compromise: do the experiment and the papers would be signed off on.

The archaeologist was easily brought in as he was a professor at the same university as the Parapsychologist, and being a Diviner, also dealt with symbols and finding meaning in them. The local art history museum was robbed, bringing the police detective to investigate, and the museum curator was an old colleague of the archaeologist. The Autistic Savant was the daughter of the archaeologist (a single father).

When a murder happened and the victim was in a very difficult to reach place, the skills of rappelling, that the SWAT team Ghost Hunter had, brought him finally face to face with the police detective he had previously “nudged” into getting the rest of the group together. Thus, everyone in the group finally had a previous link or a new link to at least one other group member, and most had 2 links. Not everyone has to know everyone else to begin with, but they all don’t have to only know the same person or know everyone.

Being Flexible with Skills

Applying Conditions to Skills

In the Palladium system of skill percentages, a skill is listed as a base percentage number, plus an additional percentage per level (after the first level). Any I.Q. bonuses, P.C.C. Bonuses, Occupation bonuses, etc., are then added to this base. The rules state that the skill cannot go above 98%, because no one always succeeds. I offer here a slightly different approach, which allows for quick adjudication by the G.M., and further separates the bad, from the good, from the great. The roll of a 99 or 00 still *never* succeeds, but the actual skill percentage may be higher than 98%.

Why? There are always conditions which may help or hamper the performing of a skill. On BTS-2, page 174, there is even a handy chart dealing with certain skill penalties for stressful situations. While this is a start in the right direction, there are no bonuses given for things such as extreme lack of stress, and penalties or bonuses for various natural occurrences (such as rain, fog, etc.) are left out completely. Under excellent conditions, a person with a poor skill may have a much better chance at doing something, and under extremely bad conditions a person with a high skill level that has been “capped” for some time should do better than someone with a low skill level just recently “capped,” even if under “normal” circumstances and normal rules, they both would have a 98% maximum.

How would this work? First, do not stop the skill’s percentage number when it reaches 98%. Keep adding to it with each level/equipment/spell/ability/etc. So a player character could theoretically have a skill at much higher than 100%. Any time the player has to roll percentile for his player character’s skill, a roll of a 99 and 00 always fails. In this case just worry about the dice rolling 99 or 00, don’t worry about the skill percentage.

Any conditions favorable to the player character will increase the skill percentage up to that 98% chance. Any conditions that would hamper the skill would lower the percentage. For a skill which normally is over 100%, this may lower it even under the 98% chance. Multiple conditions (better and worse) may add to and subtract from the skill percentage.

The Game Master can use the following list, in addition to that on BTS-2 page 174, as a reference for modifying skills. Add

these modifiers to the skill if the condition would help the player character succeed, and subtract the modifiers to the skill if the condition would hinder the player character’s use of the skill. If the G.M. wants to use these modifiers for D20 rolls (such as combat conditions, checks against Attributes, etc.), divide by 5. So hiding while in fog might give a character a +20% to his Prowl skill, but he would also be at -4 to shoot at an opponent. Using these conditions will show in game mechanics how different conditions actually affect the Player Characters and are not just “flavor” that should be forgotten as soon as the dice start rolling. Also remember that any equipment (such as nightvision goggles when in the dark) may cancel certain modifiers.

Skill Modifiers

Remember, some of these modifiers can be either bonuses or penalties, depending on what the player is trying to accomplish; G.M.’s discretion.

Weather:

- Night with stars and moon: +/-30%.
- Night with stars but no moon: +/-60%.
- Night without stars or moon: +/-70%.
- Complete Darkness: +/-100%.
- Light Rain/Light Fog: +/-10%.
- Rain/Fog: +/-20%.
- Heavy Rain/Thick Fog: +/-30%.
- Thunderstorm: +/-50%.
- Light Snow: +/-5%.
- Heavy Snow: +/-20%.
- Blizzard/Sandstorm: +/-70%.
- Extreme Cold/Heat: +/-50% (additional to snow/sand).

Tools and Ease:

- Not having tools for a skill which requires them: -50%.
- Using tools that are not specific to the task (such as a wrench and a screwdriver instead of a hammer): -5%.
- Using superior tools made specifically for the task: +10%.
- Extremely easy use of the skill: +50%.
- Easy use of the skill: +20%.
- Difficult use of the skill: -20%.
- Very difficult use of the skill: -50%.

No Stress:

No Stress (e.g., practicing tightrope walking a foot/0.3 m off the ground is easier than 20 feet/6 m above the ground): +10%.

Time:

A +5% can be added to the effective skill percentage of a player character if the skill is accomplished over at least twice the amount of time normally taken for the task. Time can continue to be added up to a maximum of +20%. So if a task normally takes 1 melee action, and the character takes 2 melee actions to accomplish it, a +5% is added to the skill percentage. If 3 melee actions are taken, the bonus increases to +10%. 4 melee actions increases the bonus to +15%, and 5 melee actions would give a maximum bonus of +20% added to the player character’s effective skill percentage. Any added time after this bonus of +20% is just procrastination, and does not add any further bonus.

If used for melee attacks (when a D20 roll is used, and not a skill percentage), use a +1 to the roll for each time increment,

up to a +4, and a straight +2 for a non-stressful situation (e.g. taking very careful aim for 5 melee actions, at an empty barn for fun, with no one watching, would grant a total of +6 to the attack roll).

A -15% penalty can be applied if a Player Character tries to do a rush job and reduce the time it takes to complete a task by 25%. This can go to a maximum of -45% on the skill percentage, when a task is attempted in 25% of the original time. So, if a task normally requires an hour to complete, and the Player Character wishes to rush the job and do it in 30 minutes, he would have a -30% to his skill. The quickest he could attempt it would be 25% of the hour, or 15 minutes, at a penalty of -45%. Any faster than that is just a waste of time and automatically fails.

Contested Skills

Palladium Books leaves contested rolls to the G.M. to figure out. In various sources they have a few various and different ways to do it, depending on what is used against what. I add here a very simple mechanic that can be used absolutely any time a contested roll is needed. In any contest there is one person who does a thing first and then the other reacts to it. Such as a person trying to hide while another looks for him. The hider did it first, otherwise there would be nothing to search for. The first person rolls the percentile dice. If the roll is lower than the skill, the difference is added to the second person's roll. If it is above the skill, the difference is subtracted from the skill roll. The skills may be the same or different, depending on the situation, but the mechanic used is exactly the same.

Example 1: A person forges a document and it is examined by a Questioned Documents Forensic Scientist. Both of these characters would use the Forgery skill. Let's give the forger a 75% and the forensic scientist an 85%.

If the forger rolls lower than his 75%, the difference is added to the forensic scientist's roll. So if a 50 was rolled, the forensic scientist would add 25 to the roll. With a roll of 60 or lower, he would see it was a forgery, on 61 or greater, he would be fooled by it.

A "failure" on the forger's part would not necessarily mean an instant discovery. If he rolled 80%, he barely missed his skill roll by 5. This 5 would then be subtracted from the forensic scientist's roll, as it is a little easier to notice the forgery, but it is still not a certainty.

When hiding or trying to conceal something from a Perception check, for each 5 points (round down) of success, the person looking subtracts 1 from his 1D20 roll. If the roll is failed, a +1 is added to the roll. The person making the Perception check might still not be paying enough attention.

Example 2: A person trying to sneak past a sentry in fog rolls a 30 against his Prowl skill of 60%. The fog added an additional 20 points to his skill percentage, so his skill was effectively 80%. This 50 point difference (80-30=50) is divided by 5, so a 10. The sentry's Perception check has 10 subtracted from the roll (14 difficulty as it is a challenging situation).

If the prowler was trying to do it in broad daylight and rolled badly (say, a 90%), he would have failed by 30 points, for a +6 modifier to his opponent (30/5=6). So the sentry would have a +6 to his Perception check and only need a 4 (an easy situation).

Armor and Trauma

Using Armor and Trauma in Beyond the Supernatural™

This next section is to be used as an alternative for armor that is not an actual part of an animal or creature, i.e. worn. *The normal A.R. rules should be used for natural animals and supernatural creatures with A.R. that is part of their actual bodies; do not change it.*

Although BTS-2 does not have an equipment list or chart for armor, a "basic" ancient armor chart and a modern armor chart are both listed in many of Palladium's modern games, including BTS first edition, Ninjas and Superspies™, Heroes Unlimited™, and Dead Reign™. I suggest using the ancient one normally (if you have it), but to use the armor below for modern variants. The new armor presented below works with and is tailored specifically for the new trauma rules explained below. You'll notice that I present some armors with A.R. above 20. Both the new trauma rules, and the fact that it is possible to get a strike roll above 20 with combat bonuses, factor into this change in the normal A.R. range. If you do not use the trauma rules, and dislike the high A.R. for modern armor, I suggest using the one listed in the books mentioned above. I also highly recommend taking a look at Dead Reign™, which, as well as having modern armor listed, has a greater list of common equipment that could as easily be used in the BTS-2 setting without needing any modifications.

Ancient Armor

You may use the standard ancient armor list/chart when playing BTS-2. Remember, ancient armor is not used in modern combat for the reason that it is pretty ineffective against firearms. The protection it provides does not compensate for its weight and hampering of movement. But if you're going to get hit, any armor is better than none, and since supernatural creatures have a high probability of using teeth, claws, clubs, and other natural or ancient weapons, it can still be a life saver. For BTS-2, I recommend using the straight A.R. and S.D.C. values listed on that chart.

For those using these rules for Heroes Unlimited™, Ninjas and Superspies™, or another more heroic and less horrific game, I suggest a change in S.D.C. values. The ancient armor chart is the same chart that goes back to to the First Edition of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**. This was before Player Characters had personal S.D.C. Even then, I would have players who preferred to be hit when their opponent rolled low damage, because healing was easier and cheaper than buying a new suit of armor or repairing a damaged one. In **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 2nd Edition**, many times one hit would completely deplete the S.D.C. of leather or take chain armor down to little S.D.C. When Player Characters started having their own personal S.D.C., they often had more S.D.C. themselves than some of the lower armors, such as padded, leathers, etc., basically making the character tougher than their armor. To help with this, take the armor's S.D.C. and multiply it by 3. This is the armor's new S.D.C. value. So leather armor with 60 S.D.C. now has 180 S.D.C. This will make the armor last a bit longer, and in a heroic game it makes sense.

Player Characters with occupations that may have access to ancient armor would be museum curators (but if it is damaged,

the curator could be in big trouble by the museum and/or actual owner), or any wealthy occupation which can afford to buy it. Blacksmiths make some for recreational “Renaissance Festivals” or other groups, and simple chain armor can be made easily enough with directions and time. Remember, the modern world is not the Middle Ages. Needing repairs to armor damaged in battle may lead to questions from the authorities.

Sports Gear

While at first glance, it might seem laughable to have a Player Character decked out in an American football uniform facing down a Dybbuk demon, its helmet, shoulder pads, and other pads do offer some protection, especially against natural and hand to hand weapons. Player Characters with occupations such as the Sports Athlete could have easy access to protection specific to their occupational sport. G.M.s, again, remember that buying new protective equipment or having a character’s sports organization constantly having to replace damaged equipment, may cause problems down the line. If using these in a “heroic” game, I would suggest only a 2x S.D.C. adjustment, since sports gear is not made specifically for combat. Once damaged, S.D.C. for sports equipment cannot be repaired normally. Claw and sword slashes, and gunfire are not the types of damage sports equipment is made to protect against, and the equipment’s integrity would be greatly diminished.

Bare Minimum Protective Sports Gear: This category would consist of a Player Character wearing a conglomeration of various safety equipment easily bought at a department store. Such items could include elbow and knee pads (skateboarding or rollerskating/rollerblading), shin guards (soccer), and gloves, as well as kid-sized shin guards to protect the forearms. (Removing one of these items would lower the A.R. by 1 and S.D.C. by 10. Removing two items makes it pretty much useless, rules-wise.)

This collection of items offers an A.R. of only 8 and 25 S.D.C., but has no restrictions on movement and can be easily replaced without drawing attention.

Light Protective Sports Gear: This category would consist of motorcycle jackets and pants/chaps, gloves, and boots made of leather and or Kevlar. This would be the typical “biker” gear from road/street motorcycles, not off-road/motocross.

A.R. 10, S.D.C. 50. No restrictions to movement. Very “normal” looking, people would probably not look at the character twice, if in an appropriate setting. Easily replaced at your local leather/biker shop.

Medium Protective Sports Gear: This category would consist of normal hockey, American football, lacrosse, and cricket batsman gear, as well as catcher’s gear in baseball. Motocross/off-road protective gear would also fall under this category.

A.R. 12, S.D.C. 80. (-5% to Physical skills due to weight/bulk.)

Heavy Protective Sports Gear: For goalie gear in hockey and lacrosse, which offers more protection than the other positions.

A.R. 13, S.D.C. 105. (-15% to Physical skills due to weight/bulk.)

Sports Helmet (half): This would include bicycle, skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding, baseball, hockey or motorcycle

(without face plate), or any other helmet that protects the head, but not the face.

A.R. +1 and S.D.C. +25 (no penalties).

Sports Helmet (full): This includes any helmet that protects both the head and face, such as for baseball catchers, American football players, some hockey/lacrosse helmets, full motorcycle helmets, etc.

A.R. +2 and S.D.C. +50. (-5% to Physical skills.)

Note: Baseball bats, hockey sticks, golf clubs, and a variety of other sports equipment that can be used in hand to hand combat are sprinkled about in various other Palladium game books and I won’t list them here. But I think it might be enjoyable to think “outside the box” on other ways sports equipment might be used offensively with the W.P. Targeting skill. Player Characters such as a baseball pitcher or a cricket bowler might use W.P. Targeting to throw 85+ mph (136+ km) fast balls to injure villains and monsters (1D6 damage). A soccer or hockey player could use the goal net to entrap a monster for a few precious melee attacks. Take a racket and a tennis ball or racquetball, or even throw a bowling ball for 1D6 damage. Even golfers (club and ball), hockey players (stick and puck), and baseball/cricket players (bat and ball) could pull off 2D6 damage with well placed shots. All of these attacks would require 2 melee attacks to perform. The first for a set up/windup and the second for the actual follow through.

Author’s Caveat: I had not originally planned to include sports things in this article, but I suddenly had the idea of “sports armor,” and then I also started to think of offensive as well as defensive uses for sports equipment that aren’t so obviously able to be used for offense (such as javelin throwing, discus, etc.). And while on first glance it might seem humorous and unfitting for a horror game, people have indeed been knocked out and some have died from cracks to the head from balls and pucks.

Modern Armor

“Bulletproof” vests, Flak Jackets, and Kevlar are what most people think of when they think about modern armor. Add a helmet if in a combat zone or if the SWAT team is involved. I’m not going to “date” this article by specifying what the modern armor is made from. Kevlar is still used, but there are 5 or 6 current other materials which use various fibers, steel, titanium, and ceramics for protection. For game purposes, assume the following statistics are what the current “modern” armor is, regardless of technological improvements.

(A note to all the “firearms experts” out there. Many people who own a gun think they are a firearms expert. The Palladium Books® online forum is filled with ex-military, NRA members, and just good old boys who love to hunt or love the 2nd Amendment. The examples below might seem wrong to you. I have worked with my Firearms Examiner brother to come up with a quick and simple explanation and statistics for modern armor. If I was to list out every type of armor and then go further to list out their protection by coverage (what they protect) as well as what they can protect against (against firearm class II, IIA, III, etc., or ballistic armor vs spike armor, which is armor used in prisons to mostly protect against knives, shivs, ice-picks, etc.), you would see a list that is 3-4 pages long. What I present here is a simple and mostly accurate way to look at modern armor.)

The basic protection of modern armor is the jacket or vest made of Kevlar or similar material with fibers. The fibers both

trap projectiles (preventing damage caused by the projectile fracturing into parts), and disperse energy to lessen trauma done to the person. From concealed armor worn under normal clothes to full tactical combat/SWAT armor, the base material is the same. Modern armor then has special “pouches” in which trauma plates can be added. These plates can be made of fiber materials or hard plates. But both forms do the same thing, they *add* to the protection offered by the basic armor. A very simple concealed armor is a thin “T-Shirt” made of ballistic material that can have a small trauma plate inserted into the chest if needed. A complex suit of full modern tactical armor will have a jacket made of ballistic material that is then covered with multiple trauma plates over the chest, sides, back, shoulders, and groin. Trauma plates can also be added to protect the legs as well. I offer a quick system of 4 different armor categories based on situations in which they are to be used. Then each category will have statistics presented for both the base armor and with a full set of trauma plates.

If playing a heroic game, use the same 3x S.D.C. as mentioned earlier with ancient armor.

The Categories of Modern Armor

Concealable Armor: Fits under normal clothes and is not noticeable unless carefully searched/patted down. Covers the chest and back only.

Base: A.R. 10, S.D.C. 50 (-70% to detect skills and -14 on Perception Rolls to notice by sight).

Adding Trauma Plate: A.R. +1, S.D.C. +25 (this lessens the concealment above by 10% or by 2 on Perception Checks). Chest only; use Base for damage from behind and sides.

Uniform Armor: This armor is worn over a police, military, or other uniform. It is not worn under clothes, but at a casual glance looks to be part of a normal uniform. This armor covers the chest, back, and sides.

Base: A.R. 12, S.D.C. 100 (-20% to detect skills and -4 on Perception Rolls to notice by sight).

Adding Trauma Plates: A.R. +2, S.D.C. +50 (with trauma plates, this armor is easily seen). Chest/Back only, use Base for side damage.

External Carrier Armor: This armor has pockets and/or pouches for carrying items such as extra magazines, badges, name tags, etc. It is easily noticed to be armor. This armor covers the chest, back, and sides.

Base: A.R. 13, S.D.C. 150 (-5% to Physical skills due to weight).

Adding Trauma Plates: A.R. +3, S.D.C. +100 (-5% to Physical skills due to weight/bulk in addition to the Base).

Adding Neck Guard: A.R. +2, S.D.C. +25 (-5% to Physical skills due to weight/bulk in addition to Base/Trauma plates).

Tactical Armor: Full combat armor that has pouches/pockets for extra magazines and other items. Cannot be mistaken for anything other than armor. This armor covers the chest, back, sides, groin, shoulders, and legs.

Base: A.R. 15, S.D.C. 250 (-15% to Physical skills due to weight/bulk).

Adding Trauma Plates: A.R. +4, S.D.C. +125 (-10% to Physical skills due to weight/bulk).

Adding Neck Guard: A.R. +2, S.D.C. +25 (-5% to Physical skills due to weight/bulk in addition to Base/Trauma plates).

Additional Components

Combat Helmet: A.R. +2, S.D.C. +50 (-5% to Physical skills due to weight/bulk in addition to Base/Trauma plates/Neck guard).

Note: Yes, a fully equipped tactical suit with helmet will give the Player Character an A.R. of 23. Using this new system adds trauma (fully explained below), which negates some of what may seem a super-high A.R. Also, with bonuses, it is possible for the attack against the character to be above the 23. Natural 20s still always hit (unless another Natural 20 is rolled as a dodge or parry), and do damage straight to S.D.C. and/or Hit Points.

Combat Shield: S.D.C. 250. Has a “window” to look through that is about 4 inches (10 cm) tall and 18 inches (46 cm) across.

Notes on shield tactics: The -10 to parry with a shield from guns/modern firearms is sometimes misunderstood. If the attacker fires a gun and the defender then tries to parry with a shield, then yes, a -10 is applied to the parry roll as it is a reaction. What players sometimes forget is that Palladium Books has a very good system explained for cover. If the defender is using the shield actively for protection (already holding it between himself and his attacker) and keeping behind it, then the attacker must use the rules for cover, as it is very likely the shield will be hit. The S.D.C. of the shield in this case will be depleted by the attack against it, but there is no parry roll involved, as it is being used *as cover*. Shooting from this position is possible (the modern shields are designed for this), and is not quite considered shooting wild (only a -3 to strike with a handgun).

K-9 Armor: Yes, there is actually doggy armor used by both law enforcement and the military. Think about it. We humans are empathetic and emotional people and want our loyal friends who are used against violent criminals with guns and who are used to sniff out bombs, etc., to be protected, too. Not to mention that any canine that sees police or military service is a highly trained, valuable asset worth protecting. A.R. 12, S.D.C. 100.

Modern Armor Notes

For modern combat armor, the design of the “base” being fibrous material basically prevents it from being repaired. As the fibers are damaged, the very integrity of the armor is diminished. Fibrous trauma plates have the same properties, and even solid trauma plates weaken with damage and it is better to completely replace the plates than to try to repair them. But since the trauma plates are removable, damaged trauma plates can be taken out and new ones put back in, while the base armor is unaffected. A quick and simple way to do this within the game mechanics is to subtract damage first from “add-ons.” When the S.D.C. of the add-ons are depleted, drop the bonus A.R. The add-ons should be affected by damage in this order: Neck Guard, Trauma Plates, Helmet. Lastly, the base armor will be affected. If the base armor is damaged, but not useless, the Player Character may want to just add trauma plates (and maybe a Neck Guard) without getting a new base piece. This system is simpler than trying to figure out exactly which part of the armor is hit and which is not, similar to how the Main Body is always considered to be hit unless a Called Shot is made with M.D.C. combat.

Player Characters with occupations like police detective, private detective, and such would be able to start with Concealed Armor. Law enforcement occupations like actual street/beat cops will probably start with Uniform Armor. In cases where they are

responding specifically to crimes (such that they were at the police station when the crime was reported), they could grab External Carrier Armor. Military soldiers would have access to External Carrier Armor or Tactical Armor, depending on the situation. Members of the SWAT Team would actually have an assigned set of full Tactical Armor.

Real life situation: The police went to a house to arrest a person who had an outstanding warrant. They were met by shots from a hunting rifle (.30-30). An off-duty SWAT team member, driving around, heard about the situation on his police radio. This officer then drove to the crime. He luckily had a set of full Tactical Armor in his trunk. Even though there were higher ranking police officers at the scene, he was the first SWAT member to arrive and due to the situation (his specialty), was put in charge. He put on his gear and coordinated with the other officers to break the door down. In his heavy Tactical Armor, he was first to enter and took a shot to the middle of his chest. It knocked him down, but he kept consciousness and fired back at the criminal, who was not wearing armor. His first shot blew through the criminal's elbow, basically cutting off his lower arm. A couple more shots and the criminal was immobilized. The SWAT trooper lived with very minimal trauma.

Later, the armor was sent to the crime lab for processing. (G.M.s, be sure to understand that things used at a crime scene, even if police equipment used lawfully by law enforcement, will be collected and sent for forensic processing. The characters won't be able to just keep it, although they may be issued new gear depending on if the altercation was favorable or not to their images.) In front of the top officers of the Highway Patrol, my brother examined the armor. They took out the trauma plate and looked at the hole underneath it. The trauma plate was at a lower class of protection than a .30-30, so he looked at the hole in the base armor first. When he did not find the bullet in the hole, he looked back at the trauma plate. The bullet had been caught and held in the plate and the *force* of the shot still made a hole in the base armor. The trauma plate performed higher than its class rating, and an officer's life was saved because of it.

Simulating Trauma by Having Damage Bypass Armor

I wanted a rule to simulate that a person can take damage, even if the armor is hit. This can add to the "scary" factor of a BTS-2 game. If the characters take damage even when their armor is hit, they will probably come up with better ways to fight against the supernatural than to just charge in with guns blazing. As the rule stands, a successful attack either hits the character or the armor. If it hits the armor, and the attack does not completely deplete the S.D.C., then the character takes no damage. In BTS-2, I want the Player Characters to have a little more fear of combat. What I propose is using the armor's A.R. as not only the "to hit" number but as a base amount of points that can be absorbed or "soaked" before the character experiences harm to his body. If the character gets hit by a solid whack to the chest with a mace, it should still cause some bruising and possible internal damage, even if the character is wearing armor. It is quite simple to write down a "soak" number next to the A.R. for reference.

Ancient armor should have an absorption of 1.5x the A.R.

Sports protective gear should have an absorption *equal to* the A.R.

Modern armor should have an absorption of 2x the A.R.

Mystical armor should have an absorption of 2.5x the A.R.

Ancient Armor example:

Chain Armor of A.R. 13 and 150 S.D.C. If the roll to strike is 1-4, he is missed as normal (1-8 if it was a ranged attack). If the roll was 14 or greater, the character would take full damage. If the roll to strike was 5-13 (or 9-13, if ranged), then the armor would absorb the first 19 points of damage ($13 \times 1.5 = 19.5$, round down to 19). The rest would be subtracted from the Player Character's own S.D.C. or Hit Points. So, if the roll was a 12 and damage was 10, then 10 points would be subtracted from the armor (its S.D.C. would be lowered to 140) and the Player Character would not take any damage, as all 10 points of damage were absorbed by the armor. If the damage was 20, the first 19 points would be taken from the armor (its S.D.C. would be 131) and the remaining 1 point would be taken from the character's own S.D.C., or Hit Points if the character was out of S.D.C. This adds more danger to a game that is about horror, and thus I think is appropriate.

Sports Protective Gear example:

Sports Protective Gear uses the A.R. number itself as absorption. So if a football player in gear and helmet was hit for 25 points of damage, the first 12 points would be taken from the 100 S.D.C. of the gear and the remaining 13 points would be taken by the character himself as S.D.C./Hit Point damage.

Modern Armor example:

Let us take a character wearing modern Exterior Carrier Armor and trauma plates, with an A.R. of 15 and S.D.C. 250. If 40 points of damage is done, then the armor would absorb 30 points of S.D.C. damage, as the A.R. $\times 2$ is 30. The remaining 10 points would be subtracted from the Player Character's own S.D.C. or Hit Points. Remember, if the damage done is still within the S.D.C. provided by trauma plates, a neck guard, etc., the base armor does not have to be replaced. New trauma plates/neck guards can be added to the old base armor with no penalties. Again, this is not perfectly realistic (as seen in the above real life example), but good enough realistically for a game rule.

Mystical Armor example:

"Mystical," to me, means anything "supernatural," as in not normal or mundane. So magic, psychic powers, etc., that give A.R. and S.D.C. would have a 2.5x absorption for trauma. So an Armor of Ithan spell with A.R. of 18 and 180 S.D.C. would be able to absorb 45 points of damage before the person protected would take Hit Points or personal S.D.C. points of damage. If a creature hit him for 60 points of damage, the Armor of Ithan spell would have its S.D.C. reduced to 135, and the Player Character himself would take 15 points of damage to S.D.C./Hit Points.

Trauma Rules for M.D.C. Settings

If the G.M. wants, he can even use a variation of the above rule for **Rifts**® or other games with M.D.C. If you are like me, you think characters should be a little bruised with M.D. attacks, even in armor. And maybe you want a middle ground between characters automatically dying when that last M.D.C. point is gone, and the last M.D.C. point absorbing the rest of the blast isn't so great to your thinking either. I offer you this:

Rule 1: In addition to the rules for taking damage in M.D.C. armor by falls and explosive blasts (see **Rifts**® **Ultimate Edition**, pages 355-356), the character should take 1 point of S.D.C.

damage, while in personal body armor, for each 10 points of M.D. done to the armor. This S.D.C. damage is from bruising/impact damage from projectiles and from burns from laser and plasma attacks (the armor super heats at the hit location, and even with padding/cooling systems it causes the skin to blister in 2nd or 3rd degree burns (this way the G.M. and players can enjoy the game without spending time figuring out what the attack's form was). For those in power armor, 1 point of S.D.C. damage is taken for every 50 M.D. done. Those in giant robots are not affected.

Rule 2: If the armor takes more M.D. than it has in M.D.C., then the damage over this number becomes S.D.C./Hit Point damage and is transferred to the character. In this way, the character might survive, but is not going to be unharmed or just unconscious. So if the character's armor has 1 M.D.C. left and he takes 180 M.D. from a Boom Gun blast, he is still going to take

18 points from the hit on the armor alone (see *Rule 1*), **PLUS** another 179 points from the damage above the armor's M.D.C., which would be 197 S.D.C. damage. This is probably enough to still kill the character. If he had been hit with a rifle for 24 M.D., he would take 2 (*Rule 1*) + 23 (*Rule 2*) = 25 S.D.C. points of damage, which he might live through, but it would still hurt. If the damage goes negative, but not past the P.E. number below zero, see which part of the body was hit. That limb/part was blown off, and immediate medical attention is needed; use the rules as presented in **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 359.

I hope these additions to the BTS-2 "mundane factor" give you G.M.s and players some spice and flavor to your games, and make them more fun and challenging.

Wolf Blood

Optional Source Material for Rifts®

By Shawn Arbuckle

When the world was still young, before humans would rise to dominate the earth, there lived a race of tribal humans known as the Vager. Magic was a potent force then, and it would be wielded by a long dead god to form the *Vulbund*, or the Binding, between man and beast. This ancient god, whose name has long since been lost to time and history, forged the Vulbund between chosen Vager and wolves. On their own, each had formidable strength and power. When they were joined in the Vulbund however, a greater whole was formed. The reasons for creating the Vulbund have been lost with its creator, but what was set in motion in those ancient days would develop a life of its own and continue to bless or curse chosen Vager. In time, the matched wolf and warrior came to be known as the Vulbund by those who did not understand the force linking the two. They saw in the Vager a fierce nature mirrored in the wolf. "Vager" simply refers to half of the bond, while the wolf is simply known as the wolf.

With the decline of magic, the Vulbund would slip into the shadows, surfacing only on rare occasions. Few of the Vager existed during the Golden Age, and those who were blessed chose to remain in hiding until the time came when the Vulbund would again rise. Their creator was lost with the decline of magic, leaving the Vulbund without a patron. However, the Coming of the Rifts would breathe new life into the Vulbund. With the return of magic and the dominance of man shattered, the Vager were free to roam the land once more, and their numbers have greatly increased in the last three centuries.

Exactly how the Vulbund survived the decline of magic and the intervening Golden Age is unknown. Today, the Vager do not have any formal organization, preferring solitude or living in packs. Perhaps during the Golden Age of mankind, solitude is all that preserved the Vulbund and the Wolf Blood. When a Vager is chosen, he simply knows to seek out his companion. Such quests can last for years, and once the Vulbund is formed, the chosen is given something most people will never know. Every Vulbund is between a Vager and a wolf, but not necessarily an ordinary Earth wolf. With the Coming of the Rifts, rare Vager have discovered themselves destined to be joined with otherworldly variations of

wolves, including monsters like the Dragon Wolf, and even the Fenry Demon Wolf. That said, the vast majority of Vulbund are formed with ordinary wolves.

Once formed, the Vulbund cannot be broken, the Vager and the wolf become one in body, mind and spirit. Their minds are linked, and each can easily read the other's thoughts. Their spirits are joined, and magical energy flows freely between them. Their bodies are one, and each knows when the other is wounded. As one being, the life force of each is tied to together, thus blessing them with long life and good health. While the Vulbund can be a great burden to bear, the benefits can easily outweigh the hardships. Between the wolf and the Vager there is now a link, the wolf and the Vager are now brothers in a sense, and each brings something to the Vulbund. The wolf grants the Vager access to his animalistic instincts, and the Vager grants the wolf a higher level of understanding.

Each Vulbund is connected by a link much more than that of a master and his pet. None can access the Vulbund willingly, however each can sense the will of the Vulbund. Rumors suggest that the eldest of the Vager may come and go within the unconscious, and even stranger still are the rumors that suggest some of the Vager have merged completely with the unconscious, and exist only as energy.

With no patron it would seem the Vulbund has no purpose, or perhaps the purpose of the Vulbund has simply changed, and now exists to create a new being. In some ways, the Vulbund takes the best of both and creates a greater whole. Neither half is complete until they find the other half of their Vulbund. Exactly how the members of a particular Vulbund are chosen is unknown, and one cannot simply choose who the Bond will pair them with. Many powerful beings and gods have attempted to control the Vulbund since their arrival on Earth, but only the Vulbund will choose a master; such is the nature of the beast. Were he of a mind to do so, only the Great Wolf Fenrir could command the Vulbund, however in his madness the Great Wolf is in no condition to command anyone. If the Great Wolf were to free himself, he would have an army of followers on Earth. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, the presence of the Vulbund is stabilizing the mind of the Great Wolf, and as the Vulbund grows in strength the effect increases. Time is meaningless to such ageless beings however, and it is impossible to know how long the Great Wolf will be held in bondage. (For more information about Fenrir, see **Rifts® Conversion Book 2: Pantheons of the Megaverse®**, page 165.)

Until now we have only spoken of the Vager, but he is only half of the Vulbund. The wolf completes the bond, and gives as much as he receives. Like the Vager, the wolf does not know who he will be bound to, all he knows is to seek out his destiny. When the wolf finds the other half of his Vulbund, he gains various abilities as well. Both the Vager and the wolf can communicate telepathically, understanding each other completely. The wolf will also grow in intelligence and now has access to all the knowledge of the Vager and the Vulbund.

Vager Culture

*I find no comfort in the shade
Under the branch of the Great Ash.
I remember the mist
Of our ancient past.
As I speak to you in the present,
My ancient eyes
See the terrible future.*

*Do you not see what I see?
Do you not hear
Death approaching?*

*The mournful cry of the Great Spirit
Shall shatter the peace
And shake the Moon and the stars.*

*Raise up your banner
And gather your noble company
From your great hall,
Father of the Slain.
For you shall go to your destiny.*

*No knowledge can save you,
No magic will save you,
While heaven and earth will burn
When the Sun retires.*

Vager culture is strange thing. The Vager follow a mixture of Native American and Norse beliefs. The Great Spirit, or the creator called upon by the Native American tribes, may be the one who created the Vulbund in the first place. For a time the Vager revered the Great Spirit, however with the coming of the Rifts, the Vager turned their reverence to the Great Wolf Fenrir. Exactly why this occurred is unclear. It is possible that the Wolf Blood believe that Fenrir is the Great Spirit reborn.

When traveling, Vager can be found alone or in small groups, but not all Vager are travelers, and tribes (or packs, as they call themselves) have claimed territory in areas the world over, with packs ranging in size from twenty to thirty Vager. These packs often build dens on or near ley lines, claiming the surrounding lands as hunting grounds. Dens are reminiscent or those preferred by native Earth wolves, simply larger.

Ranks within the pack follow those of a typical wolf pack. Each pack is led by an Alpha Vager, each Alpha is chosen by his will to lead, and anyone may challenge the Alpha for leadership. If the challenger wins, the previous Alpha steps down a rank and allows the stronger to take his place. If the challenger fails, however, his rank is reduced to Omega, until he can prove his strength and determination to climb the ranks once more. Challenging the Alpha during battle, or when dealing with an immediate external threat, is forbidden. Such rules are generally ob-



served, and enforced, by the whole pack. Vager primarily form packs with like-minded individuals, so a Diabolic Wolf Blood is not likely to be found in a pack of Principled Vager.

Alpha: The Alpha is the most dominant and respected Vager of the pack. If the Alpha is not given the respect that he (or she) deserves, he will demand it, and if it comes to fighting, so be it; disrespect will not be tolerated. If the Alpha sees that another Vager is not getting respect that he deserves, then he will see to it that the disrespected Vager gets the respect that is due to him. The Alpha tries to know what has been going on between members of the pack and, moreover, between members of other packs; he tries to “keep up with the times.” The Alpha has the final say in all decisions, and it is his duty to do what is good for the pack. Even in personal decisions, he must do what is best for the pack. This includes hearing the opinions of all the others and making a decision based on all circumstances. The Alpha usually decides what goes on at any given time in a pack: hunting, exploring, meetings, etc. This is the most responsible and reliable Wolf Blood of the pack.

Betas: The Beta in a pack plays a very similar role to the Alpha. The Beta is usually looked upon as second in command, taking over while the Alpha is not present. He or she is able to make the same decisions and have the same amount of respect as the Alpha, and answers to no one but the Alpha. While the Alpha is present, the Beta is mostly used to settle minor disputes.

Elders: Elders of the pack are usually the oldest, wisest, and most experienced Vager in the pack. They are constantly looked to for advice, even by the Alpha and Beta. They are highly respected Vager, the Elders know the pack’s history and are often the storytellers. Their job is to keep records of all the recent events going on in the den, along with getting their hands on any pieces of art, poems, or stories a wolf might come up with and keeping a log of it for future reference, or just to keep as part of the heart of the pack.

Guardians: Guardians are a larger branch, usually consisting of several Wolf Blood. Their job is to watch over the den and the wolves in it, to greet visitors, and chase them away if there seems to be a threat. They are usually among the biggest, strongest, and most loyal Wolf Blood in the pack.

Hunters: Hunters are very similar to the Guardians, being among the largest and strongest Vager. These Vager have been given the job of hunting for food to feed the pack. Usually they bring along other pack members, acting as mentors, teaching them and helping them to hunt. This is one of the most valuable positions as these Vager keep the pack alive and healthy.

Shamans: The Shaman is a Vager who shows interest and skill in caring for weakened pack mates. Shamans of the pack ensure that when any wolf is wounded, he recovers properly, not putting too much stress on his wounds, resting, and treating injuries properly. They also watch over the older or ill Vager of the pack. They serve as doctors, and try to keep the pack in a healthy state. Shamans make sure that no Vager overexert themselves before, during, or after hunts.

Scouts: Scouts are responsible for warning the pack of dangerous territory outside the den, if there is any to be found. Scouts are the Vager best known by neighboring packs, and visit them often. They stay in touch with other packs and keep friendly relations. They are to report any important changes to the Alpha and Beta. These include the formation of a new pack, the presence of outsiders, or any unusual occurrence.

Pack Members: Not all Vager hold positions; some are either new additions to the pack or have not defined their abilities yet. The Alpha takes great care in selecting which position a Vager will be allowed to maintain. As the pack members spend time in the pack, their actions will dictate if they are to be advanced.

Omegas: Omegas of the pack are the lowest ranking Vager. An Omega is usually a Vager who is either very new to pack life and still learning, or a Vager who has been lowered in rank due to improper actions. They are usually given the responsibilities of “puppy-sitter,” watching over the cubs during group hunts and making sure they don’t wander into the forest. The Omega may even growl or nip at the learning pups, teaching them the Way of the Pack and their place within the hierarchy. Ironically, other adult wolves may growl or nip at the Omega in the same manner for the same reasons. What seems to be “bullying” is much more complicated than it appears. If a pack’s survival depends on the acceptance of hierarchy, then it is crucial to learn this well and early.

Motives

For the moment, the packs are gathering their strength, while roaming Vager collect information on the major events occurring in the world. When the Coalition States invaded Tolkeen, there was a flurry of activity among the packs. Scouts and wandering Vager were sent into the war zone in search of magical artifacts. Once the dust settled, the Vager were nowhere to be found, and if any artifacts were recovered there were no clues to suggest where they may have been spirited away to. The ultimate goal of the Vager and the Vulbund is currently the release of Fenrir, so to that end, Vager have been actively seeking anything of great magical power that may aid them in their quest.

Notable Packs

Wildoak

Alpha: Fakari.

Pack Size: 30 Vager, plus numerous lesser packs.

Alignment Breakdown: Principled: 25%, Scrupulous: 25%, Unprincipled: 25%, Anarchist: 20%, Other: 5%.

The Wildoak pack is active throughout the Allegheny Mountains, claiming the entirety of the Shenandoah Valley as their own. Several smaller packs have gathered in the valley at the behest of the Wildoak Alpha, Fakari. Such a gathering of packs has not been seen for two hundred years, and can only mean something important is about to happen. Thus far the Wildoak pack has made no aggressive moves, but with so many Wolf Blood gathered in once place, the locals are getting nervous.

Fakari Quick Stats: Race: Human. Level of Experience: 8th level Vager. Alignment: Unprincipled. Attributes: I.Q. 25, M.E. 20, M.A. 22, P.S. 25, P.P. 23, P.E. 24, P.B. 20, Spd 30.

Indu Quick Stats: Race: Dragon Wolf. Level of Experience: 6th level Dragon Wolf. Alignment: Unprincipled. Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 20, M.A. 18, P.S. 25, P.P. 20, P.E. 25, P.B. 20, Spd 24 running, 106 flying. M.D.C. 240.

Woodtalon

Alpha: Tharo.

Pack Size: 30 Vager, plus numerous lesser packs.

Alignment Breakdown: Principled: 30%, Scrupulous: 30%, Unprincipled: 30%, Other: 10%.

The Woodtalon pack, led by the Alpha Tharo, operates throughout the Rockies, and like their cousins the Wildoak, the Woodtalon have begun to gather numerous small packs within their territories. So far, the Woodtalon pack has managed to go unnoticed by any major powers, but how long that will last, as they continue to gather lesser packs, is unknown.

Tharo Quick Stats: Race: Human. Level of Experience: 8th level Vager. Alignment: Principled. Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 20, M.A. 22, P.S. 25, P.P. 23, P.E. 22, P.B. 20, Spd 25.

Bathar Quick Stats: Race: Phantom Wolf. Level of Experience: 6th level Phantom Wolf. Alignment: Principled. Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 16, M.A. 22, P.S. 30, P.P. 25, P.E. 26, P.B. 18, Spd 120. M.D.C. 289.

Greenclaw

Alpha: Hauru.

Pack Size: 30 Vager, plus numerous lesser packs.

Alignment Breakdown: Unprincipled: 25%, Anarchist: 20%, Aberrant: 25%, Miscreant: 20%, Other: 10%.

The Greenclaw pack has recently abandoned a den near Tolkeen and had been moving west towards the Rockies. It is possible that Hauru simply wished to avoid a possible confrontation with the Coalition, however with the gathering of so many packs in the east and the west, the timing seems unlikely to be a coincidence.

Hauru Quick Stats: Race: Human. Level of Experience: 7th level Vager. Alignment: Aberrant. Attributes: I.Q. 20, M.E. 20, M.A. 22, P.S. 26, P.P. 24, P.E. 25, P.B. 18, Spd 25.

Thaura Quick Stats: Race: Fenry Demon Wolf. Level of Experience: 6th level Demon Wolf. Alignment: Aberrant. Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 20, M.A. 20, P.S. 35, P.P. 25, P.E. 30, P.B. 10, Spd 160. M.D.C. 200.

Vulbund O.C.C.

Special O.C.C. Abilities of the Wolf:

1. Enhancements: Bonding with the Vager through the Vulbund grants the wolf enhancements to his or her physical and mental abilities. The wolf will benefit from a 1D4+2 bonus to each of his or her stats automatically.

2. I.S.P.: Roll 3D6+6 plus the wolf's M.E. to determine base Inner Strength Points. Vulbund wolves are considered Major Psychics, and earn another 1D6+1 I.S.P. per level of experience.

Special O.C.C. Abilities of Vager:

1. Enhancements: With the formation of the Vulbund, the Vager may choose to expend a portion of his I.S.P. permanently to enhance his body or develop other special abilities.

2. I.S.P.: Roll 5D6+6 plus the character's M.E. to determine base Inner Strength Points. Vager are considered Major Psychics, and earn another 1D6+1 I.S.P. per level of experience.

3. Psi-Daggers: The Vager may summon two Psi-Daggers with a small amount of concentration. The Vulbund may freely choose the color and style of the daggers.

Duration: Five minutes per level of Vulbund.

Damage: 1D4 M.D. at first level, plus an additional 1D4 M.D. at levels four, eight and twelve.

I.S.P.: Eight.

4. Psi-Weapon: At third level, the Vager is able to summon a Psi-Weapon. The first time the weapon is summoned, a form and color must be chosen; it cannot be changed after this. The Psi-Weapon may not have any moving parts, such as guns or bows, but any color is possible.

Duration: 5 minutes per level of experience.

Damage: 4D6 M.D.

I.S.P.: Thirty.

Alignment: Most Vager tend to be selfish alignments, however any alignment is possible.

Attribute Requirements: None.

O.C.C. Skills:

Language: Native tongue at 94%.

Language: Other: One of choice (+15%).

Athletics (General)

Cooking (+15%)

Climbing (+20%)

Fishing (+15%)

Horsemanship: General (+20%)

Identify Fruits and Plants (+20%)

Hunting

Land Navigation (+20%)

Prowl (+15%)

Track Animals (+20%)

W.P. Knife

W.P.: Three of choice.

Hand to Hand: Expert

Hand to Hand: Expert can be changed to Hand to Hand: Martial Arts or Assassin (if evil) at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill.

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select two Physical skills, one Wilderness skill and six other skills, +1 at levels 2, 5, 8, 11, and 14. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communication: Barter, Language (any; +10%), Literacy (any), Performance and public speaking only.

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics only.

Espionage: Any (+10%), except Forgery and Pick Locks.

Horsemanship: Exotic Animals only.

Mechanical: Automotive only.

Medical: First Aid (+10%) and Holistic Medicine only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any, except robots, power armor, military or large, noisy vehicles.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Gambling, Imitate Voices & Sounds, and Tailing only (+5%).

Science: Math: Basic, Anthropology, Biology, and Botany only.

Technical: Any (+5% to most; a +15% bonus applies only to Breed Dogs, Lore (any) and Rope Works).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+20%).

Secondary Skills: Select four Secondary Skills from the Secondary Skills list on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than any possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base skill level.

Standard Equipment: One weapon for each W.P. and a suit of light M.D. Armor.

Money: A selection of items worth 1D6x1000 credits.

Cybernetics: None, the Vager will reject any cybernetics.

Habitat: Anywhere, but mostly places where wolves are found.

Vager Enhancements

The very nature of the Vulbund is adaptation and growth, thus the Vager is able to enhance his body through the expenditure of his I.S.P. Once this I.S.P. is spent, it can never be regained. The Vager still earns I.S.P. as he levels, but his base I.S.P. is permanently reduced. A Vager cannot simply manifest new abilities, however. He must meditate for no less than twenty-four hours, over which time the Vager's I.S.P. is slowly absorbed into his body as the Vulbund changes him. Because the Vulbund links a man and a wolf, some changes may also affect the wolf.

Alpha and Omega: If a Vager with this enhancement encounters any wolves, the wolves will respect his rank and authority. However, they may feel the need to teach him something (the nature of the lesson is left to the G.M.'s discretion). The lesson will often take the form of taunting and teasing. Yet whatever the wolves' view of the Vager, they will never attack him. This enhancement protects him from native Earth wolves as well as those that may have come through a Rift.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 6 I.S.P. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Ears of the Wolf: The Vager's ears are permanently changed to those of a wolf, complete with the muscles required to control his new ears. This means the Vager is able to tilt, rotate, raise or lower his ears. The Vager can identify a sound's location much faster than a normal human can, as well as hear sounds at four times the distance.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 15 I.S.P. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Enhanced I.Q.: The Vager is able to increase his I.Q. by 2 points each time this enhancement is taken. For two additional points of I.S.P., the wolf may also benefit from this enhancement.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 4 I.S.P., 6 I.S.P. including the wolf. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Enhanced M.E.: The Vager is able to increase his M.E. by 2 points each time this enhancement is taken. For two additional points of I.S.P., the wolf may also benefit from this enhancement.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 4 I.S.P., 6 I.S.P. including the wolf. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Enhanced M.A.: The Vager is able to increase his M.A. by 2 points each time this enhancement is taken. For two additional points of I.S.P. the wolf may also benefit from this enhancement.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 4 I.S.P., 6 I.S.P. including the wolf. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Enhanced P.S.: The Vager is able to increase his P.S. by 2 points each time this enhancement is taken. For two additional points of I.S.P. the wolf may also benefit from this enhancement.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 4 I.S.P., 6 I.S.P. including the wolf. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Enhanced P.P.: The Vager is able to increase his P.P. by 2 points each time this enhancement is taken. For two additional

points of I.S.P. the wolf may also benefit from this enhancement.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 4 I.S.P., 6 I.S.P. including the wolf. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Enhanced P.E.: The Vager is able to increase his P.E. by 2 points each time this enhancement is taken. For two additional points of I.S.P. the wolf may also benefit from this enhancement.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 4 I.S.P., 6 I.S.P. including the wolf. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Enhanced P.B.: The Vager is able to increase his P.B. by 2 points each time this enhancement is taken. For two additional points of I.S.P. the wolf may also benefit from this enhancement.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 4 I.S.P., 6 I.S.P. including the wolf. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Keen Sense of Hearing: With this ability the Vager improves his hearing ability. He is now able to register sounds of 35,000 vibrations per second compared to the normal human range of 20,000.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 6 I.S.P. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Gift of Nature: A highly coveted ability, the Vager develops the ability to regenerate wounds. With this ability the Vager will regenerate 1D8 S.D.C./Hit Points or M.D.C. per minute. If the Wolf already has a regenerative ability, he gains an extra 1D6 to supplement his regeneration.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 15 I.S.P., 30 I.S.P. including the wolf. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Supernatural: This ability changes the Vager into a supernatural creature, at the cost of ten points, and the wolf may also benefit from this enhancement for six extra points. While this enhancement *does not* make the Vulbund's attributes supernatural, it does mean that their physical attacks will harm vampires and other such creatures who are vulnerable to ordinary attacks.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 10 I.S.P., 16 I.S.P. if the wolf is included. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Voice of the Wolf: Vager with this ability can understand and communicate with wolves and each other with various howls. Howls can be a warning, a greeting, or anything in between. Howls are especially useful for rallying the pack or warning of danger.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 4 P.P.E. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Weapon Improvement 1st Level: With the expenditure of 2 I.S.P. the Vager's Psi-Weapon damage is improved by 1D6 M.D. This first level of improvement must be taken before the second level may be selected.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 2 I.S.P. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Weapon Improvement 2nd Level: With the expenditure of 4 I.S.P. the Vager's Psi-Weapon damage is improved by an additional 1D6 M.D. The first level of improvement must be taken before this level may be selected.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 4 I.S.P. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Weapon Improvement 3rd Level: With the expenditure of 6 I.S.P. the Vager's Psi-Weapon damage is improved by an addi-

tional 1D6 M.D. The second level of improvement must be taken before this level may be selected.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 6 I.S.P. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Weapon Improvement 4th Level: With the expenditure of 8 I.S.P. the Vager's Psi-Weapon damage is improved by an additional 1D6 M.D. The third level of improvement must be taken before this level may be selected.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 8 I.S.P. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Weapon Improvement 5th Level: With the expenditure of 10 I.S.P. the Vager's Psi-Weapon damage is improved by an additional 1D6 M.D. The fourth level of improvement must be taken before this level may be selected.

Duration: Permanent.

Cost: 10 I.S.P. Permanent I.S.P. cost.

Vager Psionics

While Vager Enhancements, above, are permanent changes to the Vager (and sometimes the wolf as well), these Vager Psionics produce temporary effects, and their I.S.P. costs are *not* permanent. They function just like normal psionic abilities.

Bestial Rage: With this ability, the Vager's rage expresses itself as the Vager assumes a form crossed between a man and a wolf. While in this form, the Vager gains temporary boosts to his stats: P.S. +10, P.P. +8, P.E. +8. His claws and bites will inflict 1D4 Mega-Damage.

Duration: Five minutes per level of Vager.

Cost: 15 I.S.P.

Claws & Fangs: The Vager's fingers extend and grow into vicious claws. In addition, the Wolf Blood's teeth grow into sharp points and extend like those of a wolf. Claws and bites will inflict 1D4 M.D.

Duration: Five minutes per level of Vager.

Cost: 8 P.P.E.

M.D.C. Creature: By expending 6 I.S.P., the Vager is able to transform himself and his wolf into Mega-Damage creatures. Base M.D.C. is 3D6x10 plus 2D6 per level of experience. If the Vulbund and/or his wolf are already Mega-Damage creatures, they gain 1D6 M.D.C. per level.

Duration: Five minutes per level of Vager.

Cost: 15 I.S.P.

Shape of the Beast: With this ability the Vager may assume the form of his companion wolf. This ability will grant the Wolf Blood the same speed, size and shape, but no other abilities are available. Wolf Blood Scouts often use this ability in their line of work.

Duration: Five minutes per level of Vager.

Cost: 8 I.S.P.

Rifts® Triax™ 2

Weapons Locker

“Official” Supplemental Material for Rifts® Triax™ 2

By Brandon K. Aten and Kevin Siembieda

As the Gargoyle War rages on, the researchers in the Triax Research Complexes continue to produce new and experimental weapons. Some are immediately added to the NGR's weapons armory, others are speciality items with limited capabilities and use, and some are entirely experimental. Weapons that don't make the grade may end up being wholesaled out as army surplus and discontinued, or produced and sold to foreign markets. One of the most prevalent requests by NGR troops is for weapons that are sturdy, dependable, and which offer more flexibility on the field of battle. This has led to new *multi-functional weapons* and *modular designs*, as well as *attachments* for existing weapons. For example, the many interchangeable combat systems for the X-535 Jaeger make it one of the most versatile weapons platforms deployed by any army. Similar applications are being considered and apply to power armor troops, cyborg soldiers, and special forces. Continuing research and weapons development extrapolated from existing technologies like the Pump Rounds, and collaborative efforts between its CS and Free Quebec allies, have kept Triax Industries coming up with improvements and innovations on a regular basis.

The following pages contain some of these additional and experimental military technologies. G.M.s may allow them in their games as special weapons, experimental weapons, or even unsuccessful weapon systems that have been dumped on the secondary market to freelance mercenaries, bandits and foreign buyers hungry for anything with the Triax brand name on it.

New Triax Weapons

TX-2 Pump Round Derringer

The TX-2 looks like a classic derringer from the American Old West with a single barrel. It is barely more than a snub-nosed barrel with a stubby handle and a trigger. As a derringer style weapon, it is designed for easy concealment on the body and is small enough to fit in the palm of the hand without being noticed. The fact that it can fire one “pump pistol” round gives the one-shot weapon a wallop when it comes to damage.

Weight: 2 pounds (0.9 kg).

Range: 120 feet (36.6 m).

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. per round.

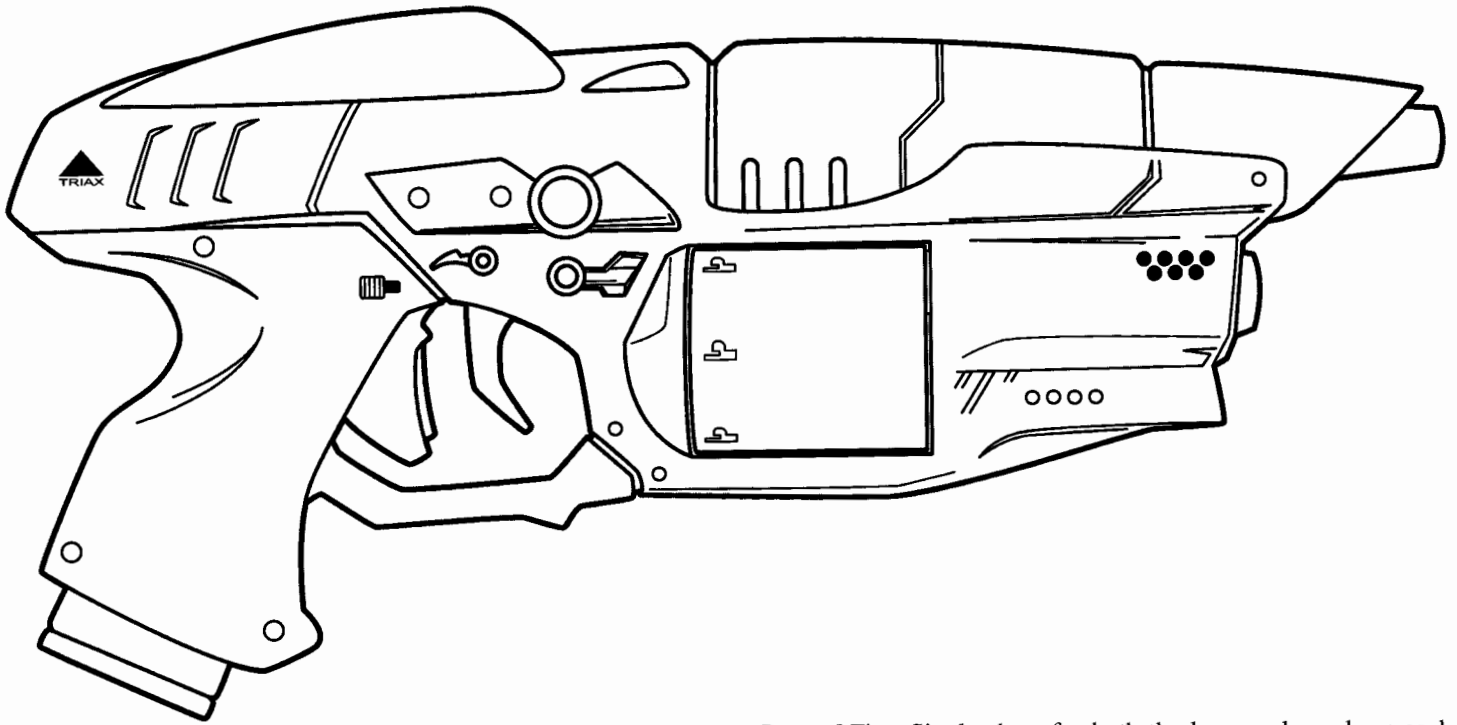
Rate of Fire: Single shot only.

Payload: One round. Can be reloaded by hand but uses up three melee attacks; only one melee attack/action to reload by any Man at Arms O.C.C. of second level experience or greater.

Bonus: The weapon's small size provides a +5% skill bonus to the Palming and Concealment skills to conceal it.

Penalty: -1 to strike, even on an Aimed or Called Shot.

Cost: 8,000 credits, due in part to its concealability.



TX-7 Police Special, Hybrid Pistol

The TX-7 is a combination high-powered laser pistol and revolver. Under the long barrel of the laser is the shorter barrel of the revolver. Right in front of the trigger guard is the ammunition cylinder of the revolver. It holds six, heavy S.D.C. rounds, making the weapon suitable for Mega-Damage and S.D.C. encounters. This weapon was developed for the military police forces as a replacement for the TX-20 Laser Pistol, but has met with mixed reaction – some people love it, others hate it. The weapon has been adopted as a field side arm for some special forces soldiers and commandos.

Weight: 3.6 pounds (1.6 kg).

Range: Laser: 800 feet (244 m). Revolver (S.D.C.): 300 feet (91.5 m).

Mega-Damage: 2D6+2 M.D. per laser blast or 6D6 S.D.C. per revolver round.

Rate of Fire: Single shots for both the laser and revolver; each blast counts as one melee attack.

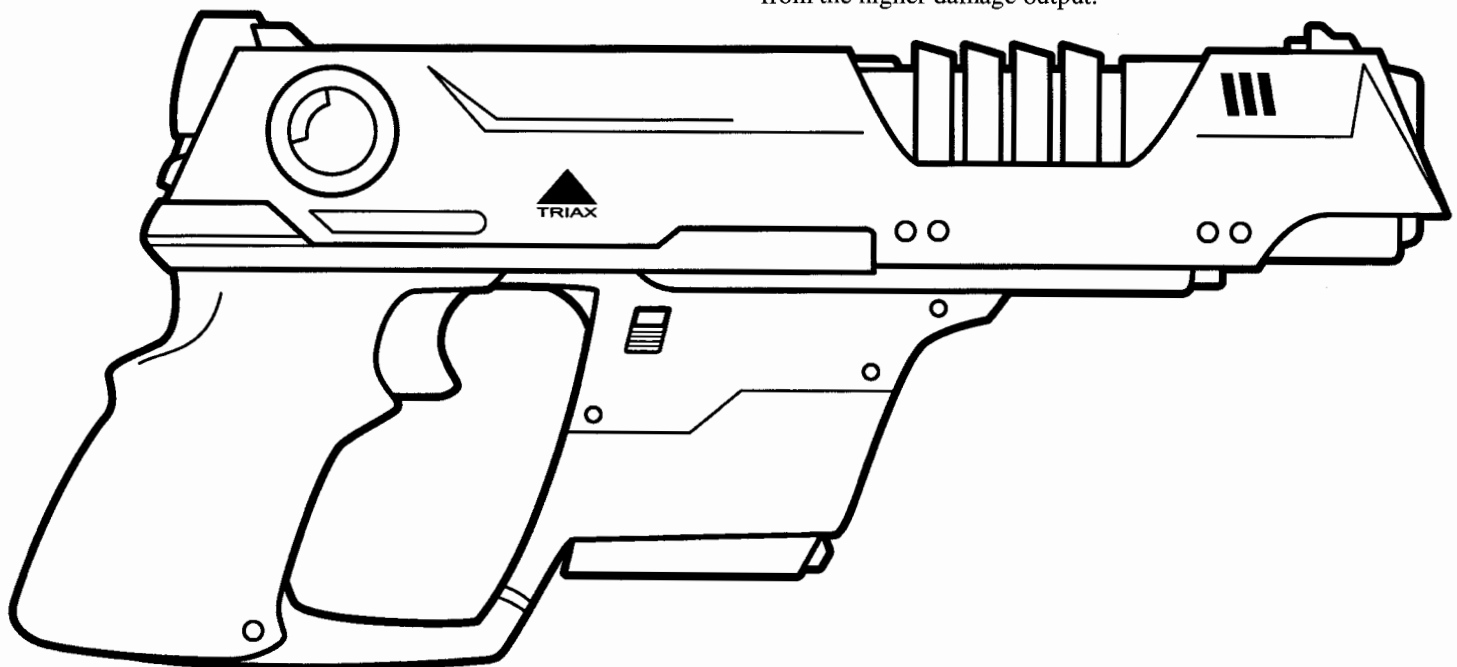
Limitation: The two weapons can not be fired simultaneously.

Payload: Laser: 18 shots per standard E-Clip. Revolver: Six rounds. The revolver can be reloaded at a rate of one bullet per melee action, or reloaded in two actions using a special speed loader.

Cost: 18,000 credits.

TX-25Q Ion Pistol

The TX-25 is effectively the NGR designation for the Q1-02 “Stopper” Ion Pistol used by the forces of Free Quebec, but increasing its range has caused the damage output to suffer. The TX-25Q is an exact replication of the Q1-02 complete with abysmal range, but still packing a punch. It looks almost exactly like the TX-25 with a slightly thicker barrel for additional insulation from the higher damage output.



Weight: 4.5 pounds (2 kg).
Range: 400 feet (122 m).
Mega-Damage: 4D6+4 M.D. per blast.
Rate of Fire: Single shots only.
Payload: 12 shots per standard E-Clip or 24 shots per long E-Clip.
Cost: 26,000 credits.

TX-144 Assault Pulse Laser & Grenade Launcher Rifle

The weapon combines a pulse laser and grenade launcher. It is quickly becoming one of the favorite standard infantry rifles in the NGR arsenal.

Weight: 12 pounds (5.4 kg).
Range: Laser: 2,000 feet (610 m), Grenade: 1,200 feet (365 m).
Mega-Damage: 2D6+2 M.D. per single laser blast or 6D6 M.D. per three shot pulse. Damage varies by grenade. Any Triax grenade can be used.
Rate of Fire: Single shots or three shot pulses for the laser, or one at a time for grenades.
Payload: 24 single shots (8 triple pulses), and 12 grenades.
Cost: 55,000 credits.

TX-146 Rotary Grenade Launcher

Think double-barreled shotgun, only it is one large barrel with a large rotary drum in front of the trigger. Special forces, cyborgs and power armor troops love it for clearing out Gargoyle nests.

Weight: 34 pounds (15.3 kg).
Range: 1,000 feet (305 m).
Mega-Damage: Any Triax grenade can be used.
Rate of Fire: One at a time or in rapid-fire volleys of two or four grenades at the same target.
Payload: 32 grenades in a large, drum-like cylinder.
Penalty: -3 to strike penalty if the shooter's physical strength is less than 23; -7 if fired one-handed. This penalty is not applicable to characters with Augmented (bionic) P.S. of 17 or greater, or Robotic P.S. of any kind. Must have a Robotic P.S. of 24 or greater to fire as a one-handed weapon at half the usual penalty (round down).
Cost: 50,000 credits.

TX-223 Pulse Laser (Giant Size)

Designed for large Power Armor & Robots

The TX-223 is powerful pulse laser designed as an assault weapon for power armor and robot troops that are 10-20 feet (3 to 6.1 m) tall. The weapon somewhat resembles the TX-222, only it has a longer, narrower barrel that provides superior range. The weapon is ideal for precision shooting with single shots and "hunting" Gargoyles, shooting them right out of the air.

Weight: 123 pounds (55.3 kg).
Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).
Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. per single shot or 1D6x10 M.D. per rapid-fire, triple pulse blast.
Rate of Fire: Each single shot or triple pulse blast counts as one melee attack. The burst is less accurate and cannot be used to make a Called Shot.
Payload: 45 bursts from the internal power supply. When connected to the robot or power armor, the internal power supply automatically recharges at a rate of one burst every 10 minutes. A giant, front sliding E-Clip can also be used; it holds 40 bursts. Effectively unlimited when hooked to the power supply of the robot or power armor suit.

Bonus: +1 to strike on an Aimed or Called Shot.

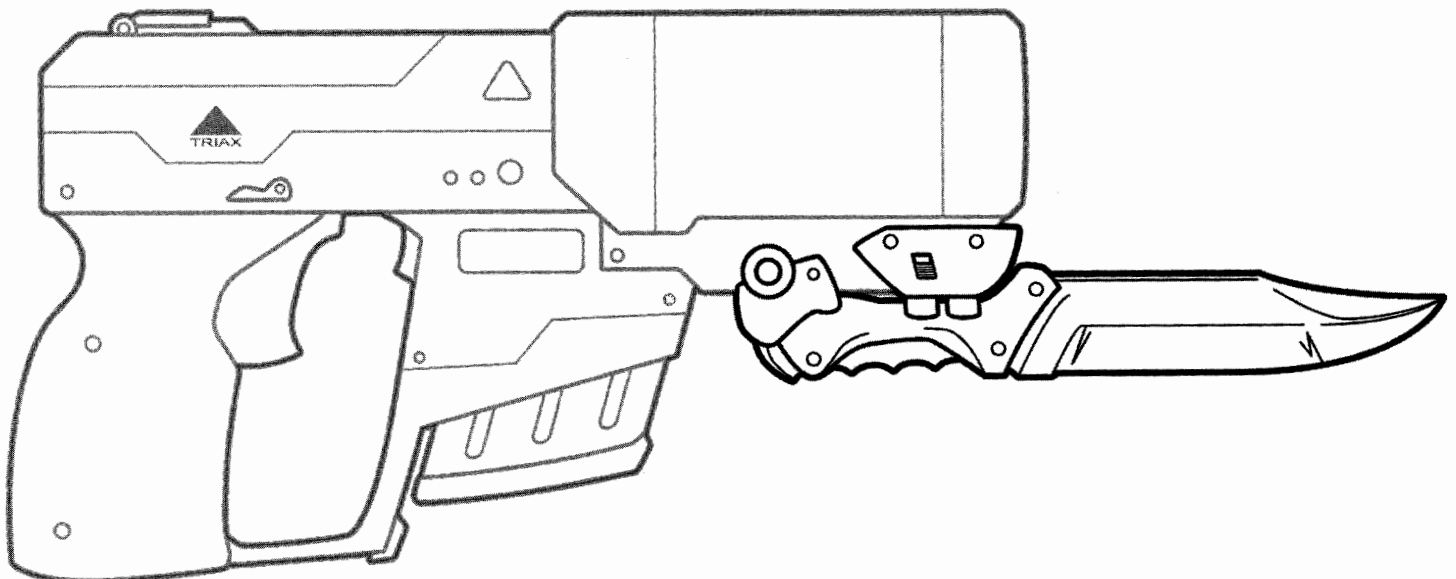
Cost: 180,000+ credits on the Black Market. This weapon is exclusive to the NGR Army and hard to find on the secondary market.

New Triax Weapon Attachments

Some Triax pistols and rifles are able to be modified with under-barrel attachments that serve a variety of purposes. Some are as mundane as a flashlight for use in dark areas, or laser targeting, while others give the weapon added firepower, like the under-barrel grenade launcher. Due to the use of the front-sliding E-Clips, not all Triax weapons can take advantage of the attachments. Those that can take an "under-barrel" attachment are listed below.

NGR Pistols

TX-6 Revolver



TX-20 "Short" Laser Pistol
TX-25 and TX-25Q Ion Pistols
TX-27 Particle Beam Pistol
WR-10 Wilderness Ion Pistol

NGR Rifles

TX-11 Sniper Laser Rifle
TX-17 Assault Rifle
WR-15 Wilderness Laser Rifle
WR-17 Wilderness "Double" Rifle
WR-19 Plasma Ejector

Vibro-Bayonet

A small Vibro-Blade can be mounted under the barrel of some pistols, or the front of most rifles. The Vibro-Bayonet is used to slash and stab an opponent in close melee combat. It can also be used to parry the claw attacks of Gargoyles as well as M.D. melee weapons.

Weight: 1 pound (0.45 kg).

Range: Hand to hand/close combat.

Mega-Damage: Pistol: 1D4 M.D. Rifle Bayonet: 2D4 M.D.

Cost: 5,000 credits for a pistol attachment, or 8,000 for a rifle attachment.

Double-Barrel

Pump Round Attachment

This attachment hooks under the barrel of large pistols or rifles. It can fire any type of pump round ammunition, in effect, giving the weapon the capabilities of an M.D. sawed-off shotgun. It is a favorite of NGR Military Police and special forces, as well as SWAT style civilian police and mercenaries. The "Pump Rounds" can be substituted with stun rounds or flash-bang rounds. Available as a pistol or rifle attachment.

Weight: 2 pounds (0.9 kg) for a pistol attachment or 4 pounds (1.8 kg) for a rifle attachment.

Range: Pistol: 140 feet (42.6 m). Rifle: 800 feet (244 m).

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D.; whether pistol or rifle, the weapon fires the same ammunition. The "Pump Rounds" can be substituted with stun rounds or flash-bang rounds; no physical damage.

Rate of Fire: Single shots only.

Payload: Three pump rounds for a pistol attachment. Seven shots for a rifle attachment.

Penalty: The attachment makes the weapon heavier and throws off the machined balance, particularly of pistols. As a result, the Pump Round (shotgun style) attachment imposes a -1 penalty to strike. No penalty for rifles or when both hands are used to support the weapon. -2 to strike additional penalty if the shooter's physical strength is less than 18 and he fires one-handed. Penalties are not applicable to characters with Augmented (bionic) or Robotic P.S.

Cost: 14,000 credits for pistol attachment or 10,000 for rifle attachment.

Grenade Launcher Attachment

The attachment hooks under the barrel of rifles and can fire any type of Triax rifle grenade, including smoke, stun rounds or flash-bang grenades. It is an attachment favored by front-line infantry troops and special forces. Suitable for rifles only.

Not available for pistols; rifle only.

Weight: 8 pounds (3.6 kg).

Range: 800 feet (244 m).

Mega-Damage: Any Triax grenade can be used.

Rate of Fire: One at a time.

Payload: Four grenades for a standard under-barrel attachment or 10 in a medium-sized, drum-like cylinder.

Penalty: -1 to strike penalty if the shooter's Physical Strength is less than 18; -3 if fired one-handed. This penalty is not applicable to characters with Augmented (bionic) or Robotic P.S. of any kind. Must have an ordinary P.S. of 25 or greater to fire as a one-handed weapon without penalty.

Cost: 12,000 credits for a simple rifle attachment, 25,000 credits for the ammo-drum. Not available as a pistol attachment.

Triax Rifle Grenades

Flash/Stun: This riot/anti-terrorist weapon is designed to disorient and confuse criminals who are holding hostages in confined places. The grenade makes a loud exploding boom and emits a bright flash followed by a shower of white-hot sparklets and some white smoke. The flash, burning sparks, and smoke should blind and startle any character without environmental armor or protective goggles. The victims of a stun/flash grenade are -8 to strike, parry and dodge, -1 on initiative and lose one melee attack/action for the next 1D4 melee rounds (15 to 60 seconds). Even those in armor should be momentarily distracted for 1D4 seconds and lose initiative. Cost: 200 credits.

Fragmentation, Light: 3D4 M.D. to everything in a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius. Cost: 300 credits.

Heavy Fragmentation, Heavy: 4D4+2 M.D. to everything in a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius. Cost: 350 credits.

High Explosive: 4D6 M.D. to everything in a 6 foot (1.8 m) radius. Cost: 300 credits.

Plasma: 5D6 M.D. to everything in a 12 foot (3.6 m) radius. Cost: 450 credits.

Micro-Fusion: 6D6 M.D. to everything in a 12 foot (3.6 m) radius. Cost: 1,000 credits.

Neural Disruptor Rifle Grenade: Designed to stun and impair Brodkiil, Gurgoyles, Gargoyles and other large, inhuman beings. Functions similar to the jolt from an Electro/Neural-Mace that shocks the system of giant enemy creatures and monsters. It is effective against the creatures noted above as well as dinosaurs and similar creatures, though the duration of shock penalties is half against such animal-like monsters. Has only a 25% chance of working against dragons, and then only for 10% of the usual duration.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Gargoyles and Brodkiil.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel and Riot Control.

Range: As per rifle grenade launcher, typically under 1,200 feet (366 m).

Area of Effect: Against large to giant opponents, a single grenade only affects the massive creature it hits. Against human-sized opponents, the rifle grenade has a concentrated blast radius of 6 feet (1.8 m) and may affect 2-4 people when they are clustered together.

Mega-Damage: Electrical charge does 2D6 M.D. plus shock/stun penalties (see below) against giant M.D.C. beings like Gargoyles (15-40 feet/4.6 to 12.2 m tall). Humans and D-Bees inside Mega-

Damage armor or power armor are mostly protected, but take 5D6 S.D.C./Hit Point damage through the armor and will suffer shock/stun penalties.

Chance of Being Knocked Unconscious by a Shock/Stun Grenade (roll percentile dice): The energy charge unleashed by the rifle grenade temporarily short-circuits the nervous system. Even if a victim remains conscious he still suffers the effects of Shock/Stun Penalties.

Chance of being rendered unconscious (roll percentile dice):

01-18% Renders an inhuman opponent such as a Gargoyle, Brodkil, other sub-demons and lesser supernatural beings, as well as young dragons and dinosaurs, unconscious. **Note:** Has no effect on ghosts/spirits, Astral Beings, or greater supernatural beings or creatures of magic. **Note:** Has no effect against the pilots of giant robots and armored vehicles, Demon/Deevil Regents and Princes, Demon and Deevil Lords/Ladies, deities, Alien Intelligences, Greater Elementals or adult dragons.

01-05% Renders a full conversion cyborg unconscious.

01-11% Renders a partial cyborg unconscious.

01-36% Renders humans, D-Bees and S.D.C. animals, without environmental armor or force field protection, unconscious.

01-10% Renders humanoids in environmental armor or power armor unconscious.

01-03% Renders mortals protected by a force field unconscious.

Shock/Stun Penalties: Reduce Spd and attacks per melee by half, and -8 to initiative, Perception Rolls, and rolls to strike, parry, dodge, disarm and related combat maneuvers.

Duration of Penalties: 1D4+1 melee rounds per each grenade that hits a sub-demon like a Brodkil or Lesser Demon. Double duration against mortal creatures such as dinosaurs, human beings and D-Bees. **Note:** Gargoyles are more susceptible to this attack and suffer the penalties for 1D4+2 melee rounds.

Save vs Shock/Stun Rifle Grenade: Same as saving against non-lethal poison, 16 or higher. The character must save each time he is struck by a stun grenade. A successful save means the victim loses only two melee attacks/actions and is -1 on all combat moves for one melee round (15 seconds).

Cost: 600 credits per rifle grenade.

Paint Rifle Grenade: Actual paint is released on impact, splattering a six foot (1.8 m) radius. These rifle grenades are primarily used against invisible creatures to make them at least partially visible when covered in paint, and to “mark” targets and fortifications. **For Example:** Yellow paint means “hostiles” use the marked building/location or hostile enemy forces are known to be in the area. Red paint means this fortification, building or location is “marked” for assault or destruction. **Cost:** 50 credits each.

Parachute Flare: This pyrotechnic device ignites three seconds after launching into a bright, sparking light that slowly drifts back down to earth. While in the air, the flare burns for 180 seconds (three minutes) and illuminates a 500 foot (152 m) radius. **Cost:** 150 credits each. **Note:** This is NOT a weapon, but if shot into a character, the flare does 6D6 S.D.C. each melee round for one minute (four rounds). There is also a 50% chance of causing combustibles to catch fire.

Smoke Grenades release a thick cloud of smoke that covers a 20 to 40 foot (6 to 12 m) radius. The smoke obscures vision in and through the cloud from those on the outside of it. Infrared cannot penetrate a smoke cloud or be used inside a smoke cloud.

Those inside the cloud will be blinded and have trouble breathing while inside it. Those who are not protected by environmental suits or gas mask and goggles will be -5 to strike, parry and dodge and -1 on initiative. Attackers firing into/through the cloud are shooting wild. Note that passive nightvision will work in a smoke cloud. **Cost:** 150 credits.

Tear Gas Grenades: The gas will instantly affect all characters without protective masks or environmental body armor. The eyes burn, sting and water profusely, causing great discomfort and makes seeing clearly impossible. The gas also makes breathing difficult and irritates exposed skin. The effects last for 4D4 minutes. The 30 foot (9.1 m) cloud dissipates in about five minutes unless blown away by wind (dissipating more quickly in 1D4 minutes). The victims of tear gas are -10 to strike, parry and dodge, -3 on initiative and lose one melee attack/action for each of the next 1D6+1 melee rounds. Those in environmental armor are completely safe and not affected. **Cost:** 400 credits.

New Triax X-535 Jaeger Interchangeable Devices

TX-898M Jaeger Mortar

The TX-898M mortar unit is actually a Triax version of the mortar system of the Taurus Glitter Boy of Free Quebec. Instead of having to carry the two large mortars, the units are mounted to the Hunter's back and swing into position when the coordinates are entered by the pilot or radioed to him by a forward scout. The TX-898M provides long-range fire support for ground troops and for hammering fortified positions and Gargoyle roosts and nests.

Weight: 1 ton.

Primary Purpose: Artillery Strikes.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Fortification.

M.D.C.: Each mortar cannon has 100 M.D.C., the mounting unit/ ammo drum has 120 M.D.C.

Range: One mile (1.6 km).

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D. per single mortar to 20 foot (6.1 m) blast radius, 2D4x10 M.D. for a simultaneous double blast (counts as one melee attack/action).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or a volley of two.

Payload: 28 total.

Bonus: +3 to strike a large, specified ground coordinate, building or fortified position, as well as a target that is “tagged” by a special laser targeting device or forward observer.

+2 to strike a massing enemy formation.

Penalties: -3 to strike a specific target smaller than 50 feet (15.2 m) in diameter, and an additional -2 penalty to strike when the target is moving faster than 15 mph (24 km) or is under the cover of smoke.

-8 to strike small or fast moving targets like a dodging Juicer, hover cycle, speeding car, or a flying Gargoyle.

Jaeger Melee Package

The melee package adds a large, armored vambrace to each of the forearms of the Jaeger which contains three large, retractable Vibro-Blades. On the underside of the vambrace is housed a special type of Neural Mace that can shoot into the hand at a moment's notice. Unlike the Neural Mace of the Coalition States,

this new device can actually affect Mega-Damage creatures like Brodkiil and Gargoyles. While not nearly as effective on supernatural creatures as Neural Maces are to humans, the stunning effect is still enough to give the Power Armor Commando an edge in combat.

Weight: Adds 600 lbs (270 kg) to the weight of the Jaeger.

Primary Purpose: Melee Combat.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

M.D.C.: Adds 150 M.D.C. per arm.

Range: Melee.

Mega-Damage: Vibro-Blades: 3D6 in addition to punch damage. Neural Mace: 2D6 in addition to punch Damage. The target is -4 to strike, parry, and dodge for 2D4 melees. Each strike extends this duration by 2D4 melees.

Payload: Vibro-Blades: Unlimited, linked to the power supply of the Jaeger. Neural Mace: 10 strikes before needing to be returned to its housing in the vambrace for charging. Recharges at the rate of one charge per 30 minutes.

TX-881 Rail Gun

This Jaeger modification is similar to the TX-802 in design as both are weapon attachments that differ from the standard top-mounted devices. The TX-881 is a large, dual Gatling-style rail gun that is held in the dominant hand of the power armor suit and clamped onto the forearm for additional support. The weapon is further held by a forward handle. The huge ammo drum is mounted behind the shoulders of the Jaeger, and locked onto the shoulder weapon mountings, often making the Jaeger hunch over. This design makes the unit top heavy and less maneuverable, imposing massive penalties.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Armor.

Weight: 4 tons.

Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10+10 M.D. per full 60 round burst of DU ammunition from both guns. 1D4x10+5 M.D. per full 30 round burst from only one of the guns.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks of the pilot.

Payload: 16,000 round drum. That is enough for 200 full bursts.

Penalties: Speed is reduced by 50% and all bonuses to strike, parry, and dodge are reduced by half.

TX-802 Particle Beam Cannon

The TX-802 has a large ammo pack mounted on the back behind the shoulders, attached by clamps on the shoulder mounts. The large ammo pack is a massive energy capacitor that slowly recharges, which is why the device weighs so much. The Particle Beam Cannon is clamped under the dominant firing arm and is supported by the other hand for ease of use and assistance with aiming.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Armor.

Secondary Purpose: Assault.

Weight: 3 tons.

Range: 3,000 feet (914 m).

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10+10 M.D.; Critical Strike on a Natural 19 or 20.

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 120 blasts from the oversized power pack. Recharges one blast every 10 minutes.

Penalties: Speed of the Hunter is reduced by 50% and all bonuses to strike, parry, and dodge are also reduced by half.

Triax Mobile Sentries

The Triax Mobile Sentries are simple weapon robots dropped with Deployment Pods and Drop Forts. These specialized pods usually only take up one deployment slot and many can be delivered by a single XM-199 Phoenix transport or XM-180 Drag-onfly. The Mobile Sentry pods have the same deployment procedures and landing drop systems as the other Deployment Pods.

Once deployed, the A.I. unfolds and exits the pod. As a mobile unit (most have 4 spider-like legs), the Mobile Sentry can be sent to a specific location to defend (the front gate of a base, a weapon depot, a mountain pass, a hallway, etc.) or physically picked up and placed at a location by a large robot or power armor. Once in position, the unit remains in "alert mode" and fires upon any recognized enemy(s) until it is authorized to disengage its weapon systems or runs out of ammunition. When out of ammo, the Mobile Sentry walks to the nearest corner or area where it is least likely to be seen and attacked by the enemy, folds up, and goes dormant, waiting until it is reloaded and redeployed.

Each Mobile Sentry has a simple and limited artificial intelligence that helps the mobile weapon unit identify, targets and fire upon the enemy to defend a perimeter or fortified or strategic position. At any time, the A.I. can be manually overridden by a human officer or soldier with the correct pass codes, to shut it down or to be "man" operated. There are a variety of Sentry Fortifications that can fit a number of roles.

Mobile Sentry Stats

Exclusive to the NGR Military

Note: All Mobile Sentries use the same modular body and have the same basic stats. Only the weapon system/weapon turret or sensor array varies.

Class: Ground Deployed Mobile Sentry Weapon System.

Crew: None, independent A.I.

Note: Friend or Foe recognition system can recognize and engage 3,200 different enemy targets, including all known Gargoyles and Brodkiil and any creature that closely resembles one.

M.D.C. by Location:

* Legs (4) – 90 each

* Standard, small, low profile sensor and laser targeting pod.

** Optional Weapon Turret (when applicable) – 100

*** Main Body – 142

* A single asterisk indicates a small, difficult target to strike with a -3 penalty even with a Called Shot.

** If the weapon turret is destroyed the unit goes dormant.

*** If the M.D.C. of the main body is reduced to zero, the unit is destroyed.

Statistical Data of the Sentry Pod

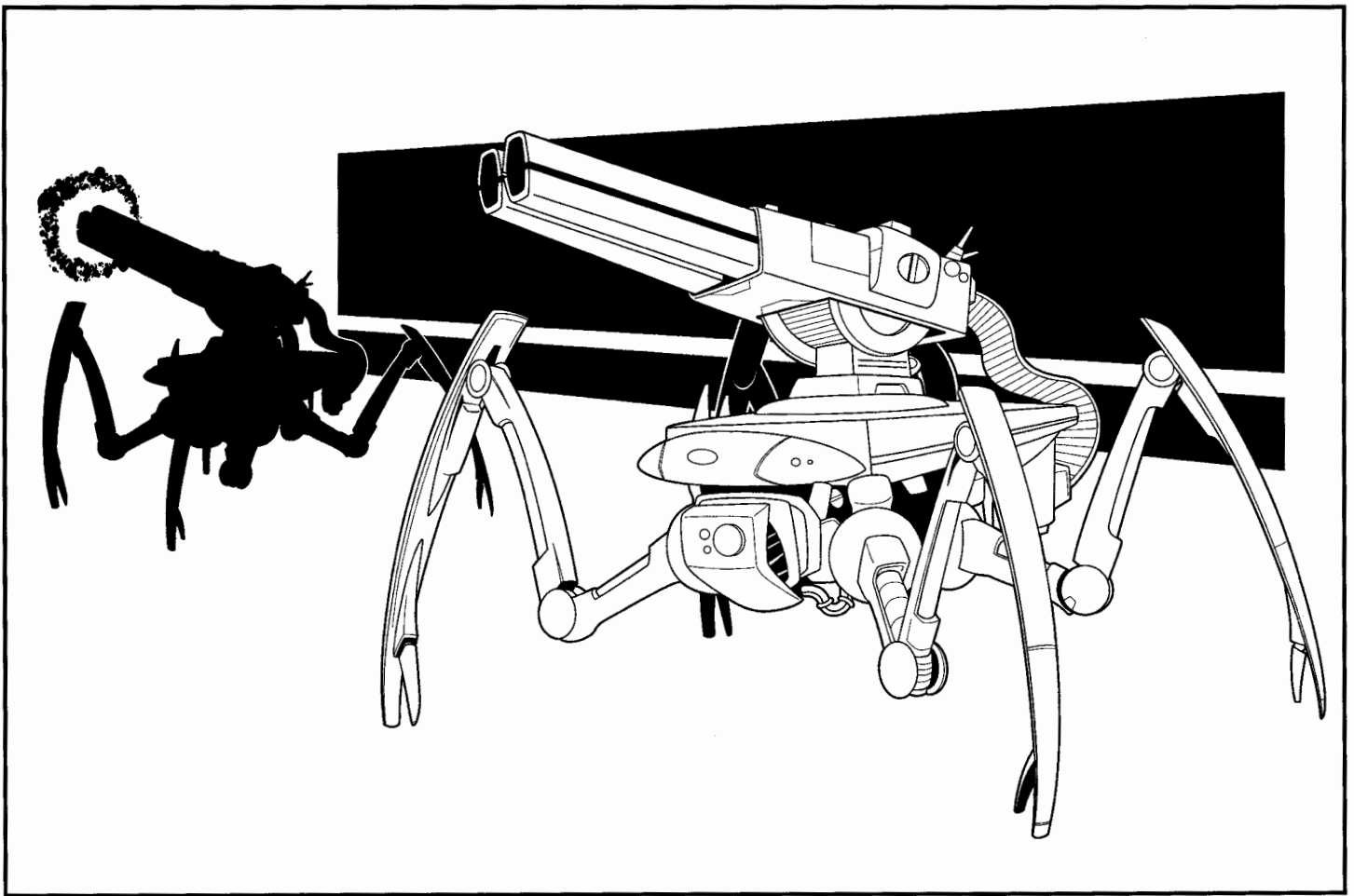
Height: 4-7 feet (1.2 to 2.1 m).

Width: 4-8 feet (1.2 to 2.4 m) with legs extended.

Length: 4-8 feet (1.2 to 2.4 m) with legs extended.

Weight: A half ton to 2.5 tons depending on the model and ordnance loadout; rail guns, grenade launchers and missile launcher units are the heaviest when fully loaded.

Cargo: None.



Speed: 15 mph (24 km) maximum, but usually holds a stationary position unless programmed to do otherwise.

Strength: Robot P.S. of 28.

Attacks per Melee: Five, unless stated otherwise. Non-weapon units have five melee *actions* per round.

Power System: Nuclear, average energy life is five years; longer if used infrequently.

Transport Slot Occupation: One.

Black Market Cost: NOT AVAILABLE OUTSIDE OF THE NGR. If one becomes available it will fetch a price of 600,000 to 1.3 million credits.

Modular Mobile Sentry Weapon Turrets

Any ONE of the following weapon turrets can be mounted on a Mobile Sentry.

Note: For energy weapons, the payload regenerates at a rate of 24 charges/blasts per hour, as it draws energy from the power supply.

High-Intensity Pulse Laser Sentry Weapon

The turret has a 90 degree up and down arc of fire and can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft/Gargoyles.

Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10+6 M.D. per rapid-fire, three shot burst at the same target. The weapon cannot fire single shots.

Rate of Fire: Bursts fire only. Each burst counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 1,400 bursts.

Special Feature: Independent coordinated targeting: +2 to strike. The A.I. has five attacks per melee.

Supercharged Ion Cannon Sentry Weapon

The turret has a 45 degree up and down arc of fire and can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Armor.

Range: 2,000 feet (610 m).

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. per single blast.

Rate of Fire: Single shots only. Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 3,000 shots.

Special Feature: Independent coordinated targeting; +2 to strike. The A.I. has five attacks per melee.

Particle Beam Sentry Weapon

The turret has a 45 degree up and down arc of fire and can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Armor/Anti-Gargoyle.

Range: 2,000 feet (610 m).

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10+10 M.D. per single full powered blast.

Rate of Fire: Single shots only. Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 700 blasts.

Special Feature: Independent coordinated targeting; +1 to strike. The unit gets a Critical Strike on a Natural 19 or 20 (double damage). The A.I. has four attacks per melee.

Dual Rail-Gun Sentry Weapon

The turret has a 90 degree up and down arc of fire and can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel.

Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Mega-Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. per single gun burst. 2D4x10 M.D. per dual burst or 2D4x10+20 M.D. when loaded with Depleted Uranium or U-rounds.

Rate of Fire: Can only fire bursts. Each burst counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 200 bursts per each rail gun. That's 400 light bursts if one rail gun is fired and then the other kicks in when the first runs out of ammo. However, only 200 heavy bursts with both rail guns firing simultaneously at the same target.

Special Feature: Independent coordinated targeting; +1 to strike. The A.I. has five attacks per melee. The weapon can be loaded with DU or U-rounds for special deployments.

Rapid Fire Grenade Launcher Sentry Weapon

The turret has a 90 degree up and down arc of fire and can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Personnel and Anti-Gargoyles.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Range: 1,200 feet (366 m).

Mega-Damage: 3D6 M.D. to a 10 foot (3 m) radius per single round, or 1D4x10 M.D. to a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius per four grenade burst.

Rate of Fire: Single shot or bursts only. This is set at the time of deployment, but can be adjusted during battle by the A.I. based on the target recognition and acquisition protocols. If there are a great number of potential targets, the A.I. may switch to burst firing mode and switch back to single shot if there are fewer targets in order to conserve ammunition.

Payload: 140 grenades.

Special Feature: Independent coordinated targeting; +2 to strike. The A.I. has four single shot or four burst attacks per melee.

Flak Cannon Sentry Weapon

The turret points upward and has a 45 degree downward arc of fire, but can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft/Gargoyle.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Missile.

Range: 10,000 feet (3,048 m) skyward only.

Mega-Damage: Single round does 4D6 M.D., two rounds do 6D6 M.D., or a rapid fire volley of four rounds does 1D6x10 M.D. Each shot or burst has a 5 foot (1.5 m) blast radius.

Rate of Fire: Four attacks per melee round. Each blast or burst counts as one melee attack. Programming and ammunition is designed to only attack aerial targets, never ground or infantry forces.

Payload: 800 rounds. 133 bursts of six rounds or 400 two round bursts.

Special Feature: The guns can be set to fire two round bursts or six round bursts at the nearest enemy target, or they can be set to

only intercept fast, incoming targets (usually missiles). The guns are +1 to strike and have five attacks per melee in this mode.

Mini-Missile Launcher Sentry Weapon

A box style turret that holds thirty-two mini-missiles. The turret has a 90 degree up and down arc of fire and can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft/Gargoyles.

Range: Varies with type of missile used.

Mega-Damage: Varies with type of missile used.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of 2, 4, 6 or 8.

Payload: 32 mini-missiles.

Special Feature: Independent coordinated targeting, +1 to strike. The A.I. has five attacks per melee.

Short-Range Missile Launcher Sentry Weapon

A box style turret that holds eight short-range missiles. The turret has a 90 degree up and down arc of fire and can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Assault and Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft/Gargoyles.

Range: Varies with type of missile used.

Mega-Damage: Varies with type of missile used.

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in volleys of 2 or 4.

Payload: Eight short-range missiles.

Special Feature: Independent coordinated targeting; +2 to strike. The A.I. has five attacks per melee.

Medium-Range Missile Launcher Sentry Weapon

A box style turret that holds six medium-range missiles. The turret has a 90 degree up and down arc of fire and can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Assault and Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft/Gargoyles.

Range: Varies with type of missile used.

Mega-Damage: Varies with type of missile used.

Rate of Fire: Fires one missile at a time.

Payload: Six.

Special Feature: Independent coordinated targeting; +2 to strike. The A.I. has five attacks per melee.

Mobile Sentry Support Systems

The following two Mobile Sentry Support Systems are elaborate sensor, communications and programming packages that may be installed *instead* of the weapon systems listed above. Otherwise, these Support Sentries are identical to the standard units.

Communications Sentry & Mobile Relay Station

In a world without satellites, reliable communications networks are rare and welcomed. The Army of the New German Republic has one of the best. It is made possible via the use of *Mobile Sentries* equipped with radio broadcasting and relay systems. Radio transmissions are bounced from mobile sentry unit to unit to create an unbroken (or mostly unbroken) communications network. These communications relay units are crucial for extending and maintaining lines of NGR communications in the field of battle and in the Gargoyle dominated mountains. The NGR drops

these Mobile Communications Sentries along mountain ranges and wilderness regions. The ability to identify friends and foes enables the simple AI to *move* away from hostile forces and find the best, least conspicuous location to establish itself within a five mile (8 km) radius of its drop site. If the situation changes and its location becomes compromised, the “Mobile” Communications Sentry can walk to a new location. If attacked, its last broadcast is a message (with video if available) indicating the time, date, location, and the type and numbers of the force that attacked (and destroyed) it.

The NGR tries to drop Mobile Communications Sentries at intervals that overlap each other’s communications ranges, rather than at the maximum length of each unit’s range. This way if one is destroyed, the others can spread out to maintain the communications network. As good as this network using Mobile Sentries is, there are still frequent holes – communications dead zones – especially in wilderness and mountain areas dominated by enemy forces. The Gargoyles have also come to recognize the importance of the Mobile Communications Sentries, and destroy them whenever they can.

Transport Slot Occupation: One.

Communications Relay Systems:

1. Long-Range Laser Communications:

Primary Purpose: Used as a mobile relay station.

Range: 1,000 miles (1,600 km); half range in the mountains or in an area with several ley lines and/or dimensional disturbances. Half range when transmitting radar signals.

2. Encrypted Transmission: Can encrypt and transmit scrambled messages for additional security, but transmissions are sent at half the usual speed.

3. Advanced Radar: The Mobile Communications Sentry has its own independent, extended radar with a range of 200 miles (320 km). Can track 144 aerial enemy targets simultaneously.

AI Programming of Note:

A. Friend & Foe Recognition Program: Can identify 3,500 known enemy targets operating in and around NGR territory.

B. Relocation Initiative: The AI is smart enough to position itself in a concealed area or unobtrusive location to avoid easy detection by the enemy, but still function as an effective communications relay. Its ability to recognize the enemy and assess their movement and general intentions enables the Mobile Sentry to temporarily shut down and hide, or relocate to a new location where the enemy is not present or is minimal.

C. Special Program: Hide/Conceal Self and Prowl (for the purpose of self-concealment) 70%.

Defensive Weapon System of the Mobile Communications Sentry:

This mini-turret has a 45 degree up and down arc of fire and can rotate 360 degrees.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Range: 1,000 feet (305 m).

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. per laser blast.

Rate of Fire: Single shot. Each blast count as one melee attack.

Payload: 5,000 single blasts. The A.I. has five attacks per melee.

Guardian Mobile Sentry

This Mobile Sentry is equipped with a range of sensors designed to detect intruders. It can be set to sound a silent alarm via radio transmission and/or for a loud siren to blare a warning. A flashing red light is also part of the warning system.

Transport Slot Occupation: One.

Sensor Systems:

Digital Camera Array: The camera is equipped with several different cameras and lenses for both wide angle and zoom close-ups; it can film up to 48 hours of video and shoot tens of thousands of still photo images. Unless programmed to do otherwise, the Sentry transmits a live video feed to its base of operations as well as stores it in a digital format.

Laser Distancer: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Motion Detector: Increased range: 500 feet (152 m), adds to the ability to respond quickly, parry and dodge.

Molecular Analyzer: Identical to the cybernetic lung implant of cyborgs.

Optics: The Guardian Mobile Sentry has advanced robot optics (basic 20/20 vision up to two miles/3.2 m away) with infrared, ultraviolet, polarization, and passive nightvision, all with a range of 4,000 feet (1,219 m), plus telescopic vision with a range of two miles (3.2 km), and an optical reader.

Radar Detector: The sensors can detect when the area is being probed by radar waves.

Radio: Basic: Can receive and send radio transmissions (200 mile/320 km range). Monitors open channels and the AI has a word recognition program to identify enemy transmissions and hostile intentions (80%).

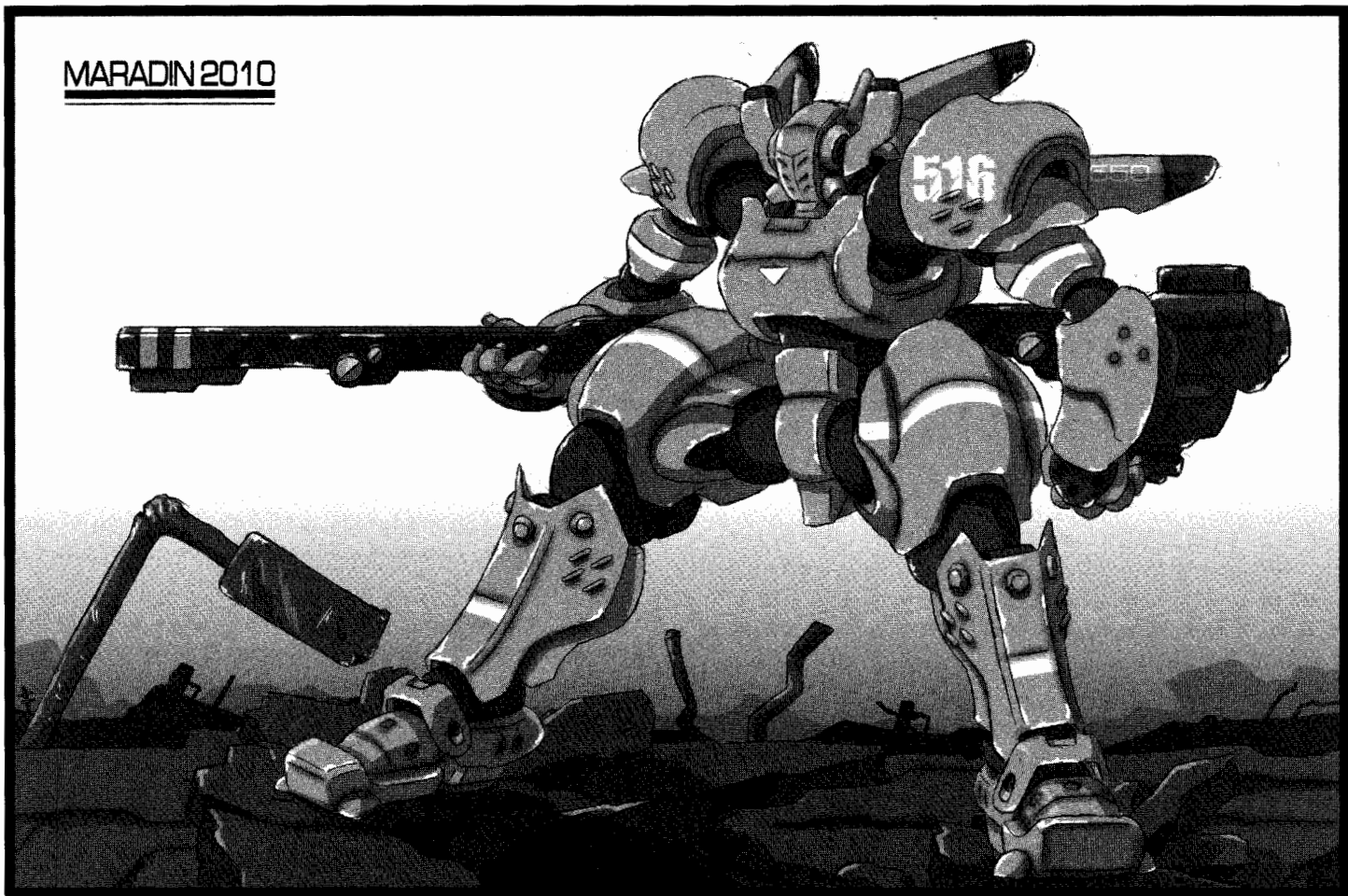
Language Recognition Program: Understands the following languages: Demongogian at 66%, Gobblely at 80%, and American, Euro, (traditional) German, and Techno-Can at 90%.

Vibration Detectors: These sensors enable the Mobile Sentry to detect ground movement by troops and vehicles, and estimate their speed, direction of travel and location at a base percentage of 70%.

Language Military General Programming: Demolitions Disposal 90% (has the data and knowledge, and can talk a technician or soldier through the procedure; includes a “chemical sniffer” sensor system), Languages include Euro, American, German, Techno-Can, and Gobblely at 96%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 70% (+15% when it comes to Gargoyles and Brodkil), Mathematics: Basic 96%, Military Etiquette 96%, Radio: Basic: 96% and Sniff Out Explosives (special; exactly what it sounds like) 88%.

Military Reconnaissance & Intelligence Program: Climbing 85%/15%, Detect Ambush 60%, Detect Concealment 60%, I.D. Plants and Animals 88%, Intelligence 80% (+10% when dealing with Gargoyles and Brodkil), Land Navigation 88%, Mine/Trap Detection 68%, Prowl 70%, Tailing (people or vehicles) 85%, Track Animals 88%, Tracking People 88%, and Wilderness Survival 80%.

Weapon Systems: None.



New Triax Cyborgs

VXC-550 Chromium Cyborg

“Glitter ‘Borg” or “Silver Type”

Soon after the trade agreement with Free Quebec, Triax began to develop a cyborg armor system to use with the laser resistant chromium plating. The resulting development is the VX-550 “Silver Type.” This cyborg is about as large as the VX-500 Manhunter Cyborg, and is equipped with the new super-dense, chromium plated armor. It is an imposing figure that appears broad shouldered with wide hips for stability, and a long-barreled cannon. Only the head truly resembles the classic, North American Glitter Boy power armor. The cyborg is designed as a front-line combat unit and troop support unit. It can handle a massive amount of M.D.C. laser fire as its chromium body is laser resistant like the Glitter Boy.

The body of the VXC-550 cyborg is *not* composed of the laser resistant chromium material, but rather the combat cyborg is designed to wear heavy Glitter Boy style armor.

The Silver Type, or “Glitter ‘Borg,” is given a newly designed, long-range laser cannon fired as a handheld weapon. When not in use, it can be stowed, pointing upward, in a housing behind the right or left shoulder. Combined with a small compliment of mini-missiles of its own, the VXC-550 is a welcome addition to the NGR Military.

Triax VXC-550 Chromium Cyborg Soldier Nicknamed “The Glitter ‘Borg”

Part of the NGR Military

Note: The following stats are for the “standard” VXC-550 Full Conversion Combat Cyborg. Specific weapons and bionic features may change slightly from cyborg to cyborg.

Model Type: VXC-550

Class: Full Conversion Cyborg – Heavy Assault.

Crew: One human volunteer.

M.D.C. by Location:

Hands (2) – 30 each

Arms (2) – 70 each

Legs (2) – 90 each

Shoulder Mini-Missile Launchers (2) – 45 each

Exhaust Tubes (3, back) – 69 each

Laser Cannon (1) – 100

* Head – 100

** Main Body – 199

Special Heavy Infantry Chromium Armor & Face Plate:

Adds 335 M.D.C. to the main body and provides laser resistance the same as the Glitter Boy, plus an additional 45 M.D.C. to the head, and 60 M.D.C. to each of the arms and 70 to each of the legs. Chromium Armor imposes the following penalties: 50% speed reduction, -25% to skills and -3 to strike, parry and dodge. The armor is also designed for quick (1 melee action) removal in case of an emergency. This allows a cyborg to quickly drop his armor and make for an escape if the situation calls for it.

* Destroying the head of the cyborg KILLS the character! However, the head is a small and difficult target to hit. The attacker must make a *Called Shot* and even then he is -3 to strike. The hands and exhaust tubes in the back are difficult targets to hit and are at a -4 to strike on a *Called Shot*.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body destroys it and whatever is left shuts down, leaving the cyborg immobile and helpless. In either case, emergency systems keep the brain and vital organs alive for up to one week. Recovery of the severely damaged body will enable doctors to place the bionic character on a life support system that will keep him alive until a new bionic body (typically the same style) is available for integration. Failure to find the damaged cyborg within a week means the character dies. Similarly, massive amounts of damage (300 points below zero) completely destroys the cyborg with no hope of recovery.

Speed

Running: 60 mph (96 km) inside Heavy Infantry Chromium Armor. Without any armor or just light standard cyborg armor, increase speed to 120 mph (192 km).

Leaping: 15 feet (4.6 m) high or lengthwise. A running start adds another 10 feet (3 m).

Flying: Via jet pack only.

Statistical Data

Average Height: 8 feet (2.4 m).

Width: 4 feet (1.2 m).

Weight: 1.4 tons.

Physical Attributes: Robotic P.S. 32, P.P. 22.

Laser Resistant Armor: Same as the Glitter Boy.

Power System: Nuclear, average life is 20 years.

Black Market Cost: Not available.

Penalties: The Heavy Infantry Chromium Armor provides superior Mega-Damage protection but limits the cyborg's maximum speed, prowling is impossible and reduce the number of attacks per melee by one.

Standard Bionic Features (non-weapon types):

1. Bionic Lung with Gas Filter & Oxygen Storage Cell.
2. Built-in Language Translator.
3. Built-in Loudspeaker.
4. Built-in Radio Receiver & Transmitter.
5. Clock Calendar.
6. Gyro-Compass.
7. Modulating Voice Synthesizer.
8. Multi-Optics Eyes.
9. Psionic Electromagnetic Dampers.
10. Radar.
11. Molecular Analyzer.
12. Combat Computer.
13. Rear Optics in the back of the head.
14. Universal Headjack with Amplified Hearing and Sound Filtration.
15. Shoulder Mini-Missile Launchers (described below).

Weapon Systems

1. **TX-250 "Slayer" Laser Cannon (1, standard issue):** When stood up on end, this weapon is actually taller (13 feet/3.9 m) than the Glitter 'Borg. It requires the support of both hands to fire and is often supported by resting it on debris or the hood

or roof of a vehicle. Many Glitter 'Borgs have taken to shooting from the hip against Gurgoyles, Brodkil and other ground troops, and claim it gives them better accuracy. The sturdy, M.D.C. weapon can also be used as a blunt lance-like weapon to strike and parry in melee combat, and lash at low flying Gargoyles.

Primary Purpose: Long-Range Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Gargoyle and Defense.

Gun Weight: 200 lbs (90 kg).

Gun Length: 13 feet (3.9 m).

Range: 3,000 feet (914 m).

Mega-Damage: Laser: 5D6 M.D. per single blast. Blunt Weapon: 1D8 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Each shot counts as one of the cyborg's melee attacks.

Payload: 96 blasts from an internal power supply and generator. Recharges at a rate of six blasts per hour.

Bonuses: +1 to parry and disarm when used as a blunt weapon in melee combat, +1 to strike with laser blasts on an Aimed or Called Shot.

2. **Shoulder Mini-Missile Launchers (2):** Each shoulder flips open to reveal a mini-missile launcher that the cyborg may use to bring down flying opponents or against incoming missile volleys.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Gargoyle.

Secondary Purpose: Assault and Anti-Missile.

Range: Usually about 1 mile (1.6 m).

Mega-Damage: Varies with type of missile used. Any mini-missile can be used, but standard issue is armor piercing (1D4x10 M.D. to a 3 foot/0.9 m blast radius) or high explosive (5D6 M.D. to a 5 foot/1.5 m blast radius).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in a volley of 2, 4, or 6.

Payload: Eight total, four mini-missiles per shoulder launcher.

3. **Hand to Hand Combat:** The cyborg can engage in hand to hand combat with damage resulting from Robotic P.S. of 32. **Combat Bonuses (including bonuses for having a P.P. of 22 and Optics):** +4 on initiative, +4 to strike, +6 to parry, +7 to dodge, +4 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +1 to save vs all psionics, +2 vs possession, +1 to save vs magic illusions and mind control, and +1 vs Horror Factor.

Damage:

Restrained Punch – 15 S.D.C. or 1D4 M.D. (as desired by the Combat Cyborg).

Full Strength Punch – 2D4 M.D.

Power Punch – 4D4 M.D.

Kick – 2D8 M.D.

Jump Kick/Leap attack – 4D8 M.D. (Counts as 2 attacks.)

Judo Style Throw/Flip – 1D4 S.D.C.

Full Speed Ram/Body Block – 1D8 M.D. (Counts as 2 attacks.)

4. **Optional Handheld Weapons** including rail guns, energy rifles, grenades, melee weapons, etc., can be used. Up to two other bionic systems weapons and devices such as a concealed weapon rod, hidden compartments and the like may also be integrated into this cyborg.

5. **Typical Training/Skills:** See the *Combat Cyborg O.C.C.* in *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*, or *Cyborg Soldier* in *World Book 5: Triax & the NGR*.

VX-3000 Cyborg Soldier

The “Bombardier ‘Borg” (a.k.a. “BB”) is an experimental type of heavy combat cyborg in that it is a heavily armored, walking weapon platform. The massive amount of explosive ordnance reduces speed and mobility but gives the Bombardier as much firepower as a tank or larger suit of power armor.

The Bombardier functions in the roles of troop support, front-line infantry assault, anti-fortifications, anti-tank/power armor/robot weapon, and Gargoyle nest buster. The VX-3000 can be used to soften up the enemy, punch holes through defensive lines and fortified positions, cover troops making a tactical retreat, and engage swarms of Gargoyles.

Although heavily armored, the Bombardier ‘Borg is poorly suited for close combat encounters due to a lack of mobility, the weight of its payload, and lack of many melee or short-range weapons. Once it has fired its payload of explosive ordnance, the BB is lighter and faster, but still slow compared to other cyborgs, and thus vulnerable to enemy attack. This sense of vulnerability is compounded by the psychological effects of being a walking bomb delivery system and takes its toll. Remember, while a combat cyborg such as the BB may look like a hulking robot, there is a human brain and mind located inside the mechanical monstrosity. A person with all the same fears and emotions as you or I. On the flip side of the psychological coin, one third develop megalomania or a god-complex, and lose touch with their humanity. Thus, after every two years of active combat duty, each VX-3000 undergoes a psychological evaluation. If deemed necessary, the cyborg soldier is removed from duty and transferred into a different, less powerful cyborg body. Some BBs who realize they are suffering from psychological disorders and do not want to lose their powerful cyborg bodies may consider going AWOL and desert to become mercenaries operating far away from the NGR, or go on a suicide run to die with glory rather than be “retired” into a smaller, punier bionic body.

Random Bombardier ‘Borg Insanity Table

Roll once every year to save vs insanity (12 or higher saves and there is no insanity). A failed roll means the Bombardier ‘Borg has developed a type of insanity. While random, it is important to keep continuity, so try to develop this within the character or work with the Game Master to apply an appropriate insanity. For example, if you roll Obsession: Coalition States, and your character has never encountered the CS, it can easily be changed to Gargoyle Empire, Atlantis or some other kingdom the player character has encountered. A cyborg can be treated for each insanity he develops, but should he develop more than two at any given point, he is given 1D4 weeks leave and undergoes psychological evaluation. Should he develop more than four insanities, the cyborg soldier is taken out of service and transferred into a light, cyborg body with no built-in weapons.

Roll percentile dice for random determination of insanities:

01-20% Obsession: Roll once on the Random Obsession table (page 337 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*; you may substitute with things more appropriate to the European setting, such as Gargoyles, Brodkil, the Angel of Death, etc.).

21-40% Phobia: Roll once on the Random Phobia Table (page 336 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*; you may substitute with things more appropriate to the European setting).

41-60% Affective disorder (see page 333 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*).

61-80% Psychosis (see page 334 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*).

81-00% Manifests another insanity. Roll twice on the Random Insanity Table (see page 332 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*).

VX-3000 Cyborg Soldier

Also Known as “The Bombardier Borg”

Note: The following stats are for the “standard” VX-3000 full conversion cyborg. Specific weapons and bionic features may change slightly from ‘Borg to ‘Borg.

Model Type: VX-3000

Class: Full Conversion Cyborg – Heavy Artillery.

Crew: One Human Volunteer.

M.D.C. by Location:

Back Mounted Mini-Missile Launcher (1) – 60

Chest Ion Cannon (1) – 30

Rear Mounted Short-Range Missile Launchers (2 sets) – 60 each

Shoulder Mini-Missile Box Launchers (2) – 40 each

Shoulder Dual Grenade Launcher (1, left) – 100

Shield (1, left arm): 125

Shoulders (2) – 112 each

Forearms (2) – 95 each

Forearm Ion Blaster (1, right) – 26

Hands (2) – 35 each

Legs (2) – 140 each

* Head – 120

** Rear Sensor Array (1, back of head) – 25

*** Main Body – 380

* Destroying the head of the cyborg kills the character! However, the head of the VX-3000 is protected by the mini-missile launchers, high shoulder plating, and other things that block an easy shot, and is a small, difficult target to hit. The attacker must make a *Called Shot* and even then he is –4 to strike. The hands, rear missile launchers, mini-missile launchers, chest and forearm ion gun are all difficult targets to hit and are at a –3 to strike on a *Called Shot*.

** Destroying the sensor mount will remove the cyborg’s ability to fire grenades from behind cover. Requires a *Called Shot* at –5 to strike.

*** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body effectively destroys the artificial body, but emergency systems will keep the brain and vital organs alive for up to one week. Recovery of the severely damaged body will enable doctors to place the character on a life support system that will keep him alive until a new bionic body (same style or another) is available for conversion. Failure to find the damaged cyborg within a week means the character dies. Similarly, massive amounts of damage (225 points below zero) completely destroys the cyborg with no hope of recovery.

Speed

Running: 50 mph (80 km) maximum running speed, reduce by 50% (25 mph/40 km) when fully loaded with explosive ordnance.

Leaping: 6 feet (1.8 m) with full loadout. Double when 90% or more of the explosive ordnance has been expended.

Flying: Not applicable.

Statistical Data

Average Height: 12 feet (3.7 m).



MARADIN 2010

Width: 7 feet (2.1 m).

Weight: Two tons; three tons with full loadout.

Physical Attributes: P.S. 36, P.P. 20.

Power System: Nuclear, average life is 20 years.

Black Market Cost: Not available.

Penalties: The heavy armor provides incredible Mega-Damage protection but limits the cyborg's maximum speed, prowling is impossible and the character has penalties factored into the bonuses to strike, parry, dodge and roll with impact. Also, the character is very large and is easily mistaken for power armor. The BB is twice the size of normal humans and so will be uncomfortable inside homes and offices, and human-sized areas will feel cramped.

Standard Bionic Features (non-weapon types):

1. Bionic Lung with Gas Filter & Oxygen Storage Cell.
2. Built-in Language Translator.
3. Built-in Loudspeaker.
4. Built-in Radio Receiver & Transmitter.
5. Clock Calendar.
6. Gyro-Compass.
7. Modulating Voice Synthesizer.
8. Multi-Optics Eyes.
9. Psionic Electromagnetic Dampers.
10. Radar.
11. Combat Computer.
12. Rear Optics in the back of head.
13. Universal Headjack with Amplified Hearing and Sound Filtration.

Weapon Systems

1. Concealed Rear Mini-Missile Launcher (1): A large mini-missile launcher is located on the back, pointing up.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Gargoyle.

Secondary Purpose: Assault and Anti-Missile.

Range: Usually about 1 mile (1.6 m).

Mega-Damage: Varies with type of missile used. Any mini-missile can be used, but standard issue is armor piercing (1D4x10 M.D. to a three foot/0.9 m blast radius) or high explosive (5D6 M.D. to a 5 foot/1.5 m blast radius).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in a volley of 2, 4 or 6 missiles.

Payload: 24 total.

2. Shoulder Mini-Missile Launchers (2): Located above and behind each shoulder is a box mini-missile launcher that the cyborg uses to bring down flying opponents.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Gargoyle.

Secondary Purpose: Assault and Anti-Missile.

Range: Usually about 1 mile (1.6 m).

Mega-Damage: Varies with type of missile used. Any mini-missile can be used, but standard issue is armor piercing (1D4x10 M.D. to a three foot/0.9 m blast radius) or high explosive (5D6 M.D. to a 5 foot/1.5 m blast radius).

Rate of Fire: One at a time or in a volley of 2, 4 or 6.

Payload: 16 total, eight mini-missiles per shoulder launcher.

3. Side/Back Mounted Short-Range Missile Launcher (2): A four tube launcher is located to the right and left side of the cyborg, mounted on the back and peeking out from behind the arms and shoulders. They flip up to fire their payload. Typically used to bring down flying opponents.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Gargoyle.

Secondary Purpose: Assault and Anti-Missile.

Range: Varies on missile, but usually 3-5 miles (4.8 to 8 km).

Mega-Damage: Varies with type of missile used. Any short-range missile can be used though typically high explosive (medium 2D6x10 M.D. to a 15 foot/4.6 m blast radius), armor piercing (2D6x10 M.D. to a 5 foot/1.5 m blast radius) or fragmentation (light 2D4x10 M.D. to a 20 foot/6.1 m blast radius).

Rate of Fire: One at a time, or in volleys of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 or all 8.

Payload: Eight short-range missiles total.

4. Dual Rapid-Fire Grenade Launcher (1). Protruding from behind the left shoulder is as double-barreled grenade launcher. The gun can turn 360 degrees to fire in all directions and has a 360 degree arc of fire. To reload, the firing mechanism must connect to a housing in the back; takes one melee round (15 seconds).

Primary Purpose: Anti-Personnel and Anti-Gargoyles.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Range: 1,200 feet (366 m).

Mega-Damage: 3D6 M.D. to a 10 foot (3 m) radius per single round, or 1D4x10 M.D. to a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius per four grenade burst.

Rate of Fire: Single shot or burst, each counts as one of the cyborg's melee attacks.

Payload: 16 grenades, eight per barrel, are loaded into the gun at a time. There are 96 grenades for the total payload.

5. Chest Ion Cannon (1): The weapon has a 45 degree arc of fire in any direction and is mainly used as a backup weapon when all explosive ordnance has been exhausted.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Assault.

Range: 800 feet (244 m).

Mega-Damage: 4D6+4 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Each attack counts as one melee attack.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

6. Ion Forearm Blaster (1, Right): The arm has a short-range ion weapon. Point and shoot.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Assault.

Range: 1,200 feet (366 m).

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

7. Detachable Arm Shield (1, Left): The left arm has a large, detachable shield. It is used to both defend against attacks from clawing Gargoyles and melee weapons and as a blunt weapon to strike at the enemy and push through enemy forces.

8. Hand to Hand Combat: The cyborg can engage in hand to hand combat thanks to tiny studs that cover the back of the cyborg's hand which generate an energy field around them. When engaged, add +1D6 to any punch attack.

Combat Bonuses (bonuses for P.P. 20 and optic/sensor included): +4 on initiative, +5 to strike, +4 to parry, +3 to dodge, +4 to pull punch, +2 to roll with impact, +1 to save vs all psionics, +2 vs possession, +1 to save vs magic illusions and mind control, +1 vs Horror Factor.

Restrained Punch – 1D4 M.D.

Full Strength Punch – 2D6 M.D.

Power Punch – 4D6 M.D. (Counts as 2 attacks.)

Head Butt – 1D4 M.D.

Kick – 3D8 M.D.

Jump Kick/Leap attack – Not possible for this cyborg.

Judo Style Throw/Flip – 1D6 M.D.

Full Speed Ram/Body Block – 1D8 M.D. (Counts as 2 attacks.)

9. Optional Handheld Weapons including rail guns, energy rifles, grenades, etc., can be used. One other bionic weapon such as a concealed weapon rod, hidden compartment and the like may be integrated into this cyborg.

10. Typical Training/Skills: See the *Cyborg Soldier O.C.C.* for complete details. In the case of the VX-3000 Bombardier

'Borg, he must spend two of his five "other" O.C.C. Related Skills on Demolitions and Demolitions: Disposal. Each gets a bonus of +25%.

11. Sensors and Features of Note: Due to the design of the cyborg, when the VX-3000 is hit with an area explosion (like that of a grenade or missile), as long as the explosion was in front of him, he will take 25% less damage. He can NOT roll with impact to reduce the damage any further.

Rifts® Vehicle Construction Rules

Part Two

Optional Source Material for Rifts®

By Greg Diaczyk

For more information, please refer to Part One of this article in *The Rifter*® #50.

Other Weapon Related Features

Fixed Weapon Placement: Unless you purchase a turret it is assumed that any weapons mounted on a vehicle are fixed and fire only in one direction. To aim the weapon, the vehicle driver or pilot must orient and aim the vehicle to face the target. A pilot or vehicle driver with the Weapon Systems skill may apply the +1 bonus to strike to any weapons used in this manner. **Cost:** Free! (The cost of installing the weapon is assumed in the weapon price.)

Turret: This is the basic frame, control system (remote controlled by the pilot or manually controlled by a gunner) and weapon mount to facilitate a turret mounted weapon. You still need to purchase the weapon(s) to go in the turret, and turret armor for the turret. **Cost:** Small Turrets (think belly gunner on a Lancaster bomber): 10,000 credits for a gunner station, 25,000 credits for pilot remote controlled station, and 30,000 credits for a dual system (typically controlled by a pilot, but a manual backup is available); each system weighs 120 lbs (54 kg). Large Turrets (think tank turret): 20,000 credits for a gunner station, 45,000 credits for pilot remote controlled station and 55,000 credits for a dual system (typically controlled by a pilot, but a manual backup is available); each system weighs 240 lbs (108 kg). **Note:** Small turrets can hold one to three weapons. Large turrets can hold one large cannon-sized weapon or up to five smaller weapons.

Linked Weapon Systems: Double or triple barreled weapon arrays, with all weapons firing together, one action to fire all. **Cost:** 8,000 credits to link the weapons.

Increased Payload: Doubles (or triples) current payload of energy weapons, essentially a secondary or tertiary E-Clip is added to the power pack. **Cost:** 5,000 credits per E-Clip. **Note:** Having a Nuclear Power Supply provides an unlimited payload for energy weapons.

Ammo Drums: Have 30 M.D.C. of their own and typically hold 6,000 rounds for machine-guns or rail guns, or 600 grenades for grenade launchers. **Cost:** 10,000 credits per drum.

Grappling/Harpoon Gun and Towline: This item can be used for a couple of unique applications. The first is the obvious one of harpooning a large target. This could be a flying monster or hovercraft so you can reel it in for closer combat, to snag a running monster or vehicle, using the weight of the vehicle to stop or slow it down, or to board it. The second, less likely application is to use it during high-speed maneuvers. The grapple/harpoon is launched into a tree or rock, enabling the vehicle to make a quick turn at very high speeds. The harpoon is released before the towline slams the vehicle into the structure used in the turn (tree, rock, building, etc.) or other obstacles (needs to make a piloting control roll, failure means a collision). The basic turret mounted gun fires a Vibro-Harpoon that inflicts 1D6 M.D. and then turns off and activates its spikes to lock it into place. Its purpose is not to damage the target but to impale and secure itself to it. **Range:** The gun can accurately shoot and hit something at 1,000 feet (305 m), but the towline can extend up to 2,000 feet (610 m). The winch mechanism can pull up to 10 tons; however a Vibro-Blade or magical sword can easily cut through the towline if 5 M.D.C. is done in a single blow/cut. When the harpoon is ready to release, the operator simply flips a switch, which retracts its spikes and activates the Vibro-Blade to cut through any material that may still be clinging to the blade then turns the Vibro-Blade off, which then allows someone to safely reel in the towline and harpoon. The quick vehicle turning option is typically installed on either side of the vehicle to allow for turns in either direction. **M.D.C.:** 50. **Weight:** 130 lbs (59 kg). **Cost:** 35,000 credits. **Payload:** Works like a rail gun and can fire 20 shots (including reeling in the line) from a conventional E-Clip (unlimited uses if attached to a nuclear power supply).

Winch and Towline: This is simply a high tensile strength, M.D.C. steel line with a hook on it. It can be pulled out from a vehicle and latched onto something or lowered down to a spot and used to pull up cargo, pull out trees or tow items. The winch can pull up to 2 tons; however the towline can be easily cut by a magical sword or Vibro-Blade that inflicts more than 5 M.D.C. in a single blow/cut. It has a maximum length of 100 feet (305 m). The weight of the system is 50 lbs (22.5 kg) and runs off of the vehicle's engine so it doesn't require an additional power supply. **Cost:** 2,000 credits.

Vehicle Caltrops: While not terribly effective against hover vehicles it does work against monsters, horses and wheeled vehicles. The S.D.C. variety is simply a four-sided shaped prong (think a four sided die) or other similar appearance that always lands with at least one pointed side up. When a vehicle travels over a bunch of them it pops the tires. If animals/monsters step on them, they cause extremely painful wounds (each additional step drives them further into the foot/h hoof) and must be removed before the creature can continue on (wild or difficult to control animals/monsters will rear up on two legs and back away from the “danger,” bucking off anyone on them, or worse, throw them into the pile of caltrops on the ground in front of them). **Damage:** 1D4 S.D.C. each, but typically running through a bunch of them will inflict 1D4x10 S.D.C. (blowing tires, injuring feet, etc.). Only hovercraft can safely navigate/travel over such a countermeasure. **Weight:** 10 lbs (4.5 kg). **Cost:** Release mechanism (and storage housing) is 300 credits. The housing holds 6 canisters each. Each canister holds around 100 caltrops and costs 100 credits.

Grenade Caltrops: This weapon system is very much like the vehicle caltrops, however instead of dropping sharp metal pieces to puncture tires, this option drops grenades that explode as the pursuing vehicle passes through them. The “light” version is probably the most common (and cheapest), dropping little balls or discs of explosives with pressure sensors on them. The initial fall/impact from being dropped won’t detonate the explosives, but having a vehicle drive over them will. Each mini-grenade does 1D4 M.D., but most vehicles will run over several of them as they pass through the exploding caltrops, doing 1D4x10 M.D. to tires and the underside of the vehicle (such an underbelly attack will go right through vehicle armor, attacking the engine and crew armor directly (or engine and crew if no armor is present). The “heavy” version uses grenades very similar to standard hand grenades and deploys them on a timer as opposed to a pressure sensor (meant to take out a pursuer rather than cover one’s escape). The heavy option also has a unique added feature that can be employed; each grenade is also configured with magnetic clamps. These magnets activate right after being deployed from a vehicle and have a 50% chance of latching onto any pursuing vehicle as they bounce on by. The time delay then runs out and detonates attached to the vehicle! **Damage:** Each set of released grenades inflicts 1D6x10 M.D. for fragmentation, 2D4x10 M.D. for high explosive or 4D4x10 M.D. for plasma. **Weight:** 40 lbs (18 kg). **Cost:** The release mechanism costs 3,000 credits. Each canister holds 10 grenades and costs 2,500 credits for fragmentation, 2,000 credits for high explosive and 3,500 credits for plasma. Add an additional 1,000 credits to the canister cost if the grenades also have the magnetic clamp feature. **Note:** In game terms, trying to hit a pursuer is done as a normal strike roll, and you may add the +1 to strike if the Weapon Systems skill is known. The pursuing vehicle gets to dodge, but is -4 dodge if back a bit or -6 to dodge if closely in pursuit.

Oil Slick: The vehicle squirts out an oily substance behind the vehicle. On roads this substance makes it difficult to control a vehicle that has driven through it (-20% on control rolls), however out in the wilderness, dirt, rocks and plants pretty much make the slipperiness of this ineffective. What some inventive motorists have done is use flammable oil, which they ignite after they’ve left a trail. Though the flame is only S.D.C., it does create a lot

of smoke, blocking potential hazards on the other side of the fire. The oil also sticks to any tires that run through and continues to burn (will eventually catch S.D.C. tires on fire and cause them to explode/burst). Animals (even M.D.C. monster animals) are fearful of fire, and only an extremely loyal animal or one under mind control will jump through a flaming barrier for its master. The slick is housed in a storage drum that holds about 5 gallons (19 liters) of oil. **Damage:** Once ignited, the fire rages on for 2D4 minutes. Furthermore, any combustible materials that were covered in the slick or are close by will ignite and start burning on their own. Anyone foolish enough to try and run through the blaze will take 4D6 S.D.C. and continue to burn, doing 2D6 S.D.C. per melee round until the burning oil is extinguished (dousing in sand/rolling on the ground is sufficient). Anyone following the blaze and stuck in the fire (i.e. on the road behind the vehicle deploying the slick and caught in the igniting blaze) will take 1D6x10 S.D.C. per melee round that he is in the blaze. The slick has about 10 uses, or can be continuously spilled for one minute. Weight of the system is only 2 lbs (0.9 kg), each drum however is about 35 lbs (15.8 kg). **Cost:** 600 credits for the tank, sprayer and ignition system. Each refill of the drum costs 200 credits.

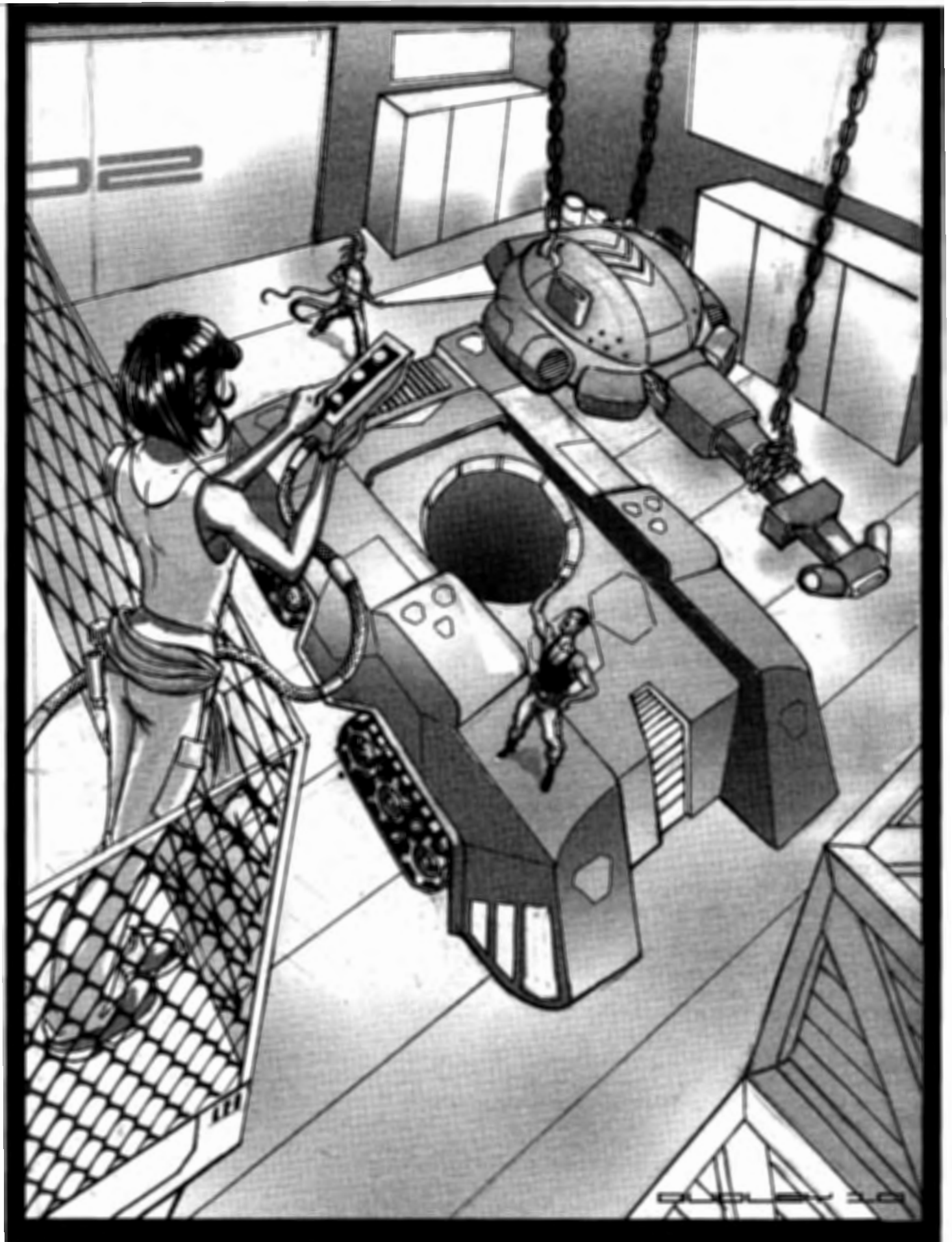
Smoke Screen: Many motorists like to have the ability to cloud their pursuer’s vision, lay down cover so other adversaries cannot see an area, or simply leave a trail for others to follow. The smoke screen is created by burning a selection of materials to produce a variety of annoying (yet not toxic) fumes. Colors: Black, grey, white, red, blue, yellow, green and brown. **Weight of System:** 5 lbs (2.3 kg), each canister weights about 0.5 lbs (0.22 kg) **Cost:** The smoke generator costs 250 credits. Each smoke canister costs 50 credits.

Ram Prow: It is highly recommended to have an M.D.C. frame to properly use a ram prow. The ram prow provides 50 M.D.C. for cars, 75 M.D.C. for trucks/large vehicles. The ram prow protects the front of the vehicle and allows the vehicle to perform ram attacks without damaging the vehicle. (See pages 83 to 86 of **Heroes Unlimited™ RPG, 2nd Edition** for information on rams.) **Cost:** 10,000 credits for cars and 15,000 M.D.C. for large trucks, haulers, buses and transports.

Self-Destruct System: This is a last resort destruction system for the vehicle. The system can be armed by remote (50 miles/80 km range), set as an automatic feature (need to flip a hidden switch to disarm before trying to start/hotwire the car), or set as a timer. **Cost:** Remote (watch or small cigarette lighter sized box) 250 credits, Timer 100 credits, Disarming Switch/Auto-Trigger 500 credits, S.D.C. Explosive (destroys an S.D.C. vehicle plus does 1D4x100 S.D.C. to a 20 foot/6 m area) 1,000 credits, M.D.C. Explosive (destroys vehicle plus 2D6x10 M.D. to a 20 foot/6 m area) 40,000 credits.

Laser Targeting System: Must be purchased for each weapon system, or Linked Weapon System. The laser dot reflects back and the driver can usually see where on the target the guns are pointed. **Bonus:** +1 to strike. **Cost:** 5,000 credits.

Targeting & Combat Computer: Can be linked to all sensors, radar and other vehicle systems to track up to 32,000 targets and allocate weapons for easy use by pilot/gunners. **Bonus:** +1 to strike, dodge and initiative. **Cost:** 500,000 credits.



Special Features and Options

Active Suspension: This suspension system is linked to special sensors around the wheeled vehicle that allow it to detect the road up ahead. It can then appropriately adjust the height of the tires, and increase or decrease spring resistance to better handle the bumps and awkward terrain. **Bonus:** +15% to piloting skills for maneuvers with this vehicle. **Cost:** 12,000 credits.

All Wheel Drive: All wheels on the vehicle are powered and can propel the vehicle forward. In addition to the added grip and control this offers the system, it also allows for variable torque control on all the wheels, which essentially allows power to shift from wheels that lose traction to those that have traction to maintain control of the vehicle. This is great for mud, snow, water and ice. **Bonuses:** +10% to vehicle control rolls. **Cost:** 5,000 credits.

Armored Tires: Simply put, these are M.D.C. rubber tires, tough and durable; yet still maintain a little bit of flex for good road handling. Each tire has 3 M.D.C. and costs 1,800 credits or has 5 M.D.C. and costs 3,000 credits or 10 M.D.C. and costs 6,000 credits.

Giant Sized Tires: These are the kind of tires you might find on a monster truck. They may make getting into the vehicle a challenge but the added height and reach of the tires makes it easier to travel over rough terrain, and through shallow rivers and swamps. Besides making more types of terrain more accessible, the wider tires and wider wheelbase make piloting easier (and tipping harder), providing a +5% to any piloting rolls. **Cost:** 1,000 credits for S.D.C. tires (100 S.D.C.), 8,000 credits for light tires with 5 M.D.C., 18,000 credits for medium tires with 10 M.D.C. and 25,000 credits for heavy tires with 35 M.D.C.

Self-Sealing/Inflating Tires: This option works for both conventional tires and the armored tires. In either case, the interior of the tire is coated with a sticky, sludge-like substance that quickly plugs any leaks or holes in the tire. Unless the tire is completely destroyed (doing double damage to it), the tire will instantly seal itself. Once sealed, it "heals" itself and can do this 1D6 times before the tire is too badly damaged (treat each use as restoring the S.D.C. or M.D.C. back to half the maximum original value, i.e. If a tire had 5 M.D.C. and was shot with a Wilk's laser pistol for 6 damage, the tire would deflate and then seal/reinflate restoring to 3 M.D.C.). It also has an inflation control regulator, which reinflates flat tires after they have been sealed, but can also add or remove air from the tires for better traction. (Removal of air makes the tire softer, giving it more surface area to grip the road and thus more traction/better control.) An experienced driver (make a skill check) can adjust the tires' inflation before entering a slippery area (i.e. just before entering an iced over river/lake or muddy flats) and give himself a +5% to any control rolls if he has adjusted the inflation pressure correctly. It only takes 1-2 seconds (one melee action) to seal and reinflate. **Cost:** Adds 450 credits per tire.

Vector Thrusting and Enhanced Control Fins: The ideal control system for any hovercraft enthusiast! The vector thrusting offers maximum control over the vehicle's positioning. Sleek and contoured control fins also add maximum efficiency and ease of control during high-speed flights. **Bonuses:** +5% to piloting skill, +1 to dodge while traveling over 10 mph (16 km). **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

Nitro Booster: Essentially spare tanks that hold N₂O (Nitrous Oxide, a.k.a. laughing gas) used to temporarily enhance an engine's performance. The basic principle behind this is that air is made up of 20% oxygen and 80% nitrogen; Internal Combustion Engines use air in the combustion of fuel to produce power. Nitro Boosters provide "special" air for the combustion process in the form of N₂O gas (which is 40% oxygen and 60% nitrogen), providing more oxygen for the combustion process and thus a more efficient burn. You could also use pure oxygen and supplement it with normal air, but that requires a mixer and special sensors to regulate the air intake (as too much oxygen will quickly corrode engine parts or create excessive explosive forces that could destroy the engine). The down side to Nitro Boosters is that S.D.C. vehicles quickly burn out their engines due to the excessive heat created in the process (it also gets expensive repairing and replacing the burned out components). With the advent of M.D.C. materials, engine parts can withstand the heat and function better using the Nitro Boosters, but then you are still limited by your supply of the gas. Each tank (about half the size of a S.C.U.B.A. tank (roughly 6 inches/15 cm diameter by 18 inches/46 cm long) weighs about 20 lbs (9 kg) and holds enough gas for two melee rounds of use (30 seconds) with N₂O or one minute with O₂ (Oxygen). The effect in game terms raises the maximum speed of the vehicle by 4 Speed Classes for the duration of the tank. Multiple tanks can be installed (though be wary of cargo space). If it's a retrofitted S.D.C. vehicle roll a 1D6 every time the Nitro Booster is used; rolling a "1" means the engine has been damaged and will need repairs soon (also reduce Speed Class by 2 levels). For every "1" rolled, roll 1D6 again; a second rolled "1" means that something has blown in the engine (gasket, valve, piston, etc.) and the engine is quickly dying. The longer the vehicle continues to operate, the more damage is done to the engine. The engine will last 1D4 melee rounds until it completely seizes up and the car rolls to a stop. M.D.C. engine components can be installed, but such a task is expensive to accomplish. **Note:** This option is only available on Internal Combustion Engines. **Cost:** Tank 100 credits each (50 credits to refill with gas), installation into an Internal Combustion Engine costs 300 credits (includes mounts for tanks), and an additional 5,000 credits for M.D.C. components/engine parts (pistons, gaskets, engine block, etc.).

Fuel Efficiency/Super Conductor Modification: This option is for Internal Combustion Engines or Electric Engines respectively. Essentially the motor and fuel system (for Internal Combustion) or wiring, motor and power cells (for Electrical) are tweaked, insulated and run with super conductors to prevent energy loss and create an efficient transfer of power from the fuel/energy cells to the motor, increasing the engine's performance as well as reducing the vehicle's resistance factors (drag, rolling resistance, power loss along transmission, etc.). This option increases the overall range by 50% (typically 600 miles/960 km). **Cost:** 2,500 credits.

Super Fuel Efficiency/Enhanced Super Conductor Modification: This option is for Internal Combustion Engines or Electric Engines, and is essentially the same as the Fuel Efficiency/Super Conductor Modification but does an even greater job. This option doubles the overall range of the vehicle (typically 800 miles/1,280 km) **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

Extra Fuel Tank/Power Pack: This option extends the existing fuel supply of a vehicle by adding an extra tank (this option

may be purchased as often as the weight allowance of the vehicle permits). Each extra tank essentially doubles the fuel capacity of the vehicle. **Cost & Weight:** A tank for gasoline, diesel or other hydrocarbon products costs 200 credits per tank (without fuel) and weighs about 10 lbs (4.5 kg). Fuel (gasoline, diesel, etc.) typically weighs about 6 lbs (2.7 kg) per gallon (3.8 liters); see the **Internal Combustion Engine** section above for the amount of fuel in the varying sizes of vehicle tanks. Extra power packs (essentially an E-Clip) cost 5,000 credits (fully charged) per unit and weigh about one pound (0.45 kg).

“Feather Fall” System: This is a booster jet system that is used to assist hovercraft and small maneuverable, wheeled vehicles to fall from dangerous heights. For hovercraft these are additional auxiliary thrusters that automatically engage when the vehicle exceeds its maximum travel height (such as ridding over a cliff) and gently slows the fall of the craft until it returns to its operating range. Wheeled vehicles use the booster jet system to slow their descent then rely on a special impact absorbing suspension system. Juicers, Crazies and other daring pilots have popularized a secondary use of the system. By manually activating the booster jet system at high speeds, they can “jump” with the vehicle. This allows the vehicle to jump ravines, obstacles on the road or make a quick escape from weapon fire or mini-missile volleys. **Weight:** The “Feather Fall” system is relatively light, but does take up about 5% of the vehicle’s maximum load capacity (as indicated under the **Chassis Table in The Rifter® #50**). **Cost:** Hovercraft booster jets cost 125 credits per 10 feet (3 m) of falling height above the vehicle’s maximum travel height. Wheeled vehicle booster jets and suspension systems cost 200 credits per 10 feet (3 m) of falling height above ground. When traveling with some speed, you can activate the booster jets to jump 10% of the failing height (1 foot/0.3 m per 10 feet/3 m) above the maximum travel height normal for the hovercraft or above ground for wheeled vehicles. The distance traveled is proportional to the speed traveling at the time of the jump.

“Whisper” System: The original system was supposedly developed for military helicopters in the later part of the 20th Century, but whether or not the technology was actually used or merely made popular by several television shows and movies at the time is unknown. Either way, the concept was transferred over and modified for use in hover vehicles. In the hover vehicle system, specially designed engine modifications smoothly carry the flow of air, reducing the ambient roar normally associated with hovercraft. Also, special sound emitters instantly record and emit reverse sound waves based on the engine’s noises, which then cancel out most of the remaining noise of the hover system. The net game effect is that a skilled pilot can actually use the Prowl skill to prowl with the hovercraft! The only real limitations on the system are that it reduces the vehicle’s Speed Class by 2 levels (due to the reduced air flow and engine modifications) and the prowling ability only works as long as the vehicle is traveling less than 35 mph (56 km); anything faster than that and the typical hover craft roar returns and the sound suppression system can’t compensate fast enough for the extra noise and turns itself off. Small vehicles (like hovercycles) have no further penalties, but large hovercraft are a little harder to hide and are -20% to -35% to Prowl with depending upon their size. If a pilot does not have a Prowl skill he can automatically prowl at 20%. **Cost:** 164,000 credits. **Note:** Electric or nuclear powered wheeled vehicles are

also capable of prowling as the system makes very little noise. It is only the crinkling and crunching of leaves, earth, twigs or other obstacles under the wheels that will make any noticeable sound. Prowling with electric/nuclear wheeled vehicles can be done with the pilot’s Prowl skill, but at a -20% penalty. It is impossible to prowl in a wheeled internal combustion vehicle, as they make way too much noise.

Anti-Theft Alarm and Locks: Locks are hard to pick (-35% Pick Locks) and any attempt to open the lock that fails sets off the alarm (loud, piercing siren). The alarm is also set off if a window is broken or the vehicle is bumped or moved around. **Cost:** 100 credits.

Keypad Entry: A keypad entry system (instead of conventional key or keycard). **Cost:** 100 credits per lock.

Voice Activated Locks and Ignition System: Can recognize up to 6 different voices. **Cost:** 1,200 credits.

Remote Activated Locks and Ignition System: A small, handheld unit (fits on a key chain) or a watch that can activate the locks and ignition system on the vehicle. **Cost:** 150 credits. For 1,500 credits, software can be uploaded/installed into a universal headjack or other related cybernetic/bionic implant that includes a radio transmitter, which allows the cyborg/Headhunter the same options as the handheld version, only it’s safely tucked away inside his or her head.

Loudspeakers: For blasting music, addressing a crowd of people, or shouting over the roar of combat or high speed travel. **Cost:** 200 credits.

Sound/Entertainment System: This is a simple audio playing system that lets you listen to music and audio recordings. **Cost:** The basic system costs 200 credits, and has multiple inputs (disc, portable drives, plug-ins, etc.) for most common audio storage devices. It also has an AM/FM radio tuner, which can be used to pick up radio broadcasts (only common near high-tech centers and big cities). The entertainment upgrade has a small (6 x 8 inches/15 x 20 cm) flat screen for watching videos/movies, a movie disc player, TV receiver (can pick up TV broadcasts), headphones and a fingerjack/headjack plug-in. A single upgrade can be purchased for the whole vehicle or multiple upgrades can be purchased so each passenger can have one. If multiple systems are purchased each user has the option of patching into the main unit to see/listen to what everyone else is listening to/watching or may put earphones or jack-in with a fingerjack or headjack to listen/watch their own music/movies. Each upgrade costs 500 credits. The upgrade unit is typically mounted behind seats or pulled out from the wall or out from the seat on an adjustable arm.

Flashing Lights: This is just like what you would see on a police car or fire truck. **Cost:** 150 credits (has 100 S.D.C.) or 1,000 credits for a 3 M.D.C. version.

Searchlights: A big, directional searchlight (manual or remote), 20 S.D.C.. **Cost:** 200 credits for manual, 300 credits for joystick remote, add 300 credits for infrared, add another 700 credits for it to have 2 M.D.C.

Short-Range Radio: Range: 4 miles (6.4 km). **Cost:** 200 credits.

Long-Range, Directional Radio: Range: 100 miles (160 km). **Cost:** 1,000 credits.

Video Camera: Mounted on the inside or exterior. **Cost:** 1,200 credits for a 10 S.D.C. version, 8,000 credits for a 2 M.D.C. version. To add nightvision it is an additional 1,400 credits or to add infrared is an additional 1,000 credits.

Radar Detector: Indicates whenever the vehicle is being “pinged” by another radar signal. **Cost:** 200 credits.

Radiation Detector/Geiger Counter/Dosimeter: Indicates the levels of radiation on the exterior (and/or interior) of the vehicle. This is useful for keeping an eye on a leaky nuclear power plant, or traveling dangerous radioactive wastelands. **Cost:** 200 credits.

Radiation Shielding: This lines the walls of the vehicle with radiation shielding (lead lining and lead based windows). This not only protects from most kinds of radiation but will also disrupt a number of psionic, magical or supernatural abilities that cannot penetrate lead (such as X-Ray Vision). **Cost:** 50,000 credits for a car, truck or hauler/transport cab, 120,000 credits to cover a bus, trailer or an entire transport.

Clock, Calendar and Gyro-Compass: This is great for the directionally challenged, traveling at night, or open desert/grasslands, and provides a +5% bonus to the Land Navigation skill. **Cost:** 200 credits.

Mini-Radar System: Built into the dashboard, also provides a “beep” noise every time a moving object comes into view, alerting the pilot of a target. **Bonus:** +1 on initiative. **Cost:** 3,000 credits.

Heads-Up Display (HUD): Instead of (or in addition to) the display on the dashboard, all pertinent data (speed, fuel levels, weapon payloads, etc.) are projected onto the windshield of the vehicle for easy viewing of the pilot and passengers. **Cost:** 10,000 credits.

Vehicle Cybernetic Interface: This is the vehicle component of the Cybernetic Vehicle Interface found on page 100 of **Rifts® World Book 17: Warlords of Russia™**. Not all vehicles are outfitted with this system, but many cybernetically enhanced Headhunters, City Rats and cyborgs insist on such systems in their vehicles. Though popular in Russia/Europe, similar systems do exist throughout the world (a common technology before the Cataclysm, but it was a toy of the rich and wealthy so not every vehicle encountered will have this system installed, but many do, especially if they predate the Cataclysm). **Cost:** 80,000 credits to outfit a vehicle. There is an additional 25,000 credits per station or sub-system that can be plugged into (like a turret, auxiliary weapon system, etc.) which is controlled by another person who also has the Vehicle Cybernetic Interface.

On-Board Computer/Control Systems – Basic: The vehicle makes heavy use of computers to modulate and control fuel intake, air intakes, emission controls, optimum engine performance, etc. It also has most, if not all, of its features controlled or assisted by computer to anticipate and aid in driver control of the vehicle. The vehicle needs to have a Heads-Up Display (H.U.D.), a headjack/fingerjack to plug into or a Vehicle Cybernetic Interface system for the pilot to make effective use of the system. When used, this grants a +5% to the piloting of the vehicle. This system also networks other sub-systems on larger vehicles, allowing easy communication between pilots and gunners, and helps them coordinate attacks and maneuvers. **Cost:** 45,000 credits, and typi-

cally comes with one set of interfaces (headjack and fingerjack) as part of the package. Each additional station on the vehicle will cost an additional 12,000 credits (includes networking this system with the main one).

On-Board Computer/Control Systems – Advanced: This is identical to the basic system but offers a number of additional features. First, the computer system used to assist in vehicle performance and control is far superior and provides a +10% to piloting of the vehicle (instead of the +5% of the basic model). It also provides a +1 to strike on all vehicle controlled weapon systems, a +1 on initiative and a +1 to dodge with the vehicle. Secondly, the system also has an auto-pilot feature that functions at a 60% skill rating of the corresponding piloting skill (can communicate with the driver for further instructions such as destination or purpose; flee, follow the river, etc.). **Cost:** The advanced system costs 500,000 credits. The system can be networked with other sections of a vehicle like the basic model and can even allow someone plugged into a remote station (like a gunnery turret) to pilot the vehicle through a Vehicle Cybernetic Interface. Each sub-station costs 25,000 credits.

Secret Compartments: A hidden compartment that can be used for smuggling or storing personal items or weapons that the owner doesn't want found. **Cost:** Small (2 inches/5 cm x 4 inches/10 cm x 1 inch/2.5 cm) 1,000 credits, Medium (6 inches/15 cm x 6 inches/15 cm x 2 inches/5 cm) 2,000 credits, Large (2 feet/0.6 m x 2 feet/0.6 m x 6 inches/15 cm) 4,000 credits, Extra Large (3 feet/0.9 m x 3 feet/0.9 m x 1 foot/0.3 m) 8,000 credits.

Convertible/Removable Top: This option provides a retracting top for the vehicle. The top retracts back into part of the trunk space and allows the driver and passengers a nice, breezy drive. The only down side to this modification is that Environmental Pilot Compartments, Reinforced Pilot Compartments and Passenger Armor cannot be used with this feature. The option is also only available to cars, jeeps and small trucks. **Cost:** An M.D.C. frame and canvas (which provide 45 M.D.C. when the canopy is closed) is 30,000 credits. You can have a topless or open concept for the vehicle at no extra cost to the basic vehicle chassis, but you are still limited/unable to use the Environmental Pilot Compartments, Reinforced Pilot Compartments and full Passenger Armor (only a windshield may be purchased). Another option is a removable hardtop that provides 80 M.D.C. and weighs 20 lbs (9 kg) but must be unlatched and removed manually to make the vehicle into a convertible; costs 50,000 credits. An ejectable model (can be blown off to get rid of unwanted passengers/pests or for an emergency exit from the vehicle) costs an additional 600 credits (can be either the canvas or hardtop model).

Reinforced Pilot/Crew Compartment: Essentially this is a reinforced passenger compartment that protects the crew and pilot. Adds 40 M.D.C. and 20 lbs (9 kg) per person. **Cost:** 25,000 per person. Only an area effect weapon (like a plasma mini-missile) or a Called Shot to strike the passengers will damage this armor before all of the vehicle armor is depleted.

Environmental Pilot Compartment: Includes independent air supply, air conditioning, heat, air purification and circulation system (good for 24 hours). **Cost:** 25,000 credits total for all passengers. If a Reinforced Pilot/Crew Compartment is also purchased, the two together allow the compartment to survive

up to a water depth of 500 feet (152 m), for those unlikely events where the vehicle falls off a bridge or slams into a river.

Advanced Crash Survival System: This is one of the few amazing advances from the Golden Age to make it into the post-apocalyptic world of Rifts Earth that finds minimal use! Most vehicles are equipped with seatbelts or restraining harnesses of some kind, and like the people of the 21st Century, not everyone uses them (only 90% of Canadians and 80% of Americans used seatbelts in that era). The same goes with these advanced systems. It also doesn't help that Juicers and Crazies believe themselves to be invincible and throw caution and such remarkable features to the wind. As an add-on feature to the Reinforced Pilot Compartment, this advanced system consists of impact absorbing structures, air bags, padding, protective roll bars, and automatic shutdown and braking features to protect the occupant. In game terms, in any instance where the person using this system is about to take crash damage he should make a roll to save vs punch/fall or impact or 12 or higher (without bonuses); a failed roll means he takes half damage, a successful roll means he take no damage at all and walks away from the crash unscathed! **Cost & Weight:** The system adds 50 lbs (22.5 kg) and costs 2,500 credits per driver/passenger, and requires the Reinforced Pilot Compartment as a prerequisite before this system can be installed. **Note:** This system is not available for motorcycles/hovercycles or convertible cars.

Seats: All vehicles come free with basic seats (number depends upon type of vehicle). Some vehicles (like transports and trailers) can have additional seats added. These additional seats are pretty basic (S.D.C. material, seatbelts and minor adjustability), costing 100 credits and weighing 20 lbs (9 kg) each. The Advanced Model is made of light M.D.C. material, has a wide range of adjustability (a good feature for most humanoid D-Bees), and a variety of seatbelt options to select from (lap belt, lap & shoulder belt, 5 point harness), weighs 18 lbs (8.1 kg) and costs 1,200 credits each. The Deluxe Model has everything the Advanced Model does, plus heated/cooled seats, plug-in for a headjack and fingerjack, power plug-in for appliances (computers, disc players, etc.), fold out table and beverage holder, weighs 22 lbs (10 kg) and costs 5,000 credits each. For control freaks, there is the Captain's Chair. The Captain's Chair has everything in the Deluxe Model plus a built-in computer, which collects and feeds vehicle data (vehicle performance, weapon payloads, sensor data, damage reports, etc.) to the person sitting in the chair. Weight is 25 lbs (11.4 kg) and costs 6,000 credits each.

Ejection Seat: Though not very practical on a motorcycle, the ejection seat can be quite useful for hovercraft and fast moving wheeled vehicles. Essentially, the pilot (additional ejection seats are needed for each passenger seat) is rocketed away from the vehicle, parachutes deploy to slow him down and bring him safely to the ground. **Cost:** 6,000 credits each.

Ejection Seat Hover Vehicle: Essentially the same as a standard ejection seat, however instead of a parachute the seat turns into a jetpack that automatically brings the wearer safely to the ground. The automatic feature can be overridden and the system can be used as a short-range jetpack. The jetpack itself is a toned down version of the Wilk's jetpack (as found on page 228 of the original **Rifts® RPG** or page 267 of the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**). This modified version has the following stats: 20 M.D.C.,

Range: 100 miles (160 km), Weight: 45 lbs (20.3 kg), Speed: 120 mph (192 km). **Cost:** 11,000 credits each for gasoline, 13,000 for electric and 128,000 for nuclear (2 year life).

External Cargo Mounts/Racks and Containers: Some find it easier to just strap a canoe, bags, water cans and other pieces of equipment to the exterior of a vehicle, and many just do so with some rope. This option, however, uses specially designed racks, quick release mounting brackets and rigging to safely and securely strap cargo to the exterior of a vehicle, robot or suit of power armor. Power armor pilots love these things as they can wear their favorite suit of power armor and still keep all of their personal effects safe and on hand if they should need them. Each rack covers one area on a vehicle (i.e. roof, hood, side, back, etc.) or section on a robot/suit of power armor (back, arm, leg, etc.) and this will need to be purchased multiple times to cover an entire vehicle. **Cost:** 80 credits per S.D.C. rack/mounting (100 S.D.C.), or 1,200 credits per M.D.C. rack/mounting (10 M.D.C.). Magnetic clamps are another popular feature used in this application. The only drawback is that a constant supply of power is needed to maintain the magnetic field or else the cargo will fall off. Vehicle owners with nuclear power supplies, and robot and power armor pilots, favor this option as they have a relatively unlimited power supply. The same system can be powered by an E-Clip, which will constantly hold an object in place for about two weeks before being too weak to hold it any further. A Supernatural P.S. of 15 is required to remove it while activated. **Cost:** 5,000 credits for the E-Clip and 300 credits per magnetic mounting plate and system. Note the one serious down side to external cargo is that it is not protected and is often the first thing damaged in a firefight. You can protect valuable cargo by storing it inside a vehicle or by using M.D.C. cargo containers. Small containers (mostly used on bikes and power armor) are 1 foot x 0.5 feet x 0.5 feet (0.3 m x 0.15 m x 0.15 m), have 5 M.D.C. (or 10 M.D.C. for heavily armored), are waterproof, weigh one pound (0.45 kg) each on their own, and cost 2,000 credits (4,000 credits for a heavily armored version). Medium sized containers are roughly 1 foot x 3 feet x 4 feet (0.3 m x 0.9 m x 1.2 m) or a barrel 2 feet x 3 feet (0.6 m x 0.9 m), have 12 M.D.C. (or 25 M.D.C. for a heavily armored version), are waterproof, weigh 3 lbs (1.4 kg) each on their own, and cost 8,000 credits (18,000 credits for heavily armored). Large sized containers (ideal for a roof rack or giant robot backpack) are roughly 6 feet x 5 feet x 3 feet (1.8 m x 1.5 m x 0.9 m), have 30 M.D.C. (or 65 M.D.C. for a heavily armored version), are waterproof, weigh 10 lbs (4.5 kg) each on their own, and cost 22,000 credits (or 50,000 credits for heavily armored).

Bulldozer Bucket/Shovel: This is typically a metal scoop or shovel that can be used to move dirt, knock over trees or do some serious damage to civilian vehicles. It has a limited range of motion controlled by hydraulics (though some use electric motors). **M.D.C.:** 100, and inflicts 1D6 M.D. slowly plowing through stuff or adds 2D6 M.D. to a ram attack. **Cost:** 50,000 credits.

Backhoe Shovel: This is typically a rear mounted robotic arm with a shovel on the end for excavating dirt. The system also includes stabilizing pylons (retractable feet) that help stabilize the vehicle while it digs through the earth. A vehicle doesn't need to use the stabilizers to move dirt, but the operator does need to be aware of what he is lifting or he could tip over the vehicle. **Cost:** 100,000 credits.

Crane, Winch and Cable: This is what you might find on the back of a tow truck; a crane or robotic arm, high-tensile M.D.C. steel cable, a powerful winch and an assortment of harnesses and attachments for moving heavy loads. Though not something for your average adventurer, many Operators and robot/power armor pilots rely heavily on one of these to load a robot or suit of power armor onto a trailer or into a repair bay or a transport. Juicers, Crazies, a few daring D-Bees and cyborgs have also been known to use the line to water ski behind vehicles (some are even so bold as to try it on dry land, and love being dragged through a sandy desert). **Cost:** Small size, which handles most small suits of power armor and cyborgs up to 10 feet (3 m) tall and weighing under 2 tons, has 20 M.D.C. (the line itself can take 5 M.D.C. in a single attack before being cut) and costs 80,000 credits. Medium size, which handles most large suits of power armor, giant cyborgs and robots up to 30 feet (9.1 m) tall and weighing under 20 tons, has 50 M.D.C. (the line itself can take 5 M.D.C. in a single attack before being cut) and costs 150,000 credits. Large size, handles most robots up to 50 feet (15.2 m) tall and weighing under 80 tons, has 80 M.D.C. (the line itself can take 10 M.D.C. in a single attack before being cut) and costs 300,000 credits.

Robotic Appendage: This is typically a single or even a pair of robotic arms used for heavy labor. The Robotic Appendage(s) function much the way as the old forklifts used to work, but has the added benefit of fine motor control and grabbing onto things as well as general lifting. **Cost:** A basic system costs 190,000 credits per arm. Each arm has a Robotic P.S. of 20 and 24 M.D.C. To upgrade with special features or to increase strength, see the Robot Creation Rules on pages 94 to 105 in the original **Rifts® Sourcebook One** or pages 12 to 38 in the new **Rifts® Sourcebook One, Revised & Expanded**. In the alternative, bionic systems can also be used as a guideline for tools, increased strength and other features.

Odd Customizations

Sometimes what you want just can't be found in a store, whether it be that Emperor Prosek hood ornament or the "I Break 4 D-Bees" bumper sticker. So you hire a local artist or Operator to make you what you need. The variety of customizable items is extensive and impossible to list completely, especially with so many players with really cool ideas. I'll present a few basic ideas to get your creative juices going and inspire your unusual design work. You should consult with your G.M. before finalizing/choosing your customization.

Customized Paint Jobs, Insignias, Logos or Crest/Coat of Arms: Sometimes you just need a new paint job to clean up an old car, other times you may want a grinning shark's face or flames to give your car that little extra or to "make it go faster." Full body painting of a single color is 600 credits for a full sized car (multiply or divide this number based on the difference in size to your vehicle; a bike would be half, a van would be x2, etc.). Multi-colored schemes (like camouflage) are 1,200 credits (again, multiply or divide this number based on the difference in size to your vehicle). Small symbols, logos, crests or pictures will cost 1,000 to 2,500 credits depending upon the level of detail in the artwork. Large, full vehicle motifs, murals or designs can easily range from 5,000 to 10,000 credits or more. The paint jobs are all S.D.C., as M.D.C. paint jobs would be exorbitantly expen-

sive and not cost effective (multiply the cost by 30 and add 1D6 M.D.C. per square foot (0.09 sq. m) covered by the paint if you still insist on M.D.C. paint).

Removable Racing Stripes/Logos & Designs: Most often removable decals are used in the transport business to designate truck cargo (frozen foods, hazardous waste, time sensitive equipment, etc.). However, many illegal or Black Market organizations use them in smuggling or as vehicle "quick changes" to disguise vehicle movements or to hide from pursuers. Most strips use magnets or a special adhesive that allows for quick attachment and removal. **Cost:** For small to medium signs, add 200 credits to the cost of the logo or artwork. Large signs often have a hard time staying on, but are available for an additional 500 credits to the cost of the logo or artwork.

Hood Ornaments & 3D Art: Some people like to mount "cool" things on their cars. This can be iconic symbols or miniature statues or figures (rumor has it you can buy the chrome-plated image of Emperor Prosek himself from a few Black Market shops in the 'Burbs), to animal horns/antlers, skulls and even complete skeletons. **Cost:** 20 to 50 credits for sculpted figures or ornaments, or 5 to 20,000 credits for animal trophies (from simple moose antlers to Rhino-Buffalo skulls).

Fuzzy Dice and Other Dashboard Accessories: A wide assortment of pre-Rifts artifacts seem to make it into this category, as do a number of wild yet interesting trinkets from local vendors. These things include fuzzy dice, religious symbols, wide angle mirrors, magnetic compasses, dancing Hawaiian girls, bobble heads, stuffed animals, plush toys, and the list goes on. **Cost:** Anywhere from 2 to 5 credits for modern trinkets, or 100 to 10,000 credits for original, pre-Rifts artifacts.

Mini/Giant Sized & Customized Chairs: With undersized and oversized D-Bees around, this is a customized option for chairs that meet their size requirements as well as needs for accommodation of tails, back spines, wings and other unusual features. **Cost:** Adds 1,000 credits to the cost of the chair (as above) per feature accommodated (smaller, larger, tail rest, wing support, wheel chair access/use etc.).

Plated Parts: Very popular amongst a number of pre-Rifts car enthusiasts were chrome-plated bumpers, wheel rim and other peripherals. While some of that is still true today, the fad has taken a more practical turn, using silver. Many enthusiasts claim it's so they can run down and harm supernatural vermin foolish enough to be on a road, an ever growing theme in the vampire-ridden South and in places like the Pecos Empire. **Cost:** 200 credits for small trim, mirrors and other minor features, 1,000 credits for rims, lights and medium-sized features, 2,500 credits for a large item like a bumper. **Note:** These costs are for items plated in chrome or silver. Increase the costs proportionally if another metal is used.

Campers, Trailers, and Towing Accessories

Some adventurers are quite content with an R.V. style transport or a decked-out truck or hover car. Others may prefer something to cart around a spare vehicle/suit of power armor, load up

like a pop-up camper or just to carry extra weapons, gear and equipment. This option will facilitate most of these designs.

Just like the vehicles, the trailer design uses a special kind of chassis (see **Chassis Table** in **The Rifter® #50** for options) and requires some kind of locomotion (typically the same as the vehicle pulling it). An engine and power supply are optional (and partially dependent on the type of locomotion), as are weapons and other features.

Chassis

Small: This is typical for a small cargo space or weapon mount (usually something heavy and needing to be “set up” to fire). It is also the only size that a hovercycle or motorcycle can pull. Also note that this size is the same option for building a sidecar for a motorcycle or hovercycle, but the maximum load is half (1,000 lbs/450 kg).

Medium: This size is typical for a small camper or trailer to carry a motorcycle, hovercycle, or small boat or to carry several crates of cargo.

Large: This is the kind of chassis used as the base for hauling other vehicles like cars, trucks, hover vehicles and the like. It is also the “standard” size for cargo trailers used by a hauler for transporting goods.

Note: See **Chassis Table** in the vehicle section (see **The Rifter® #50**) for trailer chassis costs and data.

Locomotion

Just like the vehicle towing the trailer, the trailer needs some kind of means of locomotion. Most trailers are of the wheeled variety (cheapest), but hovering trailers/platforms are also available. Walker/legged trailers are available, but most walking/legged vehicles would use a wheel trailer to save on costs as a legged trailer would essentially cost as much as a legged vehicle due to the needs to purchase all the same engine components to make it work.

Wheeled and Tracked: The trailer has two to ten wheels depending upon the size of the trailer. **Cost:** 100 credits per wheel. Add an additional 1,000 credits for a tracked system with the same bonuses and limitations as found in the vehicle locomotion section above.

Hover: What you create here is a hover platform. The unit can be powered by the main power supply of the vehicle or set up as an independent platform. The main advantage of the first option is the reduced price of the trailer, but any damage to the umbilical cord/trailer hitch (typically has 20 M.D.C.) that connects the vehicle to the trailer (and provides power to the trailer) could sever the link and either create a dead weight, dragging behind the vehicle, or pull the vehicle down if it was flying at any significant height. The second option can be used independently of a vehicle, but needs to be towed or pushed manually to move about (it is also ideal for moving cargo short distances with a few laborers). The down side is that this model is more expensive. Use the same rules and guidelines above for the creation of a hover vehicle (basic system costs, altitude, power supply, etc.), just leave out the costs for Ground Speed, as the trailer doesn’t move on its own but is pulled by another vehicle. When it comes to nuclear power supplies, use the Bike column for small independent trailers, Car/

Truck column for medium independent trailers and Bus/Transport/Hauler column for large independent trailers.

Walking/Legged Systems: For this rare option use the same design process above for vehicular locomotion as a walking/legged vehicle.

Vehicular Drag

Any vehicle forced to tow a trailer will experience a drop in maximum and cruising speed simply because the engine is forced to do more work.

Bikes: Will see the Speed Class drop by 5 levels while pulling a small trailer or attached to a sidecar.

Sports Cars: Will see their Speed Class drop by 4 levels while pulling a medium sized trailer and by 3 levels with a small trailer.

Cars and Trucks: Will see their Speed Class reduced by 3 levels while pulling a medium sized trailer and by 2 levels with a small trailer. Only trucks (like a pickup truck) can pull a large trailer, which will reduce the Speed Class by 5 levels.

Transports, Buses and Haulers: Will see their Speed Class reduced by 1 level while pulling a medium or small sized trailer. Buses and Transports can haul large trailers but doing so reduces their Speed Class by 4 levels. Haulers can pull large trailers, which only reduce their Speed Class by 2 levels. Haulers are also the only vehicle type designed for pulling more than one trailer (these elongated vehicles are often called “Road Trains” due to their similarities to pre-Rift rail trains and their operation on roads and highways). Other types of vehicles can try but will find the task daunting and have a good chance of blowing out the transmission. Haulers are typically limited to 5 trailers for safety and terrain considerations but can pull more if their engines are powerful enough. Such road trains are typically limited to areas that are wide open and flat, as rough terrain and forests severely hinder their use.

Camper and Cargo Options

Though most of these options are intended for trailers, some of these options can be installed into buses, transports, haulers (the back cab unit), vans, trucks and pickup trucks (the truck bed unit).

Small Trailer Hitch: This is needed on any vehicle that wishes to pull a small or medium sized trailer. **Cost:** 150 credits for the standard S.D.C. version (100 S.D.C. or 1 M.D.C.); 1,500 credits for the M.D.C. version, which has 20 M.D.C. **Note:** The trailer hitch is a hard target to hit (impossible from directly in front of the vehicle or behind the trailer), and a Called Shot is required, with a -4 penalty to strike (typically needs a 16+).

Large Trailer Hitch: The large trailer hitch is the style of trailer hitch used by pickup trucks and transports to tow large trailers (the “5th wheel”). Haulers already have a this style of hitch included as part of their basic purchase. If you wish to have a hauler pull multiple trailers, each trailer pulling another trailer will need a large trailer hitch. **Cost:** 800 credits each for S.D.C. versions (300 S.D.C. or 3 M.D.C.), or 4,000 credits for an M.D.C. version with 50 M.D.C. **Note:** The large trailer hitch is a hard target to hit (impossible from directly in front of the vehicle or

behind the trailer), and a Called Shot is required, with a -1 penalty to strike (typically needs a 13+).

Collapsible Camper: This option transforms a compact trailer into a fully expanded camper home. Typically the trailer is anchored to the ground or raised up on pylons, sections open up and unfold, creating a living and sleeping environment to facilitate a number of people. Small trailers are limited to two people, medium trailers can accommodate up to eight people and large trailers can accommodate up to twenty people or more! **Cost:** 100 credits per bed, adds 10 lbs (4.5 kg) per bed and provides 20 S.D.C. per bed to the main body of the unit. Note that you can have more beds but that will make things crowded. Also, having other features (kitchen, toilet, showers, storage space, etc.) will reduce the number of available beds. The camper is also typically S.D.C. due to its flimsy structure, which limits its defensive properties. However, M.D.C. fabric or leather from an M.D.C. creature can be used on the tent-like sections, and M.D.C. metal, ceramics and plastics can be used for the siding and roof of the tent trailer, to offer some minor protection from midnight raids, bandits and stray shots. An M.D.C. camper costs 10,000 credits per bed, adds 5 lbs (2.3 kg) per bed and provides 10 M.D.C. per bed to the main body of the unit.

Hardtop Camper: This option is for fully framed trailers, pickup trucks, buses, transports or the back section of a hauler. The unit can also be armored as very little, if any of it collapses down. This option is also good for those constantly on the move as a driver can operate a vehicle and pull the camper while tired party members sleep. **Cost:** 1,000 credits per bed, adds 15 lbs (6.8 kg) per bed and provides 30 S.D.C. per bed or 25,000 credits per bed, adds 10 lbs (4.5 kg) per bed and provides 15 M.D.C. per bed. Armor can also be added on top of the hard top camper frame at the same costs as for vehicles above.

Kitchen/Kitchenette: The camper or trailer can have some kind of BBQ, grill or stove, refrigerator and dry storage/pantry. For small trailers, this can be a fold-out grill and kitchen or a nearly fully equipped kitchen that one might feed a small mercenary band or platoon of soldiers with. **Cost:** 1,200 credits for a hot plate/grill and mini-refrigerator which weighs about 20 lbs (9 kg), 5,000 credits for a "standard" size kitchen with table and benches one might feed a family of six with (weighs about 100 lbs/45 kg) and 20,000 credits for the super sized kitchen that includes two BBQs, a large oven, stove, two full sized refrigeration/freezer units and enough collapsible picnic tables and chairs to accommodate 40 people, which all weighs in at 1,200 lbs (540 kg).

Showers/Bath Tubs: Most wilderness folk tend not to bathe as often as city folk. Getting wet in a lake or river is often acceptable to most. But for some travelers, a shower and smelling clean are an "essential" part of camping, and thus this has been included here. Bathtubs and hot tubs are extremely rare, as most wilderness folk are not inclined to waste, let alone carry around a large amount of water to be wasted (i.e. not for drinking), so only the rich and eccentric will cart such things into the wilderness. **Cost:** A simple collapsible curtain and stand that uses a 5 gallon (19 liter) bucket/tank is about 500 credits (typically a part of a collapsible camper/tent trailer) and weighs about 20 lbs (9 kg). A solid shower stall with a water collection system/drain uses two 5 gallon (19 liter) tanks (one hot, the other cold), costs 1,000

credits and weighs 44 lbs (20 kg). A one man tub is only 100 credits (weighs 50 lbs/22.5 kg), a two person tub is 300 credits (weighs 80 lbs/36 kg), a one man hot tub/whirlpool with massaging jets will cost 1,000 credits (weighs 70 lbs/31.5 kg), and a three man hot tub/whirlpool will cost 3,000 credits (weighs 160 lbs/72 kg). For the tubs this may seem relatively inexpensive, but these prices do not include water, which must either be boiled and/or heated over a fire or with a water heating system (see options below).

Portable Toilets: Many female adventurers will swear that a decent portable toilet can make or break an expedition. This unit is considered luxury compared to a latrine or thunder box, as it securely stores and processes organic waste with minimal odor, and the unit is also sealed tight enough to keep out annoying insects and other critters as you do your business. **Cost:** 250 credits for a simple chemical toilet that needs to be drained/cleaned of its smelly cargo once a week, weighs 5 lbs (2.3 kg). A more advanced model, which separates the water from the waste (to be reused in the flushing or put back into a water storage system) and produces odorless and sanitized bricks, which can simply be tossed, buried or burned as fuel, costs 1,200 credits and weighs 20 lbs (9 kg).

Water Storage, Purification and Recycling System: An essential part of any serious adventure party, especially one traveling through a desert or desolated, diseased or radioactive terrain. This system can be tied into a kitchen, shower/tub and/or portable toilet to provide and recycle a steady flow of hot or cold water used in those systems. **Cost:** A simple system that holds 5 gallons (19 liters) and is good for drinking water and one minor appliance costs 2,000 credits and weighs 10 lbs (4.5 kg). A more robust system that holds 20 gallons (76 liters) of water and can be used by a family sized group (6 to 8 people) using a number of appliances at intermittent times (or a single user who likes to use a bathtub or hot tub), will cost 20,000 credits and weighs 200 lbs (90 kg). A full system suitable for a mercenary group or platoon of soldiers (or a family sized group who likes to frequently bathe or use a hot tub) holds 100 gallons (400 liters), costs 100,000 credits and weighs 990 lbs (446 kg).

E-Clip Charging Unit: This is a special unit that either is built into or plugs into the main power of the vehicle. It will charge most conventional batteries, E-Clips and car batteries. The vehicle needs to have a Nuclear Power Plant or an Electric Power Plant with enough Solar Cells to charge the required E-Clips (see **Solar Cell Option** under the **Electrical Power Plant** in the previous issue). The charger will charge most E-Clips in 6 hours (can simultaneously charge 4 E-Clips), and other batteries can be charged in less time. **Cost:** 12,000 credits and weighs 10 lbs (4.5 kg).

Portable Power Generator: Most of the previously mentioned systems run on their own power cells (uses a standard E-Clip), are manually operated/pumped or use gas (typically propane, butane or methane) to heat. But sometimes the power requirements are greater than what those can provide. A solar collector can be used to operate all features and even charge E-Clips. A nuclear power plant is probably preferred if the trailer is also used as a weapons platform or the group needs to recharge a lot of E-Clips. For all instances, use the power plant options

above as outlined for vehicles when making/selecting a second power system.

Vehicle Transport: This is all the equipment you need (ramps, guides, mounting blocks and rigging) to use a trailer as a vehicle transport. In most cases, one set of vehicle transport equipment is needed for each type of vehicle (small boat, motorcycle/hovercycle, car/truck, large boat, power armor, etc.). Again, the size of the trailer dictates the type of vehicle to be hauled. Small trailers are limited to one-man ATVs, small motorcycles or small suits of power armor. Medium trailers are good for most hovercycles, large motorbikes, cars and jeeps. Large trailers can cart one large vehicle like a hover truck or small robot or two cars or four hovercycles/motorcycles, etc. **Cost:** 1,000 credits per set of equipment, with those for large vehicles and small robots costing an additional 1,500 credits. Note that most large robots are too big for a standard vehicle trailer, needing custom rigging and an extra large trailer (typically the equivalent of two to three trailers or more).

Weapon Mount/Turret: Trailers can also be used to cart around small artillery weapons, long-range missiles and other types of weapon systems. This option sets up the trailer with grounding pylons (similar to a Glitter Boy's), a rotating platform/turret and a seat and control system for the weapon. Sensors, the weapon itself, turret armor and other such features still need to be purchased for the trailer (use the lists above for the appropriate costs). **Cost:** 50,000 credits. If the weapon is not tied into the power system of the vehicle (like a missile launcher), it must use a small power pack to operate the pylons and weapon fire control system, which costs 5,000 credits and is essentially an E-Clip that powers the unit for 20 uses (set up/deployment of the laser burrowing pylons, firing the weapon and retracting the pylons combine to make up one use).

Repair Bay: All the essentials tools, equipment and work space to make repairs to vehicles, robots, power armor, weapons and body armor. It also includes a mini manufacturing plant (and a small selection of raw materials, machine components and electronics), which uses nanobots to build parts from scratch (designs in the Operator's database or designed by himself). The Repair Bay also includes a high-end computer station with several monitors for designing, controlling manufacturing of parts, reading technical journals and troubleshooting difficult problems. The weight of the entire unit is 10,000 lbs (4,500 kg). **Cost:** 600,000 credits. At the G.M.'s discretion, an Operator character can have this added to his personal vehicle (trailer, transport or truck) free of charge, in place of all the starting tools and mechanic related equipment he receives at character generation. Some of the tools and accessories included as part of this package are: Crane, Winch and Cable (as above, free, any one size); Portable Cybernetics and Robotics Tool Kit (**Rifts® Bionic Sourcebook**, page 68); and Cybernetics and Robotics Shop Kit (**Rifts® Bionic Sourcebook**, page 68). **Note:** The Repair Bay does include a basic Design and Diagnostic Simulation Computer/DiSCuS (no bonuses), but the Operator can purchase the upgraded version at the normal price of 300,000 credits per +2% skill as outlined on page 69 of the **Rifts® Bionic Sourcebook** to add to this package.

Field Surgery Unit/Medical Bay: An operating table (changes shape as needed – stirrups for giving birth, chair for dental work, etc.) cabinet of basic medical supplies, recovery room (one

free, others purchased as normal beds), incinerator (to dispose of medical waste), cleaning supplies (to sterilize medical instrument and prep doctors as well as to clean up afterwards), diagnostic equipment, plus an assortment of materials and tools related to the doctor's specialty (e.g. a Cyber-Doc would also have a few Bio-Systems and cybernetics for medical purposes and a mini repair station, a Body Fixer would have a collection of medical odds and ends such as drugs, herbs and salves). The Medical Bay also includes a high-end computer station with several monitors for reviewing patient data, writing reports, monitoring patients and/or designing cybernetic systems (design only, manufacturing them will require special equipment). The weight of the entire unit is 8,000 lbs (3,600 kg). **Cost:** 400,000 credits. At the G.M.'s discretion, a Cyber-Doc or Body Fixer character can have this added to his personal vehicle (trailer, transport or truck) free of charge, in place of all the starting tools and medical supplies he receives at character generation. The original **Rifts® RPG** does give each of the O.C.C.s a starting vehicle, but **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** does not. I leave it up to the G.M. to decide if the player can have a free non-military vehicle (use the customization budget above if the G.M. approves). Some of the tools and accessories included as part of this package are:

- Bio-Comp Monitor (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- Compu-Drug Dispenser (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- 4 Standard First Aid Kits (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263); Hypodermic Gun (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- IRMSS Internal Robot Medical Surgeon System (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- IRVT Internal Robot Visual Transmitter or "Seeker" (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- RAU Robot Antiseptic Unit or "Cleaner" (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- RMK Robot Medical Kit or "Knitter" (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- RSU Robot Sedative Unit or "Sleeper" (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- Suture Gun (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- Palm Bio-Unit (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).
- Portable Bio-Scan & Bio-Lab (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 263).

Field Laboratory: This is a nice little research center filled with an assortment of scientific equipment, diagnostic tools, analytical systems and storage facilities for dangerous materials and isolation chambers for specimens. The lab also includes a high-end computer station for writing reports, reviewing and editing video & audio recordings and monitoring specimens. The weight of the entire unit is 6,000 lbs (2,700 kg). **Cost:** 34,000 credits. At the G.M.'s discretion, a Rogue Scientist character can have this added to his personal vehicle (trailer, transport or truck) free of charge, in place of all the starting tools and research supplies he receives at character generation. The **Rifts® RPG** does give the Rogue Scientist a starting vehicle, but **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** does not. I leave it up to the G.M. to decide if the player can have a free non-military vehicle (use the customization budget above if the G.M. approves). Some of the tools and accessories included as part of this package are: Portable Laboratory (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 264); Portable Scan Dihilator (**Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 264); and 2 M.D.C. Containment Cells

(Environmental, 100 M.D.C., Radio Communication and Video Surveillance). 8 x 6 x 6 feet (2.4 x 1.8 x 1.8 m).

Prisoner Transport Module: This add-in feature converts the back seat of a car/van or the cargo area of a bus, transport or even a trailer into a safe, secure and inescapable prisoner transport. This modular unit is quite popular with Bounty Hunters, Headhunters and slave traders. One module must be purchased for each prisoner to be transported and a vehicle is limited in the number of modules by the number of extra seats it has. The basic unit has chains and manacles to secure the prisoner and M.D.C. wire meshing or M.D.C. glass as a screen to the driver or as windows and bars/plating underneath and padding everywhere else. If the prisoner can escape the chains (needs a Supernatural P.S. of 20 or to be able to inflict 5 M.D.), he will need to do 10 M.D. to the wire mesh to breach it or 15 M.D. to go through the plating, but that then typically leads him to have to cut through the vehicle's hull and outer armor to fully escape. The "Extreme" unit may seem a little excessive, but with psychics, practitioners of magic and D-Bees running around with all kinds of weird powers and abilities, that tune can quickly change. This unit features full body restraints (needs a Supernatural P.S. of 45 or to be able to inflict 30 M.D. to break free), sensory deprivation and concentration disruptors (bad elevator music, random electrical shock, etc.), and sedation equipment. The "cell" is also confining/restrictive and impossible to escape from without supernatural abilities, and 100 M.D. must be inflicted to break free. Basic unit is 12,000 credits per prisoner. The "Extreme" version runs a whopping 60,000 credits per prisoner, but most Bounty Hunters and Headhunters swear by them! Either system adds 250 lbs (113 kg) to the vehicle.

Rare Vehicle Customization Options

Ok, this is the part where you start begging and groveling with your G.M.! Most of these items are available in the world of Rifts Earth, but you have to be really lucky to acquire them, and come across an Operator who can do the work, to achieve some of these exotic features (a good subplot/treasure hunting adventure). I like to include stuff like this because eventually someone will find it and try to use it, and it gives G.M.s something to work with when it does.

Stealth Coating: Stealth or radar invisible coatings do exist out there, but are usually used for aircraft. Aerial hovercraft could conceivably use the technology, but finding it is half the challenge! (A possible adventure to find the blueprints and manufacturing process on its own, and could be a very interesting ride!) But typical radar defensive technology is not usually employed with ground-to-ground activities due to the fact that radar is rarely used as the main sensory/navigation tool. An Operator using a nanobot tool kit could make repairs to a damaged paint job (with at least 25% of the paint still intact) for around 25,000 to 100,000 credits depending upon the amount remaining.

Laser Resistant Armor: Not many people know how to make the laser resistant armor of the Glitter Boy (save Free Quebec, Triax and the KLS Corporation), though most of these places usually won't waste their valuable armor technology and resources on simple vehicles. The size, mobility and effectiveness of a single

Glitter Boy makes the effort and cost in designing and building a laser resistant APC with a Boom Gun and pylons pointless. Mind you, an Operator looking for an interesting challenge could salvage several Glitter Boy suits (good luck with that), remove the plating and cover the APC with enough pieces/parts to armor a vehicle. Of course, it would still be cheaper (and much less of an effort) to repair all the collected Glitter Boys. Most Operators with a nanobot tool kit will typically charge 10,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. to make repairs to Chromium armor (whether customized or on the original Glitter Boy).

Force Fields: A visit to a Naruni dealer can easily get you one of their force fields (depending on the time line and location of your campaign, this could be easy or very difficult). However, you are still going to need an inventive Operator to make the modifications necessary to turn a personal force field into a vehicular force field. Another option is to cannibalize the Triax force field from their Ultri-Max robotic vehicle. **Cost:** Hovercycles and motorcycles are limited to a modified personal force field, and an operator would probably charge about 5,000 credits for the modification on top of the price of the force field (which range from 40,000 credits for a light force field generator/harness to 200,000 credits for a heavy force field generator/harness). Large hover vehicles, cars, trucks and the like can only be outfitted with robot sized force fields (double M.D.C. but 20 times the cost), and an Operator will typically charge 10,000 to 25,000 credits, depending upon the size of the vehicle, for the installation. See **Rifts@Mercenaries**, pages 125 and 126, for more details and prices of the units. If the unit overloads or is damaged, an Operator familiar with the technology can attempt to fix it, but finding such an Operator may prove to be quite difficult (unless you get lucky and stumble upon a Naruni dealer and his sales team). Such repairs are likely to cost half the original cost of the unit.

Magnetic Field: Much like a "low-tech" force field, this unit generates a powerful magnetic field. On the positive side, it deflects and reduces the impact of several high-tech weapons. On the down side, it hinders radio communication, plays havoc with radar, and can immobilize a vehicle if it's trapped in a city or iron ore deposit. Some consider this type of defense as much of a hindrance as it is a help, and others prefer not to use it, but a few crazy Operators do offer such devices as defensive countermeasures. All rail gun rounds (typically iron flechettes or slugs), ion blasts and plasma blasts are influenced by magnetic fields (most of these weapon systems use a magnetic field to launch and direct their devastating effects). Iron/steel projectiles (either magical or mundane) and electrical attacks (magical or mundane) are slowed down/dissipated or deflected enough to reduce the damage inflicted by the attack. **Cost:** A Light Magnetic Field Generator reduces the damage from incoming attacks by 25%, costs 10,000 credits, and will consume a standard E-Clip in 8 hours of use. A Medium Magnetic Field Generator reduces damage from incoming attacks by 50%, costs 25,000 credits, and will consume a standard E-Clip in 4 hours of use. A Heavy Magnetic Field Generator reduces damage from incoming attacks by 75%, costs 60,000 credits, and will consume a standard E-Clip in 2 hours of use. Also note that any cyborg or character with any metal/iron/steel in or on his body will be kept at bay (minimum of 10 feet/3 m), as if an invisible creature with a Supernatural Strength of 15, 30 or 45, respectively, were pushing the character away. The cost also includes magnetic shielding that protects the vehicle's cargo

and passengers, however the moment someone steps outside the vehicle while the system is activated, any metal he is carrying or wearing will be instantly flung 20 feet (6 m) away from the vehicle due to the repulsion of the magnetic field (and likely the character with it)!

Hardened Electronics: Most civilian vehicles are not hardened against EMP (Electromagnetic Pulses), ion discharges and lightning strikes (all of which can disable the electronics and therefore, the vehicle itself). Most wheeled vehicles with rubber tires are naturally protected from electricity (due to the insulating rubber tires), but the use of directed ionic/electrical attacks, and especially EM pulses, can wreak havoc with a wheeled or hover vehicle's electrical systems. As an optional rule to make use of this phenomenon (or to add some more spice into your campaign), any vehicle struck with an electrical attack may be required to make a save vs electricity (16+) to prevent critical systems from being fried in the attack, shorting out the vehicle and forcing it to roll (or crash) to a stop. To protect the vehicle insulation, circuit breakers and special electrical conduits can be used to deflect the flow of electricity away from sensitive areas. Electronic systems can also be outfitted with Hardened Electronics, which can survive EM pulses, ion blasts and even lightning strikes (most military vehicles have this). To purchase this feature for your customized vehicle, add a 50% increase in the price of all electronics, sensors, computer systems and other related features to cover the protection of those systems. Any electrical attacks will simply leave burn marks on the armor (doing normal damage) without damaging the delicate electronics inside.

Variable Camouflage Coating/Armor: By cannibalizing a number of Naruni Variable Camouflage armors, or cutting up a camouflage tarp, you can create cloaking technology for a vehicle. **Cost:** An Operator who happens to have a dozen or so suits of armor and can carve it up and place it on a vehicle would charge about 160,000 to 220,000 credits for motorcycles/hovercycles (using about 2 suits), 470,000 to 830,000 credits for cars/trucks (using 6 to 8 suits), and 1.6 to 3.5 million credits for haulers, buses and transports (using 20 or more suits) for the armors, and roughly 20,000 credits per square foot of vehicle to cover it with the camouflage tarp (includes labor). The only way to get original or true armor is to find a Naruni dealer and ask them to make it for your vehicle, which would be a very expensive option. The sales representative will most definitely milk you for all he can! If a player is still willing to do this, use the vehicle armor prices above, but increase the prices by a factor of 20!

Thermo-Kinetic Armor: With the recent release of Naruni's new Thermo-Kinetic armor (as of their 109 P.A. catalog; see **Rifts® Dimension Book 8: Naruni™ Wave Two**), this new armor may be another viable option if a player can make contact with a Naruni dealer. However, finding and salvaging such armor from fallen enemies is highly unlikely (the armor is too new on the market). Just like the Variable Camouflage Armor, a Naruni dealer could be asked to make it for your vehicle, and again will charge through the teeth for the new armor option! If a player is still willing to do this, use the vehicle armor prices above but increase the prices by a factor of 50.

Contragravity Propulsion System: Though not native Earth technology, many inter-dimensional explorers, salesmen (Naruni Enterprises) and mercenaries do possess such technology.

Also, a player making a return trip from Phase World might just have it, and could have it turned into a propulsion system for a hover vehicle. (Highly unlikely, but you know players will try anything.) The returning presence of Naruni Enterprises makes this option at least possible (again, depending upon the G.M.), so I'll present the basics here should the G.M. agree to letting a player have a Contragravity vehicle, or in case a G.M. wants to have a Phase World/Three Galaxies campaign and use Contragravity vehicles. The basic system is not cheap, and typically runs 6.4 million credits for a bike or small car. Large cars, vans, trucks and small trailers are typically 8.2 million credits. Commercial vehicles (transports, buses and haulers) and large trailers are around 10.5 million credits. Use the **Ground Speed Table** in the previous issue to purchase the required Speed Class, but Contragravity systems cost *one hundred times* more than the standard price for each Speed Class (thus, a bike that goes a maximum of 300 mph/480 km will cost 300,000 credits instead of 3,000 credits). The Contragravity system is much more responsive and easier to control than hover systems, thus providing the pilot a +1 to dodge and +5% to piloting skills. Elite pilots (Phaeton Juicers, Psi-Techs, RPA Pilots, RPA "Fly Boy" Aces, etc.) who have the appropriate piloting skill also receive a +3 on initiative, +3 to auto-dodge, and 2 additional attacks while using high speed and maneuverable Contragravity vehicles. There are also other benefits to a Contragravity system. First, for an additional 50,000 credits you can have the option of tweaking the Contragravity field to encompass the pilot, removing any excessive G-forces created during extreme piloting maneuvers, allowing normal humans (not just enhanced humans, D-Bees and cyborgs) to use the vehicle at high speeds. However, reduce the Speed Class of the vehicle by 2 if this option is activated. Another advantage is increased weight allowance. For an additional 50,000 credits, you can have the option to further modify the Contragravity field to reduce the overall forces and inertia on a vehicle to allow it to move more easily while carrying heavier weights (i.e. more armor and weapons). When the weight capacity is doubled, halve the Speed Class of the vehicle. This can be repeated (double weight/halve the speed) until the vehicle reaches Speed Class 1, at which point the vehicle won't drive on its own and the pilot has to get out and push (but he can do so just like pushing a grocery cart). A third benefit is silence, allowing the Contragravity vehicle pilot to prow (use his own skill or a base of 65%) without feeling a breeze from conventional hover engines or hearing the noise of the engine.

Repairing Vehicles

Designer's Note: Many players and G.M.s probably take the text and game mechanics as is and give little thought to real world physics (overlooking any flaws in favor of fun), but every now and then, it's nice to know that real world physics do apply to the wackiness, which enhances the plausibility of the game. For those of you who start to glaze over at the ramblings of highly technical terms, scientific theory and the like, just skip on down to the relevant section.

The way I see advanced M.D.C. materials working is based on scientific theories I learned way back in school (I studied mechanical engineering). Metals, for example, have a crystalline structure. Their natural formation is governed by the chaotic forces

of nature, and thus they form with imperfections and inclusions, which, in turn, allows the materials to break apart more easily. If a crystal structure could be made atom-by-atom, you could build a structure that was easily 100 to 1,000 times the strength of existing materials, so it is not inconceivable, then, to produce M.D.C. versions of existing materials. How would you actually build such an atom-by-atom structure? Easy, nanotechnology is well on its way as we speak to doing this, so again, by using a fleet of microscopic robots you could build any desired part simply by programming them with the desired dimensions and shape of a part. Simply selecting the types of atoms to be used, you could control the material properties. How about repairing this stuff or making on the fly replacement parts? Again, easy answer is nanobots controlled by an Operator. These guys have kept some of the secrets of the ancient technologies from before the Cataclysm intact, so they could have easily held onto the tools needed to make modification, repairs or even new components. All they have to do is know the design and have raw materials to use. What about size, you may ask? Simply put, an Operator could have a toolbox-sized case (6 inches x 6 inches x 20 inches or 15 cm x 15 cm x 50 cm), upload the part design from his portable computer into the robots' interface/controls, and then place the needed materials in the box. Depending upon the number of nanobots controlled by the system, the unit could manufacture a small part or piece of armor in a day or less. A similar system could be "poured" onto a damaged section of robot armor and have the nanobots make repairs to the existing design under the guidance of the Operator, as long as enough of the original design was still intact. Otherwise, the Operator is guessing and doing the best he can do to ascertain and fix the damaged equipment (requires a roll on the appropriate skill – Mechanical Engineering, Automotive Mechanics etc.). Of course, such nanobot repair kits would be considered priceless due to their invaluable applications. Larger scale fabrication would be reserved for non-mobile manufacturing plants akin to what you'd find at Northern Gun. Welding and laser cutting of materials would not be exactly as most people envision it. The welding/melting of metal would create S.D.C. bonds between materials at the joints of the parts, so unless you used a nanobot repair kit to fuse two pieces together you'd have some pretty weak repairs. Laser cutting of parts would still be feasible, as you are simply destroying M.D.C. material and not trying to rebuild/stitch together with S.D.C. practices. You could also easily cut or drill holes in parts to use M.D.C. bolts and nuts to hold things together, still making their use and application widespread, especially for vehicular repairs where you just remove a section of armor plating and slap a new one back in place with proper hardware (bolts, nuts, washers, etc.).

Repair Costs

Repair costs can be found on pages 55-56 of the original *Rifts® Sourcebook One*, and on pages 36-38 of *Rifts® Sourcebook One, Revised & Expanded*. What follows are some optional rules you may find helpful in negotiating prices for vehicle construction or selling salvage, as well as an expanded set of repair costs (focusing more on vehicles).

Cost of Repairs and Negotiating Prices

Prices for repairs compared to new parts vary substantially, by as much as 200%, depending upon where you go. The Coalition

States, Black Market and Manistique Imperium all charge roughly the same or close to it, within 10% (or on occasion, as high as 30%). Northern Gun will usually have prices at 10% lower than their biggest competitor. Availability is another issue, which may see prices rise as high as 50% to 200% above what is listed, or some things may not be available at all or require lengthy wait time (waiting for parts or manpower to accomplish the work).

Designer's Note: One of my players loves using Charm/Impress and Trust/Intimidate to barter down prices or to sway potential customers when he's trying to make repairs or sell off loot. His character has a high enough M.A. and P.B. to warrant such a persuasive sales ability, but nothing in the game mechanics really accounts for any bonuses or actual cash adjustments, so I made up some rules to accommodate this; feel free to use them.

Optional Rule:

Successful Roll of Charm/Impress or Trust/Intimidate Ability

Both skills act as sort of a weak non-psychic mind control, so I treat it as a modified save vs mental attack. You can use M.E. bonus plus any bonuses vs Mind Control (for Charm/Impress or Trust) or bonuses vs Fear/Horror Factor (Intimidate) to resist doing as he asks. Simply add up the resistance bonuses and multiply by 5%. Take that percentage and subtract it from any Charm/Impress or Trust/Intimidate roll.

The G.M. may also add a penalty depending upon the difficulty. Some suggestions include a -0% to get something like a meal, night's lodging or a drink for free, to -25% for getting an energy pistol, E-Clip or Vibro-Blade for free, to -50% to getting a hovercraft, horse or body armor for free, to -75% for getting a suit of power armor, robot or multi-million dollar piece of hardware for free. "Discounts" are much more easily applied, at a -1% for every 2% of a discount the Charmer/Impresser or Trusted/Intimidator wishes to get.

Same goes for information. Something that a person may never reveal even to his or her own mother is going to be -75%, but finding out when the guards have a shift change might only be -5%.

Of the few things that might work to increase the Charmer/Impresser or Trusted/Intimidator's chances of succeeding are alcohol and drugs (including a "truth serum" like Sodium Pentothal), which can add a +5% to +50% depending on the severity of the person's drunkenness or strength of the drug.

Note: The same thing applies for M.A. and P.B. related skills (such as Seduction, Find Contraband, Bartering, and Interrogation). Simply use the skill as a trained version of the base ability, applying any bonuses or penalties from the attributes. In the event that a Trust/Intimidate or Charm/Impress percentage is lower or higher than the skill, use the higher of the two to perform the feat.

Armor Repair

Vehicles, robots, cyborgs, power armor and body armor can all have dings, dents, burns and scratches easily repaired as long as at least 15% of the original M.D.C. is still intact. Lost or completely destroyed parts (weapons, arms, tires, etc.) need to be replaced. As stated above, any Operator/mechanic can use nanobots and raw materials to fix the armor. The Operator/mechanic typically

charges a hefty fee for their services (and their nanobots), on top of any raw materials (or scrap to be recycled) and spare replacement parts. These prices reflect the basic labor cost and materials provided by the Operator/mechanic, as well as the demand for, and rarity of, their services.

Body Armor

Plate: 7,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced, includes all Coalition States armor, Juicer Flexi-Plate, Huntsman etc.

Chain: 5,500 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced, includes Gladiator, Crusader, etc.

Composite: 6,500 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced, includes Bushman.

Plastic: 6,300 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced, includes Plastic-Man.

Padded: 6,200 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced, includes Urban Warrior.

Organic/Leather: Cannot be repaired by an Operator/technology (nanobots). Cellular structure/organization and curing of material is beyond the level of control the Operator has over the nanobots to properly repair the material. However, replacement leather or leather patches may be added to homespun armor or M.D.C. animal hide through the use of the Sewing skill to make the appropriate repairs, with an approximate cost of 5,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced.

Exotic: Non-magical, exotic, technology-based armor, like the Naruni Camouflage armor and/or homespun armor made from pieces of Glitter Boy laser resistant chrome armor, typically costs 10,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced, but may be more, depending on the uniqueness of the technology (like Cerasteel used by the Arkhons of South America), and could cost as much as 50% to 200% more.

Note: Magic armor cannot be fixed in this manner either, and will need someone familiar with the original creation process to make the required repairs, or an application of the **Mend the Broken** spell.

Power Armor, Man-Sized Robot and Small Vehicle (Bikes & Cars) Repairs

If a weapon, sensor or other component still works and you are simply repairing lost M.D.C. (and at least 50% of the original M.D.C. is intact), just use the armor repair cost to fix the item. If the component was jammed, inoperable or the M.D.C. was brought down below 50% (or reduced below zero, becoming essentially scrap metal with a few useful parts), use the below repair costs to restore and/or replace the damage parts.

M.D.C. Armor Repairs:

Light Armor: 6,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced.

Medium Armor: 8,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced (most power armor are medium).

Heavy Armor: 10,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced (Glitter Boys are one of the few robot/power armor that use heavy armor).

Wings: 40,000 credits each for light wings (30 M.D.C. or less), 60,000 credits for heavy wings (31 M.D.C. or more). Price includes removal and replacement.

Jet Packs/Flight Systems: Includes SAMAS, T-21 Terrain Hopper, Flying Titan, etc. Flat fee of 65,000 credits for repairs, including installation.

Optics and Sensors: Same as equivalent cybernetic/bionic systems, plus 10% for installation.

Weapon Systems:

Rail Guns: Cost of gun and power pack plus 30,000 for installation. Add another 20,000 to tap into nuclear power supply. Ammunition reloads are 1 credit per 2 rounds (or 0.5 credits per round).

Launchers: Includes grenade and missile launchers; 50,000 credits.

Light Energy Weapons: Typically includes lasers and ion blasters (anything 4D6 M.D. or less for a single shot), but can include other energy types, 60,000 credits.

Heavy Energy Weapons: Typically includes plasma and particle beams (anything 5D6 M.D. or greater for a single shot), but can include other energy types, 100,000 credits.

Mini-Missiles (Reloads):

1,200 credits for fragmentation and high explosive.

2,400 credits for armor piercing and plasma.

Grenades (Reloads):

70 for smoke.

200 for fragmentation.

250 for high explosive.

350 for plasma.

Note: Component and other non-armor related repairs (like weapons and sensors) are the listed price to repair an existing part. Often it is cheaper to get a replacement part instead of repairing the original (in which case, pull the cost of the item from bionic/cybernetics or a comparable weapon and add 10% for labor and installation). However, such resources are not always available to the mechanic doing the job, especially for exotic vehicles, robots or power armor.

Robot and Large Vehicle Repairs

M.D.C. Armor Repairs:

Light Armor: 20,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced (most "off the shelf" large vehicles like trucks, transport and haulers).

Medium Armor: 40,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced (most robots vehicles).

Heavy Armor: 60,000 credits per 10 M.D.C. replaced.

Hand or Foot: 1.5 million credits to repair a disabled or nearly wrecked hand or foot, up to 30 M.D.C. (mostly frame structure and minor armor), anything else above that would be extra armor (typically uses the Medium Armor above for cost).

Arm: 3.5 million credits to repair a disabled or nearly wrecked arm and hand, up to 80 M.D.C. (mostly frame structure and minor armor), anything else above that would be armor (typically uses the Medium Armor above for cost).

Leg: 8 million credits to repair a disabled or nearly wrecked leg and foot, up to 200 M.D.C. (mostly frame structure and minor armor), anything else above that would be armor (typically uses the Medium Armor above for cost).

Wings: 100,000 credits per each small or light wing, 200,000 credits per each large/heavy wing, and includes the installation as well.

Jet Boosters: 250,000 credits for small jets, 400,000 credits for large jets and 2 million credits to completely rebuild a propulsion system/engine.

Hover System: 500,000 to rebuild an entire system with a few minor spare parts and the existing dilapidated remains.

Optics and Sensors: Complete Sensor Turret with standard robot systems (original **Rifts® RPG**, page 214, or page 273 of the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, #2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7): 1 million credits.

Special Optics:

Infrared and Ultraviolet spectrum: 500 foot (152 m) range; 50,000 credits.

Infrared Searchlight: 500 foot (152 m) range; 40,000 credits.

Passive Nightvision: Light amplification system; 100,000 credits.

Targeting Sight: +1 to strike; can only have one; 70,000 credits.

Telescopic: 30,000 credits.

Thermo-Imager: 200,000 credits.

Video Camera System: 200 foot (61 m) range, with telescopic lenses; 110,000 credits.

Weapon Systems:

Rail Guns: Robot rail guns are usually giant-sized and specially designed for the robot; these are not the small, power armor sized weapons. Includes the cost of the gun and connection to the nuclear power supply; 10 million credits and up.

Mini-Missile and Grenade Launchers: 2 million credits.

Large, Full-Size Missile Launcher: 10 million credits and up.

Turret Energy Weapons: Turret and weapons manned/operated from them. Typically includes laser and ion weapons placed in a turret, but can include other energy weapon types; 4 million credits.

Cannon Energy Weapons: Weapons used as an over the shoulder cannon, giant robot sized “rifles” and other large, single weapon systems. Typically includes plasma and particle beam, but can include just about any type of energy weapon; 10 million credits.

Short-Range Missiles:

2,500 credits for fragmentation and high explosive.

5,000 credits for armor piercing and plasma.

Medium-Range Missiles:

25,000 credits for fragmentation and high explosive.

50,000 credits for armor piercing and plasma.

100,000 credits for multiple warhead/smart bombs.

Long-Range Missiles:

200,000 credits for fragmentation and high explosive.

500,000 credits for armor piercing and plasma.

1.5 million credits for multiple warhead/smart bombs.

Note: Light energy weapons, mini-missiles and grenade launchers can use the pricing found above under the **Power Armor, Man-Sized Robots and Small Vehicle (Bikes & Cars) Repairs** section if they are of similar size and caliber. Likewise, any suit of power armor with a large cannon or missile system

would use the larger weapon price for repairs (such as the Glitter Boy’s “Boom Gun,” which would use this rail gun pricing, costing 10 million credits to make repairs).

Vehicle Combat Rules

Rifts® doesn’t actually have any rules for vehicular combat, but the rules found on pages 83 to 86 of **Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Edition** are quite detailed and effective in dealing with vehicle to vehicle combat and vehicle to robot combat, as well as vehicle to pedestrian/power armor combat. The only real concern in regards to these rules is the application of S.D.C. damage. Most M.D.C. vehicles can survive a crash, ram or other impacts unscathed (unless the crash damage exceeds 100 S.D.C.). Passengers, on the other hand, are still at risk of injury (even in M.D.C. armor) from crash damage, and are often killed or incapacitated in a crash even if their vehicle survives intact. With the rare exception of an M.D.C. D-Bee or cyborg, all players, even in environmental M.D.C. body armor, should take full damage (with the standard chance of rolling with punch, fall or impact to take half damage) from vehicle crashes, impacts or rams. While the vehicle may not be damaged in most of the maneuvers of vehicle combat, it can certainly be stopped, slowed down or even disabled by clever feats of driving prowess (again, most of which are detailed in **Heroes Unlimited™ 2nd Edition**).

Rifts® Aircraft & Spacecraft Construction

See **Mutants in Orbit™** for spacecraft construction rules. As for earthbound aircraft, they are relatively rare, but not unheard of (especially small flyer or fighter craft). Most are part of a large nation (like the Coalition States or custom built TW contraptions working for a large nation like Tolkeen), with a few independents. Not to mention, most O.C.C.s do not start with an aircraft as an optional starter vehicle, so I’ll save those details for a possible future article in **The Rifter®**.

Ship and Submersible Construction Rules

This should hopefully be showing up in the upcoming **Rifts®: Underseas 2** book.



The Hammer of the Forge

Chapter Fifty-One

“Roman Holiday”

By James M. G. Cannon

Syracuse is one of the most popular vacation spots in the Consortium of Civilized Worlds. A water world of spectacular cerulean oceans, the only habitable land exists as a band of subtropical islands ringing the equator. Tourists can catch a cruise across the world ocean, visit the Court of the Whales or fish for the elusive thalasso fish. They can walk the quaint streets of the Old Cities, explore the temples of the Dodekathion, or laze about on the beaches and enjoy the local cuisine at one of the many family-run restaurants that dot the islands.

But some people come simply to get away from the excitement of their daily lives.

So it was with Caleb Vulcan and Romana Vorishcenko ne Uskios. Caleb, a Knight of the Cosmic Forge, and Romana, a junior member of the Time Council, were hoping to forget their most recent adventure. Also, having reunited after some time apart, they wished to spend some time together away from the possibility of attack, or the fate of the Three Galaxies depending upon their actions. When they first met, they each felt a spark of attraction to the other, but the demands of their respective orders had quickly separated them. Now was a chance to catch up for lost time.

Barefoot, they walked along a beach on one of Syracuse's many island paradises. The warm ocean lapped at their heels as they made their way across the white sands. Romana wore a violet and white sarong over her black bikini, while Caleb wore only a pair of red swim trunks. At some urging from his companion, he had left his personal comm unit back at the hotel, which meant he could not monitor Syracuse's emergency band, nor receive

any calls from friends or imperiled allies. Romana, however, made sure she wore her wrist chron, as it happened to be one of the most powerful artifacts of Temporal Magic in the Megaverse – the Singularity Watch.

Caleb felt like a teenager, all gangly limbs and awkward speech. He could face down the Transgalactic Empire's finest without blinking, but put him in a tropical paradise with an attractive woman whom he truly cared about, and he didn't know what to do. He suggested fishing, only to learn she was a vegetarian. She took him dancing, and he didn't know any of the moves. He made jokes that fell flat. Still, she hadn't run away screaming yet, and that was something.

“After lunch, why don't we go over to one of the bigger islands and see the temple district,” Romana said. “That is, if you'd like to. I mean, they have some interesting architecture. I know you're not a worshiper or anything.”

“No, I'm not, but I've seen some of that stuff on Alexandria. It's a lot like the ruins in Greece back on my world. Except they're not ruins, of course.” Caleb paused, noting to himself how stupid he sounded. “Um, yeah, I'd like that. Do we need to take a boat or can we fly?”

Romana wagged a finger. “You agreed before we got here that we would act like normal people. No powers.”

“I know, I know. I just miss flying. It's one of the real perks of being on call 24/7 for the universe.” He missed the quiet of the void as well, but somehow, less than he would have if he were alone. He remembered being trapped on that strange post-apocalyptic Earth and feeling desperate to return to space. But he

felt none of that now. Despite his self-conscious feelings, he was enjoying himself.

"Tell me more about your world," Romana said. Her hand brushed his, and he caught her fingers between his own.

"It's a backward place," Caleb said. "No world government. Everyone is still running their own country, jockeying against one another, fighting pointless wars, murdering members of their own species. There's no interstellar travel. We hadn't even gotten to the moon before I left, although we were working on it. Earth is a dull, uninteresting place."

"And yet, you said that this beautiful world reminds you of it."

"Well, parts of it. And only parts I saw on television or in books. The islands here could be in the Caribbean, while the local buildings look like they came from Ancient Greece. Even the name of the planet is the name of a city back home."

"Really?" Romana smiled at him. "This backwards Earth has visions to rival this splendid tropical world and it names its cities after worlds in the CCW? I think there is more to this place than you are letting on, Caleb."

They reached the edge of the beach. A pathway led through a thicket of greenery back to town. Brightly colored birds and flying lizards darted about the trees. Insects buzzed, nearly drowned out by the lulling sound of the ceaseless ocean. A family of Ratinoids bearing a picnic basket, umbrella, and towels came toddling down the path. The children ran past Caleb and Romana, but the adults nodded a greeting before passing by.

"This is nice," Caleb said. "Normal, almost."

"I'm glad you're having a good time. I am too. I wasn't sure you would."

"Why's that?" Caleb asked, surprised.

"I never pictured you as the type to slow down and smell the roses. You've made a name and a reputation for yourself, Caleb, out there in the Three Galaxies. You have saved billions if not trillions of lives as a Cosmo Knight."

"Yeah, I was due a vacation," Caleb said glibly.

Romana shook her head. "You make light of it. But you are a hero, Caleb."

"No, I'm not," Caleb said. Something in his tone made Romana pause and look him in the eye. "I'm doing what I can, because I can. A lot of people can't. But the Forge offered me a chance, and it gave me the power to make a difference."

"And you don't think that's heroic?"

He looked at her. She really was a spectacularly stunning woman. He reached down, plucked a flower from the side of the path, and threaded it over her right ear. The rich red of the flower contrasted with her dark hair and eyes.

"Thank you," she said. "Why did you do that?"

"Impulse," he said. "Also, change the subject."

She laughed. He liked it when she laughed. "Okay, fair enough. Are you hungry? No, of course not, you Cosmo Knights don't need to eat like us ordinary mortals. Well, I'm hungry. Let's get lunch, and then see about chartering a ship."

"Okay," Caleb said. "Sounds good to me." His hand found hers again.

* * *

Caleb and Romana were not the only adventurers visiting Syracuse.

Two tall figures strode purposefully through the streets of the temple district. The cobbled streets shone in the mid-afternoon sun, and the buildings around them were fashioned from marble and limestone, and decorated with gold leaf and brightly colored paints. Here and there, an olive tree bloomed. A barker at a stall called people to try his sweetmeats, or purchase handcrafted jewelry. Crowds of sapient beings moved leisurely through the district, enjoying the sights and sounds and smells of the neighborhood. Most of the tourists appeared to be human or near-human, but more exotic species like Catyrs, Seljuks, and others filled out the crowd. The throng was varied enough that the two adventurers drew no undue attention to themselves.

One of them was human enough, albeit very tall and extraordinarily broad. Clean shaven, he kept his long brown hair tied back from his forehead with a red cloth, knotted at the back. He wore a pair of dark maroon pants, and a cuirass of half-armor that left most of his chest and his right arm bare. The woman beside him had long, blonde hair and sparkling, sea-blue eyes. Athletically built and graceful in her movements, she was nonetheless distinctive in height; she stood over three and a half meters tall. She wore a flowing garment that covered her from neck to ankle. Yet when passers-by saw her out of the corner of their eyes, she appeared to be clad in some kind of archaic armor, and bearing a sword. A blink and a direct look would bring the flowing dress back into focus.

"I don't know about this, Herbert," the Titan said to her shorter companion.

Herbert frowned. "It's Hercules in the field, *Melia*. And what's not to know? You said you wanted something nice to decorate your place with – what could be nicer than a statue of your namesake?"

"We're interdimensional mercenaries and god impersonators, *Hercules*. We can afford to just buy something."

Herbert shrugged, an odd hunching motion with his inhumanly broad shoulders. "And where's the fun in that? Look around you – this is a primitive tourist trap of a world. They deserve the kind of excitement we'll be bringing. These stupid families on their stupid vacations will be talking about this for years."

Melia Strongoak shook her head. Herbert was forever getting her into these little adventures during their downtime as agents in the Olympus Club. At least it kept things from getting boring, and she knew they wouldn't be in any real danger. Herb borrowed a few dimensional travel scrolls from Shell, the Temporal Raider who masqueraded as "Lord Hades" in the Club, and those would be powerful enough to get them and the statue back to the realm they called home. Still, the gang walked a fine line doing their impersonations. It would never pay to draw the attention of the actual Olympians to their little group. The Megaverse was a big place, and the gods couldn't be everywhere, so generally Zeus' scheme worked out well for everyone involved. But here Herbert and Melia were on a planet that worshiped the Olympian pantheon, about to plunder one of the temples.

It seemed needlessly reckless to her. She knew Herbert was hotheaded and impulsive; it was one of the things that most attracted her to him. But she wasn't invulnerable like he was, and she had just enough magical schooling to be wary of angering any supernatural intelligence powerful and arrogant enough to call itself a god.

"And here we are," Herbert said. He stopped in the middle of the street and planted his fists on his hips. Melia stepped be-

side him and half-turned, regarding the grandiose structure before them.

The temple of Pallas Athena stood on a hill, and a broad, marble staircase wound up to the front door. Huge pillars carved and painted to resemble Gorgons held up the roof, and a large, bronze basin stood before the front door, a low flame flickering within it. Worshipers with offerings and tourists with cameras moved up and down the staircase. A family of Ratinoids stood on the first landing, taking pictures, not of the temple, but of the rest of the acropolis, including the space where Melia and Herbert stood. As the mother looked at the camera and the pictures she had just taken, her muzzle twisted in puzzlement, and then she looked directly at Melia. The illusion she wore only worked on intelligent minds; the digital image in the camera would show her in full regalia.

"Looks like we're on already," Herbert said, noticing the Ratinoids as Melia did. He didn't sound too upset about it, either. Herbert brushed people aside and surged up the staircase. The Ratinoids stood frozen to the spot, and did nothing as Herbert casually plucked the camera from the mother's hand and crushed it easily in his fist. With an insolent grin, he continued up the stairs towards the temple proper. There was slight confusion on the stairs as people began to register what had just happened, and were rudely shoved out of the way by Herbert. Soon, someone, perhaps the Ratinoids, would be annoyed enough to summon whatever passed for the law around here.

At the promise of some action, Melia's doubts evaporated. She dispelled the illusion. She stood in the street for a moment in her gold and silver suit of heavy Techno-Wizard armor, enjoying the startled reactions of the people around her. Then she drew her sword, holding it casually, and ascended after Herbert. Her longer strides brought her quickly to him, and together they entered the temple.

A man in yellow and white robes, holding a staff, tried to block their way as Melia ducked through the doorway. "You may not enter here with a drawn weapon," he said, but Herbert casually knocked the staff out of the man's hands, then backhanded him across the face. Melia heard his jaw break and saw the robed man go tumbling across the smooth, marble temple floor. That's when the screaming started, and people began running for the exits.

Herbert laughed. "Look at 'em go. Just like I told you."

The interior of the temple was vast and largely empty, save for elaborate bas reliefs on the walls, and the enormous statue of Athena that dominated the far side of the room. Nearly six meters tall, it was made of limestone coated with gypsum, and showed Athena in battledress, holding a spear in one hand and an abacus in the other. On her shoulder, an enormous owl.

But they weren't there for so obvious and cumbersome a trophy. Herbert led the way across the suddenly empty temple floor, around the statue, and through another doorway. Melia had to really hunker down to follow him. Her armor scraped against the back of the statue and the stone wall, leaving gouges in each. Her armor didn't lose so much as a paint flake.

Through the door existed a series of apartments, but only one room concerned them. In a room to its own, thick with incense and surrounded by unlit candles, stood the Palladium. Carved from wood, it stood only 2.4 meters tall, give or take a few centimeters. Once it had been brightly painted and looked lifelike, but now it was the warm brown of wood, burnished clean by the hands of thousands and thousands of worshipers. Legend had it

that this statue was the very one that Odysseus and Diomedes smuggled out of Troy in order to ensure an Achaean victory in that war. Personally, Melia doubted that a wooden object would survive that many tens of thousands of years without disintegrating, and wondered how an object from some forgotten, prehistoric planet might show up on Syracuse, but she couldn't deny the prestige she would acquire by stealing it, and putting it up in the foyer of her home.

Herbert battered aside the railing around the Palladium and scooped it up, levering it over his shoulder. He grinned at Melia. "Out the back or out the front?"

"Oh, the front, I think," Melia said with a giggle.

The big statue shuddered again as Melia wedged herself back out into the temple proper. Herbert followed, carrying the Palladium easily.

The temple remained empty. Melia momentarily worried, having expected some kind of police or guards to manifest, then mentally shrugged and continued on her way. Outside, Melia impulsively tipped over the bronze basin, spilling hot coals across the portico floor. Herbert nearly slipped, and shot a glare at her. She laughed, leading the way down the stairs.

But the laugh died quickly.

In the middle of the street below stood not a collection of police or guards, nor a crowd of curious onlookers, but just one man.



He was enormous, taller even than Herbert, and although not as broadly built, he was heavily muscled, with barely an ounce of fat on him. He had a broad chest, thick arms and legs, and wore only an abbreviated, over the shoulder tunic, plain sandals, and some kind of tawny animal pelt as a cloak. His darkly bearded

face split into a wide grin. "Children," he said, "I don't think that belongs to you."

"Come and get it," Melia said, pointing her sword at him.

Beside her, Herbert groaned. "You have got to be grunning me. It's him."

Melia risked a glance at Herbert, and was dismayed to see the human's face pale with fear. "It's who?"

"The *real* Hercules."

"Herakles, if you please," the bearded man said. He cocked his head, dark eyes narrowing. "I seem to recall beating the tar out of you once before, boy. I see you haven't learned your lesson." He flexed his massive arms and cracked his knuckles, a sound that echoed down the street. "Still, you're lucky my sister isn't here. Then you'd really be in trouble."

* * *

Caleb and Romana made their way down a busy street in the temple district. Romana crunched away at an iced treat, making appreciative noises. "You sure you don't want one? They have lots of flavors."

"I'm okay," Caleb said with a laugh. He held up a small datapad. "Now, the guidebook says that the temple to Poseidon is over that hill. It says they have an elaborate water garden."

"That should be interesting," Romana said. The Singularity Watch suddenly pinged. She looked at it crossly.

"Weren't you saying something about 'no powers'?"

Romana frowned. "Yes, but I still have the watch keyed to alert me if anything unusual happens in our vicinity. A d-traveler just Rifted in to town. Rather clumsily, too."

Caleb craned his neck, as if he would be able to see what the artifact had sensed. And then he did see people running behind them, carrying children and goods, shouting in a babble of languages. "I think I know where it happened." He took Romana by the elbow and gently turned her around. They exchanged a look, then by mutual assent began walking against the crowd, carefully picking their way through the rushing mass of humanity. There came a crash from up ahead, as of rock hammering against rock.

"Guidebook says that the temples of Athena and Herakles are in this direction," Caleb said. Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw a Seljuk blunder directly into Romana's path. The guidebook tumbled from his hand as he grabbed Romana, plucking her out of the path of danger, and held up his other hand to halt the reptilian humanoid. The Seljuk kept coming, and would have bowled them both over were Caleb not superhuman. Instead, it bounced off his raised palm and landed on its backside with a rush of escaping air.

"What'd you do that for?" the Seljuk snapped, lurching to its feet.

"You almost ran us over," Caleb said. "What's the trouble?"

"Sorry," the Seljuk said, quickly moving around the two of them, "but you'd better get out of here yourself. There's a god fight back there!" Then it was gone.

Caleb and Romana exchanged another look. "God fight?" she mouthed.

"No more messing around, then," Caleb said. He scooped Romana up in his arms and took to the air, flying towards the danger. They quickly reached the disturbance, traveling rapidly over the heads of the fleeing crowd.

In the midst of a broad, cobblestone plaza stood three massive figures. The woman was a young, blonde Titan, wielding a glowing sword. Her companion was human, so broadly built that he looked squat despite his own considerable height. The two of them hammered away at the third figure, a hugely muscled man in a tawny cloak, who seemed to be laughing even as he swung one meaty fist into the other man's broad face, staggering him.

The Titan slashed wildly, her pale face panicking. The sword slid harmlessly off the second man's tawny cloak. He spun, grabbed her wrist with one hand, and effortlessly flipped her over his shoulder. The Titan sailed through the air, crashing into the facade of a building. Marble splintered and statuary fractured. The woman slid to the ground, her armor clattering all the while.

The first man slammed into the second from the side, wrapping beefy arms around his cloaked form. "Shall it be grappling, then?" the second man said, still chuckling. He grabbed his opponent at the arms and shoulder. "Autolykus himself taught me, boy, and I fear *your* instructor did not invent the sport of wrestling." He twisted, peeling the broader man off of him, and threw him as well. The broader man flew even farther than the Titan had, landing on a roof several blocks away which collapsed under the impact.

Caleb had seen enough. He set Romana down on the ground.

"Don't do anything stupid," Romana said.

Caleb smiled. "Trust me."

The man in the tawny cloak dusted his hands. He turned towards the Titan, who scrambled to her feet.

Caleb whistled. Both of them looked at him. The man in the tawny cloak had a puzzled look on his face as Caleb slammed into him at several hundred miles an hour. Caleb bounced off, and only just caught himself from wrecking a building as well. The tawny cloaked man was pushed back half a dozen meters, and his feet dragged through the cobblestone beneath them, cracking the stones. He looked momentarily stunned, but shook himself and focused on Caleb.

"An unprovoked attack is most unsportsmanlike!" he belated.

Caleb risked a glance at Romana. She wore an "I told you so" look.

"He's crazy!" the Titan shouted. "He just appeared and attacked us!"

"A base lie," the man said. "And who are you to interfere with divine justice?" He jabbed a finger in Caleb's direction. Caleb was about reply, when the broad man came running down the street, roaring a wordless battle cry. Everyone turned to look at him. The tawny cloaked man caught the other man, hammered several left handed blows against his temple, and threw him down. The broad man rolled and was back on his feet instantly, completely unfazed. But snarling.

Romana waved Caleb over. He dropped down beside her. "So that didn't work."

"I didn't think it would. I've been scanning with the Singularity Watch. I've no idea who the other two are, but the big guy you ran into is Herakles."

"Herakles? As in Hercules, the Greek strong man?"

"And Demigod."

Caleb let loose a low whistle. "Doesn't look a thing like Steve Reeves. So, he's the good guy, then?"

"Not necessarily. Herakles has a temper, and a tendency to kill people who irritate him. He's the mad dog of the Olympian

pantheon, and they sic him on anyone who angers them and lives outside the reach of Zeus' thunderbolt."

While they talked, Herakles and the broad man continued to hammer one another with titanic blows. And yet Caleb knew that Herakles wasn't entirely focused on his attacker. His eyes tracked the Titan, Caleb, and Romana, even as he blocked and punched, twisted and jabbed.

"What's that over there?" Romana pointed across the plaza, past where the two men struggled.

"Looks like a log, or... is that a statue?"

Romana nodded. She started towards it, edging her way around the plaza to avoid the combatants. Caleb followed, keeping his eyes on the two men.

"Why aren't you helping?" the Titan called. She held her sword defensively in front of her, looking for an opening.

Caleb ignored her. Romana's instincts were better than his, and he trusted her. There was more going on here than he had first assumed. Had these two desecrated a temple? Herakles had mentioned "divine justice."

As Romana and Caleb drew closer to the statue, the Titan suddenly broke and ran towards them, brandishing her sword. Caleb's hammer appeared in his hand without conscious thought, blocking the Titan's two-handed swing. He knocked her sword aside and slammed her in the chest, knocking her backward. "That wasn't very nice," Caleb said. "You didn't know I was armed."

"I- you- damn it," she spluttered. She tried to draw herself up to her full height. "I am the goddess Athena, and this is my brother Hercules! We are under attack by a... a... demon, disguised as a strongman. We demand your help!"

Caleb furrowed his brow. "Really? That's the best you can do?"

"Here's the real Athena," Romana called. Caleb glanced at her out of the corner of his eye. Romana knelt beside the statue, carefully examining it. The Titan made a threatening move in Romana's direction, unarmored but not unprotected. Caleb swatted the Titan in the skull with the business end of his hammer. She dropped like a ton of bricks. Her bloody nose almost made him feel bad. Almost.

"My hero," Romana said.

In the middle of the plaza, Herakles had once again gotten the upper hand on "Hercules," and had the other man in a headlock that left Herakles' right hand free. Which he brought down on Hercules' head, repeatedly.

"What was that about being Athena and Hercules?" Romana asked.

Caleb shrugged. "A load of grun, far as I can tell. What have you got?"

"I think this statue is the Palladium, a wooden statue of Athena that figured in the mythical Trojan War."

Caleb looked at her, then at the statue, then at the two thugs wrestling in the street. "Schliemann would disagree on the 'mythical' part." He sighed. "Romana, remember when I said my home world was dull and uninteresting? It turns out I was totally wrong."

With a final, thundering crash, Hercules was thrown to the ground. He still looked unhurt, despite the beating Herakles gave him, but he was gasping for air. His hands fell to his sides. "Uncle," he managed breathe.

"Ha!" Herakles roared. "Victorious again! I believe I told you once before to stop masquerading as me. This time, you would do well to listen to me." Herakles placed a sandaled foot against Hercules' face and pressed down.

"Hey!" Caleb said. "I think that's enough."

Herakles' eyes narrowed. "And you would do well to stay out of this, stripling. You have no authority here."

Caleb summoned his armor, encasing himself in metallic crimson Megasteel. "My jurisdiction extends throughout the Three Galaxies. Now get off him."

Surprisingly, Herakles stepped back. "A Cosmo-Knight. Amazing. I have long respected the martial valor of your order."

"What are you going to do about these two?" Caleb asked.

Herakles looked at Caleb blankly. "You know, that hadn't actually occurred to me. I suppose I could haul them back to Olympus, and let Uncle Hades deal with them."

"I have a better idea. Leave them with me. I have a deputation for this sector of space. I can bring them to the proper authorities."

Herakles' brow furrowed, as he took in Caleb, Romana, the Titan, and Hercules. His expression suddenly cleared, and he smiled broadly. "So be it! What is your name, Sir Knight, that I may honor your wisdom in the halls of golden Olympus?"

"Caleb Vulcan."

"A good name, methinks," Herakles said. He crossed the plaza and held out his hand. Caleb took it. "I think we shall meet again, Caleb Vulcan, Knight of the Cosmic Forge."

"Well, it will be only too soon, won't it?" Caleb said. He released Herakles' hand, who turned and approached the fallen Hercules.

"Behave for the Knight, miscreant, or you shall know my wrath a third time." With that, Herakles began to glow brightly, an intense, golden light. When it faded, the Demigod was gone.

Hercules slowly lifted himself up off the cobblestones. Bits of shattered rock clung to his bare skin. He brushed it away. "Thanks for scaring that nutjob off," he said shakily.

"You and your girlfriend are under arrest," Caleb said.

Hercules sneered. "Without that ape to protect you, there's nothing you can do to stop me from walking away from here."

Caleb stepped towards him, and let just a little bit of energy redden the visor of his helm. "Go ahead. Try me."

Hercules' sneer died. He held up his hands. "Okay. Alright. Jeez."

Afterward, when "Hercules," real name Herbert Rowland, and "Athena," also known as Melia Strongoak, had been taken into custody by the island's authorities, Caleb hefted the statue of Athena and carried it back up the hill and into the temple. An older man in yellow robes, being treated by a paramedic for a broken jaw, brushed away the medical assistance and insisted on guiding Caleb and Romana to the back of the temple. The man leaned heavily on his staff, face pale and drawn with pain, but directed Caleb wordlessly as the Knight set the Palladium back in its proper place.



2010 Palladium Open House Report

Written by Kevin Siembieda

Photos by Kevin Siembieda, Alex Marciniszyn or Wayne Smith

Disclaimer: The following description is limited mainly to my own experiences and things I saw, heard and experienced. My apologies if something awesome or somebody notable is left out. – *Kevin Siembieda*

The Palladium Open House (POH) is an irregularly hosted event where Palladium fans from around the world gather for four days of gaming and fun. Yes, you read that correctly, from around the *world*. While most gamers in attendance are from the United States and Canada, we've had gentlemen from *Australia, Germany, Spain* and *England* in attendance.

The event is hosted inside the **Palladium warehouse**, where we game from morning till midnight. Then gaming continues at the hotel. One of the things that makes the event so cool is that many of the games are run by the writers and creators who make the games. So players get to game with me, Kevin Siembieda, and guys like *Julius Rosenstein, Carl Gleba, Carmen Bellaire, Brandon Aten, Josh Sinsapaugh, Mark Oberle, Greg Diacyzk,*

and other Palladium creators. Additionally, fans get to meet a host of other writers and artists and sit around and talk with them for hours. That makes the Palladium Open House very different than your typical convention; it is much more homey, friendly and informal. This year's POH took place the end of April, 2010.

I'm happy to report the **2010 Palladium Open House** was pure fun for those who were able to attend. Many, even those from far away places, vowed to return to the next Open House (tentatively scheduled for April, 2012) and thanked us for a great time. That's always very rewarding for us.

Of course, for the Palladium staff and I, the Palladium Open House starts months earlier and is a great amount of work. In addition to the obvious set-up and cleaning, there is online hype, designing T-shirts, reserving the hotel, planning and organizing, printing the name badges, making sure the T-shirts are done, re-configuring the warehouse, plotting where tables and chairs go, setting up displays, arranging for additional parking, bagging T-shirts when they arrive (*Kathy Simmons* bagged 600 T-shirts all by herself!), getting prizes for the costume contest, signing prints, and a hundred other things.

By the time VIP Thursday rolls around we're all pretty tuckered out, fortunately the adrenaline kicks in and we seem fresh and raring to go.

Kathy Simmons is the workhorse who handles the heaviest workload and pretty much coordinates and manages everything from skirting tables, making signs and displays to hotel arrangements, catering, ordering the tables and chairs, and everything non-game related, which is a lot. During the event she kept coffee flowing, answered questions, dealt with problems, and helped at every turn to make sure the entire operation ran smoothly. Which it did. She never stopped working for a second, and honestly, I don't know how she does it. By the end of the show we're all exhausted and we do half of what Kathy does.

Even though I seldom got home before 10 or 11 at night the week before, I managed to make sure I got some rest before the Open House. I also got six hours of sleep every night of the Open House, which kept me relatively fresh and alert throughout the event. It was a noticeable difference, because I had a number of people comment on my looking more rested than usual, especially by Sunday.

Wednesday Preparations

Friends and freelancers started showing up Wednesday. Tables and chairs arrived and got set up. *Joe Bergmans*, *Doug Lamberson*, and *Becky Rudell* helped the staff and me with set up. *Carmen Bellaire* arrived later that evening and spent the entire night setting up his epic *Robotech* game. *Hendrik*, a gamer from Germany and one heck of a player, arrived that evening as well and helped Carmen with his set up. Kathy Simmons was present during part of the day and spent the rest of the afternoon and evening preparing food.

Thursday: VIP Night

Gamers started showing up around 3:00 PM, with the bulk of VIP guests arriving between 4:00-5:00 PM. We had a full house

and excitement ran high. Most made a B-line for **Rifts® Triax™ 2** – hot off the presses.

There were a lot of familiar faces, but we were happy to see a good number of new faces/first timers at this year's Open House. We estimate at least 25% were "new" people.

Catered dinner was served at 5:40 PM, and the food was fabulous. Kathy handled the catering singlehandedly, from the preparation of the food, to the presentation and serving. It was delicious and included hot sauerkraut and kielbasa, meatballs, mostaccioli, noodle salad, potato salad, fried chicken, rolls, soda, coffee and cake.

Around 7:20 PM, I gave my welcome speech and general update. I usually open the talk up to questions and answers, but since I had a panel talk at 8:00 and we had a dozen games scheduled, I skipped the Q&A part this year.

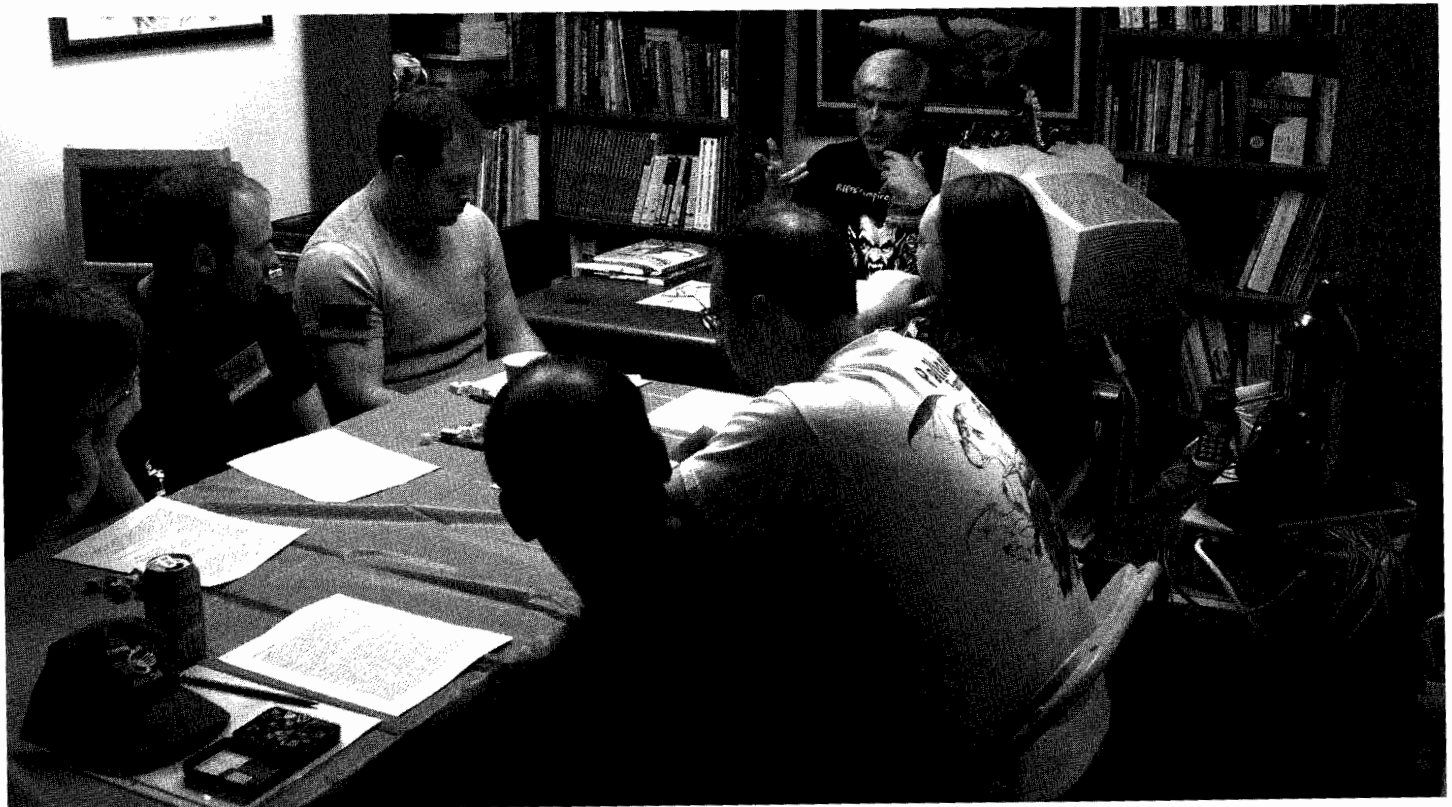
At 8:00 people ran off to play games and a couple dozen folks hung around to chat, ask questions and get autographs. Everyone had a blast.

At 10:45 I started to make my way out of the building. By 11:35 I finally slipped away and was on my way home. Of course my brother called me the minute I got home and we talked till 12:30. I got about six hours of sleep.

Games continued till 1:00 AM.

Friday: Game till you drop

I arrived at Palladium around 8:15 AM. Kathy had been there since 7:00 AM and volunteers like *Colleen Bruning* and *Jon Bruning* (both a big help), and a handful of others who arrived around 8:00 AM were already busy collecting and dumping garbage and straightening up gaming tables. *Joe Bergmans* made sure bathrooms were in order and had toilet paper (among many other helpful things), and *Joseph Black Bear* became Kathy's procurer of "ice cubes" for the coolers where soda pop and water



were kept. *Chris Guertin* joined us that evening and all day Saturday to help, as did *Becky Rudell* and *Doug Lamberson*.

I had two games on Friday, one in the morning at 11:00 and another at 6:30 in the evening. Both were the same **Palladium Fantasy® Game** with different players. Both were a blast. Both had 14 players. I enjoyed the players in both groups.

I was so busy before the event I did not have a game actually prepared. That's okay because I'm a master of improvisation and the characters are the same ones I use over and over (I love seeing how different players interpret the same characters). 15 minutes before game time I asked my pal, *Doug Lamberson* to give me an idea for a game. He said: "How about a villain who is more than he appears to be is taking over a town. Nearby is a volcano that has suddenly become active and maybe there's something going on inside. Maybe some kind of demon or monster."

I whipped that into a **Minion War™** crossover adventure where a Rift inside the volcano would unleash "the legions of Hades" upon the Palladium World. The demons' plan, to unite the Monster races of the Old Kingdom and lead them against the civilized world, starting with the *Empire of Sin*. To stop this from happening, our heroes had to defeat the Straw Man (a Scarecrow) and Mayor who had been secretly replaced by a Raksasha. Fun ensued.

By Friday we were already getting raves about **Rifts® Tri-ax™ 2**. Everyone was getting a copy and loving it!

There were lots and lots of fun games run by many wonderful and capable Game Masters. It would take too long to list and describe them all here, so let it suffice to say everyone had a great time. There were also numerous "pick-up" games in Open Gaming areas and a number of panel discussions. I did a lot of talking and signing books the weekend of Open House.

Carmen Bellaire's epic Robotech® game using a 3-D display and Robotech® toys was pure anarchy and fun. Carmen, the maniac that he is, would continue to play games after Palladium closed its doors around midnight every night, at the hotel in one of the two conference rooms available for Open Gaming – as did a number of other happy-go-lucky gamers.

Scott Gibbons' Rifts® Board Game. I still haven't had a chance to play it yet, but I've heard nothing but good things about Scott's **Rifts® board game**. It's a player versus player game that I'm told is a lot of fun to play. I enjoyed chatting with Scott and he was one of the folks who helped Palladium set up and tear down tables and chairs. He also showed up Monday to help us clean up and was kind enough to sweep the floor, clean bathrooms and load and unload gear we had to haul back to Kathy's and elsewhere. Thanks Scott, I appreciated the help and good company. Scott Gibbons also joined me in one of my panel talks with writer *Josh Sinsapaugh*. If the name Scott Gibbons sounds familiar, it's because he has contributed to **The Rifter®**.

Side note: Yes, if you come to the Open House and offer to help, you could find yourself collecting garbage, moving tables, mopping floors and scrubbing toilets. So be warned. :)

Saturday: Games, Auction and Costume Competition

Saturday was more games, more panel talks and more fun. I hosted several panel talks as well as the costume competition and live auction.

Saturday: Costume Competition

Due to a weak economy, we had fewer costumes this year than last – like two-thirds less. Folks cited a lack of money and/or time for not entering the contest this year. Still we had some pretty awesome costumes (see photos).

The Ley Line Walker (Dan Deluca) won First Place in the Rifts/Science Fiction category, a **Zombie Police Officer** (Dan Felkins) won the Horror/Modern category, and a **Bard** (Tom Nelson) won the Fantasy Category. Each winner got an inscribed plaque with his photo and "Palladium Bucks" as a prize. As always it was very fun.

Saturday: Auction

The live auction is always fun and an opportunity for people to get rare and sometimes weird collectibles. There were plenty of bargains, items from Erick Wujcik's personal collection and a few big ticket items.

A lot of people were smart this year, and made purchases at the "Buy it now" price, so some potentially hot items never made it to the auction, like a first printing, hardcover Palladium Crimson Edition Fantasy RPG, a Rifts® G.M.'s screen, a copy of Rifts® Manhunter, Erick's Go set, and several other things. All items I think would have sold for much more if they had made it to auction.

Sunday: A day of fun, games and farewells

There were more games, panel talks and fun on Sunday. I gave several tours of the Palladium offices all week long, and made sure I squeezed in a couple on Sunday.

I ran a **Dead Reign™** zombie game with 15 players. It was fun, but ran long. Again, I had a bunch of excellent players who



Dan Deluca presented me with a *carved watermelon* with the **Rifts® logo**. He did the best he could with the tools he had available, apologizing for it not being his best work. Are you kidding, Dan, it is awesome!!! What a surprise and a cool, unique gift. Thank you. Everyone loved it and we all took plenty of photos. I haven't had the heart to cut it open to eat the watermelon! It's just too cool. Much to our amazement, the watermelon has not yet

rotted (it's been in a cool environment) so as of June 30, we are still enjoying the skill and artistry.

A three hour panel talk. To end the event, I was asked by a few gamers to host a panel. I had missed my 1:00 panel because I had forgotten about it and my **Dead Reign™** game ran over by an hour and a half. (Hey, I was having fun.) So when a few guys asked me to talk at 2:00 PM, I said okay. Though three or four guys quickly turned into a couple dozen, and at its peak, we had thirty or more people in the audience. It was questions and answers, and the folks in the audience had great questions. *Irvin Jackson* participated until he had to leave, and so did *Mike Leonard* (another person I was glad to finally spend some time with). Anyone who knows me or has listened to an online podcast knows I like to talk, and with one great question after another, we talked, and talked and talked. It was excellent. I think it was the best panel talk of the Open House. Of course, because it was impromptu, it is the only one panel talk that was NOT videotaped. Oh well.

The next thing we knew it was 5:00 PM, the Open House was over, and volunteers and Palladium staffers were packing up the tables and chairs. There were a lot of last minute taking of photographs, hugs, handshakes, autographs and fond farewells. The end of the event is always a little bittersweet as a weekend of fun and camaraderie comes to an end. I'm happy to say I made a number of new acquaintances and had a lot of fun. I had a heck of a time signing books, and chatting with old friends and new Open House attendees. As I've said so many times before, gamers are the greatest fans in the world, and Palladium fans are the best of the best.

Goodbyes continued till about 6:30 PM, but games continued at the hotel into the wee hours. As for me, Joe, Kathy and I went to dinner and collapsed sometime around 9:00 PM. But we all enjoyed the event and all the fun and goodwill it brings.

Other Weekend Highlights

Artists and Writers Area. The opportunity to meet Palladium's wonderful freelance writers and artists is always a highlight of the Open House. The area is always a center of activity, laughs and fun. Everyone is always happy to share their time with the fans, talk, sign autographs and goof around. The artists bring original art and prints to display and sell, and many are willing to do character sketches. They share stories about Palladium Books, gaming and other adventures. They are all down to earth and wonderful people. My thanks to them for making the Open House that much more fun.

Tours of the Palladium offices. I gave a number of tours of the Palladium office. Depending on my fatigue level, the tour was longer or shorter, or more detailed and perky, or low key. I'm afraid the Sunday tour filmed by *Mike Leonard* is one of my less detailed and effervescent tours, but it was fun. I think Mike posted it on YouTube.

I signed more than 500 books over the weekend. I know this, because one friend/fan brought more than 200 books and another brought more than 100. After that, I just had to keep count. By the way, it is my pleasure to sign books – even massive quantities – especially if they are divided into batches of 50 as the one gent did. Hey, that's what the Palladium crew and I are there

for, to visit with *you*, sign books and help you feel welcomed. I enjoyed it.

An international event. We had more gamers from outside the USA than ever before. We had three blokes from England, two from Germany, and I thought someone said we had a gent from Scandinavia or the Netherlands, plus a bunch of gamers from Canada as far away as Calgary. Awesome.

It was nice seeing **Andreas Decker** (from Germany) again, and many other familiar faces. Andreas was there to help us clean up on Monday morning, and I teased him and *Matthew Tremly* (from England) that they could tell people they came to the Palladium Open House and Kevin Siembieda made them sweep floors and pick up trash. :)

Greg Diaczyk is a freelance writer and one heck of a guy. He was on a panel talk with me and ran a bunch of games. Heck, his smiling face and good cheer seemed to be everywhere. I wish I had more time to spend with him. Heck, I wish I had more time with all my freelancers. I promised the Manning brothers we'd hang out and all I said was hello and goodbye!

Thank you. I want to thank *everyone* who volunteers at the Palladium Open House, that includes the many high quality Game Masters who run epic RPG events for us, our freelance artists and writers who attend at their own expense, and those of you who volunteer to clean up, set up, tear down, run errands for us, and help in so many other ways.

I also want to thank those of you who come to spend a day or a weekend with us at the Open House. Your energy, laughter, praise and kind words help to inspire and invigorate us for months after the actual event. And, of course, we enjoy our time with you, playing games, chatting, and exchanging ideas and laughter. Thank you for helping to make the Open House so much fun and worth doing.



Palladium's Next Open House – April 2012

The Next Open House is *tentatively* targeted for April 2012. That should give the global economy time to settle down and Palladium fans time to save up to come on over. We haven't decided if we are doing it for certain in 2012 or what the exact dates are yet, but we'll keep you posted as our plans firm up. Meanwhile, game on!



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