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THE

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Coming Attractions, News, & More

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

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



## The Rifter® Number 73

## Your Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

## PDF Edition – December 2017

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**Palladium Books® Presents:**

# THE RIFTER® #73



## **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 this issue, especially new contributors. Our apologies to anybody who may have gotten accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

– *Kevin Siembieda, 2016*



# Contents – The Rifter® #73 – Winter, 2016

## Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Publisher Kevin Siembieda covers a number of subjects including the fact that 2016 is *Palladium Books' 35th Anniversary*, why **The Rifter® #73** has entirely “official” content, The Rifter® Super-Subscription Drive, what’s going on behind the scenes, and how our imaginations are working overtime. And he’s right, you should see all the exciting projects we are working on. Happy New Year! 2016 is promising to be a great one.

## Page 7 – Palladium News

Some of the latest things going on at Palladium, **Rifts® Savage Worlds** being voted the most anticipated new RPG of 2016 by EN World, plans for **Robotech® RPG Tactics™**, some of the many conventions running Palladium gaming events, Kevin and Chuck are guests at Anime North in May, and other good stuff. They hope to see many of you there at Anime North and at AdeptiCon and Gen Con.

## Page 9 – Coming Attractions

We have big plans for new book releases in 2016. We expect to be supporting many of our game lines including the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Rifts®, Robotech®, Heroes Unlimited, Splicers®** and others. Read all about them.

## Page 15 – The Rifter® Super-Subscription Offer – Offer #232016 Ends March 20, 2016

The online offer happened throughout February, as always, but we don’t want any of our loyal subscribers to miss out. We know some of you do not have Internet access and wait for this offer in the pages of *The Rifter®* to re-subscribe. Well, here it is. Offer #232016 ends March 20, 2016.

## Page 16 – The Triumvirate Dragon™ – Official material for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

The iconic image of the a three-headed dragon graced the original cover of the 1983 **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®**, but it has never been described. Until now. Writer *Glen Evans* made this realization and it was his history and ideas for the **Triumvirate Dragon** that inspired creator *Kevin Siembieda* to run with the ideas and take them even further. The Triumvirate Dragon is not your typical dragon. If you are looking for depth of storytelling, conspiracy and a touch of the bizarre, you are really going to enjoy this dragon. A creature so nuanced and steeped in mystery, that it presents adventure ideas in and of itself. So beware the cunning and secrets of the Triumvirate Dragon™.

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Page 18 – The Truth about Triumvirate Dragons

Page 19 – Important Combat Notes

Page 19 – Destroying all three heads

Page 19 – Hydra healing powers

Page 20 – Hiding in plain sight

Page 21 – Triumvirate Dragon Stats

Page 22 – Natural Abilities

Page 23 – Personalities of the Three Heads

Page 25 – Rifts® Conversion Notes

Artwork by *Kevin Siembieda*.

## Page 26 – Forest Children™ – Official material for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

Kevin Siembieda, writer and creator of the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, gives us an in-depth look at the deceptive power and dangers of the *Forest Children* – Faerie Folk. Only the Wolfen and Kankoran truly understand these mercurial creatures of magic, and that behind their veneer of cuteness lies beings best not to be trifled with. Includes the Wolfen’s guidelines for dealing with Faeries, insight about Faeries, what they eat, how they think, the games they like to play on people, the truth behind “fairy tales,” and the trickery and cruelty of Faerie vengeance.

Page 28 – Faeries and Wolfen

Page 29 – Wolfen rules about Faerie Folk

Page 29 – Understanding the Forest Children

Page 31 – Hide and Go Seek

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Page 33 – A note about Leprechauns

Page 33 – Earning a Faerie’s Wrath

Page 34 – Creatures of Magic and Habit

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Page 34 – Faeries and the Food They Eat

Page 35 – The Grandelson Curse

Page 37 – Lord Ander Grandelson Stats

Page 38 – Skyfire the Rune Staff

Page 39 – The Lost Grandleson Rune Weapons

Page 42 – Sir Cransin Nestro (NPC Villain)

Page 43 – Risinor Dragon Stallion

Art by *Angela Deland-Baldwin* and *Michael Wilson*.

## Page 45 – The Nexus Born™ – Official source material for Rifts®

The power of the ley lines and the secrets of *Hidden Nexus Points* are explored by *Julius Rosenstein* and *Kevin Siembieda*, and how being born on a Nexus Point provides the individual with an affinity and aptitude for magic. Such individuals are known as the Nexus Born™.

Page 45 – Dim Nexus

Page 47 – Obscure Nexus

Page 48 – Nexus Born

Page 50 – The Wyoming Medicine Wheel

Artwork by *Michael Leonard*

## Page 51 – Dead Reign® in Detroit™ – Official source material for Dead Reign®

*Thomas Morrison* presents the fate of Detroit in the *Zombie Apocalypse*, and the danger that remains present but largely unknown.

Page 55 – Mock Human

Page 55 – Big Flesh Eaters

Page 57 – Giant Flesh Eaters

Page 58 – The Cult of Brulyx in Detroit  
Artwork by *Nick Bradshaw* and *Michael Mumah*.

## Page 63 – I am Legion, Part Two – Official adventure & source material for Splicers®

*Chris Kluge, Lance Colley* and *Charles Walton II* team up to present the next chapter of *I Am Legion*, an episodic adventure ushering in the new rogue Nexus personality, *Legion*. To her, humans are precious, and she seeks to unify man and machine in her own twisted way. Though Legion desires to bring about the ultimate peace, she only creates more turmoil and bloodshed. Five years in the making. Designed as a special release. Special thanks to *Jeff Ruiz, Lance Colley* and *Todd Spencley* for their assistance and input.

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Page 69 – It just keeps getting worse  
Page 70 – Sweeper O.C.C.  
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Page 90 – Ailuros, Host Armor of Warlord Artemis  
Page 92 – Drake Benton, Archangel  
Page 94 – Shauna Davies, Senior Sweeper  
Page 95 – Janus Ambush Team  
Artwork by *Charles Walton II*.

## The Theme for Issue 73

The theme of **The Rifter® #73** is secret revealed, with a heavy dose of magic and monsters. We hope you enjoy the fact that this entire issue contains “official” and significant source material for your gaming enjoyment. Use them well.

## The Rifter® Needs You

We need new writers and artists to fill the next few decades 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 welcome.

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

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

## The Cover

The cover is by **Michael Wilson**. It depicts *Grandelston the Mad* aloft on his Risinor Dragon Stallion (see page 43 for details), menacing the target of his latest rage.

## Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

This special issue of **The Rifter®** contains *ALL official* source material.

Most issues present “unofficial” and “optional” rules and source material. “Unofficial” material is alternative ideas, home-spun 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](http://www.palladiumbooks.com) – Palladium Online

## The Rifter® #74

**The Rifter® #74, Spring issue** offers more “official” and unofficial new source material for *Rifts®* and other Palladium RPG settings.

- **Rifts®: The Town of Moorcroft, Wyoming** – “official” source material.
- **Splicers® – I Am Legion, Part 3**, “official” source material.
- **Optional source material for 2-4 other settings.**
- **More gaming advice.**
- **News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.**
- **96 pages – \$13.95 retail – Cat. No. 174. Spring issue.**

**One game system – infinite possibilities  
limited only by your imagination™**

# Celebrating 35 years of adventure in the Megaverse®

# From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

## All official source material this issue

For the first time ever, the entire issue of **The Rifter® #73** contains “official” source material. We know it is something some of you have been wanting to see, so I hope you enjoy it.

Why? And why now? Because we want to launch Palladium Books’ **35 Year Anniversary** off with a bang! Please consider **The Rifter® #73** as a portent of good things to come all year long. We expect 2016 to be full of new product releases that are going to impress and knock your socks off. Outstanding product that pushes the envelope, offers surprises and delivers on the fun and wow factor, as always.

## The Rifter® Super-Subscription is on

It is your chance to renew your subscription or try **The Rifter®** at a discounted price, get a FREE gift worth as much as \$35.85, save \$16.00 off the retail price, and have it delivered right to your doorstep. **This is a limited time offer. Do not miss out!** See the complete description elsewhere in this issue.

Since this issue will not reach most of you till the end of February, we do not want any of our loyal subscribers to miss out. Consequently, you have till **March 20, 2016** to place your order, but make sure it includes the special Code “**Sub Offer #232016**” in the memo area of your check or money order. And make the check out to *Palladium Books* (not *The Rifter*). **Limited time offer that happens only once a year.**

## 2016 – the Year Ahead

2016 has the potential to be one of the most exciting years of releases in some time. See the section on *Coming Attractions* for the beginning of what you can expect. Below are some of the broad strokes boiling behind the scenes.

- **Laying the groundwork for the future.** Sometimes I think one of the hardest things to do, for me at any rate, is keeping mum about plans and products in development. We keep quiet, either because we don’t know if anything will come of them or because they are a year or two away, and we don’t want to get you excited now only to be disappointed later if things don’t work out or the project is delayed. Well, we have a number of projects that we quietly put into motion over the last year or two that seem to be coming together. And they could mean some exciting times for Palladium and you. We’ll announce them when we have concrete details.
- **More RPG books. A lot more.** In addition to several **Rifts®** and **Splicers®** titles, there are two **Palladium Fantasy®** books being written even as you read this, two **Heroes Unlimited™** titles, one **Dead Reign®** sourcebook, and plans developing for **Beyond the Supernatural™**, **Robotech®** and more.
- **2016 Robotech® RPG Tactics™.** We renewed the **Robotech®** license and look forward to getting **RRT Wave Two** into your hands and onto store shelves. We’ll also be doing more support of the game in a variety of ways. See News for more details.
- **More Robotech® sourcebooks in 2016?** We think so. We have a number of ideas for sourcebooks that would contribute

to the **Robotech®** setting whether you strictly play the role-playing game line or **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** that are in the pipeline, too.

- **2016 Rifts® Savage Worlds RPG,** the Pinnacle adaptation of the **Rifts®** setting to the **Savage Worlds** rules and published by Pinnacle (the **Deadlands** and **Savage Worlds** people), should see release sometime this year. We’ve seen some of the art and preliminary work on rules and it is good stuff.
- **2016, more licenses?** Palladium has been approached by a handful of interested third parties about licensing and developing various I.P.s. in different markets. These include **Rifts®**, **Splicers®**, **Nightbane®** and **Heroes Unlimited™**. We already have a couple of startup companies with product ideas that sound very promising. One is looking to do a **Rifts® board game** that sounds incredible (this is one of the behind the scenes projects). Another is considering taking **Heroes Unlimited™** or **After the Bomb®** into the digital game medium. And there’s more we cannot yet talk about. You know, sworn to secrecy until there is some real, hard news to report.
- **More feet on the ground.** Mark Freedman of **Surge Licensing** remains Palladium’s licensing agent, but another player is getting involved in shopping Palladium’s I.P.s (Intellectual Properties) around. Palladium is happy to consider any serious offers from companies, large and small, established and startups, who know the Palladium properties and aim to remain true to the I.P.s and the fans.

## 2016: Rifts® on steroids!

### Powerful events could change

### **Rifts® Earth and the Megaverse®**

You are going see some very interesting material coming for **Rifts®**. A number of people seem to think that **Megaverse® in Flames** is the final chapter in *The Minion War™*. Wrong. **The Minion War™** is having lasting and profound repercussions across **Rifts North America** and elsewhere. You may see kingdoms and powerful forces rise and fall. **The Coalition States, Free Quebec, the Federation of Magic, Lazlo, Archie Three, the Republicans, Cyber-Knights™** and others all feel the impact of the **Minion War** in ways none of them (or you!) could have imagined before **Megaverse® in Flames™**.

It all begins to unfold before your eyes in upcoming sourcebooks like **The Coalition States: Heroes of Humanity™**, **The Disavowed™**, **Rifts® Haunted Tech™** (tentative title), **Federation of Magic: Pact with the Devil** (tentative title), and others over this year and next. Not only that, but some storylines have connections to the past as well as affecting the present. This is going to be epic. And yes, you are hearing about some of these titles for the very first time.

Our imaginations have been on fire and we are working hard to release sourcebooks for many of our game lines. Keep your imaginations burning bright. We’ll be providing plenty of fuel, very soon.

– Kevin Siembieda, February, 2016

# Palladium News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

## 35 years of making games

2016 marks Palladium Books' 35th Anniversary. It seems incredible to me that I have had the honor and privilege to have been creating games for you for three and a half decades. When I started Palladium Books in 1981, at the tender age of 25, it was supposed to be a temporary thing. A way to make some money in a hobby I enjoyed until I broke into the comic book industry as an artist. The next thing I know, Palladium Books is a taking off, I'm having a blast and making a good living at game design. I blink, and 35 years have gone by. Crazy. Awesome.

## The Rifter® Super-Subscription Drive

The Rifter® Super-Subscription Drive is on now. Subscriptions and renewals have been coming in at a steady pace online for a few weeks. Make sure you get your subscription. The annual Super-Subscription Drive happens only once a year. I try to make the *FREE gifts* something special and fun to entice people into trying **The Rifter®**. I want people to realize the tremendous value of **The Rifter®** as a resource for new ideas, building adventures, and source material that is suitable for most Palladium RPG world settings, not just the specific game line they may have been written for. See more about **The Rifter® Super-Subscription Drive** elsewhere in this issue. A limited time offer. Do not miss out!

**The Rifter®** is also available in stores everywhere!

## Rifts® Chaos Earth® Resurrection™

*"I am LOVING Chaos Earth® Resurrection™. It is an awesome book. Love Chuck's art and the borders are really cool, they blew me away when I first cracked open the book. And then started reading and, wow."*

We are hearing a lot of comments like that about **Chaos Earth® Resurrection™**. All the time, in fact. I think we really surprised people with the content in **Chaos Earth® Resurrection™**. It is NOT your usual Zombie Apocalypse scenario and the cyborg-like Scrap zombies are most definitely *not* your typical zombies. Far from it. In fact, I don't know if anyone has ever done *mechanized zombies*. Best of all, the zombies, the Black Obelisk, the villain and ideas are easy to drop into *Rifts®*, *the Three Galaxies*, *Palladium Fantasy®* or even on an alien world in *Robotech®*. It is this type of out of the box thinking you are going to see in all upcoming books.

If you haven't taken a look at this bad boy, you are missing out on something fun and different. Now available in stores and from Palladium Books, as well as from DriveThruRPG.com as a PDF book. There are also a pair of FREE **Chaos Earth® Resurrection™** previews on DriveThru, but they don't do the entire book justice. We have more coming for **Chaos Earth®** in the months ahead.

## Rifts® Savage Worlds RPG voted Most Anticipated RPG of 2016

*EN World* announced the results of an online poll in which gamers voted **Rifts® Savage Worlds RPG** as the **Number One Most Anticipated new role-playing game release of 2016**. Awesome news. You can count the Palladium crew among those who can hardly wait. Of course, we've seen some of the text and artwork for this exciting 2016 release, so we are really psyched up about it. No release date available yet.

You might remember us mentioning the **Rifts® Savage Worlds RPG** a while back. It is an adaptation of *Rifts Earth* using Pinnacle's *Savage Worlds* rules.

## UPDATE: Robotech® RPG Tactics™

As I have stated in recent Weekly Updates on our website, Palladium Books has renewed its **Robotech®** game license and we intend to move **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** forward in 2016 in a big way. I want to get the Wave Two Kickstarter exclusives and expansion packs into manufacturing, and ultimately into your hands, as soon as we can.

Despite the fear and apprehension of some, I want to assure you that our Kickstarter backers have never been out of our thoughts, and **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Wave Two** is coming. As I have stated, for strategic and business reasons, we have been unable to share with you everything Palladium has been exploring, considering and working on. As you know, one of the things we have been doing is looking into and considering possible ways to reduce part counts and make the game pieces easier to put together. As we get into actual production and manufacturing for Wave Two this year, we will share plenty with you. And we think you'll be pleased. Considering all the delays and frustration of the past, we do not want to even speculate on release dates and other details until we have hard, solid information we are confident with ourselves.

In the Spring we expect to be able to share with you much more details, information, progress reports and offer up new material on a regular basis. We'll have some new data and material sooner, but I don't think things will really begin to heat up before Spring or Summer. We want **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Wave Two** and fulfillment of our Kickstarter obligations more than anyone. It's coming.

Oh, and when we talk about the relaunch of **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** we mean a renewed market push of the core game, regular product releases and game support, like RRT rules clarifications and elaboration, rules additions, advanced rules, demos, convention support, gaming events and promotions, adventures, PDF and physical releases, and more.

We are also floating ideas for a number of new **Robotech® RPG** sourcebooks for various **Robotech®** generations, which will ultimately result in new mecha, vehicles, aliens, and factions for **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** expansions. We have some ideas of our own, but we welcome input and suggestions from you, so start kicking around ideas and don't hesitate to share them with us.

Please know that we are truly committed to fulfilling our Kickstarter obligations and to make **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** truly epic, with future expansions across all eras of **Robotech®**.



## 2016 Conventions

Here are a selection of conventions running **Palladium events** in the first 4 months of the year (plus a couple of big events). Most have Palladium gaming events every year and are always looking for Game Masters to run more games and new people to join the fun the next year.

### Strategicon – February 12-15, 2016

**Convention Name:** Strategicon – Orcon.  
**Dates:** February 12-15, 2016; Presidents' Day weekend.  
**Location:** Los Angeles, California.  
**Website:** <http://www.strategicon.net/>  
**Supporting:** Role-playing games and a major **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** Build and Paint Workshop and **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** Tournaments. **Note:** Last year's RRT tournaments were 300 and 1000 points each. Anticipating 76+ participants for the **RRT tournament** thus far.  
**Contact for Details & Registration:** [stratcon\\_ccgs@strategicon.net](mailto:stratcon_ccgs@strategicon.net)

### Katsucon – February 12-14, 2016

**Convention Name:** Katsucon 2016.  
**Dates:** February 12-14, 2016.  
**Location:** National Harbor, Maryland.  
**Website:** <http://www.katsucon.org/>  
**Supporting:** Anime, Cosplay, Role-Playing Games and Comics.

### Pensacon – February 19-21, 2016

**Convention Name:** Pensacon.  
**Dates:** February 19-21, 2016.  
**Location:** Pensacola, Florida.  
**Website:** <http://pensacon.com/>  
**Supporting:** Role-playing games; including **Rifts®** and **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** events hosted by Palladium Books Megaversal Ambassadors.

### SaltCON – March 3-5, 2016

**Convention Name:** SaltCON.  
**Dates:** March 3-5, 2016.  
**Location:** Layton, Utah.  
**Website:** <http://saltcon.com/saltcon-2016/>  
**Supporting:** Role-playing games.

### CoastCon 39 – March 4-6, 2016

**Convention Name:** CoastCon 39.  
**Dates:** March 4-6th, 2016.  
**Location:** Biloxi, Mississippi.  
**Website:** <http://www.coastcon.org/>  
**Supporting:** Role-playing games and miniature games: 70% attendees are gamers!  
**Contact for Details & Registration:** [gaming@coastcon.org](mailto:gaming@coastcon.org)

### AdeptiCon – March 31-April 3, 2016

**Palladium Books® in exhibitor area**  
**Convention Name:** AdeptiCon.  
**Dates:** March 31-April 3, 2016.

**Location:** Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel in Schaumburg, Illinois, (Chicago area).

**Website:** <http://www.adepticon.org/>

**Supporting:** Wargames and tabletop gaming. Palladium Books® is in attendance with a booth selling the **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** main box game, RRT expansion packs, exclusive figures, and role-playing game products, as well as running demos, having display pieces and being available to chat. We are hoping to bring RRT co-game-designer *Carmen Bellaire* with us to run RRT demos and chat with gamers.

### International Tabletop Day Event Hosted by RAGECon – April 30, 2016

**Convention Name:** RAGECon – International Tabletop Day.  
**Dates:** April 30, 2016, plus in-store RPG games within the next few months.  
**Location:** Reno, Nevada.  
**Website:** <http://www.ragecon.com/>  
**Supporting:** Role-playing games, including **Rifts®** and **Ninjas & Superspies** games on 4/30/2016. In-store games hosted by a Palladium Books Megaversal Ambassador. Coming in the next few months, game events for **Dead Reign®, Heroes Unlimited™**, **Ninjas & Superspies™**, **Rifts®** and **Splicers®**.  
**Contact for Details & Registration:** Ask for Jeff at [event@ragecon.com](mailto:event@ragecon.com).

### Anime North – May 26-29, 2016

**Palladium Books® in exhibitor area**  
– **Kevin Siembieda and Chuck Walton** Guests

**Convention Name:** Anime North.  
**Dates:** May 26-29, 2016 (Memorial Day Weekend).  
**Location:** Toronto, Ontario, Canada.  
**Website:** <http://www.animenorth.com/>  
**Supporting:** Anime, Cosplay, Role-Playing Games and Comic Books. Palladium Books® will be there with a booth selling the **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** main box game, RRT expansion packs, exclusive figures, and role-playing game products, as well as running demos, having display pieces and being available to chat.

*Kevin Siembieda* and *Charles Walton II* are guests at the **2016 Anime North**. A few other Canadian Palladium creators may also be in attendance at the Palladium booth in the gaming hall. Anime North is one of the largest and longest running anime conventions in North America, with 26,000+ in attendance in 2016. The range of special guests, voice talent and cosplay is amazing. If you are attending Anime North, please drop by the booth to say hello or sit in on any of Kevin's panel talks about game design, licensing and Hollywood, writing, world building and others. We love this event and highly recommend it. Tickets sell out fast, so order yours and book a hotel room immediately.

### RAGECon – June 24-26, 2016

**Convention Name:** RAGECon 2016.  
**Dates:** June 24-26, 2016.  
**Location:** Reno, Nevada.  
**Website:** <http://www.ragecon.com/>  
**Supporting:** Role-playing games, including **Rifts®**, **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Ninjas & Superspies™** and **Splicers®**.

**Contact for Details & Registration:** Ask for Jeff at event@ragecon.com.

## 2016 Gen Con Indy – August 4-7

Gen Con is the biggest gaming convention in the country. Palladium Books will be there as usual with products to sell and a gaggle of creators to sign books and chat. And thanks to volunteer Game Masters working through the Palladium Megaversal Ambassador program there should be 40+ Palladium Gaming events.

**Convention Name:** Gen Con Indy.

**Dates:** August 4-7, 2016.

**Location:** Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Website:** <http://www.gencon.com/>

**Supporting:** ALL types of gaming; role-playing games, board games, miniature games/war games, card games, videogames and more, plus cosplay and guests by the dozens. We love this event and highly recommend it. Tickets sell out fast, so order yours and book a hotel room immediately.

Palladium Books will be there in the Exhibit Hall, and dozens of Palladium games are part of the schedule of events. Guests at the Palladium Booth include *Kevin Siembieda* (game designer, author, founder), *Wayne Smith* (editor), *Charles Walton II* (artist), *Brandon Aten* (author) and others (to be added).

## Megaversal Ambassador Program is surging

Megaversal Ambassadors are Palladium's growing network of volunteer Game Masters who run games and tournaments across the United States, Canada and abroad. If you like running gaming events and demos at conventions and stores, and you are not already part of the MA Program, please think about becoming an "official" ambassador for Palladium Books. Contact the **Palladium Megaversal Ambassadors** at [ambassadors@palladium-books.com](mailto:ambassadors@palladium-books.com) — or by telephone (734-721-2903).

## Palladium Collectibles in my Online Toy & Collectibles Store

Palladium collectibles, hardcovers, out of print titles, original artwork and toys and items from my personal collection are all available on my ebay store. We add items on a regular basis and offer sales, so check it out from time to time. Includes one-of-a-kind original artwork, prints, **Rifts®** and **Robotech®** artwork by *Kevin Long*, *me* and *others*. There is also a range of limited editions, rare book titles and limited edition hardcovers, toys and more available with frequent new items added. Items include original art, out of print titles, redlined proofreader photocopies signed by me and the staff, signed manuscripts with editors' corrections, some original art, hardcover books (including **Rifts® Lemuria**, **Northern Gun™ One**, **Northern Gun™ Two**, **Megaverse® in Flames™**, **Beyond the Supernatural™ Gold**, **Rifts® Machinations of Doom™ Gold** and **Rifts® Ultimate Gold**), hundreds of toys and action figures, all from my personal archives and collection. Take a look every weekend or two for new items added.

<http://stores.ebay.com/kevinstoys-artandcollectibles>

# Coming Attractions

## Palladium's 2016 Release Checklist

### Available Now

- **Rifts® Chaos Earth® Resurrection™**
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth®: Rise of Magic™**
- **Robotech®: Expeditionary Force Marines™**
- **The Rifter® #71 & #72, Double Issue**

### February 2016 Releases

- **The Rifter® #73, Official Source Material**
- **Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™**

### Coming in 2016

- **Rifts®, The Coalition States: Heroes of Humanity™ Sourcebook by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements** – in final production right now. Ships February or March.
- **Rifts® The Disavowed™ Sourcebook by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements** – in production right now. Ships March or April.
- **The Rifter® #74 – Spring issue** – 96 pages. Ships April or May.
- **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlantians™ Sourcebook by Carl Gleba** – Spring, 2016.
- **Rifts® Haunted Tech™ sourcebook by Kevin Siembieda** – Spring or Summer.
- **Garden of the Gods™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook by Kevin Siembieda** – Spring.
- **Lopan™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Adventure Sourcebook by Glen Evans**, additional material by Kevin Siembieda – Summer or Fall.
- **Dead Reign® Sourcebook: Hell Followed™ by Taylor White** – a large, juicy, 160 page sourcebook. Spring or Summer.
- **The Rifter® #75 – Summer issue.**
- **Chaos Earth® First Responders** (more than you may imagine)
- **Splicers® Sourcebooks**
- **Heroes Unlimited™ Sourcebooks**
- **Beyond the Supernatural™ sourcebooks**
- **Robotech® RPG sourcebooks**
- **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Wave 2 expansions packs**
- **Robotech® RPG Tactics™ source material and events.**
- **Rifts® World Books and Sourcebooks, including Rifts® Sovietski, Rifts® Antarctica, Rifts® New Navy, and others.**
- **And some surprises ...**

Palladium RPGs are available in many hobby and game stores around the world. We encourage people to support their local stores. Going to a store enables you to see the product before purchasing it, and many stores are happy to place special orders for you, provided you pay in advance, enabling you to avoid the cost of shipping and possible damage in the mail.

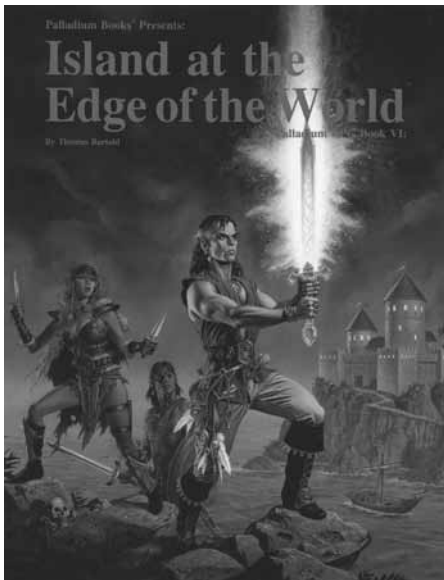
**Ordering from Palladium Books:** You can also order directly from Palladium Books, but you will pay extra for shipping. For customers with access to a computer, we highly recommend ordering online. This provides you with information about the most recent releases and Palladium's entire product catalog. It also provides you the most accurate shipping costs and more shipping options. You can also order by telephone; 734-721-2903 (order line only). For customers without such access, use the following "mail order" process.

1. Send the cost of the books or items being ordered.

2. **In the USA:** Add \$6 for orders totaling \$1-\$50 to cover shipping and handling. Add \$12 for orders totaling \$51-\$95. Add \$18 for orders totaling \$96-\$200. **Note:** For *non-book products*, including the **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** box game and expansion packs, add an extra \$6 per \$50 worth of product, on top of the shipping amounts listed above. This is because *non-book products* cannot ship via Media Mail, and must use a more expensive method of shipping. **Outside the USA:** Double the shipping amount for orders going to Canada, and *quadruple* it for overseas orders. Any and all additional costs incurred as a result of customs fees and taxes are the responsibility of the foreign customer, NOT Palladium Books.

3. Make checks or money orders payable to *Palladium Books*.

4. Please make sure to send us your complete and correct address, *including* apartment number. **Note:** These costs are for the least expensive and slowest method of shipping only. Allow 2-4 weeks for delivery. Order online or call the office for a superior but more costly shipping method.



**Back in Print!**

## Island at the Edge of the World™

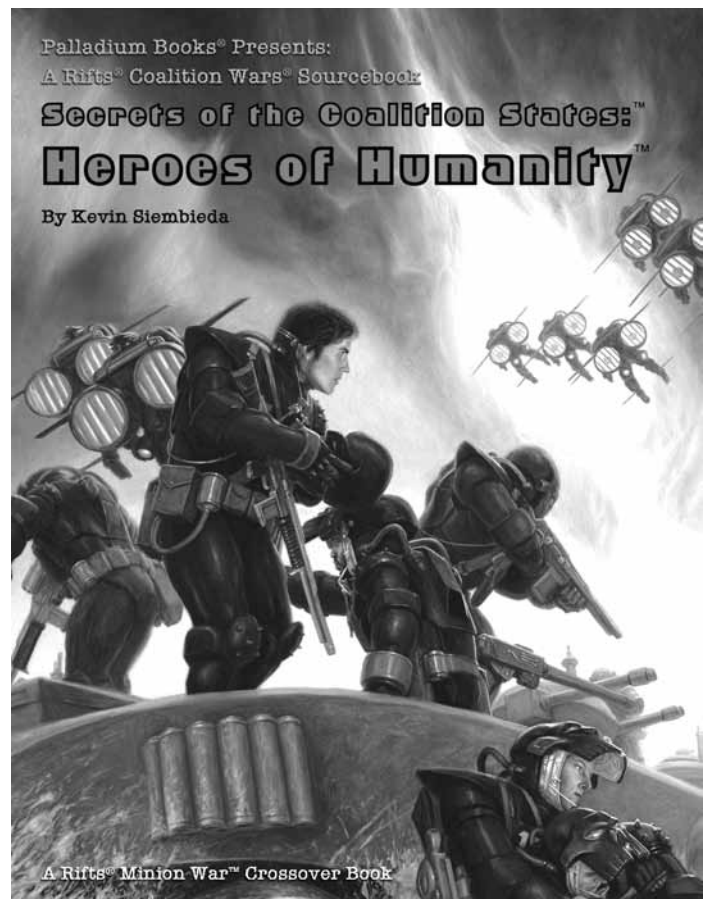
### A Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook

You demanded it, so we have brought **Island at the Edge of the World™** back in stock as a short run, special printing. This is the original Palladium RPG® sourcebook VI that utilizes First Edition rules. That said, it is very easy to adapt for use with Second Edition rules.

**Island at the Edge of the World™** reveals some of the little known history of the Palladium World, the Time of a Thousand Magicks, the Changeling Inquisition, and dark secrets that could

threaten the world. Learn about forgotten Crystal Magic (as powerful as Rune Weapons), the Church of Scar, the legendary Circle of Absolute Elemental Power and frightening prophecies about the end of the world.

- **The hidden Crystal Forest and Crystal Palace.**
- **The Psychic Science of Magic and Crystals.**
- **New magic weapons and items.**
- **The Town of a Dozen Fracts, an adventure setting.**
- **The Silent Forest adventure.**
- **Quest for the Tombs adventure.**
- **The Old Kingdom Mountains and adventures.**
- **The Valley at the Top of the World, an adventure setting.**
- **The Island at the End of the World, an adventure setting.**
- **Ancient ruins and additional places, people and secrets of note.**
- **Written by Thomas Bartold. Additional text by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **First Edition rules. Requires some modification to use with Palladium Fantasy RPG®, Second Edition.**
- **144 pages – \$20.95 – Cat. No. 458. Available now.**



**NEW! Rifts® The Coalition States:**

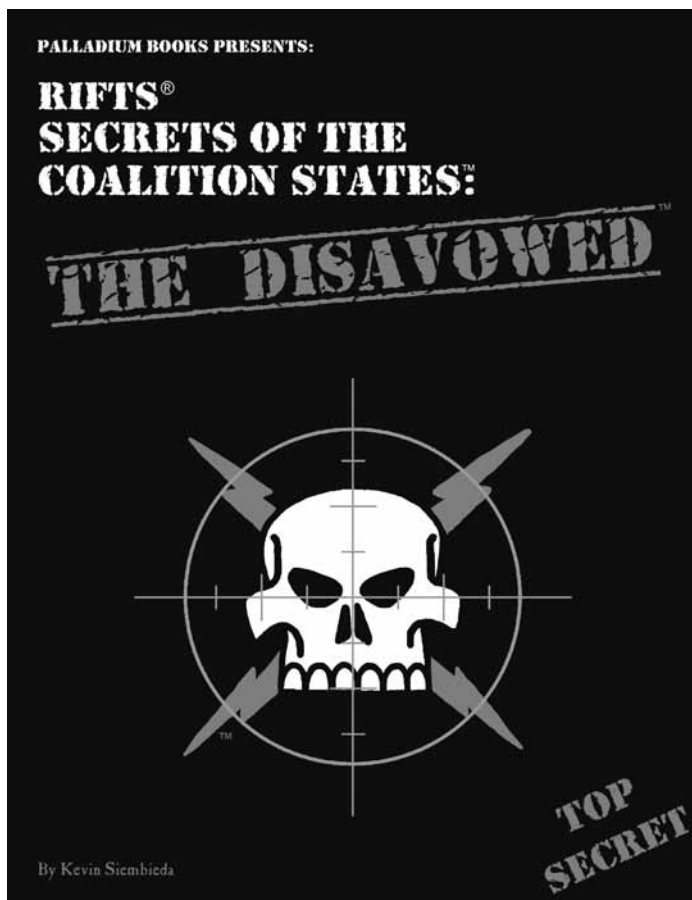
## Heroes of Humanity

In final production as this issue goes to print. The events unfolding in **World Book 35: Megaverse® in Flames** threaten to change the entire landscape of Rifts® Earth as the demonic minions of Hades and Dyval seek to bring Hell on Earth and turn the planet into a dimensional gateway to Armageddon!

The Coalition States, along with Northern Gun and Lazlo, take the lead in the defense of North America. **Heroes of Humanity**

explores the good and bad in the Coalition's efforts to save humanity and send this new threat back to the pits of Hell.

- **New Coalition weapons, armor and war machines.**
- **The Coalition States: Are they heroes or villains? Or does it depend on whether you are human or not?**
- **Can the CS fight alongside mages and D-Bees if it means saving the world?**
- **How is the CS dealing with the Minion War on Earth, their battle plans, strategies and alliances.**
- **One plan to battle the Xiticix and who really pays the price.**
- **Setting background, world information and many adventure ideas.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda, Matthew Clements and contributors.**
- **96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 889. Ships February or March.**



## Rifts® Secrets of the Coalition States:

### The Disavowed

“Desperate times require desperate measures. War has nothing to do with morality or justice. It’s all about winning or dying. We cannot bind our hands with high ideals, even our own, or worry about the laws of renegade nations or the rights of alien people. We must fight fire with fire. And you are the match.” – *Colonel Lyboc addressing a Disavowed team*

The Disavowed are so Top Secret that their existence is known only to a handful of the Coalition States’ most elite, top echelon, with *Joseph Prosek II* the mastermind behind the Disavowed operation, and Colonel Lyboc its shadowy face. Find out who these men and women are. How the Disavowed get away with

using magic, traveling to other parts of Rifts Earth and even to other dimensions in pursuit of enemies and strategic information that cannot be had through conventional means. Learn about the secret parameters in which these hard-boiled warriors, secretly hand-picked by Joseph Prosek II, operate, why almost every mission is considered a suicide mission, and why they must forever be the Disavowed.

- **CS operatives so secret that even the top military and political leaders right up to Emperor Prosek *know nothing about them*. And if they did know, would they condone their activity or condemn it?**
- **Are the Disavowed heroes or renegades? Assassins or soldiers? Madmen or super-patriots? Or a little of them all?**
- **Unsung heroes who keep the CS safe, or thugs and pawns of a shadow agency within the Coalition government?**
- **What role does the Vanguard play in this group?**
- **How do they reward their D-Bee “teammates” when the mission is over?**
- **What happens to the Disavowed when they have seen or learned too much? Adventure ideas galore and so much more.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements.**
- **96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 892. Ships March or April.**

## NEW! Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans

True Atlanteans are descendants from Earth’s past. The survivors of the sinking of Atlantis (really a dimensional mishap) and travelers of the Megaverse, wielders of Tattoo Magic and other lost mystic arts. Most people regard them as heroes, but are they? The Sunaj Assassins are mythic villains feared by all, yet they too are True Atlanteans who serve dark forces.

For the first time, much of the story behind True Atlanteans and their secrets are revealed.

- **True Atlanteans revisited.**
- **Optional Atlantean character creation tables including clan heritage and other factors.**
- **Secrets of the stone pyramids, different types/purposes and powers.**
- **Many new magic tattoos, magic spells, weapons and armor.**
- **Atlantean hideouts and secret communities across the Megaverse.**
- **The Sunaj Assassins, their secrets, history and plans for the future.**
- **Atlantean Monster Hunter O.C.C., Atlantean Defender O.C.C. and much more. And this is just the tip of what this book contains.**
- **Written by Carl Gleba. Additional text and ideas by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Final page count and price yet to be determined, but probably 160-192 pages – \$20.95-\$24.95 retail – Cat. No. 890. Spring.**

## NEW! Rifts® Haunted Tech™ Sourcebook

Faced with the imminent threat of the Minion War and ensuing demon plagues across Rifts® North America, heroes and nations rise! Archie Three is taking none of it lying down. The insane machine-god is obsessed with sending the demons back to Hell and saving “his” world.

- **The Republicans reveal themselves and take action. Yes, that means Chaos Earth NEMA O.C.C.s, robots and technology in Rifts® Earth.**
- **Archie Three takes action behind the scenes, in a big way.**
- **New menaces appear.**
- **Haunted Tech gives new meaning to “ghost in the machine.” But are they a godsend or a Pandora’s Box of new danger?**
- **The new rules, powers and abilities for Haunted Tech will blow your mind.**
- **Adventure ideas, plot hooks and more.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda. Additional ideas from Charles Walton II.**
- **Final page count, price and catalog number yet to be determined, but probably 96 pages – \$16.95 retail. Spring or Summer release.**

## NEW! Garden of the Gods™

### A Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook

This has been a secret project of Kevin Siembieda’s that he has been plotting and writing in what little spare time he has. The Garden of the Gods is said to be a holy place watched over and even frequented by the avatars of the gods. According to legend, the god may visit heroes and followers in dreams or in person by an avatar of the god, to be given guidance, inspiration, heroic quests, and gifts of knowledge and magic. More details about this title will follow.

- **The Garden of the Gods described in detail.**
- **Godly insight and visitations.**
- **Gifts of magic and knowledge.**
- **Sanctuary and more.**
- **The Black Pit, a place of evil and dark secrets. Is it a counterbalance to the good of the Garden or a trick of the Old Ones?**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Final page count, price and catalog number yet to be determined, but probably 96 pages – \$16.95 retail. A Spring or Summer release.**

## NEW! Hell Followed™

### A Dead Reign® Zombie Apocalypse Sourcebook

At 160 pages, **Hell Followed™** is the largest **Dead Reign®** sourcebook yet. Spring or Summer release. Can you survive the Zombie Apocalypse? Find out by playing **Dead Reign®**. The results may surprise you.

- **New O.C.C.s and skills.**
- **New zombies and other menaces.**
- **More world information, new dangers and new adventurers.**
- **Written by Taylor White.**
- **160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 236. Spring or Summer release**

## NEW! The Rifter® #74

Every issue of **The Rifter®** is an *idea factory* that helps players and Game Masters to generate new ideas and keep their games fresh. It provides useful, ready to go, source material gamers can

just drop into their ongoing games. A doorway to new possibilities and numerous Palladium role-playing worlds. It offers new characters, O.C.C.s, powers, magic, weapons, adventure and ideas for your games. It presents new villains, monsters and dangers to battle, and new ideas to consider. Every issue has material for **Rifts®** and at least two or three other Palladium game lines.

### The Rifter® #74 – Spring, 2016:

- **Rifts®: The Town of Moorcroft, Wyoming – “official” source material.**
- **Splicers® – “official” source material.**
- **Optional source material for 2-4 other settings.**
- **More gaming advice.**
- **News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.**
- **96 pages – \$13.95 retail – Cat. No. 174. Spring issue.**



## Robotech® RPG Tactics™

**Wave Two is coming ... but you can get started with the core box set and Wave One expansions right now**

If you love Robotech®, you want to take a look at this game. Beautifully detailed game pieces of your favorite Robotech® mecha, and fast playing rules that capture the Robotech® experience in a new, exciting way. And this is just the beginning. We have so much more planned in the years ahead.

**Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Box Set (Main Box Game) – Cat. No. 55100 – \$99.95 retail price.** This is the game Robotech® fans have wanted for decades. **Robotech® RPG Tactics™** is a fast-paced, tabletop combat game that captures the action and adventure of the **Robotech®** anime. Two or more players can engage in small squad skirmishes or scale up to massive battles. Relive the clashes of the First Robotech War, engage in stand-alone tactical games, or use the dynamic game pieces to enhance your Robotech® RPG experience. Or simply collect your favorite mecha from an expanding range of top-notch game pieces. Get yours now, so you can build your armies and have them ready when Wave Two is released.



The First Six Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Expansion Packs are available to retail along with the main box game. Here are the SKUs and retail prices.

- UEDF Valkyrie Wing – Cat. No. 55201 – \$36.95 retail.
- UEDF Tomahawk/Defender Destroids – Cat. No. 55202 – \$32.95 retail.
- UEDF Spartan/Phalanx Destroids – Cat. No. 55203 – \$32.95 retail.
- Zentraedi Regult Battlepods – Cat. No. 55401 – \$36.95 retail.
- Zentraedi Artillery Battlepods – Cat. No. 55402 – \$36.95 retail.
- Zentraedi Glaug Command – Cat. No. 55403 – \$36.95 retail.
- Robotech® RPG Tactics™ Rulebook – Cat. No. 55105 – \$20.00 retail. **Note:** This is the same rulebook that is included in the main game box, and is offered separately for those who want an extra copy, or want to check out the rules before buying the whole game.

## Palladium PDF Books

This is a great resource for getting *out of print* Palladium titles and other select books. We've made more than 100 PDF products available for digital download from [DriveThruRPG.com](http://DriveThruRPG.com), as well as Fantasy Paper Miniatures, Game Master resources and other good things with more to come. This is a great way to try Palladium products and get access to out of print RPG source material. Some notable titles include:

- Splicers® RPG
- Rifts® Chaos Earth® (all)
- Rifts® RPG, First Edition
- Rifts® Coalition Wars® series, The Siege on Tolkeen (all)
- Rifts® Minion War™ Crossover series (all to date)
- Rifts® World Books 1-13 with all the rest coming soon.
- Rifts® Vampires Sourcebook and other Rifts® titles.
- Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG and Boxed Nightmares™, 1st Edition rules.
- Dead Reign® RPG (all titles) – The Zombie Apocalypse
- Nightbane® Book Four: Shadows of Light™
- The Mechanoids® RPG and The Mechanoid Invasion® RPG Trilogy.
- Palladium Fantasy RPG® First Edition Rules and select 1st Edition sourcebooks.
- After the Bomb® RPG and sourcebooks.
- The Rifter® issues 1-64 with more coming.
- The Best of The Rifter®
- Palladium Weapon Book Series
- Deluxe Revised RECON® RPG and Advanced RECON® Sourcebook.
- FREE 12 highly-detailed, comprehensive *Robotech® RPG Tactics™* assembly instructions for all the Wave One mecha – available now.
- FREE *Robotech® RPG Tactics™* color guides are available now.
- FREE *Robotech® RPG Tactics™* paper game pieces, force organization tables, stat cards, rules and special items – coming soon!
- Palladium Fantasy RPG® Paper Miniatures – Volumes #1-6 are available now. More are coming.

- Game Master kits and other resources.
- 120+ Palladium titles and more, with many more books to come.
- Go to [DriveThruRPG.com](http://DriveThruRPG.com) to see the full selection. But come back every month to see what new books have been added. We are planning to do a lot.

## COMING in 2016:

### Rifts® Chaos Earth® Sourcebook:

## First Responders

The Great Cataclysm has devastated civilization, but humanity fights for survival. The struggles of civilian law enforcement, fire and rescue, and everyday men and women are some of the most epic tales to be told in a world gone to hell. They fight monsters, aliens, the paranormal, the elements, and each other, all with the hope of reclaiming their lives from the Chaos.

- New D-Bees and monsters from the Rifts.
- First Responder O.C.C.s, skills and special equipment.
- New “average citizen” Occupational Character Classes (O.C.C.s).
- New equipment for NEMA “Roscoes” and other emergency personnel.
- Notable rescue vehicles, robot drones, and technology.
- Source information and stats for common Golden Age technology (weapons, vehicles, medical tech, etc.).
- Apocalypse Plagues brought from other worlds to Chaos Earth.
- Adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Jason Richards. Additional text by Clements & Siembieda.
- 96 pages – \$16.95 retail – Cat. No. 665. A Summer release.

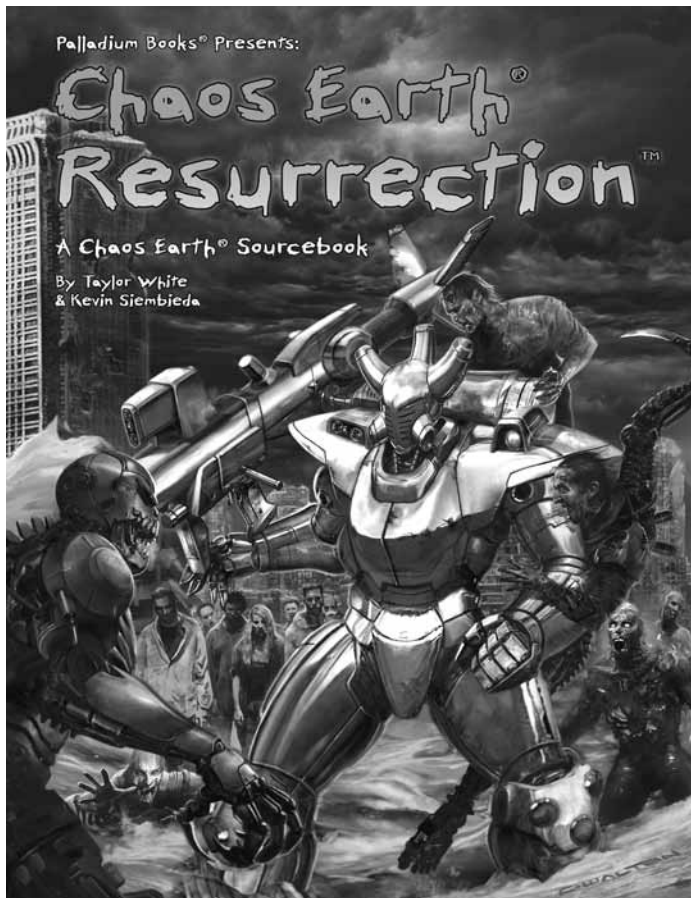
## Available now

## Rifts® Chaos Earth® Resurrection™

The Golden Age of Science and human civilization is shattered with the return of magic and the Coming of the Rifts. Overnight, human civilization is toppled. Many major cities are wiped from the face of the Earth. Humanity struggles to survive against impossible odds and the demonic horrors, aliens and monsters emerging from the Rifts.

Now comes the first invasion from another world. Its army? The corpses of our own dead, deliberately reanimated to become an invasion force to conquer the living. A growing number are *mechanized zombies* – nightmarish creations with multiple body parts and armor and weapons bolted right onto their bodies. Unless stopped, they could wipe out all human life.

- Do you hear the Transmission? If you do, it may drive you mad.
- Chaos Zombies rise to slaughter the living.
- 12 different mechanized Scrap Zombies soon join their ranks.
- Frankenstein amalgamations, *Scrap Zombies* are armored and weaponized in ways never before imagined. They stalk the ruins of civilization and battle power-armored troops in a death match humanity must win.
- Zombie Mistakes and Quirks Tables.



- The Black Obelisk, a zombie factory, a mad man and dark magic.
- More monsters and plagues from beyond the Rifts.
- Suitable for use in *Rifts*®, *Heroes Unlimited*™ and other RPG worlds.
- Written by Taylor White and Kevin Siembieda.
- 160 pages – \$20.95 retail – Cat. No. 666 – Available now.

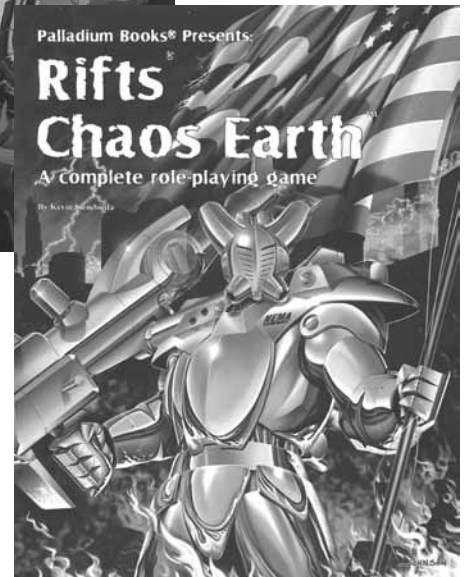
### Rifts® Chaos Earth® Sourcebook

## Rise of Magic™ – Back in print

In the *Rifts*® *Chaos Earth*® series you play through the Great Cataclysm as the apocalypse happens. In *Rifts*® *Chaos Earth*®: *Rise of Magic*™, humans, particularly children, are discovering they can draw upon mystic energy and cast magic. The thing is, they don't really know what they are doing. Magic is just part of the chaos and the impossible that is happening all around them. Meanwhile, others have found they can summon and control monsters and demons, while still others make pacts with supernatural beings to become witches and worse. And some have learned they can harness the magic to animate and command the dead. Madness and more chaos ensues. All of this only complicates things for NEMA, Earth's defenders, as the line of distinction between "good guys" and "bad guys" begins to blur, and things go from bad to worse.

- Chaos Magic, new magic specific to the *Chaos Earth*® setting.
- 100+ unique Chaos Magic spells.
- New magic O.C.C.s like the Blue Zone Wizard and Chaos Wizard.

- New evil magic users like the Chaos Witch and Demon Caller.
- More on NEMA and the Demon Plagues.
- Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- Two new *Chaos Earth*® sourcebooks are coming soon.
- 64 pages – \$12.95 – Cat. No. 662. Available now!



## Chaos Earth® RPG – Available now

The origins of *Rifts*® start here! You play survivors or the heroes of NEMA. The men and women of the Northern Eagle Military Alliance equipped with their *Chromium Guardsmen* (Glitter Boys), *Silver Eagles* (SAMAS) and a host of other robots and power armor to stand against a rising tide of enemies and alien invaders. They are humanity's last and only hope to survive the apocalypse that will become known as the Great Cataclysm. These are the heroes you play in a world that can only be described as *Chaos Earth*.

- Overview of the Great Cataclysm as it unfolds.
- Introduction to NEMA and its weapons and resources.
- 11 different character classes, including robot pilots, the Para-Arcane, Demon and Witch Hunters, Chromium Guardsmen, & more.
- Weapons, robots, power armor, vehicles and equipment.
- Monsters, chaos and adventure. Written by Kevin Siembieda.
- 160 pages. A complete RPG – \$20.95 – Cat. No. 660 – Available now!
- *Chaos Earth*® Sourcebook 2: *Creatures of Chaos*™ – 30+ Chaos Demons, NEMA and more. \$12.95 – 64 pages – Cat. No. 661 – Available now.

# The Rifter®

## 2016 Super-Subscription Offer

- Free gift(s)
- \$16 savings off cover price
- Free shipping of each issue in the USA
- Each fun issue delivered to your doorstep
- Each is a sourcebook for the Palladium Megaverse®
- Must put “Sub Offer #232016” in the Memo area of your check.

Looking for fresh, bold ideas, adventures or source material for your games? Then **The Rifter®** is for you. Every issue of **The Rifter®** presents unofficial and/or official source material such as new monsters, magic, powers, weapons, hardware, villains, O.C.C.s, adventure, fiction and new ideas for at least three (often more) adventure settings, from **Rifts®** and **Splicers®** to **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** and/or any variety of other Palladium world settings. It also presents the latest news, product release info, and peeks at new game releases. Many out of print issues are coveted *collector's items*. For a while, people were reportedly paying as much as \$70 for *issues #4 and 21*.

### Super-Subscription Offer

The cover price of **The Rifter®** is **\$13.95** – a steal for 96 pages of RPG source material and adventures. But a subscription gets you **The Rifter®** delivered to *your doorstep* for only **\$9.95 an issue**. And you can select a **free gift worth \$17.90 to \$35.85** available *only* during this special offer, for the cost of shipping and handling. All prices are in U.S. dollars. **Offer ends March 20, 2016** for subscribers only.

● **\$39.80 – USA. That's only \$9.95 each, a savings of \$16.00, and Palladium pays the shipping!** Plus you get to select a FREE subscriber's gift worth \$17.90-\$35.85 (please include \$7.00 to cover shipping and handling). That's **\$46.80 total** including shipping and handling for the free gift. **Note:** This rate is *limited* to subscribers in the *USA only*. Sorry.

● **\$61.80 – Canada. That's \$15.45** for each issue of **The Rifter®**, plus you get to select a FREE subscriber's gift (please include \$10.00 to cover shipping and handling). That's **\$71.80** including the gift item. That's still not a bad price for *four 96 page sourcebooks*. Our apologies for the higher cost, but Palladium Books cannot cover the cost of postage to other countries. We hope you understand.

● **\$75.80 – Overseas. That's \$18.95** for each 96 page issue, plus you get to select a FREE subscriber's gift (please include \$20.00 to cover shipping and handling). That's **\$95.80** including the gift item. We are only passing along the additional postage cost, but it is hefty. Our apologies. Postal rates are out of our hands. Likewise, the purchaser is responsible for any duty or customs fees.

**Note:** Please indicate if the gift items are NOT wanted. You may decline the gift and get your subscription for the regular price of \$39.80 (USA), \$61.80 (Canada) or \$75.80 (other countries). **Offer #232016 ends March 20, 2016. Place your order today!**

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K. SIEMBIEDA

# Triumvirate Dragon

Official source material for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG*® and suitable for easy adaptation to *Rifts*®, *Phase World*® and other settings.

By Kevin Siembieda and Glen Evans

### Inspired by concepts from Glen Evans and Erick Wujcik

The Triumvirate Dragon is an enigma and point of considerable controversy. The vast majority of learned people believe the dragon is the stuff of myths and legends and never existed. A tiny minority claim the dragon is real and possibly the rarest of all dragons. However, even many of them speculate that a “winged hydra” is a bizarre amalgamation of a Hydra and a Great Horned Dragon, and probably concocted by an ancient alchemist or Demon Lord. They postulate that a natural born offspring between a Hydra and Great Horned Dragon is biologically impossible, therefore the *Triumvirate Dragon*, as it is most commonly known, must be the creation of an unknown creator. Someone or something who wishes to remain anonymous, because no wizard or deity has claimed responsibility for the dragon. Those who hold this belief claim the Triumvirate Dragon is not a true dragon, but a magical creation or strange crossbred creature like a mule, leaving it sterile and unable to reproduce.

The fact is, nobody knows the truth, and nobody is out looking for it, because most believe the creature is the stuff of fairy tales, and not real at all. The tiny handful of peasant people and cultists in the south who know the creature is real don't even waste their time in this debate. It is only those who believe it is a creature that can be made through magic and breeding who are out to prove their theory. They are but a tiny handful.

Known by many names – Triumvirate Dragon, Three-Headed Hydra, Tri-Dragon, Winged Hydra and others – many scholars agree that the first “recorded” sighting of a Triumvirate Dragon in the modern age goes back to the beginning of the Elf/Dwarf War. A lone three-headed dragon is said to have encountered a group of fleeing Dwarves in retreat from an Elven army. Both Elves and Dwarves recount the battle that transpired and the many lives the monster took on both sides before it flew away. The beast had suffered great injury and lost two of its heads, but still had the strength to fly off into the mountains.

The most recent and arguably “documented” sighting was only two centuries ago in the *Land of the South Winds*. A bard named *Julianus* wrote a ballad about a three-headed, winged dragon and its confrontation with the noble army of *Kevin the Gray* during his invasion of the lands held by the Wizard/Summoner *Almarzym*. The Wizard was accused of performing horrific experiments on animals and humans, of which the Triumvirate Dragon might have been one. Kevin the Gray had come to put an end to the dark magic taking place. As the noble army gathered only a few miles from the castle, a three-headed dragon of immense size swooped down upon them like a hurricane.

The great beast seemed consumed with rage and hellbent on destroying every living person on the field of battle. The army was decimated. The lucky ones managed to flee to confirm the tale later recounted by the Bard. It was only by sheer luck that Kevin the Gray, himself, managed to strike the killing blow that slew the beast. A short time later, while seeing refuge in a large cave with the tattered remains of his army, he found a large nest containing four dragon eggs. The Gray took the eggs as his spoils of war. According to legend and song, he sold one egg to a Western nobleman, another to a South Winds Wizard, and a third to a merchant explorer. The last egg, it is said, was kept by Kevin the Gray. All intended to raise and tame the beast inside and expected good fortune as a result. What became of the knight and the four

eggs, or the people who had them, is unknown. Which give many people reason to discount this tale. As for Kevin the Gray, he never returned home. His fate, unknown.

Over the last several thousand years, there have been no more than a half dozen reliable sightings of Triumvirate Dragons. Most of them in the south, and a few in the Old Kingdom, Eastern Territory and Great Northern Wilderness. While there have been other claims, most scholars disregarded them because there is no corroborating physical evidence or a “reliable” witness such as a noble from Timiro or the Western Empire.

Even among the greatest scholars and schools of wizardry, the Triumvirate Dragon is considered a *creature of legend* and part of southern folklore, well known for its wild claims and outrageous exaggeration. This is also the position held by the leaders of the **Church of Dragonwright** – at least it is their official stance. Behind closed doors and among the elite within the church, there is a mandate that any sighting of the beast is to be investigated and that the monster be destroyed wherever it is found.

Of course, in the *Land of the South Winds* and *Yin-Sloth Jungles*, there is no doubt that the Three-Headed Hydra, or Triumvirate Dragon, is real. Rare and seldom seen, but real. Many southern legends speak to the power and cleverness of the Winged Hydra, and claim that it has roamed the Yin-Sloth Jungles and the forests of the Land of the South Winds for tens of thousands of years.

Some argue the best evidence to support the existence of the Triumvirate Dragon is the reaction from adult dragons (1,000 years or older). The typical reply is one of scorn or rage with an utterance of words like, “I will destroy such abominations on sight.” And, “I will not waste my breath speaking on this subject any further.” For scholars and priests of Dragonwright, such words are meaningless and highly speculative at best. Still, monster hunters and slavers are quick to point out that dragons do not deny the existence of the Triumvirate Dragon, only that they are an “abomination” not to be spoken of. This suggests the dragon is real, or was real in the past.

If the Triumvirate Dragon does exist, it raises a new question: why has it chosen to remain in hidden from the eyes of the world? And why do other dragons seem to hold them in such disdain?

**The answer goes back long ago, before the Age of Elves and Dwarves dominated the planet.** The new kingdoms were forming in the aftermath of the battle with the *Great Old Ones*. Elves, Dwarves, Ogres and humans, among others, were beginning to rise and take their place in the new world order. As they did, the various gods strove to win their support and worship. Among the first of the new gods were the serpent deities of **Dragonwright**. A pantheon of dragons that become one of the great churches before it was laid low by infighting and treachery from within. A betrayal and deceit the Triumvirate Dragons are rumored to have instigated and played a key role in the fall of the Church. Thus, dragons, and most practitioners of the reborn Church of Dragonwright (some would say “cult”), despise and disparage the three-headed dragon. Going so far as to pretend the creature never lived, while secretly waging a war of genocide to wipe it from existence.

**To the average followers of Dragonwright**, all that is known is that the Triumvirate Dragon is the lowest of all creatures, should never be trusted under any circumstances, and is to be detested and hated above all others, even demons and Deevils.



The dragon is so loathsome so that their very existence is to be denied to outsiders.

It is the sacred duty of all priests and dedicated followers of Dragonwright to destroy the three-headed beast whenever the monster is discovered. And they have done so for millennia. The exact reasons for this hatred and death sentence is lost to antiquity. It is said that not even the highest priests or eldest dragons know the secret history and treacherous past of the Triumvirate Dragon. The fact that its destruction is decreed from on high, is enough for most followers of Dragonwright.

In the early days, long before the Elf/Dwarf War, Dragonwright's campaign of genocide was so effective that it was believed the Triumvirate Dragon was extinct. However, since then, every now and then, reports of the three-headed winged hydra resurface.

Secretly hunted for millennia, Triumvirate Dragons are said to hide, revealing their presence and true nature only by accident and in moments of rage, and on rare occasion, to their most trusted of allies. To cover their trail and preserve their species, it is the Triumvirate Dragons themselves who work hardest to spread lies and rumors to convince people that they are a myth and never existed, or became extinct long ago. Such a tactic keeps dragon slayers off their heels and helps keep the few Triumvirate Dragons that have survived under the radar of their enemies. Such cunning and deception is characteristic of the dragon.

The Triumvirate is said to be one of the largest species of dragons, has wings, and is capable of flight. In dragon form, the wingspan is simply immense. In humanoid form, the dragon must sprout a pair of leathery wings from its back in order to fly. Of course, such measures reveals it to be more than it seems, and may require the dragon to abandon any identity it has established for itself as a humanoid, and take on a new appearance. However, such an incident can be explained away by the cunning dragons who disguise themselves as mere humans. The *man* can claim the "winged imposter" must have been a Succubus or Incubus, or other shapechanger that had stolen his appearance for some wicked purpose or cruel joke. He may even claim to have been kidnaped, bound and hidden away while the creature pretended to be him, and only just now managed to escape. (A **historical Note:** China has many such ancient stories in our own, real world.) Since such beings *do exist*, most people are likely to accept such an explanation, provided the disguised Triumvirate Dragon is well liked in his human guise, and an incident like this does not become a regular occurrence.

The skin color of the Triumvirate Dragon varies from a sandy brown to a golden metallic color with a green underside on the neck, chest, belly and the inner portion of the wings. The three heads and neck lack horns, but halfway down its back are a row of short spines similar to those of the Hydra. Like the Hydra, the spines end a short way down the tail. The Triumvirate Dragon's four-toed paws are more akin to those of a feline, and end in large claws. This makes the claws deadly in combat, but picking up, grasping and carrying objects is extremely difficult, and wielding a weapon is impossible. Another reason why it must, at times, use metamorphosis to take a humanoid form.

All Triumvirate Dragons are aggressive, cunning and love deception, trickery and treachery. The beast becomes even more aggressive and vicious when it loses one or two of its heads in

combat. And when enraged for any reason, it may engage in wanton acts of destruction and wholesale slaughter, as well as take on seemingly impossible odds and fight to the death.

Hunted and destroyed by the followers of Dragonwright, and fellow dragons, the surviving Triumvirate Dragons use their power of metamorphosis to hide among mortals where they pose as *adventurers, wizards, priests, scholars* or *business owners*. Even at their most savage and diminished state of being, Triumvirate Dragons are cunning, devious and dangerous. Charismatic and compelling speakers in any form, those of Anarchist and evil alignments are often consummate liars and manipulators who know how use the emotions and desires of others. Such tactics are used to motivate and trick people into doing the dragon's bidding or to create conflict the beast finds entertaining. Except for those of good or unprincipled alignment, a Triumvirate Dragon can never be trusted. Their word of honor is meaningless and backstabbing is inevitable. Even those of good alignment may resort to the manipulation of heroes and people "for their own good," as well as use deception and trickery to defeat bad guys. The dragon is notorious for being a power-monger and self-serving, and always quick to betray a friend or confidence when it serves its own purpose. It is such treachery against the deities of the Church of Dragonwright, and dragons in general, that has earned the Triumvirate their lasting hatred.

**How many Triumvirate Dragons exist** in the world (or anywhere else in the Megaverse) is unknown. According to legend, there are seldom more than a dozen active at any given time, but the same legends are so wrong about the dragon or lack accurate information in so many other areas that they are pretty much worthless. (So is the Lore skill when it comes to this dragon.) Still, there are probably fewer than 40 in the known world, and maybe half that number have traveled to other worlds and dimensions. Then again, as a shape-changer who enjoys deception and the manipulation of others, it is impossible to say how many may really exist. Or how many stand behind the thrones of power, pulling the strings of kings and leaders from the shadows, or walk among the people of any kingdom or world every day.

## The Truth about Triumvirate Dragons

The true story of the Triumvirate Dragon is long forgotten – lost in the annals of history. Even their original name is no longer remembered or known to any but the tiniest handful of Triumvirate Dragons themselves, and a few ancient and tiny cults in the *Land of the South Winds* and *Yin-Sloth Jungles*. And they aren't talking. All those who revere this dragon – some say the greatest of them all – would rather die than reveal its secrets. Truth be told, even they know very little other than a few of the old names, and that a small band of Triumvirate Dragons had the audacity to try to usurp the power of the Dragonwright gods for themselves, through deception and treachery. Failing that, the Triumvirates brought the once great and powerful Church of Dragonwright to its knees. Dragonwright has never recovered, and even with its resurgence today, most people considered it to be nothing more than a cult. All of this has made the Triumvirate Dragon, to some, the betrayers of their own species and the enemy of dragonkind and the Church of Dragonwright. Which is why they are hunted.

What is ironic about claims that this dragon never existed is that the *old name* of the Triumvirate Dragon does appear in ancient texts like *The Tristine Chronicles* and *old scriptures of Dragonwright*. However, since their old name is no longer recognized, and the powers and abilities of the so-called “Triumvirate Dragon” are also forgotten, the dragon’s old name – **The Hidden Ones** – is incorrectly attributed to another feared and hated race of beings, *Changelings*.

The confusion is understandable. For one, the name of one particular species of dragon is pluralized as the *Hidden One* “s.” Not the Hidden One. This plurality refers to the dragon’s three heads and personalities. Each with its own unique personality and alignment. The confusion is exacerbated by the fact that each head can metamorph into one or two different types of humanoids, and when that happens, *the Three Become One*, making the other two dragon-head personalities, the “Hidden Ones.” The link to Changelings is reinforced because Changelings see the Triumvirate Dragon as a kindred spirit and a potentially powerful ally, so they are known to hide and protect the creatures whenever they can. It should be pointed out that Changelings have also forgotten the dragon’s ancient name, *the Hidden Ones*, and also mistakenly believe that the “Hidden Ones” references in ancient texts refer to their own people. A mistake that the Triumvirate Dragons may have instigated to hide themselves in the first place. It is the type of elaborate deception they love to implement.

**All dragons are highly competitive toward other dragons.** It is a well documented fact that males often hunt down their own male offspring, and kill them before they can reach maturity to reduce competition. Dragons are seldom encountered in numbers greater than mated pairs because the rivalry between them becomes too intense, violent and bloody. And though it is said that an “elephant never forgets,” that saying should be attributed to dragons. The long-lived dragons never forget, and can be spiteful and vengeful to such an extreme that an adult may extract its revenge upon the descendants of a hated rival or enemy when the actual perpetrator cannot be found or has died. Likewise, a dragon may join forces with the enemies of its enemy, just to get back at him.

Now imagine this mentality and behavior going on between the three heads of the Triumvirate Dragon. Each vying for dominance or some measure of control over the other two, and trying to further its own goals and agendas. All of which are likely to conflict with those of the other heads. Over time, the personalities of the three heads often make an uneasy peace and learn to work together, especially when it is necessary for their mutual survival, but they may be at odds with each other for much of their long lifetimes.

In many cases, it becomes inevitably that one head/personality becomes the most dominant and leads the other two. However, these two heads maintain their own thoughts and free will, and can refuse to do as they are told. This can result in a bizarre and terrifying display of split-personality schizophrenia. For example, one head might shout at a group of human heroes to run and hide, while the other one or two heads attack them. One head may offer information, while one or both others accuse their brother or sister dragon-heads of lying. Insisting anything they say cannot be trusted. On the other hand, there are many times when the three personalities must cooperate with each other if they are to survive.

## Important Combat Notes

Since each head has its own personality, magic abilities and free will, one or two heads can refuse to participate in combat. This prevents the other head (or two heads) from using the magic spells, breath ability, power of metamorphosis or combat capabilities that belong to the personality(s) refusing to cooperate. The Triumvirate Dragon only fights at full capacity when ALL three heads willingly, even if grudgingly, work together. When one refuses, its *magic, P.P.E., breath weapon, attacks per melee round, bonuses, speed, and metamorphosis* abilities are NOT available.

**When this happens**, reduce the dragon’s combined attacks per melee and all of the above, by *one third* (33%) per each head that is noncompliant and refuses to participate. Each head represents one-third of the Triumvirate Dragon’s overall and combined power. If one or two heads refuse to participate, the dominant personality remains in control of the dragon’s body, but *it loses one third of its powers* per each uncooperative dragon head.

**Destroy the heads, and weaken the monster.** Destroying each head significantly diminishes the power of the Triumvirate Dragon. All the things noted above, under *Important Combat Notes* are reduced by **33%** per each head that is lost!

*In addition*, reduce *skill performance* and *ALL attributes, except Spd*, by **25%** when one of the heads is destroyed! Destroy two heads, and the cumulative penalty is a reduction by **half**. Spd is reduced by 33% per each head lost, as noted above, reducing speed by 66% when two heads are lost. Furthermore, the reduction of the Triumvirate Dragon’s I.Q., M.A. and M.E. by 25-50% makes it behave in a more primordial, reckless and less capable manner. Most Triumvirates choose to fly away and perform a metamorphosis to hide until it can regrow its two lost heads, but some become so enraged, they fight to the death. Don’t forget, Triumvirate Dragons have wings and the power of flight, a great asset for surviving.

**Metamorphosis penalties.** When “three become one” via metamorphosis, the reductions and penalties count the same as if the dragon lost two of its heads, above.

**Destroying all three heads.** If the heads are targeted (requires a “Called Shot” to hit with a -3 penalty to strike per each attack) and all three are destroyed before any one head can regenerate, the dragon collapses and appears dead. However, unless ALL of its main body Hit Points and S.D.C. are reduced to zero or below, the Triumvirate Dragon regenerates and each of the heads grow back in a matter of 2D4 days. The head that was destroyed first, is the first to regenerate and reawaken, followed by the second and third. As the first to regrow, that head can opt to perform a metamorphosis into a humanoid form to become the sole personality in control of its disguised, Elf, human, Ogre or Reptilian humanoid body. (The other personalities awakening when all the Hit Points of the head have been restored, only to find themselves trapped in a humanoid body controlled by one of its brothers or sisters.) See *Hiding in Plain Sight* for details. If the main body is destroyed any time while it is in a coma and regenerating damage, the dragon is destroyed.

**Hydra healing powers.** The Triumvirate Dragon is, indeed, a type of *Hydra*. When a head is lost it will grow back. Even when the creature loses all three heads, it is still alive. The body collapses, as if dead, but still retains whatever main body Hit Points it had and will regrow the heads. The only way to kill the dragon is to destroy all three heads and reduce the Hit Points of the main

body to zero. The personalities of those heads are left in a dream-like state until their heads regenerate, regrowing in the order in which the heads were destroyed. Like the Hydra, the heads are able to completely regenerate and awaken within 2D4 days!

When two heads are destroyed, the remaining *one* is the sole force operating the body. He or she possesses only its own abilities and reduced attributes, skills, Hit Points and magic, but until the other heads completely regrow, those two personalities are trapped inside “The One.” This gives the surviving one head/personality an opportunity to metamorph into its humanoid form, trapping the other two inside. By metamorphosis, the dragon can disguise itself to appear to look like an ordinary person and still retain its own, formidable dragon abilities in that form, including the ability to fly. Metamorphosis also makes it The One in charge. The other two are submerged inside the humanoid body until the personality currently in control releases them by taking the natural form of a three-head dragon.

In the alternative, the three personalities are able to *swap places* by metamorphing into one of the other humanoid forms available. However, The One currently in control must willingly give up his/her position of dominance for the swap to take place. The swap is forced whenever the Main Body Hit Points of The One in humanoid form is reduced to zero. In this case, the personality lives as long as its two counterparts have life, but is automatically swapped out when reduced to zero Hit Points. A voluntary swap out or return to dragon form usually takes place when The One needs the powers of one or both of the other dragon heads to accomplish something it cannot do itself, or in order to survive.

Each head/personality wields its own set of magic spells and breath weapon which each head can share while in dragon form and all are working together. Those abilities are gone when the other two personalities are concealed inside the body of The One.

## Hiding in Plain Sight

Unlike other dragons, the Triumvirate has very limited abilities of metamorphosis, but can maintain its non-dragon, humanoid form indefinitely. Thus, The One personality is able to contain and submerge the other two for as long as it can keep its humanoid form. This can be hours, days, weeks, months, years, and even decades or centuries. Metamorphosis into a humanoid is only way *one* of the heads can usurp total control from the other two personalities. Only in humanoid form does *The One* hold sway over the other two.

As a result, metamorphosis is only possible when the other two heads give their consent and allow it to happen, or they are temporarily destroyed and unable to oppose the metamorphosis. A willing metamorphosis usually takes place for strategic reasons and under the agreement that The One taking control will return control back to the one relinquishing it, or back into dragon form so all three personalities/head can coexist together. However, the dragon head personality that is The One, is in complete control and may choose to hold onto that form for as long as desired. Keeping the other two dragon heads contained, but not silent. **Note:** The human metamorphosis form of any given personality turns “three into one” and gives the head that wields that humanoid shape control over the body all three inhabit. Such control and dominance comes with a price.

## There are two big downsides to becoming The One:

1. The loss of power: With the other two personalities/heads submerged and stifled inside the body of The One in control, the metamorphed Triumvirate Dragon possesses only one third of the powers and abilities of the whole dragon. Hit Points and S.D.C. (M.D.C. in Mega-Damage settings), P.P.E., Speed, attacks per melee round, combat bonuses, and bio-regeneration are all at a mere **33%**. The other 66% belong to the two other dragon heads not in play. The combined power of all three is only available in three-headed dragon form.

Moreover, The One can use only its own magic and breath weapon while the other two dragon head personalities are submerged inside of it. That means penalties for **skill performance** and **attributes** are the same as if the other two heads were destroyed, *reduced by half*. Worse, the Spd attribute, Hit Points, S.D.C. (or M.D.C.), P.P.E., and Bio-Regeneration are *reduced by two-thirds (66%)*. This makes the dragon in disguise via metamorphosis, still powerful by human standards (one third of 4,000 Hit Points, for example, is still 1,333 H.P., and the Natural A.R. is retained even in humanoid guise), but it is a shadow of its *whole self* when in its true dragon form, especially when all three dragon head personalities work together.

2. Devils on your shoulder: The One may be in control, but the other two personalities are locked inside, able to hear and experience everything The One experiences. Worse, the two Hidden Ones can speak to The One like an inner voice, encouraging it to do things The One might not otherwise consider. This is rather like having that devil and angel (or two devils) you see in cartoons, one standing on each shoulder, whispering suggestions into each ear whether you want to entertain them or not. And if the two personalities are at odds, those suggestions from each are likely to be contradictory.

The two submerged personalities also petition The One to re-sume dragon form and let them *be whole* again, or why he or she should let one of them metamorph into a different humanoid and become the dominant personality for a while. Such a swap may be necessary when the magic or traits of a different personality are required to get out of trouble. This becomes especially poignant when the situation is life and death, and swapping forms, or returning to dragon form, can save its own life or save (or destroy) the lives of others. **Note:** When the Hit Points of The One body are reduced to zero, that personality lapses into a coma-state and he automatically transforms either into a dragon form with two heads (his is, in effect, destroyed) or a humanoid body of one of the other personalities. The two hidden inside have the power to decide which of them should manifest. However, they must decide in two melee rounds/30 seconds, or the body automatically reverts to its dragon form. Most personalities swap out or change to dragon form before they are “killed” (Hit Points reduced to zero or below).

**The instant the Hidden Ones are restored to dragon form,** ALL the combined attacks, bonuses, attributes, skills, P.P.E., breath weapons and powers are instantly available to the dragon. And so are the Hit Points and S.D.C. (or M.D.C.) of the other two dragon heads. Only the Hit Points/S.D.C. (M.D.C.) lost by The One while the others were hidden inside of it are reduced from prior combat, and now that the Triumvirate Dragon is whole, its Bio-Regeneration ability is back to 100%. Such is the power of *the Hidden Ones* when they are revealed in their true dragon na-

ture. **Note:** The swap from one humanoid metamorphosis to the metamorphosis of another non-dragon form passes control to the new dragon head allowed to perform the transformation. This turns the current humanoid disguise into a *completely different* humanoid life form, and may also be a different gender. Now he or she is in the driver's seat, and The One who was in control is now submerged inside.

If *The One* in control transforms back into the three-headed Triumvirate Dragon, it is a safe bet that all three work together to survive, triumph in battle and make good their escape. After the battle is over, the dragon head that is usually dominant over the others immediately tries to reassert its control, but at least all three dragon-head personalities are conscious and able to take action. Of course, this could bring about an argument between the three dragon heads as to who should lead, what needs to be done next, and how it should be accomplished. Balanced and reasonable personalities try to cooperate and take turns as leaders or make decisions by committee.

Having been trapped and without control or power for a long while can sometimes result in much improved cooperation between the three, especially in the short run. Three heads working together in concert and sharing control and engaging in temporary metamorphosis swaps that best serve all three makes the creature a force to be reckoned with. However, it usually takes several centuries to a few thousand years before the three can find common ground with which they can all co-exist to each others mutual benefit. It takes practiced tolerance and compromise to reach that degree of cooperation, but a good number of Triumvirate Dragons seem to find it. It is rare to ever find a Triumvirate Dragon whose three heads consistently operate as a well-oiled machine most of the time, but it happens. It is inevitable one betrays the others, many, many times over the dragon's long life. Diverse alignments and gender identity both play a large role in how the heads relate to each others as to the dirty tricks they pull on each other. The most successful dragons manage to find compromise and make peace. Others end up with one dominant personality and a pecking order. Still other dragons become locked in endless competition, squabbling and frequently in conflict with each other.

It is only in the non-dragon form of The One, via metamorphosis, that gives any one dragon head, full control. Which means personalities trading places with each other results in lifelong rivalries, competitions and skullduggery against each other. Each personality has its own goals, agendas and machinations, so the accomplishments of one personality might be opposed and sabotaged by another, its hard work undone. As a result, when it regains control, it may do the same to the one responsible, or seek revenge in other ways.

Think *Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde*, plus one. Each trying to do its own thing, good or bad. Its own actions perhaps accidentally or deliberately undoing everything the other had accomplished, or establishes new rivals and enemies to oppose or reverse the schemes of the other dragon heads. And when the actions of one personality are diametrically opposed to the other, the opposing personality is likely to work against, or tries to make up for, the actions of the rival personality(s). For example, a dragon-head personality metamorphosed into a beautiful Elven maiden of good alignment may hire do-gooders and heroes or start her own cult. The purpose is to fight and destroy the gang of villains or evil cultists established by one of the other personalities. Or

she may have them steal back a precious artifact and return it to the rightful owner or the person capable of doing the most good with it. This means the different personalities of a Triumvirate Dragon can become locked in rivalries, acts of vengeance, and war against each other that can span the ages. Each using their respective humanoid henchmen, pawns and allies (and worshipers when applicable) against the other. Which raises the question of how much of this is all a chess game to a Triumvirate Dragon? How much has been built by one and unbuilt by the other in these long-ranging competitions? And how many people benefit or suffer because their games? **Note:** The Triumvirate Dragon can be played for humor at times, but this dragon should be played much more like a cunning and deceitful serial killer with two other split personalities. The battle for dominance of one personality is often subtle and manipulative. After all, *the three really are one*. One soul. One life essence with three unique personalities that are really the same being.

All things considered, it is probably a good thing that this schizophrenic dragon is so rare, and hunted to the brink of extinction by heroes, enemies and dragons alike.



## The Triumvirate Dragon

**Also Known As:** Three-Headed Hydra, Tri-Dragon, Three-Headed Dragon, Winged Hydra, The Abomination and others. In ancient times the dragon was known as "The Hidden Ones" and another ancient and forgotten name is the "Three Who Are One." These names are still whispered among a few ancient cults in the *Land of the South Winds* and by tribal Shamans in the *Yin-Sloth Jungles*, but even they pretend to either know nothing about the dragon in public, or use the more common name of Triumvirate Dragon or Three-Headed Dragon.

**Race:** Dragon; believed by many to be extinct, but that is not true.  
**Alignments:** Varies with each head. See *Personalities and Powers of the Heads*, below.

**Attributes (adult):** I.Q. 3D4+21, M.E. 3D4+18, M.A. 3D4+24, P.S. (Supernatural) 3D6+33, P.P. 3D4+18, P.E. 3D4+16,

P.B. 3D4+21, Spd 1D4x10+30 running in dragon form, or 1D6x10+60 flying in dragon form. Reduce by 66% when The One has taken a form other than its natural one as a three-head dragon. (On average, that's a Spd of 14-17 running and Spd 30 flying.) Supernatural P.S.

**Attributes (hatchling):** I.Q. 1D6+15, M.E. 1D6+12, M.A. 1D6+15, P.S. (Supernatural) 1D6+21, P.P. 1D6+12, P.E. 3D4+12, P.B. 3D4+12, Spd 3D6+12 running (double speed when flying). Supernatural P.S. Remember, the hatchling's attributes, Hit Points, and S.D.C. change completely (are rerolled) when the dragon reaches full maturity.

**Size:** 30-35 feet (9 to 10.7 m) tall, 80-100 feet (24.4 to 30.5 m) long, with a wingspan of 130-150 feet (39.6 to 45.7 m). Half that size for hatchlings.

**Weight:** 25-35 tons. Half that weight for hatchlings.

**Natural A.R.:** Adult: 15. Hatchling: 10 for hatchlings. A.R. is the same in dragon and non-dragon form.

### **Hit Points By Location:**

#### Adult:

Head (3) – 1D4x100+300 each  
Arms (2; front) – 1D6x100 each  
Legs (2; rear) – 2D4x100 each  
Wings (2) – 1D4x100+300 each  
Tail (1) – 1D4x100  
Main Body – 1D4x1,000+600

#### Hatchling:

Head (3) – 3D6x10+30 each  
Arms (2; front) – 3D6x10 each  
Legs (2; rear) – 5D6x10 each  
Wings (2) – 4D6x10 each  
Tail (1) – 3D6x10  
Main Body – 1D6x100+90.

**S.D.C.:** Adult: 6D6x100. Hatchling: 4D6x10 +P.E. attribute number.

**Horror Factor:** Adult: 15. Hatchling: 11.

**P.P.E.:** Adult: 1D6x100+600. Hatchling: 4D6x10 +P.E. attribute number and +3D6 per level of experience.

**Average Life Span:** 1D6x1,000+9,000 years, making the Triumvirate dragon one of the most long lived. It is said, that some even search for the secrets of immortality.

**Level of Experience:** Average equivalent experience level of an adult is 2D4+2 or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Hatchlings should start at first level or as the G.M. desires for NPCs.

**R.C.C. Skills:** Basic math 96%, literate in Dragonese/Elven and three written languages of choices all at 96%, Dance 72%, Detect Ambush 84%, Disguise 84%, Imitate Voices and Impersonation 72%, Intelligence 84%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 84%, Land Navigation 84%, Prowl 48%, Sing 90%, Swim 72%, Track Animal 90%, Track Humanoids 85%, and Wilderness Survival 90%. Hatchlings get all the above skills but at -20%.

**Natural Abilities:** Magically understands and speaks all languages at 96%, Nightvision 600 feet (183 m), see the invisible, exceptional hawk-like vision (can see a rabbit or read a sign one mile/1.6 km away), superior sense of smell (recognize a familiar scent 90% and track by smell 84%), track by sight 66%, turn invisible at will, resistant to fire and cold (does half damage; including M.D. fire and cold), teleport self 66% (22% when metamorphed), dimensional teleport 36% (12% when

metamorphed), and all other magic, natural, and dimensional powers and knowledge common to most "true" dragons.

**Fire Breath (special):** Each of the three heads can expel a specific type and color of fire as a breath weapon, each with its own unique properties. Any of the heads can breathe any of the fires when they are cooperating with each other, but not when a dragon-head personality refuses, or when that head is temporarily destroyed. When a Triumvirate Dragon loses a head (Hit Points/M.D.C. is reduced to zero or less), all the specific powers are lost and unavailable to the remaining head(s), until it regrows. Each breath attack counts as one of the dragon's melee attacks. **Note:** See Personalities and Powers of the Heads, below, for details.

**Metamorphosis (special):** The Triumvirate Dragon's power of metamorphosis is truly unique, if limited. However, unlike other dragons, *The One* who uses metamorphosis can maintain that form indefinitely. It can also change its appearance at will as long as it remains the same species (e.g., there are billions of humans who look different from one another). This also means the dragon can transform itself to look like a specific person within the species it is limited.

There is one exception. The left dragon-head personality can assume the shape and appearance of any reptilian humanoid, but it can also transform into other true dragons, except for the Hydra. The reptilian humanoid transformation can be maintained for as long it desires, but the dragon metamorphosis can only be maintained for *one hour per level of experience*. When the time elapses, or whatever amount of time it spent disguised as another type of dragon, the Triumvirate is forced to resume its own natural dragon form, and the left dragon head cannot perform another metamorphosis of any kind until an amount of time equal to the time it spent in alternate dragon-form has passed. The other two dragon-heads (unless they are temporarily destroyed) can try to use their power of metamorphosis to assume a new form provided the other two don't block it. Remember, to perform a metamorphosis the other two heads must agree, or be knocked out of commission (temporarily destroyed) and unable to oppose.

It is the Triumvirate Dragon's ability to metamorph into the form of a dragon, including copying and impersonating a specific dragon, that has earned it the fear and animosity of dragonkind. The use of the dragon metamorphosis to impersonate one of the gods of Dragonwright was part of the treachery used to topple the Church long ago.

As noted above, the metamorphosis power enables the dragon to assume the *general* appearance of a particular humanoid species/race such as Elf, Human, Ogre or Lizard Man/Reptilian humanoid, and in the latter case, that of other species of dragons. However, to copy and impersonate a specific person, that person must be available for close scrutiny. Without the person being present for copying (photos are not enough, though an accurate 3D hologram may do the trick), the Triumvirate Dragon can NOT make himself look exactly like him. This can be done without the target of the impersonation being aware of it, as long as he is close enough for the dragon to observe and mimic with some degree of accuracy. HOWEVER, in a case like this – for example, sitting off to the side of the target in a tavern or theater, and transforming while looking at him or her – the copy is incomplete. The dragon can only duplicate the parts he can see; most likely the head and hands.



The rest of the body is non-specific, which could ruin the deception under some circumstances. For example, the impersonation is blown if the disguised dragon removes his shirt in front of teammates who know the man has a massive scar across his chest. A fact the dragon does not know, so his chest is perfect and unmarred. Moreover, the Triumvirate Dragon can only copy the appearance, not the voice, mannerisms or knowledge of the person being impersonated.

See *Personalities and Powers of the Heads*, below, for which humanoid species the specific head can metamorph into.

**Super-Regeneration (Special):** The Hydra can completely regenerate a severed limb (hand, foot, arm, leg, portion of tail) within 1D4x10 minutes! It can even regrow one of its heads within 2D4 days. However, if more than one head is lost, it takes 4D4 weeks to regrow them, one after the other. *Bio-Regeneration* for adult dragons is 5D6 S.D.C./Hit Points (or M.D.C.) per melee round, and 1D6 per melee round for hatchlings; which, in the case of Triumvirate Dragons, is under the age of 2,000 years old.

**Three Heads (special):** The I.Q. and all mental attributes are the same for each head, but as noted in the description, above, each of the three dragon heads have their own unique, individual personality and gender identity which enables them to speak and act independent of each other. When working as a team, they can respond to attacks from all sides and pool their unique sets of magic knowledge and abilities. When one or two refuse to cooperate, the dragon may be left vulnerable and open to attack. Worse, the Triumvirate is unable to use the magic, fire breath and abilities unique to each uncooperative head.

## The Personalities and Powers of the Heads:

**Right Head:** Represents life, healing and enlightenment. This dragon-head personality seeks knowledge, enlightenment and balance. It identifies most with noble knights, wise men and heroes. It prefers to fight evil, help the innocent and deliver justice. This is the dragon-head personality that has a soft spot for humans, Elves, Dwarves and the canine people, especially Wolves, and tries to encourage them to rise to greatness. It is the personality most likely to show the most mercy and kindness, offer encouragement, provide help and protection, and work with, or manipulate heroes (and villains), to create a better, kinder and gentler world.

**Alignment:** Scrupulous or Unprincipled. Pick one or roll percentile dices; 50/50.

**Gender Identification:** Male or female, but tends to be female. Pick one or roll percentile for a random determination: 01-40% male. 41-00% female. P.B. in Elf form is 1D6+20 regardless of the dragon's own P.B.

**Limited Metamorphosis:** Elf only.

**Yellow Fire Breath:** Range: 200 feet (61 m), three foot (0.9 m) wide blast. Damage: 2D6 damage, but after making contact, the victim must make a save vs magic (14 or higher) or continues to feel burning pain that leaves no physical damage, but inflicts the following penalties: -6 on Perception Rolls, -5 on initiative, -4 to strike, -3 to parry and disarm, -2 to dodge, -2 melee attacks and -30% on skill performance. Penalties last for 1D4 melee rounds. +3 to strike.

**Magic:** Knows all Wizard invocations levels 1-4, plus the following: Animate Object (15), Calling (8), Cure Illness (15), Create Bread and Milk (15), Detect Poison (10), Escape (8), Exorcism (30), Eyes of Thoth (8), and Heal Wounds (10). Starting at level five and each subsequent level of experience, the right head gets one of the following until they are all taken: Constrain Being (20), Impervious to Energy (20), Magic Pigeon (20), Purification (20), Mend Cloth (12), Reduce Self (20), Stone to Flesh (30), and Tongues (12). Add Restoration (750) at level 15 and Resurrection (2,000) at level 20!

**Middle Head:** Represents selfishness, the cruelty and chaos of life, and the elements of Earth and Air. The middle head is always self-serving and manipulative, using cutthroat tactics to get what it wants or to cause trouble and conflict for its own amusement. The latter is likely to include the dragon's so-called allies as soon as they serve their purpose or begin to become more trouble, or annoying, than they are worth to it. Besides, all the personalities of the Triumvirate Dragon enjoy instigating conflict and trouble, and are skilled at pressing buttons and getting people riled up. And usually do so via pawns and henchmen. The Middle Head is the most inclined do this and is also likely to be the most cunning, conniving, manipulative and sarcastic. It loves to set people up for a fall, as well as build them up only to see them get knocked down.

**Alignment:** Anarchist, always.

**Gender Identification:** Male or female. Pick one or roll percentile for a random determination: 01-50% male. 51-00% female.

**Limited Metamorphosis:** Human and Ogre races only. Ogres are included because they share enough genetic traits with humans that they can interbreed.

**Blue Fire Breath:** Range: 200 feet (61 m), three foot (0.9 m) wide blast. The flames do not burn but rather inflict magic cold damage. Damage: 5D6 per blast and instant numbness: -1 to initiative, -1 to strike, parry and dodge, and -10% on skill performance. Penalties last for 1D4 melee rounds. +3 to strike.

**Magic:** Knows all Earth and Air Warlock spells levels 1-3, plus the following Wizard and Warlock spells: Ball Lightning (15), Breath of Life (50), Calm Storms (20), Darken Sky (20), Dissipate Gases (15), Mend Stone (15), Repel Animals (10), Sense Dimensional Anomaly (30), Superhuman Speed (10), Superhuman Strength (10), Wall of Thorns (15), and Whisper of the Wind (30). The Middle head gains magic abilities as follows: At level five add Mend Metal (30). At level eight add Wind Blast (40). At level 10 add Wall of Iron (45). At level 15 add Wind Cushion (50), and at level 20 add Suspended Animation (80).

**Left Head:** The left head is the symbol of change – violent change as represented by conflict, war and betrayal. To this personality, life is war. And war is ugly. To win, you must be willing to do whatever is necessary, no matter how terrible or dirty. This makes the left head the most treacherous of the three. Despite being quick to use violence to settle a score or get what it wants, it enjoys making alliances, pacts and promises it has no intention of keeping in order to manipulate individuals and kingdoms alike. It loves to provoke discord and conflict, and does so by sowing the seeds of dissent, inspiring betrayal, appealing to greed, and encouraging violence. This head sees most people as lesser beings, and that includes Elves, Titans, and other dragons, as fools, pawns and henchmen to be used and toyed with. Those who don't fit that categories are hated rivals and enemies to be destroyed.

And all of them waiting to be manipulated and vanquished by him (or her). This personality loves to use ambition, greed, desires and lust for revenge to motivate others to action. Dragons, priests and practitioners of magic are generally considered to be the most dangerous opponents.

**Alignment:** Aberrant or Miscreant. Pick one or roll percentile dices; 50/50.

**Gender Identification:** Male or female. Pick one or roll percentile for a random determination but tends to be male. 01-60% male. 61-00% female.

**Limited Metamorphosis:** Reptilian humanoids and true dragons, *excluding* the Hydra. Even though the Triumvirate Dragon appears to be a cousin of the Hydra, it cannot shapechange into one, nor can it metamorph into creatures that are not “true” dragons, such as the Dragondactyl, Rizinor, Worms of Taut or the Flying Horror of Dyval.

**Red Fire Breath:** Range: 300 feet (91.5 m), six foot (1.8 m) wide blast. Damage: 6D6 +1 point of damage per level of experience. +3 to strike. Counts as magic fire and in Mega-Damage setting, s inflicts M.D. with each blast.

**Magic:** Knows all Wizard invocations levels 1-3, plus the following: Agony (20), Animate and Control Dead (20), Charm (12), Compulsion (20), Dispel Magic Barriers (20), Domination (10), Energy Disruption (15), Eyes of the Wolf (25), Fire Ball (10), Fire Bolt (10), Fire Fist (15), Fool’s Gold (10), Globe of Silence (20), Life Drain (25), Love Charm (40), Memory Bank (12), Multiple Image (7), Mystic Portal (60), Negate Magic (30), Spoil (30), Superhuman Strength (10) and Wink-Out (20+). Add Transferal (50) at level six, Swords to Snakes (50) at level eight, Speed of the Snail (50) at level 12 and Havoc (50) at level 16.

**Vulnerabilities and Weakness:** The biggest are the differences and rivalries between the three personalities that may be exploited by the enemy. Turn one or two against the other(s), and you successfully reduce its power and abilities. Divide and conquer is very true when dealing with Triumvirate Dragons.

Like most dragons, the three personalities feel superior to non-dragon races. This makes them supremely smug, arrogant and often overconfident. As a rule, even the well-intended Right Head believes it and the other two heads are the smartest and cleverest beings in the room. And that can be used against them. Compliments and going along with their “brilliant” plan keeps the three happy and overconfident. It also helps prevent them from watching their “loyal” and “devoted” humanoid servants and associates too closely. This makes the dragon susceptible to manipulation and betrayal itself.

To prove they are superior, Triumvites, especially the Left Head, like to win. Some have an almost psychotic need to win and when it appears that it may be losing – especially if the loss is embarrassing or personally crushing – the dragon takes foolish risks and reckless action that can be what actually leads to his defeat. This need to win can be used to manipulate and trick Triumvirates. Making a Triumvirate Dragon feel like a loser, or make him frustrated or enraged, and it throws cunning and deception out the window in favor of brute force. Which can be used to make it reveal itself and its secret plots, charge into combat, take on more than it can chew and even fight to the death.

The dragon’s life-long competition with the priests and followers of Dragonwright and other dragons can also be used

against them. It is surprising, but the Triumvirate Dragons do not hate nor despise the followers of Dragonwright, nor other dragons, but they love – absolutely love – yanking their chains, embarrassing them and slowly destroying them. Triumvirates see themselves as the valiant and clever underdog who successfully pokes and bests other Dragons and the Dragonwright Church and all who hunt them. They actually see the campaign of genocide as a game, and one they, the Triumvirate Dragons, are winning.

**Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses):** **Adult:** +4 on initiative, cannot be surprised by attacks from behind or above (heads can observe and strike in any direction), +3 to strike, +3 to parry, +1 to dodge, +1 to pull punch, +4 to roll with punch/impact, +12 to save vs Horror Factor, and +4 on all other saving throws.

**Hatchling:** +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry, and dodge, +1 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch/impact, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, and +2 on all other saving throws.

**Attacks per Melee:** **Adult:** 12, +3 (one for each head) when enraged.

**Hatchling:** 9 attacks in dragon form, +3 when enraged. Only three attacks when three become one via metamorphosis into any humanoid form.

**Combat Notes:** Each breath weapon attack or casting of a magic spell counts as one of its melee attacks. In dragon form, each head has three attacks, +1 when enraged.

When all three heads are working together, ANY of the heads can unleash any of the fire breath attacks and cast any of the spells known to the three heads/personalities as a whole. However, when one or two refuse to cooperate, or the heads are destroyed, those spells and breath attacks from those heads are no longer available. Each head can only always count on the powers it normally has (described under each head) and only those powers belonging to it are available when it metamorphs into The One (the powers of the other two heads are submerged and suppressed until it swaps humanoid forms with one or returns to dragon form).

**Damage:** As per Supernatural P.S. from blunt attacks (punches, head butts, and tail slashes), bites and slashing claw strike damage as per Supernatural P.S. +3D6. The dragon can also attack with fire breath (varies by type) or spell magic.

**Magic:** Each head possesses its own set of spells. P.P.E. is shared between them. When The One is in control, he can only access one third of the P.P.E. See *Personalities and Powers of the Heads*, above, for details.

**Psionics:** None, though the heads are impervious to possession and +3 to save vs mind control and illusions, in addition to bonuses it may enjoy from high attribute numbers.

**Habitat:** If Triumvirate Dragons have a homeland or preferred place to live, legends and sightings would seem to indicate it is the **Yin-Sloth Jungles** and/or the **Land of the South Winds**, but they can survive in most environments. Rumors claim that one resides in the ancient gladiatorial arena in the *City of Clypass*, capital of the Isle of the Cyclops, and another resides in *The Bleakness* in the Land of the Damned as a minion of the Chaos Lords.

**Enemies:** Triumvirate Dragons consider all dragons and the followers of Dragonwright as their enemies, and take great pleasure in harassing, embarrassing, undermining and killing them. Dragon slayers, heroes out to foil their schemes and any-

one who hunts them are also regarded as enemies. Otherwise, the Winged Hydras find people of all races fascinating and fun to mess with. People are not quite playthings, but the dragon enjoys playing with their heads, causing trouble in the political arena, instigating conflict and war, tearing down religions and antagonizing gods (very irreverent), and using people to get what they want, whether it be treasure, vengeance or stirring up conflict.

**Allies:** Various cults in the Land of the South Winds, certain jungle tribes, Changelings, and anyone willing to trust them or work with them. It should come as no surprise that the Triumvirate Dragon is known to associate with Changelings, Deevils and other demonic beings, particularly those known for lies, temptation, manipulation, and deception. Other allies include anyone who adores them or can be manipulated, or is willing to serve them in a subordinate role, is considered a potential ally.

Triumvirate Dragons love politics and deception, and generally see life as one big chess game with ever-changing playing pieces (e.g. people). That means any alliance with a Triumvirate Dragon is always a temporary and dangerous one, because the dragon abandons or betrays its "allies" when they have accomplished what it wants or no longer serve its purpose. An alliance may also be dissolved, usually with treachery, when an ally becomes too annoying, demanding or troublesome. (Translation: Challenges the dragon and insist on doing the right thing.) Many an association with a Triumvirate ends when it sends its associates off on a dangerous adventure that is sure to get them in trouble or killed.

**Rifts® Conversion Notes:** A Triumvirate Dragon becomes an M.D.C creature in Mega-Damage settings. Add the Hit Points and S.D.C. together and make them M.D.C. point for point. So a hatchling with 390 Hit Points and 172 S.D.C. has 562 M.D.C. Armor Rating doesn't apply. **R.C.C. Skills, Natural Abilities** and most everything else remains the same. Magic spells may need to be adjusted, as most, but not all, spells in

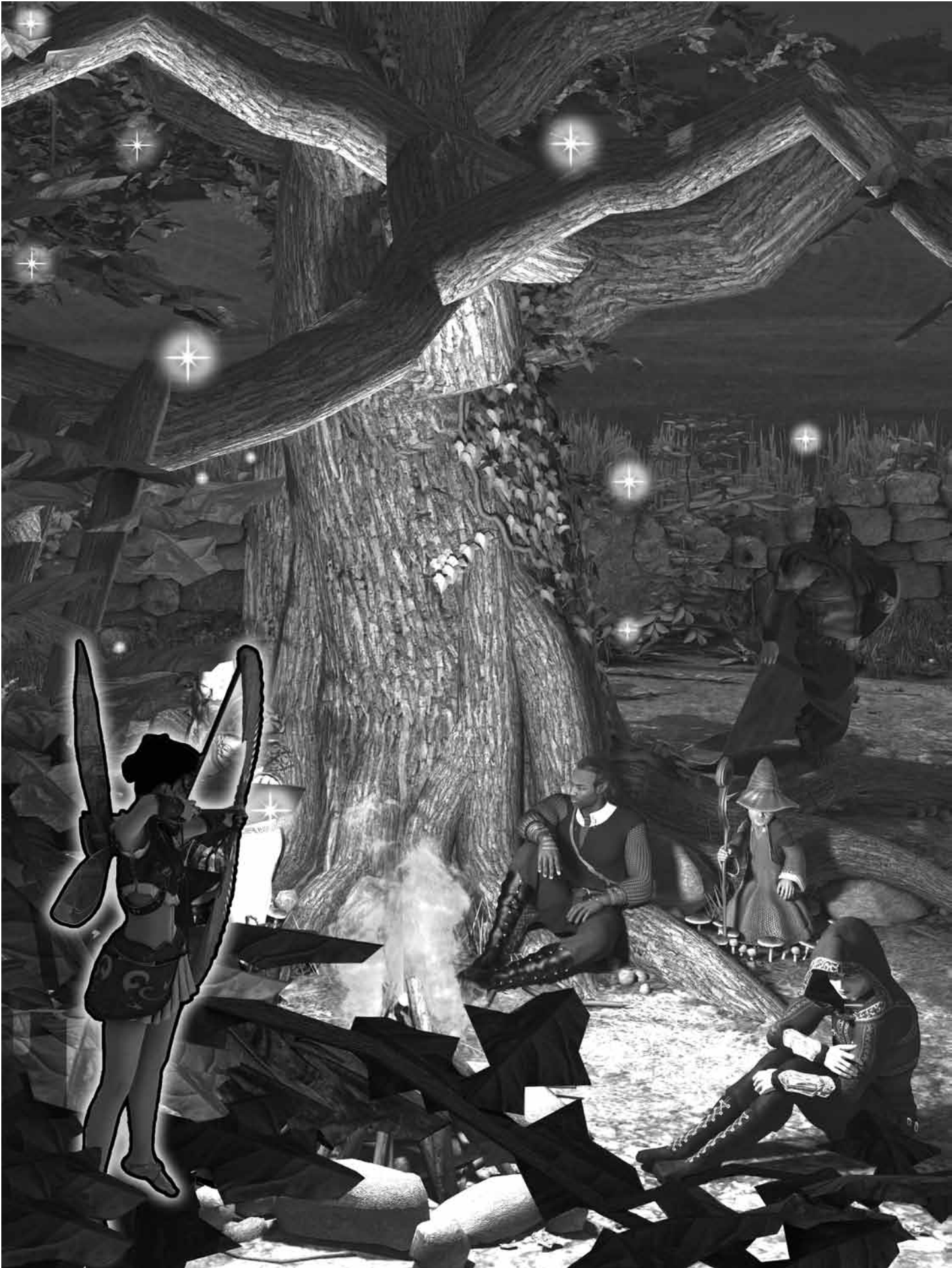
Palladium Fantasy are found in **Rifts®**. Either allow them, justifying that the dragon comes from an alien world/dimension, or swap it out for something similar or appropriate for that personality. Damage inflicted by fire breath, physical attacks and magic use the same dice, just instead of doing Hit Point/S.D.C. damage, they do M.D., point for point. Thus if an attack did 5D6 S.D.C. damage, it now does 5D6 M.D.; fast and easy conversion.

**On Rifts® Earth, Phase World® and elsewhere,** Triumvirate Dragons behave the same, including concealing their identity as a dragon. A smart move, because there are those who fear and hunt Triumvirates on different worlds. First among them, other dragons! Because they are so few and rare, most dragons and beings do not know what a Triumvirate Dragon's aura looks like. Seeing the dragon's aura when it is disguised as a humanoid is likely to look unusual and certainly indicates a mage or something more than human, but does not scream dragon. Triumvirates will find technology fascinating, though only accessible when in humanoid form. They also find the politics, power blocks and rivalry on Rifts Earth and across the Three Galaxies exciting, with plenty of opportunities for exploitation, fun and profit. Though they may associate and team up with Deevils and demons when it serves them, Triumvirates recognize the Minion War and demonic domination as terrible and fight against them. In fact, the dragon's own deceitful nature makes them know how Deevils think and how to manipulate, trick, trap and counter them. Triumvirates could be excellent allies (for the moment) against the demons and infernals.

**For much more info on Dragons:** See the **Dragons & Gods sourcebook** for the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, describing 14 species of dragons, an overview of dragons and characteristics common to most dragons, 40 gods, 20 demonic lords, 12 Elemental beings, Spirits of Light, Rune Weapons and more. Written by Erick Wujcik and Kevin Siembieda.



K. SIEMBIEDA - 2014



# Forest Children

Official adventure source material for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®,  
but suitable for *Rifts*® and most game settings.

By Kevin Siembieda

*The Wolfen guide sniffed the air and released a low growl of disappointment.*

*“We go back to camp, now. Hunt again tomorrow, at first light.”*

*“What?” protested the Elven dignitary. “I’m neither a Wolfen or a Ranger, but even I can see the blood trail from the stag we wounded. He can’t be far, at all.”*

*“Yes. Trail easy to follow,” said the Wolfen leading the group. “Stag is near, but we go now.”*

*“That makes no sense. Why are we turning back?”*

*“Beyond the Great Oak is home to the Forest Children. We no go there. Hunt again tomorrow, away from this place.”*

*“Forest Children? What nonsense is that? Wolfen superstition?”*

*The Wolfen warrior turned a stern gaze upon the Elven visitor from Timiro.*

*“Trust me, friend, not worth offending or attracting attention of the Forest Children. You not like their idea of hospitality.”*

*As if on cue, the Elf turned to what sounded like the laughter of children and a flute playing in the distance.*

*“Is that music? And ... children laughing? Way out here?”*

*The Wolfen put a heavy paw on the outlander’s shoulder and pushed him hard, back down the way they had come. The Elf turned and was about to protest the rough treatment, but the look in the Wolfen’s eye silenced him. It was then he realized the other three Wolfen accompanying their group had already vanished from sight into the woods. It always impressed him how creatures so large could move so silently and so quickly.*

*“Are we in danger, Nrrwood?”*

*“No. Not if we move quickly.”*

Legends about the Great Northern Wilderness abound. It is a land known for its harsh and unforgiving winters, its many exotic and deadly creatures, and the dense woods’ proximity to the fabled Land of the Damned. Not the least of its dangers were the Wolfen. But there is a creature that even the mighty Wolfen fear and respect above all others – *Faerie Folk*.

Faerie Folk, and Faeries in particular, may be tiny and seem frail, but they are dangerous creatures of magic never to be taken lightly. Many an adventurer to the Great Northern Wilderness has learned this the hard way.

Tales of Faeries abound in the lands and cultures of all people, as Faerie Folk can be found almost everywhere in the world. Many modern tales of Faeries have been boiled down into children’s fare – heartwarming or humorous fairy tales that speak to the Faeries’ mischievous nature and which paint them as silly pranksters and cheerful tricksters. However, if one pays attention, there still exist undiluted tales that warn of the darker side of the Faerie Kingdom. Even children know that a Faerie’s wrath is to be feared, and that but a few of Faeries or Sprites can bring a knight or Troll to his knees. Despite the eons of such stories, civi-

lized people who seldom, if ever, encounter Faeries, have come to think of them as delightful, fragile creatures of mirth and myth. Thus, when they do meet a Faerie, they all too often make the mistake that their own superior size and strength can overcome the wit and magic of the Wee Folk, or simply dismiss them as nothing with which to be concerned. And Faerie Folk hate being ignored and dismissed.

Most people have no idea how to safely interact with these strange and mercurial beings. The average “civilized” person, from humans and Elves to Dwarves and Ogres, thinks of Faeries and their handsome kin such as Sprites and Pixies, as cute, whimsical beings as fragile as the butterflies they resemble. This illusion is helped along by the Faeries’ slender bodies, attractive appearance and tiny size. Indeed, Faeries barely stand a foot (0.3 m) tall, and Sprites are half that size. Even the boisterous Pixie and the gentle Brownie are smaller than three feet (0.9 m). Faeries and Sprites may appear clad in clothing made from leaves and vines or woven grass to hand-tailored cloth and silks, or completely nude. Standing before a human, a Faerie or Sprite may appear rather like a tiny, perfectly sculpted, porcelain doll adorned with beauty butterfly wings. They hardly look like a threatening monster. The Wolfen and their kin know otherwise.

The “Forest Children” as the Wolfen call them, are forest spirits to be shown the utmost respect and courtesy. Wolfen and their canine kin know that when it comes to Faerie Folk, appearances are deceiving, and that the Forest Children are creatures of chaos that wield magic capable of vanquishing even the greatest of Wolfen warriors.

They are aptly named by the Wolfen because Faerie Folk love nature and dislike the trappings of civilization. As far as most Faerie Folk are concerned, cities and towns are scars upon the land and attract filth and vermin. As a result, most Forest Children stay away from noisy cities and towns. They much prefer the savage beauty of the wilderness. As humanoid kingdoms rise, be they founded by Elves or humans, Wolfen or other “Big Folk,” the denizens of Faerie move away to more serene, remote woodland surroundings. While some communities are rumored to have one or more Faerie Folk make their home in large and lovely city gardens or parks, or in meadows near a city or town, most prefer remote areas away from the calamity of “civilized” people.

Though Faerie Folk tend to be reclusive, and careful to avoid rushing into the unknown, many are surprisingly curious about “Big Folk” – as they call humans and other mortals – and may watch and follow people from a distance, sometimes for many miles. Even caravans of travelers are often observed from a distance. Like a rabbit or bird, Faerie Folk are expert at hiding among the vegetation, making their presence known only when they want to do so, or when startled from a hiding place. In fact, their ability to hide so expertly among the treetops and in the flora of the wild makes it impossible for anyone to accurately estimate

their numbers. Like squirrels and rabbits, when somebody sees one, there are likely to be 10 or 20 others hiding nearby.

The rarity and beauty of Faeries and Sprites, in particular, fascinate city-dwellers and ignite the imaginations of artists, storytellers and even mages. However, it is only Rangers and others who have had first-hand encounters with Faerie Folk who even begin to understand the primordial and innate magical power and danger the little people represent.

Living in the wilderness is not enough to make you an expert on Faerie Folk. The Barbarian tribes of the Great Northern Wilderness, Bug Bears, Orcs and other beings who live in the wild, know very little about them, and have no interest in learning anything more. The **Kiridin Barbarians** call Faeries, Sprites and their kin the “Cursed Ones” and “Little Tricksters.” They see all Faerie Folk as malicious spirits to be avoided or slain whenever they are encountered. In fact, with the exception of the canine people, most barbarians and members of the so-called “Monster Races” (Goblins, Orcs, Ogres, Trolls, etc.) hate Faerie Folk and never, ever trust them.

This disdain by savage wilderness people has a lot to do with the Faeries having cruel fun with such beasts, and subjecting them to all manner of deceptions, trickery, and embarrassment. Faerie antics that breed such a harsh response may include freeing animals from traps and snares, springing traps to prevent animals from being captured or killed, scattering horses and livestock or riding them until they collapse from exhaustion, stealing food, hiding equipment, untying shoelaces, unknitting rope and fishing lines, stealing sweets, leading children and pets astray, covering trails and tracks which can result in people getting lost, and scaring the wits out of folks. More on the Faerie’s idea of fun later, but in a hostile environment, any of these “games” can cause serious trouble, injury and death.

Just as many monstrous beings dislike and destroy handsome beings (including Faeries) and objects and places of beauty, Faeries and most of their kin dislike ugly people, places and things. Which makes monstrous and brutish beings the target of cruel and mean pranks by the Forest Children. Thus, by their very nature, the Monster Races and Faerie Folk do not get along, and might be considered natural enemies. While it is true some of the uglier and wicked Faerie people may associate with other monsters, when push comes to shove they usually side with their Faerie cousins. There are some exceptions to this, but kinship wins out more often than not. Of course, some monsters, like the **Kinnie Ger, Hairy Jack, and Goblins**, all of whom are said to be cousins of Faerie Folk, are so far removed that most (the exception being the magical *Goblin Cobbler*) have no sense of kinship or allegiance to Faeries, and may even hunt them for sport.

## Faeries and Wolfen

Wolfen, Kankoran, and even the barbaric Coyle and massive Bear Men of the North share a unique knowledge and relationship with Faeries. Each has a better understanding of the Forest Children than most scholars or the wisest of wizards.

For thousands of years the canine people have venerated Faerie Folk as tiny forest spirits and woodland guardians. In the earliest days of their history, the canine people worshiped the Forest Children, and learned to always show them the utmost courtesy and respect. Countless are the lessons and rules among Wolfen governing interaction with Faerie Folk. How to address them,

how to treat them even under the most annoying or hostile conditions, and most important, how to avoid their pranks and wrath, and share the wilderness with them without incident.

Respect goes a long way with all of this. So does understanding the nature and behavior of Faerie Folk. It may seem odd to see a towering 8 or 10 foot (2.4 or 3 m) tall Wolfen warrior bowing before a tiny creature that is able to stand in the palm of his hand, and treating the Faerie as if he were a king or high priest, but then you rarely see a Wolfen or Coyle subjected to the Faerie’s Dance or any act of malice.

What the Wolfen know, and most other people do not, is that despite their tiny human-like appearance, Faerie Folk are woodland creatures who have more in common with a deer or a blue jay than a human being. Faeries, Sprites and most of their kin live off the land. They don’t invent or create works of art. They do not build cities or machines, nor do they study magic or science. Though the Forest Children are capable of fighting to defend themselves, and may even swarm to fend off an invader or group of invaders, they do not wage war nor seek power, wealth or possessions. They just exist, like any animal of the woods, and enjoy each day as it comes. They don’t involve themselves in politics or the affairs of others, they live in the moment and enjoy the simple wonders of the wilderness, life, friends and merriment.

Fairies, Sprites, Bogies, and Toadstools gather in simple tribal communities, family clans, and small groups; a huge group is 200, a typical group is more like 2D4x10. Other Faerie Folk tend to operate as lone individuals, mated pairs or very small family clans of 3-12. This is why you seldom encounter more than one Leprechaun, Pixie, Brownie, Nymph, Will-o-the-Wisp, Grogach or Spriggan at a time.

Fairies, Sprites, Pixies, Brownies, and Nymphs, in particular, are attracted to places of beauty and serenity, making their homes in meadows and near lakes, among fields of wild flowers, and any location in the forest or mountains that has an incredible view. The Forest Children are inspired by the splendor and majesty of nature, and seek places of natural beauty as well as being attracted to places of magic such as ley lines and nexus points. Located in the Great Northern Wilderness are undisturbed places in the forest and neighboring mountains that have been home to Faerie Folk for tens of thousands of years.

There are few beings who can travel through Faerie Lands unmolested, but the canine people are counted among them. Though **Wolfen** and **Coyles** try to avoid what they call “Faerie Lands” — areas where Faerie Folk are plentiful, especially when in the company of non-canine people — they too can usually navigate a domain of Faeries without serious incident. Only the **Kankoran** have earned such mutual respect among the Forest Children that they can travel and hunt in areas inhabited by them without fear of incident. This is of great help when trying to escape or hide from a human or monstrous enemy, and makes travel through the Great Northern Wilderness easier because the Kankoran can take shortcuts through a Faerie Land where others are wise to make a detour around it. And not just to avoid possible interaction with Faerie Folk, but because Faeries are very protective of their friends, so if invading Big Folk are chasing or mean harm to their Kankoran brothers and sisters, they will have to deal with the Faeries first.

Here are some of the most notable and common rules regarding Faerie Folk as practiced by the Wolfen and other canine people.



- Forest Children are powerful forest spirits, respect and honor them as you would respect and honor your own mother.
- Forest Children are born of the Mother Earth, cherish their forest home and do no harm to the land.
- Never insult, belittle or ignore a Forest Child. Show the utmost respect and kindness to all Forest Children, for it shall win the day. Remember, they are but children who seek your attention.
- Never ruin the fun or playtime of a Forest Child.
- Be playful and silly. Let Forest Children pull your tail, braid your hair and cover it with flowers. Let them paint your face with berry coloring and ride on your shoulders. Forest Children like that. Your playfulness and laughter will endear you to them.
- Tolerate the Forest Children's idea of fun and smile, even if you want to howl at the moon or bite one in half.
- Always show Forest Children kindness and patience as you would with any child.
- Help a Forest Child and you win their blessing, and Mother Forest shall smile upon you with safe travel.
- Offer Forest Children sweets to win their favor. But never show them where you keep all your candy. And always keep some in reserve, for they are many.
- Never harm or threaten a Forest Child.
- Kill a Forest Child without a witness, it must become a secret you share with no one and carry to your grave.
- Kill a Forest Child on purpose and in view of another Faerie and you are doomed.
- Kill a Faerie by accident and you must plead your case, explain and beg for his kin's forgiveness. Accept any punishment or quest to make amends. And may the gods be with you.
- Never disturb or destroy a Faerie Mound for it is home to the Forest Children.
- Keep a keen eye for Faerie Mounds and circles of flowers, mushrooms, and trees as they indicate Faerie Lands and mark the place of Faerie dances and festivals.
- Tie colorful ribbons in your hair, or wear flowers upon your head and clothing inside out when traveling through a known or suspected Faerie Land. It will help garner safe passage through their lands.
- Never eat food offered by the Forest Children, for it is certain to be magic and may be cursed.
- Never consume a drink, not even a single drop, offered to you by the Forest Children, for it is magic and it too may be cursed.
- Food and drink from the Forest Children are often part of their fun and games that you want no part of.
- A Child of a Forest can make a good and loyal companion for a short while, but his long-term companionship can only lead to trouble and doom, for her and for you.
- The Forest Children belong nestled in their mother's arms (i.e. the forest). Never lead one away from her embrace. The home of men is a Faerie's doom, and possibly yours as well.
- Music and song, laughter and merriment, and bribes with sweets almost always soothes the heaving breast of the Forest Children. When it does not, times must be most desperate and dark. Beware.

The canine people of the North have shared the wilderness with the Forest Children for eons, so they understand them better than anyone. As tribal people themselves, the Wolfen, Coyles, Kankoran and Bear-Men have survived as hunters and gatherers

and recognize Forest Children as forces of nature, along with the wind, the rain and the sun. Even as the Wolfen become increasingly civilized and begin to establish cities and trading posts in the forests of the North, they do so with an understanding and respect for the Woodland Spirits, preserving and protecting places known to be home to Forest Children.

It is a strange sight to see a massive and burly Wolfen warrior bowing and behaving submissively to a tiny Faerie that can fit in the palm of his hand. But it is this respect and reverence that has earned the Wolfen, Coyles and Kankoran the favor and tolerance of Faerie Folk in the North. And why, unless provoked, Forest Children, generally, do not pester the Wolfen with pranks or trouble. They leave them alone.

All canines in the Great Northern Wilderness carry with them two or more small bags of treats for the Forest Children. The pouches that hang around the Wolfen's neck or are strapped to biceps are often presumed, by humans, to be medicine bags containing talismans and luck charms, but they really contains candies made from honey and maple syrup to be left as an offering to Faerie Folk, or as a gift to avoid trouble, or a bribe to get information or help from a Forest Child. Similarly, when a Wolfen or Coyle is seen gathering berries or honey and leaving them on a leaf or large, flat mushroom, it is an offering and show of respect to the Forest Children; like bringing a gift when you visit the home of a friend or attend a party. Gifts to win the favor of any Faerie Folk they may encountered, and to keep the "Forest Children" happy.

Whenever possible, Wolfen and Coyles skirt around areas recognized as Faerie Lands, even if the detour takes them out of their way. When it is absolutely necessary to travel through a Faerie Land, the Wolfen, and even the savage Coyle and the massive Bear Man, take care to do no damage or harm to the flora and fauna within that immediate area. All canines know never to hunt, dig up the ground, cut down a tree, or crush a bed of flowers in Faerie territory. Any animal being hunted is to be left unmolested if it wanders into an area even suspected of being home to Forest Children. A small campfire, if well tended and controlled, is okay to burn in a Faerie Land, but always runs the risk of attracting the attention of the Forest Children which is seldom a good thing. Better to shiver through a cold night without the warmth and light of a campfire, or hot food in the belly, than to risk attracting Faeries, especially playful Faeries. And none, except the fearless Kankoran, dare approach a Forest Child with deliberate intention for any reason.

Centuries of such displays of respect and reverence have earned the canine people and Bear Man, the favor of Faerie Folk, who see the canines as kindred Forest Children who appreciate the forces of nature and understand the ways of the wild.

## Understanding the Forest Children

The canine people refer to all Faerie Folk as the "Children of Forest" or "Forest Children," and for good reason: Faeries and most of their kin have the emotional disposition and general maturity of an *eight or nine year old child*. Faeries, Sprites, Pixies, and to a lesser degree, Brownies and most Faerie Folk, including Leprechauns, are best thought of as *impetuous and impertinent children*, and treated as such. However, you are not their parent, so don't scold them. That is a recipe for disaster. A playful Faerie doesn't like a grouch or anyone ruining *their fun*. It is this mercu-



rial personality that makes dealing with Faeries dangerous. They can be cute, sweet and playful one minute, and willfully defiant, demanding, selfish or threatening the next.

Though Faerie Folk exhibit considerable intelligence and resourcefulness, they behave very much like playful children. Most have short attention spans, don't have much use for money or possessions, and love to play, dance and sing. **Faeries** and **Sprites** more than any of the Faerie Folk, with the possible exception of Pixies and Brownies, like to frolic and play, enjoy beauty and seek fun and playmates to game with. Their playful spirits can make them quite boisterous among their own kind, laughing and chasing insects, riding on the backs of frogs and rabbits, dancing in mid-air with butterflies and dragonflies, and engaging in all sorts of aerial acrobatics and silliness. When relaxing, they may sun themselves on a tree branch, rock or lilly pad, or lay hidden in the tall grass, or in the case of a Sprite, inside a large flower, and watch the clouds go by.

Like an impetuous child, most Faeries and Faerie Folk lack social graces and don't see things in the same light as adult humans. They don't understand or like rules and laws or anything that curtails or limits their fun. They ignore the things they don't like, and constantly need to be gently reined in, or let loose to go off and play.

Described by some as morally ambiguous, and by others as downright wicked, it is more the case that Faeries Folk do not understand the human condition. Nor human frailty or human

morality. Playfully mischievous by nature, some scholars count them among the creatures of chaos, as even some of their playful pranks can be painful, cruel or life-threatening. You better look out if you swat at one or do anything to make it angry and not convincingly apologize.

Like spoiled children, Faeries enjoy childish slapstick, pranks and jokes that make people look ridiculous, including themselves. They find it endlessly hilarious, for example, to strip people naked and make them do silly and outrageous things like jump into a mud puddle or roll around in pig slop or horse manure. They see absolutely nothing wrong with embarrassing and humiliating Big Folk. In fact, it is one of their favorite pastimes! The sillier or more embarrassing the prank, the better. Farting, wearing silly hats or clothing, pratfalls, slapstick, pies to the face, honey in the hair, spilling drinks, turning people a different color, buckets of water or milk spilled over someone's head, pulling down someone's pants, tripping people and watching them fall (especially into water, garbage, mud, goop, manure or a prickly plant like a raspberry bush), and similar antics are all hilarious to Faeries, and never get old. They also find tremendous amusement in bad puns, getting people in trouble, causing brawls, stripping people down to their underwear or completely nude, and having them stand on their heads, do somersaults, handstands, cartwheels and silly dances.

Some of these pranks and "games" have lingering side effects and dangers as well. For example, a bucket of milk spilled over

someone's head may be funny (or not so funny for the victim of the prank), but now the person's hair and clothing is covered with it. Milk has a scent/odor to begin with, so unless it is washed out, it will attract pesky insects and maybe certain animals. It also makes the character and anyone with him, easier to track by beings who have a keen sense of smell, like Wolfen, Coyles, Bug Bears, etc. (+15% to their tracking skill). Over time, the milk (eggs, wine, etc.) spoils, creating a sour smell that is repulsive to the victim covered in it as well as those around him and the people he meets along the way. If out in the wilderness in the hot sun, these problems manifest quickly. Bugs are attracted by the odor, may bite, and become a constant annoyance and distraction (reduce Perception Rolls and initiative by half, -5% to the performance of skills). All of this, by the way, is funny to the mischievous Faerie Folk responsible.

Similar antics may involve syrup, honey or jam smeared in the hair or on armor and clothing, or the use of wine, eggs, and other foods and drinks, or aromatic material, including animal feces. Similar "games" or pranks may involve sneaking raw meat or a blood soaked rag into a person's pocket, hood or backpack so that it might attract a bear, wild dogs or other animals, especially at night while the unsuspecting victim sleeps. Another favorite joke is leading people into a situation where they might get "skunked," or attacked by bees or hornets (dropping a hornet's nest in the middle of a group of adventurers is great fun!) or luring them into the lair of a wild animal like a bear, badger, Peryton or even a dragon or Orcs.

Another favorite ploy by Faerie Folk is a playful game of **hide and go seek**. Only in the Faerie Folk's version of this game, they steal something important or valuable to the individual or group, and make him or them have to search for the item. This may be a map, a magic scroll, Holy or magic weapon, a favorite weapon, a pouch of gold and gems, food supply, and so on.

Ironically, with a few notable exceptions like the Leprechaun and Dead Moon Hag, most Faerie Folk have little desire for valuables, gems, gold, possessions or power. Not like humans and other Big Folk. Thus, they may deliberately deprive people of their belongings just to watch what unfolds. A mischievous Faerie might take a bag of gold or gems, a scroll or other items while digging through a person's pack looking for sweets and use it in a prank. ("Oh no! That was my holy sword that just fell into the river!" "Is that my Gryphon Claw gauntlets hanging from the antlers of that moose!?!") When a Faerie realizes a particular item is precious to a mortal, it becomes a potential target for their ideas of fun and games.

And since Faeries and Sprites can fly, and others are excellent climbers, the item could be hidden up high on a branch or cliff, or inside the hollow of a tree, or under a log, or just above a hornet's nest, or inside a gryphon's nest or the cave of a bear, and so on. Even if the stolen valuable is just up in a tree, an armor-clad character is likely to find it necessary to remove his armor to climb the tree – pieces of which may be stolen and hidden by the Faeries to continue the fun and games – as well as leaving the individual vulnerable without his armor! Worse, a thief, rival or enemy may find the stolen valuables first, and keep them for himself, or the time it takes to find the items could become an issue for the victim and his teammates. Of course, the Faeries are happy to provide *hints* and *clues* to the whereabouts of the hidden item in exchange for a treat or a silly antic. ("Hint for honey. Hint for honey." "Stand on your head and spin." "Catch a fish and put

it in your pants, and I will give you a clue.") The more angry or desperate the victim(s) becomes, the more fun it is for the Faerie Folk. On the other hand, if the victim actually makes it a game, laughs about it and joins in on the fun and silliness, the Faerie Folk are likely to appreciate him as a fun playmate, and be more helpful. ("You are getting hotter/closer." "Oh no, you are cold. Nowhere near." "Oh yes, you are getting hotter again.") In fact, if the Faeries had a really good time, and their Big Folk playmates were good sports, they are likely to reveal the location of the hiding place or return the item(s) to them. **Note:** This is not the case for games of vengeance, see below.

**In the case of fun**, the Faerie Folk may find it funny to watch humanoids tear apart their gear looking for the missing items, be it a frying pan or magic item. They also like putting a valuable someplace that requires Big Folk to go through an ordeal to retrieve it: climb a tall tree or cliff, swim through crocodile infested waters, battle a monster or animal for it, etc.

**On a happier note.** Faeries, Sprites and Pixies love happy music, singing and dancing, stories too, and can be entertained and won over by them. However, when feeling particularly malicious, they *enchant* Big Folk to dance and dance until they collapse from exhaustion. Only then, or after they have had their fill of "fun and games," do the Faeries release their victims and fly away. You see, all of this "fun" is often *forced* upon Big Folk via Faerie Magic.

Thankfully, a Faerie's great sense of humor means they rarely stay mad for long, and silliness and jokes can turn an angry Faerie back into a cheerful playmate in a matter of seconds. That's why one of the defenses against Faeries is wearing your clothes inside out. It is funny to them, leaving the Faeries in stitches. They are so busy laughing, or appreciate the gesture, that they leave the people alone, provided the Big Folk do not do anything to invite their wrath.

Likewise, someone who is a "good sport" about being the subject of endless teasing, jokes, hair pulling, having their hair or beard tied into tiny ponytails with bows or flowers in them, dancing and so on, are likely to, temporarily, win their favor. A cheerful Faerie may share information and rumors, point the way, heal the injured, lead the thirsty to drinking water, the hungry to a fruit tree, and do other things to help a big playmate they have enjoyed. And on rare occasions, even give him a weapon or magic item, especially if they know their playmate is going off to battle a monster or evil force that also threatens Faerie Folk, Wolfen or the forest.

The trick to surviving a Faerie encounter is trying to have fun with it and to bid a fond goodbye *before* the Faeries' mood changes or you accidentally offend one of them. Leave a Faerie happy and it will be happy to see you again and is willing to vouch for you with his fellow Forest Children.

It should be said that playing and partying with Faeries can be tremendous fun, particularly if they take a liking to you. As with a child, Faerie Folk can be sweet and endearing, and at times, generous with their affections. It is just that they play harder and longer than most humans can endure. Worse, they have boundless energy and enjoy the same stupid prank or trick over and over again, which can get very tiring for anyone who is not a Faerie or a child himself. And never accept food or drink from a Faerie. Odds are it is enchanted and could have lasting repercussions if you partake in it. As always, the challenge is turning down Faerie hospitality without offending them. Pretending to be too full is

one of the best responses. Saying you are allergic is a bad one, as they are likely to want to see the funny (or not) allergic reaction.

## Revenge Games

### You won't like them when they are angry

Make a Faerie or Sprite angry and they can become wickedly mischievous, cruel and dangerous in the extreme. They seldom, outright physically attack anyone unless defending their home, a friend or their tribe. Instead, Forest Children prefer to harass and torment for days, months and years on end. They love to trick and send people to their doom and on fool's errands that are certain to lead to misfortune and suffering. Faerie Folk love to send people they dislike or seek to punish into dangerous situations and environments that are likely to get them killed. And they are happy to mislead such people over and over again, delighting in every wound, injury and loss the hated ones suffers. And if he is foolish enough to keep coming back for more ("I have succeeded in the task/quest you set for me."), they keep sending him into more deadly situations and pointless quests until he either gives up or is finally killed.

**The wrath of Faeries is legendary**, and the greater the offense the more vindictive the Forest Children become. Vindictive and vengeful Faerie Folk may do any number of nasty things to those who have incurred their wrath. Some may seem like minor sabotage, such as undoing harnesses and saddle straps to cause a person to be thrown from a horse or releasing a dangerous animal from a pen or cage, but both can lead to serious injury and fatalities. Likewise, they may steal or shred boots (it's hard to travel, especially through the woods, in bare feet) or clothing, hang a weapon or scroll high up in a tree or mountain ledge, chase away horses and pack animals, lead wild animals and monsters to the target of their wrath (they love seeing people run for their lives or in terror from a predatory monster or stampeding herd of animals). Big People have been known to be tormented and tortured by vengeful Faeries by being sent out in the wilds without clothes (a death sentence in the Great Northern Wilderness in the winter), and/or without weapons, and left to find their way back – if they can survive – or made to dance until exhausted, or made to fight a bear, lion or monster, or sent into other dangerous situations.

Another favorite revenge plot is to implicate the target of their ire of theft or a wrongdoing among his teammates. This is done by the Faerie stealing an item and planting it or other evidence on him. Faerie Folk may also lie about seeing the accused do the dirty deed. Anything that causes the person of their disdain torment, loss, terror, injury and death may be put into action by vengeful Faeries. This include them identifying the person they want punished as guilty of crimes to creatures like Ogres, Trolls and witches, who attack first and ask questions later. If the player group suddenly finds a band of Orcs, Coyles or Iceborn after them for no apparent reason, it is probably because a vengeful Faerie Folk identified them (or someone in their group) for some terrible wrongdoing, or being in possession of something the monsters want.

Remember the **hide and go seek game** Faeries and Sprites like to play? That game can turn ugly and deadly when a Faerie is out for blood.

A favorite ploy and type of punishment is for a Faerie Folk to steal and hide, bury or discard valuables, weapons, and magic items. Such things may be dropped into a river, lake or bog, but

the Faerie Folks' sense of adventure, anarchy and justice is more likely to compel them not to destroy such items or make them ir-retrievable, but rather to place them someplace inconvenient, and which inevitably leads to punishment, suffering and adventure. If done well, it could result in weeks, months or years of entertainment and satisfying revenge for the Wee Folk. This particularly cruel prank or punishment is the genesis of stories about Faeries sending a hero or villain off on a quest to vanquish a monster or to rescue a fair maiden, or recover a powerful weapon or magic item. As the stories go, if he succeeds, there is a magic weapon or treasure as his reward, or something else that helps him triumph over an even greater evil, or helps him to become a hero of renown. And sometimes it is true.

What is left out of such stories is that the magic item or treasure was put there by the *Faerie Folk* in the first place. And if the Faeries find out an enemy or rival wants the item(s), they may tell him the location or secretly lead him there, instead, or in time to challenge the person they hate.

Getting an item returned is not an option for *hide and go seek games that are done in vengeance*. Revenge games are spiteful, cruel and designed to hurt and punish someone. The Faerie Folk involved never reveal the location, unless it is someplace that is likely to get the person killed. And even then, the Forest Children are more likely to lie about the location so that if the person(s) they want to punish survives, he still does not recover his belongings. Odds are the vengeful Faeries send him on many a fool's errand or quest that has no possibility of recovering his precious possession. When Faerie Folk seek to punish someone, they make finding the item(s) as difficult, painful and dangerous to recover as imaginable. If someone else finds it before him, or at a later time (often years or decades later), they do not care, as long as it is not the person being punished.

Strangely, the Faeries' logic and sense of fair play is such, that even when they are trying to help a hero, he too must vanquish a monster or face an enemy or survive great peril to win the prize. Likewise, even those they intend to punish or hope will suffer and die, usually have a shot at "winning" a treasure. Such quests, whether they be for heroes or hated villains, are designed to entertain the Forest Children. Not only do the Faeries get to watch great feats of daring and courage from a safe distance (the people on the quest probably don't even know Faeries are watching). It also provides them with spectacle and great stories to tell for generations to come. Half the *fairy tales* and *hero quests* that are written or sung about have actually been orchestrated by Faeries! Ultimately, even punishments and vengeful pranks are a way to amuse Faerie Folk who are entertained by all the heroes, fools and villains who come to fight the monster and meet their end at its claws, or win the treasure. For the Faerie Folk, it is like watching a boxing match or live theater. (**G.M. Note:** And it is a great source for all kinds of adventures, quests, clues and rewards for your player group.)

Faeries and their kin like to put captured, found and stolen magic items, scrolls, books, wands, weapons, armor, gold, gems, and objects they believe humans treasure, in the lairs of monsters and animals, witches and other dangerous beings, and challenging locations. Every attempt by somebody to retrieve the "treasure" or "great magic," gives Faerie Folk something exciting or funny to watch, as the case may be. This is where a Faerie's ire can turn deadly, and it is also another example of how differently Faeries think and perceive things. Case in point, Wee Folk find it enter-

taining and funny to see Big Folk *die* following a hero's quest or fighting a monster, evil wizard or dragon. A person getting killed, especially if he/they offended or angered the Faerie(s), can be hilarious to them. Funny and ironic. And in some cases, the quest may serve the purpose of a morality play, justice (i.e. punishment for one's crimes against Faeries), or the handiwork of Fate.

The moral you need to take away from all of this is, do not piss off Faerie Folk and beware of any quest presented by them. The Wolfen and their canine kin learned this ages ago. Humans and most other Big Folk, on the other hand, never seem to learn. Which gives Faerie Folk plenty of entertainment.

**A note about fair play.** The Faerie Folk's sense of fair play means that if they send a "hero" on a quest, the item, treasure or information he seeks, really is there. This holds true, half of the time, even for those whom they seek to punish or see dead. The other half of the time, the specific item desired may not be there, but there will be some sort of reward. That's just how Faerie Folk think things should work.

## A note about Leprechauns

While Leprechauns follow the general rules above, they are more likely to steal gold, gems and jewelry for themselves, sneaking off with it to add to their legendary *pot of gold*. Leprechauns may also run off with booze and minor magic items, or just about anything that happens to catch their eye even if it has no real value. They have little use for magic items themselves, and almost never keep magic scrolls, books, potions or magic items, not even Greater Rune swords or Holy weapons, and never keep body armor as part of their treasure. It is gold and gems, but especially gold, that strikes their fancy.

As a result, Leprechauns are always competent thieves and pick pockets, as well as excellent storytellers and tricksters. Skills they use to win trust, appear more drunk than they really are and to distract and misdirect while they are busy robbing those they are entertaining. A favorite Leprechaun trick is to drink a Big Folk under the table and either trick him out of his money (leaving magic and weapons untouched), or simply taking gold and valuables when their drinking buddies pass out drunk or are too drunk to notice. (+25% to a Leprechaun's ability to steal and pick pockets when his victim is inebriated.)

Consummate storytellers and liars, Leprechauns enjoy getting gullible and foolish Big Folk into trouble, especially if he takes a disliking to them. The Leprechaun's dirty tricks and practical jokes can be any of the things noted above, including getting people trapped, lost, captured by a monster or villain (or about to be), only for him to "pop up" and offer them a way out — for a price. If they pay his price, which may be steep depending on the circumstance, he helps them escape and get out of trouble. If they refuse, or are rude about it, he leaves them to their fate.

It should be noted that, unlike Faeries, Sprites and other Faerie Folk, Leprechauns understand the value of gold and gems, and are excellent at bargaining and blackmail. They cannot be bought off with candy or one bottle of alcohol (a case or wagon full, but not one bottle), and though most Leprechauns have 1D4+1 large "pots of gold" (may be a big pot, chest, trunk or barrel), they actually have little use for the treasures they amass. Money has little use among the denizens of Faerie, and Leprechauns, like the rest of their kind, tend to avoid "civilization" and Big Folk. Even they don't know why they love to hoard gold and gems.

As you might suspect, Leprechauns can be bribed and information purchased with gold and bottles of booze. Any kind of booze. Leprechauns love their alcohol. However, you can NEVER buy their help. If you are accompanied by a Leprechaun who claims he'll take you to the lair or den of monster X, or help you fight villain so and so, it is a lie. Leprechauns never face danger or fight unless they have no other choice. They certainly never risk their lives for Big Folk. Odds are, at the first opportunity, the cheerful drunk slips away when nobody is looking, and probably with one or more money pouches or the very treasure he helped you locate. Even in chains, a Leprechaun always finds a way to escape, or get *you* killed, or beholden to him. And he always gets away with some of the gold.



## Earning a Faerie's wrath

One of the worst affronts is capturing and torturing or killing one or more Faeries. Another is destroying a Faerie's favorite place in the woods, or killing a favorite animal or friend. The absolute worst is destroying a Faerie's home, particularly a Faerie Mound.

When you see one Faerie or Sprite, you should assume there are more (2D6) nearby. If there are several flitting about, it is safe to assume there is a *Faerie Mound*, home to 2D4x10 Faeries and/or Sprites, someplace within a 5 mile (8 km) radius. The largest communities having as many as 200 Faeries living in and around the Faerie Mound.

Faerie Folk tend to see Big Folk, especially humans, Dwarves, Orcs, Ogres and Trolls, as dangerous and a "common enemy" to be united against. Thus, rival tribes of Faeries and evil Faerie Folk like *Bogies*, *Pucks*, *Toadstools*, *Will-o-the-Wisp*, *Kimmie Ger* and *Dead Moon Hags* are likely to help Faeries and Sprites ex-

tract revenge against their enemies, especially if the wicked Faerie Folk stand to benefit from it. In the case of malevolent Faerie Folk like the *Kinnie Ger* and *Kelpie*, that can be as simple as the enjoyment of killing a humanoid and eating him. For the Hag and Leprechaun, it may be the acquisition of magic, weapons or gold. For others, like the Spriggan or Nymph, Pixies or Brownies, their involvement in acts of retribution against Big Folk is likely to be all about justice or protecting the Faeries or the environment against unwelcome invaders.

**Items held for ransom** may require the Big Folk to either provide the Faerie(s) with goodies like sweets, honey or alcohol, or to do them some service like rescue a captured Faerie (usually captured by a human slaver, mage, witch or evil Faerie Folk), or perform some other deed that helps the Faerie community, a wounded animal or a friend.

Yes, Faeries have friends and sometimes become quite attached to humans and other humanoids. In fact, a Faerie sometimes become so smitten to adventurers it may want to tag along for awhile whether their “friend” wants them to or not. Remember, Faeries have the emotions and sensibilities of an eight or nine year old human child, so it can be difficult to make them understand things from a human adult’s point of view, and it’s easy to hurt their feelings. (“I thought you liked me.” wails the Faerie. “You said we were friends.”) In fact, most trouble with Faeries and Sprites arise from misunderstandings or a Faerie’s idea of fun that gets out of hand.

## Creatures of Magic and Habit

Faeries are creatures of magic, the same as dragons, Wind Puffs, and Unicorns. Though small in size, Faeries and Sprites wield a considerable amount of magic (P.P.E.). So much so, that they actually glow with a faint aura of magic visible in the gathering darkness at dusk and night. That’s why at night, they often hide up in the treetops or dance among fireflies, to conceal their presence from mortals who would do them harm or capture them for display. By the witching hour, most will have retired to their communal sanctuary, **the Faerie Mound**, while others may find a comfy hole in a tree or an abandoned animal’s nest, to lay up for the night and get some sleep.

During the winter months, **Faeries** and **Sprites** go into hibernation for weeks at a time. Their little bodies slow down, burn much fewer calories and they sleep through much of the winter, tucked away deep inside a Faerie Mound, cave or hollow tree. They do wake up from time to time to eat a little, and may go outside to play in the snow, skate across frozen lakes and find fun – often at the expense of Big Folk – before hunkering back down to sleep for a few more weeks. Faeries and Sprites seldom remain active for more than a few (1D4) days at a time during the Winter months. The same is true of most **Leprechauns**, **Grogach**, **Common Pixies**, **Bogies** and **Toadstools**. It is another story entirely for **Frost Pixies** who come down from the mountains to explore and play during the winter freeze of the Great Northern Wilderness and the Eastern Territory. Frost Pixies are also present in the Northern Isles of Bizantium and sometimes stowaway on ships for adventure out at sea. **Brownies**, **Hairy Jacks**, **Pucks**, **Satyrs**, **Spriggans** and most large Faerie Folk may hibernate for a few weeks here and there during the most treacherous parts of winter, but otherwise they stay active year round, as do the **Kinnie Ger** and **Kelpie**; the latter may be seen galloping across frozen

lakes and luring mortals onto thin ice. **Will-O-The-Wisps**, **Dead Moon Hags**, and **Nymphs** also remain awake and active during the winter months, though they usually stay rooted to one location and seldom travel far in winter.

**In warmer climes**, Faerie Folk who normally hibernate in the winter remain active year long, though they may hibernate during seasons with heavy rain. Faeries and most Faerie Folk never willingly make a home in a desert, except perhaps at an oasis. They do not live in any place of desolation. They seek places full of lush beauty and vegetation and favor woodlands, meadows, mountain valleys and remote islands. While they are most often associated with the mixed forests of the Northern Wilderness, Bizantium, Phi, Lopan, Eastern Territory, and the Old Kingdom, Faerie Folk can be found worldwide from northern forests to the southern jungles and tropical islands, they just prefer remote places and keep to themselves. And while forests are favored, Faerie Folk can be encountered in grasslands as well, though in much fewer numbers and variety.

**The Faerie’s Dance.** All Faeries have the magic power to inflict the *Faerie’s Dance*, as well as a small handful of other spells. The exact type of magic varies with the species of Faerie. Most Faeries and Sprites can cast Charm or Love Charm. Other spells vary and may include magic like Animate Plants, Befuddle, Blinding Flash, Circle of Rain, and Invisibility, all of which can be used for pranks as well as protection; and they love pranks. As noted above, when Faeries are angered, they may use their magic with wicked and cruel intent.

Nobody knows how many Faerie Folk exist. They are believed to be most plentiful in the lands north of the Old Kingdom, including the Land of the Damned, but nobody really knows.

## Faeries and the food they eat

Vegetarians, Faeries, Sprites, and Brownies feed on berries, fruit, nuts, certain flower petals, and the nectar of flowers. All three of these Faerie Folks (and others) have a tremendous sweet tooth, and may overindulge on honey, syrups, jams, candy, and other sweet goodies. They gather such delicacies all year long, to make wine, jams, candy, cookies and pies, and make sure they have a good supply of such tasty treats for the long, cold winters. They are small, so they don’t need to eat much to sustain themselves, but when it comes to sweets, they can surprise you, with one Faerie able to consume half a pie if he or she gets carried away. Of course, after a big meal like that, the little fellow may want to fly off to nap somewhere, or be more charged up and eager to play than before. Like a child on a sugar high, a Faerie or Sprite charged up on sugar can become an annoying pest, particularly toward “Big Folk,” which includes most humanoids, including Dwarves, Goblins, Kobolds and even Gnomes.

**Faeries, Sprites, Pixies, Brownies, Bogies, Leprechauns, Toadstools** and even **Spriggans** have been known to steal fresh baked pies and pastries, cookies, cakes and jams set on windowsills to cool, and are so bold (and quiet), they may even sneak into a kitchen to gobble up the goodies or grab some and slip away with it. Thus, sweets, particularly honey drops, honey in any form, syrups, jams, candy, pies, cakes and sweets of almost any kind can be used to barter with Faerie Folk, buy safe passage (but make it fast), or used to barter for information or items in the Faeries’ possession. Faeries do not have the same sense of value as humans and other Big Folk, so it is possible to trade



a jar of honey or a handful of candies or cupcakes for a suit of armor, weapon, scroll, potion, or magic item. HOWEVER, the Faerie must feel it is a *fair trade*. If the creature comes to believe it has been swindled, watch out if you are still in the area or pass through again. (See Faerie wrath and vengeance.)

Some of the other Faerie Folk have additional weak spots for wine, liquor and other items. **Pixies** love all well-prepared foods, and eat almost any tasty food from chicken and duck to a leg of lamb, to breads, pastries, candy and good wine, but not hard liquor, and are always attracted to new, exotic foods to experience. **Brownies** love sweets, especially berries, honey, pies and jams, but also enjoy fresh cow and goat milk, cheese, bread, biscuits, and cakes, and adore pancakes with syrup or berries. Everyone knows **Leprechauns** love gold and hoard the precious metal, but they also adore wine, brandy and other quality liquors to such a degree that many are inebriated or sleeping off a night of drinking half of the time. If you want to get a secret out of a Leprechaun, get him drunk first. Of course, that's easier said than done, because most Leprechauns hold their liquor well, and can out-drink any three large men. Moreover, most Leprechauns would rather die before revealing the location of their pot of gold. A pot that is likely to contain some gems and jewelry (10% of their treasure) and maybe a few (1D4) silver-plated daggers and/or a magic item or two. **The Grogach, Nymph** and **Saytr** have a weakness for wine and flavored liqueurs. **Mermaids** and **Merrows** enjoy wine and rums. **The Dead Moon Hag, Puck,** and **Hairy Jack** enjoy wine, stout beers and hard liquor, and **Spriggans** and **Bogies** may overindulge on wine, mead, ales and beers. The craving of the **Kelpie** and **Kinnie Ger** is said to be *human flesh*.

Again, as cute as some of this may sound, it can lead to trouble, as Faerie Folk may sneak into the camp and wagons of Big Folk and rummage through backpacks and packages looking for treats. *Ransack* is probably a more accurate word than rummage, as a sweet obsessed or angry Faerie can be surprisingly destructive and careless, tossing flint and tinder box, pens, chalk, ink, paper, combs, and such, aside like they were junk. Other times, a stealthy Faerie, Sprite, Pixie or Leprechaun sneaks in, takes what he wants and slips away without a trace. It is not until someone finds their bottle of wine or food missing that they realize they have been robbed. And if the Faerie culprit is nearby and sees a Big Folk accuse one of his comrades for the theft, and an argument or brawl ensues, all the better – treats and a show! Brownies are the only ones who are always considerate of other people's belongings and they are very neat and quiet. It should be noted that a Brownie NEVER steals. Well, not exactly. He or she always leaves something *in trade* for whatever is taken. The trade item could be some sort of work to pay for the food (wash and fold clothing, chop wood, feed the horses, leave some other type of food like fresh caught fish, berries, edible mushrooms, eggs, etc.).

**Faerie Foods.** Since Faeries and Sprites enjoy good food, it makes sense they like to cook and make a variety of foods and wines themselves. However, they often *enchant* their foods to inflict unwanted magical effects and curses upon those who eat them. In many cases, this is, again, a Faerie's idea of fun and practical jokes, but usually not so "fun" for their victims. Forest Children also use enchanted Faerie Foods to trick and defeat Big Folk and monsters who represent a danger, putting them to sleep, etc.

Otherwise, the Forest Children live off the land and enjoy the splendor of nature. At dawn, Faeries and Sprites rise with the sun and to harvest flower nectar, drink and wash their faces in fresh dew, eat berries, fruit, nuts, honey, and certain edible mushrooms and plants. This also means they are very knowledgeable about spices and herbs and which ones are suitable for herbal medicines.

# The Grandelson Curse

Adventure setting, NPC villain, monster & magic

## Lord Grandelson the Younger

Lord Ander Grandelson the Younger of the Western Empire had big plans for a building an empire of his own in the new frontier of the Eastern Territory. At least until they ran afoul of a tribe of Forest Children.

Originally hailing from the Western Empire, the Grandelsons never really fit in with Western society. Most considered *Ander Grandelson, the Elder* and *the Younger*, both to be arrogant and ignorant louts who only became wealthy through a happy accident. In deed, this middle-class family of traders and adventurers struck it rich when they stumbled upon ancient ruins during an expedition in the Yin-Sloth Jungles, near the Baalgor Mountains. Led and financed by the adventurous Grandelson the Elder, the discovery left them with ancient Elven artifacts from the Elf/Dwarf War and a small fortune in gold and gems. Arguably even more valuable and important, were the Greater Rune Weapons the Elder found in the ruins. Each of which was worth a fortune in their own right and made the Elder a very powerful man.

Overnight, the family was rich beyond their wildest dreams. However, while those in Western high society had to acknowledge their wealth, and the power of the coveted Rune Weapons, they never accepted the Grandelson family. They were new money, after all, and unskilled in playing the political games or the boot-licking that goes on in the Western Courts or between the established Western noble families and merchant kingpins. It made life among the wealthy in the Empire of Sin difficult, to say the least. It didn't help matters when the holdings of the boastful Elder Grandelson in Phi and Lopan went bust, and the family threw away their money on lavish parties and flagrant displays of wealth. As the family's diminishing fortune were made known, the Elder and his family became a laughing stock. It is said the shame of it all finally stopped the Elder's heart, leaving what was left of the family fortune to *Ander Grandelson, the Younger*.

Maligned and bullied in the Empire of Sin, Grandelson the Younger decided to build himself and the family a kingdom of their own in the Eastern Territory – a land of opportunity for those bold enough to seize the moment. The family had considered staking a claim in the Lower Territory which was already becoming civilized, until Grandelson the Younger learned he could purchase four times the land in the **Disputed Lands** in the North. So it was he sunk the family fortune into the land and the army he raised in order to hold it against the Wolfen barbarians who claimed the Disputed Lands belonged to the Wolfen People.

Like most people from the civilized south and west, Ander believed the stories describing Wolfen as dumb, barbaric, baby-



eating savages. So it came as a shock when he discovered them to be skilled and disciplined warriors. The savage and bloodthirsty Coyles were more in line with what he had expected, but even they were better fighters and much greater numbers than he had ever imagined.

Two things gave him confidence in fighting the monsters and building the **Grandelson Kingdom** out of the wilderness: his elite squad of Risinor riding warriors and the powerful Rune Weapons left in his possession after the death of his father. Both would be taken out of play before they could make a difference.

Ander Grandelson the Younger's **Risinor Dragon Legion**, as he calls this elite fighting force, had taken the extra step of training their riding animals to hunt and prey upon Coyles and Wolfen. With plenty of opportunity to fly and hunt, Grandelson the Younger reasoned the Risinor would do well in the *Disputed Lands of the Eastern Territory*. The creatures even liked playing in the snow and did not seem to mind the cold too much. What limited their effectiveness in the Great Northern Wilderness is the forest itself. The woodlands are so dense that Risinor have trouble seeing prey on the ground from the sky above, and are unable to swoop down and attack until there is a clearing, which are few and far between. This makes them most effective along the shore line, farmland, pastures, and places like Ophids Grasslands or up in the mountains where the forests are thinner – none of which apply to the undeveloped landholding purchased by Ander the Younger. At least not until he began to clear the land for farming and livestock. Both things that the Wolfen, Coyles and Forest Children fought relentlessly to stop! His 36 Risinor and riders have had plenty of opportunities to hunt and fight, they just have not made the impact their Lord expected them to make.

**Ander's greatest defeat**, however, has been the loss of his family's precious Rune Weapons at the hands of angry Faeries. He and two of his dragon legionnaires had chased a pack of Coyles into the forest when a Faerie appeared to scold him for not being very nice. A belligerent man to begin with, Lord Grandelson the Younger, in no mood for a silly dalliance with a Faerie, bellowed at it to begone and swatted her away. The Faerie was actually struck, and while it fluttered to get out of the way, Grandelson's Risinor tried to swallow her whole. One thing led to another. The conflict that ensued left one Faerie dead and four others injured, and threats from Grandelson the Younger that he was going to destroy the nearby Faerie Mound and burn down the forest around it.

The encounter ended with Grandelson the Younger and his two warriors stumbling out of the woods, beaten, naked and covered in scratches and bruises. They had been missing for three days. Three days of non-stop harassment and punishment at the hands of the Forest Children. Three horrifying and humbling days and nights. Worst of all, the Faeries had taken all their possessions, including Grandelson's four precious Rune Weapons.

The fortunes of Grandelson the Younger have only gotten worse since that fateful day nine years ago. He uses what little money he has left to hire adventurers to go on quests given to him by the Faeries and to investigate every rumor he hears about Rune magic. He also hires adventurers to go on expeditions into the wilderness and the Great Northern Mountains, and some say into the very Land of the Damned, in search of new treasure and magic that might save him from financial ruin and restore him to greatness. His obsession with the attainment of power and wealth is almost as all consuming as his obsession of recovering

the Rune Weapons taken from him. That, and exacting revenge upon the Faeries responsible once he gets his weapons back. The Faeries know this – everyone knows this – which is why they will never return his weapons to him or anyone associated with him or his family.

Meanwhile, his fledgling kingdom has fallen into a shambles. It is little more than a castle, a lawless frontier town and a few trading posts of the worst sort, surrounded by a few dozen farms. His family has left him, most returning to the Western Empire in disgrace, a few returning to Lopan to try to make a go of things there. All of this, it is said, has Grandelson the Younger into madness. He still retains half of his original 36 Risinor, the rest escaped into the wild or were slain on one ill-conceived quest or another. The remaining elite guard stay because they rule his kingdom and run the trading posts. This makes them a decent living and gives them the sort of power bullies such as they seek. All of them are scoundrels who engage in all manner of dirty dealings with Coyles, cutthroats and outlaws, which gives them a tidy sum of money they skim off for themselves without Ander knowing it.

The leader of the Dragon Legion, **Sir Cransin Nestro**, is the most powerful and the worst of the lot. It is he who runs the kingdom for his master, and has Grandelson's complete trust and confidence. Moreover, he still leads the corrupt Dragon Legion who answer only to him. Thirteen evil brigands who still have their trusty Risinor steeds to terrorize the land and enforce their will on the people. **Grandelson the Mad**, as people now call the Younger behind his back, is oblivious to their underworld dealings, and trusts Sir Cransin to run his affairs while he deals with more important matters, as outlined above. Consequently, the Dragon Legion have a free hand in conducting their criminal enterprises.

Half of the time. Grandelson the Mad locks himself away in his castle. The other half he is off on a quest or flies out on his Risinor Dragon Stallion to inflict his rage upon someone he believes has wronged him, or to join an adventurer group in search of his lost Rune Weapons, or to acquire a new fortune. According to recent gossip, Grandelson the Mad has begun consulting with witches and dark forces. One rumor suggests he has cut a deal with three sisters, all *Dead Moon Hags*, to do whatever it takes to make the inhabitants of the Faerie Mound that took his treasured weapons, suffer until they give up the location of the items.

## **Lord Ander Grandelson the Younger**

### **A Lord from the Western Empire**

#### **Self-Claimed King of Grandelson Castle**

**Also Known As:** Grandelson the Mad, Ander Grandelson the Younger, and Grandelson the Wicked.

**Race:** Human

**Alignment:** Diabolic (was Aberrant at one time).

**Attributes:** I.Q. 15, M.E. 7, M.A. 10, P.S. 23, P.P. 17, P.E. 15, P.B. 10, Spd 18.

**Hit Points:** 74. **S.D.C.:** 30.

**Height:** Five feet, 9 inches (1.75 m). **Weight:** 164 lbs (74 kg).

**P.P.E.:** 4. **Age:** 54

**Disposition:** Ander Grandelson, the Younger is quite mad. He is obsessed with the recovery of his inheritance and destiny stolen from him by the Faeries of Lilly Hill in the form of his Rune Weapons. Grandelson the Mad had big plans and those

weapons played a key role in them. Without them he has nothing. With them the world is his to conquer!

The madman bounces from melancholy to outbursts of rage, violence and acts of cruelty and wanton destruction. When feeling especially frustrated or angry, he flies off on his Risinor with 1D4 of his Dragon Legion in tow, and finds a reason to attack and slaughter someone. This can be adventurers, mercenaries, a band of Wolfen, Coyles or other monster race, or just innocent travelers minding their own business. He also engages in rape and torture. Other times he finds an adventurer group to hire to go off on some insane quest, usually following a lead to what he hopes is one of his treasured Rune Weapons. Sometimes he joins the party on the quest. At times, Grandel-son the Mad can seem quite sane and reasonable, especially in the early stages of quests, when he is optimistic. But if there are delays or too many hardships or disappointments, the mad king becomes surly, short-tempered and cruel, even abusive. When the quest comes to an end, and one of his Rune Weapons is not found among the spoils of war, the full force of his madness is revealed in raves and paranoid behavior. Lucky quest partners see him fly away in a rage (and often with half the treasure or the plum items). Other times, he starts to blame them for every problem and may engage in actions that put them in harm's way, or he arranges accidents, or he betrays them, or picks them off one by one, or leaves them to an uncertain fate after he betrays or abandons them. If they should survive and they meet again, there is a 01-50% chance that he treats them like long-lost friends and he has a new mission for them. Any differences they had, real or imagined, forgotten or forgiven. 51-00% chance he remembers them through the filter of insanity as treacherous villains who used him and his money to fund their expedition, leaving him with nothing, and/or because of their incompetence or something they did, they failed him. As a result, they are the subject of his disdain and lasting vengeance.

**Description:** Average height on the small side, strong and muscular for a man his age, and capable of fighting opponents half his age. He has long, light brown and grey hair, a moustache and a long, flowing beard (see cover to this issue).

**Experience Level:** 10th level Mercenary Fighter and nobleman.

**Skills of Note:** Athletics (general), Climb/Scale Walls 90%, Dance 90%, Forced March, Heraldry 90%, Horsemanship: Exotic Animals: 85/75%, Horsemanship: General 90/75%, Hand to Hand: Assassin, Interrogation Techniques 75%, Surveillance 80%, Land Navigation 72%, Languages: Western, Elven and Gobblely 95%, Eastern 60%, Literate in Elven 75%, Math 95%, Swimming 95%, Recognize Weapon Quality 95%, Wilderness Survival 85%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Staff, W.P. Sword, and W.P. Shield.

**Attacks per Melee:** Seven.

**Bonuses (includes all bonuses):** +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +12 to damage, +4 to disarm, +4 to pull punch, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, paired weapons, critical strike on 19-20, knockout on a Natural 17-20, kick attack does 2D4, leap kick does 2D6 but counts as two attacks, body flip/throw does 1D6; 55% to evoke trust/intimidate, +2 to save vs Horror Factor and +1 to ALL saving throws via the Rune Staff Skyfire.

**Magic:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Notable Equipment:** Skyfire the Rune Staff, described below.

As a lord of even a floundering kingdom, he can acquire pretty much, whatever he needs, including all items listed under the Merc Fighter O.C.C., plus the following: *Magic Armor: Leather of Iron* (A.R. 15 and 199 S.D.C.!), a pair of magical *Gryphon Claw gloves* (2D6 damage per claw strike), a magical broadsword (it does 2D4+2 damage and the sword is indestructible and can perform a Blinding Flash three times daily), a silver-coated knife (1D6 damage), a silver cross worn around his neck, four healing potions (3D6 H.P. restored per potion), two Chameleon Potions, one Fly as the Eagle potion (lasts 30 minutes), one Truth Serum, one Might of the Palladium, a backpack, tent, bedroll, knapsack, saddlebags, 2 canteens, 2 week supply of rations, a wine skin of fine Eastern Wine, a bottle of brandy, 4D6 pieces of candy, and some personal items. **Note:** As the king of the crumbling Grandel-son Kingdom, he has access to all the resources of the kingdom. His main henchman being Sir Cransin. **Note:** Grandel-son NEVER shares any of his belongings or magic.

**Transportation:** Raging Fury, his Risinor Dragon Steed (240 Hit Points for main body, 5 attacks per melee). The beast is completely loyal to Lord Grandel-son and like all of the Risinor, has developed a taste for Wolfen, Coyle and human flesh. He has a riding horse named Quicksilver (26 Hit Points, 23 S.D.C., 2 attacks per melee).

**Money:** Honestly, he doesn't know how much money he has left; less than he thinks. Sir Cransin always makes sure there is at least 100,000 in gold and silver available to fund whatever mad quest the would-be king wants to sponsor, but beyond that, the kingdom (if you can call it that), is pretty broke. What profits there to be made are skimmed away by Sir Cransin, and the town has become a rough and tumble stomping ground for mercenaries, adventurers, thieves, smugglers, pirates and all manner of cutthroats operating in the Disputed Lands, Eastern Territory and southern portion of the Great Northern Wilderness. That includes playing both sides of the conflict in the Disputed Lands – humans and Coyles/Wolfen (mainly Coyles).

## Skyfire the Rune Staff

Grandel-son the Mad's primary and favorite weapon is his sole remaining Rune Weapon, **Skyfire the Lightning Staff**. It is the only ancient Rune Weapon in his possession only because he did not have it with him the day he crossed the Faeries of Lilly Hill. It is an example of ancient Rune Weapons of tremendous power that have abilities beyond those commonly known. Skyfire possesses all the standard powers of a *Greater Rune Sword* (see **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, page 250), plus the following, very special abilities. Skyfire is an ancient Rune Staff created by the Dwarves but once used by the Elves against them in the Elf/Dwarf War.

**Staff's Alignment:** Anarchist and likes to humor Grandel-son on his quests and moments of insanity, contributing to his moments of paranoia. Skyfire enjoys the madness and chaos of her owner.

**I.Q. and other properites:** I.Q. 17, communes with Grandel-son via Telepathy, is totally indestructible and is 7 feet (2.1 m) long.

**Makes its owner impervious to lightning/electricity.** Applicable only when it is in his possession. All other types of energy

attacks, including lasers, particle beams, plasma, heat and fire do half damage.

**P.P.E.:** 80 points.

**Skyfire Elemental Combat Abilities:** Unlike most Rune Weapons, the Lightning Staff does not cast spells. Instead it has its own unique range of combat abilities. The Rune Staff can unleash lightning blasts as described below.

**1. Fire Lightning Bolts:** The wielder of Skyfire simply points and commands it to unleash a small lightning bolt at the desired target. **Range:** 2,000 feet (610 m). **Damage:** 6D6 S.D.C./Hit Point damage per blast. Each blast counts as one of the user's melee attacks. **Bonus:** +2 to strike.

**2. Lightning Strike (Blunt Damage):** Each blunt attack with Skyfire also unleashes an electrical charge, inflicting 4D6 damage per successful strike, plus any applicable damage bonus for a high P.S. attribute and combat bonuses (+12 in for Grandelston the Mad). **Note:** When the Rune Staff is used to parry attacks, the opponent whose attack is parried suffers 1D6 damage from an electric shock even when the weapon is used for defense.

**3. Lightning Rod:** Any lightning bolt, including the magic spell Call Lightning, that comes within 20 feet (6.1 m) of Skyfire is drawn to it and absorbed into the Rune Staff, doing no damage to anyone within its radius of protection!

**4. Call Down Sky Fire:** By raising the staff up onto the sky during any type of rain or storm, even a winter snowstorm, calling for skyfire and pounding one end onto the ground, calls down a massive lightning bolt. The moment the lightning bolt hits the staff, the user of Skyfire can either divide the energy into five smaller lightning bolts to strike FIVE different opponents within an 80 foot (24.4 m) radius. Targets must dodge or be struck and take damage! Each smaller bolt inflicting 5D6 damage to each target. Or he may redirect the lightning bolt to strike *one target* within 120 feet (36.6 m). Damage is 4D4x10 damage! Calling Down Sky Fire can only be done only twice per 24 hour period and only when it is raining or snowing; it works even if it is a light rain. This is one reason why the Wind Rod, able to create rain and summon storms, is missed so badly by Grendelston the Mad.

**5. Electric Blasts:** Deployed as a warning shot or when toying with an enemy. **Range:** 200 feet (61 m). **Damage:** 2D6+2 S.D.C./Hit Point damage per blast. Each blast counts as one of the user's melee attacks. **Bonus:** +1 to strike.

## The Lost Grandelston Rune Weapons

The Faeries never want these Rune Weapons to fall into the hands of Grandelston the Mad or any member of his family, but they may want them to be "acquired" by a hero. That said, the dangers and villains or monsters that said hero(s) must face will be extremely challenging and deadly.

**Each of the Rune Weapons** possesses all the standard powers of a Greater Rune Weapon (see **Palladium Fantasy RPG®**, page 250), plus the special abilities listed under each. Each Rune Weapon is worth millions in gold.

**Adventure Note:** As far as Grandelston the Mad and the rest of the Grendelston family are concerned, Ander Grandelston the Elder looted the ruins in which he found these Rune Weapons

and there are no others left to be found. Or are there? The Grandelstons tend to be brutish opportunists. Did the Elder perform a thorough search of the ruins? Are parts of the ruins he never unearthed? And if so, is there more amazing Elven treasure and Rune Weapons to be found? There is only one problem. The Grandelston family has kept the location of these ruins a secret. Heck, the Elder didn't trust half of them, so only a few of them know the location: Grandelston the Mad, Uncle Ollie Grandelston who returned to the Western Empire, and cousin Trent Grandelston, now living in Lopan. Neither of them have been to the site, but have a map and know the stories. You need to know the stories in order to use the partial map. The map has deliberate omissions that, if you know the stories of the Grandelston Expedition, can be filled in to find the location.

## Deathsong Rune Broadsword

Deathsong is a Greater Rune bastard sword, and though normally a two-handed weapon, Deathsong has the weight of a short sword and can be used with one hand. The blade is jet black and almost seems to be made of ice or an ice covered blade of polished ebony stone. Its high gloss makes it appear to be wet and glistening all the time.

**Location:** Depending on which rumor one chooses to believe, Deathsong has fallen into the hands of a Lizard Mage (see **Monsters and Animals**) who has plans for it back in the *Baalgor Wastelands* or *Old Kingdom*, a wicked and murderous rogue Jeridu (see **Land of the Damned One** for details on this rare, six-armed race of people), a Bizantium pirate or an Ice Born (see **Bizantium and the Northern Islands**). If such a powerful weapon has fallen into the hands of an Ice Born leader or Sea Witch, it could help the monsters with any number of invasion plans. Which, if any, of these rumors are true, is anyone's guess.

**The Sword's Alignment:** Miscreant evil and enjoys bloodshed, destruction and murder.

**I.Q. and other properities:** I.Q. 20, communes with its owner via Telepathy, it is totally indestructible and is four feet (1.2 m) long. The owner of the blade enjoys an extra 20 S.D.C., is +20% to survive vs coma/death and is +1 to save vs Elemental Magic. Deathsong floats on water.

**Damage:** Inflicts 1D4x10 damage, but does double damage to elemental beings, including Golems and Spirits of Light. Victims say the sting of the blade is cold as ice.

**P.P.E.:** 88 points. Deathsong can cast spells in any combination provided it has sufficient P.P.E. When all the P.P.E. it possesses is used up, it cannot cast more spells until at least 10 P.P.E. has regenerated. P.P.E. recovers at a rate of 10 points every three hours.

**The Spells of Deathsong the Rune Sword:** The numbers in parenthesis are the P.P.E. the weapon needs to cast it. Rune Weapons can only draw upon their own P.P.E. reserve.

**1. Animate and Control Dead (20)**, same as the Wizard spell except Deathsong can animate as many as 13 skeletons or corpses for one hour per casting of the spell.

**2. Death Trance (1)**, same as the Wizard spell equal to a 6th level Wizard.

**3. Detect Poison (10)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**4. Dispel Magic Barrier (20)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**5. Fire Ball (6)**, similar to the Wizard spell, except that the fire ball is fired from the sword (point and shoot), it has a range of 300 feet (91.5 m) and inflicts 6D6 damage per fire ball.

**6. See the Invisible (4)**, same as the Wizard spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**7. Turn Dead (6)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

## Kalizar the Wind Rod

Kalizar controls the wind and the rain. In the past, Grandelion the Mad would use it in tandem with Skyfire to first bring rain and then lightning. This three foot (0.9 m) length of white wood covered in silver Runes resembles a magic wand or perhaps a walking stick. Indestructible, yet light as a feather, Kalizar can be used like a short fencing foil to parry swords and other weapons.

**Location:** According to one rumor, the Faeries gave the rod to a terrible monster that wanders the Great Northern Wilderness. Another rumor says Kalizar has fallen into the hands of one of the barbarian kings or warlords, because it was hidden in barbarian country. Another rumor says it rests unused and forgotten among the treasure of a great monster; an Angel-Demon Serpent or a dragon perhaps? Yet another rumor has it that the Wind Rod is someplace in the mountains of the Northern Hinterlands, protected by one or more monsters and waiting for a hero to claim it and use it to fight the undead and demons. A similar rumor says that a Titan and a band of Minotaur intend to take Kalizar back into the Land of the Damned for purposes unknown.

**The Rod's Alignment:** Scrupulous and it seeks a champion of light who will use it to slay vampires and demons (it hates the undead above all others). Kalizar is glad to be out of the hands of the Grandelions, though becoming a tool of another selfish or wicked master is not the fate it had hoped for.

**I.Q. and other properites:** I.Q. 20, communes with its owner via Telepathy, it is totally indestructible and is 3 feet (0.9 m) long.

**Damage:** Inflicts 2D6 damage when used as a blunt weapon, and on a power punch attack, can stab and impale like a sword (4D6 damage). Does double damage to vampires, zombies, animated dead and other undead.

**P.P.E.:** 90 points. The Wind Rod can cast spells in any combination provided it has sufficient P.P.E. When all the P.P.E. it possesses is used up, it cannot cast more spells until at least 10 P.P.E. has regenerated. P.P.E. recovers at a rate of 10 points every three hours. There is one exception, Summon Storms, which it can cast once every 24 hours.

**The Spells and Magic of Kalizar the Wind Rod:** The numbers in parenthesis are the P.P.E. the weapon needs to cast it. Rune Weapons can only draw upon their own P.P.E. reserve.

**1. Float (special; no P.P.E. cost):** The Wind Rod and its wielder float on water and in the air. By just possessing the Wind Rod the owner cannot fall from heights greater than two feet (0.6 m) high without damage. If he should stumble off a mountain ledge or rooftop, Kalizar's owner hovers in midair for a few moments and the person can quickly scramble back to the safety of the ledge or roof. If he just stands or lays there, he starts to slowly descend like a feather riding a light breeze. Landing on the ground as gentle as can be.

If there is an updraft, the wielder can use it to help support him and climb up sheer walls, cliffs, towers and trees by pulling himself along the object and upward while he is held up by the

draft/wind with no chance of slipping or falling. Climbing speed is equal to half his usual running speed.

On water, the wielder of Kalizar floats gently even on rough waters and has no fear of sinking or being pulled under by a wave or current.

**2. Wind Rush (10)**, same as the spell equal to a 6th level Warlock, can be performed once per melee round and counts as one of the wielder's melee attacks.

**3. Circle of Rain (25)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Warlock.

**4. Calm Storms (20)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Warlock.

**5. Summon Storms (special)**, same as the Wizard spell, equal in power to an 8th level Wizard, but can only be performed once per 24 hour period.

**6. Cloud of Slumber (4)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Warlock.

**7. Create Air (6)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Warlock.

**8. Breath of Life (50)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Warlock, which gives it a 76% chance of success.

## Lundyn, Helm of Beasts

Thinking Wolfen and Coyles to be more beast than man, one of the reasons he came to the Eastern Territory and the Disputed Lands was because he incorrectly believes he can use the Helm of Beasts to seize control of entire tribes of the canine monsters. In his madness, he is more certain than ever, that if he can recover the Helm, he can become the *King of the Wolfen* and conquer all of the Eastern Territory, the Great Northern Wilderness and Bizantium to become the greatest king of all! He is absolutely convinced of this. In his mind, the Faeries of Lilly Hill have stolen his destiny.

This device helped Ander Grendelson the Elder tame the Risinor and establish his business of selling them as flying war-horses.

**Location:** According to one rumor, the Helm of Beasts was hidden somewhere in the Disputed Lands until a Cyclops and his adventurer group took it in combat. If the rumors are true, the Cyclops and his freebooters intend to head back home to the *Isle of the Cyclops*. That means they are most likely to travel to one of the Western Empire's sea ports in Ophid's Grasslands, take a ship to *Lopan* and book passage on a ship from there to the *Isle of the Cyclops*. It is also possible the Cyclops and his band may find pirates along Ophid's coast who can take them directly to the island nation. What nefarious plans he may have for the helm are unknown.

**The Helm's Alignment:** Anarchist.

**I.Q. and other properites:** I.Q. 18, communes with its owner via Telepathy and is totally indestructible. The helmet magically adjusts in size to fit whomever places it upon their head. The wearer of the helm is never attacked by wild animals, and all animals accept him as one of them and non-threatening.

**Damage:** Only via the creatures under its influence.

**P.P.E.:** 66 points. The Helm of Beasts can cast spells in any combination provided it has sufficient P.P.E. When all the P.P.E. it possesses is used up, it cannot cast more spells until at least 10 P.P.E. has regenerated. P.P.E. recovers at a rate of 10 points every three hours.



### **The Special Power of Lundyn, Helm of Beasts:**

**Master of the Beasts (special):** In the right hands, Lundyn, the Helm of Beasts is a very dangerous and deadly weapon. Whomever dons the helm becomes enchanted in such a way that animals see the wearer as a dominant (alpha) member of its own species. This enables the wearer of the Helm of Beasts to seize control of entire groups of animals without challenge from the alpha male. The alpha and all the animals in the group accept the wearer of the Helm of Beasts as their leader and follow and obey his every command. By this means the wearer of the Helm can control and command a single animal such as a viper or hawk, or an entire group of them. Whether it is a herd of wild horses or elephants, a pride of lions or a pack of wolves, a flock of birds or a nest of snakes, a pod of whales or a school of sharks, a troop of gorillas or a sounder of wild boar, the wearer of the Helm of Beasts becomes their leader. Each and every animal in that group follows him anywhere and fights to the death if he so commands it. The pack, herd, school, etc., can number as many as 200, provided there were than many beasts in the herd in the first place. Predators usually gather in “packs” that with 6-60 animals, while herd animals gather in larger groups. The animals the Helm can control includes *monstrous animals* such as Chimera, Dragon-dactyls, Peryton, Silonar, Tree Eels, Tuskers, and Gryphons, etc.; if it has an *animal intelligence* it can be controlled by the wearer of Lundyn. It was the use of the Rune helmet that enabled Grandelson the Elder to wrangle and tame so many *Risnor*.

**Exceptions** are creatures of magic (dragons, Faerie Folk, Wing Puffs, Unicorns, Ki-Lin, and similar), *supernatural beings* (even if animals and predators like the Worms of Taut), *insects*, and *lower organisms*. Nor does it apply to primitive or animal-like “beast men” such as Hytril, Grimbor, Lizard Men, Wolfen, Bear Men, Sasquatch, and so on, nor animals with human-level intelligence like the Loogaroo, Emirin, and Waterbat. Generally, if it speaks, uses weapons and tools or wields magic, it cannot be controlled by the helm.

**Domesticated animals and pets are a special case.** Tamed animals who love and appreciate their masters/owners see him as their pack leader and cannot be forced to turn against the people they love and serve. However, if the animal is mistreated and dislikes, fears or hates its owner, it can easily accept the wearer of Lundyn as its leader and does whatever it is told to do. This applies to domesticated horses, dogs, cats, and any guard or riding animal. It does not apply to cattle and most other livestock like goats, sheep, pigs, ducks, chickens, etc. unless the animal is a beloved pet. Thus, the Helm of Beasts can NOT be made to have a horse throw its rider or a guard animal or pet made to attack its owner.

**Limitations:** The wearer can only lead and command a maximum of three different groups of animals. Solitary hunters that do not gather in groups, such as bears and most predatory felines, can only be controlled as an individual or mated pair, and that one animal or pair counts as one of the three different groups.

As the *pack leader*, the wearer of Lundyn must actually lead, with the other animals following his charge, attacks, and direction. He can command predatory animals to attack, and they will, but he must be present to direct their actions and to keep them from running away when they are injured or frightened as they would under normal conditions. As the super-alpha leading the group, the wearer of Lundyn can override animal instincts and make passive animals attack, lead (or stop) a stampeding herd,

and get them to ignore their normal fears of fire, loud noise, etc., as well as not to attack prey animals or specific people in the group with them. As long as the wearer is present they follow his commands.

Smart use of Lundyn can make the wearer of the Helm of Beasts deadly to entire armies of men.

**Additional Spells and Magic of Lundyn, Helm of Beasts:** The numbers in parenthesis are the P.P.E. the weapon needs to cast it. Rune Weapons can only draw upon their own P.P.E. reserve.

**1. Chameleon (6)**, same as the spell, equal to a 6th level Wizard.

**2. Climb (3)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**3. Repel Animals (7)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**4. Swim as a Fish (Lesser, 6)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**5. Swim as a Fish: Superior (12)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**6. Fly as the Eagle (25)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

## **Tigera the Treacherous**

Considered a Major Rune Weapon, Tigera is an *invisible dagger* that only the user/owner can see. She enjoys combat and encourages backstabbing, revenge and acts of selfishness, as well as lying to people to get what you want and using others.

**Location:** One rumor says an Elven Assassin employed by one of the noble houses of Bizantium has acquired the blade. Another reports the blade has fallen into the hands of a dirty Gladiator who travels the world competing in gladiatorial games, but is most often found competing on the coast of Ophid's Grasslands, Lopan and the Western Empire. Yet another says Tigera was stolen by a notorious Pirate and is on a ship heading back to the Land of the South Winds.

**The Knife's Alignment:** Anarchist.

**I.Q. and other properities:** I.Q. 15, communes with its owner via Telepathy and is totally indestructible. The invisible knife magically adjusts in size to fit whomever wields it, but damage never changes. When drawn, the wielder can automatically see the invisible!

**Damage:** The invisible blade does 4D6 damage per strike, double damage from surprise attacks!

**Returns to its owner when thrown (special):** Throwing range is 100 feet (30.5 m).

**Bonuses:** Since only the owner can see the blade, he is +2 to strike, parry, and disarm with the invisible blade.

**Additional Spells and Magic of Tigera the Treacherous:** The numbers in parenthesis are the P.P.E. the weapon needs to cast it. Rune Weapons can only draw upon their own P.P.E. reserve.

**P.P.E.:** 50 points. The blade can cast spells in any combination provided it has sufficient P.P.E. When all the P.P.E. it possesses is used up, it cannot cast more spells until at least 10 P.P.E. has regenerated. P.P.E. recovers at a rate of 10 points every three hours.

**1. Armor of Ithan (10)**, same as the spell, equal to a 6th level Wizard.

**2. Concealment (6)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**3. Invisibility: Simple (6)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**4. Sense Evil (2)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**5. Sense Magic (4)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

**6. Sense Traps (7)**, same as the spell, equal in power to a 6th level Wizard.

## Sir Cransin Nestro

Sir Cransin Nestro has always been an underhanded schemer with delusions of grandeur. He has advanced in life by stepping over the bodies of those he has walked over and left behind. He chose to serve Lord Grandelson the Younger as the head of his elite guard and leader of the Dragon Legion mainly to get out of the Western Empire before his past caught up with him. As Lord Grandelson the Mad became more distracted with his own obsessions, Sir Cransin stepped in to carry more and more responsibilities. It was not long before he was the not so secret power behind the throne. It is he who runs the tiny kingdom. It is he who dispenses justice and protects the realm. Sir Cransin is more Mafia boss than knight or protector. The only person he really watches out for is himself and the criminal organization he has created. He is reasonably loyal and good to his lieutenants and those who serve him well, but ultimately, they too are expendable. For now the knight is happy to let Grandelson the Mad go off as he pleases, as long as it is he who hold the keys to the kingdom. Those who challenge or oppose him have accidents or go missing, or are charged with crimes they didn't commit and locked away or killed.

### Sir Cransin Nestro, a Knight from the Western Empire

**Race:** Human

**Alignment:** Miscreant.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 14, M.E. 17, M.A. 19, P.S. 20, P.P. 21, P.E. 15, P.B. 14, Spd 12.

**Hit Points:** 41. **S.D.C.:** 34.

**Height:** 6 feet (1.8 m). **Weight:** 200 lbs (90 kg).

**P.P.E.:** 2. **Age:** 37

**Disposition:** Cransin can be charming like a snake, but beware his venomous bite. He is one of those guys who smiles while he plunges a dagger into a "partner's" back. Sir Cransin may be a knight, but he has spent his time wallowing in the mud and blood on the streets and getting his hands dirty in the shadows. He is streetwise, cagey, cold and calculating; always looking for an angle to exploit or a new victim to cheat, trick or use to his advantage. He likes to put on airs and behaves high and mighty, but in a clinch, he is a street fighter who uses every dirty trick he can think of to win or get his way. One way or the other, rivals, competitors and threats to his power-base are eliminated. He is not afraid to get his own hands dirty, but usually tries to let his henchmen deal with trouble first. He knows many unsavory characters – mercenaries, thieves and assassins, as well as members of the monster races with

whom he quietly does business, including Coyles he knows attack and murder humans in the Disputed Lands. Secretly offering protection to criminals and fugitives in the kingdom of his king and master, has proven to be quite lucrative.

Sir Cransin commands the Dragon Legion and a network of thugs, thieves, smugglers and assassins operating under his protection in the failing Kingdom of Grandelson. Most criminal operations in town and at the crooked trading posts, either give him a cut of the action (20%) or work for him. He thinks of himself as criminal mastermind, but he's not. He's good, but not that good. Arrogant and cunning, Sir Cransin is a gambler who likes to take calculated risks. However, when angered or losing face, or when feeling overconfident, he takes foolish risks and may act in reckless haste. Acting in the heat of the moment and pressing his luck when things are going well, has gotten him in trouble many times in the past.

**Description:** Tall, slender, muscular build, black hair, mustache and neatly trimmed beard. Though handsome, there is something slimy and sinister about him even at his most charming.

**Experience Level:** 8th level Rogue Knight.

**Skills of Note:** Body Building, Boxing, Card Shark 66%, Dance 80%, Escape Artist 65%, Heraldry 75%, Horsemanship: Exotic Animals: 75/65% Horsemanship: Knight 80/70%, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Hunting, Land Navigation 72%, Languages: Western 98%, Gobblely 85%, Eastern 60%, Literate in Elven 90%, Math 80%, Prowl 75%, Swimming 85%, Recognize Weapon Quality 85%, Wilderness Survival 70%, W.P. Cross Bow, W.P. Lance, W.P. Sword, and W.P. Shield.

**Attacks per Melee:** Five.

**Bonuses (includes all bonuses):** +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +6 to dodge, +7 to damage, +4 to pull punch, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to disarm, paired weapons, critical strike on 19-20, kick attack does 2D4, leap kick does 2D6 but counts as two attacks, body flip/throw does 1D6; 55% to evoke trust/intimidate, +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Magics:** None.

**Psionics:** None.

**Notable Equipment:** All the basic items of the Knight O.C.C., a silver-tipped lance, a pair of magical Gryphon Claws (2D6 damage per claw strike), a magical broadsword (it does 2D4+2 damage and the sword is indestructible) plus a round shield, two small, throwing axes (each does 1D4+1 damage each), silver-coated knife (1D6 damage), a silver cross worn around his neck, three healing potions (3D6 H.P. restored per potion), 2 Fly as the Eagle potions (each lasts 15 minutes), two scrolls of Call Lightning (equal to 4th level spells), a backpack, tent, knapsack, saddlebags, 2 canteens, 2 week supply of rations, and some personal items. **Note:** As the Commander of the Dragon Legion and the unofficial ruler of the Grandelson Kingdom, Sir Cransin has access to the dwindling resources of Lord Grandelson as well as his own, formidable contacts within the criminal underworld

**Transportation:** Riding horse (20 H.P., 26 S.D.C., 2 attacks per melee).

**Money:** 50,000 in gold and gems in the Eastern Territory immediately available to him, 250,000 ferreted away in a bank in Timiro, 79,000 in gold in a Bizantium bank, and he lives in the lap of relative luxury at the castle.



## Risinor Dragon Stallion

The Risinor are rare even in their native Yin-Sloth Jungles. Grandelson the Elder had heard tales of the beasts being tamed and ridden in great numbers by Elven warriors against the Dwarves during the Elf/Dwarf War. So many were destroyed in that conflict that there was a time when the Risinor (pronounced “risen-nor”) was thought to be extinct. So it was a thrill when Grandelson the Elder found a flock in the northern end of the Yin-Sloth Jungles. Armed with the Rune Weapons and magic from what he claims was an Elven treasure he had unearthed earlier in the expedition, the Elder succeeded in capturing a good many of the flock. He then established a compound, right there on the edge of the jungle. Using the Helm of Beasts, he was able to break them like wild stallions, and turn them into flying warhorses. This was a feat that had been accomplished in the past by others, but none had done so in such great numbers in 500 years. One more feather in the cap of the Grandelson family, and one of the resources that did interest Western Royalty, fighters and adventurers. After the initial blush of excitement, however, sales of the Risinor as a war mount slumped. The cost of the rare beast was high, but the real deterrent was upkeep, care and housing of the creature.

Though dubbed a “dragon stallion,” the Risinor is neither a dragon nor a stallion. Rather it is a large, winged predator that resembles a small dragon in its appearance. Risinors are roughly the size of a warhorse, but are more robust and burly, like a bull. Its claws, legs and large leather wings make it resemble a dragon. The head, mouth and scaly skin also resemble a dragon or large lizard. The teeth are large and heavy, for breaking and crushing bones as well as rending flesh from their prey. The front paws more resemble hands with three large fingers and an opposable thumb. This comes in handy for climbing mountains, cliffs, large trees and for grabbing and carrying off prey. The animal has a long tail, but no fins or spikes. When running on the ground, the Risinor lopes, like a cat, but this is a winged creature that, like birds, is born to fly. They land on the ground only to hunt, mate, play, and to kill and devour prey. In the wild, the Risinor is either flying or resting atop a mountain peak or the side of a cliff, or sunning itself in a field someplace.

Risinor can become surprisingly domesticated and respond with the same measure of intelligence and obedience as a horse, but only when they are allowed to take wing on a daily basis for long periods of time. As a war steed, Risinor love fighting and remain steady in combat, but they need to be allowed to fly and hunt on a regular basis. In the Western Empire, this has made Risinor best suited for armed patrols along the borders or in wilderness areas, limiting their usefulness and ruining the idea of just having your own “dragon stallion” to show off and impress guests.

Unless the Risinor is flown often and allowed to hunt wild prey such as deer, elk, wild boar, people, etc., it becomes dangerously cranky or despondent. This is not an animal an owner can stable or keep in the city, like a horse. It needs a massive pen and must be ridden in the sky where it can soar several times daily. A tethered Risinor stuck on the ground, becomes a wickedly sullen and irritable beast that lashes out in anger at those come near it. Such an angry and sad creature becomes disobedient, may kill livestock left for it but refuse to eat, may take swipes or nips at its handlers, and kill and eat anyone it does not know and comes too close. If the frustrated penned animal escapes, it is likely to slaughter cattle and livestock out of spite, and cause havoc before its owner can regain control of it.

After a few months of captivity without freedom to soar and hunt, many Risinor stop eating and starve themselves to death. Unless a purchaser is going to be riding and/or engaging in combat, it is only a matter of time before it starves to death or goes berserk, breaks free and goes on a killing spree. And since humanoids are on its list of prey, Risinor that have broken free and gone feral can become man-eaters that terrorize the countryside.

This may sound like the animal makes a good steed for adventurers, but that’s not true either, unless the owner of the beast is always on the go and is in an environment where the Risinor can fly and hunt without causing panic or being targeted for destruction. Dragon Stallions are an ancient creature of legend, known to slaughter livestock and become man-eaters, so they are feared and chased of or destroyed whenever any happen to come down into populated areas. Their large size makes them difficult or impossible to bring into enclosed areas such as caves, tunnel sys-

tems and dungeons, and their restless nature, and the fear they invoke, makes it difficult to leave the animal tethered outside or even flying in the air, circling like a hawk until his master calls him.

## Risinor

**Also Known As:** Dragon Stallions, Mock Dragons, Little Dragons and Risen Horror.

**Alignment:** Animal Predator, considered Anarchist or Miscreant.

**Attributes:** Animal attributes are very consistent and offer a smaller range of attribute aptitude. I.Q. 1D6+4; high animal intelligence. M.E. 1D6+12, M.A. 1D6+10, P.S. 2D4+22, P.P. 1D6+16, P.E. 1D6+20, P.B. 1D6+10, Spd. 2D6+15 running (18 mph/29 km on average); 2D6+38 flying (on average 35 mph/56 km). Equal to Robot P.S. in **Rifts**® and other Mega-Damage settings.

### Hit Points & S.D.C. by Location:

Wings (2) – 100 each

Forelimbs/claws (2) – 100 each

Hind Limbs (2) – 140 each

Tail – 90

Main Body – 4D6x10

**Note:** In an Mega-Damage setting, convert the Hit Points & S.D.C. above, into M.D.C. point for point.

**Horror Factor:** 13 in the wild or when there is only one and a rider. 15 when two or more are attacking as flying war steeds with a rider on its back. The reason is the attacks are directed and controlled, not random, and you have the additional danger of attacks by the rider.

**Size:** 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) tall at the shoulders, 9-10 feet (2.7 to 3 m) long from snout to rump, with the tail adding an additional 6-8 feet (1.8 to 2.4 m).

**Weight:** 800-1,200 lbs (360 to 540 kg).

**Average Life Span:** 20-26 years.

**P.P.E.:** 3D6

**O.C.C.:** None; animal, but can be domesticated and made to understand words and commands on par with that of a horse. Displays similar loyalty and affection as a horse.

**Natural Abilities:** Swift runner and flyer for its size. They can maintain their top speed for 15 minutes running and an hour flying, but after that, cruising speed is half for both running or flying, but at a measured pace that can be maintained for 1D4+1 hours before requiring the beast to stop and rest for a while. Risinors love to fly and soar, and hate being grounded. Keen hearing and hawk-like vision enabling it to see prey the size of a rabbit up to two miles (3.2 km) away. It does NOT have nightvision and in the wild it sleeps at night. Nightvision is on par with humans. Good sense of smell and can track by smell, on the ground, 60% or from the air 50% (+15% to follow blood scent), Climb 80%, Land Navigation 92%, Prowl 40%, Swim 55%, but makes a loud, splashing landing in water and loses half its attacks in water. Risinor heal rapidly (4D6 Hit Points/M.D.C. every 24 hours) with damage/tears/holes done to the wings healing up in a matter of time. Horns and tail regrow completely, but not eyes or lost limbs.

**Attacks per Melee:** Four, plus those of its rider. **Note:** Riders see their own attacks per melee round reduced by half when airborne, as they must spend some effort to maintain their balance in the saddle and control their Dragon Stallion.

**Damage:** Head Butt with horns 1D6+6 damage, bite 2D6+3, claw with forelimbs 3D6+3 +P.S. damage bonus for high P.S. attribute, kick (rear legs) 4D6 damage with a 01-70% chance of knocking human-sized targets off their feet (victims knocked off their feet lose initiative and one melee attack), tail slash 2D6 +P.S. attribute damage bonus. Flying body block/ram attack counts as two of the Risinor's melee attacks, but leading with head down and horns up does 1D6x10 damage +P.S. damage bonus and has a 01-85% chance of knocking down human-sized targets; 01-60% against large targets such as Ogres, Wolfen, and Trolls. Victims of a flying ram attack lose initiative and two melee attacks.

**Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses):** +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +1 to dodge on the ground, +3 to dodge when flying, +1 to roll with impact, and +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Magic:** Heals at a rate of 6D6 M.D. per hour when on a ley line!

**Psionics:** None.

**Enemies:** Other predators, and anything that might be a food source. Though Risinor usually hunt other animals such as wild boar, deer, mountain goats, livestock, cattle, etc., they may hunt humanoids as well, especially when released in heavily populated areas, as most humans are easy prey. Risinor who hate humanoids or develop a taste for them become man-eaters.

**Allies:** None, except for members of their own flocks when they form them. In the wild they may be encountered as a lone hunter, mated pair, small family group of 1D4+2 (two parents, 1D4 young) or flocks that can range anywhere from 2D6+6 to 4D6+18.

**Value:** Limited. Teeth and skull have some value. The meat is not very edible as it is very tough, chewy and stringy, making it difficult for people to digest and has a undesirable taste. Some find value in using Risinor as guard animals, pets, and flying stallions as well as monsters in the gladiatorial arena, where they can fetch 1D4x1,000 gold per animal (1D6x1000 gold for a trained riding animal). The use of Risinor as a winged steed fades in and out of fashion every few hundred years. Over the last five thousand years, the scarcity of Risinor and their need to fly and hunt often makes their use as riding animals in captivity difficult. See description, above.

**Habitat:** Low mountains and thin forests and jungle. A small number of mated pairs and small family groups of Risinor are known to exist scattered across the Old Kingdom Mountains, but they are rare. Larger numbers are also known to exist in the mountains, mountain valleys and jungle forests that rim the foothills of the Baalgor mountain range. Here the rare beast can be found in modest flocks, but they avoid humanoids and are elusive and difficult to capture. (Grandelson the Elder was able to do so using his Helm of the Beasts. One of the Rune items he found with the ancient Elven treasure he managed to stumble upon.) There are rumors that they also exist in the Land of the Damned, but nobody knows for certain.

# The Nexus Born

## Official source material for Rifts®

By Julius Rosenstein based on ideas by Kevin Siembieda.

Addition text and ideas by Kevin Siembieda.

Ley Lines are the mysterious lines of magic energy brimming with ambient magic energy (in game terms, P.P.E. or Potential Psychic Energy). The ancients knew them as lines of magic or Earth Energy, in China they were called *Dragon Tracks*. Regardless of the name given them, they were known to be lines of mystic energy that flowed and crisscrossed the land like invisible rivers and streams. Before the *Coming of the Rifts*, the energy along these lines was so minimal that magic nearly vanished from the Earth, recognizable only to those who knew what they were looking for and how to use it. Even then, the use of magic was only possible at some of the most powerful ley line junctions, like Stonehenge, and others. That all changed with the *Great Cataclysm* when the ley lines exploded with magic energy and cascaded over the globe.

On Rifts Earth today, the rivers of magic energy are so powerful they can be seen faintly glowing in daylight and shining brightly at night like well-lit highways. Everyone knows that ley lines are rivers of magic and where they cross, Rifts – portals to other worlds – may open up. Yet even in the world of Rifts-Earth where they are so prevalent, ley lines remain an enigma to most inhabitants of the planet. Those who best understand them, like the *Ley Line Walkers* and *Ley Line Rifters*, and even the Splurgorth with their stone pyramids, cannot fully fathom all of their mysteries. However, through experimentation and study, some facts have been discerned about these lines of magical earth energy.

On Rifts Earth, bodies of waters vary in size greatly. There are streams that are little more than a trickle to rivers the size of the mighty Mississippi, Saint Lawrence, the Nile, and Amazon rivers. They vary in strength and size from the slow meanderings of the Rio Grande and the Meremac to the frenzied rush of the violent Colorado River and wide Mississippi river. *Ley lines*, like rivers of water, are not all the same size or intensity. Nor are they necessarily permanent. Just as rivers can change their course, so too can ley lines. However, as a general rule, the powerful ley lines are less likely to shift than the smaller, weaker ones (again, a similarity to rivers of water). Thus, some of the most powerful ley lines have been around since the Great Cataclysm and before, its just that before the Coming of the Rifts, they were barely noticeable. Others seem to appear and disappear, remaining in a state of flux.

Though most Ley Lines are not as easily seen during daylight hours – their faint blue glow washed out by sunlight, especially on sunny days – they all glow with a blue light that is clearly visible to the naked eye at night, dusk, dawn and overcast days. The size and intensity of the light given off by a ley line varies, like the waters of rivers, with the size of the ley line and the flow of its ambient magical energy. Some ley lines are not noticeable unless one is within a few hundred yards of them, while others can be seen from miles away, and it is rumored that the most powerful

ley lines can be seen from orbit. The larger and more powerful the flow of magic energy, the brighter the glow and wider the path of the ley lines themselves, many measuring a half mile to a full mile (0.8 to 1.6 km) wide, and some even wider. The glow of many rising 100-600 feet (30.5 to 183 m) above the ground and into the sky. Many adventurers and Wilderness Scouts use ley lines and nexus points as landmarks in their travels.

The exact location where two or more ley lines intersect and crisscross each other, is known as the **nexus point**. Ley lines that cross another ley line are always brighter and the energy flow stronger on all the lines connected to that *nexus ley line system*. **Note:** The term “nexus ley line system,” or simply “ley line system,” refers to two or more ley lines that intersect to create one or more nexus points.

The energy is always at its brightest and most powerful at the *nexus* junction points, especially during peak periods of P.P.E. that, again like the tide of Earth bodies of water, are affected by the position of the moon, sun and the planets. At some of the most powerful nexus points – including those located in the ruins of **Tolkeen** in Minnesota, **Lazlo** (Toronto, Canada), **Windsor** and **Detroit**, **St. Louis**, the ruins of old **Chicago**, **Stonehenge**, the pyramids in **Egypt**, and many in the **Magic Zone**, among others around the world – the magical light generated at the nexus points and ley lines during the summer and winter solstices and equinoxes, eclipses and planetary alignments, is equal to daylight.

## Hidden Nexus Points

Recently, a strange phenomenon has been recognized, ley lines systems and nexus points that do not glow. First recorded in Erin Tarn’s **Traversing Our Modern World**, Ms. Tarn tells of a small nexus point formed by three ley lines located in *Wyoming’s Big Horn Mountains*. Amazingly, neither the ley lines or the nexus point they form emit the familiar telltale glow normally associated with lines of magic. A phenomenon Erin Tarn dubbed as a *Hidden Nexus*. Thus far, the **Big Horn Medicine Wheel**, made famous by Tarn, is the only commonly known and documented Hidden Nexus. However, there have been unsubstantiated rumors and reports of other hidden nexus points and its ley line system. They appear to be rare and presently, unexplained, but very real.

## Dim Nexus

**Hidden nexus points** have been categorized into two basic types: Dims and Obscures.

Dims do glow, but it is so faint as to be barely noticeable to the naked eye at night, and virtually invisible in daylight. Even at night, unless you are paying attention, you may not realize that you have stepped onto this ley line and walking along inside of





it. You might just think the night is fairly bright with moonlight, a natural phenomenon.

The ley lines connected to a **Dim Hidden Nexus** function like standard ley lines and nexus points. All the powers and special abilities of Line Walkers and Rifters remain unchanged. They can still draw upon the ambient P.P.E., heal and use their special O.C.C. abilities as always. They can also sense the presence and locations of Dims from a distance, just as they would a regular ley line or nexus, they just don't see the telltale glow they have come to expect. This makes encountering a hidden nexus and the ley lines connected to it, disconcerting. The mage senses the P.P.E. emanating from the nearly invisible nexus ley line system, but even as he gets closer and closer to it, does not see the familiar glow from the magical energy.

Most mages have never heard of a Hidden Nexus. Others out West may have heard rumors and stories, but have never actually encountered one. While a Dim Nexus and its nexus ley line system provide practitioners of magic with the same level of ambient magic energy for channeling, the line network behaves differently. Ley Line Storms seldom occur along Dims and when they do, their intensity and duration is half that of a normal ley line system. Moreover, since the Dim cannot be seen even on overcast days and is barely visible at night, most mages do not feel the same sense of security and power that they feel on visible lines. And since the lines are barely visible, it is easy to walk off and away from them without ever realizing you were on a ley line. Likewise, it is much more difficult to pinpoint the nexus on a Dim ley line system, requiring the Line Walker or Rifter to rely on their ability to sense and follow the energy rather than use visible cues. Again, all of this creates a sense of uneasiness, because the ley line and especially the nexus, should not be so faint. It's unnatural and raises the uncomfortable question of why is this nexus ley line system nearly invisible? Is something wrong? Is there a danger here?

**It has been theorized** that the level of mystic energy flowing along a *Dim nexus ley line system* is so small and narrow or weak that its glow is barely visible – as if it were a tiny stream you could leap over to get to the other side, or a shallow river you can walk through and never get wet above the knees. It is the easy answer, sounds reasonable and makes sense. But for some, it does not add up. If the nexus system of a Dim is so small and weak, how is it that mages can channel the same amount of ambient P.P.E. available to them as any visible ley line and nexus point? That argument is countered by mages and scholars who point out that the amount of energy (P.P.E.) a practitioner of magic can draw upon at a visible ley line or nexus does not usually increase at the large, more powerful lines or nexus points, either. **Note:** Remember, a “nexus ley line system” refers to two or more ley lines that intersect to create one or more nexus points within that connecting network of ley lines.

## Obscure Nexus

The Obscure Nexus is even more inexplicable than Dims. Here the nexus point and its connecting ley lines do not give off *any* magical glow, nor can they be easily detected or sensed. Not even by those sensitive to magic energy like Ley Line Walkers and Rifters. It is as if the lines do not radiate with magic or the magic energies are somehow blocked or concealed. But by who or what? Why and how?

As a rule, an Obscure nexus ley line system can only be felt by a mage when he comes within 100 feet (30.5 meters) of it, or when walking right on top of it! Even then, the energy is barely noticeable, and if sleepy, busy, or otherwise distracted, the mage may miss it completely.

When an Obscure Nexus system is noticed, it is often misinterpreted. Those who suddenly, and seemingly inexplicably, sense magic energy or what seems to be a completely invisible ley line or nexus are likely to be startled, confused and on guard, especially if they have never heard of such a thing. They are likely to regard this “strange sensation” as ominous and unnatural (which it may be). The energy might be misidentified as being in the presence of a powerful supernatural being or a dimensional anomaly of some kind, and probably one that should be avoided. Others may interpret the sensation as a bad omen – a portent of danger and bad things to come if one lingers in this abnormal area of magic energy for too long. Lingering within it, however, does not create any negative effects, other than the fact that the mage(s) is not likely to be able to relax while in its presence.

**Obscure nexus ley line systems do not behave like normal ley lines.** Ley Line Storms never appear along them, the amount of available ambient P.P.E. that mages can tap and channel is *half* the usual amount, dimensional Rifts seldom randomly open at the nexus, and when they do, they often disgorge demons and beings from the same dimension/world/realm of existence, not from random locations across the Megaverse. This suggests the Obscure nexus could be anchored or linked (permanently?) to one specific location. Could it be that this is what a “stable” nexus ley line system looks like?

It has been reported that to open a new dimensional portal at an Obscure nexus to a chosen location requires 20% more P.P.E. than normal to perform the spell or ritual. And some insist they feel an odd sensation whenever a portal *is* opened at an Obscure, as if it was *resisting* the magic or they were going against the current of energy.

**Some have theorized** Obscure ley lines and nexus points are so small that they barely register. Or that the ley lines are so short, perhaps a hundred yards (meters) or so, they affect a very concentrated area and have the unusual result of being invisible and almost undetectable. A more likely and disturbing theory is that Obscures are ordinary ley lines that are somehow being tapped and drained by an unknown force. That is a scary prospect, because there is no known supernatural being, magic or machine that is able to drain a ley line so low it barely registers. Whatever may be responsible must be more powerful than anything yet encountered on Rifts Earth. More powerful than an Alien Intelligence like the Splugorth who use stone pyramids to contain and control nexus points, but the nexus system and its lines all remain in place and glow as brightly as ever.

Another, equally troubling, possible explanation is the energy from an Obscure Nexus could be drained by the equivalent of a *Black Hole*. Of course, an Obscure could be something else entirely. Something we don't yet know about or understand.

**A matter of geography and cosmic influence?** It is interesting to note that Dims and Obscures are few and far between in areas east of the Mississippi River. In fact, *none* are “known” to exist in the eastern or southern parts of North America, or anywhere else in the world. On the other hand, such Hidden Nexus points would be closely guarded secrets. And what anyone knows

about the world as a whole is minuscule even to the most ambitious world travelers, including the illustrious Erin Tarn.

It is only as one gets closer to the Rocky Mountains that rumors of Dims and Obscures begin to surface. This has led some to speculate that the stories about unpredictable dimensional energies and wild dimensional anomalies said to have claimed the western States of the old American Empire are true. If so, it may very well be that Dims and Obscures are the invisible signposts that you are entering an area that is dimensionally and magically *unstable*. It has been widely rumored that the veil between dimensions is thin on the other side of the mountains. Travelers, it is said, cross dimensional planes into other worlds without ever realizing they have done so until it's too late and there is no way to return home to Rifts Earth. It is why explorers who go over the western mountain ranges are seldom ever seen again.

**For now, at least,** Dims and Obscures do not seem to pose a danger. Some communities, like the town of Moorcroft, Wyoming, have learned to use the hidden source of magic to their advantage. Not only does living on an Obscure or Dim nexus ley line system provide constant access to ambient magic energy (P.P.E.), but it does not cause the mental and emotional agitation many experience when they try to live directly on visible ley lines. And living on a nexus ley line system creates a population with a greater affinity and aptitude for magic. People dubbed the **Nexus Born**. Information that is generally kept quiet.

## Life in and around Ley Lines and Nexus Points

As stated earlier, when two or more ley lines cross, they form a *nexus point*, an area of great magical power. Staying with the river analogy, a nexus might be thought of as a section of rapids or a waterfall – a location of turbulent magic energy and great power. As such, nexus points are usually unpredictable and dangerous. Ley Line Storms are generated at nexus points and roll down the connecting ley lines. Random Rifts – tears in space and time – also open at the nexus. And every time a Rift opens, even if it is tiny or only lasts a few seconds, *something* is likely to crawl out of it. Entities, demons, monsters and dimensional beings (D-Bees) all enter our world via the Rifts or magical summonings that are likely to utilize a nexus point and require a Rift to be opened.

Dangers aside, a nexus is a place where mystic energy can be tapped by mages and its energies channeled and used for good or evil. As a result, most *visible ley lines and nexus junctions* are well known to the beings who can use the ambient energy. They attract mages and creatures of magic as well as supernatural beings who use the magic energy to boost their own spell casting abilities or to open a Rift and travel between worlds. Under the worst of circumstances, nexus points are used to bring new horrors into our world.

Though many try, being able to claim and hold onto a ley line or nexus ley line system for yourself, is highly desirable, but incredibly difficult. Those who succeed are usually deities and powerful groups and organizations. You need an organization and a small army to keep the energies of the nexus out of the hands of others. Remember, ley lines often stretch for 1D6 miles or more. In addition to the people and monsters who may want the Nexus ley line system for themselves, any group trying to claim a nexus for themselves must also be able to defend themselves

from the dimensional anomalies, storms, creatures and demons that emerge from the nexus whenever a Rift appears. A random Rift can disgorge one or ten thousand new menaces. Creatures who may be inclined to attack anyone living too close to their port of entry. Still, once identified, a nexus point often becomes the location for strongholds, towns and cities of practitioners of magic, such as Tolkeen and Lazlo, or as a protected, but shared source of power as is often the case with the Federation of Magic located in the *Magic Zone*. Ley lines and nexus points in the Ohio Valley are dominated by clans of the Federation of Magic.

Communities that stumble upon a Dim or Obscure nexus system have the advantage that the ley lines and nexus are either barely detectible or completely obscured, making them a *secret* source of magic. A few communities may not even realize that they are built upon the ley lines of a dim or obscure nexus system. This was very much the case for the town of **Moorcroft**, located in the State of Wyoming. It was not until its citizens began to exhibit an aptitude for magic and an increasing number of them taking up the magic arts, that they came to realize they were part of something unique and special. Communities where the so-called **Nexus Born** are commonplace.

The first *Nexus Born* were recognized at communities living near or on a nexus ley line system. In the records at Lazlo, there is an account that chronicles what is believed to be the first discovery of the Nexus Born. A group of adventurers were passing near a ley line nexus when they encountered a pregnant woman and a midwife being threatened. The heroes chased away the band of monsters, but in the excitement, the woman began to give birth. The Body Fixer among the adventurers assisted the midwife in the successful birthing of a healthy set of twins. As he was showing off the newborns, one of his comrades, a Mystic, sensed unusually high P.P.E. readings emanating from the infants. The mother said it was, “The luck of the blue lines,” and went on to explain that the people of her village had a tradition of their women giving birth on a ley line nexus because it brought strength and good fortune upon the child. Some even came to the nexus when trying to conceive a child and claim to have better luck.

Upon reaching the nearby village, the Mystic was idly curious about its inhabitants and did some random magical and psionic readings on the locals. The parents of the twins were neither mages or psychics. The mother was a schoolteacher and the father a gifted farmer. Yet their children both seemed to be imbued with extraordinary levels of P.P.E. The Mystic was startled by this, and further investigation revealed the townspeople, though superstitious about ley lines and nexus points, seemed to be generally more well educated, skilled and resourceful than similar small, backwoods communities he had encountered. He also noted that an inordinate number of the townsfolk were beginning to pursue the mystic arts. There were what he felt to be an unusual number of *Mystics*, *Ley Line Walkers* and *Elemental Fusionists* among their ranks. All of whom gave the community better odds for survival in the hostile and savage wilderness. But even people of mundane occupations such as carpenters and farmers often had more P.P.E. than is the norm.

Upon his return to the then fledgling kingdom of Lazlo, he brought his observations to the Council of Learning. The Council put this theory to the test under controlled measures. First, looking at their own populace and seeing similar trends, then with a sampling of volunteer test subjects who agreed to give birth at one of the Lazlo nexus points. The results were surprising. Al-

though not every child was born with noticeably elevated levels of P.P.E., there were too many to be a coincidence. Although they could not explain why, at least 75% possessed moderately to significantly higher levels of P.P.E. Over the years, many of these “Nexus Born” seemed to exhibit a greater aptitude for magic than usual. Such a determination is difficult to confirm in a community founded by mages who promote learning and magic, which is what made continued observation of the people of the small, wilderness community all the more vital, because the results were much more clear.

In time, there was no denying that there is some benefit to giving birth at a nexus point. (**Note:** There was no noticeable increase for children who were believed to had been consummated on a nexus.) The lingering question, are there any dangerous side effects?

There appears to be both modest benefits and penalties for giving birth on a nexus point. The benefit as noted above (and below) is an aptitude for magic. However, some fear, the innocent babies are vulnerable to possession when born at a ley line nexus and may be more open to supernatural influence for the rest of their lives. And there is always the potential dangers of possibly mutating energies and supernatural forces emanating from a nexus that could permanently damage or haunt the child for the rest of his life. Thus, the verdict is still out as to whether the apparent modest benefits outweigh the unknown dangers of a child being a Nexus Born. Though not widely known, word about the Nexus Born is out there, though often shrouded in superstition and wild conjecture. Some think the children are blessed. Others fear they are cursed, and perhaps marked forever by the supernatural.

And that backwater wilderness community? Over the generations it would grow and prosper. It’s name, **New Lazlo**. A utopian city-state of scholars, practitioners of magic and dreamers in lower Michigan.

## Qualities and Bonuses of Nexus Born

**Note:** Player characters as well as NPCs (non-player characters) can be Nexus Born. All that it requires is to have been born at a nexus point. However, there are limits as well as dangers and drawbacks as to who and what can become a Nexus Born.

**Race/Species:** Humans and mortal D-Bees/humanoids born on Rifts Earth can be a Nexus Born, though many may not even know it. D-Bees who were not born on Rifts Earth are (obviously) incapable of being nexus children, because their home world does not have the unprecedented level of magic found on Rifts Earth.

Supernatural beings and creatures of magic do not benefit from being born at a nexus. That said, beings who normally possess strong inherent magic often avoid giving birth at nexus points. Just as too much air will burst a balloon, some believe too much P.P.E. can “short out,” harm or kill such an offspring. Thus, for example, dragons (being magical powerhouses) NEVER hatch their eggs at nexus points.

**O.C.C. Selection:** Being a Nexus Born should not necessarily affect one’s broad choice of choosing an Occupational Character Class (O.C.C.), such as man of arms, adventurers, people of science, etc. The Nexus Born have complete leeway in choosing their own career. However, they tend to be attracted to magic, creative pursuits and the scholastic (including the sciences). Their inherent *P.P.E. base*, even if the Nexus Born goes on to

become an Operator, Rogue Scholar or thief, is often greater than usual. Not a huge amount, but noticeable, often double or triple the usual amount for an ordinary adult.

Being born at a nexus (even during an eclipse or solstice) does not necessarily guarantee that someone possesses an affinity for magic or the bonuses and penalties of the *Nexus Born*. There are many cases (20%) where a child born at a nexus has no discernable benefit from it, whatsoever. The term “Nexus Born” is reserved for those born at a nexus who do show an affinity for magic and possess a greater amount of P.P.E. Timing the birth to coincide with an optimum flow of energy such as an equinox, solstice or eclipse, does NOT provide any additional benefit/bonuses. Thus far, no one has determined any specific correlation, cause or effect as to why some babies born at nexus point gain the Nexus Born abilities/bonuses and others do not.

**First, roll to Determine if the Nexus Born has the bonuses and elevated P.P.E.** Roll percentile dice.

**01-20% An ordinary newborn:** +1D4 P.P.E. bonus, but that is all. Do not roll on the tables that follow.

**21-00% Nexus Born:** This child has an inclination toward, and aptitude for, magic or other creative ventures. Roll on the following tables, below.

### Nexus Born Bonuses and abilities:

**1. Increased P.P.E.:** Mortal humans and most D-Bees/alien humanoids do not have a large amount of P.P.E. by the time they become mature adults. Their initial P.P.E. base decreases with age as their “potential” is spent on natural talents and skills as the child learns, develops talents and matures into adulthood.

FOR REFERENCE: Normal P.P.E. Levels for Humans

Children (ages newborn to 12 years of age): 4D6+12

Teens (ages 13-19): 2D4+5

Young Adults (ages 20-28): 1D6+3

Adults (29 and older): 1D4 P.P.E., the usual base P.P.E. for humans who are not mages or psychics. The P.P.E. of D-Bees varies, but is usually similar.

**Bonus P.P.E. of the Nexus Born; roll percentile dice (D100):** Does not change with age unless the character does not pursue magic or the bonus P.P.E. points are spent to develop skills or mental attributes; see Note, below. Those who become practitioners of magic enjoy the bonus P.P.E. that becomes part of their permanent Base P.P.E. for casting magic, as well as get the bonuses and penalties listed below.

**01-25%** +1D6+3 bonus P.P.E.

**26-50%** +2D4+4 bonus P.P.E.

**51-75%** +2D6+5 bonus P.P.E.

**76-00%** +3D6+6 bonus P.P.E.

**Note:** Remember, the Nexus Born does not have to become a practitioner of magic, they can choose any O.C.C. **Nexus Born who do not become a Practitioner of Magic** can *buy the following bonuses* for every five bonus P.P.E. points spent, but must retain a minimum of 8 P.P.E. as their *permanent P.P.E. Base* (includes the 1D4 for human adults in addition to the bonus P.P.E.). *Increase one mental attribute* by one point per every five P.P.E. spent, or add a +5% *skill bonus* per every five P.P.E. points spent. The skill bonus can be applied to more than one skill (+5% to each for a cost of five P.P.E.) or ALL spent P.P.E. can be added to one specific skill. **Example:** If 18 bonus P.P.E. were rolled on the table above, the character could apply a +15% bonus to ONE skill or +5% to three different skills. The remaining 3 P.P.E. are



part of the characters' permanent P.P.E. base. In the alternative, he could boost each of his three mental attributes (I.Q., M.E. and M.A.) by one point, or ONE attribute by three points.

If there is not enough bonus P.P.E. to purchase a skill or attribute bonus, the points are applied to the character's permanent P.P.E. base. Likewise, if no bonuses are purchased and all the bonus P.P.E. are kept, it becomes the character's permanent P.P.E. base and can NOT be used to buy bonuses at a later time. Of course, high levels of P.P.E. are valuable in group rituals, but may also make the character the target of P.P.E. vampires and ritual magic, including blood sacrifices!

**2. Attracted to other Nexus Born:** Somehow, Nexus Born are attracted to other Nexus Born and often strike up lasting friendships, partnerships and marriages with each other; often without being aware of it. There is no bonus to such relationships other than they seem to find a certain compatibility and level of trust as friends, teammates, etc.

**3. Aptitude for Magic:** Nexus Born possess a proclivity toward magic. One of the reasons that so many Nexus Born take up magic O.C.C.s is that they have an aptitude for it and a higher than usual amount of P.P.E. to start off with. Learning magic comes easier for the Nexus Born who seem to have a natural talent for it.

**Common Bonus:** All Nexus Born, regardless of the Magic O.C.C., enjoy a +3% bonus to all *Magic O.C.C. Abilities*, including O.C.C.s not listed below.

**Most Common Magic O.C.C.s among Nexus Born:** Any Practitioner of Magic O.C.C. may be selected, including those not listed below. However, those below tend to be most common among the Nexus Born. You can pick one from the list below or roll percentile dice for a random determination.

**01-10%** Elemental Fusionist (*Rifts® Ultimate RPG*, page 100; gets two bonus Warlock spells).

**11-30%** Shaman, any (*Rifts® Spirit West*, page 48; +1 on Perception Rolls and +1 to save vs possession).

**31-50%** Mystic (*Rifts® Ultimate RPG*, page 118; +10% bonus to Sense Supernatural Evil; may also trade away half the bonus P.P.E., point for point, to boost the character's permanent I.S.P. base. Example: Permanently sacrificing 9 Bonus P.P.E. gets the Mystic 9 I.S.P. added to his permanent I.S.P. base).

**51-70%** Ley Line Walker (*Rifts® Ultimate RPG*, page 113; +5% bonus to sense ley lines and nexus points).

**71-80%** Ley Line Rifter (*Rifts® Ultimate RPG*, page 116; +10% bonus to sense ley lines and nexus points).

**81-90%** Fire Sorcerer (*Rifts® Mystic Russia*, page 109; gets two bonus Fire spells selected from levels 1 or 2).

**91-95%** Star Child (*Rifts® England*, page 53; +1 to Perception Rolls and +1D6+1 to permanent I.S.P. Base).

**96-00%** Slayer (as in demon slayer; *Rifts® Mystic Russia*, page 136; +1 on Perception Rolls and +6% to Recognize Supernatural Shapechangers).

## Nexus Born Penalties

The affinity the Nexus Born have for magic gives them some bonuses but also makes them more vulnerable to certain influences and inflicts a few penalties. These penalties don't often come into play, unless an adventurer, so many Nexus Born are not aware of them.

-1 to save vs possession, double the penalty at a nexus point.

-1 to save vs Illusions and mind control, double the penalty at a nexus point.

Their affinity to magic can also be considered a negative under some circumstances. Most Nexus Born have curious minds, especially about magic, dimensional travel and alien people and worlds. A curiosity that can lead them into trouble. Likewise, possessing a high level of P.P.E. makes the Nexus Born targets of P.P.E. vampires and potential victims in human sacrifice for magic rituals.

## The Wyoming Medicine Wheel

The Wyoming Medicine Wheel is located in the Big Horn Mountains. This is undoubtedly one of the most infamous places of power in the state of Wyoming, especially so after it appeared in the best-selling book, *Traversing Our Modern World* by Erin Tarn.

To many living in the area, the Medicine Wheel is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, it has been recognized as place of magic by tribal people for untold centuries. They have always known it to be a powerful place of magic where young Native Americans of the past and present day, come to fast and receive vision quests, inspiration, insight and healing from Mother Earth. It is also known that many Great Little Ones live under the Big Horn Medicine Wheel – faerie-like spirits and ancestors dedicated to helping humankind (particularly Native Americans). Many believe it is the combined power of the Great Little Ones who prevent demons and monsters from completely emerging from the occasional Rift that opens up. And now, with advent of the Minion War, the noble spirits are ready to help humans any way they can, particularly Native Americans and heroes of any species, human and D-Bee, who possess a noble or kind heart or warrior's spirit. *Cyber-Knights* and the *Lyn-Srial Sky-Knights* have

both confirmed receiving vision quests and spiritual healing at the Medicine Wheel, and that it is a place of positive energy and goodness.

On the other hand it is a danger. As a famous place of magic and mysticism spoken about in countless ancient, Pre-Cataclysm books, travel guides and information sites, it attracts outsiders. As a known place of magic, Shamans are sometimes pushed out by other practitioners of magic, creatures of magic and supernatural beings who come to use its resources. With the Megaverse in flames and the Minion War spilling onto Rifts Earth, many Shamans are concerned that the Wheel may be targeted by the forces of evil. The reason: The Big Horn Medicine Wheel is a force for good. That's why the Great Little Ones live under and around it, and why legends speak of monsters and demons being unable to use the nexus at the Medicine Wheel to get into our world. Demons that have appeared, fight half-way out of the Rift, before sliding back into it and vanishing to where they came from. Indeed, those of Anarchist and especially evil alignments, feel uncomfortable near the Big Horn Medicine Wheel. Most keep their distance and want to leave the area as quickly as possible. However, some linger a ways from the Medicine Wheel, bushwhacking visitors, heroes, shamans and Native Americans as they come and go. For this reason, Shamans, warriors and the people of Moorcroft are keeping an eye on the ancient site and for any gathering of dark forces, especially demons and Deevils, in the area.

The other thing that makes the Big Horn Medicine Wheel unique is it is an *Obscure Nexus ley line system*. It has been confirmed that three ley lines and a small nexus are located at the site, with the nexus being inside the stone circle of the Medicine Wheel itself. As an Obscure, the lines and nexus are all completely invisible to the naked eye and their magical energies barely detectible. So unless a visitor comes to the Big Horn Mountains specifically to see the Medicine Wheel, they should not realize the nexus even exists. Which is how local inhabitants in the area like it.

The same holds true for the town of Moorcroft which exists on a Dim. To protect themselves and the Medicine Wheel, the town council has requested that whenever their citizens, particularly magic practitioners, leave town in the direction of the Big Horn Mountains, they make a quick detour to look in on the Medicine Wheel and let the council know if anything seems out of place or suspicious. No one is being asked to get too close. The Moorcroft council does not want anyone to get hurt or killed, but the Medicine Wheel could be important to their survival and the fight against the Minions of Hell.

**Coming Next Issue!** "Official" source material about the **Town of Moorcroft, Wyoming** shall appear in **The Rifter® #74**. Written by Julius Rosenstein and Kevin Siembieda.



# Dead Reign® in Detroit

## Official Source Material for the Dead Reign® RPG

By Thomas Morrison

The Wave hit Detroit, Michigan, very hard; perhaps the hardest of all American cities. The first case of the Wave in Detroit was merely seven hours after the initial outbreak in Hong Kong (now known as "W-Day" there), and a full four hours before any other major U.S. city. In North America, Detroit is second only to Mexico City for the number of zombies that rose on "Z-Day." And Detroit was the first of only a handful of major metropolitan areas in the United States where "toxic" (overtly aggressive) *Cults of Brulyx* became the dominant power. (One of the others being Los Angeles).

### Overview of Michigan Prior to the Wave

Why was Michigan so hard hit by the Wave?

**First and foremost**, Michigan's economy was in bad shape. Michigan's largest city, Detroit, was once the center of America's automobile industry. During World War II, Detroit accounted for nearly a quarter of all war production in America. In

the mid-1950s, Detroit was the fourth most populous city in the United States with over 1.8 million inhabitants. Starting in the 1960s, the decline of American heavy industry in general, and of the auto industry in particular, hit Detroit hard. Those who could find work elsewhere moved away. Those who could not had no choice but to stay in an impoverished area with increasing crime rate and crumbling infrastructure surrounded by a sea of working-class suburbia, some of which were not fairing much better than Detroit.

**Second**, and often cited as a direct consequence of the corruption, crumbling infrastructure and poverty, crime in Michigan was higher than the national levels. To complicate matters further, between 2002 and 2012, the number of law-enforcement personnel in Michigan declined by 15%, corresponding to a 15% state-wide increase in crime. Detroit was especially hard-hit, losing 40% of its law-enforcement personnel during the same period. All of which created a shortage of critical first responders and hampered chances of survival after the Wave struck.



**Third**, when the Wave hit and the dead rose, there was no one to stop the dead or help the living. The city's limited resources and short falls made its population easy prey and became a vast legion of zombies. Walking dead that spread throughout every neighborhood and industrial area of the city. This meant that in the first hours of the dead rising, Detroit had far more free-roaming zombies than many other American cities, where the walking dead were initially concentrated in hospitals and military bases. The zombies' instant penetration of all the city's districts gave Detroit's residents and protectors much less opportunity to recognize the threat and react before being overwhelmed.

**Fourth**, the effort to provide medical care, food, water, and some semblance of order in the midst of the Wave required more trained manpower than the State of Michigan had readily available. Michigan had only two Federal military bases, **Selfridge Air National Guard** (in Harrison Township, east of Detroit) and **Detroit Arsenal Army Base** (in Warren, Michigan, a Northern suburb of Detroit, primarily a tank manufacturing plant), so the state had to rely heavily on its police forces and National Guard. As noted previously, Michigan's declining tax base had led to cuts in its state and local police, but even if they had greater resources, nobody was ready for the Apocalypse and the rise of the dead. Furthermore, Michigan's economic woes combined with ongoing U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) budget cuts led to the state's representatives in Congress lobbying hard to deploy Michigan's National Guard and Reserve forces abroad, both to

provide jobs and to justify current and proposed DoD spending in Michigan. Michigan had several military police, medical, transportation, logistics, and engineering units, but only a few combat units like artillery, attack helicopters, mechanized infantry, Marines, and tanks. However, it was precisely these "enabler" and "filler" units that were in great demand in the U.S. Global War on Terror. Thus, when the Wave struck, Michigan had the good fortune of having a military Reserve and National Guard force that was slightly overstrength and that had an above-average amount of combat experience. Michigan was also blessed with almost a full battalion of Reserve Marines who had just returned from a combat deployment and had not yet demobilized. However, the high demand also meant that nearly a fifth of Michigan's military personnel were overseas when the Wave struck. Worse, many of Michigan's part-time soldiers were full-time police officers, paramedics, and doctors, which reduced the number of available first responders even more.

Michigan did, however, have a small but officially-recognized militia-like organization, the **Michigan Volunteer Defense Force (MIVDF)**, which was already involved in various civil defense roles, such as providing trained personnel for emergency response teams and storing NBC protective equipment and medical supplies for the *U.S. Centers for Disease Control*. When the call went out for additional manpower to assist the Michigan National Guard in handling the Wave —prior to the rising of the dead— many honorably discharged military veterans donned

their uniforms and were summarily inducted into the MIVDF. However, even the full mobilization of all of Michigan’s official and unofficial military might was woefully inadequate to protect a state with nearly 10 million inhabitants, of which about two million would turn into zombies overnight on “Z-Day.”

A pre-Wave snapshot of the number of personnel in Michigan’s military and police forces provides a glimpse of the scale of the problem:

<u>ENTITY</u>	<u>Authorized</u>	<u>Assigned</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Deployed</u>
Michigan State Police:	965	965	902	63
Michigan County and City Police:	16,890	16,214	15,565	649
U.S. Coast Guard (including Reserve):	1,151	1,173	785	388
<b>TOTAL LAW ENFORCEMENT:</b>	<b>19,006</b>	<b>18,352</b>	<b>17,252</b>	<b>1,100</b>
U.S. Army:	1,846	1,200	1,000	200
U.S. Army Reserves:	11,906	12,501	9,626	2,875
Michigan Army National Guard:	9,186	9,645	7,426	2,219
U.S. Marine Corps:	134	132	129	3
U.S. Marine Corps Reserves:	985	985	985	0
U.S. Navy:	128	122	121	1
U.S. Navy Reserves:	4,095	4,299	3,310	989
U.S. Air Force:	72	68	67	1
U.S. Air Force Reserves:	5,227	5,488	4,225	1,263
Michigan Air National Guard:	2,815	2,955	2,275	680
<b>TOTAL MILITARY PERSONNEL:</b>	<b>36,394</b>	<b>37,395</b>	<b>29,164</b>	<b>8,231</b>
Michigan Volunteer Defense Force:	1,776	1,776	5,500 (est.)	0
Michigan Unorganized Militias:	N/A	N/A	12,000 (est.)	0
<b>TOTAL MILITIA PERSONNEL:</b>	<b>1,776</b>	<b>1,776</b>	<b>17,500</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL PERSONNEL:</b>	<b>57,176</b>	<b>57,523</b>	<b>63,916</b>	<b>9,331</b>

## In the Eye of the Storm

### Michigan During the Wave, W-Day to Z-Day From the Outbreak to the Two-Day Death

“W-Day,” as the first day of **the Wave** became known, came to Detroit nearly four hours before it struck other cities in North America. The initial American response to the outbreak was fairly well-organized, at first, as epidemics and bio-terrorism had long been of concern to the government of the United States. In every American state and territory, the **U.S. Centers for Disease Control** had stored antiviral medications and personal protective equipment (i.e., NBC suits and masks) in strategic locations so that they could be rushed anywhere in the United States within 12 hours of the outbreak of a dangerous disease – natural or not. As soon as the Wave hit, those assets in Michigan were mobilized and rushed to the city of Detroit to protect police, ambulance crews, doctors, firefighters, civilian leadership, and other key personnel. It was not enough. Not in Detroit. Not anywhere.

Very quickly it became clear the Wave was abnormally contagious and extremely debilitating. The speed and virulence of the illness convinced the authorities this was a terrorist attack of some kind, but in those initial hours, it was not known if it was an airborne disease or some type of poison in the water, or what.

Detroit was placed on lock-down. All businesses and public buildings were closed. People were told not to panic, to remain in their homes, and to drink only bottled water. The Michigan National Guard was mobilized. Police and military personnel were put to work distributing food and bottled water to residents,

enforcing the curfew, establishing medical triage facilities, and erecting roadblocks to quarantine the city. As ill luck would have it, both of Michigan’s Army Reserve medical units were deployed overseas. The Federal government declared a state of emergency and promised aid.

Within four hours, however, outbreaks of the Wave were noted in nearly every major city in the world, with no discernible common denominator between the affected cities other than a density of population. Warned by the events in Hong Kong and Detroit, these other cities, states, and countries had put their civil defense and military forces on alert, speeding their responses greatly. At first, this seemed to slow the spread of the Wave elsewhere, which gave humanity hope – albeit fleeting and false – that the Wave might be contained.

**In Detroit**, however, matters continued to deteriorate rapidly. As people fell deathly ill by the thousands, then by the tens of thousands, many of them began to die. This wasn’t the Two-Day Death (“2DD”), where nearly a fifth of Earth’s population died en masse, but merely the 8-15% of the people – the old, the young, and the infirm – for whom a severe infection of any kind may have been fatal. Michigan’s police and National Guard were soon called upon to remove the dead bodies filling the hospitals and morgues. To avoid a panic and to ensure there would still be room for the sick to have access to medical care. National Guard trucks were initially used to haul the corpses to military bases for temporary storage; the air-conditioned aircraft hangars at the Air National Guard bases in Selfridge, Grand Ledge, and Battle



Creek were used for this purpose. Within three days, however, even these locations were filling up.

What was Michigan to do with, at the time, just over one hundred thousand corpses? Private burials were impossible because any public gathering might spread the disease among the mourners. At the time it was unthinkable to burn them or to bulldoze them into an anonymous mass grave. There wasn't enough refrigerated space in the state to store them. It would have been a public relations disaster to leave them in a rotting heap, being picked at by buzzards. Still clinging to the hope that the majority of humanity would survive outbreak of the Wave, the authorities decided to put the dead somewhere until the crisis was over and people could provide their loved ones with decent burials, a place where they would be safe from rot and animals, out of the public eye, and where minimal refrigeration was required.

The answer was just over 1,100 feet (335 m) beneath them: **The Detroit Salt Mine**. It had been idle before the outbreak of the Wave and was perfectly situated in the center of Detroit with abundant road, rail, and river access to transport the dead. In 1941, when it was seriously considered for use as an air-raid shelter, it was estimated to have enough space for all of Detroit's, then, 1.6 million inhabitants. Since that time, 25.2 million more tons of salt had been removed, nearly tripling its cavernous capacity. The temperature of the mine is a constant 58 degrees Fahrenheit (14 C), cool enough to at least slow decay. Salt is also a natural preservative, and Detroit's salt is only used for industrial purposes, so rock salt used to preserve a corpse now could still be resold to sprinkle on a road next winter. It was an easy choice. Right up until the rising of the dead ("Z-Day"), corpses from throughout Michigan and even neighboring states were brought in by truck, train, and ship to be temporarily interred under piles of salt, far below ground.

**By the third day of the Wave**, the unprecedented and unforeseen scale of the disease exhausted the CDC supplies of antiviral medications and carbon filters (for military gas masks). Nor were there enough full-body NBC suits to issue to every military member, police officer, firefighter, physician, nurse, EMT, civic leader, utility worker, government employee, and volunteer aid worker. People were told to "make do" with T-shirts wrapped over their faces and any type of waterproof gloves they could acquire. But as the number of sick persons surpassed a million statewide, temporary medical facilities at sports arenas, schools, hotels, and military bases ran out of space and supplies.

First in Detroit, then throughout the state (and indeed, throughout the world), governments at various levels imposed a **media blackout** to avoid a panic. This blackout was least effective in the cities, as the newest generation smartphones could establish their own local area Internets: urban file sharing and text messaging mushroomed, allowing rumors and extremist propaganda to fill the information void. Yet in most of Michigan, as in most of rural and suburban America, the public believed the government's assurances that the Wave was a highly contagious but 95% survivable kind of influenza; they remained calm and heeded the emergency broadcasts to stay in their homes, to wash their hands often, and to drink only bottled water.

In Detroit and, to a similar but less-publicized extent, Flint and Pontiac, panic set in. Conditions there were even worse than elsewhere, and a rumor that the Wave was a CIA plot to wipe out minorities fanned old embers of distrust in government. Desperate families with ailing loved ones demanded medical care

at gunpoint or tried to flee the "Hot Zone" by going through or around the police and military roadblocks. Streets were jammed. Shots were fired. Fires broke out. More people died. Law and order broke down. Electricity went out, then water.

Like most places the world over, Michigan found itself desperately short of trained manpower to maintain the public security it needed to care for the sick, to collect the dead, to feed its people, to fight fires, and to maintain vital services and utilities.

By the end of the week, Detroit and much of the State of Michigan was teetering on the verge of anarchy, with nearly 25% of its 10 million inhabitants deathly ill with an unknown disease and over a quarter of a million people dead. Little did anyone know, but the rest of the country would follow in its footsteps just a day or two behind.

## The Two-Day Death

Then the sick began to die, all at once, all throughout the world, over a 48 hour period. Still, more than three quarters of Earth's people were alive and healthy. Despite the partial collapse of society across the globe, what authority and government remained did its best to dispose of the dead. Volunteers, family members, and military personnel, already exhausted by seven days of caring for the sick, used whatever means were at hand to collect and inter their fellow citizens.

In Detroit and surrounding suburbs, near-anarchy reigned in most neighborhoods, but the **Detroit Salt Mine** continued to receive the dead by the truck and train, and boatload. The reserve Marines (1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, minus Weapons Company) guarded the convoys, the mine, and the nearby rail yard, docks, warehouses, fuel depots, and Federal Medical Contingency Station. A Navy Seabees battalion (RNMCB-26, based at Selfridge ANGB) and nearly 800 unarmed MIVDF volunteers augmented the surviving mineworkers operating the facility 24 hours a day. The mine was serviced by a giant elevator, capable of hauling six tons of salt at a time, but was deemed too slow in moving up and down the 1,100 foot (335 m) shaft to handle the number of corpses to be interred there. The Seabees created a vertical conveyer system where the weight of the bodies going down was counterbalanced by salt going up. In an amazing feat of "can do" engineering, the legendary efficiency of the Marines and the legendary resourcefulness of the Seabees enabled the interment of nearly *two million dead bodies*, almost half of which were from out of state.

By the end of the Two-Day Death, the police, National Guard, and volunteers at all levels were exhausted and on the verge of an operational collapse, but by some miracle they were still just barely holding on.

That night, the dead began to rise.

## Z-Day

The chaos caused by the rising of the dead cannot be overstated. Much is still not known about the actions of what police, military, and government were left, because nearly all witnesses and records are wiped out. What is known, surmised, and/or generally rumored is listed below, as close to chronological order as can be determined:

- **The dead rose worldwide** at about 8 AM Greenwich Time (3 AM Eastern Standard Time, midnight Pacific Standard Time).

They rose simultaneously in every location where the corpses of those who had died from the Wave had been placed; every military base, hospital, temporary medical facility, etc. Since it was nighttime in America, most of these sites were overrun when almost everyone but the night shift personnel were sleeping, often before anyone could raise the alarm.

- **Central FEMA Headquarters** at Raven Rock Command Facility, Pennsylvania, noticed almost all emergency sites going offline at about the same time. At first, this was attributed to a technical fault. The President, aloft in Air Force One by that point, probably would not have been immediately informed.
- **At the Detroit Salt Mine**, *tens of thousands of corpses* waiting to be taken down inside the mine, suddenly rose. The dead killing nearly all military personnel and volunteers on site within minutes. A few groups of Marines and others managed to reach rooftops and other relatively safe positions, but there wasn't much they could do to stop the tide of dead flowing out into the surrounding city streets. Fortunately, the almost two million zombies now clamoring to escape inside the mine were trapped as soon as the conveyor system stopped running.
- **In response to a call for assistance, the Detroit Police Department** sent what manpower it could spare to contain the situation at the Detroit Salt Mine. The sheer volume of zombies pouring out of the trucks, box cars, and nearby warehouses was unstoppable. Not yet understanding what they faced, nearly a third of Detroit's police was eliminated by the zombie horde at the mine location. This was the last large-scale, organized act of the DPD. From that point on, the people of the Metropolitan Detroit-Area were *de facto* unprotected and on their own.
- **Detroit City Hall went silent.** Rumors vary, from tales of the mayor of Detroit fleeing the city via executive helicopter with his mistress, to stories of the mayor and his bodyguards holding off zombies for an hour until they were finally overrun. Whatever the truth, the mayor, police chief, and other city leaders were lost, leaving what police and other authorities that remained without guidance or coordination.
- **The wife and children of the mayor** of Detroit used his armored limousine to escape the city. They are now at the Lake Orion Safe Haven, where they are valued members of the community.

## Mock Human

### A New Survivor Type

While about 25% of Earth's population was infected with the Wave, the disease itself was 82% fatal in those countries where the majority of the population had access to modern medical facilities, and up to 94% fatal when they didn't. Unfortunately for those who got sick but survived the infection, the very hospitals that kept them alive were ground zero for the risen dead, so only a rare few of them are alive today.

Permanently scarred by the effects of the Wave, these fully-alive survivors often resemble the walking dead. This has led to them being called *Mock Humans*.

**Mock Humans have the following attribute adjustments and special modifiers:**

- While their bloody, pox-like sores and blisters have mostly healed over, the Wave left their skin scarred, pitted and discol-

ored. Skin has a grayish shade and the eyes are surrounded by dark circles. Reduce P.B. by half. Average P.B. is 5.

- Only the hardest of people survived the disease. Add 1D4 to P.E. attribute number, +10% to save vs coma and death, +2 to save vs disease, and should it ever happen again, they are immune to the Wave!
- Survivors who never became ill from the Wave sometimes mistake these fully-human survivors for zombies and may need strong proof to be convinced that the character is not a Mock Zombie instead. Others fear Mock Humans may be "carries" of the Wave and do not allow them inside their communities.
- A Mock Human still has P.P.E. as normal. Any zombie that can sense P.P.E. *never* mistakes the character for a zombie.
- All of this has led many Mock Humans to become fiercely independent and capable survivors in the world of the dead (+5% to all Wilderness, scavenger and survival skills). However, many are also resentful of the many survivors who fear and shun them, and the survivor communities that shut them out. This can turn Mock Humans into bandit, raiders, and hardened scavengers who do not go out of their way to help other survivors nor share their resources. Most have gone through too much to become Death Cultists, but you never know. Among the people who do trust and confide in them, Mock Humans are often the leaders or key personnel in the survivor group or community.

## New Zombies

### Big Flesh Eater

"It's been about six months since the dead rose, and we keep coming across new kinds of zombies. Mostly, it's just zombies that were already there, but we just hadn't met yet. But in the case of the Flesh-Eating Zombies, some of them may actually be changing. Growing.

"I know what you're thinking. 'How can a dead thing grow?' Me, I figure that if it can walk and eat, it just makes sense that it can grow, too. All that flesh it's eating has got to go somewhere, right?"

"I heard some AURA scientist say that Flesh Eaters actually retain a low level of metabolic processes in their bodies, which means their organs still do something, just not as much as ours. That's why it's easier to hurt them than other zombies – disembowel a Sloucher, it just keeps on coming, but disembowel a Flesh Eater, and it is *hurt*.

"The problem is, the Flesh Eaters are smarter than the average Sloucher and I swear as they get bigger, they get smarter too. The only way to make them stop growing is to send them back to Hell. Take them down whenever you see them. Don't give them change to grow and mutate. Dumb zombies are bad enough. Smart ones, the idea sends chills down my spine."

– Brad Ashley, *Leader of the Road Reapers*

Flesh Eaters that feed well, feed often and avoid a lot of physical damage grow in size. On average, Big Flesh Eaters gain six inches (15 cm) in height and 50 pounds (23 kg) in weight. Their arms are proportionally longer than a human's and they tend to be hunched over, rearing up to full height only when fighting. Big

Flesh Eaters have distinctive jaws and teeth, similar to those of a baboon. Their oversized jaws are capable of inflicting significant damage to flesh.

Flesh Eaters that are kept in captivity seem more subservient to their living masters, possibly due to the long time spent being fed on a regular basis. They are less likely to rebel against the authority of a Zombie Master, Death Priest, or Zombie Lover than an average Flesh Eater, and much more likely to grow big (75%) than Flesh Eaters surviving in the wild (14%). And because Big Flesh Eaters are more intelligent, they are able to be trained to perform simple tasks and behave as a semi-domesticated Flesh Eater, reminiscent of a watchdog or workhorse.

Big Flesh Eaters in the wild have to rely on their own cunning for food, so they get sneakier and more cunning. It is not known if months of hunting thinking prey has forced the Flesh Eater to learn and become more cunning, or if only the smartest Flesh Eaters are successful enough hunters to get the extra food required to grow. It also isn't known if they might grow smart and larger over a longer period of time. What is known is that some wild Big Flesh Eaters are almost as smart as Thinkers. They behave accordingly, often leading groups of lesser Flesh Eaters and setting simple ambushes, tailing survivors to watch and wait for the most opportune time to attack. Wild Big Flesh Eaters are notoriously difficult to domesticate; they think they're the boss or dominant force, and constantly look for a way to escape or kill and feast upon their captor.

**Also known as:** BFE (for Big Flesh Eater), Big Boys, Beefy, and Ogres.

**Alignment:** Considered Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D4+4 (captive Big Boys) or 1D4+5 (wild), M.E. 1D4+4, M.A. 1D4, P.S. 2D6+19, P.P. 1D6+4, P.E. 1D6+15, P.B. 2D4, Spd 1D4+10.

**Hit Points:** P.E. attribute number +6, but all Main Body S.D.C. must be depleted first before Hit Points can be affected. **Note:** See *S.D.C. by Location* for more details.

**S.D.C. by Location:**

- \* Hands (2) – 1D6+5 each
- \* Arms (2) – 2D6+5 each
- \* Feet (2) – 1D6+5 each
- \* Legs (2) – 2D6+9 each
- \* Lower Jaw – 2D4+6
- \*\* Neck – 1D6+12
- \*\* Head – 2D6+17
- \*\*\* Main Body – 4D6+33

**Armor Rating:** 12

**Horror Factor:** 14

**P.P.E.** 1D4+2

**Natural Abilities:** Standard as previously described.

**Toxic Bite:** Like a Komodo Dragon, the oversized jaws of Big Flesh Eaters contain the rotting flesh from past meals and are full of harmful bacteria. Add +10% to the roll for the likelihood of infection (**Dead Reign**®, page 30) and +15% to the roll for the infection symptoms and penalties (**Dead Reign**®, pages 31-32).

**Near-Sentience:** The Big Flesh Eater can think about as well as a mischievous dog. It can open unlocked doors and move simple obstacles out of the way. It knows that cars, footprints, lights, and fresh scents are signs of human prey. It is more patient than other Flesh-Eating Zombies and knows how

to hide and wait for the right moment to strike. Unlike the Thinker, however, it does not know how to use tools.

**Rudimentary Communication with Zombies:** Other Flesh-Eating Zombies look up to the Big Flesh Eater and accept it as the group leader, the alpha dog of the pack. As a result, a Big Flesh Eater can sometimes get other Flesh Eaters to follow its lead and obey simple commands. Likewise, there is 01-25% chance Slouchers and other dull-witted zombies may also follow and obey a BFE for 1D4x10 minutes, especially if it seems to be leading them toward a potential meal. The maximum number of non-Flesh-Eating Zombies it can control at any one time is equal to its I.Q. attribute number. **Note:** Thinkers, Mock Zombies, and Half-Zombies are immune to such control, regardless of how low their intelligence may be.

**See Life Energy (P.P.E.):** 9,000 feet (2,743.2 m) at night or in darkness.

**Sense Life Energy (P.P.E.):** 25 feet (7.6 m) to sense 1-6 people, 50 feet (15.2 m) to sense a group of 7-24 people, and 100 feet (30.5 m) to sense a group of 25 or more people. Half that range to sense animals. One quarter that range, 6.2 feet (1.9 m), when a zombie is dormant.

**Recognize Human Scents (Enhanced):** 90%. This also tells the zombie that humans are nearby, or have been present recently.

**Track Humans by Scent (Enhanced):** 40% chance, +10% if the human is sweaty or hasn't bathed in three or more days, +20% to follow the scent of blood, +5% if there is more than one human present in the same area, +5% to smell perfume, cologne, or aftershave. All bonuses are accumulative.

**Smell Fear in Humans (Enhanced):** Makes zombies more aggressive: +2 on initiative and +2 to strike or disarm. If the level of fear is fever-pitched or five or more people are terrified, the zombie is also +1 attack per melee round.

**Feeding Frenzy:** Big Flesh Eaters react like sharks to the taste and smell of the blood of a severely injured victim. When it or a member of its pack causes Hit Point damage to a person, it gains +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, and +1 to damage. These bonuses are accumulative to those derived from smelling fear.

**Zombies Can See Without Eyes:** The eyes glow with a red light inside empty eye sockets.

**Keen Sense of Hearing:** Can pinpoint the location of a Zombie Moan after hearing it for only 30 seconds.

**Impervious to Most Everything:** Only decapitation, destroying a zombie's brain, and fire can kill a zombie. Does not need to breathe, and survives underwater and in a vacuum.

**S.D.C. and Hit Point Regeneration:** 1D6+3 S.D.C. and 2 Hit Points are automatically restored every hour. Extra P.P.E. may also restore S.D.C. and Hit Points at a rate of 1D6+2 S.D.C. and one Hit Point per extra P.P.E. point. See S.D.C. and Hit Points for details.

**No Life Energy of Their Own:** Zombies are cold, dark creatures without body heat or an aura. They cannot be seen by infrared and thermal imaging optic systems. Rather, zombies register the same as a piece of timber.

**Go Dormant:** A stasis sleep that keeps zombies from decaying. Walking dead hide when they go dormant and can be waiting anywhere.

**People Slain by the Zombie Rise as One:** Victims slain in a zombie attack, their P.P.E. absorbed, rise as the walking dead within 2D4+4 minutes after expiration.

**Skills of Note:** Climb 78/53%, Prowl 58%, Tail 68%, and Track (Humans) 49%.

**Attacks per Melee:** Four.

**Damage (S.D.C./Hit Points):**

Bite: 2D6+3 damage (and a chance of infection even if the wound is treated immediately after receiving it). P.S. damage bonus does NOT apply to bite attacks.

Head Butt: 2D4 + P.S. damage bonus.

Punch/Claw Attack: 1D8 + P.S. damage bonus.

Power Punch: 3D4 + P.S. damage bonus, but counts as two attacks.

Kick Attack: 2D4 + P.S. damage bonus.

Weapon: A rarity; almost never.

Note: Leap Kick, other kicks, body flip, and martial arts attacks are NOT possible by Big Flesh Eaters.

**Bonuses:** +3 to strike, +1 to disarm, also see Natural Abilities for additional bonuses.

**Penalties:** -2 on Perception Rolls.

**Vulnerabilities:** A slightly lower A.R. (12) makes them a little more vulnerable. They hunt in small groups of 2-12, making them dangerous but manageable in combat. They exhibit early hominid behavior, a step above pure animal instinct, and are capable of simple ambushes, tailing, tracking, and rudimentary reasoning. They are attracted to the carcasses of dead animals and the corpses of people but are more capable than other Flesh Eaters of determining if something is being left as bait. Still fairly slow and compared to most humans and cannot swim. Big Flesh Eater is still susceptible to cold weather. Sustained temperatures below 41° F (5° C) reduce speed, attacks per melee, and combat bonuses by half. Head shots, decapitation, and fire can still kill this zombie. Fear of fire can keep them at bay; Horror Factor 16.

## Giant Flesh Eater

“Tales of these things roaming wild are like stories of Bigfoot: Everyone claims to know someone who saw one or battled one, but no one has ever come up with convincing proof. The only ones I’ve ever seen were the pets of some really sick Zombie Masters and Death Priests. Now, I’m not saying that these things will never be encountered in the wild; I’m just saying that if you do see one, take it down fast and get a good photograph of the body.”

– Brad Ashley, *Leader of the Road Reapers*

It is believed that Flesh Eaters that feed exceptionally well on people with high amounts of P.P.E. (e.g., children and clergy) for six months to a year grow to be giants, but no one knows it this true or not. Most are 1D4 feet (0.3-1.2 m) larger than a human in height and 150-300 pounds (68 to 135 kg) in weight. Captive Flesh Eaters of some of the larger groups of Death Priests and sadistic raiders sometimes fall in this category. Only about one wild Flesh Eater in ten thousand is able to eat this well long enough to grow to such a massive size.

Giant Flesh Eaters are built like gorillas, with massive bodies and disproportionately long arms. They have huge jaws, similar to those of a hyena, which are quite capable of snapping and grinding bone. They can sprint on all fours and are as strong as

Juggernaut zombies. Wild Giants are also almost as smart as Thinkers.

Giant Flesh Eaters that are created by being in captivity are almost slavishly subservient to their masters, possibly due to the long time spent being fed well on a regular basis. They are unlikely to rebel against the authority of their meal ticket, be it a Zombie Master, Death Priest, or Zombie Lover. Though not nearly as smart as their wild cousins, domesticated Giant Flesh Eaters can be trained to perform simple tasks and fight in arena-style combat. They otherwise behave as a domesticated Big Flesh Eater.

Giant Flesh Eaters in the wild have had to rely on their own cunning for food. Such zombies are as smart as Thinkers and know how to recognize and follow signs of human prey. They behave accordingly, often leading groups of lesser Flesh Eaters, use simple tools (clubs, knives, hatchet, shovel, etc.), and set well-planned ambushes. Wild Giant Flesh Eaters are impossible to domesticate and are violent and aggressive toward all humans and living beings.

**Also known as:** Giant Zombie, GFE (for Giant Flesh Eater), Giffie (for the acronym GFE), Goliaths, and Trolls.

**Alignment:** Considered Diabolic.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 1D4+4 (captive) or 1D4+8 (wild), M.E. 2D4+1, M.A. 1D4+2, P.S. 2D6+24, P.P. 1D6+6, P.E. 1D6+18, P.B. 2D4, Spd 1D6+12 running on all fours.

**Hit Points:** P.E. attribute number +10, but all Main Body S.D.C. must be depleted first before Hit Points can be affected. **Note:** See *S.D.C. by Location* for more details.

**S.D.C. by Location:**

- \* Hands (2) – 1D6+7 each
- \* Arms (2) – 2D6+8 each
- \* Feet (2) – 2D4+6 each
- \* Legs (2) – 2D6+12 each
- \* Lower Jaw – 2D6+6
- \*\* Neck – 2D6+15
- \*\* Head – 2D6+20
- \*\*\* Main Body – 4D6+42

**Armor Rating:** 12

**Horror Factor:** 14

**P.P.E.** 1D4

**Natural Abilities:** Standard as previously described.

Toxic Bite: Like a Komodo Dragon, the oversized jaws of Big Flesh Eaters contain the rotting flesh from past meals and are full of harmful bacteria. Add +10% to the roll for the likelihood of infection (**Dead Reign**®, page 30) and +20% to the roll for the infection symptoms and penalties (**Dead Reign**®, pages 31-32).

Low Sentience: Captive Giant Flesh Eaters think and behave just like regular Flesh-Eating Zombies. Wild ones, however, can think about as well as a monkey, being able to use simple manual tools to do basic tasks that have immediate benefits, like using a club, piece of concrete or a sledgehammer to bash open a door to get at prey. It knows that cars, footprints, lights, and fresh scents are signs of human prey, and if it has seen it done, knows how to turn on a light switch. It is more patient than other Flesh-Eating Zombies and knows how to hide and wait for the right moment to strike. Unlike the Thinker, however, it does not know how to use precision tools like a screwdriver (other than as a stabbing weapon), guns or machinery.

**Communication with Zombies:** Other Flesh-Eating Zombies regard the Giant Flesh Eater as the group leader, the alpha dog of the pack. As a result, a Giant Flesh Eater can get other Flesh Eaters to follow its lead and obey simple commands. Likewise, there is 01-60% chance Slouchers and other dull-witted zombie may also follow and obey a Giant for 1D4 hours, especially if it seems to be leading them toward a potential meal. The maximum number of non-Flesh-Eating zombies it can control at any one time is equal to its I.Q. attribute number x3. **Note:** Thinkers, Mock Zombies, and Half-Zombies are immune to such control, regardless of how low their intelligence may be. However, they may chose to work with a Giant Flesh Eater, and the Giant is smart enough to recognize if they are a benefit, a hindrance or potential trouble.

**See Life Energy (P.P.E.):** 9,000 feet (2,743.2 m) at night or in darkness.

**Sense Life Energy (P.P.E.):** 25 feet (7.6 m) to sense 1-6 people, 50 feet (15.2 m) to sense a group of 7-24 people, and 100 feet (30.5 m) to sense a group of 25 or more people. Half that range to sense animals. One quarter that range, 6.2 feet (1.9 m), when a zombie is dormant.

**Recognize Human Scents (Enhanced):** 95%. This also tells the zombie that humans are nearby, or have been present recently.

**Track Humans by Scent (Enhanced):** 54% chance, +10% if the human is sweaty or hasn't bathed in three or more days, +20% to follow the scent of blood, +5% if there is more than one human present in the same area, +5% to smell perfume, cologne, or aftershave. All bonuses are accumulative.

**Smell Fear in Humans (Enhanced):** Makes zombies more aggressive: +1 on initiative and +1 to strike or disarm. If the level of fear is fever-pitched or eight or more people are terrified, the Giant zombie is also +1 attack per melee round!

**Feeding Frenzy:** Giant Flesh Eaters react like sharks to the taste and smell of the blood of a severely injured victim. When it or a member of its pack causes Hit Point damage to a person, it gains +1 to initiative, +1 to strike, and +2 to damage. These bonuses are accumulative to those derived from smelling fear.

**Zombies Can See Without Eyes:** The eyes glow with a red light inside empty eye sockets.

**Keen Sense of Hearing:** Can pinpoint the location of a Zombie Moan after hearing it for only 30 seconds.

**Impervious to Most Everything:** Only decapitation, destroying a zombie's brain, and fire can kill a zombie. Does not need to breathe, and survives underwater and in a vacuum.

**S.D.C. and Hit Point Regeneration:** 1D6+3 S.D.C. and two Hit Points are automatically restored every hour. Extra P.P.E. may also restore S.D.C. and Hit Points at a rate of 1D6+2 S.D.C. and one Hit Point per extra P.P.E. point. See S.D.C. and Hit Points for details.

**No Life Energy of Their Own:** Zombies are cold, dark creatures without body heat or an aura. They cannot be seen by infrared and thermal imaging optic systems. Rather, zombies register the same as a piece of timber.

**Go Dormant:** A stasis sleep that keeps zombies from decaying. Walking dead hide when they go dormant and can be waiting anywhere.

**People Slain by the Zombie Rise as One:** Victims slain in a zombie attack, their P.P.E. absorbed, rise as the walking dead within 2D4+4 minutes after expiration.

**Skills of Note:** Climb 90/66%, Prowl 50% (its size makes stealth difficult), Tail 75%, and Track (Humans) 62%.

**Attacks per Melee:** Four.

**Damage (S.D.C./Hit Points):**

**Bite:** 3D6+2 damage (and a chance of infection even if the wound is treated immediately after receiving it). P.S. damage bonus does NOT apply to bite attacks.

**Head Butt:** 3D4 + P.S. damage bonus.

**Punch/Claw Attack:** 2D6 + P.S. damage bonus.

**Power Punch:** 3D6 + P.S. damage bonus, but counts as two attacks.

**Kick Attack:** 2D6 + P.S. damage bonus.

**Weapon:** Captive: None unless trained. Wild: Commonly a big rock, chunk of concrete, or piece of scrap metal weighing on average 200 pounds (90 kg), doing 4D6 + P.S. damage bonus, and which can be thrown one yard/meter for every three points of P.S. the zombie has.

**Note:** Leap Kick, other kicks, body flip, and martial arts attacks are NOT possible by Giant Flesh Eaters.

**Bonuses:** +4 to strike, +2 to disarm, also see Natural Abilities.

**Penalties:** -1 on Perception Rolls.

**Vulnerabilities:** A slightly lower A.R. (12) makes them a little more vulnerable. They hunt in larger groups of 6-36 other types of zombies, making them more dangerous in combat. They exhibit early caveman behavior and are capable of executing straightforward ambushes, trapping prey in restricted terrain, basic reasoning, and planning for the near future. They are attracted to the carcasses of dead animals and the corpses of people but are quite capable of determining if something is being left as bait. Faster than most humans and capable of swimming, the Giant Flesh Eater is still susceptible to cold weather. Sustained temperatures below 41° F (5° C) reduce speed, attacks per melee, and combat bonuses by half. Head shots, decapitation, and fire can still kill this zombie. Fear of fire can keep them at bay; Horror Factor 16.

## The Cult of Brulyx in Detroit

As mentioned above, Detroit began Z-Day with zombies spread all over the city, plus tens of thousands that had been shipped in for placement inside the mine, but had not yet been put underground. As a result, perhaps as many as 100,000 fanned out from the salt mine area. Combined with decapitation of the city government and the deaths of a large percentage of the city's defenders, chaos ensued. Most of the terrified population left to fend for themselves. Those who survived the first few days were left isolated, running out of food, surrounded by zombies, with no escape. Who could possibly come to their rescue?

For many, their only hope was the **Cult of Brulyx**.

There were once more than twenty different enclaves or "covens" of Brulyx in Detroit. Attrition, mergers, infighting, and hostile takeovers have reduced that number to three major cult factions. All of them have senior members who have had at least some military or police training. Naturally, these three groups have a paramilitary organization along functional lines.

# 1. Chuck's Coven

**Boss:** Charles “Chuck” Montague, former captain and commanding officer, 46th Military Police Company (Heavy Security), Michigan National Guard. He is a charismatic, direct, no-nonsense soldier with plenty of counterinsurgency experience in the Middle East and Central Asia. He joined the coven soon after Z-Day, bringing over many of his surviving police and military friends. Very soon after becoming a full-fledged Death Priest, he took over the coven from its former “spiritual hippie” leader and immediately reorganized it along the lines of a military battalion with five operational companies and a full and capable staff.

## Underbosses:

**Tyrone Johnson:** Executive officer. Former police lieutenant and National Guard combat engineer, current Death Priest.

**Samir Milad:** Commander, Alpha Troop. Former police sergeant and National Guard military police sergeant. Current Death Priest.

**Jozef Stajic:** Commander, Bravo Troop. Former National Guard military police sergeant and ROTC student. Current Death Priest. Millicent's brother.

**Mackenzie Dawson:** Commander, Charlie Troop. Former police officer and Army Reserve truck driver. Current Death Priest.

**Barak Williams:** Commander, Delta Troop. Former co-owner of a local construction company and National Guard military combat engineer. Current Death Priest.

**Tricia Conyers:** Commander, Weapons Troop. Former National Guard artillery lieutenant.

**SheQuanDa Pickens:** Administration. Veteran, former HR specialist at a large corporation.

**Samuel Bernstein:** Intelligence. Former police investigator and Army Reserve military intelligence officer. Current Death Priest.

**Isma'il Khan:** Operations. Former police dispatcher and military veteran.

**Johnny “Mo Bettah” Moretta:** Logistics. Military veteran and former owner of a trucking company.

**Luisa Espinoza:** Medical. Former medical-surgical nurse at a small Detroit hospital.

**Noam Levi:** Civil affairs. Former lawyer and community activist.

**Millicent Stajic:** Communications. Military veteran and former telecommunications technician. Jozef's sister.

**Area of Operations:** West and northwest Detroit suburbs out to Wixom, Farmington Hills, and Livonia.

**Headquarters:** Livonia, Michigan.

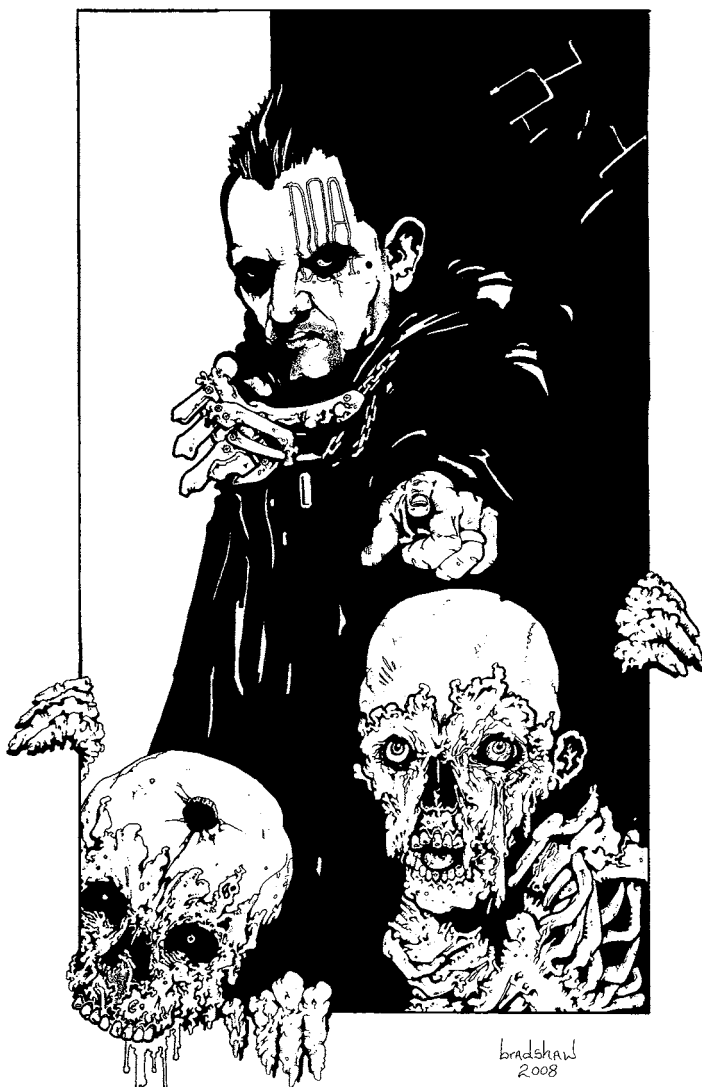
**Notes:** *Chuck's Coven* is large and well-equipped with police and military weapons, body armor, and lightly armored vehicles. It is the most overtly aggressive and arguably the strongest cult in Detroit, but its strength is starting to wane in the face of stiff *Road Reaper* resistance. Chuck's bid for supremacy is to head straight up the I-75 corridor and link up with the two much more peaceful covens that seem to have secured **Flint**. With that strategic crossroads and its additional territory, manpower, and resources, Chuck's Coven could then roll east to Port Huron to stymie the northward expansion of the *Calixto Coven* (see below), or north or west to Camp Grayling or Fort Custer Training Center in order to acquire more National Guard equipment. However, the large number of police and military veterans in his coven's upper ranks belies the fact that the vast majority of its members are civilians who never fired a weapon prior to the Wave. With little room to maneuver, Chuck's Coven relies on straight-ahead assaults featuring waves of zombies and mortar barrages, followed up by increasingly less-motivated armed cultists.

# 2. Calixto Coven

**Boss:** Marvin “Calixto” McLennan is a former Army Reserve civil affairs officer and record company publicist, who took the name “Calixto” as more fitting and exotic for a religious leader. He is one of two pre-Wave cultists in Detroit to retain command of his enclave. His suave, polished, and professional veneer that won him so many converts is beginning to crack under the strain of running a wartime church in a post-apocalypse Earth. However, Calixto remains a highly motivated, highly skilled leader who has the confidence and support of his subordinates. His coven's paramilitary organization is purposely masked by religious labels in order to *appear* more peaceful and friendly than they really are.

## Underbosses:

**Jackie Underwood:** Co-Guru (second in command). Former seminary dropout, paralegal, community activist, and lobbyist. Current Death Priest. Popular among the cultists, but has poor managerial skills and zero combat ability.



Nolan Paavo: Chief Brother, Adoration Council. Retired Navy chief petty officer and former corporate executive. Current Death Priest. He is in charge of the Troy area and the newly “liberated” Rochester Hills.

Mike Washington: Chief Brother, Benevolent Council. Army veteran. Former police officer. Current Death Priest. He is in charge of the Sterling Heights area.

Raequanda Jefferson: Chief Sister, Charity Council. Former Air Force communications officer and information technology entrepreneur. Current Death Priest. She is in charge of the St. Clair Shores – Mount Clemens area, including what’s left of *Selfridge Air National Guard Base*.

Sarah Levin: Chief Sister, Devotion Council. Former stay-at-home mom and grandmotherly socialite. Current Death Priest. No combat ability, but excellent managerial and people skills. She is in charge of the Warren area and also handles the coven’s bookkeeping and human resources.

Candace Lester: Chief Sister, Education Council. Former public school assistant principal. She heads the coven’s training and education programs.

Brian Ajami: Chief Brother, Fellowship Council. Claims to be a veteran, but dropped out of Air Force basic training after three days. Former political activist and car salesman. Current Death Priest. He heads the internal security division of the coven, including Calixto’s squad of bodyguards.

Mark Cupertino: Special Assistant, Leadership Council. Former Army chief warrant officer who taught weapons and tactics at both Camp Grayling and Fort Custer. Not a Death Priest, he nevertheless believes fully in cult’s world view and wholeheartedly uses his wealth of combat expertise to train and advise the coven in military matters.

Sylvia Lewandoski: Chief Sister, Outreach Council. Navy intelligence veteran and former undercover police officer. Current Death Priest. She heads the coven’s intelligence, propaganda, and proselytization efforts, including an AM radio station.

Zachary Z. Zobel III (aka “Z3”): Supply Council. Former rich playboy, perpetual college student, and part-time assistant vice president of his father’s wholesale goods conglomerate, Z-Mart. Current Mock Zombie. Charming and surprisingly efficient, he handles the coven’s logistics.

Maria De Los Santos: Special Assistant, Technical Section. Former district manager of a nationwide electronics chain. Master’s degree in computer science and business. She manages the coven’s computer support and electronics repair shop.

**Area of Operations:** Suburbs north of Detroit and east of I-75, including Warren, Sterling Heights, and (most recently) Rochester Hills.

**Headquarters:** Recently moved to the Detroit Arsenal Army Base, more commonly known as the **Warren Tank Plant**, Warren, Michigan.

**Notes:** This group is the second-strongest and is jockeying hard for first place. Calixto and “Chuck” Montague (see above), are in competition to be the one to link up with the two much more peaceful covens that seem to have secured Flint. Calixto’s plan is to outflank the Reaper strongholds in Waterford and Brighton by heading north to Lapeer and then west. Unfortunately, one of the two main roads north runs through Goodison and the Oxford Safe Haven; the other runs through Romeo, Almont and Imlay City – all five towns being well-fortified.

To keep from tipping his hand and eliciting a Reaper response, Calixto plans to infiltrate Goodison and Oxford with undercover cultists who will open the gates late at night to enable swarms of zombies to enter. He can then portray his coven’s occupation of these areas as a “humanitarian operation.” Should this route be blocked, he will simply shift eastwards and try the road north through Imlay City. However, failure of his Plan B will cause him to resort to naked aggression. His coven is well-supplied with vehicles, small arms, radios, and light (mostly home-made) body armor. Calixto’s zombies wear an orange X on their shirts in order to tell them apart from the walking dead that are uncontrolled or that belong to another coven.

### 3. Maxie’s Circle

**Boss:** Maxine “Maxie” Fulani, a former “hactivist” and college professor, perpetual student, current Death Priest and life-long member of the Cult of Brulyx. She has a PhD in computer science and telecommunications, with a Master’s degree in psychology. She is the only other pre-Wave enclave leader in the Detroit area to retain command of her coven. Maxine is disarmingly charming and far more subtle and patient than the other Detroit area coven leaders. She personally runs the Detroit seminary for Death Priests, a position she uses to maintain good relations with the other covens. Brilliant and manipulative, Maxine sees others as puzzles for her to solve and bend to her will, if for no other reason than to prove – quietly and to herself – that she is cleverer and better than they.

#### **Underbosses:**

Amin Fulani: Second in command. Amin is Maxine’s cousin, best friend, and lover. A military veteran, former entrepreneur and self-made millionaire, he is almost as smart and only half as wicked as Maxine. He truly believes that the Cult of Brulyx offers the only route to world peace, even if it has to kill some people to do it. Amin governs the coven’s territory, while Maxine remains the spiritual head and quietly pulls his strings to maintain the fiction of “separation of church and state.”

George Gemayel: Head of the business district. He is an energetic, middle-aged former millionaire, having owned his own restaurant chain. His district has a factory to mass-produce body armor, an ammunition repacking plant, and a food processing facility.

Lenora Habash: Head of the industrial district. She is a spy, old widow with an M.S. in mechanical engineering and a minor in business. Her district has a major auto and truck repair and modification facility. Her current main project is to re-start a recycling plant.

Gabriel Rizquallah: Head of the waterfront district. This young man is an avid boater and a former manager of one of George Gemayel’s restaurants. His district has a mid-sized laker (cargo ship) and a small fleet of fishing boats. He facilitates transportation to the Windsor side of the river as well as trade with other communities on the Great Lakes.

Gus Schram: Chief of administration. He is a former assistant to the Detroit City Council. He has a B.A. in public administration. He handles the bookkeeping and human resources.

Pieter Nieuwenbroek: Chief of security and human intelligence. He is a middle-aged, former Army human intelligence sergeant, police detective, and security contractor. He handles the physical security of the coven’s leaders and vital facilities, vets



the coven's rank and file, and trains and runs the coven's undercover agents and saboteurs. He is married to Beatrice.

**Beatrice Nieuwenbroek:** Chief of communications and signals intelligence. She is a middle-aged former Army signals intelligence sergeant and defense contractor. She runs the coven's radio listening post, promptly sharing with other covens any information about Road Reaper activities, and operates the short-wave radio that the coven uses for long-range communications (encoded when talking to other covens). She also maintains a cellular base control station and four towers, permitting cell phone and smartphone internet use within 25 miles (40 km) of the Detroit/Windsor area – but only for registered users. Maxine's Circle gave registered devices to the other covens, secretly giving Beatrice's team full back-door access to all their data. She is married to Pieter.

**Claude McNamara:** Chief of public works. He is a former project manager of a mid-sized local construction company. He oversees the sewage, water, electricity, transportation and urban renewal projects for the coven's territory. His crew keeps busy demolishing unsafe buildings and stripping them of useful materials (wiring, plumbing, bricks, etc.). His main project currently is to secure a steady supply of chlorine to purify the municipal water system.

**Eric Cappotoccio:** Deputy Chief Seminarian. He is a former university professor of Eastern philosophy. A highly skilled martial artist, this Death Priest is second in command of the coven's evil seminary, a school that teaches both normal elementary and high school students as well as aspiring Death Priests. The curriculum for both is rigorous, militant and survivalist in nature, providing graduates with Athletics (general), Hand to Hand: Basic, Wilderness Survival, and W.P. Rifle in addition to the skills normally associated with their respective O.C.C.s. The seminary has five full-fledged Death Priests and about 30 aspirants. Eric oversees proselytization and the coven's radio station that broadcasts pleasant music, news, and talk shows in both AM and shortwave.

**Joachim Mengele:** Chief of Public Health. He is a fully-certified medical-surgical doctor and a Death Priest. He runs the medical clinic with a staff of a paramedic, two nurses, and an ambulance driver. Torture is his hobby, so he helps Pieter Nieuwenbroek interrogate those who are particularly stubborn. His clinic is well-equipped, but short of pharmaceuticals. His goal is to find a way to manufacture at least the basics (vaccines, antibiotics, and anesthetics).

**Area of Operations:** Downtown and central Detroit.

**Headquarters:** Renaissance Center, Detroit, Michigan.

**Notes:** Maxine's coven is well-organized, well-equipped, and well-supplied. Her area is the best governed of all the Metro Detroit covens: Running water (non-potable), sewage, trash removal, and limited electricity have been restored to all her coven's inhabited buildings; the streets are clear of debris; children go to school; and a decent medical clinic is open. Her coven operates a pleasant radio station that broadcasts on both AM and shortwave. Maxine often "lends" Death Priests, zombies, and armored trucks to other covens in exchange for resources and/or favors, which greatly ingratiates them to her.

With her diplomatic talents, economic resources, and information dominance, Maxine's plan is to ensure that the most pliant coven ends up on top, assuring her place as both the king-maker and the power behind the throne. Her current pet project is to

expand the cell phone network. Her Death Priests and zombies bear the mark of a yellow circle. Her territory flies the flag of the United Nations "as a symbol of global unity with survivors everywhere."

## Other Notable People in the Detroit Area

**1. Amanda Vick:** Former police officer and private detective. Native of Goodison. Currently a member of the Lake Orion Safe Haven militia and entrusted with "special" tasks. Excellent shot.

**2. Angelina Pacheco:** Former owner of a pawnshop, a junkyard, and an auto repair shop. She ran the second-biggest fencing operation in southeast Michigan and is a niece of a notorious pre-Wave criminal. Angelina handles bulk orders of trade goods.

**3. Bruce Wrobel:** Mayor of Goodison. Bruce used his position as a logistics officer in the National Guard to buy huge amounts of building supplies from the company he owned; when the dead rose, his corruption seemed like genius because he was able to ring Goodison with Hesco barriers and steel gates. Bruce is willing to wheel and deal with anyone, which has made Goodison a favorite location for buying and selling goods of questionable origin. Goodison retained its excellent veterinary and dental clinics, so it is the best medical facility north of Detroit. Bruce keeps Goodison out of the Road Reaper vs Death Priest conflict as "war is only good for business when it's other people fighting."

**4. Christopher and Eloise Hube:** Unofficial leaders of Romeo. They are good family people, history buffs, and military veterans. Former members of the MIVDF, they organized their farming community's defenses immediately after Z-Day, setting up a perimeter ditch with a turf-and-timber rampart. As an additional defense against zombie hordes, a barn outside their perimeter has been set up as a trap, with the inside dug out to a depth of ten feet, several 55-gallon (208 liter) drums full of an improvised explosive, and a noisemaker lure. They refuse to trade with Death Priests, but have good relations with the Retro Savages in Imlay City, Reapers, and the Lake Orion Safe Haven.

**5. Claudia "Big" Byrd:** Retro Savage leader of Orion Township. Claudia is a heavyset college graduate with a degree in agriculture and a minor in history. Her group is moderate, meaning it doesn't sacrifice people to zombies and is open to trade with other communities. However, it wants no part in the Road Reaper vs Death Priest conflict, accepts no refugees, and eschews such technologies as internal combustion engines, electricity, and modern medicine. Orion Township is protected by a ditch and a turf-and-timber rampart.

**6. Florence "FloJo" Johnson:** Unofficial Deputy Mayor of the Lake Orion Safe Haven (which includes Oxford). She is the widow of the Mayor of Detroit and was a full partner in his sleazy politics, but did not see his betrayal coming. FloJo has since turned over a new leaf and now uses her formidable political and managerial talents to help the Lake Orion Safe Haven. Her principles are above reproach: No refugee is turned away, everyone works, and everyone eats. Though committed to being "good," Florence can and will send select people outside of the safe area to perform "special" tasks that ensure the security and freedom of her community. She understands better than most the greater implications of the Road Reaper vs Death Priest conflict and provides low-key support to the Road Reapers. The safe haven is

encircled by chain link fencing, which the residents keep busy reinforcing with sandbags.

**7. Frank Jacobsen:** Former drug runner and truck driver. Currently a scrounger and an agent for Calixto's Coven. He has been sent to Goodison to betray it.

**8. Georgi Paulsen:** Scrounger and former pizza delivery person and drug dealer. Currently a member of the Lake Orion Safe Haven militia and entrusted with "special" tasks. He has quick reflexes and contacts throughout southeast Michigan.

**9. Harold Woodson:** Former drug runner. Harold still has contacts throughout Michigan, Toledo, and Windsor. You want pharmaceuticals or specialty items? Harold can (usually) get it... for a price.

**10. Jack "the Jackal" Els:** Leader of the largest and most notorious band of raiders in southeast Michigan, burning and looting farming communities from Bay City to Marysville. He revels in and encourages the worst kinds of depravity and atrocities. He uses an open-top semi-truck trailer as a gladiator pit, parking two other semi-trucks beside it so his marauders can watch. When he sacks a town, he puts the survivors in it and tells them that whichever one of them kills the others will be allowed to live. Often he will lock opaque face masks on the survivors and put a zombie in with them to make things interesting. When he feels like it, he actually does let the last one standing live and join his group. Before the Wave, he was a lead guitarist for a local hard rock band and is fond of playing a monster solo while his captives die. He was last noted in Lapeer.

**11. Jill Clinton:** Death Priestess, northern Flint. Jill was a bright high school student but a college drop-out. She was a talented stand-up comedienne and singer until she and her boyfriend overdosed on heroin. He died, she didn't. Ravaged by survivor's guilt, she embraced death worship, a Goth lifestyle, and witchcraft. She was a pre-Wave member of the Cult of Brulyx and remains true to its doctrine of no overt violence. She has two lesser Death Priests in her coven.

**12. The Madman of Richmond (name unknown):** This old man is a psychopath who seems to have killed or driven off everyone in his small town of Richmond, Michigan (not to be confused with Richmond, Virginia). He apparently is a military veteran, as he has done a professional job blocking off every road into town. He mostly hangs out in a three-story house that appears to have been recently reinforced with cinder blocks, rammed earth, and metal shutters. He shoots at anyone within range of his .308 rifle and never seems to sleep, miss, or run out of ammunition. Piles of dead zombies and people mark the edges of his turf.

**13. Marcia Dupre:** Mayor of New Baltimore. A strong-willed woman with a PhD in law, Marcia was a career small-town politician who led the citizens of her town in the fight to rid it of zombies and erect some kind of protective barrier. Successful but exhausted, the residents of New Baltimore are now desperate for additional manpower, weapons, ammunition, food, and construction materials. Recently, a cargo ship with trade goods was recovered and docked at the town's only large pier. Marcia is willing to barter with anyone to get what her town needs.

**14. Maurice Wilkins:** Retro Savage leader of Imlay City. Maurice grew up running his family's cider mill. His group does condemn "troublemakers" to be eaten by zombies, but sometimes trades with other communities, especially for diesel fuel. They operate tractors and electric generators, but shun any electronic device invented after 1950. Imlay City is encircled by chain link

fence topped with barbed wire, with log roadblocks at each entrance.

**15. Naomi and Patrick Folkes:** Survivors and retirees, unofficial leaders of Iron Mountain, Michigan. Patrick is a veteran and former electrician; Naomi was a community leader and knew everyone in all the social circles of Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Iron Mountain is a safe haven community that is blessedly free of immediate threats, but that may be its downfall. So many refugees have arrived that the whole county is almost devoid of game to hunt; many fear that there will not be enough food to last past mid-winter.

**16. Robert Masters:** Military veteran and former hit man. With three other bandits, Robert occupies a former MIVDF roadblock on an overpass in the far suburbs of Detroit. A highly skilled sniper and Zombie Master, Robert extorts passers-by for "tolls," but keeps his area mostly free of unwanted zombies.

**17. Thaddeus Jachym Wrona:** Former undercover DPD officer. Currently a member of the Lake Orion Safe Haven militia and entrusted with "special" tasks. His wife died due to complications of childbirth soon after Z-Day. He is a jack of all trades.

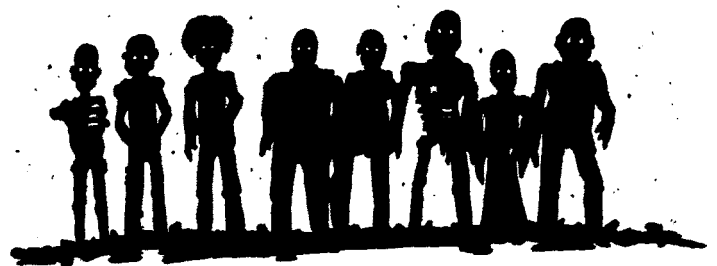
**18. Torvald Gudmundsson:** Reaper leader, southeast Michigan. Torvald, a former Marine officer and lifelong biker, is legendary for his ability to motivate, organize, and energize people. He is a veteran of three foreign wars and authored books on infantry tactics and counterinsurgency. He is fearless and leads from the front, making victories happen seemingly regardless of the odds. He is currently in Waterford, opposing Chuck's Coven.

**19. Victor Gonsalves:** Death Priest, southern Flint. Victor was a garbage collector who always thought he could do more with his life. He is another pre-Wave member of the Cult of Brulyx, and also remains true to its doctrine of no overt violence. Violeta, his wife of 20 years, is the only other Death Priest in his coven. Their three sons are exceptionally well-fed, Giant Flesh-Eating Zombies.

## The Detroit Legacy

What's left of Detroit is an inner city no-man's land crawling with zombies. Since the Metro-Detroit area is the epitome of urban sprawl, with one city seamlessly merging into the next, the zombies have spread out to where the people are. That means swarms slowly moving out into the more rural areas, while other zombies remain in the cities waiting for survivors to scurry out of their hiding places.

The one danger that still lingers, and could become a terrible weapon of any cult that manages to seize control of it, is the estimated two million zombies currently trapped inside the Detroit Salt Mine near the waterfront. It would take a lot of work to clear the shaft of debris and rebuild the elevator, but the potential payoff would be a swarm of two million zombies that nobody could stand against.





# I am Legion, Episode II

**An Adventure and Official Source Material for Splicers®**

**Concept developed by Chris “Slappy” Kluge and Charles “Chuck” Walton II**

**Written by Chris Kluge**

**Illustrated by Charles Walton**

**Note:** For Part I, see **The Rifter® #71-72 Special Double Issue**, page 86.

## Returning Home

When the player characters finally do make it back to House Artemis, the sentry guards at the entrance tell the group that Warlord Artemis and the Senate have already assembled and are waiting for them. They tell the players that a pair of Royal Guards have been dispatched to escort them to the meeting and that the players should wait at the gate for them to arrive. Within minutes, the group spots two distinctively dressed warriors making their way through the crowded corridor. With the crimson Me-

ga-Damage silk robes adorning their Host Armor, and the high-frequency swords slung at their hips, the two guards look similar to the samurai warriors of old, despite the monstrous appearance of their armor beneath. Only the best among the Dreadguard are ever offered a position within the Royal Guard, and the reverence felt for these distinguished warriors is apparent as the noisy sea of Splicers within this busy passageway quickly falls silent and parts to let them through. This was likely the purpose of the escort. It

was not like Warlord Artemis worried the player characters would dawdle or get lost along the way. He knew that having his Royal Guards leading them through the densely packed hallways would help expedite their journey. Time is of the essence and Warlord Artemis is anxious to hear their findings.

As the player characters make their way towards Warlord Artemis' personal chambers, the rough stone walls common throughout the underground haven become smoother and more polished. The utilitarian support columns found in other areas are slowly replaced by more polished and refined stone pillars until they too are replaced by dozens of chiseled statues immortalizing House Artemis' greatest heroes. The walls in between these statues are decorated with dozens of beautifully woven silk tapestries depicting some of House Artemis' most renowned victories over the Machine as well as those over rival Great Houses. This chamber is where Warlord Artemis entertains dignitaries from other Great Houses, and it was built to be a demonstration of House Artemis' affluence and military might.

Warlord Artemis' chamber is sealed by a pair of twenty foot tall, polished oak doors, but the Royal Guards' powerful suits of Host Armor allow them to push these heavy doors open with ease. As the group enters the chamber, they see a heated discussion already taking place. The guards motion the group to remain in the doorway until they are addressed. Warlord Artemis the Fourth is sitting at the far end of a massive table that is large enough to seat thirty. Seated around this table is the entire Senate, twenty of the most heroic Dreadguards within House Artemis. These legendary warriors have served their House with distinction for decades and now they are Warlord Artemis' most trusted advisors. They are arguing ferociously about how to handle the current crisis as Warlord Artemis looks on intently. As the group waits to give their report, they glance around the chamber. The room itself is circular with polished marble walls and a high, domed ceiling. The walls are covered with more of the same silk tapestries and marble statues that lined the hallway leading in. The chamber is basically empty except for the finely crafted table sitting in the center of the room and the twenty Royal Guards standing motionless along the walls. The room is well lit by dozens of organic glow cells, but the way they are arranged casts a series of shadows that adds to the ominous and intimidating feeling of the room. Warlord Artemis allowed the discussion to continue for a few minutes after the players arrived, but he eventually raises a single hand to silence the room. He then quietly asks the player group to come in and recount what they saw.

Within seconds of the group detailing the disastrous assault and their lucky escape, the room once again erupts in debate. Half of the Senate is pushing for House Artemis to mobilize all their forces and meet the enemy head on while the rest want to hunker down, reinforce the underground haven's defenses, and hope Legion and N.E.X.U.S. destroy each other. Each side sees the player characters' findings as further proof that their original strategy is still the best plan of attack. Warlord Artemis, however, realizes there may be another way. With a wave of his hand, Warlord Artemis once again silences the room. He then stands up from his chair and addresses the Senate.

"While discretion has forced us to live underground, it is only through the strength of our military and merciful luck that we, humanity, continues to survive. Burying our heads in the sand and hoping for this storm to pass would be folly, as would throwing our entire army against an enemy we do not understand. But we must act, and we must act now. Make no mistake, Legion is no...

savior. She is not the answer to our prayers, but the harbinger of this planet's doom. We are the strongest Great House within this Area of Influence, and it is our duty to defuse this threat before Legion becomes unstoppable.

"Judging from your report, the speed and precision with which Legion's forces fell upon your assault teams suggests that she knew of your presence long before you struck, yet she allowed the attack to proceed anyway. She wanted to deliver a message, and not to insult the talents of your team, but I believe you were allowed to escape so that you could deliver it. She wanted to tell us that she can neutralize our most powerful weapon, but what she doesn't know is that it's not our only weapon."

He pauses momentarily to let the gravity of his suggestion sink in. One of the Senators then interjects, "My Lord, you can't mean the Shell. I thought it was meant only for the most desperate of circumstances."

"I would say this qualifies," Artemis calmly replies. "But it's not like the Kamikazes. It has no failsafe against organic targets. If House Janus or worse yet, House Shiva got their hands on the genetic code, it would be a greater threat to our security than Legion and N.E.X.U.S. combined."

Warlord Artemis once again raised his hand and quickly silenced the discussion before any other Senators could inject their opinions. He then continued on, "The risk is great, but you underestimate the danger posed by Legion. N.E.X.U.S. has billions of robots at her disposal and yet she can't stop Legion. She can't even slow her down. If the Deluvane Splicers were correct, the Factory Walker is the key. The Shell has the power to take it down, but more importantly, its small size will let our people sneak it through the Walker's defenses. We just need to activate the Shell's timer, place it in the path of the Factory Walker, and let Legion casually stroll over it. The blast should rip the Walker to shreds. Perhaps we should use two just to be sure."

He then addresses the player characters directly. "That is where you come in. You did great work out there. You not only provided us with invaluable intel, but you went toe-to-toe with Legion's forces and survived. That pretty much makes you the resident experts. I need you to serve your House in this difficult hour. I need you to place these bombs in Legion's path."

Artemis then turns his attention back to the Senate, "Assign two of your best Sweepers to their team to handle the Shells, and send Drake Benton as well. His Archangel stealth fighter skills have always been impressive. We need to keep the team small and low-profile or else risk repeating Deluvane's mistakes, but I also want some firepower on this mission. "Senator Bane, escort them to the armory and make sure they get everything they need. I want them fully briefed and fully equipped within the hour. Time is of the essence, and I want them mobile the second that Deliveryman reports back on Legion's position. That's it. Dismissed."

With that, the Senators quickly pour out of the room to make preparations as Warlord Artemis and his retinue retires to his personal quarters, leaving the player characters alone with the grizzled war hero, Senator Bane. Even in his late fifties, the Senator still strikes quite an imposing figure. His six foot, three (1.9 m) frame is still heavily muscled, despite his advanced age. His weathered face bears the scars from a lifetime of military service, including a vicious looking slash that runs down the entire left side of his face and across his throat. How he survived such a wound is a mystery, but it left him with a voice that sounds like he's gargling gravel. Perhaps this is the reason he rarely speaks, but the perpetually stern look on his face makes it seem unlikely he was ever the

chatty type. He is wearing the same elaborate white and red silk robes worn by the rest of the Senate, but for some reason he just looks out of place in them. He looks just as pristine and regal as his fellow Senators, but he looks more like a front-line soldier playing dress up than a professional politician.

Senator Bane gives each player character a quick look up and down with an almost disgusted look on his face, then turns and starts walking out. If it were not for the uncomfortable silence, the player group might have missed the raspy “let’s go” coming from Senator Bane as he quickly walked away. He leads the group through the twisting tunnels of House Artemis to the armory without saying another word. As soon as Senator Bane enters the armory, the dozen or so Splicers in the waiting area and the clerk standing behind the long stone counter immediately springs to attention. It is not often that anyone from the Senate strolls into the armory unannounced, so it is unclear if the look of terror on the clerk’s face would have been caused by any Senator or if it is specifically due to Senator Bane. As Bane starts hissing orders at the clerk, the player characters watch the other armory attendants busily going about their business. The unique nature of Bio-Technology means its care and storage is also somewhat unique. Like a standard high-tech armory, all the weapons and equipment are neatly filed away on a series of hundreds of shelves. The difference is that all of these shelves are submerged within an enormous pool of nutrient-rich fluid that keeps these weapons alive. The thick pink liquid is clear enough to allow the players to see the armory attendants in their Proto-Host Armor shuttling weapons and suits of Living Armor to and from their designated storage areas. This is one of the main armories for House Artemis so it is absolutely enormous. Even the somewhat low ceilings in this simple stone chamber cannot hide the massive size of the cavern.

Another attendant comes out of an innocuous door in the corner of the waiting area carrying a large tray filled with Chig hand grenades. The players can see that the room he came from is filled with garbage and other waste material with thousands of organic explosives crawling all across this rotten pile. The Chigs, Migs, and Squigs are not only powerful weapons of war, but they also help keep the underground haven livable by disposing of waste produced by the human population.

The player characters turn their attention back to Senator Bane so they can hear the specifics of what “everything they need” truly means. Bane informs the clerk that he wants the player characters traveling light but heavy. In addition to their regular armaments, he authorizes one heavy weapon of choice, one sidearm of choice, six Chig grenades, six Bug Bombs, six Squig detonators, two Migs, two Booster Patches, and two Slap Patches for each player. Senator Bane then turns back to the players and asks if they are going to need a trip to the War Mount Corral as well. He tells the group that once Legion is located, the player characters will be delivered by Dracos air drop to just outside of the combat zone, so transportation will not be an issue, but if they want the extra firepower, it is authorized.

Once the group is fully equipped, Senator Bane leads them down a series of long, narrow corridors deep into the heart of the underground haven. The player characters recognize that they are heading towards the Engineering Chambers. This area is restricted to all but the most senior members of the military, so it is one of the most heavily fortified locations in House Artemis. Once they get past a series of sentry stations, they are surprised to see that the hallway leading towards the Engineers actually slopes upward. The hallway is filled with hundreds of five foot (1.5 m) wide, four foot

(1.2 m) tall barricade walls composed of solid resin. They are set two or three wide in a staggered configuration so that there are no direct paths through all the barricades. It is a pretty ingenious design. It prevents large invaders like tanks from rolling through the corridor, plus it provides plenty of cover for defenders and gives them the high ground advantage. As the group weaves through this obstacle course of defensive walls, the player characters notice that each barricade has a large white number painted on the back of it. If they ask Senator Bane about the numbers he will gruffly respond, “Don’t worry about it. We don’t exactly let everyone down here. Just consider it an honor and keep your mouths shut.”

The group proceeds through another half dozen sentry stations and three more barricade-filled hallways before arriving in a small meeting room. The room itself is a rather unremarkable stone chamber. There is one wooden door on each end of the room, a large wooden table in the center, and dozens of intricately hand drawn maps covering the coarse rock walls. Sitting around the table are the three other people that have been assigned to this mission. They snap to attention as soon as Senator Bane enters the room. He does a quick round of introductions between the three and the player characters before proceeding with the briefing.

“Let me introduce you to the rest of your team. This is Senior Sweeper Shauna Davies and Senior Sweeper Anderson Long. Both have nearly a decade of distinguished service in the field. They’ll be the ones transporting the bombs. There’s no one else in the Sweeper Corps that I would trust more with this responsibility. Both are fully trained on the Shell Tactical Omega Cell, but we’re going to train all of you on how to detonate them as well, in case they both go down.” Senator Bane does not even pause for a second to let the group digest the apparent fact that he knows casualties on this mission will be high. He simply continues on with the introductions. “This is Drake Benton, a former Dreadguard with over twenty years of experience. Now, he’s serving House Artemis as one of our Elite Archangel Test Pilots in the new “Angel Core” Program. Apparently, his new rank as a test pilot means he’s not in charge of this mission, but he’s seen more action than all of you knuckle-draggers combined so I would listen to him.”

Senator Bane then introduces the player characters. He has apparently been through their service records and knows quite a bit about them. They are surprised to hear that he is equally as complimentary of each player as he was when introducing the other three soldiers. The player characters never met Senator Bane before today. They heard many stories about him from their fellow warriors, nearly all of which were quite positive. At first they did not understand why this cantankerous, old warhorse was still considered such a beloved figure in House Artemis, but now they are beginning to understand.

The Senator was about to begin the briefing when a man in Proto-Host Armor walks in through the opposite door carrying what looks like two oversized clam shells. The surface of each is quite rough with multiple ridges of sharp spikes running along the top and bottom shell. Both he and his cargo are soaking wet and dripping pink nutrient fluid all over the floor. Apparently, there is another armory on the other side of the door. This must be where House Artemis stores their top-secret munitions like the Shell Tactical Omega Cell. The man sets the two bombs on the table and then stands at attention.

The player characters see the hint of a smile on the Senator’s face as he addresses him, “Ah, perfect timing. Thank you, son. Please bring in the trainer as well.” The armory attendant then

starts walking back out the same door as Senator Bane motions for the rest of the group to gather around the table.

“This is the Shell Tactical Omega Cell. Four kiloton yield. Against heavily armored targets the effective blast radius is considered 1,000 feet (305 m), but it will kill any soft target within a 2,000 foot (609.6 m) radius. However, maximum destructive potential is within 200 feet (61 m), so you’re going to need to get these up close and personal with the Factory Walker. You will literally be holding a Kamikaze Cruise Missile in your hands. Our Librarians figured out how to take the same explosive charge used in the Kamikaze and shrink it down to this. It’s one of the most powerful weapons in our arsenal, and one of the biggest mistakes we’ve ever made. When House Shiva first crawled out of the scum to threaten the Resistance, our Librarians developed the Shell so we could wipe out their Great House in one fell swoop. Those damn freaks thought they were so smart, but they were too smart for their own good. Kamikazes may be big, dumb, and crazy, but they never attack living targets; only the Machine. Those brainiacs decided to remove the safeties so we could use it against House Shiva, but they seemed to forget that House Shiva had Librarians too. No plan ever goes perfect and if the attack failed, we’d have given the Shivs all they’d need to make thousands of these damn things. At least the Senate was smart enough to call off the attack, but they should have scrapped them all. Warlord Artemis the Third decided to hold onto a handful of them in case of an emergency. Made me sick when I first learned about them. This planet is deadly enough without these things on it. It was a mistake to keep them then and it’s a mistake now. Even worse, now we’re going to let them loose on the world.

“I want to make it perfectly clear to each and every one of you the awesome responsibility we just put in your hands. These must not fall into the hands of ANYONE. If capture seems inevitable, it’s your duty to protect your House and humanity by destroying these things, even if it means you go with them. The Warlord is right; there are a lot worse threats out there than the Machine. Legion may be one of them, but I think he’s underestimating just how dangerous House Shiva truly is. I don’t want to spend the rest of my days worrying about some psycho sneaking one of these into my home. I’ve got enough to be concerned about.” Senator Bane is briefly interrupted as the armory attendant comes back in carrying another Shell Bomb, only this one looks like it has been soaking in formaldehyde or some other preservative agent. He sets it down in front of the Senator and then stands at attention until dismissed. Senator Bane then continues with the briefing. “All right, as you can see, this one’s dead. No chance of detonation. The Shell can be pretty tricky to set off, so we’ll bring you up to speed with this one. You’re up Davies.”

Sweeper Shauna Davies springs to attention and then walks over to where the Senator was standing using what can best be described as a march. It is unclear if she is trying to show off her best military discipline for the Senator or if she is always this stuffy and serious. She is actually an incredibly attractive woman, but she looks like she is trying to downplay her beauty. Her uniform is also somewhat bulkier than usual. She likely wears it in attempt to hide her figure, but it is not doing a very good job.

She pulls the two halves of the Shell open and spreads it out across the table. The interior looks pretty similar to a giant clam as well. It is just a mess of muscle tissue, thick tendons and ligaments, and organs. It all has a sickly pale color from the formaldehyde, but it does not look that different from a normal animal. The only object that seems alien and out of place is the softball-sized trans-

parent orb sitting in the center of the right half. The surface of the orb is covered in a spiderweb of thin black veins, and within it is a black golf ball sized core suspended in a clear jelly that sparkles in the light. It almost looks like a giant frog egg except for the dozen or so large, organic fibers that connect it to nearly every corner of the interior. Some of these cords have been cut to allow the Shell to be opened, but most are still intact.

As if sensing the player’s interest in the object, Sweeper Davies points at the orb and says, “This is the heart of the Shell Bomb. This is the Omega Cell. Everything else in there is just meant to keep the cell alive, protected, and most importantly, stable.

“A stable Omega Cell can survive all kinds of trauma without exploding, but once it’s destabilized, even the slightest bump can set it off. The good news is that the Shell was designed to make it very hard for the cell to detonate. Well, I suppose that’s part of the bad news too. The triggering mechanism is pretty tricky. If you don’t activate it just right, the cell dies and the bomb is useless. It’s a safety feature to prevent thieves from accidentally figuring out how to set it off. Even if they escape with their prize, they’ll most likely ruin it trying to use it.” “Gentlemen, let’s focus more on not losing them in the first place,” Senator Bane interjected angrily. “Of course, sir,” Davies sheepishly replied. “I was just trying to emphasize the importance of following the triggering sequence correctly.”

“Just get on with it, Davies,” he snorts back. It appears that Senator Bane’s patience is quickly reaching its limits. “Yes, sir. Right. Um, first of all, as you can see on the living Shells, that the two halves are sealed shut by a thick band of muscle. This seal actually needs to be sliced open before you can begin. There is no other way to open it. This will allow you to access the interior, but do not spread the clamshell open like I’ve done with this one. The Shell can only be opened about eight to ten inches, but I would keep it to about six just to be sure. Any more than that, and you risk ripping these two ligaments at the base of the clamshell. It’s one of the safety mechanisms designed to ruin the bomb if any unauthorized people try fumbling around with it. It’s not a problem for our Shellback Armor, but you’re going to need to feel around in there blind. We’ll practice with this one to get everyone comfortable with knowing what’s safe to touch and what’s not.

“The bomb has a sort of built-in timer. To activate it, you need to sever at least one of the three main arteries that feed the Omega Cell. As you can see, these three vessels are much larger than the ones around it. The other ones are more safeties. You cut any of those and the bomb dies, but if you cut any of the large ones then the cell is destabilized. Think of the three arteries as a variable timer. If you cut one, you have about three to eight minutes (1D6+2 minutes) before the bomb explodes. If you cut two, you only have about one to two minutes (2D4+2 melee rounds) before detonation. In the alternative, you can cut all three, which instantly destabilizes the Omega Cell, but it won’t detonate it. You’ll need to set it off by some secondary means, like a remote detonator or even a gunshot. However, it’s extremely volatile in this state. Even a slight shake of your hand as you pull back out of the bomb could trigger it prematurely (01-12% chance of instant detonation when all three are cut). Let’s just say, I don’t recommend using it this way.”

“Thank you Davies,” Senator Bane abruptly says. It does not look like he cares if Sweeper Davies was finished or not. “All right, I want each of you to familiarize yourselves with the Shell. You’re going to have to work by feel alone, so close it up, get your hands dirty, and practice. I don’t know how long we have before we

get the report on Legion's position, so practice for the next eight hours. If we don't hear anything by then, hit the barracks down the hall and get some rest. It'll probably be the last shut-eye you catch for a while. Long, Davies, I expect you to make them experts with those things. There's not much more you need from me, so I need to return to my duties."

"Let me remind you that the fate of House Artemis lies in your hands in more ways than you can imagine. You were all selected for this mission for a reason. Show us that we made the right call. Good luck and Godspeed."

The players do get a full eight hours of training with the Shell Bomb before retiring to the barracks. This gives each player the skill of Detonate Shell Bomb at 55% plus any I.Q. bonuses. A failed roll means the bomb dies and becomes useless. Both Sweepers already have this skill at 98% which definitely makes them the best ones for the job, so the player characters should try to keep them safe.

The barracks area is another unremarkable room carved directly into the bedrock. The room is filled with dozens of small bunks stacked two high and a small bathroom through a door in the corner. There are no lockers or storage of any kind, so the player characters need to stack their gear along the far wall. This is one of the most secured areas in all of House Artemis, so theft is not a concern. The attendants have left some food for the group, and the players have a little time to finally clean up after their last mission before bedding down for the night.

Unfortunately, their night is cut short after only a few hours of sleep. The weary player characters wake up to the loud bang of the barracks door being flung open and the bright light from the hallway flooding into the room. They look up to see the silhouette of three armored men standing in the doorway. The man in the center steps into the room and shouts, "Lights on!" The glow cells in the ceiling respond to his command and quickly illuminate the room. All three men are wearing Host Armor, and the lead man is also wearing the ceremonial robes of the Royal Guard. He walks into the middle of the room and addresses the group.

"We have Legion's location. There are two Dracos mounts ready to fly at the Launch Bay." He then points over his shoulder to the men behind him, still lingering in the doorway. "These men are your Outrider pilots. They'll get you to the drop site. Get suited up."

It only takes minutes for these well trained Splicers to slip into their heavy organic armor and gather their weapons. The bulky Shellback Armor worn by the Sweepers looks similar to regular Host Armor only it has much thicker armor and has a large shell mounted on its back. It was designed for demolitions and demolitions disposal, so the suit sacrifices speed and mobility for defensive protection. Each Sweeper was also given a Mega-Damage leather knapsack for transporting the Shell Bombs.

Shellback Armor is quite specialized but it is really not all that different than any other suit of organic armor. However, the same cannot be said for the Archangel's "Nighthawk" Assault Armor. This is the first time the player characters have ever seen this prototype armor, and even these seasoned Splicers are startled by its dark, sleek, ominous appearance. The armor looks like Living Armor except for the fact that it is covered in an obsidian looking hide that appears more alien in texture than any other armor ever produced before. What is even more unnerving is that the wings seem to emit a low hum and the twin visors on the sinister looking alien helmet seem to be staring down the player characters as if they were a piece of raw meat. The players did not know what to

expect when Drake Benton was assigned to the mission, but they suddenly are feeling somewhat uneasy with the idea of working in close proximity to this experimental, special ops monster.

Once the team is fully equipped, the Royal Guard leads them through the halls of House Artemis to the nearby Launch Bay. This entrance connects to a maze of abandoned sewer tunnels that are large enough to accommodate the massive wingspan of the Dracos War Mounts. It is primarily used by Archangels and Flying War Mounts because most of the tunnel exits open up over a fifty foot (15.2 m) cliff overlooking the Great Ocean. There are smaller tunnels that exit directly into the ocean, but none of these are large enough to accommodate a large War Mount.

The Launch Bay was not that much larger than the other entranceways to House Artemis, but the high-domed ceiling made it feel enormous. What also makes it feel so large is the fact that the Senate cleared the entire area of all personnel not directly linked to this mission. These entranceways are usually cluttered with over a hundred armored soldiers at all times, and to see it nearly empty is somewhat eerie.

Since this staging area caters mainly to fliers, it was designed to give them a little room to test their gear before heading topside. Of course, the Archangels push this little allowance to the limits (much like they do with everything else in their lives). Their version of testing their Wing Packs involves buzzing past each other in these relatively tight confines at high speeds. As the player characters enter the Launch Bay, they see about eight or nine Archangels looping around each other in a dizzying display. They witness dozens of situations where a high-speed collision seems imminent only to watch the two fliers veer off at the last second with such skill and precision that it almost appears choreographed. High-speed strafing bursts and skimming the walls and ceiling with only a foot or two of space is nerve-racking to watch, but yet so daring that it is captivating. The player characters are distracted for a few moments by this dazzling air show before being snapped back to attention as one of their Outrider pilots starts going over the mission details.

"Legion's army is marching on the Retro-Village of Dillontown. They should reach it within the hour. There's a pretty decent sized forest between them and the village. Legion's not one for going around obstacles, so we're pretty sure her forces will just plow straight through. That'll be the drop point. It should provide you with decent cover and still put you right in their path. Our scouts are reporting limited N.E.X.U.S. air patrols in the area, but we'll still be sticking low to the trees to avoid attracting attention. The Outrider then points up at the Archangels still swooping about the Launch Bay at dangerous speeds and says, "These maniacs whirling around our heads will be providing escort along with two Zephyrs. We're going to go in low and fast. It may get a little bumpy, but hopefully it will be an uneventful transport. All right, let's mount up."

The team will be split up evenly across the two Dracos War Mounts (each holding one Sweeper) to ensure that the mission can proceed if one of the transports is shot down en route. It is just another subtle reminder of the incredible odds stacked against the player characters. They do not have time to dwell on it now, but they will have plenty of time to think about the danger during the thirty minute flight to the drop point.

The flight through the old sewer lines is uneventful. After five minutes of seemingly endless twists and turns through this maze of decaying tunnels, the transports and their defenders come blasting out of the sewer pipes over the Great Ocean. The midday sun



glinting off of the water is absolutely blinding compared to the dark, dank sewer tunnels they just exited (even for characters with polarized filters on their armor). The player characters are a bit more stunned by the light because they actually had no idea what time it was before reaching the surface. Keeping track of time underground is confusing enough already, and the lack of sleep combined with the hectic pace over the past twenty-four hours has left them somewhat disoriented. Sunset is about five or six hours away, so it looks like they will be taking on Legion in broad daylight. It is rare for House Artemis to stage any type of attack during the day, which speaks to the urgency of this mission, but it also means the strike will be that much more difficult.

As soon as the procession exits the tunnel, they all bank hard to the right and begin to head back inland. The Outrider said they would be flying low, but the player characters did not realize they would be soaring over the forest just a few feet above the tree-tops. The constant bobbing and weaving around the taller trees that pierce the forest canopy makes for a rough ride, but it is far better than dodging gunfire. After twenty minutes of bumpy but uneventful travel, the group starts to think they might actually make the drop point without incident. Unfortunately, they are wrong.

## Intercepted

The peaceful forest up ahead suddenly erupts into flames as a barrage of Bio-Weapons fire rips through the trees and into the convoy. Three Archangels fall in the first volley and several others are injured. Neither Dracos is even scratched, so it looks like the escorts are the intended targets. The attack does not slow the procession down and they race past the ambush site without breaking formation. A second volley fired at the convoy's backs brings down another Archangel and damages both Zephyrs. They are able to keep up, but their maneuverability has been significantly compromised. Both Zephyrs and only five of the original nine Archangels remain, but every one of them has suffered some measure of damage. The ambushing Splicers only got off a few volleys, but they succeed in weakening the escorts and, more importantly, distracting the convoy from the real threat.

While the group was focused on the ground assault, three Skullcracker War Mounts and three Griffin War Mounts sprung from their hiding places and started charging directly towards the convoy's right flank. The procession was too distracted by the gunfire to notice their approach until it is too late.

The player characters look up just in time to watch the Skullcrackers slam into three of their Archangel escorts. Their organic armor collapses under the impact with a sickening crunch, and all three are sent spiraling to the forest floor at hundreds of miles per hour. One of the Griffins grabs the closest Zephyr War Mount and secures itself to the beast using its barbed tentacles. The Griffin then starts slashing it apart with its powerful high frequency talons as the Zephyr breaks away from the convoy at high speed in a desperate attempt to shake off its attacker. This blitzkrieg strike succeeded in clearing a path through the escorts so that the remaining two Griffin War Mounts could grab their primary targets, the Sweepers.

The first Griffin plucks Sweeper Anderson Long off of his Dracos with ease and begins racing off into the distance. The second Sweeper, Shauna Davies, realized she was a target as soon as the first shot was fired. She quickly used the forearm mounted tentacles on her Shellback Armor to secure herself to the Dracos. When

the second Griffin grabs hold of her and tries to fly off, its Outrider pilot is momentarily stunned when his target does not even budge. This gives anyone on the Dracos, as well as any remaining escorts, a free shot at this War Mount (automatically loses initiative). If it survives the initial barrage, it will let go of the Sweeper and fly off.

While this is going on, Anderson Long is proving that he is not an easy target either. The player characters glance over in time to see an enormous explosion erupt on the underside of the Griffin. Anderson used one of his explosive charges on the beast knowing that his thick Shellback Armor would protect him from the blast and the resulting fall. The blast sends both the War Mount and the Sweeper crashing to the forest below about three quarters of a mile (1.2 km) away from the convoy. They were not that high above the forest at the time, so it was only a forty foot (12.2 m) drop into the trees. This is still a significant distance, but hopefully the trees helped break their fall. The other Zephyr breaks off to pursue Anderson, but it is quickly pounced on by the first Griffin War Mount. The players look around to see what happened to their other Zephyr escort. They spot the tattered creature plummeting to the ground off in the distance. It looks like the Griffin made quick work of it before moving on to the next Zephyr. It falls about fifty feet (15.2 m) and then suddenly explodes. The Zephyr was already beaten, but Griffins always leave a little explosive surprise when they break off from an opponent. The blast tears the War Mount apart, making the likelihood that the Outrider survived the assault rather slim.

Not even an hour into the mission and the unthinkable has already happened, a Shell Bomb is in the open! Whether Anderson survived the fall or not does not matter. The player characters must recover the bomb. It is pretty apparent that these Splicers not only knew of their existence, but also who was carrying them. This ambush was far too coordinated to be a random trap. Someone within House Artemis must have tipped them off. What is even more alarming is that only the highest ranking members of the military were even aware of this mission. Discovering the identity of this traitor is nearly as important as recovering the Shell Bomb. If possible, the player characters should try to capture one of the attacking Splicers to hopefully learn the identity of the traitor. But that is secondary. Right now, all that matters is recovering the bomb before the attacking Splicers can. The player characters still have two undamaged Dracos War Mounts with riders, two damaged but combat-able Archangels, the War Angel Drake, and Sweeper Shauna Davies at their disposal. One Zephyr is still in the fight, but it cannot shake the ferocious Griffin off of its back and it does not look like it will last much longer. One (possibly two) of the Griffin War Mounts are down, but the players still need to worry about at least one more as well as three Skullcrackers (not to mention any ground forces that are likely lurking in the forest below). Anderson and one of the Griffins crashed into the forest in a flaming heap, so any ground forces in the area are probably rushing to this blazing signal fire already. They need to hurry.

The smoke from the crash site is obscuring the view from above, so there is no way to know what may be waiting for the player characters down there. The Dracos War Mounts can drop them directly on the crash site, or they can drop the group further away if they want to make a more cautious approach. The forest is too dense for either Dracos to touch down and the canopy is too thick for them to provide air cover. On a positive note, this also means the player characters will not need to worry about harassment from aerial attackers once they enter the forest. Then Drake tells the group that he, the Outriders and the rest of the Archangels

gels can deal with the Griffin and Skullcrackers while the player characters recover the Sweeper and his cargo. They will stand by for extraction as long as they can, but the smoke is likely going to attract Machine attention, so they do not know how long they can wait.

The thick underbrush in the forest makes movement somewhat difficult, but thankfully, it is broken up periodically by decent sized clearings. The crash site is in one of the larger clearings up ahead. By the time the player characters finally do reach the site, all they find is the Griffin and its Outrider pilot, both dead. The Sweeper is nowhere to be found, but a quick survey of the scene makes it pretty apparent that he survived the crash. There are fresh blast craters all across the clearing, including a sizable one that took the Griffin's head off. Sweepers can generate an impressive amount of explosive ordnance within their Shellback Armor, and it looks like Anderson used quite a bit of his before retreating into the forest. A few small fires are still burning, but the area is wet from a recent rainstorm so the risk of them sparking a wildfire is pretty low. The battle likely slowed him down a bit, so he could not possibly be too far ahead. The deep footprints in the mud from his heavy armor have left an easy trail for the player characters to follow. They are about to go after him when they hear the sound of snapping twigs behind them. They turn and see a dozen Gorehounds push through the underbrush and enter the clearing. They start charging straight at the player characters until the group hears someone shout "halt" from off in the distance. The hounds stop dead in their tracks and begin growling ferociously. The player characters now have a much better view of these Bio-Tech hounds and they realize they are not actually Gorehounds, but Maulers.

Maulers are evolved versions (some would say, devolved versions) of the loyal Gorehounds. They are larger and much more powerfully built, but they are also incredibly aggressive and difficult to control. House Artemis created the Mauler strain years ago, but they consider them a bit too unpredictable so they only produce them in limited numbers. Unfortunately, agents from House Janus acquired the genetic code and used it to turn a large percentage of their Gorehounds into Maulers. These volatile beasts lack the patience for many of the Gorehounds' usual missions, like search and rescue, demolitions detection, or reconnaissance. Maulers are only good for one thing, killing. Their presence shows how serious these ambushing Splicers truly are. It also confirms the suspicion that the attackers are likely from House Janus. Seconds later, the group sees who ordered the Maulers to stand down. Four Splicers emerge from the brush behind the hounds and immediately train their weapons on the player characters. Two of them are wearing the distinctive armor of the Packlords. These deadly Splicers are senior Packmasters who have proven themselves to be such skilled handlers that they are allowed to upgrade their Gorehounds into different variations. Much like their hounds, Packlords tend to favor close combat (which is pretty evident from their wicked looking forearm-mounted tentacle whips).

The other two are wearing Host Armor. One looks like a standard Dreadguard, but the other one is definitely a Dreadnaught. His armor is nearly twice the size of his fellow warriors, and the dead giveaway is the massive Harbinger Cannon he is carrying at his hip. Only elite Dreadguard are ever offered the option of becoming one of these heavy weapons specialists, so this brute is most likely the leader of the assault. The players' suspicions are confirmed when he points off in the direction of Anderson Long's footprints and starts shouting orders at the other Splicers. "The Sweeper's tracks lead off into the forest. Gavin, take your hounds,

find him, tear him apart, and bring me the package. Apollo and Lycaon, spread out! We'll shut the rest of these cubs down." The booming distorted voice from this enormous Host Armor is somewhat unnerving, as is the fact that he does not seem to be interested in taking prisoners. One of the Packlords and half of the Maulers tear off through the underbrush in pursuit of Sweeper Anderson Long. Their departure significantly diminishes the ambush party's numerical superiority, but the Dreadnaught does not look too worried about the odds. In fact, it almost looks like the wicked carnivorous maw on his Host Armor is smiling. Once the Packlord is out of sight, the Dreadnaught points his enormous Harbinger Cannon in the player characters' direction and opens fire (roll for initiative as normal). Any trees between the two groups are torn to shreds, as are huge swaths of trees behind the group as this thick barrage of Bio-Energy blasts rips through them like paper.

The salvo destroys any cover between the combatants. The Dreadnaught may feel comfortable standing in the open trading fire, but the other warriors in his group do not feel so invulnerable. The other Dreadguard actually steps behind the Dreadnaught to use the big bruiser as cover, while the Packlord uses his own charging Maulers as cover so he can close the distance with the player characters.

Game Masters, let this battle play out a bit, but be careful not to mow the player characters down with the Dreadnaught. A concentrated burst from his Harbinger Cannon could tear any one of them to shreds, but fortunately, he does not seem to be targeting anyone at all. He is just firing wildly in the direction of the player characters. This constant barrage of suppressive fire keeps the players off balance and on their heels (-2 to strike and parry), plus there is a 01-35% chance a player will be struck by a stray blast whenever they move (3D6 M.D. per blast). His strategy (or complete lack thereof) is somewhat puzzling. He never makes any effort to dodge incoming fire (no matter how damaging), and he never targets any of the player characters directly. The other members of the ambush party, on the other hand, seem to be making every effort to annihilate the group as quickly as possible.

The battle ends when the Dreadnaught goes down. Whether this takes twenty minutes or one lucky headshot is up to the Game Master. I would suggest ending it suddenly if the tide starts to turn on the player group. Otherwise, just let them hammer things out themselves. The Dreadnaught is an imposing yet easy target to strike, so he should naturally draw a lot of fire. However, if no one targets him, he can still fall as the victim of a stray blast or attack from Drake Benton (whether the players witness the killing blow or not). No matter how it happens, once the Dreadnaught falls, the Dreadguard standing near him (or another Splicer that arrives to reinforce their position if the Dreadguard happened to fall first) will immediately begin shouting at his allies, "Hold your fire! Hold your fire! Stand down!"

He then drops his weapon and slumps down next to the fallen Dreadnaught. He starts shaking his head back and forth and muttering over and over again. "We didn't know. I swear we didn't know."

## It Just Keeps Getting Worse

The combatants cautiously gather around the slain Dreadnaught to see what caused the Dreadguard to suddenly throw down his arms. Both sides are a little wary standing shoulder to shoulder around the corpse considering the fact that they were all trying to kill each other only seconds before, but the Splicers from House

Janus will maintain the truce as long as the player characters do. It takes little more than a glance to see why the Dreadguard is so shaken up. The top of the Dreadnaught's armored helmet is blasted off, as is half of his skull. Mixed in with the bloody mess of brain matter and skull fragments is a large, shiny metallic object. Obviously, no one in the group is an expert in electronics, but every one of them can instantly recognize the complicated circuitry common to their robotic foes. As unbelievable as it may seem, it appears that half of the Dreadnaught's brain was removed and replaced with an artificial one. No one has ever seen or heard of anything like this before, but the player characters quickly realize this is likely Legion's doing.

The Janus Splicers are absolutely horrified once they realize that they have been acting as pawns of the Machine. Blood feuds, raids, and thefts between the Great Houses are common, but no one in the Resistance would willingly side with N.E.X.U.S. against their fellow humans. Any rivalries are immediately pushed aside and the House Janus Splicers tell the player characters they will cooperate in any way. The other Packlord comes back to the clearing with his hands raised in the air. He announces that he heard the message and has no intentions of attacking. A few seconds later, his Maulers enter the clearing as well. They are dragging the still struggling Anderson Long by the arms. The Packlord tells both groups that the Sweeper is unharmed and that this was the only way he could get Anderson to come with him. Apparently, the Sweeper did not trust the sudden change of heart, and needed a little bit more convincing. Once the player characters confirm to Anderson that everything is all right, he calms down enough for the Maulers to release him. Anderson seems to be fine. His Shellback Armor took some significant damage, but it will heal. He pats the satchel at his hip to indicate to the player characters that he still has his Shell Bomb. The Janus Splicers either did not notice the gesture or simply do not care anymore. They seem to be too busy staring awestruck at the fallen Dreadnaught.

After a few more awkward moments of silence, the Dreadguard of the group introduces himself as Apollo and starts telling the player characters everything he knows. He is very candid with any information he does have and will answer all of the players' questions without hesitation. Apollo tells the group that the Dreadnaught's name was Leon and he was the group's superior and the one who organized the entire assault. He never told the rest of the group what they were after, just that it was some kind of experimental weapon. He tells the players that the orders did not come from higher up and that he had no idea where Dreadnaught Leon came by his information. He served with the Dreadnaught for years so he had no reason to distrust the man, but looking back, he should have been more suspicious.

For months, Dreadnaught Leon seemed a little... off. For the most part, he seemed like his normal self, but he recently started acting a bit more serious than usual, plus he kept on forgetting simple things like directions to familiar locations and even the names of longtime friends and comrades. Dreadguard Apollo admits how he dismissed these as side effects from the stress and fatigue of endless warfare, but he soon realizes and acknowledges that the changes happened rather suddenly. He tells the group that he has a pretty good idea of when his friend was altered, but he never went missing for an extended period of time. Leon just left on a standard sweep and clear one day and came back a little different. Apparently, this means the Machine (or Legion) can work fast. He goes on to say there were three other Splicers on that mission and that he needs to report this information back to his Warlord right away.

As they gather up the Dreadnaught, the Dreadguard looks back at the player characters and says, "I wish we could do more to help, but we have our own problems now. I don't know what your objective is, but whatever it is, it looks like the Machine knows about it and is pretty serious about stopping you. I'm sorry for our part in hindering your mission. Just know that House Janus will not stand in your way again, I promise. I wish you luck." He then glances down at the circuitry inside the skull of his friend and says, "I wish us all luck." With that, the Janus Splicers disappear into the forest. Seconds later, Drake Benton contacts the player characters by Bio-Comm. He tells them that the Griffin and Skullcrackers just split and they should probably do the same. The firefight cleared enough room for the Dracos War Mounts to land and pick up the group. All that remains are the two Dracos transports. Besides Drake, one additional Archangel survived the battle, but he realized he was too damaged to do any good and headed back home. Once everyone is aboard, what is left of the convoy flies off along their original heading. Archangel Drake tells the pilots to find a place to set down so they can plan their next move.

**Game Masters:** If you want to give the players a moment to relax and digest their latest findings, then just let them find a nearby place to hide, regroup, and plan a course of action. However, if you want to keep them on edge, now would be a good time to spring a surprise N.E.X.U.S. patrol on the group. I would recommend a lone Sky Fighter dropping from orbit or two Flying Strike Ships or a small pack (1D10) of Necroborgs that were attracted to all the commotion. Nothing too extreme. Just enough to provide a little challenge and remind them why the surface is such a dangerous place. Be sure to give the players plenty of avenues of escape if they wish to avoid a fight or are losing the fight. Diving into a nearby lake or Nature Preserve could provide instant sanctuary from Machine patrols.

**To be continued ...**

# I am Legion, Episode Two

## Adventure Source Material

### New O.C.C.s

### Sweeper O.C.C.

Sweepers are the demolitions experts of the Resistance. Their main responsibility is to disarm bombs and land mines planted by the Machine and rival Great Houses, but their training also makes them expert saboteurs. They wear an experimental suit of Host Armor called Shellback Armor that gives them the tools to disarm or detonate nearly any type of explosive device, plus some of the thickest armor in the Resistance in case things go wrong. Sweepers are among the handful of people that know how to disarm Bio-Tech explosives, and they are the only humans (other than Technojackers) capable of dismantling bombs that use metallic components.

For decades, the task of sniffing out bombs and land mines was the responsibility of Packmasters and the Gorehounds under their command. While they were very effective at finding explosive de-



vices, there was little they could do to actually disarm them. Conventional bombs set by rival Great Houses could be disarmed, but the majority of explosive devices were placed by the Machine's forces and it was nearly impossible for a human to safely touch them. These devices were primarily composed of metal, and the Nanoplague made most attempts to disarm them suicide. Really all Packmasters could do was mark them for other troops to avoid, or detonate them with Chigs and Squigs (which was not very helpful when they were trying to maintain a low profile).

This all changed with the creation of the Sweepers. Their Shellback Armor gave them the tools to safely disarm any of the Machine's devices (in spite of the Nanoplague) and the protection to survive nearly any sized blast in case the pilot failed. The armor has dozens of eight foot (2.4 m) long, retractable tentacles that the pilot uses to operate on explosive devices from a relatively safe distance. Plus as an extra precaution, the suit is able to create a containment field around the device by covering it in experimental Bio-Tech insects known as Impact Beetles. Sweepers are trained to work quickly in order to prevent a Nanoplague Response, but if it does happen, the tentacles are designed to take the brunt of the damage. The excessive amount of limbs allows the pilot to continue working even as the Nanoplague tears tentacle after tentacle apart. If all else fails and a device proves too difficult to disarm, Sweepers are also equipped with multiple types of explosive chemicals and Bio-Tech devices that they can use to detonate the bomb. Sweepers are also trained how to use their explosive payloads for maximum effect against the Machine's robot minions and installations.

Since members of the Resistance knew very little about the Machine's technology, the first batch of Sweepers were actually trained by Technojackers. Fortunately, since few humans could safely handle N.E.X.U.S. manufactured explosives, the Machine did not bother creating complicated devices, so it did not take long to educate the first Sweepers on how to properly disarm them. Once they mastered this skill, their training quickly switched to understanding how to best utilize their explosive payloads against the Machine. The Sweepers have worked out better than anyone could have imagined. Their presence in the field has prevented hundreds of Splicers from falling victim to explosive booby traps, and their demolitions skills have allowed the Resistance to wreak incredible destruction upon the Machine.

**Alignment:** Any, but typically good or selfish.

**Attribute Requirements:** I.Q. and M.E. 14 or higher.

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

**O.C.C. Bonuses:** +4 to roll with impact, +2 to save vs insanity, and +5 to save vs Horror Factor.

**Base S.D.C.:** 30, plus any from Physical skills.

**Common Skills:** Standard.

**O.C.C. Skill Programs:** Basic Military (+10%), Saboteur (+20%), Guerilla Warfare (+20%), and Technical (+15%) or Construction (+15%).

**Special Skills:**

**Disarm Bio-Tech Explosives:** Sweepers have been trained how to disarm Bio-Tech explosives like Migs and Trench Foot Mines. Usually, once these devices have been set, even touching them will trigger the explosive. Shellback Armor is equipped with a special Bio-Toxin that is capable of paralyzing small Bio-Tech devices for 2D6 melee rounds. This gives the Sweeper enough time to surgically sever any of the devices' triggering mechanisms. The skill roll determines if the Sweeper

successfully cuts all triggers. On a failed roll, at least one trigger remains and the device immediately detonates once the effects of the Bio-Toxin wear off. **Base Skill:** 60%+3% per level of experience.

**Disarm Metallic Explosives:** The Nanobot Plague makes touching metallic objects a dangerous and often deadly affair. Sweepers, however, are trained on how to disarm bombs that use metal components. Shellback Armor is designed to take the brunt of the damage from a Nanoplague Response, but sometimes, despite their best efforts, the Nanobots actually trigger the device. Sweepers are trained how to prevent this from happening, but it is by no means one hundred percent. On a successful skill roll, the device is successfully disarmed. On a failed roll, a Nanoplague Response is triggered. Roll on the standard Nanoplague Response Table to see the effects, plus roll to see if the device itself is accidentally triggered (01-30% chance). **Base Skill:** 40%+3% per level of experience.

**Elective Skills:** Trap and Mine Construction (+20%) and select six Elective Skills from the following list at first level, plus one additional at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency.

**Communications:** Any (+5%), Domestic: Any (+5%), Espionage: Any, Medical: First Aid only, Military: Any (+10%), Physical: Any, Rogue: Any, Science: Any (+10%), Technical: Any (+20%), Transportation: Any, Wilderness Survival: Any (+5%) and W.P.s: Any.

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

**Shellback Host Armor:** Sweepers receive an experimental Host Armor design known as Shellback Armor. The Sweeper is genetically bonded to one specific Shellback Armor.

**Step One:** See the specific details on Shellback Armor below.

**Step Two:** Determining Metabolism. Shellback Armor is always a Lithovore.

**Step Three:** Available Bio-Energy points for the Sweeper is M.E. attribute number, +P.E. attribute number, +1D4x10+20 points, plus an additional 20 points for the Lithovore metabolism. Each level of advancement, starting with level two, the Sweeper gets an additional 5D4 Bio-E to add to the capabilities of his current Shellback Armor. These Bio-E points can be spent as soon as they are acquired or saved and combined with points from subsequent levels of experience.

If the Sweeper's Shellback Armor is destroyed, another will be bonded to him, but it will only have the most basic Bio-Enhancements. Further augmentation will only occur with each additional level of experience or as a reward for impeccable service.

**Step Four:** Biological Enhancements and Weapon Systems. Selections can be made from any of the categories, but most Sweepers focus on Biological Defenses in order to give themselves better protection in the field and the unique Bio-Enhancements that are only available to Shellback Armor.

**Standard Equipment:** Military fatigues, a suit of non-organic body armor for backup or disguise, dress clothing, survival knife, utility belt, first aid kit, 2 Slap Patches, Face Wrap, tinted goggles, hatchet for cutting wood, one light Bio-Weapon and one heavy Bio-Weapon of choice and one weapon for each W.P. with appropriate ammunition for heavy combat, a good



Mega-Horse for transportation, tent, knapsack, backpack, two water skins, emergency food rations (two weeks supply), and some personal items.

**Handheld Weapon Bio-Enhancements:** Sweepers receive 5D4 Bio-E at level one plus 5 Bio-E at each additional level of experience starting at level 2. Bio-E can be distributed between all the weapons in the character's personal armory or applied to one favorite item.

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

**The Upside:** You are a walking explosives factory with the knowledge and skill to make the most of it. You can bring down nearly any obstacle, structure, or opponent with a few cleverly placed charges. Your skills at finding and disarming explosives make you a hero among your fellow soldiers, and they make sure to return the favor by watching your back in the field.

**The Downside:** You are a walking explosives factory, which does have its drawbacks in the middle of a war zone. When allowed to operate in peace, the bombs you place can inflict unimaginable devastation upon the Machine, but it is rare that any human can find a moment of peace in the field. Your thick armor does protect you somewhat from the Machine's fury, but it also makes you a slow and easy target to hit. You may have the tools to disarm metallic bombs, but the Nanoplague makes your success rate far from perfect. You know how to work around these Nanobots, but no one knows how to completely stop them. You have taken more than your fair share of explosive blasts at point-blank range, and it is always in the back of your mind that your Shellback Armor might not survive the next one.

## Shellback Armor

Shellback Armor is a specialized suit of Host Armor specifically designed for demolitions and demolitions disposal. It gets its name from the thick, turtle-like shell mounted on the back of the armor. This shell does provide the pilot with additional protection, but its main purpose is to shield the nearly one hundred pounds of explosive chemicals and Bio-Tech organisms that the suit continuously produces. The original intent of these explosives was to detonate bombs and mines when all attempts at disarmament failed, but Resistance leaders realized that the sheer amount of destructive power these suits carried made Sweepers ideal saboteurs and demolitionists as well. The suit combines some of the latest breakthroughs in Bio-Technology with the thickest armor ever produced for a suit of Host Armor. This bulky armor allows the pilot to work around the problems posed by the Nanobot Plague while disarming bombs using metallic components, and the strength to survive nearly any sized blast in case he fails.

Mounted on each forearm of the suit are over a dozen eight foot long, retractable tentacles that the pilot uses to work on explosive devices from a relatively safe distance. Each tentacle is articulated as the pilot's own fingers and many of them are tipped with useful tools that make the pilot's job even easier. The reason for the excessive number of tentacles is to give the pilot backup limbs to work with as the Nanoplague destroys them. As long as the Nanoplague does not actually trigger the device, a Pilot can continue to work uninterrupted as the Nanobots tear through tentacle after tentacle. Once the job is done, the incredible regenerative powers of these limbs quickly restore any damage done.

Before starting work on any explosive device, the pilot first covers it with strange Bio-Tech Insects known as Impact Beetles in order to create a containment field. This is a safety measure meant to absorb the bulk of the blast in case of failure. Each bug is capable of generating a small Bio-Force Field, and when they combine their strength, they can create a force field strong enough to contain almost any sized blast. The energy field hovers a few inches over the device, so even if the explosion completely destroys the containment field, the power of the blast is greatly diminished (the remaining M.D. that pierces the field is halved, as is the blast radius). Shellback Armor is the only other suit of armor capable of growing Bio-Tech Insects. These Impact Beetles are slightly different than the ones generated by Hive Armor. They are unable to propel themselves at sonic speeds and the force fields they create are much smaller in size (although much more powerful). They may not be as versatile, but they are perfectly suited for the task of demolitions disposal.

Shellback Armor offers some of the best protection in the Resistance, but this increased shielding does come at the cost of decreased speed and mobility. They can run at a decent speed for their size, but the thick armor makes them somewhat ponderous and cumbersome in battle. This is usually not much of an issue since Sweepers rarely engage in frontline combat. Their role is to clear the field of enemy explosives or cover it with their own traps.

**Class:** Host Armor.

**Crew:** One Sweeper.

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

Arms (2) – 3D6x10+20 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 2); both arms have the same M.D.C.

Hands (2) – 2D6x10+20 M.D.C., +15 additional M.D.C. at levels five, ten, and fifteen; both hands have the same M.D.C.

Retractable Tentacles (28) – 70 M.D.C. each, +5 additional M.D.C. at levels five, ten, and fifteen.

Legs (2) – 4D6x10+20 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 2); both legs have the same M.D.C.

Feet (2) – 2D6x10+30 M.D.C., +20 additional M.D.C. at levels five, ten, and fifteen; both feet have the same M.D.C.

Head – 2D6x10+20 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 2).

Main Body – 8D6x10+150 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 2),

Turtle Shell – 6D6x10+250 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 2). If the M.D.C. of the shell is depleted to zero, then there is a 70% chance that the explosive payload will detonate, inflicting 6D6x10 M.D. to the main body of the armor and half damage to everything within a 40 foot (12.2 m) radius.

**Note:** The turtle shell can only be targeted with a called shot. However, it is a large target, so there are no penalties to strike.

**Speed:**

**Running:** 4D6+20 mph (38 to 70 km). The act of running does tire out the pilot, but at only 10% of the normal fatigue rate.

**Leaping:** Only 10 feet (3 m) high or 15 feet (4.6 m) across.

**Digging:** 20 mph (32 km) through sand or dirt, but one quarter as fast through rock or concrete. Digging tires out its pilot, but at half the usual fatigue rate. To dig down enough to adequately hide from enemies on the surface takes 3D6 minutes.

**Swimming:** 10 mph (16 km); swimming tires the pilot but at 10% of the usual rate.

Underwater Depth: Shellback Armor can withstand pressure up to 1000 feet (305 m) down.

#### **Statistical Data:**

Height: Approximately 2-3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) is added to the height of the pilot.

Width: 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m), based on the size of the pilot.

Length: 3-4 feet (0.9 to 1.2 m), based on the size of the pilot.

Weight: Adds about 500 to 700 pounds (225 to 315 kg) to the weight of the pilot.

Cargo: Contained within the turtle shell on the suit's back is about 100 pounds (45 kg) of explosive chemicals and Bio-Tech Organisms.

Physical Strength: 4D6+15 – Splicer P.S. is equal to Robotic Strength.

Production Cycle: Six month gestation, plus 6 months growth time.

Operational Lifetime: 2D10+50 year life span.

Trade Value: None, because each Shellback Armor is bonded to a specific pilot and will not function for any other person.

Bio-Regeneration: 2D6 M.D.C. per hour for the main body and 1D4 M.D.C. per hour for all other locations except the retractable tentacles which regenerate at a rate of 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round. Only the tentacles can be regrown once severed, all other locations require at least one point of M.D.C. in order to regenerate. However, an Engineer can generate and attach a replacement limb with minimal difficulty.

Horror Factor: 7 for humans and other intelligent life forms; none against the machines.

**Senses and Features:** Standard Host Armor features and Combat Bonuses plus the following:

Enhanced Sense of Taste and Smell: Track by smell is possible at 50%+4% per level of experience, special bonus of +10% when attempting to detect or track explosive chemicals. The character can also recognize the distinct scents and smells of individuals and can detect when people experience extremes of emotions at 60%+2% per level of experience. Enhanced sense of taste gives the Sweeper the ability to recognize the exact components in anything the armor tastes at a skill of 50%+4% per level of experience, and a special bonus of +10% when tasting explosive chemicals.

Seismic Sense: Able to detect miniscule vibrations in the ground, feeling earthquakes, thunder, explosions, and even the approach of heavy vehicles, robots, troop movement, and stampeding animals up to 12 miles (19 km) away.

Reinforced Exoskeleton.

Resistance to Physical Attacks: A layer of heavy tissue filled with impact-resistant fluid cushions Shellback Armor from blunt attacks, falls, and explosive concussions (all inflict half damage).

Emergency Explosive Payload Dump: If the turtle shell is ever breached, the explosive chemicals and Bio-Tech creatures within become completely exposed to enemy fire. At this point it takes very little to set off a devastating chain reaction within the armor. The armor is capable of quickly expunging all explosive chemicals in an emergency with a simple mental command from the pilot. The turtle shell actually rips itself open and spits the entire payload in one massive glob about 10 feet (3 m) away. It is not quite far enough away to protect the armor in case this explosive glob is detonated, but it does give the pilot a small head start. Even the slightest spark will ignite this high-explosive concoction, so it is best to take cover. Detonating this explosive glob inflicts 4D6x10 to a 40 foot (12.2 m) area. The pilot can perform an emergency payload dump at any time, but most will wait until the last possible

second since it is pretty rough on the armor. The Shellback Armor is incapable of generating any new explosives for 36 hours while the turtle shell recovers from this incredibly damaging maneuver.

Feeding: Even though the Sweeper may look carnivorous to some, it is indeed a Lithovore. The suit eats 60 to 90 pounds (27 to 40.5 kg) of minerals (stones, rocks, dirt, clay, etc.) a day.

Sleep Requirements: Shellback Armor requires 3D4 hours of sleep/rest/inactivity per day, during the day or night hours.

Combat Bonuses: +1 to strike, +5 to parry (mainly due to the retractable tentacles), -1 to dodge, +3 to entangle, +1 to disarm, and +4 to roll with punch.

#### **Demolitions Tools and Weapon Systems:**

**1. Retractable Tentacles (28):** A ring of fourteen small holes runs around each wrist of the armor. The pilot can extend an eight foot (2.4 m) long tentacle from each one of these holes. Each tentacle is incredibly articulate and when multiple tentacles are used together, it feels as natural to the pilot as using his own hands. Several of the tentacles on each arm are tipped with different tools to better help the pilot perform his duties. In order to safely work from a distance, one tentacle on each wrist has a standard eye mounted on the tip. Most Sweepers enhance these eyes with Macrovision, but in the beginning, they are just regular human eyes. Another pair of tentacles (one on each arm) is tipped with tiny bone spikes. They are shaped like a screwdriver head and can be used like a chisel to pry open bomb casings, or they can actually be used as screwdrivers. Another set of tentacles are tipped with razor sharp scalpels to allow the Sweeper to disarm Bio-Tech explosives, and a final set of tentacles are equipped with tiny pincers that can be used as tweezers for delicate procedures. The rest of the tentacles act as disposable fingers that can be torn apart by the Nanobot Plague and quickly replaced. They are designed to automatically detach if they are ever exposed to anything that would threaten the armor (like the Nanoplague Response that creates a metallic poison). Each Tentacle regenerates at a rate of 1D6 M.D. per melee round, and severed tentacles will completely regenerate within 1D4 hours.

Primary Purpose: Demolitions Disposal.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: Only the scalpels are capable of inflicting any damage, and each one only inflicts a measly 1 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of attacks per melee.

Effective Range: 8 feet (2.4 m).

**2. Mini-Hive:** Within the armor's turtle shell is a miniature hive that is capable of generating special Bio-Tech insects known as Impact Beetles. These powerful insects are used to create a containment field around explosive devices before the Sweeper begins working. Each bug is capable of generating a small, four inch by four inch (10 by 10 cm) Bio-Force Field, and when dozens of these bugs combine their strength by overlapping their force fields, they can contain nearly any sized blast. The energy field hovers a few inches over the device, so even if the explosion completely punches through the containment field, the power of the blast is greatly diminished (the remaining M.D. that pierces the field is halved, as is the blast radius). The insects sit on the device and project their force fields over their heads. This means they actually sit inside the containment field, so if the bomb detonates they are all instantly destroyed. However, the field actually remains a few milliseconds after their bugs' demise, which is more than enough time to absorb the brunt of the explosion.



The Sweeper decides how many Impact Beetles to use for the containment field and then releases them through a small opening in the turtle shell by a simple mental command. The armor transmits a mental image of the target to the insects, and once released, they speed directly to the target and activate their force fields as soon as they land. They can maintain their force fields for 4D6+10 minutes before they run out of energy and die. Even if the Sweeper finishes working before this time elapses, the Sweeper has no way to deactivate the bugs or recollect them. **Note:** Individual Impact Beetles will automatically shift or deactivate their force fields as necessary to allow the Shellback Armor's tentacles access through the containment field. These small openings do not reduce the overall protection of the field.

**Primary Purpose:** Demolitions Containment.

**Secondary Purpose:** Defense.

**M.D.C. of the Force Field:** Each insect can create a tiny four inch by four inch force field with 10 M.D.C. Multiple insects can combine their strength for a more powerful containment field. Every Impact Beetle adds 10 M.D.C. to the force field.

**Duration:** The force field can be maintained for 4D6+10 minutes before the insect runs out of energy and dies.

**Rate of Fire:** Requires one melee attack to release the Impact Beetles.

**Effective Range:** Typically 10 feet (3 m), but Sweepers can direct the insects to a target up to 50 feet (15.2 m) away.

**Payload:** 10 Impact Beetles. One spent insect is regrown every 4D6 minutes. The maximum payload of Impact Beetles can be increased at a cost of 5 Bio-E for each insect up to a maximum of 30 Impact Beetles.

**3. Squig Generator:** Shellback Armor is capable of growing the organic blasting caps known as Squigs within its enormous turtle shell. While not very powerful on their own, these detonators are the primary component of nearly every explosive device the Sweepers create. They are generated and stored within the turtle shell. When the pilot needs one, a simple mental command causes the suit to squeeze one Squig through the suit's internal ductwork where it emerges in the armor's palm. The pilot can determine which hand the Squig will appear in.

**Primary Purpose:** Demolitions.

**Secondary Purpose:** Demolitions Disposal.

**Mega-Damage:** 1D4 M.D.

**Rate of Fire:** Requires one melee action to summon a Squig.

**Payload:** 24 Squigs. Shellback Armor can create one Squig every 12 hours to replace spent detonators. The maximum payload of Squigs can be increased at a cost of 5 Bio-E for every 2 Squigs up to a maximum of 40 Squigs.

**4. Tech Paralyzer Bio-Toxin:** Mounted on the right forearm is a small tube that is capable of spraying a special Bio-Toxin known as Tech Paralyzer up to 10 feet (3 m) away. It was designed to only affect small Bio-Tech devices like Migs and Trench Foot Mines, but it can also be used to incapacitate Bio-Tech pistols, small melee weapons, and other small Bio-Tech devices (larger devices are completely unaffected no matter how many doses they are sprayed with). Any device sprayed with the chemical must make a roll to save vs non-lethal poison of 16 or higher or else be completely paralyzed for 2D6 melee rounds. Sweepers are very adept at spotting the signs of a successfully paralyzed device, so they know when it is safe to operate.

**Primary Purpose:** Demolitions Disposal.

**Secondary Purpose:** Defense.

**Rate of Fire:** Equal to the number of attacks per melee.

**Effective Range:** 10 feet (3 m).

**Payload:** 5 doses of Bio-Toxin. Spent blasts are regenerated 24 hours after they are used. The maximum payload of doses can be increased at a cost of 5 Bio-E per dose up to a maximum of 20 doses.

### **Bio-Enhancements Only Available to Shellback Armor:**

**1. Primer Cord Generator:** The left forearm of the armor can be equipped with a hollow tube capable of creating a special explosive rope known as primer cord. It is composed of a high-explosive chemical wrapped in an outer casing of Mega-Damage silk. It is processed within the armor's turtle shell and then squeezed through the forearm tube like toothpaste. It is completely dry by the time it is expelled from the armor. The Sweeper can choose what length he wants the suit to produce. No matter how long the primer cord is, the entire length detonates almost instantly after placement. It is primarily used as a detonator to link multiple charges together across a distance, but it also packs pretty impressive destructive power when wrapped around an object. Sweepers routinely wrap primer cord around multiple support beams in order to collapse buildings and other structures. The Mega-Damage silk surrounding the primer cord protects it from premature detonation and makes it difficult to cut, but it can still be detonated with a Squig. Every one foot (0.3 m) length of cord has 1D4 M.D.C. Spent primer cord is regenerated within the turtle shell at a rate of 10 feet (3 m) every 12 hours.

**Primary Purpose:** Demolitions.

**Secondary Purpose:** Assault.

**Mega-Damage:** 1D6 M.D. per five feet (1.5 m) of primer cord, but the damage is drastically increased when wrapped around on object. In this case, damage is 1D6 M.D. for every foot (0.3 m) of primer cord wrapped around the object.

**Rate of Fire:** Requires one melee action to create 10 feet (3 m) of primer cord, so creating 40 feet (12.2 m) of cord would require 4 melee actions.

**Bio-E Cost:** 10 Bio-E for every 10 feet (3 m) of primer cord up to a maximum payload of 100 feet (30.5 m).

**2. Mig Generator:** Shellback Armor can have up to two Mig Generators mounted on the underside of the turtle shell, just behind the hips. The Sweeper just reaches back and plucks them off. These Migs are somewhat different than the standard versions. They are not self-sustaining, so once they are removed from the armor, they will dry up and die within 48 hours if not used. It takes 24 hours to grow a new Mig once one is removed.

**Primary Purpose:** Assault.

**Secondary Purpose:** Defense.

**Mega-Damage:** 1D8x10 M.D. to a 12 foot (3.6 m) radius.

**Rate of Fire:** Requires one melee action to remove a Mig from the armor.

**Bio-E Cost:** 20 Bio-E per Mig Generator, up to a maximum of 2.

**3. Agitation Mine Generator:** The turtle shell can be Bio-Enhanced to create small, baseball-sized explosives known as Agitation Mines. The tiny mines are designed to detonate if they are disturbed in any way. Even the vibrations from heavy robots traveling too close to the mines can set them off. They are grown within the turtle shell and released through a small opening behind the left or right shoulder (pilot's choice). Each mine looks like a lumpy ball of mottled brown and tan colored flesh (to better help them blend in with the environment). To activate the mine, the wielder first squeezes a small nerve cluster on top of the mine. He then has four seconds to place

the mine before it becomes active. Once activated, the slightest touch will detonate the mine. Even the Sweeper that created the mine cannot touch it without setting it off. These mines are surprisingly powerful on their own, but they are primarily used as detonators to set off larger traps. Sweepers love to use agitation mines in combination with primer cord wrapped around support beams to drop thousands of tons of debris on top of the enemy. This is a great way to immobilize dangerous threats like Assault Slayers.

Primary Purpose: Demolitions.

Secondary Purpose: Assault.

Mega-Damage: 4D8 M.D. to a 6 foot (1.8 m) radius.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of attacks per melee.

Effective Range: Can be thrown up to 200 feet (61 m).

Bio-E Cost: 8 Bio-E for every Agitation Mine up to a maximum of 20 mines.

**4. High Explosive Putty Generator:** Shellback Armor can be Bio-Enhanced to create a special high explosive putty. It has the consistency of clay, and can be hand molded into any shape the pilot desires. It is generally used to create shaped-charges capable of punching through heavy armor. The putty is rather durable and will not explode if exposed to normal S.D.C. fire, explosives, or electricity. It can only be detonated by Mega-Damage fire, energy blasts, or explosives (like Squigs). The putty is generated and stored within the turtle shell. When the pilot needs some, a simple mental command causes the suit to squeeze one pound of putty through the suit's internal ductwork where it emerges in the armor's palm. The pilot can determine which hand the putty will appear in. Spent putty regenerates at a rate of 1 pound (.45 kg) every 12 hours.

Primary Purpose: Demolition.

Secondary Purpose: Assault.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D. to a 10 foot (3 m) radius. If the pilot takes the time to mold the putty into a shaped charge (which takes 2 melee actions), the damage from the charge is increased by 50 percent. However, this does decrease the blast radius by 50 percent.

Rate of Fire: Requires one melee action to summon one pound (.45) of putty.

Bio-E Cost: 15 Bio-E for every pound of putty up to a maximum of 20 pounds (9 kg).

# New War Mounts

## Griffin

The Griffin War Mount is a relatively recent addition to humanity's arsenal, but it is already making a tremendous impact against the Machine's air forces. It was designed to intercept and destroy the supersonic Sky Fighters, and it does so surprisingly well. Of course, its strategy for taking these fast flyers down is not quite what one would expect (which is one reason the Machine is having such a difficult time adapting). One weakness of Bio-Technology is that it has never been able to match the blistering speed of high-tech jet engines. Human ingenuity and the crazy daredevil flying of the Archangels and Outriders have allowed the Resistance to hold their own, but Sky Fighters still fly circles around them in nearly every engagement. Sky Fighters typically swoop in with their guns

blazing and then fly away before the Splicer pilots can get into position to retaliate. Their speed makes dogfighting nearly impossible, so pilots generally only have moments to try and squeeze off a lucky shot.

This is where the Griffin comes in. The Librarians knew they would never be able to match the speed of the Machine's forces, so they decided to go with a different approach. Instead of trying to chase down the enemy, they built the Griffin so that it could quickly decelerate and grab on to anyone chasing it. It is quite a surprise for any Sky Fighter closing in for the kill to suddenly see this beast flip around in midair and latch on to the craft's fuselage. Once the mount grabs on, it anchors itself to the aircraft by firing a pair of barbed tentacles from its chest into the hull. This allows the Griffin to bite with its powerful beak, fire off blasts of plasma breath, or tear the craft to shreds with its deadly high frequency talons without fear of being shaken off. This strategy also keeps the War Mount clear of any of the Sky Fighter's weapon systems. The only way to strike the beast is for one of the robot's allies to fire on it (which usually strikes the Sky Fighter as well). The introduction of the Griffin has inspired the Archangels to adopt a similar strategy with their grappling hooks, although they are not nearly as well equipped for this task as the Griffins are.

When the mount finishes ripping the target apart at close range, it then detaches the bone spears from the end of the tentacles and flies off, leaving the target with another nasty surprise. These discarded bone fragments contain a powerful explosive chemical that detonates within seconds of being exposed to air. Outriders and Archangels have become very proficient at inflicting just enough damage before breaking off their attack so that these spears finish the job. The Griffin actually has twenty of these tentacles arranged in two rows along the chest so that it can attach itself to multiple craft while the spent bone spears regenerate.

The Griffin War Mount looks exactly like the mythical creature it was named after. It possesses the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion. The front and back legs end in powerful clawed hands that allow the mount to grab, tear, and slash with any of its limbs. Even the wings can be used as weapons. The seemingly normal looking feathers are actually composed of a super-strong ceramic material. This not only provides additional armored protection, but the razor sharp edges enable the wings to hack through armored plating with ease. The wings can propel the mount at a decent speed, but the body is also lined with organic thrusters. These not only increase the Griffin's speed, but also provide it with its stunning aerial maneuverability. The thrusters and tentacle bone spears are concealed beneath the Griffin's fur, so this creature looks very much like the Griffins of legend. Aside from the War Saddle, the only thing that detracts from its mythical appearance is the lone eye mounted on the tip of its tail. This lets the beast and its Outrider pilot keep an eye on any pursuers, so they know the perfect moment to flip around and attack.

When the Griffin War Mounts were first introduced on the battlefield, the devastation they wreaked on the Sky Fighters was unbelievable. No one expected them to be so effective. N.E.X.U.S. has adapted her strategies somewhat to contend with these War Mounts, but even these adjustments have benefited the Resistance. When a Griffin is spotted among the assault force, Sky Fighters will tend to fire from outside of their maximum effective range rather than risk getting grabbed during a close-range strafing run. Even when they are not chasing these mounts down directly, the Griffins still seem impossibly skilled at figuring out their approach vector and intercepting them.



Another new Sky Fighter tactic that has backfired somewhat is their tendency to come to a dead stop in mid-air to avoid the Griffin's grappling attempt. Sky Fighters can go from full speed to a hover in seconds, which even the Griffin has difficulty matching. This may sometimes prevent the Griffin from grabbing its prey, but the War Mount can still use its plasma breath (plus any additional weapon enhancements mounted on it and the rider) to shoot down the now stationary target. In addition, Archangels generally fly support for the Griffin War Mounts, so they also get a free shot at any Sky Fighters that are foolish enough to come to a stop. The Machine still has numerical superiority on her side, but the Resistance sees the introduction of the Griffin War Mount as an important step in taking back the skies.

**Class:** Close Combat Aerial War Mount.

**Crew:** One pilot.

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

- Wings (2) – 200 each
- Front Legs (2) – 150 each
- Hind Legs (2) – 180 each
- Clawed Feet (4) – 80 each
- Tail – 80
- Tail Mounted Third Eye – 10

Barbed Tentacles (20) – 85 each

\* Head – 180

War Saddle – 100

\* Main Body – 400

\* Depleting the M.D.C. of the Head or Main Body kills the Griffin.

**Speed:**

**Running:** 120 mph (192 km) maximum, but normal cruising speed is only 80 mph (128 km). The act of running does tire out the War Mount but not the rider. The Griffin can run at top speed for up to two hours straight before needing to rest for 1D6x10+30 minutes. However, it can fight or trot along at cruising speed almost all day (20 hours) without needing rest.

**Leaping:** 50 feet (15.2 m) high or across, increase by 50% with a short running start. Organic thruster assisted leaps can propel the Griffin an additional 200 feet (61 m) high or 500 feet (152.5 m) across.

**Digging:** 15 mph (24 km) through sand or dirt. 10 mph (16 km) through clay, rock or stone. Digging does not tire out the War Mount and it can dig an adequate hole to cover itself in 2D4 melees.

Swimming: 30 mph (48 km). Maximum depth is only 200 feet (61 m).

Flying: Maximum speed is 450 mph (720 km), with a cruising speed of 150 mph (240 km). The Griffin can reach speeds of nearly 600 mph (960 km), but only for short bursts of 2D4 minutes, after which the Griffin must drop down to cruising speed for the next hour. It can also hit speeds of 800 mph (1,280 km) when performing a steep power dive. When the War Mount wants to fly silently (without the organic thrusters), it can only fly at a maximum speed of 200 mph (320 km) and a cruising speed of 80 mph (128 km). It can fly all day long at cruising speed, but only four hours at maximum speed before needing to rest for at least 1D4 hours.

#### **Statistical Data:**

Height: 8-9 feet (2.4 to 2.7 m) at the shoulder.

Width: 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) with a wingspan of 25 feet (7.6 m).

Length: 11-12 feet (3.3 to 3.6 m) with an 8 foot (2.4 m) long tail.

Weight: 1 to 1.5 tons.

Cargo: Can carry 800 lbs (360 kg) on its back or 1200 lbs. (540 kg) within its talons. Additional weight decreases the Griffin's speed. An extra 500 lbs (225 kg) decreases speed by 25 percent, an extra 1000 lbs (450 kg) decreases speed by half, and any additional amount greater than 1,500 pounds (675 kg) total makes flight impossible.

Physical Strength: 1D4+36, Supernatural.

Production Cycle: 2 year gestation period plus 2 year growth cycle.

Operational Lifetime: 60 year life span.

Bio-Regeneration Rate: 6D6 per hour to the main body and 3D6 per hour to all other locations.

Horror Factor: 13 against humans not familiar with the Griffin. None against machines.

Feeding: The Griffin is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 30-60 pounds (13.5 to 27 kg) of animal matter a day, and may gorge on up to 300 pounds (135 kg) at one time. After gorging, the War Mount can go 2D4 days without feeding and without suffering any ill effects.

Color: The fur on its body is a light brown with a white underbelly and the feathers on its head and wings are white. Its four clawed feet and beak are a bright orange-yellow color. Other color variants are solid fawns, Golden eagle, shadow gray & white, solid black or solid white for arctic regions.

Sleep Requirements: As an artificially created organism, the Griffin only requires 4 hours of sleep per day.

#### **Other Data on the Griffin:**

An unmanned Griffin is able to operate independent of a rider using its animal-like intelligence and instincts to respond to any given situation. The Griffin feels a close kinship with its rider and other caregivers it is familiar with and will come to their aid if threatened, but it will not come to the aid of unknown humans unless ordered to do so by a Packmaster, Outrider, or Archangel. The exceptions to this rule are the Archangels. Griffins feel a special bond with their "little flying brothers" and will take to the skies to help any Archangel in need.

Alignment: Anarchist. Griffins are usually calm and relaxed. They generally only fight when commanded to do so or when directly threatened.

War Mount Attributes: I.Q. 1D6+2, M.E. 1D6+8, M.A. 1D6+8, P.S. 37-40, P.P. 2D6+8, P.E. 2D6+14, P.B. 3D4+6, Spd. 120 mph (192 km) on the ground, 450 mph (720 km) in flight.

Number of Attacks per Melee: 4.

Combat Bonuses: +4 on initiative, +4 to strike in hand to hand combat, +6 to strike when attempting to grab onto an opponent,

+4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +6 to dodge while flying, +6 to roll with punch, +3 to pull punch, +2 to disarm, pin/incapacitate on a natural 18-20, cannot be surprised from behind, and impervious to Horror Factor, disease, and poison.

Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note: Land Navigation 90%, Track by Scent 65%, and understands the Native Language of the Great House that created it and one other common language at 70%.

#### Combat Capabilities:

*Bite:* 3D8 M.D.

*Restrained Talon Strike:* 1D8 M.D.

*Talon Strike:* 5D8 M.D.

*Power Talon Strike:* 2D4x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

*Dual Talon Strike:* 2D4x10 M.D., counts as one melee attack, but can only be done while in flight.

*Grappling Attack:* This is the Griffin's primary method for attacking Sky Fighters. The War Mount quickly decelerates and allows any pursuing craft to slam into it so it can grab its prey and sink its claws in to hold on. This move inflicts 4D10 M.D. to the enemy craft, but it also inflicts 1D8 M.D. to the Griffin (this amount already includes the decrease in damage taken due to the Resistance to Physical Attack Enhancement). Roll to strike as normal. The Griffin has a special bonus of +6 to strike with this attack (plus any attribute bonuses). In addition, the enemy is -3 to dodge this attack due to the sudden and surprising change in direction of the Griffin.

*Shred Attack:* Can only be performed when the Griffin is anchored to the target with its barbed tentacles. The War Mount uses all four talons and both of its razor-sharp wings to claw, slash, and tear the target apart. Inflicts 3D4x10+30 M.D., but counts as three attacks.

*Wing Slash:* 3D8 M.D.

*High-Speed Wing Slash:* This strafe attack can only be performed at speeds of at least 100 mph (160 km). Inflicts 1D8x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

*Head Butt:* 3D6 M.D.

*Body Block/Pounce/Ram:* 5D8 M.D. (+2D8 M.D. if flying more than 200 mph (320 km). Has a 01-70% likelihood of knocking an opponent who is as large 20 feet (6.1 m) tall off of his feet and onto his back. If knocked off his feet, the victim loses initiative and two melee attacks. A ram counts as two attacks.

Senses and Features: Standard for War Mounts plus the following:

*Resistance to Physical Attack:* Beneath the skin is a layer of thick tissue filled with an impact resistant fluid that cushions the War Mount from blunt attacks like punches, kicks, falls, and explosive concussions (all of which inflict half damage). It is mainly used to protect the Griffin from the impact of grabbing onto pursuing aircraft.

*Tail Mounted Third Eye:* Mounted on the tip of the Griffin's tail is a single Advanced, Armored Eye. It possesses Enhanced Sight, just like the War Mount's normal eyes. It is primarily used to track enemies chasing after the Griffin, but many Outriders also use it as a periscope during times when the mount is hiding underwater, hidden in deep crevices of cliff faces or concealed underground.

#### **Griffin Bio-Weapon Systems:**

**1. Plasma Breath:** The mouth, throat, and lungs of the Griffin have been modified to allow it to exhale a chemical spray that ignites on contact with air to create a powerful fire blast.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 6D12 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Once per melee round, but counts as two melee attacks.

Effective Range: 40 feet (12.2 m).

Payload: 36 blasts per 24 hours. Automatically regenerates over a 24 hour period.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, but this is the only bonus that applies to the Plasma Breath.

**2. Barbed Tentacles:** Mounted in the chest of the Griffin are two rows of ten retractable tentacles that end in five inch (12 cm) long, barbed bone spears. They are completely concealed beneath the fur of the Griffin until fired at their target. Their primary purpose is to anchor the War Mount to its prey so it can freely attack without fear of being shaken off during high-speed maneuvers. The tentacles can be cut or allies can attempt to pull the Griffin off, but it requires a combined Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 65 or higher to rip the beast loose. When the War Mount finishes attacking its target, it mentally signals the tentacles to detach from the bone spears so it can fly away. Once released, the explosive chemical within the bone spears is exposed to the air, which causes them to detonate. Since they are already imbedded within the target, they inflict massive damage when they explode.

Primary Purpose: Grappling.

Secondary Purpose: Assault.

Mega-Damage: 6D8 M.D. per dual strike (always fired in pairs). When the tentacles detach from the bone spears, they detonate, inflicting 1D6x10+20 M.D. to a 6 foot (1.8 m) radius.

Rate of Fire: Each dual strike counts as one melee attack.

Effective Range: 10 feet (3 m).

Payload: 20 tentacles. Spent bone spears regrow after 4D6 hours.

Bonuses: +3 to strike distant opponents, but +10 to strike when the Griffin is already clinging to the target.

**3. High-Frequency Talons:** The feet of the Griffin are prehensile with three toes in the front and the “thumb” on the back of the heel. Each toe ends in a six inch (15 cm) long, high-frequency talon. They are generally used for slashing attacks, but they can also be used to grab hold of prey. It requires a combined Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 50 or higher to break free of the Griffin’s grip.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Grappling.

Mega-Damage: Each foot inflicts 5D8 M.D. and a dual strike inflicts 2D4x10 M.D. (counts as one melee attack, but can only be performed while in flight). All four limbs can engage the same target, but only when the Griffin is secured to its target with its barbed tentacles. This attack inflicts 3D4x10+30 M.D., but counts as three attacks.

**4. Ceramic Wings:** The Griffin’s feathers are actually composed of a durable ceramic material that not only provides excellent armor protection, but also make deadly slashing weapons. The wings can be used like an enormous sword when fighting on the ground, or they can be used to slash opponents during high-speed strafing runs in the air (minimum attack speed is 100 mph /160 km). In addition, the Griffin can use its wings to parry melee attacks (the wings take no damage on a successful parry) or as a shield against weapons fire (in this case, the wings take half damage from the attack). The Griffin cannot parry weapons fire. It needs to shield itself (or someone else) before the enemy attacks.

Primary Purpose: Assault.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: Slash from a single wing inflicts 6D6+15 M.D. A high-speed strafe attack inflicts 1D8x10+10 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

Bonuses: +1 to strike and +2 to parry.

## Skull Cracker War Mount

The Skull Cracker is a fast-attack aerial War Mount. It looks like a large, heavily armored Pterodactyl with muscular legs, dark green armor plating and skin. Its carnivorous lizard head more resembles that of a mixture between a dragon and an ankylosaurus than a Pterodactyl, but what makes the design truly unique is its thick, muscular neck, armored plating and large ram horns. Its powerful wings allow it to reach impressive speeds, and its body is lined with multiple organic thrusters, which makes it one of the fastest War Mounts in the Resistance. The beast is not as big as some of the larger aerial War Mounts like the Dracos or Zephyr, but it packs decent destructive power. Its only long-range armaments are a pair of Pod Launchers that it uses to soften up the Machine’s air forces or tear apart large concentrations of ground troops, but its real strength comes from its very unconventional method of attack.

The War Mount gets its name from its primary method of attack. The skull of the beast is nearly one foot (0.3 m) thick, and it has an enormous pair of ram horns that allow it to crash into opponents at incredibly high speeds without ill effect. The unique design of the War Saddle helps protect the pilot during these collisions as well. The pilot lies in a prone position on the Skull Cracker’s back at a slightly elevated thirty-degree angle to give him a better field of vision. While on the ground, the pilot can move his head freely, but when the War Mount takes flight, the War Saddle grows around the pilot’s head in order to completely immobilize it. This protects the rider from whiplash during high-speed impacts, but it does limit the pilot’s peripheral vision. The War Mount’s built-in radar helps compensate for this little side effect, plus most Skull Cracker riders will also enhance their armor with additional eyes on the sides of their head.

The Skull Cracker is one of the favorite War Mounts among Archangels and Outriders that prefer speed, maneuverability and durability over firepower. They are primarily used to support ground forces and cover the backs of the slower, more powerful War Mounts like Dracos and Zephyrs, but some field commanders have found that Skull Crackers are more effective when their crazy pilots are just allowed to cut loose. When this happens, it is truly a sight to see. These speedy beasts become an absolute blur as they blaze all across the battlefield. They constantly ram into Sky Fighters and other flyers, bombard ground forces with their Pod Launchers, and swoop down to seize Steel Troopers and Slicer Robots in their powerful talons. Only the best among the Archangels and Outriders are ever issued a Skull Cracker, and it is a common goal of nearly every one of these lunatic pilots to take to the skies on the backs of one of these beasts. Because of the growing popularity of the Skull Crackers there is a smaller variant more similar to a raptor dinosaur called the “Sky Slammer,” designed for pilots who want the speed with less scale. (Stats listed in parentheses reflect the Sky Slammer variant.)

**Class:** Attack Aerial War Mount.

**Crew:** One pilot.

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

Wings (2) – 180 each (140 each)



- Legs (2) – 160 each (120 each)
- Clawed Feet (2) – 110 each (80 each)
- Tail – 180 (120)
- Pod Launchers – 120 each (85 each)
- \* Head – 280 (225)
- War Saddle – 100 (75)
- \* Main Body – 360 (190)
- \* Depleting the M.D.C. of the Head or Main Body kills the Skull Cracker.

**Speed:**

**Running:** 60 mph (96 km) maximum without a rider, but only 30 mph (48 km) when carrying a pilot. The act of running does tire out the War Mount but not the rider. The Skull Cracker can run at top speed for 1D4 hours straight before needing to rest for 1D6x10+30 minutes.

**Leaping:** The legs are surprisingly powerful which allows it to leap 30 feet (9 m) high or across. Organic thruster assisted leaps can propel the Skull Cracker an additional 200 feet (61 m) high or 500 feet (152.4 m) across.

**Digging:** Not possible.

**Swimming:** 120 mph (192 km). Maximum depth is only 500 feet (152.4 m).

**Flying:** Maximum speed is 600 mph (960 km), with a cruising speed of 300 mph (480 km). The Skull Cracker can reach speeds of nearly 900 mph (1,440 km) when performing a steep power dive. When the War Mount wants to fly silently (without the organic thrusters), it can only fly at a maximum speed of 400 mph (640 km) and a cruising speed of 150 mph (240 km). It can fly all day long at cruising speed, but only eight hours at maximum speed before needing to rest for at least one hour.

(Sky Slammer variant: Maximum speed is 650 mph (1040 km), with a cruising speed of 350 mph (560 km). The Sky Slammer can reach speeds of nearly 1,200 mph (1,920 km) when performing a steep power dive. When the War Mount wants to fly silently, it can only fly at a maximum speed of 400 mph (640 km) and a cruising speed of 150 mph (240 km). It can fly all day long at cruising speed, but only six hours at maximum speed before needing to rest for at least one hour.)

**Statistical Data:**

**Height:** 10-11 feet (3 to 3.3 m) standing upright with legs hunched, but 14 feet (4.2 m) standing straight up. When walking quadruped like a bat with its wing arms and hind legs it is 4.7-5.5 feet (1.4 to 1.6 m) high. (Sky Slammer: 7-8 feet (2.1 to 2.4 m) standing straight up, but 3 feet (0.9 m) when lying on its stomach.)

**Width:** 6 to 6.5 feet (1.8 to 1.98 m) from one Pod launcher to the opposite pod Launcher and wings closed. It has an open wingspan of 48.5 feet (14.78 m). (Sky Slammer: 4 feet/1.2 m with a wingspan of 20 feet/6.1 m.)

**Length:** 11-12 feet (3.3 to 3.6 m) from the tip of its nose to the rump. Also has a 12 foot (3.6 m) long tail.

**Sky Slammer:** 8-9 feet (2.4 to 2.7 m) from the tip of its nose to the ends of its feet, plus a 7 foot (2.1 m) tail.

**Weight:** 1.5 tons (1350 kg) (Sky Slammer: 800 pounds (360 kg)).

**Cargo:** Can carry 1,000 pounds (450 kg) on its back or 2,200 pounds (990.9 kg) within its talons. Additional weight decreases the Skull Cracker's speed. An extra 450 pounds (204 kg) decreases speed by 25 percent, an extra 600 pounds (270 kg) decreases speed by half, and any additional amount greater than 900 pounds total makes flight impossible.



**Sky Slammer:** Can carry 500 pounds (225 kg) on its back, or 1,200 pounds (540 kg) within its talons. Additional weight decreases the Skull Cracker's speed. An extra 300 pounds (135 kg) decreases speed by 25 percent, an extra 500 pounds (225 kg) decreases speed by half, and any additional amount greater than 900 pounds (405 kg) total makes flight impossible.

**Physical Strength:** 1D6+30 (1D6+20).

**Production Cycle:** 1.5 year gestation period plus one year growth cycle. (Sky Slammer: One year gestation period plus one year growth cycle.)

**Operational Lifetime:** 50 year life span (60 year life span).

**Bio-Regeneration Rate:** 4D6 per hour to the main body and 2D6 per hour to all other locations for both variants.

**Horror Factor:** 14 against humans outside the Resistance, none against robots (12).

**Feeding:** The Skull Cracker is a Carnivore. It needs to eat 50 to 80 pounds (22.5 to 36 kg) of animal matter a day, and may gorge on up to 200 pounds (90 kg) at one time. After gorging, the War Mount can go up to 4 days without feeding and without suffering any ill effects.

**Sky Slammer:** A carnivore, it needs to eat 10 to 20 pounds (4.5 to 9 kg) of animal matter a day, and may gorge on up to 80 pounds (36 kg) at one time. After gorging, the War Mount can go 2D4 days without feeding and without suffering any ill effects.

**Color:** The Skull Cracker is dark green in color with light tan ram horns, or in a tan and dark brown striped pattern or solid black with blue trim highlights and sky blue, marble eyes.

Sky Slammers can be the same dark green as its larger brother or it can be a speckled tan camouflage, all white with jet black eyes or jet black with jade mint eyes.

**Sleep Requirements:** As an artificially created organism, the Skull Cracker only requires 5 hours of sleep per day. The Sky Slammer only requires 4 hours of sleep per day.

### **Other Data about the Skull Cracker:**

Unmanned Skull Crackers and Sky Slammers are able to operate independent of a rider using its animal-like intelligence and instincts to respond to any given situation. They quickly learn that robots are the enemy and will attack them whenever they get too close. These War Mounts live for the thrill of combat just like their riders, and they enjoy mixing it up in the skies with the Machine. They only follow the commands of Packmasters, Outriders, or Archangels (Skull Crackers have an affinity for these fearless daredevils).

**Alignment:** Anarchist. The Skull Cracker is an adrenaline junkie and quickly becomes bored and agitated when confined. They grow very close to riders with a similar personality type and will actually come to their aid when threatened.

**War Mount Attributes:** I.Q. 1D4+2, M.E. 1D6+8, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 21-26, P.P. 1D4+20, P.E. 1D8+14, P.B. 1D4+1, Spd 60 mph (96 km) the ground, 600 mph (960 km) for Skull Crackers and 650 mph (1,040 km) for Sky Slammers in flight.

**Number of Attacks per Melee:** 4.

**Combat Bonuses:** +3 (+4) on initiative, +4 to strike in hand to hand combat, +2 to strike with ranged weapons, +2 to parry, +2 (+3) to dodge, +4 (+6) to dodge while flying, +5 (+6) to roll with punch, +2 (+3) to pull punch, +5 (+4) to disarm, and impervious to Horror Factor, disease, and poison.

**Equivalent (Instinctive) Skills of Note:** Land Navigation 90%, Track by Scent 65%, and understands the Native Language of the Great House that created it and one other common language at

70%. Recognizes robots and machines as enemies to be destroyed or chased away.

**Combat Capabilities:** The War Mount may use its long-range weapons or engage in hand to hand combat, or combine the two.

*Bite:* 3D8+10 M.D. (3D8 M.D.).

*Restrained Talon Strike:* 1D8 M.D. (1D6 M.D.).

*Talon Strike:* 3D8 M.D. (2D8 M.D.).

*Power Claw Strike:* 1D6X10 M.D., but counts as two attacks (6D8 M.D., but counts as two attacks).

*Kick:* 3D8 M.D. (4D6 M.D.).

*Leap Kick:* 5D8 M.D. (4D8 M.D.), but counts as two attacks.

*Tail Whip:* 3D6 M.D. (1D8 M.D.).

*Body Block/Ram:* 4D8 M.D. per every 100 mph (160 km). See the Ram Attack below for complete details.

**Senses and Features:** Standard for War Mounts plus:

*Radar:* Maximum range is 6 miles (9.6 km) in open spaces.

*Reinforced Skull.*

### **Bio-Weapon Systems:**

**1. Pod Launchers (2):** Mounted over each shoulder of the Skull Cracker is a powerful Pod Launcher. They fire a burst of seed pods that explode on impact and shower the blast area with razor-sharp shrapnel. These weapons can devastate large concentrations of ground forces during high-speed strafing runs.

**Primary Purpose:** Assault.

**Secondary Purpose:** Defense.

**Mega-Damage:** 5D8 M.D. per burst with a blast radius of 30 feet (9.1 m). When both launchers fire at the same target, damage is 10D8 M.D. to a 50 foot (15.2 m) radius.

**Rate of Fire:** Each burst counts as one melee attack. A dual attack from both launchers counts as one melee attack.

**Effective Range:** 2,400 feet (732 m).

**Payload:** Each Pod Launcher grows enough seed pods for 48 bursts per hour (96 total); automatically regenerates. (Sky Slammer: Pod Launchers grow enough seed pods for 32 bursts per hour (64 total).

**Bonuses:** +1 to strike with a burst of pods.

**2. Barbed Talons:** The feet of the Skull Cracker are prehensile with three toes in the front and the "thumb" on the back of the heel. Each toe ends in a four inch (10 cm) long, razor-sharp, barbed talon. This allows the Skull Cracker to easily grab targets at high speed and keep them from breaking its grip. It may be difficult for the victim to break free, but the Skull Cracker can easily tear the talons out of its prey whenever it chooses.

**Primary Purpose:** Assault.

**Secondary Purpose:** Grappling.

**Mega-Damage:** Each foot inflicts 3D8 M.D. and a dual strike inflicts 6D8 M.D. (counts as one melee attack). It requires a combined Robotic/Splicer P.S. of 50 or higher to break free of the Skull Cracker's grip. Whether the War Mount pulls the claws free or the victim does, this action inflicts an additional 1D10 M.D.

**Effective Range:** 6 foot (1.8 m) reach.

**3. Prehensile Tail:** The tail of the War Mount is prehensile and is used to ensnare robotic prey. It is not designed for whipping, so it cannot deliver a very powerful strike.

**Primary Purpose:** Assault.

**Secondary Purpose:** Defense.

**Mega-Damage:** 1D8.

**Rate of Fire:** Equal to the number of attacks per melee.

**Effective Range:** 7 feet (2.1 m).

**Bonuses:** +3 to strike and parry, and +5 to dodge. These bonuses only apply to the tail and no other bonuses.



**4. Ram Attack:** The Skull Cracker's strongest and strangest attack. Even people familiar with this War Mount are often surprised that it can survive such high-speed collisions. Every 100 mph (160 km) of speed inflicts 4D8 M.D. The War Mount and rider are protected from the impact, but at higher speeds, the Skull Cracker does take some damage. Any ram attack at speeds greater than 500 mph (800 km) means the War Mount also takes 20% of the damage. A ram attack has a 01-90% likelihood of knocking an opponent as large as 20 feet (6.1 m) tall off his feet and onto his back. If knocked off his feet, the victim loses initiative and two attacks per melee. A ram attack counts as two melee attacks. Skull Crackers are also able to perform a head-on collision against other flyers. They have learned to blunt the impact so that it is not fatal. In these cases, the Skull Cracker inflicts 2D6x10 M.D. against its target and only suffers 5D6 points of damage (counts as two melee attacks).

# New O.C.C. Specialty Upgrades

**Note:** More Specialties will be featured in an upcoming Sourcebook.

## Dreadnaught

Dreadnaughts are the heavy weapons specialists of the Dreadguard. Actually, heavy *weapon* specialist would probably be a bit more accurate. This entire class was built around their primary weapon, the Harbinger Cannon. This experimental, heavy Bio-Weapon has been around for some time, but it had a few problems that made it somewhat difficult and impractical to use. First off, this massive, seven foot (2.1 m) long, 200 pound (90 kg) rifle was just too big, heavy, and unwieldy for all but the strongest suits of Host Armor. While there are several other enormous Bio-Weapons in the human's arsenal, none comes close to the size and weight of the Harbinger. The other major problem with this rifle was that it chewed through its ammunition at a ridiculously fast rate and it required a Bio-E source, very much like the Bio-E Expulsion Energy Vents. In order to keep the rifle light enough to even be lifted, it could only hold a (comparatively) minuscule amount of ammo, which meant it would run dry pretty quickly. Users raved about its incredible destructive power, but ultimately they said it was just too much weight to haul around for the five to ten seconds of firepower it provided. Eventually, the Librarians created an enhancement package for Host Armors that could handle the weight of the rifle and most importantly, the weight of the massive ammunitions backpack that was required to finally make the Harbinger a usable weapon. The size and strength of the Host Armor was drastically increased and the musculature was altered to allow it to carry incredible weight without getting exhausted. This slowed the armor down a bit, but the trade off was well worth it in order to efficiently use the Harbinger Cannon.

After a brief debate throughout the Resistance concerning who should be entrusted with this awesome weapon, the honor was eventually bestowed upon the Dreadguard. Most Warlords thought the Roughnecks were a bit too wild and reckless to be given this

kind of firepower, and they felt more comfortable putting it in the hands of the loyal warriors that lived by the Code of Duty. Great Houses all across the Resistance modified small groups of Dreadguards and sent them out to field test the Harbinger, and the tests exceeded everyone's expectations. The only problem that came back from these tests was a tendency for users to get too focused on what was in front of them and lose track of their close surroundings. Harbinger users were eventually equipped with a pair of tentacles that possessed an Independence Bio-Enhancement. This gave them some "partners" to watch their backs, and kept them from getting flanked so easily. The Sentinel Eels helped the Dreadnaughts in close quarters combat where they were most vulnerable. In time, the sentient tentacle eels and the Host Armor's massive size increase became a badge of office that distinguished these heavy gunners as their own special class within the Dreadguard, causing people to refer to them as Dreadnaughts. While they are seen as a distinct Special Forces unit, they are not afforded any kind of elevated status over their fellow Dreadguards. Within the social hierarchy of the military, they are viewed no differently than other Dreadguards, although so far, no Dreadnaughts have ever risen to the rank of Warlord. It is quite possible that the amount of firepower and purpose invested into their Dreadnaught design may have also cursed them to remain in the field and providing that heavy firepower that the Resistance so desperately needs.

**Alignment:** Any, but typically good or selfish.

**Attribute Requirements:** Must be a Dreadguard of 5th rank or higher to be eligible. I.Q. and M.E. 14 or higher.

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

**O.C.C. Bonuses:** +4 to roll with impact, +2 to save vs insanity, and +5 to save vs Horror Factor.

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

**Common Skills:** Standard.

**O.C.C. Skill Programs:** Basic Military (+15%), Host Pilot (+20%), Bio-Technology (+10%) and Weapon Training.

**Special Skills:**

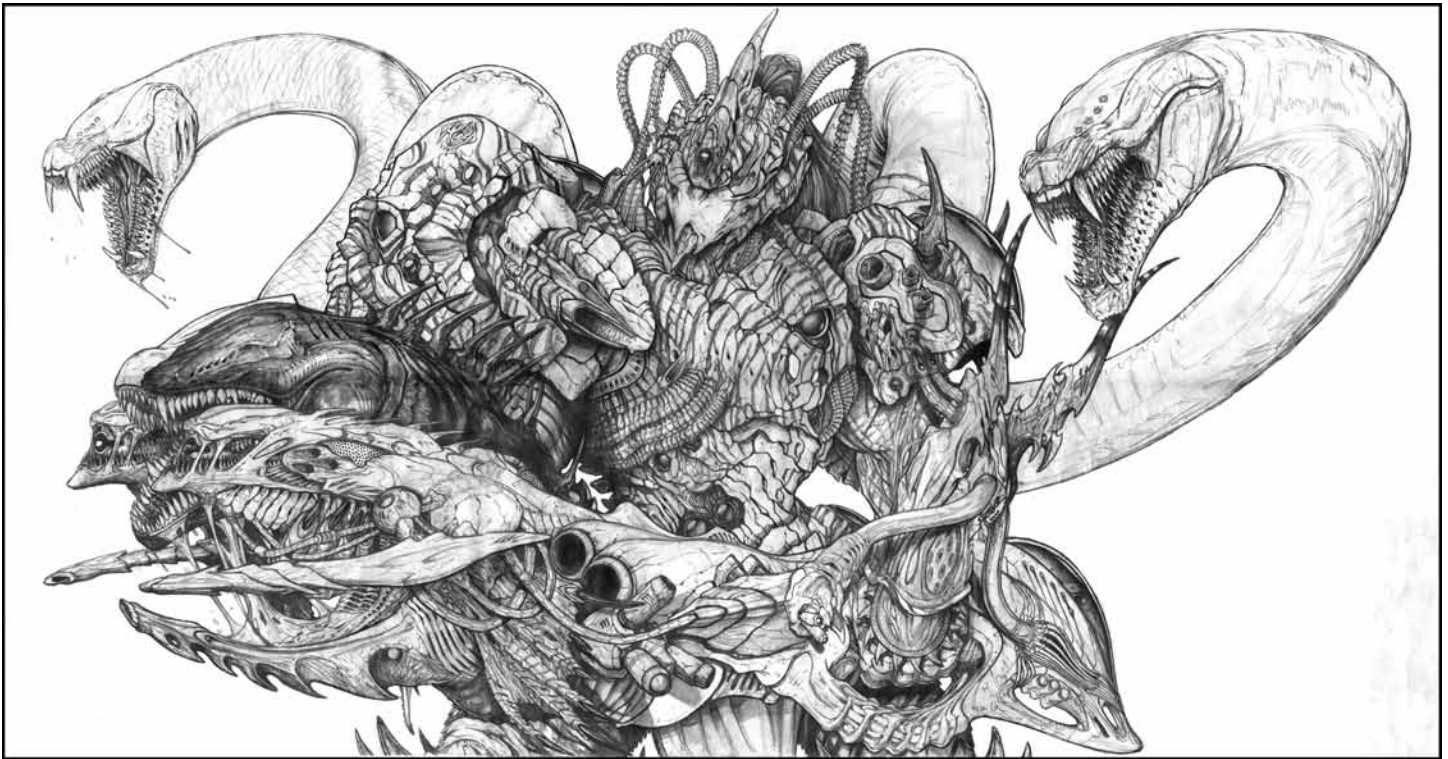
**Heavy Fire Support:** Dreadnaughts are trained how to provide strategic weapons fire with their Harbinger Cannons to best support their troops and to cause the maximum amount of destruction to their enemies. Dreadnaughts know that they are the tank equivalents of Host Armors and utilize their massive size and fire power as such. They utilize their scale and heavy firepower to bring down the most significant targets or threats first and allowing the infantry and the rest of the troops to finish off the targets. Dreadnaughts learn to use the Harbinger cannon for suppressive fire against armored targets, and to provide suppressive fire in landing zones and against ground and aerial threats. **Base Skill:** 60% +3% per level of experience.

**W.P. Bio-Weapons: Heavy (Base Skill:** 40% +3% per level of experience).

**Elective Skills:** Same As Dreadguard (**Splicers® Role-Playing Game**, page 151).

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

**Dreadnaught Host Armor:** Dreadnaughts receive an experimental upgrade to their main Host Armor design that makes it a larger, more formidable armor to utilize, plus it is bonded with two large, tenacious, alien symbiotic creatures called *Sentinel*



*Eels*, that are contained in the Host Armor's backpack shell located above the Harbinger Cannon's munitions reservoir.

**Step One:** See the specific details on Dreadnaught Armor below.

**Step Two:** Determining Metabolism. Dreadnaught Armor is always Carnivore, Omnivore or Vampiric.

**Step Three:** Available Bio-Energy points for the Dreadnaught is M.E. attribute number, +P.E. attribute number, +1D4x10+20 points, plus an additional 40 or 30 Bio-E points according to the Host Armor's metabolism type. Each level of advancement, starting with level three, the Dreadnaught gets an additional 5D4 Bio-E to add to the capabilities of his current Dreadnaught Armor. These Bio-E points can be spent as soon as they are acquired or saved and combined with points from subsequent levels of experience.

If the Dreadnaught's Armor is destroyed, another will be bonded to him, but it will only have the most basic Bio-Enhancements. Further augmentation will only occur with each additional level of experience or as a reward for impeccable service.

**Step Four:** Biological Enhancements and Weapon Systems. Selections can be made from any of the categories, but most Dreadnaughts focus on long-range Offenses and Biological Defenses in order to give themselves better protection in the field while providing heavy suppressive firepower to support their team.

**Standard Equipment:** Military fatigues, a suit of non-organic body armor for back up or disguise, dress clothing, survival knife, utility belt, first-aid kit, 2 Slap Patches, Face Wrap, tinted goggles, hatchet for cutting wood, one light Bio-Weapon and one heavy Bio-Weapon of choice and one weapon for each W.P. with appropriate ammunition for heavy combat, a good Mega-Horse for transportation, tent, knapsack, backpack, two water skins, emergency food rations (three weeks supply), and some personal items.

**Handheld Weapon Bio-Enhancements:** Dreadnaughts receive 5D4 Bio-E at level one plus 5 Bio-E at each additional level of

experience starting at level 2. Bio-E can be distributed between all the weapons in the character's personal armory or applied to one favorite item.

**Money:** Has 3D6x100 credits worth in precious metals, relics or trade items, as well as 6D6x10 in available credits. Money can be spent now on additional equipment or saved for later.

**The Upside:** You are the true walking tank and heavy firepower specialist of the Host Armor types with the power, size and knowledge to make the most what you have. You tear down nearly any enemy, structure, or decimate a wide path of charging robots with a few short, controlled bursts. Your skills at providing suppressive firepower make you an invaluable resource for clearing out landing zones necessary for strategic deployment or emergency evacuations. You are one of the few units that can take on the largest adversaries in the field, without requiring a War Mount, thus enabling the rest of your platoon and other soldiers to focus on their objectives and earning their favor by watching your back in the field.

**The Downside:** You are a walking tank and are slower than normal Host Armors in both speed and agility, due to the cumbersome Cannon that you have to lug everywhere. The Harbinger Cannon takes both hands to carry, thus you have to rely heavily on your other enhancements to pick up the slack and your heavy firepower draws major attention to you in a battle, and makes you a primary target equal to that of a War Mount. Your massive bulk not only reduced your agility to dodge most attacks but it makes it very difficult for you to retreat during intense chaotic combat scenarios, especially if your team is being overrun. If that weren't bad enough, the Harbinger Cannon is able to dispense a heap of deadly firepower in heavy surges, but it also chews through its ammo reserves at such a high rate that you may find yourself having to improvise and occupy your opponents with your other weapons and enhancements until your munitions replenish themselves.

**Experience Table:** Continuing using the same Experience Table as the Dreadguard found on page 183 of the **Splicers® Role-Playing Game**.

# Dreadnaught Armor

Dreadnaught Armor is a massive Host Armor specifically designed for providing Heavy Weapons Fire and suppressing heavily armored or numerous enemy targets at once. Just hold the Harbinger Cannon steady and pull the trigger; let the cannon and the Armor do the rest. At least that's the way it appears to many who have witnessed firsthand the immense devastation of a Dreadnaught. These forms of armor are larger and more robust than standard Dreadguard Host Armors. They have massive shoulder and chest plating with broad, tree trunk-sized legs that help root the armor to the ground as they man their main weapon the Harbinger Cannon. So much has been designed around the cannon that the armor itself is almost too specialized. It is so bogged down by the massive weight of the cannon and its munitions reservoir housed on the back, that it is slower than other Host Armors and the assault cannon requires both hands to be used, which means the pilot cannot use both hands in combat and leaves Dreadnaughts rather vulnerable in close combat and tight spaces.

To try and compensate for vulnerability in melee combat, two large tentacle appendages were added to the armor. Each a massive, powerful constrictor-like eels called, **Sentinel Eels**. Sentinels are symbiotic creatures capable of thinking and fighting independent of the Dreadnaught Armor and the pilot inside. They alert the pilot of potential threats, but attack enemies that come within striking distance on their own, and even defend the armor when the pilot is rendered unconscious. The Dreadnaught's host armor is genetically bonded to the eels and if the armor is completely destroyed, the Sentinels will also die. They can not be transplanted into a new Host Armor nor War Mount for that matter. The Sentinel Eels know this and will fight to defend the armor even over their own preservation. Since the brain of the symbiotic creature is actually located inside the Dreadnaught armor, a severed Sentinel Eel can regenerate completely given enough time. This makes these powerful eels more likely to sacrifice themselves in order to protect the Host Armor.

Adding these heavy, alien eel creatures seemed only to add to the specialty requirements, because of the eels' erratic movements, lunging and snapping in and out at targets in all directions, or their awkward coiling movements that easily throw off the pilot's aim, balance and coordination. In order to counter this, two bio-organic gyrostabilizers were built into the massive shoulder plating and hardwired into the chest and hips as a core to help compensate for the eels' unpredictable movements. This finally provided the Dreadnaught pilot with enough stabilization, control and focus to improve the firing accuracy and overall mobility necessary to operate such a massive Host Armor. The overall outcome however, is a massively heavy and less agile Host Armor that packs a major wallop of firepower.

**Class:** Host Armor.

**Crew:** One Dreadnaught Pilot.

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

Arms (2) – 3D6x10+30 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 6); both arms have the same M.D.C.

Hands (2) – 2D6x10+20 M.D.C., +15 additional M.D.C. at levels six, eleven, and fourteen; both hands have the same M.D.C.

Sentinel Eels (2) – 70 M.D.C. each, +5 additional M.D.C. at levels six, eleven, and fourteen.

Sentinel Shell – 3D6x10+150 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 6). If the M.D.C. of the

shell is depleted to zero, then there is a 80% chance that the Symbiotes brains will be exposed and vulnerable (1D6x10 M.D. each brain) **Note:** The Sentinel shell can only be targeted from behind with a called shot. However, it is a large target, so there are no penalties to strike.

Legs (2) – 3D8x10+25 M.D.C. each, +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 6); both legs have the same M.D.C.

Feet (2) – 2D6x10+30 M.D.C. each, +20 additional M.D.C. at levels six, eleven, and fourteen; both feet have the same M.D.C.

Elbow Bone Blades (2) – 2D4x10+18 M.D.C. each.

Harbinger Cannon – 4D4x10+20 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 6).

Head – 2D6x10+20 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 6).

Main Body – 6D6x10+180 M.D.C., +15 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 6).

Harbinger Munitions Reservoir – 6D6x10+250 M.D.C., +10 additional M.D.C. per level of experience (starting at level 2). If the M.D.C. of the shell is depleted to zero, then there is a 35% chance that the explosive payload will detonate if hit by projectiles or lasers or ignited, inflicting 3D6x10 M.D. to the main body of the armor and half damage to everything within a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius. **Note:** The Munitions Reservoir can only be targeted from behind with a called shot. However, it is a large target, so there are no penalties to strike.

**Speed:**

**Running:** 4D6+20 mph (38.4 to 70.4 km). The act of running does tire out the pilot, but at only 10% of the normal fatigue rate.

**Leaping:** Only 10 feet (3 m) high or 15 feet (4.6 m) across.

**Digging:** 15 mph (24 km) through sand or dirt, but one quarter as fast through rock or concrete. Digging tires out its pilot, but at half the usual fatigue rate. To dig down enough to adequately hide from enemies on the surface takes 4D6 minutes.

**Swimming:** 10 mph (16 km); swimming tires the pilot but at 10% the usual rate.

**Underwater Depth:** Dreadnaught Armor can withstand pressure up to 1500 feet (457 m) down.

**Statistical Data:**

**Height:** Approximately 3 feet (0.9 m) is added to the height of the pilot.

**Width:** 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m), based on the size of the pilot.

**Length:** 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m), based on the size of the pilot.

**Weight:** Adds 700 pounds (315 kg) to the weight of the pilot.

**Cargo:** Contained within the carapace shell on the suit's back is about 200 pounds (90 kg) of Harbinger Cannon munitions, plus two symbiotic Sentinel Eels, each weighing 130 pounds (58.5 kg) that are stabilized by two gyrostabilizers located in the massive shoulder plates, each weighing 100 pounds (45 kg). The rest of the Sentinel Eels' weight and movements are left up to the Host Armor and pilot to endure and counter.

**Physical Strength:** 4D6+15 – Splicer P.S. is equal to Robotic Strength.

**Production Cycle:** Nine month gestation, plus 6 months growth time.

**Operational Lifetime:** 2D10+35 year life span.

**Trade Value:** None, because each Dreadnaught Armor is bonded to a specific pilot and will not function for any other person.

**Bio-Regeneration:** 2D6 M.D.C. per hour for the main body and 1D4 M.D.C. per hour for all other locations except the retract-

able tentacles which regenerate at a rate of 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round. Only the tentacles can be regrown once severed, all other locations require at least one point of M.D.C. in order to regenerate. However, an Engineer can generate and attach a replacement limb with minimal difficulty.

**Horror Factor:** 9 for humans and other intelligent life forms; none against the machines.

**Senses and Features:** Standard plus the following: Reinforced Exoskeleton, Resistance to Kinetic Energy/Attacks, and Radar (+1 attack and helps detect, locate and target incoming opponents and early target acquisitions).

**Sentinel Eels:** These are actually tentacles that have been enhanced and modified to have gaping mouths filled with razor-sharp teeth. These fearsome tentacles can be used to rip and tear their prey to shreds, or the Host Armor can actually use them to feed. Furthermore, these tentacles have evolved into symbiotic creatures capable of thinking and fighting independently of the Host Armor. They will alert the pilot of potential threats, attack enemies on their own, and even defend the armor when the pilot is rendered unconscious. Of course, the tentacle is still a part of the armor and cannot survive on its own, and the Sentinel Eels know this. The creatures instincts push them to fight and to defend the Host Armor even over their own preservation. Since the brain of the symbiotic Eel is actually located inside the suit of Host Armor, a severed Sentinel Eel will regenerate completely given enough time. Each Sentinel Eel grows its own independent brain at the base of the tentacle and a row of four tiny black bead-like eyes adorn each side of the maw. The visual range of these eyes is only 100 feet (30.5 m), but that is more than adequate for the symbiotes as they are also equipped with Motion Detector Pits adorning their lower jaws (Same as Motion Detection Enhancement in **Splicers® Role-Playing Game**, page 81).

**Special Note:** All previously purchased Dreadguard Host Armor Bio-Enhancements carry over to the new Dreadnaught Host Armor, but they do not override the Dreadnaught's penalties and bonus restrictions. If the Dreadguard's Host Armor already had one of the listed Dreadnaught Enhancement then the Dreadnaught Armor inherits the pre-invested Bio-E points back and is allowed to spend the points on something else.

**Feeding:** Standard for either Carnivore, Omnivore or Vampiric, plus the suit eats an additional 60-90 pounds (27 to 40.5 kg) of minerals (stones, rocks, dirt, clay, etc.) a day to sustain the Sentinel Eels and the Harbinger Munitions. The Sentinel Eels can consume food while the Host Armor is inactive or occupied.

**Sleep Requirements:** Dreadnaught Armor requires 2D4 hours for Carnivores and 1D6 hours for Omnivores of sleep/rest/inactivity per day, during the day or night hours. Vampiric Dreadnaughts do not require sleep, but must rest 2D4x10 minutes after feeding, during which time the armor is sluggish (reduce attacks per round by -2, speed and combat bonuses by 25%).

**Combat Bonuses:** +1 to strike, +5 to parry (mainly due to the retractable tentacles), +3 to entangle, +1 to disarm, and +4 to roll with punch. **Note:** Due to the size and weight of the cannon and armor, a Dreadnaught can never have a dodge bonus higher than +3, regardless of any enhancements chosen.

### **Dreadnaught Weapon Systems:**

**1. Harbinger Cannon:** A dual, handheld, heavy assault cannon, the Harbinger Cannon has come a long way in the form of field tested and proven firepower. It is a sophisticated monster of a weapon composed of three major components and is frowned

upon by many who dispute its efficiency when wielding it, minutes after they have exhausted its destructive ammo.

**Central Maw** is a formidable set of crushing jaws filled with powerful teeth and large spurs adorning the top of its broad head and neck. Jet black with a white stripe going down the middle, the Maw uses its jaws to deliver a vicious bite (3D8 M.D.) into adversaries or into structures. This huge maw can stretch and quickly lunge at attackers, like a snapping turtle, striking targets up to 6 feet (1.8 m) away. The jaws can retract the seized prey or item, bringing them into the horrific discharges of the cannons. The victim can pull away (counts as one melee action/attack) or be pulled out of the Harbinger's Maw by comrades provided they match the Dreadnaught Armor's Splicer P.S. Lastly, the maw is also able to spew a gaseous fluid that instantly ignites the liquid streams fired from the three Spore Discharger Cannons that are also mounted on the Harbinger.

**Side-Mounted Velocity Cannons (2):** These twin cannons resemble the mouths of a viper with a barrel shoved down their throats. They are the lethal cannons of the Harbinger that fire high-velocity Burster Shards up to 3,000 feet (914.4 m). The cannons inflict 1D8x10+20 M.D. for a short individual burst of 10 rounds from one cannon or 2D6X10+20 M.D. per simultaneous bursts from both (counts as one melee attack). The cannons can only fire in bursts; single shots are not possible. Each burst creates an explosion with a blast radius of 15 feet (4.6 m) +5 feet (1.5 m) per additional burst fired. Damage is increased proportionately by bursts of 2, 3 or 6 bursts fired simultaneously at the same target. The explosions can be heard up to three miles (4.8 km) away. Payload: 120 per bursts per Velocity Cannon with an additional 600 rounds in a Munitions Reservoir housed in the back of the armor for reloads. It takes 2D10+30 minutes after every meal or 6D6 hours to re-grow a full load. It takes only 1D10 minutes to grow one full burst without a meal.

**Spore Discharger Tusks (2):** Two medium-range dischargers mounted on the sides and a long-range discharger directly underneath the cannon, each fires a stream of metal-eating spores in a liquid form. Once the liquid comes into contact with a robot, machine or any metallic object (including Technojackers armor), the spores burst like a stream of micro-explosive rounds and begin to eat into the metal target. These spores are ineffective against living/organic targets. However, unlike most Spore Dischargers, when the liquid is ignited by the Central Maw of the harbinger cannon, these spores turn into a blue napalm plasma that is able to incinerate living targets as well. The spore dischargers inflict the standard damage listed in the Splicers Main Book, page 104. When used as a napalm discharger, the damage and effects are identical to the napalm discharger on the Dracos War Mount, (Splicers Main Book, page 115). Range is reduced to 500 feet (152.4m).

**2. Sentinel Eels (2):** Within the armor's Back Carapace shell are two large chambers that house the alien symbiotes that mature into Sentinel Eels. Their voracious tentacles were enhanced and augmented into powerful constrictor-like creatures, each with a deadly maw filled with fangs. Sentinel Eels are symbiotic creatures capable of fighting independently of the Dreadnaught Armor; biting, pummeling, coiling and constricting opponents that dare get into close range of the Dreadnaught. The Dreadnaught pilot can seize complete control over the Sentinel Eels at any time and utilize them like an extension of his own body, but with heavy firepower suppression often being the focus, most

Dreadnaughts simply let the Eels operate freely as vicious, defensive counters against close proximity opponents.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

M.D.C. of each Sentinel Eel: Each Eel has a starting M.D.C. value of 4D6x10 points. A severed eel will completely regenerate within 3D8 hours.

Damage: Each successful Bite does: 3D8 M.D.C. Special Crush/Squeeze attack first requires that a victim is successfully entangled/grabbed and held. But instead of holding tight or biting, the Sentinel Eel squeezes with the intent to crush and hurt its captive. Damage is 3D4 M.D. per squeeze + Splicer P.S. punch damage. Due to the Independence Enhancement, each constriction of the body counts as one of the Sentinel Eel's Attacks (not the Host Armor's melee attacks/actions). Victims can use their Escape Artist skill at +10% to escape (slip the hold), or the victim can pull away (counts as one melee action/attack) or be pulled out of the Eel's hold by comrades provided they match the Dreadnaught Armor's Splicer P.S.

Effective Range: Typically 10 feet (3 m) away from the Dreadnaught Armor is the maximum.

Bonuses: Each eel possesses two attacks per melee with bonuses of +3 on initiative, +4 to strike, +3 to parry, and +2 to dodge. Both Sentinel Eels can engage the same target, but each eel must roll to strike independently. The previous bonuses for the tentacles only apply when they are controlled by the Host Armor pilot. The pilot also gains a bonus of +4 on initiative and +3 to Horror Factor when the eels are active and cannot be surprised from behind.

**3. Twin Bone Blades:** Located on the elbows of the Dreadnaught Armor are a wicked pair of large bone blades that are capable of slashing through the thickest armored hides or shredding metal.

Primary Purpose: Melee combat.

Secondary Purpose: Defense.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10 M.D.

**Bio-Enhancements Only Available to Dreadnaught Armor:**

**1. Harbinger Munitions Generator:** The heavy backpack of the Dreadnaught Armor has a large Generator mounted on the underside of the shell, just behind the hips. The Dreadnaught plugs the Harbinger into one of the generator's three ports and the Cannon hums to life, with its massive maw hissing and drooling, anticipating the heavy firepower it is getting ready to unleash. The Munitions Coil meticulously feeds the ammo to the Harbinger Cannon through a lubed inner tube with rows of small insect-like legs passing the munitions along and avoiding any undesirable jamming or lock-ups. The Coil is well-protected with reinforced chitin plating and is extremely flexible. The Munitions Generator reduces the time needed to replenish Burst Shells by half: 2D10+15 minutes after every meal or 3D6 hours to regrow a full load. It takes only 1D4+1 minutes to grow one full burst without a meal.

Primary Purpose: Ammunition Provisions.

Bio-E Cost: 35 Bio-E points.

## Packlord Upgrade

Elite Packmasters, proven in the field can become eligible to specialize their craft as a combat variant called the "Packlord." These variants are designed specifically for excursions, close combat and hunting. Packlords are gifted a prestigious Packlord Armor that is nearly the same hide armor as the *Elite Packmaster Armor* (featured in **The Rifter® #59**, page 27, minus the Elongated Legs, Leaping Legs and Retractable Bone Blades). Instead, the Pack-

lord's Armor has been equipped with Organic Thrusters built into its backpack and lower legs for fast flight and leaping capabilities to keep up with his Gore pack. Instead of having retractable Bone Blades, the armor has armored gauntlets that each house a retractable, armor-plated, serpentine tentacle that secretes a Bio-Napalm. These wicked symbiotes are bonded to the Packlord's armor and are well deserving of their name, "Gore Tentacles." They pierce and burrow their way through their opponents, causing 4D10 M.D., plus an additional 1D8 per melee attack until removed. The gored victim will also be severely burned by a sticky Bio-Napalm substance that is secreted by the Gore Tentacle, which burns and disintegrates the internals of machines and living creatures alike. The chemical is the same Bio-Napalm produced by the Burner (see the **Splicers® RPG**, page 134). It is because of this deadly new weapon's use against fellow Splicers and the Bio-E strain placed on the wearers, that House Artemis placed a restriction on the reproduction of these suits to only the elite of Packmasters (5th level or higher). Anyone lower than this rank and tolerance loses control of the Gore Tentacles and falls unconscious.

## New Gorehound Type – Maulers

Maulers are melee combat specific versions of the loyal, more versatile Gorehounds. To become a Mauler, the Gorehound is returned to the Gene Pool for a number of months. When it emerges, its form and genetic make-up have been completely redone. Heavier and much more powerfully built, Maulers are extremely aggressive and very difficult to control, requiring extreme focus and concentration from the Packmaster. Most Packmasters/Packlords strategically unleash the Maulers upon adversaries, because once the hounds are engaged, they are difficult to pull off of a victim or might refuse to retreat (even if near death). If a Mauler is engaged in melee combat, the Packmaster must lose one attack per melee and reduce initiative by half if trying to control, divert or redirect the Gorehound. Each additional Mauler that the Packmaster has to regain control of subtracts an additional melee attack/action. Only seasoned Packlords (Levels 9 or higher) have better control over Maulers (initiative is only reduced by -1 and no actions/attacks are lost).

Maulers are loyal to their Packmasters/Packlords and to other Bio-Tech hounds, but their prey drive will easily trigger them to attack alien predators (28% chance), War Mounts (14% chance) and even animal-like Host Armors (11% chance) without provocation, including allies (7% chance). House Artemis created the Mauler strain years ago, but considered them too unpredictable so they only produce them in limited numbers. Unfortunately, agents from House Janus acquired the genetic code and used it to turn a large percentage of their Gorehounds into Maulers. The Maulers are a bit of a double-edged sword. They are not nearly as fast or versatile as standard Gorehounds. Additionally, they lack the patience needed on missions not involving direct combat, such as search and rescue, demolitions detection, or reconnaissance. Maulers are only good for combat and killing; in these areas they excel. Currently, there are three basic Mauler configurations that have been developed; each with its own suite of enhancements and specialty for close quarters combat. **Note:** If the Gorehound already has any of the listed Enhancement(s) before the Mauler augmentation, then that Gorehound receives the pre-invested Bio-E points back and is

allowed to spend the points on something else. Once the process has been complete, any enhancements added following the Mauler conversion require double the usual Bio-E cost. Maulers will only listen to Packmasters (even non-elite) if their Packlord has fallen unconscious or has been killed. Because of this challenge and House Janus' reckless nature, some rogue feral packs of Maulers have been sighted.

**Cerberus Type:** There are many versions of Cerberus described throughout the Greek mythos; some describing the monster canine with a hundred heads to other stories indicating only one head teaming with a large mane of serpents. However, the most common and prevailing description is a massive, three-headed canine with a stinger-like tail. This was the source of inspiration that the Artemis Librarians enjoyed the most. Having a powerful three-headed Gorehound would be a formidable, melee combatant in the field and operate as the ultimate enforcer of a Gore-Pack. To serve as a base foundation for the Cerberus Mauler Gorehound, the Librarians will enhance a Packmaster's pre-existing Gore-Hound and grow two additional Gorehound heads & necks onto the pre-existing Gorehound's body and then add the following Bio-Enhancements: Advanced Senses, Increased M.D.C. (x4), Reinforced Exoskeleton, Enhanced Physical Strength, Stinger Tail, Medium Fangs and Medium Gore Cannon as a breath weapon for all heads. Any Bio-enhancements following this Mauler conversion requires double the usual Bio-E cost.

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

- Front Legs (2) – 116 each
- Hind Legs (2) – 144 each
- Stinger Tail – 107
- Medium Fangs (6) – 20 (2 for each head)
- Heads (3) – 184
- Main Body – 450

**Height:** 4.5 feet (1.4 m) at the shoulders, 6 feet (1.8 m) to the top of the head.

**Width:** 4 feet (1.2 m) shoulder to shoulder.

**Length:** 8 feet (2.4 m) nose to rump; plus a 16 foot tail (4.8 m).

**Weight:** 620 pounds (279 kg).

**Physical Strength:** 25 Supernatural.

**Horror Factor:** 14 individually, 17 with four or more Gorehounds.

**Augmentation/Gestation Period:** Three month gestation period, plus another three months growth time.

**Combat Bonuses:** 7 Attacks, +4 on initiative, +4 to strike in hand to hand combat (+5 for tail), +2 (+3 for tail) to parry, +3 to pull punch/bite/tail strike, +3 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 (+3 for tail) to disarm, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +4 on Perception Rolls, and +2 to save vs poisons/toxins and disease.

**Combat Capabilities:** Restrained Head Butt: 1D6 S.D.C., Full Strength Head Butt: 2D6 M.D. (+1D6 M.D.), Pawing Claw Strike with Front Legs: 5D6 M.D., Biting Attack: 3D6 M.D.+2D8 M.D. per head, Leap Attack: 2D6 M.D. and Running Leap Attack: 7D6 M.D. (Leap Attack and Running Leap Attack have standard Gorehound likelihood knockdown percentages (+5%) as mentioned in the **Splicers® RPG**, page 118).

**Penalties:** Max. running speed limited to 60 mph (96 km), regardless of additional enhancements. Cerberus Hounds are highly aggressive, requiring an extra action/attack to command or take control of them during combat. -10% to prowl. Unless it involves intimidating people, sports, a physical challenge, fighting, hunting or killing, the Cerberus simply isn't interested. This means work and assignments involving the mundane are either ignored entirely

or done quickly and sloppily. One exception is guard duty; the Cerberus Hound excels at guard duty.

**Shocker Type:** The Shocker Gorehound creates a living dynamo of electric power. Quite possibly the most radical of the Mauler types, Shockers are remade with a variety of enhancements and changes: Increased Metabolic Rate, Electrical Resistance, Electrical Discharger, Sonar, Electromagnetic Vision (the eyes resemble small, silver-colored, spider-like sensor spheres), Adrenaline surge, Increased M.D.C. (x2) and reinforced Exoskeleton. The Shocker's most notorious weapons is its Lightning Bite which it uses to disable, immobilize or to stun opponents. This makes the victim easier to secure or to destroy. The Shocker's Lightning Discharger Jaws can emit a powerful jolt with a range of 50-feet (15.2 m) or touch. The Lightning Bite delivers 1D6x10 M.D. damage plus save vs stun attack (15 or higher, with any possible bonuses from P.E.) or they will also lose initiative, two melee attacks and are a -4 on all combat actions for 2D4 melee rounds. The bite on Host Armors and War Mounts inflicts the 1D6X10 M.D. to the armor plus 2D6 S.D.C. or Hit Point damage to the pilot inside or riding the War Mount, but the pilot does not suffer any other penalties. Machines and Technojackers take only the M.D. inflicted per blast. Technojackers with electrical generation abilities and wearing their Nanobot armor are immune to the electrical damage but still receive the bite damage (3D8 M.D.) caused by the Shocker's maw.

If a Shocker's packmates arrive to join in melee combat the Shocker will either reduce its jolting electrical output or cease to electrocute the target. This allows other packmates to deliver their damaging effects and special arsenals (unless they too are also Shockers). If the Shocker is biting an opponent and another Shocker latches on to the same target, they can increase the electrical output, causing double the stun damage and duration. This is the maximum stun that can occur no matter how many more Shockers are biting the same target.

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

- Front Legs (2) – 94 each
- Hind Legs (2) – 122 each
- Tail – 94
- Sensor Spheres (5) – 34 each
- Head – 174
- Main Body – 350

**Height:** 4.5 feet (1.4 m) at the shoulders, 6 feet (1.8 m) to the top of the head.

**Width:** 3 feet (0.9 m) shoulder to shoulder.

**Length:** 10.5 feet (3.2 m) length from the tip of nose to the end of the tail.

**Weight:** 560 pounds (252 kg).

**Physical Strength:** 23, Supernatural.

**Horror Factor:** 12 individually, 16 with Orion's Pack.

**Augmentation/Gestation Period:** Six months gestation, plus an additional three months growth time.

**Combat Bonuses:** +1 attack per melee round, +5 on initiative, +5 to strike, +3 to pull punch/bite, +3 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to disarm, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, and +2 to save vs poisons/toxins and disease, +20 mph (32 km) to running speed. It can also leap 20 feet (6.1 m) higher and 40 feet (12.2 m) farther across than usual. Immune to all stun weapons and attacks. Half damage from electrical-based attacks, including Lightning. **Note:** When a Shocker is under the Adrenaline surge it has +2 Attacks



(7 total) and an additional +20 mph (32 km) per melee round for 1D4+1 minutes.

**Penalties:** Shockers burn through energy at an alarming rate; the Shocker hound requires a 20 minute nap for every four hours of activity, in addition to normal sleep/rest requirements. Furthermore, Shockers eat nearly constantly, requiring triple the usual amount of food, 30-60 pounds (13.5 to 27 kg) of meat or carrion, for its metabolism. Shockers are also susceptible to Electromagnetic Pulse attacks which, if hit directly by a pulse, causes the Shocker to have all of its combat bonuses and attacks reduced by half for 2D4+1 melee rounds and its sensors are unreliable; temporarily blinding the Shocker Gorehound for 1D4 melee rounds. A blinded Shocker will attack anything near it minus its Packmaster and packmates, which are scent coded to the Shocker. If the Packmaster is in line of sight of the Shocker and spends one melee action, they can guide the Shocker's movements and residual attacks.

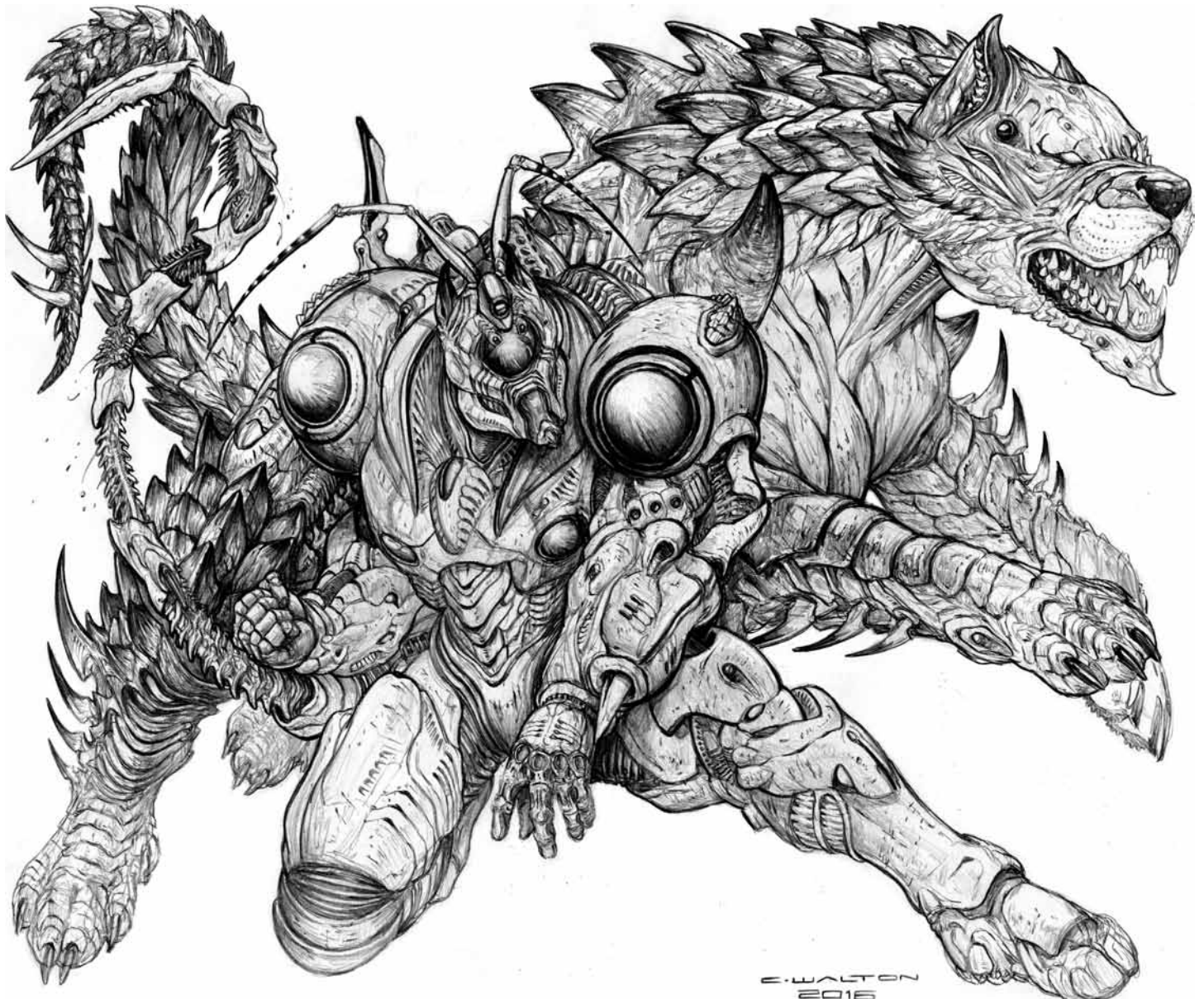
**Shredder Type:** The most alien looking of all the Maulers, Shredders appear to be a mass of walking spikes, serrated spurs, teeth, and horns. Able to absorb tremendous punishment and virtually impervious to pain, Shredders think nothing of jumping in where the fighting is the thickest. To create a Shredder, the Librar-

ians will enhance a Packmaster's pre-existing Gore-Hound with the following Bio-Enhancements and changes: Advanced Senses, Acid Blood, Horned Defense, Increased M.D.C. (x2), Reinforced Exoskeleton, Suction Cups and Gripping Hairs, Combat Tail and each leg has a row of four Combat Spurs. The Shredder earns its name with a devastating set of bio-organic chainsaws housed in its upper and lower jaws. Each jaw has independent rows of rotary teeth resembling serrated blades that cause overwhelming damage (1D8x10 M.D.) to anything bitten by a Shredder. Shredders are dicers in melee combat and with all the spikes, horns, and serrated edges, they are extremely difficult to parry, entangle, pin or grapple with (Opponents reduce all parry bonuses by half). However, despite their playful nature and eagerness to romp and roughhouse, they are very difficult to train and to play with. Trying to pet a Shredder is like trying to pet a squirming, wiggling blender running at full speed. When Shredders are excited, even fellow platoon members know to look out to avoid undesirable slashes when they dart off.

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

Front Legs (2) – 109 each

Hind Legs (2) – 149 each





Tail – 117  
Horns (16) – 61 each  
Combat Spurs (16) – 15 each (four on each leg)  
Head – 197  
Main Body – 390

**Height:** 4.5 feet (1.4 m) at the shoulders, 6 feet (1.8 m) to the top of the head.

**Width:** 3 feet (0.9 m) shoulder to shoulder.

**Length:** 10.5 feet (3.2 m) from the tip of the nose to the end of the tail.

**Weight:** 560 pounds (252 kg).

**Physical Strength:** 23, Supernatural.

**Horror Factor:** 13 individually, 16 with four or more Gorehounds.

**Augmentation/Gestation Period:** Two months gestation plus another three months growth.

**Combat Bonuses:** 6 attacks per melee round, +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +3 parry, +5 disarm, +3 to pull punch/bite, +3 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, and +2 to save vs poisons/toxins and disease. Any and all hand to hand attacks directed against the Shredder with a strike roll of 12 or less means the attacker will hit one of the horns and inflict 2D10 M.D. damage to himself. A running ram/body attack or block inflicts an extra 2D6 M.D. in addition to the paw strike/P.S. damage for the Gorehound.

**Combat Capabilities:** Full Strength Head Butt: 3D6 M.D., Pawing Claw Strike with Front Legs: 5D6 M.D., Biting Attack: 3D6 M.D., Leap Attack: 2D6 M.D. and Running Leap Attack: 7D6 M.D. (Leap Attack and Running Leap Attack have the standard Gorehound likelihood knockdown percentages as mentioned in the **Splicers® RPG**, page 118).

**Penalties:** Shredders simply ignore pain. While this may sound like a good thing, Shredders will often take on anything, easily biting off more than they can chew and fight until they collapse (down to one M.D.C.), ignoring discomfort, injury and blood loss and without noticeable physical penalties/incapacitation. This can lead to severe injury, complications and death, even when seeking medical help could have stopped bleeding and prevented further damage. Packlords must always keep a close eye on Shredder hounds.

# Great House Artemis

## Non-Player Characters

### Warlord Tristan

### Artemis the 4th

Since the first days of the Resistance, the Great House Artemis has been one of the leading forces in the fight against N.E.X.U.S. Always a military powerhouse, they have become best known over the past few decades for the steady stream of ingenious Bio-Tech devices and weaponry that continue to spring from their Gene Pools. Under the guidance and leadership of their current Warlord, Tristan Artemis IV, the House has flourished. Warlord Artemis is a hard-charging fighter and a natural leader on the battlefield, headstrong and straightforward. Despite the impressive pedigreed heritage of his royal family and a privileged upbringing, Tristan

was drawn to tales of combat and showed a natural aptitude to strategy and tactics. With some resistance from his noble family, Tristan began his Dreadguard training as a young teenager. By his sixteenth birthday, the future Warlord had a dozen major battles under his belt and had received numerous decorations for bravery. Though young, he showed an extraordinary grasp of battlefield tactics and was consistently able to think clearly in combat.

By age twenty, Tristan was promoted and given command of one of the House outposts. There he gained a reputation for being a fair and even-handed commander. He insisted on leading from the front, standing shoulder to shoulder with his troops and earning the respect of those who followed him. It was also at the outpost that he began taking an interest in the design and development of bio-weapons and equipment.

The next step in the Warlord's growing fame blossomed at the age of twenty-three. Still in command of the outpost and continuing to make a name for himself, he achieved a stunning victory over the Machine. Leading a force of several hundred, he soundly defeated a full strength Robot Battalion. Tristan orchestrated the perfect ambush, his troops splitting the battalion into smaller groups and eliminating them entirely. Tristan himself personally destroyed one of the two Land Dominators assigned to the Battalion. Even more impressive was the fact that the Land Dominator was being possessed by the N.E.X.U.S. personality, Kali. This victory stunned both N.E.X.U.S. and the Resistance and placed Artemis on the fast track to leadership of the House and brought him to the top tier of the most wanted list by the Machine. Tristan became the Warlord of the Great House Artemis at the unheard of age of twenty-six.

With his newfound leadership and the resources of the Great House at his disposal, the freshly minted Warlord began to explore his interest in bio-weapons design to its fullest. One of his earliest ideas was the formation of an elite, personal strike force dubbed "Beast Walkers." Shrouded in secrecy, all Beast Walker candidates were enhanced to some degree, then outfitted with tremendously powerful Host Armor, easily able to take on squads of robots single-handedly. Tristan was the first to volunteer for the process and led the Walkers himself. The Walkers were a terror on the battlefield for a number of years, regularly completing missions others would consider suicidal. Yet the victories came at a heavy cost and the group was ultimately disbanded.

Like his natural aptitude for battle, the Warlord's ideas have led to great prosperity and recognition for the Great House of Artemis. Its innovative designs are considered to be top of the line and its research and development is second to none. Artemis grown weapons and equipment of all kinds can be found throughout the Resistance.

Now approaching fifty, Warlord Artemis shows very little signs of slowing down. Healthy and trim, he continues to keep his mind and body honed and disciplined. His daily routine includes a grueling training and workout regimen that many half his age can't keep up with. He considers mental fitness as important as physical and regularly enjoys strategic games and tests to keep his mind and body honed. Though by necessity, he is limited by his title, Warlord Artemis fights at the front line whenever he can. In battle, his massive, saber-toothed Host Armor, Ailuros, is usually where the fighting is thickest, its great maw and spiked mace tail tearing through enemy robots like a force of nature. Where Warlord Artemis goes, the House follows, rightly confident of victory.

**Full Name:** Tristan Artemis IV, Warlord of the Great House Artemis

**Alignment:** Scrupulous.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 16, M.E. 20, M.A. 23, P.S. 19, P.P. 18, P.E. 19, P.B. 14, Spd 18.

**M.D.C.:** 82, plus any from Living or Host Armor. Due to enhancements made as part of the Beast Walker program, Warlord Artemis is a minor M.D.C. being.

**Age:** 48. **Height:** 6 feet, 1 inch (1.8 m). **Weight:** 215 pounds (96.7 kg).

**Appearance:** Warlord Artemis looks like a typical career military officer: neat, ramrod straight, his close-cropped hair slightly graying at the temples. He's lithe and muscular with just a hint of a stomach that somehow resists his punishing workouts. A handsome man, his face nevertheless carries the look and the lines of age, war and responsibility.

**Disposition:** Tristan is blunt and no nonsense, with an aura of authority and leadership. He is usually straightforward and brutally honest, especially when dealing with military strategy and evaluation. These same characteristics often make diplomacy problematic for the Warlord; he has little patience for the verbal feints and parries required. Despite his sometimes harsh and demanding demeanor, the Warlord can be surprisingly friendly, sincere, and open under the right circumstances.

Strict but fair, Tristan is always willing to listen to all sides of an argument or discussion, especially if presented in an organized and cohesive fashion. His experience has taught him that all points of view, no matter how different from his own, have a level of merit. He is a charismatic leader almost universally loved by his House and especially its troops.

**Experience Level:** 12th level enhanced Dreadguard.

**Combat Skills:** Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Boxing, Kick Boxing, Wrestling.

**Attacks per Melee:** 6.

**Bonuses** (All bonuses, including those from stats): +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +9 to parry, +9 to dodge, +5 to auto-dodge, +2 to entangle, +3 to pull punch, +5 to roll with punch, +4 to disarm, +8 S.D.C. damage, +2 save vs mind control, +2 save vs toxic gases, poisons, drugs and disease, +3 save vs Horror Factor, +5 save vs insanity, 75% trust/intimidate, +8% vs coma/death.

**Combat Skills:** Automatic Knockout on Natural 20, Back Flip, Back Flip Attack, Back Flip Escape, Body Flip/Throw, Critical Strike on an unmodified 18-20, Roundhouse Kick (3D6 damage), Axe Kick (2D8 damage), Karate Kick (2D6), Knee Strike (1D8), Leap Kick (3D6 but counts as 2 melee attacks), and Jump Kick (4D10 damage, but must be the only kick that melee and uses up all attacks for that round. However, Artemis can still parry and dodge, just not make any other attacks). Body block/tackle does ID4 damage and the opponent must dodge or parry to avoid being knocked down. If knocked down the victim loses initiative and one melee attack for that round. Pin/incapacitate on a roll of 18, 19, or 20. Victims who are pinned are held in such a way that they cannot physically attack or move. Crush/squeeze is a bear hug-style hold that does 1D4 damage per squeeze attack.

**Special Abilities:** Because of his Beast Walker modifications, Warlord Artemis has been enhanced to some degree. Though not quite superhuman, the Warlord's senses are greatly heightened. He is a physical workhorse, able to push himself longer and harder than unaltered humans.

**Super Endurance:** Can remain alert and operate at full efficiency for up to 3 days without sleep. Tristan requires only about 6 hours of sleep every 3 days.

**Super Healing:** Regenerates 1D4 M.D.C. per minute and can regrow any lost appendages except eyes.

**Superior Senses:** Crystal clear sight and hearing (can clearly recognize a human face at 1,000 feet/305 m and hear a whisper at 50 feet/15 m). Sense of smell is enhanced and the Warlord can follow a scent trail that is up to two hours old.

**Skills of Note:** Appraise Goods, Bio-Comms, Biology, Climbing, Creative Writing, Excavation, First Aid, Genetics, History, Host Armor Combat, Land Navigation, Machine Lore, Machine Technology, Military Etiquette, Operate Bio-Equipment, War Mount Combat, Wilderness Survival and Xenology at 98%, Creative Writing 85%, Bartering 66%, Creative Writing and Research 55%, Public Speaking 50%, Boxing, Kick Boxing, Running and Wrestling.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** Sword, Knife, Heavy Bio-Weapons, Light Bio-Weapons, and Paired Weapons.

**Allies:** As the Warlord of a Great House, Artemis can rely on the support of nearly all members of the House. In addition, the Great House has strong ties with numerous cells and factions within the Resistance, including the House of the Barren Marsh and several Technojacker clans.

**Enemies:** The Warlord considers N.E.X.U.S. and its forces to be his personal enemy. Only slightly below N.E.X.U.S. are Waste Crawlers and other raiders. Warlord Artemis considers these to be almost as bad as the Machine itself.

**Money and Valuables:** Warlord Artemis can access any of the resources of the Great House.

**Weapons and Equipment:** Warlord Artemis primarily relies on his Host Armor, Ailuros (detailed below), for almost all combat. In the alternative, he can access any weapon or equipment in the Great House.

## Ailuros

### Personal Host Armor of Warlord Artemis

When expecting combat, Warlord Artemis normally dons his Host Armor, Ailuros. Designed with speed, stealth and infantry combat in mind, Ailuros looks like a massive, bipedal saber-tooth tiger. It is roughly humanoid shaped but big and husky, with broad shoulders, a barrel chest, relatively slim waist, powerful, thick legs and a formidable spiked mace tail. It can run on two legs, but increases its speed by sprinting on all fours in a loping manner. The hands and toes are clawed and a number of weapons add to the firepower of any weapons carried into combat (typically heavy weapons). The robust head and neck are strongly influenced by a prehistoric smilodon, with almond shaped eyes, sharp, pointed ears, and a powerful muzzle housing massive fangs and metal-crushing jaw muscles. Ailuros has hands with two thick fingers and a thumb, each ending in a hooked claw, but the hands have full manual dexterity and can use weapons and equipment.

Like Artemis, his Host Armor has been enhanced as part of the Beast Walker program. A major modification, and ultimate failing of the program, was an attempt to grant Host Armors a level of independent thought and action; not true sentience but something very close. While the modification was ultimately successful, the newly granted independence placed an extraordinary mental, physical, and even emotional strain on the Dreadguard who controlled them. Over time, most members of the program began to suffer various physical and psychological problems. Some became

rabidly violent. Others devolved into near catatonic states, living out their lives with little more than a blank stare.

Almost all the original Beast Walkers are dead or retired now, but a few still remain throughout the Resistance, Warlord Artemis included. Sadly, a few of the survivors are so insane they now hunt their former comrades and other Splicers for sport or vengeance. The guilt constantly gnaws at Warlord Artemis and he personally looks into any reports that sound like a Beast Walker.

Despite the dangers, Warlord Artemis continues to pilot Ailuros. For reasons no one can be sure of, he's shown remarkable resiliency against the strain. Artemis functions equally well as both a heavy assault unit and stealth operative, though Artemis prefers to be in the middle of the action. As a front-line assault unit, Artemis and Ailuros decimate enemies with barrages while closing the distance for hand to hand. In close combat, the Armor becomes a predatory whirlwind of teeth, claws, and tail. During battle, Ailuros can be seen cutting through fortifications and robotic limbs, often spearheading the charge, his troops following behind to support him.

## “Ailuros,” 12th Level Warlord Host Armor

**Class:** Warlord Host Armor (Enhanced).

**Crew:** Warlord Tristan Artemis IV.

**Level:** Twelfth.

**Bio-E Remaining:** 45 Bio-E points.

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

Hands (2) – 67 each

Arms (2) – 167 each

Legs (2) – 217 each

Feet (2) – 69 each

Organic Thrusters (4) – 120 each

Spiked Hammer Tail – 100

Long-Range Spore Discharger – 60

Omega Blaster Plate (Left Chest) – 107

Bio Energy Expulsion Vent (Right Forearm) – 56

Electro-Whip Tentacles (3) – 15 each

\*Head – 197

\*\*Main Body: 425 and Bio-Force Field – 100

**Speed:**

**Running:** 120 mph (192 km) Note that the act of running does tire out its operator, but at a fatigue rate 90% less than normal, thanks to the musculature of the Host Armor.

**Leaping:** Can leap up to 20 feet (6.1 m) high or 40 feet (12.2 m) across from a standing position.

**Digging:** 20 mph (32 km) through sand or dirt, but half as fast through rock or stone. Digging does tire out the Host Armor, but at a fatigue rate only 50% less than normal. To dig down enough to adequately hide the host takes 3D6 melee rounds.

**Swimming:** 30 mph (48 km/26 knots), and swimming tires out the pilot in the same manner as running. The organic thrusters can be used to rocket underwater at speeds of up to 100 mph (160 km).

**Underwater Depth:** The Host Armor can withstand pressure up to 700 feet (213.4 m) down.

**Flying:** 200 mph (320 km), with a maximum altitude of 25,000 feet (7620 m).

**Statistical Data:**

**Height:** 11 feet (3.3 m), **Width:** 4 feet (1.2 m), **Length:** 3 feet (0.9 m), **Weight:** 540 lbs (243 kg), including Artemis' weight.

**Cargo:** Only what he can carry or strap to his back.

**Physical Strength:** 40 (Splicer Robotic Strength).

**Operational Lifetime:** Currently has a 52 year life span.

**Bio-Regeneration Rate:** 1D6 M.D.C. per minute (6D6x10 M.D.C. per hour) for the main body and 1 M.D.C. per minute (1D6x10 M.D.C. per hour) for all other locations.

**Horror Factor:** 7 (against humans and similar beings, none against the machines).

**Feeding/Metabolism:** The suit is carnivorous and eats from 10 to 30 lbs (4.5 to 13.5 kg) of animal matter a day. It may gorge on up to 50 to 80 lbs (22.5 to 36 kg) at one time. After gorging, the Host Armor can go for 2D4 days without feeding and without suffering any ill effects.

**Sleep Requirements:** The Host Armor has been modified as part of the Beast Walker program and requires only 2D4 hours of sleep/rest/inactivity every 72 hours.

**Instinctive skills:** Land Navigation 70%, Tracking (people) 65%, Track Animals 80%, and Wilderness Survival 60%.

**Attacks per Melee:** 10.

**Combat Bonuses:** +11 on initiative, +7 to strike, +13 to parry, +14 to dodge, +6 to auto-dodge, +3 to entangle, +6 to pull punch, +11 to roll with punch and +5 to disarm.

**Senses & Features:** Enhanced Passive Nightvision (light amplification), Range: 6,000 feet (1,829 m).

Additional Senses & Features include Enhanced Hearing, Motion Detection, and Sensitive Whiskers.

**Biological Defenses:** Bio-Force Field, Reinforced Exoskeleton, Regeneration: Enhanced, Enhanced Neurological Connections, Resistance to Heat. Legs & Feet: Elongated Running Legs, Organic Thrusters

**Standard Weapons:** 1. Medium-Sized Climbing Claws, 2. Large Saber Teeth, 3. Bio-E Vent (right forearm), 4. Long-Range Spore Discharger (right shoulder) and 5. Omega Blaster (left chest panel).

**Specialized Weapons:** As the Warlord of the House that specializes in new Bio-Technology & Weapons Dealing, Artemis has had some experimental and prototype weapons built into the armor. These modifications are currently not on the open market, but may be at some point in the future.

**1. Viper Injectors:** Each of the massive ivory saber teeth are strikingly similar to a viper's fangs, having small of hollow cores that receive a chemical concoction from a gland located near the base each tooth. On a successful bite attack, the chemicals can be injected directly in or on the target from a slit-like exit orifice on the front of the fang near the tip. (If the opening were at the very tip of the fang, its strength would be compromised and it would lack the sharp point necessary to penetrate a target.) In the alternative, Ailuros can spit or spray the chemicals a short distance. Because of this modification, Ailuros periodically sheds its fangs and re-grows new ones roughly every two months. The regrowth process is fairly rapid, with the new fangs fully grown in about 6 hours.

**Rate of Fire:** The chemicals can be released once per successful bite attack.

**Maximum Effective Range:** By bite or short-range spit of up to 12 feet (3.6 m).

**Payload:** The glands produce enough chemicals for up to ten attacks every 24 hours. The chemicals automatically regenerate within 24 hours of initial use.

**Damage:** Against inorganic substances (ceramics, glass, plastics, metals, etc.), the chemicals act as a burning corrosive, inflicting 3D8 M.D. on the initial attack, plus an additional 2D8 M.D. for 1D4+1 melee rounds or until washed off. The chemicals can be

used to burn through metal locks, doors, hatches, etc. and are ideal for acts of sabotage.

Against organic substances (living flesh, fur, leather, Host Armors, etc.), the chemicals cause severe burning, inflicting 2D8 M.D. on the initial attack, plus an additional 2D6 M.D. per round for 1D4+1 melee rounds or until washed off. In addition, the chemicals cause intense eye irritation and blurred vision (victims lose initiative and are -4 to strike, parry, dodge, and disarm for the duration).

**2. Spiked Hammer Tail:** Ailuros's clubbing tail is lined with numerous small spikes. While the spikes serve to increase the striking damage of the tail, they are also a devastating weapon on their own. On a successful strike, a number of spikes can be made to break off, lodging themselves in the target. The small spikes only require a few seconds to regrow and not all are fired at once; the tail will not run out of spikes during combat. The separation from the tail triggers a complex chemical process that causes the spikes to explode within a few seconds. The explosions are small and localized (no blast radius), but quite powerful as the force is narrowly focused directly into the target. The resulting explosions produce a powerful concussive shock, capable of knocking most opponents off their feet.

**Mega-Damage:** A strike with the tail inflicts 6D6 M.D. The spikes explode within a few seconds (one melee action) and inflict an additional 1D6 M.D. Additionally, targets who weigh less than a ton have 01-45% chance of being knocked off their feet from the blast. If the victim is knocked down, he loses the initiative and one melee attack/action.

**3. Electro Whips (3):** Three retractable tentacles can extend from the forearms to lash and grapple opponents. The tentacles are prehensile, so they can be used to entangle, and even hold and carry items or enemies. Once per melee round, an electrical charge can be sent through the tentacles to inflict additional damage and possibly stun any trapped victims.

**Mega-Damage:** A whip or lash attack inflicts: 2D8 M.D. per tentacle or 1D4x10+8 M.D from all three. May be used to entangle or yank the target around.

**Electro-Blast:** As little as 1D6x10 S.D.C. or 1D8 M.D. per each tentacle or 3D6 M.D. from all three. This electrical damage can be inflicted when used as a whip (add it to the strike damage) or when an opponent touches or is held by one or more tentacles. There is also a chance that the shock will stun an opponent for 1D4 melee rounds. The stunned opponent has only two attacks/actions per round, no initiative, -8 on all combat maneuvers like strike, parry, etc., and skill performance and speed are reduced by 70%.

The likelihood of a stun is as follows:

01-92% Human/humanoid without body armor.

01-65% M.D.C. humanoid with no body armor or human in partial armor.

01-50% Human in Living Armor, Nex-Androids and drones, minor M.D.C. animals or creatures.

01-30% Host Armor or Power Armored opponent, human-sized combat robots or M.D.C. animals or creatures.

01-05% Large combat robots and M.D.C. animals or creatures.

**P.S. of Tentacles:** 15

**Range:** 10 feet (3 m) beyond the reach of the arm and hand.

**Tentacle Bonuses:** +1 to strike and parry, +2 to disarm, and +4 to entangle. Bonuses apply only when the tentacles are used.

**Payload:** Effectively unlimited.

**4. Hand to Hand Combat:** Tristan enjoys raining heavy gunfire down on the machines heavy gunfire as if he were firing dev-

astating thundering bolts created by the wrath of the gods of Mt. Olympus. However, when it comes to fighting Splicers, he would rather use long-range weapons with strategic discernment and discretion; often preferring the Warrior's Way of engaging in hand to hand combat. His knowledge and understanding of predatory species and big cats melds seamlessly into his combative tactics and prowess as he would appear to pilot the Host Armor more akin to a feline monster and predator rather than an actual human.

The damage below includes all applicable features.

*Head Butt* does +1D6 M.D., a *Running Pounce/Charge* does an extra +3D6 M.D., and +2D6 M.D. bonus to *punches, elbows* and *kicks* from the character. +1 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

*Restrained Punch:* 5D6+ 15 S.D.C. or 1D4 M.D.

*Full Strength Punch:* 4D6 M.D.

*Power Punch:* 6D6 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

*Bite:* 7D8 M.D.

*Claw Strike:* 6D6 M.D.

*Kick:* 4D6+4 M.D.

*Leap Kick:* 4D8 M.D., but counts as two attacks.

*Head Butt:* 2D6 M.D.

*Body Flip/Throw:* 1D6 M.D. plus loses one melee attack/action.

*Body Block/Ram:* 6D6 M.D. and has a 01-50% chance of knocking an opponent who is as large as 12 feet (3.6 m) tall off his feet. If successful, the victim loses initiative and two melee attacks/actions, but counts as two of Ailuros' melee attacks.

**5. Beast Walker Modifications:** As one of the original Beast Walkers, Ailuros has some level of independence and can take limited action on its own. If for some reason the pilot inside the Host Armor is rendered unconscious, the creature will take over. It operates under a bloodthirsty, alien symbiote intelligence with an appetite for destruction. The Host Armor will first attack any threats in the immediate area, with no regard towards strategy, battle plans, or collateral damage. Once the immediate threats are removed, it will attack any target that doesn't appear to be totally harmless (robots are ALWAYS considered hostile). However, a Host Armor will not attack anyone in Living Armor or another Host Armor. Other humans may be considered potential targets, especially if armed or acting in a threatening manner. The Host Armor continues its rampage until the immediate area, roughly 100 foot (30.5 m) radius, looks safe. It will then retreat to a safe area (outpost, Great House, staging area, etc.) until the pilot has healed or regained consciousness.

## Drake Benton

### 9th Level Archangel

Once a fierce Dreadguard, Drake discovered that he enjoyed the freedom of aerial mobility far more than being limited to pure ground warfare. With roving Machine forces patrolling the lands and hunting Splicers, he liked having the most versatile means of fighting. After a battle, he always looked to the skies, the domain of the Machine and Angels. Both could choose to engage ground or aerial targets or could strategize tactics from a better viewpoint. Drake was so focused and consumed with the ideas of surviving the battlefield and destroying his enemies that he realized he had overlooked other possibilities and the liberty that Biotech had to offer. Drake sought bio-organic thrusters and once his Host Ar-



mor received them, he thought he was a “Flyer” among the Angels until he was shot down. How wrong and humbled he was as he was left smoldering on the jungle floor, watching the Archangels avenge his demise by dismantling the Machines in mid-air with clever acrobatics, daredevil flying and precise weapon strikes. As Drake climbed out of the host armor’s carcass, he knew he would rise as an Angel. Drake went to Warlord Artemis for a change and was granted the opportunity to prove himself. Several years later, Drake has risen to become the pioneer of the “Angel Core” program and is testing out the Archangel stealth fighter prototype “Nighthawk” Living Body Armor.

Like many Archangels, Drake is confident, bold, quick to size-up a situation and even quicker to respond. An expert pilot, Drake acts as a “flanker” in combat, often hanging back and waiting to see how the enemy will act before taking action. He has such a good sense of how his Wing Pack handles that he receives an extra +10% on all piloting rolls and +3 to strike and dodge while flying. Drake enjoys strafing runs against ground troops and is famous for his ability to fly only a few feet above the ground, an action that often causes enemy flyers to inadvertently crash. During combat, he will often buzz inches over the heads of ground troops, dropping bombs and insults alike. Unfortunately, he has a somewhat

overblown sense of his own skill, however, and sometimes takes unnecessary risks with the assumption that no Machine could possibly be good enough to shoot him down.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 14, M.A. 14, M.E. 14, P.S. 18, P.P. 19, P.E. 18, P.B. 12, Spd 21.

**Notable Skills:** Pilot Wing Packs 98%, Parachuting 98%, Detect Ambush 75%.

**Notable Equipment:** Drake currently pilots the Nighthawk; a prototype Living Body Armor and Wing Pack designed to test out the newest features and concepts of Artemis for the Archangel Stealth Fighter combat squadron. The Living Body Armor is a sleek, Heavy Hide Armor (150 Main Body M.D.C.) with a dual visor and a living wing pack fused to the suit. The Wing Pack has all standard features plus the wings are grown with the same ceramic style and capabilities used by the Griffin War Mounts. This enables it to fly, maneuver and slash adversaries with ease. A slash from a single wing inflicts 4D6+10 M.D. A high-speed strafe attack inflicts 1D8x10 M.D., but counts as two attacks (**Bonuses:** +1 to strike and +2 to parry). Drake’s Wing Pack is equipped with: Compound Eyes, Long-Range Spore Discharger and Bio-Energy Vents on both wings. Drake’s armor has elbow Bone Blades, 6 Super Light Cells (3 on each chest

plate), and Armored Antenna radar on the helmet (features are the same as Radar; see the **Splicers® RPG**, page 81). Drake frequently carries a Pod Rifle, Bore Pistol, and several explosives for strafing runs.

**Flying Speed and noteworthy Bonuses:** Flying: Top Speed 472 mph (755 km), Cruising speed is typically 100 to 170 mph (160 to 272 km). Accelerated Dive 672 mph (1,075 km) in a steep downward dive.

6 Attacks (9 Attacks Airborne).

## Shauna Davies

### Senior Sweeper

A bombshell in every sense of the word, Shauna Davies is one of the most experienced explosive experts in the Great House. A stunningly beautiful woman, Shauna grew up surrounded by weapons and bio-tech. Her father was a tough and rugged Roughneck who taught her everything he knew about weapons, N.E.X.U.S., tactics, and fighting. By the time she entered her teens, Shauna could shoot, cuss, and drink as well as any front-line soldier. Though she looks like a model, she has the heart of a fighter and loves the military life. But she loves to blow things up even more. From simple booby traps to demolishing buildings, Shauna knows precisely how to use explosives to get the most effect. Her hand-crafted explosives are more potent than normal and she even breeds her own special Chigs and Migs. Thankfully, she loves defusing explosives almost as much as blowing things up. Despite her stunning looks, Shauna constantly tries to downplay them so her skills and talent are taken more seriously. She often acts like “just one of the guys,” drinking and raising hell with the best of them. More than one lecherous admirer has learned the painful lesson of keeping his hands to himself.

Shauna seems to have almost supernatural luck. She’s never had an accident and hasn’t suffered so much as a scratch from an explosion. Shauna’s presence on any team is seen as a sign of good fortune and she’s constantly requested for high value missions. Despite her reputation, Shauna doesn’t trust assistants and does all the work herself. She breeds her own special Chigs and Migs and produces a small number of “custom” explosives for use on missions. With the proper time and resources, Shauna will gladly modify explosives for other members of her team. All explosives Shauna modifies (including her personal Chigs and Migs) inflict 50% more damage. For example, a normal Chig inflicts 5D8 M.D., while one of her specially grown Chigs inflict 7D8 M.D. Shauna can only modify a few dozen improved explosives a week, so she will never have more than 5D6 modified explosives on hand at any given time.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 19, M.A. 10, M.E. 19, P.S. 14, P.P. 18, P.E. 16, P.B. 22, Spd 9.

**Age:** 29. **Height:** 5 feet, 1 inch (1.5 m). **Weight:** 118 pounds (53.5 kg).

**Notable Skills:** Disarm Bio-Tech Explosives 87%, Disarm Metallic Explosives 67%, Trap Construction 76%, Trap & Mine Detection 90%, Machine Technology 95%.

**Notable Equipment:** Shellback Armor (Bio-Force Field, Trench Foot Mines, and Casting Launcher), Bio-Rocket Slinger, Bio-E Pistol, 2D4 modified Chigs, 1D4 modified Migs, and 2D4 modified conventional explosive charges.

## Alexander Long

### 5th level Sweeper

At a glance, no one would give Alexander a second thought. Rather short, somewhat unassuming, he normally avoids eye contact, his movements fidgety and nervous. But his eyes come alive, his hands as steady as a surgeon, and his face lights up when doing what he truly loves: “playing” with explosives. Alexander’s booby traps are quickly becoming legendary. He has set up explosives in small packages such as clothing and even in letters. He can disguise mines so thoroughly nobody suspects them until it’s too late. Alexander loves his job. Some say a little too much. His stories about explosives and their effects (hilarious to him, horrifying to most everyone else) make people nervous and can even be intimidating.

Even with the stories, Alexander can be a charming and funny guy, yet very eccentric. Alexander almost always has an explosive device on his person, sometimes something visible like a grenade or Chig. Other times, it may be disguised as a fairly common item like a pen or large button. Many people half expect him to explode himself one of these days.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 22, M.A. 13, M.E. 20, P.S. 13, P.P. 17, P.E. 16, P.B. 9, Spd 10.

**Age:** 31. **Height:** 5 feet, 11 inch (1.5 m). **Weight:** 243 pounds (109 kg).

**Notable Skills:** Disarm Bio-Tech Explosives 75%, Disarm Metallic Explosives 55%, Chemistry 60%, Concealment 45%, Sleight of Hand, Camouflage 65%.

**Notable Equipment:** Shellback armor (Reinforced Exoskeleton, 12 Organic Rockets, Light Bore Cannon), Pod Rifle, Light Cell Laser Pistol, 1D4 Chigs, 1D4 Migs, and 2D6 modified conventional explosive charges (some hidden).

## Senator Norris Bane

### 15th Level Dreadguard

Senator Bane is many things to many people: a legendary warrior, an elder statesman, a powerful politician and an aging warhorse past his prime. Regardless of personal opinions, even the most passionate detractor speaks of the Senator with grudging respect. An imposing figure at what many consider to be an advanced age, the Senator has an aura of authority about him. His battered, weathered visage bears the scars of a lifetime of war. Marred by an ugly slash that travels down the entire left side of his face and across his throat, his otherwise handsome face seems to be locked in a perpetual grimace. How he survived such a horrendous wound remains a mystery and it’s left the Senator with a voice that is little more than a gravelly rasp. Yet even the rasp has the weight of authority behind it. The Senator is a man who is not only accustomed to giving orders, he’s accustomed to them being followed.

Although a little too old (and too important) to be sent on combat operations, the Senator deeply misses the glory and danger of fighting. In his youth, he was a military machine whose only concern was ridding the world of N.E.X.U.S. Yet the Senator was never a raving lunatic or bloodthirsty berserker, but a true noble warrior with a warrior mentality. He often would spare the lives of opponents he deemed worthy of mercy and on more than one occasion, this honor would return to save his life. To this day, there

are at least a dozen high-ranking members of various Houses or factions (and it is said, even a Waste Crawler tribe leader) who owe their lives to Senator Bane's mercy. Such is the legacy of one of the Resistance's great Dreadguard, a man of uncompromising principle and courage.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 15, M.A. 25, M.E. 20, P.S. 13, P.P. 13, P.E. 15, P.B. 12, Spd 10.

**Notable Skills:** Host Pilot Combat 98%, Military Etiquette 98%, Public Speaking 98%.

**Notable Equipment:** "Aegis Thrasher," his personal Host Armor, has all the standard features, plus Chameleon Skin, Heavy Gore Cannon, Medium Bore Cannon, and Tentacle Harpoons.

## Great House Janus

### Ambush Team

(Quick stats)

## Colin Loker

### Call Sign "Apollo," 10th level Dreadguard

As a child, Colin displayed exceptional physical talents and was encouraged to pursue Dreadguard training. As expected, he excelled and quickly rose to the rank of Platoon Commander. Colin has been offered advancement to the Janus Senate on numerous occasions, yet each time he's refused the promotion. This Dreadguard is a natural-born warrior, a pure fighter through and through, who feels most at home on the battlefield with his platoon. A valiant and brilliant soldier, Apollo and his Apollo's Warriors Platoon have repeatedly beaten numerically superior forces. He is widely recognized as one of the Resistance's foremost experts in small unit tactics and one of the most accomplished platoon commanders alive. He is very proud of his skills and the fame that follows it.

An extremely honorable man in combat and with his platoon, Dreadguard Apollo is not without his flaws. Though he recognizes their strategic benefits, Apollo despises Technojackers (referring to them as "undesirable elements") and will only grudgingly accept their assistance. When not on duty, Colin is a drinker and a brawler; the terror of any place he visits. He never hurts anyone seriously (the brawls are mostly for fun) but he cares little for property damage.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 14, M.A. 16, M.E. 16, P.S. 21, P.P. 23, P.E. 18, P.B. 10, Spd 18.

**Notable Skills:** Host Pilot Combat 98%, Operate Bio-Equipment 98%, Forced March.

**Notable Equipment:** "Helios," his personal Host Armor. Helios has all the standard features, plus Resistance to Heat, Heat Projector Cannon, Plasma Breath, Combat Spurs and Screamer Grenades.

**Combat Bonuses:** 6 attacks per melee; +2 initiative, +9 to strike, +11 to parry, +11 to dodge, +2 to entangle, +2 to disarm, +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

## Leon Gold

### Call Sign "Hyperion," 8th Level Dreadnaught

When the Dreadnaught armor finally became a reality, Leon Gold was the obvious (and only) choice for the pilot. Born and raised in the Wastes, Leon came to the House as a teenager after his tribe had been wiped out by N.E.X.U.S. His skill with all types of weaponry and unarmed combat was unmatched, but his attitude was terrible. Leon refused to take orders from officers he did not respect and was frequently and openly insubordinate. A number of former commanding officers were killed and injured under mysterious circumstances, though nothing was even proven. While his attitude has improved somewhat, Leon is still willful and can be violently stubborn. However, Leon has no leadership ability or head for tactics and he knows it. He will happily follow orders from respected officers and he holds Colin Loker in the highest regard. Leon has an almost savant-like ability with weapons. From knife to Host Armor to his bare hands, Leon can use any means of destruction with terrifying skill. He loves war and fighting for its own sake; issues and politics simply don't matter. Whatever mission he is given, he fulfills, and doesn't care about the consequences. The exceptions are his teammates and members of the Great House; he will protect each and every one with his life if needed. Leon also fancies himself a ladies' man and somehow manages to seduce both naive girls and married women with alarming frequency.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 15, M.A. 16, M.E. 16, P.S. 21, P.P. 23, P.E. 18, P.B. 11, Spd 18.

**Notable Skills:** Host Pilot Combat 98%, Operate Bio-Equipment 98%, Forced March.

**Notable Equipment:** "Hyperion," his personal Host Armor. Hyperion has all the standard Host Armor features, plus Resistance to Heat, Heat Projector Cannon, Plasma Breath, Combat Spurs and Screamer Grenades.

**Combat Bonuses:** 6 attacks per melee; +3 initiative, +7 to strike, +11 to parry, +3 to dodge, +4 to entangle, +2 to disarm, +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

## Jason Mercer

### Call Sign "Lycaon," 8th level Packlord

As an elite Packmaster promoted to the status of Packlord for House Janus, Mercer is a no-holds-barred, trophy collecting, relentless Bounty Hunter and Huntsman of alien predators and machines, and specializes in Anti-Splicer combat. He enjoys hunting with his tenacious pack of enhanced Mauler Gorehounds. Even seasoned Dreadguards and large War Mounts have succumbed to his infamous hunts. Lycaon and his pack are a fine-tuned killing force as he has exceptional control over these hyper aggressive canines. Instead of using chaotic melee engagements, Mercer will coordinate horrific attacks with strategic precision. He typically allows his Maulers to charge in on targets while he supports them with long-range cover fire; hopefully flushing, wounding or pinning his targets while the Maulers flank their opponents' position(s). Lycaon's primary goal is to stall for enough time for his fastest Maulers to close in on the victims, where they can do their deadliest work. Once the Maulers engage, it is only a few seconds thereafter before his heavy-hitters join the fray and the decimation of the prey begins. Most adversaries are considered



lucky if Mercer decides to gore them with one of his acid tentacles versus leaving them to a brutal death by the Maulers. Unlike most Splicers or War Mounts, Mercer's pack has learned and taken a liking to Splicer flesh (armor and all), and will quickly consume whatever they rip off and rush in for more.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 17, M.A. 18, M.E. 16, P.S. 19, P.P. 21, P.E. 21, P.B. 10, Spd 12.

**Notable Skills:** Prowl 90%, Tracking 90%, Surveillance 95%.

**Notable Equipment:** Mercer has been gifted the Pack Lord Armor. It has all the standard Packlord features plus the following enhancements: Advanced Senses, Motion Detection and Chameleon Skin. Mercer also has Bio-Energy Expulsion Vents on the back of his hands and he wields a Heavy Pod Rifle with two Bore pistol side arms for long range excursions and an Acid Edged Short Sword and Sickle Axe when not using his Gore Tentacles.

**Combat Bonuses:** 7 attacks per melee; +4 initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +3 to automatic dodge, +2 to disarm, +5 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

**“Mercer’s Maulers” Gore pack (6):** 1 Cerberus type with a Bio-Force Field (180 M.D.C.), 3 Shredders, and 2 Shockers with Regeneration: Enhanced.

## Gavin

### Call Sign “Orion,” 7th level Packlord

Highly intelligent and with an excellent grasp of tactics, Gavin is becoming the perfect Packlord. Years of military service and search and destroy missions have made Gavin an efficient soldier. And an even more efficient killer. Gavin has discovered he's not only good at killing, he enjoys it. Gavin is a psychopathic killer without a shred of humanity, on his way to becoming a mass murderer. Like many psychopaths, Gavin acts surprisingly normal and can be charming and outspoken. However, there are hints to his darker nature. He is a brutal interrogator, always fights to kill, and never takes prisoners; he kills everyone he fights unless somebody intervenes. When Gavin commits a murder, he plans it very carefully, leaving no clues pointing to him. So far, he has murdered a dozen innocent civilians, not counting the combatants he's killed in battle. He's so careful in his planning, no one yet suspects him of his crimes.

**Attributes:** I.Q. 16, M.A. 17, M.E. 19, P.S. 17, P.P. 18, P.E. 21, P.B. 14, Spd 27.

**Notable Skills:** Interrogation 65%, Blind Fighting 85%, and Vital Points.

**Notable Equipment:** Gavin has been gifted the Packlord Armor. It has all the standard Packlord features plus the following enhancements: Advanced Senses, Motion Detection and Chameleon Skin. He carries a Heavy Pod Rifle with two Bore pistol side arms for long-range excursions and an Acid-Edged Short Sword and Sickle Axe when not using his Gore Tentacles.

**Combat Bonuses:** 6 attacks per melee; +2 initiative, +3 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +2 to entangle, +3 to pull punch, +2 to roll with punch, fall or impact.

**Orion’s Pack (6):** Gavin has 3 Shredders, 1 Shocker with a Bio Force Field and 2 Standard Gorehounds.

### Orion’s Standard Gorehounds Quick-Stats:

#### M.D.C. by Location:

Front Legs (2) – 69 each

Hind Legs (2) – 97 each

Head – 137

Main Body – 260

**Height:** 4.5 feet (1.4 m) at the shoulders, 6 feet (1.8 m) to the top of the head.

**Width:** 3 feet (0.9 m) shoulder to shoulder. **Length:** 10.5 feet (3.2 m) from the tip of the nose to the end of the tail.

**Weight:** 500 pounds (225 kg).

**Physical Strength:** 23, Supernatural. **Horror Factor:** 12 individually, 16 with Orion’s Pack.

**Senses and features:** Standard Gorehound plus the following: Chameleon Skin, Motion Detector Antenna, Reinforced Exoskeletons, a shoulder mounted Heat Projector, Increased Metabolic Rate, thus an overall increased speed of 120 mph (192 km).

**Number of Attacks:** Six.

**Combat Bonuses:** +6 Initiative, +6 to strike, +2 to parry, +4 to automatic dodge, +3 to pull punch/bite, +4 to roll with punch, fall or impact, +2 to disarm, +4 to save vs Horror Factor, +2 to save vs poison/toxins and disease. Impossible to sneak up on.

**Combat Capabilities:** Restrained Head Butt: 1D6 S.D.C., Full Strength Head Butt: 2D6 M.D. (+1D6 M.D.), Pawing Claw Strike with Front Legs: 5D6 M.D., Biting Attack: 3D6 M.D., Leap Attack: 2D6 M.D. and Running Leap Attack: 7D6 M.D. (Leap Attack and Running Leap Attack have standard Gorehound likelihood knockdown percentages as mentioned in the **Splicers® RPG**, page 118.)



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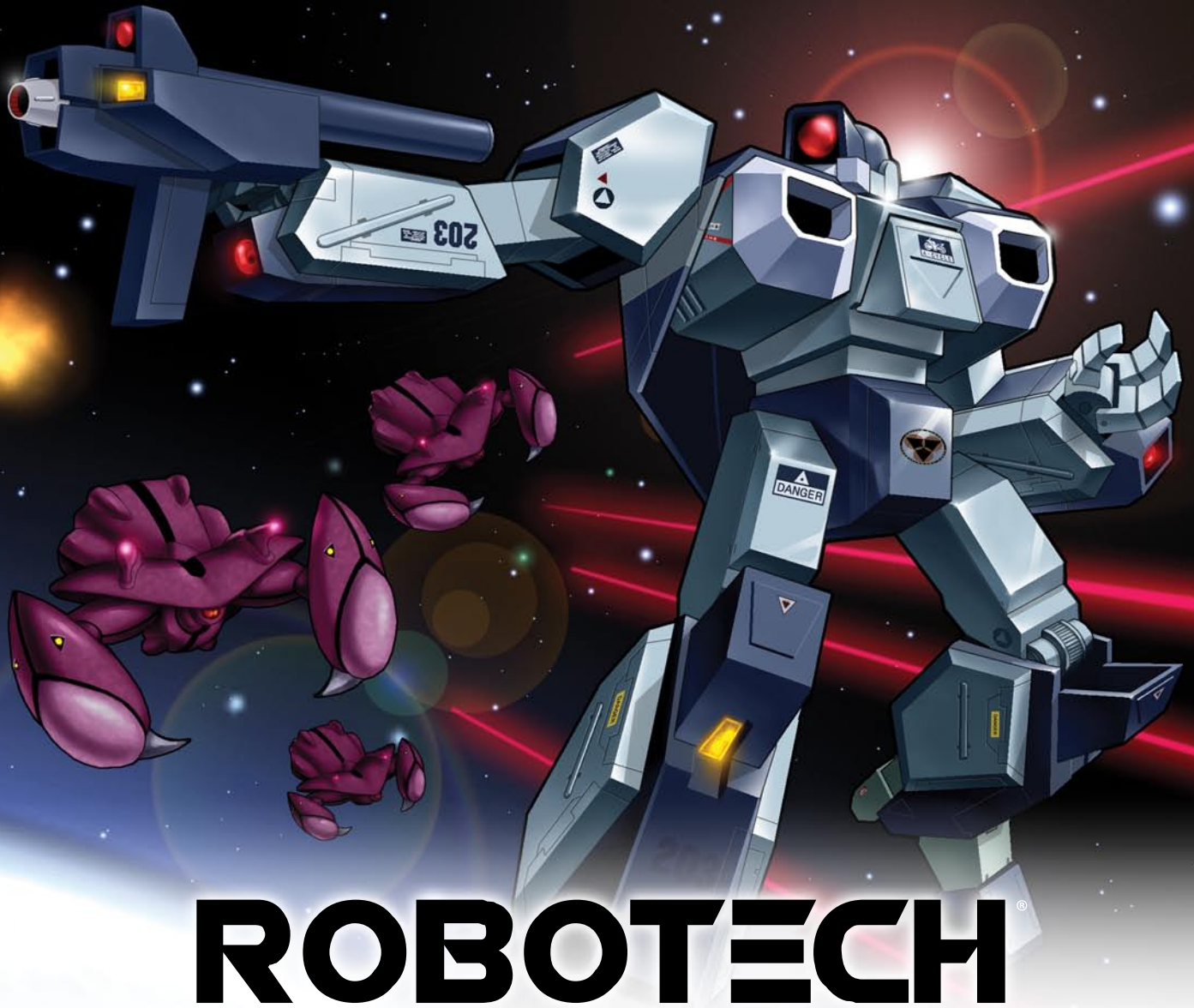
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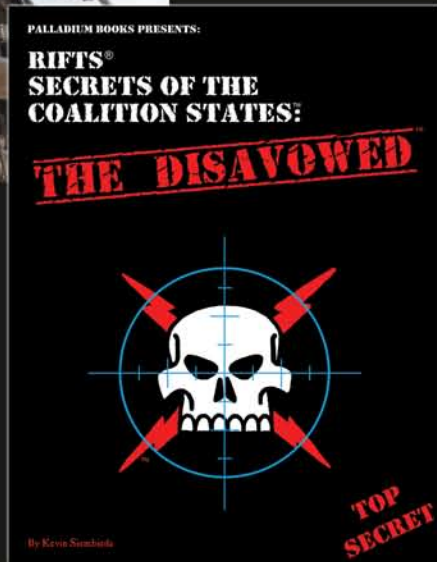
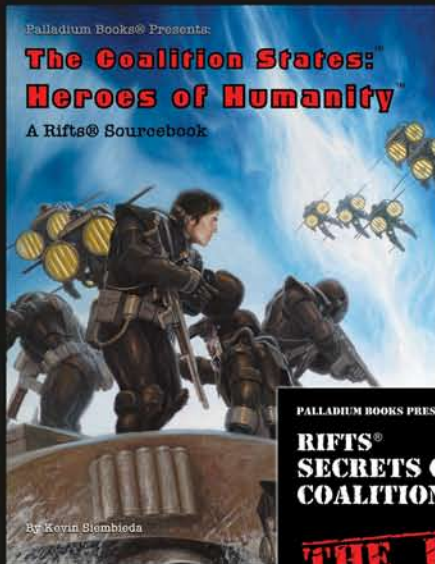
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