

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE

RIFTS

Guide to the Megaverse®



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Palladium Fantasy® – Quorian Riftlord™

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REAR

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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 55

Your guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

First Printing – July 2011

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

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Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #55



Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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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® #55 – July, 2011

Page 6 – Art

Here's a peek at **Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™**. The illustration by *Nick Bradshaw* with additional inks and embellishment by *Kevin Siembieda* shows the true form of the Master Vampire. Scary stuff. There's more about **Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™** in the back of this issue and a description of the book can be found on page 10 of *Coming Attractions*.

Page 7 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Kevin talks about what has been going on at Palladium Books, our successes, the new website, disappointments, and pressing forward with an eye toward fun, new adventure and quality products to challenge your imaginations.

Page 8 – News

It's convention season and Palladium is revving up for **Gen Con Indy** and others. Palladium doesn't attend a lot of conventions, and it has been a few years since we even attended **Gen Con Indy**. As you might imagine, we're excited about being at Gen Con and hope gamers will drop by to say hello, get autographs and have some fun. Our next convention will be the **Detroit Fanfare**, a comic book and media event that should be lots of fun.

Kevin also talks about the new Palladium website, **Robotech®**, and Editor Alex Marciniszyn's new fight with a blood disease, among other things.

Page 9 – Coming Attractions

Out of print titles continue to come back into print. The most recent being **Rifts® Book of Magic**. Meanwhile, new releases that have been delayed are finally coming out. *Coming Attractions* gives you the complete lowdown and descriptions of all the hot new releases coming your way. We are especially excited about **Rifts® World Book One: Vampire Kingdoms™ Expanded & Updated**, which has been almost completely rewritten. You can get a little sneak preview of it in this issue of *The Rifter®*. We're also excited about **Rifts® Lemuria** which is in final production and should be at the printer by the time you read this. It will be followed by other hotly anticipated titles like **Robotech® New Generation Sourcebook**, **Rifts® Megaverse in Flames™**, **Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook**, **Dead Reign™ Sourcebook Three**, and many others that will inspire adventure and delight your imaginations.

Back in print titles start on page 13. What are you waiting for? You know you want these role-playing game titles.

Page 18 – Home Away from Home

– *Optional* source material for **Palladium Fantasy®**

Travis Guerrero is back with bold insight about the strange and magical race of beings known as the Quorians. He explores their roots, language, society, and culture which includes some surprises like the Quorian Riftlord R.C.C.

Page 20 – Duels of Honor

Page 21 – Military

Page 22 – Crime and Punishment

Page 22 – Ancient Rivalries

Page 23 – Names and Visions

Page 24 – The Lost Homeworld

Page 25 – Quarian Riftlord™ R.C.C.

Page 29 – Potential Adventure Ideas

Artwork by *Mike Mumah*.

Page 30 – Ancestral Mystic R.C.C.

– *Optional* source material for **Palladium Fantasy®**

Paul Herbert presents a lost mystic art from the Time of a Thousand Magicks known as Ancestral Mysticism. A magic that draws upon the knowledge and powers of the mage's ancestors. There are tables and information for creating an Ancestral Mystic player character and other fun tidbits.

Artwork by *Kent Burles*.

Page 36 – Souls

– *Optional* source material for **Palladium Fantasy®**

Jonathan Farnham presents a few new magic spells that draw upon or steal souls.

Artwork by *Joseph Lawn*.

Page 38 – Dark Day Chronicles™, Volume III

– A Short Story for **Nightbane®**

Jeremy Hutchins presents more tales of the Nightbane after Dark Day as they learn about their powers and the supernatural world of demons and evil that has leached into our world.

Includes character stats for Gabriel Quintos, an Athanatos, and Nightbane, Avalon Lauren Murphy.

Artwork by *Mike Leonard*.

Page 47 – Triax™ Update

– Revised O.C.C.s from **Rifts® World Book 5**

Brandon K. Aten updates the Military O.C.C.s of the New German Republic, adding skills from *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* plus a few new ones.

Page 47 – NGR Medical Officer

Page 49 – NGR Infantry Soldier

Page 51 – NGR Field Mechanic

Page 53 – NGR Cyborg Soldier

Page 55 – NGR Power Armor Commando

Page 56 – NGR Robot Combat Pilot

Page 57 – NGR Intelligence Division Agent (New!)

Page 60 – New Skills

Artwork by *Kevin Long* from the original World Book Five.

Page 61 – The Cutting Room Floor: The CCW

– Material for **Rifts® Thundercloud Galaxy™**

Here is some text and history written by *Braden Campbell* and *Kevin Siembieda* that didn't make it into *Rifts® Dimension Book 14: Thundercloud Galaxy™*. It provides some insight about the Consortium of Civilized Worlds and their efforts in the Scramble for the Thundercloud.

Artwork by *Mike Mumah*.

Page 69 – The Black Crusade™,

Part Two: The Methodeans™

– Optional source material for Rifts®

Andrew Lander returns with more dimension spanning intrigue, adventure ideas and alien races. The Methodeans are a secretive race of humanoids who have only recently appeared on the Megaverse scene, and nobody knows what their agenda might be. This article sheds a little light on that. Or does it only open up more questions?

Page 69 – Methodean Trading Syndicate (MTS)

Page 71 – G'due D'gud Dimension

Page 72 – Zuthxiou R.C.C.

Page 73 – Biomech Union Dimension

Page 74 – ChuChwa Conglomerate

Page 75 – Legion of Mars

Page 77 – Green Valley

Page 80 – Old Gizzard

Page 81 – Methodean Equipment

Page 83 – Hook, Line and Sinkers™ Adventures

Artwork by *Joseph Lawn*.

Page 86 – Sweet Vengeance

– A short story for Rifts®

Glen Evans presents a thrilling tale of courage and survival set in the gladiatorial arenas of Atlantis.

Artwork by *Mark Dudley*.

Page 93 – Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™

– Sneak Peek at the new Revised & Expanded Edition

Here's an excerpt from **Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™** in which legendary Vampire Hunter *Doc Reid* talks about the undead. Written by *Kevin Siembieda*.

Artwork by *Nick Bradshaw*.

The Theme for Issue 55

This issue of **The Rifter®** is split between magic and discovery, and people and war – the Quorians, NGR soldiers and the CCW. 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®**, **Phase World®**, **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, espe-

cially **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 **RC Aradio**. RC fell in love with **Rifts®** after the **Colt the Outlander™/Rifts®** crossover comic strip that is appearing in **Heavy Metal® Magazine**. Part One appeared last Summer, Part Two (the conclusion) is to appear in an issue this Fall. RC loves Juicers and wanted to do them or some kind of **Rifts®** cover, so we let him cut loose to do the moody and powerful piece that graces this issue. Nice. RC has also done the cover for **Rifts® Megaverse®** in **Flames**. All we can say about that piece is, wow.

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

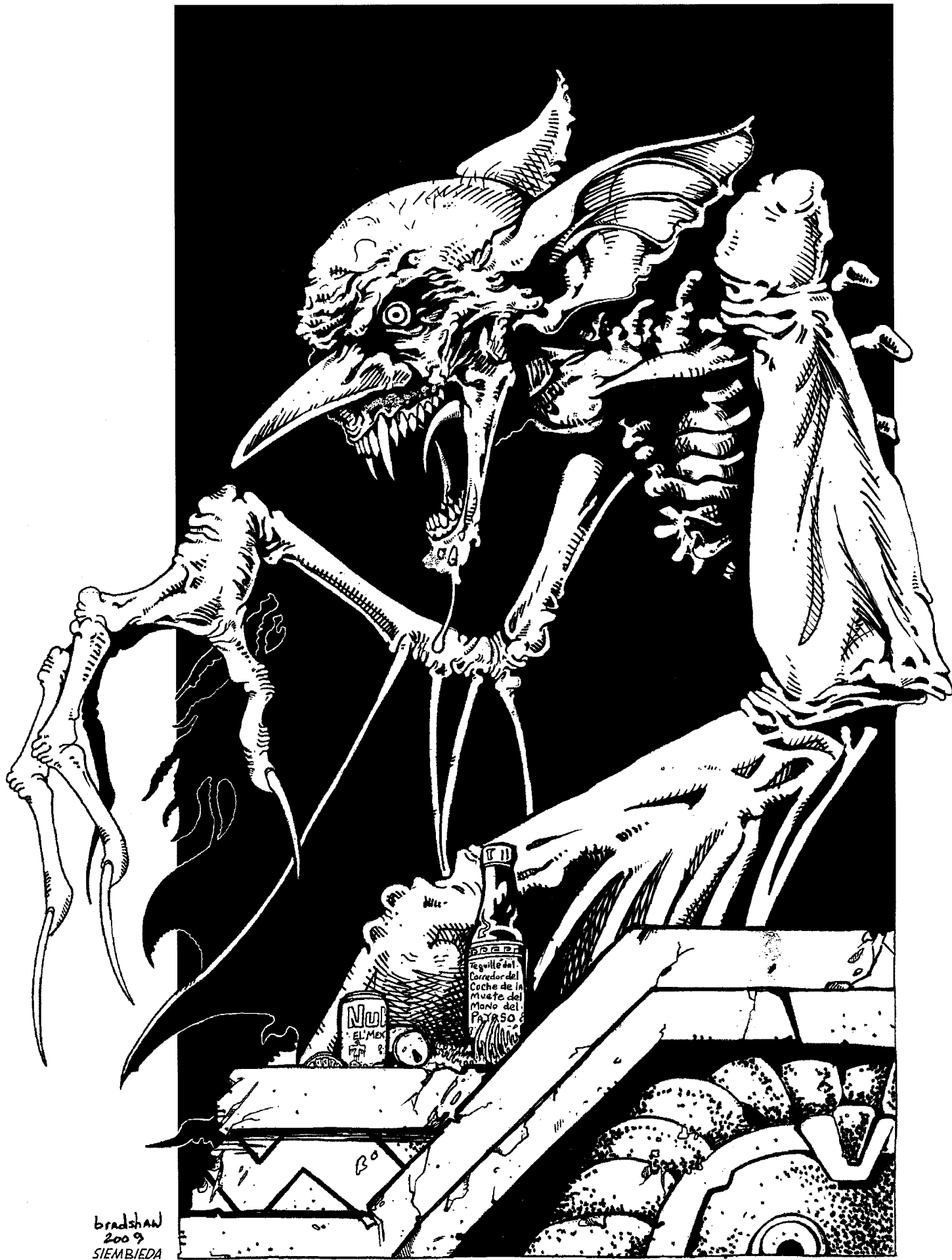
The Rifter® #56

The Rifter® #56 is our traditional “horror” issue, but while there may be things that drink your blood and go bump in the night, we may surprise you with some other things.

- Source material for **Rifts®**.
- Source material for **Beyond the Supernatural™**.
- Source material for **Dead Reign™**.
- 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™



Bradshaw
2009
SIEMBIEDA

From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

2011 continues to be a year of ups and downs, success and disappointment. We always have a million ideas and plans. Some work out, others don't. Here are some of this years successes and disappointments, so far.

Success

The Creators Conference in April was a great success. We talked, we brainstormed and everyone walked away enlightened. The excitement level was out of this world. There are nearly a dozen role-playing game books in development as a direct result of it. The Conference was everything I had hoped for. You'll be seeing new imaginative books and great artwork coming, starting right now.

New Website. It's gorgeous. It's easy to navigate. It's fun. And we plan to do a whole lot more with it, like video chats by me discussing Palladium Books, running games and Game Master tips. Carmen Bellaire plans to do video book reviews, and we have much more in store.

Palladium Books Facebook Page. People love it. It's fun. We plan to expand into Twitter and other online social mediums.

Palladium Comic Book Project. I don't want to talk about this much until we are in full development, but we are working on ways to bring Palladium's game I.P.s (intellectual properties) into the comic book world in a variety of mediums. This would be a way for Palladium to reach new audiences and expand our presence in other markets, which could lead to other good things for the company.

New RPG Releases that You Love. We continue to produce quality role-playing game sourcebooks that entertain and challenge your imaginations. Books that surprise, please and take you to places you were not expecting. We present worlds of adventure that make you want to play. That's not going to stop. In fact, the books in the pipeline and in development are going to blow your mind.

Out of Print Titles Back in Print. We've been very successful in bringing a large number of out of print titles back in print. Here's a list:

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

- **Rifts® World Book 8: Rifts® Japan™ – Back in print – Available now**
- **Rifts® World Book 13: Lone Star™ – Back in print – Available now**

Disappointments trimmed with hope

It seems like the Palladium family just can't catch a break. We seem to have had to deal with more than our share of disappointment, trouble and woes these past several years:

The Crisis of Treachery from which we are still feeling the ripples.

Two MMO deals that promised the world but fell through for reasons beyond Palladium's control.

The deaths of Erick Wujcik, Keith Parkinson, Alex's father, and my father, Henry Siembieda, and a number of other people close to us.

Alex's house fire.

And now Alex Marciniszyn is sick with a blood disease. After feeling ill for a while now, he has only recently been diagnosed. He's getting treatment and we are all optimistic about his future, but this is something he'll have to deal with for the rest of his life. More on Alex's situation in the News.

Inability to get new books out on time. Palladium seems forever unable to get books out on time. We work harder than most people can imagine and put in crazy hours, but we still struggle with getting books out on time. I know this drives people crazy, and we're at the top of that list. We need to get books out faster and on time. However, it's hard to do that and maintain our high quality. It's hard to do that when you're dealing with emotional issues like Alex's house fire and illness. It's hard to find the energy and words when other things weigh on your mind. Writing and editing have been going slow. Releases are late. It is so frustrating.

We're working on fixing the problem with late releases. We have a vast number of sourcebooks in development and Palladium's artists and writers are all taking their game to the next level. You will love what's coming from Palladium Books. Several books are coming out in July and August, with more throughout the year.

Support for all game lines. While some game lines have languished, we plan to put a stop to that. There are three sourcebooks planned for Robotech® over the next 6-8 months, two **Splicers®** sourcebooks, a **Dead Reign™** sourcebook, a **Nightbane®** sourcebook (in development), talk about a couple new **Heroes Unlimited™** sourcebooks, two **Chaos Earth™** sourcebooks are coming, and several **Rifts®** titles. What about **Palladium Fantasy®**? I have big plans for Palladium Fantasy, but it's too soon to talk about it yet. The outcome of the Creators Conference has freelance writers and artists working on new masterpieces. And hopefully, books will be released on time. I'm also eyeballing a new guy to hire on staff provided we can find the money to do so.

Rifts® movie. This Spring there was a lot of behind the scenes excitement about the Rifts® movie. We renewed the movie option for one more year with Walt Disney Pictures and JB Films and . . . no word since. It's very cool that the rights have been

renewed for another year. That makes it nine years the film rights have been optioned, suggesting this is a project Jerry Bruckheimer does not want to let slip through his fingers. But will there be a Rifts movie, ever? It's out of Palladium's hands and we just don't know. Furthermore, if the film does get the greenlight for production, I'll probably be sworn to secrecy and not be able to tell you a word. Crazy.

Good or bad, we continue to give you our all. Books may be late, but they rock. The writing and art are better than ever. The concepts and characters, fun and exciting. And we have a whole lot of them coming your way.

Keep those imaginations burning bright.

– Kevin Siembieda, July 2011

News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

Convention time is here. It's that time of year again and we are busy planning and preparing for a number of conventions and trade shows. As I write this, **Gen Con Indy** is less than four weeks away. In September we're attending the **Detroit Fanfare**, in October it's the **Alliance Trade Show**. Plus, we're eyeballing a couple of small, local conventions in the Detroit area. We are especially excited about Gen Con. *Spread the word* and let people know we'll be at these shows, and come on over to see us.

Palladium to attend

Gen Con Indy – August 4-7, 2011

Palladium Books® Booth 1125

Gen Con Indy is the biggest gaming convention in North America, and Palladium will be there along with many other game companies. From video games and board games to role-playing games and trading card games, the industry leaders and hopeful start-up companies will be at Gen Con Indy promoting their games and getting new people to try their games.

If you are going to **Gen Con Indy**, please stop by to say hello, chit chat, get books autographed, and buy the latest releases, back stock titles, some out of print books (like *TMNT RPG* titles and *Rifts® Ultimate Gold*), collectibles, original artwork, T-Shirts and other goodies. The guys and I are happy to sign books and chat for a little while with everyone who comes by. So please, come on over and join the fun. If you have friends going to Gen Con, tell them to do likewise. Send everybody over to say hello.

In fact, you can give Palladium a helping hand by spreading the word that Palladium Books will be at Gen Con Indy.

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.

For more info go to **Gencon.com**.

Palladium Books is Booth 1125 at Gen Con Indy.

Palladium creators you'll get to meet include:

- Kevin Siembieda (that's me!)
- Wayne Smith (the Editor-in-Chief of The Rifter®)
- Nick Bradshaw (artist)
- Michael Mumah (artist)
- Brandon Aten (writer)
- Matthew Clements (writer)
- And others to be announced.

FYI: I don't think there are any "official" Palladium gaming events on the schedule but there are always a bunch of "unofficial" games.

Palladium to attend Detroit Fanfare

September 24 & 25, 2011 at Cobo Hall, Downtown Detroit

One of the main guests is **Kevin Eastman**, co-creator of the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles®**. That means we'll be there selling TMNT RPG products and getting our own TMNT game books (and comics) signed by *Kevin Eastman*. I know I'll be dragging a stack of **Ninja Turtles®** game product and comics for Kevin to sign. It's the first time Kevin has been to my home town of Detroit so I'm looking forward to chit-chatting and catching up.

Palladium will also be selling **Ninja Turtles® RPG** books and other Palladium titles at the Fanfare. Of course, I'll be at the booth along with other members of the Palladium crew, selling our wares, signing autographs and chatting with fans.

Detroit Fanfare is a comic book and media convention that made a big splash last year where the headline guest was Stan Lee.

Other guests in 2011 that may be of interest to gamers include *Dave Dorman* (Palladium cover artist), *Tim Bradstreet* (White Wolf artist), and pal, Defiler and Palladium contributor of old, *William Messner Loeb*s. And who doesn't love actor *Bruce Campbell* (Evil Dead, Burn Notice, etc.)?

If you are a few hours' drive away (Ohio, Indiana, Windsor) you should think about coming over to this very cool convention.

For more details go to: <http://www.detroitfanfare.com>

New Palladium Website

is Love at First Sight

We launched the website in April and people love it. We had our share of glitches and problems, but we addressed everything and continue to make tweaks in improvements. We'll be adding features and offer sales and special features. If you haven't seen the new website, you should drop by. Most people are impressed and pleased. I've had a number of conversations with folks on the phone where I'm telling them about it and they look it up on their computer or smart phone. Every time the reaction is, "Wow, it looks really great! I love it." That's happened to me at least a dozen times now. I think you'll like it to. **www.palladiumbooks.com**

Palladium's Facebook Page

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

Robotech® Titles are Coming

Robotech® New Generation Sourcebook is the book that will follow **Rifts® Lemuria**. We're starting to put things in place for its production and release right now. I approved the color cover sketch this week and Apollo Okamura is working on it.

Not only that, but we hope to release one additional Robotech® title by the end of 2011, with more to follow. The **Robotech® Marines** book is *not* dead. Probably a 2012 release.

Vampire Kingdoms™ Sneak Preview

A **Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™ Sneak Preview** is available as a FREE PDF download from **DriveThruRPG.com**. So are sneak previews for **Armageddon Unlimited™** and **Thundercloud Galaxy™**. The **Rifter® Number Zero** and **Hades Map Pack** were recently made available on **DriveThruRPG.com** as well. DriveThruRPG offers more than 90 out of print titles (and a few that are not) as PDF downloads.

80+ Palladium RPG titles as PDFs at DriveThruRPG.com

This is an excellent source to get a wealth of gaming 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**, **Rifts® 1st Edition** and many others at **DriveThruRPG.com**. Check 'em out.

Palladium Editor, Alex Marcinizyn

Fights Blood Disorder

A bit of troubling news. My dear friend, Alex – yes, Alex Marcinizyn whose name you've see in the credits of EVERY Palladium book since 1984 – is suffering from a serious, chronic blood disease. It is called *Polythemia Vera*. In short, Alex's blood is too thick. Way too thick. His red blood cell count is way too high, blood platelets are giant and all of this can result in blood clots that can cause a host of other problems. The disease is also responsible for the exhaustion, heightened anxiety, and other problems Alex has been experiencing for the last couple of months.

The good news is, once they get the disease under control, the illness is manageable. We have a medical plan of action and Alex is getting treatment. He is reasonably positive and I'm there to help him deal with it all every step of the way. A lot of people don't know it, but Alex and I have been best friends since 8th

grade. We're like brothers and I have his back. Over the next few months the doctors are confident they can get Alex's blood chemistry to where it belongs and help him manage the illness. Alex's spirits are good.

Here's more good news. As you may recall, Alex's home caught fire. The family has been displaced. We found some good people (friends of ours) willing to repair the home at a discount price. By the time your read this, Alex and family should be moved back into the fully repaired and renovated home. All we are waiting for now is getting the Certificate of Occupancy from the City. The house looks fabulous.

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 is completely done and probably appearing in one of the Fall issues (September?). It is awesome so watch for it. Both parts will also be appearing a collection of **Colt the Outlander™** presented as a *graphic novel* collecting several of the Colt strips in one juicy book. Watch for it.

By the way, Colt artist RC Aradio is the gentleman who did the cover to this issue of **The Rifter®**. Nice. He's also done a dynamic cover for **Megaverse® in Flames**, the end book in the **Minion War™** series where the action comes to Rifts Earth (September release).

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2011 Release Checklist

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

2011 Releases

- **The Rifter® #53** – Available now.
- **The Rifter® #54** – Available now.
- **Armageddon Unlimited™** – Available now.
- **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 14: Thundercloud Galaxy™** – Available now.
- **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® Book of Magic** – *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

July

- **The Rifter® #55** – Available now.
- **Rifts® WB One: Vampire Kingdoms™, Expanded & Updated** – New

August

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

September

- **Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames** (Minion War™ crossover) – New

October

- **Dead Reign™ Sourcebook Three**
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth™ sourcebook**

November

- **Palladium Fantasy®: Mysteries of Magic™ Two** and maybe another Fantasy title.

In the Pipeline

- **Rifts® Chaos Earth™ Sourcebooks**
- **Rifts® Antarctica**
- **Robotech® UEEF Marines** and other **Robotech®** sourcebooks.
- **Rifts® sourcebooks**
- **Palladium Fantasy®** other sourcebooks
- **Warpath™ Urban Jungle RPG**
- And other good stuff.

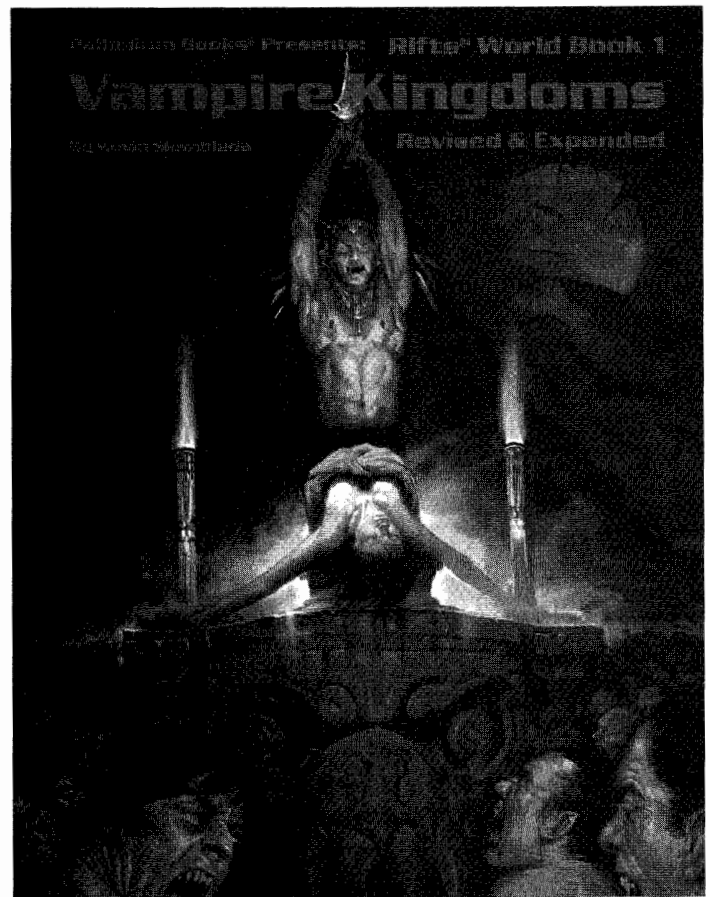
New!

Rifts® World Book One:

Vampire Kingdoms™, Expanded & Updated

Kevin Siembieda has completely rewritten, reorganized, and expanded one of the most popular **Rifts® World Books** ever published: **Vampire Kingdoms™**.

Updated to 109 P.A., there is so much new material that it is practically a new book, yet it also preserves most of the original characters, concepts and information. The new material is built upon the original text, only rewritten, clarified and expanded. **Vampire Kingdoms™** will be updated and expanded in a more dramatic fashion than Kevin's work in **Rifts® Sourcebook One**



a few years ago. Best of all, it will be quickly followed by the **Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook™**.

- **The Vampire Hunter O.C.C.**
- **Hero Vampire and Deluded Vampire O.C.C.s.**
- **Techno-Wizard vampire slaying weapons and devices, new and old.**
- **Vampires: Their strengths, weaknesses and powers.**
- **The Vampire Kingdoms expanded.**
- **Travel through the Vampire Kingdoms and surrounding areas.**
- **Desert survival rules and guidelines.**
- **Vampire strategies and plans for conquest.**
- **The observations of Doc Reid.**
- **Camazotz, Lord of Bats and Darkness** – his plans for conquest of the Vampire Kingdoms and humanity.
- **Ciudad Juarez** mapped and described. A typical village and other places also described.
- **The Yucatan Peninsula, and adventure ideas galore.**
- **Were-Jaguars and other Were-Beasts of the Yucatan.**
- **Updated and revised to 109 P.A., plus Archie Three and more.**
- **Cover by E.M. Gist.**
- **New artwork by Mike Wilson, Kent Burles, Mike Mumah and Nick Bradshaw, plus the best of Kevin Long and Tim Truman from the original book.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **192 to 224 pages – \$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 802-E. Available now.**



Rifts® Dimension Book™ 14:

Thundercloud Galaxy™

– Available now

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.

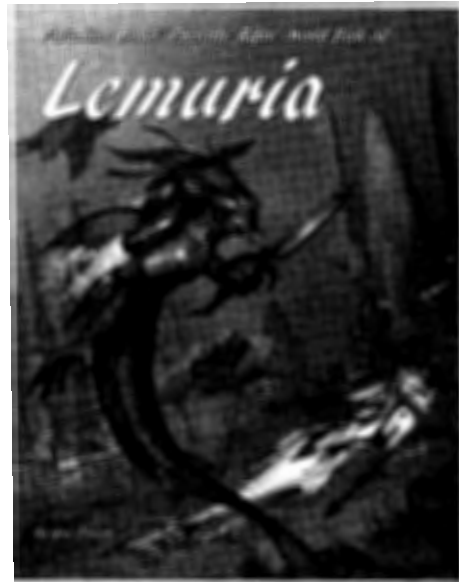
As the civilizations of the Anvil and Corkscrew Galaxies scramble to colonize the Thundercloud in a mad rush to grab as much as they can, they are beginning to realize the galaxy holds more riches, beauty, horrors and secrets than anyone has ever imagined, making it a place of discovery, adventure and 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 races.
- 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.
- 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. Available now.

NEW Titles Coming Soon



Rifts® World Book 32: Lemuria™

The power, secrets and magic of the underwater realm of Lemuria revealed. Player characters can use symbiotes, magic and technology to breathe underwater and spend time below the waves.

Lemuria is more than an underwater civilization of aquatic beings. They can trace their lineage as far back as the Atlanteans and can survive on dry land as well as underwater. In fact, their greatest secret is that there is no one resting place for the Lemurians, their great cities are always moving. Learn about the people of Lemuria, new Biomancy magic and weapons, Biomancy en-

gineered riding animals, sea herbs, new powers of healing, sea monsters, and more. Epic adventure awaits.

- 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.
- Biomancy armor, weapons and equipment.
- Symbiotic creatures and constructs; some that enable air-breathers to survive underwater, indefinitely.
- New psionic abilities.
- Sea Serpents, Sea Dragons, monsters, and riding animals.
- New dangers, new challenges, 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. At the printer. August release.

Robotech®

New Generation™ Sourcebook

This Robotech® sourcebook will be a 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. August or September 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. August or September release.

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. September or October release.

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. Fall 2011.**

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.**
- **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:

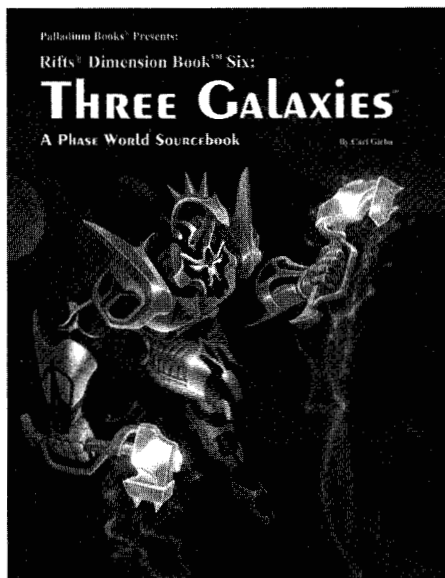
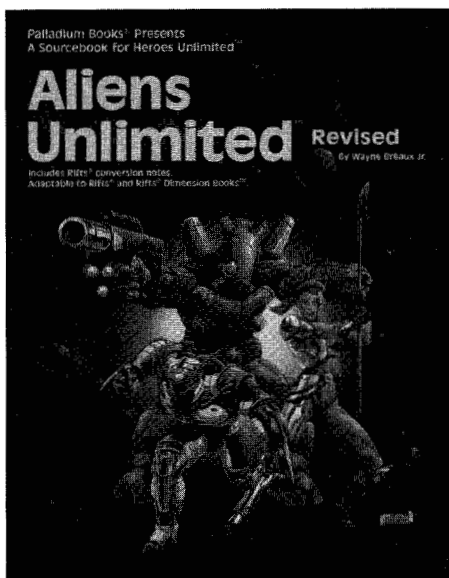
Three Galaxies™

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.**
- **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 & 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?

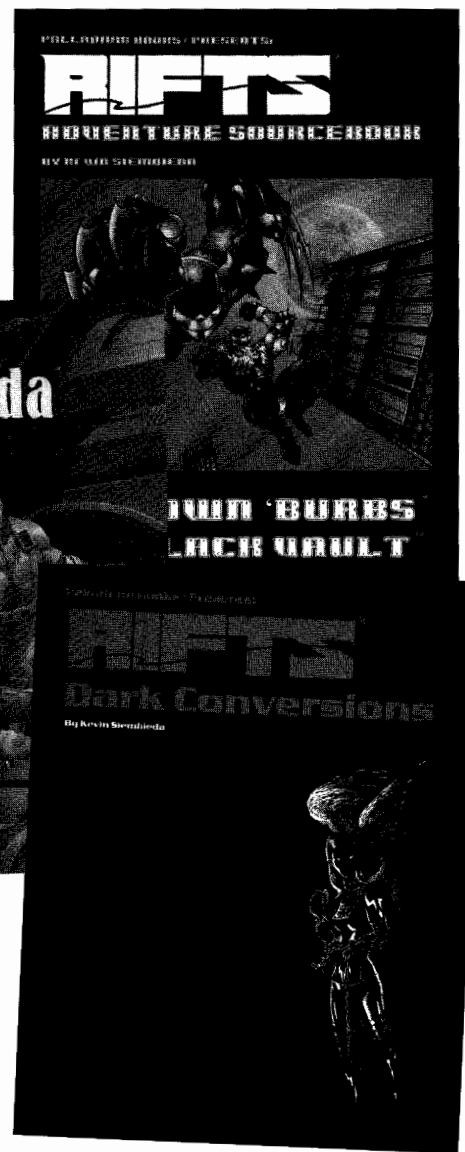
- **The Legend of the Black Vault.**
- **The Coalition's Campaign Against Magic.**
- **Coalition Anti-Magic Squads.**
- **The Black Vault, its defenses and inventory of magic items.**
- **101 Magic Items – each "item" (79 of them) is described in detail. The last 22 items are magic potions with the effects of magic spells.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **48 pages – \$9.95 retail – Cat. No. 855 – Available now.**

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.

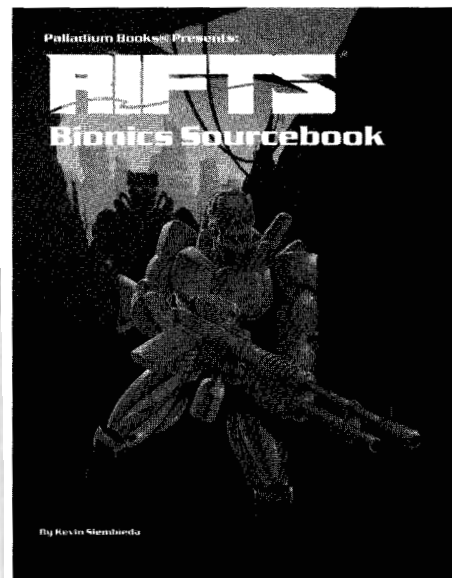
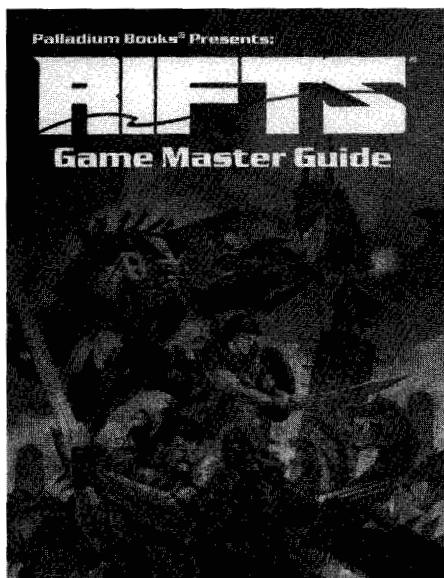
- **The Inuit Shaman O.C.C. and abilities.**
- **12 Monsters of the North, including Sasquatch and Loup Garou.**
- **7 demonic beings including Demon Bears, Windigo and Sedna the Sea Hag.**
- **8 D-Bee R.C.C.s common to Canada, including the Cyber-Horsemen of Ixion (bionic Centaurs).**
- **The Headhunter 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.
- 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.

- Cover by David Dorman. Interior art by Perez, Wilson & others.
- 352 pages – \$26.95 retail – Cat. No. 845 – Siembieda & others.
- 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, Whale-songs 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.
- 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 – a nation 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 the 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.

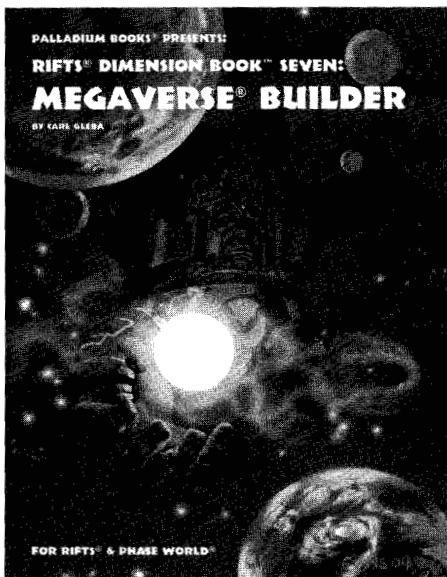
Note: For 18 new O.C.C.s, heroes of the Celestial Court, Geofront, secret technology, mystical powers, Demon Wrestling, Demon Quelling, Chi Weapons, martial arts and more, see **Rifts® World Book 25: Rifts® China 2 – 160 pages – \$20.95 – Cat. No. 858.**

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® 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! Make 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 28 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. Meanwhile the monster races – Goblins, Orcs, Ogres and Trolls – lay claim to the Old King-

dom, 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.



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,

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Home Away from Home

Quorian Culture

Optional Source Material for

The Palladium Fantasy RPG[®]

By Travis Guerrero

Long before they came to the Palladium World, the Quorians had developed a culture to live and die by. Having lost any way back to their homeworld however, and with the losses they suffered during the Elf-Dwarf War, including the apparent extinction of the Riftlords, much of what they were was lost. There is no question that their time in the Palladium World has changed them as a people, but they are still a prideful race which has not abandoned who they once were. At the very least, a part, if not more, of who they were before still remains.

Note: The information here is an expansion of the Quorian race as described in *Palladium Fantasy RPG[®] Book 9: Baalgor Wastelands[™]*. For details on the Quorians such as stats and some culture notes not included here, please read their write-up within that book.

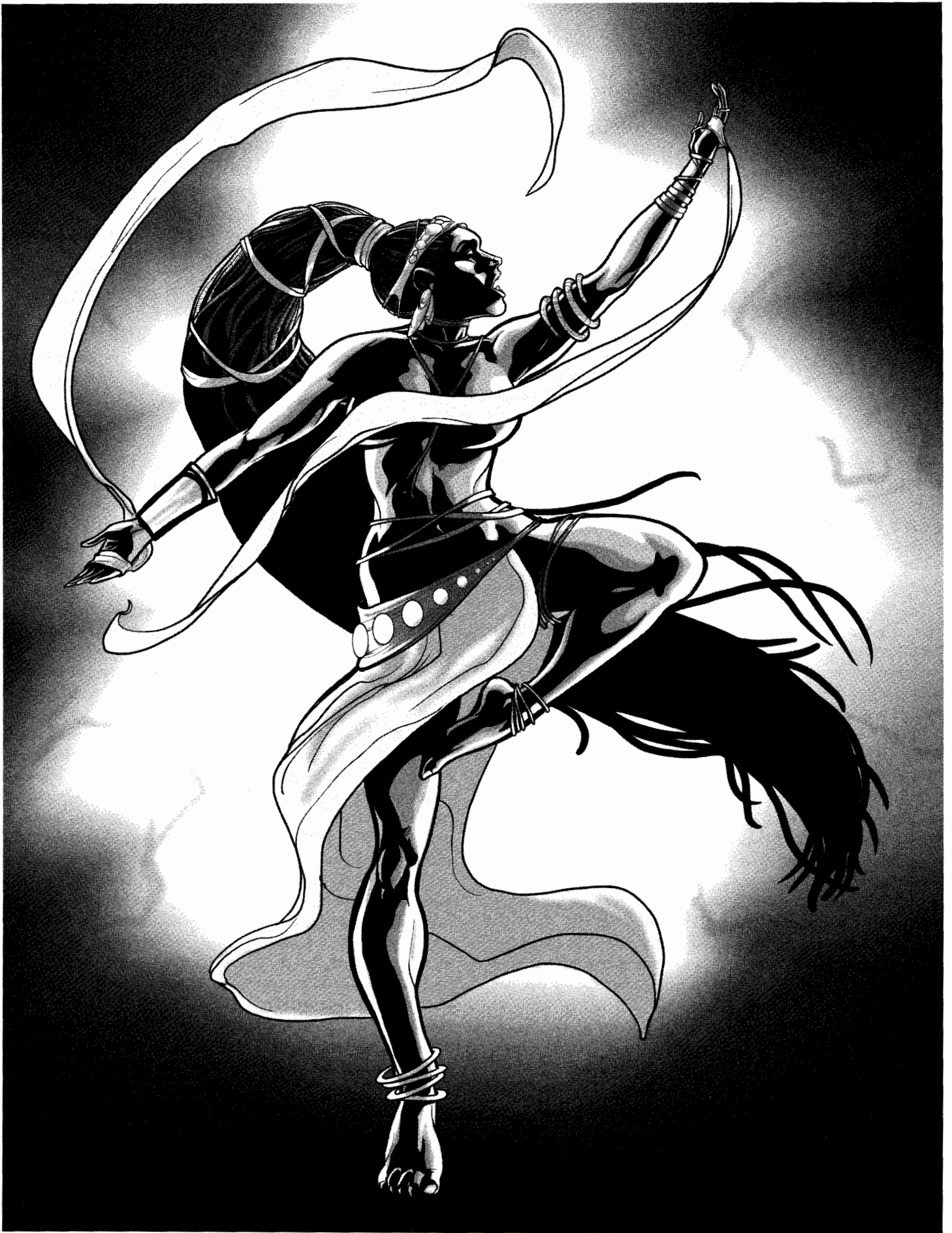
Language

The Quorians have their own unique language which is simply known as Quorian, even to them. It is known that it once had another name, a name they called it before their arrival on the Palladium World, a name that had its own meaning. However, that name has since been lost to time. It is believed that the language was named after the main continent of their homeworld, or perhaps the name of the first Riftlord who unified their people, but the truth behind it appears to be lost even to them.

When the language is spoken, vowels are almost always held for a second, allowing the sound to carry before continuing. The first consonant of a word is emphasized and the last consonant is spoken far more softly, as if the word starts off strong and slowly fades to silence. As a result, each consonant of the word often sounds like a separate, distinct word to the untrained ear. If the word is composed of only one syllable then it simply starts off strong and quickly goes to a faded, soft whisper. Despite the nuances of the spoken word, there is no such distinction in the written word.

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the Quorian language is the fact that they don’t naturally have any word for “peace.” The closest translation anyone has been able to come up with so far is the word “surrender.” If anyone declares to a Quorian that they want peace, then in Quorian eyes, the person is effectively walking up waving a yellow flag (see *Military* for more notes on surrender and the yellow flag). This attitude is also attributed to the fact that the Quorians are a well known race of warriors.

It is not proper to shout when speaking Quorian. The tone is not what is important; it is what is said that matters most. While



one will not take offense to someone shouting, it is simply viewed as foolish and will lower others' opinions of the shouter. That is, because if spoken properly, there is no need to shout. One could set down a challenge with spoken words alone. Shouting is just some cheap trick to make one seem bigger, a trick only the weak need to employ.

The language places a rather large emphasis on the concept of "understanding." There are several words to describe different levels of understanding something. They have 10 different words which translated mean, "I understand." However, each one means something more. One can mean, "I understand your words, but the concept is strange/foreign." Another can mean, "I understand and agree wholeheartedly." Then another will mean, "I understand what you're trying to say but completely disagree." This last one can often come off as a challenge, and these are but three examples of the varying degrees.

Children and Aging

Children are conceived in much the same way as human children, involving a man and a woman and a 9 month gestation period. Due to their war-like nature, many expect the Quorian mating rituals to be highly aggressive and very rough. On the contrary, there are those who know better and will state that there is no more gentle touch than a Quorian in love. This fact causes many to be shocked and dismayed since even the appearance of a Quorian indicates a tough and very physical warrior nature.

Each and every Quorian born is unique and individual. Until the Quorians came to the Palladium World they had no concept of twins or triplets (or more). The concept of multiple children being born at the same time was truly a foreign concept which was quite disturbing in the eyes of many. Even now, after so much time has passed, most Quorians find the thought unsettling, but have come to accept it as just one of the many strange things which go on in this alien world.

Once a child is born, the child is looked after by the entire family. Father and mother, as well as any older siblings, are to look after the health and well-being of a child. The oldest child must look after the younger ones as a result of birth order, giving the absolute youngest of a family the least responsibility. This often gives the eldest child a great feeling of burden, especially when the parents must go out to do battle. As a result, it is not uncommon for a feeling of animosity between siblings and even towards the parents. The animosity is something that is simply expected and accepted within the Quorian culture.

Until children reach spiritual adulthood, they are viewed as the weak members of the villages or "wandercamps." This means the child is to be cared after and protected, not because they are family but because they are too weak to fend for themselves. The Quorian word for "family" doesn't convey a feeling of love and togetherness, but one of obligation and duty. A child is brought up being trained to be self-sufficient, not being coddled and showered with affection. As a result, there are no strong bonds or sense of connection between family members, except for the "paired" parents who have chosen a life together.

There is no set age for a child to become an adult. In fact, Quorians do not even keep track of such trivialities as age. Each day one is alive is worthy of celebration. As a Quorian was once quoted as saying, "Life is short, and the life of a warrior is all the shorter. Why celebrate once a year when you can celebrate each

day?" Age in terms of years is irrelevant; they merely keep track of the three phases of life: child, adult, and elder.

Quorians reach spiritual adulthood after they have their first "dream-vision." This dream-vision typically occurs at a time of age that most humans refer to as early adolescence. The dream-vision is viewed as a very significant part of Quorian life and can cause one's entire life to change drastically, some more so than others. For that reason, guidance is often sought for interpretation. While Psi-Mystics can perform such interpretations, Oneiromancers are viewed as the most skilled, with Shaman being a close second.

Within one year of their first dream-vision, tradition dictates a Quorian leave the family's village or wandercamp. This is to help the Quorian find his or her own place in the world and that cannot be done while the attachments from birth are still present. After leaving, the Quorian is never welcomed back. There are theories for this, but any Quorian will simply explain that this is because Quorians do not get along with their families. If given the choice, most Quorians would prefer to spend their time with strangers as opposed to those who share their blood.

Duels of Honor

The Quorian sense of honor is very easily insulted. Even the slightest insinuation that one is not courageous, forthright, and/or dependable can, and typically will, result in what most consider a duel of honor. Though, much like the Dwarves, the duel of honor with a Quorian is little more than an all-out brawl. The loser owes the winner an apology, simple as that. These duels tend to be rather bloody, often beating the other half to death. Luckily, their amazing healing factor helps to prevent them from killing each other and allows them to quickly recover.

Most other races view Quorians as violent and easily provoked, typically preferring to avoid their company when possible to avoid getting caught up in some barbaric duel that has little basis. A Quorian will not even necessarily declare a challenge, the duel simply is. For this reason, most should not make idle comments, say something without thinking, or anything one does not mean, when dealing with a Quorian. Quorians, on the other hand, are known for being very up-front and honest, speaking their mind. When they do this though, they are fully aware of possible consequences and prepared for what comes with it.

Two Quorians getting into a duel of honor with each other is viewed as a normal event. These duels tend to be something considered fairly common, even if not the case. Truth be told, Quorians don't make a habit of saying insulting comments without meaning it, and most don't give good cause to be insulted by their own. As a result, duels are far more uncommon than most people truly believe. This is not to say they don't happen; they're just not an everyday event as many outsiders believe. Unfortunately, most don't understand the Quorian sense of honor and mentality, viewing them as little more than barbarians.

Few outsiders can truly appreciate the way Quorians handle matters. However, their method of dueling is fairly similar to that of Dwarves, which was one of the many reasons the two races got along so well at the start of their dealings during the Great War. While they went their separate ways during the war, the Dwarves are still one of the few races who can get along well with Quorians. Luckily, Quorians at least recognize how much more vulnerable most other races are, and will actually give them the chance

to don armor first. On the other hand, Quorians rarely take it easy on anyone, regardless of race or position of power.

Ruling Structure

In their home dimension, the Quorians lived in very large communities led by the Riftlords. Underneath the Riftlords were the “Dream Shamans,” Oneiromancers. Below the Oneiromancers were the Psi-Mystics. Finally, though they had no official place of power, the Shamans of the communities were viewed as advisors and could have a great deal of influence, sometimes even more than the Oneiromancer. In this way, the Quorians were able to maintain a large, structured community and still maintain an element of control.

Sadly, every last Riftlord is rumored to have been completely destroyed during the Elf-Dwarf War. While Quorians hold onto hope that the Riftlords have survived in secret and will one day return, this has still left a hole within the Quorian social structure. The race has fractured all the more and large groups are almost completely unmanageable. Oneiromancers have helped to try and fill the void, taking over leadership to the best of their ability, but the Quorians are clearly diminished as a people.

Now, Quorians tend to be split up into small “wandercamps,” groups of Quorians who rarely stay in one place long, and villages which settled down to one location, something that is still relatively new but increasing in numbers. Even the most competent of Oneiromancers can rarely handle any more than 60 individuals in a wandercamp. The largest villages, usually composed of several wandercamps, may go as high as 500, but typically less. These larger villages are mostly a result of the Earthshakers (see **Baalgor Wastelands™** for more details on Earthshakers) where they are set up, not the leadership of Oneiromancers.

The Earthshakers play no actual role within the lives of the Quorians, but the hope that these magnificent creatures may hold some key to finding their way home, or to some major upcoming event just as important, is what unifies them as a people at these places. It is important to note that even though the Oneiromancers have difficulty handling large groups, the entire fault does not fall with them. Despite their social structure, Quorians are independent, proud, and honorable, making large groups extremely difficult to manage.

The ability for anyone at all to gather a group of these independent spirited individuals together shows skill and deserves to be respected. It only goes to show all the more the true respect and power the Riftlords wielded when they were still present. With their tragic loss though, the Quorian “go-it-alone” nature has resulted in a much smaller and fractured people. Unless the Riftlords do return, it seems the only hope for the Quorians to have any type of united front will be a result of the Earthshakers.

Military

The Quorians are highly disciplined and orderly fighters. As long as they are rallied around a strong leader or have given their word of honor, they are truly a force to be reckoned with. However, if their leader is weak or lacks the skill in handling these people, things can quickly lead to a feeling of chaos. This is partially a result of their healing factor leading them to take foolhardy actions, using only straightforward and direct charges into battle, getting in over their heads, never retreating, and the whole

while being convinced of their own immortality in battle. Quorians fully understand that as individual warriors they will fall, but as a people they believe they are virtually undefeatable.

Warriors of the same wandercamp or village often know each other well, will respond to each other well and cover each other’s backs. Despite this understanding within the warrior section, warriors alone will lead to a very costly battle. Rallied behind a strong and intelligent leader, using tactics and strategy such as flanking and attacking supply lines comes into play, making these already fierce warriors a nearly unstoppable force. Unfortunately, it is very hard to impress these warriors enough to convince them that their fighting skills are not enough for straightforward tactics and to follow a single leader.

When dealing with Quorian rank on the battlefield, even for small, separate groups, it is decided the same as the ruling structure above. When there are two Quorians of the same rank involved, the more powerful warrior is in charge. However, if the two cannot agree which Quorian that is, then they must have a duel (similar to an all-out brawl, which might be one of the reasons they get along so well with Dwarves) to prove once and for all which is better. This will be done even if they are only moments away from a battle with an enemy. After all, they cannot face the enemy (and win) until they face each other and remove any doubts.

A Riftlord is the only member of a Quorian community who reserves the right to declare a retreat. No other Quorian can do this, not even an Oneiromancer in the absence of the Riftlords. Since the Riftlords were the undisputed leaders of the communities, there was little question to their courage. If the issue of cowardice ever did emerge, the issue could be taken up with the Riftlord personally and settled in a duel. The Riftlords also tended to be expert warriors, and this typically did not end well for the challenger.

Sadly, this means that without the Riftlords, it is almost unheard of for a Quorian to ever retreat from a battle, no matter the reason or how hopeless it may seem. This has led to the deaths of many Quorians which could have been prevented simply by retreating. However, retreating is one of the signs of cowardice, and few Quorians would ever risk such a dishonor. Death of honor is a far worse fate than the death of the body.

As you may have gathered by now, Quorians don’t retreat and don’t give in easily. Surrendering is a sign of weakness and one that rarely comes up, but it is not totally unheard of. Quorians are unsure of how this tradition started, but to surrender a Quorian waves a yellow flag. It is from the Quorians which the concept of a “yellow stripe” on someone’s back or a “yellow belly” now refers to cowardice on the Palladium World. Due to their time on the Palladium World, they have come to accept the symbol of a white flag as a term for surrender as well.

While Quorians will rarely retreat or surrender, they accept these acts within others far more easily. Quorians only know how to accept unconditional surrenders. This means the Quorian name the terms under which they accept the surrender and the others simply must accept it or the war continues. They will not even listen to requests under such circumstances. As for enemy armies retreating, usually a cowering army will be left alone to run away without pursuit short of demeaning words as the victorious Quorians laugh at them, unless a strong leader orders the battle to continue. This, unfortunately, can often work against the Quorians as the enemy can retreat and regroup while the Quorians do not have such luxury.

Their mentality of no retreat, no surrender, and no “peace” leads most others to believe the Quorians are almost at constant war. This, however, is not the case. The Quorians are actually quite capable of living side by side with another without going to war or serving the other. As best as can be translated to Quorian, this is “separation.” Separation is the concept of living near someone, but not having any actual connection to the other. This is actually a very common and basic Quorian mentality.

On the other hand, “peace,” as near as the Quorians can figure, involves living together and having no set ruler, no one better, no one lesser, everything just being in total harmony. To live in peace, everyone must be equal, everyone must be happy, but the Quorians view this as something just not possible. For everyone to be equal and everyone to be happy, that means everyone can do anything they want and this will certainly lead to chaos, or someone is ruling and everyone is surrendering to that person’s will. Anything else is simply a lie.

Crime and Punishment

Rules of Quorian society aren’t very complicated. Have a high regard for all life, unless a Gosai, is the primary rule. To have a high regard for life is more than just not engaging in senseless bloodshed, it is also treating that life with a degree of civility such as not torturing, starving or beating people, etc., without very good reason. Beyond that it is to respect another’s freedom and to act with honor. Respecting another’s freedom is not only to entail not enslaving someone, but also respecting their space and not stealing from them, etc.

It is rare for a Quorian to ever break these most basic rules of life, at least not within a Quorian society. One who feels a deviant from such ways often leaves Quorian society once reaching spiritual adulthood to live by a different set of rules in a different type of society. If a Quorian breaks some such liberty within Quorian society, most commonly a matter of honor, it is settled with a Duel of Honor (as described above). More often than not, this settles things once and for all.

There are rare instances when this is not enough, or a conflict continues. In cases such as this, if the matter is small, the matter is handled by the leader of the community. More often than not though, the matter which cannot be settled with a simple duel is large enough that it is handled by the community as a whole. For example, a Quorian wearing armor (shields, armlets, and gauntlets are acceptable) is typically viewed as a pathetic display of weakness and cowardice. This can result in chastisement, abuse, and more than likely, exile. Some outsiders view this as extreme, but to a Quorian, cowardice and weakness should be treated like a diseased limb, removed before it spreads.

Note: In settings such as **Rifts®**, where one single shot from a Mega-Damage weapon can kill, even the Quorians have come to accept the use of armor. Light armor is preferred. Many will not even use anything more than partial armor, giving their enemies weak points to strike. In their mentality, this helps save honor for they still need to have skill to avoid enemies taking advantage of these spots. If an enemy displays no ability to use M.D.C. weapons and cannot damage the armor, the Quorians will first discard any armor worn before engaging in battle. While the Quorians are no fools, a clever and tricky opponent may be able use this mentality, feigning weakness, to get a Quorian to take off his or

her armor, then reveal previously concealed abilities to quickly and easily kill the Quorian warrior with more powerful weapons.

Furthermore, a Quorian warrior who retreats from battle, even with good reason, is viewed as an even greater coward. The coward is likely to be marked by those actions, a symbol literally being carved into the forehead for all to see forever, and exiled. This exile will not only include the individual wandercamp or village, but from every Quorian society. Fortunately, there is hope for redemption, if the Quorian can prove he is truly brave and courageous. Once marked as a coward though, it is hard to ever prove to the contrary. For some, this is a lifelong quest.

If the retreat abandoned fellow comrades to die, the coward will likely be killed on the spot. Killing of this coward will take priority even to fighting the enemy. In the Quorian mindset, a coward who abandons a brother or sister in arms during battle may as well as have tried to kill those comrades, for it is the same in Quorian eyes. For this reason, they must kill this traitor before the coward can betray any other allies. There is no chance for redemption after betrayal, only death. The chance for further betrayal is simply too great to risk.

Preferred Weapons

Due to tradition, Quorians tend to prefer simple weapons without many moving parts or very much metal at all. Probably the most common are blunt weapons, with weapons such as staves and spears coming after. They have no particular disdain of weapons such as swords and axes, those that favor things like a large metal blade, but no fondness for them either. Unlike the Gosai, they do not have any biological aversion to metal, but a more personal reasoning that actually dates back to the Quorian home world.

Before coming to the Palladium World, the Quorians made very few weapons and those they did make were typically fashioned from wood, stone, or bone, almost always blunt in design. Their metalworking techniques were very crude. This is in part because of the methods used, but also because metal resources on Quoria are not as pure as on the Palladium World, resulting in lesser quality. Methods to refine their techniques were never very worked out, as Quorians usually prefer to rely on their own strength and abilities rather than those of some weapon.

After coming to this world, many new metalworking techniques were learned. While they never could compete with the Dwarves in quality, or even Kobolds for that matter, they at least became more competent and could compete with many other races. The inclusion of magical items made weapons all the more intriguing. While they are still not necessary as no true warrior *needs* a weapon, Quorians definitely developed a new fondness for them. Regardless of what they have learned, many Quorians still follow the tradition of using no weapons or only basic blunt types merely because it is tradition.

Ancient Rivalries

From nearly the beginning of their inclusion in the Elf-Dwarf War, the Quorians were pitted against the Gosai. Dwarves lured the Quorians in with promises of superior quality weapons (Dwarven quality) and magical weapons, including rune items. These were brand new and fascinating to the Quorians who were more than happy to help in exchange. While the Great War lasted for nearly 2,000 years, the Quorians did not participate in it for its

full duration. Quorians have a very high regard for life and dislike engaging in senseless bloodshed, and for this reason they quickly lost their enthusiasm for the Elf-Dwarf conflict.

To a Quorian, war is waged for a reason, and has a definable goal. During a war, battle should be limited to the offending parties. However, with the horrors both Elf and Dwarf committed during the war, the Quorians could no longer stand such atrocities. For one, the Quorians believed innocents should be left out of the conflict, though Elves and Dwarves both seemed to no longer show that distinction, consumed by their own obsessions with destroying each other. Even today, Quorians show hesitation when dealing with either of these races as the stories of their actions have been passed down through the generations.

Even though they no longer took part in the Elf-Dwarf War, the conflict between Gosai and Quorians persisted and continues to this very day. The exact reason for this is no longer even known to them, but all the Quorians need to know is that it is. They do not doubt the actions of their ancestors, especially not the Riftlords, and know their decisions must have been wise and with good cause. It is believed by many that the Gosai showed no honor with their assassinations, or that someone important was killed. There is another popular belief that one of the first Riftlords swore on his honor to fight them for the Dwarves. Now, even after his death, they, as a people, are sworn to uphold that oath.

Names and Visions

At birth, a Quorian is given a name by the parents. This name may be given after consulting an Oneiromancer, Shaman, or Psi-Mystic for added advice. While consulting one of these individuals within the tribe is not required, it is considered tempting fate to do otherwise. If a child is not named properly at birth it is believed it can inflict bad luck upon the child until adulthood. This is just one example of their highly superstitious natures. Fortunately, bad luck from a name at birth can be overcome once the child reaches spiritual adulthood.

As described previously, a child reaches spiritual adulthood after having their first dream-vision. Once this happens, the Quorian will take a second name. The second, new name is considered the “true” name of a Quorian. This is because the Quorian is no longer limited to that which he or she was born under, but now taking true independence for the first time in life. It is taken very seriously and considered its own right of passage. Deciding how this is to be handled is one of the first true tests of the new adult.

Typically, the counsel and guidance of an Oneiromancer is sought, with Shamans and Psi-Mystics being sought if one is not available. Regardless of what advice is given, the final decision of how to act rests solely upon the shoulders of the new adult, including deciding a second name. While counsel will usually give a new name fitting of the first dream-vision and commonly taken, the name is not forced upon the Quorian. It is important to note that the birth name is not changed and does not go away; it remains as part of the full name of the Quorian, only not as important as the first dream-vision name.

Some Quorians will continue having dream-visions, up to three more for a total of four, throughout their life. With each new dream-vision, a new name is taken. Again, counsel is often sought but not required. These new names are added to the full name of the Quorian. As a result, most adult Quorians will have

a minimum of two names, with some up to five total names. The Quorian will either use the name of the first dream-vision or the most current one to be identified by, but only one (whichever the individual prefers). This single name is referred to as the “recognized” name, the name the Quorian will go by.

Some outsiders will make the mistake of believing that calling a Quorian adult by the first name, the original birth name, is a sign of closeness. On the contrary, to a Quorian this can be quite insulting and may very well lead to a duel as a result. Once a Quorian has reached spiritual adulthood using the childhood name alone, while still a part of the full name, is equivalent to saying the Quorian is acting like a child. While there may be times when such a comment is appropriate, it should only be done if someone is well prepared to risk the consequences.

Oneiromancers typically have three names. The first is their birth name, the second is their first dream-vision name, and the third is Oneiromancer, which translates to “Dream Shaman” or, more commonly among the Quorians, “Of Many Dreams.” Both translations are accurate. This is because Oneiromancers are known to have so many dream-visions within their lives. Should an Oneiromancer seek the counsel/interpretation of another, rare but not unheard of, a new name will be added to the typical three names of the Oneiromancer, selected by the second Oneiromancer.

When a Quorian makes initial introductions, the entire name is given, each and every part of the name. After this, only the “recognized” name is required, which is also repeated after the full name is stated. Even though the full name is only given once (at first introductions), it is important to remember the full name. Though it is not commonly used, it is viewed as insulting to have been forgotten even if only given once. To a Quorian, this is the equivalent of saying he or she is not important and not worth remembering.

Naturally, old acquaintances may not be familiar with a new name (one gained since their last meeting). This is, of course, understood and accepted. It is up to the individual Quorian to remember which form of their name was last given to someone. If the Quorian has forgotten, this can be equally insulting to the old acquaintance. For this reason, it is said a Quorian must be good at remembering and some believe they naturally have Total Recall. However, this is not true and Quorians are trained diligently from birth to remember such things, though it is quite possible they’ll have a poor memory in all other regards.

The matter of a “true” name in regards to magic is a bit blurred when it comes to Quorians. While in a magical sense, the name given at birth holds great power over an individual, but when it comes to Quorians, they are said to be starting life again, similar to being reborn, after each dream-vision. Each and every new name taken as a result of dream-visions is more than just a title or an alias. These new names become a part of their very being. As a result, merely knowing the birth name may not be enough to hold full power over a Quorian as it is but one piece of their “true” name.

Religion

Quorians have little respect for priests and other men of the cloth. Until arriving on the Palladium World, the Quorians never had priests. This is a new and strange concept to them. There are those who suspect that this indicates there are no deities in their

native dimension. While this is possible, not even the Quorians know for sure, but their explanation is simple. Priests, and others who need to turn to the gods for help, are weak. A warrior should never need to turn anywhere except to himself and his camp. They do not doubt their existence or power, merely that they should not be the source to solve problems.

In recent years, as some have turned to wizardry and “elementalism” (Warlock magic) in the hopes of finding some way home, a small handful have turned to the gods, even becoming priests, with similar aspirations, praying that perhaps these beings can be the key home. Those who have turned to the gods have even begun to suspect that perhaps the Riftlords are not gone, but have been elevated to godhood. These true believers scour ancient religious texts, anything written by the Quorians, for any type of clue to the names of these gods.

If true, the ascended Riftlords have likely fallen in power due to lack of worship over the years. By finding their names they can once again be worshipped and regain their lost power, once again regaining the power to take them home. Due to the fanatical obsession the Quorian people have to the Riftlords, this theory may not be so far-fetched. Unfortunately, due to the low regard the Quorian people have of priests, even the views of Quorian priests are easily dismissed and ignored. Unless some hard proof can be found, their people are likely to never listen.

The Lost Homeworld

The Quorian homeworld is known as Quoria. It has been lost to their people since the end of the Elf-Dwarf War. Even though no Quorian alive on the Palladium World can recall their homeworld, it does not reduce their longing to one day return there. They know one thing: it is home. That is all they need to know. Legends and tales of their lost home have been passed down from generation to generation. Though such legends and tales can often be distorted, especially after so much time has passed, it does not stop the Quorians from believing them as the truth.

Most tales indicate that the environment of Quoria is similar to that of their home in the Baalgor Wastelands, but far more pleasant. Of course, these are Quorians, and what is pleasant to them is not necessarily the same to most other races. The Quorians thrive in the harsh climate of the Baalgor Wastelands, but Quoria is believed to have dry air and heat levels that surpass what they have become accustomed to. There are plants that could help with dream-visions and roaming animals they often took as pets. Though, to a Quorian, a pet is an animal that can hunt and fight, not an animal that is used for companionship. Seeing as how much time has passed, this could quite easily be a version of their homeworld that has been distorted through the generations, or even that the homeworld has undergone changes since that time.

One of the most commonly known difficulties to the Quorians finding their home is that they have no clue where it is. However, there is a second problem not nearly as well known. There is a dimensional barrier sealing it off from all others. Even if one could find the dimension they would need to be able to navigate the dimensional barrier to actually reach the worlds on the other side. This is a talent very few possess. The now missing Riftlords were among the very best at navigating this barrier, making their help during the Elf-Dwarf War to bring large numbers of Quorians to the world essential.

As a result of the dimensional barrier, few know how the first Quorians came to arrive on this world, other than some element of random chance or perhaps a type of lost magic. Some suspect that the Riftlords destroyed the secrets of how to cross the breach to protect their people from being summoned ever again. Those who subscribe to this theory often speculate that it was this act that led to a conflict between the Dwarves and Quorians, ultimately leading to the destruction of the Riftlords, at least on the Palladium World.

There is another rumor which states the dimensional barrier around Quoria was actually erected by the Riftlords. For those that believe this rumor and know about the barrier at the edge of the world, it is suspected that it may have been erected by the Riftlords in an attempt to protect the rest of the world from the madness of the Elves and Dwarves. While this seems unlikely, it is argued that the true power of the Riftlords is not well documented and it could have easily been within their power. **Note:** The barrier at the edge of the world is not a well known fact. This is for a select few who do, to be heard after the characters learn of it, or to include rumors for flavor and the readers.

The Elements

The Quorians believe quite simply that there are only three elements in the entire universe. These elements are quite simple: Body/Physical, Mind/Psychic, Spirit/Magic. Everything in the universe is connected to one of these three elements. Fighters have the strongest connection to the physical element. The world we exist on, the trees, metal, and all these aspects, are physical elements. The mental element is responsible for things such as psychic abilities, creativity, freedom, and other such metaphysical elements. Psychics naturally have the strongest connection to the mind element.

Spirit is the life force of all things, people, animals, magic, and even more importantly to Quorians, is the random aspect of chance. With the Quorians as superstitious as they are, chance plays a very important role in their lives, and that means they respect the element of spirit more so than any other. Mages have the strongest connection to the spirit element and it is believed this connection helps them to control their fate more than any other.

Just because the three elements represent different things does not mean they cannot overlap. In fact, it is believed almost all things possess some aspect of all three. An example of this is processed minerals, those which do not exist naturally, which are viewed as a mix of body and mind elements. Magic weapons are both body and spirit elements. Oneiromancers are said to be a true balance of all three, and for this they gain all the more respect.

Another aspect of these elements which should not be ignored is **space**. For those on the Palladium World, space is a relatively unknown factor and most will never even realize it's there. However, some have made it to other worlds such as Rifts Earth where such knowledge is more common. Space is viewed as the element of the mind. It is clearly not physical. Spirit is a representation of life, and space is not considered life. Clearly to the Quorians, it must be mental, a representation of freedom and openness. How the mind created space is not quite clear, but one does not need to know to accept.



Quorian Riftlord R.C.C.

Practitioner of Magic

Design Note: The Riftlords are a class that once existed during the Elf-Dwarf War, a time when legends were fact. Their power level may not be suited for most Palladium Fantasy campaigns. They are recommended primarily as reference material, NPCs, and/or higher powered campaigns and settings. If a G.M. feels this class is not appropriate for the campaign then he should be able to restrict its use or alter some of the abilities to make it more acceptable. Players should respect the decision of the G.M. and not argue too heavily. This is designed for fun and options, not for causing problems.

The skills and talents of a Riftlord could not be taught to just anyone. Instead, the power needed to become this highly respected class of Quorian was a birthright. Only those of certain bloodlines could even attempt to become a Riftlord, and some of those still lacked the potential to learn the art. Those not of the bloodline who attempted to do so can only expect disaster. There is one such mention of this in the stories taught in training of an adopted son, not known by the father, that attempted to learn the art, but ended up putting his entire community in danger when he could not control the great power of a true Riftlord.

While in training to become a Riftlord, the Quorian is more commonly called a "Riftdancer." This name tends to stay with the Quorian until reaching a high level of training (usually around

eight or higher level). However, when away from the rest of the community and there are no other Riftlords around, it is not uncommon for them to be called a Riftlord by other Quorians as they are the closest thing to one in the area. This is also common when others outside of the Quorian community are around, so as not to give away the Riftdancer's true level of experience. Before becoming a true Riftlord, the Riftdancer is considered similar in rank to the Oneiromancer or Psi-Mystic, depending on experience and skill.

Experience, Training, and Knowledge

The future Riftlord is trained in the ways of magic like a wizard. Their training specializes though in the area of Rifts as opposed to general magic knowledge. Once the training comes to a certain point in the traditional sense, the Riftdancer must go through real world experiences to improve. It is believed that only the fundamentals can be taught to a Riftdancer and the rest must be learned on their own. By going through real experiences, the Riftdancer (and even a Riftlord for that matter) can understand their magic to a greater degree and will be able to increase in power and ability without being specifically told or taught.

In order to improve as a Riftlord, they need to increase in experience and in knowledge. Only by learning more about the world around them and themselves, can a Riftlord understand their talents better. It is up to the experienced Riftlords, those who have earned the right to truly call themselves lords, to make sure the younger Riftdancers receive this experience. This is usu-

ally done by sending them on missions and quests for training, regardless of how necessary or dangerous it is.

Since the bloodlines of the Riftlords are not very common and they are such a valued asset to the communities, usually a Riftdancer (or even a Riftlord for that matter) will not be sent out without at least two Quorian warriors as protectors. However, this does not mean the Riftdancer is not in danger. The warriors are only there to protect against unforeseen dangers and to step in before the Riftdancer is killed.

They are to not interfere with the mission of the Riftdancer unless death of their protectorate seems imminent. The protectors can be asked to do little things as long as the Riftdancer asks specifically and it does not affect the mission too greatly. These tasks can be something such as helping to clear a path, cook a meal, lifting an object that is either too heavy for the Riftdancer or to hold it while the Riftdancer needs to do something else (part of an elaborate plan perhaps). Asking the protectors of too much though is a sign of weakness and cowardice. These protectors are usually well trained warriors which can be trusted.

First Level

1. Sense Dimensional Anomaly: This is similar to the spell invocation of the same name. The Riftlord will automatically sense the ripples in the space-time continuum. To get a clear view of the anomaly, the Riftlord must spend 15 P.P.E. (same knowledge as the spell).

2. See and Use Ley Lines: Same as the Wizard O.C.C.

3. Ley Line Drifting: Same as the Wizard O.C.C.

4. Ley Line Rejuvenation: Same as the Wizard O.C.C. This is in addition to their normal Healing Factor.

5. Dimensional Teleport (Basic): This is considered a natural ability. It can only be used on a ley line nexus and does not cost any P.P.E. See the Invocation spell of the same name for further details. **Base Skill:** 20% +5% per level of experience (+10% on a ley line, +20% on a ley line nexus). **Note:** Unlike the spell, this ability always works. A failure on the skill roll will result in teleportation to a random dimension. In addition, it will take several days until the Riftlord can gain a sense of the location of their home dimension (or another well known dimension such as Palladium). Until this happens, the Riftlord will be unable to teleport again. It will take 1D4x8 days for a first level Riftlord to locate a familiar dimension. Every level thereafter, the multiple reduces by one (1D4x7 at second level, 1D4x6 days at third, etc.). For this reason, it is rarely used until higher level.

6. Dimensional Knowledge: The Riftlord can remember the location of any dimension they have previously traveled to, even if they are not the one who created the portal to the world. This dimensional knowledge varies from Riftlord to Riftlord as each of their experiences have been different. Quoria is almost always the best known dimension and the point of reference the Riftlord will use to be able to find all other dimensions. The only time this is not the case is if the Riftlord was not born on Quoria, but this is a rare occurrence. **Note:** Merely seeing the portal is not enough unless the Riftlord has actually traveled there in person.

7. Magic Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic at levels two, six, ten and fourteen, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs possession and mind control of all kinds, and +1 to Spell Strength at levels four, eight and twelve.

8. P.P.E.: All Riftlords are living batteries of mystic energy. The character draws from this energy to create magic and cast

spells. **Permanent P.P.E. Base:** 2D4x10+20, plus the P.E. attribute number. Add 3D6 P.P.E. per level of experience, starting at level one. The Riftlord can also draw on P.P.E. from ley lines, nexus points, and other Quorians whenever available. Riftlords find tapping into the P.P.E. of races other than Quorians to be quite difficult. They say there is a foreign flow to the energy of others. As a result, a Riftlord must draw 2 P.P.E. for 1 P.P.E. desired. This can be done from a willing victim only. The other half of the energy drawn is lost in the exchange. **Note:** They are not skilled practitioners of magic. Whether this foreign flow of energy is a result of them not being skilled practitioners of magic or something only Riftlords can see is unknown. Practitioners of magic of other races suffer no loss of energy when drawing from a Quorian.

Second Level

1. Ley Line Phasing: Same as the Ley Line Walker O.C.C. Ability from the **Rifts® RPG**.

2. Ley Line Transmission: Same as the spell invocation of the same name, but at half the P.P.E. cost.

3. Locate Ley Line: This is the ability to locate a ley line using a cross between a mystical ability and deductive analysis with their knowledge of nature. A ley line can be detected up to 20 miles (32 km) away plus 5 miles (8 km) per level experience, twice as far for a ley line nexus. A Riftlord can roll once every melee round to sense a ley line, but must roll *two consecutive* successful rolls to locate it. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level of experience.

4. Track Rift Scent: According to the Riftlords, each Rift has a unique and recognizable scent. If the Riftlord finds the location of a recent Rift (within the last few hours), he can track the scent of anything which may have come through it for up to 1D4 days plus one day for each level of experience, starting at level 1. After this time, the scent is too faint to be tracked any longer. The Riftlord is also able to identify any person or object that has traveled through a Rift within this time period. Once the scent of the person or object has been identified, it is possible to backtrack the individual to the source of the original Rift, even if it is has closed. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience.

5. Dimensional Teleport (Advanced): The ability of the Riftlord to use and understand ley lines has increased to the point that this ability can be used as long as he is on a ley line. If only on a ley line, and not a nexus, it costs 50 P.P.E. All other aspects are the same as the level one ability.

Third Level

1. Learning New Spells: The Riftlord has a better understanding of the ways of magic and can now cast spell magic. Due to their focus on Rifts and time though, the Riftlord has not yet learned any additional spells beyond the House of Glass spell (detailed below). They can still learn/purchase new spells the same as a wizard by finding an instructor. Tend to be attracted to spells that manipulate time and space. Any spells outside of their specialty cost *double* the P.P.E. (same as the Necromancer). See the Wizard O.C.C. for more details on learning new spells.

2. House of Glass (special): The very first spell learned is a variation on the typical House of Glass spell. This is very similar to the Rifts spell of the same name. The main difference is that the spell also affects the Riftlord, causing whatever damage he

deals to the victim to damage himself as well. Most Riftlords will prefer this version as opposed to the normal invocation version. It is a method to see which person is tougher without any cheap tricks. When this spell is in effect, it only matters which one can take more damage as both are receiving the exact same punishment. It is not only a test to see which can take more damage, but also a demonstration of the confidence of the Riftlord to be better than any opponent. If the courage of the Riftlord is ever called into question it is common to use this spell on the challenger to show the Riftlord is not scared of taking damage and is capable of handling whatever he deals out.

Learning this spell is a part of the initiation for a Riftlord. Casting it shows that the Riftdancer has successfully learned to handle spell magic and it is typically used against a higher level Riftlord, usually an instructor. This, quite obviously, will more often than not end in defeat for the Riftdancer. Losing can be an important part of the lesson, teaching the Riftlord in training how to handle defeat. It is not always enough to go into a fight confident of winning, but willing to go into a fight even when winning seems impossible. That is what true courage is about, and only one of many lessons learned throughout training. This is not to encourage suicide or starting senseless battles that cannot be won, but to help the Riftdancer understand that sometimes it is more important regardless of the outcome. **P.P.E.:** Eight.

3. Dimensional Teleport (Expert): Now being fluent enough in the ways of casting magic, the Riftlord is capable of using a dimensional teleport regardless of location. If not near a ley line or ley line nexus it costs 100 P.P.E. to use. All other aspects are the same as the level one and level two abilities.

Fourth Level

1. Spell Casting: By this point, the Riftlord has gained a stronger understanding of their magic. It is possible to open small portals to cast light in an area (Globe of Daylight), a time distortion that causes reflections to emerge in the space around them (Multiple Images), and other types of spells that manipulate time and space. A Riftlord can select one of the following. One additional spell can be selected for each subsequent, new level of experience. **Note:** Additional spells may be added to this list if the G.M. and player can agree it is fitting.

- Astral Projection
- Close Rift
- Concealment
- Dimensional Pocket
- Dimensional Portal
- Globe of Daylight
- Globe of Silence
- Mystic Portal
- Multiple Image
- Teleport: Lesser
- Teleport: Superior
- Time Capsule
- Time Hole
- Time Slip
- Wink-out

2. Dimensional Intuition: The Riftlord gains additional intuitive knowledge of other dimensions. At levels four, seven, ten, twelve and fourteen, the Riftlord gains the knowledge and location of one other, previously unknown dimension. This new dimension may have been picked up by scent in the past and never

explored, seen from a remote source, or even visited in a dream-vision with no other connection to it. Learning of a new place through a dream-vision is rather common among Riftlords and has caused many to travel to distant and foreign lands believing it significant. The new dimension can be determined by the G.M., rolled on the table in *Land of the Damned One: Chaos Lands* (pages 166-171), or by some other method.

Fifth Level

1. Navigate Dimensional Barriers: Some worlds, such as their home world of Quoria, have a dimensional barrier surrounding them, making it impossible for most to break through. Only masters of dimensional teleporting even have a chance. While all Riftlords possess the ability to naturally teleport to their home world at any level, attempting to access another world with such a barrier requires considerably more skill. The chances for success are quite small, however.

Additionally, there are dangers of attempting to do so and failing. There are creatures that can live within the barrier, and attempting to pass through can leave the character vulnerable to attack from these creatures. These dimensional beings can attempt to possess the character, control their mind, or siphon off their very life force. **Base Skill:** 5% +3% per level of experience (see additional bonuses below). This starts as a level one skill. The Riftlord can temporarily raise the chances of getting through by expending P.P.E. For every 3 P.P.E., the Riftlord gains a +1% to this skill. **Note:** All characters with the ability to dimensionally teleport can attempt to learn this ability for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill.

Bonuses (all bonuses are cumulative):

+10% for powerful beings such as dragons, Demon and Devil Lords, Godlings, Demigods, gods, and Alien Intelligences. Riftlords, due to their skill of dimensional travel, fall into this category.

+10% if the character has some method to help navigate, such as following someone who knows the way, following a summons, a worshiper's prayer, etc.

+10% if the character has successfully navigated the dimensional barrier before.

+20% if the individual is a native of the dimension.

Sixth Level

1. Resist Summons: The Riftlords have an understanding of dimensional portals and Rifts. Through this understanding, the Riftlord can resist any attempt to be summoned via a spell, circle, or any other form. When any attempt is made, this ability will automatically block the attempt and alert the Riftlord to the attempt. The character can make a conscious decision to lower this defense and allow the summoning spell to work. They will only appear if they *want* and there is *NO* battle of wills, they are free to do as they please. **Note:** This power is common among dragons, Demon and Devil Lords, Godlings, Demigods, gods, and Alien Intelligences (as per the Summoner O.C.C., page 145 of **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Second Edition**). While a Riftlord does not compare to any of these races in pure power, it is their skill and technique that allows them to resist a summons equally.

2. Answer Summons: The knowledge of the Riftlord has grown to the extent that they can answer the summons for any Quorian within a one mile (1.6 km) radius per level of the Rift-

lord. While this protects the other Quorians from being summoned, the Riftlord is in danger. Having taken the place of another, the Riftlord cannot prepare a proper defense and is subject to the Battle of Wills. The Riftlord receives a +1 to save vs submission at levels 7, 10, 13 and 15. **Note:** The Riftlord is considered a Greater Being for the purposes of maintaining control (as per the Summoner O.C.C., page 141 of **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, **Second Edition**).

Seventh Level

1. Summon Quorian Warrior: This is the ability for a Riftlord to summon a Quorian warrior from their home world. Most Quorians will automatically be subservient to a Riftlord out of respect. Only one Quorian can be summoned with this spell at a time. Once summoned, the Quorian can stay an indefinite period of time. The Quorian cannot return to his or her home world unless sent by the Riftlord or another portal can be found. This spell can also be used to send a single Quorian back to their home world for the same cost. This spell cannot be used to summon a Shaman, Psi-Mystic, Oneiromancer, or another Riftlord. **P.P.E.:** Seventy.

2. Reopen Rift: If the Riftlord discovers the location of a closed Rift, he can cause it to reopen to the exact same location as before. This can be very dangerous without knowing what originally came through the Rift. This ability will only work for as long as the "scent" of the Rift remains (see the level two ability for details on scent duration). **P.P.E.:** One hundred forty.

Eighth Level

1. Temporal Magic: Starting at eighth level, the Riftlord can select Temporal Spells. These spells can be selected instead of one from the list at third level. Riftlords can also select one Temporal Spell at levels eight, ten, twelve, and fourteen in addition to the usual spell selection. The spells can be up to one level higher than the Riftlord. This means that an 8th level Riftlord can select a 9th level Temporal Spell or that a 10th level Riftlord can select a spell from 11th level. Temporal Spells can be found in Rifts World Book Three: England (also in the Rifts Book of Magic).

2. Increased Ley Line Energy: The Riftlord is able to further tap into the amazing power of a ley line. Though the range, duration, and damage of spells remain the same as normal for the proximity to a ley line, all the effects to P.P.E. are doubled for a Riftlord. This includes the amount of P.P.E. that can be tapped as well as the recovery rate.

Tenth Level

1. Summoning Spells: At this level, the Riftlord can select any type of summoning spell instead of one from the list at third level.

Twelfth Level

1. Summon Quorian Superior: This ability is similar to the seventh level ability. With this advanced spell, the Riftlord is capable of summoning a Quorian other than just a warrior. This includes a Shaman, Psi-Mystic, and Oneiromancer. Like the warriors, these other Quorians will typically be naturally subservient to the Riftlord out of respect. The spell is still limited to only one Quorian being summoned at a time. Despite this spell being

more powerful than the seventh level version, another Riftlord still cannot be summoned. **P.P.E.:** One hundred forty.

Fourteenth Level

1. Sanctuary: By this point in life, many Riftlords are older and considering settling down, if they have not done so already. It is common for the Riftlord to make a "realm" where he can always safely rest, train, and live. While it is possible to walk into this area, touch it, and interact with it almost as normal, this is no longer the same land, air, and water and is now the domain of the Riftlord. The spell actually isolates this section of the land into a different dimension where violence is not possible. This is the equivalent of the Spell of Legend of the same name, but at half the cost. **Note:** If an enemy becomes immobilized within the sanctuary, the Riftlord will *never* take advantage of the situation to attack a defenseless opponent.

Quorian Riftlord R.C.C.

Alignments: Same as all Quorians, but Riftlords, more so than most, tend to favor "honorable" alignments.

Racial Restrictions: Only Quorians of a certain bloodline can learn this class. That bloodline is believed to have been killed off by the end of the Elf-Dwarf War.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 10, M.E. 12, and P.E. 14 or higher. Riftlords are the leaders of their people so a high M.A. and P.B. can also be helpful but not mandatory.

O.C.C. Skills:

Land Navigation (+10%)

Language: Quorian 98%, plus one of choice (usually Dwarf; +5%).

Literacy: Quorian (+10%)

Mathematics: Basic (+20%)

Mathematics: Advanced (+10%)

Military Etiquette (+20%)

Wilderness Survival (a +10% applies while in desert areas only)

W.P. Knife/Dagger

W.P.: Two of choice.

Hand to Hand: Expert

Hand to Hand: Expert is commonly changed to Hand to Hand: Martial Arts for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Hand to Hand: Assassin (if Miscreant or Diabolic; extremely rare for a Riftlord) for the cost of two.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select eight other skills of choice at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels three, six, nine, and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency. It is important to note that Riftlords are traditionally born on Quoria. Unless born on the Palladium World, most of their skills will be based around talents available on their home world.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: None.

Espionage: Any, except Sniper (+10%).

Horsemanship: Exotic only.

Medical: None.

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any (+5% when applicable).

Rogue: None.

Science: Any.

Scholar/Technical: Any (+15% to Lore skills only).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.
Wilderness Survival: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select four secondary skills from the previous list at level one, and one additional skill at levels four, eight, and twelve. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in the parentheses. All secondary skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited (any, only, none) as previously indicated in the list.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a robe or cloak with hood, boots, a pair of gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, two large sacks, two small sacks, a water skin, and a tinder box.

Armor: Like all Quorians, a Riftlord will steadfastly refuse to wear armor of any sort (shields, gauntlets, and armlets are okay). Riftlords are the only Quorians to actually wear armlets and this is often used to identify one on a battlefield. If desired, a Riftlord can begin with a chain mail armlet with 12 S.D.C. (see below for more armlet descriptions).

Weapons: Starts with a dagger and two weapons of choice. One of these weapons is typically an honorary weapon given at the end of initial training (starting at first level). It is held as sacred and typically holds sentimental significance. If anyone steals or damages it there is no end that a Riftlord will go through to seek revenge. Though this weapon is not of Dwarven quality or magical in any way, it tends to be the favorite weapon of the Riftlord. Magic weapons and additional items must be acquired later.

Money: Quorians are aliens to the Palladium world with a different type of monetary system. They typically only have a small handful of valuables worth 1D4x10 in gold. However as valued members of the Dwarven military, they are often taken care of by the Dwarven Empire and may be paid for missions or even receive a regular salary.

Experience Point Table: Same as the Necromancer.

Potential Story Ideas

As a writer, these are additional story ideas I had toyed with, but decided to avoid as definitive aspects of my world and cultures. They are included here as a few additional ideas that may inspire a G.M. for a Quorian based storyline. Enjoy.

1. Going in Circles: There is a fair chance that the first Quorians arrived on the Palladium World via circle magic. This is likely the cause for the extreme distrust Quorians have of circle magic. One wandercamp in particular tells a tale of Dwarves using a power circle to bring large numbers of their people here forcibly and bound them into slavery. According to the tales, it was not one power circle but a series of them all connected: one a standard summoning circle for Quorians (a circle which has since been lost), one for a dimensional portal (see Power Circles in Palladium Fantasy; Second Edition on page 150), another for navigating the dimensional barrier (another circle lost), and another which allowed them to even summon and control Riftlords (also lost).

While the tales say the Riftlords destroyed this wretched circle, the leader of the wandercamp suspects it may still exist, buried somewhere in the Baalgor Wastelands. He continues to lead his people in search of this fabled circle. Even those under him do not know if he intends to finish the Riftlords' work to destroy it,

or he has some method of using it to try and get home. If it's the latter, then it can easily prove either a blessing or damnation for their people. While it may hold the power to send them home, it can just as easily be used to bring more of their people here and enslave them if it falls into the wrong hands, a consequence often overlooked by the ambitious.

What is the leader really up to? It can be up to the player characters to find out. Then decide to either help him or stop him. This can also be a useful storyline for a Summoner character looking for some new circles.

2. Wiped Out: The Riftlords are indeed hiding, and they've done such a good job they're hiding even from themselves! They decided the best place to hide something was to hide it in plain sight. Instead of leaving, they found a way to temporarily wipe their memories. After a period of time they were supposed to regain their memories, but something went wrong and it became permanent. As a result, the bloodline of the Riftlords is still very much alive, only they've forgotten how to use their power. Attempting to find a member of the bloodline and restore their power could be an entire campaign.

How did they learn this? Dream-visions are an obvious and easy answer. Other possibilities exist, including finding some ancient text documenting what happened. Another idea is that Riftlords were said to be masters of not only "Rifting," but time as well. Perhaps a message from the past (or future, a vision of things to come) reaches the characters, giving the clues and warnings. This could open a wide range of possibilities.

Once they find the descendant of the bloodline, what if he isn't what they expected? Maybe he was banished from his tribe for being a coward. Is he really afraid, or did he simply suggest a tactical retreat (as only a true Riftlord can do)? The would-be Riftlord may be clumsy and terrible at combat, leaving the characters with their work cut out for them. Do they give up and try to find another, or do they have faith in the bloodline and try to bring out his true potential?

3. A Cold Reception Home: The Quorians have long desired to return home. Whether through a Riftlord, circle magic, godly intervention, or other means, what if the characters finally find their way home to Quoria? Sometimes dreams are better off as dreams. What if their home world has undergone some massive change, such as a new ice age? It has been thousands of years, and it's possible the Riftlords of old had been seeking a new home, knowing what the future of Quoria held. If their world is totally inhospitable, what do they do now? Do they return to the Palladium World and tell their people the truth? Leave them to have futile hope? Try to find some new world to call home?

This is just one idea, but the concept of the home they've sought for not being what they've imagined can leave several possibilities. Keep in mind this should not be used to dash the players' hopes and dreams. While things not being what they expected can be a great twist, making players feel like everything they've done was pointless is not the goal. This shouldn't be a crushing defeat, but just one more stop along the way of their adventure, or the beginning of a new one. New doors and possibilities should be opened. Maybe there is some way for them to save it, or maybe this is designed to give the Quorians on the Palladium World a new, greater purpose in their current home. Instead of being frozen over, maybe the world has been conquered, the native Quorians' spirits crushed, and it is up to the group to rekindle their warrior spirit and free their people.



Ancestral Mystic

Optional Source Material for The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Paul Herbert

Whoever said, "You can choose your friends, but you cannot choose your family," had clearly never met an Ancestral Mystic.

– *The Great Sage, Sulyott*

During the Time of a Thousand Magicks, there were a number of mystical arts that have since been eliminated or forgotten to the world. One such art form was that of the Ancestral Mystic.

Ancestral Mystics are often, although not always, lonely, reclusive people who lack the social adeptness of normal folk. It is not that they dislike company or crowds; it is just that they are a little awkward at gatherings. They feel uncomfortable when forced to socialize and are generally of a quiet, shy disposition. It takes this Mystic a long time to make friends that he can relax with even though he may not have a lack of distrust for them. They are simply anti-social, timid characters.

It is also usual for these traits to have been developed from childhood. This is normally the result of a traumatic incident involving the loss of one or both parents or sometimes a sibling. It would seem that the psychic's emotions are escalated by some sort of early empathic absorbing of the emotions of those around him, specifically leaving the Mystic feeling abandoned, alone and scared. The rest is not known. Most other Ancestral Mystics believe that they empathically transmit their emotions to the spirit realm as a cry for help. Their cries are so sincere, so passionate, so raw that they find their way to their ancestors. When they think they are alone and without kin, they are proven wrong.

Whereas the average psychic may seem to be more attuned to his fellow man due to his abilities, the Ancestral Mystic is the opposite. These psychics develop their psionics just as any other would but at some point, either their emotional loss or simply just their reclusive nature and inability to deal with the world around them, has directed their abilities to channel the spirit world. This is not, in itself, unusual for a psychic, but the Ancestral Mystic goes much, much further.

Tales of spirit guides, watchmen and guardian angels have been discussed around the fireplaces of Palladium for centuries. Ask any soldier or adventurer and they can regale a story of how they were starving, cold and at death's door when a guiding light led them to shelter or perhaps how they had been set upon by a half dozen Orcs and, nearly beaten, they were inspired by a vision and found the energy and willpower to overcome these unwinnable odds. Some say such things are the acts of the gods (others say wine). Few know the realism of ghosts, entities and spirits. Only one can confirm these guardian angels to be an absolute.

During a communion with the spirit world, usually at an early age (teens), the Ancestral Mystic will make contact with a friendly spirit that is welcoming, helpful and somehow feels familiar. The spirit in question will reveal himself as one of the psychic's very own ancestors! Although never admitted, it is believed that in actual fact the spirit is the one who made contact and has been very close to the Mystic throughout his or her life.

These "guardian angels" remain in close contact, staying by the Mystic's side at all times and are ready to assist their relative in any and as many ways, as possible. There is no battle of wills or twisting of words like a summoned creature may attempt. Neither is there any bargaining required. The spirit of the ancestor is willing to help as a family member would any loved one.

Because of this open bond and trusted relationship, the Ancestral Mystic can allow himself to be opened up for an unusual form of possession from the newfound spirit of his ancestor. Whilst connected as one, the Mystic is in full control, and he is able to utilize various traits and knowledge of the possessing spirit. The two are working together for the goals of the Mystic. These traits can extend into skill knowledge, experience and reflexes, resistances and even (in some cases) magical and psionic abilities! Remember, the ancestor's spirit desires to aid the psychic as much as he is able and these "gifts" represent the ultimate aid.

These intimate connections can be exhausting to the Ancestral Mystic, and as such they can only be maintained for a short period of time. They also require some of the psychic's inner strength (I.S.P.) to channel the link between the two worlds.

You Can't Choose Your Family

Indeed. The Ancestral Mystic has developed his psionics and tuned his thoughts, senses and power towards the spirit world. So much so that he has been contacted by a long deceased relative. This is never someone the psychic knew in his lifetime. However, the Mystic is not yet so attuned that he can select which spirits he wishes to commune with.

The spirit that originally contacted him wasn't random but it also wasn't orchestrated by the living psychic. The following table should be used to determine the O.C.C. of the ancestor that comes through to the Mystic at each new plateau of his ability. The O.C.C.s of the ancestor are typical of an adventuring type as these kindred spirits can relate to the hopes, passions and desires of the living relative. They are the ones who can give aid and guidance and as such, it is the experienced adventurer (good or evil) that makes the bond with the Mystic.

Spiritual Ancestor O.C.C. Random Table

1-2%	Assassin (evil)
3-4%	Beastmaster
5-7%	Blacksmith
8-9%	Bounty Hunter
10%	Conjurer
11-12%	Diabolist
13-14%	Druid
15-18%	Farmer
19%	Forsaken Mage
20-21%	Gladiator
22-23%	Holy Crusader
24-25%	Illusionist
26-27%	Juggler
28-29%	Knight
30-31%	Long Bowman
32-34%	Merchant
35-36%	Mind Mage
37-38%	Minstrel
39-40%	Necromancer (evil)
41-42%	Noble

43-45% Nomadic Tribesman
 46-47% Pirate (evil)
 48-49% Prestidigitator
 50-51% Priest of Darkness (evil)
 52-53% Priest of Light (good)
 54-55% Psi-Healer
 56-59% Ranger
 60-63% Sailor
 64-65% Scholar
 66-67% Scholar Monk
 68-69% Shaman
 70-73% Soldier
 74-76% Spy
 77-78% Summoner
 79-82% Thief
 83-84% Undead Hunter
 85-86% Warlock
 87-91% Warrior (Mercenary)
 92-93% Warrior Monk
 94% Were-Shaman
 95-96% Witch (evil)
 97-98% Witch Hunter (good)
 99-00% Wizard

A Family Reunion

One's family tree isn't a small thing. Man has wandered Paladium's soil for centuries, Elves for millennia, and as such there is an entire host of relatives and spirits passed that may be contactable. Even the poorest Ancestral Mystic may have his or her roots in ancient nobility or once had kin who led armies across the New Kingdom or engaged dragons as equals, trading the magical incantations of wizardry.

It is believed that as they become more attuned to the spirits, the most powerful of the Ancestral Mystics can reach the spirits of specific ancestors whom they have researched and thought were once forgotten. There is even a rumor that one could have such a connection that they may be able to contact those long, long passed away, back to the Time of a Thousand Magicks or further.

The more the Ancestral Mystic opens himself up to the spirit realm and the communion with his ancestor, the more he becomes attuned. This channel becomes second nature and strengthens with the frequency of the ancestor's visits. As the psychic's development continues, he is contacted by further relatives! Each new spirit is as cooperative and helpful as the first, giving their knowledge, skills and even powers freely as and when called upon. They too have approached their living descendant to aid, guide and empower him.

Although these ancestral spirits are as obedient and ever serving to the Mystic's every whim, they also have a certain alignment or, in the case of some, a code they would have followed in life. Their bond with the psychic, as well as his control over them, added together with (of course) the prolonged period of being deceased and in limbo in the spirit realm, have all but depleted their old alignment. This means that an evil Ancestral Mystic can form a union with what was once the noblest of knights. The bond of family and kinship is now the driving force behind this alliance.

The alignment and disposition may not be apparent on a conscious level, but some forces are so wicked and cruel that sub-

consciously they can have adverse side effects on the innocent and kindhearted. Legends (the few there are) tell of Ancestral Mystics becoming corrupted by the spirits of their ancestors and the power they can offer, but these are only in the cases of what were once the truly vilest of souls. The same can be said for good and honorable ancestors, who could have a benevolent influence on a wicked Mystic.

Ancestral Mystic P.C.C. Abilities & Bonuses:

1. Link With Ancestors: At level one, the Ancestral Mystic has become so attuned to the spirit of one of his ancestors that he has formed a mystical link, allowing the spirit to possess his body and share its knowledge and abilities with the psychic. This grants the Ancestral Mystic certain skills, powers and bonuses for a limited period of time. Only one spirit may bond with the psychic at any given time, so choose wisely.

To bond with the chosen ancestor (and thereby receive the bonuses), the Mystic must spend 20 I.S.P. This union lasts for 5 minutes per level. During this time, all applicable bonuses are conferred as well as access to all of the ancestor's skills and abilities. Any psionics used or spells cast cost their usual amount of I.S.P. or P.P.E. which is taken from the character's own. All skill percentages, including Weapon Proficiencies, are at the current level of the Ancestral Mystic, although a bonus may be applicable. This use of his own P.P.E. and I.S.P. is a sign of the psychic's power over the bonding and not the ancestor's knowledge. The spirits have chosen to aid the Mystic as they have much wisdom and experience to give.

Additional Ancestral Communion: As the Mystic focuses his efforts, he further widens his doorway to the spirit world. As such, the character is able to form a link with another ancestor at levels 2, 4, 6, 9, 12 and 15. At level six, the Mystic is so attuned to his family tree that should he know of a specific ancestor (and his or her O.C.C.), he has a 60% chance of contacting that spirit and forming a link. This chance increases by 10% per level after level six (at level ten, the chance maxes out at 98%).

Rare Ancestral Communion: Should the character attain level 12, he has become so habitually integrated with the spirit realm that he is able to connect with his family from much more than mere generations ago but with ancestors who lived thousands of years previously! There is a possibility that these ancestors may have wielded magicks unknown to modern sorcerers. Could the secrets of Rune Magic be uncovered by the rare Mystics?! These O.C.C.s are left up to the G.M. but may include any of the following:

- Alchemist
- Sage
- Runesmith
- Temporal Wizard
- Cannibal Mage
- Song Mage
- War Mage
- Enchanter

Any substituted from **The Rifter®** or rest of the Megaverse®.

Ancestor Characteristics: At the point of linking with each new spirit, some of the ancestor's details should be developed as this will impact on various skill selections, powers and character traits. Details such as name, gender and age (at death) are important to round out a character. Their alignment and disposition should also be known as this will impact on the player character

the closer the bond gets. Certain questions should be asked. What is their land of origin may determine what area of knowledge and language selections are known (and available to the player). At what time in Palladium's history were they alive? This may reflect on their knowledge of history and skill choice as well as possible racial hostilities. (Are these imparted to the psychic? That is left to the G.M.) As mentioned previously, all skills, spells and psionic powers should be selected at the moment of gaining a new ancestor and these choices cannot be altered once chosen.

2. Psionic Powers: At level one, the Ancestral Mystic automatically has the powers of Commune with Spirits, Empathy, Presence Sense and Sixth Sense (a warning by his guardian angel?). Plus he gets to select two powers from the Sensitive category and one from the Physical category.

Additional Psionic Abilities: The character gets to select one additional psionic power from the category of Sensitive or Physical at levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15.

3. I.S.P.: To determine the character's amount of Inner Strength Points, take the number of M.E. as the base, roll 2D4x10 and add it to the base number. The character gets another 10 I.S.P. for each additional level of experience, starting at level two. Considered to be a Master Psionic.

4. P.P.E.: Add a die roll of 1D6x10 to the P.E. attribute for the character's initial base P.P.E. Add another 2D6 points to his P.P.E. for each level of experience, starting at level one. The Ancestral Mystic can also draw on ambient P.P.E. from ley lines and blood sacrifices the same as a Wizard.

5. Bonuses: As a Master Psychic, the Ancestral Mystic needs to roll a 10 or higher to save versus psionic attack (plus any M.E. attribute bonuses). +2 to save versus mind controlling drugs, potions and magic charms, +4 to save versus possession and +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

Note: The Ancestral Mystic does not instinctively have any spell casting abilities. Any spell casting abilities are purely possible through a link with a spell casting ancestor. All spells (and any ancestor's psionics) must be selected at the point of bonding with the spirit. Once chosen, this selection cannot be altered (the ancestor hasn't suddenly learned different spells, after all).

The Ancestral Mystic P.C.C.

Alignment: Any.

Attribute Requirements: None, however a high I.Q. and M.E. (10 or higher) are strongly suggested.

Racial Requirements: Members from any race can become an Ancestral Mystic P.C.C.

Multiple O.C.C.s are *not* possible.

O.C.C. Skills:

Languages: Native Tongue at 98% plus two of choice (+20%).

Land Navigation (+10%)

Dowsing (+5%)

Mathematics: Basic (+20%)

W.P.: Two of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Expert at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills, or Martial Arts/Assassin (if evil alignment) for the cost of three.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select a total of six other skills. Plus select one additional skill at levels three, six, nine and twelve. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications & Performing Arts: Any.

Domestic: Any.

Espionage: None.

Horsemanship: General or Exotic only.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any except Acrobatics, Gymnastics, Boxing and Wrestling.

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any (+5%).

Scholar/Technical: Any (+10% on Lore, Language and Literacy).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any.

Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select four secondary skills from the previous list at level one, and two additional skills at levels four, eight, and twelve. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantage of the bonus listed in parentheses. All Secondary Skills start at the base skill level. Also, skills are limited (any, only, none) as previously indicated in the list.

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a cloak or robe (with or without a hood), boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, blanket, bedroll, backpack, two medium-sized to large sacks, two small sacks, a water skin, food rations for 1D4 weeks, a small mirror, a hair comb and a flint & tinder box.

Armor: Starts with soft leather (A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20).

Weapons: A knife, and one additional weapon of choice. All weapons are basic S.D.C. weapons of good quality. Magic weapons and additional items must be acquired later.

Money: The character starts with 250 in gold. Additional money will come from payment for services rendered and/or the acquisition of booty.

Experience: Same as the Psi-Mystic P.C.C.

Abilities & Bonuses Gained

Based on Ancestral Spirit O.C.C.

O.C.C.: Assassin - Evil.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to pull punch, +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Scale Walls (+10%), Concealment (+14%), Detect Concealment (+10%), Pick Locks (+15%), Prowl (+10%), Track Humanoids (+10%), W.P. Knife, W.P.: Select one, Use Poison.

Powers/Abilities: +1 attack per melee round!

O.C.C.: Beastmaster.

Bonuses: +3 to save versus poison & disease.

Skills: Animal Husbandry (+25%), Identify Plants & Fruits (+10%), Track Animals (+15%), Wilderness Survival (+10%), Dowsing (+10%), Holistic Medicine (+10%), Horsemanship: General, Horsemanship: Exotic.

Powers/Abilities: Animal Kinship, Animal Diagnosis, Animal Telepathy.

O.C.C.: Blacksmith.

Bonuses: +1 to damage, +1 to Spd attribute.

Skills: Basic Math (+5%), Recognize Weapon Quality (+20%), Field Armorer (+20%), Pick Locks (+5%).

Powers/Abilities: Metalworking (+10).

O.C.C.: Bounty Hunter.

Bonuses: +1 to parry, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: W.P. Net, Streetwise (+15%), Intelligence (+10%), Disguise (+5%), Surveillance (+10%), Interrogation (+5%), Track Humanoids (+15%), Detect Concealment & Traps (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Conjurer.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +1 to pull punch, +1 to save versus magic.

Skills: Literacy: Native (+10%), Lore: Magic (+15%), Lore: Geomancy & Ley Lines (+10%), Basic Math (+20%), Land Navigation (+10%), Wilderness Survival (+5%).

Powers/Abilities: See/Use Ley Lines.

O.C.C.: Diabolist.

Bonuses: +1 to save versus Magic, +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Art (+10%), Cryptography (+20%), Sculpting (+20%), Basic Math (+25%), Literacy: Elven 98%.

Powers/Abilities: Power Words, Literacy: Runes, Mystic Symbolology, Identify Energized Wards, Recognize Enchantment, Recognize Magic.

O.C.C.: Druid.

Bonuses: +1 to save versus disease, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Animal Husbandry (+20%), Anthropology (+15%), Astronomy (+15%), Botany (+2%), History (+20%), Land Navigation (+15%), Lore: Faerie Folk (+20%), Wilderness Survival (+20%).

Powers/Abilities: Oghrunes, Knowledge of Sacred Sites, See/Use Ley Lines, Ley Line Drifting, Ley Line Rejuvenation, Recognize Enchantment on Animals.

O.C.C.: Farmer.

Bonuses: +1 to damage, +2 to Spd attribute.

Skills: Animal Husbandry (+5%), Cook (+5%), Wilderness Survival (+5%), Identify Plants, Preserve Food.

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Forsaken Mage.

Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Language: Elven (+20%), Language: Select one (+20%), Literacy: Native (+15%), Literacy: Elven (+15%), Basic Math (+20%), Horsemanship: General.

Powers/Abilities: See/Use Ley Lines, Recognize Enchantment, Recognize Magic, select one spell from each level 1-5 Wizard spells (may include rare spells).

O.C.C.: Gladiator.

Bonuses: +3 to pull punch, +1 to parry, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Dance (+10%), Disguise (+10%), Recognize Weapon Quality (+15%), Sign Language (+10%), W.P. Spear, W.P. Forked Weapons, W.P. Net, W.P. Sword, W.P. Shield.

Powers/Abilities: Disarm on 19 or 20, W.P. Paired Weapons.

O.C.C.: Holy Crusader.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to pull punch, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Literacy: Native (+20%), Lore: Religion (+15%), Horsemanship: General, Intelligence (+5%), W.P. Shield, Climb (+10%), Wilderness Survival.

Powers/Abilities: Heavy Touch.

O.C.C.: Illusionist.

Bonuses: +2 to save versus illusions, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Camouflage (+10%), Disguise (+10%), Imitate Voices (+12%), Palming (+10%), Ventriloquism (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: Sound & Image Illusions!

O.C.C.: Juggler.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +1 to dodge, +1 to strike with thrown weapons.

Skills: Juggling (+40%), Palming (+10%), Concealment (+5%), Public Speaking (+5%), Streetwise (+4%).

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Knight.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to pull punch, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: W.P. Lance, W.P. Shield, Heraldry (+20%), Horsemanship: Knight, Military Etiquette (+15%).

Powers/Abilities: Way of the Horse, Way of the Lance.

O.C.C.: Long Bowman.

Bonuses: +2 to Spd attribute, +1 to dodge.

Skills: W.P. Archery, W.P. Targeting, Sniper, Wilderness Survival (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: Superior Bowmanship, Dodge Arrows.

O.C.C.: Merchant.

Bonuses: None.

Skills: Basic Math (+25%), Public Speaking (+10%), Language: Foreign: Select two (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: Trust 40% (unless M.A. bonus is higher).

O.C.C.: Mind Mage.

Bonuses: +2 to save versus psionics, +6 to save versus mind control, +3 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Literacy: Native (+15%), Language: Select one (+15%), Basic Math (+20%).

Powers/Abilities: Select one power from each of the three normal categories and two Super Psionic powers (any).

O.C.C.: Minstrel.

Bonuses: None.

Skills: Sing (+25%), Public Speaking (+10%), Dance (+10%), Play Instrument (+30%), Language: Select one (+15%).

Powers/Abilities: Trust 40% (unless M.A. bonus is higher).

O.C.C.: Necromancer.

Bonuses: +4 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Lore: Demons & Monsters (+20%), Lore: Magic (+10%), Basic Math (+20%), Skin & Prepare Hides (+5%), Wilderness Survival.

Powers/Abilities: Impervious to Vampire's Slow Kill, Animate Dead (24; 40% chance; can only be performed once per day). Select one spell from each level 1-5 of Necromancy magic.

O.C.C.: Noble.

Bonuses: None.

Skills: Dance (+15%), Heraldry (+15%), Horsemanship: General, Military Etiquette (+15%), Literacy: Native (+20%), Language: Foreign (+15%).

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Nomadic Tribesman.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Wilderness Survival (+10%), Knowledge & Customs (+10%), W.P. Archery, Dowsing (+10%), Holistic Medicine (+5%), Identify Plants & Fruits (+10%), Track & Trap Animals, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides (+5%).

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Pirate.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Seamanship (+15%), Rope Works (+10%), Castaway (+10%), Climb (+10%), Swim (+5%), W.P. Blunt, W.P. Grappling Hook, W.P. Sword.

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Prestidigitator.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to save versus illusions.

Skills: Palming (+20%), Concealment (+15%), Card Sharp (+10), Escape Artist (+15%), Pick Locks (+10%), Public Speaking (+10%), Streetwise (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: Recognize Magic 22%.

O.C.C.: Priest (of Light) - Good.

Bonuses: +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Dance (+20%), Lore: Religion (+20%), Lore: Demons & Monsters (+15%), Language: Select one (+20%), Basic Math (+20%), Wilderness Survival (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: All Blessings, Remove Curse, Turn Dead.

O.C.C.: Priest (of Darkness) - Evil.

Bonuses: +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Lore: Religion (+20%), Lore: Demons & Monsters (+15%), Language: Select one (+20%), Basic Math (+20%), Streetwise (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: All Curses, Remove Curse, Turn Dead, Animate & Command Dead.

O.C.C.: Psi-Healer.

Bonuses: +2 to save vs psionics, +4 to save vs mind control, +4 to save vs poisons, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, +12% to save vs coma.

Skills: Cook (+10%), Biology (+15%), Holistic Medicine (+20), Identify Plants (+10%), Preserve Food (+10%), First Aid (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: The psionic powers of Deaden Pain, Healing Touch, Advanced Healing, and Psychic Diagnosis, plus select one of choice from the Healing category.

O.C.C.: Ranger.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Animal Husbandry (+10%), Land Navigation (+20%), Skin/Prepare Animal Hides (+15%), Track/Trap Animals (+20%), Wilderness Survival (+20%).

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Sailor.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +10% to sense of balance.

Skills: Seamanship (+20%), Rope Works (+10%), Castaway (+5%), Climb (+5%), Swim (+10%), Sail (+10%), Sea Lore (+15%), W.P. Blunt, W.P. Grappling Hook.

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Scholar.

Bonuses: None.

Skills: Lore: Select two (+20%), Literacy: Native (+20%), Language: Elven (+20%), Literacy: Elven (+20%), Basic Math (+20%).

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Scholarly Monk.

Bonuses: +1 to dodge, +1 to save versus magic, +1 to save versus poison and disease.

Skills: Cryptography (+20%), Writing (+20%), Public Speaking (+15%), Basic Math (+20%), History (+15%), Lore: Demons & Monsters (+20%), Lore: Magic (+20%), Lore: Religion (+20%).

Powers/Abilities: Automatic Dodge! Magic knowledge.

O.C.C.: Shaman.

Bonuses: +1 save versus poison & disease, +1 save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Sing (+20%), Dance (+15%), Wilderness Survival (+10%), Holistic Medicine (+10%), Dowsing (+10%), Sign Language (+5%), Recognize Weapon Quality (+5%).

Powers/Abilities: Sense Mystical Power, Sense Ley Lines, Sense Mystical Beings.

O.C.C.: Soldier.

Bonuses: +1 to pull punch, +1 to damage, +2 to Spd attribute, +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills: Scale Walls (+5%), Forced March, Military Etiquette (+20%), W.P. Shield, Surveillance, Interrogation.

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Spy.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Literacy: Native (+15%), Literacy: Select one (+10%), Disguise (+10%), Intelligence (+10%), Interrogation (+10%), Impersonation (+10%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors (+10%), Concealment (+5%), Palming (+5%).

Powers/Abilities: Trust 40% (unless M.A. bonus is higher).

O.C.C.: Summoner.

Bonuses: +1 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

Skills: Gemology (+15%), History (+15%), Lore: Demons & Monsters (+20%), Lore: Faerie Folk (+15%), Basic Math (+20%), Preserve Food (+15%).

Powers/Abilities: Understands all Protection and Summoning Circles, Decipher Circles, Power Words, Mystic Symbology, Recognize Enchantment, Recognize Magic.

O.C.C.: Thief.

Bonuses: +1 dodge, +1 save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Pick Locks (+15%), Pick Pockets (+15%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors (+15%), Streetwise (+15%), Prowl (+10%), W.P. Knife.

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Undead Hunter.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to damage, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Literacy: Native (+15%), Lore: Demons & Monsters (+20%), Wilderness Survival (+10%), Climb (+10%), Field Armorer (+5%).

Powers/Abilities: +1 attack per melee round! Select three spells from the Undead Hunter starting list.

O.C.C.: Warlock.

Bonuses: +1 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Lore: Demons & Monsters (+10%), Lore: Faerie Folk (+5%), Land Navigation (+10%), Wilderness Survival (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: Speak Elemental, Sense Elemental, Sense Nature of Life Sign, Special Abilities of Life Sign, Brotherhood Etiquette, select one spell from each level 1-5, according to chosen life sign(s) (5 spells total).

O.C.C.: Warrior (Mercenary).

Bonuses: +2 to pull punch, +1 to damage, +2 to Spd attribute, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: W.P. Sword, W.P. Shield, Scale Walls (+10%), Recognize Weapon Quality.

Powers/Abilities: None.

O.C.C.: Warrior Monk.

Bonuses: +1 to save versus disease, +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Climbing (+10%), Lore: Religion (+20%), Lore: Demons & Monsters (+15%), Land Navigation (+15%), Swim (+10%), Wilderness Survival (+15%), Play Musical Instrument (+20%), W.P. Spear, W.P. Staff.

Powers/Abilities: Stick Fighting, Begging.

O.C.C.: Were-Shaman.

Bonuses: +1 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Lore: Religion (+20%), Lore: Demons & Monsters (+15%), Language: Select one (+20%), Basic Math (+20%), Streetwise (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: Totem (1) Abilities, Animal Metamorphosis (including dangers).

O.C.C.: Witch.

Bonuses: +1 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Lore: Demons & Monsters (+20%), Lore: Faerie Folk (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: Intimidate 40%, select one bonus power of Major Pact (roll 1D8), select one spell from each level 1-5.

O.C.C.: Witch Hunter - Good.

Bonuses: +1 to parry, +1 to save versus magic (+3 by Witch), +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Lore: Demons & Monsters (+20%), Horsemanship: General, W.P.: Select one, Literacy: Native (+10%), Intelligence (+5%), Climb (+10%), Track Humanoids (+10%).

Powers/Abilities: Impervious to Mind Control, select one spell from each level 1-3.

O.C.C.: Wizard.

Bonuses: +1 to save versus magic, +2 to save versus Horror Factor.

Skills: Language: Elven (+20%), Language: Select one (+20%), Literacy: Native (+15%), Literacy: Elven (+15%), Basic Math (+20%).

Powers/Abilities: See/Use Ley Lines, Ley Line Drifting, Ley Line Rejuvenation, Recognize Enchantment, Recognize Magic, Select one spell from each level 1-5.

Souls

Optional Source Material for

The Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Jonathan Farnham

Scholars and philosophers have long debated about the soul and the afterlife. Many pore over the numerous texts in the Library of Bletherad, looking for even the smallest hint of where the soul may go after death. Due to the power of the soul, some of the most extensive research has been done by mages through the years. Many priests believe that their soul will go on to the next eternal life.

There have been a few accounts by alleged dimensional travelers who have claimed to have reached a land described as, for lack of a better word, perfect. According to these dimensional travelers, the crossings between these afterlife dimensions have powerful magic barriers that affect the memories of those who enter or leave. It is not certain who created these barriers, but it is known through these dimensional travelers that the gods use these dimensions for their followers. Some scholars question whether these dimensional travelers were legitimate or just dragons or gods in disguise. It could be an elaborate joke, or a clever ploy by the gods to give more reason for followers to worship them. The scholars do agree that if these incredibly powerful dimensional barriers do exist, it would explain why those who are resurrected do not remember what happened after death.

These dimensional barriers wipe the memory of whoever passes in. Dimensional travelers have either had a powerful enough protection against this magic, or spent an unknown amount of time in these dimensions before their memory was restored. These barriers would wipe the memory when leaving too, causing the same problems when attempting to return to their home. Many of these dimensions may be used by the gods to let their followers live after their first life – not just those from the Palladium World, but also many other worlds where these gods are worshiped. These are not deific realms, but it is more common for a certain god to make an appearance in these worlds more often than the in Palladium World.

A soul is what is needed for a resurrection to be successful. Part of the reason for the prosperity of the Elves during the Golden Age was their powerful magic that allowed for resurrecting

someone who had died recently, by using the Resurrection spell, or resurrecting someone who had died a good time before with little to no body present, with the Resurrection: Superior spell.



Resurrection (Superior)

Level: Spell of Legend.

Range: Special.

Duration: Instant and permanent.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 4,000

This Spell of Legend works in the same way that the Resurrection: Deific spell works, with a few restrictions. The spell can only be performed on the remains of a person, or within a six foot (1.8 m) distance from where the person died if the body was obliterated. This spell can only be performed on a mortal. The success factor of the normal Resurrection spell also applies. If the person was dead for longer than two months, one roll each on the Random Insanity Table and the Phobia Table are required if the resurrection was successful.

This figurative “safety net” of magic gave the Elves some reassurances that if they took some risks, even if it lead to death, there was a good possibility of coming back. Because of this, the Elves delved deeper into various kinds of magic than they would have dared otherwise.

These resurrection spells played an important role in the Elf-Dwarf War. It was a huge advantage for the Elves when after a battle, whether the Elves won or not, they could simply resurrect a large portion of their fallen soldiers to fight again in the future.

This led to the now infamous Rune Weapons being created by the Dwarves; most specifically, those with soul drinking abilities. When the blade of a soul drinking weapon cuts into an opponent, the weapon is able to drain his very soul into the weapon. Normally, when the person dies, the soul would travel on unless a resurrection spell calls it back into the body. But with the soul drinking weapon, the resurrection spell is impossible. When the great Dwarf Rune Blacksmith, Frolin, created the first soul drinking Rune Weapon, the tides of the war began to turn.

The soul itself is incredibly powerful, and can be used in various magicks. It also has a shadow which acts as a sort of fingerprint. This is how an object can be traced by psychics back to whoever touched it; the fingerprint of their soul was impressed on it.

The thing about the shadows of souls is that they can be stolen or given up freely. Shadow Mages are notorious for making shadow soul pacts with people for insurance on transactions. A person can freely give up his soul shadow until the contract is completed. If the shadow of a soul is not returned, instead of moving on upon death, a person’s soul is trapped inside a vessel where the shadow resides. While this is similar to the effects of a soul drinking weapon, the difference is that a soul can be released from the vessel. Many assassins will give up their soul’s shadow so that they cannot be tracked. Without their shadow to leave an impression on an object, it is not possible to read what happened to the object while in their possession. Any Object Read done on an object previously held by someone without the shadow of their soul will either fail to reveal information or only provide information on other people who have touched it. Once the contract is complete, the soul’s shadow can be returned. If a person is dead when the soul and shadow is released, the soul will pass on as it normally would.

Create Soul Shadow Container

Level: Thirteen.

Range: Touch.

Duration: Special.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: 50

This spell allows a Shadow Mage to enchant a container to enable it to contain the shadow of a person’s soul. The container used must be at least one pint in volume and have a lid. Once the container is enchanted, it becomes unbreakable. Upon death, the person’s soul joins the shadow inside the vessel. If a soul’s shadow has been released after being contained inside, the container returns to its prior state, is no longer unbreakable, and cannot hold a soul’s shadow unless the spell is cast on it again.

Steal Soul Shadow (Ritual)

Level: Thirteen.

Range: Touch.

Duration: Special.

Saving Throw: 16 or better; none if willing.

P.P.E.: 400

This spell allows a Shadow Mage to steal and capture the shadow of a person’s soul inside a container. Typically the spell

is used as a way to ensure a contract between the mage and a person is kept. It can also be used offensively, but the victim is allowed a save vs magic ritual (needs a 16 or better). The ritual requires a Soul Shadow Container present to hold the soul's shadow. If one is not present, the soul's shadow will return to the person's body after five minutes.

The real power behind this spell is when a person who no longer has his soul's shadow is killed then resurrected. His soul's shadow acts like a "claim slip" for his body, and the soul will not return if the shadow is not there. A successful resurrection will effectively create a human Golem for the Shadow Mage to control. It is not required for the Shadow Mage to resurrect the person himself, and will be magically guided to the location of the human Golem for one hour after the resurrection.

The human Golem will not move on its own unless given a command by the Shadow Mage in possession of his Soul Shadow Container. It can be moved by another person, and will not resist unless commanded. The human Golem retains all attributes, Hit Points and S.D.C. at the moment of death, plus any which are restored by the resurrection magic. The human Golem will no longer be able to perform any magic or psionics if the person was able to do so before. The Shadow Mage can command the Golem to perform simple tasks such as guarding a door, killing a person, etc. The Golem does not have any of his past memories and will not recognize any family or friends.

To release a human Golem from this state, someone must find and open the Soul Shadow Container that contains his soul's shadow. He will immediately stop following any commands that have been given and will only remember what happened before his death. If someone else besides the Shadow Mage has the Soul Shadow Container in his possession for more than a week's time, he will be able to control the human Golem that belongs to the soul's shadow contained inside.

When the person dies, these Soul Shadow Containers restrict the release of P.P.E. that evil mages would use for their magic. Instead, Shadow Mages will use or sell these containers, so when they are opened, the soul, along with the doubled P.P.E., is released. This only works when the soul and its shadow are in the container, and there is no human Golem. These containers can be sold for 500-10,000+ gold, depending on whose soul is contained within.

Dark Day

Chronicles

Volume III

A Nightbane® Short Story

By Jeremy Hutchins

Lovecraft was right when he said "we (humans) live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far." Dark reading for a child, but my adopted father insisted on it. I sometimes wondered if Lovecraft knew far more than he was letting on. There are many parallels to the Elder Evils of his tales and the Ba'al of this world.

Dark Day began slowly, with few knowing the invasion was taking place. Those of us in the know never imagined so bold a move while the ignorant masses panicked when the light did not come. Riots, murders, suicides, and mayhem rocked the world as a whole, building to a crescendo as the darkness refused to ebb. So many died in that single day and so many others disappeared, it is difficult to fathom any true goal of the enemy amidst the carnage. What brings the Ba'al to this world? Their Nighlands seems a perfect home to them. Why come here? Those were questions that plagued me and my allies in the coming days. How can one anticipate the motives of beings so utterly alien? I could not help but to wonder how many of Lovecraft's protagonists held similar desires before the madness took them.

Many innocents were affected by Dark Day, from humans to the supernatural. Nightbanes that never shifted did so unexpectedly, often in front of friends or family. Some were killed by terrified witnesses while others committed suicide. A rare few were found by us and helped to better understand the true nature of the world around them. Kendra was one such person. An innocent whose young life was filled by tragedy, her end would have been met on Dark Day were it not for the efforts of a small group of valiant beings. The day before she thought her grasp of the world was solid, but a single day of seemingly endless night changed all of that. Like the unfortunates of Lovecraft's tales, Kendra bore witness to things none should ever witness. No matter one's age, there are things that cannot be unseen or unlearned. These traumatic events are the murderers of innocence.

~From the Journal of Trystan Dey

* * *

Kendra's rest was uneasy as her nightmare continued. It was the same vision every night for the past week and Kendra assumed it was some twisted version of Hell: a bleak, ruined world filled with roving monsters under a permanent twilight sky. Previously, she would see events there that would wake her, screaming

and crying, from a deep slumber as she clutched her covers over her head like a protective shield. Demonic images of armor-clad beings bearing cruel axes chasing down pale humans and hacking them to pieces, flying monstrosities with the heads of vultures swooping down to skewer running victims, and amorphous blobs of teeth and tentacles scooping up any living being within reach and rending flesh from bone with each bite – such were her vivid dreams. Tonight, however, things were different. Kendra watched a vast horde in this demonic abyss moving steadily towards a brilliant, flat disk that stood as tall as a drive-in theater screen. Hundreds, maybe thousands, of the creatures marched towards the radiant barrier and plunged into the light without hesitation. Behind them, massive beings with similar dark armor, deer-antlered helmets and barbed whips kept the momentum going while riding in spiked chariots pulled by skeletal steeds that should have died long ago.

Kendra woke suddenly and for the first time it was not due to her nightmare. A curious sensation, a fluttering in the pit of her stomach, distracted her. Kendra slid out of her bunk and tried not to wake the others. She shared a room with three other girls and Kendra's bunkmates were very light sleepers. Already quite adept at sneaking by them when she could not sleep in the past, the young orphan displayed that same grace now. Kendra had a lithe frame, just beginning to show her womanly curves. Her long, wavy brown hair fell a few inches past her narrow shoulders. Kendra was a pretty girl according to the sisters who ran the orphanage, St. Christopher's Children's Home, and more than a few of the boys were paying her attention now that she was wearing a bra. She turned fourteen last month and the sisters held a party for her and all of the other children whose birthdays were in February. It marked her eighth year at St. Christopher's and while Kendra liked the sisters, she wished someone would have adopted her before now. Once a child hit a certain age, adoption was unlikely and Kendra suspected she would spend the rest of her childhood here.

Shaking away the dark thought, she sneaked past Gladys, Anna, and Wendy with ease. A floorboard creaked faintly as she passed Anna's bed, but the girl groaned and rolled over onto her side without waking. Kendra let out the breath she was holding and moved on, unable to shake away the feeling that something was amiss. Maybe it was the meatloaf from dinner making her stomach lurch, but it did not explain her inability to lose the sense of dread accompanying it. Hand clasped firmly around the antique door handle, Kendra twisted it painfully slow to avoid the squeaking she knew would come before finally hearing the slight click of the slide retracting. She pulled the door open smoothly and stepped out into the hallway without the slightest sound.

* * *

Sister Rosa stopped at the last door of the boys' dormitory and opened it slightly while peering inside. Four beds were filled and the sleeping forms never stirred from the familiar sound of the nightly check. The nuns took their task of giving these wayward children good homes very seriously. God entrusted these innocent children into their care and not a single sister regretted their life here at St. Christopher's. Sister Rosa had been at the orphanage for a year now, but she quickly grew to love the children as her own. She vowed to remain celibate when she took her oath and habit but the message of the church was unconditional

love and Rosa had that in abundance. An orphan as well, she grew up in a facility much like this one but with a far less caring staff. It was not a religious facility, rather a state run orphanage and Sister Rosa, then known as Rose, grew up fearing those who watched over them. Rumors that some of the girls who grew into their womanhood sooner than the others were receiving unwanted attention from the male caregivers were abundant. Rose was fortunate in that she was a late bloomer and received far less such attention than some did, but she heard and saw plenty. It was enough to make her vow that no one would ever harm another innocent again if she could help it. Years later, after taking her vows with the sisterhood, one of her former caregivers was arrested on multiple counts of child pornography, child endangerment, and statutory rape. Sister Rosa attended his trial and offered testimony of her time in the facility, detailing uncomfortably the abuse she suffered at his hands. Before the sentencing, she was given permission to approach the accused by his legal counsel and she told the caregiver that she forgave him for any sins he committed against her. He responded with a sneer, stating that he should have done more to her while he had the chance. A year later he was murdered in prison by his fellow inmates. Even hardened felons had a code, and the crimes this man committed against children were avenged with justice meted out by the most unlikely source.

Closing the door again, Sister Rosa forced aside the memory and made her way towards the girls' dormitory. The facility was small in comparison to the state one, but this felt more like a home to the children. A converted apartment building, it was foreclosed upon by the state and sold to the church at a reasonable price. Though the state gave them much of their funding for the orphans, only the Sisters of Our Father's Grace were allowed to tend to the children's daily needs. Every Friday, Father Daniel came over to play the piano and give dance lessons to any children wanting to learn. Sister Rosa was his most common dance partner but she was nowhere near as good as the priest. As a youth, Father Daniel's parents insisted upon classical music lessons and ballroom dancing for their son, and now he shared his love of music with the kids. Rosa walked into the room they used for the dance lessons, formerly two rooms that had a wall knocked out to make one larger area, and smiled at the memory of last Friday's dancing. She tripped and took both her and the good Father down, causing raucous laughter from the kids. As embarrassing as it was, she loved to hear the sound of laughter fill the orphanage. Too often, it was a place of sorrow, so laughter, no matter how minute, chased away the dreariness for a time. Passing by one of their few full-length mirrors, Sister Rosa paused a moment to glance around and make sure she was truly alone. Certain that no one was awake to witness her antics, Rosa broke into a short routine that looked to be part tap dance and part coordinated staggering. Amused at her own ineptitude, Sister Rosa's laughter drowned out the stifled giggles of her unseen spectator.

* * *

Kendra kept to the prime hiding places as she made her way through the facility. Years of nighttime sneaking, as well as being a master of hide-and-seek, made her an expert on St. Christopher's various nooks and crannies. When she did hear the footfalls of someone approaching, Kendra quickly found a good place to hide. From her vantage point behind a stack of boxes, Kendra



saw Sister Rosa enter the room. She liked the friendly nun, who came to them a year ago now, and fought the urge to reveal herself. Sister Rosa was the one on watch tonight and Kendra suddenly felt very foolish about being out of bed and prowling about. Sister Rosa was very sweet and probably the most caring of the nuns. Not that the others were cruel by any means, but there was something special about Sister Rosa that made you love her.

Rosa stopped suddenly and peered in Kendra's direction, making the girl freeze. Realizing a moment later that the nun was looking at her own reflection in the nearby mirror, Kendra relaxed. When Sister Rosa broke into her impromptu dance, Kendra snapped a hand over her mouth to stifle the fit of laughter that threatened to erupt. Try as she might, Kendra still made some noise but Sister Rosa's own laughter was loud enough to mask it. The nun started to walk out of the room when she looked again at the mirror, this time with a puzzled expression. Kendra crawled slowly, slipped further behind the boxes and tried to become one with the shadows around her. Sister Rosa moved before the mirror and stared at it curiously, even reaching out with one hand to touch the glass. Kendra could not see what distracted the nun, but something certainly had her attention. She leaned out from her hiding place a little, trying to see what was so interesting. *Curiosity killed the cat*, Kendra thought, but had no idea why that phrase came to mind.

A pair of hands shot through the mirror and grabbed Sister Rosa. In the blink of an eye the woman disappeared, physically yanked **into** the mirror! Kendra clamped a hand over her mouth once again, this time to stifle a scream, and recoiled into her hiding place with wide eyes. Her screams of denial and shock were blocked by something deep in her subconscious telling her to keep quiet. Despite the feeling, the young girl quietly sobbed near to hysterics as she tried to fathom what just happened. Trembling, she leaned out from her hiding place as far as she dared and saw something writhing in the mirror's glass. It was a shape or series of shapes contorting and flailing wildly. Daring to move further from the safety of her concealment, Kendra saw the shapes clearly now and the sight froze the girl's blood.

Sister Rosa lay flailing on the ground beneath her attacker, slapping futilely at the gripping hands that sought her neck. Her attacker was a woman dressed in barely more than rags and sported old scars along much of her visible skin. She loomed over Sister Rosa and fought desperately to grab her victim around her neck. Kendra was rooted to the spot where she stood, transfixed by the battle going on between the two women. One was the familiar Rosa that Kendra had come to know and love while the other was a shabbier, scarred brute of a woman with insane eyes and drool dripping from her clenched teeth. It was over in seconds, with Sister Rosa weakening and finally going limp while her crazed attacker rose above the dead nun and spun around to face Kendra directly through the mirror. Too afraid to move, Kendra's green eyes went even wider when they locked onto the familiar brown ones of the murderer. Face twisted with savage fury and her hair a chaotic mess, the features were still identifiable enough. Aside from the scars and her current homicidal expression, the woman looked identical to the dead nun at her feet. Crazed Rosa, as Kendra dubbed her, stepped closer, prompting Kendra to take a reflexive step back. The woman stopped suddenly and stared through the mirror at the terrified girl on the other side. She opened her mouth and exhaled slowly while the mirror began to mist up where the breath touched the other side of the

glass. Moving her head as she steamed the glass in a larger area, the murdering twin raised one bony finger and began to write in the mist. The single word was a perfect replica of Sister Rosa's tidy scrawl and it chilled Kendra to the bone.

Die.

Crazed Rosa brought one finger slowly across her own throat while baring a smile that held no warmth in it. The message was unmistakable. Crazed Rosa lurched forward through the glass and entered the room at a full run while Kendra wasted no time doing the same thing.

* * *

Stop right here, lad.

Declan panted from the exertion of his long trek. His new-found energy was refreshing, but it was not able to keep up with the pacing and distance he traveled. The hospital was more than three miles from here, yet the frequent stops to hide and moving from shadow to shadow wore on the nerves as well as his endurance. Huddled on the stoop of an apartment building, Declan took a moment to catch his breath while getting his bearings. The building across the street looked like an old apartment complex but the sign above it gave the indication there was more than meets the eye.

"Saint Christopher's?" Declan asked aloud. Anyone hearing the man would assume him insane for talking aloud to no one in particular, but anyone listening would not know that Declan O'Conner was a Sword Bearer.

Inside. This is where the flyers were going.

Declan closed his eyes and rubbed the bridge of his nose with his thumb and forefinger. How in the hell did this bracelet/sword of his know that?

I can read minds. I caught a glimpse o' this place from the wee one.

"Something you forgot to mention?" Declan asked, forgetting he really did not need to speak for Hallow, his sword, to hear him.

Nae. You do nae need to know e'rythin' about me. Not yet, anyway.

"Kind of one-sided, isn't it? You can hear my every thought but I can't know everything about you?"

Later. I promise, lad. For now you need to get in the orphanage. I can sense a minion o' the Dark Ones in there.

"That's handy," Declan muttered, but he rose despite himself and crossed the street to find a way in.

* * *

Kendra ran faster than she thought possible. Her mind raced as she tried to imagine anywhere she could hide from this crazed image of her beloved Sister Rosa. She knew every good spot in this building, but each time the young girl found a place, she would think of her fellow orphans. If this insane thing were to stop hunting her, what would it do to the children? Barely able to wrap her brain around the fact this thing stepped **out of a mirror**, Kendra did the only rational thing she could think of: distracting it. She knew this place better than the mirror woman and could outdistance her with ease, but Kendra slowed her pacing to allow the thing to keep her in sight, at least for now. Kendra was a good runner, faster than most of the children here, but tonight

she was putting on speed she did not even know she had. There were times when scrambling around a corner that her feet would slip on the hardwood floors and she needed to use her hands to regain balance. Immediately, she would start off again in a new direction and would lope on all fours for the first few steps like an animal. If it registered in her mind the changes in her body as she fled, Kendra gave it no consideration at the moment. Soon, she hoped, one of the other nuns might wake. They were keeping their chase quiet, with both running barefoot though the halls and rooms. Kendra stayed quiet more out of fear for the orphans, though she could not imagine why her pursuer had the desire to remain unseen. Soon, though, someone would make a mistake. Kendra would slip and the murderous Rosa would be on her or the killer would tire of the chase and begin exploring other rooms.

Making up her mind, Kendra ran towards the front door. A quick glance over her shoulder revealed the crazy double was still on her heels. If she left the building, maybe the murderer would follow and she might lose her on the streets. At least the children would be safe. Rounding two more corners, Kendra grabbed the wooden frame of the final arch before they passed into the entrance hall and tried to use it to gain some momentum. The feeble frame, already weakened with age, cracked in her surprisingly strong grip and Kendra lost her balance completely. As agile as a cat, she rolled as her feet came out from under her on the slippery hardwood floor and managed to get back to a crouching position, but it was too late. Hands clamped onto her face and throat with an iron grip, lifting Kendra off the floor with impossible strength. Inches away, the crazed eyes and animal snarl of the killer Rosa leered at her prey.

"They're coming," the Doppelganger of the nun said in a familiar whisper. There was little sanity left in those eyes and that scared Kendra more than anything else. "Your kind will be crushed. You can't stop them, little one."

Kendra flailed in the unyielding grasp, kicking out with her feet and clawing with her fingernails in an attempt to do any kind of damage to her attacker. Crazed Rosa blinked in confusion and tightened her grip on Kendra's neck, cutting off the air flow completely. Kendra did not know why the woman suddenly seemed so concerned by her fighting, or why the murderous double looked at her strangely. Her only thoughts were of breathing and escape, in that order.

"Now you die," the crazed Rosa promised and Kendra felt her body soar. Rosa threw her as effortlessly as one might a wadded piece of paper at a trash bin. Breath blasted from her, Kendra impacted the wall and felt the drywall give under her. Something should have broken in the young girl's body but it did not. That hurt, yes, but adrenaline kept most of the pain away for the moment. Kendra fell to the floor and was slow to try and rise as she blinked away the darkness that threatened to overtake her.

Many sounds assailed her at that moment and Kendra shrieked quickly before covering her head defensively with her arms. Another loud crack, as if the crazy woman had thrown something at Kendra and missed, echoed in the entry hall. The murderous double screeched in rage and then again in pain as another voice, a deeper one, joined in the odd sounds with a quick grunt. Then, as suddenly as it began, all was quiet. All Kendra could hear was a man's voice muttering quietly to himself, the words barely audible.

"Oh my God, oh my God, I just killed a woman... oh my God."

Adrenaline now fading and the pain from the wall's impact catching up with her, Kendra succumbed to her body's desire. She thought she saw a tall shape standing over her with something in his hands, but her mind was already trying to shut down.

* * *

Declan was trying to figure out the best way to get into the orphanage – at the behest of a magical sword worn currently as a bracelet on his arm... no, he wouldn't sound completely insane if a cop walked by and Declan told that story – when he heard strange sounds coming from the other side of the door. Whatever was happening in there, a series of loud thumps and the sound of a woman crying out in pain was all Declan needed to hear. Bringing up one foot, the Sword Bearer felt the surge of his new strength flow through the limb and the door gave under the kick with impressive ease.

Standing in the hall beyond was a strange sight as a woman who might have once been pretty stood over the prone body of a young girl. The woman's face was a mask of rage as she glared at Declan for his intrusion. With sounds coming out of her that no human should be able to make, the wild woman raked at the air between them with her hands, as if trying to claw at some unseen foe, and spit at the Sword Bearer.

Kill her, lad. Now.

What?! Declan's mind bucked at the implications of that action. Murder was wrong, no matter how frigging crazy the person might be. Based on the looks of this lady, she was definitely a loon.

She's no lady an' she's no human being, lad. She's one o' the Dark Ones.

Declan felt a sudden change that caused him to look at his right hand. Resting in it like it was there the entire time was a glistening blade of brilliant silver. The handle was wrapped in a brown leather strap while the pommel held a Celtic cross at the base surrounded by a perfect circle. The blade itself was more than three feet of perfectly weighted killing steel with a razor edge on both sides that had ended the lives of many foes over the centuries. Declan felt the perfect balance and knew his weapon, *Hallow*, was truly unique.

The crazy woman lunged for the girl on the floor and Declan passed the point of no return. Taking the weapon in a two-handed grip, Declan swung it in a perfect arc, catching the woman along the back of the neck and severing the head with his down swing. The body and head struck the floor simultaneously as Declan finished his follow-through and stepped back with wide eyes as his actions registered in his shocked brain.

"Oh my God, oh my God, I just killed a woman... oh my God."

Nae, lad. Ye killed a Doppelganger. Perfect copies o' humans, they are, but they are anything but human.

"Oh yeah," Declan said as he was still in shock. "It's okay, officer. My magic sword said she was evil, so it's okay I cut her damn head off!"

Just as the impulse to throw his blade out into the street went through his mind, *Hallow* reverted instantly back to its bracelet form, clamping firmly onto its Bearer's wrist. Not to be dissuaded, Declan tried to rip the bracelet off anyway, even if it meant losing his hand in the process. The odd struggle was interrupted by the soft groaning of the semi-conscious young girl at his feet.

* * *

Kendra fought the urge to faint and slowly opened her eyes. A strange man towered over her looking a bit shaken, as if he just noticed she was there. Stifling the urge to scream again, instead Kendra shoved off the floor and back into the wall as she tried to put some distance between them. There were sounds coming from upstairs as the noise of the struggle was heard. Kendra looked from the man to the body of Crazy Rosa. The man's gaze went with hers and both stared in shock at the sight of the corpse slowly melting into a dark, bubbly substance. Within seconds, all signs that there even was a body were gone as the Doppelganger evaporated completely. Kendra and the stranger stared at one another in mute astonishment before the young girl, whose brain had seen more than enough this day, collapsed.

For his part, Declan watched as his sword's tale was proven true. Unable to refute what he saw with his own eyes, he was unwilling to share what he witnessed with those who were undoubtedly coming downstairs to investigate the sounds. After all, he just kicked in the door to an orphanage and would be standing there next to the body of an unconscious young girl that might be one of theirs. This would look far more like a kidnapping than a rescue.

Take her.

"That's kidnapping," Declan argued. "She's safe now. The others will watch her. We need to leave, though. The police frown on breaking and entering orphanages."

No, lad. She's been exposed. She's seen too much. They'll try again and again until the girl dies. She's safer with you.

Declan fought the urge to laugh. They were both in trouble if he was the safest option she had.

The flyers'll be here soon. Take her an' wait for them, then. She cannae stay here.

Grumbling about his lack of options, Declan carefully scooped the unconscious young girl into his arms. His new strength was proving quite useful as she felt as light as a feather. Declan ran out the door and down the street, sticking to the shadows as much as possible to cover his escape. Back in the entrance hall, Sister Martha gasped at the sight of the ruined front door. Rushing to their telephone, she tried to dial 911 without success. With all lines busy, there was little the sisters could do but rouse the children and start to perform a head count. It would be another twenty minutes before the losses of Sister Rosa and Kendra were discovered.

* * *

"Down there!" Miko called.

Gabriel and Avalon looked down and saw the slight movement in the street that the Guardian indicated. It was a man who appeared to be carrying something in his arms. The trio of flyers circled the area as they watched him. A few blocks later, he stopped in the recessed entrance of an abandoned building. With a nod from their strange little friend, Gabriel and Avalon followed the Guardian down to street level.

Landing lightly in the middle of the street, they were greeted by the sight of the man brandishing a formidable looking blade as he stood defensively over the unconscious form of a young girl. Miko studied their faces for a moment before smiling widely.

"Get the hell out of here, whatever you are!" the man yelled, holding the blade in both hands defensively before him. While he seemed to be a little out of sorts, he was not terrified to see what appeared to be an angel, a demon, and some glowing kid landing in the street before him. Most people would have run screaming by now.

"Declan!" Miko said suddenly, drawing a curious stare from Avalon and Gabriel both.

The man paused and stared at the Guardian as well, confusion obvious on his face. "How... how do you know my name?"

"You beat us to her," Miko added, ignoring the question and nodding towards the girl instead. "Kendra," he added. "She was in danger, wasn't she?"

The sword lowered a little. "Yes. You... you're the ones I saw flying off the roof of the hospital?"

"Yes. You rescued her just in time," Miko congratulated.

The man nodded slowly but it was obvious he was still wary.

"That's where we were going, but we got held up. We ran into a group of Hunters and were forced to out-fly them and hide. Good thing you showed up when you did or she might not have survived, Declan."

The sword's tip was almost on the ground by now as the man stared at the trio in confusion. "My... my sword, uh, it told me to go there and save her."

Gabriel and Avalon exchanged incredulous looks before casting their gazes at Miko.

"Oh, you'll fit right in," the Guardian said with an enigmatic grin.

* * *

Twenty minutes later, Declan had learned more about the supernatural world than Hallow had taught him in a lifetime of images. Miko was a Guardian, mysterious beings of light energy with the gift of foresight. Gabriel was an Athanatos, a race of beings whose powers revolved around the main five elements of the universe: air, earth, fire, water, and death. Avalon was a Nightbane, shape-shifters who know only two forms, their human Façade and their powerful Morphus. No two Morphus were alike and Avalon's was a form of angelic beauty complete with feathery wings and an aura of peace surrounding her. Gabriel and Avalon both confirmed that Kendra, too, was a Nightbane. Perhaps that was why the Doppelganger had sought her out with such intensity.

Kendra woke and immediately fainted once again at the sight of hideous Gabriel. The Athanatos was of the Necrosis variety of his kind – death. As such, his supernatural form was terrifying to behold. Onyx skin and hair, he was built like a man but that was where the similarity ended. Leathery, bat-like wings sprouted from his back while whip-like tendrils were wrapped around his wrists, ready to unfurl and strike on a moment's notice. It was an impressive feat that Declan had not reacted stronger to Gabriel, for the Gregorian form of the Necrosis Athanatos was a monstrous thing to behold. Once Kendra woke again and remained conscious – thanks in large part to Gabriel switching to his human form – Kendra learned about her true nature. Her initial disbelief was swept away by the sight of so many supernatural beings around her, but the young woman hardly felt special. She was simply Kendra, an orphan from St. Christopher's who was

a somewhat skilled dancer, liked to sew, and was handy in the kitchen.

"You'll see," Miko said in response to Kendra's denials, drawing curious stares from all of his companions.

Declan gave the Guardian a hard look. "What do you know?"

Miko's familiar smile waned as his nearly transparent eyes stared at nothing. "Too much," he admitted. "My people don't know exactly what we are. We used to be humans I think, in the past, but we woke up one day like this with little or no memory of a past life. I see images sometimes of a house by a lake, oak trees all around, and a dirt road leading into the distance. I think it might have been my home once, but I'm not sure. I've never been able to find it."

He looked at each of them when he spoke again. "I've seen all of you in my visions. Sometime I get just sights, but many times I get conversations, too. That's how I know many of your names and little things about you. For example, I knew Declan's sword was magical, even before I sensed it. I knew Kendra was a Nightbane because I've seen her change. I've even seen your brother, Avalon. I think we have to seek him out next."

"How do you know these things?" Declan asked, astonished. "I can't wrap my head around it."

Miko shrugged. "How did you find Kendra and rescue her?"

Declan unconsciously touched the bracelet on his right wrist with his left hand as Miko asked his question. "It speaks to me, in my head. Its name is Hallow, and it's been around a long time. It tells me I'm a Sword Bearer, whatever that is."

Miko tapped his temple with two fingers and gave a half-grin. "Works the same way with me. I see things and hear things, but they don't often make a lot of sense. I get a general impression of which direction I need to go next, but it's vague with no sense of distance or reason why. I just know I'm needed there and I go."

That seemed to end the discussion for the moment and gave everyone something to consider. After a long pause, Gabriel was the first to speak up.

"Miko, you say we have to go see Avalon's brother next, right?"

The Guardian nodded.

"No time like the present. Let's get moving before a patrol of Hunters or Hounds finds us. Which way?"

Closing his eyes, the Guardian's pale face screwed up in concentration. "North," he finally said. "I see a place where three rivers meet near a large, grassy area. There's a big fountain there shooting water up in multiple sprays."

"Point State Park?" Avalon asked.

Everyone turned to her in surprise. It was Gabriel who asked, "You know it?"

"Yeah," she said. "I've been there before. That's where my brother is?"

Miko shook his head. "Not there, but close. Across one of the rivers somewhere, in sight of the park. That's where we'll find him."

Gabriel stepped out of their hiding place and checked the skies. They were still as dark as ever but he could not see any signs of avian danger. "We should get moving, then. Staying put is too dangerous for very long. Something is bound to come by."

"Um," Declan began, thinking of a problem. "How do we get there? I don't have wings, and I don't think Kendra does, either, right?"

Kendra looked from face to face, unsure of how to answer. Did she have wings? Miko said she could change, like Avalon and Gabriel. Would she be able to fly like they could? "I don't think I do," she said finally, looking to Miko for confirmation.

"I can carry you and Avalon will carry Kendra," Gabriel said.

Trust them, lad. It's the quickest way and they do want to help. No Guardian would be helping evil folks.

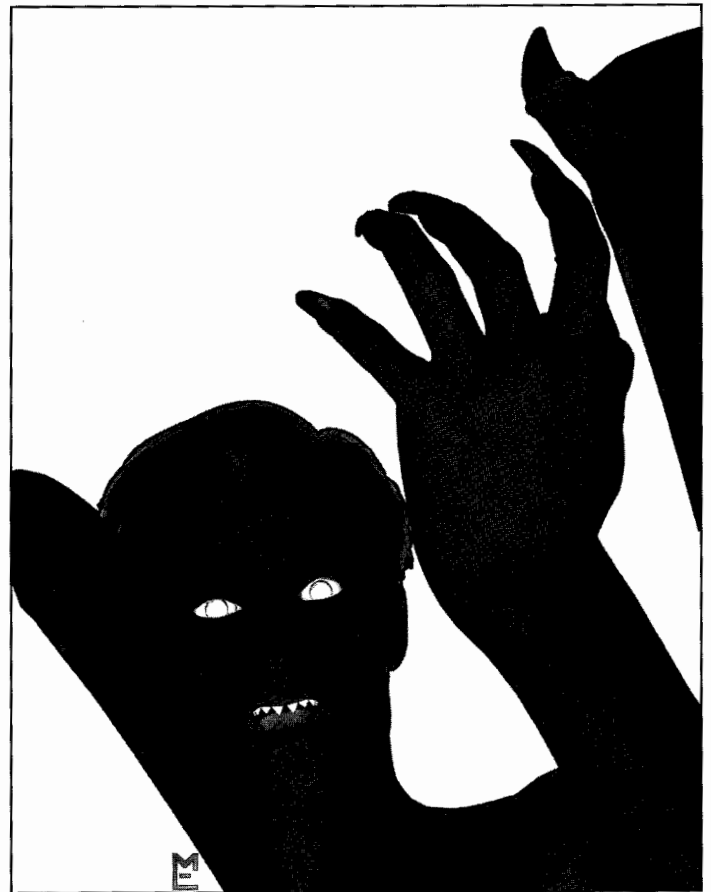
Declan frowned but he had no argument. So far, Hallow had never steered him wrong, though it was taking some getting used to taking advice from a talking sword.

"I'm game if she is," Declan said, giving Kendra a wink.

"Okay," she agreed, though she recoiled instinctively as Gabriel and Avalon changed forms before them. Gabriel still scared the crap out of her. She was glad he was taking Declan.

Seconds later, they were gone, Avalon carrying Kendra, Gabriel carrying Declan, and Miko leading the way. Now they needed to find Trystan without becoming targets themselves.

Character Statistics



"Gabriel" Quintos

Alignment: Aberrant

Attributes: I.Q. 19, M.E. 17, M.A. 11 (7 in Gregorian form), P.S. 21 (35 in Gregorian form), P.P. 20 (29 in Gregorian form), P.E. 18 (27 in Gregorian form), P.B. 11, Spd 36 (24 mph/38 km); can fly with wings at 70 mph (112 km).

Height: 5 feet, 11 inches (1.8 m; same height in Gregorian form).

Weight: 180 lbs (81 kg; 220 lbs/99 kg in Gregorian form).

Experience Level: 5

Hit Points: 27 (54 in Gregorian form).

S.D.C.: 91 (265 in Gregorian form).

P.P.E.: 158

R.C.C.: Athanatos (Necrosis - Scourge).

Armor Rating: 10 (Gregorian form only).

Horror Factor: 13 (Gregorian form only).

Combat Training: Assassin.

Number of Attacks: 6

Combat Bonuses: +5 to strike (+8 with chains, +8 with Psi-Sword), +3 to parry (+4 with chains, +5 with Psi-Sword), +3 to dodge, +5 to roll with impact, +3 to pull punch, +1 to initiative, +4 to damage, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +6% to save vs coma/death, +2 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs poisons, +1 to save vs psionics, +1 to save vs insanity.

Combat Bonuses (Gregorian form): +9 to strike (+12 with chains, +12 with Psi-Sword), +7 to parry (+8 with chains, +9 with Psi-Sword), +7 to dodge, +5 to roll with impact, +3 to pull punch, +1 to initiative, +24% to save vs coma/death, +6 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs poisons.

O.C.C. Skills: Detect Ambush 60%, Demolitions 87%, I.D. Undercover Agents 35%, Kickboxing, Running, W.P. Automatic Pistols, W.P. Auto & Semi-Automatic Rifles, W.P. Sword, W.P. Pole Arm, W.P. Chain.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Tracking (humanoids) 60%, Pilot: Automobile 91%, Prowl 60%, First Aid 70%, Streetwise 42%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 60%, Lore: Magic 60%, Lore: Nightbane 65%, Lore: Vampires 60%.

Secondary Skills: Gymnastics, Fencing, W.P. Paired Weapons, Forced March, Wrestling, Climb (gained via Gymnastics) 30%.

Languages (Spoken/Written): Greek 98%/90%, English 90%/70%, Latin 90%/70%, French 90%/70%, German 90%/70%, Spanish 90%/70%.

Psionics Powers: I.S.P.: 78, Create Psi-Sword, Induce Pain.

Spells of Note: Shadow Meld, Traitorous Hand.

Nightbane Talents (special for Necrosis Athanatos): Bloodbath, and The Shroud.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 2000 feet (610 m) in Gregorian form (or when he manifests his eyes); regenerates 1D6x10 S.D.C./Hit Points every melee round of inaction (all forms); may shift from human to Gregorian at no P.P.E. cost but takes 1 full melee round, may shift as 1 action if he makes an M.E. save; may manifest one or more Gregorian traits in human form (10 P.P.E. per trait) and it takes 1 action per feature: Wings (allowing flight), Eyes (grants extraordinary vision during the day and nightvision at night), Chains (grants Supernatural strength to all attacks and chain damage), and Body Appearance (black skin and hair – grants the additional H.P./S.D.C. with this manifestation).

Disposition: An enigma even among his own kind, Quintos (known as Gabriel in the modern times) is a being capable of great compassion and equally great violence. Driven by a code of honor that he strictly adheres to, Quintos has walked the world since a time when the Spartans were a major power in ancient Greece. A soldier for most of his long life, he was captured by Hitler's SS, led by one of their most powerful sorcerers, on the Mediterranean Island of Sicily in 1945. Unknown to the Germans of that time, the sorcerer was a native of a parallel dimension known as the Nightlands, and when Hitler committed suicide later that year, the Shadow Sorcerer took his prize back to the Nightlands and handed him over to

the Ba'al-ze-neckt, the eternal Night Lords. Quintos suffered much at the hands of his captors, who used every conceivable torture on the Athanatos. Siphoning much of his power and experience, Quintos is far weaker than his years would indicate, but his power is coming back fast. Quintos is determined to use as much of that newly earned might to make the Ba'al and their minions suffer as he did all those years, and Quintos has an appetite for vengeance that cannot be sated.

Appearance: In his human form, Quintos is a man of average looks. Not overly tall nor possessing a weightlifter's build, he does look to be a man who prefers to stay in shape. His dark hair is becoming streaked with gray but he barely looks to be out of his twenties. Quintos rarely has any facial hair and displays the many mannerisms that professional soldiers share in his movements and habits. It is his alternate form, which he calls his Gregorian, which truly alienates him from all others. Like some twisted demon from the pits of Hell, Quintos is a truly horrible thing to behold. His pale skin and graying hair darkens to an onyx color. Sharpened claws grow from his feet and fingers. Leathery bat wings sprout from his back and can bear him aloft at great speeds. Whip-like tendrils snake out of holes in his wrists up to fifteen feet away and writhe or kill on his mental commands. His white teeth become fangs and his white eyes give him the only other color from head to toe beyond a variation of black. Able to enact some or all of these changes at once, Quintos can frighten even the stoutest heart with but a stare while in his natural form.

Combat Damage: Punch (2D6+10), Roundhouse Kick (3D6+10), Axe Kick (2D8+10), Knee Strike (2D6+10), Jump Kick (3D8+10 – counts as two attacks), Backward Sweep, Body Flip/Throw, Body Block/Tackle (2D6+10), Claws (3D6+10 when manifested), Chains (4D6+10 when manifested), Psi-Sword (7D6+10 when manifested).

Combat Damage (Gregorian form): Punch/Kick (5D6+24), Claws (6D6+24), Chains (7D6+24), Psi-Sword (7D6+24).

Avalon Lauren Murphy

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 15, M.A. 20, P.S. 14 (24 in Morphus form), P.P. 16 (21 in Morphus form), P.E. 13 (26 in Morphus form), P.B. 14 (18 in Morphus form), Spd 22 (15 mph/24 km), 34 in Morphus form (23 mph/37 km), 40 when flying (27 mph/43 km).

Height: 5 feet, 6 inches (1.6 m; 5 feet, 9 inches/1.75 m in Morphus).

Weight: 110 lbs (50 kg; 155 lbs/70 kg in Morphus).

Experience Level: 4

Hit Points: 32 (85 in Morphus form).

S.D.C.: 55 (197 in Morphus form).

P.P.E.: 116

R.C.C.: Nightbane.

Combat Training: Expert (Martial Arts in Morphus form).

Number of Attacks: 6 (8 in Morphus form).

Combat Bonuses (Facade): +3 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +4 to roll with impact, +3 to pull punch, +1 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs disease.

Combat Bonuses (Morphus): +7 to strike, +8 to parry, +8 to dodge, +8 to roll with impact, +7 to pull punch, +2 to initiative, +1 to disarm, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, +22% to save



vs coma/death, +10 to save vs magic, +6 to save vs poisons, +3 to save vs disease.

O.C.C. Skills: Advanced Mathematics 70%, Basic Mathematics 80%, Computer Operation 75%, Computer Programming 65%, Computer Repair 65%, Dance (Professional Quality) 70%, Gymnastics, Lore: Nightbane 60%, Streetwise 47%.

Secondary Skills: Aerobic Athletics, Astrology 45%, Body Building & Weight Lifting, Pilot: Motorcycle 72%, Running, Swimming 65%.

Talents: Commanding Presence, The Shroud, Doorway, and Soul Shield.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 200 feet/61 m (500 feet/152 m in Morphus); may change between her human form and her Morphus at will; can sense the presence of other Nightbane within a 300 foot (91.4 m) diameter; mirror walk; immune to all forms of mind control abilities; cannot be transformed by any means; regenerates 10 S.D.C./Hit Points per melee in Morphus.

Disposition: Avalon grew up in a loving home with doting parents. She knew from a young age that she was adopted, but Tom and Carolyn never treated her like anything but their own flesh and blood. Intelligent, artistic, and inquisitive, she looked at the world as a wonderful place in which to live. Right up until Dark Day, that is. Carolyn's murder right in front of the young Nightbane's eyes opened Avalon to feelings and skills she never knew she had. It was fight or die and unlike many people, the young woman's will to fight was far stronger than her will to surrender. With timely intervention from the being she knew only as Gabriel, Avalon fought past a squad of Hounds sent to kill Nightbane before their first Becoming and

learned a lot about herself and her place in the world that day. Avalon possesses a magnetic personality that makes those around her take notice and trust the young woman. Despite her youth, she has learned the skills necessary to survive in the post-Dark Day world. Any that watch her dancing will tell you to never underestimate the graceful beauty because behind that aura of peace lies a warrior that even mighty Quintos has learned to respect.

Appearance: Average height but with a dancer's long, graceful build, there was no surprise when she took up gymnastics and dancing at a young age. Now in her early twenties, Avalon's skill as a dancer and gymnast has grown, as a score of trophies and awards on her parents' walls can attest. Set to take over the studio where she practiced most of her young life in a few years, Dark Day put a stop to that dream. Avalon's thin build hides a truly formidable warrior, brought on even more so when she switches to her Morphus. In her Façade, Avalon is a waifish woman of medium height and thin build with auburn hair barely to her shoulders. With an unassuming demeanor, those who get to know her feel the weight of her charismatic personality quickly enough. Like her brother, she is destined to be a big part of a conflict that she neither wants nor seeks, yet neither can escape. In her Morphus, a few of Avalon's changes are profound, yet many are subtle tweaks on the woman's many gifts. Dove-like wings emerge from her back, adding to her already angelic countenance. An almost otherworldly aura of awe emanates from her, as becomes evident when strangers cross her path. She grows slightly in stature, gaining a few inches of height, but little else differs. One of the few Nightbane whose Becoming heralded a being of true beauty, many of the uglier Nightbane mutter curses behind the woman's back. If Quintos is nearby, offenders make sure to whisper even quieter, for the Necrosis Athanatos seems to have an affinity for the beautiful Nightbane.

Combat Damage (Façade): Punch (1D6), Kick (2D4+2).

Combat Damage (Morphus): Punch (3D6+9), Kick (3D6+11).

Triax™ Update

Revised O.C.C.s from

Rifts® World Book 5: Triax and the NGR™

By Brandon K. Aten, based on and expanding original material by Kevin Siembieda

When working on Triax 2, I fell in love with the original concepts that Kevin Siembieda created. The idea of a futuristic, high-tech nation that was largely spared from the global destruction of the Great Cataclysm, but which was then thrust into a decades long war with a horde of demonic invaders was so fresh and unique. Taylor White and I had a blast brainstorming and taking bits and pieces of information scattered throughout a number of Rifts books and fitting them into the existing canon of the world of Rifts while also crafting a larger, flowing narrative for the backdrop of the nation.

When *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* first came out, I was extremely pleased at how Kevin and the Palladium staff updated the skill list and then modified the original Rifts O.C.C.s with special abilities for each one. I loved these abilities and thought that the classes in World Book 5 could be updated in the same way to make them more distinct from one another, and bring them more in line with the classes from *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*. I updated their skill lists to include skills that had been modified since their original printing as well.

The feel of World Book 5 always drove me to want to play a more military oriented game that other Palladium games like *Robotech®* and *Deluxe Advanced RECON®* really delivered, but which wasn't prevalent in the world of *Rifts®*. The Rifts setting and the NGR just seemed like a perfect place to tell those types of stories, so I set out to bring a little more of that feeling into the setting. One thing that I wanted to include was a list of a few skills from some other Palladium games that would help Game Masters and players give their games more of the hard military feel. I hope that this article provides that type of feel for you and your gamers, and allows you access to many more avenues of adventure.

NGR Medical Officer

The Medical Officer is roughly the equivalent of a Body Fixer with additional special training with cybernetics. While both the Body Fixer and the Cyber-Doc classes exist in the NGR and actually thrive in a society that places such a high level of dependence on technology, neither is really trained for the rigors and horrors of war. The NGR Medical Officer has undergone basic combat and self-defense training (even though some refuse to wear or use firearms of any kind) and is a capable surgeon even when having to deal with sub-par working conditions and makeshift operating rooms.

The Medical Officer and all field medics (see the M.O.S. under the NGR Infantry Soldier O.C.C.) can use any type of weapon, body armor, or vehicle but most tend to prefer light body armor

and tend to travel light, giving priority to medical equipment over everything else. The Medical Officer tends to avoid bionics for himself but is likely to have a handful of cybernetic implants to assist him in his work. The Medical Officer is familiar with cybernetic implants and prosthetics and is even able to remove and install most basic systems, however, on the field of combat, the character's goal is usually to stabilize a patient and medivac the soldier to the nearest hospital for more extensive treatment.

Note: Unlike most NGR military O.C.C.s that suffer an experience penalty for leaving the NGR military, NGR Medical Officers who leave the military or turn rogue continue to advance in experience under the Medical Officer O.C.C. without penalty.

1. Disease Diagnostic Specialist: Diagnose disease with extreme clarity and accuracy. This grants the Medical Officer the following skill bonuses: +20% to the Medical Doctor skill roll when making a diagnosis and +10% to the Brewing and Holistic Medicine skills when formulating a medicinal remedy. He is so good that he can reduce the symptoms (i.e. the penalties and duration) by half. He can also recognize possession, magical illnesses and curses at his normal skill percentage.

2. Install Cybernetics and Bionics: Like the Cyber-Doc, an NGR Medical Officer can install and remove cybernetic implants and bionics, but requires at least a makeshift operating room. Installing cybernetics is fast and easy (no skill penalty), but bionics are very complicated and demanding on the character's time and skill. **Penalties:** -5% to the Cybernetic Medicine skill to remove bionics or any prosthetic, -5% if working in poor conditions, another -5% if working with inadequate tools, -10% if the bionics are more advanced or non-Triax devices, -20% when dealing with extremely alien physiology and/or alien cybernetics. All penalties are cumulative. If there is any penalty for working under pressure or on a time limit, it should be reduced by half. Taking the Cybernetic Medicine skill a second time eliminates most penalties.

3. Repair Cybernetics: Given time and facilities, the NGR Medical Officer can completely repair cybernetics. The repairs require 1D6+4 hours to work on each item (hand, arm, shoulder, one forearm weapon, then another, etc.). Please note that this skill does not apply to bionics. **Base Skill:** 30% +5% per level.

4. O.C.C. Bonuses:

2D4+2 to S.D.C.

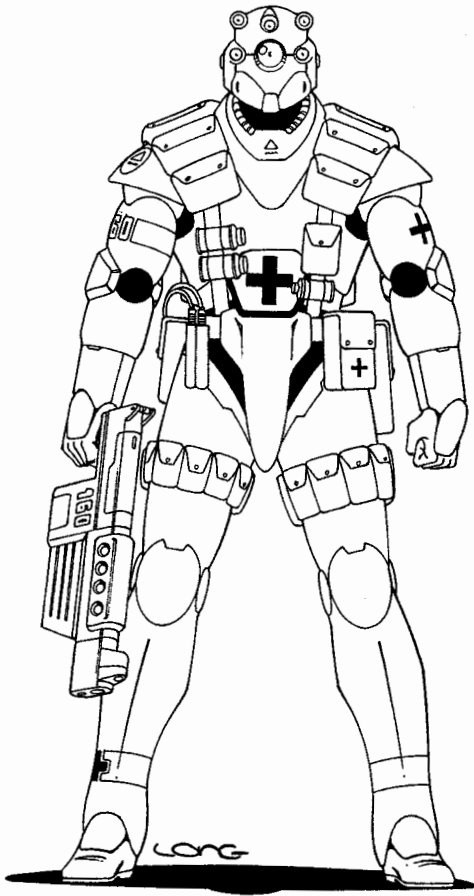
+2 to I.Q.

+2 to P.P.

+1 to P.E.

+1 to M.A.

+2 to Perception Rolls.



+4 to Perception Rolls regarding medical condition, diagnosis/health or medical procedure, dealing with drugs, chemicals and poisons.

+3 to save vs fatigue, insanity or drugs.

+4 to save vs Horror Factor regarding combat injuries.

Alignment: Any.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 10 or higher and an M.E. of 14 or higher; a high P.P. is ideal but not mandatory.

Racial Restrictions: Human.

O.C.C. Skills:

Mathematics: Basic (+20%)

Mathematics: Advanced: (+20%)

Literacy: Euro (+30%)

Language: Euro (+30%)

Language: One of choice (+20%; usually English or Russian).

Sensory Equipment (+20% medical, +5% all others)

Medical Doctor (+10%)

Cybernetic Medicine (+5%)

Brewing: Medicinal (+10%)

Biology (+30%)

Pathology (+30%)

Crime Scene Investigation (+20%)

Forensics (+20%)

Chemistry (+10%)

Chemistry: Analytical (+10%)

Military Etiquette (+10%)

Pilot: Hovercraft (+10%, includes the XM-50 and the XM-250)

W.P. Knife

W.P. Energy Rifle

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Expert for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or to Martial Arts (or Assassin if an evil alignment) at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills. Hand to Hand: Commando is not available to the NGR Medical Officer.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select seven other skills, but at least two must be selected from Technical or Science, plus two additional skills at levels 3 and 6 and one at levels 9 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any except Surveillance, T.V./Video, and Cryptography (+5%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Basic (+20%).

Espionage: Wilderness Survival only (+10%).

Horsemanship: None.

Mechanical: Basic and Automotive only.

Medical: Any (+20%).

Military: Find Contraband, Forced March, and NBC Warfare only (+10%).

Physical: Any, except Boxing, Acrobatics and Wrestling.

Pilot: Any except Tanks and APCs, and Robots and Power Amor (+10%).

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Cardsharp, Find Contraband and Gambling (Standard and Dirty Tricks) only.

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any (+15%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Identify Plants and Fruits, Land Navigation and Preserve Food only.

Secondary Skills: Select six skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** and an additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level.

Standard Equipment: Medical Equipment: Medical harness with its many pouches, two dozen disposable (paper) surgical gowns, handheld computer, pocket-sized digital audio recorder, an additional laser scalpel, and portable laboratory. Medical Kit: Anti-bacterial soap, anti-bacterial hand sanitizer, disposable towels, bandages, suture tape, protein healing salve, aspirin, painkillers, antibiotics, sedatives, anesthetic, hypodermic gun, stethoscope, pen flashlight, and portable compu-drug dispenser. Surgical Kit: Variety of scalpels, one laser scalpel, needles, clamps, sutures, suture tape, suture gun, IRMSS kit, RMK kit, handheld digital blood pressure reader, 1D4 digital thermometers with individual sanitary sleeves, six unbreakable specimen containers, 100 pairs of disposable surgical gloves, two pair of reusable surgical gloves and other assorted basic surgical items. Standard Military Equipment: One T-12 Medic Body Armor, TX-42 Laser Rifle, side arm of choice, utility belt, leg belt and pouches, backpack, air filter and gasmask, portable language translator, walkie-talkie, canteen, two smoke grenades, two signal flares, two standard uniforms and two dress uniforms.

Equipment Available upon Assignment: XM-50 Medical Ambulance Pod, XM-250 Medical Hover Station, other medivac vehicles, other means of transportation, additional weapons

and ammunition, additional medical supplies/equipment and nano-bots, robot assistant, access to medical assistants (nurses, orderlies, etc.). They also have access to hospitals, their laboratory facilities, operating rooms, examination equipment, access to computers, military escort/protection, food rations, and field equipment. **Note:** Availability of equipment and resources may be dependent upon the local commander, supply stock, location, casualties and combat conditions. However, the Medical Officer usually gets priority regarding medical supplies, facilities and equipment.

Money: The Medical Officer gets a roof over his head, food, clothing, access to power armor storage, robot hangars, maintenance areas, medical facilities and all other basic needs provided for free as part of his/her pay. The monthly salary starts at 3,500 credits a month (savings of a first level character is 2D4x1,000 credits) and goes up from there. Pay grade is similar to the chart found in **Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign™**.

When not in the field, the Medical Officer is given use of a private apartment near a hospital or on a military base. The apartment has a private bathroom, tiny kitchenette, living room, bedroom and study/library, and comes complete with stereo, video system, and personal computer. The Medical Officer can opt to live off base at his own expense.

Rank: Standard Military. All Doctors/Medical Officers start at the rank of captain.

Cybernetics and Bionics: Select two cybernetic augmentations from any category (usually sensory augmentation).

NGR Infantry Soldier

The NGR Infantry Soldier is the typical infantryman, the grunt of the army, the unsung hero. Every NGR soldier must go through intense basic training where he is taught the basics of combat and related skills such as basic radio communication, piloting a vehicle, and how to use common military weapons. After this, the infantryman must select an M.O.S. which will be his military specialization or occupation during his military career. The soldier is one of the few military O.C.C.s that is not initially trained in the use of robots and power armor, but if the specialized training is approved by an officer, then the soldier can undergo training at a later date (Robot and Power Armor skills are not selectable by the soldier until at least level 2). The soldiers are often assigned as a crew member of a robot vehicle, or assigned to a pilot or gunner position of a tank, APC, or hover vehicle.

Fifty percent of active Infantry Soldiers are human refugees from outside of the NGR. Many of the refugees, approximately 75%, will become career soldiers and half of those will meet their end on the field of combat defending their new homeland, the NGR.

1. O.C.C. Bonuses and Modifiers:

- +2D6 to S.D.C.
- +1 to P.E.
- +1 to P.S.
- +2 to Perception Rolls.
- +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 1, 3, 6, 9 and 12.

Alignment: Any.

Attribute Requirements: A high I.Q., P.S., and P.E. are helpful, but not a requirement. Certain M.O.S. programs will have specific requirements.

Racial Restrictions: Human or D-Bee as described on page 60 of Triax 2.

M.O.S.: Select one of the following areas of specialty. The character gains all skills under that M.O.S. Please note that most M.O.S. programs have attribute requirements and may grant additional bonuses to those listed above:

Communications Specialist: Requires an I.Q. of 10 or higher. M.O.S. Bonus: +1D6 to S.D.C., +2 to Perception Rolls.

Basic Electronics (+15%)

Cryptography (+10%)

Electronic Countermeasures (+10%)

Laser Communications (+10%)

Radio: Basic (+25%; use this bonus instead of the bonus listed under O.C.C. Skills)

T.V. and Video (+15%)

One Communication skill of choice (+10%).

Combat Engineer: Requires I.Q. of 11.

M.O.S. Bonus: +2D6 to S.D.C., +1 to I.Q.

Military Fortification (+15%)

Trap Construction (+10%)

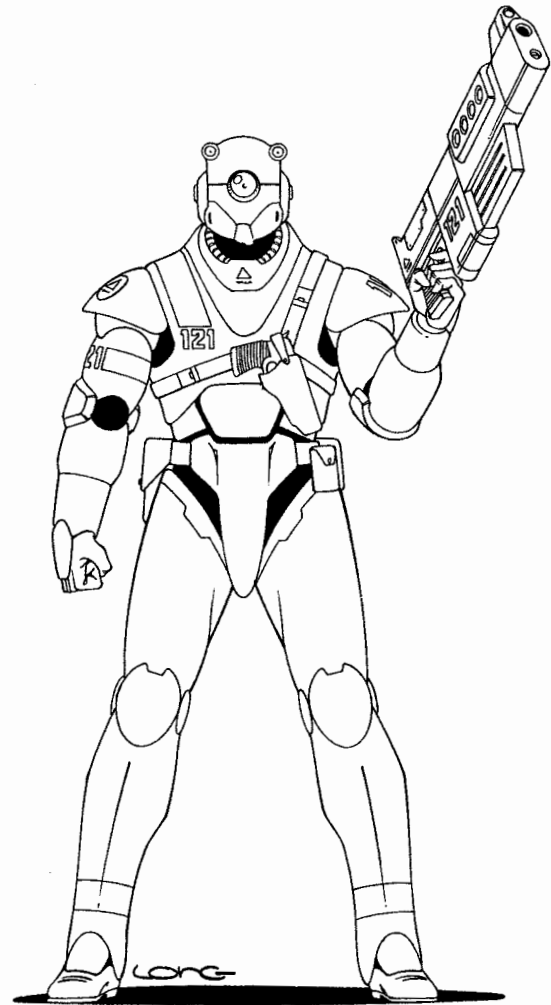
Trap and Mine Detection (+10%)

Demolitions (+5%)

Demolitions Disposal (+5%)

Excavation (+5%)

Weapon Systems



EOD/Demolitions Specialist: Requires an I.Q. of 10 and a P.P. of 12 or higher.

M.O.S. Bonus: +2D6+10 to S.D.C., +2 to M.E., +1 to P.E., +2 to roll with explosions.

Basic Electronics (+5%)

Basic Mechanics (+5%)

Demolitions (+20%)

Demolitions Disposal (+15%)

Demolitions: Underwater (+10%)

Trap and Mine Detection (+15%)

Point Man/Scout: Requires an I.Q. of 9 or higher.

M.O.S. Bonus: +2D6 to S.D.C., +1 to P.E., +2 to Perception Rolls.

Detect Ambush (+15%)

Detect Concealment (+15%)

Intelligence (+5%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Prowl (+10%)

Surveillance Systems/Tailing (+5%)

Pig Man/Heavy Weapons Specialist: Requires a P.S. of 14 and P.E. of 12 or higher.

M.O.S. Bonus: +3D6+15 to S.D.C., +2 to initiative, +1 to strike with modern weapons.

Recognize Weapon Quality (+20%)

Weapon Systems (+10%)

Demolitions (+5%)

Demolitions Disposal (+5%)

W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons

W.P. Heavy Military Weapons

W.P.: Two Modern of choice.

Infantryman: No Requirement.

M.O.S. Bonus: +2D8 to S.D.C.

Land Navigation (+5%)

Pilot: One of choice (any except Robots, Power Armor, or Ships; +10%).

First Aid (+5%)

W.P.: One Ancient of choice.

W.P.: One Modern of choice.

Physical: One of choice (except Acrobatics or Gymnastics).

Field Medic: Requires an I.Q. and a P.P. of 11 or higher.

M.O.S. Bonus: +1 to I.Q., +1 to M.E.

Brewing: Medicinal (+5%)

Biology (+10%)

Field Surgery (+20%)

Sewing (+10%)

Pathology, Chemistry or Xenology (+10%).

Medical Doctor (+5%)

Army Aviator: Requires a P.P. of 12 or higher.

M.O.S. Bonus: +1 to P.P., +2 to dodge in flight.

Pilot Jet Aircraft (+15%)

Pilot Jet Fighter (+10%)

Pilot Hover Vehicles (+10%; in this case, training includes heavy transports like the XM-279 Earth Lifter)

Navigation (+10%)

Basic Mechanics (+10%)

Transportation Specialist: Requires a P.E. of 8.

M.O.S. Bonus: +1 to P.E., +2 to dodge while driving.

Pilot Tanks and APCs (+10%)

Pilot Truck (+10%)

Pilot Automobile (+15%)

Pilot Hover Vehicles (+10%; in this case, training includes hovertanks like the Rhino and the Phantom)

Combat Driving

Pilot: One of choice.

Sharpshooter: Requires a P.P. of 11 or higher.

M.O.S. Bonus: +2 to M.E., +2 to strike on Called Shots, +1 to Perception Rolls.

Sniper

Camouflage (+10%)

Detect Concealment (+15%)

Prowl (+10%)

Intelligence (+15%)

Recognize Weapon Quality

W.P. Sharpshooting: Energy Rifle

O.C.C. Skills:

Mathematics: Basic (+10%)

Literacy: Euro (+10%)

Language: Euro (+10%)

Radio: Basic (+10%)

Computer Operation (+10%)

Military Etiquette (+10%)

Pilot: One of choice (except Robots and Power Armor; +20%).

Climbing (+10%)

General Athletics

Forced March

Swimming (+10%)

Running

Lore: Demons and Monsters

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Knife

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Expert at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or Martial Arts (or Assassin if an evil alignment) at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills. Hand to Hand: Commando is not available to the Infantry Soldier.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select six other skills, plus one additional skill at levels 4, 8 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic Electronics only.

Espionage: None.

Horsemanship: None.

Mechanical: Automotive and Basic only (+10%).

Medical: First Aid only (+10%).

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any (+10%; Robots and Power Armor skills are not available until at least level 2).

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: None.

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: Select two skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** at levels 2, 4, 7, 10 and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level.

Standard Equipment: T-10 Standard Infantry Armor (Heavy Weapon M.O.S. will have an Enhanced Exoskeleton), one standard issue rifle (either a TX-17, TX-30, or TX-42), one pistol of choice, 4 E-Clips per weapon, 2 fragmentation grenades, survival knife, flashlight, distancing binoculars, utility belt, gun holster for side arm, additional air filter and gas mask, walkie-talkie, canteen, four standard uniforms, and one dress uniform.

Equipment Available upon Assignment: Any vehicle in which the character is trained, aircraft, hover vehicle, additional weapons, energy clips, and vehicles, medical kit, portable computer, portable language translator, cameras, surveillance equipment, explosives (including fusion blocks), and has low to mid-level military clearance. **Note:** Availability of equipment and resources may be dependent upon the local commander, supply stock, location, casualties and combat conditions.

Money: The Infantry Soldier gets a roof over his head, food, clothing, access to power armor storage, robot hangars, maintenance areas, and all other basic needs provided for free as part of his/her pay. The monthly salary starts at 1,000 credits a month and goes up from there. Pay grade is similar to the chart found in **Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign™**.

Living quarters are nice dormitory style barracks with four soldiers sharing living quarters. Each has his own bedroom but they share a bathroom and living space. Alternatively, the character can opt to live off base at his own expense.

Rank: Standard Military.

Cybernetics and Bionics: None to start. Cybernetics may be purchased or given as rewards for outstanding service in the line of duty.

NGR Field Mechanic

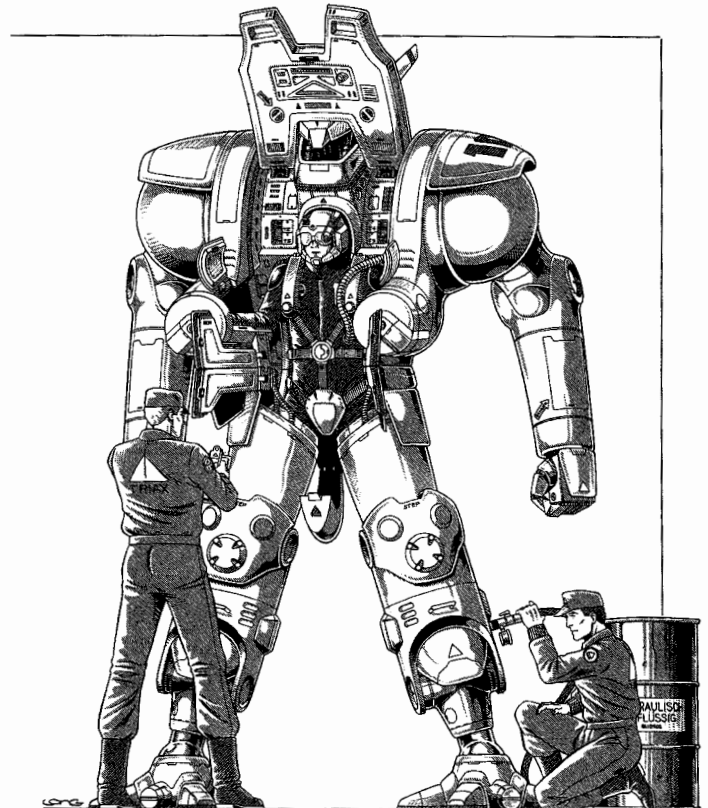
The Field Mechanic is a highly regarded specialist in the repair, modification, and maintenance of robots, power armor, military vehicles, and machines in general. They are the lifeline of the Armored Division and key personnel in a military that relies so heavily on robots, cybernetics, and machines. These brave men and women are frequently in the middle of combat, making modifications, or helping to retrieve robots and vehicles. On occasion, they slip behind enemy lines with commandos or a reconnaissance team to examine and assess enemy strengths in regards to armor and military fortifications, or to help break into or sabotage enemy systems. The NGR Field Mechanic is a specialist in Triax equipment and works extremely well in a military structure where materials and equipment can be requisitioned rather than bartered for or hunted down.

1. Brand Familiarity: The Field Mechanic is knowledgeable about technology from all of the NGR's allies and trade partners, but is truly an expert regarding Triax vehicles, robots and power armor since they work with Triax technology all day, every day. Some feel that they could tear apart and rebuild an X-10A Predator in their sleep and, honestly, they wouldn't be too far from the truth. When working with, repairing, modifying or enhancing Triax weapons, vehicles, robots or power armor, the Field Mechanic receives a +10% bonus to the applicable skill roll, and can generally perform the task in 75% of the time.

On the other hand, when working with technology from the CS, Northern Gun, Sovietski, or other nation/company, the task takes approximately 10% longer to complete, but is still done with expert skill (no penalties).

2. Enhance Robotic Strength: Through the modifications of the servos, hydraulics and inner workings of a suit of power armor or a giant robot, the Field Mechanic can adjust the Robotic Strength of that unit for a period of time. This is not usually done in a combat context, but is usually reserved for those times when a utility or labor 'bot is needed in the field and the combat units are all that is available. The tinkering of these internal systems may increase the strength but it drastically reduces the reaction times of the usually agile robots and power armor suits. It is not uncommon to see Jaegers or Gunman units assisting with cleanup after a battle, or assisting in the construction of a military fortification.

The Field Mechanic must roll on his Robot Mechanics skill and spend 1D4 hours adjusting the capabilities of the vehicle (requires another roll and 1D4 hours to be reverted back). The augmented machine will have its Robotic Strength increased by 15 points and will be able to carry, lift, and pull twice as much as normal for the modified P.S. In this state, the robot or power armor suit is -10 to strike, parry, dodge, initiative, and roll with impact. Speed is reduced by half, and the unit is also incapable



of performing power punches. The augmented unit can also lift greater amounts for short periods of time. The robot or power armor can lift to above its waist twice the amount it can carry (like a forklift). It can hold the load for one minute for every 5 points of Robotic Strength.

For example: A Jaeger power armor suit has a Robot P.S. of 40. After Hans, the Field Mechanic augments the suit, it will have a Robotic P.S. of 55. This will allow the Jaeger to carry 5,500 pounds and pull 11,000 pounds (five and a half tons). It can also lift 11,000 pounds for 11 minutes.

The augmented inner workings of the robot or power armor suit can remain in this state for 48 hours of use, +2 hours per level of the Field Mechanic, before causing irreparable damage to the internal parts. If this duration is exceeded then the unit is pretty much useless until it can be repaired at a military facility or an XM-170 Repair Barge. Repairs will take approximately a week and be extremely costly, no doubt resulting in a strict reprimand and disciplinary action from the commanding officer.

3. Jury-Rig Repairs: The Field Mechanic can slap together solid temporary repairs in half the time that last twice as long. See the Jury-Rig skill for details.

4. Repair and Soup-Up Machines and Vehicles: This ability is generally the same as the Operator ability of the same name, but unlike the North American Operator, the NGR Field Mechanic usually needs approval or authorization to carry out modifications or enhancements. Many times, when an enhancement is requested it may not be approved for a few weeks, if at all, even though the Field Mechanic could have completed the modification, checked the fluids and given the vehicle a polish before the officer finished reading the requisition.

Replace M.D.C.: The Field Mechanic can repair the M.D.C. of the Main Body and key sections. Repaired amount cannot exceed the original M.D.C. amount.

Add M.D.C.: M.D.C. can be added to vehicles, robots, power armor, and body armor. The percentage increase depends on the Field Mechanic's level of skill and experience. +5% at levels 2,4,6,8,10, 12 and 14.

Maximize Performance: Can tweak almost any vehicle or most any machine to perform better. Can increase speed 20%, range (of weapons, radio signals, sensors etc.) by 10%, reduce weight by 10%, increase damage output of energy weapons by 10%, increase payload of energy weapons by 10%, and add one extra weapon or feature, per each body area of a vehicle or standing fortification (front/nose, mid-section, rear section, top/roof, bottom/undercarriage, and wing).

5. O.C.C. Bonuses:

2D6+2 to S.D.C.

+2 to I.Q.

+2 to P.S.

+1D4 P.E.

+2 to Perception Rolls.

+4 to Perception Rolls regarding technology.

+3 to save vs fatigue and disease.

Alignment: Any.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9 or higher; a high P.S. and P.P. are helpful but not required.

Racial Restrictions: Human or D-Bee as described on page 60 of Triax 2.

O.C.C. Skills:

Mathematics: Basic (+20%)

Mathematics: Advanced (+10%)

Literacy: Euro (+30%)

Language: Euro (+30%)

Language: One of choice (+10%; usually Techno-Can, English, or Russian).

Radio: Basic (+20%)

Optic Systems (+15%)

Sensory Equipment (+15%)

Computer Operation (+10%)

Computer Repair (+10%)

Basic Electronics (+20%)

Electrical Engineer (+20%)

Robot Electronics (+20%)

Mechanical Engineer (+20%)

Robot Mechanics (+20%)

Vehicle Armorer (+20%)

Weapons Engineer (+20%)

Weapons Systems (+10%)

Military Etiquette (+10%)

Jury-Rig (+20%)

Pilot: Hovercraft (+10%, includes the XM-60 and the XM-170)

Pilot: Robots and Power Armor (+6%)

Robot Combat: Basic

Running

W.P. Energy Pistol or Energy Rifle

W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Expert for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, or to Martial Arts (or Assassin if an evil alignment) at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills. Hand to Hand: Commando is not available to the Field Mechanic.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select six other skills, but at least two must be selected from Mechanical, plus one additional skill at levels 4, 8 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Any (+20%).

Espionage: None.

Horsemanship: None.

Mechanical: Any (+20%).

Medical: First Aid only (+10%).

Military: Any (+10%, +20% to Field Armorer and Munitions Expert if selected).

Physical: Any, excluding Acrobatics and Wrestling.

Pilot: Any (+10%).

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Computer Hacking, Find Contraband, Pick Locks, and Safe-Cracking only (+5%, +10% to Computer Hacking if selected).

Science: Any (+10% to Artificial Intelligence if selected; costs two skills).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: Select two skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** at levels 2, 4, 7, 10 and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level.

Standard Equipment: Either a T-13 mechanic armor, T-42 or T-30 rifle, pistol of choice, four smoke grenades, two fragmentation grenades, 6 signal flares, survival knife, flashlight, distancing binoculars, laser distancer, hand-held computer, potable tool kit, portable laser torch, and laser wand (Triax equivalent of the Wilk's products), large toolbox and tools, utility belts, additional air filter and gasmask, portable language translator, walkie-talkie, four coveralls, two standard uniforms, one dress uniform.

Equipment Available upon Assignment: Any T-Series or X-series power armor in which the character is trained. Additional weapons, energy clips, vehicles, and medical kit, and has low to mid-level military clearance. The character also has access to most military bases, military garages, hangars, storage bays, and repair/mechanic shops, as well as access to computers and mechanic data systems. **Note:** Availability of equipment and resources may be dependent upon the local commander, supply stock, location, casualties and combat conditions. However, the Field Mechanic usually gets priority regarding robot replacement systems and parts, T-13 and T-11 body armor, mechanic's tools, and access to mechanic/repair facilities.

Money: The Field Mechanic gets a roof over his head, food, clothing, access to power armor storage, robot hangars, maintenance areas, medical facilities and all other basic needs provided for free as part of his/her pay. The monthly salary starts at 3,000 credits a month (savings of a first level character is 2D4x1,000 credits) and goes up from there. Pay grade is similar to the chart found in **Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign™**.

When not in the field, the mechanic is given use of a three bedroom apartment which is shared with two other mechanics. The apartment has one bathroom, tiny kitchenette, living room, bedroom and study/library, and comes complete with stereo, video system, and personal computer. The mechanic can opt to live off base at his own expense.

Rank: Standard Military.

Cybernetics and Bionics: A Universal Hand or Headjack and two cybernetic augmentations from any category. The selections are usually made from sensory augmentation such as a Gyro-Compass, Amplified Hearing, Macro-Eye, etc.

NGR Cyborg Soldier

With the recent adoption of military Full Conversion Cyborgs by the Coalition, and the pervasive use of heavy machines by the Sovietski and Free Quebec, the NGR no longer stands alone as a nation with a major military force comprised of cyborg soldiers. What sets the NGR Cyborg Soldier apart from his foreign counterparts is the level of training of the soldier and the technological level of his cybernetic body.

Triax supplies the NGR with some of the most technologically advanced combat cyborgs that the world has ever seen, and the military uses them with frightening efficiency and effectiveness. In fact, 18% of the NGR troops are Full Conversion 'Borgs, 15%

are Partial Conversion 'Borgs, and over 60% of the soldiers have at least some level of cybernetic enhancement.

1. Armored Division Branch Training: The Cyborg Soldiers of the NGR Armored Division are divided into three branches, each tasked with specific duties during military operations. Once a soldier registers for full cybernetic conversion he undergoes specialized training to learn his support or combat role as well as a battery of strenuous mental testing to make him accustomed to life as a metal warrior.

- **Armored Reconnaissance:** Cyborgs assigned to Armored Recon groups are usually light, agile cyborgs carrying a few heavy weapons, but whose focus is truly on espionage, mobility and stealth. They usually work in tandem with NGR Infantry and Intelligence Division soldiers to disrupt enemy logistics behind enemy lines. They are also often tasked with locating new Gargoyle aviaries and relaying their locations back to command. Cyborg Soldiers in the Armored Reconnaissance Branch get the following skills:

- Gymnastics (+10% where appropriate)

- Acrobatics (+10% where appropriate)

- Escape Artist (+10%)

- Two Espionage or Military skills of choice (+15%).

- Two Wilderness skills of choice (+15%).

- **Cybernetic Mechanized Infantry:** The Cybernetic Mechanized Infantry is a combined arms force composed heavily of Cyborgs (around 45%), and includes NGR Infantry, Robot Pilots, and Power Armor Commandos. It makes up the largest Cyborg component of the NGR Armored division with a full 50% of the enlisted military cyborgs joining this branch. The Cybernetic Mechanized Infantry are a mobile and highly self-sufficient fighting force, deployed with XM-350 Leopard III APCs and other personnel carriers, usually carrying the majority of the ammunition and gear the Cyborg Soldiers will need for a particular mission. They are accustomed to fighting with limited logistical support, and usually strike fast and hard. The Cybernetic Mechanized Infantry is usually on its way out of the field of operations before the enemy has collected themselves for an organized response. Cyborg Soldiers in the Cybernetic Mechanized Infantry branch get the following skills:

- Combat Driving

- Weapon Systems (+5%)

- Two Military skills of choice (+15%).

- Two Espionage skills of choice (+10%).

- Two W.P.s of choice.

- **Heavy Assault Armored Infantry:** The Cyborgs of the Heavy Assault Armored Infantry are among the most dangerous soldiers in the NGR mainly because of their massive hulking frames, access to some of the heaviest weapons available to the Cyborg Soldiers, and the support that they receive from heavy armored vehicles like the Phantom and Rhino hover tanks and a wide array of Robot Combat vehicles. This branch is comprised mainly of heavy cyborgs, NGR Infantry Soldiers, and Robot Pilots, with the occasional Intelligence Division Officer to provide intelligence, logistical and technical support. Cyborg Soldiers in the Heavy Assault Armored Infantry Branch get the following skills:

- Gymnastics

- Weapon Systems (+10%)

- Three Military skills of choice (+20%).

- One Pilot skill of choice (+10%). Two W.P.s of choice.



2. Cybernetic Body: The Cyborg must be either a Partial or Full Conversion Cyborg. All candidates for such conversion are thoroughly screened and evaluated for life as a living machine. Although there are special operatives, variants and exceptions, the NGR has several specific cyborg designs used by the military. Each branch primarily uses the specific body types listed below, but occasionally exceptions are granted for different Triax body types to be used. Occasionally, a body type from one of the NGR trading partners like Free Quebec is made available (this is up to your G.M.). Those Cyborg Soldiers who opt for Partial Conversion use the rules for creating a Partial Cyborg starting on page 75 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*.

- **Armored Reconnaissance:** VX-300 Striker, VX-320 Cyclops, VX-340 Slasher, VX-635 Prowler.
- **Cybernetic Mechanized Infantry:** VX-340 Slasher, VX-370 Stopper, VX-500 Manhunter, VX-550C Chromium Cyborg, VX-20,000 Barracuda.
- **Heavy Assault Armored Infantry:** VX-500 Manhunter, VX-550C Chromium Cyborg, VX-2010 Marauder, VX-2020 Monster, VX-3000 Bombardier, VX-20,000 Barracuda.

3. O.C.C. Bonuses:

- +1D4 M.E.
- +2 to Perception Rolls.
- +2 to strike with Heavy M.D. Weapons.

Alignment: Any.

Attribute Requirements: M.E. of 15 or higher, a good I.Q. and M.E. are desirable but not necessary.

Racial Restrictions: Human.

O.C.C. Skills:

- Mathematics: Basic (+10%)
- Literacy: Euro (+10%)
- Language: Euro (+20%)
- Radio: Basic (+10%)

- Sensory Equipment (+10%)
- Computer Operation (+10%)
- Military Etiquette (+10%)
- Pilot: One of choice (+20%).
- Pilot: Tanks and APCs (+20%)
- Sensory Equipment (+10%)
- Boxing
- Climbing (+10%)
- Swimming (+10%)
- S.C.U.B.A. (+10%)
- W.P. Automatic Rifle
- W.P. Energy Rifle
- W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons
- Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Basic can be changed to Expert for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill, to Martial Arts (or Assassin if an evil alignment) at the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills, or to Hand to Hand: Commando at the cost of three O.C.C. Related Skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select five other skills, plus one additional skill at levels 4, 8 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: None.

Espionage: Tracking (Humanoids), Intelligence, and Wilderness Survival Only.

Horsemanship: None.

Mechanical: None.

Medical: First Aid only (+10%).

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any that are still appropriate.

Pilot: Any (+10%).

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: None.

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

Secondary Skills: Select two skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* at levels 2, 5, 8 and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level.

Standard Equipment: All the appropriate ammunition and equipment for the cyborg's body styling and weapon systems. Energy rifle of choice, four extra E-Clips, four grenades of choice, distancing binoculars, utility belt, backpack, walkie-talkie (for back-up), and full access to regular maintenance and repairs.

Equipment Available upon Assignment: T-100 Eagle jet pack, hover vehicle or other transportation, additional weapons and equipment. The character also has access to most military bases (medium security clearance) and facilities. **Note:** Availability of equipment and resources may be dependent on the local commander, supply stock, location, casualties and combat conditions.

Money: The Cyborg Soldier gets a roof over his head, food, clothing, maintenance areas, medical facilities and all other basic

needs provided for free as part of his/her pay. The monthly salary starts at 1,800 credits a month (savings of a first level character is 1D6x1,000 credits) and goes up from there. Pay grade is similar to the chart found in **Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign™**.

Soldiers' quarters are a nice dormitory style barracks. Four Soldiers share one dormitory area. Each gets a private bedroom and study with a personal computer, computer games, stereo and television. All share one bathroom (which may not be an issue if the Cyborg Soldier is full conversion), a sitting room, and living room area. Or a soldier can opt to live off base at his own expense.

Rank: Standard Military.

Cybernetics and Bionics: As appropriate per body styling. Additional cybernetics or bionics can be purchased or granted as a reward for exceptional military service.

NGR Power Armor Commando

The NGR Power Armor Commando is a specialist in the use of combat power armor, explosives and heavy weapons. Being trained in the use of almost all of the man-sized power armored suits in use by the NGR allows the Commando a great amount of flexibility no matter what the resources are of the base or outpost where he is stationed. Typical assignments for the Commando include seek and destroy, sabotage, anti-armor assaults, enemy penetration and rescue missions, most of which take place behind enemy lines. In most cases, the job of the Power Armor Commando is to get in, do the job and get out.

The Power Armor Commando goes through extensive training to understand the strengths and weaknesses of all enemies of the NGR and have familiarized themselves with the demonic hordes attacking his nation as well as the technology the Gargoyle and Brodkil hordes use against them. Specializing in one of those areas is also a requirement of the training process.

1. Anti-Supernatural or Anti-Robot Specialty (A.K.A. Demon Hunter or Robot Hunter): The Power Armor Commando is highly trained to fight all adversaries of the NGR, but they are required to pick a specialty during their training. If they select the anti-supernatural specialty, they start with Lore: Demons and Monsters and Lore: Magic, both at +20%, and receive a +4 bonus to Perception Rolls regarding these skills. The skills advance per level as normal. If the anti-robot specialty is selected, the pilot will receive Basic Electronics and Basic Mechanics (Robot Electronics and Robot Mechanics as well as their prerequisites are also made available as O.C.C. Related skills to those who select this specialty). Game Masters may also make available the Fanatic Robophile skill from **Rifts® Canada**, page 117.

2. Maximum Performance: The Commando excels at getting the most out of his machines and regularly pushes them beyond their limits. When piloting power armor, reduce the penalty for stunts and trick piloting maneuvers by 5% and increase speed by 10%. In addition, the following bonuses are gained when piloting a suit of power armor. These are in addition to any other training:

+2 to strike with long-range weapons both integrated and Heavy M.D. handheld weapons.

+2 to roll with punch or fall.

+3 to initiative.

+2 to Perception Rolls.

+1 attack per melee.

3. O.C.C. Bonuses and Modifiers:

+1D8 to S.D.C.

+2 to P.P.

+2 to save vs Horror Factor.

Alignment: Any.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 11, M.E. 12, P.S. 14, and P.P. 14 or higher.

Racial Restrictions: Human or D-Bee as described on page 60 of Triax 2.

O.C.C. Skills:

Mathematics: Basic (+20%)

Literacy: Euro (+30%)

Language: Euro (+30%)

Language: One of choice (+10% usually Techno-Can, English, Russian or Demongolian).

Radio: Basic (+20%)

Electronic Countermeasures (+20%)

Computer Operation (+10%)

Intelligence (+20%)

Military Etiquette (+20%)

Pilot: Jet Pack (+10%)

Pilot: Hovercraft (+10%)

Pilot: Robots and Power Armor (+10%)

Robot Combat Elite: T-Series (either double digit or triple digit)

Robot Combat Elite: X-Series double digit

Robot Combat Elite: X-Series triple digit

Navigation (+10%)

Weapon Systems (+10%)

Climbing (+10%)

Running

Demolitions (+20%)

Demolitions Disposal (+20%)

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons

Hand to Hand: Expert

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

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select five other skills, plus one additional skill at levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+15%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic Electronics only (+10%).

Espionage: Any (+5%).

Horsemanship: None.

Mechanical: Automotive and Basic only (+10%).

Medical: First Aid only (+10%).

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any, excluding Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any (+5%).

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Any (+5%).

Science: Any.
Technical: Any (+10%).
W.P.: Any.
Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: Select two skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** at levels 1, 4, 7 and 11. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level.

Standard Equipment: Either a T-25 Uber or a T-31 Super Trooper for most missions, T-1000 Eagle Jet Pack, rail gun or heavy weapon of choice, one standard issue rifle (either a TX-17, TX-30, or TX-42), one pistol of choice, 1D4 tear gas grenades, 1D4 smoke grenades, 1D4 fragmentation grenades, 1D4 plasma or micro-fusion grenades, survival knife, flashlight, distancing binoculars, utility belt, gun holster for side arm, additional air filter and gas mask, walkie-talkie, four standard uniforms, and one dress uniform.

Equipment Available upon Assignment: Any T-Series or X-series power armor in which the character is trained. Additional weapons, energy clips, and vehicles, medical kit, portable computer, portable language translator, cameras, surveillance equipment, and explosives (including Fusion Blocks), and has mid-level military clearance.

Money: The Power Armor Commando gets a roof over his head, food, clothing, access to power armor storage, robot hangars, maintenance areas, and all other basic needs provided for free as part of his/her pay. The monthly salary starts at 2,600 credits a month and goes up from there. Pay grade is similar to the chart found in **Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign™**.

When not in the field, this special forces soldier is given use of a private apartment on or near a military base. The apartment has a private bathroom, tiny kitchenette, living room, bedroom and study/library, and comes complete with stereo, video system, and personal computer.

Rank: Standard Military.

Cybernetics and Bionics: Select two cybernetic augmentations from any category (usually sensory augmentation such as Gyro-Compass, Universal Headjack, Amplified Hearing, etc.).

NGR Robot Combat Pilot

The NGR Robot Combat Pilot is seen as one of the glamorous, elite military occupations. Generally, the pilots are hotshots who pilot the massive combat robots of the NGR into battle. While they specialize in the use of large military robots, occasionally they support NGR Army Aviators in flying large transports and military aircraft and can even sometimes be seen behind the controls of tanks and military APCs if they are needed. In most cases, the job of the Robot Combat Pilot is to engage the enemy head on and penetrate enemy lines. They are also used to defend strategic positions, safeguard NGR cities and military bases, provide support for ground troops, and are frequently deployed on seek and destroy, reconnaissance, and rescue missions.

1. Maximum Performance: The pilot excels at getting the most out of his machines and regularly pushes them beyond their limits. When piloting a large robot vehicle, reduce the penalty for stunts and trick piloting maneuvers by 5% and increase speed by 10%.

2. Piloting/Gunnery M.O.S. Bonuses: Many of the robots in the NGR military are manned by a crew of two or three soldiers, sometimes more. There is often a pilot, a copilot, and many times, one or more designated gunners who man the number of weapon systems available to the massive war machines. Pilots are usually the higher ranking, or more skilled soldiers while the gunners are pilots in training who are learning the ropes of modern warfare. Regardless, all pilots and gunners undergo a highly intensive and specialized training program, in which they learn some functions of both roles, but a specialty is always selected during the process. Add the following Bonuses based on the M.O.S. selected:

Robot Pilot M.O.S.: The following bonuses are gained when piloting a large robot vehicle (NOT manning a designated gunner position). These are in addition to any other training:

+2 to strike with long-range weapons both integrated and Heavy M.D. handheld weapons.

+2 to strike in melee combat.

+2 to roll with punch, fall, or impact.

+1 to disarm giant-sized opponents.

+1 to initiative.

+2 to Perception Rolls.

+1 attack per melee.

Robot Gunner M.O.S.: The following bonuses are gained when manning a designated gunner position of a large robot vehicle (NOT piloting). These are in addition to any other training:

+3 to strike with long-range weapons integrated into the robot vehicle. (This bonus does not include handheld weapons.)

+3 to disarm on a Called Shot. +2 to initiative.

+1 to Perception Rolls. +1 attack per melee.

Fire link: On a successful Weapon Systems skill roll, the gunner can fire link two weapon systems he controls. This linked attack is made with only half of the bonus to strike, rounded down, and cannot be used with missile systems. If the Weapon Systems skill roll is failed, then only one of the weapons fires at the target, still at half of the bonus to strike.

3. O.C.C. Bonuses and Modifiers:

+2D4 to S.D.C. +1 to P.P.

+1 to M.E. +2 to Perception Rolls.

+1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 1, 4, 8 and 12.

Alignment: Any.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9, M.E. 13, and P.P. 13 or higher.

Racial Restrictions: Human or D-Bee as described on page 60 of Triax 2.

M.O.S.: Select one of the following areas of specialty. The character gains all skills under that M.O.S.:

Robot Pilot M.O.S.:

Pilot: Two of choice (+20%).

Robot Combat Elite: Triax X-Series four digit

Sensory Equipment (+10%)

Weapon Systems (+10%)

Gunner M.O.S.:

Pilot: One of choice (+10%).

Sensory Equipment (+20%)

Weapon Systems (+20%)

O.C.C. Skills:

Mathematics: Basic (+20%)

Literacy: Euro (+30%)

Language: Euro (+30%)
Language: One of choice (+10% usually Techno-Can, English, Russian or Demongogian).
Radio: Basic (+10%)
Electronic Countermeasures (+10%)
Computer Operation (+10%)
Navigation (+15%)
Military Etiquette (+20%)
Pilot: Hovercraft (+10%)
Pilot: One of choice (+20%).
Pilot: Robots and Power Armor (+10%)
Robot Combat Elite: X-Series triple digit (excludes Triax Glitter Boys)
Climbing (+10%)
Running
W.P. Energy Rifle
W.P. Energy Pistol
W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons
Hand to Hand: Expert

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

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select four other skills, plus one additional skill at levels 4, 8 and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+5%).
Cowboy: None.
Domestic: Any.
Electrical: Basic Electronics only (+10%).
Espionage: None.
Horsemanship: None.
Mechanical: Automotive and Basic only (+10%).
Medical: First Aid only (+10%).
Military: Any (+10%).
Physical: Any, excluding Acrobatics.
Pilot: Any (+15%).
Pilot Related: Any (+10%).
Rogue: None.
Science: Any.
Technical: Any (+10%).
W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Land Navigation and Hunting only.

Secondary Skills: Select two skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** at levels 1, 3, 7 and 11. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level.

Standard Equipment: Assigned to a crew of any X-series robot vehicle such as the X-2000 Dynamax, X-2010 Longstrike, or the X-4500 Gunman. Choice of a T-25 Uber or a T-1011 Enhanced Exoskeleton, one standard issue rifle (either a TX-17, TX-30, or TX-42), one pistol of choice, survival knife, flashlight, distancing binoculars, utility belt, gun holster for side arm, additional air filter and gas mask, walkie-talkie, canteen, four standard uniforms, and one dress uniform.

Equipment Available upon Assignment: Any X-Series Robot in which the character is trained, aircraft, hover vehicle, additional weapons, energy clips, and vehicles, medical kit, portable computer, portable language translator, cameras,

surveillance equipment, and explosives (including fusion blocks), and has mid-level military clearance. **Note:** Availability of equipment and resources may be dependent upon the local commander, supply stock, location, casualties and combat conditions. However, the Robot Combat Pilot and his crew usually get priority treatment regarding the allocation of X-series robots, assault vehicles, aircraft, and parts and ammunition for said robots and vehicles.

Money: The Robot Pilot gets a roof over his head, food, clothing, access to power armor storage, robot hangars, maintenance areas, and all other basic needs provided for free as part of his/her pay. The monthly salary starts at 2,800 credits a month and goes up from there. Pay grade is similar to the chart found in **Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign™**.

When not in the field, this special forces soldier is given use of a private apartment on or near a military base. The apartment has a private bathroom, tiny kitchenette, living room, bedroom and study/library, and comes complete with stereo, video system, and personal computer.

Rank: Standard Military.

Cybernetics and Bionics: Gyro-Compass, Headjack, and Ear Implant to start. Additional cybernetics may be purchased or given as rewards for outstanding service in the line of duty.

NGR Intelligence Division Agent

The NGR Intelligence Division is a unique branch of the Army that trains its operatives in the areas of espionage, reconnaissance, and information gathering. While the Coalition has a number of organizations created to protect it from its numerous supernatural enemies, the NGR relies mainly on the operatives of the Intelligence Division. The agents trained by the division are usually quick thinking, resourceful, charismatic and confident men and women who remain cool under pressure.

Each agent undergoes a training program tailored to the specific individual. Every one of them is recruited and selected for specific reasons, be it natural aptitude, psychic ability, leadership skills or just extreme dedication to the protection of the NGR. The nature of the training determines the types of missions to which the character will be assigned but the missions can range from anything to stakeouts, prisoner rescue, and impersonation to assassination of high ranking enemy officials and long-term undercover operations.

The agent's services are often utilized by both the Intelligence Division and the Civilian Law Enforcement branch of the Army, but mission assignment is always at the discretion of the superior officers.

1. Special Abilities (select two at level 1, and make an additional selection at levels 4, 7 and 12):

Immersion: Through cultural immersion training, the Intelligence Agent becomes extremely skilled at blending into his surroundings, allowing him to fit in almost anywhere. The character gets a one-time bonus of +15% to 2D4 to the following skills (player's choice): Trust/Intimidate, Charm/Impress, Seduction, any one Language skill, Performance, Public Speaking, Sing, Wardrobe and Grooming, Disguise, Impersonation, Interrogation, Undercover Ops, Military Etiquette, Find Contraband,

Streetwise, and Research. This bonus is cumulative with all other bonuses.

Marksmanship – Pistol or Rifle (can be selected twice for both): Special weapons training grants the Intelligence Agent additional bonuses when using either a pistol or a rifle. The agent gets the following bonuses: +1 attack/action per melee round, +2 to strike on an Aimed or Called Shot, +1 to strike with a burst or spray, +1 to disarm on a Called Shot when using the selected weapon type.

E.O.D. (Explosive Ordnance Disposal): The Intelligence Agent receives extensive training in explosives and demolitions of all kinds, granting him the Demolitions, Demolitions Disposal, and Underwater Demolitions skills at a bonus of +15%. The agent also gets the Homemade Explosives skill found on page 74 of **Coalition War Campaign™**, with a 20% bonus.

Supernatural Expert: Agents that show exceptional aptitude in a particular area of study are encouraged to pursue further study. If the character selects the supernatural expert, he starts with Lore: Demons and Monsters and Lore: Magic, and Lore: Psychics, all at +15% in addition to other bonuses. The agent receives a +5 bonus to Perception Rolls regarding these skills.

Technology Expert: Agents that show exceptional aptitude in a particular area of study are encouraged to pursue further study. If the character selects the technology expert, he starts with the equivalent of the Fanatic Robophile skill from **Rifts® Canada**, page 117, and is +5 to Perception Rolls regarding technological opponents.

Cyber-Humanoid (costs two and must be selected at character creation): The Intelligence Agent is actually a light Full Conversion Cyborg covered in a Bio-System skin covering. 15% of Intelligence Division Agents are Cyber-Humanoids. The Cyber-Humanoid has the following statistics:

- M.D.C. of Main Body: 100
- M.D.C. of Limbs: Hands: 25 each, Forearms: 35 each, Upper Arms: 45 each, Feet: 25 each, Legs: 70 each, Head: 75.

- Arms and Hands:

Attributes: P.S. and P.P. of 20.

Weapons and Features:

- One multi-system hand, three features on the other hand.
- One wrist feature of choice.
- Three finger weapons or features of choice.
- Two knuckle features of choice.
- One concealed forearm weapon of choice.
- Legs and Locomotion:

Speed Attribute: 110 (75 mph/120 km).

Other Leg Attributes: P.S. and P.P. of 20.

Weapons and Features:

- Each leg has a feature of choice, usually a concealed storage compartment, or quick-draw holsters.
- Other Features:
Head: Psionic Electromagnetic Dampeners, Combat Computer, Universal Headjack, and one option of choice.

Eyes: Both Multi-Optic Eyes.

Ears: Two features of choice.

Mouth/Throat: Two features of choice.

Chest: Oxygen Storage Cell and one feature of choice.

Other: Cyber-Disguise AA-1, and Cyber-Disguise Type ASH Supplemental.

Psychic Sensitive (costs two and must be selected at character creation): The Intelligence Division recruits the occasional

psychic sensitive, but the recruit must have a clean criminal record, be registered with the government, and undergo a strenuous series of classes and training targeted at helping the psychic control his or her abilities. Due to their enhanced conditioning, Intelligence Division psychics are extremely loyal to the NGR and, because of their ability to pull thoughts directly from the minds of others, they are among the best at what they do. The psychic starts with eight powers from the Sensitive category, and will get one selection from the Super category at levels 8 and 15. Base I.S.P. is the Intelligence Agent's M.E. +5D6, +1D6+1 per level. The character also gets Lore: Psychics at +20%.

Iron Will: Intense psychological training helps the Intelligence Agent develop a tough disposition which even the toughest interrogators have trouble breaking. The character is immune to the effects of Horror Factor, cannot be tortured through pain alone (it would require the use of drugs, psionics or magic), and receives +3 to M.E.

Guerilla Warfare Expert: The agent excels at operating behind enemy lines for extended periods of time. They are adept at gathering information on their adversaries, supply lines, and troop movements, as well as harassing them with traps of all kinds. The character receives a +15% bonus to the following skills: Intelligence, Wilderness Survival, Trap Construction, Camouflage, Trap and Mine Detection and Detect Concealment. These bonuses are cumulative with all additional bonuses.

Intelligence Commissioned Officer: The Intelligence Commissioned Officer is a skilled leader with knowledge of Military History, and Etiquette, and is unsurpassed in the military tactics in every theater where NGR troops are found. Some officers are recruited early on in their military career, yet most (80%) of all Intelligence Officers are promoted from well seasoned veterans. Commissioned Officers receive the Military skills of Leadership, and Theater Warfare (described below), the Technical skill, History: NGR, with a specialty in NGR Military, each with a +15% bonus.

2. Intelligence Division Branch Training: After admittance into the NGR Intelligence Division, the character is assigned to one of the three specific departments modeled after its pre-Rifts equivalent; foreign intelligence, domestic intelligence, or military intelligence. Each of the three divisions has its own special training program that the character undergoes after the preliminary training that all agents go through. This training gives the character a full understanding of the relationships between all three divisions, a detailed understanding of the inner workings and hierarchy of their own selected division, the duties and responsibilities of their organization, and lastly, specific immersion training that helps the character build contacts and false identities. Characters select their Intelligence Division at character creation, which cannot be changed, though each branch works closely with the others in order to protect the interests of the NGR. (**Note to G.M.:** These contacts and identities can add a vast new array of adventure to the story you want to tell. Bits and pieces of intel can find their way to the player at various times through the use of these contacts as the Intelligence Agent uncovers plots and plans against the NGR and Triax Industries. Be careful not to give too much away at once.)

● **Federal Intelligence Service (BND) – Bundesnachrichtendienst (Foreign Intelligence):** Foreign Intelligence Agents have two alternate identities. Each of the two identities can be from either the Coalition States, the Sovietski, one of the War-

lord Camps, Poland, Northern Gun, the Free Scandinavian Alliance, the New Navy or New Camelot. Each identity has 1D4 contacts which he can use to extract information or acquire hard to get resources. The agent also gets two additional Language and Literacy skills with a +10% bonus.

- **Military Counter-intelligence Service (MAD) – Militärischer Abschirmdienst (Military Intelligence):** Military Intelligence Agents do not have any alternate identities, but they have a large number of contacts and informants that provide knowledge on the militaries of foreign nations. The agent has 3D4 contacts in either the Coalition States, the Sovietski, one of the Warlord Camps, Poland, Northern Gun, the Free Scandinavian Alliance, the New Navy or New Camelot. The character also gets +10% to three Military skills of choice.

- **Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BfV) – Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Domestic Intelligence):** The Domestic Intelligence Agent has 1D4+2 alternate identities, with each one based in Dusseldorf, Köln, Berlin, Frankfurt, Munich or Passau. Each identity has 1D4 contacts within that city who are tapped into the workings of the local VGN (German Black Market) and the criminal element. The character also gets the Streetwise skill at +15%.

3. O.C.C. Bonuses and Modifiers:

+2D4 to S.D.C.

+1D4 to I.Q., M.A. and M.E.

+3 to Perception Rolls.

+4 to save vs Psionic Attack, Insanity or Torture.

+2 to save vs Horror Factor.

+2 to initiative.

+3 to strike with ranged weapons.

+1 to strike with melee weapons.

+1 to parry, dodge, and roll.

Alignment: Any.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 13, M.E. 12 and M.A. 14.

Racial Restrictions: Human or D-Bee (very rare) as described on page 60 of Triax 2.

O.C.C. Skills:

Mathematics: Basic (+10%)

Literacy: Euro (+30%)

Language: Euro (+30%)

Literacy: Two of choice (+20%).

Language: Two of choice (+20% usually Techno-Can, English, Russian or Demongogian).

Radio: Basic (+20%)

Electronic Countermeasures (+20%)

Computer Operation (+10%)

Laser Communications (+10%)

Cryptography (+10%)

Surveillance (+10%)

Disguise (+20%)

Escape Artist (+20%)

Intelligence (+20%)

Military Etiquette (+20%)

Pilot: Jet Pack (+10%)

Pilot: One of choice (+20%).

Pilot: Robots and Power Armor (+5%)

Navigation (+10%)

Tracking (people) (+10%)

Weapon Systems (+10%)

Climbing (+10%)

Swimming (+10%)

Prowl (+10%)

General Athletics

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Two of choice.

Hand to Hand: Martial Arts

Hand to Hand: Martial Arts can be changed to Hand to Hand: Commando at the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select two Rogue or Espionage skills, one Wilderness skill, and three other skills, plus one additional skill at levels 3, 7, 11 and 15. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any (+15%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics only (+5%).

Espionage: Any (+15%).

Horsemanship: None.

Mechanical: Basic only (+5%).

Medical: First Aid only (+10%).

Military: Any (+20%).

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any (+10%).

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Any (+10%).

Science: Any.

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

Secondary Skills: Select two skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** at levels 2, 4, 8 and 12. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level.

Standard Equipment: Either a T-25 Uber or a T-31 Super Trooper for most missions, T-1000 Eagle Jet Pack, rail gun or heavy weapon of choice, one standard issue rifle (either a TX-17, TX-30, or TX-42), one pistol of choice, 1D4 tear gas grenades, 1D4 smoke grenades, 1D4 fragmentation grenades, 1D4 plasma or micro-fusion grenades, survival knife, flashlight, distancing binoculars, utility belt, gun holster for side arm, additional air filter and gas mask, walkie-talkie, handheld computer, language translator, canteen, four standard uniforms, and one dress uniform. Equipment will vary drastically from each undercover mission to the next.

Equipment Available upon Assignment: Any T-Series or X-series power armor in which the character is trained. EIR-15 Gargoyle 'bot or other means of military transportation when in the field on a direct NGR military support mission. Additional weapons, energy clips, and vehicles, medical kit, cameras, surveillance equipment, and explosives (including Fusion Blocks), and has high-level military clearance. **Note:** Availability of equipment and resources may be dependent upon the local commander, supply stock, location, casualties, and combat conditions. The Intelligence Agent always has priority over power armor, S.C.U.B.A. equipment, heavy weapons, explosives, cybernetic repairs and weapons.

Money: The Intelligence Agent gets a private, two bedroom apartment with a study, living room, kitchenette and private bath. Living conditions of each alternate identity are extremely modest and sparse when in the field, unless approval has been granted as a requirement to keep a cover. Most Intelligence Agents are pretty good with working this system to their advantage, since almost every cover they have is important. Pay grade is similar to the chart found in **Rifts® World Book 11: Coalition War Campaign™**.

Rank: Standard Military.

Cybernetics and Bionics: If the character did not choose the Cyber-Humanoid option, they will get a Gyro-Compass, Clock Calendar, Universal Headjack, and Amplified Hearing. High ranking officers (8th level and higher) are likely to have the following additional implants: one or two cybernetic eyes, one additional lung implant, Cyber Disguise AA-1, or a cybernetic finger or two, or even an artificial arm. Others can be purchased or awarded for acts of heroism, or provided for a specific mission.

New Skills Available to NGR Military Personnel

Note: Some of these are direct imports from the *Robotech® The Shadow Chronicles® RPG*, but they are a good fit for ANY of the Palladium Books® military games.

Military Skills

Robot Drone Command: All of Triax DV and EIR Robot Drones are programmed for combat and can adequately operate with limited or no human direction. Certain NGR soldiers are trained to command and instruct these combat drones to operate in tandem with each other to work more effectively in combat. Most NGR body armor can be used to synchronize the individual drones to its combat computer and HUD so the drone commander is aware of what is each drone is seeing and experiencing, allowing him to check the status of the drone or to issue new orders. When connected, the soldier is aware of all the programmed skills and can issue orders via radio. With additional experience and training, the drone commander can better divide his attention between more drones. At level one, the character can control two drones and can control an additional drone at levels 4, 7, 12 and 15. When operating drones, each drone gets the following bonuses: +1 attack per melee, +2 to strike with ranged weapons, +3 to strike, parry, and dodge in melee. The drone commander gets +2 to Perception Rolls, but all combat attacks and combat abilities are reduced by half. **Base Skill:** Not applicable. **Note:** If a character with this skill is using the X-1471 Wolfhound and controlling DV-39 Wolf robot drones, the penalties are negated.

Leadership: This skill represents an officer or NCO's ability to give orders and have them obeyed. An officer or NCO with good leadership skills can motivate subordinates and subalterns to do the impossible with nothing while smiling all the way. **Skill Bonuses:** +2 to M.A. attribute, +5% to trust/intimidate (20% if the character doesn't already have M.A. bonuses) vs armed forces personnel at level 1, and +5% at levels 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11. +5%

to charm/impress vs everyone at level one, +5% at levels 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10. Also +5% to Military Etiquette skill.

Theater Warfare: Surface, Submarine, Ground, or Airspace: Theater Warfare skill is taught at military academies and war colleges in the NGR, CS, Sovietski, and other high-tech places throughout the world. It is an advanced skill that grants not only tactical knowledge but also the strategic knowledge to wage total war within the particular theater of specialty. **Note:** This skill is generally not available to low ranking characters. It is usually reserved for officers, Military Specialists, Intelligence Agents, and for higher ranking characters. Characters pick one of the following theater specialties:

Surface: Surface Warfare covers the tactical and strategic use of naval power for force projection. Surface Warfare specialists are usually commanders of Carrier Assault Groups of Fleet Command Admirals.

Submarine: Submarine Warfare specialists are masters of the cat and mouse type of warfare that submarines excel at. Submarine Warfare specialists can be found as part of Carrier Assault Group command, or leading packs of silent and deadly submarines.

Ground: Ground Warfare includes training in the use of conventional and unconventional warfare to achieve tactical and strategic goals. Ground Warfare specialists can be commanders of commando assault teams or Generals marshaling troops in the field.

Airspace: Airspace Warfare specialists are trained in the use of fighters, bombers, attack aircraft, and UCAVs for air superiority and force projection. They are usually CAGs on aircraft carrier groups or commanders of fighter wings.

Base Skill: 35% +5% per level.

Pilot Skills

Aerobatics: Essentially a civilian version of Combat Flying, characters with this skill are usually stunt or exhibition pilots. All penalties for airborne stunts and maneuvers are half, and the pilot is +1 to dodge and +2 to roll with impact/survive a crash while flying. **Base Skill:** There is no base skill, but for each new level, reduce the stunt/maneuver penalties by another one point.

Combat Flying: Similar to the skill Combat Driving, the Combat Flying skill represents a character's ability to fly in adverse weather and combat conditions. All penalties for airborne stunts and maneuvers are half and the pilot is +2 to dodge and +3 to roll with impact/survive a crash while flying. **Base Skill:** There is no base skill, but for each new level, reduce the stunt/maneuver penalties by another one point. **Note:** This skill is only available to military trained pilots, not civilians. Bonuses do not stack with Aerobatics, but do combine with other skills such as Elite Aerial Combat.

The Cutting Room Floor

Additional Source Material for Rifts® Thundercloud Galaxy™

By Braden Campbell and Kevin Siembieda

The CCW

Consortium of Civilized Worlds

Population in the Thundercloud Galaxy: One trillion.

Demographics: 25% Humans, 21% Catyr, 10% Noro, 10% Republican Wulfen, 10% CheDive, 24% Others (including 72 species indigenous to the Thundercloud Galaxy).

The Consortium of Civilized Worlds (CCW) is arguably the single most powerful political entity in the Three Galaxies. Its origins can be found in a military agreement between the *Human Alliance* and the *Noro Federation*. The Great War brought them together and attracted other planetary civilizations to join the Alliance as well. What started as a means to survive the aggression of the Transgalactic Empire (TGE) created the pan-galactic superpower that is the CCW. As a whole, the agreement that binds the worlds of the CCW is more akin to a massive trade and mutual defense treaty between partners than it is a single, coherent galactic nation. Instead of having an all-powerful, centralized government like the TGE, the Consortium of Civilized Worlds has left its constituent governments intact. Each *member world* enjoys autonomous rule and self-government and sends a certain number of representatives, based on their collective population, to **Terra Prime** where they are represented in the Consortium Congress. Within the Consortium Congress the representatives speak on behalf of their civilization/world(s) and weigh in on issues of importance, including peaceful interaction, trade, defense, and other matters. Otherwise, the various constituents of the CCW can rule and conduct themselves as they see fit. (In this regard, the government works in a similar way to the government of the United States.)

While sentient beings of member worlds are not forced to change their ways – indeed, the CCW prides itself on being a “cultural tapestry” – they all must sign the **Civilization Compact**. This document is the Constitution of the CCW. It encompasses the Consortium’s most ardent belief that all sentient species are created equal, and from their sentience, derive certain inalienable rights. In order to become a member of the CCW, a planetary civilization or collection of planets must agree to uphold *the Compact*, or make certain societal changes that allow them to uphold it. The Compact is the heart of the CCW’s collective legal system, and abandoning it is grounds for expulsion from the Consortium.

At the heart of the Civilization Compact are the **Four Freedoms**, the rights which every citizen of the CCW is guaranteed by law. They are:

1) **Freedom from Slavery.** Slavery is outlawed on all Consortium member planets and territories. Slaves may not be owned, sold, held or transported within Consortium space, and any slaves who are found there are considered to be free people and automatically granted asylum by CCW authorities.

2) **Freedom from Conquest.** No CCW member planet may engage in the conquest or colonization of other worlds without the consent of the Consortium Authority. The violent conquest of other planets is expressly forbidden and cannot be carried out under any circumstances. Permission to colonize *uninhabited worlds* is usually granted, but such activities are monitored to ensure that the planet does not have intelligent beings or even a high potential to evolve intelligent species who may be compromised by the colonization process.

3) **Freedom from Anarchy.** All signatory worlds must be represented by a planetary government; e.g. one global ruling body for a single planet, or one body of government for two or more associated worlds or home world and colony planets. Only in a few special cases is just a portion of a planet granted membership into the CCW and the rest of the world left out of its jurisdiction. Ordinarily though, balkanized worlds with many independent ruling bodies are refused membership. Likewise, member worlds that enter into a state of civil war have a five year grace period to cease hostilities or face expulsion. The threat of exile is often enough to get warring nations or disgruntled factions to broker peace for the greater good of their world.

4) **Freedom from Tyranny.** This includes the right to own property, the right to a fair trial, the right for the people to have a voice in their government and to elect government representatives. In most cases, the Fourth Freedom has been interpreted to include freedom of expression/self-expression, freedom of religious worship, equality for all sentient life forms and the right to bear arms.

It is important to note, especially in the case of the Thundercloud Galaxy, that while all member worlds are covered by the Compact, there are actually two different levels of membership. There are *Full Members* and there are *Associate Member Civilizations*.

Full Members are those people who have attained the ability, either via magic or technology, to become space-faring.

Associate Member Civilizations are sentient beings, usually humanoids, who have not yet achieved the capability for space exploration, be they a relatively advanced people or a developing civilization. Contact with the civilizations of these underdeveloped planets is strictly controlled by the *Consortium Authority* and, as a rule, consists of a few small trading or scientific outposts, and a CCW embassy building/outpost for diplomatic liaisons and an Office of Development. Ostensibly, all associated planets are defined as “pending” members of the CCW and are defended by the *Consortium Armed Forces* (CAF). That is as far as the CCW’s protection reaches, and outside influence is, as a general rule, kept to a minimum to let the people grow and advance on their own. On worlds where the indigenous population embrace the change and advancement the CCW has to offer, there may be a request for Expedited Associate Member status. Planetary civilizations (i.e. the one or more expansive and powerful

indigenous civilization(s)) given **Expedited Associate Member** status (which is usually granted to all who requests it) authorize direct CCW intervention and counsel to help their civilization advance to the level of a space-faring people. Such worlds are given favored status and authorize CCW consultants to advise them on matters ranging from political structure to the arts and technology. These worlds are also likely to authorize the establishment of onsite CCW colony cities (i.e. advanced, modern cities developed by humans or other CCW members, for humans and other CCW members), terra-forming, mining and industrial operations on the associated planet.

Full Member worlds immediately have all the rights of the Civilization Compact, and are entitled to the Four Freedoms.

Associate Member Civilizations are usually given membership because the CCW recognizes their potential for becoming an advanced, space-faring people within 50-500 years (especially with guidance by the CCW and admission into the Expedited Membership program), and share outlooks and morals similar to the CCW's own high ideals. However, Associate Members may sometimes include planets or people with different views or dissimilar outlooks and politics but who offer a unique resource or tactical advantage for the Consortium.

In times of crisis, the CCW provides full military protection and humanitarian relief to Full Member worlds. *Associate Member Civilizations* are also protected by the CAF space fleet, but in the eyes of the Consortium Authority, CCW citizens carry more weight and are regarded as more important than the planet's native inhabitants, so their safety and rights always come first.

Colony worlds are an entirely different animal. Colony worlds are planets that either have no indigenous population, or a population that lays claim to less than 40% of the planet, has no dominant global power or central government, and whose tech level ranges from Stone Age to Medieval. Under the auspices of the "*reinterpreted*" *Consortium Compact*, such worlds may be claimed by CCW Chartered Companies, colonized, and their indigenous people brought in line to accept and embrace the principles of the CCW by any means necessary. While this was originally intended as a peaceful and gentle assimilation into the CCW civilization for their own good, in practice it has led to the conquest and subjugation of many worlds and their native people. In many cases, the indigenous people are absorbed into the colony – sometimes as second-class citizens, other times with the full rights of CCW citizens – but in either case, their humanitarian rights are completely usurped by the "superior" rights of the Charter Company, and their heritage and history completely obliterated. Once a CCW Charter Company is granted colonization rights, it is the indigenous people who are treated as if they are a potential threat to the colony. As such, the Charter Company can take whatever means and measures necessary to protect "its" colonists, workers, investments and planetary resources. This can result in the slaughter and even genocide of the planet's native people. The CCW would never allow such a thing if it knew about such atrocities, but such respect and sensibility has gone out the window when it comes to the Scramble for the Thundercloud Galaxy. The race to acquire and cultivate member planets is so bonkers wild, and communications are so terrible, that there is no oversight. Charter Companies and out-of-control colonists can pretty much do as they please. By the time authorities might find out and try to put a stop to it, the crisis is usually over. The

winner, more often than not, is the one with vastly superior technology – the CCW chartered colony.

The indigenous people of *colony worlds* have no rights under the Compact, because their civilization was never acknowledged and never became a member of the CCW. Instead, it is the colony and its sponsoring Charter Company claiming the planet in the name of the CCW that has superior rights to the planet. Thus, it is the colony and its colonists that are protected. The native people are at the bottom of the CAF's list of priorities for colony worlds. In these cases, the indigenous people are deemed too primitive and peripheral to be recognized and their planet is, in effect, stolen out from under them by a technologically superior interloper. Depending on the leadership and morality of the Charter Company and/or its colonists, the indigenous people may be embraced, nurtured and cultivated by the colonists, assimilated into colonial society without preservation of the people's history or culture, treated as second-class citizens, enslaved or even wiped from the face of the planet.

Should a colony world fall under attack by the TGE, demons, space pirates or other space-faring invaders, the CAF (Consortium Armed Forces) is supposed to provide protection to the planet and its inhabitants. However, as its forces are spread thin across the Thundercloud Galaxy to begin with, and now with many fleets being called back to deal with the demon threats closer to home in the *Corkscrew* and *Anvil Galaxies*, response time in the Thundercloud is usually slow, and CAF resources may be insufficient to deal with the invasion force. Under that scenario, the CAF tries to evacuate and rescue the *CCW colonists*, leaving the indigenous people to fend for themselves. In a worst case scenario (about 10% of the time since the demonic invasion erupted), the CAF is unable to respond for 3D6 days, leaving even the CCW colonists to survive on their own.

Though the CCW is well known for its humanitarian efforts and open-door policy to accept all space-faring civilizations regardless of race, there is something of a double standard when it comes to the Thundercloud Galaxy and what the CCW considers to be "primitive" people. This cold and callous behavior is the antithesis of what the CCW represents, but one must remember that the CCW colonists are caught up in the mindset of New Imperialism and the frenzy of the Scramble. Many of the Consortium settlers believe they are on a mission to tame the wilds of the Thundercloud and bring civilization to the unwashed masses. They try to turn every primitive sentient species they encounter into productive, full members of the CCW. The most ardent Consortium evangelists see themselves as parents guiding and disciplining wayward children for their own good. Take these things into consideration and you can imagine how such a seemingly contradictory attitude can not only endure, but become the accepted norm. It's sad and unacceptable, but it is the current state of affairs in the Thundercloud.

CCW Government Agencies

In 9500 TE, the CCW created the **Consortium Authority**, whose job was (and still is) to oversee the exploration and colonization of the Three Galaxies. The Authority is a kind of umbrella organization which controls the *Ministry of Discovery and Development*, the *Ministry of Interplanetary Affairs*, and the *Office of Colonial Administration*. It also has close ties with the *Ministry of Defense* and the *Grand Admiralty of the CAF*. In fact, one of the

few branches of government that it does not have any influence with is the *TVIA*.

The heads of the ministries are elected by the people every six years. *The Grand Admiral* and the *Director of the Consortium Authority* are hand-picked by the Consortium Prime Minister, and are answerable only to him or her. The Authority Director is also, incidentally, the third most powerful official in the Consortium government (behind the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister).

Even with all of these resources at its disposal, the Authority lacks the manpower to explore and colonize the billions of star systems that make up the Three Galaxies. As a solution, it was granted permission to create and use sanctioned *Charter Companies*. These brought in additional money from corporate sponsors and private shareholders, and let the Consortium Authority greatly extend the scope of its operations.

The Thundercloud Development Company

The first of these Charter Companies was the **Thundercloud Development Company**, funded with the vast personal fortunes of Folvel Tanet and Kestrel Hobbs. Better known simply as “The Company,” it is by far larger than every other CCW Charter Company put together, with colonies on thousands of worlds in the Thundercloud Galaxy. However, since most of the Company’s planets are either very sparsely populated, or inhabited by underdeveloped Associate Member Races, and they are spread far and wide across the galaxy, there are almost no Congressional representatives from the Thundercloud. This means colonists and indigenous people who are exploited and live and suffer in poor to atrocious conditions have nowhere to take their complaints or fight for change other than their local *Company Man*. For its part, the Thundercloud Development Company is in no rush to have its colonial possessions become full CCW members with Congressional representation, because the Company would lose the absolute control it currently enjoys. The day that the Thundercloud Galaxy is completely settled and civilized like much of the Corkscrew Galaxy, is the day the Company becomes a shadow of its former self.

The Company is set up and run as a massive corporation with intergalactic holdings. At the top, the CEO presides over a large group of executives, called the Board of Directors. Beneath them is a confusing array of Divisional Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Senior Leadership Teams, and Regional Managers. At the bottom on the pecking order are the workers, which in this case include colonists, civil engineers, builders, craftsmen, scientists, Independent Defense Force conscripts, other personnel and independent contractors (outsiders who work for the Company but are not actual colonists; e.g. the player characters and other adventurers, mercenaries, small businesses and opportunists).

The current CEO of the Thundercloud Development Company is **Laverra Drennen**, a 103 year old woman from Terra Prime. Her parents were members of the Consortium Diplomatic Corps, and as such, she was used to traveling to many different worlds. Known as a risk-taker, she made a sizeable personal fortune by the time she was 50. She is fluent in six languages, and unknown to most, is a fervent human supremacist who hates and distrusts all alien races. CEO Drennen sees the Thundercloud Development Company as her opportunity to claim uninhabited worlds for humanity and personally turn the rest of a galaxy of

backward, savage beings into proper human allies. For various reasons, moneymaking and political ambition being chief among them, the rest of the Board of Directors sees little problem with how she handles the company, even if it does go against the ideals of the CCW. As long as CEO Drennen gets results and makes them plenty of money, they are content and don’t ask questions. It helps that Drennen is well connected, and that the Admirals of the Thundercloud Task Force support the Scramble because they feel it is the only way to hold the Transgalactic Empire in check.

Since the underdeveloped civilizations of the Thundercloud Galaxy have nowhere to turn, and since the colonists have no real way of influencing how the colonies are run, what goes on in the Thundercloud stays in the Thundercloud. Furthermore, most colonists, company developers and adventurers who go into the galaxy are seldom heard from again, as they have their hands full with building new lives or just surviving on the frontier. Those engaged in smuggling and other illegal operations have their own reasons for staying quiet. Meanwhile, heroes and good-hearted adventurers, as well as opportunists, either spend all their time in the new frontier or have no forum on which to speak out when they leave the Thundercloud. Worst of all, the “civilized” people back home don’t know or care about what’s going on in the Thundercloud Galaxy. And with the eruption of the *Minion War* in the Three Galaxies, the petty problems of the backwoods galaxy are the least of anyone’s concerns.

The only things that could possibly upset the Company’s applecart are the **Galactic Courts** and the **Treaty Violation Inspection Agency**. The Consortium Authority has no power over these two groups, and therefore, neither does the Company. Still, that doesn’t mean they can’t run some kind of interference.

First, most of the Consortium colony worlds in the Thundercloud have a citizen population that is so small they do not warrant the construction of a full-time courthouse. Nor do they warrant the employment of a full-time judge. As a result, the Company has brought back the concept of a *Circuit Judge* who travels from one settlement to another at regular intervals. There is one judge per every sector of CCW-claimed space in the Thundercloud. That’s one official to oversee the courts of every colony within 500 light-years. The Company could appoint more, but that would be a waste of money and resources at the present time. When the judge is in town, any and all cases are heard. When there is no judge, the colonists can either have an offender wait in jail until one shows up, or they can take matters into their own hands. Justice on the frontier, like life itself, can be swift and brutal, and many a criminal has wound up swinging from the end of a rope long before the Circuit Judge arrives. It can be six months to a year between judicial visits, which just encourages settlers to do for themselves. By the time the judge shows up, most legal problems have been taken care of in one way or another, which only reinforces the illusion that everything is fine to the authorities.

As for the **TVIA**, just because they show up in the Thundercloud Galaxy, doesn’t necessarily mean they have an easy time getting around it. Most **TVIA** Inspectors coming from the Corkscrew or Anvil Galaxy arrive at the Consortium capital world of **Eden**, where they are welcomed with open arms by Company representatives and given very nice accommodations while some kind of transportation is arranged for them. Then the stonewalling begins. “Inspector, unfortunately we were not informed about your visit and a ship won’t be available to take you off Eden for



at least six weeks.” “We’re sorry, Inspector, but the colony you wished to visit has suffered an outbreak of a plague and the whole place is quarantined and locked down.” “The ship that was to take you on your tour suffered a massive breakdown and will be laid up in spacedock for the next month.” And so on. Even when an Inspector manages to get aboard a ship (provided by the Company for their use), he is often taken to see planets that are doing very well for themselves; model communities where nothing is going wrong and there are certainly no creative interpretations of the Civilization Compact.

CCW Military Force

The Consortium Armed Forces (CAF) plays an important role in the development of the Thundercloud. A full 20% of the CCW fleet operates within this galaxy. Half of those are dedicated to non-combat, exploratory and mapping missions under the *Consortium Discovery Corps*. The remainder is split up into 48 Battle Groups, with one group assigned to each sector of claimed space. All things being equal, that would work out to an average of 6 starships for every CCW planet. However, Full Member Worlds and the oldest and most developed of Associate and Colony Worlds necessitate a larger degree of protection, and thus a larger number of orbiting ships. This leaves hundreds of the fringe worlds and the least significant colonies out of the loop without any regular protection. Like the Circuit Judges, the lesser colonies are scheduled for regular, drive-by patrols every few months, but that leaves long periods of time when the CAF patrol is light-years away. In case of an emergency, a patrol of ships, or at least one or more of the larger CAF warships, can be called in (most often a single destroyer) to save them from pirates, raiders, slavers, and invading aliens, but it can take hours or sometimes days before help arrives. Furthermore, cunning space pirates and raiders take note of the patrol schedule, have a good idea of how quickly the CAF can respond, and calculate how much time they have to strike and get away to avoid CAF intervention.

In the early days, it was CAF policy to ensure there was at least one garrison of soldiers to police and defend every colony site, but that ended long ago. Now, only colonies and worlds that have the most valuable resources or strategic importance have a permanent complement of CAF soliders. The rest use private armies, mercenaries and other hired guns. At least a third of the colonies don’t have any permanent defenders, bringing in hired guns only when they are needed. The reality is that there were never enough soldiers to go around, and now with the Minion War, resources are stretched thinner than ever.

To protect its colonial holdings, all CCW Charter Companies have the authority to hire their own civilian police force and private army, from ground troops to space fleets. Such Company-owned private armies are known as **Independent Defense Forces (IDFs)**. Their training is provided to them by a representative of their respective Charter Company, and equipment usually consists of laser weapons and light suits of combat armor. Pay for IDFs and experienced mercs and adventurers can be good to very good. Pay for inexperienced “protectors” is low. IDFs are answerable to the Company, not the CAF. It is worth noting that in an emergency, the Consortium Congress can draft IDFs into the regular armed forces, but so far, this has never happened.

IDFs (Independent Defense Forces) have a certain standard to uphold and try to screen for criminals. As a result, IDFs are

usually comprised of retired CAF veterans, ex-military and/or police personnel, professional security companies, and volunteer native people and/or colonists trained to fight in the defense of their world. The job of the IDF is to defend their assigned world or colony from outside threats, keep the citizens safe, uphold Consortium law, and to protect Company property from destruction or harm. This mandate is very easily abused, especially when there are no actual CAF Troopers around to say otherwise. Oftentimes, an IDF army can brutalize the local indigenes with no reprisal, all the while claiming that they are protecting the Company’s interests. Again, with things the way they are in the Thundercloud Galaxy, the degree to which the IDF protects or takes advantage of the native population, and even the colonists, can vary a great deal. It often depends on the strength of leadership and the general alignment of the commanding officer or Company representative. However, well-intentioned leaders and IDF troops of predominantly good alignment may find themselves caught in morally ambiguous situations, or be commanded by their Company representative (i.e. their employer) to engage in activity they disagree with or find immoral and wrong. Failure to comply with orders is likely to result in being fired, having pay docked and being forced out of the IDF, leaving those fired by the Company able to work only as mercenaries with a reputation for being unreliable, rogues, or troublemakers.

For those planets fortunate enough to have a detachment of actual CAF Troopers, things are generally much more civilized. As professional soldiers, rather than a private Company Army or hired goons, the Troopers always try to refrain from intimidating the colonists and native people, and try their best to uphold the spirit of the Civilization Compact. Theft of Consortium property and attacks upon Consortium citizens are seen as acts of war, and CAF retribution is swift. **Note:** Even at their worst, few CAF soldiers or the IDF militia are anywhere as brutal as *Styrke*, the mercenary police force of the United Worlds of Warlock.

Independent Contractors is a broad term that includes everyone from hired workers to mercenaries. “Contractors” are often hired by a Chartered Company to fill in for shortfalls within their own ranks and resources. Defense is one of the areas that sees the hiring of a great many “Independent Contractors.” This means mercenaries and adventurers, though when times are tough and combat troops are slim pickings, colony defenders might be anyone willing and able to carry a gun for a paycheck. Mercenaries and other third party “contractors” are expected to be trained, combat ready troops with their own weapons, armor, gear and vehicles. While they too answer only to the company that hired them, they cannot be drafted into the CAF. Screening of personnel is minimal to non-existent for most private contractors, and many mercenary companies employ rough characters and even criminals. Speaking of which, when plunder is hard to come by or the heat is on, some raiders and space pirates hire themselves out as mercenaries and Independent Contractors. Many Charter Companies have an unspoken policy of hiring elite squads of mercenaries and adventurers to deal with special problems the CAF and IDF might find morally untenable. This is especially true of matters that require special talents, discretion and no trace of who was responsible. The Thundercloud Development Company, among others, always have work for employees who know how to get a job done and keep their mouths shut.

CCW Colonization Process

The **Consortium Discovery Corps (CDC)** has nearly 7,000 *Explorer*-class cruisers operating within the Thundercloud Galaxy. Although that might sound like a lot, it works out to one ship for every six million unexplored star systems. Needless to say, the missions of CDC crews can last for years or even decades at a time, during which they explore new worlds and find and catalogue every habitable planet they come across. If time permits, they might even send a team of scientists down to the surface to collect samples of local plant and animal life, run tests on the atmosphere and soil, and make certain that if a colony is planted there it has a real chance for survival. This doesn't always happen however, and many times, just the planet's general specifics are recorded and entered into the log. The planet may not even get a name. The explorers then submit a report to the Consortium Authority, who gives the Thundercloud Development Company first right of refusal to colonize said planet. The Company reviews the data and, if they decide it's economically or politically worthwhile, they proclaim it open for settlement and colonization.

Colonists can come from all over the Consortium of Civilized Worlds, but the overwhelming majority of them hail from densely populated planets deep within CCW space. In order to leave the planet they currently live on, they must submit an application to the **Office of Colonial Administration**, and undertake a training course to prepare them for the rigors of frontier life on a distant and undeveloped alien world. Once basic training is completed, the colonists' names are added to a waiting list from which any of the Consortium's Charter Companies can draw. The colonists, themselves often don't know where they are going until they are already on their way. However, because of glamorized hype about the new frontier and the excitement of the Scramble, there are millions of people on that waiting list every single year.

All licensed Consortium colonists are first brought to the **Eden System**, where the *Thundercloud Development Company* and the majority of other Charter Companies have their headquarters. Upon arrival, they are greeted by helpful and smiling company representatives who finalize their contracts and encourage them for their new life. The colonists are told what planet they are to settle, what it is like there, and what specific goals, if any, the sponsoring company would like them to achieve. In exchange, they are given a plot of land, all the equipment they need to get them started, and told they will receive regular supply drops, and have the protection of an armed garrison of troops and the CAF fleet to guard their backs. If they agree to sign, the colonists are taken to the specified planet to start their new life under the guidance and support of their sponsoring Charter Company. If they refuse, they can either go back home at their own expense, or try to make a go of things on their own. Fewer than 6% get cold feet and back out.

The **Thundercloud Development Company**, alone, is engaged in settling an average of 86 new planets per year. In order to save the time and cost of terraforming, each one of these worlds has a natural biosphere and environment capable of sustaining human life. However, there is also a chance that there will be primitive *intelligent life* on the planet. Under the reinterpreted Compact, any world whose indigenous intelligent species has a tech level lower than Medieval, and dominates less than 40% of the planet, is suitable for colonization. Such low-tech civilizations are easily subjugated, but all colony sites will have at least one

Company Overseer who tries to establish and maintain friendly relations with the indigenous people. However, the colonists can take any land and resources they want. It is ultimately up to the Company Representative as to how concerned and receptive the colony (and company) is to the needs, rights and traditions of the indigenous population. Sadly, eight out of ten colonies completely disregard the needs of primitive inhabitants and do as they please. If the indigenous people threaten and attack the colony(s), they are "pacified" by any means necessary. This almost always leads to violence and bloodshed, and more often than you might imagine, results in slavlike pacification and even genocide.

Isolation and Deprivation

In the Anvil and Corkscrew Galaxies, where global populations can reach into the billions, Consortium planets are surrounded by an invisible yet all-pervasive information net. Using desktop terminals, wearable computers, and even cybernetic implants, the citizens of the CCW have access to almost anything at any time. News and entertainment are available to them around the clock and without delay. Entire libraries and databases are theirs to peruse. Needless to say, this means that those who come to the Thundercloud Galaxy are literally being unplugged from mainstream society. Many people suddenly find that they have no interpersonal skills whatsoever, having spent most of their lives in a series of online relationships. Isolation, boredom, loneliness, and data-withdrawal are all very common afflictions. Everything they knew their entire lives is gone.

The reality of building a colony is always much different from what they imagined, more dangerous, more frightening and much harder to accomplish. Isolation does strange things to people, and although surrounded by hundreds, even thousands of fellow colonists, the settlers may feel lost and alone. Ninety percent have trouble sleeping and suffer from nightmares, 50% are plagued by mild depression and anxiety, and 12% from severe depression. Sleeplessness, depression and anxiety usually go away or diminish substantially within 6-12 months, but some never recover. Furthermore, isolation tends to make the new colonists irritable, paranoid, frightened, on edge and aggressive. This quickly leads to a strong sense of community ("We need each other") as well as a "them or us" mentality. This is most often exhibited as a reflex reaction to kill everything strange and frightening. Indigenous people often bear the full weight of the colonists' paranoia and violence simply because they are intelligent and alien. A monster or predatory animal is bad enough, but an intelligent alien race whose planet you are colonizing/invading... the imagination just goes wild. Without strong leadership and someone to quiet their fears and calm the situation, reaction to the indigenous people can be fierce and terrible.

A more amusing manifestation of isolation is an almost obsessive and often ridiculous attachment to possessions representing their old life. Robbed of the intangibles of constant communication and civilization, Consortium colonists of the Thundercloud tend to become very attached to their remaining creature comforts and symbols of their old life. As a result, it is not at all unusual for them to show up in an untamed wilderness bearing crystal goblets, antique silverware, or fine bone china. In one instance, a family from Terra Prime brought a grand piano with them, portaging it across four rivers and hauling it over a mountain range. This attitude of "home is where my stuff is" also means that they

tend to dress poorly or strangely for their environment, wearing three piece suits in the jungles, and patent leather shoes in the arctic. It's ridiculous, and any colonist who plans to make his new life a success soon learns to adapt or die. Still, this is yet another facet of New Imperialism and a desire to bend and shape a colony planet to their will. To make it an extension of home. Many colonists believe as long as they continue to surround themselves with the trappings of civilization, they will retain their civility, even in the dark heart of the Thundercloud Galaxy.

Over time, most colonists adapt to their new life and the physicality of exploring and colonizing a new, untamed world. Most come to embrace their new life, accept the changes and uncertainties, and excitement and purpose they never felt before. Likewise, many colonies come to terms with indigenous people and many learn to accept each other and grow together to share the world. Of course, there are other colony worlds without a happy ending. Places where the environment, monsters or other forces plague and destroy the colony. Planets where the indigenous people rise up to chase away or wipe out the invading colonists despite their advanced weapons and technology, or vice versa. And worlds where the colony plays havoc with the indigenous people and/or the environment, resulting in tragedy.

CCW Foreign Affairs

Transgalactic Empire. The Consortium is determined to outpace the Kreeghor in terms of colonization, and claim more worlds for the CCW. This has led them to settle many planets, each with a very few number of people. At the same time, no one in the CCW wants to go to war with the TGE again. It is an accepted fact that should the two superpowers ever undertake another Great War, the resulting conflict could gut the Three Galaxies. Therefore, for all their displays of bravado and military strength, both the CCW and the TGE will do almost anything to avoid an open conflict in the Thundercloud Galaxy. And yet, in the heat of the Scramble, where the stakes and tensions are high, disagreements can escalate quickly. A prime example of this is the Heoda Incident of 9900 TE.

Heoda was a cluster of eight stars packed together inside a massive nebula. Located in the Gaelra Arm near the Annach Gulf, the Cluster had four habitable planets, including the home world of the Kasaro. On each of these worlds, strange alien ruins were found. Heoda also directly touched on the borders of the *CheDive Theocracy*. The scorpion people had been Consortium members for a mere six years, and now they sought to increase their holdings. The TGE, feeling that they had missed a golden opportunity by not claiming the *CheDive Theocracy* for themselves, decided to take Heoda instead. Doing so would let the Empire break into the Gaelra Arm and possibly block off the Consortium's advance. The CCW, which had been settling worlds in a clockwise direction, moving along the top of the Thundercloud, couldn't allow this. The result was a standoff that nearly started a Second Great War.

The TGE sent a flotilla of more than one hundred and twenty-five starships into the Heoda Cluster. Imperial forces quickly occupied many of the alien ruins, establishing strong encampments. The CAF responded in kind with a task force of nearly two hundred vessels, and upon their arrival, politely asked the TGE to leave. The result was a standoff. The Empire had occupied the ruins first, which made the Cluster theirs under the *Tanet Agree-*

ment. However, the *CheDive* claimed Heoda as part of their ancestral lands. Neither side would budge. The crisis boiled for two months until the Fourth Emperor finally ordered the TGE Imperial Forces to withdraw. War had been averted for the time being, but the Heoda Incident only strengthened the CCW's notion that the Transgalactic Empire is out to conquer everything they see, whereas the people of the Consortium are morally superior.

Kingdom of Desslyth. Over the past few centuries, this place has become one of the most exotic ports of call that Consortium travelers can get away to. It offers far more in terms of services than many of the Utopia planets, and is reputed to be no more dangerous than the streets of Center. In the Corkscrew Galaxy, Desslyth is regarded as an alien yet alluring place to visit, like Zanzibar mixed with the opium dens of Imperial China. Many trashy romance novels are set in Desslyth, almost all of which involve beautiful female travelers who really should know better than to fall in love with chiseled, long-haired, space pirates or mercenary soldiers. Almost all of the Consortium patrons who come here know all about the *ospina drug trade*, but simply take it in stride (assuming they didn't come for drugs in the first place).

This view is not shared by all, however. Several religious fundamentalist groups, who seem to pop up in the Anvil Galaxy more than anywhere else, have started forming temperance movements to stop the spread of *ospina*. A few of these groups have powerful political connections, and are calling for the CAF to declare "a war on drugs" and wipe out this whole "nest of vipers." Although faith-based initiatives usually don't get too far in the Consortium Congress, this one just might, especially since the Deputy Prime Minister, *Jared Carden*, recently had the *Forge Dream* (see **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 5: Anvil Galaxy™**, page 19, for details).

The Prides of Shing. The CCW has heard the stories of how this race of talking lions defeated the Gulgans in a brief war, but like most everyone else, has never made any kind of official contact with them. *The Pride Worlds* lie somewhere out on the far eastern side of the Gaelra Arm of the galaxy, but exactly how many worlds there are, and the full extent of the Shing territorial "claims," are unknown. Certain members of the Company are intrigued by the tales that the Shing have no centralized government, but then wonder how they will make peaceful contact with them.

The Republikan Enclaves. The Gulgans were fine when they were confined to the Anvil Galaxy and weren't engaged in any kind of aggressive expansion. They were almost funny in a way, the deflated balloon of tri-galactic politics. The Consortium still feels that way about the Republik, but has taken a different attitude towards the Enclaves, which are starting to look like a separate nation, not just a colony. Since the Gulgans did not sign the *Lanator Accords*, there is nothing that the CCW can legally do to stop the Golgan Destroyer, the *Argosy*, from using orbital nuclear weapons on any world not affiliated with the Consortium. This makes the Enclaves, for all intents and purposes, *a rogue state*, and the CAF hates rogue states. In fact, they hate them so much that several Admirals are now drawing up plans for a preemptive decapitation strike against the Republik.

The Denlech Settlers. Even though the Consortium supports the Free World Council in its battle to achieve independence from the Kreeghor, it doesn't feel the same about the Denlech. Hypocrisy? You bet. It's all well and good for people to fight for their inherent rights, just so long as they are fighting the enemies

of the CCW. The average Consortium citizen, if he is even aware of the situation on Denlar, sees the Denlech as a bunch of filthy rotters who should be crushed underfoot for their ingratitude. Upstarts, that's all they are. Not like those brave patriots on Good Hope, Forge bless them. The biggest problem in this whole mess is that the CAF cannot tell the commandos apart from the everyday Denlech Settlers. A few unscrupulous CAF commanders have suggested building internment camps to house those suspected of giving aid to the rebels.

Trensik Mercenaries. The Trensik are not to be trusted. Even though they proclaim they have no political allegiance and never betray an employer, neither the CCW nor the CAF are buying it. On the other hand, the Trensik cannot be easily dismissed because there are just so damned many of them. Ideally, what the CCW would like to do is to find *Trennis* so they can provide the Trensik with everything they might ever need. Then they wouldn't have to fight for their meals anymore, and the TGE would be out several billion useful allies. If the Trensik cannot be assimilated into the Consortium, then it is the opinion of the CAF that they must be neutralized in some way.

United Worlds of Warlock. The CCW is unaware that the UWW has started to colonize an area of the galaxy it calls the **Thundercloud Possessions**. Hardly surprising, since most of the UWW don't know about it either.

The Exiles. Individually, the Exiles are merely a nuisance from a military point of view, but they're a threat to the constant flood of CCW colonists heading into the Thundercloud. The instability they can cause with their schemes makes them an unpredictable element in a galaxy that really doesn't need any more of those.

Motherhome-in-Exile. One of the most divisive issues in Consortium society today is that of Wulfen reunification. For over five centuries now, half of the Wulfen people have lived behind the so-called "Kreeghor Curtain," while the remainder have been founding members of the CCW. Each side would like to bring the other into its respective fold without somehow touching off another Great War. In the minds of some Republican Wulfen, discovering Motherhome-in-Exile just might be the key to success.

The four Dark Tribes allied themselves to the Kreeghor only as a means to overthrow and kill the Wulfen Royal Family. These events soon led to the outbreak of the First Great War, and despite two hundred years of fighting and billions of lives lost, they were unable to capture and secure Motherhome. The members of the Royal Family were indeed removed from power, but by the hands of the Republicans. The Emperor and his kin were sent into exile on the planet of Agetia, where they lived comfortably and eventually all died of old age. The Dark Tribes got what they wanted in the end, but were denied the joy of killing the royals themselves.

Many Wulfen in high positions would like to find Motherhome-in-Exile so that they can capture Greyaxe's descendants (who are also the last living members of the ancient Royal Family) and present them to the Dark Tribes as a peace offering. It is hoped that by allowing the Dark Tribes to kill the captives, that the centuries-old blood oaths will finally be appeased. Then serious moves can be made towards reunification and eventual Wulfen self-rule. The human and Noro delegations within the Consortium know nothing of this plan.

Notable CCW Colony Worlds in the Thundercloud Galaxy

Eden Three, also known as Bountiful Harvest. This planet, orbiting a red dwarf star near the tip of the Gaelra Arm, was the first to be settled by the Thundercloud Development Company. It is a near perfect copy of *Terra Prime*, with an oxygen atmosphere, warm seas, and steady, predictable weather. At some point in the planet's distant past, it was covered in active volcanoes. Later on, shallow seas lay over all four of its continents. These factors today mean that Eden Three has some of the richest arable soil in the galaxy.

The headquarters for the Thundercloud Development Company is located in the heart of the capital city, **Tanet**. A massive spaceport has been constructed on an island offshore from the capital. It is here Consortium colonists first arrive in the Thundercloud, are given their assignments, and then flung off into the wilderness, after a layover that may take up to 3D6 days per family or individual.

Teaca Majoris. This is the home of the Kujamoya, a land of cool, rainy forests and vast grasslands. It also boasts breathtaking mountain ranges and gorges, and many geologists believe this world had a very active period not too many millions of years ago. There are several small Consortium colonies on Teaca's largest landmass, but the two largest are *Kettlewell* (population 72,000) and *Bertram* (population 95,000). One is on the west coast, the other on the east, and between them lies 3,500 miles (5,600 km) of wilderness. The Company decided that it would be in everyone's best interest to construct a trans-continental railroad to connect these two sites. Work began on the "Kettle-Bert line" over twenty years ago, initially making great progress. However, problems set in. Although the continent had been entirely mapped by an orbiting satellite, no one had gone out and done any actual geologic surveys before construction began. Plagued by disease, mudslides, shortages of manpower, and at least one embezzlement scandal, the railroad has, so far, cost the lives of over 12,000 (mostly native) workers. It is commonly said that there are ten dead *Kujamoya* for every mile of mag-lev track.

Currently, the western arm has come to a dead stop as workers try to build a bridge over Shafer Falls; a mile wide (1.6 km), 360 foot (109 m) tall curtain of fresh water flowing out of the interior. Although the superstructure is being made of modern materials, the Kujamoya employ bamboo-like scaffolds from which to work, and accidents are many. The total length of the bridge, when finished, will be one and one-quarter miles (2 km), but for now, it simply sticks out over the raging water, incomplete.

The eastern portion of the railroad is tunneling its way under the *Indigo Mountain Range* with the expectation that someday, the two halves will meet somewhere in the middle. At least thirty-two different spurs (all in various states of progress) jut off the main line toward other colony sites or to proposed colony sites.

The Ilsa-Orlando Colonies. This binary star system is located in the southeastern part of the Gaelra Arm, across the Hollan Gulf from the Catyr Commonwealth, about halfway between the Bushi Federation and the Republican Enclaves. It consists of Ilsa, a blue sub-giant, and Orlando, an orange dwarf. The stars are less than one light-year apart, and there is one settled world in each solar system.

Ilsa-4 is a large planet with Terra-Prime-like gravity and a temperate climate. As an odd celestial feature, it is orbitally locked

behind Ilsa-3, a gas giant. Cut off from the sun, days on Ilsa-4 are like twilight and the nights are pitch black. The planet also has a series of rings. Ilsa-4's atmosphere, while breathable, is dense – “double thick” as many refer to it. The Consortium colony was built high up on a mountain plateau where the air pressure is relatively normal. Below, the atmosphere of the planet sinks into the valleys and swirls around like an unending fog. The colony contains anti-aircraft defenses, barracks, a small hospital, organic recyclers, and a major repair facility that can service all kinds of vehicles and starships up to and including frigate size. Sixteen thousand people call this colony home, and are protected by a

militia force of 2,000 IDF. Attacks from space pirates still remain all too commonplace, since the repair station and the spare parts stored therein are simply too tempting a target to pass up.

Orlando-2 is a high gravity (twice Earth norm), temperate world with a solitary continent. The air here is fine and breathable, but for four months out of the local year, the upper atmosphere turns into a giant electrical storm! This cuts the planet off from the rest of the galaxy, since the storms block any and all radio transmissions, and pose a grave danger to transatmospheric ships. Eight thousand people live here. The local IDF numbers just over 1,600 troops.

The Black Crusade

Part 2: The Methodeans

Optional Source Material for Rifts®

By Andrew Lander

Author's Note: Some of the races, O.C.C.s, equipment and other material referenced in this article are found in **The Rifter® #52**, under the article, *The Crusaders and The Black Crusade*.

The Methodeans are a secretive race of humanoids that have been recently encountered throughout the Megaverse. Although it is rare to see a Methodean in a busy inter-dimensional trade market, such as Center or Splynn, they have been encountered on a number of worlds for a variety of reasons. Most often, they are operating as merchants or looking for some profitable opportunity. In many dimensions the Methodean Trade Syndicate, or MTS, has become synonymous with the humanoids.

Methodeans are quickly earning a reputation as master magicians who utilize a wide variety of magic and psionics. Methodean towns and bases are typically centered around a stone pyramid. Individuals have exhibited the powers of Ley Line Walkers, Techno-Wizards or Shifters. Canny observers will also note the subtle use of magic tattoos and psionics. However, it is also well known that the Methodeans make liberal use of technology to supplement their magical prowess. MTS seems to have an insatiable appetite for high-end electronics, new types of weapons, or other exotic gadgets and will pay good money for new products.

The Methodeans always cloak themselves in thick robes, hoods, face masks, or environmental body armor (see Methodean Dark Robes below). They never take off their coverings except, it's presumed, when inside their private, secured quarters. The Methodeans rarely talk about their past, where they come from, what their goals are, etc. Diligently asking locals who regularly trade with them and sifting through the gossip will yield the following with a successful Streetwise roll:

- The Methodeans avoid worlds inhabited by the Splugorth.
- They are all human looking, but hide their identity because their enemies are searching for them.
- They were former slaves of the Splugorth and learned all their magic from these inhuman monsters. That's why they avoid worlds inhabited by the Splugorth.

- It's not obvious, but the Methodeans are also masters of Tattoo Magic.

The Methodeans neither deny nor confirm such rumors. They are, however, extremely secretive and never allow outsiders to learn anything about their past, where they come from, or what their motivations are.

Methodean Trading Syndicate (MTS)

The Methodean Trading Syndicate, or MTS, is an inter-dimensional trading organization operated by the enigmatic Methodeans. MTS operates in dozens of dimensions, but specializes in isolated civilizations that have few links to other worlds. This enables MTS to easily maintain a monopoly on trans-dimensional trade in these dimensions, thus reaping huge profits.

Organization Characteristics

(See *Rifts® Adventure Guide*, page 123.)

Size and Orientation: Trans-dimensional Syndicate.

Total Points: 767

Sponsorship: Secret.

A. Outfits: Unlimited (50).

B. Equipment: Electronic Supplies and Good Gear (10), Medical Clinic (20), Magic Technologies (40).

C. Vehicles: Unlimited Vehicles (60).

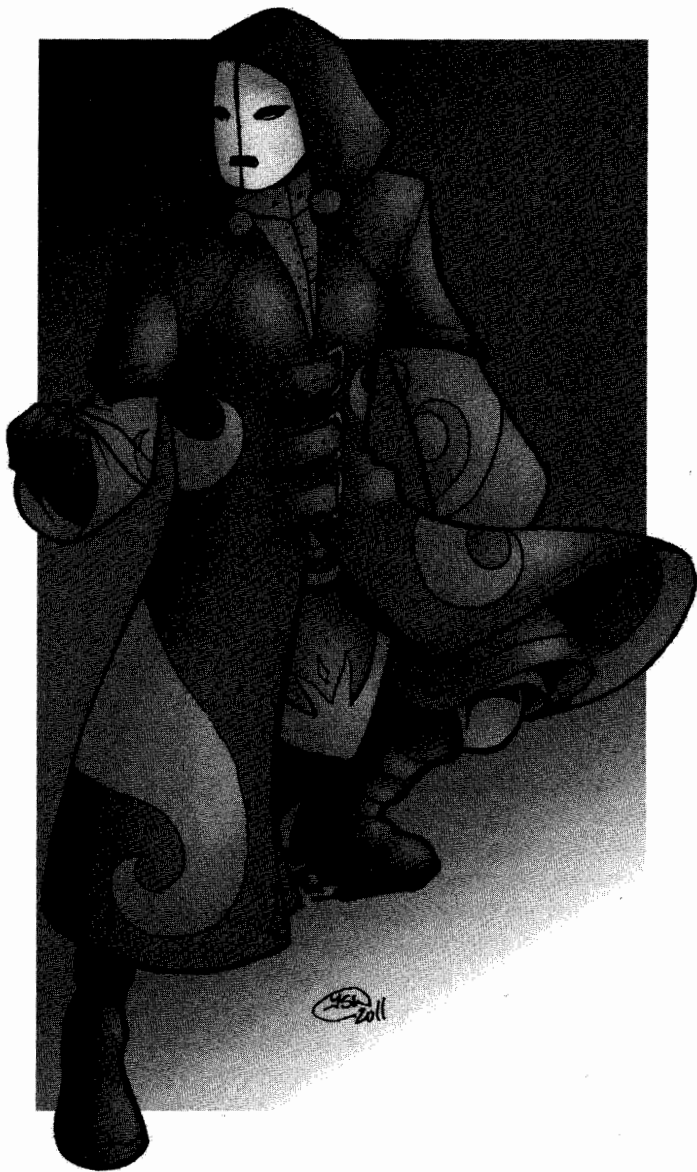
D. Weapons: Superior Tech & Magic Weapons (45).

E. Power Armor & Bots: Basic Power Armor (15).

F. Communications: Superior Communications (50).

G. Internal Security: Impregnable (60).

H. Headquarters: Sprawling Estates (75).



- I. Intelligence:** Military Scouts (5), Psychics and Sorcerers (20), Supernatural (20), Spy Network (40).
- J. Monthly Budget:** Unlimited (100).
- K. General Alignment:** Aberrant and Miscreant (2).
- L. Criminal Activity:** Assassins (10), Psychic or Wizard Enforcers (12), Smuggler Teams (15), Soldiers of Fortune (8), Surveillance Experts (10), Techno-Wizards (10).
- M. Reputation:** Known (10).
- N. Salary:** Outrageous (40).
- O. Special:** Friendship: Merchants (10), Government Backing (30).
- P. Disadvantages:** None (0).

Methodean Shifters and Stone Masters started MTS over 60 years ago. They sought to create an organization that could utilize their extensive magic and knowledge of dimensions for profit, and to further their other mysterious goals. Typically, when a Shifter discovers a new dimension it's evaluated to see if any commercial potential exists. The ideal dimension has no other trans-dimensional merchants present, such as the Naruni or Splugorth. MTS looks for raw materials the dimension is lacking as well as finished goods they could benefit from. A team then Rifts to the promising world to negotiate trade agreements with local

merchants. While MTS does have extensive military power, it seeks to expand its influence peacefully. Doing so requires fewer resources, both when setting up shop and over time. After agreements are set, MTS purchases land on a local nexus and constructs a compound containing a magic pyramid with a Techno-Wizard portal, warehouses, and other outbuildings. They then hire locals to supplement their work force. As many as two-thirds of an MTS compound's population may be natives. Positions available for locals include merchant and government liaison, store clerks, warehouse labor, janitors, clerks, and other low level jobs. Few locals are given a position of authority by the paranoid Methodeans, and compound security rarely has non-Methodeans on the payroll. However, when away from the MTS compound, the Methodeans regularly hire local bodyguards, mercenaries and goons for extra security.

MTS makes use of both advanced technology and magic. However, the Methodeans' skill with Techno-Wizardry, Stone Magic, and traditional spell magic is pervasive. MTS agents are always well outfitted with the best technological and magical weapons, armor, and equipment. The average Methodean agent has advanced armor (60-135 M.D.C.) with 1-4 Techno-Wizard enhancements, energy weapons equal to the best Kittani or Naruni guns, advanced electronics, and a smattering of other magic items. Vehicles can include anything, with the exotic and military grade transports being common. The one area of technology MTS does lack is advanced power armor and robots. Although they have enough funds to purchase such tools, the leaders rightly deduced that they are unnecessary, given the magic prowess of the average MTS agent.

MTS possesses an extremely advanced network of inter-dimensional portals and communications systems. They accomplish this by combining stone pyramids with Techno-Wizardry. Every compound's pyramid has one or more Techno-Wizard portals (see the Methodean Crystal Arch below) based on the spell *Re-Open Gateway*. These Crystal Arches cost much less P.P.E. to activate than traditional teleportation or Rifts created at a pyramid. The Crystal Arches also aid in cross-dimensional communications.

MTS is beyond paranoid when it comes to security. Every compound is surrounded by a wall (typically 10 to 30 feet/3-9 m tall) and guarded around the clock. The pyramids themselves are off limits to non-Methodeans and guarded by mysterious, and heavily armed, Methodean guards (no local goons here). Electronic and magical surveillance and traps protect every square foot of the compound. Even MTS merchants and traders away from the compound have extensive security. In addition, the Methodeans secretly spy on all the locals who work for them, not to mention any potential rivals or enemies. Locals are screened with technology, magic, and psionics before being hired and are paid enormous bonuses for revealing security leaks, such as someone attempting to bribe them or another employee who gives away secrets.

When MTS moves into a new area they always build a sizable spy network augmented with psychic, magical, and supernatural agents. They also have access to experienced military scouts to explore local militias and police. In addition, they worm their way into the criminal underground, offering the services of their expert assassins, supernatural soldiers and enforcers, and extend their trading activities into the black market. One of their most lucrative operations is smuggling illegal goods to and from a di-

mension. Thus, their influence on any given world usually far exceeds what one would expect for the number of Methodeans present. Often, they can start or stop wars, or make trade deals and alliances with a quiet murder, bribe, or blackmail in the right place and time.

MTS cost the Methodeans an enormous amount of resources to start (building pyramids and Crystal Arches is no small feat), but has paid off more than handsomely. Even with the cost of aggressive expansion, MTS is generating *hundreds of billions* of credits in pure profit every year. This is after the huge salaries and bonuses paid to employees, both local and Methodean.

Secrets Revealed

The Methodeans are none other than the True Atlantean Clan Aerihsman. The clan elders conceived of MTS as a way not only to make money, but also to expand their inter-dimensional influence and provide resources and intelligence to use against their enemies. For example: MTS spy networks are constantly on the lookout for other True Atlanteans. When found, they're thoroughly scouted out and then a hit team is sent in to kill them (Sunaj Assassins, Slayers, magic users, and psionics – often disguised as locals or inter-dimensional raiders). MTS also seems to have an unlimited budget to hire local muscle and assassins to harass, rob, beat up, and kill any True Atlanteans found. Often such thugs are paid through third party criminal partners and are used to “soften up” the True Atlanteans before the hit team moves in. Also, when (not if!) Clan Aerihsman's alliance with the Splugorth turns sour, MTS will provide them with alien technology, cash, mercenaries, bases, and other resources outside the Splugorth's sphere of influence or knowledge. Thus, providing a major strategic advantage against the wily Splugorth.

The Aerihsman created the Methodean ruse on purpose and even spread the rumors about them being former Splugorth slaves to deceive others as to their true intentions, and explain their mastery of multiple forms of magic. They also intentionally avoid worlds with a Splugorth presence or large numbers of True Atlanteans so they can keep MTS a secret as long as possible.

Another side benefit of the organization is that young and inexperienced Aerihsman can get some seasoning by working for MTS for several years. Many clan elders encourage young Shifters, Sunaj Assassins, and others to join MTS so that they gain more practice, skill, and inter-dimensional experience before being reassigned to more dangerous and important tasks. Outside the organization, the average Clan Aerihsman member knows MTS as an inter-dimensional trade guild operated by clan elders, but few have actually heard it called the Methodean Trade Syndicate (although, if they hear the name many will not be surprised, since the Methodean deception is often used in other Aerihsman operations). However, only the elders and MTS leaders know its true size and scope. Keeping details on a “need to know” basis has paid off. Several Splugorth, through a few double agents and well-placed moles, have heard of MTS, but dismiss it as small and of marginal influence.

* * *

The following are some of the more notable dimensions the Methodeans have established a presence in. They follow the di-

mension description guidelines from **Rifts® Dimension Book Seven: Megaverse® Builder**.

G'due D'gud

A subterranean dimension where the inhabitants all live underground – and the “ground” surrounding them is composed of hundreds of different types of crystals and gems.

Dimensional Characteristics

1. Type of Dimension: Infinite. As far as the Methodeans can tell, the dimension has no limits.

2. Primary Dimensional Medium: Crystals. Ninety percent of the earth surrounding the livable space is composed of common, precious, and semi-precious gemstones. All types of crystals and gems found on Earth, and several dozen new types, are common as dirt.

3. Secondary Dimensional Medium: Air. Breathable by humans (though stale) contained in chambers, crevices, and tunnels. The smallest chambers can barely be wriggled through, the largest is about 20 miles (32 km) across. Fresh and mineral tainted water runs through some chambers in streams, rivers, and lakes.

4. Density of Dimensional Fabric: Permeable. No bonuses or penalties to enter or exit.

5. Magic Level: Intermediate magic energy. Ley lines and nexuses are present but not visible. They only offer extra P.P.E. during periods when magic surges. In this dimension, that's primarily after an earthquake.

6. Dimensional Energy Matrix: Neutral. No outside technology will function in the dimension, not even that built in a dimension with a universal energy matrix. The current level of technology developed by all inhabitants encountered by Methodeans so far is Iron Age.

7. Flow of Time: Slower. For every day that passes in G'due D'gud, two pass on Rifts Earth.

8. Dimensional Quirks: Earth elemental affinity. Traveling to or from the elemental plane of earth or similar dimensions is +20%, as well as summoning earth elementals. Traveling to or from the elemental plane of fire or summoning a fire elemental is -10%. The P.P.E. cost of all earth elemental magic (not conventional or Stone Magic that involves earth) is halved.

Dozens of underground civilizations thrive in this subterranean dimension. A half dozen intelligent races war, scheme and plot against each other in a chaotic struggle to acquire more living space. All are composed of mineral life and organic matter is unheard of here. Humanoid visitors have to bring their own food, for none can be foraged in these hard, underground chambers.

The Methodeans have allied themselves with one of the strongest races, the Zuthxiou. Zuthxiou appear to have smooth, black obsidian bodies that are hard to the touch, but bend and flow like ink. Like most creatures in this dimension, they are tough S.D.C. beings (100-400 S.D.C. each). However, their true strength compared to their rivals comes from their intelligence. The Zuthxiou are the most powerful wizards of G'due D'gud as well as very active merchants. The Zuthxiou are organized into merchant and wizard houses, called *Kags*, that vie amongst themselves for power and position, while occasionally warring with their neighbors.

The Methodean trading compound is located in one of the largest Zuthxiou cities, Q'irrada. The compound has heavy security, including two entire military companies protecting it, due to the frequent conflicts surrounding them. Although the Methodeans' technological gadgets don't work, and the Zuthxiou's wizardry nearly equals their own, the Methodeans have several advantages against the locals. Techno-Wizardry, Stone Magic, and Tattoo Magic are unheard of on G'due D'gud, giving the Methodeans mysterious abilities the locals fear and respect. But most importantly, their high-tech body armor retains its M.D.C. toughness. Aggressive Zuthxiou and other locals have learned to respect heavily armored Methodeans. The Methodeans, always thinking ahead, refrain from trading M.D.C. body armor or teaching their "exotic" magical arts to the locals so they can maintain their advantage.

This dimension has proven a treasure trove for the Methodeans. They are able to trade wood, plants, small animals, and the food necessary to keep such things alive for (literally) tons of semi-precious and precious stones. (Such organic minutiae has become a mark of status among the Zuthxiou.) Not only can the Methodeans sell the gems in other dimensions at a huge profit, but they utilize the stones themselves, powering their Techno-Wizardry and Stone Magic. An example is the tons of blue tourmaline crystal exported every month for the construction of Crystal Arches and other Techno-Wizard devices (see below). Note, because of the dimension's moderate magic level, no naturally magic gems (such as *xanthine*) are present. The trading compound at Q'irrada receives so much dimensional traffic that the Methodeans recently installed two P.P.E. Vats (see Methodean equipment below) in the pyramid to supplement its meager P.P.E. reserve.

Zuthxiou

Zuthxiou are one of several races encountered on G'due D'gud. They appear as hairless humanoids with human-like facial features, two arms, and two legs. Their bodies, however, are shiny jet black and as smooth as silk, but hard like stone. Other intelligent species on G'due D'gud are stronger, larger, and tougher than the Zuthxiou. However, the Zuthxiou have rose to prominence by their intelligence and cunning.

Zuthxiou society is based around one's *Kag*. A *Kag* can be thought of as a clan, guild or even an extended family. *Kags* represent various occupations that Zuthxiou specialize in, with wizardry and merchant *Kags* being the most common. *Kags* can number as few as a couple dozen members, or as many as several thousand. Zuthxiou join a *Kag* based on merit, not bloodline, after reaching adulthood. Once part of a *Kag*, all ties with parents and other family are severed.

Zuthxiou culture is highly competitive and chaotic. Only a loose alliance of the most powerful *Kags* keeps any semblance of order. Violence, both subtle and gross, sometimes echoes through dark cities of the Zuthxiou as individuals and *Kags* vie for power. However, when threatened by outsiders, the Zuthxiou have an unspoken agreement to help each other. Not helping a fellow Zuthxiou fend off an outsider is both a mark of shame and punishable by those currently in power.

Alignment: Any, but most are selfish and evil.

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



Average Size: Five feet (1.5 m) plus 4D6 inches (10-61 cm) tall.

Weight: 180 to 320 pounds (81 to 144 kg).

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

S.D.C.: 1D4x100, plus those gained from O.C.C.s and physical skills. Zuthxiou are not supernatural creatures and do not transform into M.D.C. beings in dimensions with high levels of P.P.E.

Natural Armor Rating: A.R. 12, a roll to hit of 12 or less causes no damage.

Horror Factor: 10 when first encountered by dimensional travelers due to their strange appearance. None otherwise.

P.P.E.: 4D6 base. A Zuthxiou magic user adds 4D6 P.P.E. to his base in addition to that provided by his O.C.C.

Disposition: Cunning, back-stabbing, and selfish. Zuthxiou also consider themselves refined and cultured. Most can lie, cheat, wage war, plot and scheme with a smile on their face.

Average Life Span: 6D6+200 years. Physical maturity is attained by age 30. Females lay 1D4 obsidian-like eggs as often as once a year and can procreate until around age 150.

Natural Abilities: Basically same as a human except has Night-vision 200 feet (61 m; can see in total darkness) and good overall vision and hearing.

Skills of Note: Speak Zuthxiou at 98% and most learn 1D4 other languages common to G'due D'gud. Those that associate with the Methodeans have learned Dragonese at a basic level. Otherwise they use magic to facilitate communication.

Available O.C.C.s: Zuthxiou can select any O.C.C. that a human can select, excluding those requiring augmentation such as 'Borgs, Juicers, and Crazies. Wizards (Ley Line Walkers without the ley line powers), Mystics, Shifters, and Warlocks (especially Earth) are common, with nearly a quarter of the population being able to use magic.

Experience Level: 1D4+4 or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Intense competition ensures Zuthxiou that survive the

chaos are veterans of battle, politics, and mercantile pursuits. Players should start at first level, representing a young, untried Zuthxiou.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand Combat skill.

Damage: As per P.S. or weapon.

Bonuses: No racial bonuses beyond any high attributes.

Vulnerabilities: None, other than being disoriented the first time exposed to full daylight (-1 to strike, parry, and dodge for the first hour).

Psionics: Standard. There are a few Kags dedicated to psionics.

Magic: By O.C.C. only. Many Zuthxiou learn magic.

Standard Equipment: As per chosen O.C.C., although Zuthxiou that have never left G'due D'gud will only have access to medieval weapons and equipment.

Money: As per chosen O.C.C.

Bionics & Cybernetics: Not available.

Habitat: Zuthxiou eat a variety of crystals and gems, breathe air like humans, and require a small amount of water every day. Other than finding sufficient crystals for food, they can survive in any environment that humans can. After encountering the Methodeans, the Zuthxiou have started to experiment with dimensional travel and a few have managed to travel to other dimensions.

Slave Market Value: Potentially, 1D6x10,000 credits. Even though slavery is common on G'due D'gud, the Methodeans have refrained from exporting captured Zuthxiou to other dimensions so they can keep G'due D'gud a secret.

Alliances and Allies: Zuthxiou will trade and even ally with others in order to gain position, profit, or advantage. Most such alliances, however, are temporary. The Methodeans have formal deals with the most powerful Kags of Q'irrada and work hard to placate their allies in the shifting power struggles of the city. The Zuthxiou, in turn, stay loyal to the Methodeans in the hopes of being shown dimensional spanning magic and high technology. However, tensions are building as the Methodeans resist the Zuthxiou's requests for magic and technology.

Rivals and Enemies: Besides rival Kags, Zuthxiou commonly war with the Shuhh'Ra and Gruvpp, two other intelligent mineral races of G'due D'gud. The Dex'vic, a race capable of traveling through the crystal-earth as if it were water, also regularly try to raid the Zuthxiou (and everyone else).

The Biomech Union

A seemingly normal dimension with a peaceful, space-faring civilization composed completely of biomechanical creatures.

Dimensional Characteristics

- 1. Type of Dimension:** Infinite.
- 2. Primary Dimensional Medium:** Space/vacuum.
- 3. Secondary Dimensional Medium:** Galaxies with billions of solar systems. Much like Rifts Earth or the Three Galaxies.
- 4. Density of Dimensional Fabric:** Strong. -20% to dimensionally teleport or Rift to except at the *central nexus*, the planet Orgunik. Orgunik is considered to have a permeable dimensional fabric (no penalties or bonuses).
- 5. Magic Level:** Low magic energy. Ley lines and nexuses are invisible and of insignificant power. The *central nexus*, Orgunik, has intermediate magic energy. Although, even it has less than

30 strong ley lines and half a dozen nexuses spread across its surface.

6. Dimensional Energy Matrix: Positive. Only technology developed with a universal or positive energy flow will work. Technology from dimensions with a negative flow, such as Rifts Earth or the Three Galaxies, does not function. The current level of technology developed by the Biomech Union is roughly equal to the Three Galaxies.

7. Flow of Time: Normal. For every day that passes in the Biomech Union, one day passes on Rifts Earth.

8. Dimensional Quirks: None.

The Union, or Biomech Union as its known to organic visitors, is a space-faring civilization not unlike the Consortium of Civilized Worlds in the Three Galaxies. It seeks peaceful coexistence with all intelligent species. Its unique difference is that all 37 species comprising it are non-organic, but biomechanical. In fact, with one exception, the whole dimension appears to be void of organic life, but filled with its biomechanical equivalent. Such creatures have silicon chips for brains and hydraulic fluid for blood. For examples of biomechanical animals, see **Rifts® Dimension Book Seven: Megaverse® Builder**, page 50 (Avian Biomech) and page 55 (Saurian Biomech). All biomech creatures from this dimension, including the 37 biomech humanoids of the Union, are minor Mega-Damage beings with Robotic Strength. Even though they possess P.P.E., none have magical aptitude or psionic potential. Indeed, due to the alien nature of their minds they save vs psionics as if they were Minor Psychics (12 or higher



to save). Also note, even though they originate in a dimension with a positive energy matrix, their pseudo-living nature enables them to survive without problems in dimensions with a negative energy matrix.

As far as the Union knew, the whole universe was filled with biomechanical creatures, until they discovered the planet Or-gunik. The surface of the planet is covered in rough, blue-green, Mega-Damage, translucent crystal plates, which vary from a few feet across to nearly a mile (1 m to 1.6 km) in diameter and are between three and five feet (1-1.5 m) thick. The plates, however, cover a planet-wide ocean composed of a thick slurry containing microscopic organisms. The organic ocean covers the entire planet and varies from one to three miles (1.6-4.8 km) deep. Scans show that below the ocean is the featureless rock of the planet itself.

The Union established a science outpost on the planet (which does have a breathable, earthlike atmosphere) and soon discovered that the plates on the surface are actually formed when the slurry contacts air. The microorganisms die and the slurry hardens into the plate crystal. Tectonic forces then crack, and eventually displace the plates until an uneven jumble results.

Eventually, the Methodeans discovered the planet and encountered the scientists. After evaluating the mercantile potential, they struck a deal with the Union and built an outpost. Methodean Stone Masters discovered they could shape the crystal plates like rock and quickly constructed a magic pyramid on the planet's most powerful nexus. After several decades of operation, the Methodeans have three pyramids with outposts to study the organic slurry and trade with the Biomech Union.

The Methodeans trade magic items, alien technology and organic plants and creatures to the Union in exchange for biomech plants and animals. Most biomech animals sold in Center or Sp-lynn actually originated with the Methodeans (no doubt sold and resold through intermediaries to keep their origin secret). The Methodeans also discovered several uses for the organic slurry. By adding dyes and then pouring it into a mold, they can easily create M.D.C. stained glass windows, cups, pitchers, etc. It is also quite nutritious, containing a healthy mix of carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, and minerals. Its awful taste leaves something to be desired, though. They also discovered how to combine the slurry with cytoplasmic blobs to create the P.P.E. Vat. However, they keep this discovery for themselves.

The ChuChwa Conglomerate

A dimension overrun with its sole intelligent species, the ChuChwa. Extreme overpopulation and resource depletion threaten to destroy the ChuChwa civilization from within.

Dimensional Characteristics

1. Type of Dimension: Pocket dimension. Its exact size is unknown, but estimated to be at least 4 million miles (6.4 million km) in diameter.

2. Primary Dimensional Medium: Air, breathable to humans. As far as the Methodeans can tell, the sky stretches for millions of miles in every direction.

3. Secondary Dimensional Medium: Continent size land mass, flat like a pancake, floating through the air.

4. Density of Dimensional Fabric: Strong. -10% to dimensionally teleport or Rift to except as noted below under dimensional quirks.

5. Magic Level: Intermediate magic energy. Ley lines and nexuses are present but not visible. They only offer extra P.P.E. during periods when magic surges.

6. Dimensional Energy Matrix: Negative. Only technology developed with a universal or negative energy flow will work. Technology from dimensions with a negative flow, such as Rifts Earth or the Three Galaxies, functions perfectly. The current level of technology developed by the ChuChwa is roughly equal to late twentieth century Earth.

7. Flow of Time: Normal. For every day that passes in the ChuChwa Conglomerate, one day passes on Rifts Earth.

8. Dimensional Quirks: Weakly linked. The ChuChwa dimension has weak dimensional fabric (+20% to dimensionally



teleport or Rift to or from) to one other known dimension. The Methodeans named it ChuChwa Alpha, and it is filled with a highly energetic (and deadly) plasma containing high amounts of P.P.E. It has no inhabitants (or native life of any kind) and an impenetrable dimensional fabric except when Rifting to or from ChuChwa. The Methodeans speculate that other dimensions share a link with ChuChwa, but explorations have only found this one.

ChuChwa are a race of thin, furry, seven foot (2.1 m) tall humanoids that reproduce at an alarming rate. Even with modern birth control, their continent has a population four times what it should be able to support. The ChuChwa are also running out of natural resources, such as fresh water, oil, and coal. The continent is run by a tyrannical military regime that is slowly losing control. Laws are brutal, with most criminal offenses resulting in a death penalty. Mass riots are common and people regularly starve in the streets of sprawling, polluted megalopolises.

Several Aerihsman Stone Masters and Shifters residing on ChuChwa discovered ChuChwa Alpha almost two hundred years ago (before ChuChwa's overpopulation problem). Nothing came of the discovery until 140 years later after the founding of MTS. Looking for new opportunities, an experienced Shifter familiar with ChuChwa hit on an idea to utilize ChuChwa Alpha and ChuChwa's resource depletion to their advantage. A gargantuan pyramid was built on ChuChwa next to a new type of power plant utilizing both Techno-Wizardry and conventional technology. Plasma from ChuChwa Alpha was channeled through a Rift and into the power plant. Its P.P.E. was stripped and sent back to the pyramid for storage while its extreme heat was bled off to produce electricity. The electricity was then sold to the ChuChwa at great profit. The Methodeans soon discovered that after the plasma was stripped of its P.P.E. and heat, it cooled into highly radioactive uranium dust particles. They now collect these particles and sell them to a ChuChwa refinery, who turns them into nuclear fuel rods.

ChuChwa has only three major products of value to MTS. First, the excess P.P.E. produced by ChuChwa Alpha is periodically channeled through crystal arches to MTS pyramids in other dimensions with low magical energy. Second, MTS buys some nuclear fuel rods back from ChuChwa for their own use or to export to other customers. Lastly, while the ChuChwa people are nothing special, their social situation makes it easy for MTS to acquire ChuChwa and transport them to other dimensions where they are sold as slaves. Even though slavery is technically illegal on ChuChwa, indentured servitude is common. Creditors (such as your local MTS utility company) regularly indenture those who don't pay their bills. Such unfortunates who owe MTS money are most often shipped off to some other dimension in chains for sale.

The operation, while expensive to set up, has proven profitable and MTS has a second pyramid and power plant under construction with plans for a third. MTS agents are quickly gaining power on ChuChwa due to their use of magic and high technology, neither of which the ChuChwa possess. The military regime in charge has all but begged MTS for such resources. However, the current plan is to trade just enough technology and magic so the regime stays in power, but not enough to give them firm control. With high instability, social reforms will stagnate and MTS can expand its slave trade easily.

Legion of Mars

(circa 109 P.A.)

MTS is not the only operation the Aerihsman have launched using the Methodean deception. The Legion of Mars is a company-sized mercenary band of magically augmented soldiers operating in North America on Rifts Earth, led by the Methodean, Kataad Zar. They have a solid reputation and are known for their many battles against the Coalition during the Tolkeen War. Currently, the Legion is recruiting new, small bands of specialist soldiers (the player characters?) in preparation for a dangerous contract with an unknown employer.

Organization Characteristics

(See **Rifts® Adventure Guide**, page 132.)

Size and Orientation: Free Company.

Total Points: 206

A. Sponsorship: Secret.

B. Outfits: Open Wardrobe (10).

C. Equipment: Cheap Gear (2) & Magic Technologies (40).

D. Vehicles: Fleet Vehicles (10).

E. Weapons, Power Armor & Bots: Advanced Weaponry (20).

F. Communications: Full Range System (15).

G. Internal Security: Iron-Clad (20).

H. Permanent Bases: Headquarters (10).

I. Intelligence Resources: Scout Detachment (5).

J. Special Budget: Small Potatoes (15).

K. General Alignment: Aberrant and Miscreant (0).

L. Criminal Activity: Smugglers (15) & 2 Expert Assassins (24).

M. Reputation: Known (10).

N. Salary: Good (10).

Over half of the Legion's troops are Tattoo Soldiers (effectively the same as Sunaj warrior thralls, only trained and given tattoos exclusively by the band's leadership). A sizable group of Cold-Blooded (**Rifts® Mercenary Adventures**, page 18) also fight for the band. Since they never seem to run out of Cold-Blooded or Tattoo Soldier recruits, the band's leadership obviously has the capacity to make more of each. Rounding out the band's forces are a small contingent of Combat Mages (**Rifts® Mercenary Adventures**, page 5) and Shifters with their Deevil servants.

The Legion fancies itself a heavy infantry unit, capable of taking on a variety of assignments. Indeed, they have proven they can survive against all enemies, including the Coalition, Federation of Magic factions, bandits, and monsters. The Legion makes limited use of combat vehicles and has no power armor or robots. They prefer to rely on their supernatural powers.

The Legion was started by a mysterious organization originating somewhere east of the Magic Zone. The organization provides new magic tattoos to the band, as well as the creation of new Cold-Blooded. Kataad Zar secretly sends company profits back to the organization regularly. This is why, despite the company's many successes, it is still only modestly equipped (no robots and power armor, and only a few APCs). Only Kataad Zar and a few of his closest associates know the truth behind the se-



cret organization. Few of the recruits realize that the secret founders of the band even exist, although some of the officers suspect.

History

100 P.A.: Kataad Zar proposes the idea of a mercenary band in North America to clan Aerihman elders. He reasons it will give them better military intelligence in the area and access to a small but experienced military force should the organization need one (the Aerihmans, under the guise of Methodeans, will simply pose as just another employer without the band's members being any the wiser). Also, the Legion provides the organization with another source of revenue to fund other ventures. The organization agrees and Zar begins recruiting young, impressionable humans to become Tattoo Soldiers.

101 P.A.: Legion of Mars gets its first contract in the magic zone protecting an arch-wizard's holdings. Only their supernatural toughness saves them from destruction by the arch-wizard's rivals. The band continues to grow.

103 P.A.: The Legion signs a contract with Davenport, a small town in Rivereen, the southeastern barony of Tolkeen. They recruit many locals and grow their force to over three hundred.

104 P.A.: Legion of Mars adds Cold-Blooded to its ranks, giving it added toughness and versatility.

105 P.A.: War finally breaks out with the Coalition and the Legion accounts itself well, giving ground grudgingly.

107 P.A.: After two years of back and forth fighting, Davenport is overrun by the Coalition. Legion of Mars, reduced to a fraction of its former strength, spends most of the year recruiting and training new soldiers.

108 P.A.: The Legion negotiates a new contract with Tolkeen proper just in time to participate in the Sorcerers' Revenge. They fight on the front lines, pushing the Coalition out of Tolkeen territory. The Legion accounts itself well but takes heavy casualties in the process.

109 P.A.: Still with a year left in their contract, the Legion finds itself outnumbered a hundred to one helping to defend Blue-line from the Coalition's second wave. Kataad Zar quietly Rifts his troops back to the Magic Zone after only a few skirmishes with the advancing Coalition horde.

Recruitment and Pay

Legion of Mars prefers to recruit impressionable youths who aren't wise to the mercenary trade and won't ask too many questions about the company's leadership. The company has its own training camp in the eastern Magic Zone where new recruits are turned into Tattoo Soldiers or Cold-Blooded. New recruits can either sign on for 3 years, with the first year receiving half pay, or six years. Their time period does not start until after they've finished training, which can take six months for a Cold-Blooded or 12 to 18 months for a Tattoo Soldier.

Weekly Pay:

400 credits for line soldiers.

550 credits for non-commissioned officers.

600 to 1000 for officers and experienced magic users.

Personnel

Kataad Zar: 10th level Methodean (True Atlantean) Shifter, Miscreant, with a commanding personality (M.A. 22). Zar prefers not to enter combat himself, but does regularly send his Deevil minions into the fray. Also, he recognizes that he is not the best strategist and leaves most of the details of battle to his second in command, Father Feistus. Zar typically appears with his signature black armor, but has never been seen without his liquid silver facemask in place.

Father Feistus: Second in command of the company, Father Feistus appears as an old human with graying hair, dressed in a suit (even in the middle of combat). However, it is well known that he is a Fiend in disguise and all in the company fear him. Father Feistus is Zar's Greater Familiar and has a great working relationship with him. Zar is the big picture man and handles all the personnel while Feistus takes care of the rest of the details.

Other Personnel: Experience levels 1-6.

80-100 Tattoo Soldiers.

40-60 Cold-Blooded.

2-8 Wilderness Scouts.

8-12 Combat Mages.

4-6 Shifters.

12-20 Deevils and monsters.

2 Assassins (posing as scouts).

Total Personnel: 148-208 soldiers. Legion of Mars also has between 50 to 80 non-combatants, including family members, medics, kitchen staff, communication specialists, sensor operators, and drivers. Adults belong to non-men-at-arms O.C.C.s, levels 1-4; about 1/3 have some combat training (Hand to Hand: Basic and 2 W.P.s), but they are not mercenaries and will not fight except in the most desperate circumstances.

Standard Issue Equipment

Like every other participant in the Sorcerers' Revenge, the Legion looted a huge array of Coalition equipment after the battle. However, Kataad Zar sold it all for profit.

- L-20 pulse laser rifle with eight long E-clips.
- WI-GL4 grenade launcher or WI-23 missile launcher issued to 1 out of every 5 soldiers.
- 12 grenades (6 plasma, 4 fragmentation, and 2 smoke).
- Armor: light Ironwood non-EBA for magic users (25-40 M.D.C.), half suits of medium and heavy armor for all others (40-70 M.D.C.), all have a built-in short range radio (5 miles).
- Vibro-Blade and survival knife.
- NG-S2 Basic Survival Pack.
- Techno-Wizard devices, armor enhancements, and weapons are common among veterans. Officers have at least two enhancements added to armor.

Combat and Non-Combat Vehicles

- 4 GAW-M113 Improved APC (**Rifts® Merc Ops**, page 128).
- 2 Mountaineer ATVs with tripod mounted NG-101 rail guns (escort and cargo vehicles).
- 4 lightly armored buses and cargo trucks (M.D.C. 30) for soldiers, families, supplies, and equipment.
- 12 S.D.C. trucks for families, supplies, and equipment.

Headquarters

Legion of Mars has a base of operations in eastern Tennessee, almost in the D-Shifting region of the Appalachians. The base is a motley collection of S.D.C. buildings (barracks, garage, and storage) and one oversized bunker (800 M.D.C.). Since the company spends most of its time away, they erect few fortifications. However, there are always 2-40 recruits undergoing training and a training staff of 6 veterans on hand at all times. The headquarters is located near the large village of Boonkoot. The soldiers help protect the village in return for food and basic supplies.

Modern Army Unit Statistics

(Using the rules in **The Rifter® #23**, page 77.)

Type of Unit: Mercenary Infantry Company.

Number of Troops: 175

Average Level: 3rd, Regular (Type 4 unit).

M.D.C. Bonus: 9 (Light M.D.C. beings in medium armor [+3] with limited, light APC support [+3].)

M.D.C. Rating: 1,575

Attacks per Melee: 4, plus 1 armor support attack.

Bonuses: +2 to strike & +4 to parry in hand to hand, +2 to dodge, +2 to strike in ranged combat, +0 to shoot wild, +1 on initiative (communications & optics), +15% to skills. +1 to save vs Horror Factor (morale and experience).

Damage: Modern Weaponry. 4D6x2 M.D. (or 8D6) for ranged combat, and 4D6 M.D. for hand to hand weapons. Armor support attacks inflict 2D4x10 M.D.

Base Horror Factor: 13 (+1 for reputation when enemies face LoM.)

Magical Abilities: Four times per day the unit can activate one of the following effects (plus one time per day on a ley line, plus

two on a nexus). The unit can only activate a magical effect once per melee and uses up one attack:

- Defensive spells and tattoos: +1 to M.D.C. bonus resulting in +175 to M.D.C. rating (subtract this M.D.C. first).
- Attack spells and tattoos: Counts as one extra attack during the melee, roll to strike, inflicts 2D4x10 M.D.
- Close combat spells and tattoos (magic weapons, monsters, etc.): Increase hand to hand damage to 2D4x10 M.D. for the next four rounds.
- Recovery spells: Replenish 2D6 M.D.C.

The Legion's Secrets

Legion of Mars was founded and is controlled by the Aerihsman True Atlantean clan. Kataad Zar is an experienced Aerihsman Atlantean secretly using the company for the clan's purposes. He cares nothing about the soldiers fighting for him, seeing them as a means to further his clan's goals. In addition to reasons stated earlier for the company's existence, it also acts as a convenient way for Aerihsman to travel North America seeking out other True Atlanteans to slay or perform other nefarious missions. Also, many young and inexperienced Sunaj Assassins, Slayers, and Shifters join the band for a tour of duty to get some seasoning. (Both Assassins are Sunaj, as well as at least half the Shifters and a dozen Tattoo Soldiers are Sunaj.) While with the band, the Aerihsman pose as normal humans and do not reveal their link to the dreaded Sunaj or clan Aerihsman (carry only North American equipment, clothing, and weapons; even personal effects are left at home).

The Aerihsmans come from a secret base they possess deep in the D-Shifting region of the Appalachians (actually, it's grown from a military encampment to a full-sized town). The town, Green Valley, is located in a fertile valley that has few dimensional anomalies, despite being deep inside the D-Shifting region. The Aerihsman built a pyramid atop the nexus near the center of the valley, further reducing the anomalies. The Aerihsman reach the base from the Legion's headquarters by way of a winding series of secret paths that crisscross the least dangerous D-Shifting areas.

Green Valley (circa 109 P.A.)

Summary

Green Valley is a sleepy town located in the most unlikely of places, the D-Shifting region of southeast America. While it appears like so many other wilderness towns on Rifts Earth, it hides a menacing secret.

City Characteristics

(See **Rifts® Adventure Guide**, page 110.)

Orientation & Disposition: Rigid and Orderly.

Type & Size of Community: Militaristic Encampment.

Weapons & Armor: Well Armed (20).

Medicine: Excellent (25).

Agriculture & Natural Resources: Good (15).

Real Estate/Land: Bad (1).

Vehicles & Fuel: Very Basic (6).

Administration & Social Structure: Fearless Leader (10).



Alignment: Mixed: Anarchist & Unprincipled (4).
Magic: High Magic (30).
Racial Tolerance: Disapproving and Suspicious (1).
Trade: Established Trade (10).
Threats: Dangerous (3).
Skill Levels & Professionals: Communication Specialist (5), Stone Masters (10), Defense: Sunaj Slayers (15), Ley Line Walkers (10), Techno-Wizards (12).
Community Overall: Average (5).
Shelter: Fortified (35).
Security & Fighting Force: Mixed Fighting Force (25).
Power/Energy: Ley Line (40).
Special Features: Communications Suite (10), Cellars (4), Techno-Wizard Workshops (10), Alliance – Methodean Trading Syndicate (20).
Total Points: 322 points

City Statistics

Population Breakdown: 2,516 total.
 44% Humans (native).
 14% Humans (transplanted).
 11% Nogs (transplanted).
 10% Methodeans (human-like).
 21% Assorted D-Bees.
 (Expected to grow 5% annually over the next 10 years.)

Located deep in the D-Shifting region of the Appalachian mountains of eastern Tennessee, Green Valley was settled 20 years ago by the Methodeans, a race of humans claiming to be hiding from the Splugorth. The Methodeans found the small valley ideal because of its extreme isolation, surrounded by wilderness and dimensional anomalies. The valley itself is relatively free of anomalies, although an unusually large number of monsters wander into the area from the mountains.

The Methodeans quickly built a magic pyramid on the nexus near the center of the valley and then started building a small town surrounding it. With the Methodeans came a small number

of humans and nogs from another dimension. However, humans and D-Bees from the surrounding wilderness have settled in the community, seeking its protection from the dangers of the area.

Geography

The town is located in a deep valley surrounded by modest mountains and tall hills. Nestled next to a small river, most of the surrounding farms and ranches grew up close to the town to be near its protection. Two short ley lines cross at the town's pyramid. However, they do not connect to other lines in the surrounding D-Shifting region.

Government

From the outside, Green Valley appears to be an autocracy run by First Speaker Aerillezon Xerxia (11th level Methodean/True Atlantean Stone Master). The reality is that Aerillezon answers to more powerful Methodeans in another dimension. Although all the local Methodeans know where the true power lies, they don't discuss such matters with non-Methodeans.

Aerillezon's autonomy has come from her proven leadership ability. She is both naturally charismatic (M.A. 20) and diplomatically minded. Although some immigrants complain about the Methodeans' snobbish behavior (including Aerillezon herself on occasion) and strict rules of secrecy, Aerillezon has managed to placate all of them so far and build their trust. She is one of the few Methodeans that refrains from constantly wearing a Methodean dark robe or mask. She is an architect at heart. Not only of buildings, but of organizations. Aerillezon loves to create things that last, and jumped at the chance to create a new settlement from scratch.

Society

Green Valley is a closed and insular society. Although the town welcomes new immigrants, such newcomers must cut all contact with the outside world and agree to never leave Green Valley. The Methodeans also have strange laws designed to maintain their secrecy. For example, it's illegal for non-Methodeans to enter the pyramid. All laws are enforced with harsh punishments. The few that tried to leave the community have been hunted down and slain with uncanny efficiency. Punishments are public, including executions.

The town has two types of residents: Methodeans and non-Methodeans. With the exception of a few token positions, all those with power are Methodeans. Methodeans also own most of the real estate, since they build all the buildings (its illegal to construct a building without a stone structure and built-in utilities). The situation is unlikely to change since virtually all Methodeans are trained as magic users, psychics, warriors, or other skilled occupations in their home dimension. Non-Methodeans have little access to education above an elementary level.

Despite being relegated to second-class citizenship, immigrants continue to flow into the town. Its primary attraction is its safety. Since its founding, no monster or enemy has breached its walls, and rarely do the outlying farms have troubles thanks to aggressive patrols in the surrounding hills. And no one complains about paying rent to a Methodean when it comes with running water and electricity.

Technology and Magic

Green Valley emphasizes magic over technology. It boasts nearly a hundred Techno-Wizards and two score other magic users (all Methodean). The town generates power by converting ley line P.P.E. into electricity.

The Methodeans also run a radio network used by the local police, militia, and army. Unknown to non-Methodeans, the communications suite has long-range capabilities and sophisticated encryption to keep in contact with Methodean/Aerihman agents for hundreds of miles around (when ley line interference allows).

Methodeans possess numerous Techno-Wizard gadgets as well as many technological devices (most of a non-Earth design). Non-Methodeans have access to fewer luxuries. For example, most still use draft and riding animals for transportation and labor. Residents who manage to save their money often own a couple of amenities, such as a Techno-Wizard icebox, oven, or laundromatic. However, since Methodean Stone Masters and Techno-Wizards construct all buildings, every resident has both hot and cold running water, electricity, indoor lights, and heat.

Foreign Affairs

Visitors to Green Valley are uncommon. If a patrol encounters strangers away from the town they will try to learn as much about the travelers as possible. Unless the patrol's officer thinks the travelers will make good immigrants, they will try to lead the individuals away from the town itself without revealing its existence. Those who manage to travel to the town itself are met with cold suspicion. Obvious weapons of any kind are not allowed in the town and visitors will soon find out that there is only one small hotel available. Those who stay more than a day will soon notice they are being subtly watched. Those who don't move on after their business is concluded are forcibly removed.

Green Valley has no contact with other communities in North America. However, extended surveillance of the town reveals that small caravans of travelers (6-20 people, all Methodeans) periodically come and go from the town. Although they seem to come and go from different directions, in actuality, most are taking winding routes through the D-Shifting region to the large village of Boonkoot in the eastern Magic Zone. From there they split up and spread out on separate missions throughout North America.

Green Valley does have one powerful ally, the inter-dimensional merchants known as the Methodean Trading Syndicate (or MTS). Although Green Valley is not officially part of MTS, both have the same overarching agenda and regularly trade and help each other. Most of Green Valley's trade is with MTS, shipped through the pyramid.

Armed Forces

Green Valley has three groups of defenders; the police, the militia, and the army.

The police are the most visible presence in town and they number over 50 patrolmen along with a dozen detectives and officers. They regularly patrol the town and immediate surroundings in squads of six. Most sport light M.D.C. body armor and a TW pistol (with stun, S.D.C., and M.D.C. settings). They've also been equipped with short-range radios as well as other miscellaneous police gear. In the event of an emergency or civil unrest,

they can also break out TW rifles. They have no heavy weapons or vehicles. The police is composed primarily of non-Methodeans. Although half the detectives and officers are Methodean (including two psychics and one Ley Line Walker) as well as the chief constable.

The militia numbers almost 200 and consists of non-Methodean volunteers led by Methodean officers. The volunteers work part-time in the militia for extra money and prestige. The militia is primarily equipped with medium M.D.C. body armor and TW rifles. Only the officers have access to heavy weapons or special TW devices, although all members know how to use the few heavy weapons mounted on the walls. The militia is mainly a garrison force helping the army to guard the town walls and gates. They do not possess any vehicles. However, a militia squad sometimes accompanies the army on patrols into the surrounding hills to get a little seasoning.

The army numbers 146 and consists of four platoons and a command staff. Three of the platoons contain human and nog tattoo warriors led by Methodean officers (Sunaj Slayers). The fourth elite platoon is composed exclusively of Methodeans (Sunaj Slayers mixed with magic users and psychics) and guards the pyramid. Every soldier has medium to heavy M.D.C. armor and an assortment of TW weapons, with plenty of heavy weapons to go around. The army makes extensive use of radio communications (encrypted) and even has a dozen TW hover jeeps. Man for man, the army's equipment and magical augmentation makes them a potent force that has never let the town down. They regularly patrol the surrounding farms and hills in an effort to keep the valley safe.

Places of Interest

1. Pyramid: Dominating the town is a moderately-sized magic pyramid sitting on the local nexus. In addition to serving as an inter-dimensional gateway for the Methodeans, it also aids in construction and controlling local weather. Security is impregnable, with only Methodeans allowed inside.

2. Techno-Wizard Workshops: The primary industry of the town, nearly a hundred Methodean Techno-Wizards utilize the local ley line and pyramid power to create numerous Techno-Wizard devices. The workshops mostly produce civilian devices. Techno-Wizard weapons are only manufactured inside the pyramid. Although the town uses many of the artifacts, most are exported to other dimensions via the pyramid. Only the Methodeans know to whom such exports go.

3. Old Town: The tallest and grandest of the town's buildings reside here, as well as all the Methodeans not housed within the pyramid itself. Old town is under subtle surveillance and patrolled by the police and security forces to ensure its residents' privacy.

4. Purple Parsnip Farms: Located on the ley lines surrounding the town are several farms that grow a strange vegetable. Although tasteless, a single purple parsnip provides enough calories and nutrition to feed a grown man for a day. It grows rapidly in any season, but requires the presence of a ley line for sustenance. Purple parsnips are a staple of the town's diet. The vegetable is also exported to other dimensions by the Methodeans.

5. North and South Markets: Everyday items can be found at these two open-air markets and the surrounding shops. No weapons, armor, or vehicles are sold here or anywhere in town.

6. High Hill Park.

7. New Town: Newer, less grand buildings house locals who can stomach the Methodean's unbending rules and restrictions.

8. Buildings Under Construction.

9. Green Valley Inn: The only accommodations in town for visitors. A single, starkly furnished room costs 120 credits in trade (no universal credits accepted in town) per night. Anyone who complains about the price is told to sleep outside the town walls. Next door is the Green Dragon Pub and diner, the only drinking and eating establishment in the surrounding neighborhood. Unknown to residents, both are under electronic surveillance by the Methodean security forces to keep an eye on visitors.

Town Secrets

Green Valley was founded by, and continues to be a pawn of, the True Atlantean Clan Aerihman. Using their well established Methodean deception as cover, the Aerihmans have built a secret base within spitting distance of both the Splugorth of Atlantis and other True Atlanteans operating in North America. Green Valley gives the Aerihmans a secure place for its agents to enter and exit North America without the Splugorth's knowledge. It also has provided additional resources in the way of exported food and Techno-Wizard devices. The energy of earth's ley lines is such that Techno-Wizard artifacts can be created and purple parsnips grown faster than anywhere else in the Megaverse.

However, the biggest reason for Green Valley's founding is the raw power of Earth's ley lines. Green Valley's pyramid produces enough P.P.E. to open dozens of dimensional portals a day (using Methodean Crystal Arches). Thus, it acts as a hub for inter-dimensional travel. Over a dozen Crystal Arches in the upper chambers of the pyramid lead to as many dimensions. It's quite common, inside the pyramid, to see MTS trade caravans, individual Aerihmans, or small parties constantly coming and going between the Arches. For security, the vast majority of these travelers never exit the pyramid. Even trade caravans whose departure must be delayed are stored in underground chambers beneath the pyramid, so as to hide the extensive use of the pyramid by Green Valley's true masters.

Old Gizzard

The local woodsman and explorer known as Old Gizzard is one of the few friendly individuals the characters are likely to meet in Green Valley. However, appearances are deceiving. Old Gizzard is actually an agent of the Methodeans who keeps an eye on newcomers to the town.

Real Name: Unknown, has been known as Gizzard, and then Old Gizzard (after get'n' some snow in the hair) for centuries. Ask him how he got the name. It's a funny story about a Splugorth Conservator, a Blow Worm, and a barroom brawl.

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 22, M.A. 18, P.S. 18, P.P. 12, P.E. 23, P.B. 10, Spd 34.

Hit Points: 67; **S.D.C.:** 105.

Size: 6 feet, 8 inches (2 m) and 210 lbs (94.5 kg).

Age: 561, but looks to be a weathered man of sixty.

Disposition: Talkative and friendly, it's easy to kill time with Old Gizzard by having a beer or playing cards at the local pub. Such friendliness is only a façade, however. Old Gizzard

is as hard as weathered oak on the inside and cares little for newcomers to Green Valley. He will be especially chummy with True Atlanteans, going so far as to reveal he's a True Atlantean in order to gain their trust and learn more about them.

Experience Level: 11th level Atlantean Nomad.

Natural Abilities: As is common among all True Atlanteans, Old Gizzard can sense the presence of vampires, operate stone pyramids, sense ley lines and nexus points, sense Rifts, and Ley Line Phase, and cannot be transformed by any means. In addition, his P.P.E. recovers at the rate of 10 per hour of rest or sleep.

Magic Knowledge: Old Gizzard has 6 magic tattoos at his disposal:

Heart Pierced by Wooden Stake (15 P.P.E.): Protection from vampires. Old Gizzard will show off this tattoo to other True Atlanteans to prove he's a 'cousin.'

Flaming Sword (10 P.P.E.): 2D6 M.D.

Eye of Knowledge (15 P.P.E.): Allows Old Gizzard to read and speak all languages.

Heart Wrapped in Vines (15 P.P.E.): Gives Old Gizzard *Superhuman Endurance*, as the spell.

Flaming Eye (20 P.P.E.): Gives Old Gizzard thermo-imaging and can shoot fire bolts from his eyes (11D4 M.D.). Usually reserves it for a surprise attack.

Skull with Glowing Eyes (15 P.P.E.): Adds 1D4+1 to Old Gizzard's M.A. He activates this tattoo before talking to the characters if he can do so without their notice.

P.P.E.: 46. Plus has a TW battery with 50 P.P.E. in it.

Psionic Powers: A major psionic with the sensitive abilities of Empathy, Mind Block, Read Dimensional Portal, See Aura, Sense Dimensional Anomaly, Sense Magic, Sixth Sense, and



Telepathy. Old Gizzard uses his sensitive powers to discover the character's intentions as well as help him survive the D-Shifting region surrounding Green Valley. **I.S.P.:** 80.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand Combat: Basic and Boxing.

Attacks per Melee: Seven physical or two magic tattoo attacks per melee round.

Bonuses: +1 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +5 to roll with punch/impact, +4 to pull punch, +6 to save vs magic, +4 to save vs psionics, +8 to save vs Horror Factor, +4 to save vs poison/drugs, +16% save vs coma/death.

Weapons of Note: TW Storm Rifle and TW Firebolt Pistol. Always carries a couple of silver knives, a frag grenade, and a couple of smoke grenades.

Armor and Equipment: Wears homespun non-environmental armor with 40 M.D.C. Also has a Splugorth Talisman of Armor (100 M.D.C. Armor of Ithan, three times per day). Has a TW Campsite Crystal, TW Secure Line Communicator, and TW Survival Bracer (12 P.P.E./24 I.S.P. to activate *Sustain*, 20 P.P.E./40 I.S.P. to activate *Impervious to Energy*). Mundane equipment includes a gas mask, military radio with Methodean encryption built in, nightvision binoculars, and various survival tools.

Skills of Note: First Aid, Lore: Demons and Monsters, Lore: Ley Lines and Geomancy, Land Navigation, Wilderness Survival, Swimming, Climbing, General Repair and Maintenance, and Radio: Basic at 98%. Identify Plants and Fruits, Jury-Rig, and Cook at 93%. Horsemanship: Exotic 88%, Prowl 80%, and Electronic Countermeasures 43%. Since coming to Rifts Earth, he has learned how to draw P.P.E. from ley lines and nexuses like a magic user. He habitually uses ley line energy to replenish both his own P.P.E. and his P.P.E. battery as well as activate *Sustain* (using his TW Survival Bracer) and *Superhuman Endurance* (using his Heart Wrapped in Vines tattoo) when leaving Green Valley.

Description: A tall, thin, weathered outdoorsman with a crooked nose and gray in his black hair. Has a somewhat disheveled appearance and gruff, if friendly, manner.

Characters are likely to meet this friendly old-timer at the Green Valley Inn or Green Dragon Pub, both of which he frequents. He'll approach visitors and strike up a conversation. Old Gizzard will freely tell stories about his extensive travels (half of which are true) and joke with the characters about the Coalition, magic users, or whoever else seems to be on the characters' bad side. In the midst of their conversation he also asks where the characters come from, where they're going, and try to gather any other information about them.

Old Gizzard claims to have traveled around the southeast of America for a couple of years now, but just recently arrived in Green Valley. In actuality, he's a permanent resident of the town and works as a guide leading Methodeans in and out of the D-Shifting region. In his spare time he keeps his eyes out for visitors, finds out as much about them as possible, and reports to First Speaker Xerxia. The players will most likely fall into one of two categories in Old Gizzard's mind. The first are harmless travelers who pose no threat to Green Valley. The second are individuals who want to reveal the existence of Green Valley to the outside world. Xerxia and Old Gizzard would rather be careful and eliminate such individuals than let them spread word across North America of Green Valley's existence.

There's also a third category of people Old Gizzard keeps an eye out for, True Atlanteans. He'll make an extra effort to chum up to anyone who's a True Atlantean and will even claim to be a True Atlantean himself. He won't hesitate to show off his marks of heritage if they don't believe such a gruff and uncouth ruffian could be from such a heroic race. He'll claim not to know what clan he's from and that he's only met a couple of other True Atlanteans outside his parents. True Atlanteans with a working knowledge of Atlantean history and heraldry might be able to discern that the crest of his Flaming Sword is from Clan Aerihman, and Old Gizzard will be forever grateful for being told what family he belongs to. (Note: Old Gizzard was born well before Clan Aerihman replaced the Heart Impaled by a Stake tattoo with the Skull with Glowing Eyes tattoo. He still has the Heart Impaled by a Stake on his right wrist just like other clans.) The reality is that Old Gizzard is old enough to remember the other Atlantean Clans uniting together and threatening to destroy the Aerihmans if they continued to conquer other races. Old Gizzard has had a cold hatred for all other True Atlanteans since and goes out of his way to set them up for destruction.

When it appears the characters are about to leave Green Valley, Old Gizzard will offer to help guide them out of the D-Shifting region for a small fee. If the characters don't take him up on his offer he will trail behind them to make sure he can enact one of two scenarios for them. For those he believes are no threat, he'll work to confuse their passage through the D-Shifting region even more than normal by leading them in a circuitous route and using illusory terrain spells (either magic scrolls provided by his allies or cast by Methodeans trailing the characters). Thus ensuring they won't be able to find their way back to the town. If he deems the characters to be a threat to Green Valley, or the party contains a True Atlantean, he'll set them up for ambush. When they least expect it, they'll be attacked by a squad of Methodean soldiers (Sunaj Slayers, Ley Line Walkers, and Mind Melters) supported by a platoon of Green Valley T-man soldiers. Xerxia trusts Old Gizzard's judgment, and if he requests more troops than this she'll likely grant it.

Methodean Equipment

Methodean Body Armor

Methodeans have four types of body armor they routinely use. They are basically the standard Sunaj armors (Black-Suit, Scout, Assassin, and Assault) with cosmetic changes. Methodean varieties of armor typically come in a wide array of colors, with camouflage and gray being the favorite. Like Sunaj body armor, Methodean armor always covers the entire body, including the face. However, while most Sunaj facemasks are monstrous in appearance, Methodean facemasks tend to be either a single, blank globe of one-way M.D.C. glass or a beautifully sculpted metallic face. Other than cosmetic differences, Methodean armor has the same statistics as Sunaj armor.

Methodean Crystal Arch

This ten foot (3 m) wide, twelve foot (3.6 m) tall arch is constructed out of tourmaline crystals melded together into a seamless whole by a Stone Master. Tourmaline is a rare gem that the

Methodians have found in great quantities in some far-off dimension. It can be found in many colors, and black tourmaline is most commonly used by Techno-Wizards and Stone Masters, but the Methodians have found clear blue tourmaline to be very useful. When properly melded by a Stone Master, wired to an enchanted onyx and red zircon, and mystically tied to a stone pyramid, the arch is able to open a dimensional portal to a matching arch in another pyramid. The mated arch can, likewise, open a portal back to the first. The Methodians use these devices to increase the volume of material they can transport at stone pyramids. They also claim the arches minimize the ripples a dimensional Rift creates that are felt by supernatural beings throughout the Megaverse. Although they can't prove such claims, if true, it allows the Methodians to grow their inter-dimensional power in complete secrecy. Lastly, if the sender uses an arch, the P.P.E. cost of pyramid communication (as described under the powers of stone pyramids) is halved when communicating to the corresponding pyramid the arch is linked to. The arches are always in well-protected chambers near the top of the pyramid.

Device Level: Eight. **P.P.E. Construction Cost:** 1,840, only works at a pyramid. **Spell Chain Needed:** Primary Spell: Re-Open Gateway (180), Secondary Spell: Energize Spell (8), and a secret ritual requiring a Stone Master linking the arch to the pyramid (it is immovable without breaking it). **Physical Requirements:** Onyx worth 20,000 credits, red zircon worth 2,000 credits, two tons of blue tourmaline crystal, and various electronic parts to control it all. **Activation and Duration of Charge:** Activation requires only 92 P.P.E. (taken either from the pyramid or the users). The portal stays open for 4 minutes. However, by pumping another 92 P.P.E. into the device, the portal's duration can be extended another 4 minutes (no interruption in operation). This can be done continuously to keep the portal open for extended periods. **Note:** The arch is immobile and has 850 M.D.C. **Construction Time:** 1,472 hours. **Market Cost:** Unavailable! The Methodians do not share this device with anyone else. Construction costs equals at least a half million credits.

Methodian Dark Robes

These robes come in a variety of colors, some very bright. They typically drape loosely on the wearer and include long sleeves covering the hands, and a long hood. They get their name from a permanent enchantment sewn into their lining that cloaks everything covered by the robes in complete darkness. When the hood is pulled up and sleeves worn long, the wearer's face, hands, and feet are completely concealed by an inky blackness. Even when holes or rents are torn in the robe, only blackness will be seen beneath. The blackness even distorts the wearer's heat signature and psychic aura (both look fuzzy). The magical darkness cannot be dispelled by ordinary or magical light. It also distorts the wearer's voice, typically giving it a base, mechanical buzz. The wearer, however, can see and hear normally when wearing the robe.

The robe itself is actually constructed of Mega-Damage polycarbonate fiber supported by thin, concealed, lightweight plates (strategically located) and padding. It does not have any of the normal features associated with environmental body armor. However, it's loose enough that light or medium armor can be worn underneath it (damage is done to the robe first). Methodians often wear Methodian black-suit or scout armor underneath.

The robe cannot have any Techno-Wizard modifications added to it, but any used by the wearer (such as those attached to armor worn underneath) will include the robe in their effect. It's very common for Methodians to have access to magic of concealment (Invisibility, Shadow Meld, etc.) and protection (Armor of Ithan).

M.D.C.: 12

Weight: 12 pounds (5.4 kg); superior mobility, no movement penalty.

Market Cost: Not available. Would sell for 100,000-300,000 credits on the right market. Those who steal dark robes will soon find a Sunaj Assassin on their tail. The Methodians seem to have a limitless supply of the robes.

P.P.E. Vat

This device was conceived when the Methodians discovered that cytoplasmic blobs (a 10-30 pound/4.5-13.5 kg, single celled animal, see **Rifts® Dimension Book™ Seven: Megaverse® Builder** page 51) could exist symbiotically with the organic slurry from the planet Orgunik in the Biomech Union. They had been experimenting with ways to extract P.P.E. from simple life forms in an attempt to supplement the P.P.E. reserves of magic pyramids in dimensions with weak magic. The organic slurry of Orgunik was too basic to generate sufficient P.P.E., while the cytoplasmic blobs require too much food to justify the small amount of P.P.E. the Methodians could extract from them. However, together they produced a workable result. When half a dozen cyto-blobs are introduced to the slurry they gorge themselves on the delicious meal until they divide and multiply. The slurry, however, seems to feed off the cyto-blob's excretions, and after a delicate balance is reached, the slurry and cyto-blobs exist symbiotically indefinitely without outside influence. The Methodians discovered when sufficient cyto-blobs are stuffed together in a vat of slurry (several thousand), they give off sufficient P.P.E. to be useful.

The typical P.P.E. vat is built into the basement of a magic pyramid. It's actually closer to a well, being only about 10 feet (3 m) across but over 100 feet (30.5 m) deep. The vat contains thousands of cytoplasmic blobs swimming in the Orgunik slurry. A long column of blue tourmaline crystal laced with ruby quartz and malachite runs the length of the vat and upwards into the pyramid proper. The column typically reaches the topmost chambers of the pyramid, where the crystal arches are found. By touching the column, a character can access the vat's P.P.E. reserve. The typical vat produces and holds 4D6x10 P.P.E. every six hours. This is typically enough to operate a crystal arch between two and four times per day.

Despite the free P.P.E. the vat provides, it's typically only used in dimensions with low magical energy or, occasionally, in pyramids with extraordinarily high traffic. The vat requires extensive reconstruction at the pyramid as well as importing tons of organic slurry and tourmaline crystal. The average cost of a P.P.E. vat totals around 4 million credits. For this reason, it's rare to find them outside of MTS pyramids. Although, the Sunaj are evaluating its use for military installations.

TW Force Fence

This device draws on ley line power to create an invisible barrier roughly twenty feet (6 m) wide and twenty feet (6 m) tall. The wall is barely visible as faint blue energy with occasional streams

of magic energy rippling along its surface like an electrical current. Anything striking the force field is stopped as if hitting an invisible wall. Inflicting approximately 100 M.D. to a ten foot (3 m) diameter of the field will momentarily disrupt that ten foot area for 1D4 seconds, allowing two people or man-sized objects to pass through the field for each second of disruption (or one large vessel if opened for two seconds or longer). After those few seconds, the field heals itself and another 100 M.D.C. is necessary to momentarily punch through it. The Methodeans often use it on their bases, which usually are located on ley lines.

The TW force fence generators typically appear as thick bars strung together, massive cabling, or a combination of the two. It's quite versatile and multiple fences can be positioned together to cover a large area. Their fields will seamlessly meld when placed next to each other. The device can also be buried just below the surface or built into a wall. The force field extends upward/outward without disturbing or damaging the ground or wall. While the force field does protect the device in addition to extending away from it when not buried, such a tactic conceals its presence.

Device Level: Four. P.P.E. Construction Cost: 318, only works on a ley line. Spell Chain Needed: Primary Spell: Rift Triangular Defense System (840), Secondary Spell: Electric Arc (8). Physical Requirements: Red zircon worth 2,000 credits, forty Onyx crystals with a total worth of 40,000 credits and sufficient wiring and/or containment bars. Duration of Charge: Energy field will work indefinitely when on a ley line or until the field is turned off. The field must be turned off to enter/exit unless one can teleport. To Recharge: Since it draws power from the ley line, the fence can be activated with simple force of will (or even by flipping a switch on some models); the field appears within five seconds. It only works on a ley line. Note: Each twenty foot (6 m) line of field generators has only eight M.D.C., although it is protected by the field when active. Construction Time: 125 hours. Market Cost: 110,000-200,000 credits depending on the availability and market.

TW Secure Line Communicator

This small cell phone-like device records the user's words (or another sound) and transmits them along the user's ley line (and any connecting ley lines) to other TW secure line communicators. The messages are scrambled using conventional encryption techniques and then unscrambled by the receiving communicator. Communicators must be preset to a given scramble code, but can store dozens in their memory. Any communicator set to listen for the given code on the same ley line network will pick up and unscramble the transmission (each communicator can only listen for one code at a time). In effect, each communicator is like a walkie-talkie that has a range extending over the whole ley line network, and each scramble code is like a separate frequency. The advantage of using a TW secure line communicator over the traditional Ley Line Transmission spell is that it cannot be eavesdropped on. While a telepath can detect the transmission, it only sounds like a high-pitched buzzing noise thanks to the encryption.

Device Level: Two. P.P.E. Construction Cost: 47, only works on a ley line. Spell Chain Needed: Primary Spell: Ley Line Transmission (30), Secondary Spell: Blinding Flash (1). Physical Requirements: Chrysoprase quartz crystal worth 4,500 credits, clear quartz worth 60 credits and a military grade radio. Duration of

Charge: Each transmission is a separate activation. To Recharge: Since it draws power from the ley line, the communicator can be activated with simple force of will (or even by flipping a switch on some models); the transmission is sent and received within 2-3 seconds. It only works on a ley line. Note: The communicator is typically in a hardened case having 1 M.D.C. Construction Time: 9 hours. Market Cost: 20,000-30,000 credits depending on the availability and market.

Hook, Line and Sinker™ Adventures

The HLS adventure format was originally devised and created by *Jolly Blackburn*.

Hook, Line and Sinker™ are a handy adventure format where only the barest elements for an adventure are provided. The rest of the development is left to the G.M. HLS adventure outlines work well both as stand-alone adventures or as stepping stones in a larger campaign. Use only the ones that strike your fancy, spin off an entire campaign of your own from one or more HLS, or play 'em all!

The Hook is the current situation or location of the adventuring party.

The Line is an opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the player characters. Think of this as the "bait" or enticement for the party to enter the adventure.

The Sinker is the "clinger" to the Line. The Sinker presents the party with a dilemma or development that makes the situation a true adventure.

Heinous Assault

Hook: The characters, perhaps down on their luck or looking for work, run into a preacher by the name of Father Feistus. The well dressed and polite cleric is looking for enterprising young adventurers to perform some reconnaissance for his friends, the mercenary band, Legion of Mars. All warm smiles and firm handshakes, Father Feistus explains that the Legion has been contracted to assault a camp of aliens in a nearby forest. The aliens, who are cleverly disguised as humans, are experienced magic users and are building a magic pyramid on the ley line running through the forest. If they complete it, they'll be able to Rift thousands of cohorts to the area and threaten all the "god fear'n people" of the region. The Legion has many experienced soldiers, but they're no good at infiltrating enemy camps and they desperately need better intelligence. The good Father implores the characters to accept the mission, "for the good of the people," not to mention 100,000 credits upon completion.

Line: If the characters accept the mission, the Father gives them a military radio (already tuned to the Legion's channel and encrypted), rough directions to the alien camp, and 10,000 credits up front for expenses and supplies. He also draws out a symbol on a piece of paper (two concentric circles bisected by two parallel lines) and instructs them to paint/draw it on their armor, clothing, etc. so the Legion's soldiers will recognize them as allies. Their instructions are to infiltrate the alien camp and radio back their

numbers, how far along the pyramid is, what their defenses are like, etc. After the fighting starts they should hunker down and let the Legion do its thing. The Legion wants to attack the day after tomorrow, so Father Feistus recommends they start right away.

If the characters gather supplies and leave immediately they can reach the forest and its ley line within a half a day. However, the alien camp and construction site is concealed in an out of the way area and they'll need to search up and down the ley line for several hours before finding it. The construction site, surrounded by tall trees, consists of a large stone quarry (hole in the ground) next to a giant stone building two hundred feet (61 m) on a side and twenty feet (6 m) tall. This is the first level of the pyramid and its internal chambers are already complete. Several passages lead into the pyramid and dozens of humans enter and exit at different times. There is no defensive perimeter set up and only a few guards stand on top of the pyramid to keep watch. The heaviest weapons the characters see are a few rifles and the dozen workers swarming over the outside of the structure seem unarmed. Observant characters will note that there is no camp set up in the vicinity outside the pyramid.

The information is well received by the Legion when the characters make radio contact. However, Father Feistus insists the characters get closer to investigate, ideally enter the pyramid's chambers so they can more accurately estimate the aliens' numbers. If the characters refuse or argue, he'll threaten to withhold payment, saying the Legion's scouts could have told them what can be seen from the forest's edge. The characters will have to think up a plan to get more information either using deception or stealth. Turns out, if they approach the aliens directly, they seem very friendly, open and talkative. They explain they are dimensional travelers and want to establish a school to teach ley line walking. This ley line seemed a perfect place since it's out of the way and shouldn't bother anyone else. The pyramid is to be their home and school, and also their link back to their kinsmen. The construction workers are Stone Master allies of the Ley Line Walkers, magically molding the pyramid into being. The characters can observe about two dozen Stone Masters working on the pyramid or drawing rocks from the quarry, two dozen older people who must be Ley Line Walkers, and almost a hundred adolescent and young men and women who must be students. Only a dozen guards keep watch in rotating shifts.

Sinker: Eventually, the characters will notice that every one of the "aliens" has a tattoo of a flaming sword on their left wrist and a heart impaled by a stake on their right wrist. The "aliens" are indeed True Atlanteans and the tattoos are their *marks of heritage*. They are telling the truth about their intentions and reason for building the pyramid. In addition to noticing their magic tattoos, the characters will observe nearly two dozen children playing in the pyramid (they are kept inside most of the time for their safety) as well as their parents. If engaged in conversation, the "aliens" will invite the characters to a meal where they will observe the "aliens" eating very human food, engaging in very human conversation, and living much like one would expect a large extended family to.

The characters are faced with a moral dilemma. Do they do the job they were hired for? Do they warn the True Atlanteans about the impending attack? If the characters try to convince Father Feistus that he is mistaken about the visitors' intentions he gets angry and cuts all communication. If they decide to complete their mission the Legion easily overwhelms the camp and

starts executing every man, woman, and child. Characters who interfere with the bloodbath will be attacked. If the characters help the visitors, they will have to devise very clever strategies to ensure the outgunned Atlanteans survive. Whatever the characters choose, the Legion's attack will move forward, and if the characters tip off Father Feistus about their wavering loyalty, the Legion's timetable may be stepped up.

Wilderness Explorers Wanted, Investigative Experience Required

Hook: Visiting the local "big city" of the area (could be Lazlo, New Lazlo, or a smaller city like Arzno), the characters get word that the local constables are wanting to hire adventurers for a dangerous mission. Two days ago, a horrendous mass murder took place, where Gilra the Trader, his sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren, 14 people in all, were found dead in their homes. In addition to being a successful businessman, Gilra was a renowned True Atlantean and well respected in the community. The authorities arrived just after the fight ended, and Gilra had managed to kill two of his assailants and wound a third. The remaining escaped into the night, but the investigators captured the wounded assailant. After much psionic questioning, they've determined that he was part of the mercenary band, Legion of Mars. The Legion has not been spotted in the area, but the police and militia are searching fervently for them. The psionic questioning also revealed where the Legion's headquarters is, near the village of Boonkoot in eastern Tennessee. The constables are worried that the Legion is a front for Splugorth operations in North America since the captured assailant was a tattoo man. Gilra had no other relatives, and the local judge has decided to liquidate his sizable estate and put up the cash as a reward for more information on his attackers. If the characters are willing to travel to Boonkoot and discover who is behind this heinous crime they can collect the reward. **G.M. Note:** Make the reward sizable for the characters, probably over 1 million credits, since they'll have to spend extensive time and energy traveling through the dangerous wilderness.

Line: Depending on where the adventure starts, the characters will have to spend anywhere from days to months traveling through the North American wilderness to reach the eastern Magic Zone. After asking several locals and doing some searching, they eventually find the village of Boonkoot. The Legion of Mars headquarters is easily found next to the village. Observation or asking questions around the village and headquarters will reveal the following: 1. The Legion's headquarters is mostly empty right now with only twenty raw recruits and a training staff of six. The rest of the Legion is "out west somewhere," not even the training staff knows where. 2. The Legion's training staff helps protect the village in return for food and supplies. 3. No one in Boonkoot or the headquarters has heard of events out west or what transpired with Gilra the Trader. They have not seen the Legion since before that event happened. 4. The training staff, consisting of Tattoo Soldiers and Cold-Blooded, are veterans of the Legion, but know nothing about the Legion's leaders or who's been hiring the Legion lately. There are no indications of Splugorth activity in the area. **G.M. Note:** Let the characters exhaust all lines of inquiry before moving onto the next part.

Sinker: Just when the characters think they've hit a dead end, a dozen strange travelers arrive and set up camp at the Legion's headquarters. They are Methodeans and all are completely covered in armor or Methodean Dark Robes. They remain very secretive and avoid the characters as much as possible. Over the next several days, through observation and investigation, the characters find out that they are placing magic tattoos on the Legion's recruits and performing magic rituals to turn several into Cold-Blooded. After a week, they depart the headquarters and head east. Following the Methodeans, the characters find them taking a winding path through the D-Shifting region of the Appalachians. The characters will have to deal with ley line storms, shifting alien environments, and other dimensional disturbances while keeping track of their quarry. Eventually, the Methodeans come to the town of Green Valley. Investigating, the characters find Green Valley is controlled by the mysterious Methodeans. To collect their reward, they will have to find out who the Methodeans are, what they're doing here, and then make it back to the city. Opposing them will be the wily Old Gizzard and Xerxia, who will try to find out what the characters are doing in Green Valley and prevent them from escaping.

Deep, Dark Double Cross

Hook: Traveling characters crossing a ley line are suddenly caught in a ferocious ley line storm. Purple lightning and strange . . . *slimy* things rain from the sky incessantly. Just when the characters see the edge of the ley line approaching, the air around them ripples, followed by a bright blue flash. Feeling dizzy, the characters find themselves in pitch-blackness.

Line: The characters are in a lightless cavern. The magically astute will correctly guess they have traveled through a Rift (Lore: Magic, Lore: Dimensions, or Lore: Ley Lines skill check). Exploring the cavern, the characters encounter strange, mineral-based monsters, all hostile. Eventually, after walking through miles of tunnels, they encounter the Zuthxiou. They are in G'due D'gud. The Zuthxiou try to manipulate and trick the characters as pawns in their constant political infighting.

Sinker: After much investigation, the characters eventually learn other dimensional travelers inhabit the caverns of G'due D'gud, the Methodeans. Through bribery, trickery, or outright force (no one will help them for free), the characters come into contact with the Methodeans. The Methodeans offer to transport the characters home for the outrageous sum of 65 million Earth credits or 45 million Three Galaxies credits (they will gladly accept either, or equivalent trade). Seeing that the characters are "underfunded" dimensional travelers and can't afford the fee, the Methodeans reluctantly agree to send them home if they perform one small "errand." Bring them the head of the wanted fugitive, *Crucious of Alexandria*.

Deep Sinker: Since the Methodeans placed a sizable bounty on Crucious' head he has gone into hiding. After much sleuthing, the characters find and confront Crucious. Much to their surprise, rather than running or fighting, Crucious tries to talk to the characters. He claims he has broken no law, but that the Methodeans placed a bounty on him for reasons he cannot fathom. He has been stranded in this dimension for months with no way home. If characters will listen he'll tell them stories of his exploits fight-

ing the Splugorth in the Three Galaxies, for Crucious is a famed Atlantean Undead Slayer. Substantiating his claim to chivalry are two nearby Zuthxiou orphans that Crucious freed from Methodean slavery only two days ago. If the characters still decide to attack Crucious he uses his extensive magic tattoos to escape. He only fights to defend the Zuthxiou orphans or himself, and attempts to disable rather than kill the characters.

Deeper Sinker: The Methodeans ambush the characters in a double cross designed to keep them from leaving G'due D'gud and revealing its existence to other inter-dimensional powers. (Having no knowledge of dimensional travel is irrelevant, the paranoid Methodeans take no chances.) If the characters allied with Crucious previously, he fights by their side. If he escaped an attack from them earlier he comes to their rescue during the ambush. Either way, in the battle's aftermath he offers the characters a deal. Help him reach the magic pyramid in the center of the Methodean compound and he'll use its magic to transport them all away from "this cursed dimension."

Deepest Sinker: Crucious not only wants to get out of G'due D'gud, he wants to find out why the evil Methodeans want him and the characters dead. Before they leave for good, he suggests they capture a Methodean for questioning. Capturing a Methodean will not be easy as they fight like the devil, especially if they recognize Crucious. If successful, the character will learn the Methodeans are human or human-like. However, their captive refuses to talk, other than making arrogant threats. Crucious refuses to use torture, but magic or psionic questioning may reveal some Methodean secrets. Careful examination will reveal the Methodean's "Marks of Heritage," a Flaming Sword magic tattoo on the left wrist and a Skull with Glowing Eyes tattoo on the right wrist. Crucious notes how similar they are to True Atlantean Marks of Heritage. Smart characters will also try to pry information about the MTS compound from their captive. But they'll have to be fast since it's only a matter of time before the captured Methodean is missed and an investigation or rescue is under way. And once the Methodeans realize one of their own is missing, MTS compound security will be on high alert.



Sweet Vengeance

A Short Story for Rifts®

By Glen Evans

I wake to the sound of the metal door closing. The smell of my small, cramped cell slaps me in the face. I rise up off the straw pile that serves as my bed. A sliver of yellow light slices through a tiny crack, my only window to the outside world. The metal latch of my cell door is twisted. With a grating screech, the iron-bound door opens. The eight-foot Ogre Bio-Borg who serves as my jailer strides in. I've seen lots of ugly D-Bees in my life, most of them during my two visits to the Republic of Columbia, but none compare to this four-armed abomination. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't wish I had a laser torch to cut those ugly warts off his green face.

He removes the wooden bucket beside the door that serves as my toilet. He ignores me for the most part, even if I wasn't shackled from head to toe there isn't a thing I can do to hurt him. Well, I suppose I could insult him, but the freak doesn't even understand American. Besides, regardless of what I say, he just smiles with that stupid toothless grin of his.

He leaves me an empty bucket. His ravaged face turns toward me, revealing nothing that might be on his mind, but I have an idea. I've learned that as a race, female Ogres are usually sterile, and male Ogres are known to kidnap and hold human females captive in order to make Ogre babies. Mr. Ugly may have been turned into a Bio-Borg but that doesn't mean he no longer gets itchy pants, and with me wearing nothing but a smock and chains, I could do nothing about it if he felt like having his way with me. Then again, he also knows I belong to Commander Varoba, and he doesn't allow mistreatment of his "property" unless he orders it.

The Ogre wheels away and strides back through the door. His hand grips the iron-bound door by its latch bolt and pulls it firmly shut. I sit motionless, listening to the silence and thinking of how hopeless my life has become. The smells of my environment no longer assail me. I guess my relenting sense of despair has allowed me to grow accustomed to the rank and harshness. I can no longer make myself cry over my situation. No matter how much I weep and long for freedom, tears do not come. I've even stopped thinking about escape, a word without meaning here in Atlantis.

My thoughts drift for a time, wandering through memories of my former life, which is sidestepping into the realm of dreams. I catch myself thinking I've always been a slave here in Atlantis. That my eyes have never seen the blue, warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, that I never flew a CSN-117 Shrike back and forth from the *CSS Joseph Prosek* to escort Coalition diplomats to the Republic of Columbia. I must have imagined piloting a Super SAMAS through a category four hurricane in order to fight off an invasion army of aquatic D-Bees attacking Baton Rouge. From

the deepest depth of my mind's eye, I conjured up piloting an AFC-050 from Fort Pinnacle to Chi-Town with General Mican-der Drogue aboard, and him allowing me a two-minute peek at his top-secret prototype of the CAF-1 Stratocarrier. My imagin-ings tell me I hoped to receive a transfer from the *Prosek* to Air Station Alpha, so that I might be allowed to provide the Stratocarrier an air escort on her first mission, and perhaps within a few years, pilot her myself.

I fight the urge to scratch the new acquisition to my tattooed body. I bear sixteen magical tattoos now. It's the first one Varoba actually allowed me to pick myself. I only hope getting it was worth surviving in the arena against three Serpent Beasts. I still hear the sounds of the spectators cheering my slave name, "Calista, Calista, Calista."

I guess several million credits were both won and lost, which of course means the winners were the ones shouting my name. It's only a matter of time before the losers plot to have me fight something lethal enough to kill me, yet allow me a slim fighting chance, that way they'll win back their money. That's why this newest tattoo, the first of my own choosing, has to succeed, it's the only way I can see I'll survive my next match.

The process didn't even hurt this time around. I vaguely remember the initial procedure that turned me into a tattooed freak. The Tattoo Mage pours red goo all over your naked body. The goo becomes a rubbery material, which keeps you alive while the initial twelve tattoos are etched into your flesh. Your whole body convulses with burning agony, as if a surgeon decided to suture you up with a red-hot iron poker. They say without the red goo the victim simply dies. The human body cannot endure having so many tattoos installed at a single time. Nevertheless, for the next two weeks, any movement, even if it's just your big toe, causes shooting pain. The last three times Varoba had me augmented, receiving the tattoo hurt less and less, namely because with each one, I become less human, and more like a D-Bee. All the same, the transformation has not changed my overall looks. I can feel the hateful stares each time I'm taken from my cell for all of Splynn to see. They hate me for my good looks. My long golden hair, my misty blue eyes, and long sleek legs that give rise to a physique of well-defined, feminine curves. Being stationed at Fort Pinnacle granted me year-round access to sunny, Gulf Coast weather, thus every inch of my exposed skin became a permanent, shiny, chestnut brown. I was once told I look Atlantean, hence the reason the current Atlantis population hates me so.

"Why am I allowed to look as I do?" I asked a long time ago. "Why not cut off my hair, poke out my eyes, or blemish my skin?"

"Because they want to see you die," was the response. "They want to see your beauty marred. They relish when someone with your looks is made to suffer and die."

I then asked a truly dumb question, "Why?"

"Because they are the epitome of that which is defined as evil, and no matter what you say or do, they define you as something that is good and beautiful, and for that you must die. Be thankful you've been given a fighting chance, when so many others are sent to the slaughterers."

At the floor of the iron-bound door is an oval shaped opening about 6 inches tall. A wooden tray slides into the room. I glance over to see what sort of breakfast I've been given. Round bread with its center scooped out to form a bowl. It's filled with a yel-

lowish, foul smelling broth full of three-inch long, sausage-sized green caterpillars. There's also a purple tomato, three slices of dark bread, and a small wooden cup full of a white fluid trying to pass itself off as milk, but I doubt it comes from anything mammalian. I've been given this breakfast on numerous occasions. When I first arrived, I would only eat the tomato and bread. Not because I'm squeamish; three months of survival training in the marshes of Louisiana removed that a long time ago. I was more worried about possible side effects. What if the caterpillars made me sick? They were definitely not your garden type butterfly larvae. Yet the moment I learned I was to be forced into gladiator type combat, I knew I had no other choice. My body would require protein, and if these creepy crawlers were going to be my only source then down the hatch, as we used to say in the officers' mess. The night after my first meal of caterpillar stew, I dreamed they burrowed out of my stomach and crawled their way into my brain. I know better now, they're completely digested, yet every so often, the nightmare returns.

I place a caterpillar on a slice of dark bread, tear apart some of the purple tomato, roll up the bread and pretend it's sausage on a bun. My vivid imagination does not allow me to make believe that it tastes as such, nonetheless it's sustenance to keep up my strength.

My restraints only allow my fingers to come within an inch of my face. In fact, I'm manacled in such a way that I cannot touch any part of my body, not even to wipe myself after using the bucket, and all I'll say about it is that I've become inventive with a few rags and a bundle of straw. The reason for all of this restraint is to prevent me from activating my tattoos, having any sort of leverage, and full use of my hands or feet. I once tried to see if I could activate a tattoo by pressing it with my nose, no such luck. I've been told that at some point, I'll be able to activate the magic simply by thinking, but I'm sure they'll have killed me before that time comes. In addition, to guarantee I'm completely powerless, twice a day they throw some kind of talcum powder on me that nullifies the magic. All it takes is some water and it washes right off. If I tried licking it off with my tongue, I'd be dead in less than a minute. The powder is extremely toxic, even to a magical being like me.

I consume everything, including the bread bowl. Then I slide my tray back under the door. I learned rather quickly that if you do not return the tray, the next time around they open the door and throw your meal at you. I find such treatment a peculiar contrast. I'm treated like an animal, yet they expect me to uphold dinner etiquette.

A half hour passes by. I know so because my cybernetic clock-calendar implant tells me so. In fact, all of my cybernetic implants still work. The gyro-compass, the universal head jack & ear implant, security clearance access chip, my I.D. chip, and my tracer/locator chip. The transformation into a tattooed freak did nothing to damage them and surprisingly, my captors did not remove them. Then again, what would be the point? The Coalition will never fly a patrol over Atlantis and pick up my signal, and even if I was detected, no diplomatic party is going to try to negotiate for my release. I'm five ranks below the level where they would consider the option, and even then it depends upon whether or not you're worth the effort. I knew the moment I ejected over the Gulf of Mexico that I was on my own. One of the first things they tell you in flight school is if you go down in

hostile territory and no one arrives within an hour, best of luck. Your only hope is to make your way toward a regularly patrolled region. The world is just too dangerous a place to risk the lives of others for anyone, unless of course, the knowledge in your head is vital and the upper echelons want it kept out of the hands of the enemy, then an entire battalion will come looking for you. Me, on the radar screen of significance, I don't even qualify as a bird. If you somehow make it back alive, you'll be treated like a hero. You're hoisted high in the air with fanfare, parades, a shiny medal will be placed around your neck, and perhaps the bars on your uniform will go from silver to gold.

However, if you don't come back, your friends mourn you for a little while, and maybe a few in the upper echelons who remember you will shed a tear, and at your wake they will speak on how bravely you represented the Coalition, but that's about it. Those with family receive the standard compensation and a letter of bereavement. As soldiers, we live and die for our beloved Coalition; but we don't have time for lamentation, that's the role of a citizen.

The door opens again and a small, cloaked form comes into view. It's a rail thin Elf girl, aged and ruined, her face ravaged by her abusers. Her right arm is missing below the elbow. Varoba's butler, Xoi, told me her fingers, hand, and forearm were served as appetizers for some of Varoba's guests a few weeks ago; apparently, the kitchen ran a little short. I mourn her tragedy, but not enough to trade places with her. My odds are no better but at least I have a fighting chance.

Mr. Ugly pushes his way into the cell, knocking her out of the way.

I pull back against the chains that prevent me from leaving this room.

Out of her dress pocket, she produces a key and unlocks the chain around my waist that binds me to the wall. I stumble forward, one foot in front of the other. My strides are held in check by the yellow iron chains worn around my ankles. I await a shove by Mr. Ugly, he likes watching me pick myself up. It also gives him a delightful view of my backside. I'm not sure what thrills him more, the abuse or the show.

It takes us ten minutes to traverse the maze of dark and shadowed corridors, hallways filled with doors similar to mine. As I walk by I can feel the cold and emptiness as row after row of these doors pass my field of vision. The sound of my chains fills my ears, but every so often, I briefly hear the distant sound of moaning and the clanging of iron.

Glass globes containing liquid light flare before us in the corridor until we finally arrive at a wooden door. Ugly opens the door and motions me inside. It's a circular stone chamber about thirty feet in diameter. It's an empty room except for Xoi, a ten foot tall Shaydorian Intel. So far, he's been the kindest individual I've met since arriving here in Atlantis three years ago. I stand beside him while Ugly stands guard outside. Xoi mutters to me in American, "Are you doing well this morning?"

"As well as expected."

Circulating ten feet above Xoi's head are mirrored windows. We can't see who is looking down on us, but we both know who's up there. Varoba wants to inspect his merchandise, and make sure my first tattoo choice was worth the credits he paid for it.

Xoi removes my smock to give Varoba a full view of my nude, tattooed body. We dare not look up, even though we can't see him. It's his version of control. If either of us disobeys, Mr. Ugly will come in here and beat us both senseless.

A booming voice from up above speaks in a language I've yet to understand.

"He wants to know where the new tattoo is." Xoi says.

I tell him it's the one on my right side just below my armpit. He adjusts me so it can be seen from up above.

The voice says something else.

"What sort of creature is it?"

"An arm lizard," I reply.

"A what?"

"An arm lizard."

"What in the Forge is that?"

"A North American giant reptile."

"And you picked it out yourself?"

"Arkiopex showed me pictures of various beasts. I chose this one."

"Why?"

We've ignored Varoba for too long. He pipes in angrily. Xoi points to the tattoo and tells him all that I've said, knowing full well that I'm deliberately being vague. He may not have a human head, but I can tell there is a worried look on his face and tone in his voice.

Silence for what seems an eternity. Then the voice makes a long-winded reply, and then I hear what I suppose could be belatedly laughing. I hear Xoi swallow the lump in his throat, then he makes a nervous chuckle.

"I don't know how you do it, but you continue to amuse him."

"That's what they said about my drill sergeant back in basic."

Two hours later, I'm at the Arena of Champions preparing for my match. The word humongous does not even come close to describing the arena. The stadium in the fortress city of Chitown seats over 50,000 people, and it would fit inside this arena with twice the room to spare. However, the entertainment is quite different. You won't find singers, musicians, professional sports, racing, or anything resembling civilized society. The only thing the inhabitants of Atlantis like watching is living things brutally punished, maimed and/or killed. For the most part, humans make up a large percentage of victim fodder. I'm told there are some individuals who are regarded as champions or "sport heroes" and their competitions are usually not lethal, but that is because they are "free" and choose to be a professional combatant. Prisoners and slaves like me are not given a choice, nor do we have the option of surrendering. We either survive or die, and all surviving does is guarantee that you won't die today, but should expect it in the near future. I've learned not to focus on the loop of death, otherwise it will make it all the easier for your opponent to kill you. In order to live, I have to focus on surviving, however that does not mean I must avoid thinking about revenge. Such thinking I do not consider a hindrance, but an added incentive pushing me to succeed.

Shortly after I arrive, I receive a welcomed pampering. For some bizarre reason, this monster society likes to see their victims looking their best before they die. They beat them down until they're nothing but skin and bone, yet when it's time for the axe to come down they want them squeaky clean. Before each fight, I'm given a sponge bath, healed of any ailments, and given fresh garments to wear for the occasion. I must admit I enjoy the pampering. Varoba has also decided my attire shall remain the same, a bronze colored, chain mail, two-piece bikini. It barely covers anything; fortunately, I wear a red cloak pinned at the shoulder with a circular broach on which is Varoba's insignia. My only true complaint would have to be the gladiator sandals; there is nothing attractive about them.

Prisoners and slaves like me are required to wait our turn in small cages a little bigger than your average broom closet. We are not able to see the fighting in the arena, nor does anyone tell us the results. You can't rely on crowd noise because they're always yelling, unless somebody they really despise dies or a large number win a big purse, then they really start to cheer, and therein lies the reason why some of us are given a fighting chance: money, the driving force of Splynn.

The prisoner and slave competitions cater toward the savage appetites of the spectators who want to see blood and mutilation, however the spectators are also looking to cash in all the millions of credits waged on our survival. Well before any of us are brought out, the spectators are treated to a parade of the combatants and monsters the event planners have prepared for us. Brochures tell the viewing audience which of us is performing and they get to decide which monsters they want us to fight, thereby they have control over their level of entertainment. There's no logic to how the audience selects our matches, the loudest majority simply shout our name out when a particular combatant or monster is presented. However, there is a small percentage within the crowd who possess the inside details of our strengths and capabilities. Therefore, if the audience *really* wants you dead, they'll vote for the sure thing that will kill you, but if they want to prolong your death or force you to provide them a good spectacle, they'll give you the so-called "fighting chance" and they'll bet on the odds of you dying. Conversely, those with the inside knowledge will make the counter-bet that we'll not only survive but we'll end up victorious. Therefore, the safe gamble is the monster, choose the right one and you could strike it rich. Because of the huge sums of money exchanged back and forth, it's the main reason why Mr. Ugly and a number of other bodyguards are down here. The Splugorth do not want anyone thinking the competitions are fixed. They also do not want to take a chance on any slaves escaping. I'm not sure which of the two is the bigger concern.

While I'm mentally preparing for my match, I ignore everything going on around me. I could care less about who else is in this hell with me, although my heart swells whenever I see Sir Vealmor, the three-hundred-year old Elf Cyber-Knight Crusader. He's been fighting the forces of darkness and protecting the helpless since even before the end of the Dark Age. Twenty-seven times he's been brought to the arena and each time he's killed whatever they put up against him. Twenty-seven times. No slave or prisoner has a record that comes even close to his; heck, this is only my fifth fight. Most don't make it past their seventh.

When slaves and prisoners are victorious, they put them in a large cell room with a big window to view the arena. This is your

only opportunity to watch the spectacle. However, make no mistake; this is not a reward, but a way of breaking your spirit. Victors are made to see that in the end, you will die eventually. Those who've survived yesterday and today, in time, will meet their end in the arena. There is no hope of escape, just the inevitability that you will one day lie down in a pool of your own blood. All the same, Sir Vealmor represents the ultimate nuisance. He won't die and he refuses to be beaten. After my last match, I watched him take on a... demon. I believe Xoi called it a Baal-Rog. The thing was gigantic in stature, the epitome of your worst nightmare, and he killed it with just two psychic energy swords, at least as far as I could tell. The moment it died, he jumped upon its chest, with his arm raised, yelling the most defiant war cry I've ever heard. Why he wasn't simply shot right then and there, I don't know. The demon vanished, leaving no trace of its existence, just Sir Vealmor standing there in defiance of an angry crowd of several thousand monsters and D-Bees. I only wish such a sight could have been televised so everyone back in the Coalition and the Republic of Columbia could have seen it. Sir Vealmor might be an unsavory D-Bee, but what he represented at that moment is the same spirit in the hearts of every human trying to endure this relentless war to exterminate our existence from this world.

Two heavily armed Overlords arrive to escort me to the arena floor. Ugly opens my cell and urges me out. I open my eyes, rise to my feet, and follow them. It takes us about five minutes to reach a small platform where a hovercraft awaits us. Ugly makes a guttural sound to get my attention. I look over at him and he waves at me as if to say, 'Have a nice trip.' I return the gesture with one of my own.

The two Overlords and I board the hovercraft, which brings us out of a tunnel for all to see. It's at this point that I find myself truly liberated. I know that may seem strange, surrounded by thousands of monsters, all of whom want me dead, but at no other time have I've been able to focus so intently on a single task. Sure, I passed my exams and made something of myself as a Coalition soldier. I led my squadron on numerous successful missions. Heck, I saved a Columbian diplomat's life from an ambush. Yet at none of those times did I face insurmountable odds. There is nothing in my former life to compare it to. Every time I step into this arena I have to will myself to survive, and there is little in my Coalition training that I can use to help me, except for one rule of thumb the upper command made us memorize each day.

Know in your heart that you are a noble warrior asked to do terrible things so that one day we can know lasting peace and safety. Do not doubt what you know to be true.

My old life died the day that Slaver Barge snatched me out of the ocean and brought me here. Amber Desjardins was lost to the sea three years ago. She has no living family. She did her duty and sacrificed herself for the greater good, insuring the Coalition and humanity will survive. This I know to be true, yet I am very much alive. If I must choose between death and living out the rest of my days as an ungodly monster, then I pick the latter. Obtaining lasting peace and safety for myself can be mine if and only if I survive my next opponent.

Speaking of which, it approaches, rising from the lower depths beneath the arena floor as if it were the Devil himself. I stare at it, trying to recall if I've ever seen anything like it before, a

reptilian humanoid with a broad chest and pale blue-green skin with larger yellow scales. There are two rows of sharp, hook-like spines protruding from its back. It's wielding a large, two-handed, double-headed black axe with smoke pouring off the top, a most definitely magical weapon.

I continue to stare at him. There is a mean-spirited sneer upon his face. He looks very committed to the fight.

Good, so am I.

I touch the tattoo on my left forearm of two-crossed flaming swords with long, straight blades dripping blood. Magically manifesting in my right hand is a claymore sword powerful enough to damage the strongest alien materials, or the skin of any supernatural creature. Three years ago, I could not have wielded this weapon to save my life. Since then, my survival instincts have kicked in enough that I've been more than capable of defending myself and taking off my opponent's head.

I'm not sure how much time passes by. I space out the moment, staring at this reptile man. Suddenly, he charges, and then it occurs to me, he's a Vanguard Brawler, I wonder where they found him?

I bring up my sword just in time to parry his massive axe, but the force of his blow knocks me back. He hastily swings again. Despite the weapon's size, he brandishes it effortlessly, as if he'd been trained since childhood. My sword resists each of his blows, but the impacts jar me to my bones.

Man, his weapon stinks, I groan, as another blow squashes me to the ground. It smells funkier than a soldier on patrol in the Louisiana marshes who spent too many days in his power armor. I've seen tech guys practically vomit the moment the hatch is opened.

I count the seconds between each axe swing, then, with on target timing, I roll out of the way during a pause between his blows. He starts to swing, but not before I strike him across his scaly chest. The sword leaves a red scratch that he barely seems to notice.

I didn't think they'd send me up against a fragile opponent who'd die from a single blow. Thankfully, he's not grinning and laughing, otherwise I'd really have cause to worry.

Abruptly, I'm on the ground clutching my throat, unable to breathe. The smoke from his axe hangs around me like a cloud. I find myself writhing in desperation for oxygen. Yet reptile man makes a critical error in watching me struggle instead of following up with an attack. I've seen it before. The aggressor chooses to watch, savoring the end of an enemy's life instead of finishing him off. He also assumes I'm done for. Yes, I ought to be near death, having been cut off from fresh oxygen, but I'm no longer an ordinary human. With sixteen magic tattoos on my body, my essence has been charged with enough mystical energy to make me almost as durable as a Coalition SAMAS.

I'm on my knees in a heartbeat. Seeing me start to recover, he charges. I raise my weapon but I'm not ready to withstand another blow. His axe slams into my shoulder. I clutch the wound with my free hand. Definitely don't want that to happen again.

I ready myself for his next move, while watching carefully for a chance to go on the offensive. He swings at my legs, so I leap over it. I swing at his head. He easily parries it with his axe. He tries again for my legs. Since he wants them so bad, I decide to

give him one. I parry his strike, then follow it with a kick to his jaw. It snaps his head around and sends a tooth flying.

I try for another kick but he rams his fist into my midsection, and it nearly knocks the wind out of me. I blink blurry eyes, trying to shake the fogginess from my head. He comes charging at me, so I dive to the ground, roll out of his way, and spring up to my feet. My hand touches the bulge on my abdomen, not only out of pain but also to activate my lightning bolt tattoo.

He turns and charges. I release a blast of electrical energy. It slams into him, knocking him to the ground. As he starts to rise up, I rip into him with two more energy blasts. He shakes and jitters for several seconds before collapsing.

I take a moment to look in the direction of Varoba. I see him in his usual front row seat with Ugly standing behind him. The distance between the arena floor and the front row seats, I estimate it to be nearly thirty-five feet. There is also one of a dozen sculpted stone heads and busts encircling the pit beside him. I've seen them become animated and brought to life to protect the crowd from any direct attack made by gladiators or monsters. Furthermore, there is a protective, magical force field every ten feet to keep incidental or indirect contact from injuring the spectators. This magical safety screen rises an additional ten feet above the front row.

The time has come. Live or die time. In either case, I will have my revenge and/or freedom.

I turn and run toward Varoba's direction, allowing the Brawler to regain his senses. I hear the confusion in the crowd. They're wondering what my intentions are.

I stop and wait for him to recover. I even motion for him to join me. I make a sidelong glance in Varoba's direction. I'm just fifteen feet away from the wall.

The Brawler comes at me like a missile. I wait until he's within twelve feet.

I touch the arm lizard tattoo.

When I told Xoi that the monster tattoo was an arm lizard, I wasn't lying. My mother had been a Coalition research scientist, which meant she studied things that the government told her to pretend didn't exist. On one of her expeditions, she traveled along the Gulf Coast studying the indigenous gigantic reptiles that people before the Great Cataclysm called dinosaurs. Mother found them fascinating. She wanted to learn all that she could about them just for knowledge's sake, but the twenty-year plan for the Coalition expansion did not include territory occupied by dinosaurs, so they told her to pack up and return home. Nonetheless, she enjoyed her time there and sent me photographs and her reports of her findings. The moment I saw the tattoo drawing for the dinosaur, I brooded over whether the Splugorth High Lord Tattoo Artist appreciated what exactly this animal could do. The Splugorth are quite cautious about what sorts of tattoos slaves can obtain. Certain monster and power tattoos are restricted depending upon your slave and/or prisoner status. Apparently, this particular High Lord didn't believe that a Brachiosaurus (which is pre-Rifts Greek for arm lizard) couldn't be used for anything in violation of Splugorth law. Furthermore, Varoba mistakenly thought I was an uninformed soldier with no familiarity with wild animals and lacked the insight to notice and/or choose anything potentially ungoverned.

The moment the dinosaur manifests, the whole arena goes dead silent. My opponent finds himself nearly underfoot. My sauropod measures eighty-two feet long, with its head forty-eight feet above the ground, weighing in the vicinity of fifty-five tons. Dragons are big, the Great Horned Dragon that teleported in front of my Shrike and caused me to crash in the first place blocked out the sun, but this Brachiosaurus of mine is even bigger.

My opponent just stands there with his face glazed with shock, making it all the easier for my pet to lift up its front foot and squash him like a bug.

The crowd continues to stare with fascinated horror as I take up a stance between its forelegs. The silence slowly begins to dissipate, and is replaced by a surge of boos and moans made by those disappointed that I survived yet again.

I glance upward and see Varoba rejoicing in my success, but I know better. I can even see the stress line forming on his brow. The Splugorth will be questioning him about how I obtained the dino tattoo. They are not going to be happy with him, and his highly prized position within the hierarchy is in serious jeopardy.

He rises to his feet and salutes me. Ugly stands behind him with all four arms crossed over his chest. I lower my head and drop to my knees, showing my submission to my master, which is my cue to dispel the dinosaur, but I don't. Instead, I pulse a command into its magical brain.

The fact the sculpted heads didn't open fire on the dinosaur the moment I created him and allowed me to get this close to the wall, revealed what I always suspected about this monster city: they really know nothing about dinosaurs and their capabilities. Well, it's time I give them a lesson.

Sauropods are like aircraft carriers, slow and methodical, with easily identifiable offensive capabilities, but their defensive talents go unnoticed. Sauropods can negate magic and dispel magical barriers equal to the skills of true magic users. So with almost no effort, the force field protecting Varoba from debris and stray projectiles/energy bolts is no more. I stay in my kneeling position, appearing to be submissive to my master. Nobody seems to be aware of what's going on. I can tell Varoba's psychic powers activate because his eyes suddenly widen in alarm.

I raise my head, smile maliciously, and make a graphic gesture towards him, and with his complete attention on me, the Brachiosaurus rears back and rams its head right into Varoba's chest. Had he been wearing any kind of armor or received some kind of Bio-Wizardry he might have survived. Instead, his body explodes into a cloud of gore and red mist, with the majority ending up on Ugly.

I expect the guards or the statues to immediately open fire on me, yet to my complete astonishment, I'm led away to an interrogation room. There High Lord Azizad (Overseer of the Arena of Champions) and his entourage question me for about an hour. I think for sure this is where I'll meet my end, or at least be tortured for a few days. Instead, they take their anger out on Varoba and High Lord Arkiopex. Varoba was sort of a field naturalist in charge of determining the value of alien and animal life forms as slaves and/or potential minions. As far as the Splugorth are concerned, he failed in his slave master duties, and those of his authoritative position. They blame his death on his own arrogance and intellectual failures. I'm not aware of what became of the

High Lord Tattoo Artist. I've never heard of the Splugorth severely punishing one of their elite minions before, so who knows what befell him.

As for myself, I receive a promotion to servant status for Azizad. It doesn't sound that different, but trust me, it's a huge improvement. My new position instills me the "freedom" to travel throughout Atlantis and to accompany Slavers and other elite minions to capture and extract dinosaurs from the Gulf and East Coast of North America in a region the Coalition referred to as Dinosaur Swamp. Therefore, in a sense, I've been given the opportunity to return home, well, not really. Like all lesser minions of the Splugorth, my movements are heavily monitored and everything I do is regarded with suspicion. I've already proved myself a liability by killing my previous owner, but the Splugorth regard it more as a failure on his part and not so much as a strategic insurrection on my end. Nonetheless, the excessive surveillance tells me they are concerned about what I might do next.

That is where I'm at as of this moment. I suppose I "could" attempt an escape, although I risk getting captured and killed on sight. They've provided me more than enough rope to hang myself. With each trip to Dinosaur Swamp, it's like the Splugorth are edging me on. "*Go ahead, try and see what happens if you escape, maybe you'll make it, maybe you won't.*" What do I do if I successfully get away? Where do I go? I can't return to the Coalition, not unless there's a way to wash off these tattoos. I'd register big time on the noses of the mutts and their spooky, zombie-like handlers. Even if I sent word out to my friends and superiors of my survival, they'd regard it with heavy suspicion. If I told them I'd been a prisoner of Atlantis, well you can bet they'd really be looking for me, and I wouldn't be welcomed back with open arms for sure. I'd be considered a prisoner of war, interrogated and forced to reveal all that I'd seen and heard.

So what is the answer for me? Stay put, living a life where giant eyeballs are monitoring me in my sleep or when I take a leak, or run away and try my hand at surviving on my own in the wilderness. Hmm, tough choice. Yet all my life I've had to make the tough decisions and so far, I've never betrayed myself or surrendered to adversity. I'll make a decision soon, but first I'm going to the Arena of Champions with Xoi and my one armed Elf servant, Eldora, to watch Ugly fight Sir Vealmor. I have put most of my earnings on the Cyber-Knight, and if he is successful, we will make enough to buy Eldora a new arm. However, in keeping with my Splugorth position, I did put a side bet on Ugly, only the Coalition soldier in me felt it was necessary to remove his extra pair of arms, otherwise it wouldn't be a fair fight. Ah, it feels good to be in the pilot's seat once again.

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Rifts® Vampire Kingdoms™

A Sneak Peak of the new, Revised & Expanded Edition

By Kevin Siembieda



Excerpts from Doc Reid's Report:

Understanding the Vampire Pestilence

The following are a few choice excerpts from a secret report compiled by the famous Vampire Hunter, *Doc Reid*, circa 108 P.A. Commissioned by the Council of Learning at Lazlo, the document had been shared with the Kingdom of Tolkeen, so it is possible it has fallen into the hands of the Coalition States after the Kingdom fell to the Coalition Army in 109 P.A. If this is the case, the document would have been classified as *Top Secret* while heads of the CS Army Military Intelligence and Propaganda Department evaluate the data and decide if any action should be taken.

The Vampire Pathology

I have found the behavior of vampires to emulate that of disease. Thus, I often refer to them as a pathogen and think of them as a plague. The vampire pathogen starts with a supernatural creature known as a **Vampire Intelligence**; a being of consider-

able power and worshiped as a god by the vampires who serve it. The Intelligence exists in another dimension beyond our physical borders of reality and can not physically enter our plane of existence until a certain number of conditions have been met. The most notable being a minimum number of vampires born of its specific pathogen. The spreading of the Vampire pathogen must start with a willing "host" born in our mortal world. This is a mad man who wants to become an Undead Vampire for selfish or evil reasons. Tales of immortality via undeath and superhuman powers are enough to attract some people to forsake their humanity, betray their people and become a Master Vampire – the vector or "carrier" that spreads the disease and creates more undead. Exactly how a person makes contact with the Vampire Intelligence to become the carrier is not yet known, but it may very well have to do with evil intent, dedication to evil and pure luck.

In the world of vampires, the carrier is known as the **Master Vampire**. They are also sometimes known as the **Maker Vampire** and many become self-appointed Vampire Lords, Kings and Emperors who hold positions of power at the top of vampire society and command undead hordes. It is the Master Vampire who creates other vampires and they in turn create more and spread the pestilence of vampirism. Each created by this chain of heredity all answer the Master Vampire and his creator, the Vampire Intelligence. The Master may be male or female, and is, as a rule, the most intelligent, powerful and cunning of the vampires.

There is a narrow window of opportunity here when an infestation is just beginning, use it. For the first few weeks, the new born vampire – or in the vernacular of vampires, those "reborn" as the undead – are disoriented, frightened and uncertain. They behave rather like young children and look to their creator, the Master Vampire, for explanation, instruction and protection. During this short orientation period, the reborn undead remain near the Master who made them. Find and slay the Master and all of these first few creations, and you can contain the localized infestation in its tracks and stop it, but you must act quickly. Once the vampires created by the Master begin to spread out on their own, they can create more of their kind, spreading like a disease and creating an epidemic that can leave thousands dead in its wake. Like any swiftly spreading disease, the greatest fear is a pandemic and the loss of millions. Frankly, I'm a bit surprised the vampires of Mexico have not made such a move, but I fear it is only a matter of time.

The living dead created by the Master are known as **Secondary Vampires**, or sometimes as, Common Vampires, and many other nomenclatures. They possess many of the same powers and abilities as the Master Vampire, including the power to make more vampires. However, they are not as intelligent or powerful, and possess a greater range of weaknesses and vulnerabilities. Though intelligent, Secondary Vampire exhibit a more savage nature ruled by hunger and feral instincts. They have more difficulty controlling their base desires and possess a smaller range of skills. Furthermore, they instinctively recognize the Master Vampire as their superior and seldom challenge his authority.

Without the Master to serve as the starting point and “carrier,” vampirism can not be spread. This misanthrope is the beginning, but not the end. The disease of vampirism is so insidious that once it has begun to spread, it is almost impossible to quarantine and stop.

One reason for this, is that unlike true germs, the Secondary Vampires are both the disease and additional carriers.

Another reason is that Secondary Vampires embrace the monsters they have become, and fight anyone trying to stop the spread of contamination. You might think they would hate becoming monsters. A real human would, but that’s what you must understand, a vampire, though he may appear to be human or even bear the face and memories of a loved one, that person is dead and a monster has assumed his appearance. The person you once knew, is gone.

There are also **Wild Vampires**, the savage predatory of the Undead Vampires’ hierarchy; more on them later.



Humanity Gone

I apologize if I am confusing you with my reference to *disease*. Allow me to clarify. I am not saying vampires are people afflicted with a disease or that vampirism can be cured, it can not. I am saying vampires *are* the disease. Their behavior mimics that of pathogen. A human being who becomes an Undead Vampire is dead and gone. He is beyond help or a cure, because he is dead.

Let me repeat that: A human being who becomes a vampire is dead and gone.

I will discuss the process by which a person becomes a vampire later. What you need to understand is the process that turns a human into a vampire is fast and it is *fatal*. The victim dies. The vampire’s bite starts the transformation. Three successive bites over a short period of time kills the victim. The only way to prevent death is to slay the Master or Secondary Vampire responsible for the attacks before the victim dies.

This is the part people have the most trouble accepting and understanding. Your loved one slain by a vampire is dead. There is no cure for death. Not even vampirism. Those who tell you otherwise are liars or fools.

Despite the legends and lies perpetuated by the vampires themselves, there is no coming back from the dead. Your wife, husband, sister, brother, best friend, killed by a vampire is dead. It is imperative you understand and accept this hard fact. The abomination that rises from the grave as a vampire may bear the face of the person you knew in life, but he or she is not that individual. The vampire is a demon, a monster, who now wears the face and body of the person you knew just as you might wear a suit of environmental armor. It is a *disguise* these vile demons use to trick the living to get close enough to feed upon us, enslave us, and create more of their kind.

Terms such as “undead” and “living dead,” which even I use from time to time, may confuse the reality of what the vampire really is. Such terms are misnomers, because the victim of a vampire is neither “living” or “undead,” but something completely new and inhuman. Every vampire that is born, replaces one of us with a monster. That’s not your loved one any more, it is a monstrous abomination patterned after the person who died. A monster that has stolen bits of memory, skills and identity from the person who died to uses them to disguise itself as human.

Vampires and the Human Illusion

The person you knew in life is no more. He died when the vampire slew him. In his place stands a demon that has stolen that person’s appearance and mimics some of his personality, but this thing is not that person nor is it human. This is a monster. A predator in human clothing. A cunning monster that uses human appearance to cause hesitation, confusion and even acceptance from us. Do not be fooled.

I have found people respond well thinking of vampires in the context of the old children’s story **Little Red Riding Hood**. That’s not grandmother any more, that’s a wolf in granny’s clothing and skin. And my, oh my, what big teeth grandma has. The better to eat you with, my dears.

Remember that, and like Little Red Riding Hood, you may survive your encounter with a vampire. I’m serious.

Just as the wolf was not grandma, a vampire is not human. It never was and can never be human. As far as I can tell, it is an animated corpse inhabited by a tiny fragment of the Vampire Intelligence. The *Slow Kill* of its victim over a period of several nights enables the Intelligence, via its Master or Secondary Vampire carrier, to infect and take over the body of its victim three days after the person dies. This process also enables the monster within to draw upon some the memories, personality and skills of the person the vampire has slain. Thus, the thing that rises from the grave is not the person who died, but a monster using the victim’s brain patterns to appear to be a shadow of that individual.

It is a brilliant disguise, because we humans tend to believe what we see, not what we know to be true. Case in point, when we see grandma, even though we saw her *die*, we don’t see a monster, we see our grandma. Somehow, seeing her standing there smiling sweetly and beckoning to us to give her a hug, causes our emotions to override reason. It’s granny. It’s a miracle. Give her a big hug.

Wrong. It's an abomination. Grandma died. You saw it. You know it. This is not grandmother. It is a demon and a pestilence that wants to kill you and drink your blood, or use the Slow Kill to slay you and turn your body into another murderous vampire. Reading this on paper may sound obvious and easy, but when faced with it in person, it is another story. I have seen Juicers and hardened war vets rush into the arms of grandma, or their wife or child, only to have their throats ripped open and blood drained by a monster who finds it funny.

Even those of us who never knew the woman as grandma sees an innocent old woman. A fellow human being. A mother figure. It makes us hesitate and that gives the monster the edge it needs to launch an attack. Whether the vampire is an eight year old, eighteen year old or eighty year old, it is difficult to imagine that *fellow human* as a monster. It's the way we, as humans, are hard-wired, and the Undead Vampires take advantage of it. To survive, we need to learn to override our ingrained behavior patterns. If you know the person is a vampire risen from the grave, strike without hesitation or regret. You are killing a monster in grandma's skin, not grandma. This is apparent when grandma picks up a half ton Combat Cyborg and tosses him aside like a rag doll, or turns to mist, or lunges at you with fangs bared and eyes glowing like red hot coals. Only by then, it may be too late.

(Also see *Appearance* under Vampire Powers.)

Dispelling the Myth

Despite the preponderance of hard evidence and even anecdotal reports to the contrary, there persists a romantic notion that vampires are tragic figures who can be saved or redeemed. Some people even cling to the idea of "heroic vampires" that are able to maintain their humanity and suppress predatory instincts. Such "good vampires" do not exist. To believe otherwise is to open yourself and those around the vampire to danger.

1. As I have already made clear, the vampire is not your grandma, husband or child. It is a supernatural monster using your loved one's appearance for its own evil purpose.

2. Vampires, all vampires, are consumed with only two things: hunger and sating that hunger through killing. Sating the hunger is everything. Undead Vampires are killing machines. Killing is what they do. A vampire that claims otherwise is lying to you or itself.

3. A vampire who believes itself to be the person who died and whose identity it has stolen, is confused and deranged. Sooner or later, the monster will accept its true nature or be unable to suppress the hunger and kill.

4. Vampires use the *illusion of humanity* with great cunning and skill. They can make themselves seem quite ordinary and innocent, and no different than you or I. They can make themselves seem likeable, caring and kind, or sympathetic, vulnerable and sincere. Regardless, it is all a deception to get close to their prey: YOU. Their convincing acting abilities are aided by the monsters' powers of mind control and metamorphosis. (See *Appearance* under Vampire Powers.)

I must confess, I have encountered **Delude Vampires** who honestly believe they are the person they were in life, afflicted with the "curse of vampirism." These lost souls are in denial about what they are and mistake the memories and emotions of

the slain person whose body they have stolen, to be their own. I don't doubt that some of these Deluded Vampires torture themselves by denying their true nature. I have seen some battle the wickedness that swells within their breasts and the hunger that drives them to kill. Some sincerely try to be human and maintain their human identity for a remarkably long period of time. Even under torture and pain of death, I have seen Deluded Vampires insist, with their last dying breath, they are not monsters and can control their predatory instincts.

They are wrong, of course.

Just as a leopard cannot change its spots, a vampire cannot be something it is not. ALL vampires need blood or die. Though the vampire who clings to shadows of humanity may try to be human, it needs blood to survive. The blood may be offered freely by a friend or loved one, but the creature must feed upon somebody. Animal blood cannot be substituted, and the blood of *D-Bees* requires twice as much because it is only half as fulfilling and nutritious. Some so-called *Heroic Vampires* rationalize feeding on their enemies and only kill to feed without ever turning their victims into vampires. Others draw blood from willing donors via sanitized medical procedure, but how is any of this different than the monsters of the Vampire Kingdoms? How are those who offer their blood freely any different than the human cattle and servants of evil vampires? And are they offering their blood freely, or is there subtle mind control taking place? Such practices are nothing more than an attempt to rationalize the aberrant behavior of the vampire and deny the truth: The vampire is a predatory monster who lusts for the blood of humans and lives to hunt and kill humanoid prey.

In the end, a single vampire will kill at least several dozen people in the course of a year. Hundreds or thousands in its life time. The vampire *must* feed on blood. If denied blood, the monster becomes desperate to feed or starves. In time, the hunger becomes obsession and, like a starving mad dog, the monster will attack and feed upon anyone, including the mortals it claims to love above all others. I have proven this a thousand times over. Vampires can not control their need for blood. When push comes to shove, vampire instinct takes over and it is humans and D-Bees who pay the price every single time. A Deluded Vampire in denial may insist he had no choice or lost control. He may sob and proclaim to hate himself for his reprehensible acts of murder to momentarily quench his unquenchable thirst, but it won't stop him from doing so again, and again, and again. The monster can't help himself. It all comes down to survival, and the survival instincts of the vampire supercedes all others.

We are human, they are not. We are the prey. Vampires the hunter. Never doubt that.

Wicked is as Wicked Does

Cruelty, sadism and vampires

Undead Vampires live to dominate, terrify and feed upon inferior humanoid life. Humans and D-Bees are regarded as prey to be hunted, and in the Vampire Kingdoms, we are cattle bred, corralled, butchered and devoured. They also use humans and D-Bees as slaves and servant, pets and playthings. All too often pets and playthings are made to satisfy the demons' sadistic pleasures and base emotions. They are beaten, raped, tortured and humiliated a



The wickedness and sadism of vampires is so reprehensible that a newly risen vampire often seeks out the *loved ones* of the deceased whose body the monster now wears, as his first victims. The vile creature is drawn to the family and friends not because of the fond memories and emotions he has stolen from the deceased, but to make a mockery of them and destroy everything he once held dear. What a rush it is to return from the grave as daddy or mommy to rip the life from the children and spouse. The delicious horror from the children as their life is bled out of them, one by one, by darling daddy or loving mother is the best thrill-kill high the vampire will ever know in its eternal life. And just to be cruel, the new vampire may decide to turn the wife or little sister or sweet auntie into a vampire like itself. I know this, because it has been told to me by hundreds of undead before I had the pleasure of taking their horrible life.

All mortals are considered lesser beings, but as terrible as humans are treated, **D-Bees**, get it even worse. The less human a D-Bee's appearance, the more humiliation and suffering the poor being will suffer at the hands of vampires. The food pens of the Vampire Kingdoms are 50% D-Bees, and D-Bee slaves are treated like mules and barely worthwhile. One vampire told me they are little more than a barn cat or scurvy old dog. Vampires behave like playground bullies when it comes to all of their slaves and servants, laughing at every misstep, accident and plea for mercy. Like a malicious child pulling the feathers from an injured bird, the vampire picks and pokes and pries until the mortal curls up into a sobbing ball of misery. If the pitiable slave is lucky, his evil masters find this satisfying or hilarious and lets him live again. If the slave is unlucky, his tormentors may find this a disappointing end to an evening of fun and games, and feed upon him, kill him or torture him for many more hours.

thousand different ways. The majority of vampires, regardless of their station, enjoy inflicting fear and suffering in all its forms, from the physical to the psychological. I find many people do not realize the undead not only drink blood, but are *psychic vampires* that immerse themselves in dark emotions. Fear, hate, sorrow, agony are all sweet nectar to Undead Vampires. When a vampire kills and feeds, the monster soaks up the delectable quintessence of life tinged with the tantalizing flavor of terror or ecstasy that only a vampire can evoke. When the mortals around them quake in terror or tremble with hate, vampires get an endorphin rush making them feel aroused and powerful. Thus, an environment of despair, sorrow and suffering in and around the Vampire Kingdoms is not an accident of vampire culture, but quite deliberate. The more miserable, demoralized and hopeless their servants and slaves feel, the more delicious and enjoyable the environment for the vampires.

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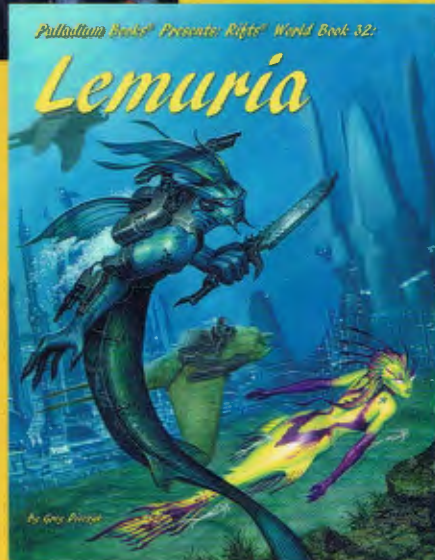
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