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THE

RIFTER®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®

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Rifts® – Chaos Earth® Nebraska, Part 2

Heroes Unlimited™ – Super Sleuth, Expanded

Palladium Fantasy RPG® – Gnomes, Expanded

Palladium Fantasy RPG® – Wolfen Vampire Adventure

Game Master Advice – Navigating Game Power Levels

Official source material, settings, and characters

News, coming attractions, adventure ideas and more



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bradshaw
2018

The Rifter® Number 81

Your Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

Dedication – To Wayne Smith for 20 years of helping to keep **The Rifter®** alive. Thanks for providing gamers around the world with a print forum to share their ideas and adventures with other gamers.

– *Kevin Siembieda, 2018*

PDF Edition – August 2019

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The Rifter® #81 is part of an RPG sourcebook series published by Palladium Books Inc., 39074 Webb Court, Westland, MI 48185. Printed in the USA by McNaughton & Gunn of Saline, Michigan.

Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #81



Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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concepts and Megaverse® created by **Kevin Siembieda**.

Special Thanks to Hendrik, Matt, Greg, Dan, Megan, Julius and all our contributing writers and artists this issue, and to the hardworking Palladium staff. Our apologies to anybody who may have gotten accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2018

Contents – The Rifter® #81 – 2018

Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Here you go, **The Rifter® #81** just a few weeks after **#80** as promised. Publisher Kevin Siembieda talks about his and Rifter® Editor-in-Chief Wayne Smith's experiences over the past 20 years of publishing **The Rifter®**. Yes, 2018 is the *20th Anniversary of The Rifter®*. This 20 year milestone is one more reason we have been trying to make every issue bigger and extra special. Enjoy this short trip down memory lane and be prepared for page after page of adventure source material that will make you want to game.

Page 7 – Palladium News

Publisher Kevin Siembieda offers up the latest goings-on since last issue. Mostly we have been working hard to release new product and get current with issues of **The Rifter®**. Hope to see many of you at Gen Con. And check out the RPGLeague event happening August 11 in San Diego. It sounds like fun.

Page 8 – Coming Attractions

Books like **Rifts® Sovietski™**, **Nightbane® Dark Designs™** and **Splicers® I Am Legion™** have been released, and a lot more books are coming your way. They start with **Rifts® Bestiary of North America, Vol. One** and **Vol. Two** (these are shaping up great), and issues of **The Rifter®** in rapid succession! **Dead Reign® sourcebook: In the Face of Death**, **Rifts® Antarctica**, **Chaos Earth® First Responders**, **Rifts® The Disavowed**, **CS Arsenal** and other fun books to follow. Read all about them here.

Page 16 – Gnomes: Undersized & Underestimated™ – Optional Material for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*

Hendrik Härterich offers us fascinating and in-depth information about these often underestimated, little heroes and adventurers. Enjoy an overview of their history, how they live and survive in Ophid's Grasslands, how they fight, and why they enjoy adventuring around the world.

Page 16 – What the books say about Gnomes

Page 16 – A Summary of the History of Gnomes

Page 18 – Ophid's Grasslands

Page 18 – Notable Creatures & Inhabitants

Page 19 – The Law

Page 19 – Settlements & Structures

Page 20 – Dandelion Rubber

Page 20 – Homesteads

Page 20 – The Coming of Old Grinder

Page 22 – Old Grinder Stats

Page 23 – On Being a Gnome

Page 24 – Life in the Homesteads

Page 25 – Fighting

Page 26 – Gnome Traps

Page 28 – The Ebenezer Clan

Page 29 – Allies of the Gnomes

Page 29 – Kadrac Kallastyr

Page 30 – Gnome Landsails

Page 31 – Warskiff

Page 32 – Sloop

Page 32 – Gnomfilín, Men at Arms

Page 33 – Gnome Religion in the Grasslands

Page 33 – Gandárran Gandáramgee

Page 37 – Creed of Gandárran

Page 37 – New Skills

Artwork by *Charles Walton II* and *Kevin Siembieda*.

Page 39 – Hitting the Streets with the Super Sleuth™ – Optional Source Material for *Heroes Unlimited™*

Matt Reed expands the Super Sleuth with skills, abilities, specialized gear and more. Enough so that you can create different types of Super Sleuths. It is all so fun and compelling it will leave you wanting mysteries and crimes to solve.

Page 39 – The Mechanics Needed to Play

Page 39 – Quality, Perception & Contested Skills

Page 40 – The Evidence System

Page 41 – Interrogation Conflicts

Page 42 – Character Creation

Page 43 – Step Three: Abilities

Page 45 – At the Keyboard

Page 46 – Calling Old Friends

Page 49 – Origin Story

Page 50 – Working a Hunch

Page 51 – Step Four: Equipment

Page 51 – Other Stuff

Page 53 – Equipment and Gear (descriptions)

Page 54 – Investigator's Lab

Page 54 – Contraband

Page 55 – Sample Super Sleuth Characters

Artwork by *Michael Mumah*.

Page 57 – Navigating Game Power Levels – G.M. Advice for Running Rifts® & All RPG Settings

Greg Diaczyk and *Kevin Siembieda* offer helpful Game Master insight and tips for how to run adventures in high-powered game settings like **Rifts®**, as well as how to handle different power levels and players archetypes, teamwork and other insight. A lot of it boils down to perception and seeing the vast potential of the players and the settings.

Page 58 – The Players

Page 59 – Siembieda Note

Page 60 – Being the Game Master

Page 60 – The advice I ever got about G.M.ing

Page 60 – Setting up the Game

Page 60 – Setting up Low-Powered Games

Page 61 – When a character starts

Page 63 – A few ideas for starting low level

Page 65 – How to Keep a Low-Powered Game Going

Page 65 – Setting up a High-Powered Game

Page 65 – A few High-Level Concepts

Page 66 – Size Doesn't Matter

Page 67 – Blood Moon – Adventure – Official Material for the *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*

The adventure starts in the Disputed Lands where the inhabitants of an entire logging camp have gone missing. Wolves are

acting strangely and rumors abound of Werewolves and even Wolfen Vampires, something many believe are not possible. Your team of adventurers have taken up the challenge to find the missing people and put a stop to the evil that has invaded these woodlands. What they don't know is that the fate of the world may hang in the balance.

Kevin Siembieda wants to share his 2018 Palladium Fantasy Open House tournament adventure with everyone. **Blood Moon** is a fully-fleshed out adventure, complete with stats for NPCs, villains and even optional NPC heroes to play if you would like to. The adventure starts small, but builds in its scope. It is also written in a different, more story-like style. Let us know what you think of it.

Page 67 – A mysterious disappearance

Page 69 – The adventure begins

Page 71 – The most impassioned plea

Page 71 – Heading to the Logging Camp

Page 73 – The First Encounter

Page 74 – Game Master Eyes Only

Page 74 – Pinch, Goblin Thief

Page 75 – Vital Game Master Notes

Page 76 – Still Game Master's Eyes Only

Page 77 – A possible Third Encounter

Page 77 – Showdown at the Cave

Page 78 – The NPC Characters

Page 78 – The Coyles

Page 81 – The Vampires

Page 81 – Lord Salizar

Page 83 – Wolfen Vampire #1

Page 85 – Vampire Malcontent, Julius

Page 88 – The Legend of the Blood Fang

Page 89 – NPC Heroes, Destroyers of DeSilca

Artwork by *Nick Bradshaw*.

Page 98 – Chaos Earth® Nebraska, Part Two – Official Source Material for Chaos Earth®

Dan Frederick, Megan Timperley and Kevin Siembieda present new O.C.C.s, a new D-Bee and adventure ideas for the Chaos Earth Nebraska setting. The chaos of the Great Cataclysm is different everywhere. This source material examines some of the events and survivors of Nebraska.

Page 98 – The Ash Fallen O.C.C., NPC Villains

Page 99 – Ash Fallen Psychic Abilities

Page 100 – Weird Side Effects Table

Page 102 – Ash Fallen Flamethrower

Page 102 – Lost Skeletons Militia O.C.C.

Page 104 – Lohran River People R.C.C. (D-Bee)

Page 106 – Nebraska National Guard O.C.C.

Page 107 – Survivalist/Prepper O.C.C.

Page 108 – M.O.S. Skills

Page 110 – Nebraska Adventure Hooks

Artwork by *Benjamin Rodriguez*.

The Theme for this Issue

The theme for **The Rifter® #81** is mystery, discovery and exotic characters with unique powers and abilities. That includes

new O.C.C.s for Chaos Earth® survivors, villains and heroes, the Super Sleuth, Fantasy Gnomes, and what makes them all unique and fun to play. All fuel to fire up your imaginations and carry you to new realms of adventure. With new releases coming for **Chaos Earth®, Palladium Fantasy, and Heroes Unlimited™**, we thought we would start building the anticipation for them with new characters, insights and source material now. Enjoy.

Become a Writer for The Rifter®

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, particularly *Rifts®*, *Chaos Earth®*, *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Ninjas & Superspies™*, *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Dead Reign®*, *Splicers®* and *Nightbane®*.

Pay is lousy, fame is dubious, but you see your work in print, 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 **Amy L. Ashbaugh** and depicts some of the Wolfen Vampires from the Blood Moon Adventure. Human vampires are bad enough, but Wolfen undead. That takes the danger to a whole other level.

Optional and Unofficial Rules & Source Material

Most of the material for this issue is “official” source material. As for optional source material, settings 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. We hope all of it ignites your imagination and inspires you to create your own wonders.

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The Rifter® #82

- **Rifts® source material.**
- **Heroes Unlimited™ source material.**
- **Nightbane® Age Modifiers by Mark Oberle.**
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth® Pyromancer and spells.**
- **Other adventure source material.**
- **News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.**
- **112 pages – \$14.99 retail – Cat. No. 182. September release.**

**One game system, infinite possibilities
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What magic or technology is enough?

From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

Hi everyone, I hope you are happy to be holding a copy of **The Rifter® #81** in your hands only scant weeks after **The Rifter® #80**, as we work to catch up and get current with **Rifter®** releases. **The Rifter® #82** will be coming your way in September. That will be only one month after this issue. Not bad.

20 years of The Rifter®

The Rifter® #81 marks 20 years that we have been publishing this sourcebook-fanzine series. That's quite a landmark achievement, especially these days. While **The Rifter®** was my idea (or was it Maryann's idea?), there has been only one *Editor in Chief* behind every issue, **Wayne Smith**.

Wayne was just a crazy kid (23 years old?) when he was hired full-time back in 1998, but we had met Wayne a year or so earlier. I was collecting *Star Wars* toys, and Maryann (my wife at the time) reached out online for Palladium fans around the country to keep an eye out for certain figures and we would buy them if they could get their hands on them. Wayne was one of the people who contacted us. Silly fan boy stuff, right? It turned out he was right here in Michigan, he found some toys I was looking for, he brought them down, I bought them, signed some books, we talked and hit it off.

After a few more toy exchanges (Wayne had a K-Mart near where he lived that got the good stuff), we invited Wayne and a few of his pals to come in on big shipping days to help unload the truck and to pack and ship out new releases. This was back in the good ol' days when we were printing 10,000-20,000 copies of a new release and would ship out half or more the day they arrived from the printer.

Wayne was smart and a good worker. The more we saw of him, the more we liked him. Wayne offered to "look over" books and manuscripts and had a natural talent for editing. After a few freelance editing jobs, we hired him as an additional staff editor and I.T. guy. Wayne was also a computer wiz, and we needed one of those after Thomas Bartold had left the company. With help and guidance from me and Maryann, six months later we handed Wayne **The Rifter®**. Twenty years later, Wayne is celebrating his landmark 81st issue (**The Rifter®** has always been a quarterly publication).

It doesn't seem possible that 20 years have passed since the first issue, but it is true. Wayne would grow into a capable editor, troubleshooter, and friend. The kind of guy you can count on to be a straight shooter and stand tall with you through thick and thin. The kind of friend and valued employee you can trust and rely upon. He's also turned into a Photoshop whiz, a good layout man, and a decent writer (when he tries). I value his insight and opinions as much as his friendship and hard work.

We have gone through a lot together. Some good, some not so good. We've attended a lot of conventions and trade shows together, worked on 100+ projects together and weathered a few storms together. I'm glad Wayne got to know my Dad and Erick Wujcik, and meet others. During his tenure with **The Rifter®**, Wayne has gotten to work with titans like Erick Wujcik, Brom, Jeff Easley, and Jolly Blackburn. In fact, we had the privilege of running **Knights of the Dinner Table** comic strips made special for **The Rifter®** in something like 10 or 12 issues. He also had a fun time rooming with Jolly and got to become good friends on a week-long Palladium cruise vacation back in 1999. He got to work with "new guys" like *Freddie Williams II*, *Apollo Okamura*, *Ramon K. Perez*, *Mike Mumah*, *Mark*

Dudley, *Amy L. Ashbaugh*, *Nick "the Brick" Bradshaw*, *Chuck Walton*, *Mike Wilson*, *Carl Gleba*, *Carmen Bellaire*, *Matthew Clements*, *Brandon Aten*, *Jason Richards*, *Mark Oberle*, *Josh Sinsapaugh*, and many, many other artists and writers.

It has been a wild ride. And I think that ride is about to get wilder as we move into a new era for Palladium Books and try to expand into new mediums. I hope some good things, big things, are coming for Palladium, because Wayne and the entire Palladium staff deserve to see what the good times are like. We've had enough rough times to last a lifetime. I'm glad to have had wonderful friends like Wayne, the rest of the Palladium crew and a wealth of marvelous friends to help us weather the storms and challenges we have faced.

So it is that I want to dedicate **The Rifter® #81** to the man behind the scenes, **Wayne Smith**. I don't know how many issues are in our future, but I'm sure Wayne will be there knocking them out.

Happy anniversary, Wayne. You've done well.

I marvel at it all

This and some other recent turn of events have gotten me reminiscing a bit. I'm one lucky guy when it comes to friends and the array of remarkable people I have met, worked with and have had the privilege of calling friends. *Paul Jacquoise* from my Judge's Guild days, *Jim Steranko*, *Richard Corben*, *Stephen Bissette*, *Timothy Truman*, *Flint Henry*, *Kevin Eastman*, *Peter Laird*, *Keith Parkinson*, *Larry Elmore*, *Brom*, *John Zeleznik*, *E.M. Gist*, *Tim Bradstreet*, *Kevin Long*, *Kevin Fales*, *Michael Gustovich*, *Jeff Dee*, *Bill Willingham*, *Bill Loeb*, *Bill Rienhold*, *Jordan Weisman (FASA)*, *Mark Miller (GDW)*, *Jerry Bruckheimer*, *Chad Oman*, *David Franzoni*, the awesome *Rawson Marshall Thurber*, the equally awesome *Joe Manganiello*, *Nick Manganiello*, *Drew Cook*, *Mark Freedman*, and some new people I dare not name yet ... many of whom have become friends.

And there are a zillion other people whose names would probably mean nothing to you, but mean the world to me: *Teresa Mead*, *Joe Bergmans*, *Doug Lamberson*, *Shane Neville*, *Todd Spencley*, *Kay Kozora*, *Paul Deckert*, *Rene Vega*, *Matthew Balent*, *Thom and Ken Bartold*, *Eric Champion*, *Shawn Hall*, *Ryan McDaniels*, *Randi Cartier*, *Roger Cartier*, *James Brown and family*, *Scott Gibbons*, *Tom Roache*, *Peter Pidrak*, *Sean Patrick Fannon*, *Renee Lane*, *Marc Moore*, *Cheryl Corey*; to name but a few. And a multitude of other people. Though I didn't have the pleasure of working with them, I've met people like *Gary Gygax*, *David Arneson*, *Steve Jackson*, *Mark Rien-Hagen*, and many, many other people.

I probably should not have started listing names, because there will be someone whom I will wish I had given a shout-out to, or someone who will be disappointed for not being named. Please do not be disappointed or offended. I simply know so many amazing and wonderful and talented people it is impossible to name them all. Folks I would never have met without role-playing games and Palladium Books. And I haven't even begun to mention family, friends outside of gaming, or you, our fans. I hope to see some of you at Gen Con in a few weeks.

I have enjoyed a wonderful and blessed life. Sure there have been bad times, betrayals, and losses, but wow.

I could not have done it without you. Any of you. You are my inspiration. The muse that keeps my imagination burning and fuels my desire to write and design new game worlds. Thank you one and all for sharing this journey with me and the Palladium crew.

– Kevin Siembieda, Publisher, Writer, Grateful, 2018

Palladium News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

Books are coming your way

As promised, you are holding **The Rifter® #81**, another larger issue packed full of fun and useful gaming source material. **The Rifter® #82** should reach you sometime in September.

As you read this issue, we will be fast at work on the final writing and additions to **Rifts® Bestiary, Volume One** and **Volume Two**, as well as having assigned covers and artwork for **Chaos Earth® First Responders**, **Rifts® Antarctica** and other RPGs in the works. All things we know you are going to enjoy. And that doesn't even count new books that writers *Glen Evans*, *Carl Gleba*, *Matthew Clements*, *Steve Dawes*, *Greg Diaczyk* and others are working on for future releases.

Coming!

Chaos Earth® First Responders™

As reported last issue, we want to put a lot of new books in your hands the rest of the year and well into next year. That includes some of those books you have been waiting for like **Chaos Earth® First Responders™**. We even had a real-life first responder and writer take a look at the **Chaos Earth® First Responders™** manuscript for feedback and additions to this long-awaited book.

Coming! Chaos Earth® Psychic Scream™

Writer *Taylor White* (**Chaos Earth® Resurrection™** and **Hell Followed™**) recently turned in a **Chaos Earth®** manuscript entitled **Psychic Scream™** that I hope to see released this autumn or winter. We are getting rave reviews from people who have seen the unedited manuscript, so we know this bad boy will be a crowd-pleaser.

Rifts® Tournament by the RPGLeague®

– August 11, 2018 – San Diego

At Ease Games Gaming & Tournament Center is the location

8990 Miramar Rd #140

San Diego, CA 92126

<https://crassus6680.wixsite.com/rifts-tourny-sign-up/about>

This is the group's second role-playing tournament. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, the Game Masters will be judged by the **RPGLeague**, which is why this is an **Open Call** for all players and

friends of a friend of a friend, to come down play in these 3-4 *hour adventures*. Player judges will fill out score cards per each Game Master per game.

This is open to all people – not just group members – who wish to try their hand at running a **Rifts®** game. If you are already experienced in running **Rifts®** this is a good opportunity to show off your stuff.

Tournament requirements: Each game must have at least TWO social talking sessions between Player Characters (PCs) and one or more Non-Player Characters (NPCs). Mission briefings and PCs talking to each other during combat does not count. **Please Note:** Lack of this requirement may disqualify the game session from being entered for scoring!

Tournament Schedule: Saturday 9:00 am to 10:00 pm, 2 game sessions for 3 separate rounds with each session consisting of 4 hrs each.

For the Tournament the following is strongly suggested:

- Utilize music and sound effects at least once per adventure.
- Utilize handouts, pictures, and visual aids using any media.
- Utilize a 5 point scene formula for adventure creation.
- Demonstrate and encourage immersive role-playing and thematic storytelling.
- Use the blank group adventure document for uniform adventure presentation.
 - 1) Social dilemma.
 - 2) Combat.
 - 3) Investigation.
 - 4) Something weird and/or funny.
 - 5) World-building.

Each of our Group's G.M.s will be writing their own adventures for the tournament and the content is strongly encouraged to demonstrate and show off what your personal monthly campaign is going to be about.

2018 Gen Con

– Indianapolis, Indiana – August 2-5, 2018

Gen Con is just around the corner. We look forward to seeing many Palladium fans there. Of course, we will bring a bunch o' books for ALL game lines, new and old, including the Raw Preview Editions, new releases, The Rifter, some T-shirts, prints, original art, out of print collectibles and maybe a surprise or two.

- Meet a number of Palladium creators and get books signed by characters like:
 - Kevin Siembieda, Writer and Game Designer
 - Carmen Bellaire, Writer and Game Designer
 - Brandon Aten, Writer and Game Designer
 - Wayne Smith, Editor, Rifter®
 - Mark Oberle, Writer
 - Glen Evans, Writer
 - Charles Walton II, Artist
- Please join the fun and swing by to say hello and chat.

2021 Palladium Open House

We are already planning for a 2021 Open House to celebrate Palladium Books' *40th Anniversary*. A number of people were disappointed because they did not have enough time to plan for the 2018 POH between the short notice and the dates for the actual event.

Well, because we intend to make the 2021 event the biggest, best Open House ever, we are giving you all plenty of advance notice! Start making your plans now for an extravaganza nobody will want to miss.

Coming Attractions

Palladium's 2018 Release Checklist

Available Now

- **New! The Rifter® #81** – 112 pages.
 - **New! The Rifter® #80** – 112 pages.
 - **New! Splicers® I Am Legion™ sourcebook** – 256 pages.
 - **New! Rifts® Sovietski™ World Book** – 224 pages.
 - **New! Nightbane® Dark Designs™ sourcebook** – 160 pages.
 - **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans™** – 224 pages, epic.
 - **Rifts® Secrets of the Atlanteans™ Gold Hardcover** – 224 pages.
 - **The Rifter® #79** – 96 pages.
 - **New! Raw Preview Edition: Rifts® Antarctica™**
 - **New! Raw Preview Edition: Rifts® Surviving Chaos Earth®**
- Note:** The Raw Previews are limited editions available only from Palladium Books. They are not available in stores.

Coming Soon

- **Rifts® Bestiary™ of North America, Vol. 1** – Summer, in production.
- **Rifts® Bestiary™ of North America, Vol. 2** – Summer/Fall.
- **The Rifter® #82** – 96 pages – September, in production.
- **Dead Reign® Sourcebook: In the Face of Death™** – Fall.
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth® First Responders™** – Fall/Winter.
- **Chaos Earth® Psychic Scream™** – Fall/Winter.
- **Rifts® Antarctica** – Fall/Winter.

Also on the drawing board for 2018

- **Rifts® The Disavowed™ Sourcebook** by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements.
 - **Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™ CS Arsenal**
 - **Garden of the Gods™, Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook** by Siembieda.
 - **Lopan™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Adventure Sourcebook**
 - **Lopanic Games™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook**
 - **Hardware Unlimited™, a Heroes Unlimited™ Sourcebook**
 - **Heroes Unlimited™ Sourcebooks**
 - **Splicers® Sourcebooks**
 - **Nightbane® Sourcebook**
 - **Beyond the Supernatural™ Sourcebooks**
 - **And more.** Other titles are in the pipeline and being written.
- Thus additional and other titles may be slotted into the release schedule.

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 at 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 T-shirts, 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.

New & Coming Soon

NEW! Splicers®:

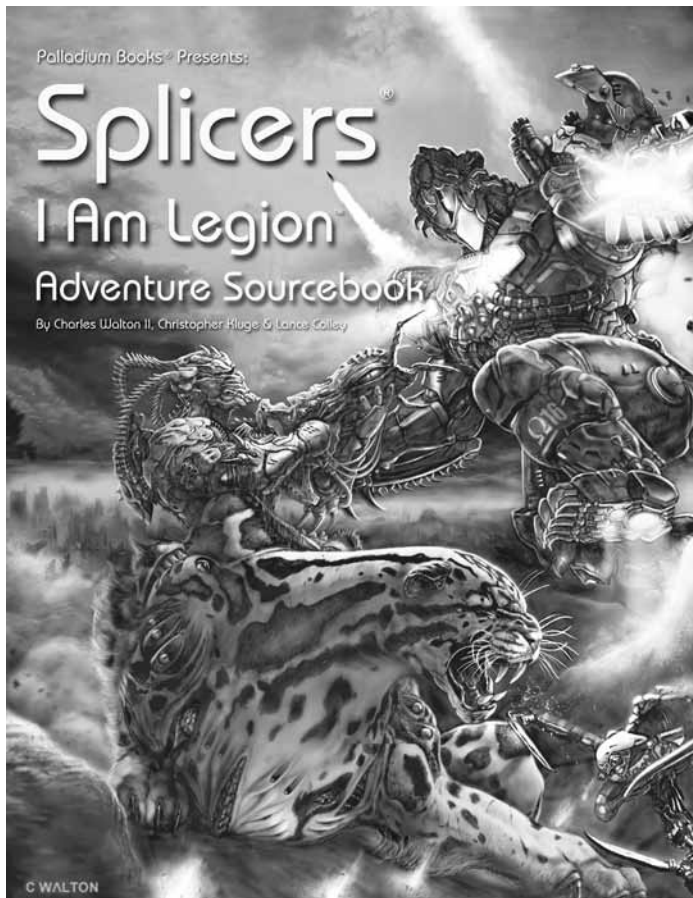
I Am Legion™ Adventure Sourcebook

Splicers® is a dark world of the future where a nano-plague has made touching metal deadly and humans are forced to use genetically engineered, living weapons and organic war machines to battle N.E.X.U.S., an insane Artificial Intelligence and her legion of robots and monstrosities.

This big, 256 page adventure sourcebook for **Splicers®** is jam-packed with new Host Armors, War Mounts, Bio-Enhancements and adventure galore. Your heroes must uncover the mad schemes of the new N.E.X.U.S. personality that calls herself Legion. Then battle her army of robots and Amalgams every step of the way. If you fail, thousands will die. Collects the adventure source material from The Rifter® issues #71-78 and looks great.

Highlights Include:

- 6 new Great Houses.
- 4 new Host Armors.
- 6 new Splicers War Mounts.
- 7 new Bio-Enhancements and augmentation.
- 19 new Bio-Weapons, including the Hive Sword, Bug Bombs and more.
- 15 new machines – robots and amalgams of the murderous Legion.
- Amalgam creation tables, new alien predators and more.



- **Legion:** A new and psychotic personality of N.E.X.U.S., statted and described.
- Includes 20 pages of additional, unpublished material.
- An epic series of adventures, plus adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Chuck Walton II, Christopher Kluge, Lance Colley and others.
- 256 pages – Cat. No. 201 – \$26.99 retail – Available now.

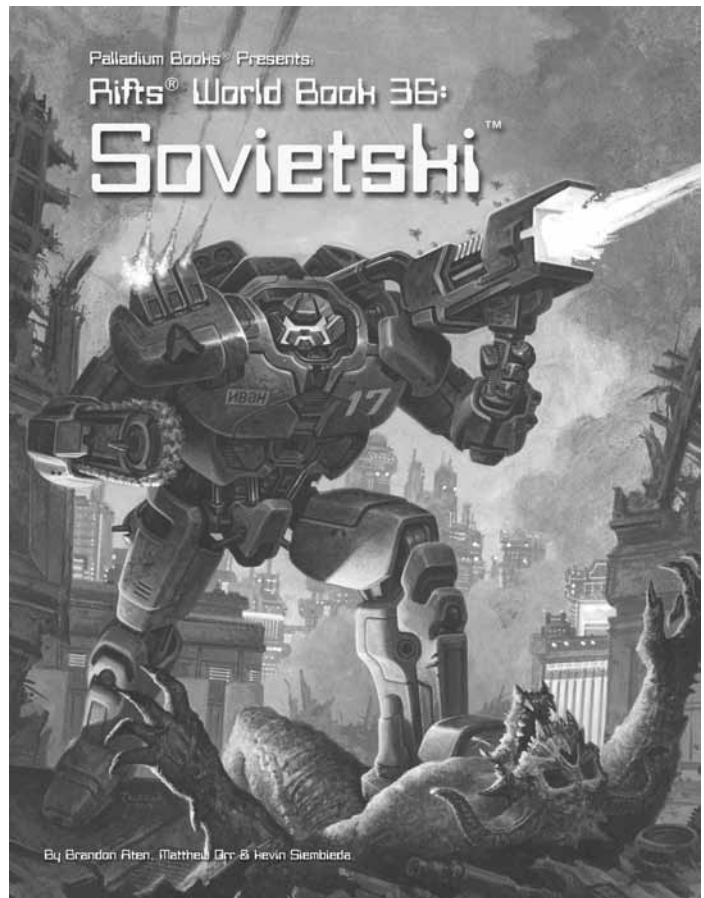
New! World Book 36:

Rifts® Sovietski™

Rifts® Sovietski™ is jam-packed with a wide array of source material. New cyborgs, new O.C.C.s, new skills, new D-Bees, new cyborgs and bionics, new weapons, new vehicles, underground bunker tables, tons of adventure ideas and a whole lot of fun.

The Sovietski faces danger from the high-tech but savage and ruthless Warlords of Russia, the expanding Brodkil invasion sponsored by *Mindwerks* and the *Angel of Death*, Werewolves in the north, Gargoyles spilling in from the west, and the coming of the Minion War.

Rifts® Sovietski™ is a treasure trove of new ideas for cyborgs, player characters, D-Bees, and the fledgling Sovietski nation. This book brings the Russian landscape to life and ready for adventure. See how the Sovietski came into being and where it is going, learn about its soldiers, army, people and their dreams, beliefs, and politics, plus Dead Zones, Spetsnaz Intelligence force, new cyborgs, bionics, and more. When combined with the **Rifts® Mindwerks™ Sourcebook**, **Warlords of Russia™**, **Mystic**



Russia™ and the **Triax™** books, you have a setting as large as North America.

- 9 Sovietski O.C.C.s.
- 40+ M.O.S. Skill Packages and 4 unique D-Bees.
- 11 unique new Cyborgs, plus new bionics and body armor.
- Light, Heavy and Superheavy Machines (cyborgs), revisited.
- Cyborg animals for scouting and combat – new concept.
- Sovietski war machine – 18 new vehicles, tanks, aircraft, and more.
- 16 unique weapons plus grenades, tank shells and special ammunition.
- Spetsnaz Sovietski Special Forces – the new KGB.
- Bunker creation tables and Dead Zone tables.
- Soldier Motivation/Origins, new skills and other tables.
- Russian D-Bees like Wolverine People and the elemental Yaganar.
- Overview of the Sovietski, notable cities and places of interest.
- Notable groups, enclaves, people, many adventure ideas and more.
- Written by Brandon Aten, Matthew Orr and Kevin Siembieda.
- 224 pages – \$26.95 retail – Cat. No. 891. Available now.

Other Rifts® titles for Russian or Eastern European Campaigns:

- **Rifts® Warlords of Russia™** – Overview of Russia, the Warlords and their legions of cyborg warriors, the Sovietski, 20 O.C.C.s, 20 Cyborgs, Russian weapons, vehicles, and more. 224 pages. Cat. No. 832, \$24.95 retail.

- **Rifts® Mystic Russia™** – 18 Archaic Russian Demons, 10 monsters, Night Witch, Hidden Witch, Mystic Kuznya, Fire Sorcerer, 9 Gypsy O.C.C.s, Russian magic, 6 vehicles, and more. 176 pages. Cat. No. 833, \$20.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Sourcebook 3: Mindwerks™** – The techno-horrors of the Angels of Death and Vengeance, 27 monsters and D-Bees of Eastern Europe, Mindwerks™ weapons, robots, MOM Implants, Brodkil, Gene Splicers, the Kingdom of Tarnow, the Black Forest, maps and more. 112 pages. Cat. No. 812, \$17.99 retail.
- **Rifts® Triax & NGR™** – The New German Republic vs the Gargoyle Empire, 16 O.C.C.s, 20 vehicles, 15 robots, 9 cyborgs, plus power armor, body armor, weapons, overview of Europe, maps and more. 224 pages. Cat. No. 810, \$24.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Triax™ 2** – More about the NGR, the Gargoyle and Brodkil Empires, and the rest of the NGR war machine: Triax robots, power armor, vehicles, aircraft, and weapons galore. 192 pages. Cat. No. 881, \$26.99 retail.
- **Rifts® Game Master Guide™** – Every Rifts® robot, power armor, vehicle, weapon, experience table, map, and more that appeared in World Books 1-23 and Sourcebooks 1-4, plus O.C.C. and R.C.C. index, rules clarifications, and more. 352 pages. Cat. No. 845, \$26.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Book of Magic™** – 900+ magic spells, plus Techno-Wizard devices, Magic Tattoos, Nazca Lines, Whale Songs, Herbs, Symbiotes, Bio-Wizard Weapons, Rune Weapons, magic items and more! 352 pages. Cat. No. 848, \$26.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Adventure Guide™** – 150+ adventure ideas, Random Rifts, making towns, cities, merc companies, and traveling shows, gaming tips and much more. 192 pages. Cat. No. 849, \$24.95 retail.
- **Rifts® Megaverse® in Flames™** – Rifts Earth has been invaded by the minions of two Hells. Demon Plagues, 14 Hell Lords, Hell Pits, Calgary Kingdom of Monsters, adventure and more. 192 pages. Cat. No. 876, \$24.95 retail.

Coming Soon! Rifts® Bestiary of North America, Vol. One

You requested it, so we are doing it: collecting the hundreds of monsters and beasts of Rifts Earth into easy to use reference books, similar to what we did with *D-Bees of North America*. Only there are so many wondrous and fierce creatures we cannot squeeze them into one book. The first two **Rifts® Bestiary™ sourcebooks** are being created simultaneously, right now! Between them, these two volumes compile all the beasts of *Rifts North America* (unintelligent monsters, predators, notable animals and intelligent beings that are monstrous or animal-like in appearance or behavior) from all current World Books and Sourcebooks. In addition, Kevin Siembieda, Chuck Walton and Greg Diaczyk are adding some new monsters to make life in the wilderness interesting. Presented in alphabetical order, with maps showing their range and location, in two big books.

Note: If these two volumes do well, future volumes will include spirits, ghosts and entities, another on dragons, other volumes on creatures in other parts of Rifts Earth, and so on.

- **Monsters and animals of Rifts North America organized in two big, easy to use sourcebooks. Predators, exotic riding**

animals, beasts of burden, alien horrors, giant insects and more.

- **Some new creatures, but most are existing creatures.**
- **Updated information where applicable.**
- **Updated and uniform stat blocks.**
- **A map for every creature showing where it is found.**
- **Fully illustrated.**
- **Art by Chuck Walton, Siembieda and many others.**
- **192-224 pages – \$26.99 retail – Cat. No. 896. In production. Anticipating Rifts® Bestiary™ Vol. One as an August or September release.**

New! Rifts® Bestiary™ of North America, Vol. Two

More monsters and exotic animals of Rifts® North America as part of an ongoing series of **Rifts® Bestiary sourcebooks**. The first two **Rifts® Bestiaries, Volume One** and **Volume Two**, are being created simultaneously. Between them, these two volumes compile all the beasts of *Rifts North America* (unintelligent monsters, predators, notable animals and intelligent beings that are monstrous or animal-like in appearance or behavior) from all current World Books and Sourcebooks, plus some new monsters by Siembieda and Walton. Presented in alphabetical order, with maps showing their range and location, in two big books. **Note:** If these two volumes do well, more will follow.

- **Monsters and animals of Rifts North America organized in two big, easy to use sourcebooks. Predators, exotic riding animals, beasts of burden, alien horrors, giant insects and more.**
- **Some new creatures, but most are existing creatures.**
- **Updated information where applicable.**
- **Updated and uniform stat blocks.**
- **A map for every creature showing where it is found.**
- **Fully illustrated.**
- **Art by Chuck Walton, Siembieda and many others.**
- **192-224 pages – \$26.99 retail – Cat. No. 897. In production. Anticipating Rifts® Bestiary™ Vol. Two to be a fall release.**

New! The Rifter® #82

– Ships Fall!

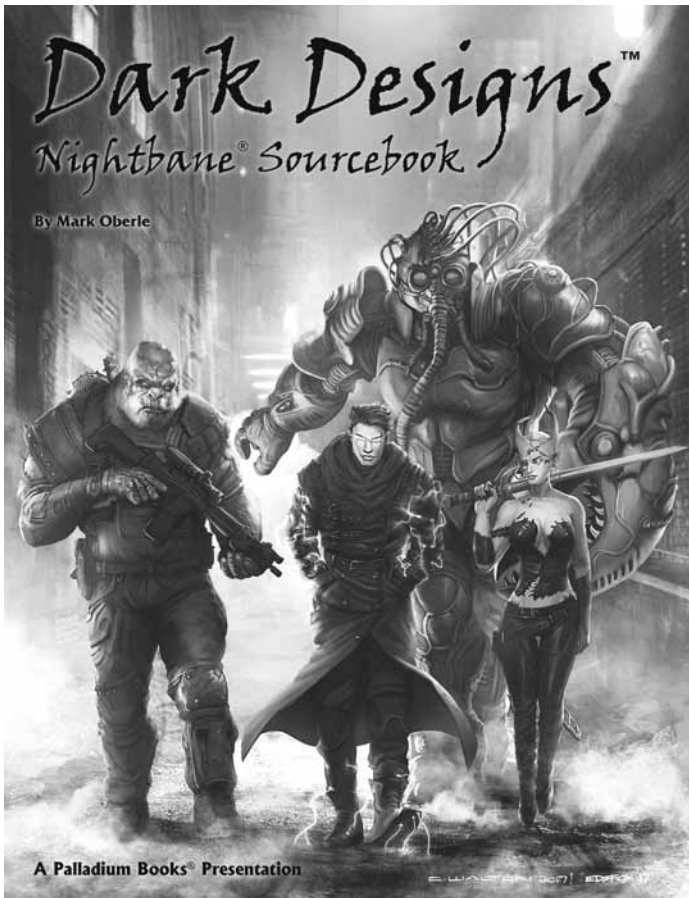
That's right, **The Rifter® #82** is already in production. Articles have been selected and artwork is assigned.

Every issue of The Rifter® is an idea factory for players and Game Masters to generate new ideas and find new avenues of adventure. It provides useful, ready to go source material you can just drop into your ongoing games. A doorway to new possibilities and numerous Palladium role-playing worlds. And the many new characters, O.C.C.s, powers, magic, weapons, villains, monsters, adventures and ideas for one setting can be easily adapted to *any* Palladium setting. Every issue has material for **Rifts®** and usually 2-3 other Palladium game lines. The focus of this issue is **Rifts®, Splicers®** and RPG advice. Don't forget, unofficial material can be easily adapted for use in ANY Palladium game setting.

Rifter® #82 Highlights:

- **Rifts® source material.**

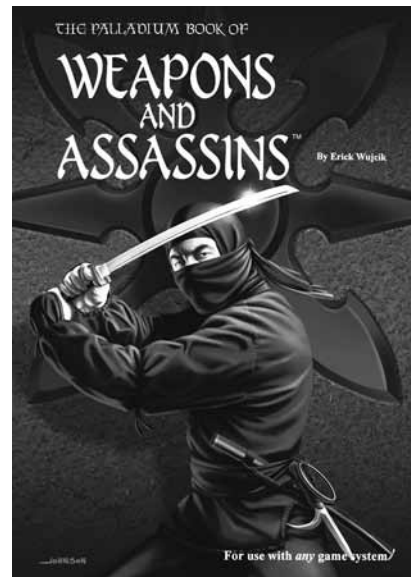
- **Heroes Unlimited™** source material.
- **Nightbane®** source material by Mark Oberle.
- **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** and other source material.
- News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.
- **112 pages – \$14.99 retail – Cat. No. 182. September release.**



New! Nightbane® Dark Designs™

This is another title that people are enjoying and is available now. **Nightbane® Dark Designs™** is a guide to creating the Nightbane and a sourcebook for *players* and *Game Masters* alike. It presents all sorts of new Nightbane creation tables, new Morphus tables, new Talents, and new information. Info and powers that enable players to make memorable Nightbane characters and G.M.s to take their games up a notch.

- **18 new and comprehensive Morphus Tables.**
- **60 new Common Talents.**
- **38 new Elite Talents.**
- **Transformation Transition Table.**
- **Talent creation and conversion rules.**
- **Ancient Nightbane R.C.C. fully statted out and creation tables.**
- **Insight to the Becoming.**
- **Answers to some common questions & more.**
- **Appendix of 23 Morphus Tables gathered from the Nightbane® RPG and Sourcebooks.**
- **Appendix of 53 Talents gathered from the Nightbane® RPG and Sourcebooks.**
- **Written by Mark Oberle. Cover by Charles Walton II and Eduardo Dominguez.**
- **\$20.95 – 160 pages – Cat. No. 736 – Available now.**

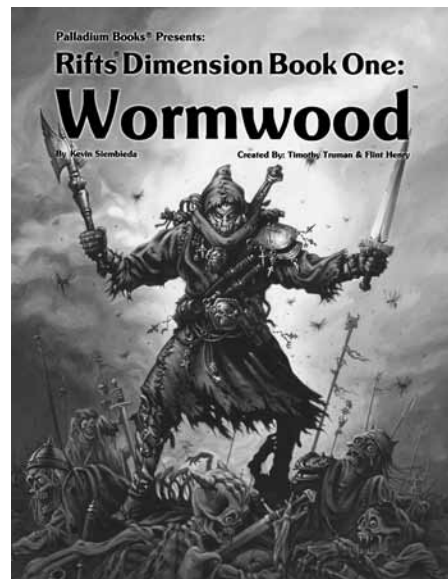


Back in Stock:

Weapons and Assassins™

The weapons and secrets of real world, ancient assassins. Includes guilds and societies of assassins like the Order of the Assassins, Ninja and Thugs of India, as well as details about their weapons, tools, poisons, clothing, armor, methods and more. A fan favorite written by Erick Wujcik. Back in stock.

- **The Order of the Assassins.**
- **Thugs, the Assassins of India.**
- **The Ninja and their weapons, equipment and methods.**
- **Written by Erick Wujcik.**
- **48 pages – \$9.99 – Cat. No. 403. Available now.**



Back in Stock:

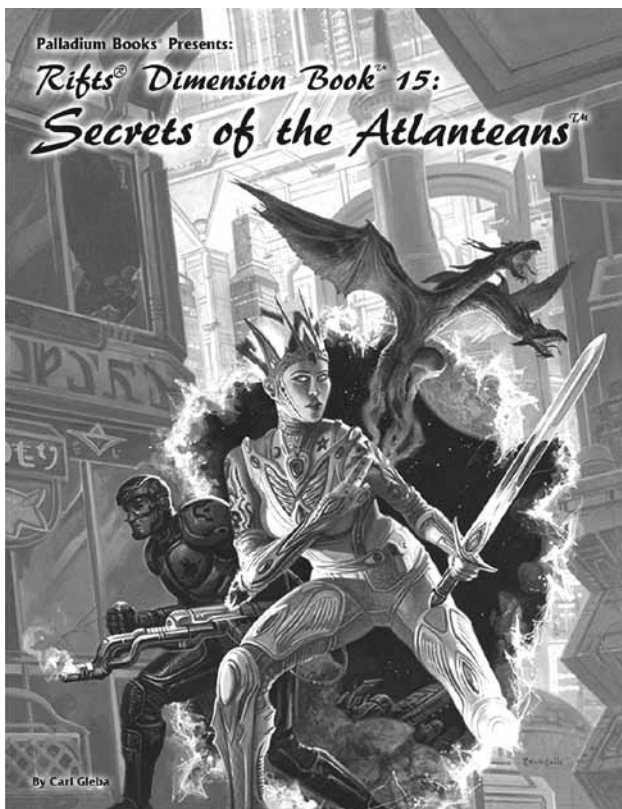
Wormwood™

Rifts® Dimension Book™ One

Wormwood is a mysterious living planet of unknown origin and purpose. It is presumed to be some sort of colony world and supports human life, but under the strangest conditions. It might be an idyllic environment if not for the corrupting “infections”

that are the Unholy and his minions – demonic and monstrous creatures who battle for domination of the planet and its inhabitants. So it is that humans and monsters, the good and the wicked are at constant war with one another. Epic adventure, horror and the supernatural. There is nothing quite like Wormwood in the Megaverse®.

- **The Good and the human are represented by the Cathedral.** Its Champions of Light include warrior priests, monks, Wormspeakers (seers), Symbiotic Warriors, Knights of the Temple, Holy Terrors and the most powerful and heroic of them all, the legendary Apok.
- **The Wicked and the demonic are represented by the Unholy, Dark Priests and the demonic Dark Minions.**
- **Home of Crawling Towers, Holy Terrors, Wormspeakers, Apoks the Avengers, and hordes of demonic monsters.**
- **37 unique Wormwood spells.**
- **50 symbiotic organisms; worms, claws, crawlers, stars and more.**
- **Magical Blood Stones and crystals.**
- **16 Dark Minions, including Entrancers, Skelter Bats and Worm Zombies.**
- **8 Player O.C.C.s, 20 monsters, a world of adventure unlike any other.**
- **20 page comic strip by Timothy Truman and Flint Henry.**
- **Created by comic book legends *Timothy Truman* and *Flint Henry*.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **160 pages – \$22.99 – Cat. No. 809. Available now.**



Rifts® Dimension Book 15:

Secrets of the Atlanteans™

People love this book. Available now. True Atlanteans are among the most mysterious and storied heroes across the Mega-

verse®. Learn about Atlantean civilization, the many clans, where they are found across the Megaverse, why they hide, and why they hate the undead so much. Also discover the power of Shadow Magic, the treachery of the Sunaj Illuminati, and a darkness that could destroy them all.

- **60+ new Magic Tattoos.**
- **60+ Shadow Magic spells.**
- **30+ new Crystal Magic spells and the Crystal Mage O.C.C.**
- **Stone Pyramids described with floor plans.**
- **Stone Master and Undead Slayer, revisited.**
- **Sunaj Shadow Mage and Shadow Assassin O.C.C.s.**
- **The dark history, shame, and secrets of True Atlanteans.**
- **Learn more about the famous Atlantean Tattooed Warriors, Undead Slayers, Stone Masters and other Atlantean heroes.**
- **Tremble at the terrible secrets of the Aerihman and their plans for inter-dimensional domination.**
- **Dark secrets of the sinister Sunaj secret society.**
- **Who are the Sunaj and why do they hunt True Atlanteans?**
- **Valuable source material and adventure ideas galore.**
- **\$24.95 retail for softcover edition – 224 pages – written by Carl Gleba – Cat. No. 890. Available now.**

COMING! 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 – \$17.99 retail – Cat. No. 665. A fall or winter release.**

COMING! In the Face of Death™

– A Dead Reign® Sourcebook – Fall 2018

The cover is done and I want it out in October! This sourcebook is all about inner city survival. Survivor colonies finding a way to live and prosper in the big city. Conventional wisdom says that living in the big population centers is impossible. These survivors prove otherwise.

- **Inner city survival. Old and new O.C.C.s.**
- **Skyscraper communities and life on the rooftops.**



- **Cults** – the new power in the city.
- **Gangs, street runners, the new underground, and more.**
- **Take your zombie campaign to new heights!**
- **Cover by E.M. Gist. Interior art by Nick Bradshaw.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda. Adaptable to other Palladium settings.**
- **Size and price not yet determined – Cat. No. 237. Fall/winter, 2018.**

Update:

Palladium Fantasy®, Rifts® etc.

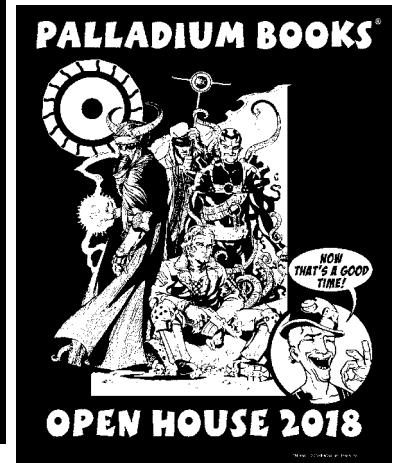
Just because a specific title is not mentioned does not mean it is not coming out, it simply means there is nothing to report other than we are “working on it” and there is no “tentative” release date yet. We are trying not to show exact dates of release until we feel strongly we can hit them. We are working on a vast number of projects for a large number of our game lines.

NEW! Four New T-shirts – Available now

New Rifts® T-shirt! We kept this new Rifts® T-shirt simple and dynamic, featuring a CS soldier firing his gun. Is he friend or foe? You decide. It fits the current Rifts® story arc with the Minion War and most any theme involving Rifts and the Coalition States. Art by comic book artist Freddie Williams II. Enjoy. Cat. No. 2582.

Heroes Unlimited™ T-shirt! You have been asking to see more for **Heroes Unlimited™**, we heard you and offer this striking T-shirt as just the beginning of more support for **Heroes Un-**

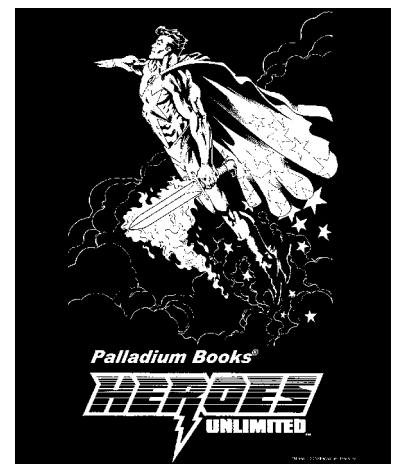
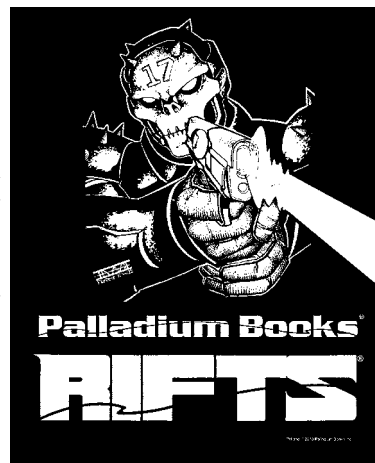
limited™. It was certainly a hit at the Palladium Open House. Cat. No. 2583.



New Game Master T-shirt features the dynamic artwork of *Kevin Long's* original Villains Unlimited cover. Why this art? A) Because G.M.s unleash the villains and challenges that await their players. B) *Heroes Unlimited™* needs some loving. And C), because it is a dynamic piece of art that screams get ready for adventure. Cat. No. 2584.

The new **Palladium Open House T-shirt** is fun and one of my favorites, featuring art by Ramon K. Perez. You did not have to be at the Open House in person to get this fun T-shirt. If you were there in spirit or just like the design, snap it up. Limited to 120 shirts. Available only while supplies last. Cat. No. 2585.

- **All T-shirts are high quality, pre-shrunk, 100% cotton Gildan T-shirts and look great.** I love all four. Wore the POH, G.M. and Heroes Unlimited T-shirts during the event and I'm wearing the Rifts® shirt for inspiration as I write this.
- **Available in most sizes, Medium to 5XL, as usual.**
- **\$18.95 each for Medium to XL, \$20.95 for XXL, and up for larger sizes. All available now.**



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Palladium Books® Check List

The Rifter® Series

- ___ 179 The Rifter® #79 – \$13.95
- ___ 180 The Rifter® #80 – \$14.99
- ___ 181 The Rifter® #81 – \$14.99
- ___ 182 The Rifter® #82 – \$14.99
- ___ 183 The Rifter® #83 – \$14.99 (new!)
- ___ 184 The Rifter® #84 – \$14.99 (coming)

Splicers® More sourcebooks coming soon.

- ___ 200 Splicers® RPG – \$23.95
- ___ 201 Splicers®: I Am Legion – \$26.99

Dead Reign®

- ___ 230 Dead Reign® RPG – \$26.99
- ___ 231 SB 1: Civilization Gone™ – \$14.99
- ___ 232 SB 2: Dark Places™ – \$12.95
- ___ 233 SB 3: Endless Dead™ – \$16.95
- ___ 234 SB 4: Fear the Reaper™ – \$12.95
- ___ 235 SB 5: Graveyard Earth™ – \$12.95
- ___ 236 SB 6: Hell Followed™ – \$20.95
- ___ 237 SB 7: In the Face of Death™ – \$17.99 (coming)

Rifts® Novels

- ___ 301 Sonic Boom™ – \$9.95
- ___ 302 Deception's Web™ – \$9.95
- ___ 304 Tales of the Chi-Town 'Burbs™ – \$12.95
- ___ 305 Rifts® Path of the Storm™ – \$12.95

Weapons Books

- ___ 401 Weapons and Armor™ – \$8.95
- ___ 402 Weapons and Castles™ – \$8.95
- ___ 403 Weapons and Assassins™ – \$9.99
- ___ 404 Weapons & Castles of the Orient™ – \$9.95
- ___ 409 Exotic Weapons™ – \$9.99 (coming)
- ___ 410 European Castles™ – \$9.99 (coming)

Palladium Fantasy RPG®

- ___ 450 The Palladium Fantasy RPG® – \$28.99
- ___ 451 Dragons & Gods™ – \$24.95
- ___ 453 Old Ones™ 2nd Ed. – \$26.99
- ___ 454 Monsters & Animals™ 2nd Ed. – \$26.99
- ___ 455 Adventures on the High Seas™ – \$24.95
- ___ 458 Island at the Edge of the World™ – \$20.95
- ___ 459 Yin-Sloth Jungles™ – \$20.95
- ___ 462 Western Empire™ – \$24.95
- ___ 463 Baalgor Wastelands™ – \$24.95
- ___ 464 Mount Nimro™ – \$20.95
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- ___ 466 Library of Bletherad™ – \$20.95
- ___ 467 Northern Hinterlands™ – \$24.95
- ___ 468 Land/Damned 1: Chaos Lands™ – \$24.95
- ___ 469 LoD 2: Eternal Torment™ – \$24.95
- ___ 470 LoD 3: The Citadel – \$26.99 (coming)
- ___ 471 Wolfen Empire™ – \$22.99
- ___ 472 Mysteries of Magic™ One: Heart of Magic – \$16.95
- ___ 474 Bizantium/Northern Islands™ – \$24.95
- ___ 475 Garden of the Gods™ – \$22.99 (coming)

Heroes Unlimited™ / After the Bomb®

- ___ 500-2 Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Ed. – \$28.99
- ___ 5000HC Heroes Unlimited™
- ___ 30th Anniversary Hardcover – \$50.00
- ___ 501 Villains Unlimited™ Revised – \$24.95
- ___ 503 After the Bomb® RPG – \$26.99
- ___ 505 Road Hogs™ (After the Bomb® II) – \$9.95
- ___ 507 Mutants Down Under™ (AB III) – \$9.95
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- ___ 514 Mutants in Orbit™ (AB VI) – \$16.95
- ___ 515 Aliens Unlimited™ – \$26.99
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- ___ 517 Century Station™ – \$26.99
- ___ 518 Gramercy Island™ – \$24.95
- ___ 519 Aliens Unlimited Galaxy Guide™ – \$24.95
- ___ 520 Mutant Underground™ – \$16.95
- ___ 521 Powers Unlimited® One – \$16.95
- ___ 522 Powers Unlimited® Two – \$16.95
- ___ 523 Powers Unlimited® Three – \$16.95
- ___ 525 Revised Ninjas & Superspies™ – \$22.99
- ___ 526 Mystic China™ – \$24.95
- ___ 527 Armageddon Unlimited™ – \$22.99

Beyond the Supernatural™

- ___ 700 Beyond the Supernatural™, 2nd Ed. – \$26.99
- ___ 702 Tome Grotesque™ – \$22.99 (coming)
- ___ 703 Beyond Arcanum™ – \$26.99 (coming)

Nightbane®

- ___ 730 Nightbane® RPG – \$24.95
- ___ 731 Nightbane®: Between the Shadows™ – \$22.99
- ___ 732 Nightbane®: Nightlands™ – \$20.95
- ___ 733 Nightbane®: Through the Glass Darkly™ – \$20.95
- ___ 735 Nightbane® Survival Guide™ – \$20.95
- ___ 736 Nightbane® Dark Designs™ – \$20.95

Rifts® Chaos Earth®

- ___ 660 Rifts® Chaos Earth® RPG – \$20.95
- ___ 661 Rifts® CE Creatures of Chaos™ – \$12.95
- ___ 662 Rifts® CE The Rise of Magic™ – \$12.95
- ___ 665 Rifts® Chaos Earth® First Responders™ – \$17.99 (coming)
- ___ 666 Rifts® Chaos Earth® Resurrection™ – \$20.95
- ___ 667 Rifts® Chaos Earth® Psychic Scream™ – \$17.99 (coming)

Rifts®

- ___ 800HC Rifts® RPG Ultimate Edition – \$41.99
- ___ 801 Rifts® Sourcebook One Revised – \$22.99
- ___ 802-E Rifts® World Book 1: Vampire Kingdoms™, Revised – \$26.99

- ___ 803 Rifts® Conversion Book One™ – \$24.95
- ___ 804 Rifts® WB 2: Atlantis™ – \$20.95
- ___ 805 Rifts® Sourcebook 2: Mechanoids® – \$17.99
- ___ 807 Rifts® WB 3: England™ – \$20.95
- ___ 808 Rifts® WB 4: Africa™ – \$20.95
- ___ 809 Rifts® Dimension Book 1: Wormwood™ – \$22.99
- ___ 810 Rifts® WB 5: Triax™ – \$24.95
- ___ 811 Rifts® Pantheons of the Megaverse® – \$24.95
- ___ 812 Rifts® Sourcebook 3: Mindwerks™ – \$17.99
- ___ 813 Rifts® Mercenaries™ – \$22.99
- ___ 814 Rifts® WB 6: South America – \$20.95
- ___ 815 Rifts® WB 7: Underseas™ – \$26.99
- ___ 816 Rifts® DB 2: Phase World® – \$26.99
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Gnomes: Undersized and Underestimated The Gnome Homesteads in Ophid's Grasslands

Optional Material for the Palladium Fantasy RPG®

By Hendrik Härterich

Gnomes are a rather small race in Palladium Fantasy which has always occupied a big space in my heart. I have long been fascinated and puzzled by how a people could have remained so genuinely good-hearted and peace-loving after the devastation and trauma caused by the Elf-Dwarf War.

There is not that much information on our smallish friends in the canon. This article seeks to remedy that. In the following you will find details about a so far unknown Gnome society, their culture, and in particular, how the Gnome of today lives and how history changed his way of life. As you will find, Gnomes are sorely underestimated.

Introduction

What the Books Say about Gnomes

The canon books give us only some answers. Aside from the information in the core book (*PFRPG*, pages 294-295), you will find a good treatise on the history of the Gnomes and their exodus to the North in *Book 13: Northern Hinterlands* (pages 41-43). Building on that, only one Gnomish city has been sketched with a very short description in *Land of the Damned Vol. 1*, page 23: Grayvale, a militant Gnome freehold of strong magic with at most 10,000 inhabitants but probably less. In *LOD* it has further been hinted at that there may be yet another Gnome settlement in the Old Kingdom Mountains. When going through all the *PFRPG* books, you will find that very few Gnomes can still be found living in (usually) human dominated settlements, and that these Gnomes are scattered all over the lands of the Palladium World.

Only very rarely will you find more than a handful of Gnomes together. The secret city of Glade (*Eastern Territories*, pages 60-71) is one exception but even there you will find no more than a community of 120 Gnomes. The only surviving Gnomish nation – the so-called Gnome Central State, which cooperates closely with the Wolfen – is another exception. Not much is known of this “state” but that about 43,000 Gnomes live there, spread over hundreds of square miles and consisting of over 100 “tribes” (see *Wolfen Empire*, page 25, and *Adventures in the Northern Wilderness*, page 11). It stands to reason that these “tribes” are probably divided further into many smaller communities.

Monsters & Animals has an interesting description of the Populated Areas on Palladium and shows population quotas on page 18. According to *Monsters & Animals*, the Northern Wilderness has a Gnome population of 8%, most of whom will live in the mentioned Gnome Central State. However, there is another and very sizable Gnome population shown for Ophid's Grasslands: 15%, no less. This is highly intriguing as nothing is mentioned in the other books about that population. Even though no basic value is given to calculate the actual number of Gnomes behind

the percentage value, we can get to a realistic approximation. As the Ophid's are grasslands and tundra, we can make an educated guess. Assuming that the Ophid's have a similar population density to Wyoming or Alaska (the latter has a population density of only 1.3 persons per square mile, conservatively rounded down to 1.0 here) and taking into account that the Ophid's encompass an area of about 225,000 square miles (582,747.3 km²), we can come up with a speculative population size of about 33,750 Gnomes. Assuming an even slightly higher population density, the number may even be as high as double that! To put the population number in perspective, though, the Ophid's are a vast swath of land. The Grasslands are a little larger than France, which is more than twice as large as Wyoming and not much smaller than Texas. Considering that the Gnomish race was almost extinguished in the Elf-Dwarf War and not many remain today, a number of 33,750 to 67,500 hidden in Ophid's Grasslands is truly remarkable and we know almost nothing about this population! Even when deducting the higher of the known numbers for the Gnomes living in Grayvale (max. 10,000), which is located hidden in the Northern Mountain Lowlands on the western edge of the Ophid's, the question is: how and where do the remaining 20,000-50,000 Gnomes live in Ophid's Grasslands?

A Summary of the History of Gnomes

10,000 years ago, the golden age of the Gnomes ended when the Elf-Dwarf War began. Before the war, Gnomes lived in the Old Kingdom alongside Elves and Dwarves in what was usually referred to as the Gnome Republic. Gnomes love to talk, are family-centric, and peace-loving. They like to strike a bargain. They are naturals when it comes to peaceful arguing; one might even say they are wont to lengthily deliberate on issues small and great. Alas, talking did not help them. During the war, at some point in the murky history of that greatest of all conflicts, Gnome society and their great Shining Commonwealth was ground to dust under Elven fist and Dwarven boot. This almost ended Gnomes completely, but you can never keep a good Gnome down, and so they survived.

After the hostilities had broken out again between the first and the second peace, about 9,500 years ago, most of the surviving Gnomes made a mass exodus to the north and founded the Exodus Republic. At the same time, a precious few went deeper into the stony dark of the Old Kingdom Mountains and established a small and well-hidden city. The name of this city is unknown. What is known in Gnome lore is that 6 great Gnome clans with a total of over 20,000 Gnomes went “under the mountain.” How many are left and how they live is anybody's guess after nigh 10,000 years. It is further rumored that at the same time, one Gnome clan, the Carfyn, fled south to found a Gnome settlement in the great jungle. However, it was the great exodus of the Gnomes from the Old Kingdom to the north which allowed the

still considerable remnants of Gnome society to prosper again for several hundred years. Sadly, no good luck holds forever.

Towards the end of the war, around 8,200 years ago, the two combatant nations were fatigued and desperate. A rumor abounded that the Gnomes had command of a secret magic. Elves and Dwarves alike decided to get that magic at all costs to gain the vital edge in their great conflict. However, the Gnomes were adamant not to help one party over the other. The Gnomes thought that by this they would create a stalemate and restore peace. How wrong they were – a stalemate can be broken by force, like the Gordian Knot, and so it was. Dwarves and Elves both marched to the Northern Hinterlands to literally wring the secrets out of the Gnomes. In the span of 20 horrible years, 97% of the Gnome population of the Exodus Republic had died by the hands of either Dwarves or Elves. Hundreds of thousands perished.

When the Exodus Republic had fallen, the survivors fled. A very few established small villages in the deep, dark, and cold-bitten forests of the Northern Hinterlands. Some established the City of Grayvale in the Northern Mountains while some scattered to the winds and sought refuge in the settlements of other races. Some, however, chose yet a different style of life, hiding in Ophid's Grasslands. They are the chief subject of this article.

Ophid's Grasslands

Ophid's Grasslands is a large area of land where we find a mix of natural environments. Mostly, hence the name, the ecosphere of the Ophid's ranges from various types of grasslands, especially tallgrass prairie, to tundra with much shorter growth spurts, permafrost subsoil, and mostly treeless plains, which makes up the largest part of this part of the Ophid's. Wherever you go, however, there will be palatable, high-productivity grass, herbs, and willow scrubs (like, for example, in the Scottish highlands). A dense hardwood forest makes up the northern border of the Ophid's and covers the remainder of the Northern Hinterlands up to Bizantium. Lighter forest can be found to the northwest and northeast of the Ophid's, hugging the hardwood forest timberline to the northeast and clothing the foothills leading up to the Northern Mountain Lowlands to the northwest. Essentially, the landscape changes to become colder, less and less forgiving, and harsher in climate, when you move from the south to the north.

A little journey through Ophid's Grasslands

When you arrive by ship at Ophid's Grasslands in the Colony of the Western Empire, you will pass along the cliffs of the rugged but lushly green coastline (think Ireland or Maine) until you make landfall in Ophidia, a sprawling yet neatly laid out, clean and orderly picture of an imperial settlement of 70,000 inhabitants (see *Western Empire*, pages 139-142). You may take a rest, safe under the protection of the imperial garrison, and enjoy a wonderful meal at the excellent Blue Whale tavern in the Commercial District before you set out to venture north. The Empire may pretend it owns a good piece of property in the Ophid's but it does not control it. You see a few imperial patrols and smallish settlements but as soon as you leave Ophidia, you have, for all intents and purposes, arrived in the wilderness. For roughly the whole colony and a little further northward, you will stride through the high grass of a tall grass prairie, which reaches north from the coast for about 100 miles (160 km), and see only small

woodland areas break the swaying uniformity of the tall grass. Then, going yet further north, you will see the landscape change quickly; the grass around you will become shorter during the next 50-100 miles of your march. At about the middle of the Ophid's you will have left the last of the small copses behind. There will not have been a single house for days already at that point. Even single trees will have become rarer and rarer; the vegetation will turn into a flat, wind-torn tundra. It is here, about 200-250 miles away from your starting point, where you will probably question the wisdom of your idea to travel through this land. This harsh, low grass, desert-like environment will be your constant and unforgiving companion for at least another 200 miles as you labor northbound until you will finally hit the timberline of the great forest. Until then you will have only the cold ground littered with moss, shrubs, lichens, and grass under your feet and great herds of hundreds of animals – bison and reindeer mainly – as your sole companions. While you have any chance to meet several other, far more dangerous animals, among them savage Tusker packs and the aggressive Catoblepa herds, you must be protected by Issuron, Lord of Mercy, as your journey is safe and peaceful. If you veer off the straight northern path, not daring to go into the great northern forest, and instead venture northwest, you will soon find yourself in the lighter northwestern forest and will have to navigate the hilly and often treacherous land of the many peaty bogs and fens there. If you want to avoid the winds of the tundra, often blowing as strong as 30–60 mph (48–96 km), on your way to return south again you might decide to follow the seemingly more sheltered line of the gigantic Northern Mountains. However, as you will find, the meltwater from the mountains could not sink low there – as it does in the more peaty country of the north-western hills and light forest which you just left behind you – and, over the millennia, has formed a deceptively beautiful land of lakes and marshes. This marshland is tough to negotiate safely, let alone in a direct route. After a round trip of about 1,000 miles (1,600 km) for several daunting weeks, you will, hopefully, arrive back at Ophidia safely. (**G.M. Note:** For some further information, please refer to page 185 of *Northern Hinterlands*.)

As harsh as the Ophid's are, when in bloom they are one of the most spectacular and beautiful sights to behold on Palladium – the landscape is bedecked colorfully with myriad flowers. It is also when the Faerie Folk of the Ophid's are at their most mischievous!

Notable Creatures and Inhabitants

Nomads and bandits. As if the climate was not dangerous enough, there is an abundance of dangerous creatures and beings in the Ophid's. Unlike in the little journey above, it is quite likely that anyone traveling through Ophid's Grasslands will encounter some of the following: Bands of humans, various humanoids and Bug Bear nomads who roam the plains – the humanoid races, most notably Orcs and Goblins, but even the larger, unsavory types, may be found mostly in the Horde Lands. All these nomads are hunting the great herds of bison, musk ox, reindeer, roan antelope, and even catoblepa, if desperate enough, and are a danger to anyone crossing their paths.

The Coyle Golden Horde (see *Northern Hinterlands*, page 188) are just a few thousand nomads, despite their name, who have never been seen to act as one and live off the land in small family clans, wherever they can, all through Ophid's. Coyles

also make the forest of the north a more dangerous place than it already is because of the forbidding climate, and often get into conflict with the gentle Kankoran and the proud Wolfen. The latter two races rarely go south, but forays by Wolfen scouts or Kankoran younglings on their 6-months rite of passage journey may occasionally be encountered as far south as the outskirts of Ophidia.

The Centaurs of the Eastern Ophid's are a proud and fierce force for good on the wide plains of the Ophid's Grasslands. About 15,000 of them roam the Ophid's in tribes of 100-300 (see *Northern Hinterlands*, page 97, where you can also find information on the secret Centaur city of Wildwind(!), which is not far from the eastern edge of the Ophid's). If banditry has not become the scourge of the land yet, it is thanks to the Centaurs. They might even occasionally save travelers from danger if the Centaurs think the strangers deserve help or if the attackers are evil creatures.

In the grasslands you may also find the following creatures (all in *Monsters & Animals* unless otherwise noted):

Diatryma, the large, powerful, and fast flightless bird of prey can be found hunting everywhere in the Ophid's Grasslands, but trust me, you do not want to find one (further detailed in *LOD 1: Chaos Lands*, page 34). Gnomes do what they can to avoid them.

Emirin, but only around the Northern Mountains. There is one odd case of an Emirin who has been saved by a Gnomfilín (Gnome warrior bards, detailed later in this article) and who has taken it upon itself to shadow and protect him.

Various Entities, mainly in haunted places, like the ancient and weather-ground ruins of Dwarven or Elven outposts and the underground remains of the Exodus Republic.

Eye Killers, anywhere in the Ophid's – one of the great dangers to Gnomes, the evil owl-snake with its psionic powers can endanger a Gnome homestead all by itself.

Various Faerie Folk, especially when the Ophid's are in bloom.

The rare Hopper, but generally only in the southeast of the Ophid's. Hoppers are probably the only creatures Gnomes hate and will hunt down with extreme prejudice.

Rock Crawlers, but almost entirely in the southern third of the Ophid's, which is one of the reasons why the Gnomes usually build their flat-burrows further north, as a community of Rock Crawlers once cleaned out a Gnome homestead.

Snakes – there are rattlesnakes of both kinds in Ophid's Grassland. Cottonmouth can be found in and around bodies of water. They are a particular danger in the bogs and fens around the hill-burrows of the Gnomes as well as in the lakes and marshes hugging the Northern Mountains. Diamondbacks hunt in the grasslands but are usually not found in the tundra. It goes without saying that Gnomes do not fancy snakes any more than most other people do, but “bog fillet” is a delicacy Gnomes love to eat. The meat is very protein rich but must be properly prepared or it will taste like the rubber wheels of a landsail. Especially the smaller Faerie Folk occasionally fall victim to a diamondback, which the Gnomes think is not entirely a bad thing when the Bogies are considered.

Suckers thrive wherever it is cool and dark, preferably caves and ruins, and there are many places like that in the Ophid's (see *above*). They usually do not bother the Gnomes. Occasionally, there may be a Sucker infestation in the storage caves of a Gnome homestead deep underground, but as Gnomes tend to keep the liv-

ing areas warm, Suckers as a rule do not get closer to the Gnomes than that. However, if Suckers are found in a homestead, the stupid creatures will be caught and made into a delightful stew. They have to be prepared as carefully as squirrels and for much the same reasons, but provide quite a lot of meat when considering the size of a Sucker in relation to the size of a Gnome.

Packs of Tuskers or the odd lone and extremely hostile male.

The undead Yema, but only in the south near the mountains and the ragged coastline, which is an issue for the Western Empire Colony but not for most creatures in the Ophid's. According to Gnome lore, the Yema were used by the Elves to hunt down Gnomes in the Time of Terror when the Exodus Republic was destroyed. Gnome mothers still use the Yema as a bogeyman to encourage good behavior from their children. Gnomes are mortally afraid of the Yema (-3 to save vs Horror Factor).

Uuhgtaar/Shaggy Elephant (*Wolfen Empire*, pages 59-60) – called **Gandar** by the Gnomes – these woolly mammoths are rare but can be encountered in small herds of 2D6+2 animals anywhere in the Ophid's. The Gnomes do not fear them – unless the mammoths trample over one of their flat-burrows, when a collapse might have to be feared – but rather see them as holy creatures and will neither harm them nor allow anyone else to do so.

The Law

The only portion of Ophid's Grasslands under some sort of civilized rule of law is the Western Empire Colony, but in reality the gavel of the judges of the Western Empire is not heard beyond the coastline. Hugging the coast to the eastern Sea of Dread, you will only find the city of Ophidia, as mentioned, and a very few hamlets, farms, and small towns. Other than that, each group of the various nomads makes its own law and that reaches no farther afield than where they are. That said, the Gnomes have rule of law and are very law abiding – their judges are traveling judges: their warrior bards, the Gnomfilín.

Settlements & Structures

Aside from the Gnomes' burrows, the remainder of the Ophid's knows no permanent settlements beyond, essentially, the coastline of the Western Empire Colony. You will not find a single house south of the hardwood forest in the north. You might find nomad tent sites, but they will be here today and gone tomorrow when the nomads have traveled on.

You come across quite a few ruins in Ophid's Grasslands. The nomads avoid them as they think they are all haunted. Sometimes people will report that they were woken at night by terrible screams coming from a nearby ruin or that they saw glowing specters marching through the night. The buildings are worn down by time now. The ruins are of Elven and Dwarven outposts, mostly erected at the time when the two warring races hunted down the Gnomes. Some structures are even older. Rarely, you may find the entrance to one of the large underground settlements of the Gnomes from the time of the Exodus Republic. It is said that none who ever ventured down those rabbit holes ever returned. There is substance to these travelers' tales: so many Gnomes died horrible deaths in these buildings, it is likely that the ghosts of these Gnomes still linger. In fact, the great slaughter of the Gnomes and their often torturous deaths have tarnished these ruins, probably forever, and Entities have been drawn to

these places. Entities seem to wallow in the psychically lingering taste of horrors past.

Most creatures living in the Ophid's have learned to group up and many will be good at hiding and camouflage, not only because taking shelter against the wind is sensible (though perhaps not in the ruins), but also because being seen may quickly put you on the menu. Most of the Ophid's is a flat plain and you can easily see for about 3 miles (4.8 km). That said, the Ophid's are anything but crowded and you can go for days without seeing a soul. It is rather likely, though, that you will see large herds of grazing animals.

Dandelion Rubber

– The White Gold of the Ophid's

That's right – Dandelion Rubber, or Milky Gold as the Gnomes of the Ophid's call it. The Ophid's Dandelion is a modest plant that is a good alternative source for the natural rubber gained from rubber trees. Dandelion milk contains latex, which exhibits the same qualities as the natural rubber from rubber trees. The Ophid's Dandelion has stalks that reach about up to 2 feet (0.6 m) in height. It is usually in flower from May through June with seeds ripening from June through July. Further north nearer the tundra line, the flower will only be found in June and ripens only in July. This dandelion is even more resilient than normal dandelions and able to grow in the harsh climates of the Ophid's and even where the soil is not or just barely suited for the cultivation of palatable crops. Dandelions grow annually while rubber trees take between seven and ten years to deliver the first harvest. To harvest the Ophid's Dandelion, only the roots are pulverized as the leaves contain very little rubber. Water is then used to separate the latex from other substances. The dandelion rubber works just as well as latex from rubber trees. However, the dandelion yield is only about one tenth of the yield of caoutchouc (natural rubber), but 222-444 lbs (100-200 kg) of rubber per hectare of Ophid's dandelions may be harvested.

In a sense, it is essential for the "Gnome defense industry" as it provides the warskiffs best protection against damage from rocks and other obstacles, but rubber tires are also faster and more resilient than wooden wheels, even if they have White Iron rims. Rubber is a rare and near priceless commodity for Gnomes.

Dandelion harvest time is when the Gnomes of many homesteads will "swarm" the endless dandelion fields and harvest White Gold. This is an occasion when the Gnomes of several homesteads will work together and, thus, a great opportunity for young Gnomes to meet each other. End of July is then also the time of the great Gnome harvest festivals. If you want to see Gnomes party like there is no tomorrow, go to a burrow in the Ophid's at the end of July!

Another source of rubber used by the Gnomes, but very rarely, is caoutchouc. That kind of rubber must be imported from the south, preferably the durable and most flexible "golden rubber" gained from rubber trees, but the journey is long, hard, and dangerous, so Gnomes usually do not get caoutchouc. Golden rubber is called golden not for its value, although that would be quite fitting as it so hard to get, but for its honey-like color. Due to its function (and value) you will sometimes hear a proud skiffer call his golden rubber fitting, "best bouncy." More on the Gnome skiffs, i.e. landsails, later.

Rubber Equipment

Incidentally, as the Gnomes have quickly learned to appreciate, rubber is also extremely water resistant, and they make rubber boots (so-called Gnomingtons), hats, and cloaks, all excellent and durable, warding against rain and wind. Some Gnomes will even custom-make and sell these rubber garments to non-Gnomes, but they are costly:

Gnomingtons (rubber boots): Knee high, 300 gold.

Gnomingtons (rubber boots): Hip high, 600 gold.

Gnome Rain Cape (rubber cape): Long and hooded, 400 gold.

Rubber Hat: Large-brimmed, 250 gold.

Gnomes can buy these items at about 20% of the above prices; Gnomes from the same burrow usually get them for free.

Gnomish Settlements in Ophid's Grasslands: Homesteads

Long before Gnomes lived in cities and worked for Dwarves and Elves, they had lived peacefully in so-called homesteads for countless centuries. When the war came and they were crushed by their "friends," many of the few survivors ultimately returned to this way of life, and now live in a string of widely scattered farm-burrows in Ophid's Grasslands. A Gnome of the golden age would have fainted at the mere suggestion of living in a hole in the ground, camping in caves, or living with goats – let alone in a rough and forlorn place like Ophid's Grasslands, but history has a way of seeing the most adaptable survive, and not those who hold onto a cushy pillow.

The Gnome burrows of the Ophid's are hearths and homes. They are located mostly in the lightly forested hills near the murky bogs and lush meadows of the vales in the northwest (hill-burrows) or hidden under the high grassed plains (flat-burrows). The Gnomes of the Ophid's did not really choose a new lifestyle, they rather returned to the ancient ways of the Gnome race and live in close-knit family homesteads again. Still, it may be stressed, our modern Gnome lives very differently from his ancestors of the golden age.

The exact number of homesteads is unknown, but it is safe to assume that at least 350 of such homesteads exist; the largest have a population of about 200 Gnomes, while the smallest house a family of about 10 Gnomes each. Imagine 2 foot (0.6 m) tall Amish farmers living underground most of the time and you are not that far off.

Gnomes love stories. So, let us start with one to see how the Gnomes of the Ophid's live:

The Coming of Old Grinder

It had the makings of a fine day. The dandelion harvest had been brought in. There had been no Orc raiders anywhere near the homestead for a while. The cool autumn sun was shining gently on the tall grass of the seemingly endless tundra. The Ophid's were still in full bloom. Soon this would change. The days had already become short and the nights cold with the first serious frost, but nobody would worry today. Today, the ale would be drawn and the smell of fresh bread, goat cheese, and sautéed mushrooms was all about. The snakes had been skinned; there would be bog fillet – finest delicacy of all. That night there would be a feast.

The Gnomes of Three Hills were milling about laboriously. Especially the children were excited. There had been rumors that a storyteller would come, but not just any storyteller. People said that Old Grinder the Gnomfiln would come, a Gnome storyteller with a reputation. Grinder had been well respected as well as infamous for over 200 years for being a fierce warrior bard. Gnome warriors were needed in the dangerous Ophid's, no doubt, but even after 8,000 years with a sore need to, at least sometimes, have to fight, Gnomes have not shaken off the discomfort around warriors and shame they see in the act of fighting. True, Gnomes will kill animals to live, but killing a sentient being is something absolutely abhorrent to Gnomes. Gnomes who did that were socially branded forever, they were seen as tainted in their soul. Still, Grinder was loved as he was also a storyteller, perhaps the rarest and best regarded profession among Gnomes. Gnomes just love stories, and huddling together listening to a good, long tale is as close to heaven as a Gnome feels he can get.

One Gnomeling shouted in the squeaky noise of the young, "Will Grinder come, Papa?"

"Sure. Sure as the sun rises every morn, Matty. When there's a big feast, Grinder will come, have no doubt."

"Is it true that Grinder killed his first Orc as a youngling?" asked another boy.

"You young tykes. We don't speak about this."

"Awww, Papa, please."

"Oh, alright, then, but just because it is the feast coming," said Adam the Smith with a sigh, remembering how he had been as a boy. Besides, nothing beats an exciting story anyway. "It is true, boys and girls. Grinder was not older than you are now when he tore out an Orc's throat... with... his... teeth," said Adam, showing his own teeth in a mock fierce grin.

"Ugh, gross, Mr. Adam."

"You want me to stop?" laughed Adam, knowing full well the answer of the jumpy Gnomelings around him. They were quivering with energy and over-excitement and would never say no to THIS story.

The kids all begged and a chorus of answers drowned out the word stop. "Please go on, Mr. Adam." "Papa! You cannot stop now." "Please."

"It was a horrible day and Grinder had no other choice but to fight. Orc raiders had come in the night and raided his homestead. It is the ruin not 30 miles from here, up north. It was a beautiful place, great-grandfather always says. Old, too. Almost as venerable as ours. Well, everyone in the homestead was dead and most of the Orcs had already started to feast on the slain. Grinder had hid under one of the cupboards. He almost got away with it, but when the Orcs put his mother on a stick to roast her over the fire, Grinder started to whimper." The children were completely hushed now, many of the children were silently crying but they were captured by the story.

"He should not have whimpered. He should have stayed hidden. But Grinder did not. Grinder got angry. Yet, he did not know what to do. The half drunken Orcs made that decision for him, and one, a powerful Orc chieftain called Axehead, drew Grinder out by the feet, laughing at the helpless Gnomeling. Helpless, so he thought. He was wrong. Grinder saw red. Grinder, the smell of blood and roasted Gnome in his nose, was near a rage. A roaring rage, kids."

"Axehead lifted Grinder above his head and wanted to shatter his bones, to bash him into a wall, but Grinder was hard to hold.

He wiggled. He danced in the Orc's hand. He was more fidgety than a fish or a squirrel in mortal fear."

"Axehead was cursing at the young Gnome for daring to cause him so much trouble. A Gnome, a nothing. A nothing! But we are not nothing, and Grinder, Grinder is quite something as the Orc soon found out. He taught them. Axehead would have cursed a lot more had he seen what the future held in store."

"The other Orcs stopped what they were doing and stared at their boss and his travail, and mocked him. This made Axehead really angry as you can imagine. He shook his fist at his men. He should not have done that. It gave Grinder time."

"What did Grinder do? What would any sane Gnome do? A Gnome would run away. Grinder did not. He was in an insane rage. He bit into the Orc's hand. Axehead let him go, reflexively. Grinder fell, clutched at the Orc's upper arm, caught onto it, flew up the shoulder like an angry wolverine, locked his legs around Axehead's arm, put one hand at the chin, the other at the big Orc's ear, and bit into the Orc's neck. Grinder was not only biting, mind, he was chewing in a frenzy. He dug into it like you would into Mother Maghie's cream cake if she let you."

One of the boys fainted.

"The other Orcs stood by, perhaps transfixed by the strangeness of the grim fight. Axehead fell gurgling, desperately clutching for the Gnome but he could not tear Grinder off. Grinder had his teeth locked into the Orc's throat. When Axehead drew his last breath, his limbs still quivering, the blood-showered youngling let go and rose to stand on his opponent's chest. Grinder looked around him somewhat befuddled. Probably because reason sneaked its way back into him, he started to wake up to the situation. The Orcs were staring at Grinder. Grinder stared back. In the blink of an eye the Orcs would snap back to it and swoop down on Grinder, for sure. What would Grinder do?"

A chorus of Gnomeling voices squealed and shouted, "What happened," "Run, run, Grinder, run," and "Go on, Mr. Adam, please."

Adam continued with a smile, "Grinder looked about him, swiftly snatched Axehead's knife, and darted away into the dark corridors of the homestead. Grinder still has this knife. Maybe, just maybe, if you ask him nicely... he will show it to you."

Soon thereafter, Matty went up to the green "roof" of The First Home, the oldest of the three hills settled by Ebenezer's clan. The sun set, bathing Ophid's Grasslands and Three Hills in its blood red glow. Matty had heard that Grinder had his own homestead, a small homestead where he lived by himself, and that it was some 50 miles to the east. The boy looked eastward unflinchingly, intent on being the first to see Grinder. Matty had been standing there ever since Papa had told the story of Grinder's fight against Axehead. He was eager to meet Grinder.

And then, suddenly, he saw a sail fin cutting through the tall grass. "It is Grinder! Grinder's coming! Papa!" he shouted at the top of his lungs. Matty realized, somewhere in the very back of his young mind, that he was breaching Gnome noise discipline, a serious offense, but he was too excited to stay calm and use the snake-teeth snapper or bone flute the Gnomes usually use to alert one another.

The landskiff was fast. It must have moved at top speed, gliding through the grass like a hot knife through butter. Only the most daring and experienced Gnome skiffers dared to approach a homestead at such break-neck pace, risking to shatter skiff and bones alike on one of the many rocks in the Ophid's.

When Matty looked again, the skiff had already disappeared in the bogs surrounding Three Hills. The youngling searched the fens with his sharp eyes, but the smoke and fog clinging to the gnarly waterlands did not let him see the landsail. However, he heard a dull jingling sound. It seemed like some large beads knocking arrhythmically against wood. Then, suddenly, Orcdread, the warskiff of Grinder, shot out of the swamplands unto the hill where Matty stood. 10 feet long, long enough to carry the two tall, triangular sails, it was also sleek like a snake to cut easily through the tall grass. Hanging over the precious golden rubber – imported from the south – were Orc, Goblin, and Kobold heads, dancing grimly up and down with the movement of the skiff. The skiff was racing up the hill, carried by the stiff, ever-present wind. Artfully, the skiffer turned the landsail not 5 yards from Matty, who stood as if rooted to the ground with mouth agape. The skiffer let the sails fall, hitting the wheel breaks and at the same time bringing the skiff to a grinding halt; only a moment later, the skiffer jumped off board.

Grinder was not a tall Gnome at 2 feet, but he was sinewy and well-muscled, unbent by age at what must have been closer to 300 than 200. He wore a fine mesh mail. Matty could see the old bone hilt of a Gnomish sword protruding from a simple leather sheath at Grinder's side, and that Grinder carried a two-handed war hammer in his left hand, which he now deftly put in the sling hold on his back. Taking off one of the thick skiffer gauntlets, his weather-beaten, bearded face split into a wide grin, and he struck out his right hand to greet the youngling. In a hoarse voice, Grinder said, "Cayn, called Grinder in these parts, at your service, young man."

Awestruck, Matty shook the great hero's hand knowing at this moment that he would become a warskiffer himself when he was big.

Matty led Grinder down the tunnels. Flutes and drums and the sound of stomping feet of the Gnomes' harvest dance echoed through the halls, long tunnels and winding corridors of Three Hills. The grown-ups, but for those who had sentry duty, were in the "Great Hall of Ebenezer," a beautiful large room of some 30 yards length, 15 yards width, and a more than generous ceiling height of 6 feet. The younglings, full from the many fine treats served at the fest, sat in "The Small Place," a small hall in Rockholm, the second oldest hill settlement being part of Three Hills, around the fireplace in a semi-circle.

Only a little later, Grinder, a pipe in one hand, a huge stein of beer in the other, was about to tell his first story of the evening. Drawing deep from the pipe, Grinder looked at the innocent younglings mirthfully, his grey eyes mustering each and every one of them and sorting them to The Twelve Families of Three Hills.

Grinder loved telling tales, especially to the young ones. It was the sacred duty of the Gnome storyteller to hand down the tales of the Gnomes – "The Seven Sagas," "The Long Tale of Brindin Sugarbreath The Merchant Prince," "The Song of the Realm of Silk," and especially, "The Lay of the Fallen Realms." It was also excellent fun to see the excited glow of curiosity in the listeners, but Grinder was not entirely happy. His bones were getting heavy and he got weary faster these days than only a few years ago. The coming winter held no joy for him – his joints would get stiff and hurt again as if a small army of ants gnawed at them. Yet, there was some hope, he thought to himself. Mae-gaen's snake oil and swamp rub from The Three Hills always

helped a lot and she had already promised him she had set aside a generous number of bottles for him earlier this evening. His thoughts of the coming discomfort vanished with another puff of smoke from the pipe as he began his tale.

"Something horrible happened over 10,000 summers ago. That is older than me or anyone you know. It is long enough ago for even a god to have been forgotten. That many summers ago, far to the south, many weeks' journey from here, there was a place where the people did not even know of the 'Lands we call home now. It was our Shining Commonwealth, at the time when Dreyzarmal the Great was chancellor and his lovely wife, the bard Elizzandra, was the toast of the theaters. They presided over many clans, of which the smallest numbered many times all the Gnomes you know put together. It was truly the golden age of Gnomes. Our people made the finest jewelry and ornaments. Our white iron tailors made the most beautiful garments the world had ever seen..."

Quick Stats for Cayn "Old Grinder" Dindar

Old Grinder is a legend among the Gnomes of the Ophid's. He is tough as nails and there is none truer in grit. He has fought for the Gnomes of the Ophid's for over 200 years now. His age is slowly showing. Despite being long past his prime, he does what he can to keep up appearances. For many nomads, seeing Grinder's warskiff alone or hearing his strong voice will deter them from whatever banditry they are about. He tries to only fight the unavoidable fights these days, and he no longer seeks out danger as he did in his youth. Grinder knows that his flawless reputation must not suffer from him being bested. He concentrates on telling stories to keep Gnome lore alive. That is not just because he is older and weaker than he was. Cayn is much more than just a fighter and concentrates on his sacred task as a Gnomfilín.

Race: Gnome.

O.C.C.: 10th level Gnome Gnomfilín.

Alignment: Scrupulous (Good).

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 10, M.A. 18, P.S. 10, P.P. 22, P.E. 20, P.B. 13, Spd 9 (running), 5 (digging).

Hit Points: 67

S.D.C.: 15

I.S.P.: 12

Attacks per Melee: 5 (6 on a warskiff, 4 ranged).

Bonuses: +4 on initiative, +6 to strike, +2 disarm, +7 to parry and dodge, no damage bonus, +3 to pull punch, +3 to roll with impact/fall, +8 save vs Horror Factor.

Other Combat Info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts — Kick Attack (2D4), Critical Strike 18-20, Paired Weapons.

Skills: W.P. Knife, W.P. Blunt.

Magic: None, but see Magic Items below.

Weapons: Arkengrim: An exquisitely crafted, short-hafted warhammer of Dwarven make, made into a Greater Holy Weapon of Gandárran, Lord of Peace, with the following special powers: 1) Healing Touch, 2) Sense Evil, 3) Monster Slayer, 4) Expel Deevils, Demons, and Entities. Bonuses are: +3 to damage, +3 to parry, damage 3D4+9, and double damage against supernatural beings as well as creatures of magic. When Cayn fled from the Orcs, he needed shelter. He knew that he had no chance by running and he did not know where to go. Although mortally afraid of the ancient ruins of the Dwarven outpost close to his family's burrow, he figured that the Orcs

would be at least as much afraid of the haunted place as he, and chancing death by a ghost's hands was better than sure death as an Orc snack. He was proved right; the Orcs followed his tracks to the ruins but did not dare enter and left after a few hours. Cayn still stayed put, but on the next morning he became fidgety – he was a young Gnome at the time, after all – and started to explore the ruins. He found Arkengrim there. Arkengrim was the fine hammer of a Dwarven officer who had commanded the outpost that had once stood there. Years later, a Gnome high priest of Gandárran Gandáramgee (see further along in this article for a description of this god) invoked The Lord of Peace to bless the weapon and turn it into a Greater Holy Weapon of the Lord of Peace. The Holy Weapon powers will only work if either the bearer of the weapon is attacked first or if he tried a peaceful resolution of the conflict first!

Axehead's Dagger: A simple but well-tended dagger with a white bone hilt (1D6 damage).

Armor: Cloak of Armor, A.R. 14, S.D.C. 150.

Magic Items: **Gnomingtons of Surefootedness:** These magically enchanted Gnome-sized and knee high rubber boots let the Gnome wearing them never slip, and walk surefooted over even the wettest plank, over the thinnest rope, etc.

Coarse Needle of Sewing: This needle works like the Needle of Sewing described in *PFRPG*, page 260, but is too large for sewing clothing but perfect for mending sails and leather.

Cherubot Anchor: Works much like the Cherubot Rope as detailed in *PFRPG*, page 257, but can support up to 2 tons and does not need to have one end touching “the ground” but any firm surface will do, like being tied to a warskiff.

Potions: 4 Superior Healing, 1 Negate Magic, 2 Negate Poison, 1 Superhuman Strength, 1 Turn into Mist.

Money and Other Equipment: Cayn does not have or need much money as all of his needs are provided by the homesteads he visits for free. In terms of equipment he has everything he needs (standard equipment like rope, lantern, lantern oil, blankets, etc.) as well as spares.

A Gnomish Welcome:

On Being a Gnome

“Welcome, traveler. May you bring peace and a tale to my hearth,” is what you will probably hear when you visit a Gnome's house. It says it all. Gnomes love a good story, are always hungry for news, and wish for nothing but peace.

Once, Gnomes were prized as craftsmen and renowned as fair and skillful traders throughout the lands of Palladium, but their services were especially sought after in the rich markets of the Old Kingdom. They lived in benign and mutually beneficial cooperation with Elves and Dwarves alike. While the peace-loving Gnomes were considered soft by the two great races, they were appreciated for their products, diligence, and resourcefulness.

Gnomes are great at thinking out of the box. They are not a physically impressive people, though, and easily overlooked as they do not make much noise about themselves. Gnomes tend to be humble. It has never been considered chic by Gnomes to boast, not even to put their accomplishments in a good light.

Gnomes think that a deed or thing speaks for itself. A Gnome master, for example, will not heap praise on his apprentice, but the master's soft smile, his nod, or handshake when the work

is finished will be held dear by the apprentice until his old age. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why neither Elf nor Dwarf ever afforded them the respect and recognition Gnomes deserve.

Gnomes love discussions; for example, with respect to the future of the homestead or whether or not to take up trading with somebody. If you are pressed for time, never go to a Gnome council meeting. Gnomes give patience a new meaning; a filibuster would never work with them, they might actually enjoy it.

Gnome craftsmanship will invariably take time. A Gnome never rushes *anything* if he can help it, because he wants to produce the best result possible and he usually will. Many of the most beautiful etchings in Dwarven masonry and the finest Elven jewelry are the work of Gnomes. Gnomes excel at work that requires small hands and long attention to detail. A Gnome will work at a square inch of the finest fret for days without ever once losing interest or concentration.

Gnomes never were great armor smiths, but their white iron (*Northern Hinterlands*, page 56) tailors were as fabled as their work to embellish weapons and armor with extremely intricate ornaments. Even if their fame waned with their fate, Gnomes are, as they always were, assiduous and skilled craftsmen, a hard-working people and natural entrepreneurs.



Gnomes can be adventurous. They love to see places. Some then choose to stay in one of the places they visit and set up shop. In the heyday of the Gnome civilization over 10,000 years ago, when the Gnomes were still many, you would see Gnome communities in every city and meet many a Gnome traveler on the roads of Palladium. Their inborn curiosity fired up by stories of fabulous places, many Gnomes were in fact traveling around to see the sights. A Gnome is a natural born tourist.

There is a good reason for the Old Kingdom saying “*if there is beauty to behold, be careful not to step on a Gnome,*” which exists in the Dwarvish, Elven, and Kobold tongues with exactly the same meaning. Today, a slightly shorter version – “*don’t step on the Gnome*” – is still used to say that something beautiful is near. An Elf may say that to a friend if he sees an exceptionally beautiful Elf-girl, hears great music, etc. A Dwarf may say it when he sees great stone masonry, a masterwork weapon, or a wagon full of beer barrels. Conversely, Wolfen or humans do not use that expression, except for the primitive descendants of the ancient Kawan people in the Yin-Sloth Jungles. The latter curiously enough view this phrase as a sacred command and will go out of their way not to hurt a Gnome.

Gnome lifestyle and needs are reflected in their architecture, as for any culture. So, let us look into what those needs are. Gnomes have many natural enemies – Kobolds, Orcs, Goblins, etc. all spring to mind. Worse, those preying on Gnomes have included people they traded with and even their “friends.” History has taught them in the harshest possible manner that not being seen is their best defense and wariness has been emphasized as a Gnome trait. Consequently, defensibility, camouflage, escape routes, and traps have all become major architectural requirements.

Even average Gnome works tend to be embellished beautifully. Every Gnome house will have woodcarvings of such beauty and minute detail that it is easy to lose oneself in them. Generation after generation will add to these carvings. If you pay attention to these carvings, they will tell you the story of the owners of the house, what they believe and what happened around them. All that will be interwoven with the wildest and most fantastic stories, legends and tales. Gnomes simply love storytelling. That is what a Gnome family will often do every evening, sit in front of the fire and share stories. To invent a story is considered a great gift.

Some of the best traders are Gnomes. Gnomes are open-minded and fair to others to a fault, even though they can also drive a hard bargain. Gnomes are especially gifted at trading and have a keen eye for detail. Gnomes strongly believe in “my word is my bond” and rarely will use written contracts, but expect them to remember the minutest detail of your arrangement.

Gnomes are trusting but not gullible. To protect all Gnomes, the Gnomes of old have formed a secret pact before they parted after the fall of the Exodus Republic: the “Gnometrust.” The Gnometrust binds all Gnomes to do and suffer anything rather than let anyone else endanger Gnomedom ever again. Gnomes are also bound to help one another. Each Gnome can ask another for shelter for up to one week and provisions for another week, for free, and no questions asked.

The hospitality of Gnomes is, by those it ever has been bestowed upon, fabled. A Gnome will go to great lengths to make his guest welcome and will wine and dine him as well as circumstances allow. As the Gnomes say, “*your hearth is the heart you show a stranger: a guest must see you smile, eat and drink well, know merriment and a good tale at a warm fire.*”

Whatever happens to them, Gnomes are absolutely unfaltering in their optimism.

Life in the Homesteads

Homesteads can be small and merely house one (quite possibly extended) family of 3D6+3 Gnomes. The typical size is the equivalent of a small hamlet housing 6D6+15 Gnomes. Only a few homesteads are the size of small towns and will be home to 1D4x50 Gnomes.

Gnome homesteads can be found all over Ophid’s Grasslands. There are two distinct variants, both built into the ground:

Hill-Burrow: In the forested and hilly northwestern part of Ophid’s Grasslands, where the land rises in slow ripples up to become the Northern Mountain lowlands, a homestead will be a burrow in and under the hills. While for a good part, the Ophid’s northwestern, lightly forested hill lands merge into the Horde Lands (see *Northern Hinterlands*, page 188), the Gnomes of the Hill-Burrows still brave such risk. They protect themselves by the many cunning traps and tricks they have cooked up over the millennia to stay safe. Besides, even the Horde Lands are anything but thickly settled and you can cross them, too, for many miles without ever seeing a single humanoid (just never assume a Goblin scout has not seen you), let alone a humanoid settlement or even camp. Some Hill-Burrows even deal, albeit VERY carefully, with Kobolds for black iron.

The whole region of the lightly forested north-west of the Ophid’s in the extended foothills leading to the Northern Mountain lowlands is full of scattered wetland mires – fens and bogs of various forms – also because it is the region where the water from the “Floods of the Arch-Warlock” (see *Land of the Damned Vol. 1*, page 18) will ultimately collect after it has found its way through the Northern Mountain lowlands. It goes without saying that all Burrow Homesteads have reinforced walls where necessary – a Gnome does not want to be flooded out. The Gnomes from the hills make good use of this landscape feature, as described further on.

Flat-Burrow: In the flat tundra plain and the southern grasslands with its long grass, however, the Gnomish homestead will be built right under the flat ground with no part of the burrow raised above ground level and its very sturdy trapdoors well concealed. The trapdoors are so sturdy that they can withstand a Catoblepa stampede without as much as a dent. The bigger homesteads will conceal one or more ramps for landsails under the trapdoor entrance so that the skiffs and other landsails can shoot out of the burrow quickly. Speed is often of the essence for Gnomes. The smaller skiffs can actually be “shot out” with either a rubber band or White Iron, which has shape-memory, or spring contraptions not unlike some early aircraft catapult ideas. Almost no Flat-Burrow will be in the northern Ophid’s Horde Lands or within the Western Empire Ophid’s Colony.

In all cases, Gnome families and clan structures are close-knit and many generations will live under the “roof” of the homestead. Usually, everyone living in a given homestead will be related to some extent. You will find Gnomes of 1D6+3 generations with an almost equal distribution but with most Gnomes being young to middle-aged adults. Gnomes are hardy and remain fit until old age more than humans do. You will still find some natural thinning out towards the end of the age curve, though. That said, the young tend to be the most daring and vulnerable. Gnomes do not

have the same survival scheme as rabbits. Gnomes breed slow. Thus, the young are strongly protected and kept under protection – as little as that often succeeds as it is at odds with the strong and somewhat carefree curiosity of your typical Gnome.

Gnomes do not marry closer than cousin and Gnomes seeking to marry are encouraged to find their mate outside the homestead. Gnome meetings between homesteads are a prime opportunity to meet a mate, but young Gnomes traveling between homesteads are sought after, too. A young couple is usually free in their decision regarding which clan homestead they will live.

The Gnomes of Ophid's Grasslands use fast landsails – ships on wheels – for transport. This allows them to cover great distances in relative safety since landsails can outpace most creatures. Most of the landsails are small skiffs. Some are built for combat; these are called warskiffs. The sailor of a skiff is called a skiffer or a warskiffer.

Among the Gnomes, being a warrior is considered but a necessary evil. You have to have those who defend you, but normal folk avoid fighters. A good Gnome never sheds blood without need, he will kill for food but he will try to seek peace with any creature. Warriors are somehow seen as being almost over the edge and to kill for sport, they are seen as soiled, if you will. While most great burrows will have, at least, a few warskiffers – warskiffers are warriors who sail the sleek and fast fighter landsails – they are not held in high regard. It is not that the rest of the burrow is not grateful to them. It is not that the others do not see the general need. It is like it is with tanners. Everybody understands that tanners are necessary, but their work “stinks,” it is unsavory. They are confined to live apart from the other people in a city, and the tanneries are off the city center. It is so with the warskiffers. As a consequence, by tradition, actually after thousands of years of this practice, warskiffers tend to stay amongst themselves. Warskiffer families usually marry into other warskiffer families between burrows. Essentially, warskiffers are a Gnome warrior caste of a low social rank. Use the Soldier O.C.C. for your standard warskiffer.

Gnomes build underground. They do everything they can so that their home remains undetected. These days, Gnomes do not build tall – neither outside, nor inside. Inside there is no reason to build high rooms. The rooms are made just so that Gnomes will be comfortable, i.e. at a height of about 4-5 feet. Some sections of a homestead, particularly corridors, will be even lower at about 3 feet. All this is still roomy enough to let Gnomes pass through and do the daily chores without the slightest hindrance or discomfort to them. Gnomes in the homesteads have scant interest to build high halls like Dwarves do. Firstly, contrary to Dwarves, they lack the need to show off in this fashion. Secondly, building beyond the need is also economically inefficient. Thirdly, this way of building is hardly an accident as it is more defensible – it goes a long way to make taller races fight much less effectively. In the corridors even a Dwarf or Goblin would be disadvantaged. **Fighting in areas too low for your body size is at -2 for every foot (0.3 m) of size of a combatant over the ceiling height;** so, a 6 foot (1.8 m) human will be at -6 to strike/parry/dodge in a 3 foot (0.9 m) “high” corridor.

Gnome houses are usually built in and under hills. Contrary to the common Tolkien imagery of halfling houses, who are gracefully absent from Palladium, you will not see a single friendly, let alone flower garnished, window or other highly visible, brightly colored, big round door on the hills were the Gnomes live. Neither

will you find any lush gardening on the outside. All that would be nice to have, and Gnomes are highly appreciative of nature and beauty, but it would not prudent. Gnome gardens are hidden, often inside their hills. Gnomes survive by hiding their homestead. As the Gnome saying goes, “*live for beauty and peace, but to keep living, don't advertise.*”

Gnomes will also not allow their settlements to be advertised by sounds from their livestock. Gnomes keep livestock, especially hardy goats, but almost never cattle and only rarely sheep. Goats are more adaptable to rough terrain and easier to handle than cattle, which are also just not Gnome-size friendly. Gnomes appreciate sheep for their wool, though you will not find them in any homestead. Some very desperate Gnomes even cut the vocal cords of their livestock. It eliminates the chance of enemies being drawn to a homestead by goats “talking.” However, the Gnome that goes that far is rare indeed. Gnomes are a gentle people and cannot bear to hurt any soul – they will go to immense lengths to avoid harming a living creature. Many homesteads have underground grazing areas where the goats can feed on moss and clover, and where any bleating will be muffled. When the goats are left outside to graze, the Gnomes will take care to collect the dung. Nothing goes unused in a Gnome household. Besides, Gnomes want to make sure that no tracks are left. Many homesteads use the dung for underground central heating in much the same way the Romans did in human history.

Aside from goats' milk and cheese, a very important part of Gnome cuisine and industry are rabbits. Not only do rabbits taste great, the angora rabbits the Gnomes of the Ophid's breed also give marvelous wool. Rabbit fur is light and beautiful and makes great fur coats and gloves. Angora rabbit wool makes for high quality clothes. As a bonus, rabbit warrens littering the countryside around a Gnome burrow are great natural pitfalls against on-rushing attackers, but do not stop or damage a skiff as the wheels are too big to be caught in a rabbit hole. Gnome warreners tend to the rabbit population with their skill, nets, and trained ferrets.

Gnome floor heating is quite effective. The resulting smoke from their heating systems is either collected in outlying “smoke caves,” where the Gnomes will use the smoke to conserve fish and such, or let out at the time of the morning fog. This way it draws the least attention. The most sophisticated – usually older and bigger – homesteads may even have a mechanical (wind, water, or even treadmill driven) fan system in place that is capable of blowing the steam to swamps or bogs in the vicinity of such homesteads. Interestingly, this smoke collection and fan system can also serve a defensive purpose when the fans are set up so that the Gnomes can flood corridors and rooms with smoke. While smoke may even be lethal, the effect Gnomes aim to achieve with it is only a little worse than Cloud of Smoke (*PFRPG core book*, page 233) but not intended to kill. Victims caught in the smoke will cough and choke, and their eyes will tear up, which will make seeing even worse than it is anyway because of the opaqueness of the smoke. Victims are at -5 strike, -9 to parry/dodge beyond three feet (0.9 m), and will be unable to see out of the smoke or beyond three feet. Likewise, those hidden in the smoke cannot be seen from outside (same modifiers for striking) of the smoke. Those in the smoke must save versus Poison: Non-Lethal every 3 rounds. When unsuccessful, they are at -25% on all skill checks that require concentration and focus, such as picking a lock. It is hard to focus when you're coughing your soul out. Once failed, the smoke effects last until the victim has had 1D6x10 minutes to recuperate in clear air.

Gnomes literally bog down enemies and use smokescreens. To further reduce visibility and accessibility, and thereby increase defensibility, some Gnome clans flood meadows and valleys around their homestead to create (artificial) fenland. Underground steam tunnels will lead to those bogs and any off-heat and smoke will be funneled to them. This effectively closes certain access routes, and the smoke and natural wetland fog, increased by the heat, will create additional visual cover.

Gnomes are accomplished builders and masons, and apt at (Roman technology level) mechanical engineering. They also know the secret of cement – they make it with volcano ash, and it is extremely durable, and can even be used underwater.

Gnomes have a well-developed defensive architecture, even outside the burrow. Gnomes make optimal use of the environment to the point of re-shaping it. It will look natural, but remember the Gnomes have had 8,000 years to shape the landscape around them. Gnome gardeners are not about beauty, they are about effect.

For example, the hill-burrow Gnomes will use hedge plants and thorny bushes, like roses and other forms of brambles, and plant large copses of them in the spaces between trees to create natural walls and “stop traps.” The brambles will lignify after a while and only the top will still bloom. The brambles create a natural field of barbed wire, if you will, and it is very hard to pass through them. Any unit coherence and impetus will be lost in these bramble fields. This “stone wood” is extremely hard to clear and quite fire-resistant. Yet, this is not where Gnome thinking stops. Gnomes have the benefit of being small. They create a warren system inside the brambles, so that they can pass quickly, e.g. when having to flee from somebody through the brambles and to their burrow. This warren system has the advantage of also allowing Gnomes to hide. Larger creatures cannot spot them well or at all, but a Gnome can see what is happening above him and may, if under dire threat, attack through the brambles with a spear. Many evil attackers have perished in such Gnome brambles. Gnomes make sure that they can quickly navigate the warrens at running speed and that they have refuges there, which they can enter through trapdoors on the floor of the warren.

Despite their wariness, Gnomes will always help a being in need, unless it is clearly evil or dangerous to the community. Gnomes are also excellent hosts, but travelers who are welcomed into their halls, which happens rarely enough, would do very well to heed their hosts’ gentle advice about where they may go.

Gnome Traps

Gnomes are very good at making traps, with any material available. They prefer to create traps triggered by weight. Gnomes are small and light, but most of their enemies are heavier. A weight-triggered trap will conserve their ability to walk through areas trapped by them with utter impunity while most anyone else will suffer the consequences of Gnome trap lore. Their traps may be as simple as sling traps any half-capable forester could make or be so mechanically involved and have such a detailed mechanism that even the most competent Dwarven specialist would be hard-pressed to do the same. Gnome traps, however, are only rarely deadly or have a lethal default. Gnomes respect life. If their point is to trap a non-evil creature, they will create a trap that catches and immobilizes the trapped victim without killing it. Do not be

mistaken and assume Gnomes would be incapable of creating a deathtrap, though. They can and they have when necessity required it. They have learned the hard way that some creatures are so evil or implacably wild that defeating them by anything but deadly force is impossible, but most Gnomes would rather endanger themselves than kill for convenience. The Gnome strategy seems to work as a deterrent, at least with some creatures. The many Faerie creatures of Ophid’s Grasslands, for example, have learnt to avoid Gnome homesteads. Only the most stubborn or dumb will try to sneak inside.

Collapsing Section: This is not a trap as such but really a last resort defense. Many Gnome homesteads, especially the flat-burrows, will be built so that they can be collapsed section by section, if need be. Gnomes are talented architects and anything but stupid. They know that a defense like that may be used against them. Hence, they do not use simple braces to be kicked away but a hidden pulley system with safeguards, often including a multiple lever trigger system where the levers have to be pulled and positioned in a certain sequence. That said, when a section collapses, anyone having the ceiling come down on them will suffer crushing damage. Now, Gnomes always take great care not to kill outright. This goes even for the *Collapsing Section* trap, but it is a bit difficult to pull off, even for Gnomes. Everyone caught in a collapsing section will take 1D6x10 damage (half damage when successfully rolling with the impact). Those who survive the initial blow may have managed to hide in a nook, or were saved by two stones tumbling auspiciously together to form a “tent” protecting them, etc., but may face suffocation soon. Use the “Heroes caught in Avalanches” rules in *Northern Hinterlands*, page 28, with the exception of the “how deep were you buried” table, as that is determined by the size of the burrow/structure that collapsed rather than by a random roll. If you were in a room 30 feet under the ground, well, you will simply be under about 30 feet of stone and earth after the collapse. Essentially, the invaders will be buried under stones and earth and may be dug out and saved, if that is done fast enough, or suffocate. Note that the Gnomes will do what they can to dig out those buried; Gnomes have an uncanny tunneling speed!

Double-tap Mug: This trap is made to becalm guests or even render them unconscious, depending on the poison used. Gnomes tend to give all first time or untrusted guests mugs, steins or ale kegs with a double bottom. It is really a simple technology; a simple double tap on the bottom will open small slits on the sides of the upper bottom to allow the poison to flow up and mix with the chosen drink. Sometimes the technology is more involved. Sieve or even membrane constructions opened with a small lever in the handle or hidden in the intricate carvings on the outside of a beer stein are known to have been made. Gnomes are nobody’s fool and Gnome master craftsmen are known to take pride in never repeating their use of one hiding place for the lever. It is very rare for Gnomes to use deadly poison, but not impossibly rare; it really depends on the “guest.” A save versus poison is needed to deflect the poison effect. A perception check before may detect the poison; the check will usually be difficult or worse as Gnomes tend to be very careful to sweeten or spice the drink used to mask the effect. As it is bad form in a Gnome household to not accept the first drink, guests will be hard pressed to not have this first drink. Gnomes are peace-loving and honest but not above abusing manners to retain their safety.

Ejection Seat: The ejection seat may be as small as a chair or as big as the floor of a whole room. A tightly coiled metal spring construction will throw a guest out of the Gnome burrow. The smaller the trapped surface, where the victim sits/lies/stands on, the longer his trajectory will be. The damage taken by the fall will depend on the trap size and resulting “throwing distance” as Gnome ejection seats do not provide the victim with a parachute. Throwing distance will usually vary between 10-50 feet (3-15 m) but may be farther; damage from the resulting forced fall will be 1D6 S.D.C./Hit Points for every 10 feet (3 m). Gnomes are careful to hide the “chimney” over the trap, usually with a thin sheep skin or cotton cloth, carefully crafted and painted to look like the ceiling around the “chimney.” The egress of the “chimney” will be hidden by a trap door that usually is hard to detect even if one stands on it. When the coil is triggered the mechanism will open the trap door at the same time. The lever mechanism is generally hidden in the floor and walls, and triggered by a small lever hidden in some carving; sometimes in a pillar or the wall or even in a table leg, under a table or the opposite chair, so the Gnome host can conveniently trigger the mechanism to get rid of a dangerous guest.

Heat Vents: As said above, some homesteads have a heating system. Hidden behind the walls are pipes carrying heated steam or sometimes heated water. Not unlike the technology behind an aqueduct, Gnomes use a very slight down slant of the pipes to carry the hot water “downstream” along the pipes or an up slant to carry the heated steam upwards, making use of the updraft of hot air. In order to trap a tunnel or corridor, they will carefully hide vents in the walls which can be opened individually or in a sequence by a crafty lever construction. The steaming heat or scalding water can then be used either to fill a tunnel, corridor, or room, slowly or quickly depending on setting, or to herd the victims by being driven along in order to avoid damage. Used for damage, the vents will do as little as 1 point or as much as 4D6 S.D.C. (dodge to avoid being hit).

Hot Room: Hot rooms use the same technology as the Heat Vents trap. They often have a metal grating built into the walls as metal will readily accept and hold heat. The point of hot rooms can either be to make the victims doff their armor, get all sweaty, and sluggish, and thus less able to fight (sauna effect: -1 to attack, dodge, and parry per minute spent in the room) or to be so hot as to quickly cause unconsciousness (heat exhaustion: save versus coma/death plus heat resistance bonuses, if any, per 1D6 minutes).

Mouse Trap: This trap may be one of the most common Gnome traps. A section of a corridor/tunnel or even a whole room can be cut off from other areas by letting heavy stone slabs crash down. Gnomes have been known to love combining this trap with the Hot Room or the Poison Valve traps. While they are usually hidden quite well, guide rails and/or slits in the ceiling may give this trap away.

Muck Trap: Sometimes Gnomes use a nearby water source, such as a bog, or even their sewage tank contents to flood individual sections of their burrow. This may be used to merely slow down invaders, to flush them out or to drown them. Like aqueducts, Gnome homesteads will be very carefully designed to slope exactly where and how Gnomes want it, i.e. how they want to direct flows.

Prison Train: Gnomes hate killing living beings. Often they will have to capture them if they cannot deter them otherwise.

The prison train is a set-up that holds prisoners and makes it possible to move them around the homestead, or some of its sections, rather conveniently. Usually the prison train is a set of cages or boxes hanging from a chain, pipe or rail, which can be moved by a pulley system. Some homesteads will have underground lakes, caverns, or a chasm leading deep into the earth. Gnomes feel more comfortable if they have the feeling that it is really hard for their prisoners to escape – resting a prison train over a chasm, for example, looks perfect to them. Gnomes have also been known to coat the bars and the corners of the supporting platform of the cages with glass shards to discourage breakout attempts. Gnomes never have cages hanging in or near their living areas – the sight would just break their good hearts. That said, Gnomes will not hold any creature unfairly or overly long. Intelligent beings will be held until tried by a Gnomfilín. Any judgment will depend much on the being or creature tried. When the Gnomes think a being might learn to leave Gnomes alone, they may keep it imprisoned just long enough to teach a lesson. If they think the being will not learn, for example because it is inherently evil, they will put the prisoner to sleep and transport him away. Mostly, they will just take the offending non-Gnome as far away as possible from their burrow (as well as from other Gnome burrows) – into the wild, 1D6+2 days away from the burrow usually. Some prison trains can actually go through dozen of miles of underground tunnels to drop prisoners at certain “drop spots.” Sometimes, though, the transport will be by landskiff, sometimes along (underground) rivers, and sometimes the Gnomes will ask other creatures, like centaurs, to speed the prisoners far away. Invariably, the prisoner will be released without harm to his body. When the being will wake up it will find itself alone in the wilderness, but in a not too dangerous place with enough food for a few days. Murderers, burrow invaders, irredeemably evil persons, and such, may be further punished and put in a more dangerous or sinister place, like old tunnels and other underground ruins of the Gnome Exodus Republic. Gnomes, perhaps futilely but without ever giving up on hope, will hope that being made aware of the terrible plight of the Gnome people should teach everyone at least the lesson to leave them alone. That said, Gnomes will always pray to Issuron to have mercy on those brought away.

Poison Valves: Much like the Heat Vent trap, Gnomes sometimes install poison reservoirs and a grate/valve system into the walls, floor or ceiling so that they can fill an area quickly with poisonous gas to put enemies out of commission. Often the gas will just put the victim to sleep, but sometimes deadly poison is used, especially on creatures known as irredeemably invincible. It sure helps that the Gnomes may use rubber to coat doorframes, when available. Gnomes like that anyway as it stops doors from falling shut noisily.

Swinging Floor: Sometimes a prison train is not practical or desirable for a homestead. You may find a swinging floor trap there instead. Gnomes will guide or coerce enemies – for example via the Heat Vent trap – into a room trapped with a swinging floor. Most are triggered by weight, so that a Gnome can pass unhindered, but others will suffer from the trap’s effects. Other Swinging Floor traps will be triggered by unlatching wedges. The wedges holding the floor in place are drawn and the whole floor will tilt, dropping those in the room to whatever lies below, which usually is “just” a deep, dark hole in the ground. We can be sure that those surviving the fall – standard falling damage for any normal-sized humanoid is 1D6 S.D.C./Hit Points for every 20

feet (6.1 m) one falls, small humanoids, such as Gnomes, take 1D4 S.D.C./Hit Points for every 10 feet (3 m) they fall – will find that the floor clicking shut and the wedges being driven back into place sounds like an echo to eternity. However, Gnomes just cannot bring themselves to shut any prisoner away forever, let alone let them starve to death in a dark hole. Like with the *Prison Train*, prisoners will always be brought away and set free, far away from the burrow.

Water Hose: Gnomes employ fire hoses, mostly made out of leather, sometimes out of rubber, to force attackers away. Obviously, high pressure water (pump system) can be used to throw down enemies or to wash them out without getting into melee reach. Sometimes such water hoses, rubber or a pipe installation, will be installed into the walls. A water hose makes a ranged attack. The range will depend on the strength of the water jet. Usual range is 10-30 feet (3-9 m). Treat it as a P.S. 20 Body Block/Tackle (*PFRPG core book*, page 44), which the victim can attempt to dodge; damage will be 1D4+5 (already includes the P.S. bonus) in case of a hit. Once a person is thrown down by the water jet, he can be held on the ground; subsequent strikes will be at +4 as long as the victim is on the ground. Instead of pinning victims down, the water jet can be used quite efficiently to push others away, to literally wash them out. Each successful strike will wash the victim away 2D6 feet (0.6 to 3 m), unless the victim wins a strength contest: each side rolls a D20 and adds its P.S. bonus (+5 for the usual water hose); the higher roll wins, defender/victim wins a tie.

Wilderness Traps: Gnomes not only trap their burrows, but also trap the surrounding landscape. A drawback of the bramble system, as mentioned above, is that small creatures, especially the little Faeries, but also Goblins and Kobolds, have no problem walking or, in any case, crawling through the warrens. For that purpose, Gnomes tend to make the warrens labyrinthine and install traps even in the warrens. Gnomes love spring traps – like a bent back branch with thick thorns or daggers pushed through the branch (damage 1D6 to 2D6+4, mainly depending on the force with which the branch will hit) – and will also use all types of body-gripping traps, snares, cage traps, and deadfalls.

The Homestead of the Ebenezer Clan

The homestead of the Ebenezer clan is one of the oldest and most likely, most extensive independent Gnome settlements in the Ophid's Grasslands. It is the hill-burrow homestead Old Grinder visits in the story above. It is situated south of the Jer-rigut passage and north-east of Mount Furry (refer to the map in *Land of the Damned Vol. 1*, page 123), southwest of the Horde lands (see the maps and descriptions on most notably, page 21 of *Northern Hinterlands*).

Ebenezer Silvertongue, a merchant of some wealth, was a very resourceful Gnome and he fled just in time before the apocalyptic terror of the Elf-Dwarf War could swallow him. When the Dwarven army – an unstoppable and merciless juggernaut of gleaming steel and strength – rolled towards the shining Gnome city of the Exodus Republic, where he lived, he fled without even a single thought of what he left behind. Ebenezer left all his wealth behind. He mustered his clan, decreed that only practical equipment and sound provision would be taken, and left the city the night before the Dwarves attacked and tore into the city like a raging beast sparing none.

Ebenezer's clan numbered a good 200 when they set out. A mere 14 had survived on the day Ebenezer called a stop in the hills of the Northern Mountains in the northwest of the Ophid's. There they built the "First Home," carving a small homestead, a few rooms really, out of under a hill – far away from anything any good Gnome would have called civilization only a few precious months before. As the centuries rolled by, the descendants of the great Ebenezer extended their living area to encompass further living and storage areas under two more hill sites, "Seahill" and "Rockholm." The Gnomes refer to these three burrows as "Three Hills."

The clan of Ebenezer now numbers 215 Gnomes and consists of "The Twelve Families" living together, spanning six generations.

Today, First Home is the smallest of the Three Hills of the Ebenezer Clan; it houses only one family with 17 members. You will find the quarters of the head of Ebenezer Clan and his immediate family there. First Home, perhaps as the most impressive of all rooms the Ebenezer Clan has to show, features the astonishingly ornamented "Great Hall of Ebenezer," which serves as a large dining area for the joint meals of the so-called "twelve families" and as a community hall for the great gatherings of the clan, especially when a Gnomfiln comes to visit or holds court. Lastly, First Home also holds a small hangar where 6 warskiffs are held – these warskiffs are launched by catapult (as described above) – and the office of the Captain of the warskiffers. The warskiffers communicate by speaking tube, which connects the small hangar and captain's office in First Home with the c. 2,300 feet (701 m) distant main hangar at Seahill.

Rockholm is the sturdiest of the three hills as the rooms there, literally, have been carved, scratched and hewn into a sturdy but small granite formation. Rockholm houses 5 of the families with a total of 78 members. It also features "The Small Place," which is smaller than the Great Hall and usually serves as the school-room of the clan as well as a hospital in times of need. Rockholm is also where the Ebenezer Clan keeps its sheep in a cave deep under the hill. The natural rock formation naturally deadens the emission of sounds.

Seahill has its name for a reason: it is a hill square in the middle of a watery bog. It is the largest of the Three Hills and the home of the remaining 6 of the Twelve Families with 120 members. Three Hills is also the place of the main hangar, where 12 of the 18 clan warskiffs, 5 skiffs (buggies), and 3 barks are held. The hangar is large enough that it could also hold a sloop, two in a pinch. The skiffs are launched by rolling down a ramp into the bog and pick up speed quickly by making use of the wind. The barracks of the warskiffers are also located in Seahill. Here they take their meals together, have their own gym, a kitchen, and a lounge.

All burrows have various sanitation facilities, storage areas, various workshops – like smithy, carpenter's, bakery, etc. – and kitchen facilities. The largest storage is in Seahill and the largest kitchen in First Home. The bathrooms all have running water with a choice of warm or cold at your disposal and the toilets are flush lavatories. Due to an ingenious steam pipe system, all rooms have floor heating but for the storage areas. The steam is let out into the bog surrounding Three Hills, so that it seems to be a perpetually fog-shrouded land, especially in the colder months of the year.

The corridors and several of the rooms are ingeniously trapped. All of the traps described in this article are in use. Most of these traps, especially those in living areas, will be harmless to a Gnome (depend on weight or size) or would require activation from one of the hidden controls or through the main control in the bunker of the clan's head, deep under Rockhome, before becoming dangerous at all. The prison train goes deep into the earth and then moves west towards the Northern Mountains. Any prisoner the Gnomes of Three Hills set free this way will find himself safely (from the Gnomes' perspective) far away from Three Hills within the rugged lowlands of the Northern Mountains.

Allies of the Gnomes

In addition to the traps, beyond camouflaging their whereabouts, and aside from the warskiffers protecting the homesteads, the Gnomes have other means of defense. The good Gnomes have made some allies in the Ophid's, notably some Centaur tribes, with whom the Gnomes trade for protection, and have found a special champion in the titan Palladin Kadrac Kallastyr.

Quick Stats for Kadrac Kallastyr

When their former allies from the Chaos Wars with the Old Ones, the Elves, became arrogant and cruel, the Titans did not turn from them. Even when the Elves became guilty of many crimes and atrocities against Dwarves, Gnomes and other races, they would not act against them. The Titans did not fight for either side in the Elf-Dwarf War, but took it upon themselves to rescue as many of the peoples suffering by the warring parties, among them the Gnomes. The Titans went north when the fight turned against the Exodus Republic and, as few of the Gnomes survived, those who did have a debt of gratitude to the Titans. While about 20% of the Titans fell in the Elf-Dwarf war to protect the weak and innocent, the death toll in the north in the 20 years of terror was much worse. Only a dozen of the Titans saw the end of the war. They decided to protect the Gnomes, as the race suffering entirely unjustly and by far the most, against further injustices until the last of them would perish. Incidentally, they also wished to ward Palladium against incursions of evil coming through the Northern Mountains. They erected a small fortress midway between the Jerrigut and the Rodogol passages east of the Wall of Broken Hopes (see *Land of the Damned*, page 122) in the lightly forested hills of the Ophid hills, northwest of the Vault of Destiny (see *Northern Hinterlands*, page 21), which they called *Tower of Justice*.

Many creatures and people in the Ophid's believe that Kadrac is immortal and he is often respectfully or fearfully, depending on whom you ask, referred to as The Eternal Palladin. While this may be true, Kadrac himself would say that he is the tenth Palladin of the name since the first Kadrac Kallastyr who served with the Titan company.

Kadrac lives in the Tower of Justice. He would like to marry and see to it that an eleventh Kadrac will follow him, but his tasks do not leave him the time to go courting and he thinks that at 340 he is still too young to settle down. His father and mother both fell in combat; he lives alone but for his friend Gonfell. The Tower is now half ruined as Kadrac alone cannot maintain it sufficiently, but it still serves the purpose of good well, just as it

has for the past 8,000 years. Amongst Titans, the noble Kadrac is well known; he and his family line are held in high esteem for the tenacity and absolute dedication to their dangerous and noble mission.

Race: Titan.

O.C.C.: 14th level Palladin.

Alignment: Principled (good).

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 10, M.A. 18, P.S. 26 (supernatural), P.P. 22, P.E. 30, P.B. 28, Spd 20.

Hit Points: 92

S.D.C.: 95

P.P.E.: 20

Attacks per Melee: 7 (6 in ranged combat).

Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +6 to strike, +2 to disarm, +9 to parry and dodge, +15 (plus Supernatural Strength damage bonus of 2D4 restrained/3D6 full strength/6D6 power punch) to damage, +4 to pull punch, +3 to roll with impact/fall, +9 to save vs Horror Factor.

Other Combat Info: Hand to Hand: Martial Arts, Critical Strike/knockout/stun 18-20, Boxing skill, Paired Weapons; triple damage with lance on Natural 19-20; Palladin's Demon Death Blow vs supernatural creatures and creatures of magic.

Spells: None.

Weapons: All weapons are giant-sized. Lance 3D6+4 (+2 damage for superior quality already included in the bonus) enchanted to be *Indestructible*. Claymore 4D6 enchanted to be a *Demon & Devil Slayer* (double damage against demons and devils. Long sword of Dwarven make with superior blade edge and balance 3D6+4 (+4 damage already included; further +2 parry/strike) which was gifted by a Dwarven mastersmith to the 2nd bearer of the name Kadrac Kallastyr in reparation for the deeds of the Dwarves during the days of the Exodus Republic. Dagger 2D6.

Armor: A black suit of superior plate and chain mail (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 350) enchanted by an alchemist to be weightless, buoyant, have a magic S.D.C. bonus of 200, and to be impervious to fire.

Magic Items: Ring of Nightvision; Ring of Greater Protection from Undead (includes protection against a vampire's gaze/mind control); 2 Containers of Much Water; Crystal Ball (at the tower); 10 Superior Healing potions; 1 Shrinking potion; 2 Negate Magic potions; 3 Truth Serum potions; 1 Might of the Palladium potion of long duration; 6 Bestiary Guardians in the form of silver wardogs who guard the Tower of Truth.

Money and Other Equipment: Kadrac has all the items he needs to discharge his duty and takes great care about his riding equipment, arms, the stable, and the few rooms he uses. In addition, he has the ancient storage of the Tower of Truth at his disposal and, thus, in principle, access to any standard non-magical equipment, some even of superior workmanship. As he has to tend to the tower alone and due to the passage of time, some of the items in storage have suffered, though, and any item he may need aside from what he uses regularly has a 20% chance to be too rusty/rotten/damaged to be of use. He also has a bit over 30,000 in gold coins and jewelry at his disposal.

Notes: Kadrac is 18 feet (5.4 m) tall, heavily muscled, with a noble bearing and of handsome countenance. He looks every inch the valiant Palladin.

Quick Stats for Gonfell (Kadrac's "Warsteed")

In appearance, Gonfell is a huge and exceptionally strong, Shaggy Elephant, i.e. Uughtaar/Gandar, bull. In fact, though, it is a minion of the god Gandárran (detailed later in this article). The Lord of Peace created Gonfell when the Gnomes built their first burrow in Ophid's Grasslands after the destruction of the Exodus Republic of the Gnomes to ensure the survival of the Gnome race. Gonfell met Kadrac's ancestor when the titans provided the rear guard for the Gnomes. The two warriors formed a deep bond of friendship and Gonfell has served the descendants of the first Kadrac Kallastyr ever since.

Alignment: Principled (good).

Attributes: All attributes are typical for a Shaggy Elephant animal and not particularly remarkable, but for I.Q. 12 and P.S. 30 as both were boosted by Gandárran with *Create Minion*. Gonfell has a stubborn and ponderous mind but is as capable of thought as a slightly above average human being. His strength is utterly impressive and coupled with his supernatural nature, lets him do amazing feats of strength as well as cause rather humongous damage. There are not many obstacles that can withstand his push if he, literally, puts his head into it.

Hit Points: 120

S.D.C.: 66

Natural A.R.: 7. Gonfell's usual Armor Rating is higher as he wears a studded leather and chain barding made of black iron most of the time, especially when riding forth with Kadrac. This "shadow steel" armor was made for Gonfell by a Kobold smith in the north, whom as well as his family, Kadrac and Gonfell saved once from drowning in a bog. The leather part of the armor has beautiful silver thread inlays made by Gnome tailors later. The barding makes for a striking contrast with Gonfell's shaggy white fur. Superior Black Iron Barding: A.R. 15, S.D.C. 190.

Horror Factor/Awe: 12

P.P.E.: 43; very sensitive to the presence of magic energy and the supernatural.

Natural Abilities: Keen eyesight and hearing, nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), swim 60%, can travel under water (up to a depth of 125% its height) by using its prehensile trunk as a snorkel. Can use the trunk to pick up objects up to 1,500 pounds (675 kg) and hurl them up to 30 feet (9.14 m; damage according to *PFRPG*, page 17) or, more simply, to reach leaves high up in the trees, pull down branches, manipulate objects that can be manipulated with the set-up a trunk provides, etc. Natural abilities bestowed by the god Gandárran: Teleport 98% (3x/day; to anywhere within Ophid's Grasslands; will teleport himself and anything he wears or carries up to an additional weight of 3,000 pounds (1,350 kg); limited metamorphosis (into a human, a Gnome, and back into his own form, 2x/day, duration: until metamorphosing into another form; will transform into an unusually hairy male).

Attacks per Melee: 3

Damage: In addition to the supernatural damage of +2D6 on a restrained punch, +4D6 on a full strength strike and +1D4x10 on a power punch, the trunk does 1D6+15 damage, head butt 2D4+15, short charge and strike with tusks for 3D6+21, stomp 5D6+19, trample does double stomp damage, and a running charge and ram with the head down will do 6D6+21 damage.

Bonuses: +3 strike, +1 parry, +1 dodge.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Average Life Span: Gonfell is now over 8,000 years old and shows no sign of growing old. It is said that Gonfell will live as long as there are Gnomes and he stays in Ophid's Grasslands.

Value: Priceless.

Habitat: Ophid's Grasslands.

Languages: Gonfell speaks Dwarven and Elven at 98%. Sometimes he is a tad difficult to understand, but he speaks very slowly anyway.

Enemies: Anyone who harms Gnomes, and all evil creatures. Gonfell will not be attacked by any animal of Ophid's Grasslands.

Allies: Gnomes simply adore Gonfell; no one else in particular but all creatures of good alignments are potential allies.

Physical Appearance: A huge wooly mammoth.

Size: 18 feet tall (5.5 m) at the shoulder, 32 feet long (9.7 m), of which the tail accounts for 2 feet (0.6 m); the tusks are essentially curved like scimitars and have a length of 13 feet (4 m).

Weight: 18 tons.

That said, the Gnomes are not without true friends throughout Palladium outside of Ophid's Grasslands, who may come visit, may protect them, and will send them information or help them make deals for special goods, such as:

Ossilian, an aging but powerful Gnome wizard and scholar who travels widely and will sometimes come visiting his kinfolk in the Ophid's (see *Mount Nimro*, page 126).

Glinn Oakenwart, a Gnome druid from Greenbough town (see *Eastern Territories*, page 127).

Trestin Oakspur, a rich Gnome, trader and moneylender from Llorn (see *Eastern Territories*, page 101).

Nestor Greifillian, who is the Gnome owner of the messenger service "Speedyquick", which he runs together with his three brothers in the city of Colfax using magic to deliver parcels and messages (see *Western Empire*, page 116).

All, but for Glinn Oakenwart, grew up in homesteads in the Ophid's and left to make their luck elsewhere. As with almost all Gnomes, they feel a strong connection with each other and will do everything to keep the Gnometrust and Gnomes safe.

Gnome Landsails

Gnomes like peace and comfort. They are willing to go to quite some length to get the comforts they want. The largest remaining Gnome communities are in the Northern Hinterlands, close to the Ophid's Grasslands. Tobacco and natural rubber from the Land of the South Winds, wines and silks from the Western Empire, special scents, spices and oils, etc. are luxury goods the distinguished Gnome, who has never lost his taste for civilization even if he had to hide for many generations, is willing to pay a pretty penny for. Also, the Ophid's are a dangerous place and being able to move faster than the enemies preying on you, notably Orcs and such, is an excellent survival tactic. Finally, Gnomes just love a good story, to stay in touch with relations, and their culture encourages cross-clan marriage. All this necessitated the invention of a fast mode of transportation suited to the vast and largely flat Ophid's.

This has given rise to the invention of the landsails. The Gnome landsails are sailing carriages on wheels used to traverse Ophid's gigantic sea of grass. Their speed and sturdy build allow them to stay ahead of most, if not all, dangers of the Ophid's as long as they move and do not hit one of the rocky outcroppings hidden by the tall grass. A Gnome of means will protect the wheels and hull of his landsail with dandelion rubber. Depending on the type, as described in the following, landsails will make speeds up to 50 miles (80 km) per hour, but there have been stories that especially lightly built skiffs may make it to 120 mph (192 km) with a strong wind at their back.

The sleek warskiffs, in particular, are a sight to behold. When a group of these warskiffs sail speedily through the tall grass, the only thing that can be seen will be their sails parting the grass much like shark fins cut through the ocean surface. Gnomes are not known for their fighting prowess, but the creatures of Ophid's Grassland have learned to take warskiffers seriously the hard way.

Landsail Types

There are four basic types of landsails:

- Skiff
- Warskiff
- Bark
- Sloop

Skiff (landsail)

The skiff is a fast landsail built to carry a small group of Gnomes, and is used much like a "buggy" would be to visit relatives and friends at the next homestead. While sturdily built, it is not designed as a military craft; it has no weapons.

Type: Mostly transport and pleasure.

Crew: One is barely enough to steer it, but it is slow, dangerous, and a handful of work (-30% to Sailing: Landsail); two skiffers are better, one to steer and one to man the sails.

Size: 12 feet (3.7 m) long, 4 feet (1.2 m) wide.

Excess Cargo Capacity: 800-1,200 lbs (360-540 kg). Up to 6 Gnomes comfortably.

Top Speed: 31 mph (50 kmh).

Cruising Speed: c. 20 mph (32 kmh).

S.D.C. by Location:

- Mast — 50
- Sails (2) — 25 each
- Front Section — 80
- Mid-Ship — 100
- Rear Section — 80
- Hull per 10 foot (3 m) area — 50
- Keel per 10 foot (3 m) area — 50
- Rudder — 40

Estimated Value: 4,000-6,000 gold for an old skiff (30+ years; reduce S.D.C. by 25%), from 15,000-25,000 for one in good condition (usually not older than 10 years), and 30,000-40,000 for a brand new one; add 20,000 gold if the hull has a rubber bumper protection, add 10,000 gold for rubber wheels, and add 5,000 for a rubber tent.

Warskiff (landsail)

Especially reinforced with rubber fittings, this skiff is known as a warskiff with much the same function as a war chariot but on sail power. It is very fast and sleek and will carry a maximum of two Gnome warriors, but most are operated only by one. Warskiffs are rare as the art of fighting with one, and the pursuit of it as a career, while these men are sorely needed in the Ophid's, is seen as the lowest a Gnome can stoop to. However, warskiffers are still respected for the amazing prowess with which they handle their skiffs.

Type: War.

Crew: One.

Size: 10 feet (3 m) long, 3-4 feet (0.9-1.2 m) wide.

Excess Cargo Capacity: 600 lbs (270 kg).

Weapons & Features of Note: The warskiff usually has a ram at the prow. Ram prow damage: 3D6x10+10 damage at full speed, 1D6x10 at half speed but there is a 15% on any ramming that the warskiff will also suffer 1D4x10 damage to the front section of the vessel. Ramming needs a successful Sailing: Landsail check; dodging is not possible. Some warskiffs may also be armed with a ballista shooting high-torsion propelled arrows for 1D4x10 damage at up to 700 feet (213 m). Using the ballista requires W.P. Siege Weapons or the user is at -4 to strike. Loading and driving at the same time are impossible, so most warskiffers who have a ballista on deck will pre-load.

Top Speed: 50 mph (80 km).

Cruising Speed: 20-30 mph (32-48 km).

S.D.C. by Location:

- Mast — 70
- Sails (2) — 50 each
- Front Section — 150
- Mid-Ship — 200
- Rear Section — 150
- Hull per 10 foot (3 m) area — 100
- Keel per 10 foot (3 m) area — 100
- Rudder — 80

Estimated Value: 5,000-7,000 gold for an old warskiff (30+ years; reduce S.D.C. 40%), from 30,000-50,000 for one in good condition (usually not older than 5 years), and c. 60,000 for a brand new one; add 20,000 gold if the hull has a rubber bumper protection, add 10,000 gold for rubber wheels, and add 5,000 for a rubber tent.

Bark (landsail)

The bark is used to transport goods or a Gnome family/group from one place to another. It is basically the homestead "truck."

Type: Mostly transport and pleasure.

Crew: One is barely enough to steer it, but it is slow, dangerous, and a handful of work (-40% to Sailing: Landsail); two-three skiffers are better, one to steer and one or two to work the sails, etc.

Size: 20 feet (6.1 m) long, 6 feet (1.8 m) wide.

Excess Cargo Capacity: 4-10 tons. Up to 20 Gnome passengers.

Top Speed: 25 mph (40 kmh).

Cruising Speed: 10-15 mph (16-24 kmh).

S.D.C. by Location:

- Mast — 50

Sails (2) — 25 each
Front Section — 100
Mid-Ship — 140
Rear Section — 100
Hull per 10 foot (3 m) area — 70
Keel per 10 foot (3 m) area — 70
Rudder — 60

Estimated Value: 6,000-8,000 gold for an old bark (30+ years; reduce S.D.C. 25%), from 20,000-45,000 for one in good condition (usually not older than 10 years), and 40,000-55,000 for a brand new one; add 50,000 gold if the hull has a rubber bumper protection, add 30,000 gold for rubber wheels, and add 5,000 for a rubber tent.

Sloop (landsail)

The sloop is the largest of the landsails and used for long distance trading. Sloop merchants are highly respected as the most adventurous of Gnomes braving the dangerous wilds (i.e. anything beyond the Gnome home from a Gnome perspective), and for bringing goods and, what may be the most important, stories to the homesteads. It is very sturdy but comparably slow and may not be able to outrun, e.g. a Catoplepa stampede. The sloop is also fully seaworthy, and sloop captains usually immerse their craft before they enter a harbor they plan to trade with. Keeping the Gnome settlements secret is of chief importance – any skiffman would rather die than betray the Gnometrust.

Type: Merchant/cargo transport.

Crew: About 20 crew.

Size: 40 feet (12.2 m) long, 15 feet (4.6 m) wide.

Excess Cargo Capacity: 20 tons light or 40 tons heavy. Up to 30 additional skiffmen, laborers, or passengers (or 60 Gnomes comfortably).

Weapons & Features of Note: The sloop usually has four ballistae (arrows) on a swivel mount for 1D4x10 damage at up to 700 feet (213 m). Using the ballista requires W.P. Siege Weapons or the user is at -4 to strike. The ballistae will usually be hidden when near a homestead, either by nets and blankets thrown over it, or in the better sloops, by letting them down into the hold by an elevator mechanism. While skiffmen know that some defense capability is necessary, they feel bad about having to stoop so low and knowing how the homesteaders will react to a weapon, they rather avoid that by not showing their arms.

Top Speed: 20 mph (32 kmh).

Cruising Speed: 10 mph (16 kmh).

S.D.C. by Location:

Mast — 80
Sails (3) — 35 each
Front Section — 500
Mid-Ship — 600
Rear Section — 500
Hull per 10 foot (3 m) area — 100
Keel per 10 foot (3 m) area — 150
Rudder — 100

Estimated Value: 75,000-150,000 gold for an old sloop (15+ years; reduce S.D.C. 30%), from 200,000-450,000 for one in good condition (usually not older than 5 years), and 550,000-800,000 for a brand new one; add 200,000 gold if the hull has a rubber bumper protection, and add 100,000 gold for rubber wheels.

Gnomfilín R.C.C.

(Men at Arms)

The Gnomfilín are a special class of warriors – they are war-skiffers, but more than that, they are warrior bards, fighting storytellers!

The Gnomfilín are very highly regarded in the Gnome society of the Ophid's. Some Gnomes will still be uneasy around them, they are warriors after all, but they are universally loved for their stories. While warriors are seen as unclean, the Gnomfilín are held in awe for their oath and what they take upon themselves to fulfill their task.

Gnome history is not written down, unless you count murals and carvings. Gnomes hand down their stories, poetry, and history – which to a Gnome are one thing as their histories are usually phrased in poetic form and told like an exciting story – purely orally. The holy task of the Gnomfilín is to collect the tales of the Gnomes, the old and the new, retell them (to other Gnomes) wherever they go, and travel around to do so. They literally are the collectors and defenders of Gnome lore. It is said that when the Gnometrust was formed, the Gnomfilín began. There were storytellers and poets before, but no Gnome was really a warrior before the Gnomes were crushed in the Elf-Dwarf War. The storytellers saw that all stories might come to an end and all Gnome lore of the past may be forgotten. They took up arms and the holiest of holy oaths, repeated countless times over the generations, to:

- Protect the Gnometrust by any means.
- Keep Gnome lore alive at all cost.
- Collect and pass on the Gnome tales among Gnomes.
- Defend all Gnomes from harm, wherever they may be.

Gnomfilín are usually scrupulous (good), some are principled (good). A very few are unprincipled (selfish). If a Gnomfilín starts acting dishonorably or ever acts against his oath, other Gnomfilín will hunt him down.

If there is a matter of law which a burrow cannot resolve by itself, a Gnomfilín will be asked to adjudicate the matter. The word of a Gnomfilín is law – the warrior bards have the widest knowledge of Gnome lore and, as a side effect, the ancient laws of the Gnomes – and no Gnomfilín has ever judged unfairly.

Special Gnomfilín Training & Mastery:

1. Warskiff Mastery: Gnomfilín are true masters of the warskiff and can perform maneuvers lesser warskiffers cannot. +1 Attack while using a warskiff. All Gnomfilín use the first skill value of Sailing: Landsail for normal maneuvers as well as for stunts.

2. Gnome Lore: The Gnomfilín are especially trained over long years to remember verbatim every part of Gnome lore, i.e. history, poetry, stories, and the law, and what they hear. Gains the skill Gnome Lore with an additional one-time bonus of +50%. If you do not use this new skill, the bonus will be to History (Gnomes).

3. Danger Sense: The Gnomfilín are well prepared to lead a very dangerous and often solitary life. Gains Detect Ambush and with an additional one-time bonus of +20%, dodge +3, initiative +5.

4. Other O.C.C. Bonuses: +2 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, and 15.

Gnomfilín O.C.C. Stats:

Attributes Required: I.Q. 12, P.S. 10, P.P. 12, P.E. 10.

O.C.C. Skills: Astronomy & Navigation (+15%), Sailing: Land-sail (+30%), General Repair/Maintenance (+10%), History (+15%), Languages: Native Tongue at 98% plus two of choice (+15% each), Law (+10%), Public Speaking (+20%), Track Humanoids (+10%), Wilderness Survival (+10%), W.P. four of choice, Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select two other skills from the Espionage and two lore skills from the Scholar/Technical skill categories and two other skills of choice at level one, plus select one additional skill at levels three, five, eight, and twelve. All new skills will start at level one proficiency.

Communications: Any.

Domestic: Any; Sing and Play Musical Instrument (+10%).

Espionage: Any (+10%).

Horsemanship: None.

Medical: Any (+5%).

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any.

Rogue: Locate Secret Compartments/Doors (+10%) and Use & Recognize Poisons (+5%) only.

Science: Math and Astronomy & Navigation only (+10%).

Scholar/Technical: Any (+10%).

Weapon Proficiencies: Any, provided a Gnome can physically use the weapon.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

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

Starting Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a cape or cloak, boots, a pair of gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, two large sacks, two small sacks, a water skin, and a tinder box. Plus a wareskiff of good to excellent quality.

Armor: Starts with a suit of chain mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 44), or studded leather (A.R. 13, 38 S.D.C.); player's choice.

Weapons: Starts with a small shield, a dagger, short sword, and two additional weapons of choice; all are basic S.D.C. weapons of very good quality. Any one of the aforementioned weapons can be of exceptional quality (Kobold or Dwarven), with a bonus of +1 to strike and parry or +3 to damage. Magic weapons and additional items must be acquired later.

Money: The character starts with 100 in gold. Additional money will come from gifts for services rendered. In the Ophid's among Gnomes, a Gnomfilín will have no need of money. As a keeper of the Gnometrust, a Gnomfilín will get what he needs from every burrow.

Gnome Religion in Ophid's Grasslands

The Gnomes of the Ophid's worship mainly two gods. Naturally, they recognize all The Wild Lords (see *Northern Hinterlands*, page 124), but they actively worship only Issuron, the Lady Mercy, and another, more ancient god. Issuron is upright, honest, merciful, and has a noble heart – all virtues which Gnomes aspire to. The other god, whom all Gnomes of the Ophid's Grass-

lands know and about one-fourth worship, more or less actively, is Gandarrán, The Lord of Peace. Gnomes are not who they are because of any one god, but mercifulness and peace find a strong echo in a Gnome's being and soul.

Gandárran Gandâramgee

Lord of Peace; The Broken God; The Wanderer Between the Stars

"I am Gandárran. I was a forgotten god and am thrice betrayed but I am returned and worshiped again and I shall give my people peace! Once I was born to the Queen of Storms, my mother Ippotomi, and Lopnel the Bloodthirsty. Once I was a mighty warrior and called Gandâramgee. I perished in single combat against Styphon the Black and the whole host of evil dragons, but my mother brought me into life a second time. My father, the ever raging Red God, later took my head, but Ippotomi gave me a new one. I then left Hunagat, the terrible divine realm of the Southern Gods forever, never to return. My mother broke off one of my tusks and filled its core with diamond matter and hurled the Diamond Tusk to Palladium to be the seed of new worship. On my wings of stars I traveled long between all dimensions and to all the worlds until I was called by my first new worshiper, a human sorcerer named Kalba. He became my pupil and I taught him too many secrets. Gaining knowledge, he lost wisdom. Kalba betrayed me; he chained me, he tortured me, and he broke my body. Kalba become a god through me. He passed through the gates of insanity. After long decades of pain, my body withered, I was freed. I fled to fall into a deep slumber and rested in the earth. I awoke when I heard a million beings cry out in pain for peace. My Diamond Tusk found its way to the Gnomes. Despite their plight they wished for nothing but peace and there was only goodness in their hearts. I came to them and made Yath-Kondra, the ruined city of the Gnomes below Ophid's, my home. There I sit and watch the Gnomes. They strike warmth in my heart and give me their strength. They are now my people and I shall give my people peace!"

It is said that when the Old Ones fell, the Southern Gods – Yin-Sloth, Ippotomi, Lopnel, Michla-Da, Pith, and Tark – were the first Gods to appear on the Palladium World, and it is true. Yet, it is not the whole truth. It is said that the Elves created the first great civilization after the Old Ones fell and that humans came later, and it is true. Yet, it is not the whole truth. While the Elves built their civilization in the north, the Kawan people already established the first and ancient human civilization. The Kawan had no organized religion but believed in animism and the worship of nature. Yet, it is said that in an attempt to sway the Kawan to worship her, Ippotomi gave them knowledge and became an agent in the rise of Kawan culture, and it is true. However, the peaceful Kawan people never started to worship the other, more brutal and sinister, Southern Gods in ancient times, but they opened their heart to Ippotomi.

When later Lopnel was killed by Yin-Sloth and when Ippotomi had worked the miracle of raising the Red God from death, one of the boons she demanded of Lopnel was for him to give her a child to be entirely hers and never to be claimed by him. Lopnel made the promise and gave her the child, and Ippotomi bore her son. Gandâramgee was born fully aware, could speak within

one day and grew to manhood within a week. He was noble and strong, a mighty warrior born, yet wise in his words and careful and restrained in his actions. Probably given to him through his father, Gandâramgee had a red birthmark, a spiral on his chest.

Soon he became a counselor of the Kawan and a friend to the mighty and noble sea giants. Ippotomi was proud and so happy that for 7 years the weather was miraculously wonderful, the harvests were bountiful, the flowers sprang to a bloom never seen before or since, and the sea was calm and welcoming to shipping. The Kawan came to associate Gandâramgee with flowers and old Kawan murals show a handsome, bronze-skinned giant of a warrior bedecked with garlands of flowers and a red spiral on his chest.

When Lopnel later asked to see his son, Ippotomi denied him. When he asked again and yet again, she denied him twice more. Lopnel grew angry. He asked Tark the Spider god to help him and bring a message to his son. Tark asked a favor to be paid in the future for this, any one favor, and Lopnel granted the favor. Lopnel was so angry at Ippotomi that she had bested him like this – forgetting that she had also restored his life – and was horribly vexed. He sent a cursed letter to his son. Gandâramgee read the letter and was delighted to see that his father wished him well but surprised that he also said, “*your first great deed in selfless defiance of malice new to this world will be your undoing and you will be forever marred.*” Lopnel did not know what would happen when he wrote it, he wrote it out of spite for Ippotomi – mayhap he only dreamt of a new evil coming to this world, mayhap he just wanted to avenge the slight to be forced to do something, but perhaps he caused what came. The dark pondering of gods all too easily begets dark reality.

It was not much later that the dragons came to the south. As history tells us, they caused the end of the Kawan civilization in the Yin-Sloth. As history also tells us, a civil war broke out between the dragons and the evil dragons led by Styphon the Black who would lead the Kawan to destruction. Gandâramgee in his wisdom saw what would come right from the beginning and soon was resolved to act against it. He tried to convince the good dragons to rein in their evil brothers and sisters, and they would not act. He tried to talk reason to the evil dragons, but they would not listen. He tried to convince the Kawan to not serve the dragons in deeds of cruelty, aggression, and treachery, but those who were already seduced by the evil dragons could no longer listen. He tried to convince the good Kawan people to leave the dragons, but they would not go, too fascinated and beholden were they to the scaly beasts’ promise of glory. He then tried to convince his mother to defend the Kawan, but how to convince the ocean not to move when a storm rocks the waves, and so she did not listen. He realized that this is what his father, perhaps inadvertently, had foretold and by that, brought about.

Gandâramgee found that he had only one desperate chance. He himself had to confront Styphon the Black and slay him so that all the evil dragons and the Kawan would see that the strongest evil has to offer is too weak to stand against honor and compassion. Styphon accepted the challenge from Gandâramgee. As wise as Gandâramgee was, he could in his honorable nobility not believe that Styphon would sorely twist the challenge. Styphon came with a host of evil dragons. Gandâramgee asked the Black Dragon why he would not fight alone. Styphon answered, “Why should I? You challenged the rule of all dark dragons with your challenge to me. You called. We come. You will be destroyed.”

Gandâramgee perished in the great battle ensuing. Yet, death is not always the end, especially when one is a god prepared.

Gandâramgee might not have wanted to believe Styphon would act dishonorably, but he had known that the evil fiend would find a way to turn the cards in his favor in some manner. Taking into account the message from his father, he assumed that there was a chance that he would die. So, Gandâramgee had created a *Manifestation* of himself well in advance of the combat to appear and rest in Hunagat, the divine realm of the Southern Gods. He had cast a mighty spell on his manifestation to wake up only upon his death. He had hid his manifestation under the protection of his mother. When Gandâramgee was slain, his manifestation opened his eyes, and his mother knew that her son had died yet was alive. She welcomed him anew and to Hunagat. Gandâramgee, though, was disenchanted with the cruelty and unjust harshness of most of the gods of the south and terrible Hunagat, but Ippotomi wanted for him to stay, rest, and be safe. Gandâramgee felt that to stay would not be right and decided to leave against his mother’s will. Before he could leave, though, he wanted to speak to his father and confront him about the message. It did not go well. The Red God, as he is wont, became angry quickly and from anger went to rage. With a quick and vicious cut with his axe Blood Drinker, Lopnel cut his son’s head from his shoulders. Ippotomi felt the second death of her son on Hunagat and immediately transported herself to the place of Gandâramgee’s death. Before Gandârran’s heart could stop beating and before even his body had hit the ground, Ippotomi took the head of the closest animal, an elephant, and put it on her son’s shoulders so that he might breathe again. Lopnel did not dare interfere, as blindly brave as the Red God is, he deeply respects Ippotomi’s great power and knows in even his small mind that none should entirely alienate the Storm Goddess.

Ippotomi now understood that her son had no life in Hunagat. What is more, her heart was pained as her son had become a Forgotten God – his Kawan worshipers trickled away after his first death or perished in the dragon civil war. She resolved to send him away to be in peace and eventually be restored. The Storm Mother devised a way for her son’s restoration to full godhood. She cut off one of her son’s tusks and with a kiss, turned its core into diamond so that no one could ever break it. She whispered into her son’s ear that he would travel the stars alone and seek wisdom until he would be called again by new worshipers. She said he would immediately have to go to whomever held the Diamond Tusk with adoration and a prayer without malice. Ippotomi then took the Diamond Tusk and threw it down to Palladium to be the seed for a new faith at a later time when the stars would be right and herald the return of Gandâramgee. She then embraced her son and blessed him. When mother and son broke the embrace, Gandâramgee felt that gossamer-thin wings had grown from his back. The wings felt strong and were like leather to the touch, yet nothing but the black void of space and a multitude of distant stars could be seen through them. “May your new wings speed you along on your voyage between the stars. Be well, my beloved son”, said Ippotomi. With the mightiest gale the worlds had ever seen, the Storm Mother flung Gandâramgee far away, through many dimensions, to the stars to begin his journey.

Gandâramgee walked between the stars for long centuries, observing, thinking, meditating, and grew knowledgeable and wise beyond the understanding of mortals and gods, save for Thoth. It is said that he grew to understand everything but ever seeks to learn more. The Gnomes now believe that with his great power,

either by his reason or by the force of a push with his mighty head, he will remove any obstacle. During his star voyage, Gandáramgee took on the name Gandárran, meaning Wanderer between the stars in the ancient Kawan language, to reflect that the warrior prince Gandáramgee had departed and peace and deep wisdom had entered his mind.

After indescribably long years of journeying, Gandárran felt a tug on his soul. A human being had found the Diamond Tusk. So, Gandárran was called from the stars to Palladium by his first new worshiper, a sorcerer named Kalba. He sought wisdom and was hungry for all knowledge. Gandárran gladly taught him. Kalba was a good pupil but by gaining secrets instead of growing in humility and wisdom, he lost the goodness in his heart and lusted for more and more power. In the end, Kalba betrayed Gandárran. In order to wrest the last secrets from Gandárran, Kalba chained and tortured Gandárran. Although Kalba succeeded in breaking the god's body, he did not break his will. Gandárran knew that to give away the final secrets would unleash a terrible Kalba upon the worlds. Gandárran realized that Kalba had now chosen him as he was the weakest of all gods, alone in all the worlds and without sustenance. Kalba wanted to become a god through Gandárran. Kalba succeeded in that even though he did not receive all knowledge and secrets from Gandárran, but Kalba passed through the gates of insanity to attain godhood and would be forever tainted by his evil deed and the madness it entailed. As Kalba realized, there are rules that must not be broken or one will be punished. In a turn of divine justice, Panath the Assassin betrayed Kalba, who himself had betrayed Gandárran, to Lopnel. When Lopnel heard from Panath what fate had befallen his son, he went to Tark, The Great Spider. Lopnel remembered that Tark still had a boon to get from him. Lopnel, in a surprising moment of clear thought, thought he might turn this to his advantage. He asked Tark what she wanted. Tark had heard about the mad ascent of Kalba and the plight of Gandárran. She told Lopnel that their debt would be settled if he offered her a god through eternity. Tark did not care if she would feast forever on Gandárran or on Kalba. Lopnel offered Tark the body of Kalba. Tark greedily consented, but she asked Lopnel to strike down the Mad Sorcerer, she would take care of the rest. So, Lopnel and Tark went to Kalba's tower in the wild north of Palladium. Lopnel made good on his promise and chopped merrily away at Kalba with such speed and rage that Kalba had not even time to utter half of a spell. When Kalba's body lay on the floor, twisted and shuddering in agony, the Spider Goddess parted the essence of Kalba from his body with her poison and spun an unbreakable web around the primal form of the sorcerer. Nobody but Tark knows where the body of Kalba is now, but it is said that Tark feeds on it every single day and that Kalba's spirit form feels the sucking bites spurring him on to deeper hate and madness. Gandárran thanked his father and Tark, who departed. Gandárran threw the Diamond Tusk high into the sky, so high that it would take centuries to come down again. He then let the tower of Kalba sink deep into the earth and laid himself to rest on the marble floor of the study to sleep until a new worshiper would call upon him and offer his adulation. Gandárran was forgotten for the second time.

It was at the time of the war between Elves and Dwarves that great magics were used – so great that their use reverberated through the universe. Gandárran felt this, even in his slumber. He felt how many creatures perished in the atrocities caused by Elves and Dwarves and bethought a solution. He meditated upon it for

a while. He found that the ceasing of hostilities itself is not the aim or an aim he could bring about, but that his aim would have to be to find a way to restore and sustain peace. Gandárran did not see many who craved peace deeply, he felt only one race was truly worthy of his attention: the Gnomes. As him, the Gnomes wanted nothing but peace. He searched the universe with his mind for the Diamond Tusk and soon found it. It was falling back to Palladium. Gandárran then understood that his thoughts were right. He saw how the Diamond Tusk slipped into a river, where it flowed miraculously for a while until a Gnome picked it up: So it was that Gandárran had a voice again to speak to a mortal. He revealed himself, offering wisdom and protection, and that the Gnome would be his first priest of peace and deliver his people. They would not save all, but they would save enough to let the Gnome race live on in peace. And so it was...

- *The Great Lay of Gandárran* -

Real Name: Gandárran Gandáramgee.

Alignment: Principled (good).

Size: 20 feet (6 m) tall.

Description: A giant with bronze skin, rainbow colored eyes, black bat-like wings on his back offering a view deep into the universe, and an ascetically thin body with the head of an elephant. Gandárran's body still shows the many marks of torture and is still weakened by the ordeal Kalba put him through, even though his body has healed. In the following you will find some values in square brackets saying "before Kalba"; as you can see, Gandárran was more powerful before Kalba broke his body. Gandárran may yet fully recover his physical faculties, but this will either take many more worshippers than he has today or a few thousand years longer. He never wears armor, but is usually seen wearing only a loincloth and flowers, golden jewelry (amulet, many rings on his hands and in his great ears), and many colors painted on his body. According to legend, if Gandárran lends a person one of his rings, no harm from conflict can befall the ring bearer as long as he himself does not engage in any way in the conflict.

Attributes: I.Q. 35, M.E. 25, M.A. 30, P.S. 20 [was 30 before being the focus of Kalba's attention], P.P. 20 [25 before Kalba], P.E. 15, P.B. 15, Spd 11 walking (7.5 mph/ 12 kmh; [speed was 22 before Kalba broke his body]), 220 flying (150 mph/240 kmh).

Natural A.R.: 15

Hit Points: 800 [was 1,600 before Kalba].

S.D.C.: 1,200 [was 2,400 before Kalba].

P.P.E.: 3,200

Horror/Awe Factor: 14

Experience Levels: 20th level Wizard, 10th level Summoner, 10th level Warrior Monk.

Natural Abilities: Fly (with absolutely uncanny speed through space, more limited in atmosphere, see under Attributes above), astral travel 98%, breathe without air/underwater (without limit), impervious to cold and underwater pressure (does not feel a vacuum, can dive any ocean depth/walk the ocean floor, etc.), impervious to poison and toxins, swim 88%, nightvision (sees as if in full daylight, even in total darkness; range three miles/4.8 km), see the invisible, turn invisible at will (no time limit), knows all languages, never fatigues, is always alert even in slumber, bio-regenerates 1D6x10 per melee round without P.P.E. cost, teleport 98%, dimensional teleport

90%, sense the location of ley lines 88%, sense/recognize enchantment/magic 75%, limited metamorphosis (either a human, a Gnome or any type of elephant).

Deific Powers: Gandárran has the full range of powers over his followers, and can perform all prototypical deific powers at *double the regular cost* with the following exceptions/additions:

Banish: Cost to Gandárran: 100 P.P.E.

Bio-Regeneration: Touch: 100 P.P.E.

Walk in Peace: Where Gandárran walks, there is peace. Everyone within line of sight to/of Gandárran will cease all conflict in his presence unless they themselves are attacked, but even then they will only defend themselves; supernatural and magical creatures get a save vs magic -10, gods are unaffected. Cost to Gandárran: None.

Enclave of Peace: When Gandárran stays in a place for longer than 1 day, nature will bloom in the area as if it was spring, even out of season, for as long as he will stay unless he wills nature to take its normal course. No one in the enclave will even think of violence against other sentient beings. Any conflict would cease immediately upon crossing the threshold into the enclave. Gandárran can freely determine the size from affecting only one room up to one larger structure like a castle or temple. The area will quickly revert to normal after he has left. Cost to Gandárran: 100 P.P.E initially, 50 per hour after the first.

Priest/Healing Powers: Exorcism 80%, turn dead 80%, remove curse 65% (30% for deific curses), healing touch (6D6), resurrection 75%.

Magic Powers: All wizard spells, wards, and circles! Opponents must roll a 16 or higher to save vs Gandárran's magic.

Psionic Powers: None.

Skills of Note: All Science and Scholar skills at 85%, but has all Lore skills at 95%. Knows more Weapon Proficiencies but will only use the following: Archery, Blunt, Shield, Staff, Spear, Targeting. Hand to Hand: Martial Arts.

Attacks per Melee Round: 4

Special Bonuses (in addition to attribute bonuses): -5 on initiative, +15 to save vs Horror Factor.

Favorite Weapons: Rarely uses any weapon, tries to bring any conflict to a peaceful resolution without combat but will rely on his magic and natural abilities if needs must.

Armor: None.

Alliances & Allies: Gandárran has a good rapport with Issuron but is ignored by the other Wild Lords. He is usually not associated with the Southern Gods; nor is his demeanor anything close to that of the Southern Gods. Most Gnomes today associate him with the Wild Lords, some see him as a brother or even consort of Issuron, which may or may not be true – Gandárran and Issuron like each other well enough. Gandárran does not seek the attention of any of the other gods and several even might not take him seriously as he lacks their bluster. Gandárran is a quiet god, content with taking care of his “chosen people,” the Gnomes. Although a formidable wizard and a competent warrior, he strives for peace, never power.

Enemies: None in particular, but all evil or chaos gods are anathema to the harmony and peace Gandárran stands for. Also, there is absolutely no love lost between Gandárran and Kalba.

Vulnerabilities and Weaknesses: Deific.

Afraid of Torture and the god Kalba. Gandárran has to save vs a Horror Factor of 14 when in the presence of Kalba, a

torturing chamber or close to torturing equipment to be able to act in any way but immediate flight.

Alone in the World. Gandárran does not belong to any pantheon and the divine realm of the Southern Gods, Hunagat, is closed to him. He is very wise and knowledgeable but thanks to the brutal attention of Kalba, the effects of which are still lasting even after many millennia, he leads the life of a recluse, but for some contact with Issuron, to whom Gandárran feels a strong affection. While this saves him from some internal squabbles that pantheons seem to foster, it also means he lacks the support other gods may call upon.

Pacifist. Gandárran will go to considerable lengths to refrain from using violence of any manner and never to render the first blow. He strives for nothing but peace, harmony and balance in the world and to protect the Gnomes. He will use his powers to defend himself, the Gnomes or any goodhearted and honest being, but preferably by indirect intervention and by deterring the conflict.

Technology: Fascinated by all technology and uses it when necessary and where appropriate, although he thinks introducing technology too quickly or too early disturbs universal harmony and peace.

Manifestations or Avatars: None.

Minions: Gonfell, a Shaggy Elephant living in Ophid's Grasslands (see above in this article).

Treatment of Worshipers, Priests and Organizations: He takes care of his priests and often protects the Gnomes of Ophid's Grassland. He would like to see his church grow, but realizes that is not likely, but he is content to have the Gnomes worship him. For Gandárran, his relationship with the most (or perhaps only) truly peaceful race of Palladium is a relationship made in heaven.

Holy Artifacts: *The Diamond Tusk* is the tip of Gandárran's left tusk. It is about 10 inches long and filled with what can only be described as a single elongated diamond “poured” into the tusk. When a mortal holds the tusk and prays to Gandárran, the god must answer the summons and will appear immediately. The tusk can also be used to “write” by scratching on a slate, in the sand, etc. If such writing is accompanied by a prayer to answer a certain question, Gandárran may answer the question. If the god answers, the tusk will flow with the red blood of Gandárran and the tusk will write the divine answer on the writing surface on its own volition. Every answer will cost Gandárran 1D10 Hit Points. The blood of the God will stay on paper, papyrus, etc. and will never fade, but the material may. *The Heart of Gandárran* is the god's heart and, contrary to some rumors, in his body at the moment, thank you very much. However, if a mortal could get hold of it and eat it, it would convey the *Deific Curse: Confer Immortality* and add 1D6+3 to the I.Q. of the eater. *The Rings of Peace* are the wooden rings Gandárran wears on each of his fingers. Sometimes Gandárran gives a ring away to one of his faithful. Anyone who wears one of Gandárran's rings cannot be attacked, unless he attacks first himself.

Realms of Influence: Gandárran does not have a deific realm. He has lived underneath Ophid's Grasslands in the ruined Gnome city Yath-Kondra for 8,000 years now and leaves it only rarely. At the heart of Yath-Kondra is the ancient senate house of the Exodus Republic, where he usually is. The domed great hall of the Gnome parliament is his favorite room. The

whole senate house has become a permanent *Enclave of Peace* (description: see above under *Deific Powers*); as he has stayed in this place for millennia, it no longer costs the god any P.P.E. to maintain the deific magic of the enclave. It is so strong that even other gods may fall subject to its effects.

Gandárran is worshipped on the Palladium World, but virtually only by Gnomes and in the Ophid's Grasslands. Almost all Gnomes respect Gandárran, but only about every one in four Gnomes in the Ophid's worships Gandárran actively. A shadow of the warrior prince god Gandáramgee may still be worshipped in the Land of the South Winds and/or the Yin-Sloth Jungles, however Gandárran does not answer any such prayers anymore.

Rifts® Notes: Gandárran is the only Southern God who is aware of Rifts Earth, but he keeps silent about it to any other gods as he fears they would love the conflict too much.

Creed of Gandárran

The creed of Gandárran is as old as the destruction of the Exodus Republic of the Gnomes, roughly 8,000 years. Gandárran is virtually unknown beyond Ophid's Grasslands, but for Gnome worshippers who were raised in the Ophid's and then went on to live elsewhere. Gandárran has barely enough worshippers to be no longer considered a Forgotten God.

Major Deities: Gandárran Gandáramgee.

Alignments of Worshipers: Usually good.

Pantheon: Gandárran is not associated with a pantheon as such, but the Gnomes take it for granted that Gandárran and Issuron may be lovers and also tend to worship Issuron anyway. The Great Lay of Gandárran (see below under holy books) tells his story and mentions the Southern Gods, especially Ippotomi, Lopnel and Kalba. Gnomes ignore most of the Southern Gods but those mentioned in the Lay. Gnomes associate Kalba with greed, lust for power, and cruelty. Lopnel is seen as the god of rage, violence, and war; some warskiffers pray to Lopnel before combat. A prayer of the Gnome warskiffer is: *“God of War, Father to Peace, give me the strength to do what I need to do. Gandárran forgive me! I beg you will accept me again on my return or when I fall. May I bring peace and nothing else. Issuron, my lady, have mercy on my soul.”*

Organization: There is no formal organization per se. There is no church hierarchy. All priests are equal. If leadership is necessary, the priests will elect a temporary leader or group of leaders. As all Gandárran priests are Gnomes, as you can imagine, there will be LOTS of discussions and lengthy deliberations before any decision will be taken. In a pinch, they will pray for quick insight and guidance from Gandárran.

The creed of Gandárran is open to new followers as long as they are good of heart and compassionate. Worshippers and even priests of Gandárran are not restricted from praying to or making sacrifices to other gods. Gandárran is a forgiving and wise god; however, he will not condone prayer or service to evil gods and, especially, not to Kalba.

There are not many temples to Gandárran. The largest and secret temple is in the ruined underground city Yath-Kondra. Yath-Kondra once was a large Gnome city at the time of the Exodus Republic. It was destroyed by Dwarven troops. Whether Gandárran himself truly lives in the city or even in the temple is not widely known, but there is a persistent rumor – it is part of the

Great Lay after all. There are only a very few small temples more in the Ophid's Grasslands. Usually they are not part of a burrow of a Gnome clan, but each temple has a small burrow for itself and the temple caters to the burrows in its immediate, and sometimes wider, area. Several clan burrows have a shrine to Gandárran, but not a resident priest. In a burrow with many Gandárran worshippers, the head of the clan will serve as a lay preacher and lead his family in prayer.

Symbols and Icons: The most common symbol is a small elephant tusk, usually carved out of wood, and worn as a pendant on a simple necklace. Real ivory is never used to make the pendants out of respect for Gandárran's holy animals (elephants of all types). Garlands of flowers are worn on festive occasions in the temples.

Followers: Usually Gnomes. Mind, the creed is not restricted to Gnomes, but that is how it has turned out so far.

Holy Places: *“Yath-Kondra, where Peace reigns.”*

Major Artifacts: None.

Holy Books: There are no religious texts. As Gnomes do not write down much and the important things beyond day-to-day needs are rather conveyed orally, so are the wisdoms and stories of the creed of Gandárran. The most important religious tale is the Great Lay of Gandárran, in which the story of Gandárran is told. The full Great Lay, of which only an excerpt could be shown above, is not known to many. There are dozens of Gnomish stories and parables, which every Gnome will know, though, so that the gist is “known” but as Gnomes also love to spin a tale: speculation abounds and partially digresses far from the Great Lay, such as “Gandárran is the lost son of Rurga,” “Kalba tore out Gandárran's heart and nobody knows where it is today,” etc.

Common Rites and Sacrifices: Worshippers of Gandárran will avoid killing as best as they can and will never kill for convenience. Some are vegetarians for exactly this reason, but it is not demanded by the creed. Followers of Gandárran will rather bear a fly buzzing in the room or go to unusual length to catch it than kill it. If a worshipper of Gandárran has to kill, he will always pray to Gandárran for forgiveness. If it is killing for food, he will make sure that enough animals are left to procreate and, at least, one animal is let go as a sacrifice to Gandárran. A daily prayer for cleansing thoughts in the morning is required and repeated meditations on peace are encouraged.

Wealth: Priests will depend on what they either produce themselves or what they get from their comparably small congregations. As Gnomes always help out other Gnomes, this is not a big issue. The creed, as such, has no capital as it is neither organized nor strong.

New Skills

Gnome Lore (Scholar Skill): This is the study of all things Gnome: Gnome history, stories, poetry, songs, law, beliefs, customs, and culture. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience.

Sailing: Landsail (Technical Skill): Knowledge and ability to steer and maneuver all manner of landsails. Includes the ability to appreciate a landsail's quality and state of repair. The second skill value is for “combat driving” and difficult driving stunts like sudden turns, etc. A “combat driving” roll is necessary, especially when executing a ram or any other attack before the actual strike is rolled. **Base Skill:** 35%/20% +5% per level of experience.



Hitting the Streets with the Super Sleuth

Optional Material for the Heroes Unlimited™ RPG

By Matt Reed

Three murders, one with a blunt weapon, two more by bare hands.

Carina Bertrelli, a.k.a. 'The Snoop,' clutched at her side. Her ribs ached, there was a stabbing pain as she sucked in a breath, probably a broken rib. Ruefully, she wished that she had listened to her instincts earlier, that she was overmatched, that this psychopath was damn near bulletproof, and would not hesitate to end her.

Her hands tightened around the revolver she was wielding. Fear slowly drained from her as she concentrated, and forced her breathing to steady. She'd had worse. More important, those young girls had worse. Three murders, one with a blunt weapon, two more by bare hands. It was her mantra. It reminded her of why she was risking her life.

Someone had to do something. If it couldn't be the police, then The Snoop had to do something, because nobody else would. Her eyes closed as that rage started to fill her again, renewing her purpose. He had to be brought in. Those families she was consoling, they had to know justice. Justice was still real to her.

Her gaze returned to the back room before her. He had to be there, Manik had to be there. Everything she had learned, it all came back to this place as his lair. Apprehensively, she thought crossed her mind that she could be wrong. There was no real telling who was using this dive club as a hangout. It could've been a dozen of the 176th Street Kings, or just a few aimless drifters. It could be the lair of her suspect. None of them would appreciate her bashing the door open and waving a gun around. The Snoop was in no shape for another fight, but this was her last lead at solving this crime. That was it then. She kicked open the door with her foot. Heaven help her. Three murders, one with a blunt weapon, two more by bare hands...

The Super Sleuth has always been more than it has let on in the game of *Heroes Unlimited*™. A modest power category, lost among the myriads of powerhouse cyborgs, flying brick mutants, and versatile mages. Yet there are so many stories of the power of deductive reasoning, the triumph of the clever or the bold; detectives and investigators of all sorts still fill the pages of murder mysteries, crime thrillers, and television. From the humble, tough-as-nails, noir investigator, to the professional surgeon who sees a flaw in the case where others do not, to the dogged police detectives, and upper-crust debutantes, who have made a livelihood out of understanding the human nature, there exists an entire world of heroic archetypes that have yet to be fully filled.

This article intends to bring the Super Sleuth back on the street, where he belongs. As we redevelop and reexamine the Super Sleuth, the goal is to give it the professionalism, the reasoning, and the sheer chutzpah needed to make the Sleuth the crime-busting figure he was always meant to be. The Sleuth has been presented with several different paths of focus, as was done with the Stage Magician in *The Rifter*® #79. While the Stage Magician was redesigned with the thought of their backgrounds coming more into play, and the variants possible, the Super Sleuth is

more focused still, as their objectives are ostensibly for the same cause: justice. In this article, detectives are defined more by the methods they use to obtain their goals. Sleuths may focus on their capabilities to move unseen, to invest in people who may lend a hand, medical training, and even more esoteric possibilities like learning a little magic like popular urban fantasy detectives. Overall, the Sleuth gets more dangerous as he learns more about his foes, and with each bit of evidence he collects.

As with the Stage Magician, I felt the Sleuth was extremely limited by just giving him a few basic skills, even if the percentages were fairly high. A sleuth's best traits never really came into play, so as before, I redesigned the power category by asking myself, "What would the world's best sleuth be able to do?" As such, this is a more heroic version of the Super Sleuth, one who exudes more knowhow, luck, skill, and intuition than ever before. He's much less likely to be taken out by a group of thugs, more likely to manage a getaway from a dangerous shooter, and much more likely to solve the case.

Overall, there's a plethora of new archetypes that had yet to be introduced into the Super Sleuth's realm of possibilities. Hand-to-hand action detectives are possible if you decide to become a Supercop. Criminal Insight becomes a lot more prevalent if you favor gut instincts while you're Working a Hunch. Hacking a secured database is not only more defined, but also proves the Sleuth's possibility for dominance when you're At the Keyboard. Of course, a Sleuth can always expand his martial technique a bit, raising his chance at surviving till the end if he starts Fighting Smart. These assets combine into a more defined character, giving the Sleuth the abilities he needs to hit the streets and bring justice to his neighborhood.

Mechanics Needed to Play a Sleuth Properly

A Note About Quality, Perception & Contested Skills

Much like in my earlier article for the Stage Magician, references will be made to the 'quality' of a skill roll. A skill's Quality (capitalized for emphasis) is generally considered the actual number rolled, assuming the skill is successful. The quality of a skill roll is used in contested skills to determine success or failure for the parties involved. There will be a few elements of the Super Sleuth's skill set that will influence skill quality, to give them an extra advantage in their actions, yet without making certain skills laughably easy to succeed at.

The main problem I've had with Perception in its current state is that it is nebulous how to have it react to other skills. If someone moves to Prowl through an area, and there's an alert guard nearby, how does the guard have a chance at all to spot the Prowler? Is there anything more that he can do to actively contribute to the scene?

When dealing with Perception, it is my advice to turn Perception into a percentile roll to better determine success and failure. My recommendation is to combine your Initiative and Perception bonuses, then multiply the result by 5%. Perception advances by 5% at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15. A good number of the time, the skills characters have trained in, such as Surveillance, Detect Concealment, or Detect Ambush, are more proper to use instead of Perception. Consider Perception a default skill for characters without any specialized training to warrant those more professional skills. G.M.s are encouraged to give bonuses to a character's Perception roll if the task is not contested, up to +30%.

A contested roll is a roll in which both characters involved are actively pitted against each other, especially in a situation where only one person can succeed, such as hacking/protecting a computer system, stealth versus an alert guard, climbing to the top of a building first, or any other sort of physical activity that relies on anything but sheer speed. When skills contest each other, both parties roll their skills. If both succeed, the skill with the higher quality wins.

One last thing to stress about Contested Skills is that there is a simple reason why the 'highest roll succeeds' as opposed to the lowest, which historically has been considered a better roll. Anyone with a skill can roll a 01%. People with just 10% in a skill can make that roll. Certainly characters with a low percentage in a skill won't make it as often, but again, we're looking at who made the better roll overall.

Consider that 01-35% in Metalworking covers the absolute basics. You're aware of what you need to do, and can forge some basic items like nails or sheets. When you level up, you gain 5% more, which represents your added experience. Perhaps you've made some iron rings as well by now, or learned a new metalworking recipe. The higher range you get after level one is the extra experience and training you've accomplished.

Two metalsmiths both attempt to make the same iron ball. One, the Novice, has the skill at 15%, the other, the Expert, has the skill at 75%. Both make their roll, the Novice rolling a 07%, the Expert rolling a 65%. By the idea of 'lowest roll wins,' the Novice shows up the Expert, despite the fact that there's no way the Novice could've succeeded with the Expert's roll. To view the game in that way suggests that a higher level in a skill cannot compare to the original basics learned.

However, in the 'high roll succeeds' way, the Expert uses more refined techniques with his 65%, he folds the metal differently, and spends more time to craft it, and it shows, whereas the Novice managed to make a functional iron ball – it is obviously lower-quality than the Expert's item.

An example of standard game play: The aptly-named Snoop is attempting to break into a secure network to look for phone records. She makes her roll, and finds the information she needs.

An example of contested game play: Snoop is attempting to break into a secure network again, and this time the network admin is on site to make things more challenging. Over the five hours of her attempt, she tries multiple different ways to access the system, using her various tricks; meanwhile, the system admin tracks data coming in, trying to determine if there is an intruder attempting to gain access, and if so, where that intruder is located. Snoop rolls a 53%, succeeding at her Digital Intrusion. The system admin has a skill of 80%, and makes his roll at a 06%. Both characters make their roll, leaving the situation very ambiguous. Now we look into the Skill Quality, the actual num-

ber rolled. Snoop rolled a 53% and succeeded, the admin rolled a 06% and succeeded. Since 53% is a higher success than the 06%, Snoop wins.

An example of contested game play with quality bonuses: Having done this line of investigation for a manner of months, Snoop has picked up the 'Screen Infiltrator' ability, which gives her a +10% to her Skill Quality. Mind you, this does not add to the skill itself, only the chance of success in a contested skill roll. This time, Snoop rolls a natural 22% on the dice, the network admin rolls a 30%. Normally, Snoop would lose this contested roll; however, adding in the +10% Quality bonus, her roll ends up becoming a 32%, just barely beating the system admin.

Other skills can be contested as well, such as, but not limited to, the following:

Acting/Fast Talking vs Psychology/Criminal Insight – To determine the truth of a statement.

Pick Pockets vs Perception – As opposed to the 67% chance of someone noticing a failed pick pocket attempt.

Surveillance vs Surveillance/Perception – To successfully tail someone without their knowledge.

Track Humanoids vs Wilderness Survival – In a proper environment.

Pilot Auto vs Pilot Auto – In a chase scene.

Forgery vs Recognize Forgery – To recognize proof of legitimacy or fraud.

In a game using contested skills, quality bonuses are a way to help ensure you keep the upper hand on the enemy, without making it impossible to fail. It also allows a level of success to gauge a character's skill use easier, and promote a more masterful use of skills in the game.

The Evidence System

The most important part of building a case, whether legal or extra-legal, are the clues that can be brought forth in court. Motive, weapons, destroying alibis, placing people at the scene, digital footprints, crime scene paraphernalia; ideally all of these items can be used in a court of law to deliver justice and punish the guilty. As such, they are the Super Sleuth's stock in trade. Evidence to a Sleuth means more than just admissibility in court, it also puts the pieces together faster, gives the Sleuth a broader view of the scope of the crime, and helps narrow his gaze like a laser beam towards the inevitable conclusion.

In game play terms, seeking out Evidence to be used at a later date helps provide bonuses to the skills necessary to prove guilt. Evidence also occasionally either is required, or augments Sleuth abilities, representing the extra motivation and determination the detective has.

- Evidence, with a capital "E," is defined as a major clue that assists with building a case against the main target of the investigation. Evidence should be confirmed by the G.M. as a turning point in an investigation, and should be major clues or revelations. A matchbook with the name of a hotel may be a clue to help you learn more about a scene, but is not Evidence on its own accord. Recorded testimony, bloody footprints, video evidence, and murder weapons are all high-profile pieces of Evidence that could be used.
- Evidence provides a mechanical bonus to some of the Sleuth's abilities, is able to punish foes more strongly, as well as rewards Sleuths that find all the pieces needed. In addition, hav-

ing enough Evidence gives the Sleuth the chance to reroll a failed skill roll while on the case. For every two pieces of Evidence a Sleuth has on his current case, he may ask the G.M. to reroll one failed skill roll. He must take the second roll, even if it fails.

- Most investigations only end up yielding 2 to 4 pieces of Evidence before their resolution. The G.M. may rule that some items hold over if there's a larger story at work, but this should rarely, if ever, exceed 5 in total.
- After there's a resolution involving the investigation's target (usually at the end of a story arc), most if not all of the Evidence attained no longer has much of an effect on the Sleuth. Example: Snoop has finally tracked down the foe, Manik, for the murder of her client. Having collected footage of him at the scene, testimony of an eyewitness, and the murder weapon, Snoop is prepared for the confrontation. Despite her best efforts, Manik soundly beats her down, then disappears into the night to let the heat die down. When the trail turns cold, Snoop is forced to move on. That Evidence no longer affects any of her abilities. Justice will have to wait another day.

Interrogation Conflicts

One of the most advanced possibilities about solving a crime comes when you have a chance to interrogate a suspect. The rules presented here are mere guidelines and mechanics to deal with such a situation. There are several steps to a proper grilling of a suspect. To define a situation as a true interrogation means that you have some control over the person, whether legally or extra-legally; the suspect needs to be put in a position where he understands that you have power over him. Generally, this is done in the police station, as a suspect is already confined to quarters with the potential for charges to be filed against them, but having control of finances or other major aspects of life may work as well. Most importantly, the subject cannot simply be able to walk away from you without repercussions. In those instances, it is known more as a police interview, and is generally far more difficult to glean information without that extra leverage.

The interrogation process goes as such: Research your suspect. Decide upon a good approach to use against him. Question the suspect. End the questioning. Analyze and report data found. Overall, questioners find that building a solid rapport with the suspect is a time-tested way to get answers, plus using incentives, manipulation of emotions and information, or manipulation of the suspect's ego. It should be noted that threats of violence, and especially anything akin to torture, are considered extremely unreliable as well as morally reprehensible. A skilled interrogator seeks to put himself in a position of power and authority, without allowing the suspect to shut down on him.

Therein lies the balance in the act of interrogating, the rapport between the two is key to gaining information. A suspect who feels betrayed, hopeless, or incensed, may shut down completely or feed you bad info; while an interrogator who takes the wrong approach may give up information of his own, garner nothing useful, or simply be unable to piece together anything coherent.

As part of the actual interrogation process, new mechanics have been created to represent the wear and tear on both parties involved. The main mechanic is that Mental Endurance has a chance of being damaged during the conflict temporarily. This

is to be considered stress and resolve being broken, and not to be considered permanent damage. A character who takes M.E. damage during an interrogation still retains his standard bonuses provided by an exceptional Mental Endurance.

Step One:

The G.M. establishes the scene as either an interview or an interrogation. As the situation has no control over personal containment yet, a police interview will dictate a -40% to the interrogator's skill rolls. Otherwise, there is no penalty or bonus.

Step Two:

The interrogator, or someone on his team, may roll Psychology, Criminal Insight, or Research to determine the best course of approach to the suspect. A failure on this roll denotes a -10% penalty to the Interrogation rolls.

Step Three:

The interrogator meets the suspect, establishing a rapport over an hour. The interrogator rolls his Interrogation skill with any proper bonuses or penalties, as he tries to pry information from the suspect. Evidence is brought forth, alibis are questioned, flaws in the suspect's story are examined.

Step Four (optional):

Occasionally a Sleuth will find himself having to sit on the other side of the table from someone else trained in the similar arts. In these cases, both sides may attempt to undermine the other, glean information, provoking stress, and guarding his words carefully. In this situation, both sides may roll their Interrogation skill, the one with the higher Quality (highest successful result) is considered the successful Interrogator for Step Five.

Step Five:

On a successful Interrogation roll, the suspect rolls his M.E. on a D30. On a failure, he takes 1 M.E. damage. If he reaches 0 M.E. he cracks, giving up anything the intelligence officer wishes to know. On a failed Interrogation roll, the interrogator rolls his M.E. on a D30, as the stress of the situation and the possibility of the suspect shutting down prey on his mind. On a failed M.E. roll, he takes 1 M.E. damage. If he reaches 0 M.E. the suspect is considered unbreakable to his techniques. Certain Sleuth abilities may change how this works.

Step Six (Optional):

On a successful Interrogation roll, the questioner may increase the ability damage by +1 for every piece of Evidence introduced. He may choose to do this action only once during an Interrogation.

Step Seven:

The cycle returns to Step Three as the Interrogator presses the issue, attempting to break the suspect before he stresses out.

It should be noted that it takes hours to build up a proper rapport with someone, so swapping out a stressed interrogator doesn't have much of a benefit. The suspect regains half of his damaged M.E. when dealing with a new questioner, or after having eight hours away from the questioning.

New Uses for Skills

Streetwise: In addition to its myriad of other uses, Streetwise also allows a player to recall any overt police activity in the area within the last six months. This may be rather useful to understand the shift in activity in any particular organization. More covert police activity might only be found out through the police database.

Gunsmithing: The ability to maintain, modify, and forge modern ballistic firearms. With the proper tools (see Equipment below), a character can tamper with a firearm in a way to make it less likely to be linked to a crime. **Base Skill:** 35% +5% per level.

Lore: Criminal: A more in-depth look at crime families and their histories. As with Streetwise, the character can I.D. specific syndicate members, and several facts about their most well-known actions. The character also knows how most syndicates make their money, their general actions, activity with law enforcement, and their relations with other factions. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level.

Character Creation

Step One: The Usual

Attributes: Determine the eight attributes as usual. In addition, some attributes have been increased by his or her lifestyle.

Attribute Bonuses for the Super Sleuth:

+1D4+1 to I.Q.

+1D6 to M.E.

+1D4 to M.A.

Hit Points: P.E. Attribute number +1D6 per level of experience.

Starting S.D.C.: 40

Step Two: Education & Skills

Education is fairly specialized, with an emphasis on research, investigation, psychology, and criminal sciences. Do not roll to determine education level and skill programs. Only the following skill areas are available to the Sleuth:

Common & General Skills

Pilot Automobile (+10%)

Pilot: One of choice (+20%).

Mathematics: Basic (+25%)

Language: Native Language (+25%)

Literacy: Native Language (+20%)

Language and Literacy: One additional language of choice (+15%).

And 2D4+3 Secondary Skills.

Detective/Law Enforcement

Hand to Hand: Basic, which can be changed to Expert at the cost of one O.C.C. Skill, or two Secondary Skills.

W.P. Pistol/Revolver

W.P. Shotgun

Radio: Basic (+20%)

Intelligence (+20%)

Interrogation (+15%)

Research (+20%)

Surveillance (+20%)

T.V. & Video (+15%) or Photography (+20%).

Psychology (+10%)

Rogue/Street-based Skill Program

Find Contraband (+20%)

Track Humanoids (+15%)

Three additional skills from Rogue or Science categories (+15%).

Plus One Scholastic Skill Program

Equal to three years of college (+15%).

Special Skills

Criminal Investigation

– 60% +2% per level

The Super Sleuth's key skill is a linchpin in investigations, providing a much higher sense of insight and education than any of his compatriots in the crime-busting line of work. Criminal Investigation combines the skills of Streetwise, Criminal Science, and Law, into one powerhouse of a skill. Anytime those three skills are needed during play, a Super Sleuth may roll Criminal Investigation instead.

The Sleuth, more than any other character, stays up to date on the current happenings in his city. Perhaps with a network of contacts, or a series of case files, the Sleuth lives and breathes current events. When it comes time to start a new case, he's able to work far more efficiently than any other power category. He knows people, knows how to deal with gangs and information brokers, and can read a crime scene with peerless efficiency.

Criminal Insight – 50% +5% per level

The Sleuth is keenly aware of people's mannerisms, micro-expressions, and vocal timbre ranges. He's spent hours studying statement analysis, neurolinguistics and other experimental techniques in order to gain a greater understanding of his target's thoughts and words. While these assets don't outright give the Sleuth the ability to read minds, the Sleuth can generally tell if someone is lying, though not why. This is not a psychic power, though with some Sleuth abilities, it can emulate a few psychic powers like Empathy. Criminal Insight may be contested with Acting, or Fast Talking, if the suspect is a skilled liar.

This skill is closely related to Psychology, and the two together can help assemble a more complete understanding of the how and why of a situation, as part of the Sleuth's investigation.

Digital Intrusion – 60% +2% per level

The Sleuth's third key skill is Digital Intrusion, a comprehensive skill combining Computer Operation, Computer Hacking, and Computer Programming. As before, anytime a Super Sleuth needs to roll any of those three skills, he or she may opt to roll Digital Intrusion instead.

Representing the higher training that the Super Sleuth is capable of, even more so than most electronics experts, Digital Intrusion represents the entirety of the computer world in a nutshell. The Sleuth is considered familiar and capable with all sorts of systems, even able to interpret and understand highly advanced, even alien systems if given enough time.

The following chart explains the difficulties and time-restraints of understanding, using, and modifying computer programs and systems for the Super Sleuth. After a few weeks of using a specific program or system, the Sleuth no longer considers it unfamiliar, removing most penalties associated with the initial use of the system. Most hackers or programmers would find that attempting the same activities would take three times as long, if possible at all. The Super Sleuth is even so good at her role that, even without knowing a needed language, she may extrapolate data and conjecture how things should work. As long as she has the understanding of one element of the program, such as its basic demonstrable effect, she has a chance to decipher it, even on alien systems! The Electronic Genius also may use this chart when hacking, but for all other characters it will take three times as long, and with an additional -20% to their skill for anything above medium difficulty.

Penalties for Unfamiliar Programs and Systems:

Identify Purpose by Source Code or Manipulate Program:

- +10%: Earth-created; low to medium difficulty, 1 minute.
- 0%; Earth-created; advanced/military difficulty, 1D6 minutes.
- 10%; Earth-created; cutting edge difficulty, 4D6 minutes.
- 25%; Alien-created; advanced difficulty, 6D6 hours.
- 40%; Program or system requires magical, psionic, or advanced bionic systems to function. 3D4 days.

Hack Into System from Exterior Access (a system outside its basic network):

- 20%: Earth-created; low to medium difficulty, 1D6 minutes.
- 30%; Earth-created; advanced difficulty, 4D6 minutes.
- 50%; Earth-created; cutting edge difficulty, 6D6 hours.
- 60%; Alien-created; advanced difficulty, 3D4 days.
- 80%; Program or system requires magical, psionic, or advanced bionic systems to function. 1D4 weeks.

Hack Into System from Interior Access (a system that is already in the network):

- 0%: Earth-created; low to medium difficulty, 1D6 minutes.
- 10%; Earth-created; advanced difficulty, 4D6 minutes.
- 30%; Earth-created; cutting edge difficulty, 6D6 hours.
- 40%; Alien-created; advanced difficulty, 3D4 days.
- 60%; Program or system requires magical, psionic, or advanced bionic systems to function. 1D4 weeks.

Reprogram/Re-Purpose Programs or Systems:

- 10%: Earth-created; low to medium difficulty, 6D6 hours.

- 20%; Earth-created; advanced difficulty, 3D4 days.
- 40%; Earth-created; cutting edge difficulty, 1D4 weeks.
- 75%; Alien-created; advanced difficulty, 3D6 weeks.
- 90%; Program or system requires magical, psionic, or advanced bionic systems to function. 3D6 months.

Step Three: Abilities

What sets all Super Sleuths apart are their prescient abilities, their focus of intent in their investigations. The categories and abilities listed below present a variety of choices to the up-and-coming Sleuth in his adventures. In total there are nine categories, each with a specific theme to them. Sleuths select the categories they have access to, and then abilities therein to define what they have to work with. Some of these abilities can, in essence, be replicated in game play, but having the actual ability for it makes the situation so much easier. You can always develop a network of contacts, but if you want to create one on the spot that can help you out, you'll want the actual ability. The same can be said for cold reading people; you may be able to make some calculated guesses about someone you've just met, but it's much easier to have the associated ability.

Categories are a group of abilities that all have a similar function, all denoting a focus for the detective's primary methods of investigation. When a Sleuth starts play, his starting categories denote what abilities he will be able to choose from. Starting Sleuths have access to the General Category, as well as two others. If a Sleuth wishes to have an Origin Story, that is counted as a starting style, and may only be selected at Level 1. Within those three categories, a Sleuth starts with six abilities. If you wish to acquire a further rank in an Ability, you simply devote a second ability to it, meaning it costs two abilities to get Rank 2 in anything, and three to get Rank 3 in any ability. As the Sleuth progresses, he or she gains access to the Advanced Category at Level 3, and another Category at levels 5, 7, 9, and 11. The Sleuth gains two Abilities at levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15. These abilities must be selected from Categories he or she has access to.

Categories

Advanced

Access to the Advanced Category is automatically gained at Sleuth Level 3. As you grow more experienced, new tricks and tactics get entered into your repertoire.

Brutal Interrogation

Requires Interrogator. You can get to the root of a confession sooner than most.

Rank 1: When performing an Interrogation, on a successful roll, you deal 1D2 Mental Endurance damage instead of just 1.

Capitalizer

When you lay into a foe with a good one, you already have another one coming.

Rank 1: You may use this ability once per round, and only with a melee attack. When you succeed at an offensive combat move of any sort (strike, entangle, disarm, etc.), you imme-

diately get a free melee attack on the foe you are currently targeting. You also gain +2 to Strike, and +4 to Damage on this attack.

Committed to Cover

Requires Covers. Never trusting your own thoughts when psychics could be nearby, you've steeled your mind to the identity at hand.

Rank 1: If a telepath or empath seeks to learn your true nature by judging your feelings or thoughts, they must probe your mind for a number of melee rounds equal to your Super Sleuth level before ascertaining the ruse.

Easy Entry

Requires two At the Keyboard abilities. If you've been there once, there's no need to leave for good.

Rank 1: After hacking into a secured system, you may spend 15 minutes to install one backdoor into the system, allowing easy future access. Such backdoors have a chance to be discovered every month. A moderately secure system has a 30% to locate and remove a backdoor program. A highly secure system has a 60% to locate and remove the backdoor program. An ultra-secure system will always remove the backdoor, within the week. This ability may be taken up to three times, each one giving you a backdoor into another system.

Hasty Sweep

Sometimes you don't get a lot of time to look over a crime scene before the police show up.

Rank 1: Most crime scenes require anywhere from 1 to 6 hours to process. You can recognize all viable data in half the time, with a minimum of 30 minutes.

Rank 2: You can locate the pertinent information needed in a crime scene within one-third the standard time, to a minimum of 30 minutes.

Lucky Break

Requires Born Lucky. On a regular basis, you've started to realize that last hit should've killed you.

Rank 1: Once per day, you may choose to automatically succeed at a Roll with a Punch/Impact/Fall. The move costs an attack, even if you have an Auto-Roll.

Rank 2: You may now automatically succeed twice at a Roll with a Punch/Impact/Fall per day.

Rank 3: You may now automatically succeed three times at a Roll with a Punch/Impact/Fall per day.

Master Surveillant

When you're on a stakeout, you rarely get made.

Rank 1: You gain a +20% quality bonus on contested Surveillance rolls.

Rank 2: When you make a contested Surveillance roll, you may instantly learn if you've been spotted.

Shapeshifter Hunter

Requires Recognize Disguise. The things that walk among us that are not human can still be given away by mannerisms and visual cues.

Rank 1: You gain the ability to recognize if creatures are not in their true form. This ability is restricted to recognizing physical changes, as opposed to mental imagery that forces you to think someone looks human. Roll Recognize Disguise versus the shapeshifter's ability. If no percentage is provided, assume an 80% skill in their disguise.

That Final Clue

Requires Encyclopedic Knowledge. Requires having two Evidence. Sometimes retrospect is the only thing that's going to pull the pieces together.

Rank 1: Sometimes the Sleuth misses a vital piece of information that is absolutely necessary. Perhaps he didn't read a person properly, or perhaps he didn't notice a crime scene detail. Once per game, a Super Sleuth may roll a skill check related to a previous event or location, to garner extra information about the situation. The G.M. may tell him that there is nothing extra to be garnered, and if so, this does not use up his attempt.

Unreadable

Nobody knows what you're thinking, unless they can read your mind. Maybe not even then. Also available as an Advanced Stage Magician ability.

Rank 1: People attempting to assess the truth out of you using Psychology, Criminal Insight, or similar skills, suffer a -20% penalty to their roll.

Rank 2: When attempting to see through your bluff or otherwise discern your true intentions, foes must roll Psychology, Criminal Insight or the skill of choice twice, and take the worse result.

Rank 3: The penalty for people attempting to read you is increased to -40%.

Vengeance

The more you know about a mastermind's crimes, the more you'll make him pay.

Rank 1: When in melee combat with the perpetrator of the crime you've been pursuing, you deal +1 damage (up to a total of +5) for every collected piece of Evidence related to the case. This also applies to foes with known ties to the mastermind, such as the mastermind's thugs, bodyguards, or hired assailants.

Virtual Coup-De-Grace

Requires three At the Keyboard abilities. When you win, you can't help but spike the ball.

Rank 1: After winning a contested hacking conflict, you may lock down the opposing network, shut down systems, or otherwise stall access for a time. All opposing forces involved with the hack must spend 1D4+1 hours to return their system to a proper state before attempting to track down the Sleuth electronically.

Wealth

It has often been said that the best super power is money. Petty cash is assumed to be just that, what you have on hand to work with, and not to be considered a workaround to budget your own power armor usage. Subject to G.M. allowance, you may occasionally have access to up to ten times the amount of petty cash for larger, ongoing projects.

Rank 1: In your home city, you are considered to live very well, with a well-furnished home, workshop, and three cars. You always have 2D4x1000 dollars in petty cash available for the month.

Rank 2: You have homes scattered throughout a country of your choice, each one complete with all the vehicles, and standard gear necessary for your adventures (The exact amount to be left up to the G.M.). You always have of 1D4x10,000 dollars in petty cash available for the month.

Rank 3: You have homes all over the world, each one with all the standard gear for your adventures. (The exact amount is up to the G.M.) Your monthly petty cash increases to 2D4x30,000 dollars.

At the Keyboard

Nowadays a Sleuth doesn't need to leave his seat to bag some good info, and while all Sleuths have a great deal of skill at hacking, you've taken extra training.

Analytical Mindset

Requires Codebreaker. Who needs a computer to disassemble complex codes when your mind is up for the task?

Rank 1: When attempting to decipher an encrypted code with Cryptography, you do not need a computer to analyze even the most complex codes.

Codebreaker

Electronic encryption of the finest caliber, either creating or dismantling.

Rank 1: You gain a +10% to your Cryptography skill.

Rank 2: When you create your own digital cryptography, you stymie even the most dedicated hackers for a while. When you are being hacked, your opponent must roll the time it takes to do so, and take the longer result, before knowing success or failure.

Rank 3: You gain a +10% Quality bonus to your Cryptography skill.

Digital Profiling

Given some time, you can learn a hacker's tricks. Once you see them coming, they've nowhere to go.

Rank 1: After studying several programs or a large selection of data (a month's worth of finished work by the target) for four hours, you may assemble a profile of the programmer responsible. The profile contains analysis on programming style, most likely techniques and countermeasures they may rely on, and a sense of how much equipment they have to work with. Any character who reads this profile gains a +10% bonus on digital skills when dealing with the hacker for the rest of that day.

Rank 2: The time it takes to create a profile is halved, the amount of data required is also halved, (about two weeks' worth of finished work by the target). The bonus to digital skills involving that target increases to +15%.

Faster Hacker

For you, it really IS like the movies.

Rank 1: When you roll to see how long it will take you to hack into a system, as per the Digital Intrusion skill, roll twice, and take the shorter time.

System Infiltrator

Nobody keeps you out as long as they're connected to a network.

Rank 1: At any time when you hack into a network or system, and the system is actively defended by a contested roll, you gain a +10% Quality bonus to your Digital Intrusion skill.

Rank 2: Your Quality bonus on Digital Intrusion is now +15%.

Screen King

When they log into your system, they've just volunteered themselves to be your play-toys.

Rank 1: At any time when you are in your system, and someone attempts to hack you with a contested roll, you gain a +10% Quality bonus to your Digital Intrusion skill.

Rank 2: Your Quality bonus on Digital Intrusion is now +15%.

Behind the Wheel

It may not help you crack the case, but detectives always seem to end up in car chases, enough that some extra training to hedge your bets is warranted.

Crumple Zones

Requires one other Behind the Wheel ability. Anyone else would be depressed to realize how many car wrecks you've had to crawl out of.

Rank 1: Twice a day, you may choose to personally take half damage from a vehicular crash that you've been a part of.

Demolition Derby

Requires two Behind the Wheel abilities. If you're going to crash this vehicle, you're going to do it RIGHT.

Rank 1: Your crit range with vehicle-to-vehicle attacks is now an 18+.

Rank 2: Your crit range with vehicle-to-vehicle attacks is now a 16+.

Getaway Driver

Perhaps you've been on the wrong side of the mob too often, because you're starting to get used to high-speed escapes.

Rank 1: You gain a +10% quality bonus to piloting ground vehicles when being the Getaway car in a chase.

Rank 2: You gain another +10% quality bonus to piloting ground vehicles when being the Getaway car in a chase.

P.I.T. Maneuvering

You've spent some time practicing high-speed take downs.

Rank 1: When you attempt a P.I.T. maneuver in a car chase, your foe gets a -20% on his Piloting check to avoid losing control.

Pursuit Expert

All that police training pays off when you've got a bead on a getaway car.

Rank 1: You gain a +10% quality bonus to piloting ground vehicles when being the Pursuit car in a chase.

Rank 2: You gain another +10% quality bonus to piloting ground vehicles when being the Pursuit car in a chase.

Steel Behind the Wheel

Off-road, high-speed chases are nothing new to you. It's moments like this when dedication and a cool disposition prove their worth.

Rank 1: All penalties given to your driving due to vehicle conditions or navigation, are halved. Penalties may only be halved once, no matter how many abilities or traits you have that might reduce them.

Calling Old Friends

A Sleuth is a man of the people, helping all sorts who walk in through his door. When the chips are down, there's always a favor you can pull.

Covers

You've invested a lot of time in yourself, creating phony reputations you can slip into when the need arises. Basic Covers have a bare minimum of background attached to them, forged driver's licenses, home addresses, old clearance I.D.s, etc. A little investigation can determine the identity provided is a sham. A dedicated researcher intent on exposing the cover can generally do so within 2D4x10 minutes. If you lose a Cover, it takes three months to establish a new one. Do keep in mind that a Cover is only blown if it is widely publicized in the right circuit.

Rank 1: You gain two cover identities. These covers may be determined as you gain them, however you may also bring them into play with the G.M.'s permission. These covers tend to be low level identities, ones that can be burned easily, as well as mostly unnoticed by the general populace. Janitors, office workers, dock workers, and other low visibility roles are recommended options.

Rank 2: You possess three basic cover identities.

Rank 3: You possess four basic cover identities.

Improved Covers

Requires Covers. Requires Sleuth Level 3. You've put even more time into your alternative personas. The time frame needed in research to expose an Improved Cover is much greater, usually requiring 2D4 days to recognize the fraud.

Rank 1: One of your covers is more involved than the rest. Perhaps you are also known as a hitter in the underworld, or a special agent for a crime-busting task force. Either way, you've put a lot on the line to get this far, and getting your cover blown could be catastrophic.

Rank 2: You possess two Improved Cover identities.

Alter-Ego

Requires Improved Covers. Requires Sleuth Level 5. You're more your own shadows than your own person. Are you a mastermind or a shade now? Perhaps that's why you drink so much. Still, if you can be a shady crime-boss, or a dilettante corporate executive, does it really matter? A dedicated investigator may take months of legwork to finally find the truth, generally upwards of 3D6 months.

Rank 1: Years of your life have been spent putting this character together. The amount of information or pull you can muster can be significant in specific situations, but the stakes have never been higher. If this cover gets blown, there's a guarantee of retribution, whether it be a federal task force, or a bounty put on your

head. You may only have one Alter-Ego, and may not get another if your cover is blown.

Contacts

You've put in a lot of time getting to know people. Maybe they've come to you, maybe you've approached them, but your job is a lot simpler when you've got friends watching your back.

Rank 1: You gain three contacts. These contacts may be determined beforehand, but they may also be brought into the game spontaneously, with the G.M.'s permission. These contacts are generally low-level rank and file in the grand scheme of things. Criminal informants, beat cops, or mail room employees, but they may have a great amount of insight to help the Sleuth follow his leads, and give him access to places he may not otherwise enter. These contacts may be killed off or otherwise removed from play, and the points spent may not be used to garner a new contact until a month has passed.

Rank 2: You now have six standard contacts.

Rank 3: You now have nine standard contacts.

Improved Contact

Requires Contacts. Requires Sleuth Level 3. Investing in people pays off when the Desk Sergeant can lose paperwork for a few hours, all to keep you in the fight a bit longer.

Rank 1: One contact you have is of a medium rank in whatever bureaucracy or organization they work in; middle level management, crime boss' right hand man, a police detective still in the force.

Rank 2: Two of your contacts are now considered Improved Contacts.

Rank 3: Three of your contacts are now considered Improved Contacts.

Patron

Requires Improved Contact. Requires Sleuth Level 5. Now you've got the ear of someone important, someone influential, and occasionally he's willing to lend a hand. Generally the Patron knows about your lifestyle and possible vigilante activities, but approves of the steps you've taken. This ability also requires G.M. approval.

Rank 1: One Improved Contact you have is now of a high rank in whatever bureaucracy or organization they work in. These contacts are in a good position to assist the Sleuth financially, politically, socially, or legally if they wish. A patron is not powerful enough to alter businesses, take over crime families, or rewrite laws however. Contacts in the board of directors for a corporation, an Assistant D.A. in the legal system, a mafia boss' second assistant, all are good choices for a patron.

Fighting Smart

A detective may not be the toughest toe-to-toe fighter out there, but he can learn a few tricks to help when the chips are down. For clarification, consider a Mook to be anyone that is a low-level threat to the Super Sleuth, a foe with no specified name, nor ability-set, like gangsters, gang bangers, or foot soldiers.

Fighting Profile

Requires two other Fighting Smart abilities. You've learned a person's tricks well enough that you're ready when they come at you.

Rank 1: When you have time to study a person's melee fighting technique, whether via an hour of recorded fights, or having witnessed/experienced an altercation with them twice before, you may develop a profile on them to help defend yourself against an attack by them.

When you have a Profile on a foe, you gain +2 to Initiative against them, as well as +2 to Parry, +1 to Dodge, and the foe's critical hit range is reduced by 1 (though the foe always still crits on a Natural 20).

Rank 2: Your bonuses increase to +3 to Initiative, +3 to Parry, +2 to Dodge, your critical hit range is increased by 1, and the foe's critical hit range is reduced by 2 (though the foe still always crits on a Natural 20).

Disarm Expertise

The first step in a non-lethal takedown is to remove their weapon.

Rank 1: +1 to Disarm. If you have at least 2 Evidence against the foe you're up against, gain an additional +1 to Disarm.

Rank 2: +2 to Disarm, with an additional +1 to Disarm if you have at least 2 Evidence collected against this foe.

Fisticuffs

You lead a life that is bound to require a few dust-ups, and you've learned a few tricks to deal with it.

Rank 1: Once per turn, before rolling, you may add +1D6 damage to your next melee attack. If you have Evidence against this foe, you may add +2 to the damage dealt. This holds true for all ranks of Fisticuffs.

Rank 2: Twice per turn, before rolling, you may add +1D6 damage to your next melee attack.

Rank 3: You now add 1D8 damage instead, when using this ability.

Never Outnumbered

They keep piling on, but you're always ready.

Rank 1: When dealing with lesser foes like mooks, you are not considered to automatically lose initiative unless there are six or more of them. Standard for a character is to automatically lose initiative while outnumbered by four opponents or more.

Rank 2: When dealing solely with mook enemies, you may set your initiative every round to one higher than their initiative.

Shrug It Off

You took a beating yesterday, but you can put it out of your mind to get back to work. You also find yourself more motivated to soldier on, the more Evidence you have.

Rank 1: Every time you heal S.D.C. from rest, you regain +4 more S.D.C. You heal +1 S.D.C. more if you have Evidence regarding the case at hand.

Rank 2: Every time you heal S.D.C. from rest, you regain +8 more S.D.C. You heal +2 S.D.C. more if you have Evidence regarding the case at hand.

Sap

Pistol butt to the back of the head, gets 'em every time.

Rank 1: When initiating combat behind an unaware foe, your range for Knockout increases by 2 points. For example, if your standard chance for Knockout is on a 20, for this attack, it is an 18+. If you have no Knockout ability, you gain it on a Natural 20.

Rank 2: Your range for Knockout for this attack is increased by 1 point, for a total of 3. If you have Evidence against this foe, it increases by 1 point further.

Sizing Up

When it's just you and him, you start to learn his patterns, and can anticipate accordingly.

Rank 1: Every round you're in single combat against a foe, you gain an additional +2 Initiative against him.

Rank 2: Once per round, you may spend an attack to predict a single opponent's moves, giving yourself a +4 to your next combat roll (offensive or defensive) involving him this round.

Sucker Punch

Nothing's off limits when you really need to survive this fight.

Rank 1: When initiating combat, or when assaulting a stunned/blinded/incapacitated foe, your first melee strike against that target may be a Called Shot, but only costs one action. It also deals +1 damage for every piece of Evidence you have against the target.

Tough as Nails

You're hard to take down, and harder to keep down.

Rank 1: You permanently gain 6 S.D.C., up to a maximum of 70 S.D.C.

Rank 2: You gain an additional +4 to Saving Throws versus knockout and stun.

Rank 3: You permanently gain another 6 S.D.C., up to a maximum of 70 S.D.C.

General

Sleuths come in a wide range of shapes and sizes. Very few actually use the same motif to solve crimes, protect witnesses, or search for justice, therefore there are a wide array of talents and abilities for them to fine-tune their craft further.

Authenticating and Forgery

Counterfeiting operations curse your dedication to detail.

Rank 1: You gain a +20% Quality bonus when using Forgery when determining authenticity or proving forgery. A real specimen may be required to authenticate special items. If you have Evidence regarding this crime already, you gain an extra +5% Quality bonus.

Rank 2: You gain a +20% to Forgery, and another +20% Quality bonus when determining authenticity or proving forgery. If you have Evidence regarding this crime already, you gain an extra +5% Quality bonus.

Case Files

A good Sleuth keeps an eye on everything in his city, and constantly updates his files with the latest goings-on.

Rank 1: Select one criminal organization local to your area. While you have the ability to consult your case files, you gain a +5% bonus on investigative skills involving them. You may need to physically go to your office or safe-house to consult them.

Rank 2: Select a second criminal organization. You garner an additional +5% (for a total of +10%) bonus on investigative skills involving these two organizations.

Rank 3: If they've been in your city for six months, you've heard something about them, even if it's just rumors. All criminal organizations that have set up shop in your hometown are now part of your case files, and the bonuses therein.

Eidetic Memory

A disciplined mind is the greatest weapon. For a sleuth, it's usually a matter of life or death.

Rank 1: The Super Sleuth gains the equivalent of the psychic ability of Total Recall, complete with percentile roll, for use up to six times a day with no I.S.P. cost.

Rank 2: The amount of uses of this ability increases to twelve times a day.

Encyclopedic Knowledge

You've made it a point to read everything you can, just in case it comes up, and more often than not, it does.

Rank 1: Sometimes the vital clue you need hasn't been researched properly. You get neck deep into a case, and then suddenly a new thread emerges. As such, a good sleuth has to be up to date on all sorts of topics just for situations like this. Once per game, and with G.M. approval, you may roll Research, or another appropriate skill, to retroactively declare that you've researched a particular topic of interest for six hours.

Rank 2: You may use this ability twice per game.

Rank 3: You may use this ability thrice per game.

Gruff Disposition

A glower and a menacing look go a long way.

Rank 1: You gain +10% bonus to intimidate rolls. If you do not currently have a chance to intimidate, you gain it at 30%. If you have Evidence against this foe, you may add an additional 10%.

Handgun Aficionado

Revolvers have long been the Sleuth's weapon of choice. Reliable, accurate, and just enough stopping power to bring them in alive... if you're going that route.

Rank 1: You gain a +1 to Strike with revolvers.

Rank 2: If you have Evidence against the person you're firing at, you gain another +1 to Strike with revolvers.

Interrogator

When you've got them alone, you can get the answers you need.

Rank 1: When performing an Interrogation, your opponent's Mental Endurance is treated as 1 less. If you have Evidence against this foe, his M.E. is treated as 2 less instead.

Rank 2: When performing an Interrogation, your opponent's Mental Endurance is treated as 2 less. If you have Evidence against this foe, his M.E. is treated as 3 less instead.

Keen Wits

Trouble lurks around any corner, so it's always best to expect anything.

Rank 1: +2 to Initiative.

Rank 2: +3 to Initiative.

Rank 3: +4 to Initiative.

Keen Eyes

The smallest clues help bring in the biggest criminals.

Rank 1: +2 to Perception, or +10% if using the optional Perception percentile rules.

Rank 2: +3 to Perception, or +15%.

Rank 3: +4 to Perception, or +20%.

Light Feet

You've spent a life slipping into unoccupied rooms, and listening at barely opened doors.

Rank 1: You gain a +10% bonus to your Prowl rolls.

Rank 2: You gain a +10% quality bonus to your Prowl rolls.

Rank 3: You gain a further +10% bonus to your Prowl rolls, for a total of +20% to the skill, and +10% Quality.

Manhunter

Once you find a trail, nothing will stop you from finding your source.

Rank 1: You gain a +10% to Track Humanoids. You also gain a +5% Quality bonus for each piece of Evidence you have against the quarry.

Rank 2: You gain an additional +10% to Track Humanoids.

Natural Born Actor

Most people take acting classes for a new career, you've just supplemented yours a bit. Also available as a Stage Magician general ability.

Rank 1: You gain a +10% bonus to your Acting rolls.

Rank 2: You gain a +10% quality bonus to your Acting rolls.

Rank 3: You gain another +10% bonus to your Acting rolls, for a total of +20%.

Occult Knowledge

Not everything that is on the street is in the standard library.

Rank 1: Pick three lore skills from Magic, Nightlands, Psionic, Undead, Faerie, and Demon & Monster, or Streetwise: Weird. You gain these three skills at their base percentage.

Rank 2: You gain +10% to those three skills.

Pain Tolerance

You're so used to the aches and bruises that you've started to block it out.

Rank 1: +2 vs Saving Throw vs Pain.

Rank 2: +3 vs Saving Throw vs Pain. If you have Evidence regarding the current case, add a bonus of +2 more.

Polyglot

Perhaps you don't know every language, but you're always learning more.

Rank 1: You gain four languages you may speak and write, all at +20%, and an extra language at levels 3, 6, 9, 12, and 15.

Professional Legal Training

Being a former attorney may help you get out of trouble when you need it, or draw you into it deeper.

Rank 1: You've spent some time as a Public Defender, or an assistant D.A. You gain a +10% to Criminal Investigation rolls

when dealing with law. In addition, when in a courtroom, police interview room, or other setting where legal counsel holds weight, you may substitute Criminal Investigation for Military Interrogation when actually performing an Interrogation, as per the rules listed above.

Recognize Disguise

A bit of rubber or makeup isn't enough to keep you from seeing past the disguise.

Rank 1: You gain a +20% Quality bonus when using Disguise to recognize when someone is wearing a disguise.

Rank 2: You gain +20% to Disguise and another +20% Quality bonus when using Disguise to see through other people's disguises.

Sleepless Nights

Whether it's bad dreams, coffee, or the case, you've survived longer on less.

Rank 1: You only require 4 hours of sleep to be considered well-rested.

Rank 2: You may function without sleep for 72 hours without penalty. At the end of this cycle, you are considered heavily fatigued, and must sleep for a full day as soon as possible.

Whiskey Dreams

Some people only get chatty when they're drinking, so it's more than a hobby for you; it's professional development.

Rank 1: You gain Poison Tolerance: Alcohol as a skill, giving you +3 to Saving Throws against non-lethal poison (alcohol). You also may drink twice as much before needing to make a Saving Throw against alcohol.

Rank 2: You may drink three times as much as normal before needing to make a Saving Throw against alcohol.

Origin Story

Detectives come from all walks of life. Most of them rigorously study psychology and forensics, rightly so, but others just have a knack to assist them in their work. Many people ignore the occult world when solving mysteries, and yet so very often, there's more to the case than can be seen. Some of these sleuths use occult or arcane tricks to assist in their investigations, others train to fight against such threats, and some simply go about their lives unaware of how fate has already touched them.

You may not select more than one ability in this category. The Rank 1 abilities must be bought at level one.

Born Lucky

There are drunken masters that envy your haphazard nature. Some would say that a faerie whispered into your ear, others suggest that you were born at an auspicious time... or perhaps you're just using blind luck to stumble your way through life.

Rank 1: Three times a day, you may reroll one combat roll or skill roll. You must accept the second roll, even if it is worse. You gain one additional reroll every other level. If using the optional Luck Roll rules, you gain a +20% to your initial chance of luck. This initial skill counts as three Abilities when selected.

Rank 2: *Requires Level 3.* The Sleuth may spend a reroll to swap the percentile dice in a skill roll just made. Example: Roll-

ing Surveillance, a 73% is rolled. By spending a reroll, you may alter that to a 37%.

Rank 3: *Requires Level 5.* You gain an Auto-Dodge at +0 that may be used at any time, as you clumsily stagger or trip out of the way of foes. This Auto-Dodge may also be used against surprise and long-distance attacks, as you bend over to pick up a penny or such.

Brilliant Beyond Words

You've learned a great deal about how to process information, but you tend to react a bit differently than others. This is an optimal time to consider unusual tendencies and quirks, if not outright insanity. Consult with your G.M. for interesting ideas.

Rank 1: Your I.Q. increases by 2 points, up to a max of 30. You also gain +10% to three standard skills of your choice **OR** one additional Working a Hunch ability at levels 3, 9, 11, and 15.

Rank 2: Your I.Q. increases by a further 2 points, up to a max of 30. You gain an additional +5% to those previously selected skills **OR** one additional Working a Hunch ability at levels 3, 9, 11, and 15.

Magical Detective

You're not a full-fledged wizard, and you never will be, but you've learned a few spells that can help you find your way. This counts as three Abilities when selected.

Rank 1: You can cast some low level spells. Select up to 6 spells from levels 1 and 2, as well as 1 spell from levels 3 to 5. Your basic P.P.E. starts at 1D4x10+P.E. which does not increase per level. Your Spell Strength starts at 12, and does not increase. This counts as three Abilities when selected.

Rank 2: *Requires Level 3.* You gain two more total spells from levels 1 and 2, as well as one more spell from levels 3 to 5. You also gain 2D6 P.P.E.

Rank 3: *Requires Level 5.* You gain one more total spell from level 1 or 2, and one more spell from levels 3 to 5. You also gain 2D6 P.P.E.

Psychic Sleuth

You've opened your mind to new possibilities to make your work that much easier. Though the training was esoteric and costly, it's also an inside track to getting things done. This counts as three Abilities when selected.

Rank 1: You have trained your mind to form some rudimentary psionic abilities. Select up to 6 psionics or one Super Psionic ability. Your basic I.S.P. starts at 1D4x10+M.E. which does not increase per level. This counts as three Abilities when selected.

Rank 2: *Requires Level 3.* You gain 2 more standard psionic powers of your choice, or 1 Super Psionic ability if you did not select one before. You also gain 2D6 I.S.P.

Rank 3: *Requires Level 5.* You gain 2 more standard psionic powers of your choice, or 1 Super Psionic ability if you did not select one before. You also gain 2D6 I.S.P.

Supercop

There's a better way to deliver justice, and it's not by way of a body bag. As such, you've spent a great deal of time actually learning a better style of hand-to-hand combat. Supercops practice to be at their peak physical power to bring their foes in alive, and tend to avoid the use of firearms, though

they are not outright restricted from using them if absolutely necessary. With your propensity for athletics combined with your investigative abilities, you'll surely find yourself in some dangerous situations. Fortunately, you're prepared for such an eventuality.

Rank 1: Focusing on the martial aspects of the investigation as much as the legwork and mental acuity, the Sleuth has acquired a full non-exclusive Martial Art Form as found in **Ninjas & Super-spies™**. You may also not select any selections from the Fighting Smart ability category as all of your practice and timing has been devoted to a far more potent style of combat. This counts as three Abilities when selected.

With Medical Know-How

More often now more than ever before, crime scene investigators have entered the fray, using their own particular skill set to find killers and bring them to justice.

Combat Medic

Requires Professional Medical Training. You go above and beyond when it comes to healing the wounded.

Rank 1: When you roll Medical Doctor to help apply first aid to an ally, you may actually heal a character for 1 Hit Point. Alternatively, you may choose to heal their S.D.C. by the tens digit of what you rolled. For example, if you roll 67% on Medical Doctor and succeed, you may heal the ally for 6 S.D.C. You may not use this ability on the same person more than once every 24 hours.

Crime Scene Profile

Requires Professional Medical Training. With your knowledge of physics and analysis, you can lay out some specifics about a criminal.

Rank 1: When you analyze a crime scene for several hours, you may roll Criminal Investigation. If successful, you may put together a physical profile of one suspect in the scene. You may learn the subject's height, weight, handedness, and basic physique within +/-20% estimation. While this offers no immediate bonuses, it can easily narrow down a list of suspects.

Professional Medical Training

The life of a medical examiner often goes unrewarded, but can ultimately provide the most necessary clues to close a case.

Rank 1: You should be at least 26 years old to be recognized by the proper authorities, but you may gain this ability at a younger age. You may be accredited by the local Police, or FBI, with G.M. approval. You gain Medical Doctor at +10%, or +20% if you already have the skill.

Rank 2: You are considered licensed as a forensic specialist and autopsy technician. When dealing with a crime scene that has been despoiled or tampered with to interfere with identifying people or events, any negatives you have are halved.

Pressure Points – Stun

Requires Professional Medical Training. In combat against other humans, your knowledge of the human body helps incapacitate your foes. You may only use one Pressure Points type of attack at a time. Anyone who is victim of, or watches this attack,

is wise to the trick, and is immune to it for the next 24 hours, unless they are surprised. If the foe is wearing armor with an A.R. of 14 or above, you may not use Pressure Points.

Rank 1: You gain a Stun on a Natural 20, as per Boxing. If you already have that, or gain it later, your Stun range increases to a 19+. This ability applies only to physical melee attacks.

Rank 2: Your Stun range increases to 18+.

Pressure Points – Pain

Requires Professional Medical Training. In combat against other humans, your knowledge of the human body helps you focus on nerve endings to help incapacitate foes. You may only use one Pressure Points type of attack at a time. Anyone who is victim of, or watches this attack, is wise to the trick, and is immune to it for the next 24 hours, unless they are surprised. If the foe is wearing armor with an A.R. of 14 or above, you may not use Pressure Points.

Rank 1: Roll Medical Doctor. On a success, you may attempt a called shot of a 12 against a human foe. If you succeed with the strike, the foe must make a Saving Throw versus Pain (14+) or be incapacitated for 1D4 actions. This ability applies only to physical melee attacks.

Rank 2: The time foes are incapacitated by this strike increases to 1D4+2 actions.

Pressure Points – Damage

Requires Professional Medical Training. In combat against other humans, your knowledge of the human body helps incapacitate your foes. You may only use one Pressure Points type of attack at a time. Anyone who is victim of, or watches this attack, is wise to the trick, and is immune to it for the next 24 hours, unless they are surprised. If the foe is wearing armor with an A.R. of 14 or above, you may not use Pressure Points.

Rank 1: Roll Medical Doctor. On a success, you may attempt a called shot of a 12 against a human foe. If you succeed with the strike, the foe takes additional damage equal to your Super Sleuth level. This ability applies only to physical melee attacks.

Rank 2: The damage dealt by this attack increases by +4.

Working a Hunch

The understanding of human nature is a gateway to knowing their thoughts.

Cold Read

Just by studying human nature and calculated responses, you've learned how to read a person's most likely responses.

Rank 1: Roll Criminal Insight when you assess or talk to someone in particular. If you succeed, you may glean some basic information about his personality, such as "What interests does he have?" or "What is his profession?" Specifics may elude the Sleuth, but he can have a reasonable hunch. Cold Read may be attempted five times per day.

Rank 2: You may Cold Read ten times per day.

Rank 3: You may Cold Read fifteen times per day.

Deductive Reasoning

All men are a book if you know how to read them.

Rank 1: Roll Criminal Insight when you assess or talk to someone in particular. If you succeed, you may glean some basic information about her activities, such as “What was she just doing?” or “Where has she been recently?” As always, specifics may elude the Sleuth, but he can have a reasonable hunch as to his quarry’s activities. Deductive Reasoning may be used twice per day.

Rank 2: You may use Deductive Reasoning four times per day.

Rank 3: You may use Deductive Reasoning six times per day.

Empathy

Requires Cold Read. A good deal of detectives swear by the emotional approach, choosing to analyze the people involved more so than the crime itself.

Rank 1: Roll Criminal Insight when you talk to a character. If you succeed, you can learn your target’s emotional state, as per the Empathy psionic power. This power lasts for 1 minute per level of the Super Sleuth. This power may be used 3 times per day.

Rank 2: This power may be used 6 times per day.

Rank 3: This power may be used 9 times per day.

Glibness

A quick lie can get a Sleuth into the most guarded areas, though sometimes those tend to be prisons.

Rank 1: Gain a +10% to Fast Talking.

Rank 2: You gain a +10% Quality bonus to Fast Talking.

Social Profiling

Requires two other Working a Hunch abilities. Once you assemble the clues, everyone’s a book to read.

Rank 1: After studying a person for four hours, you may assemble a profile of a specific person. To build a profile, you must have any combination of personal interaction, video, or audio surveillance of the target of no less than four hours. The profile contains a full psychological evaluation, as disposition and possible goals. Any character who reads this profile gains a +10% bonus on investigative and social skills when dealing with the target for the rest of that week. In regards to dealing with a figure online, Digital Profiling is the ability of choice.

Rank 2: The time it takes to create a profile is halved, the amount of video footage needed is reduced to ninety minutes. The bonus to investigative and social skills involving that target increases to +15%.

Seeking Truth

Requires Cold Read. A skilled Sleuth can delve even deeper, trusting his gut instinct with his knowledge of Criminal Insight to learn some real answers.

Rank 1: The Super Sleuth may roll Criminal Insight when questioning a victim. On a success, he may ask a total of four “yes” or “no” questions that he can use to assess if someone is being honest or lying to him. This ability may be used once per day. This is superior to Criminal Insight alone, since you can ask multiple tough questions in a row, without needing to reroll the skill.

Rank 2: The number of uses per day goes up by one, to a total of two.

Rank 3: The number of uses per day goes up by one, to a total of three.

Step Four: Equipment

The type and amount of equipment is limited by the character’s budget. Roll on the following budget table to determine the amount of money available to the Sleuth, then refer to the core book for purchases. At least 30% of the money should be spent on investigative equipment such as listening devices, surveillance equipment, optics, etc. A smart Sleuth should have a good budget for weaponry, bolt holes, first aid supplies, and other rudimentary needs for the life of a crime fighter. The Sleuth also automatically starts with the Rank 1 Criminal Investigator’s Lab, and Rank 1 Computer Hacker Lab. Up to half of the budget may be saved for later purchases.

Budget

01-15%	\$10,000
16-29%	\$15,000
30-45%	\$20,000
46-60%	\$30,000
61-75%	\$40,000
76-89%	\$50,000
90-00%	\$60,000

Note: Presumably, the character has already spent 2D4x\$10,000 equipping his or her crime lab. The laboratory facility holds several microscopes, light boards, magnifiers, jeweler’s tools, chemical analysis equipment, a darkroom, electrical facilities, home computer, high-speed wifi connection, and an industrial grade printer/copier.

The character also has a mid-size automobile that is 2D4 years old. The model is common in the Sleuth’s area of operations, making it a great choice for surveillance as it is both common and inconspicuous.

Other Stuff

Alignment: Any alignment can be chosen, but heroes should generally be of a good alignment.

Starting S.D.C.: 40 + any picked up from physical training or abilities.

Attacks per Melee: All heroes automatically get two attacks per melee, in addition to the two attacks garnered by hand to hand combat. Additional attacks may be accrued through physical skills or special abilities.

Weapons and Armor: Unless the character is extremely wealthy, only conventional weaponry and body armor would be available.

Reputation: If a vigilante, the police will look at the character as a potentially dangerous criminal. He is likely to have 5D6% of the police force as sympathizers who will look the other way and make no genuine effort to apprehend or stop him.



Equipment & Gear

Suitable for the Super Sleuth

While the Stage Magician is more focused on gadgets and gear than even the Super Sleuth, there's a great deal of equipment that a Sleuth could use to help keep a leg up on the case. Characters of other power categories may also have access to these items, naturally, though G.M. discretion will dictate if another power category already has something superior to any of these buyable kits. In order to buy a higher rank lab or kit, simply pay the difference between what you have and what you want.

Breaking and Entering Kit

A small duffel bag of infiltration gear, reinforced to avoid tearing, and cushioned to avoid noise. With this handy kit, infiltrating a low-tech operation is far more likely to occur.

Rank 1: Wire snips, glass cutters, thin, silk rope, lock picks, hand mirrors, disposable gloves, and shoe covers are just part of what the burglar's kit of choice encompasses. While this kit gives no bonuses on its own, it allows players to have the chance to circumvent security systems via Surveillance or another skill of choice. It also allows a variety of infiltration means. Several items in this pack are considered shady, if not outright illegal. Cost: \$1,200.

Rank 2: The upgraded B&E Kit contains extra countermeasures for more high-tech security systems, as well as military grade vision gear that can detect security lasers, ultraviolet light, infrared light, and thermal. The optical system is wired into a basic security suite that projects an overlay onto the vision system to help guide movement to avoid detection. Basic radio scrambling options are available for short ranges up to 30 feet (9.1 m) only, with just a flick of a switch. Almost the entirety of this kit is highly illegal. The Rank 2 kit provides a +10% to Surveillance Systems for its user. Cost: \$12,000.

Rank 3: The master's kit for breaking and entering is in essence, a holo-projecting computer system backpack. It is heavier than most other kits, weighing in at 65 lbs (29.3 kg). In addition to everything listed in the previous B&E kit, the master's kit has advanced software capabilities, allowing it to detect possible traps, alarms, and living beings in the area. It also possesses a small projector that can be used to project a grid for guidance over a 60 foot (18.3 m) range, and can project to up to four different systems as long as they remain within 1 mile (1.6 km). Users of this system may also view camera feeds from the other headsets. The system will also immediately shut off if there is the threat of detection. In game terms, the Rank 3 B&E Kit has its own active skills of Detect Concealment, and Surveillance Systems at 60%, when used by a person skilled in these skills, it provides a +10% bonus to Surveillance Systems, and Detect Concealment, as well as a +10% Quality bonus to those skills as well. Cost: \$250,000.

Surveillance Kit

A kit of optical and electronics gear, specialized in surveillance. A basic kit is not required to do any form of surveillance, though it may be a benefit overall as the kit initially allows a much greater area to be surveyed. Despite the futuristic levels of technology, the sheer random unpredictability of people keeps this kit from garnering the same bonuses offered by similar gear sets.

Rank 1: The basic non-bug tools that one might want available in order to keep an eye on someone visually. A few pair of binoculars, one pair with night vision, several notepads, chalk for marking signs, mirrors, several props useful for posing as occupations or such, including newspapers, major delivery company boxes and uniforms, a simple parabolic ear that is easily identifiable to onlookers, basic recording equipment, such as a wired mic that records straight to a smartphone. Cost: \$7,000.

Rank 2: All the previous items, plus several sets of binoculars with night vision and infrared, two dozen bugs of various shapes and sizes, homing beacons, and a simple computer network capable of receiving transmissions from all items within, for an area up to 5 miles (8 km). Also includes an 8 man team's worth of throat mics, and radios, with basic scrambling gear. Cost: \$65,000.

Rank 3: All of the above, but more exotic. Bugs are minuscule, and able to be overlooked easier. Transmissions are more encrypted, as well as having sharper quality audio and video. With a full location-wide setup, a computer system attached to the surveillance network will attempt to automatically follow all targets of interest until they are out of the operational range, usually about 300 feet (91 m). After enough audio samples are recorded, people in the surveillance zone can be identified by sound alone, and shown on a video feed for connected H.U.D. systems, to identify undercover agents, or high value targets. This system gives a +10% to Surveillance rolls. Cost: \$325,000.

Rank 4: *Requires Supercomputer.* With the additional power of a supercomputer dedicated to the surveillance suites, targets can now be further extrapolated on by the system, which 'guesses' at what actions could be taken by a figure out of sight, using solely audio clues, and mannerisms. Given a profile to work with, the system can analyze micro-expressions to aid the context of a situation. People can now be identified in disguise by motion habits, or other tertiary profiling agents. The system gains the active ability to See Through Disguise, as per the Super Sleuth ability, at 60%, and Criminal Insight at 40%. This lab provides a +20% to Surveillance rolls, as well as a +10% Quality bonus to Surveillance. Cost: \$650,000.

Firearm Modification Workshop

A small workshop that contains a wide array of gunsmithing tools, including drills, files, and conversions; this shop is as much at home in the hands of a Weapons Expert as any. With a proper mod kit, attempts to trace back ballistics to a specific weapon are greatly reduced. Of note, this workshop is specifically built for ballistic weaponry, and not energy weapons, so only simple modifications such as sights and stocks can be done for energy weaponry, at the G.M.'s discretion.

Rank 1: Any character with a W.P. in the proper firearm can perform basic modifications up to and including lowering the damage dealt by any of their firearms by 1D6, by using a smaller grade bullet. A Weapons Expert or characters with Gunsmithing as a skill, can attempt to help thwart ballistics tests to identify an illegally-modified weapon by -20% to any rolls to identify a weapon used in a crime. Cost: \$800.

Rank 2: The upgraded version of the Firearm Mod Workshop has exotic, obscure, and antique firearms parts capable of constructing and modifying black powder weapons, as well as rarer current-generation firearms. Characters using this kit now have a wider range of firearms to deal with. Several components of this kit are considered to be shady or illegal, depending on local

firearms laws. This kit also adds a +10% to any roll to modify a firearm, such as with the Weapon Expert, as well as the -20% to ID a weapon modified here as part of a crime. Cost: \$3,200.

Rank 3: Complete with 3D printing and high-tech tools, the Firearms Modification workshop is capable of altering the most-cutting edge ballistic weaponry on the planet. Many parts of this workshop are considered highly illegal in most places in the world, unless special permits have been purchased. Among other high-tech modifications, characters can 3D print basic firearms of a standard make and type, as a disposable source of weaponry. Weaponry can also be disposed of at this workshop, disappearing without a trace. This kit also adds a +20% to any roll to modify a firearm, such as with the Weapon Expert, as well as the -20% to identify a weapon modified here as part of a crime. Cost: \$36,000.

Criminal Investigator's Lab

A large lab set up solely for forensic work, autopsies, ballistic tests, and evidence testing. The CI Lab needs to be a sterile environment, and consistently sterilized, in order to provide maximum results.

Rank 1: As mentioned above, the Super Sleuth starts with an Investigator's Lab of basic size and equipment. This lab provides no special bonuses to investigative skills done in this location, it simply allows the skills to be done at all. Cost: Part of the Sleuth's initial starting equipment, but a replacement or backup might cost up to \$15,000.

Rank 2: Holographic imagers, hard line connections into DNA registries, and other advanced gear, make it much easier to reconstruct crime scenes, and pick up clues long since gone. There are two portable devices that a Sleuth can take to a crime scene, that have the ability to scan a 60 x 60 foot (18.3 x 18.3 m) area, and send the data to the crime lab for greater analysis. Characters using this lab in order to analyze data and use other clinical skills as part of solving a crime, gain a +10% skill bonus to their skills, as well as a +10% Quality bonus to any contested rolls. Cost: \$60,000.

Rank 3: *Requires a Supercomputer* (not included in the purchase price). This top of the line crime investigation lab has multiple small drones that can scan areas of up to 60 x 60 feet (18.3 x 18.3 m) within mere minutes, as well as detect unusual energy signatures. Some of the items involved here may be considered shady, depending on location, but nothing is necessarily illegal. Permits may be required, as well as being on a Federal database, in order to legally acquire these items. Combining the Supercomputer with the latest digital reconstruction software, crime reconstruction videos can be produced where the Supercomputer logically guesses at data it doesn't fully have, with superior results. This equipment also allows for the existence of non-mundane aspects of life, allowing speculative use of magic, psionics, or mutant abilities. While it cannot identify the exact nature of an item of supernatural origin, it will tend to denote if something in the crime scene has the potential for preternatural goings-on. Cost: \$850,000.

Computer Hacker's Lab

Technology is constantly being upgraded and reconsidered all over the world, and that change is seen the most in any cutting-edge computer lab. Those who sit on this edge of technology are constantly needing to update software, and hardware, in order to keep their edge over their enemies.

Rank 1: The basic hacker's lab is one of the basic pieces of equipment that a Sleuth starts with. It contains several high-powered computers, a rack of hard drives, as well as off-grid systems, and a wide array of programs. Several basic viruses and anti-virus systems are available in the Lab. This Lab may be shut down when not in use, but otherwise, unless someone is actively using it, any rolls made to hack into the system are done passively. Meaning that the foe must simply roll his Hacking skill to break in (though at a -10%). This Lab provides no other special bonuses to computer skills done in this location, it simply allows the skills to be done at all. Cost: Part of the Sleuth's initial equipment, but a replacement may cost \$25,000.

Rank 2: An upgraded Computer Lab has a magnitude more processing power than a basic lab, as well as a 3D projector that has real-time display network connectivity and defense options, for the user wishing to make decisions visually. This Lab is considered to be always on an active defense, therefore any attempts to hack into it are done against a contested roll, even if the operator is not actively using it. Anyone attempting to hack into this system must not only succeed at their Hacking roll, but also beat the system's defense, which has a skill rating of 60%. See above at "A Note About Quality, Perception, and Contested Skills" for a deeper explanation. This Lab also grants a +10% skill bonus to any work done here. Cost: \$60,000.

Rank 3: It's not even cutting edge, it's bleeding edge now. In addition to a Supercomputer, your Lab is one of the most state of the art facilities. 15 man-hours a week are needed to keep the lab in its best shape, or else the bonus provided here temporarily drops to that of a Rank 2 Lab. The Supercomputer here may design programs and viruses, given the user's parameters, at a 70% skill rating. This Lab is also considered an Active Defense, with a defensive skill of 75% against attempts to hack into it. Cost: \$750,000.

Rank 4: The ultimate in terms of computer systems, this Lab has a full-blown A.I. that (hopefully) follows your commands. It is able to monitor all systems attached to it, as well as extrapolate on orders given. The A.I. is considered its own sapient being, with the same alignment as its creator. With an A.I. active, only users with tele-mental capability, or other A.I.s, may attempt to hack into the system. Cost: \$3.5 million.

Contraband

Contraband comes in a myriad of forms, from cigarettes, to drugs, to firearms. No matter what the item is, having a supply of contraband is a great way to get meetings with the higher-ups in syndicates or gangs. It is veritable proof that the character is part of a real operation.

Rank 1: You've collected a storage unit full of cigarettes, cell phones, clothes, low-cost drugs, or small-grade firearms. Select one, or create your own. These items are generally of interest to direct buyers on the street. These items are illegal, and may lead to repercussions in the future if traced back to the Sleuth. This item may be purchased multiple times. Cost: \$2,000.

Rank 2: Crates of rifles, and other military hardware, designer drugs, and confiscated high-end technology. Items on this scale would be of greater interest to full-blown syndicates and organized crime. These items are illegal, and may lead to major repercussions in the future if traced back to the Sleuth. This item may be purchased multiple times. Cost: \$25,000.

Rank 3: You have a part of a prototype exoskeleton from an advanced military weaponry program, or cutting-edge personal

arms. Items on this scale would be of an interest to fledgling supervillains, or high-end syndicates, mercenary armies, or terrorist cells. Even though most of these items are only made to look genuine, possession of these items is highly illegal, with federal, if not international charges filed against the owner if this is discovered. This item may be purchased multiple times. Cost: \$250,000 to \$500,000.

Sample Super Sleuth Characters

Lena Lensman

Lena has seen her city crumble around her, and followed suit shortly thereafter. Valedictorian of her class, she chose to remain in Cascade while her more erstwhile classmates sought Century Station out as a viable market. The struggles of college courses as well as working two jobs to pay for tuition caught up to her, sending her spiraling into a narcotics rehab clinic.

When she got clean, Lena started to recognize how much suffering and injustice went unnoticed by the world about her. Using her university training and the friends she had made along the way, she used the act of telling people's stories as her crutch to keep herself motivated to move forward. While she's given little thought to actually having a moniker beyond her nickname of L.L., she's started using the moniker of Friday online for a bit of much-needed anonymity.

Lena Lensman

Level 1 Super Sleuth

Name: Lena Lensman.

Alias: Friday or L.L.

Land of Origin: Cascade, Michigan.

Alignment: Principled.

Description: A young, ambitious woman of Hispanic origin, with bright eyes and a crooked smile. Lena generally wears her hair up underneath a classic press cap, her ensemble almost entirely based off of the old 1940s press/reporter looks of the era. She wears a thick waistcoat and scarf to help ward off the chill of the night air as she hunts her case.

Disposition: Optimistic, empathic, and passionate, Friday tends to follow her bleeding heart into trouble. She invariably gets enticed by any poor soul in need of sympathy. She is uncompromising and relentless, determined to expose corruption to the public.

Age: 24

Stats: I.Q. 17, M.E. 9, M.A. 16, P.S. 10, P.P. 13, P.E. 15, P.B. 11, Spd 12.

S.D.C. 42. **H.P.** 15.

Criminal Investigation: 64%

Digital Intrusion: 74%

Criminal Insight: 54%

Notable Skills: W.P. Handgun/Revolver, Fast Talking 34%, Psychology 54%, Pick Pockets 43%.

Abilities Taken:

Contacts – Rank 2

Cold Read – Rank 1

Empathy – Rank 1

Glibness – Rank 1

Keen Wits – Rank 1

Combat: Hand to Hand: Basic. 4 attacks per round, +0 to Strike, +0 to Parry, +0 to Dodge, +2 to Initiative.

Weapon of Choice: Revolver (though only in self-defense), +4 to Strike.

The Snoop

Carina Bertrelli is a first generation immigrant to the U.S., her parents Greek and Italian respectively. She followed in her father's footsteps in the police force until illicit funds, from a suspected mob holding, were transferred into her personal accounts. The matter was brought to light by an outside source, and politics demanded Bertrelli take the fall. Suspecting corruption in the department, Carina reluctantly took on the role of a vigilante to help root out police and political corruption, as The Snoop. Always in the back of her mind is the question of why it was she who was set up for the fall.

The Snoop

Level 7 Super Sleuth

Name: Carina Bertrelli.

Alias: The Snoop.

Land of Origin: New York City.

Alignment: Principled.

Description: A Mediterranean woman with a regal beauty to her. An olive skin tone combined with shoulder-length hair that frames her sharp features. As The Snoop, Carina wears a brown, stylized waistcoat that flares at the hips, and with metal shoulder pads, belying its armored nature. The only other simple adornment is a black eye mask.

Disposition: Serious, thoughtful, and with unbreakable moral character. Carina took the vows of the force seriously, and seeks to ingrain herself to them on a daily basis. Protect. Serve. Respect. Upon dismissal from the force, she admitted to herself that she could still do a lot of good by safeguarding the boys in blue.

Age: 29

Stats: I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 20, P.S. 16, P.P. 15, P.E. 11, P.B. 22, Spd 16.

S.D.C.: 56. **H.P.:** 39.

Criminal Investigation: 72%

Digital Intrusion: 82%

Criminal Insight: 80%

Notable Skills: Surveillance 84% (+20% Quality), Find Contraband 93%, Prowl 73%, W.P. Revolver, Blunt, Paired Weapons – Blunt, Psychology 85%.

Abilities Taken:

Fisticuffs – Rank 1

Disarm Expertise – Rank 1

Contacts – Rank 1

Improved Contacts – Rank 2

Patron – Rank 1

Sap – Rank 1

Sizing Up – Rank 1

Interrogator – Rank 1

Brutal Interrogator – Rank 1

Vengeance – Rank 1

Master Surveillant – Rank 1

Combat: Hand to Hand: Expert. 5 attacks per round, +2 to Strike, +3 to Parry, +3 to Dodge, +2 to Initiative.

Weapons of Choice: A pair of high-quality nightsticks, +4 to Strike, +6 to Parry, +2 Damage.

The Consigliere

Nephew to the old-world, rich manor lord, Elston Tredigar, also known as The Victorian (**Century Station**TM, page 161), Simon Tredigar was afforded all the best courtesies that life can manage. In his teens he had everything and anything he ever cared for, save one. The actual renowned Tredigar family fortune at his beck and call. Assured, if young Simon requested any amount of funds for a pet project of his, or some audacious display, it would've surely been granted, with no questions asked.

However, Simon grew to resent his uncle, resenting the sheer concept of needing permission to do anything. Frankly, he was above such petty things. His raucous behavior only grew more extreme as he matured, often breaking laws just because he was so confident that he would get away with it. Simon started to invite the media to video tape him as he engaged in unlawful activity. He managed this for several years, thumbing his nose at society and the Crown. Until in the United States, he was arrested for manslaughter after he intentionally caused a wreck that killed several citizens on a bus. That was all it took for Simon to jump whole-heartedly into a life of crime and power-brokering.

Even now, he still has access to near-unlimited wealth, even before becoming one of the main information brokers of Cascade. It appeared that Simon wanted a challenge, a pushback that forced him to keep his attention focused, and while being arrested was simply a momentary nuisance, the constant struggle in the underworld game of politics, and high-stakes finance is exactly where he's always wanted to be.

The Consigliere

Level 11 Mastermind (evil Super Sleuth)

Name: Lord Simon Tredigar.

Alias: The Consigliere.

Land of Origin: Leeds, Great Britain.

Alignment: Aberrant.

Description: A man of average height and build, but with a steady grace to his motions. As The Consigliere, he wears a perfectly tailored American suit. The entire ensemble is completely black, save one white handkerchief in the breast pocket and some edging on his suit jacket. Even his masked face and fedora are of the same pitch-black motif.

Disposition: The Consigliere sees himself as a grandiose, ostentatious figure, a figure of power, intellect, wealth, and taste. He plays the part of nobility well, proffering lodgings and hospitality to those who come to him, reveling in the ability to supply dalliances to his guests. Simon has a razor-sharp wit, making him a masterful conversationalist, and a razor-sharp temper as well. Anyone who plays against his ego is in fear of their life, as The Consigliere never forgets a cross word. While there are those who have paid their way out of his ill favor, it is more than likely that Simon will focus on destroying the insulter's life, at least until he grows bored, and moves on to another interest.

Age: 31

Stats: I.Q. 17, M.E. 13, M.A. 21, P.S. 11, P.P. 11, P.E. 13, P.B. 14, Spd 12.

S.D.C. 48. **H.P.** 63.

Criminal Investigation: 84%

Digital Intrusion: 94%

Criminal Insight: 79%

Notable Skills: Business and Finance 89%, Art 89%, Socialization, Image Enhancement, History 89%, Surveillance 98%.

Abilities Taken:

Contacts – Rank 2

Improved Contacts – Rank 2

Cover – Rank 1

Case Files – Rank 3

Cold Read – Rank 1

Deductive Reasoning – Rank 1

Social Profiling – Rank 1

Seeking Truth – Rank 1

Interrogator – Rank 1

Committed to Cover – Rank 1

Unreadable – Rank 2

Combat: Hand to Hand: Basic. 6 attacks per round, +1 to Strike, +3 to Parry, +3 to Dodge, +1 to Initiative.

Weapon of Choice: Hired Operatives, but if he must, he's a crack shot with a rifle, +6 to Strike.

Note: While The Consigliere is indeed a Super Sleuth, he is an evil variant, noted as a Mastermind. His abilities of investigation and deduction are easily twisted to help spawn impossible-to-solve heists, perfect crimes, and blackmail of the highest caliber.

In Conclusion

The Super Sleuth now has a great deal of variety and tactics to work with. With their profiles, Skill Quality bonuses, and use of Evidence, they have several ways to really make the necessary rolls to solve crimes. I can understand how some people may feel that these articles make the Sleuth or Stage Magician overpowered, and I respect that. However, I wanted to see a more heroic version of these two power categories, with ideas that illustrate their daring, their skill, and the archetypes we've long associated with them. To use either to their full power, the optional Skill Quality rules are necessary to show these characters' superior sense of skill. A Mutant gets over a hundred choices, and a player can build a robot piece-by-piece, so I felt that these Special Training heroes needed a bit of an edge to compete.

Next up, I hope to examine either the Secret Operative, the Hunter/Vigilante, or a new hero power category, such as the Bonded Hero – a mostly ordinary person who has a special bond with a phenomenal creature, the Variable Hero – who can shift powers in need, or the Street Knight – a cycle-riding, smash-mouth hero. If you wish to provide some thoughts in these projects, look for me on the Palladium forums as zerombr.

I'd also like to give many thanks to my podcasting and gaming partners of over twenty years, The Guides to the Megaverse® at <https://guidesmegaverse.podbean.com/> (available on iTunes and Google Play), and of course to those adventuring souls in The Dark City of Cascade Facebook Group for their assistance and support.

Navigating Game Power Levels

G.M. Advice for running **Rifts**® games and applicable to ALL RPG games

By Greg Diaczyk

Additional advice and writing by Kevin Siembieda

I often describe **Rifts**® as “A game where you can play anything including the kitchen sink!” Whether you want to play a medieval fantasy style wizard, a modern gun-toting gunslinger, a high-tech cyborg, super-powered human or something really out there like an android or even a dragon, it’s all possible with **Rifts**®. The problem however is not what you can do in **Rifts**®, but how to execute it with style and game balance. The same can be said of any game, including **Heroes Unlimited**™ with their lowly Minor Hero all the way up the Mega-Hero Option.

Detractors of such games as **Rifts**® have indicated that they have gotten annoyed by the vast power gap and often cite “One of our players played a Vagabond O.C.C. and the other a Glitter Boy Pilot O.C.C., two vastly different power levels starting at first level and available as the standard roster of player characters, is totally unfair!” as one of its shortcomings. What most people don’t consider is that in life, things are never fair. That’s why you form teams to draw upon each other’s strengths and cover or protect the weakness of others in the group. This unification is where we draw upon the strength of the group and support and carry those weaker in society. Some players enjoy the challenge and excitement of being the underdog, including many Game Masters, who thrive on the player’s ingenuity, spontaneity and blindsides. Going back to that Glitter Boy Pilot and Vagabond example, that one player who went all out with a Glitter Boy Pilot burns through ammo and M.D.C. repairs like there’s no tomorrow. His skills are all combat based, and he may or may not have the skills to even fix his Glitter Boy, jacking the price of the repairs even more if he is always taking it to an expensive Operator to fix. But that poor Vagabond with his candy and bar of soap (the only original O.C.C. to start with either!) has to work from the ground up, relying on his wit and skill (though limited, as he is essentially an unskilled bum). This forces the Vagabond player to think outside of the box, work different angles, use his charm or thieving skills or whatever he has at hand to make things work for his survival, even if it includes cowering behind the Glitter Boy with his hands over his ears. That enthralled Game Master then starts to encourage the Vagabond Player by dropping magic items or better weapons and armor in front of the him while the Glitter Boy Pilot takes everything he can, converts it to cash and then spends every credit on repairs and more ammo. This style of play is wonderful and fun, but is not something everyone enjoys. Some players don’t like Game Masters taking too much control over their character, but others thrive on seeing what new, non-book item the Game Master invents on the spot from their latest Player and Game Master interaction.

Now some game systems pride themselves on game balance, which too can be fun. Rules in a game are there to provide structure and guidance, but can inevitably be bent or even broken by the Game Master to make things more fun.

In the **Palladium Books**® **Megaversal system**, all that stuff is there, just buried, because we believe the rules, though vital,

should be mostly invisible. Role-playing is about the characters and story. That’s why Palladium’s games and **Rifts**® in particular, offer endless possibilities and characters with a large range of power levels. As a result, it takes some thought to play, and may take a skilled Game Master to filter through it all and guide his players into putting together a balanced group. The problem however is that some groups expect balance up front and don’t want to read between the lines. What may then happen, particularly with an inexperienced Game Master, is the players are given “carte blanche” to a group of mixed characters and one or more have gotten excited by the vast power they can start with and go to the extreme. Meanwhile, others players may seek a role-playing experience with an intricate back story and less powerful characters. When they get into a combat phase of the game, these other players may be overwhelmed and pushed aside by the sheer power of the other, gung-ho powerful characters.

This is NOT to say that the Game Master was wrong for allowing such a vast power gap. Nor does it mean the game is imbalanced. It means the G.M. and the players have to think about their characters, use teamwork and find a proper balance. It also means the G.M. needs to apply consequences and checks and balance to all of the characters’ actions. While a powerhouse character may be able to charge into battle and kick butt, less powerful characters may have to use more finesse and caution, be sneaky and cunning, or hang back to supply support, i.e. think and “role-play.”

The players nor Game Master were not wrong or foolish for not min/maxing to keep the characters on a so-called balanced playing field. The issue is setting up the game in a way that the Game Master is comfortable running and offering the players a wide range of characters and an experience that is exciting and fun to play. Think of any number of movies and TV shows with teams of heroes like Mission Impossible, the Arrow, the Flash, Walking Dead and countless others. Not everyone in the group is a combat badass, but when you are telling a story – especially stories with depth of character and adventures that are more than about the fight scene – you have a rich story with multiple characters, each with their own area of speciality. And as Kevin Siembieda always says: “Role-playing games are all about the characters and story. That’s what makes them different from board games and videogames.” That means the Game Master needs to give each character and its player ways to contribute and their moment to shine. Rather than being the character to kill Monster X or Villain Y, that player/character is the one to uncover a valuable clue, find the secret way in (or out), talk the group or teammate out of trouble, come up with a cool plan, steal a valuable item, use magic to save the day, and on and on.

Is this more work for the Game Master? No, because that should be your job as the G.M. in the first place. That may mean talking with the players to provide a little guidance, pointing out a smart or valuable action by a character, promoting teamwork

and smart playing, and perhaps introducing an NPC (Non-Player Character) to help illustrate this by way of example. **Siembieda Note:** NPCs that are part of the player group should always take a back seat to the player characters and let them shine. The G.M.'s array of characters and moments to shine are in weaving a compelling story with fun challenges for the players and in playing the NPC villains, monsters and people that build the story and motivate the players to action. Game Masters are the unsung architect, director, rules referee and character actor portraying Simvan #3 and dinosaur #5 – actually all the Simvan and characters encountered in the game. – *Kevin Siembieda*

For players who need more defined structure and balance, the following insights and guidelines may offer some assistance for Game Masters.

Power Level

Now the big question that's been looming on everyone's mind is Power Levels and Munchkinism. **Rifts®** is probably the biggest culprit for power creep and overpowered characters capable of leveling entire towns with their arsenal, but **Heroes Unlimited™** has some too. But it all comes back to the Game Master and how he defines the game's premise, suitable character concepts and thus what O.C.C.s a player is going to select. Even still, players lean towards specific archetypes and playing styles which can further influence what skills, powers or spells they take and can make them over the top powerful. To help the Game Master understand and regulate which O.C.C.s he permits, it's important to understand the various player archetypes, how they play and how players min/max them to make them too powerful for the Game Master's intended game.

Siembieda Note: By the way, if you and your group enjoy high-powered characters and games that others might consider Munchkinism or power gaming, that's okay and game on. Role-playing is very personal and there is no one way, best way or right way to play. If the G.M. and everyone in the player group is having a blast then that's perfectly fine. You will find your approach to gaming, characters and storytelling will change over the years. Just don't be afraid to try new approaches and ideas. And don't forget about role-playing, because it adds depth of character and story, and layers of fun. For me, personally, it all boils down to characters and story. It is the fun role-playing moments that are the most lasting and fond experiences. – *Kevin Siembieda*

The Players

Editor's Note: Author Greg Diaczyk has chosen to use terms and archetypes that have been in common use in online discussions among gamers forever. He assumes they are terms that most gamers are familiar with. Palladium does not generally use these terms and makes no claim to them. Enjoy.

There are numerous types of players and playing styles, often within the same group of players. I am sure many of you have heard some outlandish stories about player antics during the game that did not pertain directly to the story, such as squabbling over the division of treasure or loot, rule discussions or ignoring the game altogether because they are busy playing an App on their phone while they are waiting for their turn. While those

may be challenging problems for a Game Master, the following five generalizations of player types focus on the actual *playing styles* of the players during the game and have been around since the early 1980s. They may be familiar to some of you as I am sure folks have seen the numerous posts and jokes pertaining to how each type would act or respond in certain circumstances. I have borrowed these archetypes to help Game Masters and players alike to affiliate with a particular archetype, and for Game Masters to gain some insight in how to best meet the needs and interests of those players for their individual campaigns. Some players may fall into two or more categories. That's fine as these players can be very versatile and eager to try new things, adding more diversity and fun into the group.

Real Man: This player archetype loves the tough, macho approach to gaming even if he, himself, is a quiet and reserved individual. Their characters usually exemplify physical strength, toughness, quickness, bravado and courage. They take the game seriously but are often your typical "jock" or "tough guy" or "paladin" – straight shooters when it comes to dealing with events in the game and with other players. These knights in shining armor are happiest when they get to shoot monsters, fight, kill the bad guys or simply blowing something up. They are often characterized as the player leading a charge into battle, toughing it out in a bar fight or scanning the horizon for something else to kill. They are often content with a straight-up dungeon crawl, battling away, rescuing fair maidens and the innocent, and are quick to activities that challenge their skills in combat and prowess rather than their character's intellect. For their heroics, they expect their fair share of treasure/loot and fame. It is their role in the *epic battle story* that is sung by bards and told around campfires that excites these players and makes them come back for more. They love heroic adventure.

Real Role-Player: This type of player may be part of a drama club or just really gets into the character and enjoys the theatrics of *role-playing*. While they can play a serious warrior type, there is usually something more to the character, which is often exemplified with a detailed and logical back-story and personal history. Their character also tends to be very well rounded-out with a wide selection of skills that do not pertain to just combat. Real Role-Players often prefer to use cunning, logic and their skills to make their characters excel. This makes them a great source for plot ideas and often provides ample avenues for character or group exploration. They can be a source of ideas, feeding the Game Master with easy pick-off points for side adventures and activities for the group.

Loonie: These players are there to have fun, even at the expense of other players or the Game Master. They often do silly things for the sake of a cheap laugh, or do outlandish things, and take the entire party on weird or odd side adventures because they saw something in the story that could be fun or creates a laugh. While this type of character can be fun to watch (or even be), Game Masters need to be prepared for their antics and oddities. Be careful to not let the side adventures they may spontaneously instigate (or try to instigate) derail a well thought out adventure or campaign in an instant. A good Game Master will roll with the antics and improvise some pretty wacky responses to the **Loonie**, all the while keeping the other players involved, and eventually returning to his originally planned plot or extracting a new angle based on what transpired. Then again, sometimes the Loonie

needs to be curtailed within the game or pulled aside and asked to tone it down. And remember, there should be consequences for the Loonie's actions, and it is the Loonie character who should suffer the brunt of those consequences.

Munchkin: Many new players fall into this category. The excitement of creating an idealized, "bad ass" character makes them giddy and overly exuberant. They want the biggest guns, the greatest bonuses and highest M.D.C., the most accolades. Like a kid in a candy store, they want it all.

While similar, in some ways, to the **Real Man**, because they also want action and their moment to shine, they are often exemplified with being enthralled by the *promise of power and/or excessive treasure*, but want the quick way of getting it and may not be willing to work for it like the **Real Man**. Their *eagerness* to play and dive into action, rescue somebody, get a big reward, and snatch up power can make them an asset to the party's survival but their quest for power and maxing out their characters often sets the bar for the Game Master when creating villains and encounters for the group. Munchkin players are likely to want their character to be wherever the action is, and in the thick of the action, which can get their character and the player group into hot water. They may also steal or fight over the most powerful weapons, armor and new spells and sometimes have a hard time interacting with other players, thinking only of their own character and their character's next boost in power.

They are also the type of player to make the most efficient character by min/maxing their attributes, multi-classing and optimizing their characters and equipment to get the highest attributes, the biggest guns, best armor protection, rarest and most powerful magic item, etc. With time and experience, a lot of gamers settle down, but for some, this style is how the player *enjoys* playing games. While the Game Master may have to find ways to curb this exuberance and make sure the character doesn't acquire abilities, weapons and gear that unbalance the game, the G.M. should also give the Munchkin his moment to shine. In fact, it is the job of the G.M. to wrangle his/her players and make sure all the different personality types get their moment to shine. To craft the adventure/story and the various villains and challenges to the strengths and weaknesses of the various players. To give each an opportunity to shine, have fun and make a difference.

And others. These are just a few common stereotypes. There is the **Rules Lawyer** who is the by the numbers guy or gal who knows the rules better than anyone and may question or argue rules every time he or she disagrees with the Game Master's or a fellow player's interpretation or judgement on a rule. There's the **Wall Flower**, who is quiet, unassuming and usually hangs back until the character has something important to say or do, and then quietly slips back into the shadows. And there are others archetypes, and combinations of two, or other variations of those described.

Game Masters, once you start playing with a group of people, it will become quite obvious which players fall into which archetype, but keep your assessment to yourself, as many people don't see themselves as you (and others) may see them. You don't want to accidentally hurt somebody's feelings with a label/stereotype that might offend or belittle them in front of the rest of the group. And don't go looking to pigeon hole people into categories. It is always a mistake to assume a person fits one archetype or another. And don't ask players what they feel is their style. It will become obvious. Besides, people grow and change with experi-

ence, and it should be the goal of the Game Master to get to know and appreciate the players, and to give them the opportunity to discover different experiences.

Siembieda Note: That goes for the Game Master too. Listen to your players, be flexible, try new ideas and approaches, but quickly move away from the stuff that your player group hates. Always take note of what the players enjoy and what makes them bored, and the things they dislike. Take note of what motivates and excites them and their characters. Listen to random comments and surprise them with something they aren't expecting or that will make them laugh. Let them try different characters if they want to, even encourage it, but do NOT force it, nor lock them into any one thing, especially if it is your idea and not theirs, and they don't seem to be enjoying it. You are their Game Master, not their therapist. This is a game which means it should be *fun and entertaining*. And as Greg and I have noted earlier, role-playing is a deeply personal, individualistic experience and expression of fun. Be flexible and accommodating to your players.

In the 40 years I have been role-playing, I have observed that no matter how open and sophisticated ANY player may be, they have a type of character and style of play they tend to enjoy more than any other. Even players who are the most open to trying different types of characters and new experiences, have their own preferences, approach to playing and style of play. You may not realize it, but *we all do*. I know more than one player who always plays the Real Man. Always. Not only that, they are all basically the same character for 40 years. That may sound dull and boring to you and me, but apparently it's what makes that player happy. So let that player be happy. Likewise, I have known other players who have played a wide range of characters, but you know what? Even they are not as different as you might think. I know one guy who always plays the sneaky lone-wolf character whether that character is a thief, an assassin, a spy, a Goblin Cobbler, Scholar or Cyber-Knight! Another pal always plays an off-beat, quirky character. Another always plays an intelligent, skilled character. Another, who always plays heroes. Another awesome player and G.M. I know has played a wide array of characters, but you know what, they always play Principled or Scrupulous good, while another always plays Anarchist, regardless of the character class or the setting. These are folks who have gamed with me for decades and played **Rifts®**, **Palladium Fantasy®**, **Heroes Unlimited**, **Robotech®**, **Beyond the Supernatural**, **Dead Reign®**, etc., all very different settings and characters. The point is, we all have our comfort zones, our favorite type of character, quirks and leanings. And it is a) okay, and b) perfectly normal. As a G.M., just be aware of them and play to your players' interests and likes for a more fulfilling and fun gaming experience. Give them all that moment to shine. Thatatta boy. And let your players surprise you. For me, as Game Master, the greatest moments are the ones when one or more players surprise me. – *Kevin Siembieda*

Again, I can't emphasize how important it is to talk to your players and get feedback on the game. You will also know that you've done a good job if your group continues to talk about the epic session you just had, the crazy antics they got away with, and the amazing story, villain, monster, or twist that just unfolded before their eyes.

Being the Game Master

Being a Game Master can be a lot of work, but it is also a lot of fun. You may be the “guy in control” but it is your job to facilitate the players’ antics and story requirements. This often requires a lot of preparation time from drawing maps, creating traps, developing NPCs (Non-Player Characters) from the flower girl on the corner to the big bad guy and everyone in between, and story development to keep players interested and coming back for more and more of the story. One of the most challenging aspects of being a good Game Master is trying to balance out the right villains and circumstances that will help the players’ characters grow, get stronger, become smarter and eventually, more powerful.

The game is never about the players defeating the Game Master or the Game Master defeating or getting over on the players. The Game Master is *working with the players* to tell a story of epic proportions. A story in which the players contribute and help build via the choices, words and actions of their characters. A saga in which the characters are the heroes of the story and their characters grow and develop in skill, power, reputation, and wisdom through the course of the adventures, working as a team and facing adversity together. Just as we all suffer in life, it makes us stronger, molds and shapes our outlooks, friends and desires, it is also true in role-playing game adventures. The game is a shared experience that happens in the imaginations of every participant. The player characters are a band of brothers at war, in the trenches, together, regardless of the setting or genre.

Now, no Game Master is perfect and we all make mistakes, but that is the fun and random aspects of role-playing, dice rolls and chance. Roll with your mistakes or poor choice. Improvise new outcomes and keep the game going. Above all, remember to always have *fun!*

Siembieda Note: Amen! Improvise. Cut loose with that great idea of yours that is playing out like a lead balloon. Hey, they figure out the clue one, two, three, and stopped the bad guy in a third of the time you expected, so what? No big deal, improvise and introduce something else or play through a night on the town to celebrate and the trouble they get themselves into. If a player comes up with a better idea or the group wanders off on an unplanned, improvised adventure, run with it. You’re playing a sequential game. A serialized story like a comic book or television show, and you have plenty of time and opportunities to swing the story back around to the one you had planned, or just skip it and go with the flow.

By now, I would think everyone knows my stand on *fun*. Having fun has been my credo and mantra since before I published my first RPG. It is all about *fun*. So here is the best Game Master advice I can ever offer: If you are having fun, and your players are laughing, excited and having fun. And they keep coming back and seem to be having fun ... stop second-guessing yourself. You are doing great. Keep doing what you are doing and keep having fun.

When I first started running an original **Dungeon & Dragons** game session, I didn’t know what the heck I was doing. Half the time I couldn’t remember which dice to roll. There were times where my players would tease me and say, “Aw man, he’s making it up as he goes along.” I was, but I didn’t let them know it. I improvised my heart out, and made stuff up on the fly. I would turn to them and ask them, which dice do I roll now, and which page is rule X on. And then I’d stop the game to look it up. And

we had our share of rules debates. None of it mattered because we were all having fun. So much fun that I finally had to stop taking new players when I hit 26 regulars. So much fun that those 26 players kept coming every weekend for three and a half years. I grew as a Game Master, and they grew as masterful, even brilliant players. But most of all, we laughed so hard and had so much fun. Heck, Julius Rosenstein and other Defilers can tell you stories about those games from 1979-1983 like they happened yesterday.

Here is the best advice I ever got from anyone about being a Game Master. I don’t even remember who told it to me. Whether it was Erick Wujcik or Matthew Balent or Ken or Thom Bartold, or one of my other Defilers. (I’m pretty sure it was Ken or Thom.) It was: “Never forget, you are the Game Master. That means **you** are the all powerful universe. It is your game. Your world. Whatever you say goes. Your rule interpretations are the ones that stand. You are the universe. You aren’t limited by anything. You can take the story anywhere you want to take it. You can change it in a heartbeat to whatever you want. You are creating the story as you go along. Only you know what waits around the corner. Only you know that you just added a new villain or changed the story you had intended.” That advice liberated me. And yes, that is why I have said for decades that with *role-playing games you are limited only by your imagination*.

Now, don’t be a jerk about it. Don’t take yourself too seriously. You need to be a benevolent and fair universe. But keeping that in mind helped me through my early days as the Game Master and became my personal mantra always when I run games as well as when I write games. Nothing is written in stone. Everything is fluid. Anything is possible. And the possibilities are endless. You are truly limited only by your imagination. Explore the infinite possibilities. And do it with your friends/players and have the time of your life doing it. That’s also why I adore role-playing games and its gamers. There is nothing like role-playing games. Thank you, Gary Gygax and David Arneson.

I hope that bit of advice helps you as well. Sorry, Greg, didn’t mean to interrupt the flow of your article for so long. I’ll be quiet now. – *Kevin Siembieda*

Setting up the Game

Now that you have a bit of perspective on your basic player archetypes, setting up an appropriate power level for a game should be easier and enable you, as the Game Master, to cater your story to each of the players’ needs. Here are some suggestions for setting up and building “fun” worlds to start your players in before ramping up the adventure itself.

Setting up a Low-Powered Game

Whether you’re playing **Rifts®**, **Heroes Unlimited™** or some other RPG, picking a power level and sticking with it helps you as the Game Master. It establishes the groundwork for where your stories and adventures are going to go. There are always more bad guys, monsters and other critters higher in power than the player characters. Start them off small and work their way up.

Remember, the moto is “have fun.” If a player wants more power, explain he will get it, but he needs to earn it. That you want to build up the anticipation of getting all the cool spells,

powers, level ups, etc. When the character gets to those levels he will not only have a sense of accomplishment, but will also now be able to mop the floor with the nasty re-occurring villain that hassled him and the other players at first level.

The Game Master should also remember to keep things in perspective. Your goal is to help the players “win” by overcoming the challenges you put in front of them, but not at the cost of fun or without really earning it. Provide simple monsters, henchmen and cannon fodder for the players to cut their teeth on at lower levels (1-3). This gives them the confidence and sense of fun and power they are looking for. But don’t be afraid to make the main villain a challenge that causes many, if not all, of the players to be hanging on by a thread at the end. Maybe the villain is worth a second round or as a re-occurring villain, so provide him with an escape plan or justification to survive, especially if the players are the killing type. Re-occurring villains create a sense of history and scope.

This also helps to stabilize the presumed power levels of the players, so a **Munchkin** who thinks he is a weakling walking around with his Wilk’s Laser pistol that only does 1D6 M.D. soon finds that he is the terror of the Chi-Town lower levels as all the foes he encounters are only wearing S.D.C. armor and wielding S.D.C. weapons, his 1D6 M.D. then becomes a 1D6x100 S.D.C. laser cannon that takes most foes out in a single blast! Once he gets this feeling of power, the Game Master can ramp things up to continue challenging him by providing foes with M.D.C. armor, which means the characters can then start getting access to more powerful M.D. weapons.

Low-powered does not mean unskilled or useless, or even limited in capacity. Let’s take a *Cyber-Knight* from the **Rifts® RPG** as an example. The Cyber-Knight has a vast array of skills from some really good combat choices to languages, lore and a ton of O.C.C. Related and Secondary Skills to pick from. But I have heard a lot of players complain how wimpy the Cyber-Knight is with his initial 1D6 M.D. Psi-Sword which is supposedly way less powerful than a Mind Melter’s. But what many of these negative commentators don’t see is that the Cyber-Knight is easily scalable. Sure the Psi-Sword is his iconic weapon and it should do a lot of damage and he shouldn’t have to use another weapon to fight foes because his main weapon is so “wimpy.” If your group is playing in a low-powered game that Psi-Sword is actually 1D6x100 S.D.C. damage, more than enough to cut an arm or a head off any S.D.C. foe the Cyber-Knight encounters. And yes, a Cyber-Knight would never use a Psi-Sword on a weak or unworthy foe (i.e. not M.D.C.), but if his life or that of an innocent is at risk and posing a clear and present danger, that counts as a worthy foe to use his Psi-Sword upon. Moreover, the Cyber-Knight is a trained fighter, so other skills and bonuses make him a superior warrior. The same goes for his Cyber-Armor with 50 M.D.C. which is the equivalent of 5,000 S.D.C. It does have an A.R. so S.D.C. weapons can hurt the Cyber-Knight, but it certainly makes him a powerhouse in the lower levels of Chi-Town or against animals or small-time thugs with S.D.C. weapons or light M.D.C. weapons.

By the same token, with the right rolls on the psionics table (or a Game Master who allows picking and choosing to help with game balance and power levels among the player group), the Cyber-Knight could be a Master Psionic who then gets a bonus +1D6 M.D. to his Psi-Sword at levels 2, 5, 9 and 13. That combined with the skill *Fencing* which grants another +1D6 M.D.

to swordplay, and then put him on a horse for another +6 M.D. (+2D6 M.D. in a charge attack!) and you’ve got a character who is quite impressive and definitely formidable. And let’s not forget the standard progression of the Psi-Sword which gets +1D6 at levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15.

So if you haven’t done the math already, it goes like this: Psi-Sword damage 2D6 (1D6 to start, +1D6 for Fencing) at level 1, 3D6 at level 2, 4D6 at level 3, 5D6 at level 5, 6D6 at level 6, 8D6 at level 9, and so on; +6 M.D. when charging on horseback. Hardly a wimp.

By comparison, your standard Mind Melter cannot even get the Psi-Sword ability until level 3, and does 4D6 M.D., the same damage as a Cyber-Knight, 6D6 at level 4, 8D6 at level 7, 1D6x10 at level 9 and so on. Yes, the Mind Melter’s Psi-Sword does more damage but it also costs 30 I.S.P. to use, is on a timer, and can’t be selected until level 3. The Cyber-Knight gets his at level one and costs no I.S.P. and if he chooses, can summon two of them! Plus he has other fighting skills and bonuses that makes him a skilled and deadly knight who is tough as nails and knows how to fight. **Note:** One of the fundamental elements of the Palladium game system is that characters are a) occupation skill based, b) improve as they grow in experience and practiced skill (which you can see in the example above), and c) role-playing is always a consideration. Besides, let’s look at a few other advantages of a Psi-Sword: It doesn’t have weight, the Cyber-Knight does not need to buy the weapon nor stow it, clean it, etc., a Psi-Sword cannot be stolen or broken, and it can be summoned as necessary anywhere, any time – even when the character is stripped naked and thrown in a jail cell or a pit with a monster, or thrown in the ocean. His Psi-Sword is a part of him. Um, that’s a huge advantage over most other characters. Players (and G.M.s) need to stop looking only at the immediate and obvious *raw power* of a character. This is *role-playing*. Most Palladium characters have ... well ... character, personality and nuanced powers and abilities. Things that should come up in role-playing, not just killing stuff. Each and every Palladium character, even the Glitter Boy, is intended to be more than a walking gun. – *Kevin Siembieda*

Now again, it really depends upon the scaling and power level the Game Master has picked for the campaign but a low-level M.D. game where the best a melee weapon can do is a 2D6 M.D. Vibro-Sword, well that Cyber-Knight’s 2D6 M.D. is on par at level 1, but quickly jumps to 3D6 M.D. at level 2, 4D6 at level 3, and so on. If the G.M. wants him lower powered, say he can’t pick the Fencing skill, if you want him higher powered, allow him to become a Master Psychic Cyber-Knight.

When a character starts

Game Masters, as a basic starting point, I (Greg) recommend keeping it simple. Keep damage and S.D.C. (or M.D.C.) levels low and reasonable, and by reasonable I mean make it so players are at least cautious when someone draws a pistol. Just because the game has body armor with 100 M.D.C. (or more), doesn’t mean you should necessarily make it available to players. A heavy suit of armor can be as low as 60 M.D.C., and light armor even less. Most games in the Palladium Books® arsenal tend to err on the safety of the character, so most suits of armor can take more damage than most weapons can dish out in one or two blasts. After all, the players are on their way to becoming big-shot heroes and adventurers and the technology is highly advanced.

Besides, what's the point of armor if after one shot, it is no good and you are dead? While this may be annoying when trying to shoot and kill a bad guy, it becomes a lifesaver for players' characters who are suddenly set upon by four or five guys all taking pot shots on the character from an ambush before he even has a chance to react.

With this in mind, your players always have the advantage in the Palladium system, but what many Game Masters forget is that an equivalent first level villain in armor isn't necessarily a fair fight. A player in a light suit of armor, like a Ley Line Walker, has a strength in the use of magic, but confronted by a first level CS Grunt or Soldier or Mercenary Fighter, the mage is probably going to get gunned down in a straight on gunfight. That's not unfair or unbalanced, that's *role-playing*. The player needs to role-play his mage with some degree of smarts and care. The *Game Master* needs to work within the confines of the two characters and the story. The G.M. doesn't just say bang, you're dead, because that's no fun nor is it a story. The Game Master needs to *role-play* this along with the player. There is little difference in this example than if a robber pulled a gun on you, in real life, as you walked to your car in a dark parking lot at night. Sure the thug can just shoot and take what he wants, but he's probably going to take your money and your cell phone and run off. This is all the more true of a game. An adventure game. An adventure role-playing game.

This is an opportunity for role-playing! The first thought in the player's head should be, "Oh, oh, how does my character get out of this?" And the G.M. should be giving the mage character options, like giving the mage a chance to talk or bribe his way out of trouble, or stall long enough for a teammate to arrive and help. The Coalition Soldier may demand that the character turn around, get on his knees, hand over his backpack, etc. What the mage does is up to the player. Complying buys time. Time to think and plan to use a spell to escape or temporarily blind his opponent, or distract him or even just make a run for it. ("I swing my backpack to try to knock the gun out his hand, or I throw it in his face and run.") Maybe the mage gets arrested! Cool. You are building an adventure scenario. Maybe the mage can use a spell or two while they are walking away to make good his escape or make the soldier fall asleep, etc. If the mage is put in holding, you now have a jailbreak scenario developing. ALL OF IT ROLE-PLAYING. Everything is not about shooting, killing, stealing. Using this example, the scenario may still end with a gunfight, but it is so much more now than a gunfight on the street when a cop said, "Stop and identify yourself." If it was a thief, maybe he gets away with something important to the group and they have to track him down and get it back. Again, who knows where this may lead. *Role-play it.*

Using this scenario example, the Coalition Soldier or whoever this "bad guy" is, is the impetus to an adventure or at least an encounter that leads to more. The soldiers and police of the Coalition States (CS) are trained warriors dedicated to defending humanity from demons and monsters from the Rifts, but also those who dabble in magic or who are D-Bees or non-humans. These CS Grunts are toting the best weapons and the best armor made on the North American continent! A better encounter for a first level Ley Line Walker might be a minor bandit with 20-30 M.D.C. armor and equipped with a 1D6 to 2D6 M.D. weapon, a minor M.D.C. monster of similar stats, or even a pack of wild (S.D.C.) dogs, who might stand a chance against the Ley Line

Walker trying to use group tactics to pin and incapacitate him before trying to finish him off. But as you see with the earlier scenario example, just because the mage is outgunned and initially overpowered, doesn't mean he is automatically defeated or killed! And this is where teamwork comes into play. Maybe the mage (or Rogue Scholar, or Operator, etc.) can't best him in a fair fight, so the character needs to cheat, use deception and cunning to get away, or the help of his Juicer or Cyber-Knight teammate(s)! Players should be working together against a common enemy. Or Game Masters, give him the time and opportunity to make his escape or do something clever, like lead the CS Grunt into a pack of D-Bees who chase him off or take him captive. Or the mage is able to cast the spell Breathe Without Air or Swim as the Fish on himself, and as they across a bridge or along the bank of the river, the mage is able to dive in to get away or appear to have drowned.

Later, try to give the Ley Line Walker a chance to excel in some other way by putting him in his element, such as in a combat situation where he has time to prepare to cast the ideal spells or help a teammate. Or put him on a ley line, where he can tap an unlimited supply of P.P.E. to cast a variety of spells, access surveillance (Ley Line Observation Orb), create a protective force field and generally rock the world of anyone who tries to confront him on his home turf. Even a lonely CS Grunt is going to think twice about attacking the Ley Line Walker when he is on a ley line.

Both the player and the Game Master should also consider that a Ley Line Walker is not necessarily heavy on combat magic like the Battle Magi and some other spell casters. They are better suited to thinking strategically and using their environment, so allow the character to take advantage of the select spells you, as Game Master, know he has (Carpet of Adhesion, Blinding Flash, Befuddle, etc.). These spells could be used to battle that CS Grunt or anyone to gain a victory.

Siembieda Note: I often think of the low-level practitioners of magic as the 50 caliber machine-gun or mortar unit that offers *troop support* with some powerful stuff and *tactical advantages*, BUT has its own limitations and needs to be protected/defended from the enemy because of the tactical advantage that spell caster (or psychic or healer, etc.) provides makes him a target for the enemy.

I also find Greg's example here a bit humorous, in the sense that it is a great example of his own perceptions, biases and gaming style, in which he sees *practitioners of magic* as weak and inferior to technology and those who wield it. Humorous, because I have spoken to others who feel that practitioners of magic are more powerful and dangerous (even too powerful) than tech-reliant characters. Personally, I think they are both pretty balanced.

The big difference is how the Game Master and the players perceive and play these two very different types of characters. A focused player who understands his character's abilities and wisely and cleverly deploys them with some skillful role-playing, makes all the difference in the world. I see this all the time when I run tournament games at conventions. In one game the Wizard or the Knight, or whoever, is played smart and utilizes the character's abilities to the max. In that game, the character is tough as nails or smart as a whip and kicks ass and takes numbers. In the next same tournament, the exact same character in another player's hands is a wimp who does very little, and doesn't even use the spells or abilities and weapons that are at his disposal.

Things that should enable him or her to win the day! They did in the other game. It is all a matter of perception, gaming style and role-playing. Of understanding the character you have chosen and role-playing that character to the full range of his or her capabilities.

Which reminds me of something else. Game Masters, if a player wants to stop playing one character in favor of bringing in a different one, especially if the player says he is not enjoying his current one, or that it's not what he thought, please let him do so, and pull him right back into the game with the new character as quickly as possible. Retire the old character or turn it into an NPC (Non-Player Character), but let it happen. As we discussed earlier, people need to find the type of character that they can connect with to have the most fun. And that will make your and the other players' gaming experience that much more fun as well. – *Kevin Siembieda*

On a related note, experience points (page 296 of the **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**) awarded for such encounters should reflect the level of difficulty for the player(s). An easy encounter like the Ley Line Walker fending off 2-4 wild dogs is only going to grant him 10-25 XP per each dog as they are a *minor menace*, and easy, one-shot kills, especially in **Rifts®** if the mage is using an M.D. magical blast or area effect attack.

More experience points (XP) could be granted for subduing the dogs with Carpet of Adhesion, sleep magic or Influence the Beast spell (50 or 100 experience points total). By comparison, talking his way out of being arrested by that CS Grunt or making a clever or daring escape might get more XP (100-150 experience points), and tricking the Grunt into revealing valuable information, freeing a prisoner, etc., might net even more XP, say 200-300 points. While simply turning invisible or Shadow Melding to avoid being seen is clever, it falls into the 25 experience point range because it was easy and not particularly inventive. Magical charm or mind control is a bit more clever, so 50-75 experience seems appropriate, maybe more if the Ley Line Walker uses his magical influence in a way that has impressive, funny or spectacular results. Of course, that will require strategic thinking and role-playing. By the way, if the mage is mid- to high-level (6-12th level) and has done this many times before, the experience gained will again be on the low end of the scale because it is *the mage who is the great menace* due to his superior level of experience and power compared to a low-level CS Grunt. Now if that CS soldier was in SAMAS power armor or was a Coalition Juicer or Cyborg of similar level as the mage, that's a different story. It is all subjective, but logical and works. Likewise, if the CS Grunt calls for help and his entire platoon arrives, now that is a *great menace* to the Ley Line Walker regardless of the mage's level, and probably to the entire playing group if his teammates are present and also low-level characters. Experience points should always be awarded based on the difficulty or ease of the challenge, and the inventiveness and cleverness of the role-playing involved, and sometimes even luck in cases where a character tries one daring move after another and the player makes several high rolls to pull it off.

Siembieda Note: Greg's right. I look at the dice rolls as the hand of Fate. If the player rolls a bunch of Natural 20s, be happy for him and let him and the group enjoy their luck and the easy win this time, because there will be other times when the dice rolls are terrible and the character(s) finds himself in hot water. – *Kevin Siembieda*

A few ideas for starting low level

The cool thing about all these settings is that while these ideas are good for beginning campaigns and low-level characters, many of these "starting settings" and ideas can be easily ramped up as the characters grow in experience and power.

● **Chi-Town (Low Power Level):** Players are asked to roll up an appropriate inner city O.C.C. Weapons and armor should be restricted to mostly S.D.C. equipment with the underlying *promise* from the Game Master that most foes will be S.D.C. to start. A single M.D. weapon that does 1D4 to 1D6 M.D. is in the character's possession, but is classified as an illegal M.D. weapon and is going to get the character in a lot of trouble if he gets caught by the CS Authorities of the city.

Armor on the other hand is going to be tricky, since most people don't see the need for armor in the "safety" of the city so things should be limited to plain clothes armors (10-22 M.D.C.), cyber-armor and maybe a light suit of armor (no more than 30 M.D.C.) for the hard-hitting macho types who "must" have the right kind of protection.

O.C.C.s in Chi-Town: Limited options. Probably to City Rats and other Adventurer and Scholar O.C.C.s. Men at Arms are possible but only if they are Coalition Soldiers, members of CS law enforcement, or *work for* the military, police or CS government. This can sometimes include **non-Citizens** such as mercenaries, scouts, snitches, and psychics (NEVER mages or non-humans!), who work for the CS in some capacity and are sanctioned to *visit* the city. However, any unsanctioned activities or adventuring by a citizen or visitor inside the fortress city (and even in the 'Burbs outside) could get them into hot water and even imprisoned! But that's okay, because it adds another layer of drama, suspense and story to the character's actions. The same holds true of Coalition Scientists and Scholars. **Note:** Family and friends who are allowed to visit inside the fortress city of Chi-Town must obey the rules and laws of the Coalition States, must leave all weapons and armor, magic and contraband outside the city, and pay harsh consequences if caught trying to smuggle contraband into the city. Harsh, as in interrogation and torture, a lengthy imprisonment, hard labor or execution!

Equipment for citizens should be only what the **Coalition States citizens** are assigned for work and special operations. Visitors to the mega-city are wise to bring only the clothes on their backs. Contraband, including magic items, books and videos outlawed by the CS government, should be left behind because they are very dangerous to possess even by citizens. If found with such an item the character(s) had better have a convincing "story" about how it is not his and how he just found it or took it from a bad guy, or is being framed by a bad guy. Possessing contraband, let alone trafficking in the sale of contraband, is a good way to lose your citizenship. This also applies to weapons and contraband items the character who is a CS citizen may have hidden outside the city or in the 'Burbs should they encounter Coalition soldiers outside of Chi-Town itself. Being caught in the 'Burbs with contraband or fraternizing with undesirables (i.e. practitioners of magic, D-Bees, known criminals or fugitives) will lead to being questioned and put on a watch list. (**Note:** We hope this is already illustrating the level of intrigue and avenues of adventure available in *Chi-Town* and *Chi-Town 'Burb* (below) settings for the player characters.)

Psychic citizens MUST be a registered psychic with the Coalition's PRP and have an IC Barcode tattooed on them and IC chip implanted. Minor psychics wanting to visit friends or family may be allowed into the city, but Major and Master Psychics are not allowed. And being identified as the latter two by CS authorities is likely to lead to interrogation and recruitment, imprisonment, death or worse.

Practitioners of magic are NEVER allowed inside the fortified city for any reason whatsoever, except as prisoners in restraints or unconscious. Any mage attempting entry will be attacked and killed on the spot or subdued and taken prisoner for interrogation, tortured and publicly executed as an enemy of the Coalition States. *D-Bees and other non-humans* share the same fate.

Game Masters and players who want to play CS soldiers and/or other Citizenry will have the luxury of adventures that take place inside Chi-Town, in the 'Burbs outside the fortress city, and missions that could take them anywhere else in North America. However, they will probably (not always) be playing what most people would consider to be the "bad guys" – human supremacists with an extreme attitude toward the use of magic and non-humans. See **Chi-Town 'Burbs** for some outside opportunities.

● **Chi-Town 'Burbs (Low Power Level):** Playing in the Chi-Town 'Burbs is like playing in the city of Mos Eisley from *Star Wars* or the lower streets of *Blade Runner*. It is not a "wretched hive of scum and villainy," but it has its fair share. The Chi-Town 'Burbs are a collection of lawless, unsanctioned shanty towns and tent cities of refugees and hopeful people waiting to become citizens of the Coalition States (CS). Among this cluster of humanity are D-Bees, practitioners of magic, adventurers, fugitives and the people who make money supplying them. And the CS police and military patrol the streets regularly, kicking down doors when they feel like it or suspect something, as well as stopping people on the street. Any D-Bees, mages, and monsters encountered are arrested or attacked on sight! Of course, some of these Coalition police and soldiers are on the take and can be bribed, others are by the book types who cannot.

So there are all kinds of eateries, taverns, Body-Chop-Shops (where you can get illegal bionics and cybernetic implants), contraband of every sort, Black Marketeers, spies, terrorists, fugitives, people on the run, drug dealers, criminals, places of entertainment, etc., along with hundreds of thousands of innocent ordinary humans trying to make a living and survive until they can convince the powers that be to allow them to become official citizens of the CS.

Here discreet mages, psychics, criminals, shapechangers and even D-Bees covered in hoods, helmets and armor to disguise their inhuman appearance, walk and live among the mass of humanity found in the crowded, maze-like streets of the 'Burbs.

Not only can there be all kinds of adventures in the 'Burbs, but they can serve as the characters' base of operation in a relatively civilized setting. From the 'Burbs the player group can go off adventuring at other nearby locations or anywhere. Or they can find plenty of adventure right in town.

The 'Burbs are always a hotbed for action. There are always dozens of rumors floating around and illegal activity that can lead to adventure and work. There are merchants, Black Marketeers and people looking to hire mercenaries and adventures for protection, rescue, escorting goods or merchant caravans, for guarding people and property, spying on rivals, spying on the CS, smuggling goods or people, rescue operations (from the CS, slavers, monsters, or madmen), searching for people who go missing,

hunting down monsters (vampires, demons, predatory creatures) that hunt and feed on the people in the 'Burbs, solving crimes, fighting gangs, fighting bullies, turf wars, stealing, forgery, protecting the innocent, avenging a wrong, helping people escape a Coalition purge on a section of the 'Burbs, helping someone escape from the clutches of the CS before they are taken inside the fortified city, protecting the 'Burbs or Chi-Town or the CS from a greater evil, and so on. As you can see, there are plenty of opportunities for adventure for characters just starting out.

● **Dungeon Crawl Adventure (Low Power Level):** We have discussed the Dungeon Crawl in other Game Master/Gaming articles. They are fun for the players and relatively easy for the G.M. to create. Just make sure there is some logic to it. Oh, and a Dungeon Crawl does not need to be an actual "dungeon." It is called that because the concept was introduced by the **Dungeon and Dragons RPG**. It can be an adventure in a ghost town, ancient ruins, modern/recent ruins (a bombed out city or military base), a secret underground military complex or lab, or cave network or area of the wilderness. Most single-player, first person shooter videogames are Dungeon Crawls, whether it is collecting items or points, or shooting zombies, monsters or bad guys.

The premise is simple: you are exploring or need to travel through a particular closed environment (a gauntlet) and must face a variety of challenges, obstacles and opponents/enemies along the way, perhaps you have to avoid a trap and/or solve a puzzle – all of which are intentionally designed for low-level characters. Dungeon Crawls are simple, straightforward and fun for both the players and the G.M.

● **Students in School (High School, College or an elite Training Program; Low Power Level):** This seems ideal for the **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Ninjas and Superspies™**, **Nightbane®** and **Beyond the Supernatural™** game worlds, but also works wonderfully for most settings including **After the Bomb®**, **Palladium Fantasy®**, **Phase World®** and **Rifts®**. There's no reason students couldn't be young mages and heroes studying in Lazlo or Dweomer, or Cyber-Knights in training, and on and on.

The premise is simple, the player characters are all *students* in the same class and learning institution, organization or specialized training program. They are learning their craft. That craft that may be very special such as science (mad science?), dimensional studies (as in dimensional traveling), magic, honing psychic abilities, learning to control and use super abilities (and how to be responsible heroes), learning to be a Ranger/scout or Druid, explorer, Dedicated Martial Artist, survivalist, fighter, spy, thief, soldier, assassin, demon slayer, Operator/mechanic/inventor, pilot, etc. Or the characters could be mutant animals, aliens or D-Bees who are trying to learn how to fit into this new world they find themselves in. A world that rejects and fears beings like them.

This starting place and premise is especially good for **gamers who have never played a role-playing game** before, because, **a)** every "student" starts off on the same foot and **b)** none of them are expected to know how to handle themselves in the real world. They are all still learning and have no real world experience. *Harry Potter* is a wonderful example of this, so is the TV show *The Magicians*. Ironically, both fantasy/magic oriented, but this applies just as easily to psionics, super abilities, martial arts, and most anything. In addition, the Game Master can include NPC teachers and mentors (or handler in the case of mutant animals

or aliens), even the school bus driver and NPC fellow students to help *guide* them into the world of RPG adventures and show them how to play via the actions of the NPC.

Depending on how young and inexperienced the characters are, the G.M. may want to modify the characters' abilities and even the power level of the spell, psionic ability or super-power. The number of spells or abilities (or skills) should probably be limited to one, maybe two Major or three Minor super abilities (others can manifest in the future), or give other types of student characters half or two-thirds the usual number of skills, spells and psionic abilities, and reduce the usual bonus by half. And similar modifications. These abilities become full-powered when the characters reach level two experience or perhaps midway through level one; use your discretion. **Note:** For super beings, take a look at the **Minor Hero**, as found on page 71 of **Powers Unlimited® 2**, for ideas and one approach.

- **Urban Hero (Low Power Level):** This type of game might see the full-on stats and abilities of a typical **Heroes Unlimited™** or **Nightbane®** character with a small number of powers and a few odd gadgets. **O.C.C.s:** Any, though some curbing of the number of powers or abilities may be required. (No Mega-Heroes, No Experiments or Mutants with 3 Major Powers, etc.)

- **Wilderness Adventures/Travel (Low Power Level):** This is probably run like your classic dungeon crawling adventure where the players need to get from Point A to Point B, and experience obstacles, challenges, encounters and enemies/monsters along the way. For example, they are from a small village (at an inn, of course) and head out into the wilderness to seek adventure. This may entail fighting low-level brigands and monsters, to encounters with a farmer or traveling merchant (who may really be a thief or a spy), to exploring ancient (or pre-Rifts) ruins. Characters may be drawn into other adventures and confrontations along the way that require them to help out the small town they use as their base of operation or the farmers or villagers who need help to find a child or woman or important someone who had gone missing or has been kidnaped by villain X or monster Y. Or they follow a rumor that promises treasure or a big reward. The point is, all kinds of things can happen along the way on the trip.

Remember, many small villages in **Rifts®** and other games are protected or ruled over by a single powerful champion or small group of champions. The player characters could be this very group of champions and may find conflict and adventure battling neighbouring kingdoms ruled by evil despots, warlords or slave masters. Add minions and NPCs as required to even the odds or provide the heroes a chance to stretch and test their limits.

How to Keep a Low-Powered Game Going

For the most part, this should be pretty straightforward. Ease the players into new conflicts, providing loot that allows them to defeat the next set of bad guys. Keep cash flow coming so the characters can upgrade their weapons and armor, make repairs and keep things progressing. Provide opportunities to feed each archetype and allow for character growth. As time goes on, the characters become more powerful and higher level. All of you, players and Game Master, will all grow at a natural progression. As the group becomes more powerful, the G.M. creates challenges and opponents that are more difficult and demanding. It's all relative.

Setting up a High-Powered Game

These types of games can become challenging for Game Masters as they are likely to require more thought and preparation. You can't just pick any old villain to fight the character(s) one on one. Now he too needs to be more powerful, or command or manipulate a group of villains that can give the heroes a tough time.

Brute force with high level characters often turns into a boring combat session that takes the group hours, or even an entire session or two to whittle down the villain's 4,000+ M.D.C. or Hit Points. This is when more finesse and role-playing are likely to come into play more than ever before. The challenge for the Game Master is not in providing physically tougher villains, but providing challenges that get players to think outside the box, try something new or work on areas where they lack sufficient skills or experience. In a way it's like converting players into the **Real Role-Player** archetype, providing them clues, reasons for doing stuff other than fighting, or to get them to think outside the box and outside the character archetypes they are normally used to.

All the elements are the same, odds are just the scope of the game will feel bigger. Instead of saving the farmer and his family, or the mayor of the town, now the group is protecting or saving the entire town, city or kingdom. Perhaps they serve the King and Queen now, or even are King and Queen, or heroes of renown. Even at this level though, setting guidelines for O.C.C. selections may be important.

If the evolution of the characters has been organic, meaning they started as level one or level two characters and have actually grown and developed those characters through months, more likely several years, of role-playing, the transition from low level games to mid and then high level games is probably seamless and natural.

If you starting out playing high level (8th level+), there might be some stumbling, trial and error. Playing high-level characters can be fun if handled properly, and there is nothing wrong with it, but we highly recommend starting low level and growing the characters for the maximum enjoyment of the role-playing experience. For that very reason, the **Palladium** game system is designed so that characters advance and grow in experience quickly. Leveling off and requiring more time and effort around level six or seven.

A few High-Level Concepts

Generally speaking, high-level characters are going to fight on a big scale, fight the big guys, and save entire kingdoms, civilizations and maybe the entire world. Depending on how high-level they are and the power level of the game, the player characters will meet and may fight legendary villains, Warlords, Kings, adult dragons, Demon Lords and gods. As long as the G.M. and players are having fun with it, game on. However, even in these big, high-powered games, there are always consequences. And the bigger the scale, the greater the consequences. Now, a character's actions may not just affect him and/or his teammates, they could affect the lives of an entire city or planet!

That means playing smarter than ever and with a sense of responsibility to people other than themselves. As the famous Stan Lee quote goes, "With great power, comes great responsibility." Your characters have gone from first level knights-errant with good intentions to becoming King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Um, and that story didn't end so well for Arthur in particular or many of the knights or Camelot, in general. Game on. — *Kevin Siembieda*

● **Space Opera (Medium):** While it is easy to run and enjoy a low-powered space opera-style game, there is a lot of material in **Phase World™** and even **Aliens Unlimited™** and certain places in **Rifts®** (the Vampire Kingdoms, Atlantis, Camelot, China, etc.) that seem to beg for some epic, high-powered adventures. And they offer an array of awesome toys, magic and abilities to unleash. High-tech weapons, space travel and gadgets galore can make this a fun game and is a good entry point for medium- to high-powered characters to quickly jump into a high level campaign and setting.

You would think in a high-level game, especially a really high-level game, anything would go, but that's not true since your players will want to be playing gods with every magic spell ever known and armed with the 10 most powerful magic weapons or tech weapons in the known universe. This means you, the Game Master, will still want to set some boundaries and limit the types of characters, magic, weapons, spaceships, etc., that are available to the characters.

Even in big, high-powered games, you want the characters to be able to grow and face real challenges. While all-powerful characters may work for a one-shot game or a few game sessions, they are a bore to play in the long haul. The threat of death and loss must always be present. You see it in the myths and legends of the Greek and Norse gods and all the god myths of every culture from Native American to Egyptian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, all of them!

Without vulnerabilities, strengths and weaknesses, love, desire, rivals, loss, betrayal, and death, there is no drama. No story. And no fun to play.

So while pretty much any O.C.C. may be available for player characters in such a game, from high level O.C.C.s of any type to adult dragons, demons, Cosmo-Knight or Godling, Game Masters will want to restrict key elements and aspects to keep things in check and to provide a sense of fragility or connection to humanity and make the dangers of normal space travel a legitimate concern.

In any game, low-powered or high-powered, the players are the heroes of the story we are telling, but even they are just part of a much bigger story or conflict. That big backdrop can be fun and does create a sense of epicness. So while the player characters may be able to smash a starship or run rampant tearing up a space station, or battle a god, there must still be a threat to them and/or the infinitely less powerful, even vulnerable people they are fighting for.

As our key players and focal point of this big story, they are the ones who save the day, destroy the enemy installation, defeat or slay the big baddie, and do things that have a profound impact (good and bad) on the epic story and the innocent lives that hang in the balance. Thus, it could be their job to take down evil tyrants, slay the monster, destroy a deity or demon lord, overthrow world governments, destroy the enemy's key war machines/space stations and ships (i.e. destroy the death star), but they may also be responsible for leading rescue missions, disaster relief, and diplomatic negotiations. This applies whether the setting is on S.D.C. worlds like **Heroes Unlimited™/Aliens Unlimited™** and **Nightbane®**, or M.D.C. settings like **Rifts®** and **Phase World®** and the **Three Galaxies**.

● **Battle of the Gods (Over the Top):** This could take place in the **Palladium® Fantasy**, **Heroes Unlimited™** or **Rifts®** setting where the gods of old roam free, causing trouble, havoc and chaos. The players are forced to pick a side as remaining neutral and cleaning up the mess is getting costly not only in property damage, but also in the mortal lives lost to either side as collateral damage or as cannon fodder. Being picked on for no other reason

than you are a priest, demigod or worshiper of a certain pantheon is all that it takes to enter this fight.

O.C.C.s: Any. You don't have to be a god to battle one, but it doesn't hurt. Godlings, Demigods, dragons, demons, a vast array of Minion races, Priests and Warlocks are all possibilities. Other interdimensional travellers and interlopers are also good options such as the Dimensional Wizards and Raiders, Prometheans, True Atlantean Undead Slayers or super-powered Mega-Heroes.

If you want to really go bonkers, pick a deity that has been statted out and let the player play the actual god, fighting alongside and against other gods and Alien Intelligences and their minions. Things are likely to get wild and messy, with trillions of lives hanging in the balance.

Size Doesn't Matter

The above notwithstanding, ANY game setting and scenario can be made to accommodate low to high level characters and adventures. Even epic, massive scale events like the **Minion War™**, which at first blush, might feel too high-powered and scary for low level characters, is perfect for player characters of *any* level. It is simply a matter of the Game Master scaling the game up or down to the level of his players.

Remember, no matter whether your character is a Godling, Cosmo-Knight, ancient dragon, or a lowly, first level Ley Line Walker, Cyborg or Rogue Scholar, there are stories to tell and adventures to run for these characters. It is the Game Master's job to find them and provide them for the player group.

Low-powered or high-powered, *the player characters are the heroes of their story*. In real events such as World Wars I and II, there is the big, overall, sweeping story and key battles that everyone knows, but for those who lived through it, there are a million smaller stories, battles and adventures that made the bigger story possible. Their personal stories may range from tiny tales to medium battles to being involved in critical moments in history. There were millions of stories, large and small.

The player characters are playing through one of those stories in the bigger, epic story of life and survival and the ongoing battles between good and evil. The scale and level of the characters do NOT matter. It should be made challenging and thrilling no matter the scale of the power level. That is the magic of role-playing. And it requires the understanding and ingenuity of the Game Master to realize that and to accommodate the players accordingly.

The big backdrop may be epic – intergalactic or multi-dimensional – but every story is important to those who live it. And your characters are living these fictional stories that everyone involved, the G.M. and the players, are creating together.

Here is one great example from a film you should all know. It was a lowly, first level Jedi who took down the Death Star with courage and a willingness to sacrifice his own life. He did it with help from his friends/teammates (R2, Han, Chewie, etc.) and a bunch of NPCs (the many pilots who lost their lives in the run on the Death Star). Heck, was Luke even first level yet? I think not. But his small **hero's journey** and the people who joined him on that adventure (the fellow player characters), each played a critical role in Luke's success. And their small story was just one of many in the much, much larger, decades-spanning story of *Star Wars* and the Empire's rise and fall. Get the idea? Sure you do.

– Kevin Siembieda, G.M. and Game Designer

Blood Moon

An “official” Palladium Fantasy RPG® Adventure

Written by Kevin Siembieda

Additional text and stats by Julius Rosenstein

Design Note: This is an adventure that I, Kevin Siembieda, created and ran at the *2018 Palladium Open House*. People enjoyed it so much, I thought I would share it with you here in the pages of **The Rifter**®. It utilizes the pre-generated characters created for my legendary **Lord De Silca** tournament that I have run for 35+ years, now. These characters have been a bit fine-tuned for publication, so those of you who have played these characters in one of my games may notice differences.

For this adventure you can use the pre-generated (tournament) characters included with the adventure or you can adapt it as an adventure in your own Fantasy campaign with your own players and their existing characters. Please feel free to adjust the adventure to best accommodate the player characters and their power level.

I also hope seeing this inspires other Game Masters and freelance writers to formally write-up and submit their many “convention” games. At the Palladium Open House and conventions, I’m always hearing about the “great game so and so ran.” And often they are one-shot games that are never played and experienced again! These *great games* are lost to posterity. That seems unfortunate and sad, especially when we have a forum like **The Rifter**® where they can see print and be share with thousands of gamers for years to come. I encourage Game Masters to write their wonderful tournament games up as adventures and submit them to **The Rifter**®. Thank you. Enjoy. – *Kevin Siembieda*

A mysterious and frightening disappearance

The people at the *East River Lumber Camp* are missing. All of them! Well except for the handful who are found dead and eaten by animals.

There is always the threat of danger for any settlement or logging camp in the **Disputed Lands** between the Eastern Territory and Great Northern Wilderness. “Disputed” because humans have claimed this region of the wilderness for themselves while the *Wolfen* and the other canine species have called it their homeland for centuries, even if there are no formal borders or obvious “civilized” kingdoms. As a result, conflict and bloodshed between humans and the so-called *Dogs of the North* is common in these parts. But this? This was something different.

Coyles would have slain everyone, stripped the bodies naked, and left the dead laying where they slew them, before burning the entire place to the ground after looting the buildings.

Wolfen Centurions would not have killed women or children, and would have sent most of the people, including the males, back

south to the Eastern Territory with a message to stay where humans belong. Only the warriors and those who opposed them in combat would have been slain and their corpses displayed. Impaling the bodies on pikes or hanging them from trees or rooftops as a warning to other “intruders” that they will share the same fate. In addition, they would have probably claimed the logging town for the Wolfen Empire and kept it in operation under Wolfen control. Though portrayed by the human kingdoms south of the Disputed Lands as bloodthirsty, wild animals who slaughter the innocent and eat babies, the Wolfen would have let the rest of the people collect their belongings, given them sufficient provisions, and marched them southward out of the region. Their final words to them would have been a warning to never return to Wolfen country and to warn the rest of their people to do the same. Any political prisoners would have been taken north for public trial and corresponding punishment for their crimes against the Canine races.

Orcs, Ogres and similar raiders would have taken whatever they wanted, slain those who opposed them, have their way with the rest, engage in some vandalism, loot the place and leave. They would not have taken so many as prisoners. Not even to sell to slavers or to eat. Not in this part of the world. Besides, prisoners, especially a lot of prisoners, are too much trouble and require care and food.

Northern Barbarians never made it this far south, so this was not their handiwork.

No, this was something else. The two men from the farming village who came upon this mystery were sure of it.

Only the church had been set on fire. Its roof caved in from the fire and most of the interior burned to ash and rubble. Three of the four walls remained standing with some of the stained glass windows still intact. The massive cross made of two thick, bark covered logs also still stood behind a stone altar in defiance of the attack. The cross itself was a crude holy symbol representing the Northern deity known as **Od** (pronounced Ohd), a warrior god, All-Father of the North, represented by the mighty oak tree and worshiped by many Eastern and Northern humans as well as the Wolfen and other beings. Od is the head of the Northern Pantheon included in many pantheons accepted by the **Church of Light and Dark**. Many settlers from the Eastern Territory, Old Kingdom and Timiro who come to the Disputed Lands believe it is prudent to worship and honor the God of the North, Ice and Forest, in the hope that it wins them his favor and protection.

Inside the church are the burnt remains of a half-dozen people, most of their corpses already eaten by animals. The rest of the town is empty. Devoid of survivors or the bodies of the dead. That meant they were taken.



Peeking into the homes and the small handful of buildings where the doors were left open, or unlatched, they found nobody home. A few doors were clearly opened forcibly. Their wooden frames cracked or latches broken where they were forced. A few places showed signs of a scuffle and sometimes a bit of blood, but no bodies. The belongings of many homes have been dumped onto the floor and rifled through, but it is impossible to tell if anything was taken.

William Highwater and **Ian Sterling** who found this sad state of affairs are simple farmers looking for a new life in a new land. The Lords of the neighboring Eastern Territory are allowing simple folk to claim and keep what lands they can hold onto as part of the expanding human Eastern Territory pushing ever northward. The promise of owning their own land and making a better life for their families is a rare opportunity and too attractive to resist. Which is why the twenty-some families in their farming village are trying to make a go of it. Until now, they have fared surprisingly well. They respect the land and try not to despoil their surroundings. As a result of their care and hard work their community is self-sufficient and growing. But this. This has the Highwaters and Sterling spooked. The entire farm community is spooked.

The same environmental respect could not be said of the logging camp. This settlement was said to have been sponsored by an old, wealthy family in the Western Empire. They showed little regard for the land and were cutting down trees as fast as they could to make lumber for the booming settlements in the Eastern Territory and Disputed Land. Their handiwork scarred the land and left wide, empty areas devoid of life. The winding river served to power the one sawmill. The lumber carried downriver by flatbed barges. One of which was marooned on rocks in the middle of the river just a few hundred yards (meters) from the southern edge of the camp.

The East River Lumber Camp was located 30 miles (48 km) farther north than the little farming community. It too was small, perhaps 100-115 people, mostly loggers and lumberjacks, but that number also included a dozen families with women and children. And all of them were missing, families and workers. The animals – mules and horses – had been slaughtered. And presumably torn apart by coyotes and wolves, in the days afterward. That seemed strange. Why would bandits or raiders slaughter valuable animals? The mad howling of the wolves that started around the same time that William and Ian guessed the camp's population went missing, only added to their mounting fears.

The logging camp would send men twice a week to trade the farmers lumber in exchange for fresh eggs, milk and produce. When the men did not come for an entire week, William and Ian volunteered to investigate. What they found has raised grave concern for the safety of their own community. It had taken them half the day to reach the logging camp plus the time spent looking around – something they did in great haste. Night would fall long before they made it even halfway back home, and it was never safe to travel these woods at night. Still, neither felt safe staying anywhere near the camp at night.

So they fled. Fled as fast and far as their feet could carry them while there was still light. And kept moving throughout the night. Working their way along the river to prevent themselves from getting lost. Behind them, throughout the night. The wolves howled at the stars. You expect to hear the occasional wolf howl, but this was an entire pack. Maybe two or three packs. Four doz-

en wolves at least, complaining to the night with angry, mournful howls from dusk till dawn. It wasn't natural.

Due to the disappearance of an entire logging camp, the slaughtered animals, and odd behavior of the wolves, the farm communities fear that *werewolves* have invaded their land. There is a range of rumor and fear based speculation. The most popular theory involves werewolves, but that has also been speculation that a band of Coyles are rabid and responsible for the disappearance and bloodshed. Another rumor is that a wolf demon now stalks these woods, and that the local Coyles worship and obey its every command. Yet another rumor is that a band of Wolfen have been turned into vampires and now command the wolves that howl in protest every night. Most people scoff at this, because it is common knowledge that while vampires are able to command dogs and wolves, the undead cannot turn animals into vampires. And Wolfen are, after all, wild animals that walk on two-legs. Some have wondered if a vampire could be controlling Wolfen or Coyles like they do ordinary dogs and wolves, but it is said the undead cannot control the canine people. Nor are vampires common in this part of the world. There is also the matter of why would a vampire abduct nearly a hundred people? So it is that the werewolves or wolf demon theories are the most popular among the farmers and other people who live in the area.

All they know for sure is that the howling of the wolves is getting closer, which makes the farmers increasingly fearful for the safety of their families. So it is that the cry has gone out for heroes and warriors to please come and investigate. Heroes or demon slayers with experience fighting the supernatural, were-beasts and demonic beings. Meanwhile, rumors spread of werewolves and vampires – vampire Wolfen, to be exact. And though the latter is deemed to be impossible, the rumor persists.

The heroes who answer the call are either your own player group or the fabled **Destroyers of Lord DeSilca** who are renowned slayers of demons and champions of the people. See the NPC section for this group of heroes.

The adventure begins . . .

By the time the adventurer group arrives at the farming village, a half dozen families are packed up and ready to head back to civilization. Several other villagers are considering doing the same thing. The wolves howling at night, every night for nearly a month now, is enough to unnerve anyone. Werewolves, wolf demons, Wolfen vampires, or whatever it is, they are not waiting around to find out. They plan to get out while the getting is good.

If it is the Destroyers of Lord DeSilca (or other heroes with a reputation for fighting and destroying demons) who arrives, it will do much to allay their fears. After all, they have fought and destroyed the wicked Lord DeSilca, his Black Priests, monstrous minions and a half dozen demons to save an entire kingdom. Where scores of other heroes failed to stop the madman, they succeeded, so if anyone can save them, it is they.

This stops people from leaving the community ... for now, but many are still packing their bags in case the heroes go into the hills never to be seen again.

The heroes are met by a small council of elders. The elder and all the people in the community are happy to tell them everything they know. Which is not much. This includes the two men, William Highwater and Ian Sterling, who are the only ones to have been to the logging camp.

Other than the information above, the two men report that they saw some larger than normal wolf tracks in and around town, but were they werewolves or Wolfen, they cannot say. These are farmers, not trackers, trappers or Rangers. They cannot say how many wolves or creatures there were nor could they recognize or tell where the villagers may have gone. It is as if they all just vanished into thin air, leaving their possessions behind. They don't know anything else about the area either, just that their own farm village and the logging camp are the end of what passes for civilization in these parts. The next closest farm and trading post is 100 miles (160 km) to the southeast, a good five or six day journey.

The only other people living in this region are several small tribes of Coyles and the smaller bands of young warriors who are known to harass travelers in the region and would threaten and bother the logging camp. There are the occasional Wolfen and even squad of Wolfen Centurions, Orcs, Ogres, Goblins, Bear-Men of the North and Kankoran, but they come and go and have not been a problem. At least not for the little farming community.

Description of the logging camp: They, the elders and a few other villagers can describe the logging camp. There is the mill, the largest building, the carpenter and lumberyard, the church (burned down), a trading post/general store, a corral and barn for the 10 workhorses and 28 mules (all slaughtered), a blacksmith, several simple wooden homes, and a small dock for the 6-8 flatbed barges used to carry the wood down river. There is no map.

One barge is on the rocks, off shore, near the camp. Three others were seen on the bank much farther down the river. If there were others, they are missing. The smithy was cold and it, the store, and other buildings were all abandoned, but not looted. While it looked like someone had gone through the handful of homes the two men investigated, none of these places looked looted and there was no vandalism. Just drawers pulled out and clothing and items strewn about the floor where they were dumped, as if someone was looking for something.

Did they see anything suspicious? It all seemed suspicious!

Can they tell how the 5-7 people they found dead in the church were killed? No, the bodies were too decomposed and mostly eaten by animals, presumably wolves.

How many wolves were howling at night? William says at least three dozen. Ian insists it was more like a hundred.

Any other questions will get the answer of, "Sorry, I don't know." Both men admit they are not warriors, they were very scared and wanted to be away from there by nightfall.

Werewolves, they are sure of it. The farm community is convinced the logging camp was besieged by werewolves. They are sure of it. They have ruled out all other possibilities other than werewolves and vampire Wolfen, and it can't be the latter because animals cannot be turned into vampires. It should be noted, that while this is a universally accepted belief, there is no evidence that it is true. This belief is built entirely on the fact that most humans, Elves, Dwarves and people, especially those who live away from the Great Northern Wilderness and know nothing about Wolfen other than the lies and stories told about them, believe Wolfen are one step above wild animals and share nothing in common with humanity. Thus, since Wolfen are animals, and animals cannot become vampires, there can be no such thing as Wolfen Vampires. It should be noted that Coyles are generally lumped in with Wolfen and seen as the same "animal,"

even though they look somewhat different and Wolfen are a full 3-4 feet (0.9 to 1.2 m) taller than their more savage, coyote-like cousins.

Almost forgot. It is probably not important, they say, but about a week before the logging camp went silent and the people found missing a week after that, a Western Empire Lord passed through their village. He arrived one night and seemed friendly if aloof and condescending. The man identified himself as Lord Salizar of the Western Empire. He refused to discuss what he was doing so far from home other than saying he was tending to some family business. The logging camp is known to be sponsored by Western Empire nobles, but not by the Salizar family. The farmers can't remember the names of (and don't care about) the Western nobles bankrolling the logging camp, but they are sure there was no mention of the Salizar family. The man lingered for a few hours, asked questions about "the Wolfen problem," and how many Wolfen were known to be in the area (not many). The farmers told the man they don't have problems with Wolfen or Coyles, but the logging camp did. They, themselves, had no idea how many of either were active in the area. They were just glad they had left them alone. Of course, the farther north you travel the more Wolfen there are. The man small-talked a bit before taking his leave, heading north.

Unless asked, the farmers don't think to mention that the nobleman did not have a horse, did not have any traveling companions or guards – at least none that they saw – did not have any weapons that they noticed, and seemed unafraid to be traveling alone at night, in hostile territory. They offered him a place to spend the night in the nice, cozy home of a town elder, but he politely declined the offer, saying he must be on his way. They have not seen him since and assume he met the same fate as the people in the logging camp. Or worse.

Distance to the Logging Camp: The logging camp is 25 miles (40 km) away to the North. Traveling on foot through rough country, it is a 7-10 hour journey. Four or five hours by horse or by horse and wagon via the dirt road to the camp. However, the road is the most obvious and noisy approach. Of course, the farmers are happy to lend the heroes a horse and wagon should they request one.

Suggestion the heroes stay the night: All the townspeople strongly suggest the heroes spend the rest of the afternoon and overnight in town, as they will never make it to the logging camp before nightfall. They will put the heroes up in their homes, though Gryff the Wolfen and any Ogres will have to sleep in the barn. Mainly because the people are afraid of them and their size makes accommodations indoors cramped at best.

Note: As stated earlier, these farmers are all simple peasants and all terrified, so there is no one who is willing to lead the way to the logging camp, nor willing to accompany them for any reason. They all have families who need them and they simply cannot risk not coming back. A few seem ashamed of this, but they just cannot do it. Truth be told, they would get in the way and be more trouble than help. A fact that any warrior in the group instantly recognizes.

The farmers are, however, happy to give the group food and shelter, and any supplies they may need. This is a simple farm community, so they have no magic, no military weapons, no armor, no tavern or boarding house. The simple things they do have are only the basics, like rope, blankets, torches, food, water, farm tools, and a few wagons. All of it, including their workhorses, a

few mules, oxen, milking cows and wagons, are inexpensive and low quality.

They are all very appreciative the heroes have come to help, as they know and like some of the loggers and their families, and worry most about the dozen children and the women who have gone missing.

The most impassioned plea comes from 7 year old Jimmy Fields

“Please, please, you have to help,” pleads the child.

“My friend Timmy is missin’. He’s my bestest friend in the whole world. He’s a good boy. Really! I promise. An’ his mom makes the best pies an’ his little sister, Zoey, is a pest, but she’s nice too. Cute as a bunny.”

“We play all the time when daddy takes me up to camp with him, sometimes. You know, when we bring up supplies to trade. Me and Timmy always git to go an’ play. We never done nothing bad, either. The only time we ever got in trouble was ... um ... when we went where we ain’t ‘posta be. You know, to the cave up the hill. We ain’t ‘posta go there ‘cuz it ain’t safe away from the mill an’ all. But it’s our secret place an’ nothin’ bad has never happened to us. Been there a hundret times. We would never gotten in trouble ‘cept little Zoey followed us and got scared when we ditched her. She couldn’t find her way back home ‘cuz we wuz so far from the mill. “Darn baby (she’s 5), wouldn’t stop cryin’ an’ told on us when we got home. Boy did I get scolded and poor Timmy got a lickin’. Dad hasn’t taken me back up there since. Good thing, I reckon.”

“But that’s all we ever done bad. Please, you gotta save Timmy. I’m so scared for him, and Zoey, and their mom and dad. Won’t you help? Please. Promise me you’ll save ‘em. Save ‘em all!”

With that, Jimmy bursts into tears.

The parents of the boy pull the wee lad aside to console him. They can confirm that Jimmy and Timmy are like two peas in a pod and the best of friends. They know nothing about the cave or what it looks like. It is the first they have heard about this secret hideaway. No, Jimmy cannot draw a map to it or what it looks like. Under absolutely no circumstance will the parents let the boy accompany the heroes to show them the way, and no good aligned characters, let alone a Knight, Paladin or Priest, would ever allow putting a child in such grave danger.

All Jimmy can tell the heroes is that the cave is not far from the logging camp, maybe 2-3 miles due North. And not far from the river either, maybe 300 hundred yards (meters). The opening to the cave is hidden behind some rocks and a cluster of tall weeds located at the base of the first hill. It is a small opening, but big enough for a man or Wolfen to squeeze through. A very tight squeeze for the latter. Inside is a chamber about the size of a sitting room. On the exact opposite end across from the opening is another, larger opening that leads to a really big chamber. Bigger than a barn. Even bigger than the mill.

Spending the Night in Farmville

These are simple, peasant farmers who are exactly what they appear to be. There is no town per se and there’s not even a trading post, no tavern, no church or school, and not even a main

road. The community is a cluster of homesteads and small farms. Each with a little sod or wood home, a barn or two, perhaps an animal pen and a few acres of crops, and repeat. About 15 of them. That’s the entire community.

They have tiny homes, almost shacks, so only one or two of the player characters can be accommodated, so each is invited to stay as a guest in different homes for a hearty meal and a good night’s rest.

If the group wants to stay together, they need to pitch camp outdoors or spend the night in a barn. Any player character(s) who wants to stand guard or wander the community is free to do so.

Spending the night in the logging community is mostly uneventful. Dozens of wolves are heard howling in the distance. Most are a good 8-10 miles away, but sound carries on the wind at night in the wild, and some are much closer. Their cries to the moon – not quite a full moon, that will happen the next night – are indeed, unnatural and unnerving even to experienced heroes.

Any character with tracking skills is able to find wolf tracks, more than you would expect to find, throughout the community of scattered family farms. Many are fresh. Most are ordinary wolves. Some are Coyle tracks that lead back into the woods before their trail is lost. Many are fresh over the last day or two, but it is clear, the farmers have been under observation for at least the last week or two.

Otherwise the night is uneventful.

If the Game Master (G.M.) wants to throw in a little suspense and action, a very large wolf or two is spotted. Its large size is unusual and its eyes glow red. It seems to be watching the player character(s) and even keeping pace with him or her from a distance.

If the large wolf is approached by anyone it quickly runs off into the shadows of the woodlands and disappears. Its trail vanishing into the night along with the animal. Werewolf? Maybe. Vampire or vampire Wolfen in wolf form? Could be.

If the group heads out, night falls before they are even halfway to the logging camp. Jump ahead to the First Encounter and possibly even running into vampires should they reach the logging camp while it is still dark.

Heading to the Logging Camp

Going by land: The easiest and least obvious way to travel is by foot on dry land, either via the narrow dirt road to the logging camp or through the woods. The road is barely that, just cleared vegetation and two worn strips from wagons and foot travel. Traveling the road is as safe as going through the woods.

Traveling through the dense underbrush of the forest adds two hours to the trip, and will be noisy even for characters trying to be quiet. It is no safer than traveling by road, and more arduous and tiring for both people and horses. A wagon cannot go via the forest.

Going by river is not advisable: Unless someone in the group has a skill with flatbed boats, traveling by water is *not an option*. It is a difficult trip by water. First, the group needs to make their way on land 12 miles (19.2 km) to where the marooned barges can be found. (The farmers do not have boats of any kind.) Then one of the marooned barges needs to gotten off the rocky shore where it crashed, and used to carry the group upstream, against the current, to the logging camp. Not ideal and requires someone



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who knows what he is doing. This method of travel is not faster than travel by foot and slower than by wagon.

Flying ahead: Anyone flying ahead sees lots and lots of forest. These are dense woodlands, so to search for people, bodies, trails or tracks, the flyer must fly below the tree canopy which could make the character a target for any number of things. If the flyer is metamorphed into a bird like a raven, he may also be targeted by a falcon or hawk plentiful in these woods. Care is necessary. If the flyer reaches the logging operation, it is abandoned and as described. Landing to look around is ill advised, but up to the player. What he might find or who or what he might encounter (see Pinch) is up to the G.M. There is a pack of 1D6+4 wolves prowling around.

In all cases, the landscape is lush and beautiful (spring or summertime), there is no hint of death, undead or unusual threats, and is just the way the farmers described it.

The First Encounter

It does not matter exactly where, but at some place a third or halfway to the logging camp, someone in the player group realizes they are being shadowed by a band of Coyles. Worse, there are Coyles on both sides of them. They haven't ambushed the adventurer group yet, but they could at any point.

If the group stops and calls them out, the leader of the Coyles and 4-5 of his warriors step out to address the leader(s) of the player group. Though five or six of them have shown themselves, it is clear there are another eight or more lurking among the trees on both sides of the group, ready to pounce at a moment's notice. Our heroes are outnumbered. It is time to talk and be diplomatic.

The Coyle warriors are clad only in loincloths, leather bands, and the occasional helmet and bits of armor. A few carry swords and weapons of metal, the rest carry long spears (Lucerne Hammer pole arms, actually) and weapons of stone and wood. Teeth, usually animal, sometimes humanoid, dangle from around their necks or arm bands as jewelry. All of them are fierce-looking and softly growling. Through gritted teeth, only the leader does the talking. He can speak in the Wolfen, Northern and Gobblely languages and is here to issue an ultimatum: Kill the new evil, gather the missing humans, and take them back home to the kingdoms of men in the south. Leave the humans here, and they, the Coyles, will slaughter them like sheep. **Note:** After all they have gone through, any survivors are happy to leave the Disputed Lands behind forever.

Game Masters, you can role-play this out and embellish the actual conversation as much as you would like, but here are the main talking points.

- Humans and their lapdog allies (Dwarves, Elves, etc.) do not belong here. This is Wolfen and Coyle territory. When their business is done here, they need to leave.
- The only reason the heroes are not already dead is that the Coyles know who they are and why they have come. That they are here to investigate evil, supernatural goings-on with the intent of slaying the monsters responsible and restore order to the land.
- It is because they are here to fight a greater evil that the Coyles will *allow them safe passage* through "their land," and safe passage out of it. This includes the heroes and any humans they can convince to go with them, which could include dozens of people from the logging camp if they can find them and

if they are still alive. The leader of the Coyles warns that if they are not gone 10 days after the threat has been dispatched, any people at the East River Logging Camp will be slaughtered by him and his warriors. This is a promise, not a threat. **Note:** Characters may feel free to engage in the political debate of who the land belongs to, but the Coyles have a strong argument of having inhabited these forests for thousands of years, and it is best not to antagonize an armed force of hostiles, especially going into unknown danger and hoping to return with nearly 100 innocent men, women and children in tow.

- The Coyles can confirm everything the farmers have told them about the logging camp, but nothing more.
- The Coyles know nothing of a cave.
- The Coyles know nothing about a Western noble. They have not seen him or any other outsiders. Only their clan and a small band of Wolfen soldiers passing through a while back.
- The Coyles have not been attacked, themselves. However, they, like the farmers, have given the logging camp and the area around it a wide berth, especially at night.
- They report wolves behaving in an unnatural manner and confirm the howling all night is not normal. The Coyle leader goes on to say that the wolves howling and aggressive behavior seems designed to frighten people away from the area. A ploy that is working.
- The Coyles are convinced there are no werewolves in the region. They believe this is the work of one or more *vampires*.
- They also fear that one or more Wolfen may have been turned into vampires. If that is the case, they all have much to fear. Human vampires are deadly enough, an 8-10 foot (2.4 to 2 m) Wolfen vampire that is stronger and faster than humans or other canine people to begin with, sends chills down the spine of even the savage Coyles. They love their freedom and have no desire to be turned into the undead and made to serve a monstrous master.
- They have also caught a glimpse of the massive wolf with glowing red eyes. They have seen it twice, both times at night leading a pack of 30+ ordinary wolves. They did not try to approach such a large pack, but such large numbers in a single pack is also unusual.
- They know nothing about Timmy or any of the missing people. They could care less, except that something unnatural is going on and maybe using them or feeding upon them. Something that could be a threat to the canine people as well as human scum. A threat that – though they are loath to admit it – is likely to be beyond their capability to handle. For that reason, the Coyles will tolerate *demon slayers* and heroes from the outside world to find their people, lead them away, and most importantly, to put an end to the unnatural evil that has invaded the Wolfen and Coyle woodlands.
- This canine clan's hatred for humans and other non-canine people is much too great for them to join forces with the heroes. The player group cannot count on their assistance. They are on their own. However, the Coyles will be true to their word about safe passage in and out of the region. **G.M. Note:** That said, at least a squad of Coyles, if not the entire band, will continue to follow from a distance without the player group knowing they are nearby. They do this to learn what danger has invaded "their forest" and to learn the fate of these so-called heroic demon-slayers. That means, at the G.M.'s discretion, a few to 24 Coyles could intercede on the heroes' behalf

as the proverbial cavalry if absolutely necessary to save them or to finish off the threat and to save the day (and the player characters' lives).

- If a Wolfen or Coyle is with the “demon slayers” the Coyles question their brother’s choice of companions, and consider him or her to be misguided, but they do not attack the canine character unless he attacks them first. If that Wolfen is the famous **Gryff**, they know of him and that he associates with humans in what the Coyles believe is a foolish and meaningless effort to show outsiders that Wolfen are not wild animals nor barbarians. They respect him for this, and the fact that he has fought and slain demons, but will oppose him if they come at odds with him or his companions.

When this encounter discussion is over, the Coyles back off into the woods. Never turning their eyes away from the intruders, and vanish into the shadows not to be seen (unless they want to be seen), again.

The rest of a daytime journey is uneventful until they reach the outskirts of the East River Logging Camp. If they left at dawn, around 6:00 AM (depending on the time of year, let us assume it is the end of Spring or beginning of Summer when the hours of light are long) the group should arrive by early afternoon. Midnight if they left later or got detoured along the way. In any case, they should have plenty of time (4-8 hours) to investigate the logging camp and even make a run at the vampires if they can figure out where they sleep during the day.

The place is exactly as described by the farmers, but early upon their arrival they encounter a frisky, and somewhat annoying Goblin named **Pinch**.

Game Master Eyes Only

As the name suggests, Pinch is a low level thief. One who cannot help but to try to cut the purse strings of any money pouch, purse or sack he spies, or to pick the pockets of everyone he can. If he should get caught in the act of thievery, Pinch always plays dumb and tries to talk his way out of trouble. “Oh my, gosh. Your purse-string broke. Lucky for you, Ol’ Pinch caught it (or found it on the ground.) I was just about to hand it to you.” Big grin.)

Though it is usually obvious he is lying, Pinch thinks he is a smooth operator and convincing liar. (He has his moments.) And failing that, he hopes his winning personality will charm his way out of trouble. Of course, his personality is not so winning.

G.M. Note: I have found that how much crap a group is willing to take from Pinch depends on the individual players. Some put up with a lot and go along good-naturedly, trying to get as much help or information out of the scoundrel as they can. Pinch is not too bright and cannot count, so his cooperation (well, to a point), can be won through offering him what looks or sounds like a lot of money, an equal share even if there is nothing to share yet, as well as bribes and payment for info. Feigned friendship and camaraderie can also work on the Goblin.

Pinch is a greedy Goblin Thief who always refer’s to himself in the third person (“Pinch is your partner. You can trust, Pinch. But never trust a Goblin. They’re all lairs and thieves. Oh! Except me, of course! You can always trust your buddy, Pinch!). Which means he is always looking for a snatch and grab opportunity or a

mark to cheat or rob. That includes people he truly considers to be friends and allies, as well as the bad guys and innocent bystanders. ALWAYS! He can barely control himself from stealing. His eyes go wide when he sees something valuable and he wants it. It also means he is always looking for the big caper with that once in a lifetime payoff – which he thinks this situation is – more on that in a bit. He is also happy to earn a little fame and bragging rights to woo the Goblin and Orc ladies, and to impress his fellow Goblins.

A braggart and a liar, Pinch often bends the truth, does not reveal everything he knows, and is prone to exaggeration and embellishment. For example, he claims to be a connoisseur of alcoholic beverages but cannot tell the difference between swill and a fine brandy. Like most Goblins, his favorite meal is rat stew and Pinch has a sweet tooth for candy, honey, and fruit pies.

Be warned, if Pinch thinks he is not getting his full, promised share of loot, he will rob his teammates blind when he gets the chance. His greed and lack of guile can get Pinch and his “friends” or “associates” into trouble. Remember the little Dickens can be easily bribed and tricked, and he has a big mouth and loose lips that can be a problem. Pinch thinks he is more clever and cunning than he really is, so he is oblivious that he talks too much or any of his other faults. (Think of the Joe Pesci character, *Leo Getz*, in the *Lethal Weapon* movies.) Pinch will switch sides or disappear when things get tough, but he’ll switch back when his “friends” look like they are coming out on top or have come into money. He will, of course, claim he was just pretending and was planning to rescue them, betray the bad guys, etc.

Pinch, Goblin Thief

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 13, M.A. 15, P.S. 11, P.P. 19, P.E. 13, P.B. 9, Spd 11 running, 5 digging.

Hit Points: 27. **S.D.C.:** 12.

P.P.E.: 24.

Horror Factor: None.

Age: 23 years.

Size: 3 feet, 3 inches (1 m) tall.

Weight: 48 pounds (21.6 kg).

Disposition: Discussed at length, above. A talkative, fun-loving thief with a big dream to strike it filthy rich. Pinch is usually cheerful and friendly.

Physical Appearance: A short, thin humanoid with the build and general body shape of a muscular 7 year old. Pointed ears, and large-ish noses.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), normal day vision, and an aptitude for digging. See pages 299-300 of the **Palladium Fantasy Role-Playing Game®** for complete details about Goblins.

Skills of Note: Card Shark 37%, Concealment 38%, Dance 40%, Escape Artist 45%, Detect Concealment & Traps 45%, Identify Plants & Fruits 50%, Land Navigation 58%, Languages (Gobblely 98%, Eastern, and Western 65%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors 40%, Palming 30%, Pick Locks 55%, Pick Pockets 55%, Prowl 35%, Streetwise 42%, Surveillance 35%, Track & Trap Animals 30/40%, Wilderness Survival 60% and Hand to Hand: Basic. **Note:** Pinch does not know math, cannot count and is illiterate, though he may pretend otherwise.



Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike and parry), W.P. Knife (+1 to strike, +2 to parry and throw), W.P. Targeting/Thrown Weapons (+2 to strike).

Level of Experience: 3rd level Thief.

Damage: As per punch, kick or weapon.

Attacks per Melee: Two.

Bonuses: +4 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge (these include P.P. bonus), +2 to roll/fall/impact, +2 to pull punch, Kick attack.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Armor: Soft leather, A.R. 10, S.D.C. 20.

Weapons: A black jack (1D6 damage), a pick (2D4 damage), and 3 throwing knives, of which one is silver-plated (1D6 damage each). One is usually concealed in each boot, and one on his belt.

Additional Equipment: Wears a cap, has two pairs of leather gloves, wears a vest with many concealed pockets in the lining, soft leather boots for prowling and tailing, set of lock picking tools, a belt, a coin purse, a pouch, three small sacks, one medium-size sack, one large sack, 3 small animal snares, 2 pounds (0.9 kg) of jerked beef, a pint of poor quality rum, satchel, a water skin and flint and tinder box, 149 gold coins, 32 silver coins found in the logging camp, and a small silver cross dropped by the Priestess in the church when she was slain by the undead. He keeps all of this hidden at a secret location. His rope is tied to the barge.

This is the cheerful scoundrel the player characters encounter near or at the logging camp. Most likely after he has stolen or tried to steal one or two of their coin purses, targeting the richest looking people in the group such as a Paladin, Knight, Priest or Wizard, first. By the way, he doesn't trust Wizards or any spell casters, and he really doesn't trust other Goblins.

If a member of the group goes to the **barge marooned on the rocks** a few hundred yards before the logging camp, they might encounter Pinch there. Especially if one or more of them try to pull the barge to shore or even talk about using the barge for any reason.

"Hey, hands off, buddy. That barge is mine! I found it fair and square. I claimed it. It's mine."

Indeed, there is a rope tied to a tree near shore that is tethered to the barge. The Goblin uses it to climb down to get on the barge from land. The barge is where Pinch has been living for the past few weeks under a pile of rags. There he is safe from the wolves and the vampires that prowl at night. He is insignificant, so if they have noticed him, they don't care and have ignored him. Likewise, it was Pinch who has ransacked the homes, stealing anything he thinks has value and is Goblin-portable. That stash of loot is minuscule and hidden, away from the barge. "These people are paupers. Hard to find a silver piece." But he did find some booze and has had plenty of human food to eat while hiding out. Watching and waiting for an opportunity to make his move. The arrival of the player group is seen as a new opportunity to get what he wants.

Here's his story: Pinch didn't work at the logging camp, he just happened by and found the place deserted. He doesn't know what happened and has only been here for few days. He says he has looked around, and has seen the big wolf with red eyes leading 10-20 other wolves. Otherwise, he knows nothing. Right.

Note: Pinch didn't work at the camp, but was there when it fell under attack. Pinch doesn't want to reveal too much or scare these people away. He knows about the ancient relic rumored to be in these woods and knows it is worth a king's ransom. He hopes to use these clowns ... er ... heroes to either get him close enough to the ancient Rune weapon so he can steal it, or to help them get it and get an equal share when he convinces them to sell it for the aforementioned king's ransom.

He also knows about the Western noble, **Lord Salizar**. That's how he found out about the legendary Rune weapon, known as the Blood Fang. A rare and powerful mythic weapon that is so rare, most people have never heard of it. Pinch overheard Salizar's spies tell him all about the item and where it is supposed to be located, just before the noble killed them both with his bare hands. Snapped their necks like kindling. Pinch doesn't know for certain, but he is pretty sure Lord Salizar is a vampire and the guy who has made Wolfen vampires. ("Oh, did I forget to mention the Wolfen vampires? Sorry. Yeah, there are five Wolfen vampires. Didn't know dogs could become vampires. Did you?")

Pinch knows where the people are, where the cave is located, and where the vampires sleep at night. He also knows more about the Blood Fang, as told to him by the Priestess before the vampires attacked, killed her, the camp's defenders, and set the church on fire for good measure.

Vital Game Master Notes: Have fun playing Pinch. I have used him in many game sessions as well as tournaments for decades, **but** be aware that some players will NOT put up with him and either knock him out or tie him up, put him on the barge and send it off. Or leave him tied up someplace or even try to kill him (he runs away before that happens). They are always glad to be rid of the annoying, untrustworthy little scamp, **HOWEVER** it means they do not learn any of the valuable information above, or below, that Pinch has to offer. They will have to find things out the hard way or via a vision from their deity (if a priest). This also

probably means waiting till the **vampires show up at night!** If they survive the night (thank goodness there is a river along the edge of the logging camp), they need to regroup, find where the undead are hiding during the day (the cave seems like the obvious candidate, but where the heck is it?), and work out a plan to kill the vampires.

Scaling this Adventure: Also note that I run large games. My tournament games usually has 10-14 players, which is why there are FIVE Wolfen vampires plus Lord Salizar. That is waaaay too powerful and deadly for most player groups of 4-6 players. I recommend you either allow the players to run two NPCs for this adventure, or reduce the number of enemies down to Lord Salizar and one or two Wolfen vampires. I have provided 10 or 12 of the tournament characters for your consideration and use. Enjoy.

Still Game Master's Eyes Only

The following important bits of information are revealed as players put up with Pinch's antics and say or do things that compels the Goblin to reveal bits of what he knows, blurt things out or share his secrets in order to get his equal share of any treasure and a fair cut from the sale of the magic artifact. Of course, his negotiations start with him getting half of the profits since he "knows things and you need me." Sort of.

Lord Salizar is a vampire and the guy stirring up all the trouble. "Yeah and he's made five Wolfen vampires to help him and to protect the dig site."

Pinch knows he's looking for the super-powerful, mythical **Blood Fang Rune Weapon**. Though that reveal is likely to come out with a slip of the lip, like, "That's because that creepy Western Empire noble wants the Blood Fang."

"Um, what's the Blood Fang you ask? Uh, gee, didn't I mention that already? No? Well it's ..." (Pinch knows the legend). Or he may say something like this. "Alright, here's the deal. I tell you about the Blood Fang, but only if you help me get it, and help me sell it, because guys like you can probably get a better price. I'll cut you guys in for half when we sell it. Hey, don't look at me like that, this crazy thing is worth a king's ransom. No, really it is. A king's ransom, I tell ya! A king's ransom. Let me tell you why." And he spills his guts, telling them everything he knows.

What happened to the townspeople. "So Lord Salizar shows up one night, all cocky with his scary face on. He's just standing there in the street bold as can be, and tells them, they work for him now. That he owns them. That if they try to fight him they can't win. Help him find what he wants and he'll let them live after they help him find what he wants. Yeah, right. Like that was gonna happen.

"Anyway, the Priestess comes out holding up a silver cross and telling him to be gone. Dumb right, but you know how priests are. A bunch of the men come out with wooden stakes and spears and hammers. They thought they were ready for him. I had warned the priestess. Okay ... I told her about the relic and tried to partner up with her, right. But nooooo. She got all holy roller on me. Said something about a vision from her god Od and how it showed Salizar with army after army of Wolfen vampires wiping out cities and towns across the land. Nothin' could stop them. All because he got the Blood Fang. I said, look, kill him, we dig up the place ... well, you know ... and she could sell it to some big

church to hide it away, I'm rich, the church gets a cut, the world is safe and we all live happily every after. Perfect.

"But nooo, she gets some of the guys riled up and they start secretly planning to find and kill the vampire — there was only one at first, right? They kept the thing quiet as to not scare everyone. Like that worked.

"So anyway, when Salizar shows up they come out ready to fight. Even I know that's a bad idea. Next thing you know, these five big, and I mean BIG, wolves show up, he starts to laugh and ... it was a bloodbath. These wolves were smart. Like Goblin smart. They attack, go for the legs to cripple some and kill them easy later. Some go for the throat. They're screaming and all of a sudden, three of the wolves turn into Wolfen and things really get ugly. Horrible. After they ripped the priestess apart and killed the men, the rest of the people surrendered. Salizar torched the church to be mean I guess. Had people, kids and everyone, gather up picks and hammers and shovels and digging tools and marched them off into the woods. Found out later they're all in the cave."

The dig site and the missing people. "Its inside this cave. Followed one of the vampire there one night just before day-break. They've got people diggin' away day and night. Ain't found nothin' yet because they are still here. I say we all lay low and wait until they find the ancient relic, then you guys clobber them, kill all the vampires and we're all rich! Did I mention this thing's worth a king's ransom? A king's ransom."

There are five Wolfen vampires all created by Lord Salizar. "Yeah, turn these many Wolfen soldiers," holds up his hand to show 5 fingers, "into vamps. They do everything he tells them to do. He's the big boss, but even if you guys kill him first, I think we still have to kill those other ones. Unless I nab the Blood Fang than I can control them and ... uh ... keep us all safe from them."

The wolf pack. "Yeah, yeah, there's a bunch 'o wolves howling all night. The ones you have to worry about is the ones that guard the cave, from intruders during the daytime. This ain't like a regular wolf pack this is like a giant herd of them. One of the feral Wolfen vampires or Big Boss Salizar leads the pack at night. Scary. Never much liked wolves. A pack ate my cousin Lenny and his sister Loraine once. Let me tell you about that. It was ugly ..."

Attacking the vampires. "What?! Wait till nightfall! Are you crazy?!? If you're dead set on attacking the vampires BEFORE their human captives find the Blood Fang, you gotta do it now. During the day when the sun is out. Night, that's their time. Their element. You're all dead if you fight them at night. Okay, okay. Look, I'll take you to their lair. It's not far. It's in the cave."

No silver or weapons in town. At least not that Pinch knows about. If pressed he reveals he has a few silver coins and two silver candlesticks he stole ... er ... found in the church after the fire. And he is willing to sell them to his partners so they can be melted down to coat arrow tips, spears and other weapons. "These people didn't have nothing of real value. So disappointing. That's okay, all you need is wood and water or sunlight to kill them. That's what the priestess told me."

The blacksmith. The forge is cold, but it can be easily fired up. "Don't waste your time. There ain't nothin' good there. Just metal and tools."

What about Timmy? “Timmy, Jimmy? I don’t know. I already told you, there were kids. Salizar took them all to the cave to work along with everyone else.”

A possible Third Encounter

If the heroes don’t go to find and fight the vampires immediately, while they still have a few hours of sunlight left, Centurion Julius will approach them shortly after sunset. This is the only Wolfen who hates being a vampire and who believes the plan to create armies of Wolfen vampires to conquer the world is evil and wrong.

He comes to warn the heroes that he and the others will soon come for them and they must be ready. If they don’t already know about it, Julius tells them about the Blood Fang, Salizar’s plan for global conquest, where they sleep during the day, where the people are locked away and that the heroes must survive the night and stop them after the sun rises. Lord Salizar must be destroyed and the ancient artifact never recovered. Alas, Julius cannot help them as long as Salizar lives, for he must obey the commands of his maker. The conversation ends abruptly with the Wolfen saying, “The Master calls. I must go. May the gods smile upon you this night.” And runs into the woods, turning into a massive wolf in mid-stride.

Showdown at the Cave

Sooner or later, the heroes need to find their way to the cave. Unless he’s not part of the plan, Pinch can take them there.

Julius, the Wolfen vampire who is against Lord Salizar, can give them a good idea where it is and tells them he and the other vampires sleep in the small, adjoining cave.

Any character with tracking skills should be able to follow the trail left by 90 or 100 people, even if it is two or three weeks later. There are also wolf trails and tracks all around the hill and some leading up to the opening.

It is prudent for any Priests to do all the praying for deific intervention or visions, etc. Because of the gravity of the situation, I give clergy a **+12% bonus** on the success of a *Prayer of Strength*, *Prayer of Communication*, and even for a *Prayer of Intervention*. And I give them two tries for any *one* of these prayers. A *prayer for a Miracle* gets no bonus (miracles are rare) and the answer to that prayer for a Miracle must make sense, like the deity delivering to the Warlock a Lesser Water Elemental, or something else that seems appropriate to save the day, move the boulder, and/or destroy vampires. G.M. discretion. Give it some thought. **Vision Note:** Communication with a deity will come as a vision. It confirms Lord Salizar’s plans for global conquest and shows him with Wolfen Vampires at his side. He is holding the Blood Fang above his head while laughing with glee. Then the vision switches to a bird’s-eye view showing thousands of Wolfen Vampires swarming across a battlefield like locusts, striking down soldiers like a farmer cutting wheat with a scythe. All of this confirms Salizar’s wicked intentions. The vision might also reveal where the enslaved people are imprisoned and where the vampires sleep. And probably conveys an intense sense of urgency. To not wait. Strike now before nightfall and before the fiends know of your presence.

Likewise, if any **Warlocks** intends to try to summon a Lesser Air or Water Elemental, they should do so *before* the party heads

for the cave, or immediately upon arrival. Because of the gravity of the situation, I usually give Warlocks a +10% chance for success and two or three tries, but not more than that. Success is in the hands of Fate.

The Wolf Pack Guards. Thirty wolves patrol the hills and guard the entrance to the cave. They are the vampires’ daytime protectors and fight to the death. Those with magic might have a way to handle this threat without killing the animals. One group held them off until everyone was inside the first cave and sealed the entrance, locking the wolves out. Killing only 5 in the process.

Entering the cave during sunlight hours while the six vampires sleep is the smart play, but there can be an argument for coming at night.

The cave is at the foot of the first hill not far from the river, just like Timmy described. The opening is small and tight, but even a Wolfen can squeeze through with some effort. Those going inside must do so single file, one at a time.

Inside, the first cave chamber is roughly 20 feet (6.1 m) in diameter.

Directly across from the opening is the arch of another cave opening, but a boulder that completely seals the opening has been pushed in place on the other side. The player group will require all their combined strength or Supernatural P.S. assistance to move the stone. It can also be done with the cooperation of the 90+ people from the logging camp who are on the other side. If the group listens carefully they can hear the sound of pick-axes, hammers and voices on the other side of the boulder. If the people hear the heroes they will shout and plead for rescue. Thankfully, their voices are muffled or they might wake the vampires.

The place where the vampires sleep is less accessible. They slumber in a small 15 foot (4.6 m) cave chamber with a low, 5 foot (1.5 m) ceiling, requiring them to crouch when they awaken. The cave’s entrance from where our heroes are located is a tunnel slightly larger than a grapefruit in diameter. It runs 100 feet (30.5 m) before it opens up into the 15 foot (4.6 m) cave described above. It is the ideal sanctuary accessible to them by metamorphosis into a mist, or even a bat. It is also accessible to anyone who can turn into a mouse, rat, bat, ferret, or similar small, low-profile animal. (Say, like the Cobbler NPC if allowed as a player character. But let the players figure this out.)

Notes for a possible Easy Kill: Let the players figure this out. At the POH, using the NPCs provided, two-thirds of the player groups came up with the following plan, so your group might too, especially if they are using the pre-generated tournament NPCs presented at the end. **1.** A Lesser Water Elemental is successfully summoned, which is no guarantee. **2.** Send in the Cobbler as a rat to make sure who is present in the small cave. Jackpot! It is all of the vampires, including Salizar. The risk is if the Cobbler snoops around too much or tries to steal something and awakens one or more of the vampires. **3.** The Priestess blesses the Elemental, turning it into walking Holy Water. **4.** The Water Elemental (Air can do this too) flows thorough the pipe-like tunnel and fills half chamber with its Holy Water essence to consume the vampires. If they think of it, the group should tell the Water Elemental to seal the narrow tunnel with ice first, so none can get away. (If not, one or two will escape through the tunnel as mist, reform and battle our heroes!) The Elemental then fights them, each punch doing double damage as flowing water, until they are all killed, usually in short order.

To be safe, the heroes might want to see if they can collapse the caves, particularly the big, football stadium-sized chamber where the people were digging, or at least the small cave entrance. Or the group can try to dig and search for the Blood Fang themselves – Pinch sure will – but they won't find it or anything else of value. *Or will they?* This could lead to another adventure. They don't find the Blood Fang (it doesn't exist), but maybe they unearth ancient Dwarven or Kobold tunnels, or ruins or a different relic or Rune weapon, or curse, or monster.

All other scenarios involve taking down the vampires one by one. See Western Empire for complete details on vampires and how to kill them in such a way that they cannot regenerate and return. With the exception of Centurion Julius, any other revived Wolfen Vampire will seek revenge. Lord Salizar is the most vengeful. He will believe they ruined his plans and effectively destroyed his family's legacy. He may even decide one of them has the Blood Fang or knows where it is. As a result, the player group becomes his new revenge obsession. He wants them all to die a slow and painful death.

Rewards: **A)** Disaster averted! No more Wolfen vampires. No conquering army. **B)** People saved. They still have no idea what they were digging for and it is probably best to keep it that way. **C)** Timmy and Jimmy reunited. **D)** Fame. Their reputations are further enhanced. **E)** Grateful people at the logging camp offer the heroes whatever basic supplies, food, wine and money that Pinch has not already stolen. They can have a barge too, if they want one. The farmers might let the heroes keep any horse and wagon they might have lent the group. **F)** A job proposal, the loggers' boss or the noble who bankrolled the operation might have another job for adventurers of their caliber. One that pays big. **G)** Pinch or one of the other character or maybe one of the enslaved children, knows where Lord Salizar hid his belongings, which are worth some coin. See his weapons and descriptions. The Centurion's weapons and armor should be stowed someplace too. Most are Wolfen-Sized, but they can be sold for some money (15-25% of actual value).

Note: Everyone at the logging camp have no problem gathering their belongings and leaving this place forever. Including the boss.

The NPC Characters

Here are the descriptions and stats for the Coyles, evil Lord Salizar, and the Wolfen Vampires. They are followed by the most notable of the DeSilca tournament characters. These heroes are a bit higher level since battling Lord DeSilca and his minions of Hades. Enjoy.

The Coyles

Dark Sky, the Leader

The leader of the Coyle marauders is aptly named, Dark Sky. He is a menacing figure who appears to be bristling with controlled fury. Dark Sky leads with a strong hand and is clever and resourceful, and utterly merciless when necessary. It is also said that the Fates smile upon him, though he, himself is not so sure of that.

Dark Sky has heard about the "wolves that cry all night" and rumors of vampires, so he has come to investigate. He intends to

take whatever measures necessary to prevent the undead plague from spreading into his homeland or anywhere in the North. However, he will let outsiders do the dirty work if they can accomplish the deed. After all, he is certain it was an outsider who has brought the undead to the Disputed Lands, so it is only fitting that outsiders resolve the problem. Should they fail, he and his brethren will be watching and step in when it is necessary. There are a total of 24 Coyles under Dark Sky's command, though outsiders seldom see more than six of them.

G.M. Note: Should they come into play, the other Coyles are fundamentally the same as the Mercenary Fighters, Thieves and Ranger stated out below; all around 3rd level. The most common alignments are Anarchist, Aberrant and Miscreant, but can be any. **Alignment:** Aberrant evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 13, M.A. 21, P.S. 15, P.P. 21, P.E. 15, P.B. 15, Spd 27.

Hit Points: 48. **S.D.C.:** 32.

P.P.E.: 11

Horror Factor: 11

Age: 27 years.

Size: 7 feet, 3 inches tall (2.18 m).

Weight: 280 pounds (126 kg) of muscle and sinew.

Physical Appearance: Body is covered in grey colored fur; muzzle, canine teeth, powerful jaws; green eyes.

Disposition: A smart, capable leader with a surprising amount of self-control and discipline for a Coyle. Cool under fire and has a good head for guerrilla strategies and tactics. Dislikes humans and those who side with them, and is ruthless in combat. Some believe he is destined to become a great leader among the Coyle people.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), normal day vision, superior sense of smell and hearing.

Skills of Note: Climb/Scale Walls 75/70%, Concealment 54%, Detect Concealment & Traps 60%, Intelligence 50%, Land Navigation 80%, Language (Wolfen 98%, Northern, and Gobbly at 80%), Math (Basic 90%), Paired Weapons, Palming 60%, Pick Locks 70%, Prowl 70%, Running, Sign Language 60%, Track Humanoids 60%, and Hand to Hand: Assassin.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Archery (+3 to strike, Rate of Fire: 5 per melee round), W.P. Sword (+3 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 to throw), Shield (+1 to strike, +3 to parry), and W.P. Pole Arm (+3 to strike and parry, +1 to throw, +2 to damage).

Experience Level: Sixth level Assassin.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +4 to damage, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +5 to pull punch, +4 to disarm, +3 to body flip/throw, +5 to save vs Horror Factor.

Damage: Bite does 1D6 points of damage, claws do 1D6+4 points of damage, kick attack/Karate style does 2D4 damage, Snap Kick does 1D6 damage, or by weapon.

Magic: None, except for his talisman. See Valuables, below.

Psionics: None.

Armor: Half suit of chain mail (A.R. 9, 20 S.D.C.) and helmet (80 S.D.C.)

Weapons: Oversized short sword (Wolfen-sized; 2D6 damage), regular, though silver-plated short sword (2D4 damage), a dagger (1D6 damage), a Lucerne Hammer (spear-like pole arm; 3D6 damage), a medium-sized wood and metal plated shield (50 S.D.C.), and eight wooden stakes and a wooden

mallet. One of his warriors carries his long bow and a quiver of 18 arrows (2D6 damage each).

Valuables: In addition to weapons and armor, Dark Sky has more than most Coyles with 26 gold pieces, 5 silver pieces, and 4 gems (each worth 80 gold), all in a pouch, a water skin and flint and tinder box.

Around his neck, Dark Sky wears a heavy gold chain with three large, silver and six small discs. Upon each is an identical black death's head/skull design set into the silver disc. It is a favorite "trophy" he took off the body of a priest. He single-handedly slew three of the man's protectors and finally, the priest himself, in one-on-one combat. The Coyle came close to death himself that day, but made a miraculous recovery. What he does not know is that the priest belonged to the cult of *Vald-Tegor, Lord of the Undead*, and that his trophy is magical.

The rare Talisman of Undeath protects the wearer from vampires and all undead, including the Master Vampire and Vampire Intelligence. It makes him impervious to the vampire's bite, mind control and hypnotic suggestions, and holds the undead at bay as a *holy symbol*. Thus, any vampire or undead that engages the wearer of the Talisman of Undeath is simultaneously repulsed by it and the undead attacker loses one melee attack, also reduce all of the undead's bonuses by half (round down). This applies to all types of undead, including animated dead, mummies and zombies! In addition, when fighting the undead, twice per 24 hour period, the talisman magically restores 6D6+12 Hit Points to the wearer and eliminates fatigue. It is said that 13 of them were created long ago for power-hungry warlords and kings who sought to command vampires among their soldiers and henchmen.

Though Dark Sky has owned the Undeath Talisman for nearly a decade and it is his most prized possession, he knows nothing of its magical powers, because he has never faced the undead before. The item is priceless to worshipers of Vald-Tegor and Utu, and worth 250,000-450,000 gold to vampire hunters, dark priests and possibly other priests and practitioners of magic.

Coyle #2: 3rd level Thief

Lynx the Nimble is quickly becoming Dark Sky's right-hand man ... or woman, in this case, as Lynx the Nimble is a female Coyle. She is young, sharp and surprisingly patient for a Coyle, let alone one so young. Dark Sky is considering making Lynx his mate; the two are very close.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 15, P.S. 13, P.P. 22, P.E. 14, P.B. 15, Spd 19.

Hit Points: 29. **S.D.C.:** 22.

P.P.E.: 12

Horror Factor: 11

Age: 17 years.

Size: 7 feet (2.1 m) tall.

Weight: 190 pounds (85.5 kg) of muscle and sinew.

Disposition: Quiet, always observing and looking for the weak link or a vulnerable victim, or the suggestion of danger. Hates humans.

Physical Appearance: Body is covered in brown colored fur; muzzle, canine teeth, powerful jaws, blue eyes, wears little clothes.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), normal day vision, superior sense of smell and hearing.

Skills of Note: Detect Ambush 50%, Detect Concealment & Traps 45%, Language (Wolfen 98%, Elven, Western 60%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors 40%, Math: Basic 55%, Pick Locks 55%, Pick Pockets 50%, Prowl 35%, Running, Streetwise 42%, and Hand to Hand: Basic.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Sword (+2 to strike, +1 to parry) and W.P. Knife (+1 to strike, +2 to parry and throw).

Experience Level: 3rd level Thief.

Attacks per Melee: Two.

Damage: Bite does 1D6 points of damage, claws do 1D6+4 points of damage, kick attack/Karate style does 2D4 damage, Snap Kick does 1D6 damage, or by weapon.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +3 to disarm, +5 to pull punch, +3 to roll with punch/fall/impact, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: None.

Psionics: Minor Psychic. Empathy (4), See Aura (6), and Sense Magic (3). **I.S.P.:** 27.

Armor: Soft Leather (A.R. 10, 20 S.D.C.).

Weapons: Four knives on a bandoleer/belt worn across her chest (1D6 damage each), a silver-plated short sword, and four wooden stakes and a wooden mallet.

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than a small pouch of powder (Herbs? Poison? Drugs?), a larger pouch with a small wooden cross, 4D6 gold pieces, a large sack, three small sacks, 30 feet (9.1 m) of rope, a grappling hook, a water skin and flint and tinder box.

Coyle #3: 6th Level Ranger

Deer Slayer is the lead scout in the Coyle war band. Sure-footed, silent when on the hunt, and capable.

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 10, M.A. 4, P.S. 19, P.P. 17, P.E. 20, P.B. 10, Spd 24.

Hit Points: 27. **S.D.C.:** 14.

P.P.E.: 11

Age: 23 years.

Size: 7 feet tall (2.1 m).

Weight: 240 pounds (108 kg) of muscle and sinew.

Horror Factor: 11

Physical Appearance: Body is covered in brown colored fur; muzzle, canine teeth, powerful jaws; grey eyes.

Disposition: Deer Slayer loves life in the wilderness and the Coyle way. He enjoys hunting humans almost as much as animals. Deer Slayer doesn't hate humans but believes they should stay where they belong, south of the Disputed Lands and leave the canine people alone.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), normal day vision, superior sense of smell and hearing.

Skills of Note: Animal Husbandry 65%, Identify Plants & Fruits 60%, Land Navigation 68%, Language (Wolfen 98%, Elven and Gobblely 75%), Math: Basic 65%, Prowl 45%, Running, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides 65%, Track & Trap Animals 60/70%, Track Humanoids 60%, Wilderness Survival 60%, and Hand to Hand: Basic.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Archery/Long Bow (+1 to strike, Rate of Fire: 5 per melee round), W.P. Knife (+1 to strike, +2 to parry and throw).

Experience Level: Sixth level Ranger.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Damage: Bite does 1D6 points of damage, claws do 1D6+4 points of damage, kick attack/Karate style does 2D4 damage, snap kick does 1D6 damage or by weapon.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +4 to damage, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to pull punch, +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Armor: Hard Leather (A.R. 11, 30 S.D.C.).

Weapons: Long Bow and quiver of 23 arrows (2D6 damage each), knife (1D6 damage), a stone dagger made of flint (1D4 damage), hatchet (2D4 damage), and a broad sword (2D4+1 damage). The hatchet is suitable as a thrown weapon, hand-held weapon and for cutting brush.

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than a pouch with dried meat, two medium sacks, 20 feet (6.1 m) of rope, 3 metal spikes and mallet, two water skins and flint and tinder.

Coyle #4, 3rd level Mercenary Warrior

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 21, M.A. 7, P.S. 21, P.P. 10, P.E. 12, P.B. 9, Spd 20.

Hit Points: 35. **S.D.C.:** 21.

P.P.E.: 13

Horror Factor: 11

Age: 20 years.

Size: 7 feet, 4 inches tall (2.2 m).

Weight: 260 pounds (117 kg) of muscle and sinew.

Disposition: Brave, daring and always ready for a fight. Has no problem with humans provided they stay out of the Disputed Lands.

Physical Appearance: Body is covered in brown colored fur; muzzle, canine teeth, powerful jaws; green eyes.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), normal day vision, superior sense of smell and hearing.

Skills of Note: Athletics (General), Climb/Scale Walls 60/55%, Language (Wolfen 98%, Elven, Western 60%), Math: Basic 55%, Running, Wilderness Survival 50%, and Hand to Hand: Expert.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Knife (+1 to strike, +2 to parry and throw), W.P. Pole Arm (+2 to strike and parry, +2 to damage), W.P. Sword (+2 to strike, +1 to parry), and W.P. Shield (+2 to parry).

Experience Level: Third level Mercenary Warrior.

Attacks per Melee: Two.

Damage: Bite does 1D6 points of damage, claws do 1D6+6 points of damage, kick attack/Karate-style does 2D4 damage, Snap Kick does 1D6 damage or by weapon.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +6 to damage, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +4 to pull punch, +3 to save vs psionics, +4 to save vs insanity and +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Armor: Studded Leather (A.R. 13, 38 S.D.C.) and helmet.

Weapons: A Lucerne Hammer (spear-like pole arm; 3D6 damage), knife (1D6 damage), tomahawk/throwing axe (2D4 damage) and medium-sized round shield.

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than 3 gold pieces and 20 teeth, some human, in a pouch, a water skin and flint and tinder.

Coyle #5, Fourth level Mercenary

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 10, M.A. 4, P.S. 12, P.P. 21, P.E. 14, P.B. 9, Spd 20.

Hit Points: 30. **S.D.C.:** 18.

P.P.E.: 7

Horror Factor: 11

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), normal day vision, superior sense of smell and hearing. Enjoys fighting and hates humans.

Age: 19 years.

Size: 6 feet, 10 inches tall (2.05 m).

Weight: 230 pounds (104 kg) of muscle and sinew.

Disposition: Young, hot-headed and spoiling for a fight, but loyal and obedient to his leaders.

Physical Appearance: Body is covered in brown colored fur; muzzle, canine teeth, powerful jaws; grey eyes.

Skills of Note: Athletics (General), Climb/Scale Walls 65/60%, Language (Wolfen 98% and Northern 65%), Running, and Swim 60%, Wilderness Survival 55%, Hand to Hand: Expert.

Weapon Proficiencies: Knife (+2 to strike, parry and throw), Pole Arm (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw, +2 to damage), Sword (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), Shield (+1 to strike, +2 to parry).

Experience Level: 4th level Mercenary Warrior.

Attacks per Melee: Three.

Damage: Bite does 1D6 points of damage, claws do 1D6+4 points of damage, kick attack/Karate style does 2D4 damage, Snap Kick does 1D6 damage or by weapon.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +5 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to pull punch, +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Armor: Studded Leather (A.R. 13, 38 S.D.C.).

Weapons: A Lucerne Hammer (spear-like pole arm; 3D6 damage), knife (1D6 damage), and short sword (2D4 damage).

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than a small gem (worth 50 gold) a bear's claw in a pouch, a water skin and flint and tinder.

Coyle #6: 4th level Mercenary

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 12, M.A. 10, P.S. 12, P.P. 13, P.E. 15, P.B. 14, Spd 20.

Hit Points: 38. **S.D.C.:** 23.

P.P.E.: 7

Horror Factor: 11

Disposition: Young, hot-headed and spoiling for a fight, but loyal and obedient to his leaders. Likes to hunt and kill humans.

Age: 21 years.

Size: 7 feet, 6 inches tall (2.28 m).

Weight: 260 pounds (117 kg) of muscle and sinew.

Disposition: A steady, reliable warrior, loyal and obedient to his leader and tribe.

Physical Appearance: Body is covered in light grey colored fur; muzzle, canine teeth, powerful jaws; golden brown eyes.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), normal day vision, superior sense of smell and hearing.

Skills of Note: Athletics (General), Climb/Scale Walls 65/60%, Language (Wolfen 98%, Gobblely 65%), Land Navigation 50%, Running, Wilderness Survival 55%, and Hand to Hand: Expert.

Weapon Proficiencies: Knife (+2 to strike, parry and throw), Pole Arm (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw, +2 to damage), Sword (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), Shield (+1 to strike, +2 to parry).

Experience Level: Fourth level Mercenary Warrior.

Attacks per Melee: Three.

Damage: Bite does 1D6 points of damage, claws do 1D6 points of damage, kick attack/Karate-style does 2D4 damage, Snap Kick does 1D6 damage or by weapon.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to damage, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to pull punch, +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Armor: Studded Leather (A.R. 13, 38 S.D.C.).

Weapons: A Lucerne Hammer (spear-like pole arm; 3D6 damage), knife (1D6 damage), short sword (2D4 damage) and medium-sized round shield.

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than a few gold pieces and 1D6 human scalps in a pouch, a water skin and flint and tinder box.

The Vampires

Lord Salizar

Lord Salizar Abbamir has always had a cruel streak and a taste for the exotic and the decadent. When he was diagnosed with the wasting illness (cancer) in his fifties, the wicked noble found a way to escape death by embracing it. He tracked down a Master vampire willing to make him one of the undead. The price: The last of his family's fortune. It is not uncommon in the Empire of Sin for powerful and evil lords and ladies to become vampires. It has happened, periodically, throughout the Empire's long and checkered history. A history in which many a Western noble has turned to the powers darkness to maintain or acquire wealth and power, or save himself.

Vampire Salizar's living relatives do not know he is one of the undead. They believe he has gone to the East in search of new wealth to support the family and keep their legacy alive. He left on this mission 30 years ago after the tragic death (murder) of his third wife. However, he and a few hand-picked members of the family have only met with modest success in establishing trade in the Eastern Territory. While his inept cousins try to

raise money in the East, Lord Salizar has gone off on adventure quests in search of lost treasures in the Old Kingdoms, and more recently, in the North.

Among Western high-society, stories and rumors circulate claiming that Salizar has fled in shame to escape the humiliation of the ancient family's fall from grace and inevitable ruination. They brand him a disgrace, a suspected murderer, philanderer, con artist, coward and worse. He and his family are a laughing stock. Lord Salizar knows how the nobility scorns and mocks him and his family at home. It eats at him like the cancer he escaped, which is why he plans to make them all pay by conquering the Western Empire and becoming its Emperor. When he has accomplished that feat, he plans to take over the entire world.

Lord Salizar Abbamir has never cared or worried about anyone except himself, first, and his worthless family, second, but only because of the family's status and political influence does he care about them at all. A very old and once very wealthy and influential family, the Abbamir fortune has been frittered away by generations of aristocratic nobles living beyond their means and doing little to replenish what they spend. In the last century, the family name has become a joke to be pitied and laughed at. Has-beens headed for the poor house.

The vampire believes the last laugh shall be his. He has spent nearly the last of what he has made in the Eastern Territory buy information about the Blood Fang artifact and to fund his expedition to the Disputed Lands. He has a hot lead on the whereabouts of the mythical Rune weapon, and once he has it, he will make all people of the world bow down before him.

Lord Salizar Abbamir

Secondary Vampire from the Western Empire, and the creator of the Wolfen vampires. They are his to control.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 20, M.A. 13, P.S. 21 (Supernatural), P.P. 15, P.E. 18 (Supernatural), P.B. 11, Spd 13.

Hit Points: 134. **S.D.C.:** 36.

P.P.E.: 30

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m).

Weight: 187 lbs (84 kg).

Age: 91, but looks to be in his late fifties.

Horror Factor: 13 (15 in full vampire form).

Disposition: Currently, Lord Salizar is driven by lust for power and revenge nearly to the point of madness. He is obsessed with the dream of conquering not just the Western Empire, but the entire world. If he finds the legendary *Blood Fang*, he may be able to achieve that dream.

As a vampire, he underestimates people even more than he did when he was an arrogant Western Empire noble. Salizar believes he is superior to all mortals. He is cold, ruthless and merciless, and has no empathy or compassion for the plight of the living. All he cares about is himself and his dream for global domination. Even vampire warriors and any henchmen he may acquire in the pursuit of that dream mean nothing to him. He uses people, and when they no longer have value for him, he throws them away or has them killed.

Physical Appearance: A tall man, with a white pallor, jet black hair worn in a long mane that goes down to the small of his back. In vampire mode his eyes turn red, the eye sockets darken, the fangs appear, and his fingers grow long and gnarled,



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2018

and end in claws. (P.B. drops from 11 to 6 when he goes vampire.)

Natural Vampire Abilities: P.S. and P.E. are Supernatural, Nightvision 1,600 feet (488 m) and can see in complete darkness, Prowl 50%, has no reflection in mirrored surfaces (including still water), does not breathe, does not bleed except when impaled through the heart, do not radiate heat, impervious to knockout and stun attacks, impervious to normal weapons, fire, heat and cold, can eat food to trick humans or for the taste sensation but does not need to eat, and track by blood scent up to a mile (1.6 km) away (50% +5% per level of experience). Bio-Regeneration 2D6 Hit Points (and then S.D.C. points) per melee round! Also see special abilities and psionics, below. **Note:** To maintain his full level of strength, the vampire must consume a diet of humanoid blood (minimum of 2 pints per 48 hours). They may slaughter and drink the blood of animals, but get no nourishment from it, only the pleasure of the kill and the savory taste of the blood.

Metamorphosis (special): Can turn into a bat, wolf, or mist at will. Counts as one melee action/attack.

Summon Animals (special): Summon and control six dogs and/or coyotes or wolves per level of experience, can summon and control 100 rats or mice per level of experience.

Super-Hypnotic Suggestion: Puts its victims into a trance in which they obey the vampire's every command short of killing themselves or killing a beloved person. I.S.P. Cost: 20 per try whether successful or not. Duration: Five minutes per level of experience. Saving Throw: 15 or greater.

Telepathic Link with Minions (special): The vampire is able to communicate with the vampires he has created via Telepathy. Range: 100 mile (160 km) radius.

See **The Western Empire** sourcebook, pages 206-216, for complete information about Vampires! In a pinch, you can also use the info about vampires in any Rifts® sourcebook, simply convert M.D.C. to S.D.C.; and powers might be a little different and expanded.

Skills of Note: Dance 85, Heraldry 85/73%, Horsemanship: General 90/68%, Language (Western 98%, Eastern 85%, and Northern 70%), Literacy: Western 93%, Military Etiquette 80%, Math: Basic 98%, Play Musical Instrument (harp) 60%, Sing 50% and Hand to Hand: Basic.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Sword (+3 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 to throw) and W.P. Knife (+2 to strike, +3 to parry or throw).

O.C.C.: Former 9th level Noble of the Western Empire.

Experience Level: 5th level Secondary Vampire. Western nobleman.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Damage: Vampire bite inflicts 2D6 damage, a restrained punch does 1D6 damage, full strength punch 2D6+6 damage as per Supernatural P.S., power punch 4D6+12 damage, but counts as two attacks, and kick attack does 2D6+6 damage.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +2 to strike, +3 to parry, +2 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, +6 to damage, +5 to save vs psionics, +3 to save vs insanity and mind control (magic or psionic), +2 to save vs other magic, +1 to save vs poison, +5% to save vs coma/death, impervious to magical or psionic sleeps, paralysis, or possession, and +6 to save vs Horror Factor.

Vampire Vulnerability (special): Normal weapons, punches, and kicks do no damage! Silver and silver-plated weapons inflict double normal damage direct to Hit Points.

Wooden weapons (arrows, spears, clubs, etc.) do normal damage direct to Hit Points to vampires, and a wooden stake through the heart instantly paralyzes the undead, but remove the stake and the creature instantly awakens and attacks the first person it sees.

Holy water burns like acid and does (1D6 damage direct to Hit Points per vial). Water becomes "holy" when blessed by a priest.

Running water does damage and can kill a vampire when the creature is held under moving water for long enough; a blast of water does 2D6 damage direct to Hit Points.

Exposure to sunlight also kills vampires (and holds them at bay), inflicting 1D6x10 damage direct to Hit Points per melee round (15 seconds). Globe of Daylight is not as effective as real sunlight but inflicts 3D6 damage direct to Hit Points per minute and prevents the vampires from entering the area bathed by the Globe of Daylight. However, vampires, even Wild Vampires, are smart enough to know they can attack those within the light with ranged weapons (arrows, spears, etc.) and even with thrown rocks and debris.

Magic does normal damage.

Magic: None.

Psionics (Vampire): Alter Aura (self; 2), Deaden Pain (4), Death Trance (1), Empathy (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Induce Sleep (4), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2). **I.S.P.:** 140.

Also see Natural Abilities, above.

Armor: None. Wears a purple, hooded cloak, silk shirt and scarf, soft leather gloves, brown britches, a belt with a couple of pouches and a gem-studded dagger (silver-plated, 1D6 damage), and wears a number of rings; see Valuables, below. Also has an extra set of fine clothing, more scarves, and a set of traveling clothes and black boots.

Weapons: Knife (1D6 damage), but only uses it as a last resort and to make threats. Prefers using his own fangs, claws, Supernatural P.S. and vampire powers.

Valuables: 50 gold coins, 3D6+10 gems each worth 100 gold, and two gems worth 1,000 gold in pouches. Also has four gold rings (each worth 1D4x100+500 gold), a large emerald ring worth 10,000 gold, a simple gold ring with magic symbols (Sense Magic, 8 melee rounds, 3 times daily), and a magic diamond ring (Invisibility 10 minutes, 3 times a day) worth 46,000 gold. The rings are all worn when traveling or making an appearance, but placed in a velvet pouch and left behind in a safe place with some dress clothes and personal item when the vampire knows he is going into combat. It is interesting to note that he usually keeps his gear and valuables someplace other than where he sleeps during the day. This is true even in the wilderness.

Wolfen Vampire #1

Squad Leader

Aurelius is a loyal Wolfen who used his thief abilities in guerilla warfare to sabotage and plunder human intruders operating in Wolfen territory. He loves his new powers and sees Lord Salizar's plans to conquer the human kingdoms with a legion of Wolfen vampires as brilliant. As vampires, they breach any walls, any defenses, leaving the humans powerless to stop them. The Wolfen Empire will rule the world, as it should. This is the Wolfen's destiny, Aurelius sees that now. Somehow the fact that the creator he serves, and who would be the Emperor of All, is a human, doesn't matter.



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2018

Secondary Vampire

Alignment: Anarchist, but quickly sliding into Miscreant since becoming a vampire.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 15, M.A. 17, P.S. 28, P.P. 18, P.E. 17, P.B. 14, Spd 28.

Hit Points: 47. **S.D.C.:** 19.

P.P.E.: 20

Horror Factor: 12 (13 in full vampire form).

Age: 24 years.

Height: 9 feet, 2 inches tall (2.75 m).

Weight: 400 lbs (180 kg).

Disposition: Aurelius has a good head for planning and guerrilla warfare, and is a strong leader. He was a bushwhacker, thief and saboteur who used to be satisfied with harassing the

enemy and forcing them to turn tail and run. Now, his eyes have been opened to a bigger world and a whole new level of power. And he likes it. Aurelius happily serves Lord Salizar.

Physical Appearance: His normal appearance is that of a black furred Wolfen with a scar across his left shoulder and another on his right thigh and right forearm. As a vampire, his eyes glow red, his canines extend to three times larger than normal and his fingers turn into wicked claws.

Natural Abilities (Vampire): Same as his creator, Lord Salizar.

Skills: Detect Ambush 55%, Detect Concealment & Traps 50%, Language (Wolfen 98%, Elven 65%, Western 65%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors 45%, Math: Basic 60%, Pick Locks 60%, Pick Pockets 55%, Running, Streetwise 46%

Weapon Proficiencies: Sword (+2 to strike and parry, +1 to throw), Knife (+2 to strike, parry or throw).

Experience Level: First level Secondary Vampire, was a 5th level Thief.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Damage: Vampire bite inflicts 2D6 damage, restrained punch does 1D6 damage, full strength punch 2D6 damage (as per Supernatural P.S.), power punch 4D6 damage, but counts as two attacks, and kick attack 2D6 damage.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry, +4 to dodge, +3 to pull punch, +13 to damage, 45% to intimidate, +2 to save vs psionics, +3 to save vs mind control (magic or psionic), +2 to save vs other magic, +1 to save vs poison, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +5% to save vs coma/death, impervious to magical or psionic sleeps, paralysis, or possession.

Vulnerabilities: Standard as per vampires; same as Lord Salizar.

Magic: None.

Psionics: As per vampires. Abilities are: Alter Aura (self; 2), Deaden Pain (4), Death Trance (1), Empathy (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Induce Sleep (4), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2), Sixth Sense (2). Needs a 12 or higher to save vs psychic attacks. **I.S.P.:** 120.

Armor: Imperial Plate and Mail, A.R. 15 and 100 S.D.C., plus a suit of Studded Leather (A.R. 13, 38 S.D.C.) for stealth operations.

Weapons: Wolfen-sized bastard sword (3D6 damage) and can be used as a one-handed weapon thanks to Supernatural P.S., a Wolfen-sized short sword (2D6 damage), and a dagger (1D6 damage); all standard issue weapons. That said, tends to rely on brute strength and natural vampire powers and abilities.

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than weapons and armor as they were in the field. Other equipment like a pocket mirror, a water skin, flint, backpack, sacks, and personal items have been abandoned, since the vampire no longer has any use for them.

Wolfen Vampire #2

Julius remains a loyal soldier in the Wolfen legions. He disapproves of the humans encroaching upon the Disputed Lands and has no qualms about fighting them and sending them back to where they belong. However, Lord Salizar's plan to create armies of Wolfen Vampires to sweep across the lands and conquer all humans, is too much. It is despicable and plain wrong. Moreover, he knows that Lord Salizar will not stop with humans. When he is done with the human civilization, the power-crazed madman will want to conquer all. Including the canine people. And this man ... no ... this monster they are forced to follow, he is human himself.

Or at least was, so Julius hates being under the thrall of a *human* and forced to serve him against his will.

In this early stage of adjusting to being a vampire, Julius does not know what he can or should do about any of this. Running away is not the answer, for the master will find him and punish him for his disobedience. Actually, Julius is not sure he has the will to run away, the Maker has such power over him. The noble Wolfen has come to realized that he must obey his creator, Lord Salizar, which makes him frustrated and angry. He wonders why he cannot embrace the darkness as his fellow Centurions have. **Note:** If Lord Salizar is slain, Julius will join the heroes and fight the other vampires. When the battle is done, he will plead for them to slay him, but requests they do it quickly and mercifully.

Julius, Secondary Vampire (malcontent)

Alignment: Unprincipled. He was Principled good before being turned into the undead.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 11, M.A. 17, P.S. 20 (Supernatural), P.P. 19, P.E. 18 (Supernatural), P.B. 11, Spd 28.

Hit Points: 33. **S.D.C.:** 25.

P.P.E.: 20

Age: 21

Height: 8 feet, 6 inches tall (2.58 m).

Weight: 360 lbs (162 kg).

Horror Factor: 12 (13 in full vampire form).

Disposition: Julius is a courageous, loyal Wolfen Centurion, but he does not see vampirism as the answer to defeating the humans. He hates the undead monster he has become and does not agree with Lord Salizar's plans to conquer the human kingdoms, then the world. If he can do something to stop this madness, he will do so. Sadly, what he can do is limited, as he must be secretive and do so behind his master's back, and cannot openly disobey his maker.

It is Julius who will try to warn and if possible, help the heroes who have come to destroy them. This noble Wolfen is willing to die to save the world.

Physical Appearance: His normal appearance is that of a brown furred wolfen with streaks of black and a scar across the back of his neck. As a vampire his eyes glow red, his canines extend to three times larger than normal and his fingers turn into wicked claws.

Natural Abilities (Secondary Vampire): Same as his creator, Lord Salizar.

Skills: Body Building & Weight Lifting, Climb/Scale Walls 55/50%, Forced March, Languages (Wolfen 98%, Elven 60%), Military Etiquette 65% and Hand to Hand: Basic.

Weapon Proficiencies: Shield (+1 to parry), Knife (+1 to strike, parry or throw), Axe (+1 to strike, parry or throw, +1D6 damage).

Experience Level: First level Secondary Vampire; was a 4th level Soldier.

Attacks per Melee: Three.

Damage: Vampire bite inflicts 2D6 damage, restrained punch does 1D6 damage, full strength punch 2D6 damage (as per Supernatural P.S.), power punch 4D6 damage, but counts as two attacks, and kick attack 2D6 damage.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +5 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +3 to pull punch, +4 to damage, 45% to intimidate, +3 to save vs mind control (magic or psionic), +1 to save vs other magic, +1 to save vs poison, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +4% to save vs

coma/death, impervious to magical or psionic sleeps, paralysis, or possession.

Vulnerabilities: Standard as per vampires; same as Lord Salizar.
Magic: None.

Psionics: As per vampires. Alter Aura (self; 2), Deaden Pain (4), Death Trance (1), Empathy (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Induce Sleep (4), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2). Needs a 12 or higher to save vs psychic attacks. **I.S.P.:** 90.

Armor: Imperial Plate and Mail, A.R. 15 and 100 S.D.C.

Weapons: Wolfen-sized bastard sword (3D6 damage) and can be used as a one-handed weapon thanks to Supernatural P.S., a Wolfen-sized mace and chain (4D6 damage), and a dagger (1D6 damage). Julius still likes to use his weapons, though more and more he is enjoying the raw power of Supernatural Strength and his vampire abilities.

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than weapons and armor as they were in the field. Other equipment like a pocket mirror, a water skin, flint, backpack, sacks, and personal items have been abandoned, since the vampire no longer has any use for them.

Wolfen Vampire #3

Antonia, Assassin and Secondary Vampire

Alignment: Aberrant evil to begin with, but quickly sliding into Diabolic now that she is a vampire.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 15, M.A. 17, P.S. 27 (Supernatural), P.P. 20, P.E. 15, P.B. 12, Spd 29.

Hit Points: 35. **S.D.C.:** 20.

P.P.E.: 30

Age: 22 years.

Height: 8 feet, 1 inches tall (2.43 m).

Weight: 320 lbs (144 kg).

Horror Factor: 12 (13 in full vampire form).

Disposition: Antonia (female Wolfen) was a cold, calculating killer before she became a vampire. She loves her new powers and agrees with Lord Salizar's plans to conquer the human kingdoms, then the world.

Physical Appearance: Her normal appearance is that of a brown furred wolfen with streaks of light tan and white. As a vampire, her eyes glow red, her canines extend to three times large than normal and her fingers turn into wicked claws.

Natural Abilities (Secondary Vampire): Same as her creator, Lord Salizar.

Skills of Note: Climb/Scale Walls 65/60%, Concealment 44%, Detect Concealment & Traps 50%, Language (Wolfen 98%, Elven 70%, Western 70%), Mathematics: Basic 80%, Pick Locks 60%, Prowl 60%, and Track Humanoids 50%, but now can track and follow blood scents as per vampire. (See Natural Abilities under Lord Salizar.)

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Blunt (+2 to strike, +1 to parry), W.P. Knife (+1 to strike, parry or throw), W.P. Axe (+1 to strike, parry or throw, +1D6 damage), W.P. Pole Arm (+1 to strike and parry, +2 damage; typical Wolfen-sized pole arm inflicts 3D6 damage, the largest do 4D6 damage), and W.P. Ball & Chain (+1 to strike).

Experience Level: First level Wild Vampire, was a fourth level Assassin when alive.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Damage: Vampire bite inflicts 2D6 damage, restrained punch does 1D6 damage, full strength punch 2D6 damage (as per

Supernatural P.S.), power punch 4D6 damage, but counts as two attacks, and kick attack 2D6 damage.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +5 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +4 to pull punch, +12 to damage, +3 to save vs mind control (magic or psionic), +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +5% to save vs coma/death, impervious to magical or psionic sleeps, paralysis, or possession.

Vulnerabilities: Standard as per vampires; same as Lord Salizar.
Magic: None.

Psionics: As per vampire. Alter Aura (self; 2), Deaden Pain (4), Death Trance (1), Empathy (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Induce Sleep (4), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2). Needs a 12 or higher to save vs psychic attacks. **I.S.P.:** 110.

Armor: Imperial Plate and Mail, A.R. 15 and 100 S.D.C., plus a suit of Studded Leather (A.R. 13, 38 S.D.C.) for stealth operations.

Weapons: Wolfen-sized short sword (2D6 damage), a Wolfen-sized morning star (3D6 damage) and a pair of silver-plated daggers (1D6 damage each). Antonia still enjoys using her "tools of the trade," but also delights in using her own fangs and claws to kill, more than ever before. It just feels right. Satisfying.

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than the lock picking tools, weapons and armor as they were in the field. Other equipment like a pocket mirror, a water skin, flint, backpack, sacks, and personal items have been abandoned, since the vampire no longer has any use for them. Money doesn't seem important anymore. Hunting the living and the acquisition of power are what's important now. That and helping the Master fulfill his quest of world domination.

Wolfen Vampire #4

Scipio was always a follower, not a leader, so it is no surprise he enjoys being an underling to Lord Salizar. He also enjoys hunting, toying with and slaying non-canine people, especially humans. He doesn't remember their blood tasting so delicious. He can't seem to get enough of it. He also likes to kill animals just for the fun of it.

Scipio, a Wild Vampire

Alignment: Diabolic, was Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 16, M.E. 13, M.A. 14, P.S. 23 (Supernatural), P.P. 18 (Supernatural), P.E. 14, P.B. 12, Spd 31.

Hit Points: 22. **S.D.C.:** 17.

P.P.E.: 14

Horror Factor: 12 (13 in full vampire form).

Age: 18

Height: 7 feet, 8 inches tall (2.3 m).

Weight: 400 lbs (180 kg).

Disposition: Being a vampire has unlocked the Wolfen's savage side and the monster gives vent to the constant urges to kill and feast upon the living, especially humans and human allies. Scipio blindly and obediently follows Lord Salizar as his master, and recognizes and follows Aurelius as the Master's second in command. He loves being a vampire.

Physical Appearance: His normal appearance is that of a dark brown furred Wolfen with flecks of grey. As a Wild Vampire the creature has a feral look, seldom wears armor or even

clothing, his eyes glow red, his canines extend to three times larger than normal and his fingers turn into wicked claws.

Natural Abilities (Wild Vampire): Fundamentally the same as Lord Salizar, except he does not possess Super-Hypnotic Suggestion and is much more feral and animal-like. Thus, the Wild Vampire is unlikely to use skills, weapons, or finesse, in favor of straightforward tactics, brute force, Supernatural Strength, fangs and claws. He is obedient to Lord Salizar and the other Secondary Vampires, and follows orders well.

Skills of Note: Language (Wolfen 98%, Elven 67%, Western 67%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors 47%, Math: Basic 62%, Pick Locks 62%, Pick Pockets 57%, Streetwise 48% and Hand to Hand: Basic.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Axe (+1 to strike, parry or throw, +1D6 damage), W.P. Pole Arm (+1 to strike and parry, +2 damage) and W.P. Sword.

Experience Level: First level Wild Vampire. Was a 3rd level Ranger.

Attacks per Melee: Two.

Damage: Vampire bite inflicts 2D6 damage, restrained punch does 1D6 damage, full strength punch 2D6 damage (as per Supernatural P.S.), power punch 4D6 damage, but counts as two attacks, and kick attack 2D6 damage.

Bonuses: +2 to Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +4 to strike, +4 to parry, +4 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to pull punch, +6 to damage, +3 to save vs mind control (magic or psionic), +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +4% to save vs coma/death, impervious to magical or psionic sleeps, paralysis, or possession.

Vulnerabilities: Standard as per vampires; same as Lord Salizar.

Magic: None.

Psionics: As per vampires. Alter Aura (self; 2), Deadened Pain (4), Death Trance (1), Empathy (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Induce Sleep (4), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2). Needs a 12 or higher to save vs psychic attacks. **I.S.P.:** 80.

Armor: Imperial Plate and Mail, A.R. 15 and 100 S.D.C., but only wears it when his Master tells him to do so.

Weapons: Wolfen-sized bastard sword (3D6 damage) and can be used as a one-handed weapon thanks to Supernatural P.S., a Wolfen-sized short sword (2D6 damage), and a dagger (1D6 damage); all standard issue weapons for Wolfen. However, seldom uses them unless the Master tells him to. Fighting tooth and claw is what comes natural to Wild Vampires.

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than weapons and armor as they were in the field. Other equipment like a pocket mirror, a water skin, flint, backpack, sacks, and personal items have been abandoned, since the vampire no longer has any use for them.

Wolfen Vampire #5

Quintius was a loyal and obedient soldier, and remains so. The difference is he now serves a new master, Lord Salizar.

Quintius, a Wild Vampire

Alignment: Miscreant evil, was Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 15, M.A. 10, P.S. 26 (Supernatural), P.P. 20, P.E. 19 (Supernatural), P.B. 15, Spd 30.

Hit Points: 29. **S.D.C.:** 15.

P.P.E.: 26

Age: 21

Height: 8 feet, 8 inches tall (2.6 m).

Weight: 350 lbs (157 kg).

Horror Factor: 12 (13 in full vampire form).

Disposition: Being a vampire has unlocked the Wolfen's savage side and the monster likes to give vent to the constant urges to kill and feast upon the living, especially humans and Elves. Quintius blindly and obediently follows Lord Salizar as his master, and recognizes and follows Aurelius as the Master's second in command. He loves being a vampire.

Physical Appearance: His normal appearance is that of a dark brown furred Wolfen. As a Wild Vampire the creature has feral look, seldom wears armor or even clothing, his eyes glow red, his canines extend to three times larger than normal and his fingers turn into wicked claws.

Natural Abilities (Wild Vampire): Fundamentally the same as Lord Salizar, except he does not possess Super-Hypnotic Suggestion and is much more feral and animal-like. Thus, the Wild Vampire is unlikely to use skills, weapon, or finesse, in favor of straightforward tactics, brute forces, Supernatural Strength, fangs and claws. He is obedient to Lord Salizar and the other Wolfen Secondary Vampires, and follows orders well.

Skills of Note: Athletics (General), Climb/Scale Walls 65/60%, Language (Wolfen 98%, Northern and Gobbly 75%), Math: Basic 60%, Running, Wilderness Survival 55%, Hand to Hand: Expert.

Weapon Proficiencies: W.P. Axe (+1 to strike and parry, +2 to strike when thrown), W.P. Spear (+2 to strike and parry, +3 to strike when thrown), and W.P. Sword (+2 to strike and parry).

Experience Level: First level Wild Vampire. Was a 5th level Soldier.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Damage: Vampire bite inflicts 2D6 damage, restrained punch does 1D6 damage, full strength punch 2D6+6 damage (as per Supernatural P.S.), power punch 4D6 damage, but counts as two attacks, and kick attack 2D6 damage.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +5 to strike, +5 to parry, +5 to dodge, +2 to roll with punch/fall/impact, +2 to pull punch, +11 to damage, 45% to intimidate, +3 to save vs mind control (magic or psionic), +2 to save vs other magic, +2 to save vs poison, +6 to save vs Horror Factor, +12% to save vs coma/death, impervious to magical or psionic sleeps, paralysis, or possession.

Vulnerabilities: Standard as per vampires; same as Lord Salizar.

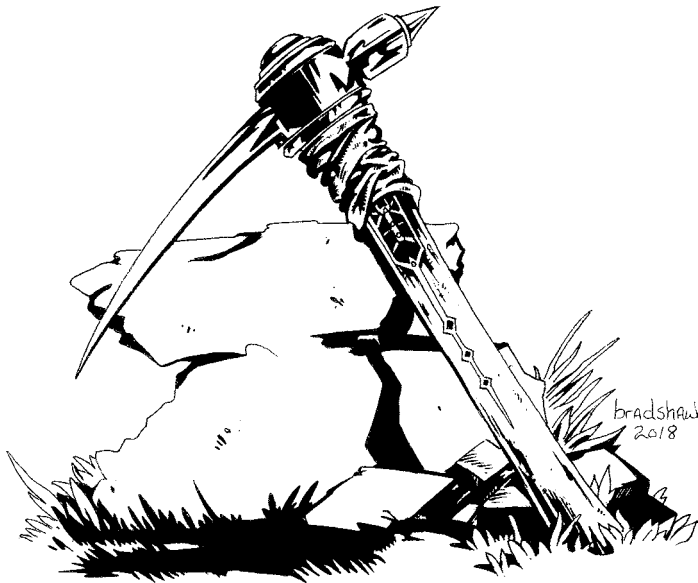
Magic: None.

Psionics: As per vampires. Alter Aura (self; 2), Deadened Pain (4), Death Trance (1), Empathy (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Induce Sleep (4), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2). Needs a 12 or higher to save vs psychic attacks. **I.S.P.:** 35.

Armor: Imperial Plate and Mail, A.R. 15 and 100 S.D.C., but only wears it only when his Master tells him to do so.

Weapons: Wolfen-sized battle axe (4D6 damage) and can be used a one-handed weapon thanks to Supernatural P.S., a Wolfen-sized short sword (2D6 damage), and a dagger (1D6 damage). However, seldom uses them unless the Master tells him too. Fighting tooth and claw is what comes natural to Wild Vampires.

Valuables: Nothing to speak of other than weapons and armor as they were in the field. Other equipment like a pocket mirror, a water skin, flint, back pack, sacks, and personal items have been abandoned, since the vampire no longer has any use for them.



The Legend of the Blood Fang

Only the most experienced scholars or priests have ever heard of the myths about this Rune Weapon. According to little known myths and legend, this ancient artifact was created during the days of the Elf-Dwarf War. If the story can be believed, it is a creation of magic and darkness, and might be the most powerful Rune Weapon ever created. However, immediately upon completion, its creators realized it was too horrible to ever be used. According to the myth, this terrible weapon is a simple looking pick – one fang – made from the bone of a dragon and covered in invisible runes so that it does not appear to be important or special. Known as the Blood Fang, legend claims the Dwarves had intended to create an army of vampires that numbered into the tens of thousands to smite their Elven enemies and any who stood against the Dwarven Kingdoms. They felt since the mighty weapon would control the vampires there was little danger to them, and they would command an invincible army. It was then that they realized the nightmare they were about to unleash and wept in shame.

Legend has it that the repentant Dwarves sealed the weapon in a block of stone, executed the elite Rune Masters who had created the Blood Fang, and then had a band of heroes take it to one of the four corners of the world and bury it in a vast, deep, dark wilderness where it will never be found. To make certain of that, the Dwarven Knights traveled far from its resting place, then all committed suicide so that the location could never be forced out of them.

This is the ancient magic relic Lord Salizar seeks, and he believes he has found its resting place in the Disputed Lands. He has taken the inhabitants of the logging camp and forces them to dig day and night until it is recovered. Of course, they have no idea what it is they are digging for.

The Power of the Blood Fang: It is said that he who wields the Blood Fang shall have absolute control over vampires and is able to command an unlimited army of them. Commanding them as if he were the Vampire Intelligence that created them. All vampires either created by the Blood Fang, or its wielder directly, have no choice but to obey his every command. So must all vampires, regardless of their creator, age or status, bow before the Master of the Blood Fang and accept him as their king and master. Lord Salizar is obsessed with finding the relic and has

spent the last 18 years learning all the legends about it. Whispered stories that are only known to but a small handful of beings, human and inhuman. Finally, he is certain this is the place where it is buried, and soon, it shall be his.

A rare Greatest Rune Weapon, made from the bone of a dragon and containing the life essence of a Vampire Intelligence. (An accomplishment that many scholars and mages claim is impossible. One more reason why the Blood Fang is considered a myth that never really existed.)

Alignment: Diabolic.

Common Rune Properties: All; indestructible and never dulls, independent personality with an I.Q. of 22, silver with glints of red, and so on.

Damage: 6D6 damage to mortals, 1D6x10 damage to the undead, 2D6x10 damage to dragons, demons and gods. Double damage to deities and supernatural beings that represent life, fertility and the earth.

Bonuses: The wielder is +2 on all saving throws, is impervious to the bite and mind control of vampires, impervious to disease and poisons, impervious to possession and mind control, can see one mile (1.6 km) in utter darkness, and can sense the movement and phases of the moon.

Create Vampires: Upon command, the dark force contained within the weapon can create a vampire. Its “fang” must be inside its victim for the blade to touch his soul. Then, as the victim’s life slips away and death is imminent, a whisper in his ear asks, “Does thou wish to live?” If the answer is yes, the whisper says, “Then to accept my gift you must accept us (the Blood Fang and its wielder) as your lord and master for all eternity. What say thee?” Before answering, the victim knows that he is agreeing to become a vampire. All too many will choose the quasi-life of the undead and are instantly transformed and ready to serve whomever holds the Blood Fang. Moreover, once under its thrall, they cannot try to take it for themselves. They are servants to “he who wields the fang.”

Gift of Immortality: Whoever commands the power of the Blood Fang shall never age and is given the gift (or curse) of immortality for as long as it is in his possession. And it does so without making him an undead. It also provides 2D6x10 Hit Points in addition to his own. Lose the artifact and the Hit Points and bonuses go with it, and the individual begins to age again, at twice the normal rate. And, of course, the vampires he once commanded have a new master. He means nothing to them without the relic.

Magic Spells: All charm, death-related and mind control magic spells, plus Banishment, Commune with Spirits, Exorcism, Mystic Portal (requires a human sacrifice), Remove Curse (requires a human sacrifice), Restoration (requires a human sacrifice), and Resurrection (requires three humans to be sacrificed).

Psionics: Bio-Manipulation (10), Bio-Regeneration (super; 20), Hypnotic Suggestion (6) and Mentally Possess Others (30).

The Truth: Lord Salizar’s quest is a fool’s errand. The tragedy here is that people are being killed, enslaved and turned into vampires (the Wolfen) in search for an artifact that is the stuff of myth and legend. It was never made and never existed.

As further evidence of this, on the rare occasion that anyone brings it up to the Dwarves, a) 99.9 percent have never even heard of this myth or legend, known mostly to death cultists and some scholars and historians. Those who have, emphatically insist this weapon was never made and that its reputed powers are

pure fiction. They say this not to save face, but because it is the truth. There are no Dwarven, Elven, or any other historical records to support the myths and legends of the Blood Fang. Nor is it mentioned in the Tristine Chronicles, and surely such a terrible weapon would have been. And though it has been sought, in secret, for 9,000 years, *nobody* has ever found it. Furthermore, the powers it is said to have possessed, above, are said to be impossible to place inside a Rune Weapon, just as it is believed to have been impossible to trap a Vampire Intelligence or deity inside the magic artifact to power it. The Dwarves did not possess such advanced levels of magical technology.

Those who want to believe the Blood Fang myths and insist it is real and waiting to be found, point out that modern Dwarves know nothing about the creation of Rune Weapons anymore, so they really cannot speak with authority on the matter. They also insist that denying its existence is all a cover-up and lies to prevent the artifact from ever being found. For them, the dream of power and immortality is a siren call that keeps them looking. And so the myth lives on.

NPC Heroes

The Destroyers of DeSilca

Sir Matthew Cazlynn

Sir Matthew is a young, human Paladin from the Eastern Territory. He aspires to be a great hero and is looking to earn a reputation for himself as a knight-errant. He has earned a reputation for being a courageous hero, demon slayer and champion of the people by battling the tyrant Lord DeSilca and putting an end to the madman's reign of terror. In so doing, he and his comrades, now known as the **Destroyers of DeSilca**, saved the entire Kingdom and for a time, helped to manage it until a new, benevolent leader could be found from within the city-state. In the aftermath of DeSilca, there were more demons and dragons to slay, and ne'er-do-wells to be dealt with. Further adding to the reputation of the Paladin and his teammates.

For a time, the good, compassionate Sir Matthew was obsessed with becoming a famous hero to bring honor to his family and perhaps boost their fortune. His family is one of the poorer and struggling members of the new nobility in the Eastern Territory, and often looked down upon. Not any longer. They are celebrated and their fortunes have improved greatly. Regrettably, Sir Matthew has learned that fame comes with a price, and he is often disappointed by the inhumanity of and cruelty he finds wherever he travels. Despite everything he has experienced, or perhaps because of it, Sir Matthew remains as noble and compassionate as ever, with a tender spot for the poor, the downtrodden, women and children. He strives to be as good a person as he can be, and Lady Elizabeth loves him for it.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Scrupulous good.

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

Hit Points: 38. **S.D.C.:** 44.

P.P.E.: 12

Age: 26.

Height: 6 feet (1.8 m).

Weight: 176 pounds (79.2 kg).

Disposition: Sir Matthew Cazlynn is everything a Paladin should be: Brave, noble, honorable, trustworthy and compassionate. He is merciful in combat, though not toward demons, witches or demon worshipers. He despises wickedness, cruelty and injustice and tries to right injustice and protect the innocent whenever he can. His once idealistic view of the world has been tempered, but he still believes in goodness and hope. He's seen in the deeds of his comrades many times and he cherishes their friendship, even Coltran, though the man does not make it easy.

Special Abilities:

1. The Way of the Horse.

2. The Way of the Lance (4D6 damage, +3 to strike).

3. The Paladin's Demon Death Blow! Damage is as per punch (1D4+6 damage), kick (2D4+6) or by weapon. Creatures who can only be hurt by magic take half damage.

Also see equipment/weapons.

Skills of Note: Boxing, Climb/Scale Walls 60%, Dance 70%, Heraldry 80/70%, Horsemanship: Exotic 55%/45%, Horsemanship: Paladin 70/60%, Land Navigation 66%, Language: Eastern 98% (and speaks Elven, Northern and Gobblely, each at 70%), Literacy: Eastern 75%, Lore: Demon & Monsters 65%, Math Basic: 90%, Military Etiquette 80%, Recognize Weapon Quality 55%, Sign Language 55%, Surveillance 55%, Wilderness Survival 50%, W.P. Lance, W.P. Sword, W.P. Shield, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Knife, W.P. Paired Weapons, and Hand to Hand Combat: Martial Arts. He also knows a few words in Wolfen 20%.

Experience Level: 5th level Paladin, approaching 6th.

Attacks per Melee: Six.

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +6 to strike, +8 to parry and dodge, +6 to damage (P.S. bonus), knocks out opponent on a Natural Twenty (Boxing), +3 to roll with punch or fall, +4 to pull punch, +2 to save vs Horror Factor, 70% to evoke trust or intimidation.

Equipment: Two sets of clothing, boots, a pair of gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, 2 large sacks, 2 small sacks, a water skin, a tinder box, a silver cross, and a horse (see below) with full tack (saddle, bridle, blanket, and saddlebag).

Weapons: Lance, Holy sword (see below, under magic), Short Sword (Kobold-made, 2D4 damage, +1 to strike and parry), silver-plated dagger (1D6 damage), Mace (2D4 damage), and a small shield.

Armor: Plate and Chain – A.R. 15, S.D.C. 140; magically silent.

Magic Items: 4 Healing potions (restores 2D6 Hit Points and 4D6 S.D.C.), 2 *Chaser Crystals* (see page 255 of *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*), one pair of *Gryphon Claws* (appear to be ordinary gloves until activated for combat; 2D6 damage (+10% to climb), and one of the following magic scrolls: Phantom Horse and Fire Ball, both equal to 6th level spells.

A Greater Holy Sword, Ezekel the "Monster Slayer": A family heirloom and his (and the family's) most precious possession. It has been passed down for five generations and bears the family crest.

Damage: 4D6 +6 P.S. damage bonus to normal, mortal opponents, *double damage* to all supernatural beings.

Sense Evil: The sword turns blood red in the presence of evil.

Protection from Supernatural Evil: Same as the Circle of Protection spell to hold supernatural evil, animated dead, zombies and demons at bay. (Does NOT work on Greater Demons or Demon Lords like Lord DeSilca.) To activate the magic protection, the sword is thrown into the air above the Paladin's head. The Holy Sword hangs suspended 4 feet (1.2 m) above the warrior and creates a circle of protection that has a 24 foot (7.3 m) radius.

Other features of the sword: Glows white, is indestructible, and it Negates Poison by touching the sword to the poisoned individual.

Horse: An excellent quality warhorse named *Fury*. The warhorse has 50 Hit Points and 61 S.D.C.; and wears "barding" that has 65 S.D.C., an A.R. 15, and is worth 17,000 gold.

Money: 3,500 in gold and gems.

Note: Sir Matthew is closest to Lady Elizabeth (they are considering marriage), Gryff the Wolfen, the two Dwarves, the Ranger and, oddly enough, the thieves, Haloric the Daring and Zandrox the Cunning, who despite their best efforts, have proven to be heroes at heart.

Lady Elizabeth Reed – Knight

Lady Elizabeth is a kind and caring hero of much renown, and even more famous and respected than the Paladin, Sir Matthew. She too is part of the new nobility in the Eastern Territory. Her family is rich and powerful, and her parents were not happy when she took the role of knight-errant rather than the princess she is destined to be. However, Elizabeth has always been a strong, independent spirit who must follow her heart. Her four older sisters are ladies of the court. The family has no sons, so Lady Elizabeth has chosen to follow in the traditional male role as knight.

Lady Elizabeth is a great and heroic *knight* known as a champion of the people and a natural leader who can inspire people to join her causes and take a stand against evil and tyranny. Even scoundrels find Lady Elizabeth to be charming, honorable and someone worthy of leading them. In this regard, she is a better, more capable leader than most traditional male knights, including Sir Matthew. She is never shy about making her thoughts and strategies known and she will not participate in murder or torture. For a time, she was the unofficial leader of the group, but Sir Matthew and the others have come to recognize her superior leadership abilities and have embraced her as their leader and spokesperson. She, Lenore and Gryff also serve as the group's moral compass.

There were instant sparks between her and Sir Matthew the moment they met, and those feelings between the two have only grown stronger.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Principled.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 17, M.A. 24, P.S. 17, P.P. 18, P.E. 14, P.B. 20, Spd 12.

Disposition: Lady Elizabeth is the epitome of a Knight, fierce in combat, yet kind, caring, noble, honorable, and compassionate. She is a courageous fighter who has proven herself in many conflicts, including battles against monster races along the Old Kingdom border and Wolfen and Coyles in the North.

Experience Level: 8th level Knight.

Hit Points: 50. **S.D.C.:** 35

P.P.E.: 16

Age: 26.

Height: 5 feet, 8 inches (1.7 m).

Weight: 146 pounds (66 kg); all muscle.

Skills of Note: Art 85%, Astronomy & Navigation 80%, Dance 90%, First Aid 65%, Heraldry 90/80%, Horsemanship: Paladin, Intelligence 70%, Land Navigation 82%, Language: Eastern 98% (also Elven and Western at 90% and Gobblely at 45%), Literate in Eastern 80%, Lore: Demon & Monsters 70%, Religion 75%, Math Basic: 90%, Military Etiquette 80%, Public Speaking 70%, Sign Language 55%, Surveillance 55%, Wilderness Survival 50%, W.P. Lance, W.P. Sword, W.P. Shield, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Paired Weapons and Hand to Hand: Expert, all at 8th level proficiency. She also knows a bit of Northern and Wolfen (30%) due to her years with this current team.

Special Abilities:

1. The Way of the Horse. See *Palladium RPG* for details.
2. The Way of the Lance (4D6 damage, +3 to strike).

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Bonuses: +1 on Perception Rolls (+2 when they involve demons), +1 on initiative, +4 to strike, +5 to parry and dodge, +2 to damage, +4 to roll with punch or fall, +4 to pull punch, +1 to save vs psionic attack, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, 80% to evoke trust or intimidation, 50% to charm and impress.

Equipment: Two sets of clothing, boots, hooded cloak with a fur trim, a pair of gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, 2 small sacks, a water skin, a tinder box, a small silver cross worn around her neck, 8 inch wooden cross, 6 wooden stakes, and a wood mallet, and a horse (see below) with full tack (saddle, bridle, blanket, and saddlebag).

Armor: Magic Chain Mail: A.R. 17, S.D.C. 200, lightweight.

Weapons: A Kobold mace (2D6+2 damage), a silver-plated Dwarven throwing dagger (1D6+2 to damage, +2 to strike when thrown), a dagger (1D6 damage), and a small shield.

Magic Items: Demon Slayer Short Sword: 2D6+2 damage to mortal foes, but *double damage* to demons and Deevils. Flaming Short Sword: 4D6 damage. Magical Restraints: 2 sets (see page 259 of *Palladium Fantasy RPG* for details). Potions: 3 healing potions (restores 2D6 Hit Points and 4D6 S.D.C.), 2 Negate Poison potions, and one Truth Serum.

Horse: An excellent quality warhorse named Nightstar (Suzie was lost in battle). 52 Hit Points, 54 S.D.C., and wears "barding" that has 55 S.D.C. and an A.R. 15. The horse is worth 22,000 gold.

Money: She has on her, 100 in gold, 22 in silver, 24 in copper pieces, and 10,000 in gems.

Note: Lady Liz is closest to Sir Matthew (they are considering marriage), Gryff the Wolfen, Priestess Lenore, the two Dwarves, the Ranger and Haloric the Bold. She has never cared for Coltran though she respects his knowledge and power, and other than Gryff, she finds it difficult to trust the monster races, particularly giants, Trolls, Ogres, Orcs, Changelings and Goblins. She holds a grudging fondness for Zandrox, but she cannot trust the scoundrel.

Lenore Verlan

– Priestess of Light & Dark

Lenore Verlan is a warrior priestess of Od. Her mission in life is to save lives, slay monsters and destroy evil. Even though she was not physically big and strong, and would never have chosen the way of the warrior for herself, she was called to duty in a vision by Od, himself. Experiences like the battle against Lord DeSilca and his hellspawn, and adventures like this one, are proof to her that she is on the correct life path.

When she was younger, Lenore was a bit quiet and shy, but she has turned into a capable fighter with a good combat instinct and courage. She is sometimes the strong, silent type, especially when among strangers and possible enemies, but speaks her mind and does what she believes is right even if others disagree. Lenore will not participate in murder or torture, but can be deadly in combat and is ruthless against supernatural evil such as vampires, demons and Deevils. Lenore grew up in Lopan and has conflicting feelings about who has the right to live in the Disputed Lands. She sees both sides of the argument.

Race: Elf

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 12, M.A. 14, P.S. 12, P.P. 13, P.E. 12, P.B. 23, Spd 15

Hit Points: 35. **S.D.C.:** 27.

P.P.E.: 60

Age: 93 (looks 21).

Height: 6 feet, 1 inch (1.85 m).

Weight: 150 pounds (67.5 kg).

Disposition: Lenore is a good person, gentle and kind. She sometimes fails to act quickly because she always tries to consider all the sides of a situation or dispute to determine the correct course of action. She is not one to react in the heat of the moment. For an Elf, she is surprisingly pleasant and compassionate to all races and classes of people, but can be outspoken and demanding when she feels she is not getting the respect she deserves.

Clerical Abilities (see *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, pages 66-67): Healing Touch, Exorcism 42%, Remove Curse 42%, Turn Dead 50%, Penance & Sacrifice (can resist thirst for 12 days and hunger for 18 days). Special Prayers (*Palladium RPG*, pages 64-66): Strength 62%, Communion 63%, Intervention 63%, Miracles 26%. **Spells:** Cloud of Smoke (2), Impervious to Fire (6), Paralysis: Lesser (5) and Tongues (12).

Skills of Note: Art (Painting) 80% (professional quality), Astronomy & Navigation 55%, Athletics (General), Body Building & Weight Lifting, Dance 70%, Heraldry 30/35%, Horsemanship: General 55/40%, Land Navigation 56%, Language: Elven 98% (also speaks Northern and Wolfen, each at 70%, and Dwarven at 65%), Literate in Elven 60%, Lore: Demon & Monsters 50%, Religion 80%, Mathematics: Basic 85%, Prowl 45%, and Wilderness Survival 60%, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Sword, W.P. Shield and Hand to Hand Combat: Expert.

Experience Level: 6th level Priestess of Light and Dark.

Attacks per Melee: Five physical or psionics attack or by Clerical ability or weapon.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +3 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, 40% chance to charm/impress.

Psionics: Minor: 40 I.S.P. Psychic Diagnosis (4) and Resist Fatigue (4).

Armor: Enchanted Double Chain Mail (A.R. 14, S.D.C. 56) and helmet.

Weapons: Medium-sized shield, wooden cross, 4 wooden stakes and a wooden mallet, and a dagger (1D6 damage).

Magic Items: **Scepter of Light:** This a blunt weapon that does 2D6 damage, +6 to supernatural evil. Hold it up and evoke Od's name, and it radiates a *Globe of Daylight* that holds vampires/undead at bay (30 foot/9.1 m radius); maximum duration 10 minutes per level of the priest that wields it. Can be activated three times per 24 hours and the globe follows the holder of the scepter.

Holy Short Sword: 2D6 damage +6 damage to *evil mortals and monsters*, and +2D6 to supernatural beings (good or evil), as well as gives its wielder a bonus of +5% to all prayers and the ability to Sense Evil (no limit).

Equipment: A set of traveling clothes, a hooded robe (for traveling), a hooded ceremonial robe made of silk, boots, belt, bedroll, backpack, a medium-sized satchel, 4 small sacks, a water skin, 2 symbols of the Church of Light and Dark, a large silver cross, 30 feet (9.1 m) of rope, 4 vials of holy water, a silver chalice, a small mirror, a tinder box, and food rations for 4 weeks.

Money: Lenore spends most of her money on adventuring and helping people. They all got a lot of treasure when they took over Lord DeSilca's castle and holdings. She has 70 gold pieces, 18 silver, and 20 gems (mostly diamonds) worth 1,000 gold each.

Note: Lenore is closest to Lady Elizabeth, but has a strong friendship with Sir Matthew, Daryl Greenwood the Ranger (she's sweet on him), Gryff and the two warrior Dwarves. She find Coltran to be an insufferable lout, she doesn't trust him or the thieves, and sees the Warlocks as religious rivals.

Daryl Greenwood – Ranger

Daryl was born and raised in the Disputed Land claimed by both the human settlers of the Eastern Territory and the Wolfen and Coyles of the Northern Wilderness. He knows his way around the woods as well as any Kankoran and is a master tracker. He was exploring and adventuring in the Eastern Territory when he heard about Lord DeSilca and his diabolic plot, and has joined the group to help stop the madness if he could.

He and the others make an unlikely band of heroes, but there is indisputable chemistry between them that has won the day against monsters and evildoers time and again. Though he has never thought of himself as a hero or a warrior, he likes the fame and respect that comes with the group's reputation. Daryl is proud to be counted among the Destroyers of DeSilca and always tries to do what's right.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 10, M.E. 12, M.A. 14, P.S. 15, P.P. 20, P.E. 13, P.B. 11, Spd 14

Hit Points: 33. **S.D.C.:** 28.

P.P.E.: 10

Age: 26.

Height: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.78 m).

Weight: 160 pounds (72 kg).

Disposition: For the most part, Darryl is pretty quiet and laid-back (almost introspective). However, anyone who does not show proper respect for nature quickly draws his scorn. He

knows a great deal about the Great Northern Wilderness, Wolfen, Kankoran and the ways of the wild. This also means he knows the Wolfen are NOT the savage monsters most Easterners insist they are.

Skills of Note: Animal Husbandry 65%, Carpentry 55%, Cook 60%, Detect Ambush 55%, Forced March, General Repair 55%, Holistic Medicine 50/40%, Identify Plants & Fruits 60%, Land Navigation 72%, Language: Northern 98% (also speaks Gobblely and Wolfen, each at 75%), Lore: Faerie Folk 60%, Prowl 50%, Sign Language 50%, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides 70%, Rope Works 35%, Track & Trap Animals 65/75%, Track Humanoids 60%, Use & Recognize Poison 46/38%, Wilderness Survival 75%, W.P. Archery, W.P. Sword, W.P. Knife and Hand to Hand Combat: Expert.

Experience Level: 5th level Ranger.

Attacks per Melee: Four in hand to hand combat, but six with a bow.

Combat Bonuses: +5 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

Armor: Studded leather (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38). He can afford better, but prefers light armor.

Weapons: Longbow and quiver of 12 regular arrows (2D6 damage), with an additional quiver of 20 regular arrows in his travel bag/satchel; 12 silver-tipped arrows (2D6 damage; double damage to creatures vulnerable to silver), Falchion short sword (2D6 damage), small hand axe (1D6 damage, mainly for chopping wood), wooden cross, 6 wooden stakes, and a silver-plated dagger (1D6 damage).

Magic: Daryl loves Cyclops Lightning Arrows and since the battle against Lord DeSilca he can afford to make certain he always has a good supply. 6 Cyclops Lightning Arrows (6D6 damage each), two Greater Lightning Arrows (1D6x10 damage each), one potion of healing (3D6 points), and one Gem of Direction (always points north).

Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a hooded cloak, boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, 2 large sacks, 2 small sacks, a water skin, fishing line and hooks, 4 snares, a pair of medium-sized metal “jaw” traps, a set of skinning/tanning knives, a six foot (1.8 m) length of light chain, 30 feet (9 m) of rope, 4 wooden spikes, a small mallet, a small mirror, a lantern, frying pan and a tinder box, and bedroll.

Money: 40 gold pieces, 10 silver and 12 gems worth 1,000 gold each. He has more money from DeSilca stashed away, as well as having sent money home to his family.

Note: Daryl is closest to Gryff and the Priestess Lenore. He thinks he might be developing feelings for her, but isn't sure she feels the same, especially since he's human and she's a beautiful Elf. He gets along with everyone, he respects and follows Lady Elizabeth and Sir Matthew, but is a bit of a loner.

Coltran of Wonders – Wizard

Coltran is a cagey fellow on a quest for fame and treasure – especially treasure – particularly magic treasure. He is drawn like a moth to a flame wherever there is the promise of acquiring plenty of loot or magic items or rare mystic knowledge. Lord DeSilca and his minions were known to have much in the way of magic and treasure so he joined this misfit band of heroes in the hope of striking it rich. That gamble paid off big time in both loot and

fame, so he has remained with the group. And though he would hate to admit it, he rather likes this motley crew.

Coltran is smart and capable, but also a lazy braggart and glory hound who likes to take all the credit for the valiant and good deeds of “his” band of heroes. He also enjoys fine food, quality alcohol, and the good things in life. He is quick to party and happy to regale listeners with tales of adventure and daring-do with an emphasis on his exaggerated exploits, use of magic, his brilliant plans and ideas, and takes credit for the triumphs of the entire group.

The Wizard appreciates the adoration of the “common man,” and likes it when they treat him like a famous hero, or better yet, like royalty, and exhibit the respect and awe that meets his satisfaction. After all, he is *Coltran of Wonders* (always spoken as if it were a pronouncement) and the leader (not true) of the *Destroyers of DeSilca*. However, he prefers it if the common folk keep their grubby hands off of him.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Anarchist through and through.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 13, M.A. 10, P.S. 10, P.P. 13, P.E. 14, P.B. 9, Spd 12.

Disposition: Coltran is a man of many moods, and his self-centered nature and the present available opportunity dictates which face he shows. Thus, he can be kind and compassionate one minute to impress someone, snide and arrogant the next (more to his true nature), hardworking another, lazy the next, and so on. He enjoys the finer things in life and dreams of becoming a powerful noble one day. He could have had that in the aftermath of DeSilca, yet he walked away from it in favor of adventure and to be with people who are the closet thing he has ever come to having true friends.

Experience Level: 5th level Wizard.

Hit Points: 26. **S.D.C.:** 11

P.P.E.: 192

Age: 39.

Height: 6 feet, 2 inches (1.85 m).

Weight: 181 pounds (82 kg).

Magic Abilities: Standard for a Wizard.

1. Recognize Enchantment 60% and Recognize Magic 50%.
2. Enchanted Cauldron 40%.
3. Can See & Use Ley Lines, Ley Line Drifting, Ley Line Rejuvenation.

4. Knows the following spells: Animate Object (15), Armor of Ithan (10), Banishment (65), Blind (8), Call Lightning (15), Cloud of Slumber (4), Death Trance (1), Decipher Magic (4), Detect Concealment (6), Energy Bolt (5), Escape (8), Extinguish Fire (4), Fire Ball (10), Fire Bolt (10), Fairie Speak (5), Fire Bolt (10), Float in Air (5), Globe of Daylight (2), Heal Wounds (10), Levitation (5), Magic Pigeon (20), Mend Cloth (12), Metamorphosis: Animal (25), Multiple Image (7), Repel Animals (7), See Aura (6), See the Invisible (4), See Wards (8), Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (2), Turn Dead (6), Tongues (12), Ventriloquism (3), Water to Wine (40), Weightlessness (6), and Wind Rush (20). **Note:** Includes a few he has learned since the DeSilca battle.

Skills of Note: Archaeology 55%, Art (Painting) 55%, Escape Artist 55%, Forgery 50%, Horsemanship: General 55/40%, Language: Eastern 98% (also speaks Northern and Wolfen, each at 75%), Literate in Eastern and Elven, each at 70%, Lore: Geomancy & Ley Lines 60%, Lore: Magic 65/55/50%, Mathematics: Basic 85%, Palming 50%, Sailing 70/55%, Wil-

derness Survival 55%, W.P. Knife and W.P. Staff, and Hand to Hand Combat: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: Three physical or by magic.

Bonuses: +1 on Perception Rolls, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, kick attacks, +2 to save vs magic, +2 to spell strength, +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

Armor: Magical Soft leather (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 93).

Weapons: Wooden Quarterstaff (2D6 damage) and an ordinary dagger (1D6 damage).

Magic: 2 doses of sneezing powder, one Screech Bottle, pair of magic silver-plated daggers (1D6+3 damage each; eternally sharp and have a yellow glow), one Transformable Weapon (scarf turns into a Staff), 6 Magic Bandages, 2 Enchanted Bags (looks and feels empty), and a Cloak of Shadows (difficult to see in shadows). **Magic Potions:** One Healing (3D6 Hit Points), two Superior Healing (2D6 Hit Points and 4D6 S.D.C.), one Mute, one Turn into Mist, and one Truth Serum. **Scroll:** Circle of Flame, Exorcism, and Magic Net, all at 5th level, and Immobilize but only lasts for 6 melee rounds (1 and a half minutes).

Equipment: Two sets of travel clothing, two sets of dress clothes, a hooded robe, boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, a medium-sized satchel, 2 small sacks, a water skin, 7 sheets of parchment paper, a 100 page notebook, two pencils, 3 crow quill pens, 2 bottles of ink, 4 sticks of graphite, 4 sticks of chalk, 4 candles, a wooden cross, a small mirror, and a tinder box.

Money: 120 in gold coins, 13 gems worth 2,000 gold each, all kept in an Enchanted bag, and 350,000 in gold and gems stashed away back home for retirement.

Note: Coltran is closest to the two thieves, Gryff and the Changing Warlock, though he considers them all to be “friends and associates.” He respects Lady Elizabeth most of all, and usually obeys her orders. For some reason he likes Lenore the least.

Gryff, the Wolfen Warrior

Gryff is a 9 and a half foot (2.9 m) tall Wolfen with a dark brown fur with some tan highlights. He was born in the Wolfen Empire to a clan of the Sun Child tribe. Although he tried his hand at ranching, he ultimately decided that it wasn't for him. Gryff's local clan chief decided that a change of scenery might be good for the young Wolfen. So, with the blessing of his clan chief and parents, Gryff began his travels and has been roaming the Northern Wilderness, the Disputed Lands and even parts of the Eastern Territory ever since. He met Sir Matthew first and has found a surprisingly good friend in the Paladin and later, the rest of the Destroyers of DeSilca. A battle in which the Wolfen nearly died protecting the innocent. The reputation of Wolfen is such that when traveling in human dominated lands, the gentle giant is almost always met with finger pointing, screams, shouts of concern, fear and loathing by humans. After seeing how misunderstood Wolfen are among humans, and to a lesser degree, Elves, Dwarves and other people, Gryff is determined to prove that Wolfen are not savage monsters that eat babies. He does this by his words and deeds. Sadly, Gryff can travel unmolested in human kingdoms only because he travels in a group of increasingly renowned heroes and is under their protection.

Race: Wolfen

Alignment: Principled.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 11, M.A. 7, P.S. 19, P.P. 10, P.E. 11, P.B. 11, Spd. 25

Hit Points: 25. **S.D.C.:** 18.

P.P.E.: 12

Age: 24. **Height:** 9 feet, 6 inches (2.89 m).

Weight: 403 pounds (181 kg).

Disposition: Gryff is the type of warrior that most Wolfen mothers want their cubs to grow up and be like. He is loyal to friends and comrades, respectful to adversaries who show themselves honorable and worthy. However, those who betray his trust gain an enemy for life.

Natural Racial Abilities: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), keen senses of hearing and smell (see the *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, pages 311-312, for details about Wolfen and their abilities).

Skills of Note: Animal Husbandry 55%, Astronomy & Navigation 45%, Carpentry 45%, Detect Ambush 45%, Forced March, Identify Plants & Fruits 50%, Land Navigation 62%, Language: Wolfen 98% (also speaks Gobbely and Elven, each at 70%), Literate in Wolfen 55%, Military Etiquette 50%, Recognize Weapon Quality 40%, Skin & Prepare Animal Hides 60%, Track & Trap Animals 55/65%, Track Humanoids 55%, Wilderness Survival 65%, W.P. Archery, W.P. Sword, W.P. Knife, and Hand to Hand Combat: Expert.

Experience Level: 4th level Ranger.

Attacks per Melee: Four in hand to hand, but five using a bow.

Bonuses: +1 on Perception Rolls (+2 on Perception Rolls involving canine animals and people in the wild), +2 to strike, (+3 to strike with bow and arrow), +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, +4 to damage, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

Armor: Studded leather (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 38).

Weapons: Longbow and quiver of 32 large arrows (3D6 damage each), Falchion (4D6), small hand axe (mainly for chopping wood; 2D6 damage), dagger (1D6 damage).

Magic: Gryff has learned the value of Cyclops lightning arrows from his buddy Daryl and has 4 Cyclops Lightning Arrows (6D6 damage each), as well as one Fire Wick. **Magic Potions:** *Size of the Behemoth* and *Shrink* (to 6 inches). These potions were originally introduced to him by an old woman he had rescued. She gazed at him for a time and then said he would have need for them sometime in the future. He did indeed, as they came in handy fighting the minions of Lord DeSilca. Since then, Gryff always tries to have one of each at all times.

Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a hooded cloak, boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, 2 large sacks, 2 small sacks, a water skin, fishing line and hooks, 4 snares, a pair of medium-sized metal “jaw” traps, a set of skinning/tanning knives, a six foot (1.8 m) length of light chain, 30 feet (9 m) of rope, 3 wooden spikes, a small mallet, a small mirror, a lantern, frying pan and a tinder box.

Money: 410 in gold and 7,000 gold worth of gems. Part of his money from the DeSilca adventure was sent home to his family clan, and the rest is put aside for Lightning Arrows, supplies and the future.

Note: Gryff is liked by, and gets along with, everyone. However, he is closest to Daryl the Ranger, Sir Matthew, Lady Elizabeth, Lenore, the two Dwarves, and Haloric the Daring, but even Coltran and Zandrox do not bother him.

Haloric the Daring – Thief

Haloric is a born opportunist who enjoys a challenge and taking risks. He is a fast talker and a charmer skilled in weaving lies at the drop of a hat. Despite his being a crook, Haloric is sort of a dashing Robin Hood type who actually enjoys helping people (usually in secret so as to not ruin his reputation as a devil-may-care rogue).

Race: Human

Alignment: Unprincipled. He was Anarchist, but hanging out with these heroes and helping people has turned him around.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 14, M.A. 19, P.S. 12, P.P. 23, P.E. 11, P.B. 15, Spd 10

Disposition: Haloric is strictly a city boy. As long as he is in an urban environment of some kind, he is confident and bold. However, in a rural or wilderness setting, he becomes nervous and ill at ease. Haloric is a resourceful, quick thinking, bold and daring opportunist who is always ready for action and thieving.

Hit Points: 30. **S.D.C.:** 25.

P.P.E.: 5

Age: 21.

Height: 5 feet, 6 inches (1.68 m).

Weight: 145 pounds (66 kg).

Skills of Note: Speak Northern 98%, Speak Gobblely and Wolfen, each at 65%, Brewing 40/45%, Concealment 32%, Detect Concealment & Traps 40%, Escape Artist 50%, Horsemanship: General 50/35%, Intelligence 32%, Locate Secret Compartments/Doors 45%, Mathematics: Basic 70%, Advanced 60%, Pick Locks 60%, Pick Pockets 55%, Prowl 50%, Streetwise 46%, W.P. Knife, W.P. Chain, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Throwing Weapons, Hand to Hand Combat: Basic.

Experience Level: 4th level Thief.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls involving fellow thieves and noticing valuables, +4 to strike, +6 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch or fall, and +2 to pull punch, kick attacks.

Psionics: Minor. 28 I.S.P. Teleport Object (10) and Death Trance (1).

Armor: Studded leather (A.R. 13, S.D.C. 34).

Weapons: Two silver-plated daggers (1D6 damage; one hidden in his boot the other hidden in his backpack), a nunchaku (wood chain weapon 2D6 damage), and *one battered looking knife* that is actually magical (1D6+2 damage, +2 to strike when thrown and magically returns to the thrower; this is his prize possession, stolen from a Bizantium merchant).

Magic: Gryphon Claws (2D6 damage), Cloak of Shadows, Boots of Mystery (leave no tracks), Cherubot Rope (50 feet/15.5 m), and two smoke bombs (fills a 20 foot/6.1 m radius).

Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a hooded cloak (with 7 inside pockets), boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, bedroll, purse, backpack, a large sack, a medium-sized sack, 3 small sacks, a water skin, a set of skeleton keys, lock picking tools, 50 feet (15.2 m) of rope, grappling hook, 5 wooden spikes, a small hammer, a pocket mirror, and a tinder box.

Money: 698 in gold, 11,000 gold worth of gems. Part of his DeSilca money was used to purchase a small estate in that town, tended to by a family who live on his property and function as the caretakers. The rest of his money is put aside for re-supplies, gambling and retirement.

Note: Haloric gets along with the crew, but is closest to Sir Matthew, Gryff, Coltran and his fellow thief Zandrox.

Zandrox the Cunning

– Goblin Cobbler Thief

Zandrox is a cunning Goblin thief who was exiled from his tribe for bringing human retribution down upon them for his antics as a thief. He has since become a wandering adventurer, finally earning a place among these heroes. Zandrox is impressed by power and magic and craves both for himself and wealth means power, so ...

He used to see all the goody-two-shoes in the group as a means to an end, otherwise he would not associate with such noble individuals. There was a time when Zandrox might have secretly worked against the group or betrayed them for his own gain, but they have gone through so much together that he actually considers them all to be teammates and friends. Now, that doesn't mean Zandrox might not withhold information, cheat at gambling, or skim a little of the top when he gets the chance, but for the most part, he sees them as friends and blood-brothers and he will not betray them.

What makes Zandrox truly special is that he is a Goblin Cobblers and Cobblers are shapechangers. Though their ability is limited to small, unpleasant animals such as rats, weasels, cats, bats, ravens and spiders the size of a softball, it is a handy ability, especially for thievery, breaking and entry and spying. There is a downside for the Cobbler's associates. The transformation requires Zandrox to leave all clothing and gear behind, which means when he reappears he is stark naked. A naked Goblin is not a pretty sight. Just saying.

A conniving opportunist ultimately out for himself, Zandrox learned long ago to "play the game" and appear sincere, loyal and kind. Since the DeSilca triumph, he has added playing hero to that list and like his pal Coltran, he loves it when people fawn over him and give him things. Hanging out with this bunch of heroes has softened Zandrox. He is loyal to the group, will never outright steal from them, nor betray them, and he has developed a soft spot for young children. However, away from his heroic teammates, the thief is much more of a scoundrel who is willing to lie, cheat, steal, torture and kill in a heartbeat if it protects him, his friends, or serves his own purpose.

Race: Goblin Cobbler (Shapechanger & Faerie Magic).

Alignment: Anarchist.

Attributes: I.Q. 10 (very smart for a Goblin), M.E. 12, M.A. 11 (also high for a Goblin), P.S. 14, P.P. 22, P.E. 13, P.B. 7, Spd. 9 (4 digging).

Hit Points: 42. **S.D.C.:** 33.

P.P.E.: 88

Age: 42.

Height: 3 feet, 7 inches (1.09 m).

Weight: 163 pounds (73 kg); mostly muscle.

Disposition: Clever, conniving, resourceful, and observant. He enjoys gambling, drinking and partying, especially at another person's expense, which is why he and Coltran get along, but he is probably not as friendly (or drunk) as he may appear to be. An opportunist who is always on the lookout for an easy payday or victim to target.

Natural Special Abilities: In addition to the character's high physical attributes, Goblins also have nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), good day vision, plus an aptitude for digging and living in tunnels.

Underground Tunneling (Special): Fundamentally the same as Dwarves only much cruder. **Base Skill**: 30% +5% per level of experience.

Underground Architecture: Fundamentally the same skill as Dwarves only much simpler and cruder. **Base Skill**: 10% +5% per level of experience; detection and deactivation of traps is done at half his normal architecture skill level.

Underground Sense of Direction: Fundamentally the same skill as the Dwarf, but less acute. **Base Skill**: 20% +5% per level of experience.

Judging the approximate relation/proximity to surface structures (natural and artificial) is poor. **Base Skill**: 10% +5% per level of experience; -20% if in an unfamiliar area.

Metamorphosis (change into a small animal): A Cobbler's most significant power is the ability to transform at will into a dark, small animal. There is no limit as to how often metamorphosis can be performed other than a maximum of once every two minutes, nor is there a limit as to how long the animal shape can be maintained. Cobbler Goblins usually select ominous animals like a rat, toad, raven, black cat, weasel, etc. This makes them perfect spies, thieves and assassins. **Note**: The animal cannot be smaller than a toad.

Faerie Magic: Cobblers can cast the following spells twice per 24 hours: *Mend Wood*, *Whither Plants*, *Sense Magic*, *Tongues*, *Charm*, and *Darkness*. All magic spells are equal to a third level mage. Since the Cobbler is not a true magic user, his abilities do not increase as he gains new levels of experience, but his P.P.E. does (1D6 per level). He can NOT learn more spells, read magic symbols, or gain/study any other magic. **Note**: All other stats are the same as the average Goblin. Characters with major or master psionic powers cannot be a Cobbler.

Skills of Note: Brewing 45%/50%, Carpentry 55%, Climb/Scale Walls 60/50%, Escape Artist 50%, Locate Secret Compartment/Doors 50%, Imitate Voices & Impersonation 62%/32%, Language: Gobblely 98% (also speaks Dwarven and Northern, each at 75%; completely illiterate), Mathematics: Basic 80%, Pick Locks 65%, Pick Pockets 60, Prowl 55%, Use and Recognize Poison +50%/32%, Streetwise 50%, Running, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Knife, and Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: Three.

Bonuses: +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, +9 to damage, kick attacks, disarm, body block/tackle, crush/squeeze, pin/incapacitate on 18-20, +1 to save vs magic/poison, +1 to save vs possession, +3 to save vs Horror Factor, and +1 to save vs Faerie magic.

Experience Level: 5th level Cobbler Thief.

Armor: Plate and chain mail (A.R. 15, S.D.C. 74); magically made to be silent and lightweight.

Weapons: Pair of silver daggers (1D6), pair of ordinary dangers (1D6 damage), a Black Jack (1D4), and a mace (1D8 damage).

Magic: Two Healing position (3D6 restores Hit Points each), two bags of Goblin Dust, two Smoke Bombs, one Stink Bomb, and one Enchanted Bag (appears empty).

Equipment: Two sets of clothing, boots, a pair of gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, set of lock picking tools, 2 large sacks, 2 small sacks, a water skin, a tinder box and 20 feet (6.1 m) of rope, wooden cross, four wooden stakes and a mallet.

Money: 730 gold pieces. Three gold rings, and 15 gems worth 1,000 gold each.

Note: Zandrox is closest to the Haloric the thief, Sir Matthew, Coltran, Gryff and the Changeling Warlock, though he considers them all to be "friends and associates." He respects Lady Elizabeth and mostly obeys her orders, most of the time.

Hugin Redaxe, the Dwarf

Hugin (pronounced Hue-gan) has traveled a great deal and has seen a lot of wars and bloodshed. A mercenary who claims to sell his axe to the highest bidder, somehow Hugin seems to wind up fighting for the side or cause that is most dear to him (even if they pay him less than the other side would). He is a gruff, grumpy warrior who plays the tough guy, but has a tender spot for people in need, underdogs and children.

Race: Dwarf

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 12, M.E. 9, M.A. 5, P.S. 24, P.P. 11, P.E. 17, P.B. 7, Spd. 11 (4 digging).

Hit Points: 42. **S.D.C.**: 33.

P.P.E.: 15

Age: 44.

Height: 3 feet, 7 inches (1.09 m).

Weight: 163 pounds (73 kg); mostly muscle.

Disposition: The classic case of a heart of gold beating under a gruff exterior, Hugin is irascible, stubborn, grumpy, and does not suffer fools gladly. However, he is also brave, protective of his friends, and loyal to his own code of honor. Hugin would willingly lay down his life for a friend. Just don't expect him to get all mushy about it.

Natural Racial Abilities: Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), inherent talents with metals, stone, and underground environments (see *Palladium Fantasy RPG*®, page 293 for details).

Skills of Note: Athletics (general), Carpentry 55%, Climb/Scale Walls 75/70%, First Aid 55%, Fishing 55%, Forgery 50%, Horsemanship: General 60/45%, Intelligence 55%, Language: Dwarven 98% (also speaks Gobblely and Northern, each at 75%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors 45%, Track Humanoids 55%, Wilderness Survival 65%, Wrestling, W.P. Battle Axe, W.P. Sword, W.P. Shield, and Hand to Hand Combat: Martial Arts.

Experience Level: 6th level Mercenary Fighter.

Attacks per Melee: Five; Critical Strike on unmodified 18, 19 or 20.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to disarm, +5 to roll with punch or fall, +3 to pull punch, +9 to damage, kick attacks, disarm, body block/tackle, crush/squeeze, pin/incapacitate on 18-20, +1 to save vs magic/poison, and +5% to save vs coma/death.

Armor: Plate and chain mail (A.R. 16, S.D.C. 84); made to be magically weightless.

Weapons: Short sword (2D4+1 damage), small shield, and a dagger (1D6; +1 to strike when thrown).

Magic: Battle Axe that is Dwarven-made and magical, it inflicts 4D6+4 to damage, is eternally sharp and +2 to strike and parry. Metalwrist band that makes him impervious to cold for 60 minutes, twice per day, a medal of protection from Witches (+1 to save).

Equipment: Two sets of clothing, boots, a pair of gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, 2 large sacks, 2 small sacks, a water skin,

a tinder box and 50 feet (15.2 m) of Cherubot Rope (suspends self in air).

Money: 560 gold pieces, one rare, Dragon Coin (worth 10,000 gold), and 12,000 gold in gems. Part of his money from the DeSilca adventure was sent home to his family clan, and the rest is put aside for re-supplies and the future.

Rex Longstryke, a Dwarf

Rex is a valiant and bold warrior who has traveled the world in search of monsters to destroy and wrongs to right. He is a noble warrior who comes from the Old Kingdom Mountains and has faced many an ogre and monster in the defense of the innocent. He is a cheerful and friendly Dwarf who likes to drink ale and tell stories of battle and adventure when he's not defending those in need. He has a tender spot for women, children, underdogs and people in need, and hates demons and dark magic.

Race: Dwarf

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 11, M.E. 10, M.A. 9, P.S. 23, P.P. 12, P.E. 18, P.B. 8, Spd 10 (4 digging)

Hit Points: 55. **S.D.C.:** 31

P.P.E.: 9

Age: 36.

Height: 4 feet (1.2 m).

Weight: 150 pounds (67 kg); mostly muscle.

Disposition: Unusual for a Dwarf, Rex is a happy go lucky, battle hardened fighter who enjoys life and has a heart of gold. He has seen more than his fair share of war and destruction, and fights to help the innocent and downtrodden so they may have a better life. Rex is brave, loyal and protective of his friends, women and children. He is willing to lay down his life for a friend and risk his own life to protect the innocent.

Natural Abilities (Dwarf): Nightvision 90 feet (27.4 m), inherent talents with metals, stone, and underground environments (see *Palladium RPG*, page 293, for details about Dwarves).

Skills of Note: Athletics (general), Boxing, Carpentry 50%, Climb/Scale Walls 75/65%, Fishing 55%, Forgery 50%, Horsemanship: General 60/45%, Intelligence 55%, Language: Dwarven 98% (also speaks Gobblely and Northern, each at 70%), Locate Secret Compartments/Doors 45%, Track Humanoids 55%, Wilderness Survival 65%, W.P. Battle Axe, W.P. Spear, W.P. Shield, W.P. Targeting/Missile Weapons, and Hand to Hand Combat: Martial Arts.

Experience Level: 6th level Mercenary Fighter.

Attacks per Melee: Six. Has kick attacks, body block/tackle, crush/squeeze, and pin/incapacitate on 18-20 from Wrestling skill.

Bonuses: +1 on Perception Rolls, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to disarm, +5 to roll with punch or fall, +3 to pull punch, +9 to damage, +2 to save vs magic/poison, and +6% to save vs coma/death.

Armor: Plate and chain mail (A.R. 16, S.D.C. 97); magically enhanced to have extra S.D.C. and to have half its usual weight.

Weapons: Dwarven short sword (2D4+3 damage), a short spear (1D6 damage) and small shield, and a silver-plated dagger (1D6 damage and +1 to strike when thrown).

Magic: Magic Battle Axe that *returns when thrown* (range 200 feet/61 m), does 4D6+1 to damage, is Eternally sharp and is +2 to strike and parry.

Equipment: Two sets of clothing, boots, a pair of gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, 2 large sacks, 2 small sacks, a water skin, a tinder box and 20 feet (6.1 m) of rope.

Money: 560 gold pieces and 20,000 gold in gems. Part of his money from the DeSilca adventure was sent home to his family clan, and the rest is put aside for re-supplies and the future.

Shartog Frostmoon

– Ogre Water Warlock

Shartog comes from a long line of Ogre warriors, thus, he is something of a “black sheep” for becoming a *Water Warlock*. He was born in the Old Kingdom but has also spent time in Timiro and the Eastern Territory. Before joining the Destroyers of DeSilca, Shartog had spent five years hiring out his services to sailors. As a result, he has traveled from Timiro as far north as Bizantium. It was during one such trip that Shartog learned about the evil Lord DeSilca and joined forces with Sir Matthew and Lady Elizabeth. The Ogre hoped that destroying this monster and saving an entire city-state of humans will help earn him his family's respect once and for all. It didn't. They look down upon him for associating with humans and assume tales of his heroism are exaggerated (they aren't).

Race: Ogre

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 13, M.E. 12, M.A. 8, P.S. 23, P.P. 10, P.E. 19, P.B. 8, Spd. 11

Disposition: The Water Warlock is still young and searching for his place in the world. He feels he has something to prove to his family who considers him to be a wuss, and to humans and Elves who look upon all Ogres as uneducated barbarians. He is resourceful, clever and capable, though he still doubts himself and is sometimes slow to take action. He is a man of his word and as good as any warrior in a fight.

Experience Level: 5th level Water Warlock.

Hit Points: 38. **S.D.C.:** 32

P.P.E.: 106

Age: 26.

Height: 8 feet, 2 inches (2.5 m).

Weight: 281 pounds (126.5 kg).

Special Abilities: Nightvision 40 feet (12.2 m), good day vision, great strength. See bonuses.

Warlock Abilities: 1. Sense Water Elementals 80%, all others 45%.

2. Sense location of water within 100 miles (160 km) at 75%.

3. Hold Breath for five minutes.

4. Summon Elementals: 25% (+10% on a ley line, +20% at a nexus).

Warlock Water Spells: Breathe Underwater (6), Calm Waters (15), Cloud of Steam (10), Fog of Fear (8), Freeze Water (8), Hail (20), Resist Cold (6), Salt Water to Fresh (4), Shards of Ice (15), Sheet of Ice (15), Swim like the Dolphin (15), Wall of Ice (20) Walk the Waves (5) and Water to Wine (5).

Skills of Note: Animal Husbandry (65%), Falconry (60%), Horsemanship: General 50/35%, Language: Ogre/Orc/Gobblely 98% (also speaks Elven and Eastern each at 75%), Literate in Elven each at 60%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 55%,

Mathematics: Basic 80%, Recognize Weapon Quality (60%), Sailing 60/45%, Swimming 85%, Wilderness Survival 45%, W.P. Blunt, W.P. Sword and Hand to Hand Combat: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: Three physical or by magic.

Claw strike does 2D4 damage +8

Kick attack 3D6+8

Bite attack 2D4 damage.

Bonuses: +1 on Perception Rolls involving water and Elementals, +8 to damage, +2 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, kick attacks, +3 to save vs magic, +2 to save vs poison, +1 to spell strength, +4 to save vs Horror Factor (+6 against Elemental Beings), and +1 to save vs possession.

Weapon Bonuses: +4 to strike with Sword or Blunt weapon, +3 to parry with Sword or Blunt weapon, +8 to damage (P.S. bonus).

Armor: Studded Leather (A.R. 12, S.D.C. 35).

Weapons: Pair of large wooden clubs (2D4 damage each, and can be thrown), a Kobold Quality mace (3D6 damage, +1 to strike, +2 to damage +P.S. damage bonus), and a pair of silver-plated daggers (1D6 each).

Magic: Large, magic, Hercules Club (4D6 damage, and can also fire a 4D6 damage *lightning bolt* three times per day; 600 foot/183 m range).

Equipment: A dark blue hooded robe, two sets of clothing, boots, a pair of soft leather gloves, belt, bedroll, backpack, a large satchel, 4 small sacks, two water skins, a 120 page notebook, four pencils, 2 crow quill pens, 2 bottles of ink, a lantern, an extra flask of lantern oil, a wooden cross, 5 wooden stakes, a small mallet, a small mirror, and a tinder box.

Money: 459 in gold and 25 gems worth 1,000 gold each. Part of his money from the DeSilca adventure was sent to his Warlock brethren, some to his family clan, and the rest is put aside for re-supplies and the future.

Ternan Drevag of the Sky

– Changeling and Air Warlock

All Changelings are shapechangers who can make themselves look like other people. Ternan Drevag was part of a family of Changelings who came to the Northern Wilderness to escape persecution and to find safety. They felt that by avoiding the more densely populated lands, their secret would be less likely to be uncovered. Humans and most people fear Changelings and destroy them whenever they are discovered. However Ternan has wanderlust and a desire to see the world.

Disguised as a human, he left his family to see more of the Northlands and eventually fell in with a wandering Air Warlock. The two became fast friends and adventured together. After one adventure, Ternan was seriously wounded and lost consciousness, turning back into his true Changeling form. The Warlock not only accepted Ternan as a Changeling but even nursed Ternan back to health. This impressed Ternan so much that he decided to follow in his friend's path and become a Warlock as well. Ternan Drevag now roams the Eastern Territory disguised as a "human" Air Warlock who hires out his services.

Race: Changeling (currently passing for Human).

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 19, M.A. 21, P.S. 10, P.P. 8, P.E. 11, P.B. 6, Spd. 6

Disposition: Ternan is very cautious. He has had too many times of having his so-called friends turn on him the moment they learn he is a Changeling.

Hit Points: 28. **S.D.C.:** 15.

P.P.E.: 109

Age: 158, but looks 30.

Height: 7 feet (1.2 m) tall as a changeling; currently passing himself off as 6 foot (1.8 m) tall human.

Weight: 210 pounds (95 kg).

Natural Racial Abilities: Shape changing ability (see *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, page 309 for details).

Warlock Powers: 1. Speak Elemental 92%, Sense Elementals 35%, Summon Elementals 15%.

2. Brotherhood with Elementals.

3. Sense Nature of Life Sign (air): Can tell the direction of the wind & accurately tell/sense time by observing the heavens 70%. Can also sense the coming of rain, snow, hail, lightning, wind storms, ley line storms, and other atmospheric disturbances and can also sense impurities in the air (soot and ash from fire, pollution, gas, etc.) and know if the contaminants are harmful, all at 40%.

4. Instinctively knows astronomy at 65% and can hold breath up to 10 minutes.

5. Knows the following *Air Warlock spells*: Air Bubble (10), Breath of Life (50), Breathe Without Air (3), Call Lightning (10), Change Wind Direction (6), Cloud of Steam (4), Cloud of Slumber (4), Create Air (6), Create Light (2), Miasma (7), Walk the Wind (10).

Psionics: Ternan also possesses minor psionics. Knows Presence Sense (4) and Telepathy (6). **I.S.P.:** 43.

Skills of Note: Escape Artist 40%, First Aid 40%, Horsemanship: General 45/30%, Identify Plants & Fruit 40%, Land Navigation 48%, Language: Elven 98% (also speaks Northern and Wolfen, each at 60%), Literate in Elven 55%, Lore: Demons & Monsters 45%, Lore: Faerie Folk 45%, Mathematics: Basic 70%, Sign Language 35%, Wilderness Survival 55%, W.P. Archery, W.P. Knife, and Hand to Hand Combat: Expert.

Experience Level: 5th level Air Warlock.

Attacks per Melee: Four physical or two by magic.

Bonuses: +1 on Perception Rolls regarding wind, weather and Air Elementals, +2 to strike, +3 to parry and dodge, +2 to roll with punch or fall, +2 to pull punch, +4 to save vs Horror Factor (+6 against Elemental beings), +1 to save vs magic, +1 to save vs possession, +1 to spell strength, +2 to save vs psionics, +2 to save vs insanity, +2 to save vs telepathic probes and mind control, and 65% to inspire trust/intimidate.

Armor: Studded Leather (A.R. 12, S.D.C. 32)

Weapons: Cross Bow with case of 16 bolts and a silver dagger.

Equipment: Two sets of clothing, a white hooded robe, bedroll, backpack, a large sack, 4 small sacks, a water skin, a tinder box, 2 candles, a wooden cross, a small mirror, and a symbol representing the element of Air.

Money: 465 gold pieces and 19 gems worth 1,000 gold each. Part of his money from the DeSilca adventure has been spent on establishing a secret sanctuary for Changelings, some to his family, and the rest is put aside for re-supplies and the future.

Rifts® Chaos Earth® Nebraska

Part Two

Official Source Material for Rifts® Chaos Earth®

By Dan Frederick and Megan Timperley

Additional concepts, rules and writing by Kevin Siembieda

New O.C.C.s, a D-Bee & Villains

Ash Fallen O.C.C.

Lost Skeletons O.C.C.

Lohran River People R.C.C. (D-Bee)

Nebraska National Guard O.C.C.

Survivalist/Prepper O.C.C.

(Pyromancer Mage O.C.C. coming in a future **Rifter**®)

Several new Character Classes and races are presented for Chaos Earth Nebraska: The Survivalist/Prepper O.C.C., Pyromancer Mage O.C.C., Ash Fallen O.C.C., Nebraska National Guardsman, and Lohran Riverman R.C.C. Some translate well to other locations across the United States, others not so much, though they may have their counterparts.

Like the rest of the United States, Nebraska has a variety of characters, creatures and phenomena unique to its geographic location. That's one of the cool things about the **Chaos Earth**® setting, crazy stuff is happening everywhere! Every corner of the planet has something weird and often isolated going on. In many cases, things that are entirely unique to that tiny area. This time period is when magic, ley line energy and Rift activity ate at its absolute peak and most chaotic. Many of these creatures, phenomena, characters/O.C.C.s, magic, psionics, and dimensional anomalies, disappear, go extinct, or change over the next 200-300 years before 100 P.A. and the **Rifts**® **RPG** setting. Many become the stuff of legend. Others simply vanish, and some, like the Glitter Boys, Juicers, and Xiticix survive.

Ash Fallen O.C.C.

NPC villains

When civilization falls, the wolves come out to feed on the weak and innocent. The Ash Fallen are just one group of human predators. A band of rogues and thieves of the worst sort. They were rogue rebellious bikers, gangbangers, extremists and anarchist members of gangs or cults on the fringe of society before the Great Cataclysm. When civilization collapsed, it became their time. The violence and chaos of the cataclysmic world feeding into their nihilistic and violent natures. Many were prepared to seize the moment and armed with weapons even before the end of the world came.

They can be encountered traveling across the plains of Nebraska looting and pillaging abandoned vehicles, homes and buildings and avoiding NEMA and the National Guard. They scavenge and plunder the ruins of cities, attacking and robbing other survivors they encounter along the way. They have no par-

ticular allegiances except to their own gang, not even to their fellow humans, as they have adopted a selfish, dog eat dog, thieving and hoarding mentality. While they steal, most are not professional or savvy thieves. Rather they use intimidation, brute force, guns and violence to take what they want and strike down those who resist or oppose them.

While the Ash Fallen have no empathy for other human survivors, and may pummel, torment and rape their victims, they usually let them live and may even leave them enough of the bare essentials to survive for a few days; longer if lucky. However, they are utterly merciless against aliens/D-Bees whom they usually slaughter before looting their corpses.

Bands of the Ash Fallen gang can be found anywhere within Nebraska, but they seem to be most active and numerous in and around the cities of Omaha and Lincoln. In fact, they have struck up nonaggression pact and trade deal with another violent group that calls itself the **Lost Skeletons** whose home base is in the city of Lincoln. However, for the most part these wastelanders of the ash have no loyalty but to themselves and their own families, friends and wicked allies.

The Ash Fallen's appearance is distinctive. In addition to the standard-issue breathing apparatus or face covering that every Nebraskan citizen who must walk above ground and outside wears, they carry excavation equipment, picks, shovels, two backpacks, a large satchel, and 1D6+1 large sacks for loot and salvage. Some may even have a cart or wheelbarrow or large suitcase on wheels. Most drive pickup trucks, jeeps or SUVs, and all are well-armed. The weapons range from melee weapons such as clubs, lengths of metal pipe, crowbars, machetes, spears, and others, to small arms, shotguns, hunting rifles, assault rifles, and what is becoming the gang's infamous symbol and signature weapons, the flamethrower and Molotov cocktails (1D4 of them). Those armed to the teeth will have a survival knife or machete (or both), a sidearm (revolver or pistol), assault rifle (*half have M.D. energy rifles*) and one other weapon or homemade explosive or Molotov cocktail. Leaders always have an M.D. energy rifle and most have an M.D. Vibro-Blade or M.D. energy pistol, and some kind of M.D.C. body armor recovered from police, national guard, military or NEMA facilities or operations. There is a lot of military-grade weapons if one knows where to find them and are willing to brave the ruins and places where such defenders perished in the Cataclysm.

It is rumored a bunker located beneath the ash and dirt in western Nebraska was looted by these bandits, and it contained hundreds (a thousand? More?) M.D. flamethrowers and other Mega-Damage weapons which were passed out to many members of the Ash Fallen gang. These wanderers burn their enemies and torch



vehicles and camps of people who defy, threaten or oppose them. After taking what they want, of course.

It is also rumored that this abandoned military bunker or small base complex now serves as one of the gang's secret bases of operation. However, the Ash Fallen never stop to ask themselves, or worry about, why such a base, even a small one, would be completely abandoned so early in the cataclysm. Did they all flee home to loved ones because it is the end of the World? That seems unlikely for trained and dedicated soldiers. Or was their fate something far more sinister? Were they slaughtered by some invading alien force or pack of monsters? If so, why aren't there more signs of battle, blood and bodies? Were the soldiers swept away by dimensional forces unleashed by the Coming of the Rifts? If so, can it happen again to the Ash Fallen who have taken up residence? Just some of the questions you would think the Ash Fallen would ask themselves, but haven't.

Instead, they have taken a "don't look a gift horse in the mouth" attitude. They tend to be fatalistic opportunists who believe they are living on borrowed time to begin with, so these concerns don't matter at the moment. It is a dog eat dog world of chaos now, and they intend to be among the lords of the jungle who rule this new savage and monstrous world.

Beneath the layers of protective garments, rags, goggles, gas masks, motorcycle and military helmets, and other wastelander gear worn by the Ash Fallen, there is no telling the gender, race, or age of the individual. They could be anyone age 13-80. And though they seem to be human – claim to be human – how does anyone know for sure until they reveal themselves, unwrapped. Such clothing and head gear is necessary for the harsh environment of destruction, weirdness, wind and endlessly falling ash. D-Bees from the Rifts that are humanoids with human proportions would be wise to adopt this wastelander look as a good way to disguise themselves as humans. This has led to questions and rumors suggesting the Ash Fallen, themselves, might not be human at all. They could be mutants or alien invaders. Many Ash Fallen don't care to correct such gossip and enjoy the fear and uncertainty it provokes.

Like many survivors of the Great Cataclysm, members of the Ash Fallen have begun to exhibit unusual powers. In their case, psychic abilities. However, there are more psychics among the organization than is typical. Is it because they were exposed to some sort of mutagen or mutating dimensional energies or transformative magic? Or is it just a coincidence? Could it be that their psionic powers are stimulated to manifest because of their violent natures? Could their ruthless, thieving, hoarding approach to survival have awakened psionic powers within them?

Whatever the reason, their psychic abilities help them to survive and operate in the still forming new world. As a result, the Ash Fallen have been further marginalized and feared by survivors without special powers. Abilities that some survivors regard as alien and unnatural, even evil and dangerous, like magic. Whether human psychics or inhuman invaders, the savage Ash Fallen are ruthless, murdering, marauders with their own agenda to carve out their place on the new Earth.

Ash Fallen Psychic Abilities & Bonuses

A whopping 62% of the members of the Ash Fallen gang possess psychic abilities. Most are Minor psychics, but 10% are Major and 3% are Master Psychics. **Game Note:** For now, see **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** for a list and description of Psionic abilities. See the upcoming **Psychic Scream** sourcebook for more ideas, powers, modifiers and specific rules for playing uncontrolled psychics.

Game Masters, roll on the following table or select the category you desire. Remember, most Ash Fallen will be Minor Psychics, with leaders possessing Major or Master psionics.

01-03% Ash Fallen Master Psychic: Select 1D4+1 psionic abilities from *each* of the three categories: *Healing*, *Physical* and *Sensitive*, plus two from *Super-Psionics*. Select one additional psi-ability from any one of the three Categories for each subsequent level of experience. Also select one additional Super-Psionic power at levels 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, and 13, but they are uncontrolled and there is a weird occurrence or side effect, each a

Super-Psionic ability is used. As well as when any psychic ability is used to attack somebody.

I.S.P. Base: 2D6x10 I.S.P. plus M.E. attribute number, plus 1D6+6 I.S.P. per additional level of experience.

Bonuses: +4D6 to S.D.C., +1D4 to M.E. attribute, +2 to save vs possession and Horror Factor, and only needs to roll a 10 or higher to save vs psionic attacks and mind control.

04-14% Ash Fallen Major Psychic: Select 8 psionic abilities from either *Physical* or *Sensitive* (not both).

In the alternative, select a total of only 2 powers but both are from the *Super-Psionic* category.

These are the only psychic abilities the character possesses. Does not get more with experience.

I.S.P. Base: 2D4x10 I.S.P. plus M.E. attribute number, plus 2D4 I.S.P. per additional level of experience.

Bonuses: +2D6 to S.D.C., +1 to M.E. attribute, +1 to save vs possession and Horror Factor, and only needs to roll a 12 or higher to save vs psionic attacks and mind control.

15-62% Minor Psychic/Typical Ash Fallen: Select a total of three psionic abilities from *Healing* or *Physical* or *Sensitive*, or one from each. Total three abilities. These are the only psychic abilities the character possesses. Does not get more with experience.

I.S.P. Base: 1D4x10 I.S.P. plus M.E. attribute number, plus 1D4 I.S.P. per additional level of experience.

Bonuses: +1D6 to S.D.C., +1 to save vs possession and Horror Factor, and needs to roll a 15 or higher to save vs psionic attacks and mind control.

Uncontrolled Psionics & Weird Side Effects Table

Applicable only when a *Super Psionic Power* is first used or when any psychic ability is *used to attack* a living creature. Probably the result of adrenaline and emotions.

Roll percentile dice to determine which uncontrolled Psionic effect occurs.

01-10% Lucked out: No weird effect happens.

11-17% Sense Danger: The psychic has a premonition about a danger or attack that will occur within the next 24 hours to him or one of his teammates. This could be a vision of a staircase or part of the building collapsing, gunfire, something lurking, growling, howling or laughing in the shadows, a shadowy silhouette of someone or something drawing a weapon or pointing a weapon or finger at him, etc. When the danger is a person, the face or exact image of who or what it is, is seldom revealed. Instead he sees a silhouette or shadow, and a shape that is humanoid, animalistic, or a small, medium or hulking monster, though he might also see fangs, slobbering jaws, claws, eyes, fire, a crumbling facade, toppling tree, flood, and sometime a sensation of heat, cold, tingling, drowning, falling, and even an insignia or symbol that might tell him something or offer a hint or clue about the danger.

That danger could be immediate, coming in seconds or minutes or sometime over the next 24 hours. The psychic does not know when, but he may (or may not) know if he is the one in danger or whether it is a teammate, a stranger he has not met yet or someone he cares about. Likewise, the psychic should get some clue or warning a few seconds before the event takes place

so he can *avoid it* (“Stop! Don’t take another step forward! Let’s go this route instead.”) or *dodge it* (+3 to dodge in that one instant) or *strike before it does* (+3 on initiative in that particular moment). In some cases, the psychic may get a sensation of **deja vu**, in which suddenly his surroundings or this exact scene or experience seems very familiar, as if he has lived this once before. Whenever *deja vu* happens, the psychic should be concerned and cautious.

Penalty from the Premonition: In the here and now, all these images happen in a flash (3 seconds), but are remembered. The flash of unexpected insight causes the psychic to lose one melee attack and he is -2 on all combat rolls and -20% on skill performance for the next melee round (15 seconds) until he clears the cobwebs from his head. If this effect is rolled again or several times within the same combat session or later that same day, double the duration of the penalties as the character is haunted by each new vision. The vision itself may be exactly the same until the incident takes place. Game Masters, make sure you remember for this moment to occur.

18-24% Brain Fizzle: The psychic is fine except he cannot remember how to perform any of his skills for 1D6 melee rounds.

25-30% Brain Lock: The psychic is momentarily obsessed with one thing for 1D4 melee rounds. That could be defeating an opponent, accomplishing a task, acquiring something or someone, escaping, and similar. Any skills required to accomplish the task enjoy a bonus of +10% and the psychic gets one extra melee action per round.

31-37% Brain Fire/Power and Fearlessness: Using a psionic ability in combat or unleashing a Super-Psionic power creates a momentary rush of emotion and that creates an overwhelming sense of power and fearlessness. **Bonuses:** The psychic is +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +3 to save vs psionic attacks, +1 to save vs magical attacks, and is impervious to possession and Horror Factor for 1D4 melee rounds!

Penalties: This might sound great, but during this euphoric state of power the psychic loses all sense of time, forgets any specific mission or goal, and forgets about his own teammates. The character is lost in the moment of power and combat. He is absorbed with using his psychic abilities to punish, defeat or hold off the enemy. He is oblivious to his teammates calling for him to help them or to retreat because the building is about to collapse or the bomb is about to detonate. In this state of mind, the fearless psychic takes risks and tackles opponents that may be more powerful or outnumber him. Which could get him or teammates or innocent people captured or killed.

Aftershock, for 1D4 melee rounds afterward, the psychic feels a bit overwhelmed, shaken and perhaps ashamed of his actions or afraid of his own powers, especially if those actions jeopardized the mission or put innocent lives at risk; -5% on skill performance, -2 on Perception Rolls, -2 on initiative, -1 to strike, and -1 to save vs Horror Factor for 1D4 melee rounds.

38-44 Birds Die: 400 foot (122 m) radius. 2D6 birds are struck dead and fall out of the sky when the power is used. If it has a duration, birds die only when it is initially unleashed.

45-51% Plants Die: Plant life within a 15 foot (4.6 m) radius around the Psychic shrivels and dies when the Super-Psionic power is initially unleashed.

52-58% Hovering Aura: The psychic’s body glows and he rises off the ground and is able to hover or walk in the air 1D4 feet (0.3-1.2 m) above the ground for one melee round when the

Super-Psionic ability is first unleashed. It gives the psychic a Horror Factor of 10. The psychic is -1 to dodge incoming attacks.

59-65% Power Surge: The psychic ability has double the range, duration and damage, and its target is -1 to save against it.

66-70% Power Failure: The psychic ability has half the range, duration and damage, and its target is +1 to save against it.

71-75% Flying Insects are attracted to him: 2,000 foot (610 m) radius. They do not hurt or attack him, but they swarm to his location for the duration of his use of the power and for 1D6 melee rounds afterward. It gives the psychic a Horror Factor of 12.

76-80% Rodents are attracted to him: 2,000 foot (610 m) radius. They do not hurt or attack him, but they swarm to his location for the duration of his use of the power and for 1D6 melee rounds afterward. It gives the psychic a Horror Factor of 14.

81-85% Sense magic: 1,000 foot (305 m) radius. Will sense if there are magic users, creatures of magic or spells being used within the radius. But doesn't know who or where they are. If on a ley line, the feedback creates a loud, momentary buzzing in the psychic's head, causing him discomfort and he loses one melee attack.

86-90% Sense Supernatural Evil: 1,000 foot (305 m) radius. Will sense if there is one or more evil supernatural beings (not creatures of magic like dragons) are within the sensing radius, but does not know who or where they are. However, the psychic will have a general idea where the most evil or most powerful evil is located! Knowing more than three evil supernatural beings or a great evil is nearby instills fear in the psychic. -2 to save vs Horror Factor and -1 on all combat rolls when he comes face to face with it for the duration of that encounter, even if the psychic saves vs H.F.

91-95% Empathy: 2,000 foot (610 m) radius. The psychic is besieged by the emotions of as many as 1D4x100 people within range. The sensation is momentarily painful, like a brain freeze from eating ice-cream, only worse. The Master Psychic loses two melee attacks, skill performance is -20% and all combat bonuses are reduced by half for one melee round (15 seconds).

96-00% Sense Evil and picks up a few malevolent or violent thoughts, but doesn't know who they are coming from. 2,000 foot (610 m) radius. The Master Psychic loses one melee attack.

Ash Fallen Villain Creation Stats

Alignment: Anarchist (20%), Miscreant (40%), Diabolic (30%), and Aberrant (10%).

Attribute Requirements: None. Just a willingness to follow the gang's leaders and to be ruthless. Thieves among the group benefit from a P.P. 12 or higher. Every member of the Ash Fallen has a job and is expected to do it well, but loyalty and savagery is more important than skill or intelligence. Follow orders with ruthless efficiency, and you'll do well in this organization.

O.C.C. Skills for Ash Fallen (special): The Great Cataclysm and the Coming of the Rifts was just a few weeks or months ago, depending on the G.M.'s time-line. So the members of the Ash Fallen possess ordinary skills from ordinary occupations. It is their quickly turning to such extreme violence and brutal methods of survival that sets them apart as a group of cutthroats and villains. **Note:** Does not include NEMA or new Chaos Earth O.C.C.s like practitioners of magic or psychics.

Common Skills:

Computer Operation

Domestic: Two skills of choice.

Language, Native

Literacy, Native Language

Mathematics: Basic

Pilot: Automobile (includes Jeeps, SUVs and Pickup Trucks)

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select four skills that directly relate to the character's occupation *BEFORE* the Coming of the Rifts: Nurse, doctor, chemist, electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, communications, computer sciences, clerk, cook, factory worker, professional truck driver, manager, athlete (high school, college or professional), thief, thug (muscle and crime), soldier, scientist, etc. Pick four skills from the one or two skill categories that best fits that occupation.

For Example: *Computer sciences* might be Basic Electronics (or Basic Mechanics), Computer Programing, Computer Repair, and Computer Hacking (or perhaps Radio: Basic or T.V./Video). *Soldier* should probably include Radio: Basic, Military Etiquette, Hand to Hand: Expert, and W.P. Assault Rifle or Energy Rifle.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select three additional skills that might be known to someone of that occupation.

For Example: Staying with the two examples above, *Computer Sciences* might include skills from the Communications Category (any) and/or Technical (like Cyberjacking or Jury-Rig, or General Repair & Maintenance, or Research, or Salvage, or even Lore: Cities or Photography), and/or from a skill from the Science Category.

Soldier could select a total of three skills from the Categories of Military, Physical and/or W.P. They could all be Military or W.P., or a combination from both or all three.

Game Master Approval of your occupation based skills: The G.M. must approve your selections. If one or more Occupational and O.C.C. Related Skills are rejected by the G.M., the Game Master should offer suggestions and point the player in the right direction. To expedite the process, the G.M. can always select the skill. In all cases, the players and/or G.M. should give this process a little thought and be reasonable. Do NOT overthink this.

Secondary Skills for the Ash Fallen (special): Select two Secondary Skills at level one from the skills and Skill Categories, listed below. Select one additional at levels 3, 5, 7, 10 and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level. These skill options reflect the darker nature of the Ash Fallen as they become violent bandits and more ruthless.

W.P. Flamethrower

Tracking (People; +5%).

Land Navigation (+5%)

Lore: Any (+10%).

Hand to Hand: Basic

Hand to Hand: Expert, but counts as 2 skill selections.

Wilderness Survival (+5%)

Communications Skills: Any.

Pilot Skills: Non-Military vehicle piloting skills only.

Rogue Skills: Any (+5%).

Weapon Proficiency: Ancient, Any.

Weapon Proficiency: Modern, Any.

Standard Equipment: One weapon and 1D6 reloads/clips for each Modern W.P., heavy clothing with multiple layers and disgusting bulk, gas mask, bandana/scarf to protect neck or head/hair, cap, hat or helmet (probably motorcycle type, but can be military), hooded sweatshirt, belt, heavy boots, one or two satchels, two backpacks, two belt pouches, 1D6 medium sacks, 1D4 large sacks, a folding shovel or large shovel (does 2D4 S.D.C. damage), or pick-axe (does 2D6 S.D.C. damage), hand-axe (1D6 S.D.C. damage), knife (1D6 S.D.C.), large flat brush for dusting away ash from delicate items, flashlight, two canteens or 1D4+4 bottles of water, one week of rations.

25% chance of having an *Ash Fallen Flamethrower* (see below) or 1D4 Molotov cocktails (5D6 S.D.C. damage each depending on where or on who it hits, plus 80% chance of setting flammable materials on fire).

Armor: Nothing for most. 20% have commercial S.D.C. (50-100 S.D.C.) or light M.D.C. (20 M.D.C.) bulletproof vest-style body armor, 10% have patchwork armor (1D6x10+8 M.D.C.), 5% have Police SWAT or Riot armor (75 M.D.C.) and 10% have scavenged and otherwise “acquired” NEMA M.D.C. body armor.

Money: Carries very little valuables on them whenever on the job looting, robbing, raiding, salvaging, or running errands. 1D6x100 pre-Rifts American dollars, 2D6x100 dollars/credits worth of other valuables (probably a combination of jewelry, soaps, lotions, perfume, alcohol, candy, food, electronics, batteries, tools, ammunition, survival gear, spare parts, etc.).

Experience Levels: Use NEMA Soldier/Field Engineer experience table from *Chaos Earth® RPG*, page 112.

Ash Fallen Flamethrower

The advanced Flamethrower of standard use by the Ash Fallen is in fact a modern plasma flamethrower.

Weight: 22 lbs (9.9 kg) or 30 pounds (13.5 kg) with plasma tank.

Mega-Damage: A single, short plasma blast does 3D6 M.D. A concentrated plasma burst does 1D4x10+10 M.D., but counts as two melee attacks. Or the attacker can spray/cover a 10 foot (3 m) length, doing 1D6 M.D. to everything in the that 10 feet (3 m), but counts as two melee attacks.

Rate of Fire: Single shot, concentrated burst or spray.

Effective Range: 100 feet (30.5 m).

Payload: Standard E-Clip holds 12 single short bursts, a long E-Clip holds 28 plasma blasts. A plasma tank holds 100 shots.

Lost Skeletons O.C.C.

Citizens' Militia

Another group of militant extremists making a power grab from Lincoln, Nebraska. They are not as evil or ruthless as the Ash Fallen, but they are serious about becoming “the” power in Nebraska. That means their rules are the law of the land and any who disregards or breaks them is a malcontent or criminal. As the regional political and military power of Nebraska, the militia, police, National Guard and thugs under the leadership of self-appointed Governor Mark Graves, are the de facto authority in the State of Nebraska. Under that assumption, they have the right to



commandeer State, police and military supplies and equipment, as well as civilian property, under martial law.

The fact that Governor Graves is not a duly elected official (he claimed the title and authority of Governor when his brother, the real governor died (murdered by Mark)). Thus, his authority is not legitimate, but might makes right, especially in this new Chaos Earth, and Mark Graves who is the leader of the militant, survivalist group known as the Lost Skeletons Citizens' Militia, functioned as a small army to take the governorship and claim authority. The sad truth is he is a despot tyrant in the making.

Lost Skeletons Citizens' Militia Villain Creation Stats

Alignment: Any, but mostly Unprincipled (20%), Anarchist (40%), Miscreant (20%), and Aberrant (10%).

Attribute Requirements: None. Just a willingness to follow the their leader, Mark Graves and to be his brutal enforcers and saviors of humanity. Loyalty and obedience is more important than skill or intelligence, at least for the moment.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +2D6+10 to S.D.C., +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +1 to pull punch, +1 to roll with impact, +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

O.C.C. Skills for Lost Skeletons (special): The Great Cataclysm and the Coming of the Rifts was just a few weeks or months ago, depending on the G.M.'s time-line. So the mem-

bers of this so-called Citizens' Militia possess ordinary skills from ordinary occupations. It is their quickly turning to such extreme violence and brutal methods of survival and conquest that sets them apart as a group of dangerous thugs and villains. **Note:** Does not include NEMA or new Chaos Earth O.C.C.s like practitioners of magic or psychics.

Common Skills for the Lost Skeletons:

Computer Operation

Domestic: One skill of choice (+5%).

Language, Native

Literacy, Native Language

Mathematics: Basic

Pilot: Automobile (includes Jeeps, SUVs and Pickup Trucks).

Wilderness: Two skills of choice (+10%)

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select four skills that directly relate to the character's occupation *BEFORE* the Coming of the Rifts: Nurse, doctor, chemist, electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, communications, computer sciences, clerk, cook, factory worker, professional truck driver, manager, athlete (high school, college or professional), thief, thug (muscle and crime), soldier, scientist, etc. Pick four skills from the one or two skill categories that best fits that occupation.

For Example: *Computer sciences* might be Basic Electronics (or Basic Mechanics), Computer Programing, Computer Repair, and Computer Hacking (or perhaps Radio: Basic or T.V./Video). *Soldier* should probably include Radio: Basic, Military Etiquette, Hand to Hand: Expert, and W.P. Assault Rifle or Energy Rifle.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select three additional skills that might be known to someone of that occupation.

For Example: Staying with the two examples above, *Computer Sciences* might include skills from the Communications Category (any) and/or Technical (like Cyberjacking or Jury-Rig, or General Repair & Maintenance, or Research, or Salvage, or even Lore: Cities or Photography), and/or from a skill from the Science Category.

Soldier could select a total of three skills from the Categories of Military, Physical and/or W.P. They could all be Military or W.P., or a combination from both or all three.

Game Master Approval of your occupation based skills:

The G.M. must approve your selections. If one or more Occupational and O.C.C. Related Skills are rejected by the G.M., the Game Master should offer suggestions and point the player in the right direction. To expedite the process, the G.M. can always select the skill. In all cases, the players and/or G.M. should give this process a little thought and be reasonable. Do NOT overthink this.

Militia: Prepper M.O.S. Skill Package: As a survivalist militia organization, select one of the following M.O.S. skill packages.

Combat Engineer Militia M.O.S.: Requires I.Q. of 11 or greater.

Demolitions (+10%)

Demolitions Disposal (+20%)

Excavation (+10%)

Hand to Hand: Basic

Military Fortification (+10%)

Trap Construction or Field Armorer & Munitions (+10%).

Trap and Mine Detection (+10%)

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

Basic Electronics (+10%)

Communication: One skill of choice (+10%).

Electronic Countermeasures (+10%)

Hand to Hand: Basic

Laser Communications (+10%)

Radio: Basic (+20%).

T.V./Video or Surveillance (+15%)

Infantryman/Rifleman/Militia Man M.O.S.: No requirements.

Climbing (+10%) or Running, pick one.

Hand to Hand: Expert

Land Navigation (+10%)

Physical: One of choice, except Acrobatics or Gymnastics.

Radio: Basic (+10%)

W.P. Assault Rifle or W.P.: Modern of choice (any).

W.P. Energy Rifle

Scout/Wilderness Survivalist M.O.S.: Requires an I.Q. of 9 or higher. M.O.S. Bonus: +1D6 to S.D.C., +1 to P.E., +2 to Perception Rolls regarding terrain condition and terrain that could be used for ambush and traps, and detecting ambushes, camouflage or traps.

* Can change Hand to Hand: Expert to Martial Arts for the cost of three Common or O.C.C. Related Skills.

Detect Ambush (+15%)

Detect Concealment (+15%)

Hand to Hand: Expert*

Land Navigation (+16%)

Prowl or Tailing (+15%)

Radio: Basic (+10%)

Wilderness Survival (+10%)

Transportation Specialist: Requires P.E. and P.P. of at least 9.

M.O.S. Bonus: +1 to dodge while driving and +5% to perform evasive maneuvers, stunts, rams and emergency crashes.

* Can change Hand to Hand: Basic to Expert for the cost of two Common or O.C.C. Related Skills.

Hand to Hand: Basic *

Land Navigation (+10%)

Pilot: Hover Vehicles (+10%)

Pilot: Tanks and APCs (+10%)

Pilot: Two of choice (+10%), any including power armor and robots.

Radio: Basic (+10%)

W.P. Modern: One of choice.

Secondary Skills for the Lost Skeleton Citizens' Militia (special): Select one Secondary Skill from the skills or Skill Categories, listed below at levels 1, 3, 5, 7, 10 and 13. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level. These skill options reflect the militant nature of these militia men.

Tracking (People; +5%)

Land Navigation (+5%)

Lore: Any (+10%)

Intelligence (+10%)

Hand to Hand: Basic

Camouflage (+10%)

Communications Skills: Any.

Pilot Skills: Non-Military vehicle piloting skills only.

Rogue Skills: Any.

Weapon Proficiency: Ancient, Any.

Weapon Proficiency: Modern, Any.

Wilderness Skills: Any (+5%)

Standard Equipment: One weapon and 1D6+6 reloads/clips for each Modern W.P., a survival knife (1D6 S.D.C. damage), military fatigues (khaki), camouflage fatigues, military grade gas mask, goggles, utility belt, web vest, combat boots, gloves, a cap, one satchel, two backpacks, sleeping bag, 1D4 large sacks, and 1D4 medium-sized sacks, 1D4 large sacks, first aid kit, a folding shovel, survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.; 10% have a Vibro-Knife that does 1D6 M.D.), flashlight, walkie-talkie, two canteens, 4 weeks of rations, pocket mirror, comb and some personal items.

Armor: 30% have commercial S.D.C. armor (A.R. 17, 100 S.D.C.) or light M.D.C. bulletproof vest-style body armor (30 M.D.C.), but 20% have a Police M.D.C. long coat, 20% have SWAT or National Guard Riot armor (75 M.D.C.) and 20% have scavenged and otherwise “acquired” NEMA M.D.C. body armor. Most have a military helmet (50 M.D.C.).

Money: Carries very little valuables on them whenever on the duty, but have 2D6x100 pre-Rifts American dollars, 2D6x100 dollars/credits worth of other valuables (probably a combination of jewelry, soaps, lotions, perfume, alcohol, candy, food, electronics, batteries, tools, ammunition, survival gear, spare parts, etc.).

Experience Levels: Use NEMA Soldier/Field Engineer experience table from **Chaos Earth® RPG**, page 112.

Lohran River People

The Lohran River People are a new dimensionally transplanted race of semiaquatic nature. Known as Lohran on their homeworld, humans call these D-Bees River People, remarking on the similarities between the Lohran and River Otters of Nebraska. Rivermen have a long, humanoid body, broad, flattened face, large flat nose, large brown eyes, and a long, tapered tail. Males typically have whitish whiskers, most have brown, tan or black, short fur covering their sleek muscular bodies. They have webbed feet and hands and are excellent swimmers who can dive up to 75 feet (23 m) underwater.

The Lohran River People communicate using several methods, including chirping, humming, growling, barking, whistles, squeals, and screams. They also communicate through scent marking using a pair of scent glands located at the base of their tail. And finally, they communicate through body language, including touch and posture. Learning English and other languages is possible over time, but speaking it is difficult for these D-Bees (-15% to language skills). Most Lohran River People are encountered along the Platte River and other Mississippi tributaries. The Lohran have a natural ability to sense ley lines, nexus points, and P.P.E., as well as Ley Line Storms, Zone Twisters and other water/storm related weather. They also have the ability to swim along ley lines during storms, heal faster on ley lines and are able to push people down ley lines and away from them. The victims report feeling as if caught in a current of water. The Lohran River

People like to live on or near ley lines because they feel safe by them and they are invulnerable to Ley Line Storms and Zone Twisters, thus ley lines offer the D-Bee a sort of natural protection.

While Lohran are not completely tied to the water, and hunt and explore across dry land, they are connected to it. Most sleep in the river at night and they require at least one hour in the water ever 72 hours or become increasingly fatigued and weak. (Reduce Spd and skill performance by 10%, and -1 on melee bonuses for every 72 hours without an hour or more spent submerged in water. After, six days without water, the Lohran suffers 5D6 Hit Point damage for every additional day without submersion in water. Eventually becomes too weak to move and dies.)

Lohran River People D-Bee Stats

Also Known As: Rivermen, Ottos, and Blue Zone Swimmer.

Alignment: Any, but 30% are Principled, 40% are Scrupulous, 20% are Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+3, M.E. 1D6+5, M.A. 2D6+9, P.S. 2D6+7, P.P. 2D6+5, P.E. 2D6+5, P.B. 2D6+3, Spd 2D6+11.

Size: 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m).

Weight: 135 to 200 lbs (61 to 90 kg).

Hit Points: 2D6x100 (the equivalent of 2D6 M.D.C.); considered minor Mega-Damage creatures. Double on ley lines. Also see conditional M.D.C., below, that occurs during Ley Line Storms and Zone Twisters.

M.D.C. (Conditional): Hit Points turn into Mega-Damage Capacity plus they get an additional +2D6x10 M.D.C. increase during Ley Line Storms and Zone Twisters. The M.D.C. bonus is temporary and lasts only during the storm/twister and for 2D6 minutes afterward, before the Lohran return to their normal Hit Point amount. Also see Ley Line Storm Swimming under Natural Abilities.

Horror Factor: 8

P.P.E.: 2D6x10 +1D6 per level of experience. This makes them desirable for blood sacrifices in magical rituals by wicked beings.

Disposition: Lohran are friendly, playful, and kind, however, they are easily spooked and flee or dive into water when frightened. They are very curious about humans and other creatures, and enjoy travel and seek adventure. They love the water and builds small wood huts in shallow water and along lakes and riverbanks, reminiscent of Earth beavers.

Average Lifespan: 70 to 80 years.

Natural Abilities: Resistant to cold (half damage), Nightvision 300 feet (91.5 m), can see in murky water 500 feet (152 m), can hold breath for 1D6+10 minutes +3 minutes per level of experience; maximum depth tolerance is 1,000 feet (3048 m). Recovers Hit Points at a rate of 1D4x100 per 24 hours, double on a ley line, triple at a nexus or when swimming in a Ley Line Storm, and recovers 3D4x100 Hit Points while inside a Zone Twister, even if it was only for five minute! Double Hit Points when on ley lines and get even more during Ley Line Storm events (see Hit Points, above, for details). They are strange little people.

Ley Line Tide (special): Also known as Ley Line Push, this ability is reminiscent of the Wind Rush spell, except that it creates a ley line effect and can only be made to happen on a ley line. **For the cost of 12 P.P.E.**, a Lohran can target one individual (two people if they are standing within three

feet/0.9 m of each other) and cause the ley line energy to push against them forcing them back and away from the Lohran. The effect is similar to being caught in rapids or a *tidal undertow* that pulls the victim away from the Lohran at a speed of 22 (15 mph/24 km). They are powerless to resist the ley line tide unless they can grab hold of a tree or something else to hold on to, but needs a P.S. of 20 to hang on. The act of grabbing onto something counts as two melee attacks and the effort to continue to hold on uses HALF of the character's attacks per melee round. There is also a 50% chance of dropping any item that was in the person's hand when they were swept away. **Range:** The Lohran can target people up to 60 feet (18.3 m) away per each level of the D-Bee's experience (half for children). **Distance Victims are Carried:** 300 feet (91.4 m) per level of the Lohran is how far away the Ley Tide carries a person. **Duration:** One melee round (15 seconds). **Saving Throw:** -2 to save, but even then the person who saved feels the pull and is -1 attack and -1 on all melee bonuses for the duration, as well as -20 to speed, as long as he pushes against the tidal, but no penalty for going with the tidal force.

Spell casters and creatures of magic suffer additional effects as follows: Any spell they cast that is going against the ley line tidal force (i.e. pointed at the Lohran) costs 20% more P.P.E. to cast and has *half the range, damage and duration!* No penalty if going with the tidal force that is pushing them back.

Note: When used on a fellow Lohran, the creature can swim through the air at half his normal running speed *against* the tidal force or at three times his normal speed for twice the usual range swimming with it. The latter is used to send a fellow Lohran ahead or at a target very quickly. Opponents are -2 on initiative and -2 to strike, parry or dodge the incoming Lohran suddenly rocketing at them through the air.

Sense the Approach of Magic (special): Lohran can sense P.P.E. in others and can tell if it is a little (under 20 P.P.E.), medium (30-60 points) or a large amount (70 or more), as well as sense the approach of Ley Line Storms and Zone Twisters, and the direction from which they are coming from. Automatic, no P.P.E. cost. Must be able to see the person to sense their P.P.E. level. Sense the approach of Ley Storms and Zone Twisters up to 5 miles (8 km) +1 mile (1.6 km) away per level of experience.

Ley Line Storm Swimming (special): Lohran are impervious to Ley Line Storms and Zone Twisters. When a Ley Line Storm occurs, and the ley line energy swells and swirls, these D-Bees are actually able to swim across ley lines at double their running speed and up to a half the height of the ley line, itself. When the Ley Line Storm passes (is a mile/1.6 km away), their ley line swimming ability fades and they are gently deposited on the ground, no worse for the wear. Most Lohran enjoy the experience.

As a Zone Twister approaches within one mile (1.6 km), the Lohran gets the M.D.C. boost mentioned above, but when the Twister is within 500 feet (152 m) they can swim in the air along the ley line and automatically become intangible, so even if they are drawn into the swirling maelstrom, they are not injured!

If pulled into a Zone Twister, the intangible Lohran cannot escape its swirling motion until it dissipates, but they are not hurt by it and are able swim around inside of it. For them this

is a fun and thrilling experience that most welcome like a carnival coming to town. When the Zone Twister dissipates away, the D-Bees become solid again and are gently deposited on the ground. While inside the Zone Twister, they cannot attack nor perform any skills other than swim or ride the winds and enjoy. As if super-charged by the experience, they can swim along the ley line at triple their normal speed for 3D6+30 minutes or double their normal speed in water. This is good because the Zone Twister is likely to have deposited them 2D6 miles (3.2 to 19 km) away from where they were pulled into it. When this duration comes to an end, the little D-Bees must walk (or swim if near a river) the rest of the way back.

Experience Levels: 1D4+1 or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Player characters should start at first level. Use the *Volunteer Militia Fighter* experience table (or *Vagabond* in Rifts®).

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand Combat skill, typically Basic.

Bonuses (in addition to those acquired from attributes and skills): When under water they are +1 to strike, parry, dodge and disarm.

Vulnerabilities: -4 to Horror Factor and often will flee the area if frightened. Must spend an hour a day in water or become increasingly fatigued: Reduce Spd and skill performance by 10%, and -1 on melee bonuses for every 72 hours without an hour or more spent submerged in water. After, six days without water, the Lohran suffers 5D6 Hit Point damage for every additional day without submersion in water. Eventually becomes too weak to move and dies.

Magic: None other than Natural Abilities.

Psionics: None.

Available O.C.C.s: None.

R.C.C./O.C.C. Equivalent Skills: All Lohran have the following skills plus ONE of the M.O.S. Skill packages below.

Barter (+5%)

Begging (+5%)

Fishing (+10%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Mathematics: Basic (+10%)

Swimming (+20%; speed is equal to running, double if swimming in a body of water within a ley line).

Wilderness Survival (+10%).

Hand to Hand: Basic

O.C.C. Related Skills: Instead of the usual range of skills available, the Lohran selects one of the following M.O.S. skill bundles, below, based on the D-Bee's area of interest, work and specialty. All Lohran are either River Dwellers who fish and grow some food gardens, Hunter/Trappers or Wilderness Wanderers who gather fruits, nuts and herbs, and know a bit about medicine.

River Dweller M.O.S.: Spends most their time in and near the water. Loves the water. These are the Lohran who build their huts.

Boat Building (+15%)

Carpentry (+15%)

Cook (+10%)

Escape Artist (+10%)

Gardening (+20%)

Pilot: Paddle Type/Canoe (+20%)

Rope Works (+10%)

Sewing (+15%)

Sing (+10%)

W.P. Knife or Spear, pick one.

M.O.S. Bonuses: +10% to Fishing and +5% to Swimming skills +1 on Perception Rolls involving water, currents, water movement, and weather, and +1 to roll with impact.

Hunter/Trapper M.O.S.: He or she is a hunter, as well as the member of the family clan or tribe who skins and prepares animal hides, and protects the clan from wild animals and humanoid raiders. Game animals include large fish, aquatic mammals, water fowl (ducks, geese, etc.) and land mammals from muskrats, rabbits and raccoons to deer and other large animals.

Cook (+20%)

Hunting

Prowl (+10%)

Skin & Prepare Animal Hides (+30%)

Tailing (+10%, +25% when in water).

Tracking (Humanoids; +10)

Track & Trap Animals (+20%)

W.P. Knife

W.P. Spear

W.P. Ancient of Choice (any).

M.O.S. Bonus: +1D6x100 Hit Points (Equal to 1D6 M.D.C.), +2 on Perception Rolls involving hunting and combat, +1 to strike, +1 to parry and dodge, +1 to disarm, +2 to pull punch, +1 to roll with impact, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor. **Note:** Basic Hand to Hand is replaced with Hand to Hand: Expert.

Wilderness Explorer M.O.S.: This Lohran loves water and fishing as much as the next Lohran, but is more curious than others (and they are all curious), so he or she likes to visit and explore dry land. Also has holistic healing skills, including finding and collects herbs for food and healing purposes. Likely to grow an herb garden and carry herbs on their person.

Animal Husbandry (+10%)

Brewing (+10%)

Brewing Medicinal (+10%)

Dowsing (+30%)

First Aid (+15%)

Holistic Medicine (+15%)

Identify Plants and Fruit (+20%)

Preserve Food (+20%)

W.P. Knife or Ancient W.P. of choice.

W.P. Spear or Wilderness skill of choice (+10%).

M.O.S. Bonus: +10% to Land Navigation and Wilderness Survival skills, +1D6x100 Hit Points (equal to 1D6 M.D.C.), +1 on Perception Rolls involving nature and weather, +1 to dodge, and +1 to roll with impact.

Secondary Skills: Select one Secondary Skill at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 from the Skill Categories below, as the character adapts to this new world and maybe even learns a little technology. Skill selections are limited to *Communications, Domestic, Medical, Technical, W.P. Ancient, and W.P. Modern*. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level.

Habitat: Currently, most numerous in Nebraska along the Platte River (an estimated 200 of them), but family clans and small tribes have been reported in rivers and lakes near ley lines elsewhere in Nebraska, Colorado, Kansas and South Dakota. Typical family clan is 1D6+4 members (mom, dad, a few children and maybe the grandparents or an adult sibling, cousin, or friend or two). Tribes tend to be small and made up of four or more family clans, 2D4x10 members. They are a simple, nomadic, tribal people. As such, they are embraced by Native Americans.

Standard Equipment: Ranging from little to nothing to typical O.C.C. chosen equipment.

Money: May have furs, food, drinking water, herbal medicine, and items they have found like weapons and ammo-clips, backpacks, blankets, rope, etc. to trade. Can also trade

Cybernetics and Bionics: Most Lohran Riverman will shun cybernetics and bionics, however it is possible.

Enemies: Predators and hostile individuals.

Allies: Other Lohran, those that are on Earth now, and other D-Bees and humans of good alignment.

Note: Sadly, the Lohran are believed to have been too gentle and primitive to survive the horror of the Two Hundred Years Dark Age. None are *known* to exist on Rifts Earth.

Nebraska National Guard

Nebraska National Guardsmen are fiercely proud, and know that they come from a long line of volunteers. Many are second, third, or even fourth generation. Some might even go back further than that. This is in their blood; they are loyal to, and proud of, their home state. The men and woman of the National Guard have a unique set of skills because they have two sides of their life that they must manage. Home, where they might be a salesman or nurse, or even a dog walker, and the National Guard side, where they practice combat techniques, riot control, civil defense, and disaster relief.

National Guard O.C.C. Stats

Alignment: Any, but most are Principled (30%), Scrupulous (35%), Unprincipled (15%), and other.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9, M.E. 9, and P.E. 10 or higher; a higher I.Q. and good P.S. and P.E. are helpful but not necessary.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +2D6 to S.D.C. and +1 to pull punch, +1 to roll with impact, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

O.C.C. Skills for National Guard (special): The Great Cataclysm and the Coming of the Rifts was just a few weeks or months ago, depending on the G.M.'s time-line. So the members of the National Guard have ordinary skills from ordinary occupations.

Common Skills for National Guard:

Computer Operation (+5%)

Domestic: One skill of choice (+5%).

Language, Native

Literacy, Native Language

Mathematics: Basic

Pilot: Automobile (includes Jeeps, SUVs and Pickup Trucks).

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select four skills that directly relate to the character's *civilian occupation BEFORE* the Coming of the

Rifts: Nurse, doctor, chemist, electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, communications, computer sciences, clerk, cook, factory worker, professional truck driver, manager, athlete (high school, college or professional), thief, thug (muscle and crime), soldier, scientist, etc. Pick four skills from the one or two skill categories that best fits that occupation. See the Ash Fallen or Lost Skeletons O.C.C. for examples on how this works.

National Guard Military Training/Skills: The character also gets the skills below as part of his National Guard O.C.C. Related Skills.

Military Etiquette (+10%)

Pilot: Two, choice of any military, Hover Craft, Hovercycle, boat or aircraft (+5%), and may include a NEMA power armor or robot.

Radio: Basic (+10%)

Running

W.P.: Energy Rifle

W.P. Modern: One of choice, any.

W.P. Ancient: One of choice, but limited to choice of W.P. Blunt, W.P. Chain, W.P. Crossbow, W.P. Grappling Hook, W.P. Knife, W.P. Paired Weapons, W.P. Staff, or W.P. Sword. Hand to Hand: Basic, but can be changed to Expert for the cost of one Common or O.C.C. Related Skill, or Martial Arts (or Assassin if an evil Alignment) at the cost of two skills.

Secondary Skills for National Guard (special): Select one Secondary Skill from the skills or Skill Categories, listed below at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level. These skill options reflect either their military training or civilian occupation.

First Aid (+10%)

Land Navigation (+5%)

Lore: Any (+10%)

Intelligence (+10%)

Paramedic (+10%)

Communications: Any (+5%)

Military: Any

Pilot Skills: Non-Military vehicle piloting skills only.

Rogue Skills: Any.

Technical: Any.

Wilderness Survival (+5%)

Weapon Proficiency: Ancient, Any.

Weapon Proficiency: Modern, Any.

Standard Equipment: One weapon and 1D6+6 reloads/clips for each Modern W.P., a billy club/nightstick (2D4 S.D.C. damage), military fatigues, camouflage fatigues, military grade gas mask, utility belt, web vest, combat boots, one satchel, two backpacks, sleeping bag, one large sack, one footlocker, a folding shovel, survival knife (1D6 S.D.C.; 10% have a Vibro-Knife that does 1D6 M.D.), first aid kit, flashlight, walkie-talkie, portable language translator (human Earth languages only), two canteens, 4 weeks of rations, pocket mirror, comb, and some personal items.

Armor: 80% have National Guard Riot Armor (medium, non-environmental military, full body armor with 75 M.D.C. main body and helmet with 50 M.D.C. and built-in radio and gas mask/air filtration system), 20% have Standard NEMA M.D.C. body armor (120 M.D.C. main body, helmet has 70

M.D.C.). Some also have NEMA Armored Long Coats (32 M.D.C.).

Cybernetics and Bionics: Same as NEMA soldier. Typically Bio-Comp self-monitoring system, gyro-compass, Clock Calendar, as well as bio-systems and cybernetic or bionic prosthetics for limbs lost in combat.

Money: National Guard provides a roof over their head, a base of operation, food and medical care. Carry very little valuables on them whenever on duty, but have 4D6x100 pre-Rifts American dollars or credits.

Notes and Optional NEMA O.C.C.s in the National Guard: Even though the majority of NEMA is regrouping in Chicago, any NEMA O.C.C. is playable in Chaos Earth Nebraska, or anywhere in North America. They will likely team up with the National Guard, local police, and local governments if still intact. Most military O.C.C.s or some variant of them are also suitable for **National Guard Specialists**. Most likely the following NEMA O.C.C.s with the same basic equipment and skills: *Soldier/Peacekeeper*, *Field Engineer*, and *Fire & Rescue*. But there could be a squad or two of Chromium Guardsmen, Silver Eagle Pilots and/or Robot Pilots as well. Remember, the National Guard focuses mostly on controlling riots, civil defense, disaster relief, search and rescue and support of the military/NEMA/First Responders. These are the people you most want and need in an emergency.

Experience Levels: Use the NEMA Soldier/Field Engineer experience table from **Chaos Earth® RPG**, page 112.

Survivalist/Prepper O.C.C.

Survivalism is a movement that resurfaced during the last decade or two of the Golden Age of Human Civilization. Honestly, it never completely went away, with cults and fringe groups who lived off the grid or maintained a minimalist or nihilistic lifestyle. Some dating back to the 20th Century. However, due to the new Cold War, many individuals, families and small groups called Survivalists or Preppers actively set about preparing for government collapse, including disruption in social or political order, on scales from local to international. These Survivalists or Preppers often learned how to handle a weapon, self-defense training, hunting, fishing, basic emergency medicine, and stockpiled food, water, weapons and ammunition to be prepared and self-sufficient when the end of civilization came to pass. For these individuals, it was only a matter of “when,” not if, life as we knew it came to an end. Half of them built underground bunkers or had a cabin in the woods, even a compound on several acres of land, or other survival retreat, to help them survive a catastrophe. Such places always had their own generator or solar panels or high-tech batteries to power their “retreat” and stockpiled their BOL (Bug Out Location) with ample food, water, ammo and supplies. They also made sure their BOB (Bug Out Bag) was ready for travel at a moment’s notice. They were often portrayed in the media as extremists and viewed with disdain by the general populace.

In the end, however, these Preppers found themselves better-equipped to deal with the aftermath of the Great Cataclysm than most. They had prepared for it all their lives and had the supplies, means of protection, shelter and most importantly, a plan for survival.



Of course nobody could be prepared for the Coming of the Rifts, the return of magic and strange monsters that came with them, but Preppers, because they had a survival plan, did not panic and freak out like the majority of the population. They had their plan, training and place to retreat to lay low and observe and assess the situation. That mental preparedness alone gives Survivalists/Preppers an edge over the average civilian amidst the chaos. Moreover, as noted earlier, Preppers didn't just collect supplies and gear, they learned a variety of skills such as hunting, trapping, cooking, collecting and purifying water, building a fire, first-aid and other basic survival skills the average person, regardless of how smart they may be, just does not possess. And while films and the media portrayed survivalists as lone-wolves and nut jobs, when the end came, many used their knowledge and their preparations to help others. And still do.

Survivalists/Preppers are able to assist first-responders and NEMA, and once they have been given or managed to scrounge up a Mega-Damage weapon, know how to handle it with skill and precision compared to the ordinary civilian. Aware of their abilities and unique position of being prepared for civilization's collapse, many exhibit uncommon valor, empathy and compas-

sion when it comes to helping survivors. They don't tolerate fools and people who disrespect them, but to those who are willing to listen and follow their lead, these men, women and even teens and children can be life-savers.

Survivalist/Prepper O.C.C. Stats

Alignment: Any, but most are Principled (10%), Scrupulous (30%), Unprincipled (25%), and Anarchist (25%).

Attribute Requirements: None per se, but a good to high I.Q., M.E., P.S., and P.E. are a definite plus. 70% are male and 30% female; all ages, but most Preppers are ages 30-60, some families.

Starting S.D.C.: Males: 2D6+6. Females: 2D6+2.

Bonuses (Regardless of Gender): +1 to M.E., +2 to P.S. or P.E., pick one; +2 on Perception Rolls involving survival, including suspicious behavior of others, finding trails, locating a safe place to camp, hide and hole-up, and similar.

O.C.C. Equivalent Skills: All Preppers have the following skills plus ONE of the M.O.S. Skill packages below.

Common Skills for Preppers:

Computer Operation (+5%)

Cook (+15%)

Gardening or Fishing (+10%)

Sewing or Recycling (+10%)

Language, Native

Literacy, Native Language

Mathematics: Basic

Pilot: Automobile (includes Jeeps, SUVs and Pickup Trucks).

And two skills of choice, reflecting the character's real world job, from any of the following Skill Categories: Communications, Domestic, Electrical, Mechanical, or Technical.

M.O.S. Skills for Preppers/Survivalist (special): Instead of the usual range of O.C.C. Related skills, the Prepper selects one of the following M.O.S. skill bundles, below, based on the character's area of interest, work and specialty.

The Great Cataclysm and the Coming of the Rifts was just a few weeks or months ago, depending on the G.M.'s timeline. However, Preppers have been preparing for something like this for years or decades and have basic to elite survival and combat skill. **Note:** Does not include NEMA O.C.C.s or new Chaos Earth O.C.C.s like practitioners of magic or psychics.

Gun Bunny M.O.S.: This prepper is heavily armed and ready for World War III.

Basic Mechanics (+5%)

Demolitions or Optic Systems (+10%), pick one.

Field Armorer (+5%)

Recognize Weapon Quality (+20%)

W.P. Automatic Pistol or Revolver, pick one.

W.P. Automatic & Semi-Automatic Rifles

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. of choice: Ancient or Modern, Any.

Hand to Hand: Basic

M.O.S. Bonus: +2D6 S.D.C., +1 on Perception Rolls involving hunting and weapons, +1 to roll with impact, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor. Has 4D6x1,000 of rounds of additional ammunition for each type of gun he owns, 1D4x10+30 E-Clips for his energy Rifle and 1D4x10+30 E-Clips for Heavy Energy Weapons or ammo for Heavy Weapons, as well as

1D6x10 pounds of explosives or sticks of dynamite, and the materials for making 6D6 simple homemade bombs.

Hunter Prepper M.O.S.: He or she is a huntsman with years of recreational practice and survival preparation.

Hunting

Land Navigation (+12%)

Preserve Food (+25%)

Prowl (+5%) or Camouflage (+10%).

Skin & Prepare Animal Hides (+20%)

Track & Trap Animals (+20%)

Wilderness Survival or Breed Dogs (+10%).

W.P. Archery

W.P. Bolt-Action/Hunting Rifle

Hand to Hand: Basic, but can be changed to Hand to Hand: Expert for the cost of two Common Skills.

M.O.S. Bonus: +2D6 S.D.C., +2 on Perception Rolls involving hunting and tracking animals, +1 to roll with impact, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor. Has 2D6x1,000 of rounds of ammunition and 1D4x100+200 arrows. If the character has the Breed Dogs skill, he has two hunting dogs, probably Bloodhounds, Retrievers or Pointers.

Motor Head Survivalist M.O.S.: This guy likes to be flexible and mobile.

Automotive Mechanics (+20%)

Basic Mechanics (+10%)

Basic Electronics (+10%)

First Aid (+10%)

Jury-Rig (+5%)

Pilot: Motorcycle (includes snowmobiles and similar) (+10%)

Pilot: Truck (big rigs) or Hover Craft (Ground) (+10%)

Pilot: 2 skills of choice (+10%), excludes robots, power armor and military vehicles.

Hand to Hand: Basic

M.O.S. Bonus: +2D6 S.D.C., +1 to P.S. and P.P. attributes, +2 on Perception Rolls regarding all things about cars, their engines, construction and condition. +1 on initiative and +2 to dodge driving a vehicle, +10% when performing evasive maneuvers, tricks and stunt driving, +2 to roll with impact, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

Has a mobile home instead of the cabin or bunker, plus a motorcycle or dirt bike, and a snowmobile.

Ex-Military or Militia Survivalist M.O.S.: This Prepper has had formal, military training survival and wilderness combat/guerrilla tactics.

Camouflage (+20%) or one Physical Skill of choice.

Demolitions (+16%) or W.P. of choice (any), pick one.

Detect Ambush (+15%)

Detect Concealment (+20%)

Land Navigation (10%)

Radio: Basic (+15%)

Tracking (people, +10%)

W.P. Knife or any Ancient W.P. of choice, pick one.

W.P. Energy Rifle or W.P. Heavy Energy Weapons, pick one.

Hand to Hand: Expert or Martial Arts, pick one.

M.O.S. Bonus: +4D6 S.D.C., +1D6 to Spd attribute, +2 on Perception Rolls involving hunting and tracking animals, +1 to roll with impact, and +1 to save vs Horror Factor. Has an extra 2D6x1,000 rounds of ammunition or 1D6x100 arrows.

Off-The-Grid M.O.S.: This survivalist is anti-technology and keeps his use of technology to a minimum.

Pilot: Kayaking/Canoes (+10%)

Climbing (+15%)

Dowsing (+20%)

Fishing (+20%)

First Aid (+15%)

* Horsemanship: General (+10%)

Identify Plants & Fruits (+15%)

Land Navigation (+20%)

Swimming (+10%)

W.P. Blunt or W.P. Staff or W.P. Knife, pick one.

W.P. Archery & Targeting or Bolt-Action Rifle, pick one.

M.O.S. Bonus: +3D6 S.D.C., +2 on Perception Rolls involving animals, nature and weather, +1 to roll with impact, +1 to save vs Horror Factor, and +10% to the Cooking Skill. This Prepper has one good riding horse and two kayaks or canoes. Can purchase Hand to Hand: Basic for the cost of any one skill, *Expert* for the cost of any two skills or *Martial Arts* for the cost of any three skills.

Secondary Skills for National Guard (special): Select one Secondary Skill from the skills or Skill Categories, listed below at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get any bonuses, other than a possible bonus for having a high I.Q. All Secondary Skills start at base level. These skill options reflects either their military training or other survivalist interests.

Athletics (General)

Climbing

First Aid (+10%)

Land Navigation (+5%)

Lore: Any (+10%)

Intelligence (+10%)

Paramedic (+10%)

Communications: Any (+5%)

Pilot Skills: Non-Military vehicle piloting skills only.

S.C.U.B.A.

Swimming

Technical: Any.

Wilderness Survival: Any (+10%).

Weapon Proficiency: Ancient, Any.

Weapon Proficiency: Modern, Any, except Heavy Weapons and Heavy Energy Weapons.

Standard Equipment: Has enough food/K-Rations/MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), water, fuel, basic supplies, weapons and ammo to last 2D6+6 months, as well as a jeep or pickup truck, a bug-out bag, money (probably silver and gold coins), and a secluded survival location such as a cabin or actual bunker in the wilderness, complete with solar power or high-tech battery powered, or commercial nuclear powered generator and all the comforts of home.

A suit of S.D.C. armor (A.R. 15 and 1D6x10+60 S.D.C.), a makeshift M.D.C. armored vest (4D6+4 M.D.C.), an M.D.C. helmet (50 M.D.C.), gas mask, goggles, sunglasses, an S.D.C. rifle or shotgun with 6D6x100 rounds, an S.D.C. handgun with 2D6x100 rounds, a survival knife, a pocket knife or pocket toolkit, an S.D.C. or M.D.C. cutting torch, half a dozen sets of fatigues or other utility clothes, a complete set of medical supplies (bandages, antiseptic, antibiotics, etc.), 2D6+6 rechargeable batteries of the most common variety/sizes, 2D4x10

conventional batteries of every variety, toolkit with basic tools, hand saw and axe (large, for chopping wood), chainsaw (S.D.C. damage), a portable generator, an assortment of books in hard copy and on disk (may be a few volumes or an entire library) and an impressive assortment of survival gear, usually collected into a bug-out bag (extra ammo, knife, money, small flashlight, and other essentials), that is mobile (bedrolls, backpack, compass, maps, water purification filters, etc.) worth 4D6x1000 credits.

The Preppers can pick a location in N. America that he or she has a stockpile of gasoline, batteries, weapons, ammunition, medical supplies, food stores and fresh water to last them (and their family, if they have one) for 1D6 years.

Money: Most Preppers have spent the majority of their cash on Prepping. They may have 3D6x100 in valuables on them, carried as cash, gold, and credits.

Cybernetics and Bionics: Cybernetics are limited to medical and emergency-type systems such as lung filter, oxygen storage cell, Geiger counter, and other augmentation to help one survive in an inhospitable environment.

Experience Table: Use the *Fire & Rescue* experience table on page 112 of the *Chaos Earth® RPG*.



Nebraska

Adventure Hooks

A new threat in Lincoln: The Lost Skeleton Militia

Self-appointed Governor Mark Graves has assumed command of the remaining government and the former capital city of Lincoln Nebraska. Ruling with a “feared and respected iron fist” as he refers to it, he has intimidated and browbeaten the local populace of Lincoln and exterminates or enslaves the alien beings/D-Bees. He and his militia have also proven to be resourceful, organized and able to chase-off or destroy monsters and raiders who threaten the city. All things considered, Governor Graves and his troops seem capable of defending the city and protecting the survivors, so he is accepted as Governor and leader, at least for now.

As the leader of the local chapter of a large citizens’ militia, called the **Lost Skeletons**, he has roughly 400 militia in Lincoln – men and woman of like mind – who considered Graves their leader before the Coming of the Rifts. This militia and roughly a hundred former National Guard, Lincoln Police, and a dozen NEMA troops have accepted the madman as the regional authority and side with him in his quest to protect and rule Nebraska. For them, the city of Lincoln is their starting point and base of

operations. Governor Graves has demanded those at the Omaha/Offutt base join his forces and provide them with all surplus supplies, equipment and foodstuffs or he will set his Militia upon them and bring them in under his jurisdiction by force and any means necessary.

It seems unlikely that this militia has the power or strength in numbers to attack an entrenched, military base, but they might. It is likely they will engage in acts of sabotage, guerrilla warfare, theft, and surgical strikes and raids to acquire specific resources like weapons, ammo, power armor, robots, fuel, medical supplies, etc., and to eliminate key personnel. More likely they will do all of the above to the much more vulnerable operations in the city of Omaha, where the Offut personnel are trying to create a survivors' refuge and community.

The Military commanders at Offutt, and the new civilian leadership there, need to show a strong presence to force Governor Graves to back off and leave them alone at the base and in Offutt. If the Offutt base and Omaha bend now, those in Lincoln will walk all over them. Offutt base commander, *USAF Colonel Jo Sweeney* has her hands full trying to secure Omaha, help the survivors there, and fight off other threats and monsters, but will do what she can.

The Player Characters are called into a meeting with the local leaders in Omaha, at the Offutt base, and informed about threats made by Governor Mark Graves and his mixed combat force of police, NEMA and militia. She asks the player group to investigate Governor Graves and do some reconnaissance and intelligence on Lincoln and his militia force. She wants an idea of their numbers, a threat assessment, and current activities so she can determine her best course of action. They are to go in and get out without attracting attention, so they will have to go in as Preppers, ex-military mercenaries/adventurers or survivors to do their snooping around. The player characters' infiltration of Lincoln to investigate the remains of the city, above and below ground, and find a way to fight, or hold at bay the Lost Skeleton Militia, could be one night's adventure or a series of adventures.

Back home, related missions for the player characters will be patrols to keep their eyes open for Lost Skeleton raiders, thieves, spies and saboteurs, as well as function as fast-response teams to fight such small squad enemy incursions, and pursuit teams to track them down to a) retrieve what has been stolen, rescue any captives, and b) to bring the dirt bags in for interrogation and justice.

Additionally, the characters may be assigned to engage in similar raids and sabotage and assassinations of key enemy personnel in Lincoln.

The Witch of Tears

While patrolling or exploring the ash covered wasteland of rural Nebraska, the player characters come across an old hag living in a ramshackle and hastily constructed shed. She sits on her rocking chair, knitting and clucking at her chickens, which as the player characters see, are nothing more than animated skeletons. This **Chaos Witch** (see the **Chaos Earth® Rise of Magic sourcebook**, page 52) and her husband, a *Death Mage* (see **Rise of Magic**, page 53), who is hiding in the barn watching the adventurers, are the leaders of a large death cult comprised of surviving family and friends.

Initially, she and her undead chickens do not look like they will be too difficult to handle, however, as the player characters get a closer look, they notice several tracks in the ash covered soil. Both human and much larger prints. Muffled crying can be heard in the shed behind the old crone.

If asked about the sounds or voices, she smiles a crooked, evil smile and says, "It's no matter for your concern. Please leave family matters to me."

If pressed on the matter, she claims the voices are those of her children and grandchildren, and none of the outsiders' concern. And yet, there are cries of help and sobbing that characters of a good alignment may not be able to let alone without further investigation.

Magitha tries hard to encourage the Players to go on their way, leave them alone and ignore the crying and whimpering. She may turn on some music to drown out the sounds, and might offer the characters some moonshine or other goodies like food and even ammo and information. Her demonic lord desires the tears of the children and ol' Mags does what she can to keep the Demon Lord content with her offerings and service.

If attacked, the Witch will fight to the death and summon help from her twisted demonic familiar before letting the children or any other slaves go. The Death Mage, Henry, has managed to keep an Undead Fossil under his command and will unleash it on the group if they start pushing their weight around. Old Henry, her husband, has been animating the dead livestock and corpse of their human victimse to attack and steal food and supplies from other survivors in the area.

There are 1D4 teenagers and 1D6+8 children forced to work the farm and the living livestock. When not forced to do labor, they are locked in the hot, cramped shed. There is no artificial light in the shed, and they are only give a fraction of the food and water they need for all of them to survive. They are all half starved, weak, tormented and doomed to a slow and painful death. Locked in the shed, with more in the barn, are the remains of the dozen children who have come before them.

The Husker Robots

Decades before the Great Cataclysm, some colleges and sports leagues determined that football and some other sports were too dangerous for human athletes to play and switched to cyborgs and robots.

The robots are state of the art, and better kept than some power armors held by the National Guard. A lot of money has always gone into sports. With the advent of the apocalypse, these robots have been re-purposed for search and rescue, with thoughts of using them as a police force and as soldiers.

As useful as these robots have been, some of them have problems with their coding. As a result of rushed programming and conflicting orders – and probably unexpected dimensional or magical interference – some of the robots are prone to malfunction. (Damaged robots may also be vulnerable to being taken over by Tectonic Entities.) Some have been reported tackling innocent civilians when they run or make a sudden move. Others randomly stop citizens and ticket them for jaywalking or take them into custody for breaking and entry, stealing, and looting or rioting. Others seem to work perfectly fine and have been an asset in rescuing survivors trapped in buildings, pinned in crashed cars, etc.

When the end of the world comes, the University of Nebraska, in the city of Lincoln, has 100 operational robots in their possession. One of the “egg heads” at the university approached the original Governor of Nebraska immediately after Ashfall, and proposed the use of the robots for search and rescue. Which they did with excellent results. Each of the robots are unique, though all are painted with the traditional uniform colors and markings of their football team, and have been nicknamed after legendary Cornhusker players and coaches throughout the years. The survivors of the Chaos in Nebraska fondly remember the beloved football team and accept these robots as friendly helpers.

The powers that be in Lincoln continue to expect those at the university to keep the robots going, travel with them, and repair the ‘Bots as needed. Unfortunately, there is nearly no capability to build more of these robots, and when they are destroyed the robotics engineers try to salvage what they can, but the robot is usually beyond repair; good only as scrap or spare parts. As a result, the government of Lincoln is always looking for robots and suitable parts and happily trade with wastelanders and survivors who can supply them with them. Pay is rumored to be very good and involves food, water, basic supplies, guns and ammo. It is also a way for the Governor’s militia leaders to eyeball and recruit new gunmen into their ranks.

The player characters may be able to capitalize on this open offer to replenish their own supplies, weapons and gear, or to earn a few days of R&R (rest and relaxation) in a survivors’ city reputed to be reasonably safe and secure, and which offers booze and entertainment. If actually working with the National Guard at Offutt and Omaha, they might be able to use a robot or parts as a way to infiltrate Lincoln to get a closer look at its operations, leadership and militia.

In addition, Lincoln has four lost robots they’d like found and returned to them. There is a nice reward for each.

Finding Robot #12, Reynolds

This robot ran into a swarm of Demon Hoppers near what used to be Hastings. If the player group goes looking for this robot, they encounter a *Lohran Riverman* who has seen it and offers to take them where they need to go. Along the way, they encounter a pair of Demon Hoppers and when they get to the location in a building on the outskirts of Hastings, they realize there are more Demon Hoppers also scavenging the ruins. (But not more than the group can handle. G.M. discretion.)

Matters may get complicated if some innocent survivors fall under attack and the heroes feel obligated to help, or if a different monster attacks them and the battle attracts the Demon Hoppers. Do our adventurers see a young Queen and a dozen of her Demon Hopper followers starting to build a hive inside one of the buildings? If so, she will never be less vulnerable than she is now. This could be a good time to destroy her now, before this tiny colony can grow. Kill the queen and the other Demon Hoppers flee, heading northeast.

There are a lot of possible additional adventure possibilities here, bandits, D-Bees, people in need, weird creatures, an open Rift to ... (your call), or other strange phenomena.

Finding Robot #10 – Minter

This robot is found in the middle of a suspiciously healthy-looking cornfield just North of Omaha. Yes, this is a Whispering Field. See **The Rifter® #80** for details. Are there humans or D-Bees protecting it?

See **Rifts® World Book 30: D-Bees of North America™** for some possible choices of D-Bees or whip up your own aliens from another world or the slave races found in **Rifts® World Book Two: Rifts® Atlantis™** and **Splynn Dimensional Market™**. Or even reference the Heroes Unlimited sourcebooks, **Aliens Unlimited™** and **Aliens Unlimited™ Galaxy Guide**.

Finding Robot #89 – Thomas

This robot has fallen into the hands of a small band of 1D4+3 survivors led by two brothers, both some sort of spell casters/mages and both are very crazy. One commands two Chaos Demons. They have a wild story about how the robot is possessed and nobody can have it. They must keep it to prevent it from reanimating and attacking innocent people. They will not give it up and will fight anyone who tries to take it. If the robot is stolen, they will hunt them down to get it back. If the robot is successfully returned to Lincoln, repaired (damage looks minimal) and reactivated, it behaves as a serial killer and starts to secretly slaughter innocent survivors in and around Lincoln.

Finding Robot #71 – Steinkuehler

This robot has sustained minimal damage and its programing remains intact, but it is pinned under some debris of a collapsed building in the ruins of a city in Nebraska (The G.M. can select the location, whether it is near or far). If freed it is happy to join any group of do-gooders trying to help innocent survivors, as per its programing, including fighting bad guys, D-Bees and monsters.

There is a 75% chance that a band of the Ash Fallen have already found it, and are not willing to give it up. What to do?

And then things get worse. A swarm of Demon Hoppers (or Lesser Chaos Demons, see the **Creatures of Chaos sourcebook**) attack. The confrontation requires the two rival groups to form a truce and fight together if they have any hope to survive. A temporary peace can be forged and the Ash Fallen do not betray the player characters. At the end of the fight the two should have forged something of a bond, but there is still the matter of the robot. If the Ash Fallen are willing to split the reward, they will let the player group take the robot to Lincoln and give them their half someplace near but away from the city. If the player group does not cheat them, they will have made some questionable friends. Bandits who will not attack them the next few times they see them. They may even be willing to continue to trade with our heroes, offer them warnings and share rumors, or even team-up again.



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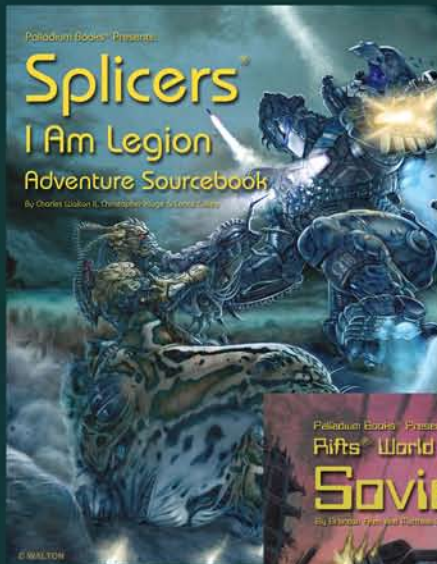
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ISBN-10: 1-57457-271-7

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