

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®



Inside this Issue...

Rifts®: The Coalition State of New Chillicothe

Nightbane®: Dark Day Chronicles, Volume Two

Palladium Fantasy®: A Megaversal™ Menagerie

Heroes Unlimited™: Dawn of a New Era, Part Two

Hammer of the Forge™ – The Epic Conclusion!

News & Coming Attractions

Warning!

Violence and the Supernatural

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

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

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



The Rifter® Number 54

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing – April 2011

Copyright 2011 Palladium Books® Inc.

All rights reserved, world wide, under the Universal Copyright Convention. No part of this book may be reproduced in part or whole, in any form or by any means, without permission from the publisher, except for brief quotes for use in reviews. All incidents, situations, institutions, governments and people are fictional and any similarity, without satiric intent, of characters or persons living or dead, is strictly coincidental.

Robotech® and Robotech® The Shadow Chronicles® are Registered Trademarks of Harmony Gold USA, Inc.

Palladium Books®, Rifts®, The Rifter®, Coalition Wars®, After the Bomb®, RECON®, Nightbane®, Phase World®, Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®, The Mechanoids®, The Mechanoid Invasion®, Splicers®, and Megaverse® are registered trademarks owned and licensed by Kevin Siembieda and Palladium Books Inc.

The slogan “A Megaverse of adventure – limited only by your imagination,” and titles and names such as Chaos Earth, Dead Reign, Dyval, Elf-Dwarf War, Warpath: Urban Jungle, Heroes of the Megaverse, Dimensional Outbreak, Armageddon Unlimited, Wormwood, Minion War, Mysteries of Magic, Hammer of the Forge, Beyond the Supernatural, BTS-2, HU2, NEMA, MercTown, Merc Ops, Tome Grotesque, Beyond Arcanum, Naruni, Mechanoid Space, Dinosaur Swamp, Arzno, Lazlo, Victor Lazlo, Lazlo Agency, Lazlo Society, Heroes Unlimited, Powers Unlimited, Ninjas & Superspies, Aliens Unlimited, Mutant Underground, The Nursery, Hardware Unlimited, Gadgets Unlimited, The Three Galaxies, Void Runners, Gramercy Island, Skraypers, Atorian Empire, Land of the Damned, The Citadel, The Palladium of Desires, Wolfen Wars, Wolfen, Wulfen, Cosmo-Knight, Cyber-Knight, Gargoyle Empire, Free Quebec, Xiticix, Xiticix Invasion, Fadetown, Siege on Tolkeen, Psyscape, Dweomer, ARCHIE-3, Morphus, Northern Gun, Coalition States, Erin Tarn, Emperor Prosek, Splugorth, Splynncryth, Splynn, Mega-Damage, Mega-Hero, Megaversal, Skelebot, SAMAS, Glitter Boy, Dog Boy, Dog Pack, Techno-Wizard, Ley Line Walker, Shifter, Bio-Wizardry, Psi-Stalker, Brodkil, Juicer, Crazy, ‘Burbs, ‘Borg, ‘Bot, D-Bee, Chi-Town, Triax, NGR, and other names, titles, slogans, and the likenesses of characters are trademarks owned by Kevin Siembieda and Palladium Books Inc.

Palladium Online www.palladiumbooks.com – Also visit us at [Facebook.com/Palladium Books](https://www.facebook.com/PalladiumBooks)

The Rifter® #54 RPG sourcebook series is published by Palladium Books Inc., 39074 Webb Court, Westland, MI 48185. Printed in the USA.

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #54



Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

Coordinator & Editor in Chief: **Wayne Smith**

Editor: **Alex Marciniszyn**

Contributing Writers:

James M.G. Cannon
Aaron Corley
Jeremy M. Hutchins
Corey Livermore
Matthew Olfson
Kevin Siembieda

Interior Artists:

bradshaw
Kent Burles
Mark Dudley
Nicholas Hendriks
Joseph Lawn
Allen Manning
Brian Manning
Michael Mumah
Apollo Okamura

Proofreader: **Julius Rosenstein**

Cover Illustration: **Michael Leonard**

Cover Logo Design: **Steve Edwards**

Credits Page Logo: **Niklas Brandt**

Typesetting & Layout: **Wayne Smith**

Art Direction: **Kevin Siembieda**

Based on the RPG rules, characters,
concepts and Megaverse® created by **Kevin Siembieda**.

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

– *Kevin Siembieda, 2011*

Contents – The Rifter® #54 – April, 2011

Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Kevin talks about what has been going on at Palladium Books, upcoming new releases, the new look for the Palladium website (coming soon), Palladium attending **Gen Con Indy 2011** and more.

Wayne had so much good stuff to squeeze into this issue, we did without the usual Page Six art.

Page 6 – News

There is a lot going on behind the scenes at Palladium Books. The News section talks about some of these things, like the new Palladium website (should go live in April some time), doing more on Facebook and other social media, getting out a pile of new releases, and more.

One of the things we're excited about is Palladium attending **Gen Con Indy**, August 4-7, 2011. It will have been three years since we last had a booth at Gen Con and we're looking forward to being there. We hope to see a lot of you come by and say hello.

This issue also bids a fond farewell to the long running **Hammer of the Forge™**, fiction by James M.G. Cannon.

Page 8 – Coming Attractions

With all the reprints and new releases planned, the Coming Attractions are as exciting as the News. Check out the 2011 Release Schedule through Summer. Read about all the books back in print, including **Aliens Unlimited™**, **Rifts® Mercenaries**, **Rifts® Black Vault**, **Rifts® Dark Conversions**, **Rifts® Game Master Guide**, **Rifts® China One**, **Rifts® Book of Magic**, **Rifts® Canada**, **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** and many others.

As for new titles, **Armageddon Unlimited™** is available now, **Rifts® Dimension Book 15: Thundercloud Galaxy™®** is out later this month (April), **Rifts® World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms™ Expanded & Updated**, the all new **Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook**, **Rifts® Megaverse in Flames™**, **Dead Reign™ Sourcebook Three**, **Rifts® Lemuria**, and **Robotech® New Generation Sourcebook**, among others, are all coming your way from now through Summer.

The popular **Rifts® Baseball Cap** is also back in stock.

Page 16 – A Megaversal™ Menagerie – Optional source material for Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Rifts® and other settings.

Aaron Corley presents a zoological menagerie of strange beings, monsters and a couple animals you can drop into your campaigns to shake things up.

- Page 16 – Pulse Dogs
- Page 17 – Shadow Swine
- Page 18 – Sentient Beings start
- Page 18 – Aztlanolagians
- Page 19 – Bruskidane
- Page 20 – Crypt Guardians

- Page 21 – Desh'coda
- Page 22 – Kuamziri
- Page 23 – Qung
- Page 25 – Shell Monsters
- Page 26 – Shimmerlings
- Page 27 – Thigmonites
- Page 28 – Varanoie
- Artwork by *bradshaw* and *Joseph Lawn*.

Page 30 – Dark Day Chronicles, Volume Two – A Short Story for Nightbane®

Jeremy Hutchins is back with a new story of angels, terror, self-discovery and adventure in the world of the Nightbane. It is a dynamic story that should give you ideas for your own Nightbane® campaign.

Artwork by *Mark Dudley*.

Page 37 – Dawn of a New Era, Part Two – Optional source material for Heroes Unlimited™

The conclusion of *Corey Livermore's* optional **Heroes Unlimited™** setting in which the of existence super-beings and aliens has recently been revealed to the human population. World governments scramble to make people feel safe by imposing a law that requires super-beings and aliens to “register.”

In this adventure setting, your heroes are framed for an attack on a space shuttle. They must prove their innocence by uncovering a conspiracy, finding the real culprit and bringing him to justice. If only it were that easy. Many maps and a new super-villain and ideas for your gaming pleasure.

Artwork by *Michael Mumah*.

Page 50 – New Chillicothe – Optional source material for Rifts®

Matthew Olfson presents his imagining on how a Coalition fortress city is built and operates. It also describes many notable places within the city, defenses, and notable characters, as well as consumer electronics galore, and other specialized tech gear.

- Page 52 – Fort Canon
- Page 53 – City Walls and Defenses
- Page 55 – ADC'n'C Building
- Page 57 – Factory Level
- Page 60 – Crimson Field
- Page 61 – Riley Station
- Page 62 – The M&M Fusion Wing
- Page 64 – The Tin Rapture
- Page 65 – Tech-tonic Electronics
- Page 69 – Pyre-Stone Funeral Services
- Page 69 – CSMT-23, Coalition Television
- Page 70 – NC Viceroy Company

Page 71 – City Hall, Cold Storage & Fire Station

Page 72 – Notable People

Page 77 – New Chillicothe ‘Burbs

Page 84 – People of Note in the ‘Burbs

Artwork by *Kent Burles* and *Allen and Brian Manning*.

Page 91 – The Hammer of the Forge™

– “Swan Song”

Chapter 54: Swan Song, is the final chapter in the Hammer of the Forge story-line. It is an epic tale that has run for thirteen and a half years, starting with issue one. We thank the intrepid *James M.G. Cannon* for the wonderful ride he’s taken us on these many years. We hope he will continue to submit short stories and game material to **The Rifter®** in the future.

Artwork by *Apollo Okamura* and *Nicholas Hendriks*.

The Theme for Issue 54

This issue of **The Rifter®** focuses on unusual people and places. The articles are packed with compelling source material to fill your campaigns with adventure, unique settings, menaces, monsters, and weirdness. This issue focuses on material for **Rifts®**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Nightbane®**, and **The Palladium Fantasy RPG®**. We hope you enjoy these contributions from fans like you, and that they inspire new avenues of adventure.

The Rifter® Needs You

We need new writers and artists to fill the next 13 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 **Michael “Madman Mike” Leonard**, and is a tribute to **The Hammer of the Forge™**. We think it does a nice job capturing the lead character – Cosmo-Knight Caleb Vulcan – and his heroic story.

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® #55

The Rifter® #55 is our Summer issue and will contain all kinds of exciting new source material, 30 Year Anniversary news and other good stuff.

- **Source material for Palladium Fantasy RPG®.**
- **Source material for Rifts®.**
- **Source material for numerous settings.**
- **News, coming attractions and much more.**

**Palladium Books® – 30 years of
role-playing infinite possibilities.**

Limited only by your imagination™

From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

April is going to be an explosive month for Palladium Books. We have two new books being released (this issue of **The Rifter®** and **Thundercloud Galaxy™**), we hope to go live with the new **Palladium Books® website**, and by the time you read this, the **Creators Conference** will have already happened. Heck, by the time you read this, I'll probably be hard at work on the next new release in the pipeline, probably one of the **Rifts® Vampire** books or **Robotech® New Generation Sourcebook**.

As I write this, the Creators Conference is two weeks away, so I can't tell you what transpired yet. That will have to wait till next issue. I can tell you what we hope to accomplish.

1. Help refine and ramp up the production of new books as well as launch a new division within the company.
2. Set clear goals for the company for the next 3-5 years.
3. Help the creators – writers and artists – take their craft to the next level.

We'll be brainstorming about new product, new mediums, and new ways to deliver great role-playing games to you. Ultimately, our goal is to launch a new era of adventure and fun to carry us along for another 30 years.

Thirty years. Wow. There are days when I can hardly believe 30 years has gone by. It seems like only yesterday that I was releasing **The Mechanoid Invasion®**. Other times I feel every day of those thirty years. We've had one heck of a ride, I'll say that. The last several years had been difficult, so it is time we turn things around and soar again. The new era starts right now.

Let the new Palladium website be a marker of the new era and change. It is the handiwork of *Rex Barksdoll* and *Thom Bartold*, and it is looking awesome. The new website will be more user friendly, easy to use, updated through and through, with a new look and feel, more art, more appeal, and more fun. With any luck it will *go live* by the end of April. Hmmm, it might be up already. Keep watching. You'll know it when you see it. I know you'll like it.

More new product is coming. Lots of it. Though we've hit a few bumps and minor delays, 2011 is still on track to bring you more new releases than you've seen in years. And no one is more excited about it than us. The following "new" titles should be out by *August*. (Does not include books already released this year.)

- **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 14: Thundercloud Galaxy™**
- **Rifts® WB One: Vampire Kingdoms™, Expanded & Updated**
- **Robotech® New Generation™ Sourcebook**
- **Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook™**
- **Rifts® World Book™: Lemuria**
- **The Rifter® #55**
- **Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames** (Minion War™ crossover)
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth™: First Responders Sourcebook**
- **Dead Reign™ Sourcebook Three**

Back in print. We're also bringing back a wide range of products that have been out of stock. So far this year that includes:

- **Rifts® World Book 20: Canada**
- **Rifts® Dark Conversions™**
- **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**
- **Rifts® Game Master Guide**
- **Rifts® World Book 5: Triax & The NGR™**

- **Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook**
- **Rifts® China One**
- **Rifts® Megaverse® Builder**
- **Rifts® Baseball Cap**
- **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 6: Three Galaxies™**
- **Rifts® Black Vault™**
- **Rifts® Mercenaries™**
- **Aliens Unlimited™ – A Heroes Unlimited™ sourcebook**

We'll be at Gen Con Indy in August. So please swing on over to the Palladium booth to chat, get autographs and get all the new books that will have come out by then, and any older ones you may be missing.

There have been rumblings about the Rifts® Movie again. Will it be made? We can only hope and wait. While you're waiting and musing about a Rifts® movie, here are some fun facts.

- It has been 9 years (2002) since Palladium first signed a movie option for **Rifts®** with Walt Disney Pictures for development by Jerry Bruckheimer Films.
 - The typical option is three years.
 - I am told the average movie, these days, takes 10 years before it goes into full development and production.
 - One in 10,000 options ever get made into a movie.
 - Three other film studios and one independent writer/producer have contacted Palladium over the last 9 years inquiring about the film rights to Rifts®.
- We remain ever hopeful.

Meanwhile we continue to create new RPG products that push the envelope while exploring new mediums and venues for marketing, storytelling and gaming. There should be more Palladium fun with Facebook and other social mediums. There should also be a surprise or two this year.

Can you feel it? Yep, change is in the wind. There is a growing excitement and momentum. And we're glad you are there with us to experience it. Keep those imaginations burning bright and game on.

– Kevin Siembieda, Publisher

News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

Palladium to attend Gen Con Indy – August 4-7

Yes, Palladium Books will be at **Gen Con Indy** this Summer – August 4-7, 2011.

Please come on over and join the fun. Palladium has not attended Gen Con in a couple of years, so we figured it was time to return. We heard the event was fantastic last year, we'll have a bunch of new product, and it is a chance for us to meet and chat with fans from around the world. Besides, it is Palladium's 30th Anniversary so it seems appropriate to be there.

We hope you will stop by our booth to chat and get autographs, as well as pick up new and back stock titles, specialty items and more. We're not sure who will be joining us at the

Palladium booth, but so far, Palladium creators you'll be able to meet include:

Kevin Siembieda
Wayne Smith
Michael Mumah (artist)
Brandon Aten (writer)
Matthew Clements (writer; tentative)
And others to be announced.

Big Plans for Palladium Remain in Place

Our release schedule hit a bump in March, with no new release, but we're back on track with two coming out this month: **The Rifter® #54** in your hands, and **Rifts® Dimension Book: Thundercloud Galaxy™** which is epic in scope and introduces a wide range of fun new aliens, weapons and equipment. **Robotech®** sourcebooks and more titles for **Rifts®** and other game lines are in development.

All our big plans are still in play:

- We intend to support our new Facebook page.
- Retool the Palladium website in a big way.
- Attend **Gen Con** (hope to see a lot of you there).
- Release 1-2 new titles a month.
- Launch a couple of secret projects by year's end.

Exactly what is coming out in the second half of the year and when will be dictated by the events of Palladium's Creators Conference April 7-10. I will provide a report in the next issue of **The Rifter®**, but excitement is running high for everyone.

As far as I'm concerned, we are about to enter a new era of growth and excitement. It starts with role-playing games and spreads into new mediums, new media and new markets for Palladium.

Update: Rifts® Movie

As of my writing of this news section (always done just before **The Rifter®** goes to the printer, so it is March 30), there is nothing new to report. Palladium's movie option is up for renewal with Disney and Jerry Bruckheimer Films. They've held the film rights for nine years. Will they go for a 10th? Do they have a screenplay or a treatment they think is rockin' enough to develop into a live action movie, or strong enough to warrant renewing the option for one more year? We just don't know. I will know if the option has been renewed by next issue.

Meanwhile, we have another major Hollywood film company interested in **Rifts®**, so if Disney and JB Films let the rights go, it might be snatched up by someone else very quickly. Again, I should know by next issue.

New and improved Palladium website is coming soon

The new Palladium website is looking fantastic and we hope to go live with it by the end of April. Watch for it. Trust me, you'll know the difference when you see it. www.palladium-books.com

Join Palladium on Facebook

The Palladium Facebook page continues to be a fun place to visit, chat and have fun and we invite you to join us. More features and interaction are coming. Our new "tech guy" Rex, has other ideas for us as well, so expect to be seeing us all over the web in the months to come. Social media, watch out!

Final Chapter of The Hammer of the Forge™

It was bound to come to an end. All good things do. Yet, somehow, the end of **The Hammer of the Forge** feels like saying goodbye to an old friend.

I'm talking about *James M.G. Cannon's* long running fan fiction that followed the exploits of a noble Cosmo-Knight on an epic journey through the Three Galaxies. **The Hammer of the Forge™** started in **The Rifter® Number One**. It has run for 54 issues over a period of 14 years. James never missed an issue and always delivered a new, compelling chapter without fail. Apollo Okamura has done the artwork for most of those 14 years.

We hope you enjoy the tribute cover and join us in thanking *James M.G. Cannon* for 14 years of fun, laughs, tears and adventure. Think about what an adventure this must have been for James, too. He has spent the last 13 and a half years weaving a story we'll never forget.

Wayne Smith and several fans suggested we collect the entire story in one volume, and include game stats for the many colorful characters, monsters and weapons in the saga. James M.G. Cannon likes the idea. What do you think? Please let us know.

Rifts® Crossover Comic in Heavy Metal® Magazine

As you may recall, *RC* and *Dominic Aradio* have created a two-part **Rifts®/Colt the Outlander™** crossover comic strip that is appearing in **Heavy Metal® Magazine**. Part Two should be appearing this Spring – I think. We approved the finished art and text a couple weeks ago. It is great. Even better than Part One. Watch for it.

The Rifter® Subscription

The special subscription drive was a big success, with most of you subscribers renewing, plus we saw a number of new people subscribe. Not a surprise, as **The Rifter®** seems to be consistently outstanding due to Wayne Smith's dedication to the series, and all of our great contributors.

Of course, you can subscribe to **The Rifter®** anytime.

80+ titles available as PDFs at DriveThruRPG.com

It seems like people are really starting to find this website where fans can acquire many of our out of print titles as PDFs. It is, indeed, an excellent source to get a wealth of material. You can get the first 48 issues of **The Rifter®**, as well as out of print titles such as **Nightbane® Book Four: Shadows of Light™**, the original **Mechanoids® RPG**, **Beyond the Supernatural™**

First Edition Rules, **Boxed Nightmares™**, **Palladium Fantasy RPG® 1st Edition Rules**, **Heroes Unlimited™ Revised 1st Edition**, and many others at DriveThruRPG.com. Check 'em out.

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2011 Release Checklist

All dates are tentative, but these are the release dates Palladium is shooting for.

2011 Releases

January

- **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** – *Back in print*
- **Aliens Unlimited™** – A **Heroes Unlimited™** sourcebook – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® World Book 20: Canada** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® Dark Conversions™** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® Game Master Guide** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® World Book 5: Triax & The NGR™** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook™** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® China One** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® Megaverse® Builder** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 6: Three Galaxies™** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® Black Vault™** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® Mercenaries™** – *Back in print*
- **Rifts® Baseball Cap** – *Back in print*

Recent Releases

- **The Rifter® #53** – Available now.
- **Armageddon Unlimited™** – Available now.

April 2011 Releases

- **The Rifter® #54** – New! Available now.
- **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 14: Thundercloud Galaxy™** – New! Available now.

May 2011 Releases

- **Rifts® WB One: Vampire Kingdoms™, Expanded & Updated** – New
- **Rifts® Book of Magic (back in print)**

June 2011 Releases

- **Robotech® New Generation™ Sourcebook** (tentative)
- **Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook™** – New
- **Rifts® World Book™: Lemuria** – New

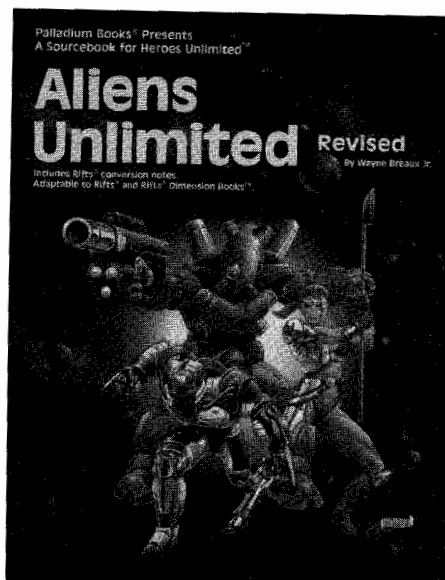
July 2011 Releases

- **The Rifter® #55** – New
- **Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames (Minion War™ crossover)** – New

In the Pipeline

- **Rifts® Chaos Earth™: First Responders Sourcebook** (as soon as we can slot it in)
- **Dead Reign™ Sourcebook Three**
- **Robotech® UEEF Marines** and other **Robotech®** sourcebooks.
- **Rifts®** sourcebooks
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth™** sourcebooks
- **Palladium Fantasy®: Mysteries of Magic™ Two & Three**
- **Palladium Fantasy®** other sourcebooks
- **Warpath™ Urban Jungle RPG**
- And other good stuff.

Back in print



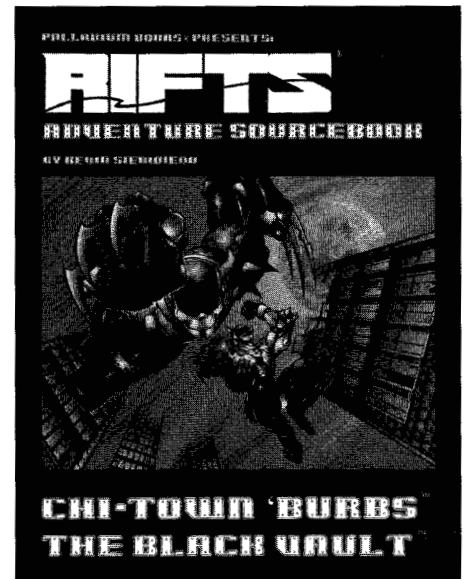
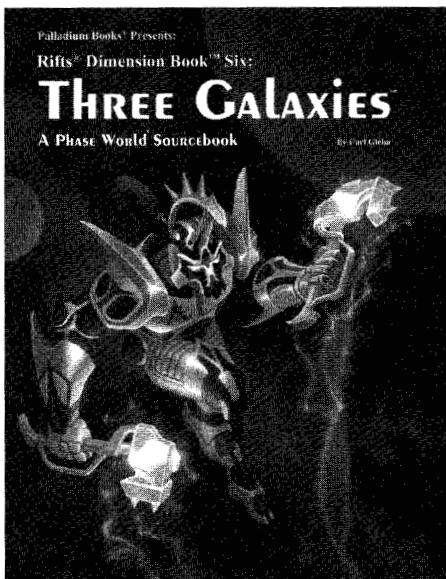
Aliens Unlimited™

A sourcebook for **Heroes Unlimited™**

Aliens Unlimited™ brings alien beings to your Earth-based **Heroes Unlimited™** setting and enables you to take your Earth heroes to alien worlds. This sourcebook has everything you need to launch an alien based campaign or galactic adventures, or introduce alien invaders, villains, heroes and campaign ideas.

Aliens Unlimited™ makes the perfect resource and companion to the **Thundercloud Galaxy™** or any of the **Rifts® Dimension Books™** and **Minion War™** series. Looking for some new space aliens, villains and monsters to add to your **Thundercloud Galaxy™** or **Minion War™** campaign? Need some unique Splugorth slaves? Demon henchmen? Take a look at **Aliens Unlimited™** (and the **Aliens Unlimited™ Galaxy Guide™** companion sourcebook); easy to adapt.

- 85 alien races/R.C.C.s., plus a bonus alien.
- 15 alien monster races, plus NPC villains.
- Galactic Organizations (Atorian Empire and more).
- Rules and tables for *Creating Alien Characters*, including an expanded Alien Appearance & Bonuses Table, Reason for Coming to Earth, Equipment, Special Vehicles and more.



- 90+ weapon stats, including Cold Weapons, Energy Weapons, Incendiary Weapons, Sonic Weapons, and a wide range of Kisentite Blades.
- Plus info about alien bionics, body armor, and power armor.
- A handful of vehicles and miscellaneous equipment.
- UFO watch groups, alien spies, NPCs and more.
- Suggestions, rules and information for your galactic campaigns.
- Plus some super abilities, spell magic and psionics.
- Adaptable to *Rifts*®, *Phase World*® and *Rifts*® *Dimension Books* complete with conversion notes for *Rifts*®.
- Written by Wayne Breaux Jr., additional text by Siembieda.
- 208 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 515. Available now!

Rifts® Dimension Book™ 6:

Three Galaxies™

A guide to the Three Galaxies, this book takes a look at dozens of solar systems, notable planets, select alien races, people, civilizations and monsters, as well as space anomalies, spaceships and more. This is another sourcebook that is ideal for campaigns involving the *Minion War*™, the *Thundercloud Galaxy*™, *Phase World*® and adventures in the *Three Galaxies*.

- An overview of the *Three Galaxies*.
- 16 O.C.C.s/R.C.C.s including the *Obsidian Spell Thief* and *Space Warlock*.
- A half dozen monsters plus the mysterious *Necrol*.
- *Galactic Organizations* (*Atorian Empire* and more).
- More information on the *Intruders*, *Kreeghor*, *Splugorth* and others.
- *Draygon Industries* and their weapons.
- *Demon Stars*, *Demon Planets* and magic starships.
- Notable spaceships and weapon systems.
- The monstrous *Necrol* and their living weapons and spacecraft.
- Notable equipment of the *Three Galaxies*.
- A wealth of background material and adventure ideas.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 851. Available now.

Rifts® Mercenaries™

This fan-favorite sourcebook presents everything you need to create and run a mercenary company on *Rifts* Earth. It includes creation rules, new Occupational Character Classes such as the *Professional Smuggler*, *Thief*, *Safecracker*, *Spy*, *Bounty Hunter*, *Master Assassin*, and others, plus a treasure trove of mercenary weapons, vehicles, gear and arms dealers.

- *Nine Mercenary O.C.C.s*.
- Rules and tables for creating a *Mercenary Company*.
- Six NPC mercenary companies described.
- *Northern Gun* – weapons and gear.
- *Naruni Enterprises* – weapons, force fields, vehicles and gear.
- *Golden Age Weaponsmiths* – arms dealer that specializes in vehicles.
- *Wellington Industries* – weapons and gear, including *Ramjet rounds*.
- *Iron Heart Armaments Inc.* – combat vehicles.
- *Chipwell Armaments Inc.* – power armor.
- *Angrar Robotics* – power armor.
- *Coalition Army* – combat vehicles.
- *Casualties of Peace* – adventure outline.
- Written by C.J. Carella.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 813 – Available now.

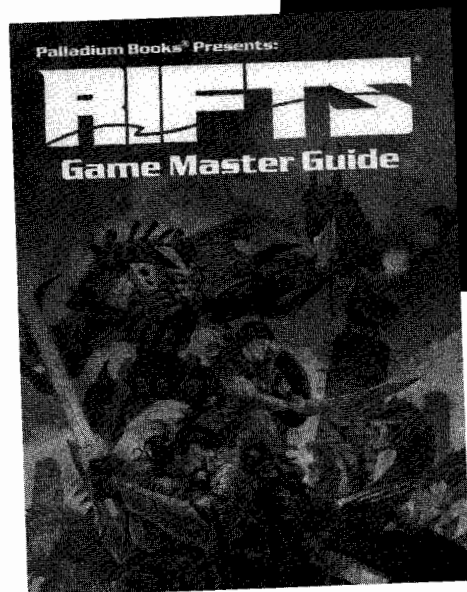
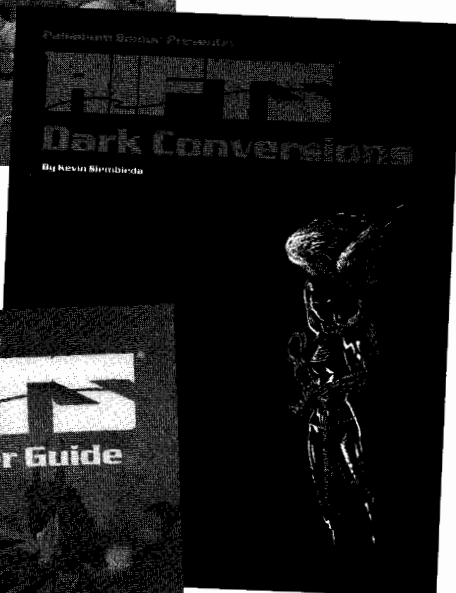
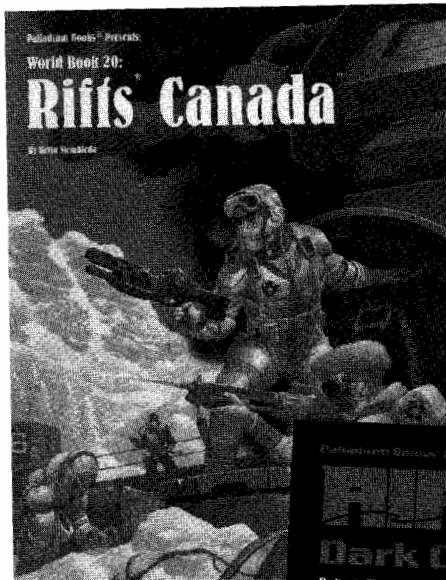
Rifts® Adventure Sourcebook:

The Black Vault™

For generations it has been rumored the *Coalition States* maintains a *Top Secret* facility where it locks away and stores all the magic weapons and items it confiscates from adventurers and mages. The CS, of course, denies these rumors, but they are true. And the truth is revealed for the first time in this epic sourcebook packed with secrets and magic items. Do your characters dare to rob the *Black Vault*?

- *The Legend of the Black Vault*.
- *The Coalition's Campaign Against Magic*.
- *Coalition Anti-Magic Squads*.
- *The Black Vault*, its defenses and its inventory of magic items.

- 101 Magic Items – each “item” (79 of them) is described in detail. The last 22 items are magic potions with the effects of magic spells.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 48 pages – \$9.95 retail – Cat. No. 855 – Available now.



- 8 D-Bee R.C.C.s common to Canada, including the Cyber-Horsemen of Ixion R.C.C. (bionic Centaurs).
- The Headhunter O.C.C. defined. Includes the Techno-Warrior, Assassin, Anti-Robot Specialist, Techno-Hound, and Momano Headhunter.
- Tundra Ranger O.C.C.s: Ranger, Scout, Cavalry, and Trapper-Woodsman.
- Techno-Wizard Bionics and notable gear of the Tundra Rangers.
- The Canadian frontier mapped and described.
- City of Old Calgary, Fadetowns and notable cities and locations; some with maps of the area.
- Travel rules for snow, ice, and arctic conditions, plus storms, flash floods and other weather events.
- Rules for hypothermia and exposure.
- 192 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 835 – by Kevin Siembieda.
- Back in stock and available now.

Rifts® Dark Conversions™

The focus of *Dark Conversions*™ is on creatures of darkness and other monsters such as Alien Intelligences, Elementals, Were-Beasts, vampires, weird supernatural beings, Elementals, the Nightbane and others. If you are looking for practitioners of dark magic, villains, monsters and vile horrors to pit against your heroes, this is the sourcebook for *you*. Many creatures also have notes on how they fit into the Rifts Earth setting and where they may be encountered.

- 130 monsters statted out and described for your inclusion in Rifts®, Chaos Earth™, Phase World® or any Mega-Damage setting.
- Were-Beasts, Gremlins, Gargoyles and spirits.
- Undead legions, Demon and Deevil hordes from the world of *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®.
- Conversions for the Nightbane® and the Nightlords™ and their minions.
- Alien Intelligence creation rules and tables.
- Elemental beings of lesser and greater stature.
- Entities and monsters from *Beyond the Supernatural*™.
- Dark Magic: Witches, Shifters, Diabolists, and Summoners.
- 192 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 852 – by Siembieda & others.
- Back in stock and available now.

Rifts® Game Master Guide

The ultimate Rifts® reference and sourcebook, it contains *all* the weapons, equipment, body armor, power armor, robots, vehicles, skills and psionics from *Rifts® World Books 1-23*, *Sourcebooks 1-4*, and *Siege on Tolkeen 1-6*, collected into one big reference. Plus, maps, lists and indexes of O.C.C.s, R.C.C.s, experience tables and more.

- 503 weapons, including explosives, plus E-Clips and ammo notes.
- 300 skills listed and described.
- 290 pieces of equipment.
- 104 suits of body armor.
- 182 vehicles.

Rifts® World Book 20:

Rifts® Canada™

A comprehensive overview of Canada, including notable places, cities, towns, people, O.C.C.s, monsters and conflicts. Though much of Canada has reverted to wilderness, there are pockets of civilization and technology, though not all of them human.

- The Inuit Shaman O.C.C. and abilities.
- 12 Monsters of the North, including Sasquatch and Loup Garou.
- 7 demonic beings including Demon Bears, Windigo and Sedna the Sea Hag.

- 86 suit of power armor.
- 58 robots.
- Optional combat rules and examples of play.
- Comprehensive index of O.C.C.s, R.C.C.s, P.C.C.s, and Monsters.
- Experience tables for scores of character classes.
- Designer notes, rules clarifications and reference notes.
- Game Master tips and hints for running Rifts®.
- Maps, adventure ideas, and a lexicon of terms.
- 352 pages of reference material galore.
- Cover by David Dorman. Interior art by Perez, Wilson & others.
- 352 pages – \$26.95 retail – Cat. No. 845.
- Back in stock and available now.

Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook™

A compendium of bionic and cybernetic systems in the Rifts North America setting, with information about Partial and Full Conversion Cyborgs, Headhunters, City Rats, the Cyber-Doc and more. A must-have resource for fans of cyborgs.

- 220+ bionic components and features plus foreign bionics.
- 47 Commercial Cybernetic implants and 24 Black Market bionics.
- 7 different City Rat O.C.C.s and insight to life in the ‘Burbs.
- The Cyber-Doc O.C.C. explored in more depth.
- The Cyber-Snatcher Villain O.C.C. dealing in “previously owned” bionics and cybernetics. Want to guess how they come by these parts?
- The Cyborg O.C.C. revisited plus rules & info on repairing bionics.
- TW Bionics, cybernetics to inhibit magic and more.
- 112 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 850 – by Kevin Siembieda.
- Back in stock and available now.

Rifts® World Book Five:

Triax and the NGR™

The New German Republic (NGR) is surrounded and besieged by the hostile Gargoyle Empire – an empire of giant monsters. Only the superior robotics and weapons technology of Triax keeps the monsters at bay, but for how long? This epic World Book presents the Triax robots, power armor, cyborgs, and world setting that is Rifts Germany and surrounding region. More than 100,000 copies sold!

- 35+ weapons and explosives, plus body armor and other gear.
- 19 combat vehicles from tanks to jet aircraft.
- 12 Triax giant robot suits and vehicles.
- 9 other types of Triax robots and drones.
- 8 Triax Cyborgs plus bionic components.
- Triax power armor units including the T-550 Glitter Boy.
- 11 NGR Military O.C.C.s.
- The Euro-Juicer and designer drugs.
- Gypsy O.C.C.s and their special abilities.
- The Gargoyle Empire and its technology and war machines.
- 21 notable weapons of the Gargoyle Empire and 4 R.C.C.s.



- Setting and regional overview, Brodkil, Gene-Splicers and more.
- Cover and art by Kevin Long. 13 pages of comic book story.
- 224 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 810 – by Kevin Siembieda.
- Back in stock and available now.

Note: For dozens of new weapons, armor, robots, drones, power armor suits, cyborgs, vehicles and updated information about the NGR, Triax and the war, see **Rifts® World Book 31: Triax™ 2 – 192 pages – \$24.95 – Cat. No. 881.**

Rifts® World Book 24:

Rifts® China One

There is no place on Rifts Earth more exotic, magical and dangerous than China, especially since the Hells of the Yama Kings have bled into the mortal plane.

- 33 Chinese Demons, including Yaksha the Tiger and the Naga.
- 8 Chinese Goblins and the Naga-Spawn (semi-divine humans).
- 5 Chinese Ghosts, plus the Terra-Cotta Warriors.
- 24 Demonic curses.
- 11 provinces and the Yama Kings who rule them.
- The eight Hells on Earth.

- The Dragonlands, the Ghost City, Qingping Market, City of the Future, Wuchang, and many other notable places.
- World overview, maps and adventure ideas galore.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 857 – by Wujcik & Siembieda.
- Back in stock and available now.

Note: For 18 new O.C.C.s, heroes of the Celestial Court, Geofront, secret technology, mystical powers, Demon Wrestling, Demon Quelling, Chi Weapons, martial arts and more, see **Rifts® World Book 25: Rifts® China 2** – 160 pages – \$20.95 – Cat. No. 858.



Rifts® Dimension Book™ 7:

Megaverse® Builder

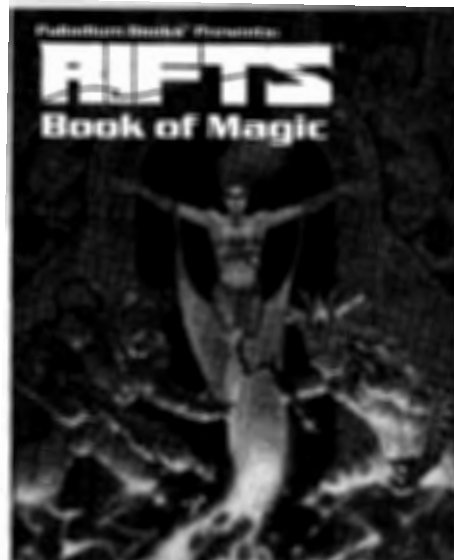
Your guide to creating your own corner of the infinite Megaverse®. The big picture of how the Megaverse® works, plus rules and suggestions for creating your own dimension.

- Dimension creation rules.
- Dimensional storms and anomalies.
- Dimensional monsters and travelers.
- The dimensions of Spires, the Great Machine, and the Garbage Pit.
- Dozens of Hook, Line and Sinker™ adventure outlines and ideas for many more.
- The Shifter O.C.C. expanded, exotic Familiars & summoning table.
- Tolkeen Artifact Hunter O.C.C. and Scavenger O.C.C.
- Designer notes, suggestions, tips & hints for dimension building.
- 96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 859 – by Carl Gleba.
- Back in stock and available now.

Rifts® Book of Magic

The ultimate Rifts® reference on magic

This is it, the ultimate guide to magic for Rifts Earth. All the magic spells, magic tattoos, Techno-Wizard items, magic weapons, equipment, body armor, restraints, parasites, symbiotes, magic items, Bio-Borgs, armor, automatons, Iron Juggernauts,



and more from *Rifts® World Books 1-23*, *Sourcebooks 1-4*, and *Siege on Tolkeen 1-6*, collected into one big reference.

- 850+ spells of great variety.
- 370+ magic items, weapons and devices.
- Elemental Magic, Temporal Magic, Ley Line Magic, Cloud Magic and Necromancy.
- Tattoo Magic, Nazca Line Magic, Nature Magic, Whalesongs and Ocean Magic, and more.
- Magic Songs, Chants, Biomancy, Magic Herbs, and Iron Juggernauts.
- Techno-Wizard weapons and devices, Rune Weapons, Millennium Tree wands and other magic items.
- Magic herbs, plants, components and Symbiotes.
- Shamanistic magic, Fetishes, Talismans and more.
- Comprehensive index of Practitioners of Magic.
- Designer notes, comments, tips & hints for running magic characters.
- 352 pages – \$26.95 retail – Cat. No. 848 – Siembieda and others.
- May 2011 back in print.



“Rifts® Logo” Baseball Cap

Back by popular demand. A black *Rifts® Logo* on a khaki baseball cap with black trim. Looks great and fans love it! Makes a great gift.

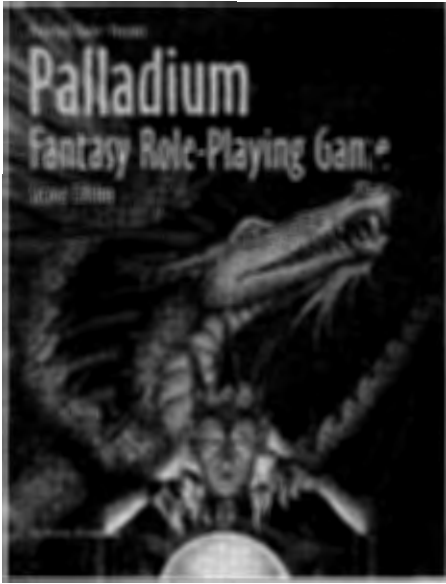
- Cotton cloth fabric, khaki color with black trim and black Rifts logo.

- Cloth Velcro strap for size adjustment. A nice cap.
- \$14.95 per cap – Cat. No. 2544 – Available now.

“Rifts® Logo” Dice Bag

Gold print on a rich black, faux velvet material. Looks gorgeous, a sturdy and well made drawstring bag. A big 7x9 inches, can hold a lot of dice.

- **Black Dice Bag: \$8.00 per bag – Cat. No. 2539 – Available now.**



Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®

A complete role-playing game set in a unique realm of high fantasy and epic adventure that has thrilled fans for 27 years. All the fantasy elements you'd expect are there, but spun in ways that you may not expect. Magic has replaced science. The elder races of Dwarves, Elves and Titans have given way to the rise of humanity and the Wolfen Empire. While the monster races – Goblins, Orcs, Ogres and Trolls – lay claim to the Old Kingdom, from which they launch their pillaging raids. And that's just the beginning.

- 13 different races available to player characters from human to Wolfen, Changeling, Elf, Dwarf, Ogre, Troll, Goblin, and many others.
- 25 Occupational Character Classes to select from.
- Magic unlike any you've ever seen before.
- 300+ Wizard and Warlock spells.
- 80+ psionic powers.
- 40 magic items plus magic potions, powders and fumes.
- 20 Curses and magical Faerie Foods.
- Summoner and the circles of power and summoning at his command.
- Diabolist and his Runes, Wards and Power Words.
- Mind Mage, Psi-Mystic, Psi-Healer and Psi-Sensitive.
- Poisons, herbs, potions and magic components.
- Men at arms with punch and power.
- Holy Swords and Rune Weapons.
- 100,000 years of history.
- A complete game with *all the rules you need to play* (additional sourcebooks, characters, abilities and settings optional).

- 336 pages – \$26.95 retail – Cat. No. 450 – by Kevin Siembieda.
- Back in stock and available now.



Armageddon Unlimited™

For Heroes Unlimited™ – Recent Release

Armageddon Unlimited™ is the ultimate good vs evil setting and adventure. The fate of the world hangs in the balance and only you can stop its destruction as demons and Deevils fight for control of the Earth and bringing about the end of life as we know it.

Armageddon Unlimited™ is more than an epic world-saving adventure, it is also a sourcebook jam-packed with new powers, magic, weapons and Power Categories that can be incorporated into any *Heroes Unlimited™* campaign. This book can be used as a standalone adventure sourcebook for *Heroes Unlimited™* or as a pivotal plot in an expansive *Minion War™* campaign. Get a free **sneak preview** of the book from DriveThruRPG.com.

- 7 new Minor and 14 Major Super Abilities.
- Deevil and Demon magical Chaos Weapons.
- Enchanted Weapons of Order and a few Enchanted Objects.
- Demon Hunter Power Category and abilities.
- Crusader of Light Power Category and abilities.
- Heroic Hellion Power Category – play a “reformed demon.”
- Hellion monster creation table.
- Magically Bestowed Variant Power Categories and abilities let you wield weapons that empower good and destroy evil.
- Doctor Vilde, the mastermind behind the Armageddon plot.
- The secret island base of Doctor Vilde and 16 maps.
- More than a dozen NPC villains.
- The Church of Unity and its role in bringing about Armageddon.
- The Chaos Generators – the key to stopping Armageddon.
- A menagerie of evil villains, people and places.
- The Armageddon scenario, adventure ideas and *Minion War™* on Earth.

- Written by Carl Gleba. Additional text by Kevin Siembieda.
- Cover by John Zeleznik.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 527. Available now.

NEW Titles Coming Soon



Rifts® Dimension Book™ 14:

Thundercloud Galaxy™

The Thundercloud Galaxy is a place for action and adventure. It is where the *Dominators* still tread and where the last of the Elder Races are said to hide. Ancient ruins of the Elders and other advanced people litter the worlds of the Thundercloud Galaxy. Some hold the secrets to riches, others threaten to unleash forgotten technology and ancient menaces.

Colonization efforts in the Thundercloud sponsored by the civilizations in the rest of the Three Galaxies offer the promise of a new beginning and a glorious future. Colonists flock to the Thundercloud filled with dreams. Space pirates and an array of cutthroats also flock to the galaxy, guns in hand, ready to rob and fleece the colonists. Lawmen and heroes are in great demand,

and the opportunities for clever adventurers are said to be without limit. Strange beings like the feline *Shing*, insectoid *CheDive*, and *Whetu*, who defy description, and monsters like the devouring *Yboor* are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg when it comes to life in this galaxy. It is also home to the Bushi Federation and the Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth, and is a playground for space pirates, raiders, the mysterious Exiles and the dark forces of the Minion War.

As the civilizations of the Anvil and Corkscrew Galaxies scramble to colonize the Thundercloud Galaxy in a mad rush to grab as much as they can, they are beginning to realize the galaxy holds more riches, beauty, horrors and secrets than anyone has ever imagined, making it a place of discovery, adventure and treachery like no other.

Thundercloud Galaxy™ is a perfect companion to the rest of the **Phase World®/Three Galaxies™** based *Dimension Books™* as well as the *Minion War™* series. Players can be pirates, raiders, brigands or hired guns, or they may be explorers, adventurers, Spacers, or any number of heroes trying to protect the colonists or the indigenous peoples of countless worlds and colonies. The possibilities are truly limited only by your imagination.

- 16 new alien R.C.C.s.
- Mysteries of the Elder Races, complete with stats for them as NPCs.
- Notes on the Dominators and Gene-Tech.
- Notable Dominator weapons, gear and salvage available to players.
- Notable monsters and strange creatures.
- Monster Creation Tables.
- Colony Creation Tables.
- Indigenous People Tables.
- 101 Ruins and Adventures.
- Guidelines for making Magic Weapons.
- Notable weapons, colony ships and equipment.
- The Trensik Mercenaries, Elder Races, Dominators and more.
- The Exiles, Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth and other mysterious people.
- An overview of the Thundercloud Galaxy, bits of history, new insights and many avenues of adventure.
- Any type of space opera and science fiction scenario you can imagine can be played out in the Thundercloud Galaxy.
- Written by Braden Campbell and Kevin Siembieda.
- Cover by John Zeleznik. Art by Michael Mumah.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 883. April, 2011.

Rifts® World Book One:

Vampire Kingdoms™, *Expanded & Updated*

Kevin Siembieda is reorganizing, tweaking, expanding and updating one of the most popular **Rifts® World Books** ever published: **Vampire Kingdoms™**. This will include *some* new artwork and an expanded page count. The book will be updated and expanded in much the same way as Kevin did with **Rifts® Sourcebook One** a few years ago. Best of all, it will be accompanied by the **Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook™**.

- The observations of Doc Reid.
- Vampires: Their strengths, weaknesses and powers.
- The Vampire Kingdoms expanded.

- Vampire strategies and plans for conquest.
- Vampire hunters and Techno-Wizard slayer devices (new and old).
- Key locations including Juarez and El Paso.
- The mystery of the Yucatan Peninsula.
- Traveling Shows, Freak Shows and Circuses.
- Monsters, D-Bees, and adventure ideas galore.
- Updated and revised to 110 P.A.
- Cover by E.M. Gist. Interior art by various artists.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 192 to 224 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 802-E. May 2011. release.

Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook™

All new source material

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

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

- Vampire protectors and guardians.
- Vampire rogues, mercenaries and warlords.
- Vampire operations away from the Kingdoms.
- Vampire incursions along the southern borderlands.
- New vampire hunters and human strongholds.
- Vampire hunter “exterminators.”
- Frightful revelations, secrets, and adventure ideas.
- And much, much more.
- Cover by Michael C. Hayes. Interior art by various artists.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda, Braden Campbell and Mark Dudley.
- 128 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 884. Spring 2011.

Robotech®

New Generation™ Sourcebook

This Robotech® sourcebook will be an early 2011 release.

- Rules for using mecha, power armor and technology from all four eras of Robotech.
- Kit-bashed mecha and rules for jury-rigging and combining parts from different generations of mecha.
- Freedom Fighter O.C.C.s and resistance organizations.
- Rogues and misfits from the three Robotech Wars.
- New weapons, vehicles, mecha and more.
- Villains, traitors, bandits, Invid henchmen, adventure and adventure ideas galore.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda and Irvin Jackson.
- A “manga” size sourcebook.
- 192-256 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 554. Final page count and price may be subject to change. Spring 2011.

Rifts® World Book: Lemuria™

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

- The Lemurians, their race, history and society.
- New O.C.C.s including the Serpent Hunter, Shriekers, Oceanic Guardsman, Aquatic Biomancer and others.
- The Stone Guardians of Easter Island and other mysteries.
- Biomancer Gardens and Aquatic Biomancy.
- Bio-Armor, Bio-Weapons and Bio-Construct Symbiotes.
- New psionic abilities.
- Sea Serpents, monsters, adventure ideas, and more.
- Written by Greg Diaczyk. Cover by John Zeleznik.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 885. Final page count and price may be subject to expansion and increase. Spring 2011.

Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™

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

- Soulmancer and Blood Magic.
- The Seven Deadly Plagues.
- The Demon Plagues across the globe.
- Battleground: Earth – as demons and infernals amass their legions.
- Rifts Calgary – also known as Hell’s Pit; the kingdom described.
- Ciudad de Diablo, Harpies’ Island and other notable Hell holes on Earth.
- Lord Doom, Pain and other demonic leaders.
- Horune treachery, Dimension Stormers and other villains.
- Global chaos and the places most dramatically affected by the Demon Plagues.
- Notable demonic Generals, mercenaries, people and places.
- Many adventure ideas.
- Written by Carl Gleba.
- 192 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 876. Spring 2011.

Rifts® Chaos Earth™ Sourcebook:

First Responders

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

- Apocalypse Plagues: Strange diseases, symbiotes and mutations that transform, torment, harm and kill Earth’s survivors.
- First Responder O.C.C.s, skills and special equipment.
- Civilian O.C.C.s, skills and orientation.
- Notable rescue vehicles, robot drones, and technology.
- New weapons, vehicles, mecha and more.
- Character modification and enhancement rules.
- Creatures from the Rifts and adventure ideas galore.
- Written by Jason Richards & Kevin Siembieda.
- 96 to 128 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 665. Coming in 2011.

Check out Palladium’s website

– www.palladiumbooks.com –

for updates, news and other information.

A Megaversal™

Menagerie

Optional Material for The Palladium Fantasy RPG® and Other Settings

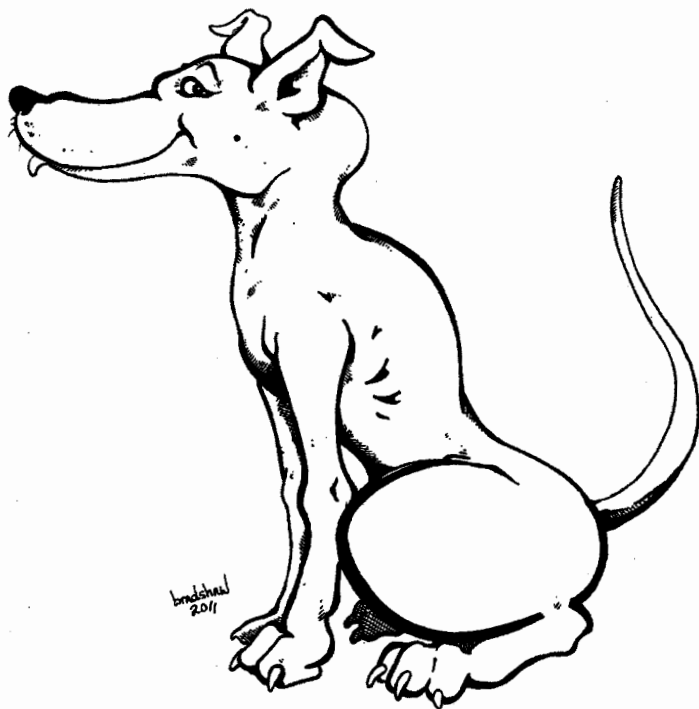
By Aaron Corley

... and so, my lord, that concludes my report. I have taken the liberty to include more in-depth descriptions of some of the exotic beings I have encountered over the last two years of traveling outside the Western Empire and beyond our own world. I pray that His Majesty will find them as interesting as I did.

As always, I am eternally in His Majesty's service and look forward to receiving my next assignment through the usual channels.

*Respectfully,
Algernon*

Animals



Pulse Dogs

Pulse Dogs are natives of another dimension, where they are used extensively to herd animals. Domestication has somewhat blunted their instincts as natural hunters, but their sound wave generation can be used to secure food for themselves and their masters.

Pulse Dogs get their name from a unique genetic mutation that allows them to generate sound waves similar to those that a dolphin on Earth uses for navigation. The dogs' brains, however, are unequipped to interpret the changes in the sounds when they bounce off other objects, leaving them unable to navigate using this ability. On the other hand, the sound waves are noticeable enough to other creatures that the dogs can employ them not only

to herd animals, but also as a concentrated offensive mechanism. Sound is actually directed at a target with enough force to stun it. Local mythology, corroborated by sacred writings, asserts that the sound waves generated by Pulse Dogs have the ability to drive out possessing spirits as well. The ability also seems effective against parasitic organisms.

Except for a larger, domed cranium, Pulse Dogs appear similar to Earth dogs and exhibit most of the same preferences and characteristics.

Alignment: Considered Anarchist, but can be trained to protect its master and herd to the point of laying down its life.

Attributes: Pulse Dogs are similar enough to regular Earth herd dogs that the usual attributes do not apply. See Herding Dogs on page 212 of *Monsters & Animals™ 2nd Edition* for more information.

Size: Their bodies measure three to four and half feet (0.9 to 1.4 m) long; tails are twelve to nineteen inches (30.5 to 48.3 cm) long.

Weight: Thirty to sixty pounds (13.5 to 27 kilograms).

A.R.: Not applicable.

Hit Points: 3D6

S.D.C.: 2D6+12

P.P.E.: 3D6

Attacks per Melee: Two (plus one sound pulse; see below).

Damage: Bite does 1D6 points of damage; claws do one point of damage.

Bonuses: +4 to initiative, +3 to strike, +3 to dodge and +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision thirty feet (9 m), prowl 45%, track by smell 80%, swim 65%, can leap three feet (0.9 m) high and six feet (1.8 m) long; can perform a leaping pounce.

Special Abilities: Pulse Dogs are able to generate two types of sonic waves. The first has a mild, wide-area effect that allows them to herd all sheep and cattle within a twelve foot (3.7 m) radius. While the wave does no damage, most creatures find it uncomfortable enough that they move away from the source as quickly as possible. Targets must save versus the sound wave (14 or better; add M.E. bonuses) or lose one melee attack/action while they hurry out of the wave's area of effect.

The second manifestation of the sound wave is an intense, concentrated beam that can only affect one target at time. It uses up both of the dog's attacks for that round and has only a five foot (1.5 m) range. When struck by the invisible wave (it is +4 to strike), the target loses two melee actions from being disoriented and generally falls to the ground (60% chance) until the effect passes. The same saving throw applies as above to avoid these effects.

In addition, this second, more intense wave has the ability to dislodge parasites within the victim's body (14 or better saves) as well as free victims from the control of a Possessing Entity (victim gets a free save versus possession with a +2 bonus; the Possessing Entity cannot attempt to regain control for 1D6x10 minutes).

Speed: 50 (35 mph/56 km) with a maximum speed of 55 (37.5 mph/60 km).

Average Life Span: Ten to fifteen years.

Value: Forty to eighty gold as a pet and watchdog and three to four hundred as a trained herding dog in their home dimension; potentially ten to twenty times that in other worlds.

Habitat: Domestic.

Range: Worldwide on their home world, but virtually unknown anywhere else.

Behavior: These dogs are used to herd and control sheep and cattle, retrieve strays, as well as serve as companions. Mated pairs remain together for life. The female gives birth to a litter of two to seven pups after a gestation of nine weeks.



Shadow Swine

Shadow Swine come from the Realm of Shadows, where they are often used as beasts of burden and watchdogs by the more intelligent beings native to that dimension. As long as they do not go hungry, Shadow Swine do not care, either. As a result, many residents of the Shadow Realm and some Shifters/Summoners with an affinity for shadow creatures will allow them to graze freely on the land outside their homes. In addition, Shadow Swine roam about the wilder parts of their home dimension. Rumors suggest that herds of wild Shadow Swine have even attacked and devoured Shadow Giants and other creatures when unable to find another food source. When trapped in other dimensions, they will eat just about anything they can find, including the beings who summoned them, if not properly cared for.

Alignment: Considered Unprincipled or Anarchist. Shadow Swine can be pesky and mischievous, getting into food supplies, sniffing through personal equipment and devouring any edibles they may find. Shadow Swine like to be on the go all the time and are easily bored after one hour of standing around doing nothing (unless sleeping), and that's when they wander off to go investigating or get into trouble. Generally, as long as they're well fed, they only attack others if they need to defend themselves.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+2 (low animal intelligence, used mostly for problem solving *if* given the proper motivation), M.E. 1D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 1D6+13, P.B. 3D4, Spd 5D6.

Hit Points: 2D6x10+50

S.D.C.: 30 plus 1D6 (or M.D.C. 20 plus 1D6).

Natural A.R.: 9

P.P.E.: 1D6

Horror Factor: 14

Attacks per Melee: Three attacks per melee by either physical attack or psionics.

Natural Abilities/Weapons: In the physical plane, Shadow Swine are generally invisible (except to psychics, young children and some animals). Otherwise, they behave in a similar fashion to real-world pigs, swine and boars.

Special Abilities: Like other shadow creatures, Shadow Swine possess the ability to become invisible in shadows and darkness. This gives their attackers -5 to strike while the Swine is hidden. Luckily, they are too stupid to prowl, and breathe too loudly to stay well hidden even if they wanted to.

Shadow Swine can see in total darkness up to 120 feet (36.6 m).

When attacking in groups of 1D4+1, the first Shadow Swine takes the form of its victim's shadow just prior to biting. It will then attempt to grapple with its target. Only a test of strength can release its victim. Meanwhile, the others in the group will seize the distraction and move in for the kill.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, parry, dodge and pull punch, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to save versus magic and mind control and +15 to save versus Horror Factor.

Magic: None.

Psionics: All Shadow Swine possess the psychic powers of Sixth Sense, Empathy, Presence Sense and See the Invisible with 4D6 I.S.P. to expend. They recover two I.S.P. per hour of activity just like a humanoid psychic.

Average Life Span: Unknown.

Vulnerabilities: Holy weapons and demon-killer weapons do double damage; holy symbols have no effect. A Globe of Daylight spell will hurt their eyes (-2 to all combat rolls), but not necessarily hold them at bay.

Value: None unless summoned to act as a guard or to terrorize others.

Habitat: The Realm of Shadows, although sometimes encountered in the Magic Zone of Rifts Earth or the Old Kingdom of the Palladium World.

Languages: None, although they understand the native language of anyone who magically summons them from their home world.

Enemies: Shadow Swine consider every living creature a potential food source. Other shadow creatures know of their low

intelligence and consider them the bottom of the food chain in the Shadow Realm.

Allies: Shadow Swine are most often found in the company of larger, more powerful shadow creatures. They are sometimes summoned into other worlds, but they tend to be difficult to control and too ornery for most Summoners and Shifters.

Physical Appearance: Shadow Swine appear as very large pigs or wild boars composed entirely of shadow. They sport small tusks, cloven hooves and beady eyes. Many have the bristly razorback mane while others may have smoother fur.

Size: Typically six feet (1.8 meters) tall at the shoulder.

Weight: Three hundred to six hundred pounds (135 to 270 kg).

Rifts® Conversion Notes: In an M.D.C. environment, Shadow Swine become minor Mega-Damage creatures with 2D6+100 M.D.C.

Sentient Beings

Aztlanologians

Aztlanologians are rabbit-like warriors from another dimension. As sentient humanoids, they possess a natural curiosity concerning the Megaverse which has motivated them to look beyond their own world for adventure. Since they come from a world that is a dimensional crossroads similar to Rifts Earth (but a much lower power concentration, on the same level as the Palladium World), they have ample opportunity to get around.

In spite of their rabbit-like appearance, Aztlanologians are anything but docile herbivores. They come from a strong warrior culture that celebrates the unity of the clan in defeating their enemies as well as surviving beneath a harsh, volcanic world subject to random Ley Line Storms. This has given them an affinity for dark, solitary places as well as a nearly compulsive love for precious metals, minerals and gemstones. It is not uncommon for younger, more restless Aztlanologians to risk life and limb for a few gold coins or sparkling jewelry. Older members of their species have learned to rely on magic and psionics instead of brute force to accomplish the same goals.

Aztlanologians share many traits in common with Mystics, although they are not able to develop their abilities to the same extent. They are also immune to mind control, magic and psychic sleep and paralysis, and have an increased resistance to illusions.

Aztlanologians are considered minor creatures of magic and are omnivorous in most cases.

Alignment: Tend to be either Principled or Anarchist, although they can be of any alignment.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+1, M.E. 3D6+4, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 2D6, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 4D6+4, P.B. 1D6, Spd 2D6.

Hit Points: P.E.x3

S.D.C.: 3D6x10

Natural A.R.: 12

P.P.E.: 4D6+150 (does not increase with experience or O.C.C.).

Horror Factor: 12

O.C.C.s Available: Any non-magic or non-psychic character class.

Attacks per Melee: Four attacks per melee or by ranged weapon type.

Natural Abilities/Weapons: Nightvision five hundred feet (152.4 m); they can see into all spectrums of light and are im-



immune to any light or magic that would blind most other creatures. They can see the invisible, and recognize illusions on a Perception Roll of ten or higher.

Special Abilities: None, other than magic and psionics.

Bonuses: +5 to save versus Horror Factor, +3 to initiative, +4 to Perception Rolls and impervious to all forms of mind control, psionic and magic sleep and paralysis.

Magic: Intuitively knows all first and second level Wizard spells, four third level spells, two fourth level spells and one fifth level spell.

Psionics: Considered a Master Psychic, and has the following abilities at sixth level proficiency (unless otherwise noted): Alter Aura, Commune with Spirits (at tenth level proficiency), Empathic Transfer, Impervious to Cold, Impervious to Fire, Impervious to Poisons/Toxins, Mind Block Auto-Defense, See the Invisible, Telekinesis (Super), Sense Magic, Sixth Sense and Total Recall.

Average Life Span: Up to 120 years, but as a result of their warrior culture, few live to see old age.

Value: An occasional Alchemist will pay a thousand gold for the large eye and up to one hundred each for their smaller eyes, although most do not know what to do with them.

Habitat: Most prefer dark burrows, but they are adaptable to nearly any environment.

Languages: Magically speaks and understands all languages, but cannot read or write unless taught to do so.

Enemies: Aztlanologians consider most other living things – including other Aztlanologians of outside of their own clan – their enemies, but most use this sense of rivalry to improve their military organizations.

Allies: Most are fiercely loyal to their clan; otherwise none.

Physical Appearance: The Aztlanologians have rabbit-like faces with long ears and buck teeth. They have small upper bodies and bulbous middles. They have thin arms and legs, and the legs are more humanoid than one would expect, giving them a slow and awkward gait. They have three eyes with the largest centered in their forehead flanked by two smaller eyes, one on each side. Their eyes are dark and their fur is usually brown, white or gray.

Size: Typically five to seven feet (1.5 to 2.1 m) tall and weighing up to two hundred pounds (90 kg).

Rifts® Conversion Notes: In a Mega-Damage environment, the Aztlanologian becomes a Mega-Damage creature, with M.D.C. equal to half its S.D.C. and Hit Points combined.

Bruskidane

Bruskidane are a curious race of noble warriors who resemble humanoid deer except for the hard skin that covers their bodies, reminiscent of a pachyderm. They have human-like feet and hands with thick digits, broad shoulders and dark eyes.

Bruskidane can be found throughout the Megaverse, fighting the forces of evil, liberating captive slaves and others who are oppressed. They especially enjoy picking out Demons and Deevils in places of power and then confronting them just for the thrill of it. They have a great sense of urgency about their calling to do good in the world (or the Megaverse as the case may be), and rarely waste time in recreation or other pursuits unless it serves some greater purpose. Others who do are looked down upon as frivolous beings.

Although they cannot use magic themselves for much the same reason that the Dwarves of the Palladium World do not, they value magical and holy weapons, armor and other enchanted devices, especially those made from silver. Any weapon that can be used to further their quest to eradicate evil is worth whatever risk or price it takes for the Bruskidane to acquire it.

Bruskidane are typically Palladins, Undead Hunters or similar O.C.C.s, although they can choose any psychic or non-magic-using occupation.

Alignment: Because of their well-developed sense of honor, right and wrong, they are limited to Principled, Scrupulous and, oc-

asionally, Aberrant. In addition, they prefer to associate only with beings who have proven to be of these alignments.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 3D6+3, M.A. 4D6, P.S. 4D6+3, P.P. 3D6+1, P.E. 2D4+16, P.B. 1D6, Spd 3D6.

Hit Points: P.E. x2, plus 1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 1D6x10+5

Natural A.R.: 8

P.P.E.: 3D6

Horror Factor: 8

O.C.C.s Available: Bruskidane are limited to any non-magical O.C.C., much like the Dwarves of the Palladium World.

Attacks per Melee: Five physical or by ranged weapon type.

Natural Abilities/Weapons: Kick attack does 2D4+6 damage, but with antlers (stags only) does 2D6+10 damage. A ram attack does double damage and has a 40% chance to pin the victim (60% chance for stags with antlers).

Bruskidane also have an innate ability to swim (+30%), prowl (+10%), and leap up to eighteen feet (5.5 m) high and thirty-five feet (10.7 m) across. They can see up to two hundred feet (61 m) in complete darkness and have excellent hearing, color vision and a fair sense of smell.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, parry and dodge, and +2 damage plus any attribute bonuses.

Magic: None.



Psionics: All Bruskidane have the abilities of See Aura and Sense Evil. If not a psychic R.C.C., the character has I.S.P. equal to his or her M.E., and gains 1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

Average Life Span: Generally sixty to eighty years, although many live to be a hundred years old or more.

Habitat: Frequent the cities of the world where they are likely to find like-minded adventurers. They can also be found fighting injustice and evil wherever it exists.

Languages: Automatically speaks Dwarven (+10%) in addition to any O.C.C. skills.

Value: None, other than what any other slave of similar build, training and skill might bring.

Enemies: Instinctively hates evil beings of all kinds, including demons, Deevils and most other malevolent creatures.

Allies: Any noble beings who have dedicated their lives to destroying evil and liberating the oppressed people of the Megaverse.

Physical Appearance: Bruskidane appear to be large humanoids with thick necks and deer-like faces, but with rhinoceros-like skin covering their bodies. Males over the age of twenty-five have antlers like deer. They tend to favor earth tones in their clothes, but have an eye for gems, silver and other precious things.

Size: Five to seven (1.5 to 2.1 m) feet tall. When males have antlers, they reach upward another 1D10+2 inches (7.6 to 30.5 cm).

Weight: 160-220 pounds (72 to 99 kg).

Rifts® Conversion Notes: On Rifts Earth, they become minor Mega-Damage creatures with 2D6x10 M.D.C.

Crypt Guardians

The Crypt Guardian is an ancient evil used by powerful mages and other nefarious beings to guard burial places. The Guardian is somehow able to feed off the decaying matter in the tomb, making it fiercely territorial and protective of the assigned burial plot. It is unknown why this connection exists, whether it is a result of residual P.P.E. or some sort of inexplicable fetish. Either way, the Crypt Guardian never strays more than fifty feet (15 m) from its assigned location, and generally fights to the death to keep looters and others away from it.

Few Crypt Guardians have been discovered throughout the Megaverse, leading scholars to believe that the magic to call them forth has either been lost or that the species itself has been driven to near extinction.

Popular opinion maintains that Crypt Guardians come from another dimension, perhaps populated by similar beings. Since they do not need to eat, remain in stasis unless disturbed, and have a seemingly unlimited lifespan, many speculate that they may be the material manifestation of creatures from another realm who merely reside in that dimension. The possible motives for this are varied and highly disputed, especially since most scholars interested in learning more about them have not lived long enough to complete their research.

When they are found throughout the Megaverse, Crypt Guardians appear as effervescent green insectoids with mantis-like pincers and gaping, serrated mandibles. They have two legs and an otherwise humanoid body encased in sectioned armor that covers them from head to foot. Their eyes appear dark, so much so that they do not reflect light.



Alignment: Theoretically any, but most are considered Miscreant, although most scholars agree there is no way to know since the creature does not communicate in any way other than to violently defend the burial place it has been assigned to.

Attributes: I.Q. 8, M.E. 8, M.A. 9, P.S. 2D6+14, P.P. 2D6+8, P.E. 2D6+13, P.B. 2D4, Spd 1D4x10+2.

Hit Points: 6D6+50

S.D.C.: 90

Natural A.R.: 12

P.P.E.: 2D6

Horror Factor: 14

O.C.C.s Available: None.

Attacks per Melee: Five via physical attacks or psionics.

Natural Abilities and Weapons: Nightvision one hundred feet (30.5 m), sees the invisible, hawk-like vision (one mile/1.6 km), resistant to heat and cold (half damage), prowl 80%, does not need to eat, drink or breathe, Bio-Regenerates 5D6 Hit Points or S.D.C. every minute, and impervious to Horror Factor, disease, poisons, drugs, possession and mind control. Can leap ten feet (3.1 m) high or fifteen feet (4.6 m) across from a standing position.

Can track by blood scent and stench of decay at 40%, but only those it has already done damage to. Track by sight 22%.

Its primary form of attack is its long claws. A successful strike does 1D6+3 (plus P.S. bonus) points of damage *directly to Hit Points* and instills its victims with a sense of doom (save versus Horror Factor 14 or run away). Furthermore, the wound cannot be healed naturally, only by magic or psionics.

Special Abilities: Vulnerable only to weapons made of silver (normal damage), holy or magic weapons, and magic spells (double damage). The Crypt Guardian completely regenerates every twenty-four hours unless destroyed (reduced to more than its P.E. attribute number below zero Hit Points).

Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +1 to strike, parry and roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to save versus psionics and magic, in addition to possible attribute bonuses.

Magic: None.

Psionics: The guardian has the following abilities at fourth level potency: Presence Sense, See the Invisible, Sense Magic and Sixth Sense. **I.S.P.:** 5D6+18.

Average Life Span: Unknown, probably immortal until destroyed.

Value: None.

Habitat: Unknown. Most encountered are found only in their assigned post.

Languages: None known.

Enemies: None known, except that they will defend their assigned post until destroyed regardless of who attempts to violate it.

Allies: None.

Physical Appearance: Crypt Guardians appear as effervescent green insectoids with mantis-like pincers and gaping, drooling mandibles. They have two legs and an otherwise humanoid body encased in a sectioned armor that covers them from head to foot. Their eyes appear dark and lifeless.

Size: Eight to ten and a half feet (2.4 to 3.2 m) tall.

Weight: Eighty to one hundred and ten pounds (36 to 49.5 kg).

Rifts® Conversion Notes: Becomes an M.D.C. creature in Mega-Damage settings with 3D6x10+20 M.D.C.

Desh'coda

The Desh'coda were either recruited, transplanted or created by the Old Ones to assist them in the great sea battles of the Age of Chaos on the Palladium World. Born of salt water and a tradition of psychic warfare, they have proven themselves repeatedly in battle since their introduction to the Land of the Damned and immediate environs. Although they often compete with Zaranceti for the same territory and resources, Desh'coda bear them no racial hostility provided the Zaranceti do not make the first move.

Because they see themselves as divinely appointed stewards and masters of the submarine world, Desh'coda show particular hostility toward land-based creatures and others who pollute the waters, hunt marine creatures or otherwise misuse the ocean and its resources. Of course, their definition of "misuse" is not widely known and tends to change with whatever mood the lead Desh'coda might be in when they encounter those not native to the seas. In spite of this, they rarely attack when outnumbered, and know well enough to flee before capture or defeat. Most often, they will attack a vessel with enough force to sink it and then loot the cargo a few hours later. In these cases, however, they rarely stray far from the vessel before it reaches the ocean floor.

The Desh'coda dislike sunlight and take damage from it just as a vampire would (even though they are not undead). No one knows for certain why this limitation exists, but it does keep them in check during the daylight hours, leading to superstitions among sailors about spirits coming out of the ocean at night.

Desh'coda favor large submarine caves for building their lairs and will often hoard massive amounts of treasure comparable to a dragon's lair. They are not opposed to building on land, however, and have been known to construct dwellings, gates and similar defenses in areas where surface dwellers and others have proven a nuisance. Since they lack any kind of magical or psychic ability to communicate with and control sea creatures, they do not use them as pets or to guard their lairs. A lair can typically hold anywhere from ten to a few thousand individuals.

When found on land, Desh'coda have either been cast out from their homes by their own people or hired to fulfill some mission for a surface-dwelling employer. Crimes worthy of exile include the wanton destruction of the undersea habitat, befriending surface dwellers, assisting slaves to escape or infractions against the lair leader, including murder, theft and rape.

Although the Desh'coda do not generally take prisoners, their leaders have been known to keep slaves captured during raids and other attacks. Since surface-dwellers do not survive long in their lairs, these slaves are generally limited to Kappa, Zaranceti, Kreeel-lok, Naut-Yll and the occasional Mermaid.



Alignment: The majority are Aberrant (55%) with approximately 15% Anarchist, 15% Miscreant, 10% Diabolic and 5% having other alignments.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6 (an aggressive, predatory and sentient being), M.E. 2D6+6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6+10, P.P. 1D6+21, P.E. 2D6+10, P.B. 1D4, Spd 1D6+4 on dry land or climbing trees, but x10 in or underwater.

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

S.D.C.: 1D6x10

Natural A.R.: Not applicable.

P.P.E.: 4D6

Horror Factor: 12, increases to 16 when in a group of four or more.

O.C.C.s Available: Any except psychics, practitioners of magic, scholars and similar non-combatant O.C.C.s.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+2, although leaders or exceptional beings may be 1D6+5.

Attacks per Melee: Five physical with one more added at levels five, ten and fifteen. Use this number in lieu of the number granted by their martial art form.

Natural Abilities and Weapons: Kick 3D6 damage plus P.S. bonus; bite 1D4 damage plus P.S. bonus; claws 2D6 damage plus P.S. bonus.

Vulnerable to sunlight just like a vampire (but takes half the damage) and, therefore, tend to limit their above water activities to nighttime hours. Desh'coda planning to travel during the day generally take precautions such as wearing heavy cloaks, gloves, hoods and facial wrappings to avoid any accidental exposure to the sun. Given the hassle of covering their extra limbs, this does not happen often.

Special Abilities: Climb 85/80%, Land Navigation 78%, Prowl 66%, Swim 88% and Track by scent 75%. They can tolerate ocean depths up to two thousand feet (609.6 m) deep.

Bonuses: In addition to possible attribute bonuses, Desh'coda receive the following: +1 to initiative, strike and dodge; +2 to parry, roll with punch/fall/impact and disarm; +3 to pull punch; and +5 to save versus Horror Factor. They are immune to poison, mind control and possession.

Magic: None.

Psionics: All Desh'coda are natural psychics with the following abilities: Bio-Regeneration (Super), Psi-Sword, Telekinetic Force Field, Telekinesis (Super), Telekinesis, Telekinetic Punch, Levitate, Telepathy and Mind Block. In addition, they may choose a total of three from any of the lesser categories (Healing, Physical and Sensitive) or one Super Psionic per level of experience starting at level two. **I.S.P.:** M.E. attribute x6. Add 3D6 per level of experience beginning with level two. Desh'coda are considered to be Master Psychics.

Average Life Span: Most live to be one hundred years old, although a few select individuals have thrived into the one hundred and forties range.

Value: As slaves, they could easily garnish 1,200 to 1,600 gold each. As mercenaries, they can confidently charge 50 to 75 gold per *day* for their services.

Habitat: Desh'coda prefer wide open seas, but are able to live on land in all but the harshest environments.

Languages: Elven and their native tongue (both +10%).

Enemies: Desh'coda innately dislike land-dwellers. They also distrust robots and similar "artificial" or constructed beings.

Otherwise, they hate whomever they have been paid to fight against. They also dislike creatures of good, specifically those who seek to protect the oceans and other bodies of water from supernatural predators, demons, monsters, pirates and others, since they see them as competition. They prefer to deal with those who violate the undersea world on their own.

Allies: Other Desh'coda, intelligent ocean-dwelling creatures, demons, members of the monster races and similar creatures with naturally evil dispositions.

Physical Appearance: Desh'coda have a humanoid crab-like appearance, except that their skin is similar to a whale's and generally ranges from deep red through purple to a dark blue. Occasionally, they will have spiny growths on their skin, but these are too small and fragile to be used as weapons. They have small eye stalks on the top of their heads and oversized hands and feet. Most walk with a modified upright gait and have webbing between their long fingers and toes. In addition, they have large membranous flaps connecting their arms and first pair of legs, much like the fins of a manta ray, which they use to swim with.

Size: Four to five feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) tall when standing on their six legs. Six to eight feet (1.8-2.4 m) long from head to tail. Their fin-like wings give them a wingspan of about twelve feet (3.7 m).

Weight: One thousand and thirty to fifteen hundred pounds (1D6+9 x 100 pounds; 464-675 kg).

Rifts® Conversion Notes: In a Mega-Damage setting, the Hit Points and S.D.C. are combined to create the Desh'coda's M.D.C. and are applied to the main body. Note that they are considered minor M.D.C. creatures with Supernatural P.S. when underwater. When out of the water for more than fifteen minutes, they retain their M.D.C., but their P.S. drops from Supernatural to exceptional human P.S. and will not inflict Mega-Damage.

The Splurgh and others may find them useful or amusing as slaves, mercenaries or special agents. Just as Desh'coda can become explorers, adventurers or mercenaries for hire. Ironically, they will view other aquatic life forms as rivals rather than allies, while surface dwellers are generally viewed with indifference and as lesser beings.

Kuamziri

The Kuamziri, a primitive race found on the plains and grasslands of South Africa after the Coming of the Rifts, are distant cousins to Elves, even though many scholars suspect they are the result of the powerful magic lost to bygone ages. Whether this is true or not, these tribal warriors eke out their existence as hunters, porters and adventurers in the veldt with efficient cunning and skill.

The Kuamziri matriarchal society operates from a central camp, ruled by the Warlock-Queen. Their culture permits only females to learn the magic arts, while men are encouraged in the ways of war and defense. Hence, the queen is the supreme governor of the clan, with an advising council constituted by other prominent members of the clan. Clan members are often sent into the surrounding settlements to do business and gain experience before they return to the clan hierarchy. Based on their exploits, they can be elected to the ruling council when a current member dies. The queen, however, is a hereditary position handed down from mother to eldest daughter.



Alignment: Any, but most tend to be Unprincipled or Anarchist.

Very few follow evil alignments and those are always ostracized and shunned by all of their fellow Kuamziri.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 2D6+2, P.S. 3D6+3, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 3D6+1, Spd 4D6.

Hit Points: Standard; equal to P.E. plus 1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: By O.C.C. type only.

Natural A.R.: None, although they usually wear armor of some sort.

P.P.E.: 3D6 plus any gained by O.C.C. type.

Horror Factor: None.

O.C.C.s Available: Any men-at-arms O.C.C. except Knight and Palladin, although most are Mercenaries, Rangers and Soldiers. They can also be any type of Clergy, Psychic Healers, Psychic Sensitives, Scholars (very rare), Monks, Shamans, Necromancers, Witches, Gladiators or Vagabonds.

Within the clan setting, only female Kuamziri are trained to be Warlocks, but outcasts and other renegade practitioners of magic are possible. Any male Kuamziri who studies the mystic arts will be shunned by his clan, as are most psychics of either gender, although the Kuamziri secretly revere healers and clairvoyants. This often leads to a clandestine arrangement between the psychic and the clan.

Kuamziri Warlocks get an additional spell in their area of focus at levels one, four, seven, ten and thirteen. These spells

can be taken from any level up to and including the Warlock's current level. However, they are never allowed to study more than one elemental force. Warlocks within the tribe guard their craft closely. Anyone caught teaching it to a male or outsider is promptly executed as soon as the ruling council can pass judgment against them.

Attacks per Melee: By hand to hand combat type.

Natural Abilities/Weapons: None.

Special Abilities: See above.

Bonuses: +1 to save vs Horror Factor and +1 to dodge. All Kuamziri get W.P. Spear at the time of character creation in addition to other skills.

Magic: By O.C.C. type.

Psionics: By O.C.C. type.

Average Life Span: Eighty years, though most live only into their late sixties.

Value: None, although wealthier individuals like them for exotic-looking slaves, causing them to sell for up to 50% more than human house slaves in a similar market.

Habitat: Kuamziri prefer wide open spaces to cities and, while basically sedentary, often follow the herds of animals they hunt during the wet and dry seasons. Their clans live in thorn bungalows near rivers and safe watering holes where a steady supply of food can be found. On Rifts Earth, they range freely over all of southern Africa.

Languages: Kuamziri have their own dialect, which all tribe members speak. It is similar to Dragonese/Elven (considered a kind of patois) and can be understood by Elven speakers at -25% proficiency. There is not a written version, although they do keep records using pictures and designs.

Enemies: Supernatural, magical and evil creatures, most subhuman races, including Orcs, Ogres, Trolls and Kobolds and other malcontents.

Allies: Most sentient humanoid races find favor with the Kuamziri, although they are particularly fond of Elves and humans. They do business with anyone who treats them fairly, but avoid getting involved in politics beyond the clan level.

An individual Kuamziri will adventure with any group of characters he or she can find with similar alignments and goals.

Physical Appearance: Kuamziri resemble Elves – they are tall and slender with strong, wiry limbs and dark eyes – except their skin is striped black and white like a zebra. Their hair is coarse and bristly and their finger- and toenails are black. Their feet are elongated like a primitive horse's, allowing for greater speed and springing power.

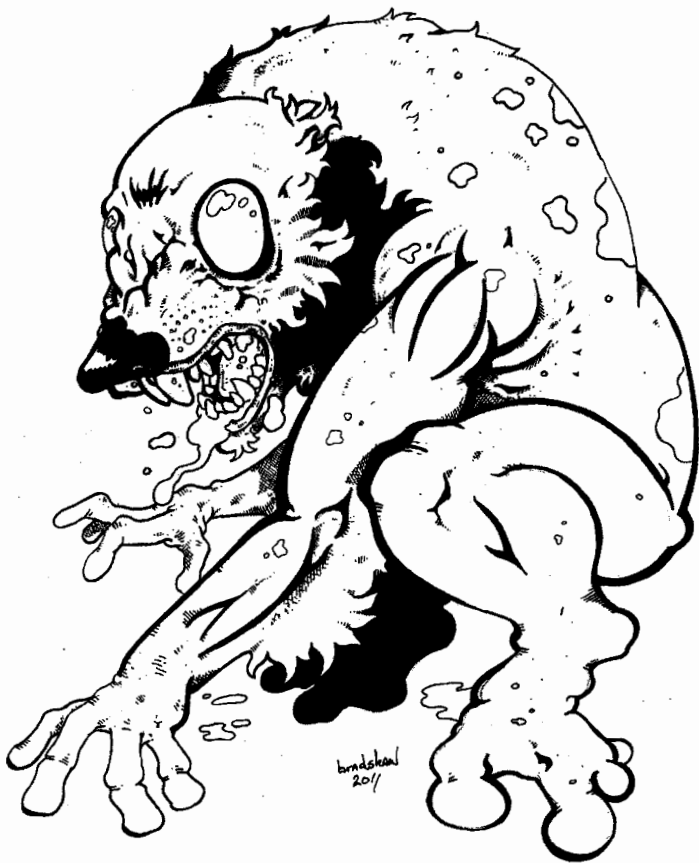
Size: Seven feet plus 1D10 inches (2.1 to 2.4 meters) tall.

Weight: Two hundred plus 2D20 pounds (91 to 108 kg).

Rifts® Notes: In a high-tech setting, Kuamziri are not M.D.C. creatures, but can use Mega-Damage weapons and equipment. They tend to be Scouts, Headhunters, City Rats and other roguish types when encountered individually.

Qung

Qung are a subterranean species with a natural affinity toward water magic. Many prefer to sequester themselves in large caverns far from the prying eyes of other species. They dislike most other creatures, although they tend to ignore others rather than attack them. The Qung believe that their race is so superior that



others are generally not worth their acknowledgment; only other Qung are worthy of their time, talents and interaction.

Qung appear to be a giant cross between a frog and a rat (see description below). No one is sure how the Qung got their unusual physiognomy since no part of their life cycle contains any amphibious phase. A female can bear live young as often as once per year. The young reach adulthood within fifteen years, although most don't leave their mothers until the age of twenty. Sometimes they can be encountered in mated pairs, but most more often in small groups of less than ten individuals.

Qung get around by an awkward-looking combination of jumping and waddling. Although there is rarely enough space to do so underground, they can easily leap long distances out in the open with no trouble at all. They also seem to grow spryer with age, hence the bonus to their P.P. attribute beginning at second level. They are considered minor creatures of magic.

Qung are also natural psychics. Their loosely-defined sense of society discourages the use of their powers on one another, but non-Qung are fair game. They typically employ their magic and psychic powers to repel unwanted visitors and attempt to use non-violent tactics first. If additional force is necessary, they will not hesitate to defend their lairs.

Although subterranean creatures, Qung are not nocturnal. They have an odd sense of wealth, preferring soft fabrics and furs to shiny coins or other junk. They also value incense and other sweet-smelling items to conventional human treasures. Few of them learn to read Elven or human languages, so they tend not to value books, either. Occasionally, a Qung will own magic rings, armor or other items, but rarely magical weapons. They do not actively seek these things, so any such treasures found in their lairs were either brought there by others whom they have since killed or scared off or their placement is mere chance. Since they avoid ruins and other places frequented by humanoids, there is

also a possibility that they have traded information or other items with lost surface dwellers, but this is rare. They tend to drive away all but the most powerful visitors, and easily grow bored with any agenda not their own.

Qung are naturally immune to poison and disease, and eat mostly fungus, mold and the soft-bodied creatures found in subterranean lakes. Their sharp teeth are too fragile to crack open shells, so they avoid anything chewier. They have an affinity for wine made by humanoids, even though the alcohol has little effect on them.

Alignment: Considered Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+9, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 3D4 +1 per level of experience, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd 1D6+40.

Hit Points: P.E. x 2 for adults and P.E. +1D6 for young adults and adolescents, +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 2D4x10

Natural A.R.: 10

P.P.E.: 2D6x10 (does not increase with experience).

Horror Factor: 12

O.C.C.s Available: Merchant, Noble, Scholar (very rare) or Vagabond/Peasant only. They tend to rely on their impressive magic and psychic powers.

Attacks per Melee: Three physical or psionic attacks per melee.

Natural Abilities/Weapons: Prowl 90%, Climb 80/75%, Land Navigation 60%, Wilderness Survival 80% and Tracking 40%. All skill percentages are halved in the daylight (not affected during daytime if underground).

Special Abilities: Nightvision two hundred feet (61 m), see the invisible, do not fatigue, are impervious to cold, poison and disease, and regenerate four S.D.C. per hour.

Bonuses: +1 to parry and +5 to damage. A single leg kick does 2D6+5 damage and a double leg kick does 4D6+10 damage (requires only one strike roll, but counts as two actions).

Magic: Can cast all first level Water Elemental spells at fourth level proficiency, regardless of O.C.C.

Psionics: All Sensitive powers plus Bio-Manipulation, Empathic Transfer, Group Mind Block, Hypnotic Suggestion, Mind Block Auto-Defense, Mind Bolt, Mind Wipe, Telekinesis and Telekinetic Force Field. Each is at tenth level proficiency regardless of experience. **I.S.P.:** 4D6x10. Considered a Master Psychic, so they only need a ten or better to save vs psionic attacks.

Average Life Span: 500 years.

Value: None unless captured and sold as slaves, then they can bring in four to six times the normal amount for similarly skilled humanoids.

Habitat: Qung prefer dark, dry places where they can hide from the light of day and the heat of the sun. They can usually be found near a subterranean source of water, although they avoid immersing themselves in it.

Languages: Speak and understand Dragonese/Elven and Faerie Speak (both at 98%), although they are not considered a member of either genus.

Enemies: Dislike most every other form of intelligent life they come in contact with, although that does not mean they attack them on sight. Generally, they only hunt for food and kill to preserve their own lives.

Allies: None known.

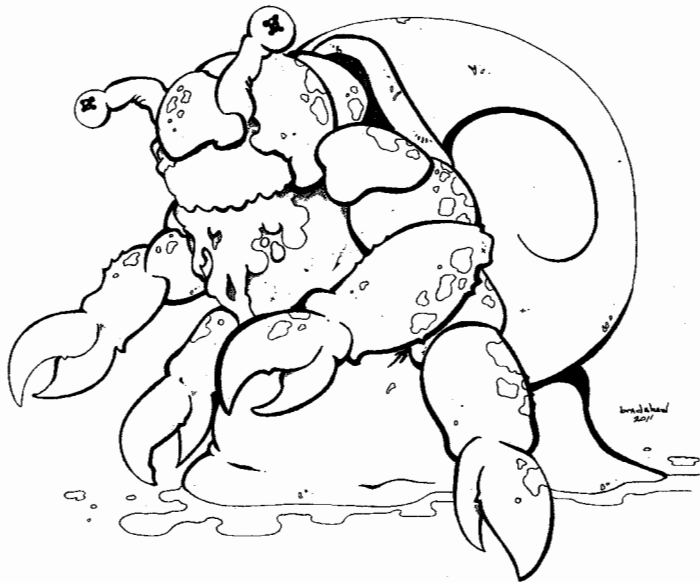
Physical Appearance: A strange cross between a rat and a frog.

They generally stand slouched over at around three feet (0.9 m) tall, although they add another two feet (0.6 m) when fully extended. They have long, muscular legs with webbed toes, like a frog. The belly and chin also resemble a frog's, complete with the smooth skin and inflation when they breathe. Short, wiry fur covers the back, arms and top of the head, however, and they have a long, naked, rat-like tail slightly longer than the length of their legs which adds balance when jumping. They have opposable thumbs but their toes are long enough to curl around tree branches and similar objects. Their frog-like eyes protrude from their heads and they have no visible ears. The mouth is somewhat elongated into a rat-like snout filled with sharp teeth, but contains a large, non-prehensile tongue that is one-quarter of their height long but is not coated with any sticky mucus. They look potbellied and often have an indifferent expression on their faces. Their bellies, and other exposed skin, are generally a sickly, pale-yellow and their eyes are often light gray to white.

Size: Three feet (0.9 m) tall, although their tails and outstretched legs make them five feet (1.5 m) long.

Weight: One hundred pounds (45 kg), but they appear heavier because of their weight distribution.

Rifts® Conversion Notes: Qung become M.D.C. creatures in Mega-Damage settings, with Hit Points and S.D.C. combined and converted directly to M.D.C. Their P.P.E. and psychic powers remain constant.



Shell Monsters

The Shell Monster is an enormous creature that looks like a cross between a crab and a snail. They are usually two or three times as tall as a man and as heavy as a small car, making them appear slow-moving and even lethargic. In reality, they are self-conceited opportunists who seek to control less intelligent beings wherever they find them.

Shell Monsters have four small, pincer-tipped arms, but generally keep them inside their shells along with their plate-covered heads and antennae. They only expose these parts of their bodies when attacking or preying upon something. They have no visible mouth, however, so all of their food is allowed to rot until they

can absorb it through pores in their underbellies. They can eat their body weight in one setting, but generally require less than twenty pounds (9 kg) of nourishment a day given their tendency to sit and wait for things to happen around them.

In general, Shell Monsters also have the ability to cast basic Water Elemental spells, though they lack the ability to summon and control such creatures. Some Shell Monsters learn the Elemental language, but find it of little use since Elementals generally care nothing for the Shell Monsters' agenda.

Although not evil creatures, many Shell Monsters see themselves as highly intelligent and gifted creatures and often seek to establish small kingdoms for themselves. They often cannot understand why other beings do not appreciate them as superior intelligences and will often exert their influence to undermine those beings rather than openly confront them – mainly because most Shell Monsters are cowards, but also because their opportunistic nature forces them to look ahead for new ventures rather than squander their lives.

Shell Monsters can be encountered anywhere in the Megaverse, although very few have established lairs on Rifts Earth. Most prefer other realms, especially those with plenty of salt water and potential minions.

Alignment: Usually Anarchist (80%), but can be any.

Attributes: I.Q. 3D6+5, M.E. 1D4, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 4D6, P.P. 4D6, P.E. 4D6, P.B. 1D6, Spd 3D6.

Hit Points: P.E. +1D6x10

S.D.C.: 5D6x10

Natural A.R.: 16 for its head, arms and shell, none for the underbelly or pseudopod (if exposed).

P.P.E.: 1D6x10 for the most common ones, but 3D6x10 for the largest and oldest.

Horror Factor: 16

O.C.C.s Available: None, although they instinctively know the following skills: Navigation (underwater 90% and on land 45%), Camouflage 40%, Surveillance 75%, Prowl 75%, Pick Locks 45% and understands Elven/Dragonese and one other language at 85%.

Attacks per Melee: Three.

Natural Abilities/Weapons: Insect-like vision: 340-degree field of vision, and can see both infrared and ultraviolet light, giving them nightvision equal to their daytime vision.

Antennae: Track and maneuver by scent alone 75% (roll every thousand feet/305 m, range is four miles/6.4 km); identify common, known smells and the chemicals secreted by other insects and mollusks 90% (twelve hundred foot/366 m range); remember and identify specific scents 50% (twelve hundred foot/366 m range); sense rain and the presence of large fires 60% (two mile/3.2 km range); automatically recognizes the scent of others of its lair; tectonic sense (senses vibrations in the earth, thunder, explosions and the approach of heavy vehicles, troops and stampeding animals up to twelve miles/19 km away and smaller beings as much as two hundred feet/61 m away) and chemoreceptors (can determine by taste the makeup of dirt, stones, rocks, clay and minerals 90%).

Pseudopod: Accurately identify common, known substances by touch 65% (35% if uncommon; range is touch or up to five feet/1.5 m); identify temperature (within ten degrees Fahrenheit/six Celsius; includes air temperature and surface temperatures) 65%; gauge wind direction and speed 85%.

Pincers do 1D4 damage plus P.S. bonus whether used as a club, slashing weapon or a clamp.

Special Abilities: None.

Bonuses: +2 to initiative and dodge and +1 to strike.

Magic: Innately knows the following spells and can cast any of them provided they have sufficient P.P.E.: See *Aura*, *Aura of Power*, *Energy Bolt*, *Paralysis: Lesser*, *Globe of Daylight* and all first and second level *Water Elemental* spells.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: Uncertain, possibly immortal.

Value: The shell is rumored to be worth thousands of gold pieces to any interested collector, but has no arcane value. The meat tastes awful and has no commercial value.

Habitat: Occasionally encountered in magical hot spots worldwide if enough salt water is nearby to support breeding and other life processes.

Languages: No known native language since most communicate through *Elven/Dragonese*.

Enemies: Humans and all mortal beings are considered nuisances to be avoided or governed at all costs. They also despise *Deevils*, *Demons* and most other evil creatures.

Allies: Regard most ocean-born creatures as possible minions, although they avoid any that exhibit too much ambition or evil tendencies.

Physical Appearance: Like a cross between a giant snail and a crab. They have a pseudopod and a spiral-shaped shell, but also bony antennae and insect-like eyes. Shell-like plates cover their heads and they have four small arms with pincers. Most have blue, gray or white colored shells and plates with brown or gray bodies.

Size: Eight to ten feet (2.4-3 m) in diameter and three to four feet (0.9-1.2 m) wide.

Weight: 1,600-2,400 pounds (720-1,080 kg).

Rifts® Conversion Notes: In a *Phase World®* or *Rifts®* setting, they become Mega-Damage creatures with 1D6x10+100 + P.E. number in M.D.C. All attacks do Mega-Damage. On the *Palladium World* they remain unchanged, although they are more likely to have a small collection of treasure and an entourage of devoted minions.

Shimmerlings

Shimmerlings are angelic creatures found in the *Nightlands*. No one knows for sure, however, whether that is their native world or whether they are refugees there like many of the other species not aligned to the *Nightlords* or demons that terrorize that twilight world. In spite of their lengthy life spans, Shimmerlings are unsure of their origins as well. Whatever they are, these beautiful creatures have dedicated themselves to defending lesser creatures from the harshness of their world.

Shimmerlings generally study magic, nature or religion. Their training centers on the belief in keeping all forms of life safe from the destructive forces of the *Nightlords* and other evil beings. They are known for their zeal when fighting to protect others, and for the assistance they have granted lone travelers and other groups in the more desolate regions of the *Nightlands*. Since they are able to fly, their lairs are unknown and rarely visited by those not of their species. This only adds to the aura of mystery that accounts for their high *Awe Factor* among those they serve.



No male or young Shimmerlings have ever been sighted. Since no one knows how Shimmerlings reproduce, it is thought that those alive today might be the last of a dying race, something Shimmerlings themselves have not confirmed or denied.

Alignment: Any, although Priestesses of Light must be Principled or Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+12, M.E. 3D6+12, M.A. 3D6+6, P.S. 4D6, P.P. 1D6+16, P.E. 4D6, P.B. 4D6, Spd 4D6+6 running or 2D4x10 flying.

Hit Points: P.E.x3 plus 2D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: P.E.x5

Natural A.R.: 14 (on *Rifts Earth* they become Mega-Damage beings).

P.P.E.: 3D6

Horror Factor: 16 (considered an *Awe Factor* to those the Shimmerling is assisting).

O.C.C.s Available: Wizards, Druids and Priests of Light only.

Average Level of Experience: 1D4+3

Attacks per Melee: Five attacks per melee round.

Natural Abilities: Magically understands all languages, Bio-Regenerates 1D6 S.D.C. or M.D.C. per hour, does not need to eat or breathe air, can live in a vacuum and survive ocean depths up to one mile (1.6 km).

Poisonous Stinger: The stab of the stinger does 2D6 damage plus the Shimmerling's P.S. bonus. A save versus lethal poison (14 or better) is necessary or the victim takes 4D6 points of additional damage and feels his entire body is on fire (reduce speed, attacks per melee and all combat bonuses by half). A successful save means the victim takes 1D4 points of damage and feels nauseous with no other penalties. *Note:* This poison does half damage to supernatural beings.

Bonuses (in addition to any attribute bonuses): +3 to initiative and strike with poison stinger, +2 to strike with other attacks, +4 to dodge, +4 to save versus magic and +10 to save versus Horror Factor. Shimmerlings are immune to illusions and illusionary effects.

Magic: None, except by O.C.C.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: Unknown, but Shimmerlings appear to be very long-lived, perhaps immortal.

Value: Various body parts of the Shimmerling are said to have strong magical properties, so some organization might pay a fortune for them.

Habitat: Shimmerlings prefer to live in high altitude areas such as mountains, canyon walls and plateaus far away from civilization and other creatures. This makes the Nightlands an ideal place for them to live, although most are widely traveled, taking any opportunity to thwart their enemies.

Languages: Magically speaks and understands all languages.

Enemies: Demons and other creatures of supernatural evil.

Allies: Although they often face evil alone, Shimmerlings prefer to align themselves with other champions of good such as Titans, angels, Elves and similar creatures.

Physical Appearance: Shimmerlings appear as beautiful human females with elongated bodies, golden skin and a stinger-tipped tail. They are often confused for demons, a misconception they work diligently to overcome. Few wear any kind of clothing or armor.

Size: Ten feet (3 meters) tall with a nine foot (2.7 m) wingspan; 1,000 pounds (450 kg).

Thigmonites

Thigmonites are a sentient plant race native to another part of the Megaverse. They have spindly limbs with large, round feet that appear to have numerous roots growing off them in all directions. Their hands and faces resemble Venus flytraps, although two pair of eye stalks and pit-like ears adorn their heads.

Thigmonites reproduce asexually. Once every three to five years, they lay a grapefruit-sized egg/seed and bury it in soft soil somewhere secluded. The seed germinates for twelve months before a new creature begins to sprout. A young Thigmonite is bound to the soil for the first ten years of its life. Afterwards, they are able to break free of their roots and walk around as much as they like. Up until this point, they feed on nutrients in the soil. After breaking free, they require four pints of humanoid blood each week to survive.

Throughout their lives, Thigmonites continue to grow and develop new limbs. Every twelve months (or every *other* experience level, whichever comes *last*), they grow a new, fully-functional arm approximately half their body length long. The fingers and thumb sprout about a week later, with the ability to use weapons and tools.

A favorite tactic of the Thigmonite is to stand perfectly still before ambushing the unsuspecting. Because of their advanced knowledge and above average strength, they will often hold aloft trees, pretending to be one themselves, and even try to convince trespassers that they are being watched by Faerie Folk or other nefarious beings with an intent to confuse and separate their prey before striking. Many will use psychic abilities to kill or incapacitate, rather than physically striking their prey.

Alignment: Diabolic only.



Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+20, M.E. 1D6, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 2D6+30, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 3D6+6, P.B. 1D6, Spd 6D6+25 (adults only).

Hit Points: P.E. + 2D6, plus 1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 2D4x10

Natural A.R.: 9

P.P.E.: 1D6

Horror Factor: 9

O.C.C.s Available: None. Skills are fundamentally the same as the **Rifts®** Wilderness Scout (see **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 98), but use the 'Borg experience table.

Attacks per Melee: Three plus one per fully-developed arm/branch. Note that they gain each extra arm only after *both* two levels of experience and twelve months have passed since their last new arm appeared, not until both have occurred. That's the first new arm at level 3 and one additional year of age, then the second at level 5 and one more year, etc.

Natural Abilities/Weapons: Claws do 1D6 damage, but once it has punctured flesh it can drain a pint of blood in five minutes to a maximum of 1D4 pints per feeding (requires a successful strike of 15 or better including bonuses). Removing it causes 3D6 damage to the victim. A slap does 1D4 plus P.S. bonus damage.

Special Abilities: Unless otherwise noted, Thigmonites have all of the standard plant features and abilities described in *Aliens Unlimited™, Revised* (beginning on page 149).

Bonuses: +3 to initiative, strike and dodge, +2 to parry, and +3 to save versus mind control and illusions. They are effectively impervious to Horror Factor.

Magic: None.

Psionics: Minor Psychics who can select a total of three powers from the Healing, Physical or Sensitive categories. **I.S.P.:** 1D6x10 plus 1D6 per level of experience.

Average Life Span: Unknown. Most reach adulthood around ten years old and are then able to move about freely as well as communicate vocally with others.

Value: No known value, although an Alchemist may wish to study one to determine if their bodies contain any arcane properties.

Habitat: Thigmonites can thrive in virtually any climate that humans can, although they prefer forests, jungles, city parks and even indoor arboretums the best.

Languages: A Thigmonite can select two languages at first level and learns another for every decade years of its life. Each starts at 50% proficiency and increases by 5% per level thereafter. No other languages can be selected or learned.

Enemies: Dislikes most sentient beings, although they will frequently align themselves with others who share their diet or quest for information, or other dark denizens of the forest.

Allies: None, although they may team up with like-minded individuals of other species if it furthers their own goals.

Physical Appearance: Thigmonites resemble human-sized Venus flytrap-like trees with green and brown skin covered with a soft bark. Their hands and faces look like Venus flytraps, although their heads sport short stalks with eyes on the ends. They avoid clothing, although they would not turn down ar-

mor or other apparel made from a corrupt Millennium Tree or similar, vegetation-based creature.

Size: The main body at the beginning of adulthood is three to five feet (1 to 1.5 m) tall with branches that lash out up to five feet (1.5 m) away. They grow an additional foot (0.3 m) every ten years.

Weight: 115-165 pounds (52 to 74 kg) for a new adult, increasing by about 30 pounds (13.5 kg) per year.

Rifts® Conversion Notes: In a **Phase World®** or **Rifts®** setting, Thigmonites are considered a menace and generally eradicated on sight; they have 2D6x10 M.D.C. On the Palladium World they are widely unknown, although a colony may be sprouting in the Yin-Sloth Jungles thanks to a solitary Thigmonite unable to leave the rainforest.

Varanoie

The Varanoie are an ancient race of amphibious humanoids directly descended from dissorophid-like creatures. Hence, they have the same domed head and beak-like mouth, snake-like body and short limbs as their ancestral namesakes, but they have evolved psychic and magical abilities that make them anything but primitive when compared to humans and other intelligent species. They have established elaborate villages in Ophid's Grasslands on the Palladium World, and similar environments throughout the Megaverse, which they defend vigorously against outsiders. They are generally wary of visitors, but will engage in trade when necessary. Rarely, however, do they leave the village to venture on their own or with members of other species.

Varanoie have a rigidly matriarchal culture which venerates the moon as the supreme mother of all life on the planet and the source of their psychic powers. They practice ritual sacrifice, usually of intelligent captives or criminals, during monthly ceremonies dedicated to the full moon. They believe that these ceremonies will guarantee the perpetuation of their people throughout time and will often have additional rites to ensure a good harvest, victory in combat and a mild winter.

Tribal matriarchs are known to consort with demons and other evil beings. They believe that their species predates the Old Ones; however, there is no evidence from outside sources to support this. Nor do they have any myths that explain their lack of involvement in banishing the Old Ones or the origins of the ruins they often inhabit.

Varanoie have a variety of innate psychic abilities, including Telemechanic Mental Operation, which lets them use complicated technological devices, although they have no knack for inventing such things. Most of the technology and other advancements known to the Varanoie have been stolen or adopted from other sources. Even their homes, ruins and other structures built within a few dozen feet of the surface, are usually acquired by running someone else out first.

Alignment: Generally Miscreant or Diabolic, although Aberrant and Anarchist Varanoie exist.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+9, M.E. 2D6+8, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 3D6+5, P.P. 2D6+14, P.E. 1D4+20, P.B. 2D4, Spd 5D6.

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



S.D.C.: 6D6+6

Natural A.R.: 12

P.P.E.: 5D6

Horror Factor: 10

O.C.C.s Available: Any, although they shy away from Priest of Light, Druid, Palladin and similar O.C.C.s commonly associated with the forces of good.

Attacks per Melee: Three plus any gained by Physical skills or combat training.

Natural Abilities/Weapons: Bite does 1D4 damage while claws do 2D4 plus P.S. damage bonus.

Special Abilities: None, other than those already described here.

Bonuses: +3 to initiative, +2 to strike, parry and dodge, +2 to save versus Horror Factor, and resistant to heat and cold (three-quarters damage only). This does not include any gained by physical or combat training.

Magic: By O.C.C. only.

Psionics: Considered a Master Psychic with 6D6+30 I.S.P. and the following powers: Telekinesis, Mind Block, Presence Sense, Object Read, Mind Bolt, Levitation and Telemechanic Mental Operation.

Average Life Span: Fifty years.

Value: None for Alchemical purposes, but gladiatorial arenas and other slavers will gladly pay thirty to fifty thousand gold for a Varanoie.

Habitat: Many live underground, while others prefer swamp or jungle conditions.

Languages: All Varanoie speak their own native language (a collection of croaks, hisses, clicks and growls) fluently in addition to any others granted by O.C.C. or other training.

Enemies: Most Varanoie hate any other intelligent beings they come in contact with, although most are intelligent enough not to attack outright. They especially do not like other sentient reptiles and may attack them on sight.

Allies: Varanoie will align themselves with demons, Deevils and most other evil beings. Some will join forces with Necromancers, Dark Priests or evil magic users. Their cultural history vehemently denies the existence of the Old Ones (they are simply a myth created by Elves and others hoping to rule over other races through fear), however, and they will never willingly serve them or seek them out.

Physical Appearance: Varanoie have newt-like faces with thick but short, muscular, humanoid arms and legs. They have dark, olive green skin with black spots running down their backs. Their eyes are yellow and tongues, palms and footpads a pale gray.

Size: Five to eight feet (1.5 to 2.4 m) tall, plus a tail four to six feet (1.2 to 1.8 m) long.

Weight: 90-200 pounds (40.5 to 90 kg).

Rifts® Conversion Notes: Varanoie remain S.D.C. creatures in a Mega-Damage setting, although they can use Mega-Damage weapons, armor and magic.



Dark Day Chronicles

Volume II

A Nightbane® Short Story

By Jeremy Hutchins

Responsibility.

It's a word we hear every day but few people actually live up to the expectation. It's easy to say you will do something but the real test comes when you have to follow through with your promise, regardless of the personal cost. Each person views the term in a different light as well, which means my idea of responsibility may be entirely different from another's view. Over the years I've been privy to some of the greatest secrets of my kind, the Nightbane. I've been entrusted with duties that placed other peoples' lives in my hands. To me, responsibility means taking these duties – be they assigned or assumed – and making them my own. You safeguard these duties to the best of your ability and never compromise yourself. It can be a terrible burden and I have seen few able to handle such endeavors with true success.

In the early hours of Dark Day, thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of Nightbane had their first Becoming. Something about the energies of that day caused both the new and the old to spontaneously change. As experienced as I am with the Becoming, I shifted as well. It was something primal, beyond our control, and only the experienced or the fast learners had the will or temperament to change back without help. It was our responsi-

bility as the elders among the Nightbane to help those newcomers to our ranks adapt and learn from the experience. Unfortunately we didn't expect this to happen and we were ill prepared to offer widespread assistance. Normally we find one or two Nightbane a year and have ample time to meet with them and introduce them to what will become their new life. Dark Day occurred without warning and set off nearly every Nightbane on the planet at once. Still, we did what we could. For many, it was too little, too late.

As luck would have it, my own sister found her savior in the form of a Necrosis Athanatos. I've never met one of these rare individuals but from everything I've read about them it was a very atypical gesture for their kind. Loners that revel in destruction and death, Gabriel, as he calls himself, would become her guardian angel in one of the most ironic twists in recent history. A truly remarkable being, Gabriel would lead my sister, along with a rag-tag group of assorted supernatural beings, to me later that very day. In time he would become my most powerful ally and a true friend. Gabriel understood responsibility better than any other creature I have ever met. He had no ties to Avalon or any of the others he led to me, yet he risked life and limb on many occasions to help others. I always wondered why and one day when curiosity finally overcame me, I posed that very question to him.

Offering an enigmatic smile, Gabriel replied, "Because no one else could."

– From the Journal of Trystan Dey

Gabriel and Avalon set down on the rooftop of Pittsburg Memorial Hospital, Gabriel lightly and Avalon considerably harder. She had yet to get the hang of these landings, but was learning fast. It wasn't every day one grew wings, after all. With no one in sight for the moment, they took a short rest from their exhausting flight. Avalon remained in a state of shock by all that occurred that morning but Gabriel seemed to know more about what was happening. She stayed with him out of a sense of safety and direction though even she thought it an odd request for him to want to come to a hospital. He didn't seem sick or injured, so perhaps he knew someone here.

Considering that, Avalon remembered her own injury and reached down to feel the place where the creature, Gabriel called it a Hound, hit her with that strange axe weapon. There was no pain, which surprised her, but she attributed it to adrenaline. In the movies such wounds looked very painful so it surprised Avalon that she felt nothing either at the moment of impact or after. Fingers crossed the area where she knew she'd been struck but try as she might she simply couldn't find any signs of the cut. There was a patch of dried blood and a tear in her jeans, but nothing else.

Gabriel sat perfectly still and seemed not to notice the squirming Avalon as she examined her leg. She looked up to ask him a question when she saw his attention was elsewhere. She watched his changing expressions with interest. One moment his lips were tight and the next his eyes would squint as if he were in deep concentration. His Gregorian form, as he called it, took some getting used to but Avalon was apparently growing accustomed to the hideousness of it now. In some ways it had an exotic beauty to it. The onyx skin seemed to absorb light, making him look like a living shadow. His long hair was as dark as the rest of him and seemed to fall behind him almost naturally, staying out of his face. When seated, his bat-like wings curled up behind him enough where she could barely see the edges sticking out from around his muscled body. He wasn't much larger in this form than when he became human but his muscles were far more defined. She watched the chain-like tendrils that came from his wrists twist and curl of their own accord, like large cat tails flickering at the whim of the feline. Gabriel could extend and retract them at will, it seemed, but sometimes Avalon had to wonder if they had a mind of their own.

Avalon left Gabriel where he rested and walked to the nearest edge of the rooftop. Pittsburg Memorial was a tall building, six floors in all, and afforded a good view of the surrounding blocks. She didn't notice from their flying height of a few thousand feet but the streets below resembled a war zone. Everywhere cars were abandoned or on fire, storefront windows were shattered, streetlights flashed red in all directions, and smoke wafted from multiple buildings. She remembered seeing footage of Baghdad from Operation Desert Storm and it looked remarkably similar. An odd, distant scream pierced the eerie silence, making the young woman start suddenly.

"There is another Athanatos here," Gabriel intoned solemnly behind her. "I'm unable to tell if it's a Necrosis or not, but it's definitely Athanatos. I'd almost forgotten the sensation," he mused with a sardonic smile.

"How can you tell?" she asked.

Gabriel motioned her closer and Avalon sat across from him. "Close your eyes."

She paused before complying but mentally chided herself for not trusting him. True they had only just met a few hours ago, but it was also true he saved her life. Gabriel could have simply flown past and let the inevitable happen but he didn't. Near stranger or not she owed him at least some level of trust.

When her eyes closed she could hear Gabriel's soft voice as plainly as if he were whispering in her ear. "Let your mind wander for a moment. Don't control your thoughts. Just let them go."

She did and the strangest thoughts came unbidden into her mind. She saw her Dad washing the patrol car last summer, and Carolyn cooking brownies for Tom. Images of the dance hall, former friends, vacation spots, and even snatches of her favorite movies rushed through.

"Now," Gabriel's voice said suddenly, causing Avalon to flinch, "picture the hospital below us. Start by imagining the top floor."

"I've never been here," she said.

"Doesn't matter," he said quickly. "Imagine what you think the hospital looks like inside. The rooms, the beds, the long halls, the desks, the people..."

Almost like a Sims game, Avalon's mental hospital began to spring to life. She could see it with such clarity it amazed her. She never considered herself a very imaginative person so it was fascinating that things were so vivid. White walls, tile floor, wooden doors, the metal framed beds, the doctors, the nurses, and even the sick people all came into focus. She even began to name them: *Mr. Norris in bed 4 with pneumonia is being visited by Dr. Smith, a handsome man who loves dogs.*

"Now," Gabriel said before her fantasy hospital could get more complex, "think about the people – just the people. Start with the top floor only. Imagine you're trying to locate someone. You're looking by instinct more than visual identification, kind of like trying to find a friend in a crowd by looking for their odd shirt color rather than their face. You understand?"

"I think so," she replied and even to her she sounded subdued, almost dream-like.

Avalon scanned her imagined crowd trying to locate anything familiar about them. After a few moments of trying she didn't feel anything different. "Nothing," she said.

"Don't worry. Try the next floor down. Same method."

Again she built the floor and everything in it all in her mind. It felt like she had been at this for hours already but somehow she knew it had been minutes, at best. She scanned the crowd methodically and was about to give up when she had the oddest sensation. Something in her almost screamed that there was a presence there familiar to her. She couldn't imagine the face but she was positive she knew that person in some way. Her stomach fluttered and she felt like she was on a roller coaster heading down a steep slope. "Second floor down," she said as she opened her eyes.

Gabriel smiled and exposed elongated, fang-like teeth. "Yes. Perfect."

Avalon's expression obviously amused him because Gabriel's unsettling smile widened just before he burst out laughing. "Congratulations, you just sensed your first Nightbane."

"Someone like me?" she asked in disbelief.

"Yes. Just like you. They might not look the same but you are the same... species, I suppose. There are quite a few Nightbane in the hospital right now, as a matter of fact." Gabriel's expression darkened.

“What? What’s the matter?”

“I’m also sensing a Guardian,” said Gabriel. “Many Nightbane, a Guardian, and one of my people, the Athanatos, all in one place. This isn’t a good sign.”

“I don’t understand,” Avalon said. “You found me. We’re together. Shouldn’t others be together, too? Safety in numbers kind of thing, I guess.”

“I’m something of an anomaly among my people. I’m more social than most Necrosis. Normally my people are shunned by other supernatural beings, even other Athanatos. We tend to creep everyone out.”

“Really?” Avalon asked rhetorically and it was clear by her tone she wasn’t surprised by that tidbit of information in the least. As nice as he seemed, Gabriel’s Gregorian form did resemble something straight from Hell. The one previous time she had seen his human form he was a handsome enough man but there was an aura about him that just screamed ‘danger.’ Maybe it was the same type of vibe that serial killers gave off, at least the ones who couldn’t blend in with the rest of humanity that well.

Gabriel gave her a withering glance. “Keep in mind, not all supernaturals will look as... attractive as you. Get used to it. Many will hate you for your looks. Maybe our hideousness is a tradeoff for all this power. Ones that look like you are very rare, Angel.”

She felt her cheeks flush from the unexpected compliment but it was tinged with wariness from Gabriel’s words. Given the events of the day so far, she certainly didn’t feel as lucky as he made her sound.

“Which brings us back to our human forms,” Gabriel said. “You did it once before, so do it again. Think of how you normally look and focus on that image. I don’t think we should walk around the hospital like this unless we have a death wish.”

She didn’t close her eyes this time but she did conjure a mental picture of how she looked in her bedroom mirror this morning. She thought about her hair, her clothing, and her jewelry just as she had donned them. A few seconds later she heard Gabriel call her name.

“You’re getting faster.”

Avalon didn’t feel any different and without a way to see her image, she was unsure if any changes actually occurred. Aside from her wings, were there any other changes, major differences? Glancing over each shoulder she didn’t see her wings now. Reaching around she couldn’t even feel any place on her back where they would have sprouted, though the two rips in the back of her shirt were ample evidence they were real.

As she turned to comment to Gabriel about them she was taken aback by the drastic changes in his own appearance. While she had seen his human form once before she was too distraught to truly take notice. No longer were his skin and hair as black as night and gone were his wrist-chains, clawed hands, and leathery wings. In place of her demonic rescuer stood a man that could have been anyone you might meet on the streets of any city. His green eyes were inquisitive but they also possessed a haunted quality, like that of a man who had seen far too much in one lifetime. His hair was still black but no longer quite as dark as pitch and much shorter, barely more than a high and tight military trim. Avalon could see a number of scars along his arms and at least one on his face.

“So what’s a Guardian?” she asked after an awkward pause, as much to find out as to break the strange silence between them.

“Small beings of incredible powers, they are a bane to all that fear the light - including the Nightlords and their minions. The only one I ever truly knew called himself Magnus. He was a being of unequalled honor.”

“You said knew... What happened to him?” Avalon asked.

“I last saw he was holding off a small army of Hounds so I could take a group of children to safety. Magnus thought at least one of the children was a Nightbane by the way the Hounds dogged us relentlessly for hours. By the time I returned the Hounds were gone and there was no sign of Magnus beyond some blood and a torn piece of his shirt. I always assumed the Hounds took his corpse.”

Avalon blinked. “A small army of Hounds? How powerful are these Guardians?” she asked. Just three or four had been a handful for her and Gabriel. She couldn’t imagine the power one would have to possess to fight off more.

Gabriel chuckled at her disbelief. “Very. Good allies in a fight. Their powers revolve around light. Magnus could use it in a lot of different ways: attacking, flying, healing others, fending off vampires. It was amazing to see.”

Avalon did a double-take and stared at Gabriel blankly. “Vampires?”

He nodded. “They’re real, too. So are Lycanthropes.”

She shook her head slightly, unfamiliar with the term.

“Were-creatures, like were-wolves, were-bears, were-tigers,” he explained, trying not to chuckle at her continued shocked stare. “You’re not in Kansas anymore, Dorothy.”

Getting them moving again, Gabriel explained more about the Guardians as they broke open the rooftop door and started downstairs. “Don’t let their size fool you. They’re about the size of a tall child, or a short teenager; just under five feet or so. They’re stronger than they look. I saw Magnus pick up a felled Hound and use it to club two more to death. He swung that thing around like it was a scythe, bludgeoning anything in his path.”

That memory elicited a chuckle from Gabriel and Avalon cut him an incredulous look. “Nice,” she said sarcastically.

“Sorry,” he said. “Most of my life has been nearly constant warfare broken up by periods of boredom.”

“Most people might call that boredom by a different name: peace.”

“Touché,” Gabriel agreed. “With my upbringing there is little in life beyond battle. It’s taken me many years to appreciate those periods of bore-, peace. Right about now I’d kill for a chance to sleep for an uninterrupted year.”

Avalon issued another scathing look for his “killing for peace” comment.

Gabriel sighed and grudgingly bowed though his crooked grin never diminished.

* * *

Exiting the staircase they froze and stared down the hallway. Both sides were lined with gurneys, all filled with bandaged or still-bleeding bodies, and injured people standing or sitting on the cold floor. Nurses and doctors rushed between patients in an attempt to try and aid as many as possible. Everywhere were signs of injury though none looked immediately life-threatening, everything from minor burns to deep lacerations was visible here.

“What the hell is going on?” Avalon whispered harshly to Gabriel and the Athanatos shook his head.

“Move on,” he said in lieu of a proper answer.

The scrubs they easily found and donned ensured that none of the hospital employees mistook them for patients and would give them better access to the more private areas of the building. Neither Gabriel nor Avalon had ever seen a hospital this full, though Gabriel had seen plenty of medic tents filled to such capacity over the centuries. People were wall-to-wall with standing room only in most hallways. Once they emerged from the restrooms in their scrubs things proceeded to get far worse. People constantly mistook them for doctors and tried to get them to tend their friends and family members. Avalon was awed by the sheer amount of people hurt.

They weaved their way through the crowd as best as possible, often having to forcibly pluck themselves free from some of the more persistent patients. Avalon began to feel a queasy stomach jitter as they descended the stairs to the fifth floor. Gabriel explained it as her sensing others of her kind. The closer she got the more distinct the sensation. Even now she didn't have to concentrate to feel one nearby. Gabriel had also mentioned things like a Guardian and another of his kind. Guardians were almost a complete mystery to her beyond what Gabriel already shared but she was excited to actually meet one. They sounded like they were the good guys.

It was on the fifth floor when Avalon found the Nightbane she sensed. He lay on one of the many gurneys and was covered in multiple bandages. She knew as soon as she saw him that he was the one. There was no doubt. He was in his human form, what Gabriel called the Façade, but somehow she could tell he was a Nightbane. Apparently he sensed her as well for their eyes met and they stared at one another. He couldn't have been more than fifteen.

“He's being tended to,” Gabriel said in her ear and Avalon nodded. The boy gave her a small wave of one bandaged hand and she wanted to go to him. She wanted to hug him tightly and tell him everything was going to be all right. He wasn't insane, he wasn't a freak, and most importantly, he wasn't alone. Gabriel's words reminded her that there were larger events going on that required their attention, however. Tearing herself away, she followed the Athanatos as he opened the door to the stairs once more.

The two supernatural beings saw injuries of all sorts which grew progressively worse the further they descended into the hospital. From knife and bullet wounds to what resembled vicious bites and scratches from things definitely non-human, Gabriel knew enough to recognize the injuries as derived from other supernatural beings. Floor by floor they searched until they eventually gained access to the basement. Here there were gurneys littered with the covered bodies of the dead, most splattered with blood and gore. It was sickening to see and the smell of someone that had burned to death lingered in the air. Gabriel led the way, his face like a mask as he concentrated on finding this Athanatos he sensed. At one point Avalon swore she saw him sniffing the air like a dog.

They tried a few locked doors before reaching one that opened just as Gabriel's hand reached for the knob. He and Avalon took a cautious step back but the man who stepped out seemed about the most harmless person imaginable. He had a wiry build with short, greasy black hair and onyx eyes that reminded Avalon of a shark. He was, to use Gabriel's earlier phrase, the creepiest looking per-



son she had ever met. His lab coat was heavily bloodstained and one hand still wore a gore-stained rubber glove.

“Been expecting you. Come in,” he bade in a Vincent Price voice that made goose bumps appear along Avalon's arms.

The thin man stepped into the room once more, barely looking at either of his guests. It appeared to be the main center of the morgue given all the dead bodies littering the gurneys. Though they were all covered, it did little to calm the nerves of those unaccustomed to being around so many recently deceased. A rolling tray of instruments rested beside the closest table to the door and the sheet was pulled back enough to reveal the pale face of a man in his late twenties. The Y-incision was visible just at the edge of the sheet and appeared to have been sewn up already. Behind the coroner were rows of cabinets with metal doors. Four rows high and at least ten rows wide, it took up the entire back wall and was obviously where bodies were normally stored.

The creepy Athanatos pulled off his remaining glove and tossed it into a nearby trash can marked for medical waste. Moving to the uncovered corpse, he pulled up the sheet, hiding the cadaver's lifeless eyes and face from view.

"Titus is my given name," he announced in a neutral tone. "You may call me that."

"My given name is Quintus, but I am called Gabriel. This is Angel," he said with a nod to Avalon.

Titus stared for an uncomfortable moment at her while Gabriel gave the introductions. Unlike most men that saw a beautiful young woman, he didn't try to stare at her breasts or curvy figure. Instead he seemed to be studying her clinically, almost like he would to diagnose a patient, or worse, assess a cadaver. His black eyes - for she couldn't see the whites of his eyes unless he looked sharply to either side - were unnerving, as was his unemotional demeanor. It almost made her forget that Gabriel had introduced her by the nickname he called her on the roof.

Titus flipped his gaze to Gabriel and Avalon noticed a brief flicker in the man's eyes as they shifted from completely black to a blazing red. They remained this way for a few seconds before returning back to their original lifeless appearance.

"You have the smell of recent death on you," he noted, talking only to Gabriel. "Scourge, I take it?"

Gabriel nodded once. "Magi," he stated more than asked, receiving a nod from Titus in return.

"And you are Nightbane," he added as his unwanted gaze fell back to Avalon. "Why are you here?"

"I thought to find one of us here. I need to get word to my Gathering," Gabriel said. Avalon's brow furrowed at the term but she said nothing.

"Oh?" Titus asked. "Why is that?"

"I think you know," Gabriel said with a grim undercurrent in his tone. "You've seen the bodies, the wounds. You know what's happening. I need to get word to my people."

Titus sneered. "I can save you some trouble, *Gabriel*," he said, almost spitting the name with disgust. "Your *Gathering* has been annihilated."

The creepy little man moved around the room to a covered cadaver and lifted the sheet enough to peer beneath. Tossing it back, he revealed a badly torn body of what appeared to be a young girl underneath. Completely naked, half of her face was little more than a torn mass of exposed bone and muscle while all of her limbs sported what looked to be teeth marks; very little of the girl's body escaped injury. By her size, she looked no more than twelve years old.

"Colorado, yes? I received word last night of their demise. Attacked by a horde of Hunters, Hounds, and Hound Masters, they were. I heard rumors that even an Avatar of one of the Night Lords led their ranks, *Gabriel*." Again he used the name with a mocking tone. "My source and one other escaped, the other ninety-two are all dead. Seems the Ba'al knew their location, their defenses, and even when they meet. Rather odd, wouldn't you think, that they attacked with such perfect timing? Most *Gatherings* only occur every few years, yes?"

Titus explained it like he was giving a food order to a drive-thru teller, all the while picking at the facial wounds of the young girl with a pair of large tweezers. He extracted something and dropped it into a small tin on a table at his side. It made a sound like metal striking metal when it landed. "As far as Angel -" he added, using the same sarcasm with her moniker, "what celestial names you two have - her kind have brought this upon us, *Gabriel*, so you'll both forgive me if I am less than civil to *it*, or you for that matter."

"She had nothing to do with this," Gabriel growled. Avalon could see his muscles clenching and his face tighten. Even his skin began to take a slightly darker hue. It was like he was fighting to retain his human shape. A normal person might cower away from Gabriel when he was obviously this angry but then again, Titus was no ordinary person. Like Gabriel, he was Athanatos and seemed to show no fear of Gabriel's rising temper.

"We should have exterminated *them* centuries ago," Titus continued, still working on cleaning the dead girl's wounds yet offering a nod of his head in Avalon's direction. "Then the Ba'al would have no interest in this world any longer."

Gabriel was visibly shaking and Avalon thought for sure he was going to lose control. Teeth gritted, his eyes were going from his human green to the blazing red that Titus used earlier and back again. "Who survived?" he growled, clutching one of the gurneys in an attempt to calm down. His knuckles were white from the strain of his grip and the metal frame began to groan in protest.

"Alexander and Mina," Titus said, still oblivious. "Alexander came to tell me and Mina fled north, I believe he said."

Releasing the gurney, Gabriel stood to his full height and spun on his heels. Nearly taking the door off its hinges, he burst through it quickly in his haste to get away from the other Necrosis. Avalon was right behind him, cutting a look back at Titus who seemed oblivious to their departure. "Now you see why my kind tend to be loners. Titus is far more typical of a Necrosis than I am."

They barely reached the stairway door when Gabriel lashed out with his fist and snapped the door in half with a deafening crack. It ripped from the hinges and fell in multiple pieces at the bottom of the stairs. Gabriel screamed loudly as he attacked with a cry of one who had lost everything. She knew the emotion and shared his pain for she felt it when she watched her mother die that morning, pinned to a wall at the end of a Hound's spear. Gabriel seemed to be shifting from his human form to his Gregorian almost at will. One second his skin darkened and the next it was light again. It went on for a few minutes before the pacing and cursing Athanatos began to regain his composure. Gabriel muttered something about it being "all his fault" but Avalon didn't understand how. She planned to ask him later when he was in a more pleasant state of mind. He needed time to cool down.

* * *

They emerged from the stairs onto the ground floor a short time later with Gabriel in better control of his temper once more. Nothing had been said but Avalon knew he was just one stray comment from lashing out at someone or something. Gabriel stopped in mid-stride a moment later and Avalon almost ran into the back of him. He glanced around seemingly confused, but it was Avalon that spotted what he must have been trying to find.

A waifish figure turned and glanced down the hallway towards them. His translucent white eyes met Avalon's and he cocked his head to one side as he regarded her. At first she took him for an albino child, perhaps twelve or thirteen years old, but the unearthly look of those strange eyes denied that truth. Gabriel noticed him a few seconds later and gave Avalon a nod. This was who Gabriel had sensed and Avalon got her first look at one of the enigmatic Guardians. A few inches short of five feet, the Guardian was slightly taller than she expected. He wore a white

hooded sweatshirt with the hood pulled up around his face, denim jeans, and a pair of Nike sneakers. Avalon could see his snowy hair falling down the sides of his face and coming to his chin. The Guardian's face was clean shaven and she barely managed to spot his white eyebrows amid that pale, milky skin of his. Something about the little Guardian's demeanor made him seem harmless.

"You look different without your wings," the little figure noted to Avalon when they approached. He wore a warm smile, as if he were seeing a dear friend for the first time in many years. "Just as pretty, but different."

Avalon stared at the smaller being in surprise. Before she could reply, the Guardian's attention switched to Gabriel. "Named for the archangel, yet you, too, look different than one would expect, Gabriel."

He held out one milk-white hand to Avalon and gave her a reassuring grin. "My name's Miko," he announced. "Pleasure to meet you, Angel." As soon as she took his hand, Miko shook it quickly and then performed the same greeting to Gabriel.

"So, Miko," Avalon began after a pregnant pause, "you're a Guardian?"

Gabriel cleared his throat and glanced around at the sheer amount of people gathered within earshot. Miko understood. "The rooftop," he said. "Should be deserted – just watch for Hunters."

Miko led the way to the stairwell and then to the roof exit. They would be able to hear a helicopter approaching long before it would see them and it was doubtful any patients or staff would come up here for any reason. Even if someone did wander up there, the opening of the door would notify them of any impending visitors. The wind was beginning to die down and Miko slid his hood back, letting his hair whip around in the gentle breeze. He stared at the dark sky for a few minutes and seemed sad. Gabriel knew why he was feeling this way: Guardians gained their sustenance from sunlight, not food. No sun was like going without nutrition. Though Miko could survive in that state indefinitely, it was very painful and not something any Guardian would want to endure.

"I knew I would meet you here, in Pittsburg, before this was all over," Miko announced. He gestured at the darkened sky as he said the word "this." "My people have a kind of precognitive insight. I can't control it and I don't pretend to fully understand it, but this insight guides me. I knew I had to go to Pittsburg and I've seen both of you in my visions. I've also seen a park where three rivers meet. I saw us there fighting things not meant for this world." The sadness in his expression never lessened and it made them feel as though he knew more than he would say. "A lot of things," he added.

Miko looked at Gabriel and nodded to Avalon. "She has to live, even if it means you and I don't, Gabriel. This is non-negotiable. You have to promise me that you'll make sure this happens, no matter what."

Gabriel gave a sidelong glance to Avalon before returning his attention to Miko. "I agree, but why? What are you not telling us, Miko?"

He stared at Gabriel and Avalon as if he were looking through them. "I don't know. Not yet, Gabriel. There are more pieces to the puzzle and we don't have them all yet. There's an orphanage, Saint Christopher's, a young girl there we need to rescue, I think. I see her in danger. Then we need to take Angel to see him."

Gabriel and Avalon exchanged another confused look. Miko seemed to come out of his trance and was looking at them both inquisitively. "See who?" Gabriel asked.

Miko was taken aback by the question. "Why Trystan, of course."

Avalon gave Gabriel a shrug; she didn't have the first clue of whom the Guardian spoke.

Miko laughed. "He can help us. He's one of you, a Nightbane."

That seemed to make a little more sense and Gabriel nodded sagely. "You spoke of the orphanage and a girl there," he prompted.

"Nightbane, too," Miko clarified. "Keep in mind I just have these visions. I rarely know the how's or why's at the time. I've learned over the years to just roll with it. They never steer me wrong. She's in trouble and needs my help. I've seen that you two help me rescue her. I can't see from what, but I do know that she's in mortal danger. I don't know where it is, though. I think it's probably here in Pittsburg."

"Should be a phone book downstairs, right?" Avalon suggested.

Miko smiled again and nodded towards her while addressing Gabriel. "I like her. She's smart."

As they made their way back down the stairs in search of a phone book, Gabriel posed the next question. "So after that we go see this Trystan?"

"Yup," Miko said as he hopped down three steps at a time like he was playing some kind of game.

"Any ideas why, Miko?" Avalon asked. She was understandably curious.

"Nope," he said, hopping down more steps. "My guess is that he helps us. I saw him in the fight near the rivers, too. Him and many others," Miko explained.

He landed lightly at the bottom of the stairs and spun around to face them as they descended. "I'm surprised you're so hesitant," he said to Avalon. "I thought you'd be excited to finally meet your brother."

Avalon nearly fell down the stairs as her legs locked along with her jaw. Gabriel had to catch her quickly as he glared at the smiling Guardian for dropping what was apparently a bombshell without any kind of warning. It took Avalon a few seconds to regain her composure. "... I don't have a brother," she said in disbelief.

Miko cocked an eyebrow and donned a sage expression. "I beg to differ, m'lady," he said in a playful tone. "You look a lot alike, at least in your Façades. In your Morpheus forms... not so much."

She dropped onto the last step heavily, barely managing to sit and stared at the Guardian's child-like face. Miko claimed she had a brother named Trystan and he was right here in this very town. Why hadn't her parents told her? Did they even know? This was all a bit too much for her. Avalon dropped her face into her palms and tried to process it all.

"Maybe I should have kept that last part to myself a little while longer, eh?" Miko whispered to Gabriel who glared daggers back at the little Guardian.

"You think?" Gabriel replied sarcastically.

* * *

Thirty minutes later they were on the roof and ready to go. The streets were utter chaos with riots, police, and rampaging Nightbane that had lost their minds in their first Becoming. They weren't the only ones running loose; however, Vampires went berserk with the extended darkness and crept out in force to hunt and feed. Lycanthropes, too, emerged from their nocturnal habits and prowled the world for answers. It was impossible to think of how the world would ever cope with the knowledge of what happened this day and move on. Monsters roamed the streets and no amount of fancy words and censorship would ever hide that fact. Luckily, Avalon and Gabriel had wings and Miko could use his powers to fly. They would be able to avoid many of the dangers that walking or driving would offer. The skies held their own peril in the form of Hunters, the aerial minions of the Nightlords. As long as the three of them were vigilant they should be safe, Miko assured them. With the street address of Saint Christopher's in hand, they jumped from the rooftop of the hospital and made their way towards the orphanage. Far below a face in the crowd that was gathered before the overfilled hospital felt a strange tingling from this odd bracelet he wore and looked up. Two winged creatures, one beautiful and the other grotesque, took wing from the rooftop followed by a smaller being that seemed to faintly glow. They were gone before he was able to get a good look but something told him he would see them again.

Looking at the ornate metallic bracelet he wore with Gaelic writing prominently etched upon it, Declan O'Connor wondered for the third time that morning about its true origins. It was a family heirloom, his father once said; ever since it woke him this morning by warming suddenly against his skin at 6:02, Declan thought there was far more to it than anyone ever told him. Since then he found it wouldn't come off his arm and seemed to warm and cool, and even sometimes tingle, against his skin. Each time this happened, Declan looked around and saw something strange but it didn't click with the young man to tie the events together. He was off work today, which was a good thing, and looking forward to sleeping in, but that wasn't going to happen, apparently. After trying to get the damn bracelet off now for two hours, Declan called his doctor's office only to get the machine. All emergencies were to be routed to the nearby Pittsburg Memorial Hospital. He felt foolish going to the emergency room for something as minor as this stubborn bracelet but it did concern him with the strange sensations emanating from it from time to time. He would feel better if they could take it off for him.

Follow them, Declan.

He turned and looked around for the source of the speaker but no one seemed to be paying any attention to him. The voice was oddly accented, sounding like his Grandfather's Irish brogue. About to play it off as an overactive imagination, Declan heard it again.

Listen to me, lad. Follow the flying ones.

Turning to an elderly man a few feet away, Declan gave him a confused look. "Sir?"

"Eh?" the man almost shouted, obviously close to deaf. Declan shook his head and waved him off in apology. Great, now he was hearing voices, too. As if this crazy bracelet being stuck on his wrist wasn't bad enough, now he heard his Grandfather.

I'm not yuir seanathair, boyo, but ye do need to listen now. There's danger coming. Follow the flyers, Declan.

Given how crowded the hospital was, Declan decided it might be a good idea to step away. Any attempts to respond to this voice aloud might have others thinking him as insane as he felt.

That's a good lad. Keep moving.

"What the hell is going on?" he said aloud once he was far enough away from the crowd.

All in good time. My name is Beannaithe, but you can call me Hallow.

Declan rounded the closest corner and stared at the eerily empty street with some trepidation. Cars were left where they had stopped or crashed, some with doors flung open and others with no doors at all. There were at least three accidents he could see and two windshields that were cracked and had what appeared to be bloodstains on them. The slow wind blew a newspaper past him and he caught a glimpse of the headline there.

MONSTERS ROAM PITTSBURG STREETS

No easy way to say this, lad, but yuir my wielder.

Before he could question Hallow any further, hundreds of years of knowledge and information flooded Declan's already stressed brain. He crumbled to the sidewalk and shook as if having a seizure while lifetimes of memories were experienced in mere minutes. Declan's eyes clinched from the terrible pain while his body convulsed. Slowly the pain began to ebb and Declan O'Connor curled into a fetal position on the sidewalk of Greene Street.

He was a Sword Bearer. His "bracelet" was not a piece of jewelry at all but rather a sword, a Gallóglaigh, more commonly called a Gallowglass, sword to be exact. Declan knew that on command the bracelet would vanish and a sword would suddenly appear in his waiting hand. It was magic, which until now he didn't believe in, and possessed awesome powers.

Welcome to the war, Declan. Now, take a breather then high-tail it after those flyers. While yuir doing that, I'll fill you in on what's happening.

Though his body screamed for rest, Declan resisted the urge to just lay there. Still trying to assimilate all the information Hallow dumped into his mind, Declan barely noticed the ease at which he rose and the speed at which he ran off to find those flying things from the hospital. Within minutes he was on their trail, though if later asked he wouldn't be able to tell anyone how he knew where to go. Perhaps Hallow guided him, or perhaps some innate sixth sense emerged with the transfer of all that data. Either way, Declan ran through the not so empty streets of Pittsburg hot on the trail of an angel, a demon, and a little glowing man. What he would do when he found them was anyone's guess, but for now his path was clear.



Dawn of a New Era

Part Two

An Adventure for Heroes Unlimited™

By Corey Livermore

Part IV: Haven't We Done this Already?

Travel from the moon to Earth will take some time, but eventually the shuttle will land on Earth. No matter what flight path the shuttle is taking – whether they decide to let the shuttle land at the airstrip in NM or if they changed where the shuttle will land – the shuttle will have a failure in the flight controls as they are entering the Earth's atmosphere. This failure will cause them to crash land in the desert 10 or so miles north of Pahrump, NV.

Pahrump is a small community about 45-60 minutes west of Las Vegas, and the principal commodity is, of course, gambling. The players will not be happy about landing in the desert, but they should head towards either Pahrump or Las Vegas (they would be able to see both cities from the sky as they were landing). Unless they have abilities that allow them to travel at high

speeds or traverse distances easily, they are in for a long walk in the desert sun.

Players may wish to run a systems check on the shuttle to find out why the flight controls malfunctioned during re-entry. Due to the damage sustained in the wreck, the computer is completely destroyed, unable to give the players any type of information about why the flight controls malfunctioned. Even players who have machine affinity abilities will be unable to get any information other than the controls malfunctioned.

The shuttle contains no supplies that will aid the players in their walk towards either Pahrump or Las Vegas, and the walk is going to take some time. Getting to Pahrump will take approximately 2.5 hours (at the average walking pace of 4 miles per hour). Getting to Las Vegas will take even longer, and the players should realize that they need to get to the closer community first.

No matter which city the players end up in, they will almost immediately have to deal with a severe situation. Shortly after they arrive in the city, the following news story is seen on either a television or an electronic billboard at one of the casinos:

“Breaking news today, this 30th day of July – several individuals who are wanted in connection with the death of a Chicago police officer as well as quite a few security officers of ConGenix and a couple of super-powered Americans, have hijacked a consumer shuttle bound for Mars and they have intentionally crashed it into the moon. I'm told we have video of the event, which was filmed by a nearby



military satellite owned and operated by ConGenix. Can we roll this footage please?"

The newscaster is replaced on the television with a shot from space, where a shuttle is passing close to the moon on its way towards what is supposedly Mars. After a few moments, the interior of the shuttle, through the windows, can be seen to be lit up by fire or another type of energy. The shuttle engines then kick into high gear and the shuttle is forcibly landed, nose-first, into the surface of the moon. Just before the explosion, a small escape pod can be seen being jettisoned from the shuttle.

The newscaster comes back on the air, a look of complete surprise on his face.

"Folks, we here at Las Vegas 5 apologize for what you've just seen. We know that the image of that shuttle being forced into the moon is not the prettiest of pictures, but we needed to let you know what is happening. All reports indicate that all 300 passengers and the entire flight crew have been killed.

"I have been informed that we have an audio transmission that was sent from the shuttle moments before it crashed. We are going to play that transmission, and I want to warn all of our viewers out there that this may not be suitable for younger viewers."

The audio transmission is a speech made by, supposedly, one of the players. With the time they spent at the prison, as well as their exploits and voices having been caught on camera, ConGenix has been able to create an entire speech pattern based on the players. Select one of the players to have been the model for the audio transmission, and continue with the following:

"My name is [insert the character's name], and I represent a group of super-heroes that is outraged by the recent attacks against us by the government of the United States of America. We are being targeted merely because we are different. But what you don't understand is that we are the future of the human race, and we are only trying to help you.

"Today, we strike a serious blow against the corporate monster that is trying to have us outlawed. We have hijacked this shuttle and have demanded that the super-hero registration laws be repealed so that we may live in peace. We have been met with resistance the whole way, and now we say no more.

"Because the corporate giant will not listen to our voices, we must make them listen to our acts. This shuttle, and all of the passengers aboard, are going to be destroyed. We are going to kill everyone aboard as a way to send a message that we are not to be messed with. Leave us alone, and we will leave you alone."

The audio transmission contains a few moments of silence, and then static when the shuttle crashes. The newscaster continues with the story.

"Again, we apologize for how graphic and senseless this violence is. As you can see in the video, an escape pod was jettisoned immediately prior to the crash, and authorities believe it contained the persons responsible for this attack."

At this, the newscaster is replaced by photos of the people responsible. And you are stunned to see that the people responsible are you.

The newscaster continues by saying "If you see any of these people, you are warned to stay away from them. They are armed and extremely dangerous. ConGenix is requesting that you contact them at the number on your screen so that they can be dealt with."

The story repeats, giving the same details, and showing your faces the whole time.

Nevada is one of the states that have not enacted super-hero registration laws, but the news story of the players hijacking and destroying a passenger shuttle will not paint them in the best light. In fact, once this story circulates on the news, the players will be wanted dead or alive anywhere in the country.

The players at this point know that they didn't destroy a shuttle, nor are they responsible for all of those deaths. But the only way to prove it is to get into ConGenix and get hard evidence that they are not in the wrong. Players may believe they have enough evidence against the corporation based on what they have found so far, but nobody at this time will believe them. They will need to take on the corporation and the Gonzalez triplets in order to clear their names.

If the players balk at the idea of having to go back to the corporation, or even to just help push them in the right direction, the following news story may be read:

ALBUQUERQUE – With the recent attack on a passenger shuttle owned and operated by local conglomerate ConGenix, the people of the United States have been shouting for the super-powered individuals behind the attack to be brought to justice. And ConGenix couldn't be happier to help.

With a security force trained in military tactics and armed with the latest weaponry available, these soldiers are ready to help defend our country against the terror within. And it's a sentiment felt not only by the soldiers, but by Treondo Gonzalez, CEO and co-owner of the corporation.

"Our country has faced a great loss. Those innocent passengers were the victims of nothing more than a terrorist act, and that act cannot go unnoticed or unpunished. This is why it is with great pleasure that I report that ConGenix is loaning 300 of our finest security officers to the United States military in the hopes that these criminals can be brought to justice.

"Some of our top executives have asked how we can afford to loan out so many of our guards, and they have expressed concern that losing that many guards from our corporate headquarters will put us in a bind when it comes to our own security. I have reassured them that the remaining security force that will be available on the premises will be more than enough to deal with any potential threat that may arise. I have also reminded them that these criminals tried to attack us once, and that although they were not caught, they were repelled by a force less than what is available at the building now."

Gonzalez, who is the identical triplet of presidential hopeful Prio Gonzalez and New Mexico representative

Secoro Gonzalez, also stated that he is sure the criminals will be caught soon, and the security force can be brought back to the corporate headquarters.

hope to hold up to the same standard my brother has put forth.”

The above news story should get the characters thinking about a few things. For starters, they were not repelled when they assaulted the corporation the first time – they were arrested and detained. This should tell the characters that they never went through the criminal justice system, and that the corporation is showing an honest face to hide the criminal enterprise that they have going on. Award any player who states this with a bonus of 250 Experience Points.

The second thing the above story will tell them is that they couldn't have been detained by a force less than what is currently at the building as they were completely surrounded during their initial assault. ConGenix is lying about the numbers they have on staff at the building, and are trying to spread disinformation to make themselves look better. Award any player who states this with a bonus of 250 Experience Points.

The final thing this should tell them is that the building is vulnerable to another attack. If they have loaned out 300 of their own guards to help look for the players, then that means there are less guards at the building to protect it. The players should know that they need to take the corporation out once and for all, and this may be the best time for them to do it. Award any player who states this with a bonus of 250 Experience Points.

Before they continue, the players should be between 7th and 9th level. There have been plenty of opportunities to earn extra Experience Points, but they still may need an extra boost to get them a little closer to this target. Feel free to implement and run any side adventures that you feel will get them up to this level.

As the players are getting ready to assault the corporation, or as a plot point to push them in that direction should they balk at the idea, the following news story is released:

ALBUQUERQUE – At a time when his very life could be in danger, New Mexico representative Secoro Gonzalez has made the decision to continue to be in the public eye. And while nobody would be shocked or surprised if he was to avoid the spotlight, he says that he has a duty to the public that must be fulfilled.

“I realize that my life is in danger,” Gonzalez stated as he was getting into his limousine. “But I have a duty to the people of Albuquerque, to New Mexico, and to the United States of America. I will not let these super-powered terrorists determine what my life will be like, nor will I let them dictate where I can and cannot go.”

Gonzalez's last statement was referring to the upcoming symposium on the cure for cancer to be held at ConGenix in 2 days' time. The symposium will be attended by not only himself, but by his brother and presidential hopeful Prio Gonzalez. When asked about his brother's life and the danger he is in, Prio Gonzalez said “Our family is strong. These terrorists are weak. They attack from a distance, hidden from the public's watchful eye. They have mercilessly killed police officers, they have attacked Secoro shamelessly, and they hijacked and destroyed a passenger shuttle. And while I promise that these people will be apprehended, I stand by my brother's decision. We are both politicians, and we have duties to uphold. When I become president, I

Next to the article is a picture of Prio, Secoro, and Treondo at a recent golf outing and charity dinner held in Albuquerque. Any players who look at the photo are allowed to make a percentile roll against ¼ of their I.Q. Any player who succeeds is awarded a bonus of 100 Experience Points, and they are aware and/or notice that something is not right about the picture. While Prio is in perfect focus, Secoro and Treondo are not. Secoro and Treondo appear to be fuzzy and out of focus, and they just don't look right. This is a huge tip that they are not what they seem to be.

The above news story should get the players thinking about going to ConGenix, or even to get them started thinking that they may need to go after the Gonzalez triplets. This is all fine and dandy, but before they can get that far they are once again assaulted by someone sent by ConGenix.

Major Corparis, Andrew S

9th Level Super Soldier

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 15, M.A. 14, P.S. 28, P.P. 19, P.E. 19, P.B. 12, Spd 34.

Hit Points: 212, **S.D.C.:** 1,468, **A.R.:** 14.

Combat: Attacks per Melee: 9

Damage: +17

Disarm: +3

Dodge: +9

Initiative: +5

Parry: +6

Pull: +6

Roll: +8

Strike: +4

Save vs Coma/Death: +18%

Save vs Disease: +1

Save vs Horror Factor: +4

Save vs Magic: +2

Save vs Poison: +3

Save vs Possession: +2

Sponsoring Organization: Secret Organization.

Motive for the Procedure: Criminal/Nefarious, for the purpose of creating assassins.

Nature of the Procedure: Chemical injections alongside radioactive bombardment.

Nature of the Test Subject: Victim of a crippling disease – cerebral palsy.

Status with the Sponsoring Organization: Active agent in the program. \$250,000 annual salary.

Super Soldier Enhancements

- Attempted to increase physical speed.
- Invulnerability attempt.
- Mind and body more attuned.
- Phenomenal balance.

Battle Armor/Costume: None. Prefers to wear fatigues.

Special Weapon: Unbreakable Rope (A.R. 19, 50 S.D.C.).

Prototype Vehicle: Anti-Gravity Belt (max speed 50 mph/80 km).

Body Flip/Throw

Death Blow

Kick Attacks

- Jump Kick (3D6x2)

- Roundhouse (3D6)

Major:

Massive Damage Capacity
Matter Expulsion, Wood

Education: Military Specialist

Skill Program 1: Military, Basic

- Athletics
- Climbing
- Hand to Hand: Basic
- Military Etiquette
- Running
- W.P. Assault Rifle
- W.P. Grenade
- W.P. Pistol

Skill Program 2: Espionage, Assassin

- Hand to Hand: Assassin
- Disguise
- Prowl
- Sniper
- W.P. Auto Pistol
- W.P. Rifle

Skill Program 3: Espionage, Agent

- Anthropology
- Criminal Science/Forensics
- Hand to Hand: Basic
- Research
- Tailing
- W.P. Auto Rifle
- W.P. Revolver

Skill Program 4: Weapon Proficiency, Modern

- W.P. Heavy Weapons
- W.P. Energy Pistol
- W.P. Energy Rifle

Skill Program 5: Espionage, Information Gathering

- Computer Hacking
- Computer Operation
- Computer Programming
- Cryptography
- Intelligence
- Literacy
- Radio: Basic
- Radio: Scramblers
- Research

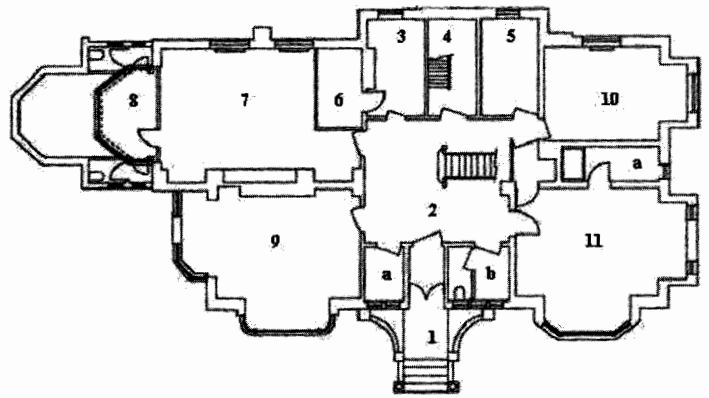
4 Rogue or Espionage Skills

- Palming
- Pick Locks
- Safecracking
- Streetwise

5 Secondary Skills

- Body Building & Weightlifting
- Find Contraband & Illegal Weapons
- Pilot Motorcycle
- Recognize Weapon Quality
- Wilderness Survival

Major Corparis prefers to get into close combat range, striking with his hands and feet to inflict the maximum amount of damage. If he has to, he'll use *Matter Expulsion: Wood* to fire arrows or other wooden darts at the characters until he can get into hand to hand range. He is aware of being able to coat himself



in wooden armor; however, he prefers not to do this as his own Natural A.R. and S.D.C. far exceed anything that his power could ever generate.

Before the battle starts, Major Corparis will make a speech to the players about how he has been sent to catch them, but their dead bodies will be just as good. He will make statements about how they should come quietly, and that they don't stand a chance against him, and that they should be thankful that he's giving them the chance to surrender. As his last statement to the players before initiative is rolled, he will state, "You know, I should be thanking you. Were it not for your attack on Secoro and your attempt to discredit Prio, I wouldn't even be here."

The statement that Major Corparis makes should be of interest to the players. They haven't gone out of their way to do anything to discredit the presidential hopeful, yet they are being told that they are doing just that. This is a clue to the players that they will have to face and take out Prio Gonzalez at some point.

Major Corparis will be extremely hard to take out. The players should get the feeling that this is the hardest foe they will ever face due to the sheer amount of damage that he can withstand before appearing hurt. This battle will take a while, and the players will be tested strategically on beating this monster. When the battle is over, each player should be awarded a bonus of 1,000 Experience Points just for defeating this guy, in addition to any awards they get for clever ideas or tactics used.

It should be noted that Major Corparis cannot be taken hostage. He will not allow himself to be taken hostage, instead preferring to die than to be a prisoner. If the players do somehow manage to capture him, he will not give any information other than he was hired by ConGenix to either capture or kill the players.

Whether they capture or kill him, the players will be able to find the orders to capture or kill them on Major Corparis' person. The orders are contained in a small envelope along with pictures of the players to make sure that he doesn't forget what the players look like. A close inspection of the orders will show that they are signed by Prio Gonzalez, and not Secoro as the players might think. This is big news – the players now know they are being targeted by Prio and will want to take him out.

The players know that Prio and Secoro will both be at ConGenix for the symposium on the cure for cancer, and they should also know that ConGenix has loaned out 300 of their own security guards to help look for the players. These two things will tell the players that their next target needs to be ConGenix.

Remember that the players will need to enter through either the front door or through the rooftop entrance as the building is magically protected against those with super-powers enabling them to teleport, phase-shift, or otherwise enter the building. The

players may not want to go through the front door or the rooftop entrance as the last time they were here they were “arrested” and sent to the prison. Give the players a minor push if they need one.

It should be noted that this is the corporate headquarters of the company. The building is actually smaller than one would think, and a lot of the functions of the corporation aren’t necessarily performed at this location. The building is modeled, however loosely, after Arden Hall in Manchester, UK, due to the location of the theater/auditorium, as well as the use of space in the basement level.

All guards use the same stats that are given in Part II: Which Way Did They Go George.

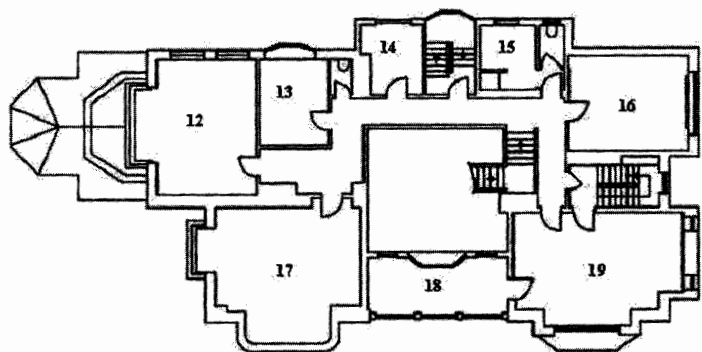
1. This is the front entrance to the building. The building actually sits a little higher up than the parking lot, so the stairway is necessary to get into the building. There are cameras on both sides of the double doors.

2. This is the lobby area of the building. A secretary will be sitting at a desk just to the south of the stairs, greeting all visitors. She will immediately recognize the players and sound the alarm. If this happens, the guards from area **a** will come into the lobby, talking on their radios that they will need backup, and pointing their weapons at the players. 2 melee rounds after this happens, the guards from areas **7**, **9** and **11** will enter the lobby.

a. This is a small security office where 2 guards are stationed at all times. They are here to provide a first line of defense (so to speak) against any unwanted visitors to the building.

The room itself has a couple of desktop computers that are wired into the security modules for the building. Players can attempt to disable the security system from here with the applicable skill check, but at a -50% penalty. The penalty reflects the fact that the alarm will already have been sounded before they reach this room, and the security system has programming logic that attempts to counter any attempted security system breach when the alarm is already sounded. Any player who is able to disable the security system once the alarm has already been sounded should be awarded an additional 500 Experience Points.

A search of the room and the security computers will turn up a sensor that is used to unlock the door leading to area **4**.



b. This is nothing more than a place for visitors to hang up their coats, or enter through to the washroom.

3. This area is used for copying/scanning/printing of documents, and is primarily used by the secretary in area **2** and the guards in area **2a**.

4. This set of stairs leads to the basement level of the building. The door is locked at all times, and the only way to unlock the

door is to depress the security sensor located in the security office at area **2a**.

5. This area is a kitchenette, complete with a refrigerator, dishwasher, sink (with garbage disposal), a microwave, and a soda machine. There is a chance (01-20%) that a security guard is in this room at any given moment.

6. This is a storage closet for the supplies needed for the printer/copier/scanner, as well as being used to house cleaning supplies such as a vacuum, broom, mop, and other cleaning chemicals.

7. This is a waiting area/conference room that leads directly to the theater and auditorium. There will be 4 guards in this room, 2 on either side of the doors leading into area **8**, and another 2 on either side of the doors leading into this area.

The room is decorated with streamers and ribbons and balloons, and there are signs in the room that indicate the symposium on the cure for cancer is being held in the auditorium/theater. Tables line the north and south walls, and there are all kinds of snacks and beverages on the tables.

8. This is the auditorium and theater area. The door into the area leads directly to the theater seating, with the stage area actually down a step or two. The room is completely equipped with all of the latest electronic gadgets designed to help with presentations (a computer, projector, speakers, etc.).

When the players enter the building, the symposium will be taking place. There will be 150 guests on this level of the auditorium, along with another 100 on the 1st floor in area **12**. Prio Gonzalez is currently speaking, and with him on the stage are Secoro and Treondo Gonzalez. There are also 4 guards inside.

If the alarm is raised, the guards will begin to escort the people out through the lobby, and they will protect them with their lives. The Gonzalez triplets will then attempt to make their way to the basement through area **4**, and then into the teleporter in area **42**. It is ok for Secoro and Treondo to be killed, but Prio will always find a way to escape.

If the alarm is not raised and the players enter this area, the 4 guards will rush up onto the stage and try to keep the players from getting on to the stage. The Gonzalez triplets will then use a secret panel in the stage area to slip down into the basement into area **35**, where they can then get into area **42** and then into the teleporter. The guards will not shoot at the players unless the players attempt to get onto the stage.

9. This area is a conference room currently being used to support the large number of guests at the building for the symposium. The room is decorated in the same manner as area **7**, but is currently empty of any guests. There are 2 guards here.

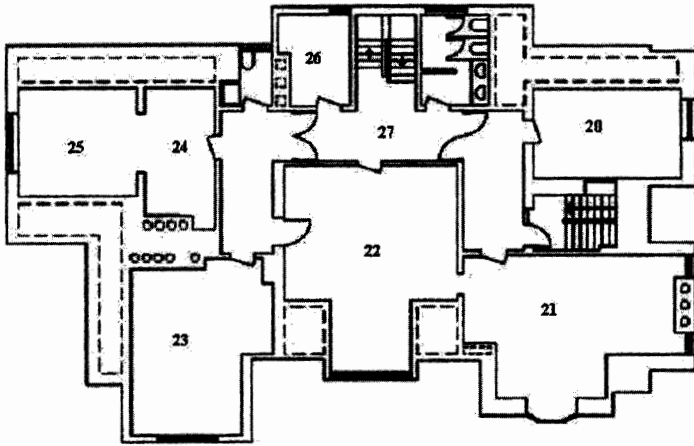
10. This is a small conference room that is used to give new employees a general overview of the corporation and what their duties at this location will be. There are several tables, all lined up and facing a projector on the east wall.

11. This is a dining area, which is used by employees to eat their meals while they are working. There are vending machines in here, with quite a few tables and chairs. There are also currently 3 guards in this room, all of whom are eating lunch. All three of the guards will not be wearing the helmets that accompany their riot gear, having taken them off to eat. There is a chance

(01-35%) that each guard will not put their helmet back on before joining the fracas in the lobby.

12. This is the upper level of the auditorium and theater. There is plenty of seating available in this area, and all seats have a clear view of the stage area. When the players enter the building, there will be 100 guests in the room, as well as 2 guards. If the alarm is raised, the guards will lock the door from the inside and position themselves at the eastern railing to get a better shot should the players attempt to get on the stage.

13. This is an office area used by the people in Human Resources. There are 6 people that work in this area, and there will



not be any guards in here. The computers in this area are not connected to the same network that controls security, so characters will not be able to hack into them and get any information on security or how to disable it.

14. This area is a kitchenette, complete with a refrigerator, dishwasher, sink (with garbage disposal), a microwave, and a soda machine. There is a chance (01-20%) that a security guard is in this room at any given moment.

15. This area is a small gym, complete with free weights, a couple of treadmills, a shower area, and an attached bathroom. There is a chance (01-20%) that a security guard is in this room at any given moment.

16. This is an office area used by the people in Marketing. There are 30 people that work in this area, and there will not be any guards in here. The computers in this area are not connected to the same network that controls security, so characters will not be able to hack into them and get any information on security or how to disable it.

17. This is a large office area used by the people in Sales. There are 60 people that work in this area, and there will not be any guards in here. The computers in this area are not connected to the same network that controls security, so characters will not be able to hack into them and get any information on security or how to disable it.

18. This is the security station for the 1st floor, and it houses 4 guards. The northern wall is actually 2-way glass, which allows the guards in this room to view the lobby below without anyone in the lobby seeing them. If the players enter through the lobby and a fight breaks out, the glass can be lifted in sections around shoulder height (about 5 feet/1.5 m off the floor) to allow the

security guards to point their weapons into the lobby and start firing at the players.

If the alarm is raised and the players are not in the lobby, 2 of the guards in this room will systematically check the rest of the 1st floor, ensuring that all of the people working are not harmed and are not in danger. This check takes about 10 minutes, and if the guards do not return in this time the other 2 guards will call up to the primary security station for backup.

The computers in this room are directly tied to the primary security system, and it is possible that the players can hack into the computers and obtain information and disable the security system. If the alarm is active, the appropriate skill check is performed at a -50% chance. The things the players can do if they hack in correctly from this area:

- a. Obtain a map of the building, which will indicate where false walls and doors are located;
- b. Obtain a technical readout of the security system and all devices connected to it;
- c. Obtain information about the teleporter in area 42;
- d. Disable the entire security system;
- e. Disable the power supply to the entire building; and
- f. Disable the power supply to the device in area 41 that prevents the ability from entering the building under invisibility, teleporting, dimensional alteration, phase shifting, etc.

Once the players have hacked into the system, each of the above tasks can be performed. It is recommended that a skill check be performed for each action the players are attempting to do, with a penalty of -25% until the security system is disabled.

19. This is a large office area used by the people in Customer Service. There are 100 people that work in this area, and there is a chance (01-20%) that a security guard will be in this area due to the proximity of the area to the security station at area 18. If there is a guard in this area, he will be 1 of the 4 guards from area 18. The computers in this area are not connected to the same network that controls security, so characters will not be able to hack into them and get any information on security or how to disable it.

20. This area is the central security station for the 2nd floor, and it is into this area that the players will arrive if they enter the building through the rooftop access door. There are always no less than 4 guards in this area, and there is a chance (01-30%) that 1D4+1 additional guards will be in here.

The computers in this area function in the same way that the computers in area 18 function, in that the players will be able to obtain the same information that can be learned in that area.

21. This is a large area used by the people in Legal. There are about 100 people that work in this area, and there are usually no guards in this area. The computers in this area are not connected to the same network that controls security, so characters will not be able to hack into them and get any information on security or how to disable it.

22. This is a large area used by the people in Accounting. There are about 100 people that work in this area, and there are usually no guards in this area. The computers in this area are not connected to the same network that controls security, so characters will not be able to hack into them and get any information on security or how to disable it.

The computers can, however, give the players several pieces of vital information that can be used against the company. All of the information relates to payroll and revenue, and includes documents signed by Treondo Gonzalez authorizing large contributions to the campaigns of both Prio and Secoro. The documents also prove that the contributions are far over the limit legally allowed according to the campaign contribution laws, and this information would put the company in a serious legal bind. The appropriate skill check should be made to hack into the computers, with a separate skill check at a penalty of -15% to find the campaign contribution documents.

Another vital piece of information contained in the documents available in the accounting department is records related to the hiring of the assassins that the players have faced up to this point. Lt. Draskal, The Collector, and Major Corparis have all been hired by the company, and records of this are contained herein. As a bonus, records regarding finances for the Moon Prison can also be found in the accounting department, but only on a successful skill check for Computer Hacking (or another appropriate skill) at a penalty of -30%.

23. This large area contains several conference rooms, all of which are equipped with the latest electronic gadgets to help in giving presentations (computers, projectors, etc.). There will be no guards in this area when the players enter the building.

24. This is an area used by the administrative assistants of the executive leadership for the company. There are 10 assistants who call this area their work “home,” and they all report directly to one of the executive leaders. There will not be any guards in this area unless the alarm is sounded. If the alarm is sounded, there will be 1D4+1 guards in this area to ensure that nobody tries to get into the executive leadership suite.

25. This is the area used by executive leadership. There are a total of 10 offices, 5 on the north wall and 5 on the south wall, where the leaders of the company perform most of the tasks that require them to be in the office. The most important office is the middle office on the south wall – Treondo Gonzalez’s office.

Players should realize that Treondo’s laptop is a vital asset. Not only does it contain all of Treondo’s personal files, but it contains several files that hint at him being a Multiple Being of Prio. The 2 most condemning files are emails sent to Treondo from Prio reminding him of things he needs to do. If the players make a successful skill check to hack into the laptop, they can find the following email:

*From Prio Gonzalez
To Treondo Gonzalez
August 3, 2036*

Treondo –

You need to come back to the house as soon as you possibly can, so we can perform the memory updates. There are things that you need to know regarding our situation, and there are things you know that I need to be updated on.

Make sure that you have your assistant schedule at least 2 days off for you, as the procedure is going to take a while to perform. Thanks to losing Secoro a couple of times, I am getting weaker and weaker, and it makes it harder to do the absorption and memory transfer.

Don't tell your assistant where you are going or what you are doing. Although Judy is aware of what's going on, we cannot afford to have her compromise our situation. She'll understand if you just tell her you need the time off.

Prio

The players can also find the following email, sent to Treondo a few days later:

*From Prio Gonzalez
To Treondo Gonzalez
August 12, 2036*

Treondo –

I've been trying to reach Secoro and have been unable to do so. I know that his life is in danger, but he's decided not to stay out of the public eye. While I think this shows that we are willing to stand up to the other super-powered individuals, it may be a really stupid idea.

Try to contact Secoro if you can. I know he was scheduled to be coming to the building for the upcoming symposium, but he needs to come home before then. He hasn't been absorbed and given the memories yet. He is a few days behind, and I cannot have him wandering around without knowing everything.

Prio

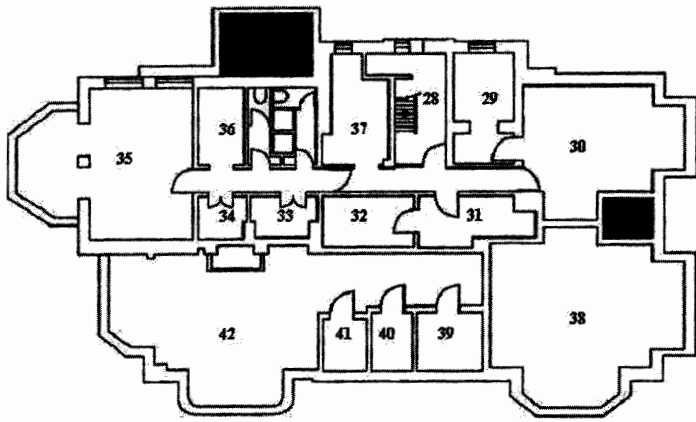
Both of the above emails almost prove, and should give a serious hint to the players, that Prio/Secoro/Treondo are not what they appear to be. The second email literally states that at the very least all three of them are super-powered beings, and the players should pick up on this. The players may also pick up on the fact that Prio is truly the only living person, and that Secoro and Treondo are merely puppets or extensions of him. Any player who figures this out should receive a bonus of 1,000 Experience Points.

The laptop also has documents that show the physical address of the Gonzalez home, should the players be unable to make their way to the teleporter. And as a side note, the dates in the emails should be changed to reflect whatever the current date is in the campaign (but no later than the end of September).

26. This area is a kitchenette, complete with a refrigerator, dishwasher, sink (with garbage disposal), a microwave, and a soda machine. There is a chance (01-20%) that a security guard is in this room at any given moment.

27. This hallway is a security checkpoint, and all people who pass through this area are subjected to a search of their person to prove that they have clearance to be on this level. There are 2 guards stationed directly in front of the stairwell to the north, with 2 other guards patrolling the area – 1 in the western section of the hallway and the other in the eastern section.

28. This is the stairwell area that leads into the basement level. There are no guards on duty here, but if the alarm has been raised there will be 1D4+1 guards stationed here waiting to see if any intruders are going to attempt to get into the basement level. They are highly trained and will shoot on sight at anyone who is not authorized to be in the basement level.



29. This is the data center for the building, and houses all of the servers, switches, routers, etc., that are needed for business to take place. The area is secured with a halo-methane fire extinguishing system, designed to snuff out any fires (and potentially any lives) in the area with a noxious gas that eliminates all oxygen. The room is temperature controlled at a cool 72 degrees, and also houses a backup power supply for itself in the event there is a power surge or lapse. The door to the room is security card controlled, and only those people who work in Information Technology have the appropriate security to enter the room.

30. This large area is used by the people in Information Technology. There are 100 people that work in this area, not including the 10 guards who are stationed here to protect the data center at area 29. The players are allowed to hack into any systems that the company uses, to include the security system, from this area, and they will be able to obtain the same information that can be obtained from areas 18 and 22.

The most interesting feature of this room is the southern wall between this area and area 38. The wall is the same version of the *Circle of Concealment* spell that is used in the Moon Prison, and it functions in the same way. When viewed from this area, the wall appears to be solid, and viewers are allowed to make a saving throw vs magic at a target of 15 to see that the wall is false.

31. This is a small security office and is the central point of security for the basement level. In addition to the guards that may be in area 28, this area houses 4 guards. The computers can be hacked into, and the same information from area 18 can be obtained by hacking into these computers.

32. This area functions as a temporary jail for any intruders who are caught attempting to enter the building illegally or who have been deemed to be anti-company. The cells are very sparse, with only a bed in them as they have not been designed to hold people for longer than it takes for the police to show up.

Each player should be given the opportunity to make a check against their Mental Endurance (percentiles, Mental Endurance x5, capped at 98%) to remember being in the cell. Any player who makes this check will remember that they were kept in a cell prior to being at the Moon Prison, and they will recognize one of the cells as being the cell they were in.

33. This is a small supply closet that holds simple cleaning supplies and cleaning implements (broom, mop, etc.).

34. This is an empty closet.

35. This is the area directly beneath the auditorium and theater in area 8 on the ground floor. The trap door in the ceiling is in the western portion of the area, just beyond the pillar.

The room is also used as a technology lab where members of Information Technology put together computers and networking devices, as well as using a few meeting rooms to brainstorm on potential technology ideas that would benefit the company (to include military grade applications). There will be 1D20 Information Technology employees in this room, as well as 1D4+1 guards in here.

The most interesting feature of this room is the southern wall between this area and area 42. The wall is the same version of the *Circle of Concealment* spell that is used in the Moon Prison, and it functions in the same way. When viewed from this area, the wall appears to be solid, and viewers are allowed to make a saving throw vs magic at a target of 15 to see that the wall is false.

36. This area is a kitchenette, complete with a refrigerator, dishwasher, sink (with garbage disposal), a microwave, and a soda machine. There is a chance (01-20%) that a security guard is in this room at any given moment.

37. This area is being used by the company archivists to transfer documents from paper format to electronic, complete with computers, filing cabinets, and paper shredders. There are currently 2 archivists working in this area, along with 1 guard.

If the players actually take the time to search through the documents and/or computers, they will find only 1 document (in paper format) that will give any type of clues about their situation. There is a document that shows that the company was started by Treondo Gonzalez, but the document is signed by Prio Gonzalez. There is way too much information to sift through to find anything else useful.

38. This large area houses the central power supply for the entire building, as well as providing space to house several back-up generators. It seems to be overkill to have such a large space dedicated to powering the whole building, but players who make a percentile roll under 2x their I.Q. will see that there has been recent construction. This is due to the company making room to implement the globe powering system that is proven to be working at the Moon Prison. There are 5 platforms that are ready to be fitted with the globes in the center of the area.

Due to the nature of this room, there are always 6 guards on duty here. These guards will not allow players to enter the room and just leave freely, and they will fight the players to the death to protect the sensitive nature of the globes.

The most interesting feature of this room is the northern wall between this area and area 30. The wall is the same version of the *Circle of Concealment* spell that is used in the Moon Prison, and it functions in the same way. When viewed from this area, the wall appears to be non-existent, and one can see through the wall into area 30.

39. This is a workshop used for research and to create/work on the power globes seen at the Moon Prison and in area 38. There is 1 globe that appears to be fully functioning (and it is), as well as 1 globe that appears to be in the beginning stages of being built. There are no employees or guards in this room.

40. This is a workshop used for research and to create/work on the Crowns. There are 15 Crowns that appears to be fully functioning (and they are), as well as 15 more Crowns in various stages of completion. There are no employees or guards in this room.

41. This area houses the device that prevents anyone from entering the building through invisibility, phase shifting, teleporting, and any other method other than in full view with no disguises through the front door or the rooftop access door. The device itself is relatively small – a cube about 5 feet x 5 feet x 5 feet (1.5 x 1.5 x 1.5 m), set into the floor with cables running from it in all directions. It appears to be smooth on all sides, with a few obvious panels for access.

The device is both technological and magical in nature, combining the best aspects of both and is a true marvel of modern technology. The device is enchanted with versions of the following spells that give the building its unique properties:

- Circle of Concealment
- Dispel Magic Barriers
- Locate
- Negate Magic
- Repel Animals
- See the Invisible

The spells were cast into the device, and the device actually continuously pumps out the effects of the spells to every square inch of the exterior of the building. These effects, when combined, are the driving force that prevents someone from getting into the building in a less than normal way. It is not known who is responsible for figuring out the exact combination of these spells, or how the device is able to function without being recharged magically.

Players should want to shut the device off permanently, and they should be encouraged to try. The easiest way to do this is to first shut off the power to the building, and then to cast 3 Negate Magic spells in succession. The device does receive a saving throw vs magic, and the target number is a 15.

The second way to shut off the device is to literally destroy it. The device has an A.R. of 14 and 250 S.D.C., so it is possible that someone could just destroy it. However, when the device reaches 0 S.D.C., a self-destruct mechanism inside the device is triggered and a retributive strike by the device is performed. This blast will cover the entire area, and any caught within the blast are dealt damage to the tune of 6D6. Also, any magical items, artifacts, or people with magical effects in operation caught in the blast must make a saving throw vs magic at a target of 17 due to the ritualistic nature of the dispel and negate spells in the device. Any items that fail their saving throw are instantly dispelled or destroyed.

The final way is to cut all of the cabling that ties the machine to the building. While each individual cable has an A.R. of 14 and 10 S.D.C., there are so many different cables and wires coming out of the device that it is impossible to list the entire amount of them here. Suffice it to say that doing this will involve no less than 1 hour of time for a party of 4 players, with an additional 15 minutes tacked on for each missing player under 4. That is, if only 2 players are in the room, the job will take 90 minutes

(an hour and a half). There is no retributive strike for cutting the cabling.

42. This area serves as the main research facility for the company, and can hold up to 75 research employees. There are always 1D6+2 guards in this room due to the nature of the research being done in this area, most notably with the Crowns and power globes. But that's just the tip of the research iceberg.

The researchers here at ConGenix have been toying around with, and have developed, the ability to clone a human being. Cloning has been around for a few years, but nobody has ever tried to clone a super-powered being before. With this technology, the company could potentially capture a single super-powered being and clone them, forcing them all to be stuck in the power globes. The technology also means that a super-powered being could be cloned and be used as an ally for its creators.

Any of the information on cloning is kept in the researchers' computers, and players can hack into them to obtain this. The information will contain specific details about the process, the trials, test runs, the failures, and most importantly, the successes they have had recently. The document details that after he was experimented on, Lt. Draskal was cloned, and the clone was sent to the Moon Prison as a test for the power globes.

Another piece of information that can be gleaned from the computers is the research into the Crowns and power globes, as well as detailed information on their creation, use, and the effects they have on super-powered beings. Information about the prison and its existence can also be found in the computers.

The thing the players should be most interested in is the teleporter that is upon a pedestal, a few steps above the ground, near the north wall. The teleporter is an interesting device considering the magical device that prevents teleporting into and out of the building. The teleporter, when activated, actually causes a disruption in the flow of magical energy from the prevention device in area **41**, and allows one to teleport into or out of the building effectively. The teleporter is linked directly to a matching device at the Gonzalez home.

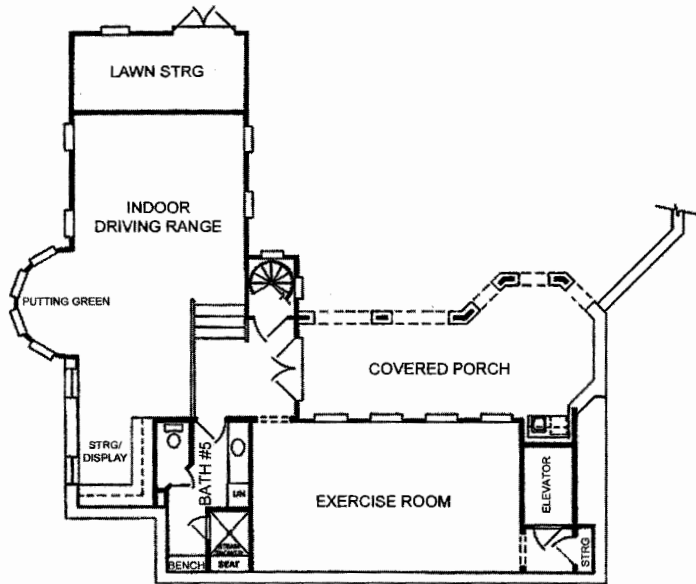
By the time the players reach this room, the alarm should have been raised at least 1 time. So when the players enter the room, they will be able to see Prio (or potentially Secoro and Treondo as well) step on the teleporter and vanish. The players will know that they should follow him/them. The teleporter can handle 4 people at once, and is activated simply by stepping onto it and depressing a red button on the inside of the teleporter wall.

At this point, the players should be stepping on to the teleporter and following Prio to his home. There will be no time for side adventures or prepping to go. If the players balk at stepping through the teleporter, they should be reminded that they have no time. If Prio is allowed to have any time at all he will not be catchable. He will also use his political and media contacts to continue spreading rumors about the players, and they will have a very hard time getting to him.

Part V:

The Final Countdown

The players have stepped through the teleporter and have arrived at the Gonzalez home shortly after Prio (and potentially, Secoro and/or Treondo).



The teleporter is located in the storage area in the southeastern corner of the basement. The players will literally step off of the

teleporter and through the door just to the south of the elevator door.

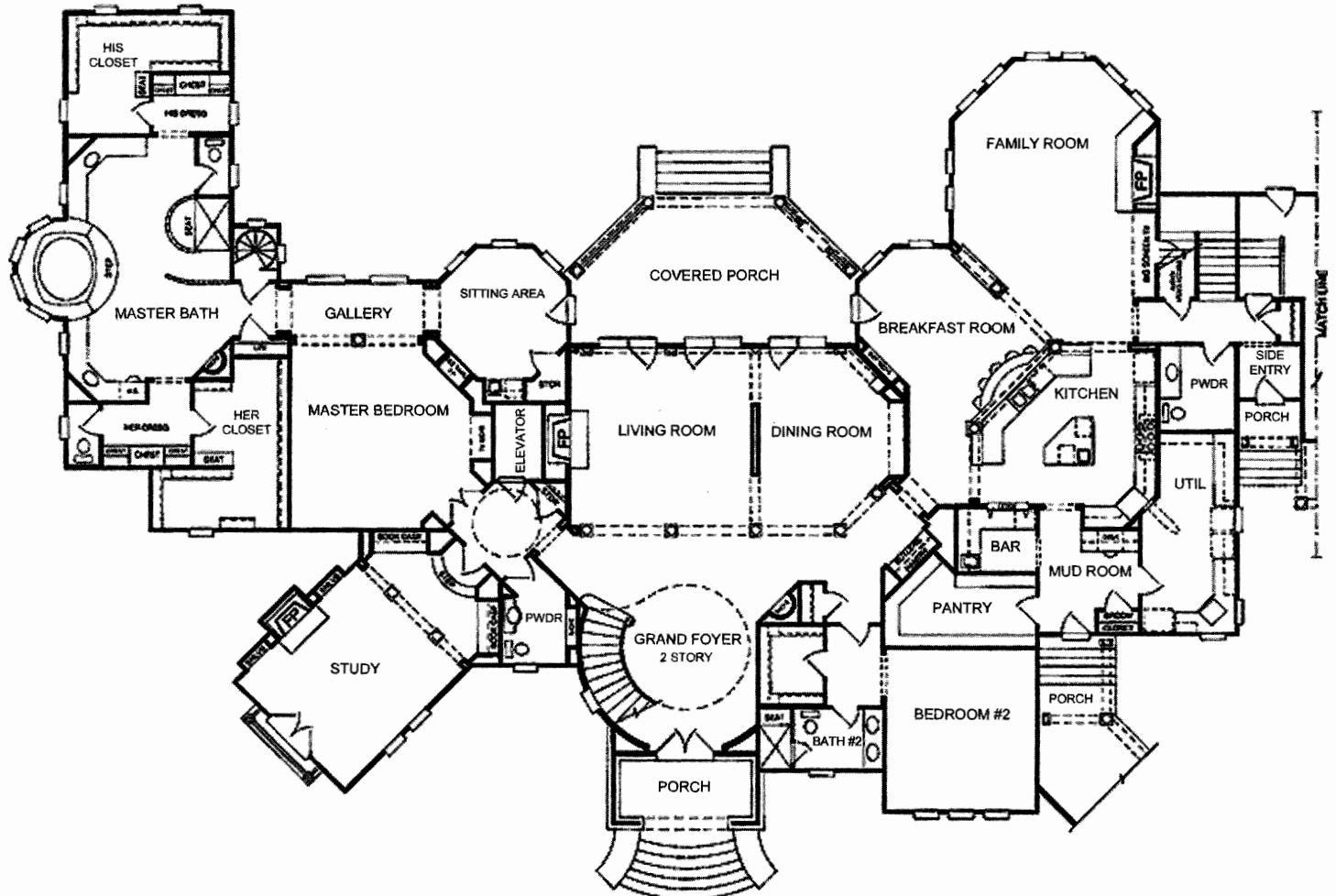
This level of the home is unoccupied, and there will not be anybody on this level when the players arrive. Prio has used his ability to teleport himself to the 2nd floor, so the players will not know where he is at. The players are free to search this level as they wish, but they will not find anything incriminating or interesting.

The Gonzalez home really is big and spacious, and the players need to be careful or they may end up getting lost. They also need to be careful about where they go on this level as there are people in the house. The following civilians are on this level of the house:

- A maid, cleaning the living room/dining room area;
- A chef, currently in the kitchen/bar/pantry area;
- 2 groundskeepers, just off the covered porch in the back;
- A maid, doing laundry in the utility room.

There are also a couple of guards in the area (using the same stats as the guards in the ConGenix building) as follows:

- 2 guards on either side of the front doors on the outside of the house;
- 2 guards on either side of the front doors on the inside of the house;
- 1 guard on the inside of the door leading from the house to the study;
- 1 guard in the circular area between the study and the master bedroom; and



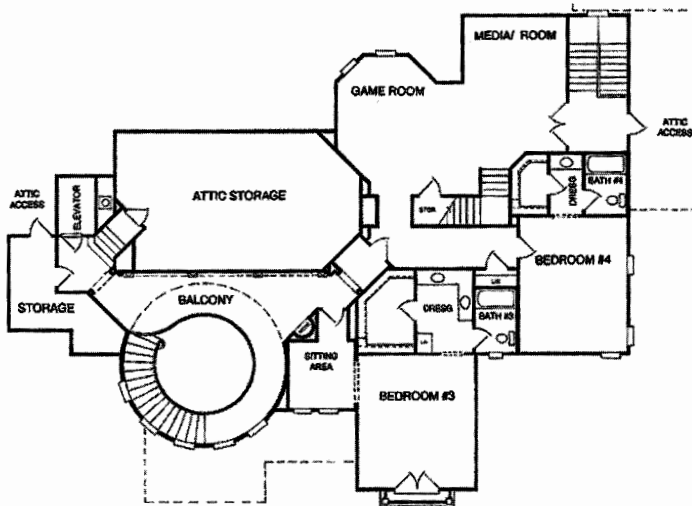
- 2 guards on the covered porch in the back of the home.

The guard between the master bedroom and the study will probably be the first guard the players encounter. The players will come off of the elevator almost directly into the master bedroom, and as soon as they leave the master bedroom they will encounter this guard. If the guard wins the initiative in the ensuing battle, or if the guard is not defeated before his first action, he will sound the alarm. At this point, the remaining guards on this level will come to his aid and will help him to eliminate the players.

The players may wish to search this level as well. And they will be rewarded if they do. Prio keeps a laptop in the study that he has used to send emails to Treondo at ConGenix, so if the players are unable to retrieve the emails from Treondo's laptop at ConGenix they can get them here. The laptop also contains information about the company's research into cloning, with a mostly-completed presentation on the subject that Prio is going to give to some clients in the Middle East, with the United States explicitly mentioned as being not worthy of the technology.

Another major piece of information contained on Prio's laptop is a partial movie file, digitally encrypted, showing a rough rehearsal of the shuttle being hijacked and crash-landed into the moon. Attached to this movie file is a document detailing exactly what will happen, and the potential speech to be used by the players.

There is nothing else of interest on this level for the players to find.



It is on this level that the showdown with Prio Gonzalez will take place. There are 3 different ways that the players can get up to this level:

- The elevator;
- The circular staircase; and
- The staircase on the eastern side of the home.

No matter which way the players enter the 2nd floor, they will hear (immediately on the eastern staircase, after moving east if by the elevator or the circular staircase) the sounds of what may be a movie or television program or a news program. As soon as they are in earshot, the following can be read to the players:

Softly at first, but growing steadily louder as you move about the floor, you can hear the sounds of an old film projector showing a movie, or a news program. You can hear a female voice speaking.

"I just don't believe it. This isn't possible. Human beings can't do that."

You then are able to hear a male voice, that of possibly a doctor, speaking to the woman.

"I've never seen anything like this. Sure, this happens at the cellular level, and that's normal. But for a human being to do it? Remarkable..."

While this is a clue to what Prio truly is, the players are in for a treat. As soon as they reach the game room/media room area, they will be able to see the projector showing an old film that was taken a long time ago. The current scene is that of a baby, lying on table in a doctor's office, with something protruding from its back. After a few moments, the protrusion comes off of the baby and the film pans to the new object, which is revealed to be an identical twin of the child. The film then goes back to the baby, where another protrusion has started to grow from its back. The film will then pan out and shows that there are 4 babies on the table, and not just the one.

After watching the film for a few moments, Prio will step into the light from one of the corners and begin speaking to the players:

"So, now you know. You know what I really am. You know some of what I am capable of. And I expect you'll want to know more, right? Well, then, let's get it over with.

"I'm no different than any of the other freaks out there. When I was a baby, as you've seen, I developed the ability to make other 'Me's. Exact copies of this wonderfully beautiful body. My mother didn't care for it, and the doctors were stunned. But thanks to my father, none of them remember anything.

"And so I grew up with this ability. And I decided that I had to do something with it. Something extraordinary. And I decided on politics. I created a clone and had him run for the House of Representatives. And I was amazed when he won. Nobody knew it wasn't really me. Or him, for that matter. But he won.

"With the money he made, I was able to start up a small company that you may have heard of – ConGenix. And I created another clone to run it. And still, nobody knew.

"The company grew larger and larger, and my clone in Congress got more and more influential. And then the researchers hit me with something I never thought I'd see – the ability for mankind to actually create clones of human beings. Sure, I could duplicate myself so many times. But for someone else to take my DNA and create a copy of me? That was genius.

"And then I had a thought. What if they cloned me, and the clone had my ability to make clones? I could put myself in all the top places in the world, and I could literally just take over. And nobody would be able to stop me. But it had to be tested first. Lt. Draskal was a complete success, and his clone was completely loyal.

"And then you people showed up. Trying to do good and help the public. It was all I could do to keep the media hating you. Wasting millions of dollars covering up the Moon Prison explosion and painting you as terrorists. You just wouldn't go away. Well, I'll have to change that now..."

At this moment, 6 other figures will step into the room from out of the shadows. They are exact multiples of Prio, and all 7 of the Prios will now want to kill the players.

Prio Gonzalez

12th Level Mutant

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 18, M.A. 14, P.S. 17, P.P. 15, P.E. 12, P.B. 29, Spd 30.

Hit Points: 53, **S.D.C.:** 47, **A.R.:** 4.

Combat: Attacks per Melee: 5

Charm: 90%

Damage: +2

Dodge: +1

Parry: +2

Pull: +2

Roll: +3

Save vs Insanity: +2

Save vs Psionics: +2

Cause of the Mutation: An unknown, random element. A complete mystery.

Unusual Physical Characteristics: Ambidextrous. +5% to Climbing and all other skills requiring manual dexterity.

Major Powers: Multiple Beings/Selves (1 copy/2 levels); Teleportation.

Minor Powers: Extraordinary Physical Beauty (+10% to Investigation/Research, Interrogation, Seduction, Palming, and Pick Pocket skills).

Education: Master's Degree.

Skill Program 1: Attorney, Basic

- Computer Operation
- Law: General
- Law: Civil Code of Conduct
- Law: Property and Estates
- Law: Traffic Codes and Regulation
- Public Speaking
- Research
- Writing

Skill Program 2: Military, Basic

- Athletics
- Climbing
- Hand to Hand: Basic
- Military Etiquette
- Running
- W.P. Assault Rifle
- W.P. Grenade
- W.P. Pistol

Skill Program 3: Military, Law Enforcement (Military Police)

- Detect Concealment
- Find Contraband
- Investigation
- Interrogation
- Law: General
- Surveillance Systems
- W.P. Automatic Pistol
- W.P. Automatic Rifle

Skill Program 4: Military, Officer

- Camouflage
- Demolitions
- Detect Concealment

- Intelligence
 - Interrogation
 - Land Navigation
 - Recognize Weapon Quality
- ### **10 Secondary Skills**
- Body Building & Weightlifting
 - Hand to Hand: Expert
 - First Aid
 - Language: French
 - Language: Spanish
 - Literacy
 - Photography
 - Pilot Boat: Motor
 - Swimming

Since arriving at his home, Prio has had enough time to arm himself properly for the anticipated arrival of the players. He is wearing a Hard Armor Vest (A.R. 12, 120 S.D.C.) and is carrying a .22 in an ankle holster (2D4 damage) in addition to a .44 magnum in a shoulder holster (6D6 damage).

All 6 of the multiples are fully clothed, having been created much earlier. They are all wearing a Concealed Vest (A.R. 10, 50 S.D.C.) and carrying a .44 magnum in a shoulder holster (6D6 damage). As they are multiples of Prio, they have exactly the same stats and abilities he does.

This battle will reveal something about Prio that the players may not have already figured out. Prio, and each of his multiples, will use the Teleportation ability to get themselves into positions behind the players to attack with a better chance of success. This will explain how the triplets were able to get back and forth across the country so quickly to be absorbed and spit out again without being gone for too long.

The players will be wondering about why Prio didn't use his Teleportation to get from the building to the house, and why he had to use the teleporter to do it. Remember that the ConGenix building is magically protected to prevent people from gaining entry in this way, and that the teleporter in the basement level is the only way to teleport into the building.

Prio will not surrender. He knows that the players need to die in order for him to succeed, and he will fight to the death. His multiples are completely loyal to him and will not surrender either. The players may actually find this battle to be anti-climactic, and that's ok. Prio isn't necessarily a fighter, but more of a strategist. He did hire the assassins, remember?

After the fight, the players will now have all of the pieces of this puzzle that they will need to clear their names, including the film in the projector. Once they retrieve the film, they are free to leave the house and go to the media and/or police with the information they have.

Epilogue

So what happens at this point? The players got all the evidence and beat the bad guys, but what now? What is next for the players, and for the whole of the population in the United States?

After clearing their names and proving that Prio was behind everything, President Alice Darford will be re-elected in a landslide. Primarily because there is no longer a major opposing candidate, but also because the people now believe that the players, and super-heroes in general, aren't all that bad.

President Darford, upon re-election, immediately vetoes the registration bill, and Congress does not pick it up again. She will go on television and make a world-wide speech that super-heroes are not just here to stay, but they are more than welcome to do so. She acknowledges that, like normal people, not all of them are good. But she knows that there are more good ones than bad ones, and society will have to adapt to the super-powered individuals.

The President will then introduce a bill into Congress that forces the states that have enacted super-hero registration laws to repeal them. The bill will pass in record time, and any states that have those laws will have to do away with them. By the time the bill can be signed, however, all states will have already repealed their laws.

ConGenix, as a global corporation, is ruined. With the public having knowledge of the prison, the Crowns, the power globes, and their attempt to experiment on and clone super-powered individuals, the company just cannot operate any more. Most military contracts were rescinded, and without that funding they couldn't survive.

All of the executives at the corporation were arrested and jailed, even though most of them claimed they didn't know what was truly going on. Most of the researchers and security guards were also arrested and detained, and the computer files at every location for the corporation were confiscated by authorities and all hard drives were wiped (although there will always be rumors that somebody has a copy of the all the information).

Worldwide, the shut-down of ConGenix caused almost 10 million people to be unemployed. All of the employees of ConGenix found themselves without jobs, and a lot of the companies that they contracted with ended up having to lay people off as the contracts with ConGenix were no longer valid. Even the military had to re-assign some people when the contracts were rescinded.

As for the rest of society, things go on as they always have. Except that now super-heroes (and super-villains) are out in public. There will still be problems that these people have to face, but life finds a way. Mankind will continue to evolve, but for now, it is the dawn of a new era.

New Chillicothe

Optional Source Material for Rifts®

By Matthew Olsson

Built in the years 49 to 55 P.A. within a mile of the original town of Chillicothe, Missouri by the shores of the Grand River, the Coalition fortress city of New Chillicothe is a place that fills many roles and functions. This new base was erected to establish a strong military presence in the state of Missouri and gave many of the Coalition's people a safe haven and a place to call home. Like all CS fortress cities, it is a military stronghold with a complete city inside of its towering walls, capable of harboring hundreds of thousands of people from the evils that stalk the land. It is little wonder why the place quickly became a beacon of light and hope for the entire state and was soon after christened the proud capital and seat of government for the Coalition State of Missouri.

The architecture of the fortress was designed to handle two major and important roles. To fulfill its first role, that of a military base, the ground and second levels of the city constitute a large military fortification that is mostly filled with ground troops, support units, and small one-manned aircraft. The base was never intended to accommodate true aircraft so no fighters, bombers or transports can land inside the base. But then again, they've never really needed such large weapon platforms to handle their local problems. To fulfill the second role of the city, that of providing homes and shelter for regular people, 19 other levels are stacked on top of each other which provide ample living space for its occupying 110,000 CS citizens (up 8.9% since the last census), though the city can actually accommodate five times that number. However, in the next few years they are expecting to receive another 100,000 to 200,000 people from a runoff from Cross, as some people may not be willing to wait six years to get a home in the new fortress city to the south.

Typical of all CS fortress cities, the lower levels (4-7) tend to be peopled with the poor, the mid levels (8-18) are where the middle class laborers live and play, while the higher levels (19-21) are populated by the rich and social elite. But regardless of where one lives in the city, just being inside is good enough for most where they don't have to worry about monsters lurking in the dark or men of magic trying to corrupt their souls. At least not *as much* anyways. As safe as it is in the city, there are still large spaces and air ducts between the levels, unpopulated zones, and dark alleys where street gangs, monsters and demons, and evil in general can hide.

New Chillicothe is roughly a quarter the size of Chi-Town. Unlike the CS capital and the newer city of Cross, this fortress city's levels only provide a 40 foot (12 m) clearance, making four-story buildings touch the ceilings. This makes the overall height of the city comparably miniscule at 1,110 feet (338 m) to the roof level and 9,050 feet (2,758 m) wide along the circular base. Still, this gives each level an average of 62 million square feet (roughly 5.8 million square meters) to work with, or 2.2 square miles, which can be tripled or quadrupled with the use of multi-floor buildings inside each level. In all, this gives the city of New Chillicothe about 42 square miles (108 sq. km) of space inside, much of which goes unused.



All things taken into account, New Chillicothe is the safest city in the whole of the Coalition States, especially with General Von Monstein and his Monster Brigade patrolling the state's borders. Though they are closer to the Magic Zone and the Federation of Magic, terrorist factions from there typically prefer to focus their attentions on Chi-Town. The same goes for potential troubles from the south and the numerous bandit bands of the Pecos Empire. Though they could raise hell in the farmlands of the CS, they much prefer to stick to Texas and play with those from Lone Star. However, the many Pecos Bandits are more contained than contented by the tens of thousands of Dog Boy soldiers that patrol their area. This isn't to say that the state of Missouri doesn't have troubles from monsters, bandits and outlaws. It's just that they have a great deal less than the other states *because* of the other states being either more tempting targets or running interference. However, this wasn't always true.

Before the formation of the Coalition States in 33 P.A. with Missouri as one of the original charter states (along with Chi-Town, Iowa, and the Illinois Contingent), Missouri was plagued by a large and vicious tribe of Simvan Monster Riders. They were a constant blight on the farmers of Missouri, before and after statehood. If the land was to be turned into the breadbasket of the domain of man, as it was envisioned to be, the Simvan had to go. In the spring of 35 P.A. after the CS military had undergone a restructuring, a massive clean-up operation was put into effect. The Simvan of today still refer to the event as "The Muddy River War," but to the CS it was simply called Operation Cockroach, simply because most of the Simvan rode Fury Beetles throughout the area.

During the Muddy River War, the Simvan found themselves fighting on two fronts. One against the CS clean-up effort, and one against their older blood enemy, the Psi-Stalkers called the Blood River Tribe. Against the Blood River Tribe, the Simvan were holding their own for over a century, but against the CS Army, they were getting squashed like bugs. Especially with their hated enemy working with them, telling all the Simvan's secrets and weaknesses. And with the Blood River Tribe being armed and equipped with CS equipment (mainly C-10 rifles and CSAA-33 EBA), they were free to strike at the heart of their territory with impunity. Though the Simvan put up a good fight and even managed to organize two major offensives, they were slaughtered and pushed back to the west in a matter of four months. This is one of the reasons why the domain of the Simvan is to the west of the CS and never crosses a single borderline of the Coalition's. They learned their lesson the hard way, but they did learn it.

After the clean-up effort had been completed, Chi-Town began to enact phase two of their plans for Missouri; the development of their lands for drastically increased farming and the installation of an adequate infrastructure to support the farmers' needs. Along with the construction of aqueducts to aid irrigation, roads to ease the delivery of supplies, and the establishment of many small towns to act as transfer depots for the goods to be brought to market, this also included keeping the state safe. And with the Simvan to the west, possibly plotting their revenge, a large 21 level base and city on the west side of the state was the crowning touch to the security and development of Missouri. The fortress city they constructed soon came to be known as New Chillicothe.

The city's defenses include a large number of troops and armor (see below), but also include a battery of heavy weapons and sensors on the exterior of the city itself. Prior to 106 P.A., the

main weapons were mainly lasers, rail guns and missiles, each in the power level of those on the old Death Head Transports. But when the war started to take a turn for the worse in Tolkeen, those in Chi-Town and especially Missouri feared that the Tolkeen army would push past the lines and attack the infrastructure and cities of the CS itself. To prepare for this possibility the weapons systems of New Chillicothe underwent a tremendous upgrade. The sensors are now comparable to those of the most modern CSN warship and capable of tracking and identifying thousands of targets at once out to a maximum range of 500 miles. Also the weapons were up-graded from the 30-year-old relics they had before, to a cutting edge state-of-the-art arsenal capable of stopping anything shy of an army of gods!

Places of Note

1. Fort Canon

The ground level and the one above is where the military forces are located in New Chillicothe. This military base goes by the unofficial name of Fort Canon, named after the famous CS General who commanded the forces in Operation Cockroach (aka the Muddy River War), Robert James Canon. Within the walls of Fort Canon are a great many armored vehicles and troop transports. But the greatest emphasis of their inventory is on fast aircraft. The primary purpose of the base is to deploy aircraft to aid others in danger, mostly farmers and farming communities. Up till 106 P.A. this role was filled by a battalion (640) of Old Style Sams and two companies (320) of Sky Cycles. They also had a small unit of 30 Spider Skull Walkers, but their slow speed made them best suited for city defense and perimeter patrols. After the unveiling of the then new Coalition War Machine, faster and more capable craft became available. By the end of 108 P.A., Missouri, being the low guy on the totem-pole so to speak, finally got their orders for the new craft. This not only increased the speed and power of their small aircraft, but also greatly increased their numbers to take the strain off their workload.

The ground level of Fort Canon has 60-foot ceilings to provide adequate clearance for robot vehicles and the usual network of cranes to be suspended from the ceiling to conduct repairs and transport munitions and spare parts from one end to another without getting in the way of traffic. The level also has repair facilities, munitions, and storage space for all of the units stationed there. The second level has the usual 40-foot ceilings and small buildings that fit in that space. It is here where the majority of the soldiers eat, sleep and live while on duty. The buildings themselves vary from barracks, office buildings, military supply stores, small arms armories, and so on. Some consider the second level to be a self-contained city within the city, which it more or less is. This level has earned it the nickname "Troop Town" for obvious reasons. The third and parts of the fourth levels of the city have recently started to undergo a redesign so they can accommodate large aircraft like transports, bombers, and jet fighters. However, due to slow going because of small work crews and minimal funds, this Army Air Corps level won't be ready for another ten years.

The following is a breakdown of the 48,000 people and vehicles at Fort Canon's command and does NOT include those that make up the Monster Brigade (see below). Note that because

New Chillicothe is a smaller base and in a safer location, their numbers greatly pale compared to the massive force that protects and inhabits the city of Cross which is in a more hostile area.

Note: Units marked with an asterisk (*) do not have their crews count towards the total tally because they are either unmanned, part of the ISS police force, or driven by regular soldiers.

Level One (Ground Armor and small aircraft):

PA-100 Maulers – 640 (One Full Battalion)
PA-200 Terror Troopers – 1,600 (One Regiment/Ten Companies)
PA-300 Glitter Boy Killers – 640 (One Full Battalion)
UAR-1 Enforcers – 128 (Two Full Armored Companies)
IAR-2B Abolishers – 32 (Two Full Mechanized Platoons)
IAR-2C Abolishers (*New*) – 16 (One Full Armored Platoon)
IAR-3 Skull Smashers – 64 (One Full Armored Company)
IAR-4 Hellraisers – 48 (One Mechanized Company)
IAR-5 Hellfires – 256 (One Full Mechanized Battalion)
CR-003 Spider-Skull Walkers – 48 (One Mechanized Company)
CR-004 Scout Spider-Skulls – 192 (One Mechanized Battalion)
CR-005 Scorpion-Skull Walkers – none

* Skelebot Force:

FASAR-20 Old Style – 15,360 (Two Full Divisions)
FASAR-30 New Style – 19,800 (Three Divisions)
FASAR-40 Hunters – none
FASAR-50 Hellions – 5,120 (One Division)

* Mark V APCs – 50

* Mark VII Slayer APCs – 50

* Mark IX EPCs – 50

Mark IX MLVs (*being phased out*) – none

Mark XIII Dragoons (*New*) – 16 (One Full Armored Platoon)

CTX-20 Grinning Skull Main Battle Tanks – 192 (One Mechanized Battalion) *Note: The aging CTX-20 is New Chillicothe's main heavy armored offensive vehicle.*

CTX-50 Line Backer Hover Tanks – 120 (Two Armored Companies)

CTX-52 Sky Sweeper Anti-Aircraft Tanks – 45 (Three Platoons)

CTX-53 Ballista MAATs (*New*) – 16 (One Full Armored Platoon)

CTX-531 Trinity RA-MLRS (*New*) – 2

CTX-54 Firestorm Mobile Bases – 2 (Note: These two are reconditioned, dilapidated relics that were severely damaged in the war. They only have half their M.D.C., speed, and weapon systems, which is why they were given to New Chillicothe. Named like ships, they are the *CST-03 Terror Star* and the *CST-07 Fearlessness*.)

* PA-06A Old Style SAMAS (ISS) – 640

PA-07A “Smiling Jack” SAMAS – 1,920 (One Full Regiment)

PA-08A Special Forces “Striker” SAMAS – 160 (One Full Company)

PA-09A Super SAMAS – 1,920 (One Full Regiment)

AAA-PA-101W Death Wings (combat model) – 160 (One Full Company)

AAA-PA-102W Death Wings (recon model) – 30 (One Platoon)

* CS Command Cars – 300

* CS “Scarab” Command Cars – 100

* CS Skull Patrol Cars (ISS) – 250

* Sky Cycles (ISS) – 80

Scout Rocket Cycles – 640 (One Full Battalion)

Warbird Rocket Cycles – 640 (One Full Battalion)

Wind Jammer Sky Cycles – 1,920 (One Full Regiment)

Level Two (“Troop Town”): 14,940 RPA pilots plus another 25,500.

Regular Soldiers (Grunts, Military Specialists, Tech Officers, etc.) – 14,000 (Two Infantry Divisions)

Pilot Corps (RPA: Elite & RPA Aces) – 14,500 (Two Divisions)

Special Forces (Commandos, Special Forces, Rangers, etc.) – 640 (One Full Battalion)

DSD Forces (RCSG, CS Juicers, ‘Borg Strike Troopers, etc.) – 1,280 (Two Full Battalions)

Mutant Animals (Dog Boys, Kill Hounds, Battle Cats, etc.) – 7,600 (One Division)

Psi-Battalion (mostly Psi-Stalkers and a handful of Master Psychics) – 1,600 (One Regiment/Ten Companies)

In addition to these, New Chillicothe has a very large “State Defense Force” made up of nearly *10,000 Full Conversion ‘Borgs* that they have maintained over the decades. In this regard, Missouri has been compared to Free Quebec and their Glitter Boy forces. The only difference is that the use of ‘Borg troopers has only been a “questionable practice” in the past before it was sanctioned in 105 P.A., as opposed to the illegal nature of Glitter Boys. Still, this was seen as a slightly defiant move on the city’s part, but their unparalleled usefulness and performance during the war on Tolkeen has more than earned them a pardon for the past transgression.

Also note that these numbers do not include other forces that occasionally come and go in large numbers. New Chillicothe is a common staging area for practice maneuvers and actual combat operations. So at times what is listed above is all that is there to defend the city and at other times there could be as much as an entire Battle Group (equal to four Field Armies!) stationed at or near the fortress city.

2. City Walls & General Defenses

Like all fortress cities of Coalition design, New Chillicothe has a circular defensive wall that slants in, giving them the look of a gigantic flat-topped Aztec pyramid of sorts. The purpose of the walls is to keep the people inside safe and the undesirables out. The walls are five feet thick and have Forty Ablative Layers to them. Every 10 by 10 foot layer of wall has 300 M.D.C. (again, that’s *per ablative layer*). If someone actually blasts a 10x10 foot (3 x 3 m) section with 12,000 Mega-Damage in 40 or more attacks (see below), they have accomplished what few have ever done and made a hole in the outer wall of a CS fortress city that allows them to enter. Because of the layering architecture, a damaged 10x10 foot layer of wall can be replaced by a crew in a few minutes of the order being given to do so, though they usually take their time about things if the situation isn’t urgent.

CS Ablative Armor is more than just an economical way of making large, thick walls that are easy to repair. It is a revolutionary defense that makes it very hard to penetrate a fortification’s defenses. Through the use of spacing between plates made from ordinary, economical M.D.C. materials and a little high-temperature insulation, damage is prohibited from passing from one sheet to the next. All the individual armor plates have the ability to absorb and disperse all the damage done to them in excess of their own M.D.C., disallowing any excess damage to pass on to the next layer! In other words, if an attack exceeds a layer’s 300 M.D.C. *by any amount up to its original M.D.C.*, even if the armor plate had been whittled down to its last point of M.D.C.,

though that layer can easily be destroyed on the next hit, the next layer beneath will still be unscathed and stand ready to take a pounding. (**Note:** Though not common for vehicles and structures, this works similar to the “last bit of armor protection” rule on page 355 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, except it is limited to damage that exceeds the remaining M.D.C. by an amount equal to the original M.D.C. This means that each 300 M.D.C. layer can effectively absorb up to 600 M.D.C. of damage!) This is why they use this method of multi-layering armor on the Coalition’s protective walls. It’s cheap to construct, maintain and repair, and it’s extremely effective. To punch through an entire section of wall, one has to blast it with *at least* as many attacks as the wall has layers, or else deal *up to twice as much* Mega-Damage as the wall would otherwise withstand. This kind of defense is only a slight improvement over conventional Mega-Damage armor and concrete against mass numbers of small units like an invading army, but against catastrophic damage caused by frighteningly powerful assaults, the ablative armor will hold up against attacks that would normally blow through a conventional wall of comparable thickness in one blast.

Because attacks can come from the inside as well as from out, the floors and ceilings of every level are also armored, effectively making up four layers of ablative armor between each and every level. In addition to that there are several internal blast walls throughout the levels that are made of three layers of ablative armor to contain any internal explosions. In an emergency, the blast walls instantly seal off all areas to completely contain any bio-toxins detected in the air or to trap someone in one place. Should terrorists ever find a way to get a bomb into the city, these measures can minimize and contain the damage should the bomb be explosive, chemical, biological, or even magical in nature. And since these blast walls also seal off every section, making each an enclosed structure onto itself, magic spells with vast area effects that can not penetrate them (just like with vehicles) will be contained to a small section of the city. In fact, since most of the city is sectioned off in this way at all times, no magic can penetrate the city’s inner areas in any way, shape or form. (**Note:** Just like how the Coalition can’t figure out how to make Glitter Boy chromium armor, only a few people even know of the special construction technique for ablative armor, much less its existence, which for the time being, is among the Coalition’s most highly guarded secrets.)

The **City Foundation** is a super thick layer that supports the entire city’s mass and acts as a buffer from the earth. Located beneath the subterranean level of S-4, this layer is made up of M.D.C. reinforced concrete, several layers of ablative armor, and ten thousand base-isolation earthquake-slides. But the most important among these features are the base-isolation earthquake-slides. During the 12 P.A. attack on Chi-Town, courtesy of the Federation of Magic, the original fortress city was nearly shaken apart and destroyed by several Earth Warlocks using an onslaught of Earthquake spells on the earth the foundation rested on. This led to the development of architecture to counter this vulnerability. What came as a result of this was a foundation of multiple layers that can move independent of each other, allowing them to slide side to side apart from each other and the structure above. Because of this feature, which is utilized on all of the Coalition’s fortress cities and many buildings in their towns, the Mega-Damage from the Earthquake spell is negated. Those in the city do experience some shaking, but the magnitude is sig-

nificantly reduced. What they’d feel from an Earthquake attack spell would amount to a magnitude of 2.5 on the Richter scale. Enough to knock over some small, loose items, but nowhere near life-threatening.

Another line of defense is the **A.M.I. (Anti-Magic Incursion) Ring**, which only a small handful of people in the entire Coalition States even know about. Though it is not widely known, in the legendary surprise attack by the Federation of Magic their first wave came in the form of shock-troopers who attacked the people of the city... from the inside out! Using a plethora of Teleport: Superior spells to bypass the walls (enabled by a little covert scouting), they put a battalion of mercenary marauders into the heart of Chi-Town’s population centers (the spell’s spatial-warping nature allows it to ignore the normal rules that prevent other magicks from penetrating enclosed structures). Their mission was to cause chaos and inflict as many civilian casualties as possible, tying up the humans’ resources and serving as a diversion while the second wave attacked from outside the city walls. Several thousands upon thousands died as a result of this vulnerability in the city’s defenses. And even for decades after the brutal Campaign of Blood that followed, this remained a weakness that scores of the Coalition’s enemies took advantage of, sometimes causing catastrophic amounts of damage and loss of life. It wasn’t until 59 P.A. that a secret organization within the CS finally discovered a way to put an end to these teleported attacks. With a little “outside consulting” (some suspect with the Vanguard), the anti-magic scientists of the then-covert organization of the Rift Control Study Group figured out a way to generate an energy field that resonates on the psychic plane and acts as a technological circle of protection. Even though they didn’t (and still don’t) fully understand how the thing works, they did know that it functioned as advertised, and that was good enough. Needless to say, this discovery changed everything. Using this breakthrough they embarked on the secret construction of a gigantic ring surrounding the entire city, but buried thirty feet underground. The project was spun to the public as nothing more than an expansion of the city’s sewage pipe system, and nobody ever thought the wiser. Even most of the people on the project didn’t suspect a thing. From the moment the A.M.I. Ring went online, half of all attempts to get into the city with teleports that otherwise would have worked, *failed instead*. The same was true of other supernatural means of gaining entry, including those in Astral Form, Psi-Ghosts, those using 4th dimensional powers, non-corporeal Entities, and even those attempting to remotely view the city’s innards. Over the years, the system’s efficiency has risen to an impressive 95%! And for those that do successfully get in, the system sends an alarm to the appropriate authorities (including the NTSET) with the general location of where the intruder appeared. Since the system’s remarkable implementation at Chi-Town, A.M.I. Rings have become standard features for all Coalition fortress cities, all secretly installed by members of the RCSG using various mundane pretenses. And if that weren’t enough, some cities have multiple sets of rings, one inside the other in elaborate crop-circle-like formations for added security. No two cities are the same. New Chillicothe, for instance, has three large circles inside one another and ten smaller circles inside those, with six just inside the main outer ring and four more between the two inner rings. This is considered to be a “light security” arrangement. Chi-Town’s “maximum security” setup has an elaborate matrix of more than a hundred rings.

Game Mechanic Note: After normal rolls to determine a spell's or power's failure, if any, a roll of a "Natural 20" on a 1D20 will allow the intruder to bypass the outermost AMI Ring, gaining entry to one of the outer areas of the city just inside the first ring. Roll again for each ring in the way, depending on how deep into the city one is trying to get. Any roll of a 1-19 will result in the caster, psychic, or Entity being stopped dead cold and bounced 2D10x100 yards/meters out from the city's outer perimeter ring and landing somewhere out in the 'Burbs! It is this massive repulsive effect that boggles the minds of the materializing casters and weightless psychics more than anything else. All they know is that something very wrong just happened and things did not go as planned, and it may take a few moments for them to figure out where they are.

3. ADC'n'C Building

The city's defensive weapons come in three categories: short, medium, and long range. The long-range weapons are used to engage the enemy long before the city is even in visual range, in hopes to stop them then and there before they have the opportunity to cause any damage. Medium-ranged weapons are typically used for anti-air and anti-missile purposes, but they are also used for general defense as well. The role of the short-range weapons is to take out everything that dares to get too close to the city, be they in the sky or on the ground.

Because the CS only has so many people to fill their ranks, they made sure that their cities' defenses could be operated by just a few, leaving the rest available to go out and engage the enemy straight on. Consequently, much of the defenses of all the major cities in the CS are fully automated while receiving the benefit of human input and strategy from those in the command and control building. And to the detriment of all who dare challenge the sovereignty of the Coalition's cities, these automated systems are ever vigilant 24/7, are lightning fast on the draw, and fear nothing.

Located in the center of "Troop Town," at Black 7, Level 2, the Automated Defense Command and Control building is where these defenses are coordinated. At the core of the system is an artificial intelligence super computer named J.C.K.3-H (or "Jack") that continually monitors the sensor data gathered from the city's numerous and redundant sensory systems. These systems include Aegis radar, CECS-7 telemetry, thermographics, optical sensors (full spectrum) with image recognition and IFF systems, auditory systems that can hear and identify the sneeze of a hatchling dragon at 20,000 feet, radio emissions detectors, analyzers and triangulators, and other systems that are too classified to mention. With all this cross-referenced data, the super computer A.I. can tell the difference between an ISS Old Style Sam from a superficially identical SAMAS by the differences in the radio frequencies of its communications and radar, any transponder ID codes concealed in its radio or radar emissions, whether it is contributing any data via a CECS system or not, squad icons and ID numbers painted on it, as well as any minute differences in the temperature its jets are burning at. All this information is made available to the officers there on duty along with recommendations from the computer, Jack. From there it's up to the top officer to either take time to have someone ward it off with a threat over the radio, fire a warning shot, or give the order to Jack to open up and blow it out of the sky. However, in an emergency, in the instances where

there would be too little time for a judgement call or procedure, Jack has the power and authority to open up and destroy anything he perceives as a threat to the city. Such instances include the detection of a stealth missile that closed in dangerously close before the optical sensors or thermographics detected it, sneak attacks organized and launched from the 'Burbs at point-blank range, or perhaps an ancient dragon teleporting over the city to launch a terrorist style attack. This doesn't happen very often, but when seconds count, Jack has the entrusted autonomy and ability to act in less than a second's notice. And when he gives the order to fire, the computer will usually assign two to three weapons to every target because Jack likes redundancy. Bigger and scarier targets will be given more attention, earning themselves ten to twenty weapon systems being trained on them.

Due to the limitations of science, Jack cannot effectively control all the weapon systems at once. The super computer could do it in a pinch, but nowhere as efficiently as is needed. This limitation is not rooted in the Coalition's quality of computers (they make some of the best in the world, including Atlantis!), but more so because of one simple principle. Light and electricity travel at the speed of light, and no faster. In other words, in the time it would take to remotely lock a weapon system on a target through miles of wires or fiber-optics, confirm that it is on target, and then send the command to fire, the target could have moved out from where the weapon was zeroed in at. This is more true with small, fast moving targets like SAMAS and similarly popular flying power armors.

To counter this limitation, each and every automated weapon system has its own A.I. brain equivalent in intelligence to a Skelebot, and its own sensor package for targeting purposes. It is Jack's job to give them the orders of if and when to fire and who to shoot at, like the General he is. As Jack keeps track of what all is out there, he gives out target assignments to the thousands of individual weapon brains, who carry out his orders to the letter. Each weapon brain in turn reports back to Jack if and when they have destroyed the assigned target, if the target has fled out of its effective range, or if it itself has been damaged or is out of ammo and cannot carry out the assigned task. Of course, Jack is well aware of what they will report before they call in with the update, but, again, Jack likes redundancy.

In addition to the weapon brains, Jack has control over a workforce of over a thousand Skelebots. These robots are used primarily as reloaders. Several of the weapon systems use munitions and require reloading. It is the job of these robots to bring ammunition up from storage and reload or exchange the magazines so the weapon brain can continue to fire as soon as possible. Using radio relays inside the fortress, Jack can direct Skelebots as needed individually or in groups. And though their programming is geared towards their logistics task, they are equipped with CP-30 laser pistols kept in shoulder holsters that have been modified to accept their energy link for unlimited firepower. With a single order from Jack, they can be sent to repel any intruder in the fortress. Also, unknown to all but a few, Jack likes to keep around a platoon of "his" Skelebots near his person for self-defense, just in case. But in the event that Jack goes insane, is controlled by an outside force, or turns against the CS, the Skelebot workers can be destroyed with a self-destruct signal from the ADC'n'C building.

In the event that Jack is down, damaged or somehow out of commission, the officer in command can give the order for some

or all of the weapon brains to fire at will. This is not a good defense and is only done in an emergency. Even though the weapon brains can tell the difference between CS forces and others, they tend to fire on things closest to them and not take out the most dangerous targets first as Jack would have them do. However, in Jack's 4 years of service there has never once been a problem that took it off-line.

Note: Jack is the standard model city defense computer for most of the Coalition's fortress cities. They differ only slightly as they are custom fit into the number and types of weapons and sensors at their command unique to each city. The computer at Cross, J.C.K.3-L, has been up and running for four months now, but Cross's Jack has yet to develop a personality. That will take another 8 to 14 months.

The following is a list of the most common weapons in the defense screen that dot the exterior walls. These weapons are typically too big to mount on a vehicle and comparing them to normal vehicle weapons is like comparing a cannon on a tank to the cannon emplacements on the Maginot Line or the battleship *Missouri*. The weapon systems are typical of those in other fortress cities, though their numbers may differ depending on the city's size. And remember, New Chillicothe is one of the smaller fortress cities in the CS. The bigger cities, like Cross to the south or Waukegan in the State of Chi-Town, can have as many as two to ten times as many weapons as listed here for New Chillicothe.

350mm Heavy Plasma Rocket Shell Cannons: These weapons are similar to those in the turrets of the Deathbringer APC, except they are significantly larger and fire a projectile that is considerably more powerful out to much greater ranges. The CSN is thinking about adapting these big guns for use on their capital ships for the anti-ship/monster and shore bombardment roles since they have a much greater range than the C-406, don't require any expensive booster systems, and have an acceptable rate of fire. New Chillicothe has 32 of these cannons, 8 on each of its four sides.

Primary Purpose: Long-Range Defense and Deterrence.

Secondary Purpose: Infantry Support Fire.

Mega-Damage: Does 1D4x100 M.D. to the target, plus everything within 125 feet (38 m) takes half damage (as normal), while everything for another 125 feet beyond that takes one-quarter damage.

Rate of Fire: Twice per melee round, every 7.5 seconds.

Effective Range: 125 miles (200 km)!

Payload: Each cannon has an automated magazine that contains 120 rocket shells. A crew of Skelebot workers can bring up more shells from storage and reload the magazine in 30 minutes using specialized equipment. Under combat conditions, a double-sized work crew can keep the flow of munitions to the guns continuously going non-stop.

CM-1000/2000/4000 Missile Launchers: These systems were made to send a wall of missiles towards the enemy and overwhelm any defenses. They come in three different varieties; the CM-1000 units fire short-range missiles, the CM-2000 fires medium-range missiles and the CM-4000 launchers fire long-range missiles. New Chillicothe has 240 CM-1000s, 60 CM-2000s, and 12 CM-4000s, with 60, 15, and 4 on each of its four sides respectively.

Primary Purpose: Short-, Medium- or Long-Range Defense (depending on the unit).

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft/Monster and Anti-Missile.

Mega-Damage: Varies by missile type. Most commonly used are Heavy HE or Plasma for normal usage, Proton Torpedos for anti-air situations, and Fragmentation to counter damage-negating magic defenses like the spell "Impervious to Energy."

Rate of Fire: The CM-1000s can fire volleys of 1, 2, 4, 8 or 16 short-range missiles. CM-2000s can fire volleys of 1, 2, 4, 6 or 12 medium-range missiles, and CM-4000 units can fire volleys numbering up to 1, 2, 4 or 8 long-range missiles.

Effective Range: By missile type.

Payload: CM-1000 batteries have a magazine of 160 missiles, CM-2000 batteries have a magazine of 120 missiles, and the CM-4000 batteries have magazines that hold 80 missiles. Using specialized equipment a Skelebot work crew can change magazines in two minutes.

Special Purpose: In addition to defensive and destructive purposes, these batteries can also launch *Fire Retardant Long-Range Missiles* to aid in the control and extinguishing of forest fires in the area. With a range of 500 miles/800 km, a 120 foot (36.6 m) explosive radius, and 100% chance to smother normal fires (98% chance versus M.D. fires of any kind), firefighting efforts can get help from afar with nothing more than a request over the radio. Each CM-4000 battery has a reserve of 12 such missiles ready to fly around the clock in addition to their normal combat payloads.

SPB-400 Super Particle Beam Cannons: These medium-range weapons are arguably the most powerful energy cannons ever made on the North American continent! They were made with one goal in mind, to be able to blast *anything* out of the sky in as few shots as possible. Consequently, they are power hungry cannons that have a greater emphasis on destructive power than rapid-fire capabilities. Each cannon is eighteen feet (5.5 m) long and weighs three tons, making them unsuitable for most vehicles. And even if they did mount the cannon on a tank or 'Bot big enough (like a Skull Smasher or Grinning Skull MBT), the power demands would all but cripple the vehicle when the big gun fires even if it had an extra nuclear power generator. New Chillicothe has 48 of these cannons, 12 on each of its four sides.

Primary Purpose: Medium-Range Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Everything!

Mega-Damage: 1D6x100 M.D. per blast!

Rate of Fire: Three times per melee round. Any faster and the thing begins to melt down! Given that, in an emergency the cannon can fire at the rate of 6 times per melee round. But at that pace it will be non-functional and completely useless after 60 seconds of sustained fire. Understandably, the ONLY time when Jack will give the order for the weapon brains to fire at their self-destructive rate is if and when the final collapse of the city's defenses are imminent, when there's nothing to lose.

Effective Range: 15,000 feet (4,572 m).

Payload: Every SPB-400 weapons system has its own devoted heavy-duty nuclear power system, giving it unlimited firepower and a 20-year energy life.

TVP-60 Pulse Laser Batteries: In essence, these are the same common T-60 lasers found on vehicles such as the Mark 7 Slayer and CTX-50 Line Backer. However, the TVP versions are three times larger, have a superior range, and fire pulsed shots of 2 to 6 blasts at a time! Their size and tremendous power demand make them unsuitable for use on vehicles, but ideal for bases and fortress cities that have vast space and huge energy reserves. New Chillicothe has 96 of these cannons, 24 on each of its four sides.

Primary Purpose: Medium- and Short-Range Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Aircraft and Anti-Missile.

Mega-Damage: A single shot does the usual 1D6x10 M.D., a dual-pulse blast inflicts 2D6x10 M.D., a triple-pulse blast does 3D6x10 M.D., a quadruple-pulse blast does 4D6x10 M.D., a quintuple-pulse blast does 5D6x10 M.D., and on its most powerful setting the cannon can fire a sextuple-pulse blast doing 6D6x10 M.D.! But note that the more powerful the shots get the longer the cannon has to cool down between each pulse.

Rate of Fire: The automated unit can fire up to 10 single shots per melee (best for when accuracy is deemed more important than firepower). Thereafter, cooling periods have to come into play slowing the rate of fire a little more with each increment of power used by the weapon system. Using pulsed shots the cannon can fire 6 dual pulses per melee, 4 triple pulses, 3 quadruple pulses, 2 quintuple pulses, or 1 sextuple super blast.

Effective Range: Five miles (26,400-feet/8,046 m).

Payload: Every TVP-60 weapons system has its own devoted nuclear power system, giving it unlimited firepower and a 20-year energy life.

Quad-Laser Turrets: These point defense weapons are more or less four CP-40 pulse lasers bundled together to fire in unison. They are mainly used to take out airborne targets that get too close to the city, but they are also excellent for engaging ground based targets that attempt to overtake the city, especially power armor and soldiers. All the other weapon systems can also engage ground based targets, but the quad-lasers were specifically designed for this purpose. New Chillicothe has 400 of these cannons, 100 on each of its four sides.

Primary Purpose: Point-Blank and Short-Range Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel.

Mega-Damage: 2D6x10+10 M.D. per quad-tri-pulse (or domo-decca-pulse)!

Rate of Fire: 10 quad-pulses per melee round.

Effective Range: 2,000 feet (610 m).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

C-420R Rail Gun Clusters: Inspired by the main guns of the Warbird Rocket Cycle, these turrets have three multi-barreled rail guns that fire in conjunction with devastating results. These weapons are considered to be essential to the defense of the city because some magically enhanced opponents are immune to energy weapons, even the SPB-400's all powerful super particle beam blast. However, kinetic attacks are another story and can rip such creatures of magic apart in seconds. This is why the CS armed forces usually carry a mixed assortment of energy and kinetic weapons, particularly Skelebots. New Chillicothe has 400 of these cannons, 100 on each of its four sides.

Primary Purpose: Short-Range Defense.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Personnel.

Mega-Damage: 3D6x10 M.D. per burst of 120, 40 from each.

Rate of Fire: 7 triple bursts per melee round (the heavier motors and recoil suppression system slows it down by 30% compared to other systems).

Effective Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Payload: Each system has a large ammo drum that holds 180,000 rounds giving the guns 1,500 bursts! Enough for over 53 minutes of continuous combat! Using specialized equipment, a Skelebot work crew can replace the drum in two minutes if already on hand with a spare.

Other Weapon Systems: There are also a wild variety of other weapons that are rumored to exist, but their existence has

never been substantiated to be true. Some have heard whispers in the wind about Neural Energy Pulse weapons that are supposed to blast like a bomb and kill or knock out everyone within a mile (1.6 km) in every direction while the city and its people remain safe and unaffected inside. Others are sure that on the top of the city is a battery of ICBMs that can deliver nuclear warheads (clean nukes, of course) that are as powerful as 100 megatons each, or worse, a 1 gigaton antimatter bomb! And then there is the belief that each and every CS fortress city has a super weapon at its core called the Sunspot Cannon. "They" say that this super weapon is a massive plasma cannon that can hurl a gigantic ball of superheated plasma out of the top and directed to its target with magnetic force field beams, hitting with the power of a super-nuke! Whether or not any or all of these rumors are true is unknown except to but a few.

4. Factory Level

Under the military base are two sub-levels that are high security areas. Level S-1 is completely devoted to the production of parts, munitions, and a few complete weapons of war. Like all fortress cities of the Coalition, New Chillicothe holds up its end in the areas of mass production for the improvement and expansion of the CS Army. However, unlike industrial giants like Chi-Town, the City of Iron, and the Lone Star Complex, New Chillicothe makes very few complete weapons of war. Instead their factories specialize in *parts* of weapons and machines, usually for spares, replacements and repairs. A good portion of what is made here is shipped to the other fortress cities to augment their production capabilities and ease production schedules. The following is a partial list of what is made at New Chillicothe.

Rail Gun Ammunition: Of the four general shapes of rail gun ammunition in use today, while Northern Gun has made rings their trademark, and Triax has a strong preference for spikes, the CS Army has always traditionally used spherical shot. Here at New Chillicothe the three most commonly used calibers are made in vast quantities for the everyday consumption of the CS armed forces. The ammunition is all match-grade in quality and made from pure tungsten, but the Coalition's highly refined and long-perfected refinement and manufacturing nano-tech techniques make the rail gun ammo easy and inexpensive to mass-produce. Most common and made in the largest quantities is the 145 grain 9.8mm (1D4 M.D.) round, widely used for small arms like the old C-40R, the big C-200DH and newer C-200 "Dead Man's." Each ball costs only 0.05 credits per round, 20 credits per belt of 400, or 150 per drum of 3,000. Rounds of this standardized mass (including Northern Gun's 1D4 M.D. 20x3mm rings and Triax's 1D4 M.D. 5x29mm spikes, both also made from pure tungsten), usually cost consumers 0.5 credits per round on the open market, but that price includes shipping costs, retailers' expenses, and profit markups. However, the CS manufactures and buys their own at cost for themselves at these considerably lower prices, which has enabled them to make ammo stockpiles en masse and cheaply at that.

After that is the larger, 387 grain, 13.5mm (1D6 M.D.) version of the ballistic sphere commonly used in the Warbird Rocket Cycles' C-42R rail guns, the forward C-20R guns of the CTX-50 hover tank, the experimental CTT-R60 (soon to see a battlefield near you!), and even the old, sloppy R-50 Rail Gun of the venerable UAR-1 Enforcer. They cost the CS 0.125 credits

per ball, or 1,500 credits per drum of 12,000. And though not considered to be part of the Army's standard TO&E, it's common practice to also buy and stockpile Northern Gun's 30x4mm 1D6 M.D. ring rounds and some of Triax's 7x40mm 1D6 M.D. spike rounds (both also using the industry standard weight of 387 grains). These import rounds are earmarked for use by some Special Forces units that use non-Coalition gear and to help rearm the loyal mercenaries that occasionally work on behalf of the CS.

The third caliber of CS ball ammunition is the big, 592 grain, 15.6mm (2D4 M.D.) round used by the original Spider Skull Walker and Town Defense weapons like the newer C-105R cannon. They cost 0.2 credits a round (4,000 credits per 20,000 round drum). Like with the smaller weight rounds, NG 40x4.2mm rings are bought and stockpiled for special purposes (Triax does not make ammo in this weight class, but they do have plans for an equivalent 9x41mm).

There are also two larger ballistic balls in the Coalition's inventory. Beyond the common calibers are the hefty 19.8mm and monster 72mm rail gun cannon spheres. The giant, 1,209 grain, 19.8mm (3D4x10 M.D.) Mach 6 round is used by the CS Navy in their anti-aircraft guns on their ships as well as the Firestorm's C-300DH guns, costing 0.95 credits a round. And then there's the massive 8.29 pound (3.7 kg), 72mm (1D4x100 M.D.), Mach 5 ball used exclusively by the C-2000 Super Rail Gun cannon of the Firestorm mobile base, costing 75 credits per round and worth every penny. But it should be noted that both the 19.8mm and 72mm cannon rounds are made elsewhere (both in Chi Town and Iron Heart), and not here.

There are four reasons why tungsten is used as the material of choice for rail gun ammunition regardless of shape or size. First of all, the metal is fairly common and inexpensive to ore and refine. When dealing with bursting projectile weapons, economics must be a factor. Secondly, it's heavy, coming in at 19.25 grams per cubic centimeter. That makes relatively small rounds hit with tremendous force at the hypersonic speeds they strike at. Thirdly, tungsten is a tough metal coming in at five times the hardness of steel. This means that the rounds are much less likely to greatly deform on impact, losing kinetic energy in the process. Their hardness also enables them to withstand the forces they experience traveling at five to ten times the speed of sound. And lastly, unlike DU or even titanium, tungsten is not a "pyrophoric" (self-incendiary) metal. This means that unlike some hard metals, the force of the impact delivers only kinetic energy and only moderate levels of thermal energy. Though there would be benefits to using a pyrophoric metal, this allows rails guns to be used in towns and cities without danger of starting fires that would endanger innocent lives.

However, tungsten does have one major drawback; it doesn't have very strong magnetic properties. And for a projectile intended to be fired from a magnetic mass driver like the rail guns of the age of **Rifts**®, that can be a problem. To compensate for this deficiency, every round is completely enveloped in a jacket made from a diamagnetic polymer coating. Regardless of the projectile's shape, the jacket is highly repulsive to the rail gun's electromagnetic field. Not only is this repulsive force used to send a round rocketing down the barrel, but it is also used to feed in the next from the weapon's magazine or ammo-belt. While traveling to the intended target, the jacket is quickly superheated by the tremendous amounts of air friction the round is exposed to due to the hypersonic velocities it travels at. As a result, the polymer

begins to rapidly burn off after about one hundred feet (30.5 m) of flight, glowing for a full second before it goes dark again. This glow can be used to help in the act of aiming in low-light conditions like tracer fire, but because it doesn't become luminous till the slug has traveled that first hundred feet, it won't betray the shooter's exact position.

Depleted Uranium rounds are a different matter altogether. Wrapped in an additional thin, leaded plastic jacket to make them safe for handling (DU is still slightly radioactive), they have the same weight and speed as their same-sized tungsten counterparts, but the metal behaves differently on impact. First among their differences is that while other rounds blunt-out on impact with a hard surface, DU actually "self-sharpens," thus allowing for a greater concentration of energy per square millimeter. The other thing that makes DU different is that it is a pyrophoric metal. On impact against a sufficiently hard material, it will combust and burn at extremely high temperatures. Between these two factors, DU inflicts up to 50% more damage than the same-sized round made from tungsten. However, unlike the versatile tungsten projectiles, DU rounds *must* be in the form of spikes and not balls or rings (which is another reason why the CS doesn't use them). Otherwise, all the special properties of the metal can't be fully taken advantage of.

Against soft targets like the fleshy parts of normal people, there is just too much energy to sufficiently slow the projectile. They travel with so much velocity and power that there isn't enough resistance to absorb their full energy, resulting in the rounds just zipping straight through bodies and inflicting only high-end S.D.C. damage and not full Mega-Damage. Should a "soft target" be hit, the damage done is a tenth of the usual damage inflicted to the victim's S.D.C. and Hit Points with the usual 1 to 100 exchange rate (e.g., a 1D4 M.D. single shot would do 1D4x10 S.D.C., while a 1D6x10 M.D. burst would do 1D6x100 S.D.C.). Though not as deadly, in most cases this will still turn a person into a blob of hamburger and a giant smear of blood.

Second only to P.O.P.s (see below), mass production of the three common calibers is New Chillicothe's chief contribution to the CS Army's logistics, amounting to 22% of all rail gun ammunition used by the Coalition.

P.O.P.s: Everyone knows that New Chillicothe, and especially the State of Missouri, is the breadbasket of the Coalition States. And as such, it should come as no surprise to anyone that the capital city of Missouri is the Coalition's number one producer of P.O.P.s, or Personally Optimized Provisions. Using a variety of foods and chemicals, the scientists/cooks responsible for the current recipes of these meals-in-a-bag have come up with a hundred different battlefield feasts to offer for the soldiers' consumption and enjoyment. And though the pre-packaged meals look like crap, their flavor and texture are next to gourmet in quality. Prior to eating, all a soldier needs to do is follow three steps. *Step 1)* Pull off the activation/safety strip that exposes the cheap, paper-thin IR power strip (similar to the solar power strip on a calculator except it uses IR light from either the sun or that which the Earth naturally emits to generate just enough electrical power for the bag's simplified computer, day or night). *Step 2)* Pass his "dog tags" over a simple sensor and a disposable computer reads all the pertinent information it needs through a short-range wireless radio connection (initiated by a short, 4 inch/10 cm proximity to one another). Specifically, it gathers the dietary nutritional recommendations the soldier's doctor made upon his last checkup

(digitally encoded dog tags are updated annually with every regularly scheduled checkup, or sooner depending on medical needs). At that point, various quantities of the prescribed vitamins & supplements are automatically added to the contents of the bag and the meal is "personally optimized" for the hungry soldier. *Step 3)* Open bag and eat. With the addition of just an ounce of water, most of these can even self-heat to 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 Celsius) via a thermal-chemical reaction in just a minute. In a pinch, a soldier can just spit in the bag till the reaction begins. However, the meals are perfectly edible cold if conditions demand that the soldier forego this optional fourth step. And for the convenience of the soldier, each packet has a separate pouch containing a wet-nap, salt, pepper, and sometimes ketchup, mustard, and/or hot sauce to be used as desired. Each "Pop" packs in 1,200 calories of yummy goodness and has a shelf life of a hundred years. New Chillicothe produces 42% of the Coalition's P.O.P.s.

Power Plants: With the vast majority of the CS military's combat vehicles using nuclear power, it was necessary to make each capital of the states capable of making miniature and full-sized power plants. New Chillicothe is the fourth and most recent state capital to receive the facilities to do this. New Chillicothe only makes 4% of the Coalition's nuclear power plants, and specializes in power plants for 'Borgs, Skelebots, rail guns, and light power armor.

EPG: The newest production facilities in New Chillicothe are set up to make another highly valued and precious commodity, Electro Plasma Gel. The gooey fluid that makes modern day E-Clips and power cells the handheld dynamos they are. Chemists and workers produce 1,000 gallons/3,785 liters of EPG a week here. Enough to fill 12,000 standard E-Clips, 8,000 Long E-Clips, or 6,000 Energy Canisters. But half of it usually goes in other energy cells for power body armor, mobile computers, remote housing and so forth. New Chillicothe makes 4% of the Coalition's EPG and power cells.

CNT Chips: In the Plum section of the factory level, a series of clean-labs mass produce Carbon Nano-Tubule chips, processors and memory cubes (hard drives) for use in the computers of the Coalition's military machines. These state-of-the-art electronics give the CS the extra edge in combat that they are infamous for. The CNT Chips can be made into and programmed with whatever is needed or desired and are extremely versatile. Also, the carbon construction makes the electronic components literally stronger than steel and capable of withstanding great stresses, jars and impacts and still functioning perfectly fine (which explains why a suit of power armor can take four mini-missiles in the chest and keep on going without malfunction). New Chillicothe produces only 3% of the Coalition's CNT electronic components.

EUL Gas-5: Laser technology is an ever-advancing science to which the Coalition is devoting a significant portion of their resources. The heart of their laser weapons is Electro Ultra Luminescent Gas series #5. The gas is a special superconductive mixture that contains tiny floating, metallic crystalline masses that are, in fact, special Xenon/Kordenite alloys. When pulsed with an electrical discharge, the gas transmits the energy to the X/K particles, which in turn emits a brilliant flash of light nearly in the UV range of the EM spectrum. If a container of the EUL Gas-5 mixture was looked at while in a transparent container, the gas would appear to be completely transparent, with thousands upon thousands of sparkling specks floating around in it. If the pressurized canister is broken and the gas exposed to the air,

the X/K alloy particles quickly evaporate, causing some coughing and irritation in the lungs for hours if inhaled, but long term health problems are very rare from such an exposure. Note that the actual gas containers in the weapons are not transparent, so they can harness and amplify the light, to be focused and directed as desired. New Chillicothe makes 9% of the Coalition's EUL Gas-5 for laser weapons.

C.R.E.A.P. Cords: Though New Chillicothe's factory level is not yet set up to produce power armor (other than the Smiling Jacks) nor large robot vehicles, the city does contribute additional parts to ease the workload off the other cities and spare parts for the field. Among the many parts made here, "Creap Cords" are among the most important. Carbon Reinforced Electro-Articulated Polymer Cords are, simply put, the mechanical muscles in the arms, legs, backs, and chests of the cyborgs, Skelebot soldiers, power armored suits and menacing robot vehicles used by the Coalition military. When an electrical current is run through the cords, they contract at a consistent distance and rate proportionate to the amount of power used, making them highly controllable, predictable, and reliable. They are produced in standard lengths (20 feet/6 meters long and half an inch/12.7 mm in diameter) that can be cut down or combined to fit the limb and body lengths required in each unit's design. Also, Creap Cords typically are bundled together to make larger and more powerful mechanical muscles. Creap Cords are a universal component that can be swapped out from one 'Bot and into another, removed from a 'Bot and cut down into shorter lengths for smaller units, or even salvaged from a Skelebot or power armor and spliced together to be fit into a 'Bot. This is but one example of how the CS can keep a large variety of diverse and different robot vehicles and power armors in their inventory with a minimum of additional logistical problems. New Chillicothe manufactures 9% of the Coalition's Creap Cords.

SAMAS & Sky Cycles: New Chillicothe is not well known for its mass production of weapons of war, but the state has a need for fast vehicles that can be quickly deployed and cover the vast expanses of farmland in a heartbeat. This necessitated the need for New Chillicothe to be able to make their own supply of patrol and security craft. Prior to 108 P.A., they made SAMAS and Sky Cycles to fill their needs without having to draw on the resources of the other states. After that though, New Chillicothe's production facilities finally received an upgrade enabling them to make Smiling Jack SAMAS and the ultra-fast Windjammer Sky Cycle. But the refitting included more advanced production machinery that were more efficient and required 20% less space. Consequently, some of the old production lines were left intact. This means that Missouri is the last state that still makes a limited supply of Old Style DH SAMAS and Sky Cycles. Many of these are used by the ISS in several cities throughout the CS, but some are used by the Regional Defense Force for state defense.

Rail Guns: To arm their SAMAS (both new and old styles) and Windjammer Sky Cycles, rail guns of varying types are also made alongside the military vehicles. The most commonly made rail gun is the venerable but still powerful C-40R, but the newer C-200 "Dead Man's" is also produced on an adjacent line for cyborgs and Skelebots alike. The two weapons are produced side by side because they both use similar principles and share some identical parts, though the C-200 is the much more advanced of the two. The Windjammer's C-33R is a more complex, twin multi-barrel and is produced in far fewer numbers, but production

still matches that of the Sky Cycles. New Chillicothe manufactures 9% of the Coalition's man-portable Rail Guns.

Bio-Synthetic Blood: Though New Chillicothe is not well known for their production of Bio-Systems for medical needs, they do make Bio-Synthetic Blood so there is an abundant supply for transfusions. The blood is an organic based blood that is of type "O Negative" to make it universally accepted by humans. It contains red blood cells and platelets to promote healing, but no white blood cells to fight off disease and infection. Instead of white blood cells and antibodies, the blood contains thousands of nano-bots designed to keep the system pure and destroy everything that does not belong in a healthy body. There are only three kinds of Bio-Synthetic Blood: Type 1 which is used in normal humans and Dog Boy soldiers, Type 2 which is specifically made for mechanically augmented people (with Bio-Synthetics, cybernetics, and/or bionics), and Type 3 which is specially formulated for odd P.P.E. metabolizing cells and enzymes of the Psi-Stalker. New Chillicothe manufactures 8% of the Coalition's Bio-Synthetic Blood, but only 2% of the Coalition's other Bio-Synthetic parts.

Skelebots: Finished just four months ago, this is the latest addition to New Chillicothe's manufacturing facilities. In the post-analysis of the Tolkeen War it was determined that one of the things the Coalition was lacking was the means to replace its force of Skelebots fast enough to keep up with attrition. On top of having inadequate programming and AI brains, which contributed to the destruction of the bulk of their stockpile of older Skelbots, one of the major problems the CS encountered with the autonomous machines was their limited production capabilities. So to rectify this, the CS High Command deemed it necessary to add new and upgraded lines to Chi-Town's and Lone Star's existing Skelebot factories, as well as giving the City of Iron and New Chillicothe factory floors of their own.

The art of making Skelebots has come a long way since their introduction a decade ago. Back then, when the FASSAR-20 was the state-of-the-art premier model, the manufacturing techniques of the day cost the CS 1.5 million credits per unit in parts, labor, and depreciation of equipment (half that of their Black Market Value). Today, after several refinements of the production floors and the automated tools used for manufacturing the parts and overall assembly, that price has been reduced to 320,000 credits per unit, the lowest they can go without sacrificing quality or capability (Black Market price has gone unchanged). When the new Skelebot factory production floor was added to New Chillicothe, they made sure to install the most cost efficient lines available.

The Skelebot factory area was set up to make two kinds of robots: the "new style" FASSAR-30 and the more costly and more capable FASSAR-40 Skelebot Hunter. At optimum output, the eight lines devoted to the #30 model can churn out 6,400 units (ten Battalions) a month using two eight-hour work shifts a day. In times of emergency, a third shift can be added, making the factory crank out Skelebots around the clock, increasing production to 320 Skelebots (two Companies) a day. This heightened production rate can be sustained for up to two weeks at a time before a day off is required for emergency maintenance. On an adjacent line, there is a single shift devoted to the manufacture of the more costly Skelebot Hunter (currently costing the CS 1.2 million to make per unit). Given the added materials and level of complexity involved in their construction, only 260 units are made a month. However, this is hardly considered to be a low

number given their different intended use and function. Overall, in spite of these fairly impressive numbers, New Chillicothe only makes 12% of the Coalition's Skelebots.

5. Crimson Field

A few years back, the CS High Command wanted to put the main base for their new, growing fleet of bombers away from danger, but close enough to the North where they could strike in an hour's notice. But with Iron Heart so close to Lazlo and Free Quebec, and Chi-Town being just about everyone's favorite target, Missouri seemed like the best place for at least one of the new bomber wings. That led to the next problem, the design deficiencies of New Chillicothe. Not being designed to be much more than a base for ground forces with a city on top, the fortress city lacked the facilities needed to harbor such large aircraft as the Bone Raptor bombers. That left them with the options of either redesigning a level in the fortress city or making an airfield outside the city. They chose to do both.

While Level Three and parts of Level Four are being slowly redesigned over the next twelve years, the aircraft of Crimson Field are operational *now*. From this base to the west of the city's protective walls, the CS has made a quickly deployable strike force that can be in the air and flying to their assigned target within scant minutes of the claxons sounding. This strike force is made up of one CS bomber wing of the new deadly Bone Raptors and two wings of Talon Stealth bombers (the 42nd, 7th and 22nd Bomber Wings respectively, comprising the 51st Air Legion). Along with them, the CS has stationed three wings of Shrike Interceptors (the 7th, 16th and 22nd Fighter Wings, making up the 6th Air Legion), and three wings of Night Strikers and one wing of the new Spider Skull Dragon Wasps (the 61st, 69th, 75th and 123rd wings respectively, embodying the 99th Air Legion specializing in close air support). The extra craft are there for the express purpose of protecting the bombers while on their attack runs, but despite this mission mandate from Chi-Town, those at New Chillicothe have found the aircraft invaluable in defending the state from raiders and bandits, as well as high flying reconnaissance.

The facilities on Crimson Field are well fortified and are under the watchful eye of the best security system the CS could put in place. The aircraft of the 51st Air Legion are stored in heavily armored hangars with two layers of CS Ablative Armor, requiring someone to hit it with 600 M.D. in at least two separate attacks (or 1,200 M.D. all at once) on the same 10x10 foot (3x3 m) area to gain entry. Each hangar looks identical from the outside so certain aircraft can not be easily targeted. The main buildings are also very tough, with each of the four buildings having the same amount of protection as the hangars. The entire area is surrounded by a twelve foot (3.6 m) tall, Vibro-charged fence (a small but dangerous 1 M.D. per touch or per one second of exposure) which has 50 M.D.C. per 12 x 12 foot section, making it difficult for spies to get near the airfield or see it from afar. And as an added precaution, Dog Boy patrols and security guards are thick throughout the perimeter, stopping those who pass through the gates, checking their credentials and giving them a casual sniff. Even inside the perimeter, security is tight with iris-eye and RFID Chip scanners at every major entrance (scans *every* passer-by up to 100 feet/30.5 m away) and guard stations no more than 300 feet (91.4 m) apart. Each guard station is manned with 4 soldiers

who are heavily armed, and has a big red alarm button in it that can be quickly and easily hit by any of them.

Getting in is extremely difficult but not impossible for a skilled infiltrator. The usual ploys from the cheesy bag of tricks like “grab a guard’s uniform and an ID (fake or real) to get in” will not work. First of all, if the scanner does not recognize a person’s iris or RF-ID code signal it will send a silent alarm to the nearest security station. Contact lenses won’t fool the system since it looks for focus and lighting adjustments in the iris, which also means a dead eye won’t work either. And since the code coming off the RF-ID chip can be easily cross referenced with its registered owner’s bio-electric signature, these too can’t be faked. Secondly, if one passes by a Dog Boy who doesn’t recognize their scent or smells something off, that person can be detained and/or brought in for questioning. And thirdly a security badge is required on everyone, even the janitors, or that person can be arrested and questioned. Basically, the only way to sneak onto the Army Air Corps’ base is to be registered as one of the airfield’s personnel. That requires finding a way to hack into the security computers, enter all the necessary data, including a scan of their iris and/or RF-ID signal (which the person might have on file labeling him as a criminal if he’s been arrested before), entering New Chillicothe’s Fort Canon and going to the second level to obtain a security badge, and trying to B.S. his way past the Dog Boy guards. This isn’t an easy task, and thus far, all attempts to sneak onto the airfield to sabotage or gather intelligence on the bombers have failed somewhere along the way.

Aircraft stationed here:

Death’s Head Transports – 2

Sky Lifter APCs – 2

Deathbringer APCs – 22 (Three Squadrons)

Black Lightning Helicopters – none

Demon Locus Helicopters – none

(Old Fashioned) Nightwing Attack Fighters – 30 (One Wing)

Shrike Interceptors – 120 (Three Full Wings)

Night Striker Attack Fighters (Army version of the CSN “Sea Striker”) – 120 (Three Full Wings)

Talon Stealth Fighter Bombers – 60 (Two Wings)

Spider Skull Dragon-Wasps – 40 (One Full Wing, with another three wings on order.)

Bone Raptor STAB-1 Bombers – 40 (One Full Wing)

6. Riley Station

Every day at 08:00 and 20:00 sharp (military time), a hover-train pulls into this station bringing people, goods, and packages to the city of New Chillicothe. Exactly two hours later, the *Death’s Head Express* pulls out on its way to its next destination, loaded with people and cargo for the next stop. This cycle has gone uninterrupted and with minimal delay for over a decade and in all likelihood will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Located at Red 3100, Level 4, and running through the Orchid Sector as well, Riley Station is a huge area complete with two extremely long bays (2,700 feet/823 m long, a third of the length of the entire level!) to hold even the longest trains. Around the opening entrance into the city are a series of sensor rings that scan every incoming train with a barrage of T-Rays, which is then analyzed by a powerful computer nearby. The computer’s sophisticated AI has a 99% chance of catching people hiding in the cargo areas (be they human, D-Bee or whatever), a 98% chance

of detecting unregistered weapons or explosives, and an 88% chance of identifying Techno-Wizard constructs. Chemicals and drugs can’t be identified, per se, but the AI does notice anything that looks like a hiding place or deliberately concealed items 99% of the time and notifies security so they can check it out. To the sides of the tunnel further down are terminals where unloaded cargo is sorted and where goods to be shipped out are staged. To hasten the process, entire Cargo Cars are pre-loaded before the train comes in, so full cars of incoming freight can be uncoupled from the train and cars full of outgoing cargo take their place. This enables the crews to guarantee a quick turnaround for the trains and gives them ample time to load and unload cargo and luggage. On an average day, over 5,000 tons of goods and packages are shipped out, while only 1,500 tons come in (more comes in from neighboring towns by truck). This is because New Chillicothe exports to the other states far more than they receive. The only things they usually get from the other states are weapons, parts, medical supplies, and the various pop culture goods. Most of their military hardware, like ‘Bots, body armor and weapons, comes in via military transports. The rest is food and goods made in the nearby towns like Savannah and Troy.

The “Terminal Exit” is from where the passengers come and go. Before they can even enter the terminal, everyone has to pass through a scanner to see if they’re armed. Those who are must either be in the military or law enforcement community, or have a concealed weapon permit, and even then it is preferred that the weapons be stowed down below with the cargo and luggage. After that, all credentials are checked to make sure everything is in order. CS ID cards have a picture of the person’s face, a CS citizen’s ID number, and have coded information about that person hidden in the card’s design. This information usually details a person’s gender, height, weight, ethnicity, eye color, right index finger print, iris scan info, and bio-electric signature, but can also include criminal convictions, psychic ability, and limited family history. A laser scanner is passed over the card and information is compared to the person’s appearance. As that happens, an automated security computer is scanning for I.S.P. readings (50% chance to detect those with 20 I.S.P. or more) and P.P.E. (35% chance to detect those with 20 P.P.E. or more), and using video/EM scanners to compare everyone’s irises against what’s on file. (**Note:** The CS uses the iris of the eye like fingerprints were used in the 20th Century. When this isn’t feasible, in the event of artificial eyes, a sub-dermal RF-ID Chip is employed.) While all this is going on, a team of Sniffer Dog Boys are patrolling the area searching for explosives, undeclared weapons and bionics, magic and psionics, and illegal drugs. After passing through all this, passengers can get in line, check their tickets, wait to board their assigned car, and go to their designated seats. Those disembarking go through a more simplified security procedure that is used to look for supernatural creatures and spell casters who slipped through on the other end.

Travel in the CS on these trains is simple, inexpensive and very safe. With the normal cost of a ticket being a steal at the price of a credit for every two miles (3.2 km) of travel (per person, including luggage), your average CS citizen can book passage from New Chillicothe to Waukegan for around 200 credits, although no two trips have exactly the same mileage. Shipping packages though parcel services is even cheaper, at the average cost of a credit per pound (0.45 kg) of the item to anywhere in the

CS. And be it person or parcel, safety is guaranteed thanks to the bullet train's gun cars.



7. The M&M Fusion Wing

New Chillicothe has had a long-standing reputation of having 'Borgs in their army. Longer than any of the other states, in fact, and long before the use of 'Borg soldiers was officially sanctioned for the CS Military by the Emperor. For their "Regional Defense Force," a separate entity from the CS Military, they have made and deployed tens of thousands of heavily armed and armored 'Borgs against their enemies over the decades. Thus it came as no surprise to the rest of the CS when New Chillicothe unveiled their own top-of-the-line bionic augmentation wing within 24 hours of the Emperor's sanction of the 'Borg Strike Trooper into the official army's ranks.

The M&M Fusion Wing (as in the fusion of man and machine) is part of the city's main hospital on Level 10, located at Forest 239. They specialize in the near-mass production of full conversion 'Borgs. Those who opt for this procedure are usually either soldiers who have been seriously to critically wounded in battle, or those who just aren't tough enough to serve as a "squishy" but wish to fight anyways. No one is forced to undergo the procedure, and those that do undergo two weeks of psychiatric review to see if they are mentally stable enough to abandon their flesh in favor of M.D.C. steel and limited sensations. Most (97%) pass with flying colors and are sent to be fitted with the kind of body that their psychological profile suggests they are most suited for.

After the 8-hour procedure, the patients then begin a six-week orientation program to get them accustomed to their new un-

armed bodies. They are taught how to live with their new selves and deal with their human needs and urges that they can not shed no matter what their exteriors are made of. Counseling helps a lot, and psychiatrists trained to deal with their specific and unique problems are always on hand to hear out those with problems, be they newly made 'Borgs or vets coming back from the field. One of the most common complaints is that they have forsaken their ability to be sexually gratified. Most of these cases are given a business card for *The Tin Rapture* and a reassuring pat on the back (see below). A full 37% of the patients suffer from post-traumatic bouts of depression, which usually pass by the end of orientation. Of those who remain manic-depressives (about 20% of this group, or 74 out of 1,000), only 7% are suicidal (or about 5 out of every 1,000). For those who have regrets, the CS offers them a prescription of a drug that instills a feeling of normalcy and well being. The drug, called "Cylucidren" (pronounced Cy-loose-eh-dren), can be taken by mouth in gel cap form as needed. Or for those who require a more regular dosage or prefer the convenience, a cybernetic implant can be installed by the heart that directly injects a small concentrated form of the drug directly into the system every hour on the hour. The implants only need to be refilled once very six months. These drugs have come to be called by the names "Zen Pills" and "Liquid Zen" respectively by Coalition cyborgs. Both are highly addictive, but they are intended to be taken for life anyways.

After they've gotten used to their new bodies and had any emotional wrinkles ironed out via counseling and/or drugs, the next phase in the 'Borgs' lives is combat training. This is also when they have their bionic weapons installed. Fighting and moving in a hulking eight to nine foot (2.4-2.7 m) tall body that weighs as much as a half-ton or even more takes time to get right. Some have to get used to the idea of having and coordinating the movements of extra arms as well, which can be frustrating. But with their electronically aided movements and integrated combat computers, it doesn't take them long to get it down and relearn how to run, shoot, fight, and move. In this two-week phase of their training they quickly become the killing machines that they signed on to be.

On the average, New Chillicothe produces 100 'Borgs during each 10 week program, which are broken down into 4 classes of 25 to increase each case's individual attention. And with 5 program schedules a year that means 500 Full Conversion Cyborg Strike Troopers come out of Missouri every year! Lately, there have been talks about expanding the wing to its own devoted building on Level 12 which could handle ten times as many cases. This could happen sometime in the nest two years. When this happens, the current facilities will be refitted to accommodate CS Juicer conversions and a detox center. Since CS Juicer conversions only require six weeks (including cybernetic enhancements) and can be handled on an outpatient basis, the number of patients they can service will be quadrupled and then some. This means that in two years' time it's very likely that there will be a flood of 10,000 'Borgs and about 2,000 CS Juicers coming out of New Chillicothe each and every year.

Currently, the M&M Fusion Wing does create a small number of CS Juicers for the Army. Though the facilities for chemical augmentation fill only a single office and examination room, they do manage to take in one new patient a week for the six-week program, adding 52 CS Juicers to the military's ranks every year. However, things are starting to get interesting in the normally

sleepy Chemo-Augmentation Office, as New Chillicothe will be taking part in the Coalition's ten-year "study program" (scheduled to begin in 110 P.A.) to explore the use of "advanced Juicer technologies." In particular, this study will create a small number of Titan Juicers and Phaeton Juicers, and an even smaller number of Psycho Stalkers for military use! For this study, the CAO plans to begin with ten Titan Juicers, a dozen Phaetons and two Psycho Stalkers, and candidates are being interviewed now. Chi-Town's and the City of Iron's study programs will produce many more of these experimental Juicers than any of the other participating cities, especially New Chillicothe.

Another aspect of this study will be the human-phase clinical trials of a new drug called *Famertal*. Being a variant of the Prometheus Treatment, *Famertal* extends the Juicer's useful life by 3 years (7 years +6D6 months before "Last Call" begins to set in), allowing them to serve for four-year or six-year terms of service before being required to undergo detox. And when they do, the new drug makes it as if they retired their Juicer powers two years earlier as 2nd and 4th year Juicers, respectively. Those taking *Famertal* who go into detox after two years have their stats return to where they originally were and only suffer a temporary penalty of -1 to their P.S., P.P., P.E., P.B., and -3 Spd for 6D6+3 months (averaging 2 years), until their bodies can bounce back. If this wonder drug works out as expected, it could open the door to the use of entire legions of CS Juicers when needed, for up to two years at a time, without truly cutting short the lives, or the quality of life, of the volunteers. Phase Two of the *Famertal* drug trials will test the subjects' ability to "bounce back" a second time after given sufficient time to recuperate. If this works out and is successful, the CS could allow detoxified ex-Juicers to have a second 2-year term of service as CS Juicers after a 3-year recovery period, and after that a third, and a fourth, and a fifth, etc. However, the drug has to be cleared for standard use first before they can even consider anything like this, and that is years away even assuming the testing goes well. For obvious reasons, the very existence of this drug has been classified and is Top Secret. Everyone who will participate in the trials will have no idea what they'll be injected with on a monthly basis. All they'll know is they agreed to be guinea pigs for a new drug of some kind that they've been assured was safe. For all they'll know it's a new inoculation for the common cold.

All the bionics, cybernetics and Bio-Systems in **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** are available at the M&M Fusion Wing, in addition to the following:

On the "Heavy CS Cyborg" models, the *P.S. attribute* can be raised to as high as 40 (normal max is 36), the same as Triax's finer 'Borgs like the NGR's VX-2010 Marauder, and get an extra 100 M.D.C. to their main body and +30% M.D.C. to their limbs and head. On the other hand, the "Light CS Cyborg" models can be made more responsive and agile, and can have their P.P. attribute increased to as high as 26 (normal max is 24) and get an extra (+1) attack per melee. See *Rifts® WB 11: Coalition War Campaign™*, page 69, for primary differences between the Coalition's Heavy and Light Cyborgs.

All combat grade 'Borgs have *Robotic Strength*. This makes them capable of taking on even supernatural creatures with nothing more than their bare mechanical hands. It should be noted that though New Chillicothe 'Borgs can be stronger than the strongest 'Borgs elsewhere (max P.S. of 40 rather than 36), because

of the structure of the Robotic Strength M.D. chart, this does not translate into them being able to hit any harder in terms of Mega-Damage. **Reminder:** Those with Robotic P.S. inflict +1 M.D. with the use of M.D. melee weapons like Vibro-Blades for every whole 10 P.S. they possess.

Concealed Weapon Eyes: These are scaled down versions of the Triax Laser and Particle Beam Eyes. Because of their smaller size, they are less efficient, but they also fit into a normal sized head and are indistinguishable from other mechanical eyes. There are two kinds available. Laser Eyes which do 1D6 M.D. with a single eye or 2D6 M.D. with a double blast from two eyes (counts as one melee attack), out to a maximum range of 800 feet (244 m). Alternately, one could opt for Particle Beam Eyes which do 2D6+3 M.D. with a single eye or 5D6 M.D. with a double blast from two eyes, out to a maximum range of 320 feet (97.5 m). Both types of weapon eyes have a rate of fire equal to the 'Borg's number of hand to hand attacks and have a +1 to strike bonus. Also, an E-Clip Port is needed to power the weapon eyes (typically in the shoulder or neck) and is good for 20 single or 10 dual blasts for either the laser or particle beam. If connected to a CS 'Borg Energy Cell Weapon Link (see below), the weapon eyes have a payload of 2,000 singles and 1,000 dual blasts (the payloads are high mostly because of the weapons' low ranges). In addition to its offensive capabilities, the eye also provides the 'Borg with polarized 20/20 eyesight for normal day to day use.

Eye Implants: One neat and popular thing to come out of Germany is the Multi-System Eye Socket, which allows the 'Borg to swap out modified cybernetic eyes as needed or desired, using those that are the most useful at any particular moment. (*Rifts® WB 5: Triax & the NGR™*, page 153.)

Sensory Systems: Simple systems also available include the Air and Surface Temperature Reader, the Data Plug Internal Link, Depth Gauge, Metal Detector, Plug-In Hand-Held Monitor, Speedometer, Advanced & Basic Radio Chip, and the latest toy to hit the CS, the Advanced Bionic Headjack (all found throughout the *Rifts® Bionics Sourcebook*).

Stealth systems are also available, including the Psionic Electro-Magnetic Dampeners (*Rifts® WB 5: Triax & the NGR™*, page 154) and a new Electronic Envelope Emitter that makes the 'Borg nearly invisible to radar scans (-55% penalty to Sensory Equipment skill) from as close as 500 feet (152 m) away. Any closer and the radar return signal gets too strong to negate.

The latest in environmental systems for the CS is *Bionic Gills* that let 'Borgs breathe underwater, and a Depth Gauge & Alarm to let the cyborg know how deep he is and how close he is to crush depth, which is about 450 feet (137 m) without special equipment for Full Conversion 'Borgs (both in *Rifts® WB 7: Underseas*, page 191).

Enhanced Mobility: Beyond foot-power and jetpacks, CS 'Borgs have the option to get a Bionic Jet Pack system for independent flight, or a Climb Cord in his wrist to aid in going up and down steep surfaces.

Added Defenses: With the addition of the Micro-Repair Robots (MiRR) and Cyber-Nano-Robot Repair Systems (CNRRS), 'Borgs can stride into danger fearing the consequences a little less. But what the CS enjoys even more are the new Psionic Filters "imported" (i.e. stolen) from the kingdom of Kingsdale, giving them that much more of a universally usable defense against enemy psychics and the supernatural.

Enhanced abilities and reflexes can be added (and typically are) with a Combat Computer to increase a 'Borg's effectiveness in combat (*Rifts® WB 14: New West™*, page 189). There is also the new Targeting Synchronizing System (derived from the "Super Slinger" 'Borg of the New West) which effectively gives the 'Borg the rare and coveted W.P.: Paired Firearms skill with two or even four arms. **Note:** Though rifles and heavy arms cannot be wielded like this normally, the C-200 "Dead Man's" Rail Gun was designed to be fired one handed by Skelebots and 'Borgs. Thus *two* of them *can* be used as paired firearms for those with the appropriate P.S. requirements!

Another weapon based implant is the unique *CS 'Borg Energy Cell Weapon Link* (or Beck Well as it's been nicknamed), derived from the old style FASSAR-20 Skelebots and the CTT-P40. This implant allows the 'Borg to draw on an additional energy supply to power a weapon. To prevent the 'Borg from diverting too much energy from his own limited nuclear power for offensive capabilities, this implant augments the power supply of the 'Borg with a regenerating power cell. So instead of drawing power directly from his own nuclear power, the body's nuclear generator charges an oversized internal E-Clip which, in turn, can be plugged into a weapon via a connector cord (cord has 5 M.D.C. but is -8 to hit and only requires two melee actions to jack in a replacement if damaged). While one end of the cord fits into the 'Borg's side, the other is inserted into an adapter that is inserted in the weapon's magazine well, replacing its regular E-Clip. This necessitates an adapter for each kind of E-Clip the cell is intended to supplement. The CS has such adapters for all its, Triax's and Northern Gun's weapons, but adapters for weapons by other manufacturers must be custom made at this point (500 credits each). If the cell is reserved specifically for the 'Borg's bionic weapons, the cords are internalized to each designated weapon (up to four weapons max). This puts much less strain on the 'Borg's personal nuclear power supply and doesn't divert so much energy that he's in danger of slowing down, or worse, shutting down. The power cell has the equivalent energy storage space of the CTT-P40's massive battery! This translates into the 'Borg being able to plug a weapon like the C-29 "Hellfire" into the CS Beck Well and getting 57 shots out of it from the implant, or 66 pulsed shots from a CP-50, or 40 shots from an NG E-12 Plasma Cannon, or even 800 shots from a classic Wilk's 320 laser pistol! Once the power has been used, partially or entirely, the 'Borg's nuclear power generator recharges the cell at a leisurely rate, taking a full 40 hours to completely recharge if fully depleted.

A relatively new cybernetic implant is the *Compu-Link Interface*. In essence, all this really is, is a mid-sized, padded Secret Compartment, typically on the leg, that has a jack inside that allows the 'Borg to plug in a small computer. The computer is usually a small but powerful PDA unit like the TEX Palm-Pro 2300 (see below). Using verbal commands through his preexisting implants, the 'Borg can instruct the computer to perform whatever task desired. A Universal Headjack & Ear Implant with the optional internal microphone is required. This is linked to the Compu-Link Interface so no stray radio transmissions betray the 'Borg's presence. With an Optic Nerve Video Implant, video images from the computer can also be displayed privately to the cyborg. With these two additional cybernetic implants the 'Borg can enjoy some music whenever he likes, watch a movie or TV program stored in the computer, or go over any data on its memory cube hard drive. But the implant isn't limited to transmitting

data. The implant also allows the computer to record *anything* that the 'Borg's mechanical senses can pick up on. With any of the 'Borg's cybernetic eye implants he can record images (which makes the Multi-System Eye Socket real popular) as well as sounds through his existing Ear Implant microphone, Amplified Hearing and/or Ultra-Ear implants. With a Sensor Hand, heat, the detection of motion, radiation and radar emissions can be detected and analyzed. Some 'Borgs like to use the system to record their personal logs and memoirs, but the CS has recently started to use it as a "black box" of sorts for their 'Borgs in the field and to review any gathered intelligence. However, the system is limited to recording and replaying audio, video and statistical data only. It can not record and replay tactile sensations, nor taste or smells, but it can record that the senses did perceive it, what a smell's chemical composition was (with the Molecular Analyzer implant), how much pressure was in what just hit the 'Borg, and so on. But Cybersmiths and computer programmers are working to overcome this limitation and think they could have something in the works in 5 to 10 years. The computer draws so little power, the implant allows the PDA to be plugged into the 'Borg's nuclear power supply to give it an indefinite power life of continuous use.

The physical appearance of a CS 'Borg made in New Chilli-cothe has a distinctive look to it. In addition to the Customized Face or Armored Faceplate, which always follows the Death's Head motif with some more traditional than others, they also have a Customized Paint Job that is a jet black base with marbled medium gray lines and swirls. This gives each a distinctive, unique yet still uniform look that helps the person maintain a sense of individuality and self as well as be part of the team at the same time. The marbled black and gray also serves as a form of camouflage, breaking up the body's form and silhouette and giving the 'Borg a +5% to any Camouflage skill he may have.

8. The Tin Rapture

Located at Orchid 3910, Level 5, this is one of the very few places of "ill repute" that legally exist in the protective walls of the fortress city. The clientele of this place are *all Full Conversion Cyborgs* and no one else. The hosts and hostesses there are specially trained to attend to their highly augmented clients so they don't feel the slightest bit uncomfortable. This is because while here, even the biggest, baddest 'Borg is emotionally vulnerable and easily hurt.

The concept for this brothel of sorts came out of pre-Rift studies about paraplegics (those paralyzed from the waist down) and quadriplegics (those paralyzed from the neck down). One of the major psychological ramifications of being paralyzed is the loss of being able to sexually perform, and those who can on a limited level cannot feel anything and thus are just going through the motions. This is a highly discouraging, frustrating, and demoralizing thing for them. However, it was discovered that though conventional intercourse was forever gone, there were gratifying substitutes available to them that would satisfy their psychological and emotional needs.

It was obvious that these studies were also applicable towards Full Conversion 'Borgs for nearly the exact same reason. The process of making a combat worthy 'Borg entails replacing better than 90% of the body, and sometimes more. All that typically remains are the brain, brain stem, spinal cord, some simplified digestive organs, liver, parts of the skull, jaw (at least the

jaw's interior), teeth, tongue, throat, usually the voice box, and sometimes (50/50 chance, at the patient's discretion), the face, which is removed and then replaced over a structurally reinforced skull. Organs like the heart, kidneys, and lungs are replaced by durable, less vulnerable and more capable cybernetic/bionic replacements. That leaves very little for the 'Borg soldier to worry about in combat, but next to nothing to work with for recreational purposes, and makes it hard to have a good time. But not impossible. Places like the Tin Rapture were made specifically for the recreational and mental health needs of cyborgs. And due to the positive effects this establishment has had on the Full Conversion 'Borgs of Missouri, places like it have been popping up all over the CS as the 'Borg population rises. In fact, there are two more locations of the Tin Rapture due to open their doors soon on Levels 7 and 8 due to the popularity of the original.

The madam and owner of the place is a woman named Eliza Winston. She was a psychiatrist who specialized in cyborg related mental conditions. The Tin Rapture started out as an illegal experiment based on pre-Rifts studies, but turned into a full time occupation when it got sanctioned by the New Chillicothe authorities due to the incredible morale boost it gave their cyborg troops. Mrs. Winston uses her psychiatric training to teach her hosts and hostesses how to behave and react to some of the odd cyborg behaviorisms, like how they have an air of invincibility about them but sometimes break down and cry in intimate moments. Or how they have grown to know no fear of pain or damage, but wince or jump at the light, seductive touch of an attractive person. Eliza has trained each and every one of her 100 hosts and hostesses as well as the 20 other employees who work there, including 6 'Borg bouncers (including two VX-2010 Triax Marauders with 40 P.S. and 660 M.D.C. named Dean and Adolph).

Services available at the Tin Rapture:

Cover Charge just to gain entry (No "Squishies" Allowed! No Partial Conversions Allowed! No Juicers Allowed!!!) – 25 credits and all removable weapons are checked at the door. Remember, most of the Coalition's 'Borgs use modular weapons.

A nice slow dance with one of the hosts or hostesses (nothing dirty on the dance floor allowed) – 5 credits a song. Each song is typically 3 minutes in length.

One hour with a host or hostess in a private room (be it just to talk, hold, or whatever) – 200 credits per hour.

Whiskey Shots (watered down to 10% strength in proportion to the amount of organics they have left in their bodies, or 15% strength shooters to get hammered as quickly as possible) – 2 credits a shot for 10% shots, and 4 credits for a 15% shooter. They also have straight cola for those who wish to abstain from alcohol or mix it down so the whiskey doesn't taste so strong. All non-alcoholic drinks and additives are free of charge, but it's still nice to tip one's waitress.

Game of Poker with other 'Borg clients – Chips can be bought from the house dealer (always an attractive host or hostess) with a 3% exchange charge.

Singer and accompanying band on stage – Free. All part of the atmosphere.

9. Tech-ionic Electronics

Up on Level 14 at Coral 8855, one can find this place of business nestled between Reno's Video Outlet and The Vonda Steak House. The moment one walks in it's easy to see that this is the

best store in the entire state to buy anything for one's computing and entertainment needs. Exhibits of all the latest models adorn the walls and display racks, all ready to be sold on the spot. All one has to do is look at something for more than ten seconds to get the attention of one of the clerks and salespeople, or maybe even the owner, Dr. Robert Taurus (Ph.D. in computer design & programming). Regardless of who comes to help the potential customers, one can bet that the sales rep will be able to tell the customer everything they want to know about any item they may be even remotely interested in. Everything from its amazing capabilities, how easy it is to use, why they absolutely need one, how it will improve their lives, all the fun and entertainment it will offer, and help them never forget or lose anything ever again. And don't forget the accessories! But no matter what one gets, be it a Palm-Pro, a nifty leather carrying case, or something major, it's sure to have the store's brand name stamped, molded, or embossed on its side in big gothic letters; TEX.

Though a few other brand names are available in the store, Robert Taurus offers his own line of computers and electronic devices under the brand name TEX, Tech-ionic Electronics eX-treme. Most of which utilize a Wilk's laser holographic screen that projects the image display suspended in thin air over the unit (complete with the option to see things in a flat, easy to read 2D, or lively 3D). The laser displays can be seen in low-light conditions as well as under moderate illumination, but bright lights such as direct sunlight diminish visibility up to 50%. Even so, the display is still legible, though faint. The computers also come with durable, stylized cases with 10 M.D.C. and rugged components that can take a beating and still function perfectly fine. As for their internal components, all the electronics are comprised of Coalition carbon nano-tubule circuitry and components, which allows them to be very small but can pack away obscene amounts of information. Because 98% of his customers are Coalition citizens, the machines also have verbal interactive interface capabilities. But for the literate, keyboard add-ons can be plugged into the utility port. The utility port(s) can also be used to feed the computer data from a variety of other sources, like miniature microwave modem transmitters (more commonly called "M-cubes"), sensory equipment (cybernetic, hand held and those of vehicles, all connected by a jack), and other computers. They also work the other way around, allowing the computer to send data to another computer or use an accessory like a simple printer, or transmit an image to a video-optic cybernetic implant. And, of course, all of these units can use "universally compatible," one-inch M.D. disks to download data to the computer and save data on them. The following is a list of some best sellers.

TEX Wrist-Com 400: This wristwatch-like computer/cell-phone is extremely popular for people in all walks of life given its convenience and ease of portability. It's quite ideal for use as a personal organizer, note pad, and simple data storage thanks to its simple and easy to use verbal interface. With a push of a button just below its digital face, an eight by eight inch (20x20 cm) laser-holographic screen appears above it. This hologram can display any kind of 2-D image and information, and commands can be keyed in by touching various icons in its display. Given that the Wrist-Com is too small to accept the universally used one-inch disk and a utility port would be a bit awkward (and visually unappealing), the little computer comes with a simple wireless transmitter that can be plugged into another computer's utility port allowing for the download of data to and from the

little gizmo. And, of course, the small one inch (2.5 cm) digital screen on its face displays the time of day, day of week, and the date in default mode, accurate within a second a year. The small screen also serves as a Caller ID while outgoing calls can be dialed by either voice command or selecting the right icon on the holographic display (often with the picture of the person being called). After the cell phone has been activated, the user simply sticks his thumb in his ear and speaks into an extended pinky. The 400's wristband incorporates the audio system based off of bone conduction technology that transmits sound flawlessly through the immediate skeletal system. Also within the wristband is a pair of coiled, 100 yard/meter, fine-filament antennas that enable digital connections to the cell network so long that there is a cellular relay within 2½ miles (4 km). This allows people to conveniently make calls and send or receive data to the Wrist-Com's computer at the somewhat sluggish rate of 8-gigs per second inside Coalition cities, towns and even much of the various 'Burbs, but not much further beyond that. **Utility Ports:** 1 in the wireless transmitter. **Weight:** 0.5 ounces/14 grams, but the bracelet can add more. **Power Cell Life:** Three years of continuous use on a single power mini-cell. **Cost:** 125 credits for the baseline model made from high-impact plastic (20 S.D.C., 10 A.R.), 165 credits for those with a metal casing (35 S.D.C., 14 A.R.), 350 credits for one with a rugged alloy casing (1 M.D.C.), and 800, 1,600, or 3,400 credits for Wrist-Coms with casings made from precious metals such as (respectively) sterling silver, 14 karat gold (normal or white), or platinum. Replacement power mini-cells cost 20 credits each and can not be recharged.

TEX Palm-Pro 2300 PDA Mini-Computer: These units are about half the size of a paperback pocketbook (and a thin one at that) and are excellent for utility purposes. They are commonplace and very popular in the Coalition States and are used for a variety of portable entertainment and organizational purposes. They are also popular with the law enforcement community for keeping lists and profiles of wanted criminals and complete copies of CS law. (**Note:** Law Enforcement model is called a Profile PDA.) Regardless of its functionality, the 2300 lacks a full-powered holographic laser display, instead having a square 3-inch screen that has the illusion of a 3D image, but larger and/or more sophisticated monitors can be hooked up to its utility port. The TEX Exo-Mon A-25 is common and popular accessory for this item. **Utility Ports:** 1; accepts one-inch disks only. **Weight:** 4 ounces/113 grams (small case only has 1 M.D.). **Power Cell Life:** 120 days of continuous use on a single power stick. **Cost:** 2,500 credits.

TEX Compu-Book 4200 Handheld Computer: This is a common tool for field researchers and authority figures that need access to large amounts of information and data storage space. Others like to use it as a depository for massive amounts of data so they can download the information from it to their more handy Palm-Pro 2300, but still use it in the 4200. The unit uses the popular design of the PC-3000 (seen but not described in *Rifts® Sourcebook One Revised*, page 69, above the PC-2020), letting people use it while on the run, when a flat surface isn't available, or just walking around. **Utility Ports:** 3; accepts both one-inch and three-inch disks. **Image Projection Size:** Opens up into a big, 10-inch (25 cm) 3D flat screen similar to the Palm-Pro's that also can double as a touch-screen keyboard in any desired language or configuration. **Weight:** 2 lbs/0.9 kg. **Power Cell Life:**

18 days of continuous use and takes two power sticks. **Cost:** 6,500 credits.

TEX Nomad 5500 Portable Computer: There are only two uses for these powerful computers, scientific field research where the unit is analyzing complex and numerous pieces of datum, and general storage of raw data en masse. The unit uses the same general design of the older but popular PC-2020 (depicted in *Rifts® Sourcebook One Revised*, page 69), complete with briefcase lid, pull-out keyboard, deluxe holographic, true 3D display, and plasma screen backup. The pull-out keyboard is a thin but durable touch-screen keyboard that can display its letters/characters in any language or configuration desired. **Utility Ports:** 5; accepts both one-inch and three-inch disks. **Image Projection Size:** Variable size from 11.8 inches/30 cm (flat or 30x30 cm 3D image) up to a meter in size. **Weight:** 4 lbs/1.8 kg. **Power Cell Life:** 4 day of continuous use and takes four power sticks **Cost:** 20,000 credits.

TEX Babel 6800 Tower Computer: For those who insist on having more computing power than they'll ever need for the rest of their lives, there is the Babel series. These things are popular with data-hackers and pirate transmitters for their illegal occupations. For this reason, the CS has considered making computers of this magnitude illegal to own without a security clearance. But since it's almost as easy to link several lesser computers together to achieve the same goal, the authorities find it more pragmatic to just let people buy these monsters of computational power so they can keep track of who buys them. **Utility Ports:** 10; accepts both one-inch and three-inch disks. **Image Projection Size:** Same as that on the Datastream 320, variable size from a 3.5x6.3 inch/9x16 cm (and up to 16 cm deep if a 3D image) projection to as large as 5x8 feet/1.5x2.4 m (up to 8 feet deep if 3D). **Weight:** 5.5 lbs/2.8 kg. **Power Cell Life:** Made to be plugged into a stationary power source. **Cost:** 85,000 credits.

TEX Datastream 320 DCDS: This is Tech-tonic Electronics' brand spanking new, top of the line Data Compilation and Display Station. It is capable of handling all of one's entertainment, vid-mail, and commerce needs for the rest of their days on Earth. Should the inconceivable happen and storage space start to become sparse, a person can either command the computer to erase old and unwanted files, or transfer the data to another computer or a storage unit (like PDD disks or the Data Chest, both listed below). As usual, a DCDS uses a holo-projection system with a 9:16 aspect ratio and a variable size display than can be as small as 3.5x6.3 inches/9x16 cm to as huge as 5x8 feet/1.5x2.4 m. **Utility Ports:** 3; plays and can record on both one-inch and three-inch disks. **Image Projection Size:** See above. **Weight:** 2.2 lbs/1 kg. **Power Cell Life:** Made to be plugged into a stationary power source. **Cost:** 3,600 credits (which can be financed for city residents). **Note:** The previous generation Datastream 220 model is half as powerful, but also half the cost at 1,800 credits. The 11 year old model 120 has a quarter the power of the 320 and a quarter the cost of a new one, and is in good availability now with many people trading up for a better model. For the truly poor there's the 16-year-old model 20 which has an eighth the computing power of the 320 and an eighth its price tag, costing a scant 450 credits.

TEX "D-Book" EP-300: Even though books per se are technically illegal, electronic mediums that mimic them are on shaky ground. The D-Book is such an electronic medium that is basically a 500-page book filled with electronic pages. Each electronic

page is filled with a bed of beads that are each a tenth the size of a grain of sand. Each bead has several colors on them, including all the primaries. When an electronic signal hits them, the desired colored side turns to the face of the page, forming pixels that in turn form letters, characters, and still pictures. Concealed and protected in the hardback jacket of the book is a series of computer components that store all the data downloaded into the system. Using the touch-screen interface on the inside front jacket, one can select which book one wants to thumb through and within seconds, the electronic pixels will form up on every page in the electronic book. Given that this electronic gizmo is one step away from being illegal in the CS, those who purchase it must show ID, and proof of their need (technical occupation, university student, CS officer, etc.). **Utility Ports:** 1. **Image Projection Size:** Big 11x8.5 inch/28x22 cm pages with any font size desired. **Weight:** 2.2 lbs/1 kg. **Power Cell Life:** Given that the pixels do not require power to stay in position, a single power stick can keep it running for years. **Cost:** Because it is not a computing juggernaut compared to the others, TEX can sell them cheaply for 50 credits each. A customized leather jacket adds 100 credits to the price tag, whereas a 5 M.D.C. protective jacket adds another 250 credits to the overall cost.

M³s (M-Cubes): Common in and around cities, Miniature Microwave Modems allow a person to tap into the local radio computer traffic between it and any number of similarly transmitting computers in a 15 mile (24 km) radius. This microwave radio traffic is a separate entity than that of the normal digital cellular system common in towns and cities and their outlying areas, though it can interface with the cell relays. In essence, the cube helps make localized wireless internets where people can communicate, reference material, and engage in commerce from anywhere the two like modem frequencies can reach each other. The M-Cubes can handle up to 360 active connections at a time and transmit or receive data as fast as the computer's processor can handle it. And, of course, not only is the system secure, only allowing access to specially designated files and programs, but the wireless modem can be simply turned off to ensure privacy. Larger and less portable models are available for those who expect to receive heavier traffic, like vendors and those who have popular content others like to reference frequently. The M-Cube plugs and secures in any utility port and costs 380 credits.

Wilk's Mongo-tron 21A & B: In essence, these are add-on accessory, Wilk's laser holographic projectors. They are made so one only has to simply plug it into a computer's utility port to drastically increase the size of the projected image. The "A" model projects a variable sized image that is as small as 9x16 inches (22.8x40.6 cm) to as large as 9x16 feet (2.7x4.8 m), both flat or 3D. And of course, the larger the image, the less resolution it has. As for the more expensive "B" model, which is often used to entertain or brief large numbers of people at a time, it can project an image as large as 18x32 feet (5.5x9.7 m) in size, flat or 3D. Not only can the "B" model make a larger image, but it has an "image re-analyzer" that gives the image better clarity at larger sizes, making its resolution equal to a monitor a third its size. **Weight:** The A model is only 2.2 lbs/1 kg and the B model weighs in at 6 lbs/2.7 kg. **Power Cell Life:** Made to be plugged into a power source, but can go for 24 hours of continuous use on battery power with four power sticks. **Cost:** 3,500 credits for the popular A model and 14,000 credits for the more elaborate B model.

Vid Mat P-2020 & P-5050: For those that don't need a giant monster holographic projector, or just don't want to drop 3,500 credits the big laser projectors demand, there is the Vid Mat. In effect, a Vid Mat is an MDTV video plasma screen that is soft to the touch and can be rolled up like a mat or a poster when not in use. To be used, all one has to do is pull it out of its carrying sheath, unroll it, and prop it up on its collapsing travel stand. Alternately, they can be hung on a wall, leaned against the back of a chair, or whatever's handy. And best of all, should it be damaged, lost, or misused, they're cheap enough to be replaced with little concern about the finances. These are ideal accessories for small PDA and book sized computers that lack a large display. The P-2020 model has a 20 inch (50.8 cm) screen with a 9:16 aspect ratio and the P-5050 has a 50 inch (127 cm) screen. **Weight:** The 2020 model is only a pound/0.45 kg and the 5050 model weighs in at two and a half pounds/1.1 kg. **Power Cell Life:** Made to be plugged into a power source, or with its power cell adapter and two power sticks the 2020 can play for 175 continuous hours whereas the 5050 can display for 70 continuous hours. **Cost:** 150 credits for the popular 2020 model and 375 credits for the bigger 5050 model.

TEX Exo-Mon Eyewear: For many people on the go, the idea of carrying around a monitor of any size is just too much of a hassle. They want something that will give them a great view of their computer's video output, and yet be next to invisible at the same time. To fill this role, TEX has come up with their Exo-Mon brand of sunglasses. With the touch of a sensor in the frames, the dominate eye is filled with MD-video quality holo-imagery while the other eye is free to keep tabs on the real world, and no one else can see what's being projected. The holo-image can be made to appear to be anywhere from a faded transparency to allow the Exo-Mon's wearer to see through it and keep a better eye on the world about him, to a solid, opaque image so the user can focus on the image all the better. In the stems of the "A" models are a set of ear buds that can be inserted in the ears to provide full stereo audio, or mono if one prefers to keep one ear open to the world. The "O" models are "optical only." The Exo-Mon comes in a wide variety of styles and lens tints (some have fully controllable variable tints), and all lenses are coated to protect the wearers' eyes against the sun's UV A, B & C emissions. A pointblank-range wireless transmitter (must be within three feet/0.9 m of the transmitter to receive signal) must be plugged into the computer's utility port which the Exo-Mon taps into. **Weight:** The lightweight frames and lenses are only a quarter of an ounce (7 g) for maximum comfort. **Power Cell Life:** The Exo-Mon has a built-in rechargeable battery cell that can provide up to a week's worth of continuous viewing in the "A" model and ten day's worth for the "O" model. **Cost:** "A" models range from 170 credits to 300, depending on style. The slightly cheaper "O" models have a starting price of 150 and can go for as much as 280. The "Controllable Variable Tint" option adds an extra 50 credits to the package.

TEX Finger Wiz 125: For the literate few who can read and write and prefer to use those skills with their computers, there is this keyboard. Those at Tech-tonic Electronics cringe at the idea of even touching an old-fashioned keyboard with buttons, so they have made their own line of contemporary-styled, touch-screen keyboards that allow the user to display its letters/characters in any font, language or configuration desired. This gives them a great deal of versatility and freedom of style, language and preference. Though cheap to produce, the units are durable

and can take their fair share of abuse, but the screens are not M.D.C. constructs. The Finger Wiz 125 comes standard on their Nomad and Babel computers, but they can be bought separately and plugged into any utility port and be used with any computer. **Weight:** Each weighs about a pound (0.5 kg). **Cost:** These are cheap, going for 50 credits each.

TEX Data Chest P-10, P-30 & P-60: These little boxes contain an array of memory cubes (hard drives) that can be used to store extra and superfluous data. They are accessories that can be jacked into the utility port of any computer, big or small, but are not computers in and of themselves. The name Data Chest is a little misleading about their true size. Because of the degree of efficiency of carbon nano-tubule circuitry, these units are about twice the size of a book or a Zippo lighter, and that's including the space occupied by the mini-processor responsible for data exchange and internal padding to make them even more shock resistant and durable. **Utility Ports:** 1. **Weight:** About half an ounce/14 grams. **Cost:** The P-10 model costs 1,000 credits, the P-30 model runs for 2,200 credits, and the supreme P-60 model goes for 5,000 credits.

Power Sticks and Power Stick Rechargers: Every computer made under the TEX brand name uses the same kind of power cells. Small utility batteries called Power Sticks, designed to be efficient and cheap. These batteries share the same shape and size of a stick of chewing gum, but use EPG to store a large amount of power, just like an E-Clip only smaller. When dead, the power stick can either be discarded or recharged and reused. And of course, to recharge a power stick, one needs to buy a power stick recharger. These rechargers can replenish the power of up to four sticks at a time in the span of three hours. Needless to say, they are woefully inadequate for the purpose of recharging E-Clips. That is, unless one has the patience to make the connections by hand (Basic Electronics and Weapon Engineer skills needed) and then wait 120 days for it to charge, or 180 days with a Long E-Clip. **Weight:** Each weighs a third of an ounce/9.4 grams. **Cost:** 5 credits each, usually sold in packs of 4 for 20 credits. The Power Stick Recharger costs 150 credits.

PDD One-Inch & Three-Inch Disks: These universally used and formatted Pocket Digital Disks are very versatile and durable mediums that have large amounts of storage space. Made to be read by and written on with an X-ray laser, they can be recorded on and re-recorded on a million times over before they start to wear out. The disks are made from multiple layers of a semi-transparent polymer-ceramic material and are tough enough to warrant having an Armor Rating of 18 and 35 S.D.C. In other words, they were made to be stomped on, thrown in the dirt, run over by a truck, and hit with a rock, and they should still play well so long as they're adequately cleaned off. The one-inch variety of these disks can be loaded with as much as 3 hours of Matrix Definition video (uses a hundred layers of High Definition imagery sandwiched together to create a three dimensional picture, the current movie and television standard). Alternately, they can be loaded up with 300 hours of 2-D High Definition video, about 170 million songs (using the high-quality eight-channel format of HVA-7 – short for Hexagonal Vectored Audio #7), or 390 million pages of text or computer code. Needless to say, except when packed with MD-video, most of the time the vast majority of the disk's capacity is never used and goes to waste. But that's what this format was originally made for; MD Video disks of pre-recorded material, usually movies of all types and lengths and the

obligatory bonus material. The three-inch PDDs store eight times as much material and are typically used for things that require the greater space. They are commonly used in the sales of commercial-free versions of popular TV shows that the entertainment networks sell, typically having a whole season of a program on a single disk with room for extras such as interviews, bloopers, and behind the scenes material. Another popular use for these larger disks is for interactive movies with multiple possible storylines and endings, all dictated by the viewer's choices. But as far as the "techie" community is concerned, there is only one real use for the three-inch disks, and that's for the storage and transportation of complex computer programs. **Cost:** 5 credits apiece or 100 credits for a pack of 25 blank one-inch disks. Pre-recorded, commercial one-inch disks with new movies and TV specials range from 20 to 40 credits, to 50 to 120 for entire seasons of TV shows. Music is usually bought on a download basis on local intranets and in person at storefronts, going for anywhere between 1 credit for any two songs, to 4 credits for an album by a single performer/band, usually containing twelve or so songs. But for the more devoted fans there are limited runs of one-inch disks of the various albums that cost 15 to 50 credits depending on who performed it, and what kind of bonus material is included. Three-inch disks cost 30 credits apiece or 600 credits for a pack of 25. Disks containing software programs can cost as little as 50 credits to as much as 250,000 depending on their level of sophistication and how new it is. Three-inch PDDs with pre-recorded seasons of TV shows or interactive movies can usually cost between 50 and 120 credits brand new, while older titles tend to run considerably less.

Programming Services: Any computer can be programmed to perform certain tasks. However, most people don't know how to program their own computers, only how to use them for the better part. Most of the time when someone wants their computer to learn a new trick, they just go out and buy a pre-programmed disk for it, pop it in, and say "Computer, download disk." From there the computer reads the instructions and accepts the new programming and applications. However, there are a few things out there that are not available on disk and must be installed by someone who knows what they're doing. **Cost:** Anywhere from a few hundred to several thousand credits, depending on the complexity of the program.

Custom Tailored AI: Given that most of the Coalition's computers use a verbal interface, many like to have a face to talk to on the screen. Those who do also tend to like that face to exhibit a personality to make it more personable and easier to converse with. To that end, the boys and girls at Tech-tonic have come up with a variety of AI Personalities that they can put in almost any of their machines. When ordered, the customer can choose from a variety of preprogrammed AIs or one can be made from the ground up. These AI interfaces are very adept at mimicking the emotions and personalities of real people, but they are still just simulations that have no real personalities, emotions, or feelings of their own. But at times, it's easy to forget that. **Cost:** A simple AI costs 300 credits. A more powerful and complex AI costs 2,000 credits. Custom made AIs typically cost 4,000-8,000 credits depending on their complexity and depth of personality.

Tech-tonic Electronics is one of the fastest growing businesses in the Coalition, with stores in every fortress city in the CS. They service a large clientele thanks to the current state of communications, where people all over can order their goods from their homes and have it delivered either to them directly or to a parcel

depot in a nearby town. Because of this, just about everyone has a variety of computers; not just those under the TEX brand name, but Robert Taurus can dream.

10. “Pyre-Stone” Funeral Services

Death is an all too common event in the world of Rifts Earth, even for the well-protected people of the Coalition States. It is something they have to accept. Though some may live up to 120, many of their young die in the line of service defending their way of life and bringing the fight to the enemies of the CS. But regardless of how one dies, young or old, peacefully of old age or violently at the hands of some monster, everyone wants to know their remains will not be a burden on their loved ones, or worse, used to hurt them as a zombie or spell component. Given this very real concern, the overwhelmingly vast majority of the CS have their loved ones’ remains treated in a special way.

First, the recently deceased is given a “Viewing Ceremony” to allow the friends and family a chance to say good-bye. They find this to be very helpful in accepting the loss and begin the healing process. However, there are times when this is not permissible for whatever reason, like if the body is too horribly mangled or if there is a real danger that the body will fall into enemy hands. In such instances, an enlarged photograph of the deceased loved one is used as a surrogate for the actual body. After this, the body is cremated and reduced to ash. But since this ash can be used as a spell component, this is not enough. The ashes are then put into a low-end Mega-Damage furnace to quickly burn off all impurities, leaving behind a carbon powder. This powder is then placed in a compressing mold and pressed into a diamond with a blue tint. The end result is called a Pyre-Stone. This diamond looks beautiful, but its industrial grade makes it unsuitable for use as a spell component or even as a part in a Techno-Wizard device. The whole process from corpse to diamond takes about half an hour.

What the family does with the diamond varies from person to person. Some have it embedded in the base of a picture frame with a photo of the recently departed. Others have it placed in a ring or necklace to wear on special occasions. Many use these Pyre-Stones as the gemstones in their wedding rings, making them much more special than some rock dug out of the earth. Some even opt to keep someone’s ashes in an urn for a time so they can have their own ashes mixed in when it’s their time. Their ashes can be mixed together to produce a single, larger diamond where their remains can be together forever. This kind of joining has even been done with pets as well at times. In this way, people have had quasi-mass funerals where entire families have been joined together. This method has also been used to make Pyre-Stones for special monuments with Hope Diamond-sized stones as the centerpiece where platoons, and even entire battalions of soldiers died in some spectacular, honorable, and “above and beyond the call of duty” manner. One such monument in Chi-Town’s Silvertip Park (Level 22) is a one-tenth-scale representation of the legendary 231st Infantry, who bravely tried to fend off the first wave of the Federation of Magic’s infamous invasion in 12 P.A. The monument is cast in stone with all 584 soldiers posed as they were just when they were being overrun by the enemy. And every last one of them has Pyre-Stones set in their eyes made from the remains of the soldiers themselves. The monument is grim in appearance, but serves as a reminder to the people of the

price they must be willing to pay for the survival of their loved ones and the CS as a whole.

This service, complete with viewing, costs 250 credits, making it fairly cost effective so even the poor can use it. What becomes of the resulting diamond is what usually ends up costing more. Memorial picture frames range from 10 to 2,000 credits, depending on quality and what they’re made from. Jewelry can be as little as 30 to 200 credits for the pieces that are made to accept uniform sized diamonds, to as much as 2,000 to 100,000 credits for the more extravagant custom-made pieces. Another medium for the gems are statues. There are a wide assortment of statues ranging from just a few inches tall to a yard/meter where the Pyre-Stone can be set in the place of the heart (on the surface of the chest, not buried in it, out of view), in the statue’s hands, or one can have the ashes made into two separate diamonds so they can be set in the statue’s eyes. This can cost as little as 80 credits for small, generic models, 500 for mid-sized statues laser forged in the departed one’s likeness, or 3,000 and up for a custom-made piece that’s truly as glorious as the person was in life.

This particular funeral parlor is run by an elderly woman by the name of Ezmerelda Nash. Like most people in her line of work, she is both solemn and comforting to others, and never condescending nor patronizing. The minute one walks into her place of business, she or one of her daughters is there to tend to their needs, whether for the recently deceased or for those thinking ahead. They are all 100% accommodating and will make provisions for “special orders” that may be a bit out of the ordinary.

11. CSMT-23

Be it news programming, action adventure, soap operas, music videos, riveting drama, slapstick comedy, or gritty reality shows, the people at CSMT-23 either make it or buy it from independent production companies. Located at Ocean Sky (Blue) 5500, Level 19, is the television network that goes by the call letters and SSD Network address CSMT-23 (short for Coalition State of Missouri Transmitter, number 23) in the whole of the CS, but most people just call it “Channel 23.”

Like all Coalition news and entertainment networks, they deal in the distribution of state-approved propaganda and information. All of the shows they make available have either a neutral or pro-human slant to them but none of them preach acceptance or equality for D-Bees and demons. Non-humans are always depicted as oafish and stupid at best, or evil and diabolically cruel at worst, but rarely both. The CS Propaganda Department wants people to think of inhumans as their inferiors, but they do not want them to think of them as easily defeatable and incompetent. The enemy is to be distrusted, laughed at, feared, and even despised, but never underestimated. To preach otherwise would be inviting another fiasco like the Siege on Tolkeen, where the enemy was grossly underestimated to the point where virtually all of the soldiers and officers in the CS invasion force were acting like the incompetents they believed the D-Bees and spell casters to be. A simple mindset that cost the CS dearly.

All of the shows are about 30 to 60 minutes in length (give or take 10 minutes) and are laced with 7 to 15 minutes of commercials. Some of the more adult-oriented programming can be graphically violent, and some of the Coalition’s moral opponents in Lazlo have even accused them of using CGI special effects to make the gore even more horrific and sickening than it really is

for the purposes of desensitizing the people (which is true!). The following is a partial list of some of the most popular programs one can have their DCDS unit download:

Witch Hunt is a game show of sorts. Basically what they do is take a spell caster out of prison, human or D-Bee, give him back the equipment that was on his person at the time of his capture or the equivalent of it (armor, weapons, gear, etc.), and then set him loose. Thereafter, a few automated multi-spectrum “chase cameras” built into high-flying hovercraft follow his every move without his notice. Then, after the caster has been given a 30 minute head start, a pack of extremely well equipped Dog Boys are sent out to hunt him down and kill him! These may be regular Psi-Hounds, Battle Cats, Kill Hounds, Kill Cats, Ursa Warriors, even occasionally Mutant Bats, whatever the Army can spare at the moment. Regardless, the hunters have exactly six hours to pick up the caster’s trail, track him down and rip him to shreds. If the mage eludes them for the whole duration or manages to kill the mutant animals, he is allowed to make a quick statement into the cameras, before being released! (At least, he appears to be released. Unbeknownst to the viewers, once the cameras are turned off, he’s gunned down and his body is disposed of. That’s a carefully preserved secret, for fear the truth would hurt the show’s ratings. Only on two occasions has the mage gotten clean away, but of course they didn’t get to make statements to the viewers, being long gone, having evaded hunters, chase cameras, and all.)

Dead Boys is a reality show where troops on patrol are followed around by a cameraman (camera is a small unit built into the side of a helmet) recording their exploits, victories, and defeats. The show is unafraid to show CS brutality against D-Bees and how they are mercilessly dealt with. But they also always take the time to show why the D-Bees and casters deserve such fates by showing them in acts of violence and by interviewing survivors of the monsters’ attacks. On occasion, they have aired episodes where the Dead Boy troops take heavy casualties or are wiped out altogether! This is to show the people that as good as the CS is, there is still much to be feared and despised out there. In fact, their highest rated show was one where a platoon of CS soldiers engaged a Splugorth party with two Slavers and their ten Altara Warrior Women, six Kydian Overlords and a large squad of power armor-clad Kittani. It was a harsh and valiant battle, in which the two cameramen caught all of the action, but in the end the Coalition lost. Episodes like this serve to keep the people scared, and more than willing to give all they have to fight the monsters that threaten their very existence.

Slopops is a children’s show hosted by a big, goofy, cartoonish CGI human who is designed to look funny, but not so off that he could be misconstrued as a D-Bee. Slopops teaches kids how to hate and fear all things that aren’t human through animated stories, sing along songs, and special guests. But though the show is a bit preachy and heavy with CS ideals, the program is made to be silly and funny for kids.

Into the Flames is a dramatic soap opera based around the trials and tribulations of a wealthy and powerful family among the Chi-Town social elite. The Crest family has about ten members, but this is a fluid number since some are killed off and more enter the show from the most implausible places. The synopsis of the most recent episode goes something like this. “While Randel is still being held captive in the ‘Burbs, Lisa has given up hope of ever seeing her true love again. Seeing her emotional vulnerability, Bobby decided now is the time to make his move on her, in

hopes of marrying her so he can start raiding the family’s fortune. However, Bobby’s motives are transparent to Rachel and she sets her own plans into motion to take him out of the picture so she can have Lisa all to herself. But little do any of them realize that Randel has escaped his D-Bee captors and is coming home, but how well will he be received?” Have no doubt, this is soap at its apex of cheesiness and over-acted drama. Even so, the show has a viewership of over 7 million people in the CS proper and an estimated 19 million more beyond in border towns and D-Bee communities through pirate signals and Black Market one-inch disk sales of the past seasons (it’s wildly popular in Lazlo)! This has raised Trent Maxim, who plays the beloved Randel, and Rebecca Roads, who plays the scheming and insatiable Rachel, to international sex symbol status throughout the entire North American continent!

Rude Ranch is considered to be *THE* most tactless, crude, and vulgar show ever. It is a comedy set on a commercial cattle ranch a hundred miles from New Chillicothe. The show uses a mixed cast of humans and real D-Bees who interact with each other as the stupid ranch owners and their even more stupid ranch hand worker slaves. Most of the jokes revolve around bathroom humor, zany antics, crude sex jokes, and childish pranks. And, of course, there is no such thing as an intelligent D-Bee on this show, only ones who are borderline mentally retarded and outright idiotic. Though in all fairness, the human ranch owners aren’t portrayed as any geniuses, either. This show has inflamed more D-Bees than the CS knew were out there watching their shows – as if they care one way or the other.

Battlefield ‘Burbs is a dramatic and well-made cop show of sorts set in the ‘Burbs of Waukegan. The central premise of the show is about ISS and NTSET officers bringing peace and safety to humanity in the ‘Burbs, and dispensing justice to all the inhuman horrors that lay in wait just beyond the walls of the fortress city, and sometimes in it. The show is also about bringing law and order to the lawless in the uncivilized ‘Burbs and protecting humanity from itself. The D-Bees and monsters on this show are rarely depicted as dumb or inept, and are often difficult to stop and kill. Many of the show’s gritty stories are based on real case files of the ISS and NTSET and are credited as such. Many in and outside of the CS consider this to be one of the finest crime dramas around due to its all too realistic stories, excellent acting and authentic looking holographic sets and special effects. The lead actor is named Dell Winters and has been called the best acting talent of the times. Consequently, Dell’s character is the only one the writers are not allowed to kill off, but there are a few others that are safe for now, at least until contract negotiations in December. Like the soap *Into the Flames*, this show is as popular inside the CS as it is beyond its borders, making its stars international icons with fans ranging from as far south as El Paso to as far north as Lazlo.

12. The NC Viceroy Company

This place of business is well known throughout the entire Coalition States as well as the neighboring Kingdoms and towns. Located at Saddle (Brown) 6, Level 12, the NC Viceroy Company is famous for their two main products, Chillicothe Whiskey and Chillicothe Cigars. Their 105 proof whiskey is aged for five years in old-fashioned oak barrels before being sent to market, and given a secret chemical additive that makes the liquor smooth

as silk with no aftertaste. This chemical also reduces the chances of getting cirrhosis of the liver by 96%. And with its going price of 16 credits for a fifth (a 25.6 oz/0.757 liter bottle), this is one of the fastest selling hard drinks on the continent. Their other main product is their Chillicothe cigars which come in sizes ranging from 4 inches (102 mm) to the mammoth 8 inches (203 mm). All of the tobacco they use is grown on their own private farms outside of town, processed in a factory in the Sol Markets sector of the 'Burbs, and sold in the store (over the counter as well as through catalog orders). The cigars are sugar enriched for flavor and chemically treated to reduce the risk (97%) of heart disease. They still aren't very good for the lungs, but with CS medicine most of the damage is taken care of during regular checkups at the family doctor. Like their whiskey, these stogies are shipped off to the other Coalition States as well and have a pretty good availability to all.

13. City Hall

In this building located at White (Blank Zone) 21, Level 20, the city's local governmental ruling body conducts its business and makes the decisions that affect the city and nearby communities. At the head of the city's government is Mayor Lisa Scott, who has held this position for the past 12 years. Scott has been an excellent city Mayor and has yet to make any major mistakes, mainly because she has picked herself a very intelligent and wise City Council to help guide her decisions. Of the thirteen people who sit on the City Council, the most notable and influential ones are Councilman Hague, the biggest greenhouse coffee bean grower in the area, ISS Commissioner Jesus Angeles, and Brigadier General (one-bar) Ann Parker, the city's second highest in command at Fort Canon. Normally, this position is filled by the top commanding officer, but General Canon instead holds a seat in the Governor's State Senate, making him ineligible to hold a second seat of governmental power. Of those who sit on the Council, the Mayor's most controversial appointment is a 35-year-old Dog Boy soldier who's been retired from active service due to his age. Sergeant Major Coke gives the Mayor a unique perspective on internal security, NTSET affairs, and matters concerning the city's psychic and mutant animal population who make up a small but significant percentage of the residents. Most see the appointment of a Dog Boy to such a place in government as a mockery of the system, but Mayor Scott feels that she would be lost without the canine's input and stands by his appointment.

14. Cold Storage Level

Be it by train, boat or truck, tons upon tons of food are sent to New Chillicothe over the course of the year. Once it arrives it is sent down a special freight elevator to Level S-2, where it is put into cold storage so it will never spoil or go bad before being eaten. This function of every fortress city is essential, because CS farms and meat producers make more than enough food for the people to eat over the entire year, but if allowed to just sit, there would be a vast amount of waste due to spoilage. To allow such a thing would be to invite famine and shortages in between the harvests, which is something the CS government has sworn will never happen. By freezing the perishable foods, they can keep a supply of eatables on hand that they can ration out throughout the year until the food stocks can be replenished.

The foods are preserved by a unique process that simultaneously dehydrates the food as it is flash frozen in a matter of seconds. This process is actually an adaptation of a pre-Rifts suspended animation system the American Empire was developing for manned deep space exploration missions. The purpose of dehydrating the food (or person, as it was originally designed for) is due to the crystallization that occurs in the cell structures of living tissues during the freezing process. The frozen water crystals damage the cells and terminate the subject. But without water present, there are no ice crystals to be formed at all, thus circumventing the problem. The revitalization process takes far longer, as the subject is re-hydrated with water mixed with a form of non-lethal anti-freeze. The second the subject is sufficiently re-hydrated, it is bombarded with a powerful barrage of microwaves that bring the subject back to its regular core temperature in just a few seconds. The whole process allows for organic matter to be kept in storage indefinitely and be brought back to its original state as it was when frozen. The CS has yet to try putting people into suspended animation with this method, but they have experimented on D-Bees with great success. The only significant difference between doing this to food stock and living creatures is that people require an electrical jump-start to the system afterwards and have a 2% mortality rate. Though the CS is incapable of space flight, they are looking into this as a means to imprison extremely dangerous beings.

Due to the incredible amounts of space the subterranean storage levels have and the abundant harvests the farmers and meat producers send to the fortress cities, the CS has been slowly accumulating a reserve of food over the decades. At present, the CS has enough flash frozen, dehydrated food in deep freeze to feed the entire Coalition for three years, or longer if they institute strict rationing. This gives them the ability to take care of the basic needs of all their people even in the face of absolute catastrophe, and gives them time to recover from even the most horrible turn of events.

15. Fire Station No. 1

Located at Roof Level, Red, with nothing above their heads but the Missouri sky, is the state's premier firefighting unit and headquarters for the Missouri State Fire Department. Though there are several other fire stations in other towns, Fire Station No. 1 is the biggest and best by far. This large, three-story station house is where firefighting efforts for the area are launched and coordinated to combat fires in the wilds of Missouri. While others take care of the occasional fires that flare up inside the fortress city below them, those of Fire Station No. 1 are trained and equipped to handle the forest fires that threaten the state's farmlands and natural resources. From blazing, thousand acre infernos to small brush fires, they handle it all with the greatest speed and efficiency possible.

Though the training that the men and women of the M.S.F.D. receive is the latest and best there is, the equipment they use is not. This is not to say that they have to put up with quirky, useless junk, because all their high-tech tools function flawlessly. But this does mean that they never receive things that are fresh off the factory floor. The number one tool used by the firefighters is the Inferno Trooper PA, which is actually a salvaged and reconditioned, battle-damaged Terror Trooper with a fire-trucked paint job. The Inferno Trooper is the favored PA to fight for-

est fires because of its great protection against the searing heat, allowing them to go into the heart of the beast; the PA's above average brute strength, which gives the firefighters the ability to make quick firebreaks; its built-in lasers, which can be used to set backfires with; and most importantly, its vast missile capacity. In the power armor's role as an Inferno Trooper, these missile launchers can be made to implement the Coalition's greatest fire-fighting tool, the **Fire Retardant Mini-Missile** (100% chance of smothering normal fires, 66% chance of smothering M.D. fires of any kind; 20 foot/6.1 m explosive radius, ¼ mile/402 meter range). With a load of 20 such mini-missiles on its back and an equal number more loaded in a CTT-M20, each Inferno Trooper usually has forty such fire squelchers at its disposal.

The M.S.F.D. also has a small fleet of Blaze Buster APCs that can get the firefighters to any site in short order. This large hover vehicle is actually a battle salvaged Death Bringer APC that has been refitted to perform this lifesaving duty, painted fire-truck red to distinguish it from those in military service. After dropping off a team of firefighters (typically 40 in EBA and 20 Inferno Troopers, or 40 Inferno Troopers), the Blaze Buster can then fly off to the nearest lake or river to fill up its bay with water. Once on site again, that water can be fired through the water cannon (converted from the Plasma Rocket Shell Cannon) to douse strategic areas. In addition to that, the hover transport has a complement of 60 **Fire Retardant Short-Range Missiles** (100% chance of smothering regular fires, and an 88% chance against M.D. fires; 30 foot/9.1 m explosive radius; ½ mile/804 meter range), which are in four missile turrets in place of the laser ball-turrets. The Blaze Buster can also rescue and evacuate anyone trapped in the inferno should things get out of hand. All of these capabilities and attributes make the Blaze Buster APC the backbone of the Coalition's firefighting forces.

For additional help, the fortress city of New Chillicothe can fire a volley of *Fire Retardant Long-Range Missiles* from any or all of its CM-4000 launchers. These Mach 5 missiles can reach out as far as 500 miles (800 km) in a matter of just over eight minutes. Though far from instantaneous, this allows firefighters on site to put added suppression exactly where they need it to get the inferno contained and under control with a little planning and forethought.

People of Note

Lieutenant General Ryan James Canon

General Canon is the relatively new base commander of New Chillicothe's Fort Canon and the highest-ranking officer in the state. His three bar General status gives him the power to run the entire state the way he likes it, but defers to Governor Kimber out of respect for the office the man holds (but not Kimber himself), respect for the chain of command, and to maintain order. However, this has not stopped him from taking an active role in the development of his home state now and when he was still under General Orly's command. He had always hoped to see his home state become more than just a political pawn of Chi-Town. To this end, he has made sure certain critical facilities and structures were either erected in or moved to Missouri, such as the Nevell Proving Grounds and increased tactical importance of Hannibal. Both of which were his doing as a Colonel with Gen-



eral Orly's backing. These moves have helped make the state a bit more powerful in the CS political landscape, but it's still far from enough for his tastes.

Ryan does this not for his own personal glory or power, but out of a feeling of oppression. All his life he has strived to make the world a better place, be it with the business end of a rifle or through political contriving. He doesn't like those who use their power to dominate and control others, much like the schemers at Chi-Town and the inhuman demons who used their supernatural power to domineer over their perceived lessers. As an RPA: Elite pilot he fought to rid the land of power-hungry monsters in all their guises. As a staff officer, he fought other officers who only had dreams of conquest for their own personal glory, regardless of the cost in human lives. And as commanding officer of military operations in the state of Missouri, he has fought both monsters and D-Bee raiders who dared to encroach on the state's boundaries, as well as power-hungry heads of state within the CS who see the breadbasket of the Coalition merely as a resource to be used, and not a sovereign entity who deserves an equal voice in the government. The reason why Ryan hates to see abuses of power can have its roots traced back to his father and upbringing.

Born in the city of New Chillicothe in 56 P.A., Ryan had a lot to live up to from the second he first drew breath in his lungs. This was mainly because his father was the locally famous General Robert James Canon, the commander of Operation Cockroach and who the city's base was unofficially named after. And though Robert was a brilliant leader in the field, he was a horrible father who was either neglecting his children in favor of his military duties or beating the hell out of them to "whoop 'em into

shape.” It wasn’t uncommon for Ryan to come home from school and see his mother weeping, covering her battered face with her hands. His brother and two sisters also often found themselves the victims of an undeserved beating. Only Ryan ever had the courage to stand up to his father and fight back, once. That effort to put an end to his father’s abusive behavior landed him in the hospital for two weeks. With such an upbringing, it was little wonder why Ryan left home and joined the military the second he came of age. He didn’t do so to follow in his father’s footsteps, but just so he could be shipped out to another state and get as far away from his father as possible. A few years later, the great General Robert James Canon was murdered by his wife. She was pardoned by the Governor of any wrongdoing since the General’s abuses were hardly a secret. Ryan didn’t shed a single tear for his old man, but did start writing home to his family much more often from that day forward. He even started sending his mother 25% of his monthly salary to compensate for the lack of income of her departed husband.

During his military career, Ryan excelled as a SAMAS pilot and as a leader. His abilities enabled him to rise through the chain of command at an accelerated pace due to his competence and capabilities. And like his father, tactical decisions came easy to him in the heat of combat when seconds counted. Unlike his father though, Ryan never abused his power and was never abusive to his subordinates. He was well liked by those who served under him, well respected by his superior officers, and greatly feared by his inhuman enemies. Ryan Canon was what every Coalition officer aspires to be. But as idyllic as he was, he too would earn some high-ranking enemies within the CS itself.

In the fall of 87 P.A., a young Ross Underhill came to Missouri to evaluate the situation down there. He quickly came up with the idea of using military forces to destroy D-Bee farms before the harvest so they would starve to death, or at the very least, make them easier to rout later on. But as he proposed it to the then new military commander of the state, General Zacarius Orly, for approval in an open meeting, Ryan Canon stood up and objected. He said it was a stupid and self-destructive plan that would only result in stirring up the natives and forcing them to raid CS farms. Ryan also mentioned that they would most likely seek retribution and destroy Coalition farms in return and take what’s left to feed themselves. Underhill scoffed at the lesser officer’s predictions and said that they would just increase patrols to stop them before any raiders got too far in-state. Given Canon’s concerns, Orly approved the plan but reduced its scale to a quarter its originally envisioned size. As it turned out, Canon called it dead on and the resulting retribution brought a minor food shortage that year to the whole of the CS. But if the plan went as first devised, things would surely have been a lot worse. As it was, the raids showed the continent the Coalition’s soft underbelly and vulnerability, its food supply. The state’s defenses had to be further increased from that day forward. However, Canon made a political enemy that day in Underhill. Underhill was confident that the reason why things went as predicted by the younger Canon was because the full scale plan was not put into effect, thus leaving too many D-Bees alive in its wake. Even today, Underhill refuses to believe he was wrong that time, but his contempt for Canon has subdued to the point where the two can be in the same room and be civil.

As the Siege on Tolkeen went into effect, Ryan Canon stood ready to answer his nation’s call to arms. He was sure that he was bound for either the Eastern or Western Front to fight for

the Coalition. But when his orders came from the Emperor himself, Canon was shocked to see that he was to stay in Missouri under Orly’s command, who was also denied his request to be transferred to one of the fronts. Just like Underhill in Chi-Town, his duty was to reinforce the state’s defenses along the north and northwest borders and keep the area secure. Needless to say, he was more than a little disappointed that Tolkeen wouldn’t feel his wrath, especially after he saw the mess the incompetent General Drogue was making of it. But on the other hand, he was a bit relieved that he wasn’t being sent north to fight and kill his fellow humans in Free Quebec. Though he was angry over their secession from the CS, the worst he felt they deserved was a few trade sanctions to try to get them back through temptation and necessity. Facilities to make nuclear power plants was one thing they didn’t have, so an embargo-induced power shortage would have been perfect to make them yearn to come back to the fold and give in on the Emperor’s demands. But then again, no one asked him.

Lieutenant General Ryan Canon has had the job of “COMCS (“Com Cass”) of Missouri” (Commander of Military Operations in the Coalition State of Missouri) for over 2 years now. He is the highest-ranking officer in the State of Missouri and is counted among the 40 Generals who make up the CS High Command. The legion of forces he commands are more powerful than several of the state’s enemies combined and have enough firepower to fight a war on their own with little trouble. Even so, compared to the massive military might of the other states of the Coalition, Missouri is by far the least powerful state in the CS. But that is little comfort to those who are held at bay by the forces at Canon’s disposal. With what he has, Canon has established and sustains his system of maintaining safety for the farmers and ranchers who do not have the luxury of living behind the heavy M.D.C. walls of a fortress city or walled town.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Principled.

Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 12, M.A. 24, P.S. 16, P.P. 19, P.E. 15, P.B. 13, Spd 25.

Hit Points: 86, **S.D.C.:** 72.

Height: 6 feet, 1 inch (1.85 m). **Weight:** 213 lbs (96 kg).

Age: 56

Description: Ryan has always had a commanding presence.

His hair is kept in a very short, neat Afro (5 mm thick), and lately has been using hair dyes to keep it black and youthful. His face has a smooth appearance and is clean shaven, and Ryan’s complexion has a medium, cocoa brown coloration to it. When looked in the eye, most are usually intimidated by his nearly black dark-brown eyes, which usually have a slight angered smolder to them, an intentional and practiced trait. He learned that one from his father. Ryan’s has a large frame and a strong build, which is so bulky it nearly kept him out of the RPA: Elite corps since it made it difficult to fit him in a SAMAS. Fortunately for him, newer designs permitted the power armor to be piloted by larger people like himself. As he has gotten older and been placed in less active positions, he has started gaining weight, slowly but steadily. Back when he was in his prime, Ryan weighed in at 182 pounds. Today he’s about 30 pounds overweight, but carries it well (too much junk food and not enough CS genetically engineered food).

Disposition: Though Ryan has been known to have quite a temper, his flashes of anger are always controlled and non-de-

structive. Ever since he struck out on his own in the military, Canon has always exhibited a strong degree of self-control that borders on a repressive personality. His years of laborious discipline to ensure he would never be like his abusive father resulted not only in the repression of his anger, but also his inability to feel any extreme emotion. He doesn't feel the highs of being in love or a big win, nor the lows of a painful defeat or shameful moments. When he does experience these feelings, they only last for a few brief, fleeting seconds and then his repressive self-control kicks in, making it as though he never felt it in the first place. It's little wonder why he has befriended Jack, the super computer that controls the city's automated defenses. This doesn't mean that Ryan is a heartless man. He genuinely cares deeply for his wife, Reba, and his two children, Calvin and Linda, as well as the safety and welfare of the people under his command. It's just that he doesn't let his feelings cloud his mind in the slightest. This quality is what makes him a good leader. It's also why many consider him to be cold and impersonal.

Experience Level: 11th level RPA: Elite Sam.

Skills of Note: Radio: Basic 98%, Sensory Equipment 98%, Weapon Systems 98%, Navigation 98%, Running, Pilot: Automobile 97%, Hover Craft 98%, Jet Aircraft 94%, Jet Fighter 94%, Jet Pack 96%, and Tanks & APCs 98%, Languages: American and Spanish 98%, Literacy in both 85%, and Writing 80%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert, RPA: Elite with all SAMAS based power armors and 4th level ability with CS triple-digit ground power armor, Kick attack: 1D6 S.D.C., Critical Strike on an 18-20, Paired Weapons, Body Flip/Throw, KO on a 18-20. W.P.: Blunt, Handguns, Submachine-Gun, Energy Pistol, Energy Rifle, and Heavy M.D. Weapons.

Attacks Per Melee: 6 normally, 11 with any kind of SAMAS PA, and 8 with Terror Trooper PA.

Combat Bonuses: +6 with Blunt & Energy Pistols, +5 with Handguns & Energy Rifles, +4 with Submachine-Guns & Heavy M.D. Weapons, +4 to Roll with punch/fall/impact, +4 to Strike, +3 hand to hand damage, +6 to Parry (+10 with a Blunt weapon), +6 to Dodge, +6 to save vs Horror Factor.

Preferred Weapons: Over the past few years, Canon has weaned himself off of his old-fashioned Death's Head Sam and taken a liking to Terror Troopers and Super Sams. Unbeknownst to all but his personal mechanic and a few people in the hangars, General Canon had a Super Sam and a Terror Trooper shipped to Whykin's Tech Works for some customized work. Using his private funds, he had them give the Super Sam a "High-End Turbo Job" and had its plasma cannons replaced with burst-capable light lasers (2D6 M.D. x2, x3, or x7 each, depending on the size of the bursts) adapted from a set of C-10 Assault Rifles. The Terror Trooper was given reinforced armor and was "souped-up" to boot. Armed with two synchronized, shoulder mounted, auto-tracking CTT-P40s (2D6x10 M.D. out to a 2,200 foot/670 m range), twice the missile capacity, and NG-P7 particle beams (1D4x10 M.D. for a single, 2D4x10 M.D. for a dual synchronized blast) in the forearms, this suit of power armor packs more punch than most 'Bots! This makes his personal Super Sam a lightweight (149 M.D.C.), supersonic racer (1,000 mph/1,600 km!), and his Terror Trooper an extra heavily armored (540 M.D.C.), plodding (23 mph/37 km), one man wrecking machine. And

though he paid for the modifications himself, the power armors were "misappropriated."

Cybernetics: A Bio-System heart became necessary after he developed a case of hypertension. Also has a Chronometer and Gyrocompass in his left forearm, near the wrist.

Allies of Note: Beyond the thousands of troops under his command, Canon has many high-ranking friends in the CS Army, including his former commanding officer, General Zacarius Orly, Governor Joshua Kimber, as well as the Emperor himself, to a lesser extent.

Enemies of Note: The many bandits that like to use Missouri as their personal hunting grounds have grown to loathe Canon due to his competent commanding abilities, even though they have never seen him face to face. Canon also has an old nemesis and arch-foe who currently takes up residence in Lazlo, named Yvette Tantanmein. She used to try her damndest to always be the one to get in his way when he was stationed at Iron Heart. If given the opportunity, the aging Line Walker could be persuaded to look him up and resume playing their old back and forth games of cat and mouse.



Governor Joshua Kimber

Hand-picked to be Governor of the state by Emperor Karl Prosek himself, Joshua Kimber is a bureaucratic puppet with very little initiative of his own. Whenever the Emperor or Executive Council snaps their fingers from Chi-Town, Kimber is all over it to make their desires happen in the State of Missouri. However, this does not mean he lets the people of his state take a back

seat to the needs of the other Coalition States. It's just that the needs of the Missouri farmers and cattle ranchers are different from citizens elsewhere. Also, it is his firm belief that Missouri's contributions to the CS are one of the primary reasons why the CS is humanity's best chance of survival in the long run.

Unlike other State Governors, Kimber has no combat or military experience under his belt. He was born among the Chi-Town elite and raised to be a bureaucrat. Instead of the military, he earned doctorates in civil engineering, agriculture and CS law. This makes him ideally suited to handle Missouri's unique set of problems and understand what's important to the farming citizens. Because of his qualifications, although Kimber may have been a lackey for Chi-Town over the past 16 years, he has also been an exceptional provider for the people who depend on him to do what's right for the state.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 9, M.A. 19, P.S. 8, P.P. 10, P.E. 12, P.B. 18, Spd 18.

Hit Points: 53, **S.D.C.:** 24.

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 143 lbs (64.4 kg).

Age: 62

Description: Kimber is skinny man who depends on the skill of his tailor to give him a strong looking body. He usually wears suits with built-in shoulder pads to compensate for his lack of muscular girth, and his suits tend to use light, solid colors to make him look more solid and broad. In reality, he is a scrawny man who gets by on his brains and leaves the concept of brawn to illusion and his four personal 'Borg bodyguards.

Disposition: Kimber is a calculating man who is a long-term schemer. He likes to think in the long term and doesn't believe in being spontaneous unless quick, decisive thinking is absolutely necessary. The Governor also likes to have ten plans and backup plans going at all times, slowly building on them to his ultimate goals. Most of these goals are for the better good of the state whereas a few are for his own betterment. But regardless if it's for him or his people, Kimber is relentless and persistent, never giving up until an avenue is completely dead. On a personal level, Kimber knows how to keep his work and his downtime separate. Unless one of his schemes calls for him to put in some extra time, once the clock hits 18:00 hours, his Governor's mindset slips away and his inner child comes out to play. He spends much of his off time either with his wife, Hilda, or at his entertainment computer playing video games, and both when he can swing it.

Experience Level: 10th level Scholar.

Skills of Note: Languages: American, Spanish, Euro, Dragonese, and Japanese 98%, Literate in all except Japanese at 98%, Advanced Math 98%, Radio: Basic 98%, Cooking (professional quality) 98%, Singing (professional quality) 98%, Detect Ambush 85%, Detect Concealment 75%, Forgery 75%, Intelligence 77%, First Aid 98%, Swimming 98%, Pilot: Automobile 90% and Hovercraft 98%, Horsemanship 90%, Biology 90%, Botany 85%, Chemistry 90%, Agricultural Farming 65%, Advanced Fishing 98%, Pre-Rifts History 98%, Advanced Math 98%, Computer Operation 98%, Writing 98%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 98% and Lore: Faerie 98%.

Combat Skills: None. Governor Kimber is only good at fighting in video games. Should he be pressed to defend his honor, he

would fight like a sissy with one hand covering his face and the other flailing about wildly. And though he has the Weapon Proficiencies for Handguns and Energy Pistols, these skills get more use and practice with his interactive first person shooter video games than in real life.

Attacks per Melee: 2

Combat Bonuses: None.

Preferred Weapons: His bodyguards.

Cybernetics: None.

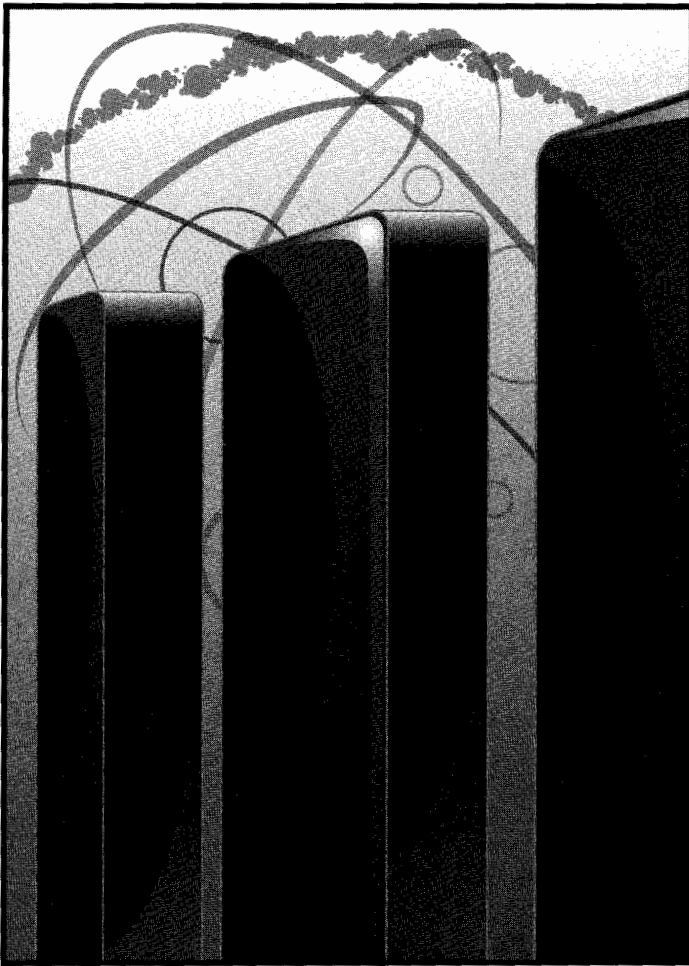
Allies of Note: The CS government has always been supportive of Kimber and would do much on his behalf to please and protect him. His top military man, General Ryan Canon, doesn't like him very much, but because of the General's respect for the office, Kimber can always count on him to help him out of a jam. And then there are Kimber's four 'Borg bodyguards, Phillips, Young, Senshi, and Corbet, all of whom are high level, combat experienced, and competent Full Conversion CS Strike Troopers who keep on top of the latest implants and weapons on the continent.

Enemies of Note: Kimber has his share of political backstabbers and rivals that he has to keep an eye on. They all hope to make him look bad and themselves appear to be brilliant so he will be fired by the Executive Council and/or Emperor and they will be chosen to take his place as Governor. But in the 16 years he's been in office, none of his potential upstart rivals have been successful in this, mostly because he uses his contacts to trip up their efforts.

J.C.K. 3-H, a.k.a. "Jack"

Though some would just say that Jack is just a machine, those who work with him (Jack thinks of himself as a "he") would say otherwise. Jack is a fully sentient Artificial Intelligence and a wonder of CS technology. He knows joy and sorrow, excitement and boredom, love and hate, irritation and humor. Any emotional state that a sentient being made of flesh and blood can feel, Jack is capable of feeling as well. However, none of this is acknowledged by the CS on any level because the existence of the Series-3 J.C.K. super computers is about as classified as things get. Not only do they wish to keep the secret of sentient computers from their enemies, but also the super-tech behind them as well. The Series-3 J.C.K.s are more than just super computers of the highest order. They are Quantum Computers with Photonic Data Matrices that use pulsed light instead of electrical impulses to transmit and process data. In other words, Jack is capable of processing a near infinite number of thoughts, concepts, programs, and strategies simultaneously, and executing them at the speed of light! There isn't a (*known*) computer on the globe that can beat Jack or his siblings in the game of electronic warfare.

Jack's job is to defend the city from intruders outside its walls. To this end, he has been given command of the city's automated defenses and acts like a General over all the lesser A.I. weapon brains. And though he does have human superiors that watch over him and his actions, Jack does have the authority to act without their permission if he deems that there is insufficient time to go through procedures and consult with his human "coworkers." But when he can, Jack will always seek the counsel of his human counterparts for a second opinion and appraisal of the situation, because Jack likes redundancy.



The Series-3 J.C.K. super computers are about two steps removed from the infamous but little known A.R.C.H.I.E 3. Both are sentient machines capable of independent thought and action, and have roughly the same level of intelligence, but the J.C.K. 3 series of A.I. super computers are not as compact as Archie. Jack is a large computer that is made up of three large, bookshelf-sized banks that he likes to think of as his Id, Ego and Super Ego. They are designed to emulate all the neural pathways and functions of the human brain, except they function considerably faster and have vastly more pre-programmed knowledge. Also, another major difference between J.C.K. 3 and A.R.C.H.I.E. 3 is that although though Jack is much more creative, he has no psionic powers. However, this does not mean he and his siblings will never develop psionics. Remember, Archie is over 300 years old, whereas the oldest J.C.K. 3 super computer (there are now a dozen of them) is only 12. Who knows what would happen if they were allowed to remain functional for as long as Archie has?

All the J.C.K.3 super computers, such as New Chillicothe's Jack, develop a very human personality during their first 12 to 18 months from the moment of their initial activation. The personality Jack "H" developed was a light-spirited one filled with optimism and mirth. And over the past 18 months, Jack has become a bit of a prankster. Using his small army of Skelebot workers, the super computer has set up some of the most complex and unbelievably perplexing jokes for his sole amusement, though he does share them with a few select human coworkers who he trusts. His targets range from the poorest of the poor on Level Three to the most wealthy and pious of the upper levels' social elite. The jokes themselves are tailor-made to be the most embarrassing for the

person being played upon. Thus, some of the social elite could find themselves in a very public and embarrassing compromising position, whereas a drug dealing lowlife might find himself set up to be discovered by his illicit associates appearing to be guilty of something they disapprove of. A good example was the time a rich and locally famous businessman went to bed in his lush mansion on Level 20 and woke up in the nude, in a pile of filth and trash down on Level 4, with a tabloid journalist and cameraman hovering over him with a thousand questions. How Jack pulled that one off, none of his coworkers are sure, but they laughed their heads off right alongside Jack.

Of all the people Jack likes to secretly mess with, his absolute favorite targets are data hackers. For his own personal reasons, they just torque him off something fierce. Those who attempt to hack their way into Jack, or even a system he happens to be monitoring at the moment, tend to feel the brunt of Jack's wrath. The super computer instantly tracks the data hacker back to the source and will then unleash one of his super viruses on the hacker's computer. These super computer viruses are of Jack's own design and can do a variety of things depending on the bug he uses. One bug can reprogram the target computer to use any weapons it's connected to and attack the data hacker and everyone in the room. Another can wipe out every trace of data and programming from the computer and have the hard drive completely crash (something that just doesn't happen in 109 P.A.). There's a bug that causes the computer to focus too much power on one part, making it explode, with a force of 4D6 S.D.C. (M.D.C. casings usually contain the blast). He has one that reprograms the hacking computer to use the data hacker's financial recorders in the computer to squander all his money on worthless investments. And that is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg of what Jack enjoys doing to hackers. Unfortunately for data hackers, Jack (and other CS super computers like him) are tempting targets for those who don't know better, since the Coalition doesn't advertise just how advanced and sentient their super computers are.

Alignment: Principled with a prejudiced bias in favor of the CS and their way of life and thinking.

Attributes: I.Q. 25, M.E. 24, M.A. 20.

Computer Attributes: **Utility Ports:** 100. **Power Cell Life:**

Normally draws power from the city's power grid, but has a small nuclear power plant of his own with a 50 year energy life for supplemental and emergency purposes. **Cost:** Top Secret! But estimated to be around a billion credits. The next planned upgrade of the Series-3 J.C.K. super computers, which will triple their functional capabilities, is scheduled to happen in 118 P.A., plus or minus a few years.

M.D.C.: Each of Jack's three armored computer banks is protected by a shell of molecularly bonded plates that utilize three layers of CS Ablative Armor technology, with each layer having 200 M.D.C. As if that there weren't enough, there is also a Triax-derived force field with 500 M.D.C. (recovers at the rate of 10 M.D.C. per hour).

Weight: Each bank weighs 1,200 lbs (540 kg), with all three totaling 1.7 tons.

Age: 4 years and two months, but with minor care and maintenance, Jack could easily live for a few thousand years and then some. However, in all likelihood the Series-3 J.C.K. super computers will be replaced in 100 years after several upgrades and given lesser duties.

Description: The three banks that make up Jack are seven feet tall, three feet wide and two feet thick (2.1 x 0.9 x 0.6 m). They have an opaque, black glassy appearance that is smooth on all sides that lack any visible access panels, monitors or buttons. Internally, Jack's primary components are made up of a labyrinth of small, spherical light-trap regulators, laser relay fiber-optic cables, laser-light quantum splitters, gigawatt pulse laser "liquid light" emitters, and some conventional nano-carbon tubule electronic components. Even the most learned computer programmers and designers in the land would be completely dumbfounded and blown away if they got so much as a glimpse of the cutting-edge tech that they've never dreamed of within Jack's bowels! However, this is not Jack's only face. On monitors, Jack has elected to display an image of a young Hispanic man to represent himself when he talks to his human coworkers and superiors. He's discovered that this gives him a more personable appeal and allows him to interact with humanity on a much more favorable level.

Disposition: Some have said that Jack has the loyalties of a Dog Boy. He always puts the needs of humanity above his own and is ever protective of their ongoing safety, vitality, and livelihood. Jack, like all of the Coalition's J.C.K. 3 super computers, is extremely pro-human and a human supremacist. And since Jack isn't a flesh and blood human, he extends that definition to the creations of man as well, including Dog Boys and himself.

Experience Level: The experience, knowledge, input, memoirs, tactics and strategies of the Coalition's best 1,000 generals and military leaders of the past 100 years have been programmed into him. In addition to that, with the accumulated knowledge, wisdom and tricks of the trade of some of the most learned people the CS has ever had from all walks of life, Jack is the equivalent of a 20th level Military Specialist, 17th level Scholar, and a 15th level City Rat! Even so, Jack has discovered that there is still so much more to learn in the world. To this end, Jack is currently working on (in secret!) a way to remotely reprogram a Skelebot(s) to either carry a downloaded avatar of himself, or function as a walking tele-presence drone that he can use to experience and explore the world beyond his home in New Chillicothe. When he eventually pulls off this trick, he will work his way into the field, experience combat, and see the demons and monsters the CS fights against, firsthand. He'll also see as much of the outside world as he can so he can learn all there is to know. So he can learn everything there is to learn that is *not* available in the vast libraries at his digital fingertips. However, given Jack's human supremacist slant and the Skelebot avatars he will work through, there is a limit to how much he can learn in this way.

Skills of Note: Knows every skill known to the CS at 98% efficiency as programmed by the best the Coalition has to offer. Since his skills are at an imperfect 98% (skill max for everybody), Jack runs through his casual calculations twenty times in less than a split nanosecond before executing the skills' work product, effectively giving him a 1.049×10^{-34} percent chance of error (that's really, *really* small). That's about a one out of every 9.5 *decitillion* (that's with 33 zeros!) executions that end up with a miscalculation. When actually putting an effort into something, Jack could recheck his calculations a thousand or even a million times for absolute certainty. Once, Jack had to focus extra hard to repel and counter an attack from a collective of over 1,000 data hackers at once (from a

large hacker gang/club that has since dissolved), countering with a counter hack using 500 trillion computational checks in a micro-fraction of a second. Not only did he stop the attack, but he managed to send a feedback pulse to each of their computers, causing them *all* to explode in their users' faces. Jack likes redundancy, for a reason.

Combat Skills: Jack is incapable of combat beyond the legion of weapon brains and Skelebot workers he commands. He has no weapon systems under his direct control. However, Jack has been learning how to interface with the other systems of the city and will eventually learn how to take control of them. These systems include the power regulatory systems, life support environmental systems, automated fire suppression systems, entertainment and communications systems, as well as the internal automated defensive weapons and systems.

Allies of Note: Everyone who works with Jack on any level likes his professionalism, charm, wit, and expeditiousness. They have grown to trust the super computer's judgment and have faith in his ability to defend the city from all the many threats that endanger their lives. Also, unknown to all but a small few, all of the J.C.K. series 3 super computers (units "A" through "L") converse with each other over the sub-orbital satellite drone communications network several times a day like the tight-knit family members they are. Should one get in any kind of trouble, the others will instantly know about it unless communications have somehow been cut off or jammed. The others could do a great many things to send aid to their sibling. This could include deploying a legion of spontaneously reprogrammed Skelebots commanded through the SSD com system (a trick only J.C.K.-A "Johnny" of Chi-Town and J.C.K.-B "Jacqueline" of Lone Star have figured out), advising their duty officer to send in the nearest Field Army to help, or even firing off some of their own cities' long-range missiles to counterattack enemy forces from afar using telemetry from their distressed sibling for targeting solutions. However, because the sentient computers are extremely loyal to the CS, they would never act against the Coalition or its people, so there is no chance of them using their computing powers to endanger or usurp control from their human masters.

Enemies of Note: Due to Jack's mean streak when it comes to data hackers, he has made more than a few enemies who are proficient with their powerful computers. But since Jack and his eleven sibling super computers are vastly more powerful than any computer or program the data hackers can throw at him, and the fact that they really have no idea what they're messing with, he has little to fear from them. It would take another super computer of his caliber or greater to threaten him in a duel of data hacking and counter hacking. Even in the middle of a major fight where most of his attention is devoted to command the city's defenses, Jack has more than enough power to fend off a thousand of the best hacker-attacks at once.

New Chillicothe 'Burbs

Like all fortress cities, New Chillicothe has a large gathering of human squatters that surround the city where permitted. The NC 'Burbs hug the walled city like a horseshoe on all sides except to the west, where the installation of the temporary Army Air Corps base Crimson Field was erected, displacing thousands

in the process. But those who live in any 'Burbs know Rule #1: CS interests come first.

Unlike other 'Burbs, the one around New Chillicothe is one of the cleanest and most economically vibrant of its kind. Many perfectly respectable people work and live in the NC 'Burbs, including a few from the fortress city itself. With the existence of such businesses like CSA and the new NG auto plant, a fair portion of the city's economy flows from the 'Burbs, helping many CS citizens stay gainfully employed. In fact, that was one of the reasons the city's mayor and state's governor agreed to let these businesses open shop in the first place. Because they agreed to give CS citizens preferential employment opportunities.

Places of Note

1. Chillicothe Special Armaments

Founded by Dr. Mark Azier, one of Chi-Town's previous leading small arms weapons designers, CSA is a weapons manufacturer like no other. The idea behind the firearms of CSA is that the weapons they produce are not meant to be used by the military, but the common guy who doesn't need a hand cannon that can blast through a person and the twenty people behind him. These are low damage, low cost firearms that are ideal for defensive situations of the common man or woman.

The factory is a large complex on the north side of the 'Burbs that is custom made from M.D.C. concrete and has a super-charged electric fence (2D4 M.D. per touch) surrounding it topped by Vibro-Razor Wire (1D6 M.D. per touch, ten times as much per melee round if entangled in it). Security beyond the fence is also pretty tight, with moonlighting CS soldiers and Dog Boys walking the grounds both inside the building and along the fence line. And for the crowning touch, security cameras are posted everywhere, covering every inch of ground possible, making it difficult to gain unlawful entry. The reason for all this is very simple. Inside the building are over a hundred million credits worth of electronics and machinery that would fetch a good price on the Black Market. Not to mention the arsenal of weapons and munitions in storage that represent a vast investment of time, money and resources for their makers.

Behind the scenes, there is more than a little politicking that goes on to keep the factory's doors open and the flow of arms going out. For starters, there is a small but very vocal activist group that wants CSA closed down because of who they sell and market their weapons to. Namely CS citizens inside the towns and cities, as well as those in the countryside. They claim that these weapons make it more appealing to own and carry weapons which are then used in less than civilized ways because the temptation to use it is too great. It doesn't matter that the facts do not mesh well with their assertions since they prefer to make up their own facts or mangle pre-existing studies and present it as canon. Most of these people are among the wealthy social elite and have never been victimized in their lives and enjoy spending their time "fighting for a worthy cause," usually at the expense of the truth. In their pursuits they have even converted a small section of the middle-class workers into believing their crusade has some merit. Of course, very few of these converts include those in the law enforcement community since they know full well that better than 99% of the time, there is little they can do to

stop a crime from happening in the first place, only mop up the mess afterwards. But having an armed citizenry actually makes their jobs easier and the overall community safer since robbers and thugs don't know who's armed and dangerous to attempt to rob, rape and/or kill, and who's not. Those on the lower levels know this and find it to be a good crime deterrent. Others don't care about that so much, instead worrying about monsters that occasionally find their way into the city to feed on human prey. So keeping these attitudes in mind, those on the middle to lower levels tend to be better customers than those on the higher levels. However, this is not to say the rich are not well armed. They just prefer to have their bodyguards and servants carry their weapons and protect their wealthy employers from all harm. Meanwhile, the social elite get to tell themselves that they need the protective value of firearms because their status and riches makes them more tempting targets. It's not true, but since when have the rich cared about the truth, especially in the CS?

This has led to a problem for Mark Azier. Though the CS government has no problem with what he does for a living, a few radical fanatics have begun a campaign of political terrorism against him and his company. They are trying to make it look as though he was secretly selling arms to New Lazlo and Kingsdale! If this were true, which it isn't, not only would the CS shut down CSA forever more, but Dr. Azier would be thrown in jail for treason and executed as a traitor to his country! However, because those responsible for this attempted ruse are financed by high level social elites, he is reluctant to start pointing fingers. Slander may not be a serious crime, but should he accuse the wrong people, they can make life even more difficult for him. So in order to get to the bottom of this, he decided to hire some freelance people not connected to the CS to investigate this (*Adventure alert! Adventure alert!*). Using his connections, Azier can get them guest passes into the city to poke around there. And with them being non-Coalition people, entering Kingsdale and New Lazlo shouldn't be a problem. But no matter what they find, no matter where they go, he needs them to bring back proof of what's going on.

G.M. Notes: Dr. Azier's problem is not stemming from the wealthy anti-firearms activists. Getting involved with the kind of people that can do this is illegal and far too dangerous for them. They know full well that all their wealth and power wouldn't save their lives should they be caught. Especially since those who are perpetrating this smear job are actually selling CSA made weapons to the enemy. And that is something no CS citizen wants to get mixed up in, lest they want to be shot in the back of the head execution style after a very public trial. Needless to say, any investigation in New Chillicothe will result in no leads.

However, if the characters use the sales receipts at CSA headquarters, they will find a few suspiciously large orders. Though most of them will pan out as being legitimate, one of them will allow the adventurers to trace an order to one Mr. Jonathan Dough. Mr. Dough's large order was to be shipped to a warehouse on the south end of town by Rockwood Harbor, which was then, according to the records at the harbor master's shack, put on a barge that went down river destined for the town of South Bay. Logically following the trail to South Bay's docks, the characters will discover that their records show that no such cargo was unloaded there, but on the day that the barge should have pulled in, there was a large shipment of Chillicothe Whiskey unloaded on the other end. The unloaded whiskey just so happened to have the exact same listed weight of the crate of weapons, and that crate

was signed for by one Mr. Jonathan Dough. According to the harbor master in South Bay, that crate was picked up by two guys in a hover truck and took off to the south. Also, he remembers that the truck looked like a rental from a local trucking service called Starlight Freight.

The guys at Starlight Freight are not as forthcoming with their client information as the others thus far. They have a client confidentiality policy that they adhere to quite strongly. To get the information on their computers, the characters will have three options. First of all, the characters can try to find someone they can pay off (like a janitor or secretary), but this will take no less than 25,000 credits. Option two is breaking in after hours and trying to hack their way into the computer. However, with their encryption codes being as good as they are, all Computer Hacking skill rolls are at a -25% to succeed. Also, there are two security guards to contend with (3rd level Headhunters). Option three is the simple, tried and true, kick in the door and make them give information at gunpoint. But this will not be a cakewalk, since during office hours there are four guards on duty. Regardless of how the information is obtained, it will show that the truck was rented by man named Trenton, and list his home address and destination as a location in the Cross 'Burbs, but the mileage on the returned vehicle was more consistent with a trip to and from Kingsdale.

Because the CS Army out of Cross is conducting maneuvers, Kingsdale is in a state of high alert. They are not permitting anyone to come or go from the kingdom. They are, however, always hiring mercenaries for their army. This could turn out to be an advantageous thing for the characters because not only will it gain them access to the kingdom's interior and allow them to snoop around, but they may be able to get some free E-Clip recharges and their armor mended. However, should they be away from their posts for too long, they will be listed as AWOL and the kingdom's military police will start looking for them. So either the characters can play soldier while the CS plays its games and investigate on their off time, or they can ditch their new day job and look for the mysterious Mr. Trenton. One will take longer, but the other could make things a lot harder.

After some questioning of the locals, one Black Market arms dealer working out of the back of a van will recognize the name. The dealer will mention how annoyed he is over this Trenton guy (a Quick-Flex Alien) moving in on his business, selling these cheap guns all over town. As the characters gather that Trenton usually peddles his weapons in the alley behind Scooter's Bar and Grill, he will offer to sell them some really nice weapons at a cream puff price. Everything is half off since business is slow due to Trenton practically giving away his weapons, and times are rough for the Black Market dealer. "Everything's practically brand new and only been dropped once!"

Just like the guy said, Trenton is there behind the bar, selling off the CSA weapons at a *tenth* of their fair market value. He and his three (or more?) hired goons (a Juicer, a Zapper and a spell caster) appear to have sold off all but a few dozen weapons of the original shipment. And to make matters worse, he and his hired muscle are all wearing CSA caps and have a sign that reads "CSA introductory sale" strung across the alley. There's no doubt of what Trenton is up to. The only questions that remain are, why and for whom? Assuming that the characters successfully shut down the operation (peacefully or by force, but Trenton, a Quick-Flex Alien Headhunter, will most likely resort to violence), a follow up interrogation will get him to reveal that he was just using

that angle to get some payback on Azier. Apparently, the grounds the CSA factory was built on was also the home of over a thousand people, including Trenton's family. During the protests of the area being cleared out, Trenton's family were uncovered for the D-Bees they were and were killed on the spot by Dead Boy soldiers. Trenton blames Azier because, if not for him and his business, the area would never have been cleared out and his family would still be alive today.

2. Northern Gun Vehicle Production Plant

It took Governor Kimber over a decade of wheeling and dealing to talk the executives at Northern Gun to do it, but the crafty Governor of Missouri negotiated a great deal for his state. The deal he struck was for them to come down from their peninsula in the Great Lakes and establish a satellite production plant in the New Chillicothe 'Burbs, bringing much needed jobs to the area and boosting the local economy. The only catch was the NG executives insisted that the state provide them with suitable facilities that they could put their machining tools and assembly lines in. Also, the state would have to provide them with a powerful nuclear energy power core capable of filling the plant's great energy needs. All of that took some doing, but Governor Kimber came through and met all of their demands. One month after the war in Tolkeen came to a conclusion, the plant was opened, employing 4,500 people and bringing a renewed economic vitality to the NC 'Burbs.

Northern Gun decided to play it safe for a while since they really didn't expect Governor Kimber to come through with their costly demands. So instead of equipping the plant to produce their usual line of weapons, power armor and robot vehicles, they elected that this was the perfect opportunity to put something new on the market. Something that would sell well in the region and make their inventory more diversified. They set up the plant to produce commercial vehicles that would appeal to the less adventurous lot that inhabited the towns and farming communities of Missouri. This proved to be a tremendous idea that earned them billions in profits. So much so that they expanded the plant out of their own pockets to add a production line for their new "Hex 800 Kodiak" and a few of their rocket cycles for adventurers and those living in hazardous areas.

Today the Northern Gun plant of the New Chillicothe 'Burbs employs in excess of 12,000 people and is the biggest producer of commercial and passenger vehicles on the market. Using the Grand River on the southern edge of the 'Burbs and CSN patrol boats as their escorts, they can deliver the plant's products to just about anywhere in the Domain of Man. If all continues to go as well as it has thus far, Northern Gun's executives plan on adding a few power armor production lines to the plant in a year or two.

3. Fort Grand

To the south of the fortress city and the NC 'Burbs is a small CSN Marine base called Fort Grand. The purpose of this base is to provide protection to commercial vessels from river pirates along the entire length of the Grand River, but they actually cover the full length of the Missouri River as well. In addition to that, they also patrol the entire network of connecting rivers looking

for monsters lurking in the depths of the fresh waters who are, in turn, hunting who or whatever they can find for food, entertainment, or whatever the beasts feel like. But still, such creatures are secondary targets when river pirate activity is reported.

The commanding officer of this base is a woman named Commander Deloris Leachman, one of the few officers in the CSN Mississippi Command, aka the Brown Water 3rd fleet. Leachman was appointed to the position three years ago by the then Captain Saunders because like him, she was born and raised on the river and knew every inch of it like the back of her hand. And she hates river pirates every bit as much as he does. However, unlike Saunders, who has intimate knowledge of the Mississippi, she is an expert on the Missouri River and all its veins and connecting lesser rivers, streams, and brooks.

Fort Grand, like the rest of the Brown Water navy, is overworked and even more so undermanned. They have a total of 420 people who make up no more than three companies under the current command structure. But what they lack in manpower, these tough Marines more than make up for in experience and ability (ranging from 4th to 10th level Naval Infantryman with a level 6 average). They usually go out in squad strength units and occasionally at platoon strength, and rarer still with a full company, but never more. To commit with anything more would leave them far too vulnerable in other places, making things too inviting for the river pirates. Fort Grand has only used a company sized attack force twice in its entire history; once to destroy a river pirate fortification with over 100 men in it, and recently to attack the notorious pirate ship, *the Bloody Prosek's Revenge*, in which they failed to destroy the flamboyant ship. The following is a listing of what all is assigned to Fort Grand. Most of the time, 85% of the units are either on patrol or on S&D assignments and not at the base.

- Sea SAMAS – 114 (three platoons)
- CS Jet Skis – 40 (one full platoon)
- Wave Demons – 65 (two platoons)
- Barracuda Modular Patrol Boats – 10
- Stingray Mini-Subs – 3 (expressly used by Nautical Commando teams only)
- Sea Wasp/Demon Locust Helicopters – 4 (one squadron)
- RTL Commandos – 40 (one full platoon)
- Nautical Commando Specialists – 18 (three teams)

4. Rockwood Harbor

Using the river system to transport commerce is a practice that goes back well over a century for the people of the land. Accordingly, Rockwood Harbor is a structure that is about a hundred years older than New Chillicothe itself, and over the decades has only grown in leaps and bounds. Today the harbor is where a sizable portion of the city's and 'Burbs' commercial products are sent to for export to and from the other states via the Mississippi River. The harbor is capable of docking up to 12 CSN Supply-Class Merchant Marine Transports and fishing trawlers, and loading or unloading their cargo can be done in a matter of hours with a good deal of mechanized assistance. In an average week, up to four ships come and go, exchanging up to 60,000 tons of cargo. In a busy week, all 12 of the docks can be filled and 180,000 tons of cargo can be swapped, but they only have two or three busy weeks a year.

Right by the docks is a small warehouse district laid out in a grid-like formation. Being fourteen warehouses wide and three long, with each being 40 feet (12.2 m) wide and 400 feet (122 m) long, plus wide access roads, the whole district takes up 860 feet (262 m) to the east and west and 1,260 feet (384 m) to the north and south. This gives the merchant marines ample space to store their goods so they can be brought into the city and 'Burbs at a later time, and a place for the dock workers to stage the goods they have to load on the outgoing transport ships. It's a working system that allows them to keep things organized and everything flowing at a good pace.

A man named George Samson currently runs the harbor and all its day to day operations. Under his ever watchful eye there is very little that goes on there that he doesn't either know about or have his fingers in. He keeps a tight ship, so to speak, and likes to keep his records neat and accurate. That is, the ones that the CS and law enforcement officials need to see now and then. In reality, George is not only the harbor master of Rockwood, but also the Black Market's top ranking man in the NC 'Burbs and New Chillicothe itself! Using his absolute authority of exactly what gets entered into the records, and what false information gets entered, George is in the perfect position to have contraband smuggled through the harbor at any time of the day or night. Those who do notice something off or stumble onto his illegal operations are given two choices, join the payroll and do some work, or go on an "indefinite" fishing trip.

However, not all is going well for George and his harbor. Recently, a rash of robberies from the warehouses have been cutting into business, both legal and otherwise. Some of George's boys recently found out who the culprits were. As it turned out, a street gang had been looting the cargo goods in storage for small but precious commodities and escaping with jet packs. After a little investigating, George found out that the gang called themselves the "Mud Waters" and used an old, run-down tavern as their hangout. Since they started taking his caches of illegal drugs and weapons, George figured they must have known what the harbor's alternate business was, so he decided to extend the same offer he gives everyone who discovers this, join up or die. The messenger was found dead in one of the warehouses the following night. Obviously, they didn't like either option. This sent George on the warpath and ordered all 19 of his boys to suit up in power armor so they could take the Mud Waters out. However, after a little recon work he quickly discovered that the direct approach wouldn't work. The Mud Waters have over 100 members to their gang, and all of them are deadly killers! A gang war was not the answer.

For the last three months, George and his band of cohorts have been tolerating the continued looting of their most lucrative goods. In the meantime, George has sent out feelers throughout the 'Burbs, looking for people who could help solve his problem. He doesn't care if these people kill 'em all or use guile to have them taken care of in some other way. Regardless, he has a standing offer of 100,000 credits plus expenses to anyone who can put an end to this.

G.M.'s Notes: Since the frontal assault approach would most likely result in the characters getting killed, they must find a way to handle this band of thugs in some other way. The Mud Water gang is as ruthless as they are greedy. But their leaders are not stupid and will not be tricked easily. One possible way to take care of them is to somehow get the ISS to clean them out. The

player characters may be outgunned, but the Coalition is not. Another way could be to take them out one at a time and use terror tactics to get them to disband. But if this is the path the characters go, there is a chance that this could backfire and bring down the wrath of the rest of the gang members. Every method has its risks.

5. The Cold, Dead Hand

Located in the middle of the 'Burbs is this shop of used weapons, armor and equipment. As the store's name implies, everything for sale was pried out of the cold, dead hands of someone else. Obviously, the main suppliers of the shop are bandits of all sorts and the most base of thieves. However, for those who are willing to look past where the goods were acquired from, many great deals can be found here.

Most of the items only have 50% to 75% of their M.D.C./S.D.C. in them due to their previous owners being roughed up or killed in their appropriation. But other than that, they all are in perfectly fine operating condition and have been inspected to ensure that their functionality or quality had not been internally impaired. Goods purchased here are usually 25% to 40% their original going price, making them great buys. And to ensure that the buyer doesn't have his new but slightly used toy taken away in the same way it found its way to the store, the buyers are given a pin they can wear that marks them as "hands off" from the store's usual bunch of cutthroat suppliers for up to a full year. In fact, a few smart people make sure they buy something from the store every year just for the pin, which is sometimes better than the weapon they bought to ward off evil.

In the back of the store is a complete Cyber Chop-Shop that gets its supply of bionics and cybernetics from local Cyber Snatchers. Because those looking to buy a bionic appendage or a Partial to Full Conversion do not want greatly damaged parts, the prices are a bit higher because some repairs have to be made. So although the prices are still a steal at 50% to 70% of their original price (including the Cyber Doc's fees), they are as much of a deal as the things in the front of the store. However, there is a trade-off for such cheap bionics. Those who get their cybernetics or bionics here rarely get matching limbs. That costs extra by a full 25% more, making this place's parts even less of a deal for those more concerned about style than functionality. But for the guy on a budget, who isn't picky about looks and who can put his conscience on hold, the Cold, Dead Hand is a hell of a place to find a good deal.

6. The House of Baja

Established twelve years ago by an entrepreneuring Psi-Stalker (retired CS military) by the name of William "The Mutt" Baja, this place of business is a nightclub like no other in the state. Seeing the success of places like the illegal Juicer Bars that cater to an exclusive clientele, Baja got the idea to make a place that caters to the wild whims and tastes of the Coalition's large population of Psi-Hounds. When off-duty, Dog Boy soldiers are allowed to engage in leisure activities on the condition that they are never too far from the base in the event an emergency situation arises and they need to be recalled. However, one of the problems the mutant animals encounter time and time again is that many places in the city, and even in the 'Burbs, refuse to serve or even admit non-humans such as themselves. And the places that do often have so many humans in them that they feel like they're

never truly off duty, that they really should be serving their masters in some capacity. Thus, this warehouse-turned-nightclub was born as a "dogs only" getaway where Psi-Hounds can just be themselves and have a good time, even though humans and Psi-Stalkers are welcome to come in if they dare.

Located on the edge of where Shadow Fall and Whiskey Town meet, the House of Baja is the place where Dog Boys go to cut loose and have a good time. And while a few humans occasionally come in to see what all the fuss is all about, they rarely stay when things start to get wild. One of the things that some people might find objectionable is the décor. For over a decade the more renowned Psi-Hounds have made it a practice of further enhancing their reputation by mounting the heads of their greatest kills on the walls! In fact, to encourage this, William Baja hired himself an in-house taxidermist so the heads could be properly stuffed and mounted on plaques, preserved for decades to come. Another thing the Dog Boys enjoy that sometimes spook off their human partners is when the liquor flows, when the music gets thumping, and when their pulses start to pound, they get rowdy. Very rowdy! Fights are not uncommon, though serious injuries and fatalities are. These aren't fights in the conventional sense, but more a form of "dog play" that one might observe in normal canines when they get playful with one another. However, on occasion, some of the more aggressive dogs (like Kill Hounds) take things too far and the blood starts to flow. And then there's the occasions (once or twice a month) when some of the dogs bring in a "Chew Toy." Chew Toy is their term of endearment for a D-Bee or lesser demon that someone drags in from the streets. This poor, soon-to-be-living-the-last-few-hours-of-his/her-life-in-agonizing-pain creature is bound and strapped to a wall or suspended from the ceiling like a pinata, and then brutalized and humiliated for hours, all for the Psi-Hounds' enjoyment. None of them survive. With all this going on in this place, it's little wonder why D-Bees and most humans give the House of Baja a wide berth, especially at night, when the dogs' howls of excitement can be heard baying at the moon.

7. Ol' Rob's Inn

Established the day after construction of New Chillicothe began, this place of business has been catering to transients for over 50 years. The three-story building is host to several pleasantries. On its floor level there is a nice restaurant in one corner, and a dance club/bar occupying the rest. Because of the tremendous noise of the dance club, that entire area has been completely soundproofed so the others in the rest of the building won't be disturbed. On the second and third floors there are 60 rooms for people to sleep and stay in while in the NC 'Burbs. The rates are quite reasonable at 35 credits a night or 210 per week. That gets one a room with 240 square feet, a queen-sized bed and fresh linens every day, breakfast every morning, access to every entertainment channel on the CS communications network, and a full bathroom.

The place is run by Tim Robinson, Rob's son, and has been ever since his dad retired five years ago. The place is and always will be a family business that Tim plans to pass on along to his girl, Tanya. And one day, Tim knows she'll stop denying her fate and begin to learn the ins and outs of running the inn. Unfortunately, Tanya is more interested in pursuing a life as an adventurer in general and a Gunfighter specifically. She's even expressed an interest in moving to the New West to pursue her

dream of excitement and glory. In the meantime, Tim is busy making a new kid as a backup plan, while hoping she survives her thirst for the wild life of a hired gun.

8. Lion's Head Bar

The Lion's Head is located on the east side of the fortress city in Shadow Fall and blends in with the nice and well kept up buildings there. Inside is a nice and comfortable bar that plays soft mood music for atmosphere and has a circular bar in the middle with a leather padded railing around it. Of course, this is all window dressing for the place's real purpose.

This common looking bar serves as the hangout of a sophisticated gang named "the Reds." Unlike the barbaric Mud Waters, a gang that terrorizes the 'Burbs, the Reds are more of an organized crime family and in it for the long haul. That means that they do not go around doing things that will draw attention to themselves. They do not engage in gang wars over territory, nor do they make overt actions intended to intimidate their neighbors into staying quiet and not calling in the authorities on them, which never works for long. Instead, they prefer to conduct their illicit business dealings as quietly as possible while building a clientele that comes to them to engage in a little "victimless crime."

In the back is a dingy concrete staircase that leads to a basement level where all the real fun is. After flashing a membership card, a person who is recognized by the doorman can gain entry to the real Lion's Head. Here one can drink, have whatever drug of choice desired, eat the most lavish of foods, gamble at an assortment of games, dance to the live band in the far corner, or rent a little "intimate companionship" for an hour or so. Below the soundproofed, smell-proofed, and thermo-shielded basement is a sub-basement with rooms where prostitutes can do their work on one side, and a large storeroom and office space on the other. This is the true lair of the Reds. Down here they count their money, partake in some indulgences, and hold their secret meetings.

The whole purpose of 'The Reds' organization is to conduct the daily operations of the Lion's Head without having one person easily being identified as the ringleader of this den of vices. All of them take turns in showing up to be the manager, the bartenders above and below, the bouncers, the pit bosses, the dealers at the tables, the pimp or madam over the prostitutes, and drug vendor. There are also those who work the streets and contacts to procure all the drugs and alcohol they need, and those who go out to sell membership cards to people recommended by one of the Reds or a well-known client. All of them do a small part to contribute to the big picture. Not enough to draw a lot of attention to the Lion's Head, and not enough to be noticed as a collective or gang, but just enough to make it all come together. And with their overlapping fields and redundancies, no one man is an essential part of the gang, and thus suspected traitors to the Reds can be dealt with harshly and immediately. Also, it should be noted that the Reds have no one leader, but instead do things democratically by vote at their secret meetings. But there are a few leader types who put forward all the good ideas and those that go along with them.

9. Shadow Fall

This section of the 'Burbs is called Shadow Fall because the mountain of steel and concrete called New Chillicothe casts its shadow over the area hours before sunset. The area hugs the side

of the fortress city and extends out a good mile before the more moderate income and crime area of Twilight begins. Shadow Fall is the richest part of the NC 'Burbs, though it is not as nice as City Side in the Chi-Town 'Burbs.

Being a neighborhood of wealthy people, Shadow Fall does not have the crime problems common throughout the rest of the 'Burbs. Because the CS has made it illegal for any kind of militia force to exist in any of the 'Burbs, a conventional security force to keep the peace and supplement the ISS is not allowed. However, the crafty people did find a way around this to make their streets and homes safer. Though they cannot have their own private police force which would constitute a militia, they can pay CS troops loyal to the Coalition to watch their streets for them while off duty. These moonlighting troops often use their own issued weapons in the course of their second unofficial job, but the people of Shadow Fall supply them with suits of Triax Explorer EBA and a few Triax Predator PA suits. This is mainly because although the soldiers' commanding officers don't mind them using their spare time to earn some extra funds, they dislike it when they bring in armor damaged in these pursuits.

The brainchild behind this security measure was a man who calls himself Senator Elite Charlton Blazden. Blazden is a self-made multi-millionaire who made his fortune by renting out a sizable mercenary troupe called the Missouri Regulators to the highest bidder. And during the Tolkeen War, that just so happened to be the CS. But aside from that, Blazden is a man of peace who wants nothing more than a safe place to call home. And of course, the only way to ensure that is to be the man in charge. So after a little string pulling, he organized a local governmental ruling body called the Senate that imposed local taxes in Shadow Fall and rules over how that money should be spent. And as any government needs a leader, so it was determined that the Senate members (all 16 of them) would elect a Senator Elite from among them. For the past 5 years, that has been Charlton Blazden. Since any governmental body in the 'Burbs is not recognized by the CS, but is tolerated in the name of peace and order, Blazden is the absolute ruler of his neck of the woods, but no further. Then again, he never wanted anything more.

10. Ever Night

The area of the 'Burbs called Ever Night is located between the west side of the fortress city and the more dilapidated and ultra-poor area of Whiskey Town. Ever Night gets its name due to the fact that the night seems to go on for several hours into the day as the shadow of New Chillicothe blots out the rising sun. The area is a fair place to live and is peopled by middle income families and small but legitimate businesses. However, because the people who live here are not rich or well organized, the place is not as safe as Shadow Fall. Once the sun goes down, the criminal element comes out to earn a living on the street corners.

The dominant authority on the Night's streets is a well organized gang called the Hellwalkers. This gang is effectively the police and governing body over Ever Night. They dictate who does what and where, as well as hear grievances from the normal folk just trying to get by. This does not mean that this area of the NC 'Burbs is completely lawless, it's just run by the lawless who keep relative peace and order as they see fit. And though there are those who disobey their rules and do as they please, in order to keep the people happy and the protection taxes coming in with

a minimal of fuss, the Hellwalkers make sure these rogues don't remain active for long.

The leader of the Hellwalkers is a woman named Diablo Jansen. Pris Jansen is the sixth person to hold the title of Diablo in the 30 years this particular gang has been around. She and her six lieutenants keep all their soldiers in line, and in turn they keep the rest of the criminal element from getting out of control. Of course, they do tolerate criminal activity in Ever Night, so long as they get their 35% cut. But what they don't like are criminals making life hard for the normal law-abiding people who just want a peaceful and normal life. Such people pay the Hellwalkers 250 credits a month per household for protection against such crooks. But home invasion burglaries, rapes, assaults and murders make it harder to get people to pay up when this happens to them. To counter this, as a penalty for those who wrong a person who's protection is paid up, the offender is brought to the one he wronged and the victim is allowed to do his or her worst, shy of killing him, as the Hellwalkers hold the scumbag down. Multiple offenders are jailed and publicly executed during a quarterly block party the Hellwalkers hold to boost public morale and relations.

However, as well controlled as the Hellwalkers have things in Ever Night, they are having problems from the sector to the west. A more reckless and brazen gang called the Dragon Skins are trying to move in on their borough by force. Normally, the Hellwalkers would just stomp them into oblivion, but there are two major problems. First of all, the upstart gang seems to be under the protection of a corrupt band of ISS peacekeepers from Precinct 68. Every time the Hellwalkers make a move, the boys in black are there to put them down. This has given the Dragon Skins the ability to use hit and run tactics against them to hurt their business and slowly whittle the Hellwalkers' numbers down one at a time. The second major problem is that about a quarter of the Dragon Skins are actually Dragon Juicers! While the rest of the gang members only wear dragon hide armor, this cadre of shock troopers are ideal for incursions into Ever Night for acts of quasi-terrorism against Hellwalker operations. With even their leader Diablo Pris Jansen at her wits' end, they are beginning to look for outside help (*hint hint!*).

G.M.'s Notes: The characters' job, should they chose to accept it, would be to find a way to either stop the Dragon Skins from trying to take over Ever Night, or find a way to remove their ISS protection so the Hellwalkers can move in without bringing the wrath of the entire ISS on them. In exchange for services rendered, they would be deemed "friends of the Hellwalkers" and made honorary members of the gang, plus a bucket full of money.

11. Whiskey Town

This dilapidated and grimy section of the 'Burbs is where the poorest of the poor live. Whiskey Town is located to the west of Ever Night and has more than its share of gangs, punks, pimps and prostitutes, drug dealers, and lowlife scum. Crime is rampant here and the gangs are too small and too disorganized to bring order to the borough. In fact, the frequent gang wars often precipitate and entrench the criminal element here and make Whiskey Town a miserable place to live.

There are over 20 gangs that roam the streets in Whiskey Town who always seem to be at odds with each other. The biggest and most powerful four are the Dems, a band of D-Bees who refuse to take a back seat to humans, the Bad Street Bastards, a group

of orphans who think of each other as family, the Blade Boys, a basic gang of street toughs who think they own the place, and the Syrens, a gang out to make money any way possible. Of them all, the worst of the lot is the Bad Street Bastards. Mainly because their primary way of getting new recruits is to find homeless kids and kill their parents, and then tell the kid, "They left you, kid. Join us." A close second of the worst gangs here is the Blade Boys, merely because they commit violent crimes simply in the name of extending their territory and domain of control. Their actions often spark off and perpetuate the never ending gang wars that often claim the lives of more innocents in the crossfire than other gang members.

The one ray of hope in Whiskey Town is another gang... the gang in black... the ISS Precinct 73 police. Dead in the middle of this crime-ridden area is a CS police station devoted to at least trying to keep the peace. The commanding officer is an inexperienced Lieutenant named Laura Dresden who has no clue of how to handle the overwhelming crime wave in this area without taking a bulldozer to it, which she doesn't want to do. Fortunately, Dresden seldom has to make the hard calls and takes her lead from her top NCO, Master Sergeant Roy Kowalsowitz, or "Cold Wall Dread," as he's been come to be called throughout Whiskey Town. Roy has been a Full Conversion Cyborg for over 40 years, and has many times more combat experience than anyone in the entire NC 'Burbs. Using his considerable skill and ability, and taking advantage of the fact that he is tough as a tank and packs as much firepower, Cold Wall Dread takes on the gangs and criminal element head-on. And backed by as little as a platoon to up to a company of ISS troops at a time, very few survive his cullings. Thanks to Kowalsowitz's tireless labors, Whiskey Town is slowly becoming a safer place to live, especially by the precinct house, but Roy and his devoted ISS troops are fighting a battle that they may never fully win.

However, Kowalsowitz has become so well known he has become a target of the Blade Boys gang. There have been many attempts on his life in the past six months. The most recent of which has resulted in the abduction of his very good friend, Darien O'Hare. This has sent Cold Wall Dread on the warpath, which has quickly escalated into the bloodiest fighting Whiskey Town has seen in its entire history. The only way to stop the fighting and bring life back down to a dull roar again is if someone (**cough, Adventure, cough**) found where the Blade Boys are keeping O'Hare, bust him loose and get him back to the 73 Precinct, safe and sound. There is no monetary reward for this one, but it could get a very powerful ally in Whiskey Town, namely Master Sergeant Roy Kowalsowitz.

12. Sol Markets

Located between New Chillicothe proper and Rockwood Harbor, just south of the fortress city, Sol Markets is the semi-official business district of the NC 'Burbs. The area is so named because it was decided that the best place for anyone to set up shop was by the part of the city that had the most southern exposure, thus getting the most daylight for business hours. And with the place being right by the docks, the markets here are always stocked with the freshest foods in the 'Burbs.

Though there are some crime problems in this section of the 'Burbs, there are no gangs running around causing troubles and forcing businesses to pay protection money. This is because of

two factors. First, because so many people depend on this area to earn a living and get by, the ISS patrols this sector well and has three precincts in the area. From these station houses, the Coalition police force keeps the criminal element pretty much under control and out of the people's faces. The other reason why there are no gangs squeezing the merchants for money is because of the S.M.M.A. Established in 82 P.A., the Sol Markets Merchant Association is a kind of mutual defense force of store owners who come to the aid of their fellow members. They are not a militia of any kind, but more of a vigilante justice mob that singles out the troublemakers and has them eliminated. Sometimes they pool their cash and hire a mercenary to do their dirty work, sometimes they wait for the offenders to come into their area and lynch them in broad daylight! But either way, the gangs and general criminals have learned to stay away from them. Sol Markets is host to a large variety of stores that people are free to shop in. The most prominent of which are:

Born Again Guns is a dealer in used and honestly acquired secondhand weapons. The store specializes in restoring damaged weapons to their original condition and reselling them. Costs tend to be 10% to 20% below their original prices.

Missouri Mules is the only dealer in the NC 'Burbs who sells riding horses and robotic horses, and offers Partial and Full Bionic Conversions for horses. See *Rifts® WB 3: England* for bionics prices and *New West™* for robot horse prices. Horses run around 2,000-8,000 credits.

Miller's Market, the biggest and best meat and produce vender in the 'Burbs.

Operetta, a complete music instrument and music disk/download vender.

Threadus Maximus, seller of the most fashionable and trendy clothes around.

People of Note

Commander Deloris Leachman

Being the Commanding Officer of Fort Grand, Leachman is a very busy and highly stressed person. She has been charged with the monstrous task of protecting the entire Grand River and keeping it safe for commercial traffic. But unofficially, she is really responsible and accountable for the security of the entire Missouri River. This isn't an easy job, and in fact, it's even tougher than it should be. Her job would be a ton more productive and her progress more maintainable if the Coalition States Department of the Navy (also called the CSN and DON) would fully acknowledge the Mississippi Command as the official 3rd Fleet. But since they haven't, she and her fellows in the Brown Water Navy must suffer and make due with leftovers and hand-me-down equipment that they manage to scrape together to make up their fleet. To this end, much of Leachman's job is to schmooze with the many quartermasters of the CSN to coax and bribe them to give her the vehicles, power armor, weapons and other equipment she needs for her boys and girls to get the job done.

Born in the town of Shari near the mouth of the Grand River on the Missouri, Deloris was raised to be a river rat by her merchant marine father. She has grown to know the Missouri River and all its joining rivers, lakes and such like she knows her own face. After her father was killed by river pirates, she joined the



Nautical Specialists Service just so she could fight and kill monsters like the ones that killed her daddy. After years of service she was hand picked by Admiral Saunders, CO of the Brown Water-Mississippi Command and the CSN's unofficial 3rd Fleet, for the position she now holds.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 23, M.A. 20, P.S. 13, P.P. 15, P.E. 19, P.B. 6, Spd 26.

Hit Points: 50, **S.D.C.:** 48.

Height: 5 feet, 3 inches (1.6 m). **Weight:** 105 (47.3 kg).

Age: 42

Description: Deloris may have an attractive personality and soul, but despite her slender build and adequate body form, she is not an attractive woman. She has a face that looks like she fell down the ugly tree and hit every branch along the way. Her complexion is pasty white because every time she tries to get a tan all her skin wants to do is freckle, so she basically gave up in a natural tan and is trying melanin pills with little success. Her nose is thin and long from the front but huge and hawkish from the side, which offsets her beady black eyes. She considered getting a nose job but she likes the way her voice sounds (both speaking and singing) and doesn't want to mess it up. Also, Deloris occasionally forgets to take her thyroid medication and sometimes gets a bit of a hairy lip and peach-fuzz beard, but she never forgets to put on a modicum of makeup to look "not so horrific," nor does she ever forget to pluck out her uni-brow.

Disposition: Leachman is devoted to her job and the ends that it was set out to meet. She is a dedicated worker, a decisive and

concise leader, a well-read strategist, tactician and a master of unconventional logistics. Because of her leadership qualities and the fact that she does not arbitrarily send her men and women out to die, she is well liked and respected by her troops and support staff. Personally, Deloris is a quiet, thoughtful person who doesn't say a lot. Though she is not coupled with anyone at the moment, she doesn't let the fact that she isn't attracting a lot of men romantically chip away at her confidence. She is forever hopeful that one day she will find the right man, as well as accomplish her mission of ridding the Missouri of river pirates, but realism tells her that neither is likely to happen soon. Still, she remains hopeful.

Experience Level: 9th level CS Naval Infantry RPA.

Skills of Note: Language: American 98%, Pilot: Tanks & APCs 82%, Hydrofoils & Motor Boats 98%, Warships & Patrol Boats 76%, Water Scooters 95%, and Hovercraft 95%, Radar/Sonar Operation 75%, Cryptography 70%, Electronic Countermeasures 75%, Radio: Scramblers 80%, Surveillance Systems 75%, Detect Ambush 75%, Intelligence 68%, Interrogation Techniques 65%, Sniper, Basic Mechanics 75%, and S.C.U.B.A. 95%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert, Boxing, RPA: Elite with all SAMAS based power armors (which includes the Sea Sam by default), Kick Attack: 1D6 S.D.C., Critical Strike on an 18-20, Paired Weapons, Body Flip/Throw. W.P.: Harpoon & Spear Gun, Knife, Handguns, Energy Pistol, Energy Rifle, and Heavy M.D. Weapons.

Attacks per Melee: 7 normally, 11 with any kind of SAMAS.

Combat Bonuses: +3 with Harpoons & Spear Guns, Knives, and Heavy M.D. Weapons, +4 with Handguns & Energy Rifles, +5 with Energy Pistols, +3 to Roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to Strike, +6 to Parry, +6 to Dodge, +4 on Initiative, and +5 to save vs Horror Factor.

Preferred Weapons: Being an accomplished RPA pilot, Leachman's weapon of choice is a suit of SAMAS power armor. Any kind of Sam would do her fine, though she does prefer the Super Sam due to its awesome firepower and adequate amphibious capabilities. For around the office and in the 'Burbs, she feels more comfortable with a CP-30 on her hip in a cross draw holster and a suit of CA-4 Mk2 "Shark" EBA for protection and as her standard uniform.

Cybernetics: Due to a depth charge attack when in a Mini-Sub, Deloris lost her hearing and had to get Bio-System replacements of her inner ears. While the doctors were at it, she asked them to install Ultra Ear and Amplified Hearing enhancements.

Allies of Note: Admiral Saunders likes her both personally and professionally. He has also considered in passing expanding their relationship into the romantic realm but is concerned that such a move might be inappropriate given that she is his one of his junior officers. Also among her allies is her personal staff of aides who would do anything she asked of them. And lastly, there are her two bodyguards, assigned to her by the governor after a street gang from the Whiskey Town area tried to kidnap her for ransom. Her bodyguards are a big 'Borg Strike Trooper named Anderson, and a quick CS Juicer named DeSate. Though both would lay down their lives for her, DeSate is discontented in his current position and feels like his Juicer abilities would be of better use elsewhere. Anderson is fine with the bodyguard role but dislikes all the attitude he gets

from the CSN troops (Marines) since he is actually an Army boy.

Enemies of Note: Every river pirate on or near the Missouri River would like to see Leachman dead or dying, but most are too cowardly to make the attempt.



George Samson

Every city, town and kingdom has one, and New Chillicothe is no exception. The Black Market has infiltrated every nook and cranny of civilization and has tempted men and women from all walks of life to join its ranks in the pursuit of power and money, but mostly money. In the 'Burbs of New Chillicothe, that person is George Samson, the top made man of the Black Market and also harbor master of Rockwood Harbor. George's operation is easier than those of most of his counterparts' in other places. All he really does is smuggle in illegal goods through the shipping lanes and pass them on to others who then distribute them throughout the NC 'Burbs and into the city itself. And with him having sole accounting of what goes through his harbor, the only thing he has to cover is his paperwork trail, which he does quite well with misleading invoices and falsified records.

George learned this line work from his mother, who ran the harbor before him, and raised him to take over as soon as she was too old to deal with the never ending line of lowlifes and losers that came with the job. To him it's a family business and traditional way of life, which he himself is grooming his only daughter, Tammi, to take over when he becomes too old and tired to deal with the never ending parade of pirates, thieves, and general scum. But since that day is still decades off, he'll continue his

labors and keep his associates and Black Market contacts happy, as his daughter is slowly brought in and indoctrinated in the ins and outs of the trade.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 10, M.A. 19, P.S. 14, P.P. 9, P.E. 17, P.B. 11, Spd 10.

Hit Points: 53, **S.D.C.:** 44.

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 165 lbs (74.3 kg).

Age: 77 but looks like he's in his early fifties.

Description: George is a nondescript man of African descent and looks very average, allowing him to blend in with just about any crowd. He has a short cut Afro and a medium build, fairly high cheek bones and a moderate chin, and an oval face set with large, almost innocent looking, cherry-brown eyes. Due to the amount of time he spends out in the sun, his complexion is very dark and almost gray.

Disposition: George has always had a personal code of conduct that has a degree of honor and respectability to him. However, because of his upbringing and being groomed and conditioned for a life of crime by his mother, his code of conduct is a bit off and twisted. He usually keeps his word when he can, but is not above stabbing someone in the back if he feels they deserve it. But to those who remain loyal to him, he reciprocates in kind, giving them the benefit of the doubt until they do something that makes him lose his respect for them. But once someone has gotten on his good side, it takes nothing less than an act of betrayal for him to cross that someone off his short list of friends. He views his honor and dignity as his most prized assets.

Experience Level: 10th level City Rat.

Skills of Note: Streetwise 85%, Radio: Basic 98%, Fishing 98%, Pick Locks 95%, Camouflage 70%, Find Contraband, Weapons & Cybernetics 81%, Recognize Weapon Quality 75%, Pilot: Motor Boats & Hydrofoils 98%, Ships 84%, and Automobiles 90%, Sensory Equipment 80%, Concealment 75%, Streetwise: Drugs 90%, Basic Math 98%, and Boat Building 30%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic, Kick Attack: 1D6 S.D.C., Critical Strike on a 19-20, Body Flip/Throw. W.P.: Energy Pistol and Handguns.

Attacks per Melee: 4 (out of practice).

Combat Bonuses: +5 to Strike with Energy Pistols & Handguns, +5 to Roll with punch/fall/impact, +1 to Strike, +2 to hand to hand damage, +3 to Parry, +3 to Dodge.

Preferred Weapons: Because of his legal CS Citizen's status, George had no trouble getting a concealed carry permit, and usually carries a Wilk's 227 pulse pistol in a shoulder holster with two spare E-Clips, concealed by a jacket most the time. As a backup weapon, he has a Wilk's 210 pocket pistol in an ankle holster on his right calf.

Cybernetics: None.

Allies of Note: George can count on better than half of the area's river pirates for help and support, so long as that doesn't entail money or lending a hand. For that he has to rely on his crew of longshoremen and his inner circle of racketeers and goons.

Enemies of Note: None per se. George hasn't screwed anyone over in a long time and the law enforcement community isn't wise to his operation. However, that doesn't mean that there

aren't those who would stab him in the back to take even a sliver of what he imports for the Black Market.



Master Sergeant Ray Kowalsowitz, a.k.a. Cold Wall Dread

Ray is the top dog at the ISS Precinct 73, and pretty much does what suits him. The street name of Cold Wall Dread he got from the gangs is mostly a play on his difficult to pronounce last name (Ko-wall-so-wits), but also comes from the fact that they all dread his rancorous raids and lethal tactics. Being a Heavy CS Cyborg Strike Trooper and a masterful combatant, he has used his abilities and skills to wage a one-man war on crime and D-Bees. Mostly D-Bees that just happen to be engaging in criminal activities, though. He doesn't do this so much out of a sense of justice, but more out of a need for revenge against all that which is not human. But Roy didn't start out this way. Though he has been a 'Borg for the better part of his life, he was not always a hard and vicious, contemptible man. There was a time when he even secretly advocated the notion of D-Bees and humans coexisting.

Being such an experienced soldier, Ray was sent to fight on the West Front at Tolkeen. There he was part of an elite Battalion of 'Borg Strike Troopers used as a cross between a commando team and an armored column. Unfortunately, a few months before the Sorcerers' Revenge offensive, the "Bionic Battalion," as they called themselves, were attacked by a much larger formation of Iron Juggernauts. Most of the Bionic Battalion were killed (over 600 of them!) and the few who did survive were either taken prisoner or taken apart by the Neuron Beasts that were nearby.

Ray was among the lucky few who were taken prisoner and sent to a POW camp.

Ray spent the second half of the Tolkeen conflict at a POW camp, stripped of his arms and legs, strapped to a crude wheelchair. If not for two close friends who he met at the camp, he surely would have died from shame. He was completely dependent on his buddies, Darien O'Hare, an ordinary soldier, and Angus, a German Shepherd Dog Boy, to feed him, watch his back, and push him around in a wheelchair or sometimes a wheelbarrow! To keep Ray going, the other POWs made him one of the escape team leaders, where he would use his bionic optics to scan the fence line at night to see exactly how the guards were deployed to aid others in their flights to freedom.

After the war and he and his fellow POWs were freed, Ray was ecstatic to have his mechanical limbs, mobility and self-reliance back. But after his years of indignity he lost his desire to remain in the field. Instead he put it to join the ISS in his hometown of New Chillicothe so he would never be far from help again. To keep his very close friends by his side, he pulled every string he could to get them positioned with him.

While O'Hare prefers to stay at the precinct filing reports, filling out forms and occasionally booking arrested criminals, Ray and Angus prefer to take out their frustrations on the street. The two have developed a great rapport and system. Angus and a few extra Dog Boys or Psi-Stalkers smell out the bad guys while Ray and several other ISS soldiers back them up. Neither lets any harm come to the other, but when the shooting gets heavy, Ray has no problem with Angus using his armored body as a shield and cover. And in fact, Ray encourages it.

Race: Originally human.

Alignment: Unprincipled with strong Miscreant leanings towards D-Bees and casters.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 13, M.A. 28, P.S. 40 (Robotic!), P.P. 24, P.E. 12 (bionic body), P.B. 5, Spd 106.

Hit Points: 52, **S.D.C.:** 51, **Main Body M.D.C.:** 380 + Armor.

Height: 8 feet, 10 inches (2.7 m). **Weight:** 1,260 lbs (567 kg).

Age: Only Angus and O'Hare know for sure, but is suspected to be around 68.

Description: Kowalsowitz is a typical looking, New Chillicothe Full Conversion Cyborg. He is very tall, huge across the shoulders, big, black and menacing. Ray has soft brown eyes, thick blonde eyebrows, and a boyish face that shows no signs of aging past the age of 30. Since it is stretched out over a steel reinforced skull, effectively removing all wrinkles, this is to be expected. But most of the time these days he chooses to leave his removable and protective face plate on, concealing his humanity from the world.

Disposition: His years of indignity made him a bitter and angry man. When he gets the chance to kill a D-Bee in a "righteous shoot" without raising too many eyebrows, Ray takes it. Every kill temporarily makes him feel a little bit better, but that euphoric high is fleeting at best. It is little wonder why he has come to be known as Cold Wall Dread throughout all of the NC 'Burbs and especially his stomping grounds in the sector called Whiskey Town. Every D-Bee face reminds him of his captors at the POW camp and makes him want to go on a killing spree, but he saves his fury for those times when he can cut loose. In time, he may work through his issues, especially with him talking to counselors at the M&M Fusion Wing every week, but even then he will hate all D-Bees and spell cast-

ers till the day he dies. When he's not confronting the demons of his past, Ray is a fun guy to be with. He enjoys having fun with his friends and occasionally frequents the Tin Rapture to embrace his humanity and enjoy a little camaraderie with his fellow and sympathetic 'Borgs.

Experience Level: 13th level Heavy CS Cyborg Strike Trooper.

Skills of Note: Intelligence 94%, Tracking (humanoid) 90%, Lore: Demons & Monsters, Magic, and D-Bee 90%, Radio: Basic 98%, all known Languages at 98% (Built-in Translator), Detect Concealment 85%, Forgery 65%, Interrogating Techniques 75%, First Aid 98%, Find Contraband, Weapons & Cybernetics 68%, Trap Construction 62%, Trap/Mine Detection 80%, Pilot: Hovercraft 98%, Motorcycles 98%, and Jet Packs 94%, Sensory Equipment 95%, Streetwise 42%, Streetwise: Drugs 52%, and Land Navigation 88%.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert (see Preferred Weapons for hand to hand damage), Boxing, Critical Strike on a Natural 18-20, Paired Weapons, Body Flip/Throw, KO on a 18-20, triple damage Critical Strike or KO from behind. W.P.: Energy Rifles, Heavy M.D. Weapons, Energy Pistols, Rifles, Knife, and Blunt.

Attacks per Melee: 7 per melee.

Combat Bonuses: +6 with Energy Rifles, +5 with Heavy M.D. Weapons, +7 with Energy Pistols & Rifles, +10 with Blunts & Knives, +3 to Roll with punch/fall/impact, +7 to Strike, +12 to Parry (+17 with a blunt or knife-like weapon), +12 to Dodge.

Preferred Weapons: Ray is never unarmed because the two Particle Beam Forearm Weapons (6D6+6 M.D. each, out to 1,000 feet/305 m) he sports on his bulky arms make him capable of inflicting wholesale carnage when used together in rapid-fire succession. They can be fired simultaneously at the same target thanks to his Targeting Synchronizing System, which he got specifically for this purpose. Because of the CS 'Borg Energy Cell Weapon Link he has connected to them, he has an incredible payload of 114 blats between the two of them. For close up work, he likes to use his brute strength, which does 1D4 M.D. with a Restrained Punch, 2D6 M.D. with a regular Punch, 4D6 M.D. on a Power Punch, 3D8 M.D. from a Kick, and 5D8 M.D. with his Leap Kick. When using his Vibro-Claws, including bonuses from his Robotic Strength, he does 2D6+4 M.D. on normal strikes and 4D6+8 with paired strikes, and is all but untouchable in close quarters melee combat when parrying with them. On the rare occasion he needs to pacify or capture instead of kill, Ray will whip out the Neural Mace concealed in a compartment in his leg (Weapon Rod). He usually wears CA-C6 EBA (+200 M.D.C. for a total of 580) into combat, but keeps some old-fashioned HI-B3 'Borg armor (+480 M.D.C. for a total of 800 M.D.C.!) around for the times when he knows he's in for a tough fight. But the HI-B3 armor slows his already impaired Speed attribute down to a relatively sluggish 79. He also keeps a CP-30 laser pistol in the small of his back as a seldom used backup weapon.

Cybernetics: Ray keeps up with all the latest bionics available at the M&M Fusion Wing. He has the Heavy 'Borg frame (+100 M.D.C., 40 P.S.); Cyber-Nano-Robot Repair System; two Micro-Repair Robots; Psionic Electro-Magnetic Dampeners; Combat Computer; Targeting Synchronizing System; CS 'Borg Energy Cell Weapon Link connected to his two PB Forearm Weapons; Compu-Link Interface with a TEX made P/ID PDA inside that can mostly work through his own bi-

onic sensors; Advanced Bionic Headjack; Retractable Vibro-Claws; one PB Weapon Eye (left) and a shoulder mounted E-Clip port for it; one Multi-System eye socket (right) and an assortment of modular cybernetic eyes for it; Built-In Language Translator; Built-In Radio Receiver and Transmitter (20 mile/32 km range); Loudspeaker; Head Jack; Bionic Lungs; E-Clip Hand Port and Finger Laser (right); Laser Utility Finger (right); “wing-style” retractable Vibro-Blades in both arms; Concealed Weapon Rod: Neural Mace (right leg); one large secret compartment (left leg); Sensor Hand (left); Amplified Hearing; Ultra Ear; Toxic Filter; Chemical Spray (chest); and a Security Clearance Access Chip.

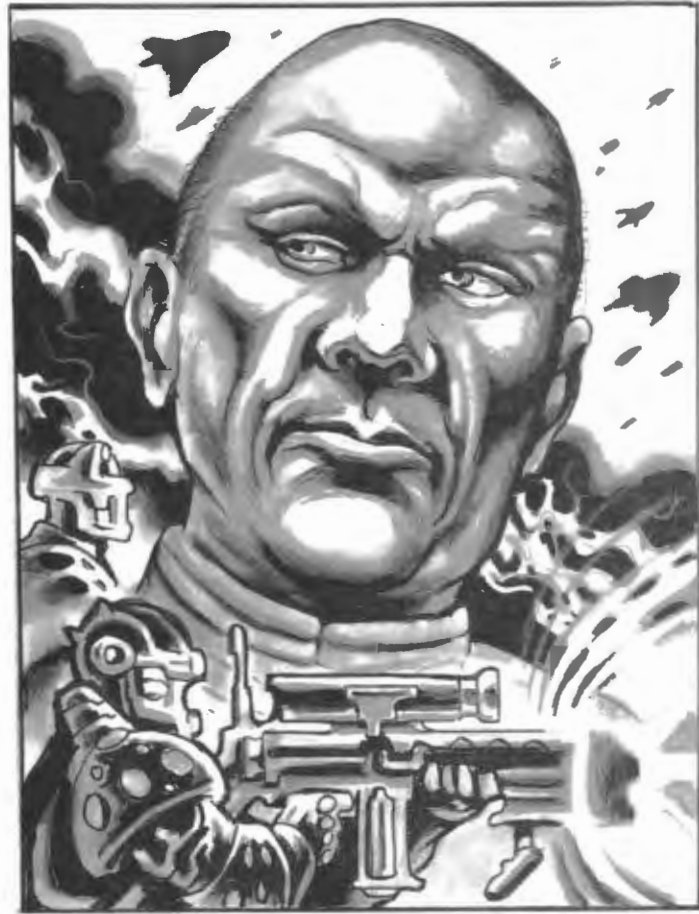
Allies of Note: To the people of Whiskey Town he is an avenging god. They would do just about anything he asked of them and would most certainly try to help should he ever need it of them. Several members of the ISS in the area credit him with saving their lives, and even more of them look up to him as a living testament of what a true CS hero should aspire to be: loyal, fearless, and relentless. But of them all, the only ones Ray looks to for help while off duty are his war and prison camp buddies, O’Hare and Angus.

Enemies of Note: There isn’t a criminal or gang member in Whiskey Town who doesn’t credit “Cold Wall Dread” with messing up their business in one way or another. Be it, “He gunned down all my good men!” or “Cause of him, I lost all my product that one time in a raid!” There isn’t a crook in Whiskey Town who wouldn’t mind taking a shot at him, but most are afraid to, fearing not only his retribution, but that of the entire 73rd Precinct’s as well.

General Quentin Von Monstein & the Monster Brigade

General Von Monstein was one of the best armor commanders to come out of the Tolkeen conflict. He specialized in the use of heavily armored vehicles to crush the enemy with brutal blitzkrieg tactics. And though others did the same with their powerful robot vehicles of war, Von Monstein’s accomplishments stood out because he was given command of an armored regiment of old CTX-20 Grinning Skull MBT and a handful of CTX-50 Linebackers supported by a company of antiquated Death’s Head SAMAS. Compared to what just about everyone else was using at the time, Von Monstein was doing more with less. For his efforts, he was awarded the Emperor’s Medal and the Iron Star during the war, and was promoted to the rank of Brigadier General just after. Von Monstein was being primed for greatness. Unfortunately, shortly after the war the great man suffered a critical emotional breakdown and his career in Chi-Town flatlined.

This breakdown was brought about by the role he played in the final days of the Siege on Tolkeen. After the walls crumbled and the CS could move into the inner city itself, he was directed by his superiors to one of the college campuses that was being used as a refugee camp. Once there, he was ordered to clean them out. As far as his superiors were concerned, any D-Bee that escaped that day was a potential threat in the future. Though reluctant, Von Monstein gave the order to his troops and tanks to open fire and slaughter the lot of ‘em. Up to that point, though the General had rightfully earned a reputation as a merciless leader, he had never really had to attack civilians. Not like this. The towns and



campsites he and his troops attacked earlier in the war always had a good many armed defenders who could put up a fight, making them a threat and a valid target in his mind. But in this instance, all of Tolkeen’s defenders were either busy elsewhere or barred from the campus for one reason or another. Here all that could be seen were thousands of innocents... women... children... the infirm... the helpless. Watching his troops carry out *his* order, watching the lasers and cannons of *his* tanks and soldiers’ rifles turn the crowd of screaming people into a massive fog of blood-vapor mist, it was too much for him to bear. In that moment he realized he wasn’t a soldier, but an instrument of genocide and mass murder. He kept his feelings bottled up for the remainder of the battle for Tolkeen for his soldiers’ sake, but that only made them build and fester in his soul. A month later, after he was rotated back to Chi-Town, his grief, guilt, and despair boiled over into a full blown emotional breakdown in the middle of a formal dinner, in full view of the CS High Command, the Executive Council and the Emperor himself.

Needless to say, this ruined his career in Chi-Town, where such signs of weakness are not looked upon with openly understanding eyes, especially when it happens in broad view of so many of one’s peers. Though he was given the psychic therapy he needed to get better, his superiors knew he’d never be the man he was. After he came back from a medical leave of absence, the High Command had to decide what to do with the esteemed war hero. He had become such a pariah among his fellow generals, his social-butterfly of a wife divorced him in an attempt to shield her social standing. There was even talk about forcing him into retirement in the upper echelons of power. And they might have done just that if not for the intervention of one man – Governor Joshua Kimber. Being enough in the loop to be aware of Von Monstein’s

predicament (and in attendance at that formal dinner), he decided to give the old battle-ax a break and take a gamble on him. With ever increasing threats emerging from terrorist cells, raiders, and would-be warlords from the Federation of Magic and the Pecos Empire, he needed a man like Von Monstein. Inside of the week, the General was assigned to him in New Chillicothe, along with as much of the General's old Monster Brigade as he could get, to play the role of guardian-supreme to the State of Missouri, keeping the movements of the state's threats and enemies more in check. Well aware of his dilemma with the High Command, despite his passing a thorough psych-exam, Von Monstein gladly accepted the Governor's assignment and swore to the man that nothing would get past his watch. That he and his men would be there to push back and completely 'mist' any threat or incursion to the state.

Using some of his old tactics that have served him well during the war, and some new ones that he put together from the lessons he learned in the war, Von Monstein uses his *Combined Infantry and Mechanized Brigade* to attack and destroy everything in his assigned patrol area that represents a significant threat to the state's security. The Monster Brigade itself has been updated with a few more modern weapons platforms to facilitate their task. But unfortunately, because the CS High Command has put Missouri low on the list of priorities, and because of Von Monstein's political enemies therein, he is mainly given aging war machines that are slipping into obsolescence. Occasionally, his requests for newer and deadlier vehicles are answered, but not as many as he'd like. In its current configuration the Monster Brigade is made up of:

The 167th CS Mechanized Regiment

CTX-20 Grinning Skull MBTs – 384
Spider Skull Walkers – 96
CTX-50 Linebackers – 16
IAR-2 "B model" Abolishers – 90
UAR-1 Enforcers – 102
IAR-5 Hellfires – 48
CTX-53 Ballista – 10 (mobile artillery support; new to the brigade)
Mark XII Dragoons – 12 (mobile artillery support)
IAR-2 "B model" Abolishers – 6 (mobile artillery support)
IAR-2 "C model" Abolishers – 4 (mobile artillery support; new to the brigade)

The 482nd CS Infantry Regiment (10 Full Companies)

Mark VII Slayers – 48 (used primarily to transport the troops, some of the power armor suits and their pilots, and the brigade's supplies and extra munitions. Plus they make for good makeshift sleeping quarters.)
CS Command Cars – 20
Super Sams – 64
Death Head Sams – 176
Glitter Boy Killers – 87
Terror Troopers – 153
Combat Troops – Six Companies (960) of human and Dog Boy soldiers (about a 50/50% mix), of which 144 (15%) use CA-6EX armor and another 144 use the Mauler PA so they can make use of heavy weapons like the CTT-M20, C-40R rail gun and the like. Some have taken to using Wellington's MG15 "Viper" 15mm machine gun due to a great deal Von Monstein got from W.I.'s sales reps.

Augmented Troops – The latest addition to Von Monstein's "Monster Brigade" are two companies of 80 CS 'Borg Strike Troopers and 80 CS Juicers. They're working out so well, the General is thinking of trying to increase their ranks to make up a full battalion, though this might take some time.

Supported by the three companies of mixed power armor units and four platoons of augmented troopers, the heavy armor of the mechanized brigade can keep the enemy's attention diverted towards the front of the attack while the support units rapidly move in from the enemy's flanks. And with a dozen companies of combat soldiers ready to charge the enemy or defend the armor, Von Monstein has yet to meet an opponent in Missouri that can survive one of his patented attacks. With around 3,500 men and women, and 760 armored vehicles, under his command, General Von Monstein finds it ironic that he has more power and autonomy here in virtual banishment than he ever would in Chi-Town, where he probably would have been relegated to pushing paper.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Was a hardcore Miscreant during the Tolkeen War, but has softened to Unprincipled with Scrupulous leanings towards genuinely innocent civilian non-combatants (both D-Bee and human) since he recovered from his emotional breakdown.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 12 (was 18 before his breakdown), M.A. 18 (was 23), P.S. 14, P.P. 8, P.E. 16, P.B. 13, Spd 15.

Hit Points: 58, **S.D.C.:** 72.

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m). **Weight:** 159 lbs (71.6 kg).

Age: 72 but looks like he's in his mid forties.

Description: Quentin is a man in possession of a medium-sized frame and keeps himself in good physical condition. His fairly well toned body is covered in dozens of tattoos of varying size, each a tribute to the units he was assigned to, the medals he's been awarded, and the campaigns he took part in. However, none of these tats are visible when his uniform is on, and most are unaware he even has them at all. All his subordinates ever usually see are his strong, usually stern looking face, his short brown hair peppered with gray, a clean shaven face, and his authoritative pale blue eyes.

Disposition: Before his emotional breakdown, Von Monstein lived up to his name and was truly a monster in his own right. As one of the infamous General Drogue's favorites due to his ruthless efficiency, the name Quentin Von Monstein was feared by all who were lucky enough to survive one of his trademark armored blitzkrieg attacks. Even his own men feared him, dreading the wrath they'd suffer for failure or disappointment. But those days are behind him. In his own way, Quentin has become a very kind-hearted man. Again, in his own way, that is. In the wake of his breakdown and recovery, he has come to respect life and the lives of others. Particularly those of the soldiers who serve under him and those of non-combatant innocents who may harbor some resentment towards the CS, but aren't actually taking up arms against the nation he loves so dear. To this end, he has abandoned his harsh disciplinary practices and refuses to order his troops to slaughter non-hostile civilians or those that don't pose a threat by simply existing. The worst he'll do is run them off with a few worldly possessions, because he so disdains unnecessary violence. Even so, he likes to be sure by using Psi-Hounds and Psi-Stalkers to sniff out any hidden supernatural monsters. But

if he deems it necessary, he will order his troops to attack with all the fury they can muster, accepting some civilian losses, writing them off as legitimate targets who were “in collusion with and aiding the enemy.”

In private, he’s noticed he actually smiles and laughs a lot more than he used to. Though he doesn’t fraternize with any of those under his command who are under the rank of captain, Quentin has taken to eating his dinner with his fellow command officers (majors, colonels and lieutenant colonels only). In addition to chatting about business and eating, they tell stories, jokes, and converse in ways not too common among Coalition officers in the field. The General has found this a pleasant way to loosen up and keep his mind sharp and on the matter at hand later on when he needs it without dwelling on the past. It also helps him build stronger relations with them, strengthening his command over them without having to resort to brutal disciplinary tactics. Another thing he’s doing now, something he would have found unconscionable before his breakdown, is he’s taken up a mistress from his own brigade. To be specific, every night, when situations permit, he spends his evenings and nights with a woman by the name of Lt. Colonel Natalie Winterborne, the commander of his twelve-company infantry force and his possible future wife, even though he’s 30 years her senior. Whether he ends up marrying her or not, he’s hoping his three children will accept her as part of his life.

Experience Level: 12th level Military Specialist.

Skills of Note: All of those belonging to the Military Specialist O.C.C., Weapon Systems, Navigation, and all Military and Espionage skills.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Karate Kick: 1D8 S.D.C., Jump Kick, Entangle, Critical Strike on an 18-20, Paired Weapons, and Leap Attack. W.P.: Energy Rifles, Energy Pistols, Heavy M.D. Weapons, Handguns, and Blunt. RPA: Elite with all CS “first-gen” power armors (precursors to the SAMAS series type) and the IAR type giant robot vehicles. In fact, he’s one of the few people left who is still qualified to pilot the old CPA-38 Grizzly (a three-generation-old suit of ground-based power armor, decommissioned for over 35 years now).

Attacks per Melee: 6 in regular combat, 11 in ground PA or in an Abolisher.

Combat Bonuses: +3 with weapons he’s proficient with (not as good as he could be), +2 with Aimed shots (Sniper skill), and those gained from Martial Arts.

Preferred Weapons: Being a general, Von Monstein doesn’t like to enter into combat with anything less than a mechanized column of heavy armor. But for appearances and personal protection (just in case), he carries a C-5 Pump Pistol on his belt high on his hip, four speed loaders on his belt, and a Wilk’s 210 Pocket Pistol in an ankle holster.

Cybernetics: Back in 102 P.A., he had to get his heart replaced due to his 50 year smoking habit (he quit after this surgery). Quentin opted for a high performance bionic heart that makes him feel like a man in his twenties. He loves the thing!

Allies of Note: Ever since he turned over a new leaf and started treating his troops with a modicum of dignity and respect, Von Monstein has gone from being called “General Bloody Bastard” behind his back, to being affectionately called “Grandpa Whoop-Ass” by all the men, women, and Dog Boys under his command. In fact, given the way he refuses to just toss their

lives away in foolish pursuits the way some other generals do, they absolutely love him and will do anything he asks of them. They know he doesn’t see their lives like poker chips to be tossed away as ante being thrown in the pot, as acceptable losses. This doesn’t mean all of Von Monstein’s troops miraculously survive every engagement. He does take losses like everyone else. But he doesn’t make them charge into certain death like they were WWI soldiers charging out of the trenches to their doom just to gain an inch of territory. There are also a few others in the old general’s corner as well. The most important of which is the governor of the sate, Joshua Kimber, who got him his current position and defends the old war-bird’s name whenever it comes up. And of course there is the General’s command staff, who loves and adores him as if he were their own grandpa. Among his command staff is Lt. Colonel Natalie Winterborne, commander of his infantry, whom he has taken as his lover, confidant, and close personal friend.

Enemies of Note: On more than one occasion, Von Monstein has made his superiors furious by refusing to slaughter squatting camps of (non-hostile) D-Bees in his area of influence. Instead he prefers to just run them off with all their limbs intact. Though only irritating to most in the High Command, others are absolutely disgusted with this habit. Roughly 6 of the 40 generals who make up the CS High Command are overt political enemies of his, and would like to see Von Monstein stripped of his command and booted out of the military. The rest are either secretly sympathetic to his tendencies, don’t see them as all that horrible of a sin, or feel that his exceptional record more than outshines this new softheartedness of the general. The Proseks have yet to weigh in on this one, and either don’t care or are unaware of this potentially “subversive and sympathetic (to the enemy) behavior.” Other enemies, more hostile ones who would actually like to see him dead, are legion. They include all the survivors of the shattered Tolkeen Army, many members of the Federation of Magic due to his occasional hit and run raids in the Magic Zone, and a few bandit groups that have felt the fury of his tanks’ cannons.

Other New Chillicothe Residents of Note:

Senator David Haley: There aren’t many people like Senator Haley in the CS, but they do exist. Haley is a proponent of peace and coexistence between the CS and its many enemies throughout the land. And though he does not dare advocate the use of magic, he does preach on and on about how magic’s status as the root of all evil is wrong and misleading to the people. These vocally stated opinions have made Senator Haley a very unpopular man in New Chillicothe. But since the media is extremely reluctant to air his word or even report that a man who holds such a high position in the CS government is saying such things, hardly anyone outside of the city knows about him and his views. If Haley doesn’t shut up soon and reverse the public opinion of him, the Senator could very well find himself in a very unpleasant place.

Councilman Coke: In a moment of either genius or insanity, Mayor Lisa Scott chose an aging Psi-Hound as one of the members to sit on the City Council. That was Sergeant Major Coke, a 35-year-old Dog Boy soldier who has served the CS with distinction and was recently retired from active duty. Coke gives the mayor an insider’s perspective on the living conditions for

the city's psychic populace, and an expert opinion on the city's security from infiltrators that NTSET has to deal with on a day-to-day basis. But despite his given seat of power, the old dog does not presume to wield it over anyone because he knows and accepts his station in life. Even so, he is the most resented member of the City Council. However, this does not mean he himself is despised, because all the people know that it was the Mayor's decision to put him where he is, and he is just following orders like the good dog and soldier he is.

Major Richard Sing: This ISS officer has a bunker-office setup just outside the 'Burbs. His job is take the names of and process D-Bees that wish to willingly become Worker Slaves. This makes him a powerful man, of sorts, though he dislikes his work and views it as a boring, paper-pushing job. D-Bees that give him too much lip or attitude (rare, but it happens) can expect to be arrested on the spot for whatever charge strikes his

mood. Those who come in and use a respectful tone get treated the same in return. As a result, 99.9% of all who come are registered without incident and get the papers they need to live inside CS territory without being killed so long as they pose *no threat whatsoever*. Secretly, Sing kind of likes the D-Bees he works with, though he'd never admit it. Of course, the ones who come to see him aren't the spell casting, demonic colluding, "death to the CS" types that others have to face and fight in the field and the 'Burbs. The ones he sees are by and large, down to earth, respectful, know their place, and are willing to put in a hard day's work. Sing respects that. Also in this office is a security detail made up of a squad of ten Dog Boy soldiers, who watch his back and examine all who walk through the door. The top dog of this squad is a mutant German Shepherd by the name of Sergeant Blue, or Old Blue to those who know him.

The Hammer of the Forge™

Chapter Fifty-Four: "Swan Song"

By James M. G. Cannon

Caleb found himself breathing.

It *hurt*.

He felt cleaned out. Scoured. He felt as though every cell in his body had been removed, scrubbed clean with a wire brush, and then haphazardly replaced. Slowly, he opened his eyes; sand-paper against gelatin.

Caleb lay in a dark room, oblong in shape, the walls of mega-steel. There was a table against the curve of a wall, strange implements upon it. Chains rattled, and Caleb realized that he was bound, wrists to each other and to the hard floor. He tested them, but his arms shook, and he had no strength.

From habit, Caleb looked for that core of fire in within himself, but it did not respond. The Cosmic Forge had forsaken him. He murdered Elias Harkonnen, choking him to death in the rings of a gas giant. And as the Forge's blessings left him, Caleb found himself floating in space unprotected. He should have died. Part of him wished he had.

But here he was, breathing. In pain. But alive.

He closed in eyes.

"This is how it ends," said a familiar voice. "Pathetic. There was always too much of your mother in you, boy. Couldn't beat it out of you. You're soft, you've always been soft. I'm ashamed to call you my son. Should have just gotten a dog – would have been less of a disappointment."

Caleb's eyes opened. Light and color resolved themselves into the shape of Master Gunnery Sergeant Ezra Vulcan. His red hair high and tight, now shot with gray and receding from his forehead, his mouth turned in a perpetual frown, and his fingers pointed accusingly at Caleb. "Don't sit there gawping, boy. Haven't you got a tongue in your head?"

"You can't be here," Caleb said. "You're still on Earth."

And then Caleb's father dissolved back into the darkness, and a high, guttural chuckle replaced him. Boots clanked on the

megasteel of the floor, leather creaked, and a vulpine smile hovered over Caleb's head, cold white eyes gleaming. "You killed me, you stupid bastard."

Elias Harkonnen, psychotic Elf, former Imperial Guardsman, who quit the Transgalactic Empire because they weren't giving him enough people to kill. A version of Caleb from the future had come back on Caleb's wedding day to warn him that Harkonnen would kill Caleb's wife. And shortly after that, Harkonnen had appeared. Caleb fought him, and eventually, driven past the point of no return, he had executed Harkonnen.

"You can't be here, either."

The Elf laughed. "The terrible truth, Vulcan, is that even though I died, I still won. I destroyed a Cosmo-Knight." He laughed again.

Caleb's head drooped. "I'm losing my mind."

"You're hallucinating, pup." The third voice belonged to a massive Wolfen clad in metallic green cosmic armor. "On top of the trauma of losing your cosmic abilities, you were exposed to hard vacuum for about three minutes. You should be dead."

"Lothar," Caleb said. "Lothar, I messed up."

"Your brain shut down, pup. Your 'rescuers' saved your life, and now that you've regained consciousness, your brain is rebooting."

"Where am I, Lothar? What's happening to me?"

Lothar of Motherhome placed an armored hand on Caleb's shoulder. "You're in the belly of the ship that brought Harkonnen to you. You've been captured by his allies. They haven't kept you alive out of any charity, though. They want the pleasure of killing you themselves. But only after torturing you as long as they can."

"You can be sure they broke orbit and jumped out of Alexandria's system. You could be anywhere in the Three Galaxies right now."

"No one is coming to save you. The Cosmic Forge has forsaken you."

Caleb's head dropped again.

"But remember this, pup. Just because the Forge has abandoned you, it doesn't mean you have to abandon it. You've looked to the Forge to give your life meaning. Let it give your death meaning as well."

A grinding noise echoed across the chamber. Lothar's presence faded in a swirl of green light. Caleb wearily looked up. Directly across from where he slumped on the floor, a door slid open. A huge shape filled the doorway before sidling into the room. Caleb focused past the lights that flickered at the edges of his vision; the shape looked familiar. Through the gloom, it resolved itself into a massive, black-scaled Kreeghor with pale eyes and a snaggle-toothed grin.

"Geryon," Caleb said.

As the Kreeghor walked into the room, Caleb noticed for the first time the table placed against the curving wall, heaped high with strange implements, and a metal chair. It was as if the room was finally coming into focus, as if Caleb's eyes were finally beginning to work properly.

Geryon stepped to the table, paused, looked at Caleb with those pale, unblinking eyes, then dragged the chair over. Geryon sat down in front of him.

"You gave us all quite a scare, Caleb." The former admiral's voice was deep and rumbling, and it rattled like a buzzsaw in Caleb's chest. "You've been unconscious for three days."

Caleb pulled weakly on his chains. "But you're still afraid of me," he said. He hoped his bravado wasn't entirely false. The idea of lying unconscious and unrescued for three days bothered him. He didn't know where the room was, although he guessed he was aboard Geryon's ship, and supposed they could be anywhere by now. Three days from Alexandria, at least, and most likely outside the United Worlds of Warlock.

Geryon chuckled. "Those are for your safety, not mine."

Even addled, Caleb spotted the lie. Inwardly, he smiled. "What do you want?" he said.

"Revenge. You destroyed my *Shadowstar*. Destroyed years of Imperial weapons research. You took me prisoner. You judged me. These are all unforgivable crimes."

Caleb shook his head.

"You claim innocence?"

"Innocence? No, I did all that. And I would do it again in a heartbeat. You're a bad guy, Geryon. I stop bad guys."

Geryon chuckled again. "Not anymore, Caleb. Not ever again. You've lost the favor of your precious patron. You're a mere mortal again. No more flying about the cosmos, writing wrongs in the name of that ridiculous artifact. Your strength is spent.

"This makes my plans for you somewhat different. I was looking forward to your bones resetting themselves after I broke them. Still, I shall enjoy carving you up and breaking you down. You will beg for release long before I grant it to you."

"Maybe. But if you had any stones, you'd just kill me."

Geryon's reptilian face twisted into a snarl. "Don't tempt me, Vulcan." His look softened, as much as it could. "Besides, I don't like to rush. I want to enjoy this."

Abruptly, Geryon stood up, kicking the chair back a few inches. He stepped over to the table and hefted an instrument. It took a moment for Caleb to realize that Geryon held Caleb's hammer. A massive sledge, it looked tiny in Geryon's great palm. He hefted it a moment, and looked over his shoulder at Caleb. "Remember this?" he asked.

Geryon turned, swinging the hammer lazily in his hands. "Did you know, Caleb, that due to the loss of the *Shadowstar* I am essentially no one in the Empire right now? My own family refuses to admit that I exist. I am an exile. I cannot return to my home.

Me, a member of the royal family. Ten steps away from the Emperor himself.

"To them, I do not exist." He stepped forward quickly, and the hammer flashed out, connecting with Caleb's elbow. There was a sick crack and despite himself, Caleb cried out. He risked a glance at his elbow, and seeing bone, he nearly blacked out. He slumped backward. Beads of sweat formed on his brow, and he gritted his teeth against the pain. He reminded himself that he had felt worse, much worse. As a Cosmo-Knight, however, he had always been assured of recovering from pain and damage quickly. And now he realized that Bio-Regeneration had had some kind of numbing effect. Sharp stabs of pain traveled up and down Caleb's arm. He felt hot tears drip down his cheeks.

"I will make it so that you wish you did not exist." Geryon's pale eyes bored into Caleb's.

But Caleb thought of Lothar's parting words – or, at least, the words that Caleb's damaged brain had put into the hallucinatory Lothar's mouth. He steeled himself. Caleb's mouth settled into a grim line. He blinked away the tears, swallowed the pain. He thought of Romana, and reassured himself that she was safe. He could die happily knowing that.

Something in Caleb's expression made Geryon take a step back. The Kreeghor threw the hammer back onto the table, where it landed with a resounding crash. It lay there, with most of the handle sticking out diagonally, almost teetering, but Geryon ignored it. "You imagine yourself a hero, Caleb Vulcan. Most Cosmo-Knights do. It's part of the transformation process, how you're indoctrinated into believing what the Forge wants you to believe. To live your life the way the Forge wants you to live. Step outside that narrow framework but a little, and this is what awaits you." He gestured at Caleb with an open hand.

"But the Forge is itself diseased. It's just an old machine, ticking away, fulfilling the programming instilled in it by a dead and forgotten civilization. The watchmaker is long gone, but the watch continues to wind itself. To what purpose? It sends out its tendrils, empowering agents like yourself, and then abandons them to a hostile and unforgiving cosmos and expects them to hew to its own ancient program.

"Let me tell you, Caleb, you did the right thing killing Elias Harkonnen. He was a mad dog. Sick in the head. No redeeming qualities whatsoever. Myself, you may think me a monster, but I do have a family. Brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, beings whom I do care deeply for. Beings I miss terribly. But Harkonnen? He quit the Imperial Guard because he wasn't getting enough action. One of the most privileged positions any sapient can achieve in the TGE and he threw it away, all because he wanted to kill more beings. Now *that* is simply insane.

"Truthfully, if you hadn't done it, I would have killed him myself. But what is your reward for doing something good for the Three Galaxies? Stripped of your rank and privileges, forsaken by your patron. Left for the wolves." Geryon smiled broadly.

"Murder is wrong," Caleb said. "Whether you do it from the bridge of a ship that creates Rifts in space and kills entire worlds, or whether you close your hands around another murderer's throat and squeeze. I made my bed. I'm prepared to lie in it. I think your exile from home is hardly punishment for the evil you have perpetrated, and hardly punishment for the evil you'll do in the future.

"What are you trying to convince me of, Geryon? That you're right and I'm wrong?" Caleb looked at his ruined elbow. "That's never going to happen."

Geryon flashed forward and backhanded Caleb across the face. Caleb fell backwards, chains rattling. He felt teeth loosen in his jaw, and spat blood as he pulled himself back up on his knees.

Geryon looked about to say something, but his comm unit chimed. He stepped away from Caleb and thumbed the comm. "I told you I was not to be disturbed."

"I'm sorry, sir, but there's an asteroid drifting close to the ship."

Geryon made a snorting nose. "Maneuver around or blast it to rubble, and if you ever bother me with something so trivial again I'll hand you your lungs."

The voice on the other side was strained. "We tried, sir, but the asteroid is tracking us. And our blaster fire bounced off some kind of shielding."

Geryon snapped the comm off. He whirled around, shooting an ugly look at Caleb. Caleb grinned and spat a gob of blood and mucus onto the deck. "Time's up, Geryon. The piper is coming to demand his payment."

Without another word or backward glance, Geryon stormed out of the room. Caleb watched him go, and tried to feel as confident as his words sounded. The "asteroid" was certainly Sammadar Orak's stolen K!ozn ship, which outwardly looked like a huge hump of rock, but inside contained some of the most technologically advanced material in the Three Galaxies. Caleb didn't know how Sam might have found him, but he was grateful to her for trying. He just hoped she hadn't bitten off more than she could chew. He wondered who else might be with her – because of his past relationship with Sammadar, Romana didn't want to invite Sam to the wedding. Caleb didn't think she was anywhere near Alexandria when everything went down.

Well, Caleb thought, *I can't leave everything up to her. I may be weak as a kitten, but that doesn't mean I can't try to get out of here.* Caleb shifted, stretching his legs out before him. The toes of his red boots just reached far enough that he could almost hook his foot around the legs of the chair. His arm throbbed, and he slipped, landing hard on it. He screamed, and maybe blacked out for a second or two. When he came to, he was stretched out, and he managed to get his foot around the chair's leg. Caleb took several deep breaths and then tried to tug the chair. It took a while, but finally he managed to pull the chair towards him. He rested, grinning stupidly at such a tiny accomplishment.

When he had his breath back, he pulled the chair towards him until he could seize it with his working hand. He breathed heavily for a moment, and then twisted, extending himself as far as the chains would allow. He lifted the chair with his good arm and swung it towards the table. The weight of it almost dragged Caleb down with the swing, and the chains made the whole movement doubly difficult. He missed his target. He paused, resting again, trying to ignore the pain in his arm.

It was while he was resting that he noticed the deck shuddering beneath him. Laser fire. Outside the room, just barely heard or felt through the thick megasteel of the door, he heard alarms ringing. Caleb grinned, a harsh predatory kind of smile.

He straightened, ignoring the lances of pain in his arm, and swung the chair. And again. *Fourth time is the charm*, he thought, and the chair leg caught the edge of his hammer's pommel. The weapon teetered further, then tipped over and crashed to the floor. Caleb almost laughed.

It was easier now. He flailed with the chair again, trying to hook the leg around the handle of the hammer. The weight of the ham-

mer's head fought him the whole time. It took a few more tries, but eventually he was able to tug it into place. He carefully set the chair down, still within reach, then stretched himself forward as far as the chains would allow. He had to brace himself with his ruined arm and reach with the good one, and found himself reciting fragments of the *Haftarah* reading he made during his *bar mitzvah* to ignore the pain. At last his fingers found the pommel of his hammer and with a surge of strength, he pulled the weapon to him.

Caleb rose on shaky legs, crouching because of the chains. Now came the hard part. He choked up on the handle of the hammer and brought the heavy head down as hard as he could on the chains. It took several tries, mostly because he didn't have the room to swing correctly, but in short order the binding snapped. Caleb pulled himself free from the floor and stood. His back protested, aching muscles groaning under the strain. His wrists were still bound to each other, but by pulling his ruined arm close to his body and adjusting the length of chain, he was able to get nearly a full range of movement from his healthy arm.

Caleb was unsteady on his feet, particularly as the floor shook underneath him, but as feeling flowed back into his limbs, he was able to lurch towards the door.

When he reached it, he leaned up against the cool metal for a long moment, catching his breath. Suddenly he opened his eyes, and found himself sitting on the floor, the hammer fallen from his hands. He must have blacked out again. With a painful groan, he scooped up the hammer and dragged himself to his feet. He stepped back, hefted the hammer in his one hand, and brought it down against the edge of the door, where it might be weakest. Nothing happened. Caleb grimaced and swung again.

He repeated the motion several times, pausing between each to reposition himself, take a breather, swear, pray, or try to ignore the throbbing pain in his arm. Gradually the metal door dented and began to bow. A week ago he would have splintered it with ease, or burned through it with eyebeams. But he was no longer the man he was a week prior.

The alarm klaxon sounded through the gap in the door, driven open by Caleb's relentless pounding. With a few more swings, he widened the gap enough to get his hand and arm through. Shoulder burning, he leaned the hammer against the curving wall and grabbed the edge of the door. With all his remaining strength he heaved and pushed and swore. Slowly at first, the gears much protesting, the door began to open. With a final titanic heave, Caleb threw it open and spilled out into the corridor.

The alarm was louder now, filling his ears with a shuddering scream, and all along the length of the hallway red lights flashed. The ship shook as another barrage of fire hammered into it. A burst conduit up above and further down the hall sent sparks skittering across the floor. Caleb almost closed his eyes, but somehow managed to get himself into a sitting position. For the first time he noticed he was still bleeding, and in fact his whole left side was sticky with blood.

Caleb groped for the hammer, found it, and used it as a lever to get himself up on his feet. He used it again as a cane to hobble down the hallway. He paused frequently to get his bearings, and was relieved to find no crew as he explored.

He stopped at a cross corridor when he saw in Trade 3 the phrase "escape pods." He looked at that sign for about ten seconds, then followed the arrow that pointed towards the bridge. He found greater damage as he went. Some corridors were blocked by blast doors, while others were filled with smoke and small



fires. He picked his way carefully through those, noting only one or two corpses along the way. Geryon must have had a small crew despite the size of the ship.

He found the bridge after a few minutes of tottering, almost losing his balance several times as the ship was bombarded. The door slid open as he approached and slowly climbed the short steps leading up to it. Beyond, the bridge was in chaos.

Geryon stood in the midst of it, strapping on his battle armor, shouting orders. Consoles were blown open or fried, and the remaining crew were either dealing with the fires or trying to re-route systems, to keep the shields up and weapons firing. From the displays Caleb could see, Sammadar's K!ozn ship had taken a heavy pounding as well. It looked scorched and blasted, its rocky surface fused to glass in some places, and it didn't maneuver as smoothly and lightly as it should. Still, Sam ran circles around the Kreeghor's ship.

Geryon slipped a gauntlet on over his oversized paw, and catching movement out of the corner of his eye, turned to look at Caleb. His mouth worked soundlessly for a moment, and then he barked a harsh, humorless laugh. "You should have run while you had the chance, Vulcan. It seems you'll get your wish after all – I've no time for play." He raised the gauntlet up and fired. Red bolts of energy flashed into Caleb's chest, knocking him backward. He swayed on the steps, but caught himself on the edge of the doorway with the hammer's head. Grunting, he pulled himself forward. The energy blasts hurt, but they hadn't killed him.

He wanted to say something, something grand and heroic and maybe a little cool, but he couldn't find the breath. He couldn't

think of anything to say. Instead he lurched forward onto the bridge, lifting his hammer. And then a barrage of missiles and lasers burned across the bow of Geryon's ship, and another console blew up, taking two crew members with it. Geryon's shields flickered and died.

Caleb was thrown to one knee, saving himself from total collapse once more with his hammer. Geryon rode the shockwave on his legs and roared.

And then they were there.

A great dark cloud formed in the middle of the bridge, swirling and coiling around, and as it dissipated, there stood a man of darkness clad in a rumpled trench coat and a battered fedora. Twin orange lights served as eyes in his featureless face, and they blazed with anger as he raised up the cane in his shadowy hands. Beside him stood a fierce Atlantean woman with long, dark hair and crystal blue eyes, clad in heavy black enameled armor that left her arms free, arms decorated with intricate patterns of blue and white tattoos. In her hands she bore a sword of blue fire and a shield of white light.

Geryon roared again, but Caleb was laughing. He found his feet.

Geryon charged him, moving to get around the intruders, driven mad by his hatred and desire for revenge. But Kassy was there. Her sword flashed, and Geryon's forearm was sheared through, his hand falling bloodlessly to the deck. Her shield hammered him in the face, sending him staggering backward. Kassy spun, and the sword carved a deep furrow in Geryon's breastplate.

Geryon swung a hamfisted blow at Kassy that knocked her sprawling. Foam sprayed from Geryon's lips as he raised a hand

that began to glow with dark light. A beam flashed from his palm, straight for Caleb, but Doctor Abbot raised his cane, caught the beam, and threw it back at the Kreeghor. It impacted with all the force of a freight train, throwing him backwards. For a split second, the bones within Geryon's flesh blazed with incandescent light, and when he landed, his body was a smoking ruin.

Kassy got to her feet, sparing a glance at Caleb. Her face grew pale. "Zeus' blood," she whispered. And then Caleb felt Abbott's arm under his own, propping him up.

"Sorry we're late," Doctor Abbott said in his dry, British tones. "You left without a forwarding address."

Kassy cut down a crew member who got too close. "Head for the escape pods, you damn idiots!" The ship shook again as Sammadar strafed it once more.

Kassy backed towards Abbott and Caleb. "Is he alive?"

"Barely. You'll hold on, won't you Caleb? You'll be safe very shortly." Abbott paused, looking at the Atlantean woman. "I'm not sure he can handle the stress of teleporting."

She nodded, and the sword and shield faded from sight. Kassy knelt beside Caleb, and her delicate fingers played over his shoulders, arm, and chest. She spoke quickly and quietly in Atlantean, her words almost completely lost as explosions rocked the ship. The crew had apparently taken her advice and left for calmer surroundings, because no one else interfered as Kassy touched other tattoos on her arms and a soft, cool blue glow surrounded her hands. The glow washed over Caleb and through him, and he felt himself slipping out of consciousness again. His elbow burned, but in a pleasant way, as he finally slipped into a deep, deep sleep.

* * *

Caleb found himself breathing.

He blinked, opened his eyes, and found himself lying comfortably on a bed, the familiar bulkhead of Sammadar Orak's K!ozn ship overhead. An IV was plunged into his right arm, and his left arm was encased in a blue cast. He ached all over, but he was no longer really in pain. He touched his teeth with his tongue and found them all in place, where they should be. There was no one else in the room with him, and he found the room itself sparsely decorated, its only décor a bank of monitors, a few chairs, and a cabinet emblazoned with an unrecognizable symbol in maroon. He suspected that, were he on Earth, it might be a red cross, but the K!ozn obviously used different symbology.

Caleb dragged himself into a sitting position, noting with abstract interest that his chest was heavily bandaged. He looked for and found a comm unit at the edge of the bed and thumbed it active. "Anyone home?"

"Caleb!" Doctor Abbot's voice came through the device. "You're awake. I'll be right down."

A few minutes later, the good doctor swept into the little room. His orange eyes twinkled in his version of a smile. "Well," he said, "it was touch and go for a while, but you have pulled through the worst of it."

"Thank you for coming to get me, Doc. Thanks for saving my life."

"You're quite welcome. Should the need ever arise, I'm sure you would do the same for me, or Kassy, or any of our other friends."

"Where's Romana?" Caleb asked.

Abbott's eyes dimmed. "I'm afraid... she's gone, Caleb. When you made your announcement and left, we naturally went to inform her of what had happened. But we found both her apartments and yours empty. She left the Singularity Watch behind, which tells me she did not intend to go anywhere at all."

Caleb groaned and slumped backward in the bed. "The other me must have taken her."

"The other what?"

Caleb told Abbott everything. The appearance of the second Vulcan, the information he imparted. The arrival of Harkonnen and Geryon's ship, the desperate race through Alexandria's system, and the final battle with the Elf. He glossed over waking up in Geryon's cell and the effort it took to escape it, but he did not leave out the loss of the Forge's blessings or why. When he was done, Abbott's eyes were very dim indeed.

"This is very distressing. But, dare I say, not the end. Where there is life, there is hope. We have access to the Singularity Watch. I am no Time Councilor like your fiancée, but I am handy with magic. We'll get it working, track her to whatever potential future she has been taken to, and we will rescue her. As for your Fall... well, you're alive, Caleb. And I am your friend until the end of our days."

Caleb looked straight at the bulkhead. "I miss the power, Doc. I miss how capable it made me feel. I'm going to miss flying through space most of all." His eyes found Abbott. "But I can live without it, so long as she's safe and sound."

Abbott nodded. "I know, Caleb. We'll find her."

* * *

After three days of travel, they returned to the planet Alexandria in the United Worlds of Warlock. Caleb spent the trip drifting through the corridors of Sammadar Orak's craft. The entire wedding party was aboard, and more besides. Sammadar, of course, piloted the ship and tried to cheer Caleb up during the few brief moments they spent together. Abbott and Kassy were never far from Caleb for long; in fact, by the second day, when he found Kassy hovering nearby, he snapped at her and then apologized. Ariel of Titan, now the only Cosmo-Knight aboard, spent the trip in the hold, too tall to walk through the rest of the ship comfortably. Caleb's visit with Ariel was awkward for them both, although Ariel tried to reassure him that many Knights who had Fallen managed to redeem themselves and regain their status as full fledged Cosmo-Knights. Joriel the Celestine, winged android and Kassy's lover, was the only one who didn't treat Caleb with kid gloves. He simply asked Caleb what he knew about the kidnapper, and began making plans for the trip into the future. Arwen Griffin, super-powered martial artist and Abbott's ward, was largely oblivious herself, but even she couldn't refrain from giving Caleb a look of pity when she thought he wasn't looking.

In addition to Caleb's closest friends, there was also a squad of Atlantean Undead Slayers aboard, led by a bald and tattooed warrior who went by the name Odin. Three Wolfen, all children or grandchildren of Lothar and guests at the wedding, had joined the rescue mission as well. Other wedding guests, among them Siv Yurilak, a Noro pilot, and Vodan Kee, a Sinestrian scientist, had also insisted on accompanying them.

They all made for a crowded journey. Sammadar's unnamed ship was not designed with passengers in mind. But it had a mind

of its own, and a tendency to rearrange rooms and passageways depending on need.

Slowly, with the help of UWW, CCW, and K!ozn technology and magic, Caleb's physical wounds began to heal. But he couldn't get his failure or his concern for Romana out of his mind.

Finally, they made landfall at Alexandria, just outside the planet's largest starport at the lavish and beautiful estate of Kassy's parents, Hiram and Kornelia. The estate covered ten square kilometers, most of it wooded hills and meadows in a state of "cultivated wilderness." The sprawling palace that lay at the center of the grounds was built in the Greco-Egyptian style favored by Atlanteans. It had four hundred rooms, an Olympic sized pool, stables, a docking bay large enough to service a dreadnought, and what seemed an endless supply of servants, courtiers, and visitors clogging its halls. Caleb still didn't know what Hiram or Kornelia did for a living, even after all these years, but they were obviously powerful and well respected members of Alexandrian society. They loved their daughter and her friends, and had graciously agreed – insisted, practically – to host Caleb and Romana's wedding.

The decorations still hung in the main hall as the travelers returned, late in the middle of a cool Alexandrian evening. The household woke quickly to welcome everyone home. Hiram Acherean met Caleb in the main hall. A tall man, tattooed in the Atlantean tradition, with a heavy beard and long hair, he looked like a Greek god come to life. He grasped Caleb's hand in his own. "There is much sadness in your eyes, Caleb Vulcan. More than is warranted, even for the events of the past few days."

"You have no idea, Hiram," Caleb said. He forced a smile. "Thank you for your concern, but what I'm really interested in is finding my wife."

Hiram clapped Caleb on the shoulder, then frowned as he saw the younger man wince slightly. "Indeed," he said. "What is your plan?"

"We'll use the Singularity Watch," Abbott said. "It should take me a day or two of examination, but I am fully confident that I can get it working."

Hiram nodded. "We are at your disposal, as always." His look encompassed the entire crowd, which was growing as guests, estate staff, family and friends filtered into the main hall to see the returning travelers. "It is late, and you must all be tired. But I can have the kitchens whip up some refreshment if you desire, or you may retire to your rooms. Or will you be convening a war council?"

"Thanks, Dad," Kassy said. "I think we'll wait until morning for the whole war council thing. Food and sleep do sound good, though."

Hiram looked to Caleb, as if seeking his approval, but at Caleb's shrug, Hiram looked up and got the attention of his major domo, Anakratos, and very soon platters of food began wheeling into the room. The buzz of conversation rose, and wine began to flow.

Caleb sat at a table, picking at his food, all too aware of the clumsy cast on his wrist. He craved action. Cooped up on the ship for days, now trapped in an Atlantean mansion. He wanted to find Romana. He worried about her. He worried for her. The bad guys had almost a week's head start and access to time travel - they could be anywhere or anywhen.

Suddenly Caleb threw his fork down and pushed his chair away from the table. "This is bull—" he started to say, when the

room was suddenly split by the flash and crackle of blue lightning.

A crack appeared in the air above the head table, and a cold silver sphere the size of a car slid out of it, like an egg being laid. The crack closed with a thunderous sound, and the sphere crashed into the middle of the table, shattering it, then rolled across the dance floor. People scrambled out of chairs as it rolled towards tables, flattening a few before finally slowing and drawing to a halt. As it stopped, Caleb was already up and moving, leaping down from the dais. He held his hand out automatically, expecting his hammer to appear, and was momentarily disoriented when it did not.

He reached the sphere, more of an ovoid actually, as a gap appeared in its silvery surface. A door opened up, and a figure tumbled out. Caleb had been prepared to pounce, but he drew up short with a look of wonder when he recognized who it was.

A slim, dark woman in a white dress. Romana, her hair disheveled, her dress torn in places, but looking whole and unharmed. She was in Caleb's arms before he realized he had scooped her up. He kissed her fiercely, and she kissed him back with equal fervor.

"What happened?" he asked, breathless, when they paused. A sizable crowd gathered around them, as friends and hosts and guests rushed to their side.

"You called off the wedding," Romana said, jabbing a finger into Caleb's breast. "I went to your room to find out why, and found you there. But it wasn't you; it was some other you from the future. He drugged me, or tried to, and then grabbed me and dragged me back to the future with him. Except the poor dear was somewhat unfamiliar with Altess physiology, because when he gassed me, he only weakened me. I came to while he was activating the Time Sphere, and as we hurtled forward in time, I got his story out of him. The other Caleb was a broken man, but he didn't want to hurt me, just protect me. He didn't think you would succeed where he had failed, but he thought I'd be willing to accept him and live in the future with him.

"Well, I disabused him of that notion fairly quickly. And then, well, the future we were hurtling toward suddenly changed from fixed to potential, and we were no longer aimed at a viable end point. Time Spheres are meant to travel through time and space, but not cross over to other dimensions, which is where we were headed by that point. I took over the controls then and landed us safely. I kicked the other Caleb out, jump started the Time Sphere with a little Time Councilor magic, and made my way back over the dimensional gulf to this time, this place. I'm pretty sure I overshot by a few days, maybe two weeks at most."

Romana paused. Her eyes twinkled. "Judging by the intensity of that kiss, I'm guessing you missed me."

Caleb laughed. For the first time in days, he laughed. He felt something loosen in his chest. "You have no idea."

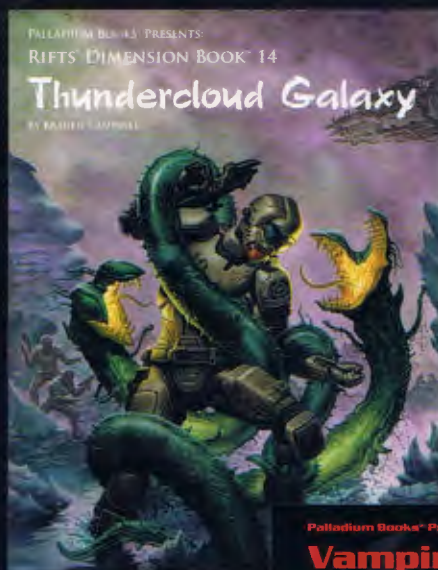
"Then the wedding isn't off anymore?"

"No!" Caleb said. "Not at all. If you'll still have me?"

Romana wrapped her arms around Caleb and kissed him. The crowd cheered, and their friends rushed forward to clap them about the shoulders and join the embrace.

And after the wedding, Caleb decided, they would live happily together, until the end of their days.

THE END



Also from Palladium Books®

Rifts® Thundercloud Galaxy™

There is a mad rush to colonize the many habitable worlds of the Thundercloud Galaxy, but that means nothing but trouble. A sourcebook of epic scale, there are thousands of worlds to be explored, colonists to protect, space pirates to battle, alien menaces, lost technology of the Elder Races and much more.

- 16 new alien races, plus monsters. 101 encounters and ancient ruins.
- The Dominators and some of their weapons & gear.
- Colony creation tables. Monster creation tables.
- For Phase World®/Rifts®, Heroes Unlimited™ and all settings.
- 160 page sourcebook of endless adventure.

Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™ Revised & Expanded™

Fan favorite Rifts® World Book 1: Vampire Kingdoms is updated & expanded.

- More and new information about vampires.
- Vampire hunters, their weapons and gear.
- Freak Shows, Traveling Carnivals and more.
- Other weird creatures, R.C.C.s and places for adventure.
- 192 pages by Kevin Siembieda.

Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook™

- More about the Vampire Kingdoms of Mexico.
- Vampire Minions and protectors.
- Vampire activities and trouble away from the kingdoms.
- Vampire hunter exterminators and more.
- 128 pages by Kevin Siembieda and others.

Other Titles from Palladium Books®

Robotech® RPG series
Dead Reign™ RPG – zombie apocalypse series
Beyond the Supernatural™
Heroes Unlimited™ RPG series
Nightbane® RPG series
Ninjas & Superspies™
Palladium Fantasy RPG® series
Rifts® RPG series
Rifts® Chaos Earth™ series & more

The Rifter® Number Fifty-Four

The Rifter® Number 54 is packed with strange creatures, weapons, gizmos, and adventure for *Rifts®*, *Palladium Fantasy®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, and *Nightbane®*.

The Rifter® is your doorway to unlimited imagination and numerous Palladium role-playing worlds. It offers new heroes, powers, weapons, magic and adventure for your games. It presents new villains, monsters and dangers to battle, and new ideas to consider. And it helps you unlock your imagination by showing you what other gamers, just like you, have created.

- The Final Chapter of *The Hammer of the Forge™* – the pulse pounding conclusion of this epic tale by *James M.G. Cannon*.
- *Heroes Unlimited™ – Dawn of a New Era, Part Two*. The conclusion to the adventure involving mutants and aliens being forced to “register” with global governments, or else.
- *Megaversal Menagerie* – a collection of sentient beings and strange animals from across the *Megaverse®*.
- *Rifts® – The fortress city of New Chillicothe, Missouri*.
- *Dark Day™ Chronicles, Volume 2 – A Nightbane® short story*.
- News and coming attractions.
- 96 pages of imagination unleashed.