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THE

RIFTS®

Your Guide to the Megaverse®

Inside this 112 page sourcebook...

Rifts® Bestiary sneak preview

Rifts® Chaos Earth® Nebraska, Part 3

Rifts® CE: 50+ Pyromancy Spells & Pyromancer O.C.C.

Heroes Unlimited™ – Physical Heroes, Expanded

Nightbane® – Age Modifiers for Nightbane®

Game Master advice from Erick Wujcik

Erick Wujcik Remembered – 10 years later

Official source material, settings, and characters

News, coming attractions, adventure ideas and more

The die is cast. Nothing can stop it.

Bradshaw
2018

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

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



The Rifter® Number 82

Your Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®!

Dedication – To the memory of my beloved friend, *Erick Wujcik*. He died 10 years ago, but his passion for games, pushing the envelope, thinking big, and Palladium Books is still with me — with all of us – today. Erick’s legacy not only continues in the games and sourcebooks that bear his name, but in everyone he had touched over the years. And that is a great many people around the world.

I would say I miss him, and I do, except ... I feel him (and Kay) with me every single day. Still prodding me to push my ideas further and sending me hope and inspiration when I need them most. Love you, Erick.

– *Kevin Siembieda, 2018*

PDF Edition – November, 2019

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The slogan “A Megaverse of adventure – limited only by your imagination,” RPG Tactics, and titles and names such as Bizantium and the Northern Islands, Armageddon Unlimited, Aliens Unlimited, Arzno, Atorian Empire, ARCHIE-3, Beyond Arcanum, Beyond the Supernatural, BTS-2, Brodkil, Biomancy, Biomancer, Bio-Wizardry, ‘Burbs, ‘Borg, ‘Bot, Dimensional Outbreak, Dinosaur Swamp, Dyval, Elf-Dwarf War, Heroes Unlimited, I.S.P., Land of the Damned, Lazlo, Victor Lazlo, Lazlo Agency, Lazlo Society, Palladium of Desires, C.A.M.E.L.O.T., Chi-Town, CS, Coalition States, Cosmo-Knight, Crazy, Cyber-Knight, D-Bee, Dark Day, Dead Boy, Devil Worm, Doctor Feral, Dog Boy, Dog Pack, Dweomer, Emperor Prosek, Erin Tarn, Fadetown, Free Quebec, Gadgets Unlimited, Gargoyle Empire, Glitter Boy, Gramercy Island, Hardware Unlimited, Heroes of the Megaverse, Heroes Unlimited, HU2, Juicer, Khemennu, Ley Line Walker, M.D.C., Mechanoid Space, Mega-Damage, Mega-Hero, Megaversal, MercTown, Minion War, Moorcroft, Morphus, Mutant Underground, Mysteries of Magic, Merc Ops, Naruni, Naruni Enterprises, NEMA, Ninjas & Superspies, NGR, Northern Gun, The Nursery, P.P.E., Powers Unlimited, Psi-Stalker, Psyscape, SAMAS, S.D.C., Secrets of the Coalition States, Shifter, Siege on Tolkeen, Skelebot, Skraypers, Sorcerer’s Forge, Splugorth, Splynncryth, Splynn, Techno-Wizard, Temporal Magic, Temporal Wizard, The Disavowed, Three Galaxies, Tome Grotesque, Triax, Vampire Kingdoms, Warpath: Urban Jungle, Void Runners, Wilk’s, Wolfen, Wolfen Wars, Wormwood, Wulfen, Xiticix, and other names, titles, slogans, and the likenesses of characters are trademarks owned by Kevin Siembieda and Palladium Books Inc.

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Palladium Books® Presents:

THE RIFTER® #82



BRANDT - 97

Sourcebook and Guide to the Palladium Megaverse®

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Special Thanks to Dan, Mark D., Mark O., Matt C., Julius and all our contributing writers and artists this issue, as well as to Matthew Balent for some great old photos, the folks who contributed their heartfelt remembrances of Erick, and to the family and friends of Erick Wujcik everywhere. And as always, to the fabulous and hardworking Palladium staff. Our apologies to anybody who may have gotten accidentally left out or their name misspelled.

– *Kevin Siembieda, 2018*

Contents – The Rifter® #82 – 2018

Page 6 – From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

It has been 10 years since Erick Wujcik was taken away from us much too soon at age 57. The fun and insightful trip down memory lane starts here, with some photos of Kevin and Erick at Gen Con in 1984. Here Kevin talks about their early days working together, Erick's many accomplishments, and presents an Erick Wujcik Bibliography of Palladium Books published works and some things you may not know about Erick. It is a fun and interesting read, and a prelude to many more insights about this creative dynamo in the Remembrance section on page 22.

Photos by *Matthew Balent*.

Page 9 – Palladium News

Publisher Kevin Siembieda offers up the latest goings-on since last issue. He talks about the bold moves we are making with the company and upcoming releases, the *Christmas Surprise Package* offer (yes, it is that time of year again, see page 18 for complete details), some errata for *The Rifter® #80*, and updates on the books in the pipeline. The news that Rifter fans will find disappointing is *The Rifter®* is going on hiatus. The good news is that there are still two more issues coming and the hiatus should help us get more new books into your hands.

Page 11 – Coming Attractions

Books like **Rifts® Bestiary Volume One, In the Face of Death™, Rifts® Bestiary Volume Two, Rifts® Chaos Earth®: Psychic Scream™, Rifts® Antarctica, Garden of the Gods™, Chaos Earth®: First Responders**, and many other titles are in production, along with a lot of other books. Read all about them here.

Page 18 – 2018 Christmas Surprise Package™

Quite possibly the best deal in gaming. Certainly the most fun. A way to get autographs from the Palladium crew wherever you live. All the details are right here.

Page 22 – Erick Wujcik Remembered

– Fond, fun insight to the man and his work at Palladium

Kevin Siembieda has managed to put together an uplifting and insightful celebration of Erick's life that is fun and touching. The many contributors are just a few of the millions of people who have been touched by Erick's work in gaming or by the man himself. It is a tribute to the creative spirit and a joyful life that has inspired countless others around the world. Erick is missed, but never forgotten. For your reference we list the page numbers for some of the remembrances.

- Page 23 – Erick and Kevin by Kevin Siembieda
- Page 24 – The Butterfly Effect by Julius Rosenstein
- Page 27 – My Early Recollections by Matthew Balent
- Page 28 – The Wujcik Legacy by Mark Oberle
- Page 32 – Living in the Moment by Brandon Aten
- Page 34 – Art and story by Nicholas Bradshaw
- Page 36 – Mutant Animals and Humanity by Michael Leonard

- Page 38 – Flights of Imagination by Paula Leasure Blumm
- Page 39 – My Friend, Erick by Paul Deckert
- Art by *Kevin Siembieda*. Photos by *Matthew Balent* and others.

Page 40 – The Name Giver

– “Official” G.M. & Player Tips for All Settings

We thought it only fitting to reprint this gaming advice by *Erick Wujcik* from *The Rifter® #1*. It's solid advice that holds up.

Art by *Scott Johnson*.

Page 45 – Thinking Big

– “Official” G.M. & Player Tips for All Settings

Some more great tips and advice by *Erick Wujcik* from *The Rifter® #2*. Learn from a master of seeing the big picture and thinking big. It will make your games feel epic. So read, learn and unleash those imaginations.

Art by *Apollo Okamura* and *Kevin Long*.

Page 48 – The Impact of Age

– “Official” Source Material for the *Nightbane® RPG*

Mark Oberle (co-author of *Nightbane® Survival Guide* and *Nightbane® Dark Designs™*) presents more information about the Becoming and tables for selecting skills based on the 'Bane's age and experience.

- Page 50 – Adapting to Power
 - Page 51 – Educational Character Classes
 - Page 51 – Young Nightbane
 - Page 52 – Average Nightbane
 - Page 54 – Older Nightbane
 - Page 55 – New Skills
- Artwork by *R.K. Post* and *Roger Peterson*.

Page 57 – Hitting the Gym

– Optional Source Material for *Heroes Unlimited™*

Matt Reed revisits and expands upon the **Physical Training Hero** with new abilities, signature moves, and more. It is all so fun and compelling it will leave you wanting to dive into a **Heroes Unlimited™** game with martial artists and Batman types of heroes.

- Page 58 – Parkour and Stunting
 - Page 59 – Determining Focus
 - Page 60 – Hand to Hand and Signature Moves
 - Page 61 – The Power of Signature Moves
 - Page 62 – Physical Training Abilities
 - Page 64 – General Abilities
 - Page 65 – Defensive and Fast Abilities
 - Page 66 – Other Stuff
 - Page 66 – Sample Physical Training Characters
 - Page 66 – Olympian
 - Page 66 – Swashbuckler
 - Page 67 – Manik
- Artwork by *Mark Dudley*.

Page 69 – Chaos Earth® Nebraska, Part Three

– “Official” Source Material for *Rifts*® *Chaos Earth*®

Dan Frederick, Matthew Clements and Kevin Siembieda team-up to present the Pyromancer O.C.C., Pyromancy Magic, the Zone Twister, some notable characters, and an adventure hook for the *Rifts*® *Chaos Earth*® setting. Also suitable for the *Rifts*® and *Phase World*® settings.

Page 70 – Ionia, Island in the Ashlands

Page 70 – NORAD, the Big Bunker

Page 71 – Nebraskan Pyromancer O.C.C.

Page 73 – New Pyromancy Spells

Page 73 – Pyromancy Spell List starts

Page 74 – List of other Fire-Based Spells

Page 74 – Descriptions: Pyromancy Spells by Level

Page 74 – Level One

Page 74 – Armor of Ash (7)

Page 75 – Fiery Dagger (4)

Page 76 – Level Two

Page 77 – Volcanological Divination (7)

Page 78 – Level Three

Page 78 – Fiery Arrowhead (4)

Page 78 – Fiery Sword or Axe (12)

Page 79 – Level Four

Page 79 – Armor of Magma (14)

Page 80 – Level Five

Page 80 – Fire Jump (Teleport; 15)

Page 81 – Heal Burns (10)

Page 82 – Level Six

Page 82 – Healing Lava Pool (15)

Page 83 – Walk on Lava (10)

Page 83 – Level Seven

Page 84 – Pyroclastic Cloud Attack (25)

Page 84 – Level Eight

Page 84 – Magma Geyser (20)

Page 85 – Level Nine

Page 85 – Ash Storm (35)

Page 86 – Level Ten

Page 88 – Rain Lava (110)

Page 88 – Zone Twisters

Page 89 – Notable Characters

Page 90 – Jon “Buckshot” Bauer

Page 91 – “Crazy” Cabe Williams

Page 91 – Dorther “Dot” Hawkens

Page 92 – The Battle for Lincoln

Artwork by *Benjamin Rodriguez*.

Page 93 – *Rifts*® Bestiary Preview

– “Official” Source Material for *Rifts*®

Here is your first peek at the *Rifts*® *Bestiary*, Volume One. It’s just a small sampling of some updated monsters and a couple new creatures.

Page 93 – Alien Rex

Page 95 – Allosuarus

Page 96 – Ghost Allosaurus

Page 101 – Covenant Falcon

Page 105 – Devil Serpent Tongue

Page 109 – Eeracrech Riding Lizard

Art by *Robert Atkins*, *Ramon Perez*, and *Charles Walton II*.

The Theme for this Issue

The theme for *The Rifter*® #82 is about discovering and unleashing the power inside each and everyone of us. 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 Nick “*The Brick*” Bradshaw and depicts one of the new monsters found in the *Rifts*® *Bestiary Volume One*. It is the deadly Devil Serpent Tongue. See page 105 for details.

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® #83

- *Rifts*® source material.
- *Heroes Unlimited*™ source material.
- *Palladium Fantasy RPG*® source material.
- Other adventure source material.
- News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.
- 96 pages – \$14.99 retail – Cat. No. 183. Winter release.

One game system, infinite possibilities
limited only by your imagination™

The die is cast. Nothing can stop it.



From the Desk of Kevin Siembieda

This issue is especially meaningful to me, because it remembers my beloved friend, **Erick Wujcik**.

Erick passed away on June 7, 2008, at age 57. In some ways, that feels like a long time ago. In other ways, it seems like only last week. I think of Erick every day and I know he is missed by thousands of people around the globe. That's just who Erick was: Larger than life, a masterful networker, and a good friend to so many.

In the world of gaming, Erick Wujcik was a genius game designer, visionary and writer. He is most remembered for writing and designing Palladium's **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® and Other Strangeness RPG** and its first several sourcebooks, **Ninjas and Superspies™**, and the **Amber® Diceless RPG**, but he did so much more, especially when it came to bringing joy to millions of gamers and inspiring and encouraging countless others.

In 1985, only Erick understood and shared my vision of what the **TMNT® RPG** and its sourcebooks needed to be to make it a great game. Only he saw the same big picture I painted of creating an RPG in which players could create an infinite array of mutant animals, not just the *Ninja Turtles*. When there was nobody else to write it, because I had other commitments and deadlines, Erick stepped in to tackle the job. He and I had been talking about the concept for at least three months. He knew what I wanted as much as I did. We were inside each other's head and the ideas had been crystalizing in his mind.

While he wrote the **TMNT® RPG** we spoke almost every single day that he worked on the book. At first, he was only going to knock out the animal creation rules, then the animal powers,

but he was inspired and kept writing more and more of the book until he had written pretty much the whole thing. As I remember it, he knocked out **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles®** in three and a half weeks, Erick always said it took four and a half weeks. Whichever it was, it would be the fastest turnaround from Erick *ever*. And it was a masterpiece.

Erick had a million truly amazing ideas for games you have never seen or heard of. That's because Erick's genius came at a price. He wrestled with manic depression his entire life. That meant he was always working on 30 projects, half them new, when he was manic, and never finishing 95% of them when he was depressed. Still, the works he did leave with us are profound and fun and brought joy to millions of role-players around the world. I'm proud to say that I was able to wrangle the most finished products out of Erick for Palladium Books, and was happy to help him set up his own game company, *Phage Press*, which published **Amber® Diceless** and **Amberzine™ #1-15**. Erick also started **AmberCon**, a global network of Amber Diceless conventions, and helped produce an **Amber® Tarot card deck** via *DesCarte* of France.

What many people may not know, is that Erick and I were best friends and invisible forces in each other's lives. We offered each other help and ideas, encouragement and love until the day Erick left this mortal coil for a brand new cosmic adventure.

For those reasons, and because Erick remains an inspiration to me and many others, we present this special tribute issue with remembrances from just a handful of the many people who were touched by this remarkable human being.

An Erick Wujcik Bibliography of Palladium Books® published works

Listed by game line rather than chronologically.

Sector 57 (1980) – To my knowledge, this was Erick’s first self-published game. It was not published by Palladium Books, but it was our first game collaboration. I did the cover and artwork for it, play-tested it and offered feedback.

The Mechanoid Invasion® (1981, Palladium Books) – Contributing Writer.

Weapons and Assassins™ (1983) – Author.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® & Other Strangeness RPG (1985) – Author.

TMNT® Adventures (1986) – Author.

TMNT® Guide to the Universe™ (1987) – Author.

TMNT® Transdimensional Ninja Turtles® (1989) – Author.

After the Bomb® sourcebook (1986) – Author.

Road Hogs™ AtB sourcebook (1986) – Author.

Mutants Down Under™, AtB sourcebook (1988) – Author.

Beyond the Supernatural™, 1st Edition (1988) – Contributing Writer (victim characters).

Ninjas & Superspies™ RPG (1988) – Author.

Mystic China™ sourcebook for N&S (1995) – Author.

Palladium Fantasy RPG® (1983) – Contributing Writer (Tombs of Gersidi adventure setting).

Old Ones (1984) – Contributing Writer (Place of Magic scenario).

Monsters & Animals™ (1985) – contributed concepts for the Eandroth, Emerin, Kankoran, Maxpary and Yema.

Adventures on the High Seas™ (1987) – Contributing Writer.

Adventures in the Northern Wilderness™ (1989) – Contributing Writer.

Wolfen Empire™ (2003) – Contributing Writer.

Dragons and Gods™ (2004) – Co-Author.

Deluxe Revised RECON® RPG (1986) – Author (inspired by Joe F. Martin).

Rifts® China One (2004) – Co-Author.

Rifts® China Two (2004) – Author.

Rifts® China Three – Never finished, it was all in his head.

After the Bomb® RPG (2001) – Author.

Note: My apologies to the family and friends if I missed a few titles.

Erick also helped me find the name for the **Rifts® RPG**, recruited artist *Kevin Long*, loved the Wolfen, Changelings, the Old Ones, the history of the Palladium Fantasy world, and everything about Rifts®. Of course, he was a sounding board for many concepts and ideas, my greatest cheerleader, a stalwart friend, and supporter of, and believer in, me and Palladium Books. He is missed.

One of our most fun and greatest achievements, along with a cadre of other people, was the establishment of the **Detroit Gaming Center (DGC)** in downtown Detroit; 1980. A passion project, Erick would continue to champion the DGC for decades after





I and others walked away from it. Those early four years at the DGC and the friends I made there would help shape my view of role-playing games and game theory, and gave me the confidence to start Palladium Books.

Erick Wujcik also designed and published the **Amber® Diceless RPG**, **Mage Knights™** and **Amberzine™** through his own company, *Phage Press*. One of his great personal joys was befriending the late, great, *Roger Zelazny*, one of his (and my) favorite authors. Erick had offered to let me publish **Amber Diceless**, but the game system was so unique and he had such big plans for it and international AmberCons, that I encouraged him to start his own company and publish it himself. I thought he could do it better justice since Palladium already had so much on its plate. Of course, I helped Erick out with game mechanics feedback, my distributor list, printer, and business advice. Erick did a great job and sold something like 30,000 copies of the Amber Diceless RPG in just the first year of its release.

Some things you may not know about Erick Wujcik:

- Erick dabbled in a several different styles of martial arts, including Aikido and Kendo as well as Fencing.
- He was a skilled chess and Go player.
- Some of us called Erick “The Wuj,” at least in the early days, and there is a location in the Palladium Fantasy RPG® named *Wuj*, after Erick.
- Erick gave me my first paying job designing a logo and T-shirts: the **Otis the WerePig** logo for the *Wayne Weregamers*. It appeared on a popular T-shirt, flyers, newsletters, etc., for a number of years. For all I know, it may still be in use. Prior to that I had done artwork for Judges Guild and various other freelance work, but not for T-shirts.
- Erick ran an ongoing D&D campaign for something like 27 years!
- I enjoyed Erick’s *Dragonwright* ideas so much he told me to use it in my original Defilers campaign, 1979-1983. Later, Erick requested that *Dragonwright* and its gods become an “official” part of the Palladium Fantasy RPG world and he included them in the **Palladium Fantasy RPG, 1st Edition**, and later in **Dragons and Gods**.

- Erick was a big fan of ancient Japan, Samurai and Ninja, but didn’t know a thing about China or Chinese mythology and magic when I asked him to write **Mystic China**. After 2-3 years of intense and extensive research for the book, he fell in love with China, its culture, history and people. He continued to study and learn about China for the rest of his life and eventually moved there for a number of years.
- He lived and worked in Shanghai for 5-6 years, learned to speak some of the language, and visited many places across China. He worked in China as *Adjunct Professor* at *Hong Kong Polytechnic University* teaching game design, and as *Game Design Studio Manager* at *UbiSoft* in Shanghai.
- Erick enjoyed traveling the world (mostly Europe and Asia), where he happily ran impromptu games for people wherever he went. I used to tell people that Erick was a true Bohemian as well as a game design genius.

Great friendships are a rarity. I’m happy to say that I have been blessed with more than a few. I don’t know if I would be the person I am without the influence of amazing friends like *Erick, Florence, Alex, Kathy, Thom* and *many others*. I’ve known an unbelievably large number of wonderful and amazing people who have touched my heart and helped to shape me, and encourage me to reach for the stars. They gave me strength, and confidence, and made a better human being on so many levels.

Cherish those great friendships and hold them dear, for they are all too fleeting. With love,

– *Kevin Siembieda, Publisher, Writer, Friend – September, 2018*



Otis the Werepig

Palladium News

By Kevin Siembieda, the guy who should know

The Rifter® to go on hiatus

The Rifter® will be going on indefinite hiatus in a few issues. The Rifter® #84 will be the last issue for at least two years. Anyone who has a subscription beyond that number, will get a store credit for the balance of their subscription.

We know many of you will be disappointed, but this is best for the company. We are doing this so that all of us can devote our time to releasing RPG sourcebooks, World Books, Dimension Books and supplements, including awaited titles for **Rifts®** and the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** to **Beyond the Supernatural™** and **Heroes Unlimited™**. Moreover, we have been working on several *Top Secret projects* for the last few years. As those projects heat up, we need more time to devote to them and, hopefully, a large number of new releases. To make this happen, something had to go, and that something is **The Rifter®** — at least temporarily. We hope you understand.

Bold moves at Palladium are coming

We have a number of bold moves and big plans for Palladium Books and our game lines. Things that have been in the works for a number of years and that we know you are going to go wild over.

Moves that will thrill and rejuvenate the game worlds you love. And in the best ways possible to provide you with new avenues of adventure while blowing your minds.

Here are just a few of them:

- An up-to-date online Palladium Catalog – November 2018.
- A new Palladium Books website and one that is mobile device friendly – February 2019.
- Digital Palladium Fantasy character sheets – 2019
- A Rifts® character generator – 2019
- Consistent release of new products. Here is just some of what you can expect on that front:
 - **Rifts® Bestiary™, Volume One** – November release.
 - **The Rifter® #83** – December or January.
 - **Rifts® Bestiary™, Volume Two** – December or January.
 - **In the Face of Death™, Dead Reign® Sourcebook** – December release.
 - **The Rifter® #84** – First Quarter 2019.
 - **Rifts® Chaos Earth®: Psychic Scream™** – First Quarter 2019.
 - **Rifts® Antarctica** – First Quarter 2019
 - **Garden of the Gods™ (Fantasy)** – First Quarter 2019.
 - **Rifts® The Disavowed™**
 - **Rifts® Chaos Earth®: First Responders**
 - **Rifts® CS Arsenal™**
 - **And much more in development** for *Rifts®*, *Palladium Fantasy RPG®*, *Heroes Unlimited™*, *Dead Reign®*, *Beyond the Supernatural™*, *Splicers®* and more!

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. There are much bigger projects in the works, but we don't want to reveal too much, too

soon. We want to wait until the bigger projects are ready to launch before we reveal all. More to come that will make you happy.

Palladium Christmas Surprise Package

Available NOW thru December

What is a Palladium Christmas Surprise Package? It's a fun bargain for you and Palladium's way of saying thank you to its many fans around the world. Fill holes in your collection, try new games (because you are not limited to just Rifts® titles), get gifts for your gaming pals, and if you want, the Palladium crew will sign every book. And you don't have to wait till Black Friday. Order now.

\$90-\$100+ worth of Palladium Books products for only \$46 *plus shipping and handling*. You are guaranteed to get an absolute minimum of *ninety dollars (\$90) retail value* in your Surprise Package. Most get \$95 and many get \$100 worth of goodies or more, because Publisher Kevin Siembieda is crazy during the Christmas Season. And for him, that season started with Halloween.

It's a surprise package and a Grab Bag because you never know *exactly* what you're going to get or who will sign your books. Palladium always tries to include many of the items on your "wish list," but they will surprise you with stuff you are not expecting. Things like a special print(s), map, or a negative from an actual book, or issues of **The Rifter®**, or a Palladium RPG or sourcebook(s), special edition comic book, or other items that they think you might enjoy. Plus you can ask for unusual items. All items are "hand-picked" by *Kevin Siembieda*, the Founder and Lead Game Designer at Palladium, from your "Wish Lists." ALL with *autographs* if you request them. For many of you, this is the only way to get autographs from Kevin and available Palladium staff members, artists and writers! **Please spread the word** and tell everybody about this offer! Ends January 8, 2019, but order today, because after you get your first Surprise Package, you will want another.

To those of you outside the USA, the X-Mas Surprise package is a way to get books and circumvent the extremely high cost of shipping from the US. Since you are getting \$90-\$100 worth of product and only paying \$46 plus a small handling charge, shipping via *Priority Mail International* (required for packages weighing more than four pounds) to most locations in Europe, Canada and many other countries should be around \$50-\$60 *US dollars*. HOWEVER, because the cost of the product is so low, that's the equivalent of paying retail for the products and \$0-\$30 for shipping. A very good deal. Plus you get autographs if you want them! Please take advantage of it to get all those products you've wished you could get except the shipping was too prohibitive.

See full details and how to order on page 19.

No Digital Christmas Surprise Package

Last year, we experimented with offering a Digital Christmas Surprise Package with mixed results. This year there will be no such offer, but we will be offering a number of juicy **Holiday sales** for PDF books on DriveThruRPG.com starting with *Black Friday*, so keep your eyes peeled.

Errata for The Rifter® #80,

Red Sands article, page 63

The *Nova Hawk War Mount* stats: Under Special Feeding Requirements it states *Organic Rocket Launchers*. This stat was a typo. Please ignore it. There are no special feeding requirements other than its standard Lithovore food requirements indicated in the article. It should read:

Special Feeding Requirements: None, per se. Standard for Lithovore, feeds on rocks.

Errata for The Rifter® #80 Credits Page

I want to apologize to Paul “Herbie” Herbert. His name was accidentally omitted on the Credits Page. (He does get credit with the article itself.) Paul and his brother Ian are two of our favorite people in the whole world, so we feel terrible about this. Sorry, Paul. Please keep that awesome imagination burning bright and keep sending in those **Rifter®** articles. You too, Ian. – *Kevin Siembieda*

Coming!

Rifts® Bestiary, Volume One

I’m sorry this book is taking longer than we had hoped, but we want to make it truly inspiring with cool monstrous pets, riding animals and alien familiars for players to use and monsters and dangers that inspire Game Masters to build better adventures. We have been working like crazy on this book, and it is coming along great, but it is taking time to get everything just the way we know you want it.

Wayne and Alex are busy editing, Chuck is drawing the beasts, Nick Bradshaw is doing art for a few last minute new monsters, and I have been writing and updating as fast as I can. The new monsters are awesome and some of the updates will make familiar and forgotten creatures feel new again. I’m behind where I wanted to be on this book, but it and Volume Two are going to be something special.

We are all excited by how much new material has been added to the **Rifts® Bestiary, Volume One** (and **Two**). Every single creature has extra information and updates, but many are much more expanded and detailed than I had originally imagined I would make them. It has been fun to revisit and expand upon these monsters and animals. These comprehensive rewrites only serve to make two better and more useful books for gamers. And the new beasts? I’m loving them and so will you. We know you will enjoy and get a lot of use out of these tomes.

The two upcoming **Rifts® Bestiary** books are great resources for players and G.M.s alike, with creatures that can be used as familiars, pets, riding animals, guard animals, and in some cases, even unlikely allies. Others are slobbering monsters or malicious predators who include humans and D-Bees among their prey. All giving you plenty of spice to add to your characters and adventures. And each comes with a map that shows at a glance exactly where to find these beasts. **The Rifts® Bestiary, Volume One** ships in November. **Volume Two** end of December or January.

Coming!

In the Face of Death™ for Dead Reign®

I recently spoke to Nick Bradshaw about the artwork and some ideas and expect to plunge into finishing this book as soon as the Bestiary books are done. Cannot wait.

Coming!

Chaos Earth® Psychic Scream™

Writer *Taylor White* (**Chaos Earth® Resurrection™** and **Hell Followed™** for **Dead Reign®**) turned in a **Chaos Earth®** manuscript entitled **Psychic Scream™** that I expect to see released this 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. I have already assigned the cover art.

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!

Garden of the Gods™ (Fantasy)

An ancient ruin unearthed over the past century, the Garden of the Gods is a place of mediation and wonder. Others say it is a place of magic and mystery. And some say, of miracles and divine inspiration. Many an adventurer finds his path or a great quest after visiting the Garden of the Gods. But there is also said to be a place of darkness on the Island Kingdom of Lopan. A place that may be linked to the Old Ones and serve as a Portal to the Damned! And I can hardly wait to finish this book. Winter release.

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® #82** – 112 pages.
 - 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™, Volume One** – November 2018.
- **Rifts® Bestiary™, Volume Two** – Winter.
- **The Rifter® #83** – 96 pages – Winter.
- **Dead Reign® Sourcebook: In the Face of Death™** – Winter.
- **Rifts® Chaos Earth® First Responders™** – Winter.
- **The Rifter® #84** – 96 pages – Winter.
- **Chaos Earth® Psychic Scream™** – Winter.
- **Rifts® Antarctica** – Winter or Spring.
- **Garden of the Gods™, Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook** – Winter or Spring.

Also on the drawing board for 2019

- **Rifts® The Disavowed™ Sourcebook** by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements.
- **Rifts® Heroes of Humanity™ CS Arsenal**
- **Rifts® Titan Robotics**
- **Lopan™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Adventure Sourcebook**
- **Lopanic Games™, a Palladium Fantasy RPG® Sourcebook**
- **Heroes Unlimited™ Sourcebooks**
- **Splicers® Sourcebooks**
- **Nightbane® Sourcebooks**
- **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! The Rifter® #82 – available now

Presumably in your hands.

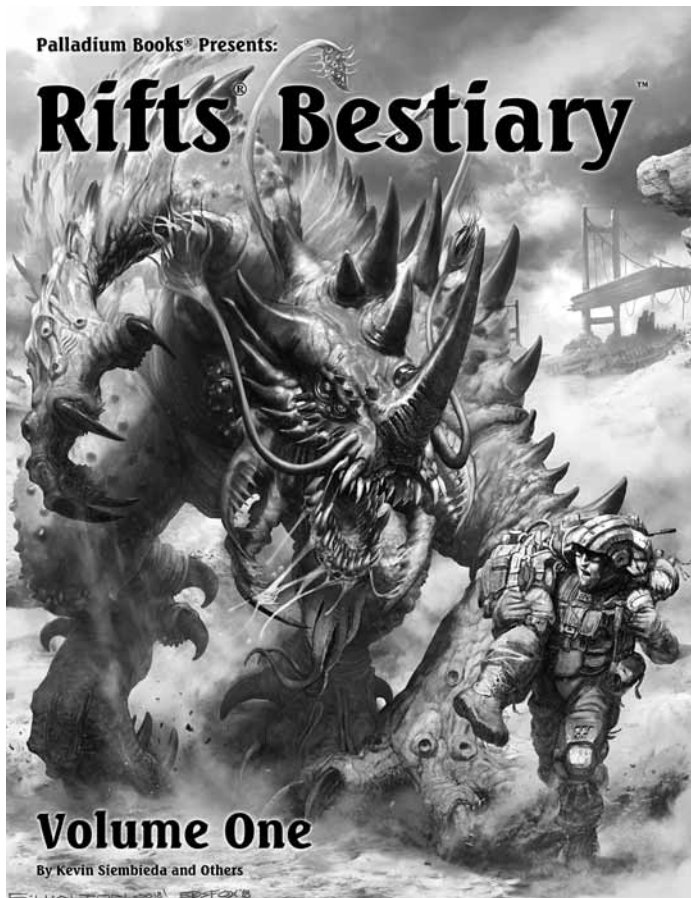
Rifter® #82 Highlights:

- **Rifts® Chaos Earth® – Pyromancy, Nebraska Part Three.** Final Chapter. "Official" source material.
- **Rifts® Bestiary Sneak Preview.** A few choice new monsters. "Official" source material.
- **Heroes Unlimited™ – Physical Heroes.** Physical Training heroes revisited.
- **Nightbane® – Age Modifiers and Education rules.** "Official" source material. 'Nuff said.
- **Gaming Advice from Erick Wujcik – Thinking Big and The Name Giver,** sage advice reprinted from *The Rifter® #1 & 2*.
- **Erick Wujcik Remembered** – 10 years after his death, Erick Remembered.
- **112 pages – \$14.99 retail – Cat. No. 182.**

New! Rifts® Bestiary of North America, Vol. One

Most of the artwork is in, and we expect the book to ship by the end of November or early December.

We are excited by how much new material has been added to the **Rifts® Bestiary Volume One** (and **Two**). Every single creature has extra information and updates, but many are much more expanded and detailed than I had originally imagined I would



make them. It has been fun to revisit and expand upon these monsters and animals. These comprehensive rewrites only serve to make two better and more useful books for gamers. And the new beasts? I'm loving them and so will you. We know you will enjoy and get a lot of use out of these tomes.

The two upcoming **Rifts® Bestiary** books are great resources for players and G.M.s alike, with creatures that can be used as familiars, pets, riding animals, guard animals, and in some cases, even unlikely allies. Others are slobbering monsters or malicious predators who include humans and D-Bees among their prey. All giving you plenty of spice to add to your characters and adventures. And each comes with a map that shows at a glance exactly where to find these beasts. **The Rifts® Bestiary Volume One** ships end of November or early December.

- **Monsters and animals of Rifts North America organized in two big, easy to use sourcebooks.**
- **Updated descriptions and information for existing monsters.**
- **Updated and uniform stat blocks.**
- **New predators, exotic riding animals, beasts of burden, alien horrors, giant insects and more.**
- **A map for every creature showing where it is found.**
- **Fully illustrated, much of the art by Charles Walton II, along with Siembieda and many others.**
- **192-224 pages each volume – \$26.99 retail – Cat. No. 896 (Volume One). In final production. November or December.**

NEW! In the Face of Death™

– A Dead Reign® Sourcebook

“People will tell you no one can survive in the big cities crawling with the walking dead. They are wrong. They’re there, alright. I have seen these survivors with my own two eyes. They’re holding their own and they have no intention of leaving. That’s where they have chosen to make their stand. I don’t know if these survivors are brave as hell or plum crazy, but God love them, they’re there.” – *Brad Ashley, Leader of the Road Reapers*

The cover is done and I want it out as soon as we can. 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.**
- **Skyscraper communities and life on the rooftops.**
- **Surviving in big cities crawling with zombies.**
- **Death Cults, a different type of danger.**
- **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. December release.**

COMING! Rifts® Bestiary™ of North America, Vol. Two – Winter

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™ Volume Two to be a Winter release.**



COMING: Psychic Scream™

– A Rifts® Chaos Earth® Sourcebook

The manuscript is in and I recently approved the tightened and tweaked sketch for the cover by artist *Anthony Moravian*. I can't wait to do the final edits and additional writing for this book.

In the wake of the Coming of the Rifts, people begin to see ghosts and demons, battle monsters and manifest psychic abili-

ties. The problem? Most people cannot control their newfound powers. Psionic abilities run amok, and people are driven to the brink of madness.

- **Untamed psychic abilities.**
- **New psionic powers and O.C.C.s.**
- **Insanity and horror.**
- **Adventure ideas and more.**
- **Written by Taylor White.**
- **96-128 pages – \$17.99 retail – Cat. No. 667. A winter release.**

COMING! Garden of the Gods™

– A Palladium Fantasy® Sourcebook

Matthew Clements is giving his considerable contributions to **Garden of the Gods** one last review and final tweak before he turns it in to Palladium. Matthew has started work on another Fantasy sourcebook and has already turned in one, still secret, **Rifts®** sourcebook that should get people very excited.

The Garden of the Gods is said to be a holy place watched over and even frequented by the avatars of the gods. According to legend, the god may visit heroes and followers in dreams or in person by an avatar of the god, to be given guidance, inspiration, heroic quests, and gifts of knowledge and magic. More details about this title will follow.

- **The Garden of the Gods described in detail.**
- **Godly insight and visitations.**
- **Gifts of magic and knowledge.**
- **Sanctuary and more.**
- **The Black Pit, a place of evil and dark secrets. Is it a counterbalance to the good of the Garden or a trick of the Old Ones?**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda.**
- **Final page count and price yet to be determined, but probably 96 pages – \$17.99 retail – Cat. No. 475. A winter release.**

COMING: The Rifter® #83

The Rifter® #83 will offer source material for **Rifts®, Heroes Unlimited™, Fantasy RPG®** and more, and is already in production. Articles are being selected and artwork will be assigned soon.

The **Rifter®** is all about new ideas, pushing the envelope, trying new things and alternative methods, rules and approaches to create epic adventure! There is no one way to look at things. Open your mind to the infinite possibilities.

Remember, adventures and source material for one game setting can also be adapted to other world settings with some easy and obvious modifications. Unleash your imagination and use **The Rifter®** to fuel your own campaigns. Game Masters, surprise your players with a creature or villain they never see coming because it is adapted from material for another game setting. Or give your players optional characters to play or special abilities or gear from the pages of **The Rifter®**. Most of all, have fun.

Rifter® #83 Highlights:

- **Rifts® source material.**
- **Heroes Unlimited™ source material.**
- **Palladium Fantasy RPG® source material.**
- **And other source material.**

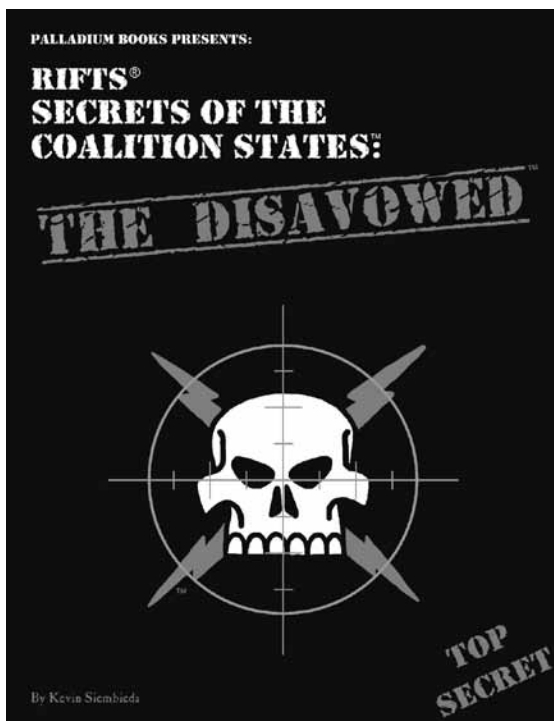
- News, coming attractions, product descriptions and more.
- 96 pages – \$14.99 retail – Cat. No. 183. Winter release.

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. Winter or spring release.

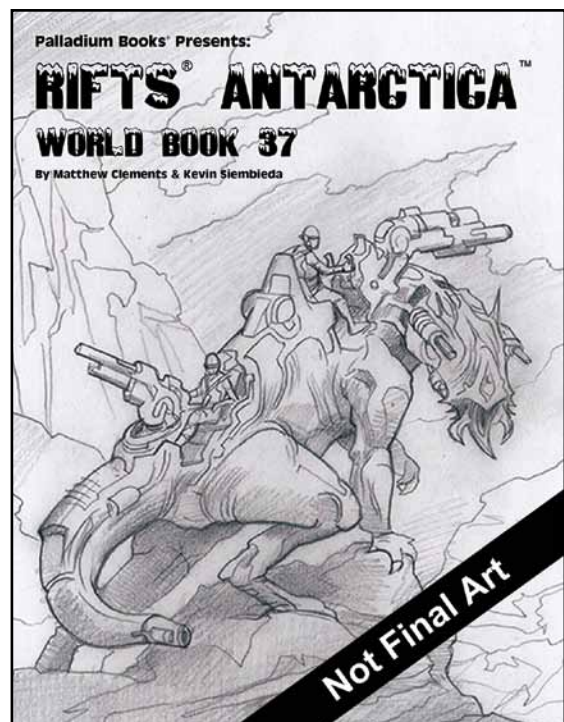


COMING! Rifts® The Disavowed Secrets of the Coalition States™

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

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

- **CS operatives so secret that even the top military and political leaders right up to Emperor Prosek know nothing about them. And if they did know, would they condone their activity or condemn it?**
- **Are the Disavowed heroes or renegades? Assassins or soldiers? Madmen or super-patriots? Or a little of them all?**
- **Unsung heroes who keep the CS safe, or thugs and pawns of a shadow agency within the Coalition government?**
- **What role does the Vanguard play in this group?**
- **How do they reward their D-Bee “teammates” when the mission is over?**
- **What happens to the Disavowed when they have seen or learned too much? Adventure ideas galore and so much more.**
- **Written by Kevin Siembieda and Matthew Clements.**
- 96 pages – \$17.99 retail – Cat. No. 892. Winter release.



COMING: Rifts® Antarctica

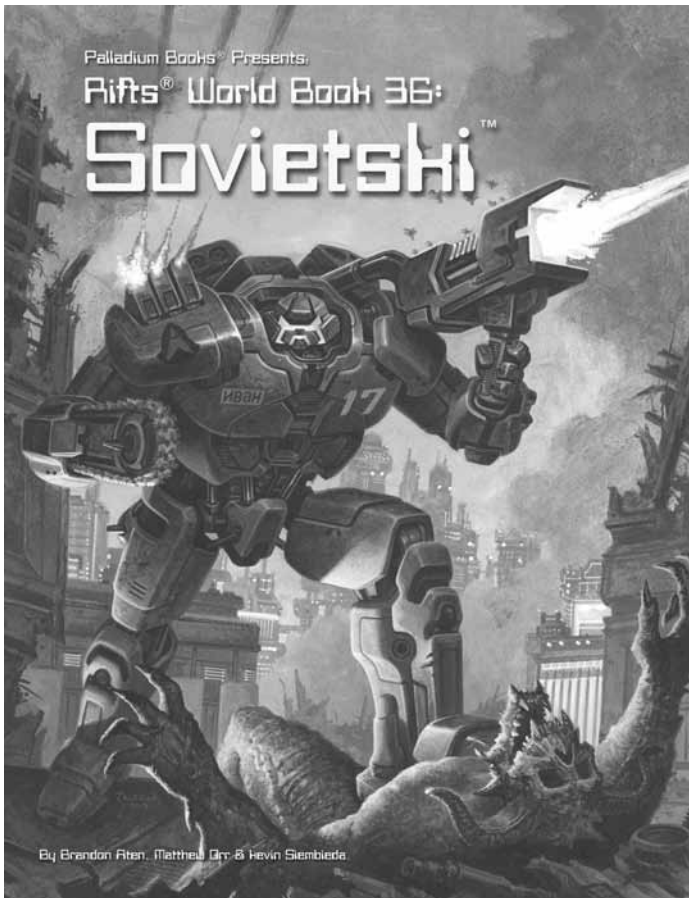
I approved the cover sketch so artist *John Zeleznik* will be moving on to final pencils and painting. Meanwhile, author *Matthew Clements* is making improvements and additions to the manuscript to ensure that **Rifts® Antarctica** is a truly compelling and exotic land you’ll want to explore. Probably a 160 page World Book around \$22.99 retail.

Product Note

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.

Notable Releases



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.

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.**

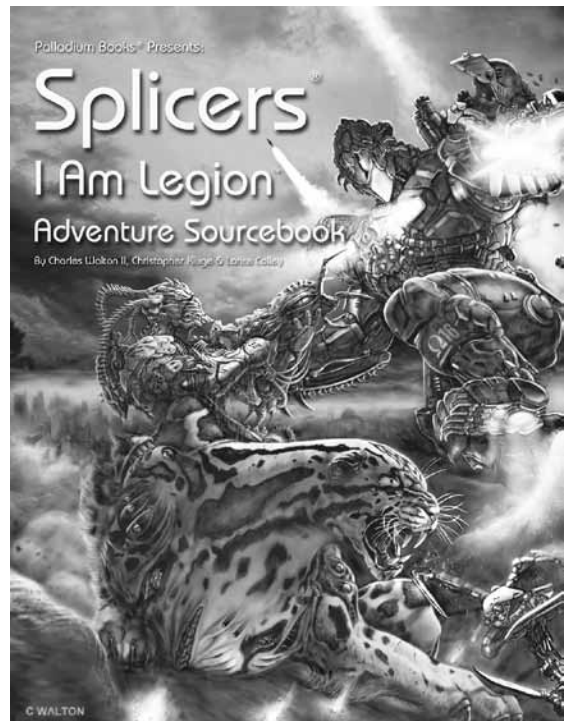
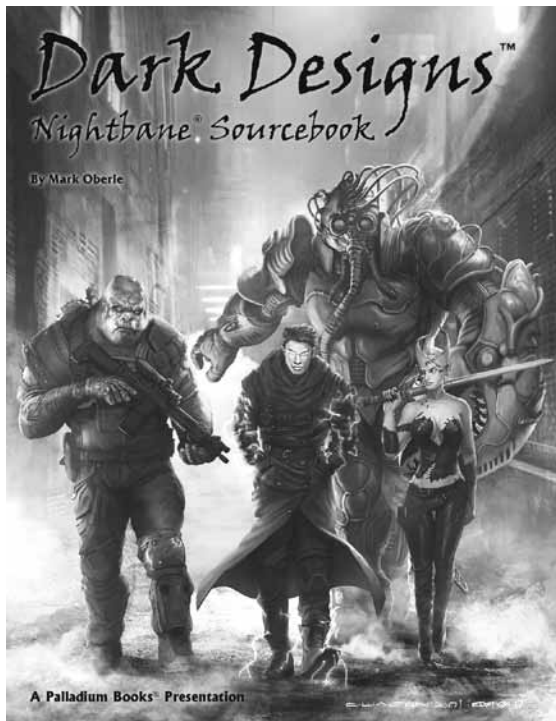
- **Sovietski war machine – 18 new vehicles, tanks, aircraft, and more.**
- **16 unique weapons plus grenades, tank shells and special ammunition.**
- **Spetsnaz Sovietski Special Forces – the new KGB.**
- **Bunker creation tables and Dead Zone tables, ideas and more.**
- **224 pages – \$26.95 retail – Cat. No. 891. Available now.**

Other Rifts® titles for Russia and Europe:

- **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, \$22.99 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 & the 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, \$28.99 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.

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 Morplus 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 & creation tables.
- Insight to the Becoming.
- Appendix of 23 Morphus Tables. Appendix of 53 Talents.
- \$20.95 – 160 pages – Cat. No. 736 – Available now.

- Includes 20 pages of additional, unpublished material.
- An epic series of adventures, plus adventure ideas and more.
- 256 pages – Cat. No. 201 – \$26.99 retail – Available now.

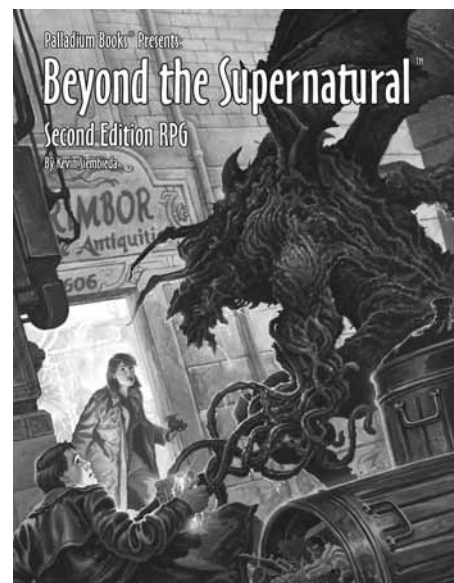
Splicers®: I Am Legion™ Sourcebook

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 and 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 personality of N.E.X.U.S., statted & described.



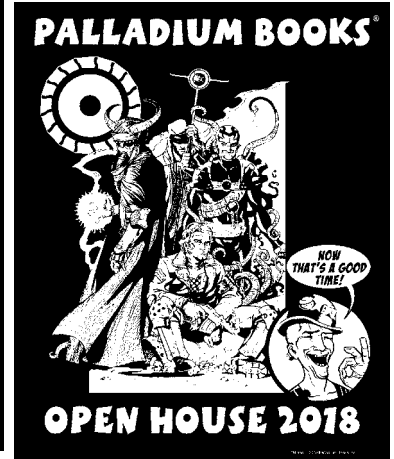
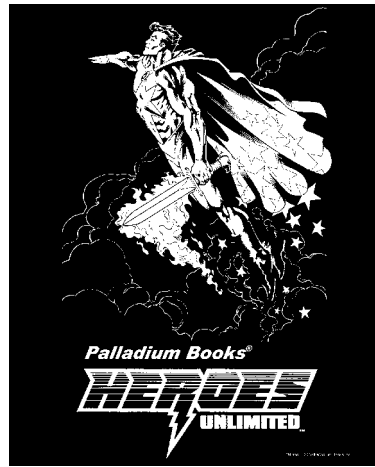
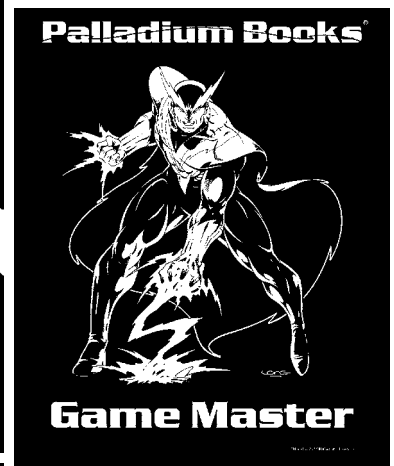
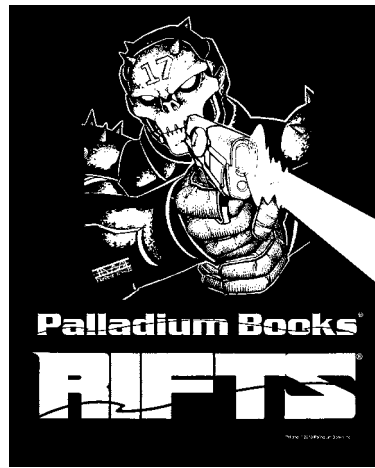
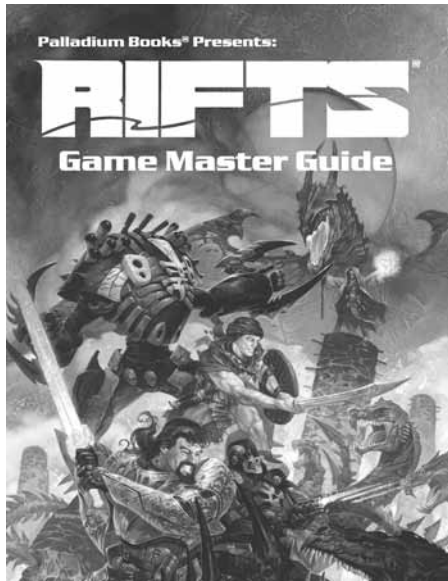
Back in Stock – available now

Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG

Beyond the Supernatural™ RPG is supernatural horror in the modern world. A plausible modern horror setting that makes sense and will have you wondering if this stuff could be for real. Play ordinary people, psychics or paranormal investigators.

- 14 Psychic Character Classes.
- 42 occupations for “ordinary” people.
- 100+ psychic abilities, including Fire Walker abilities.
- Creatures of darkness, the Lazlo Agency, and more.

- Three new sourcebooks planned for 2019.
- 256 pages – \$26.99 (NEW price) – Cat. No. 700 – available now.



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Rifts® Game Master Guide™

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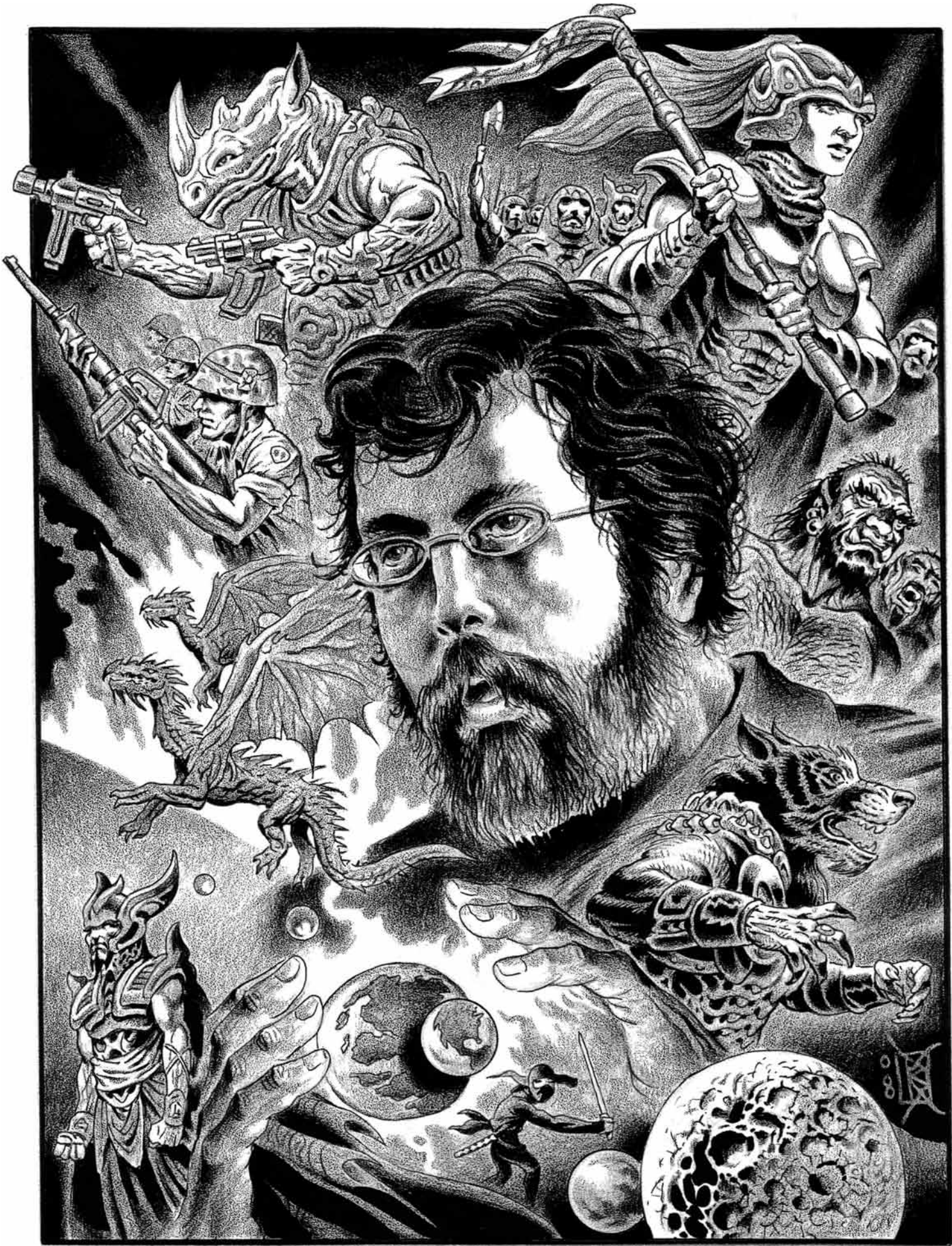
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Erick Wujcik, remembered

2018 marks the 10 year anniversary of Erick Wujcik's passing. I have asked a number of people to write a little remembrance of Erick. They are mostly Palladium folk, so they represent only a tiny handful of the multitude of lives touched by the indomitable Erick Wujcik and his work.

Erick and Kevin

By Kevin Siembieda

Erick was a big personality. A warm, smiling grizzly bear of a man whom I loved dearly. He very much resembled the character Tevye from *Fiddler on the Roof*, right down to the cap Tevye wears. It was one of many *Wujcik trademarks* along with his curly black hair, beard and mustache, plaid shirts, rimmed eyeglasses, toothy smile, and eyes that danced, especially when his mind was firing with new ideas or mischief.

Erick loved reading and learning. He read voraciously and studied everything from fencing and martial arts to computer science, history and ... well ... too many things to even try to list. He loved computers, the Internet and technology, and enjoyed writing and sharing what he knew. This combination got him a job running the servers at the *Detroit News* and writing a column in the newspaper about computers and new technology. Ah, but *game design* would become his passion. Though Erick would go on to do many things – teach game design as an *Adjunct Professor* at *Hong Kong Polytechnic University* and work on video games at *UbiSoft* in Shanghai, China, as *Game Design Studio Manager* – his true love was, and would always be, role-playing games.

I have asked people to share one or two favorite memories or moments when Erick Wujcik touched their life in some way. For me, that is an impossible task, because there are so many. How can I ever pick just one or even 10 favorites? I could write a book about them.

Erick and I were two peas in a pod. Kindred spirits with minds that worked in similar ways. We both thought big. Both loved storytelling in all its forms. We were both fascinated by new ideas and concepts, and we loved history, movies, comic books, science fiction and role-playing games. I would later learn that Erick felt I was one of the few people who always challenged him and kept him guessing where I might take an idea. That intrigued and inspired him. The same was true of Erick for me.

He and I were idea engines unafraid to see where a new idea might carry us and thrilled by the journey. Whether that idea became a game or sourcebook or several hours of flights of fancy, it didn't matter. It was the exploration of the idea that was important, exhilarating and fun.

Put us together and energy crackled like lightning. We were both pretty charismatic and passionate speakers, but together our combined energy level flew off the chart. We had heard this many times from any number of people, but for me, that became most evident one day during an RPG documentary project that, as far as I know, never got finished. This film project was being done by a talented fan, or perhaps it was someone in the gaming industry, I don't remember. If I recall correctly, he was planning to do a

series of hour or 90 minute interviews with creators in the RPG industry.

The interviews for Erick and I took place at the Palladium ofice one Saturday, in Taylor, Michigan, so I want to say it occurred sometime between 2003-2007. First, the gentleman interviewed Erick, by himself. Then me, by myself. Then he had the two of us talking together.

Erick and I were on a roll. Suddenly the videographer cried out in shock and dismay, "Oh no! Wait!" he exclaimed. "The energy between you two is incredible. I've never seen anything like it! Only my card (or was it videotape?) is full. I'm sorry. I have to reload! This will only take a minute." The poor guy hurried so as to not lose the moment he was seeing. Erick and I laughed and waited. And then picked up right where we had left off. The gentleman seemed quite delighted and a bit tired out after having witnessed the two of us in action.

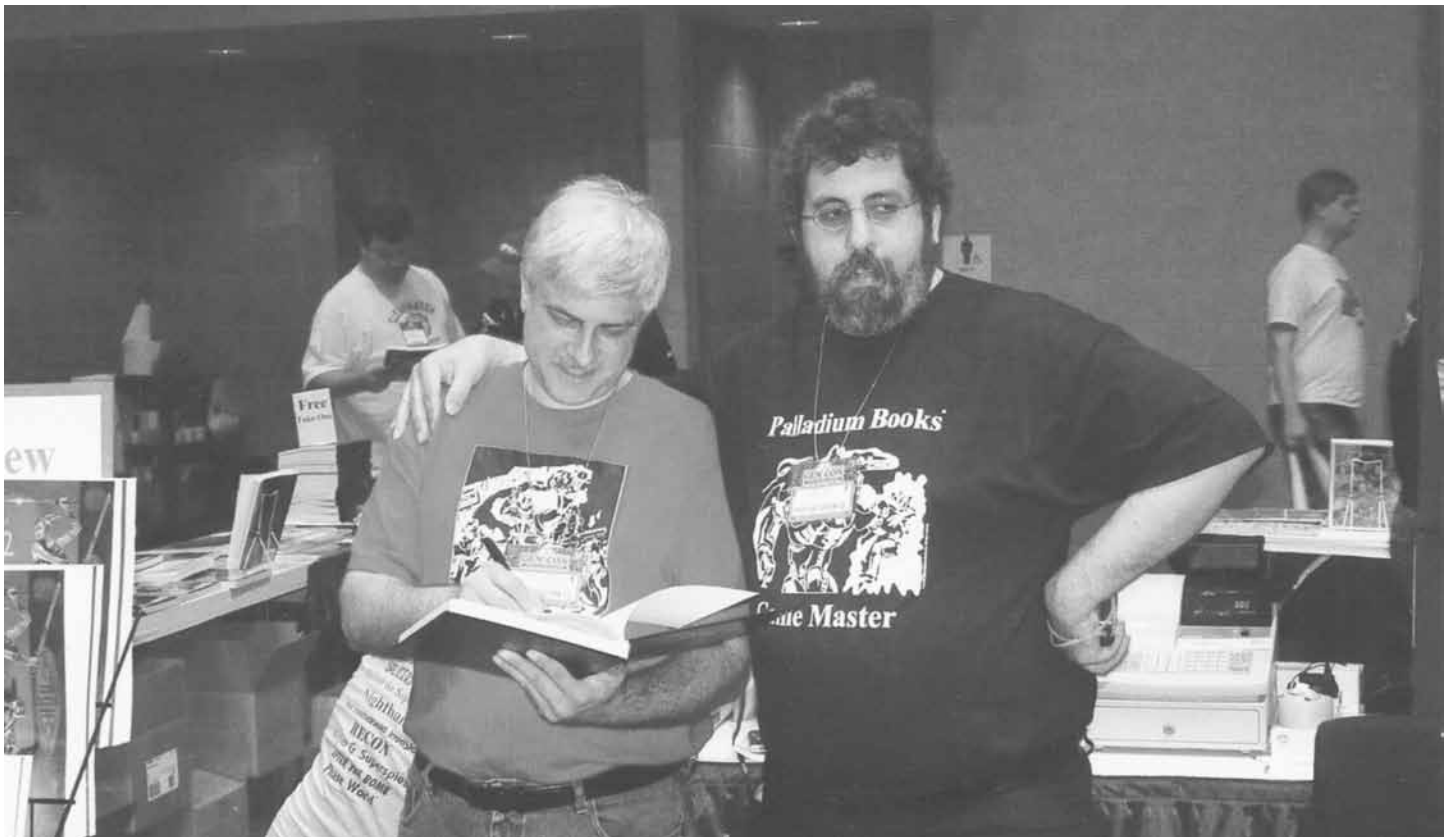
I don't know if that exuberance – our unique chemistry and love for gaming – was captured on tape or not. I never saw the video, nor did the project ever get finished or see release. A noble idea probably sitting in a basement or closet with interviews of dozens of other RPG creators. A historical record that I hope surfaces some day.

Sadly, I do not remember the gentleman's name (I'm terrible with names, darn it!), or his company (probably defunct), and I lost his contact info ages ago. Whaahhh! I would love to have a copy of those interviews with Erick, me and especially him and me together, as a precious remembrance just for my personal enjoyment. I'm sure the Wujcik family would like that too. A friendship and a seldom seen moment in time, captured. I assume that footage is forever lost. What a shame.

I would love to see what Erick and I looked like jamming together. When you are there, in person as one of the participants, you feel the energy and feed upon it, but you have no idea what it looks like except in the eyes and voice of your fellow creative maniac. When Erick and I got brainstorming with ideas, we were like two little kids on Christmas morning. Our ideas and enthusiasm boiling over to excite each other even more and creating new ideas and extrapolations in a rapid, machine-gun fire of words and intense emotion. There were times when we would break off our brainstorming because one or the other of us wanted to write the ideas down before they were lost. Yes, ideas fade and get forgotten unless written down. And when you are emotionally, intellectually on fire, you want to utilize that energy while you are hot.

It's hard to imagine, but looking back at it, Erick and I had thousands of such idea sessions. Thousands. That's pretty incredible. Many of them not even for a specific gaming project. Just ideas that we couldn't help but to run with and extrapolate upon and wonder about. Or which became a small part of a larger project. These idea sessions and brainstorming would help shape both of our creative processes and our work. Heck, they probably helped shape our lives. And it came so naturally and easily for the two of us. It was awesome.

Some of these idea sessions used to frustrate my then wife, Maryann, because I would come in from outside (Erick and I often brainstormed outdoors on the front lawn or in the drive-



way) after 3-4 hours and she'd ask, "So did you guys hammer out the books you're working on?" Nine out of ten times the answer would be, "Um, uh, no, but we have great ideas for a bunch of new stuff!"

Erick's sweetheart, *Kathryn Kozora*, also a dear friend no longer with us, must have had the patience of a saint, because I cannot tell you how many times Erick would be hours late for dinner or a get-together because we both got so lost in the ideas that the passage of time meant nothing to us. Hours would fly by like minutes.

Erick and I were both night-owls, so we would speak on the phone several days a week from midnight till 3, 4 or 5 in the morning. That went on for a couple of decades. Crazy, right? But, oh my gosh, it was great! We talked about everything, from gaming ideas and game theory to psychology and history, technology, science, new discoveries, evolution, genetic engineering, bionics, superpowers, time travel, philosophy, books, movies, storytelling, the structure of villains, our RPG campaigns, our plans for games, the Detroit Gaming Center, artwork, our families, our loves, hates, fears, and dreams. I don't think we had any secrets between us. We supported and fueled each other with ideas and inspiration and encouragement.

Of course, all relationships are unique, but ours was unlike anything I have ever quite experienced with anyone else. We were like two superheroes who were dynamic and capable on our own, but together we merged into a powerhouse dynamo with infinite powers of imagination and unlimited potential.

There are a zillion fond memories and great moments I could talk about regarding Erick Wujcik, but I'm going to leave you with this silly fun fact. Spring, 1980, I am working on the **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** and my plans for creating a universal game system. (The game system and Palladium Fantasy RPG® were actually written before my first Palladium release of *The*

Mechanoid Invasion® in 1981.) I was fine-tuning details in character creation. Erick and I play-tested the mechanics that helped me finalize the 8 attributes, alignments and character creation at a laundromat on Michigan Avenue on Detroit's west side, not far from my home. We did this between loads of Erick's laundry. I had a breakthrough at an Erick laundromat excursion a couple weeks earlier. Just goes to show, ideas can come anytime, anywhere. I do wonder, sometimes, what the people around us thought when they caught bits and pieces of excited conversations about rolling dice, character creation, Orcs, Wolfen, murder, mayhem, Anarchists and Diabolic evil.

These days, I like to believe that whenever I'm hot writing or come up with an exciting new idea or solution to a design problem, Erick is there with me. Whispering into my ear, fueling my imagination. I have a beautiful *Kent Burles* illustration of Erick, the one reprinted at the start of this Remembrance, framed and hanging on the wall in my office. Sometimes I swear he's smiling at me. Love you, Erick.

The Butterfly Effect

By **Julius Rosenstein, Gamer, Friend & so much more**

When I first met Erick Wujcik, entirely by chance, I had no idea that he would play such an important part in my life, or that we were beginning a friendship that would last a lifetime.

At that time, Erick and I were both undergrad students at *Wayne State University*, in Detroit. Since I did not own a car back then, I often rode to and from school by bus. As I preferred to not simply stare at my fellow passengers during these trips, I got into the habit of bringing something to read – nothing too serious like textbooks, just light reading, usually science fiction novels.

On one of these trips, a fellow passenger noticed what I was reading and we struck up a conversation. It turned out he was a

fellow science fiction fan. Our conversation was soon joined by yet another passenger who was also a science fiction fan. This new addition to this unexpectedly delightful conversation was *Erick Wujcik*, who informed us that Wayne State University had a club for sci-fi enthusiasts – *The Wayne Third Foundation*, and he invited us come to the meetings and maybe join the club.

Although I never saw that other passenger again, I went to the Foundation meetings and met several kindred spirits. I enjoyed the people and the ambiance so much, that I soon became a regular member until circumstances (i.e. classes and a part-time job to help me work my way through school) forced me to leave. However, being a part of the *Wayne Third Foundation* not only gave me some of my most enjoyable times in college, but I also made a couple of friends for life. One of them being Erick Wujcik.

After I graduated, I worked at an art supply store just off the Wayne State Campus. Erick was attending grad school at the time, so we still saw each other around, albeit not as much as we previously had. This would change the day that Erick came into the store to buy some graph paper.

He told me that he had just taken up a new hobby – fantasy role-playing games – and he needed the graph paper to chart out the dungeons he was about to design. I expressed an interest in this, so he invited me to his game that weekend.

I showed up, rolled up my first character, played my first RPG, and was hooked!

Erick ran me and three other players, all newbies like I was, through his D&D dungeon adventure. We had a great time. Furthermore, one of these players would also become a good friend of mine over the next several years. Once again, I am eternally grateful to Erick for an invitation to something that was new to me.

The following week, at work, when I told my friends and coworkers about my experience, some of them became interested enough (from my enthusiastic description) to want to try role playing. One of these people was my friend and (at that time) coworker *Kevin Siembieda*. Within a few weeks, Kevin had also met Erick and had his first role-playing experience. Kevin and Erick took to each other immediately and soon became fast friends and a pair of evil geniuses when it came to running games, designing dungeons and adventures, and in time, creating the Palladium Megaverse.

Given all that Kevin has since accomplished in the field of role-playing games, I consider it to be a very good thing that I accepted Erick's invitation to play in his game that fateful day; for myself as well as for the gaming industry in general. At any rate, during my first couple of years gaming, my G.M. was frequently Erick, Kevin or a couple of other friends whom Erick had introduced me to. When I felt ready to start Game Mastering on my own, Erick gave me a great deal of support and was always ready to answer any questions I had about running a game.

Erick was also instrumental in setting up a gaming club at Wayne State called the **Wayne Weregamers™**. Although I joined, scheduling conflicts prevented me from attending as many games as I would have liked. However, after Erick graduated college, he and Kevin Siembieda were the driving forces in establishing the **Detroit Gaming Center™ (DGC)**. Unlike the Weregamers, the Gaming Center, or **DGC** for short, was set up for the gaming community at large.

The first organization of its kind in the nation, the DGC was open six days a week, sometimes at all hours. (As long as some-

one who was trusted with a key was willing to remain there. And being twenty-somethings enraptured by RPGs, that was quite often.) Like many other members, I was there so much that the DGC became my second home. During this time, I got to game with Erick a lot more. Sadly, after some four years, as many good things must come to an end, due to a variety of reasons, the first incarnation of the DGC closed its doors, but not before leaving me with many great memories and a number of new friends.

Although I saw Erick less over the next few years, when I lost my job due to downsizing, Erick was invaluable in helping me find work. Not only did Erick help me compose and revise my resume, but he also used his contacts to network me to prospective employers he knew. When I finally got the job interview that got me hired, it was through a friend of Erick's.

A few years later, when I was downsized out of that position, Palladium Books had grown large enough to hire me. That was 27 years ago!

Kevin often credits part of Palladium's existence to my having introduced him to gaming. However, as it was Erick who introduced me to gaming, he definitely deserves credit as well.

Overall, gaming has been a huge part of my life for nearly 30 years, all due to a chance meeting of Erick on a bus. If I had never met Erick Wujcik, my life would have been much different and far more difficult, far less full, and far less fun. Without Erick, I might not have discovered and introduced role-playing games to Kevin. Erick, thank you for everything, especially for being a great friend.

For the Record, by Kevin Siembieda: It is amazing how being at the right place at the right time can change your own life, and how your *changed life* touches and changes so many others. Without Erick turning Julius on to RPGs, I almost certainly would never have gamed, never have met Erick, and never would have started Palladium Books. There would have been no **TMNT® RPG** or **Rifts®** ... heck, there might not have been the **Ninja Turtles®** cartoon, movies, toys, and all the rest, if I had not published that RPG book, and introduced Eastman and Laird to Mark Freedman, the licensing agent who made all of that happen. Crazy, right?

Julius being the gentle and humble soul that he is, downplays his significant role in getting me into role-playing games, but I want to set the record straight on that matter. Role-playing games sounded interesting to me, but the idea also struck me as kind of silly and dumb.

Though Erick ran my first game, I didn't really enjoy it. That was not the fault of Erick. I was surrounded by strangers, there was a pretty girl, I was feeling self-conscious. I didn't know the rules and couldn't remember how D&D Armor Class worked or which dice to roll. I felt stupid and a bit embarrassed. In my mind, the night was a blur and I was so concerned with trying to remember certain rules and not looking like an idiot, that I didn't really have fun. I enjoyed meeting everyone, especially Erick, Rene, and the pretty girl, Robin, but felt confused and a little numb by my first gaming experience.

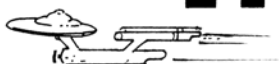
It was only Julius and his passionate glee for the game that held my interest.

The next game or two I played with a different G.M., and they were dismal experiences. I had pretty much decided *RPGs sucked* and I wanted no part of them. Julius, who loved role-playing, and whose passion for the medium was contagious, convinced me to give it **one last try**. This time, with people I knew (friends

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and coworkers) and who were also all newbies, and most importantly, *Julius* would be the Dungeon Master.

Though he had never DMed before, Julius was a great Dungeon Master and I had the time of my life. It was one of those light bulb goes off above the head moments, and I fell in love with role-playing games only because of Julius's persistence and imaginative gaming. The very next game, my character, which I loved, died because I, the player, did something cocky and truly stupid, and I still loved the game. Heck, it was even better, because you could die! This was serious storytelling. I've been hooked ever since. Thank you, Julius. – *Kevin*

Erick Wujick, My Early Recollections

By Matthew Balent, Researcher, Writer, Friend

I first met Erick in the fall of 1978 as I entered college at *Wayne State University (WSU)* in Detroit. I had been running a **D&D®/Chivalry and Sorcery™** campaign for a few years prior to that and some of my players were already attending WSU and had met him. Soon after the fall term started, a student gaming group, the *Wayne Weregamers*, was formed with Erick as president. In those days, Erick was what you might call a “professional student” having been at WSU for nearly ten years. This proved invaluable, however, as he had many connections on campus and knew quite a lot about the ins and outs of the university.

Friday afternoons were the original meeting day for the group, and we had a standing reservation for one of the larger rooms in the Student Center. Many of us spent Fridays there hanging out instead of in class. Since that building was only open until about 9 or 10 pm, we soon needed additional space we could use as a number of Game Masters wanted to be able to run their campaigns well into the night. Erick came through in this as the group soon had space in the *Montieth Center* which was an older home on campus (there were a number of them in those days) whose main floor was a student day care center and other rooms were available for student use. We ran games there for about three years which was the time Erick stepped down as president of the group.

Eventually we got a “regular” student office in the *Student Center*, a space shared with several other groups. We were, by far, the most active organization in that space and always had something going on in the common area outside the offices.

Erick was particularly gifted in the art of persuasion, especially when it came to gaming as his passion and enthusiasm were very infectious. He easily talked me into stepping up to be president of the *Weregamers*, a position I held for a couple of years. He taught me one of the basics of the university budget process: always ask for around twice the amount you really want so you can cut your request and show your fiscal restraint.

By this time Erick was full bore into promoting the **Detroit Gaming Center™ (DGC)**, which at that time was only a short distance from the university campus. Again, Erick worked his magic on me when he asked me to help out as a board member with the title of *Director of Building Maintenance* – basically the janitor. It wasn't really all that bad, as most folks cleaned up after themselves and pitched in when needed.

Erick lived for quite some time (at least 10-12 years) in a four story apartment building just a couple of blocks south of campus. I think over the time (five years) I was at school at WSU at least four other gamer folks had apartments in the same building. A

good word from Erick to the landlord was all that was needed for you to be put at the top of the list. I was there for a year until I moved on to another apartment and Erick pitched in as always, helping move a ridiculously heavy hide-a-bed down four flights of stairs.

Diceless, driven by imagination

By Alex Marciszyn, Palladium Editor and Friend

My most complete memories of Erick center around our late-night conversations at Kevin's house in Detroit and later, Dearborn. Between the three of us, we discussed things of interest from movies to science-fiction to game design. Like me, Erick viewed libraries as places to explore and learn. Fascination and imagination drove him. Erick was an inspiration to me and others.

The following short memory is about my brief introduction to diceless role-playing, which I hope you enjoy. We were driving somewhere and someone brought it up. Erick said something like, “Let's try it right now.” Strangely, I felt prepared.

Erick: You're trapped in an office on the second floor in a hospital. No one else is there. What are you doing?

Alex: I look around for a phone. Is there a phone?

Erick: Sure.

Alex: I pick up the phone and...

Erick: You hear a menacing voice say: “We are coming for you!”

Alex: Is there a window?

Erick: Yes.

Alex: I look out the window.

Erick: You see a man taking something from the trunk of his car. What do you do?

Alex: I dive for the floor!

Erick: You hear a shotgun blast and you're covered in glass.

Somehow, help reached my character in time to get out alive, but the tension and fear were there. It was fun and scary. The fact that it was all done on the fly impressed me. The only other person I know who can pull off such seemingly effortless improv is Kevin.

God bless you, Erick.

A simple lesson

By Shane Neville, Writer and Video Game Designer

As a game designer, I'll always remember a simple lesson that Erick taught me while we played an RPG concept he designed. It was at GenCon about 18 years ago. He was running the game, but I wouldn't say he was the G.M., it was much more like he was a shepherd.

Character creation was quick and loose and we dropped into the game with no explanation of the rules. Erick presented us with a challenge and was quiet. If we asked him a question, he just shook his head.

No, you're on your own.

The party talked for a while and came up with a solution. No dice were rolled, we were simply successful.

The evening continued like this for over five hours. Challenge, discussion, solution. Of course, we didn't always succeed on the first attempt, but Erick was a stone wall. He wanted us to explore the systems within his game and his world. He wanted us to fig-

ure it out. As we moved forward, our understanding of the rules grew along with the challenges we faced.

By the end of the night, we were exhausted (well, Erick wasn't, he'd sat there most of the night staring at us), but we had a great time and all felt comfortable within Erick's new game.

Today, in the video game industry, we call this *onboarding*. Slowly introducing the player to systems so that they can understand them and integrate them into their next challenge/lesson. It's become a fundamental part of video games today.

Back then, we threw a manual at the player and told them to suck it up. Tutorials were very rare.

And here was Erick, taking a genre known for rulebooks with 200+ pages, and he broke it down for us in a hotel room in Indianapolis and by the end of the night, we all felt a sense of accomplishment and mastery.

It took me more than a few years to really understand what Erick taught me that night. His silence definitely created a few moments of frustration, but we all worked together and figured out the game. He started simple and moved us forward. We were expecting a helpful G.M. and were denied, but the game and its systems were how we learned.

Of course, I could talk about how the **TMNT® RPG** was my first non-**D&D® RPG** and my gateway drug into my deep passion for **Robotech®** and **Rifts®**, or how my high school friends did a weekend marathon session of **Ninjas & Superspies™**, but Erick gave me so much more than amazing memories.

Erick taught me to be a better game designer. Thanks to him, my games can help give more players around the world great memories as well.



The Wujcik Legacy

By Mark Oberle, Writer and Gamer

I was lucky enough to meet Erick Wujcik once. It was at the 2007 Open House in Taylor, Michigan, and several people I had talked to previously were excited that he was going to be there. I recognized the name, but must admit that I was nowhere near the fan that several of the other attendees were. That had nothing to do with Erick's talent and everything to do with timing. You see, I cut my gaming teeth on **Rifts®** in early 1996, and had never even flipped through **TMNT®** and **Other Strangeness**, **After the Bomb®**, **Ninjas & Superspies™**, or **Revised RECON®**. I had only recently added them to my growing collection as part of a large lot I purchased online. What I had read of the man's work consisted largely of his **Rifts® China™** material, which I

did love. But at the time I simply didn't know how important Mr. Wujcik was to Palladium and the larger gaming community.

As I recall, my long-time friend *Reed Dees*, his brother, *Tanner*, and two of their friends (*Blake* and *Brady*) raved about meeting him the first day. They described what sounded like a combination of Albert Einstein and a zen master, and couldn't stop talking about how much fun they'd had in one of his games. I knew I had to meet the man.

The next day I gathered a few titles he had written and worked my way through the crowd around him. As I mentioned, there were many excited fans who were clamoring to talk to him for a few minutes, get a signature, and/or shake his hand. I'm sad to say that our encounter was relatively brief. We exchanged pleasantries, he graciously signed the few books I brought him, and I hung about for a time listening to him talk to those grouped around about a number of things.

In those 20-30 minutes, I did note several things. First, Erick had a very dynamic presence and he was easily able to engage multiple people at once in conversation. Second, he was obviously well-read and could speak with authority on a number of diverse topics. Third, there was a certain warmth and genuineness about his character that was undeniable. In short, I got a glimpse of this social and creative dynamo, and found myself thinking, "Of course this is one of Kevin's best friends." I made a mental note that I needed to find the time, maybe at the next Open House, to take more time to talk with him. That was an error in judgment that I still regret.

As we all know, Erick passed a short time later. By this time, I was lucky enough to have developed a growing friendship with Kevin Siembieda, who was one of my childhood heroes. See, **Rifts®** and other Palladium RPGs had been a haven for my friends and me in high school and college, and have been responsible for me making some life-long friends I may never have met otherwise. Gaming forged us into a close-knit group that always had each other's back. That had come full circle back in 2006 when I started writing content for Palladium through a wild and amazing happenstance I won't recount here. What's important to this story is that through that professional relationship, Kevin and I had come to be friends. I saw how devastated he was at Erick's passing and started to hear the many stories of how he had been there for my friend over the years. It made me think of my "band of brothers" and how it would devastate me to lose any one of them.

I tried to do what little I could for Kevin as he grieved the loss of Erick. If you have ever tried to comfort someone after a major loss, you know how helpless it makes you feel. There are no magic words, nor grand gestures, that will take the pain away. I only hope I was able to offer some small solace and distraction. What this did mean, however, is that I heard a number of stories about the titan of the gaming world that was Erick Wujcik from Kevin, Alex, and others. My understanding of how much he had contributed to Palladium specifically and gaming in general grew. I certainly wished by then that I had taken more than the 20-30 minutes to speak with him that I had. But you know what they say about hindsight ...

Over the next few years I tried my best to honor Erick's memory by giving my Palladium submissions my all. I tried to, in some small way, help fill the void his passing left at the company. When I had the chance, I managed to purchase Erick's **Gold Edition Rifts®** Main Book. Kev's sense of relief was evident

as I cut the check, and he told me he was happy it was going to someone who would appreciate it rather than being sold on to a larger market. It and his **Heroes Unlimited™ Gold Edition** are among the “crown jewels” of my gaming collection today. Along with them is the brief correspondence I had with Erick’s life-partner, *Kay Kozora*, who sent me a thank-you card for buying the *Rifts® Gold Edition*. She thought I might like to have the card with Kevin’s art of Erick as a superhero on the front. It was a sweet sentiment, and I made sure to write her back before she passed and let her know it was my honor to own a piece of her beloved’s collection, along with the wonderful card.

Unfortunately, that is the extent of my remembrance of Erick Wujcik. I know there are others who will be able to do his memory more justice in these pages, but perhaps my experience will serve as a cautionary tale. Never put off time with others if you have the option, because we never know how long any of us have on this Earth.

At least I can take solace in the fact that I try to keep Erick’s memory alive and carry his legacy forward. I still aspire to have even a fraction of the impact he had on gaming. I strive to make my material as “clean” as possible in regards to the work that Palladium has to put into editing it (something he was known for). I strive to leave gamers in awe of the ideas I hand to them. Every time I send the guys at Palladium another piece I feel as though I continue to blaze a trail that Erick helped to create. And, every time we game, those of us that have been impacted by him help to keep a piece of him alive. So, join me in carrying that torch forward, and go enjoy a raucous adventure with new friends or old. After all, tomorrow may be too late.

With profound respect, Mark “Warwolf” Oberle – Freelance Writer



It ALL began with Turtles

By Sean Patrick Fannon, Writer and Game Designer

For me, it began with **TMNT® & Other Strangeness**. Though I knew next-to-nothing about **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles®**, everything about that RPG book just popped for me in terms of creativity and gonzo fun. The random tables of animal abilities with the superheroic action against crazy ninja warriors was just ... **fresh**.

Other licensed properties had come out into the tabletop RPG space by that point, but no one had taken the opportunity to do something innovative with the leverage of such a property quite like Erick did. He didn’t just translate the property safely, going only so far as necessary to present the Turtles and their foes. He

took the premise and **designed** a game, ground-to-sky, that would inspire and excite both gamers and designers for years to come.

Years later, he would break the mold again, this time presaging an entire movement in gaming that definitively expanded our core understanding of what gaming can be. *Amber Diceless* was narrative story gaming long before we had that phrase to argue incessantly about in forums and social media. Erick Wujcik was the godfather of indie games and everything that defies the strict idea that you roll a die, choose a class, and level, and that’s the only way to play RPGs.

Erick was also a funny, warm, and generous human being who made anyone who wanted to talk with him welcome and a part of the group. I had only rare opportunities to visit with him, but I cherished each one. His voice was taken from us far too soon, but his impact on the role-playing hobby will never be lost or forgotten.

A Remembrance in Honor of Erick Wujcik

By Hendrik Härterich

They say, when you are dead, you are gone.

That is not true.

When someone good touches your life, be it for only a few precious moments or for a longer while or be it in person or through his work, a little bit of that someone will stay with you. That is a blessing and a gift to cherish. Erick Wujcik has touched many people’s lives. No matter to whom I have talked, whoever met Erick has been touched by his open-minded friendliness, his fertile mind, and contagious energy. He was “begeistert” (lit. to beghost) in the true sense of that German word: Erick had the ability to give a spark to other people.

Artists are never gone. Artists leave their works, not behind but to us. Even though Erick has sadly passed so woefully early and I never had a chance to meet him in person, he has inspired me and put a spirit in my games.

Writing role-playing games is hard. It is more than just writing a story. Gamers not only seek a good tale, but a tale to live in. Nothing is more difficult to deliver. Erick had an uncanny knack not only to hit that high mark every single time but also to write beautifully. **After the Bomb®** and **Amber® Diceless** are shining examples of great role-playing writing and wonderfully vibrant games. Erick was ever curious to try out and play with new things, I think, and that is a truly admirable quality and it got us some amazing stuff. He presents all the information you need in an elegant but conversational tone and just makes it super interesting. Every time I read one of his books, I am champing at the bit to play **THERE**. No doubt, he is one of my author-heroes.

When I started to dabble in writing, I really came to admire and appreciate Erick even more. Every single paragraph he wrote was extremely well researched. Now, it is easy enough to collect information and not much harder to write long passages regurgitating that information. The art, however, is not to retell or to impress with your knowledge but to present it in a fun, exciting and interesting manner. You want to capture the reader or to give him what he needs when he needs it, and, what is more, to write not to simulate reality but to enable the reader to tell his own enchanting tale with the tools and inspiration the author puts into the reader’s hand.

When I wrote that little *Flashing Blades of Horror* article for **The Rifter**® #79, I immediately checked Erick's **TMNT**® **Transdimensional Turtles**™ as that is the only book in the Palladium canon that deals with early modern firearms. I liked the rules, but I thought they are a bit, for lack of a better word, simple. I then researched 16th/17th Century firearms for months, reading and watching everything I could get on the subject from military tactics and history to weapon tests. At the end of that research journey, I found, to my surprise, that Erick was absolutely spot on AND his rules were easy to play. What more can a gamer ask? It is just the same with Erick's **Rifts**® **China 1 & 2** – a sweeping tale, extremely well researched, wow-factor squared. I have rarely been that impressed with the work of anyone in *any* line of business. In my book, Erick has been a titan of RPG design. It seems fitting that he is remembered in **The Rifter**®. This magazine, like no other, is a place for inspiration and where gamers write for gamers with one aim: play with it!

I think Erick would want us to be excellent to each other and game as long as we can dream.

Thank you, Erick!

Close Encounter of the Inspiring Kind

By Jason Richards, Writer and Game Designer

I don't recall exactly how it happened. I'm sure that fellow Palladium fan, *Jay Twining*, and I just went to say hello to Erick as the day was winding down. It was the *2006 or 2007 Palladium Open House*, and everyone had been gaming and hanging out all day. The doors were locked for the night and the event was "closed," but some people were still hanging around. We were supposed to meet up with some of the attendees for a late night snack and shenanigans, but somehow we ended up sitting in the warehouse talking to a legend about gaming and game design.

Erick must have talked to us, just a couple of random guys, for two hours. We discussed his long-running Amber campaign. Did you know that diceless role-playing emerged because his D&D Thief had such bad stats he couldn't make any skill checks to disarm traps? He told us that one of the lessons he taught as a professor of game design was to have his students create games with a terrible and outlandish core mechanic, knowing that when they got stuck developing a future project, whatever awful system they had dreamed up would invariably hold the solutions they needed. And then he described a game he always wanted to create, but had only tinkered with. It revolved around time travel and alternate worlds and conspiracies so amazing and complex, we could barely keep up. But for Erick's incredible mind and imagination, spinning improvised stories about the consequences of meddling with history, wrapped in complex mysteries, was child's play.

And then, he said the most amazing thing. "You can use that if you want."

The suggestion was laughable, for starters. I couldn't then, and still couldn't now possibly write this masterful, nuanced setting with all of its temporal complexities and layers of secrets. But even beyond that, this was something that he had always wanted to write and had obviously put a lot of thought into. At the time, I had written some **Rifter**® articles and a single book for Palladium. He didn't know me from Adam. But, that's just the kind of

guy Erick was. He could see that I was enthralled by this world he was describing and was just like... "Take it."

I've written a lot since then, for both Palladium and for Pinnacle, plus a couple of RPGs of my own. I still couldn't possibly write the setting that Erick had so meticulously yet effortlessly crafted (maybe someday), but I think about that late-night conversation all the time. Nothing has ever given me more confidence in my ability to write, design, and lovingly craft a compelling world. It was formative for me, and one of my most amazing professional experiences.

Game on, Erick.

I met Erick in 2007

By Doug Lamberson, Gamer

I did not meet Eric Wujcik until the *2007 Palladium Books Open House*.

I remember when he was announced to attend it, and how I gathered all the books that he had written for Palladium – which was a pretty good amount. I let my friend Mark know that I was going to that Open House so I could bring some of his books by Erick to be signed as well.

My first meeting with him, I can recall my first thought was how tall and kind of *imposing* he seemed to be to me ... but first impressions are not always accurate or true.

After our introductions, we started to talk, and I came to realize he was a kind, understanding, interesting, and warmhearted man to talk with. I remember speaking to him about his books and his work on the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**® **RPG** line, and how it was **Robotech**® that first drew me into the "Palladium fold" of collecting those RPG books. After completing my **Robotech**® collection (and wishing to see if lightning could indeed strike twice), how I spent \$300 at a *Marcon* (a convention in Columbus, Ohio) within 5 minutes of the doors opening to start **Rifts**® and many other Palladium game titles. We laughed about that, and I'm happy to say that to this day I still own those books.

Later, I asked Erick if he would be kind enough to sign the books that I had brought to the Open House. With a wonderful grin that became a smile, he said he would be glad to.

I took pictures of him with the stack of books that I had for him to sign for myself and my friend Mark. It may sound corny, but I felt a sense of awe as he signed my books – the same way I do when Kevin Siembieda signs books as well – it kinda felt to me (as well with Kevin) he was marking this moment in time for me to keep within those books. After all, this was a man whom Kevin walked with, side by side at Palladium Books, to create those wonderful words on paper, bound together for us to consume like sugar craving children going to a candy store with their allowance.

I regret I did not interact much more with Erick that weekend, but how could any of us know that would be our last chance to see Erick Wujcik? At the end of that weekend, I said my goodbyes to him, Kevin and the Palladium staff, and had hopes that there would be another Palladium Open House to attend so I could talk with him again. It was something I was looking forward to doing.

And then a year or so later, it was announced that he had passed away.

I now look back on that time and I am saddened that I did not spend more time with Erick, and now every time I walk

past that postcard that has Kevin and Eric's picture on it to see the way they both smile in it... well... it reminds me of the rare friendship that those two had together, and it will always remind me of how strong their friendship was to this day. And how he is missed.

Based on what Kevin has told me about Erick, if I had gotten to know him better, I'm pretty sure I'd call him a friend also. I do wish that there were times in our lives (as I'm sure most of us do) that we could go back to, or at least turn back time, to *re-live* those certain moments so we could spend more time with someone and do things differently.

The closest I can get to that moment long ago, was to buy a number of items that had belonged to Erick at a later Palladium Open House. I eyeballed a set of items that included a hat of his, but knew it would not fit my large melon of a head, so I did not pursue it.

But seeing how we cannot go back in time, I now find myself taking a moment at every Palladium Open House since, and at conventions and other special events in my life, to take time out and do absolutely nothing and think to myself: "this ... THIS ... is a good moment. The here and now. Enjoy it, and everybody that is here with you, because you only experience this once. This will not happen again." I do that now, to keep a mental anchor, so to speak, to etch into my memory the emotions, sights and sounds of that special moment, so I can remember it with a little more clarity and appreciation.

In closing, I feel that the Palladium Open Houses are a kind of "friends and family reunion" with some people you can't wait to see and some who you'll just say hello to in passing. New relationships may be forged, while old ones release the pause button to continue on forward. But at Palladium, there shall always be a spot that cannot be filled, and that those who were close to Erick, shall experience that bittersweet moment of remembering a dear friend and missing him at the same time.

Godspeed Erick, I hope we cross paths again someday.

A comment from Kevin Siembieda: We all had a wonderful time with Erick at the 2007 Open House. His attendance was a bit of a surprise, because he didn't think he could make it. Somehow the planets aligned and a short time before the POH, Erick told us he would be there, and we made the announcement.

Erick looked great. He had lost weight, looked fit and said he was feeling wonderful. He was excited to be at the POH and was excited about his new gig at a video game company in California.

About a week before Thanksgiving 2007, I got the call from Erick reporting that he had pancreatic cancer (he saw the doctor because he thought he had the flu and couldn't shake it for some reason). The doctors told him he had 3-4 weeks to live. A second opinion, by a trusted friend, confirmed the diagnosis and I was told by that person not to expect Erick to make it to Christmas. Of course, Erick defied the prognostication as best he could. As long as he could. Not long enough.

The point is, we don't know what the future holds for us or those we love. Doug's remembrance touched me, because we should all pause to drink in those special moments when we recognize them. Drink them in and enjoy the wonder of that moment. To etch the experience into our brains and our hearts, because such moments of joy and laughter with our friends and loved ones are the moments that make our lives beautiful and joyful.

That's why, even though we keep saying Palladium Open House "X" is our last one, I can't seem to stop doing them – because they are full of beautiful moments of camaraderie, pure joy and gaming bliss. Not just for us, the Palladium staff and game creators, but for everyone who attends. Fleeting moments of magic I know I will always treasure. – *Kevin*

Making an impact

By Rex Barkdoll, Gamer and Web Developer

One of the things that has become a recurring theme for me as I've grown up is looking at both my own life and the lives of others through the lens of the impact we make on the world around us. Erick was a person that I never met, but is someone I've used as a guidepost since the day I learned about him.

I was first introduced to Palladium Books' games when I was thirteen. They immediately struck me as the most fantastical worlds full of everything an imaginative mind could want to explore. They resonated deeply with me and I quickly began saving every dollar I could to buy the next book that caught my interest. I would wait excitedly for each order to come in the mail and then devour their content from cover to cover. After a number of years, my collection had grown fairly large and I was only buying books that caught my fancy. Even so, we had a local used bookstore that would wind up with a few older Palladium titles from someone who was slowly liquidating their collection. It was on one of these trips to support a local business that I stumbled into the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® And Other Strangeness RPG** and **After the Bomb®** series.

They reminded me of the lighter side of role-playing games – their covers brought to life the crazy antics of the mutant animals inside. While Palladium was getting into the more serious storylines in **Rifts®**, **Splicers®**, and **Dead Reign®**, the **After the Bomb®** game line reminded me that there was a completely different flip side of the coin I had forgotten about. While the world needed saving from the horrors in the dark, there were also a lot of fun adventures to be had in worlds filled with animals who fit right into B-film stereotypes (for example: *Jimmy the Rat* in a mafia suit and tommy gun). I had a lot of fun pulling the craziest stunts I could think of with my gaming group, but the value of the games truly redoubled when I attended a Palladium Open House and got to hear Kevin talk about the development of the **TMNT®** and **After the Bomb®** settings.

In short, Palladium had acquired the rights to make a TMNT role-playing game and someone had put together a system and sketched out what the setting might be like, but it felt rather limited and didn't fit well with the rest of Palladium's philosophy of "Imagination Unleashed." At its conception, the game was only geared for players to either be a Ninja Turtle or a human friend of the Turtles, but it just wasn't big enough, and for a while, everyone was stumped on how to really bring it to life.

One day, Erick walks in and says, "Kevin, I've been thinking about your idea of being able to play any kind of mutant animal, not just the Turtles and the comic book characters. What if you could be any kind of animal, from a mouse or a chicken to a lion or an elephant? And I know how you can do it." And suddenly, like a firework, ideas started going off around the office on all kinds of new possibilities and ideas. Erick hadn't been asked to work on the book, but his imagination wouldn't let him let go of

that idea. At first he offered only to write the mutant animal creation rules, but the next thing you know, Erick was penning the entire book. But it was that idea and that moment which sparked the **TMNT® RPG** and **After the Bomb®** settings we know and love.

Palladium's games have impacted the lives of millions. How many of us have had a better day by thinking about some crazy stunt to pull, being excited about a new character or campaign, or by remembering daring adventures with friends? How many of us have had our own imaginations sparked by the ideas in these books?

I am often working on a project, solving a problem, or hitting a brick wall mentally and my mind will wander back to learning about Erick just thinking differently, thinking bigger, and pushing the envelope – and I ask myself, am I doing the same thing? If I'm not, how can I think bigger, better, and do more for others?

Erick's ripples are going to keep affecting people for generations to come. The farther the ripples go out, the harder the source is going to be to see, but at least I know that every time I want to make a bigger impact or think differently, there's going to be a part of my thought process that is directly linked to something cool Erick did. I'm glad I'm part of his legacy.

Sheer Awesomeness

By Quinn Johnson, Writer and Video Game Designer

Like every other kid growing up in the 80s and 90s, I passionately loved the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles®**. I had been introduced to the world of the TMNT by the cartoon, and ate it up. But one fateful weekend, my older brother had some friends over for a sleepover and one of them brought over the black-and-white gamebook **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® & Other Strangeness** by Erick Wujcik.

My mind was completely blown. Based on the original underground comics by *Kevin Eastman* and *Peter Laird*, these were the coolest, toughest, most visually-striking Turtles I had ever seen. As I later got the book for myself and pored over every incredible illustration by Eastman and Laird and ravenously studied every story scenario and character description written by Erick, my love for **TMNT®** just exploded. Here were Turtles who were not only gritty and deadly warriors, but characters with deep personalities and personal flaws.

Wujcik's gamebook introduced me to the original *Mirage Studio* comics, which became a huge influence on my own writing style as a professional comics writer as I worked to create characters and action that paid homage to the Turtles stories that had so deeply affected me. Add to that the awesome ability in **Strangeness** to become scores of other mutant animals like bats, lizards and wolves, and story scenarios including run-ins with the heroic Sparrow-Eagles, a hostage situation masterminded by psionically-enhanced mutant farm animals, and a shadowy ninja clan led by the mysterious "Black One," and it was a game that I still treasure today for its sheer awesomeness.

A Siembieda Note: The Sparrow-Eagles were characters created by one of Erick's play-test groups. Quinn Johnson is a comic book writer (*TMNT*, *Kung Fu Panda*, *Elders of the RuneStone*) and Video Game Designer and Story Developer (*Disney Infinity*, *Deep Root Pinball*).

Living in the moment

By Brandon Aten, Gamer, G.M., Writer, Publisher

Like many Palladium fans in the 80's and 90's, I cut my teeth on **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® and Other Strangeness**. It was the first role-playing game I ever played, and one of the first I ever purchased. I still remember my first character, a wolverine based on the art for the animal type in the book. It was a completely new and refreshing gaming experience from anything I had ever done before, and I just couldn't get enough. My friends and I would play on road trips, at school, at church events, and basically anywhere we could find some free time. The characters and setting we all knew from the cartoon were now ours to control, but more importantly, we could create our own characters and tell our own sweeping stories and adventures.

That single book sent me down a rabbit hole into a world of gaming that has become such an instrumental part of my life. It opened up my eyes to other games like **Palladium Fantasy®**, **D&D®**, and **Rifts®**, and introduced me to anime through games like **Robotech®** and **Macross II®**.

I was enthralled by the talent and skill of these creators and world builders *Erick Wujcik* and *Kevin Siembieda* who could take any idea, "gamify" it and make you want to spend countless hours playing a game about it. Even when my gaming groups would fall apart and I wouldn't have anyone to play with for months on end, I always tracked down the newest releases wherever I could find them just so I could pore over every single word they wrote.

Years later, after doing a couple internships and volunteer stints with the company, I learned I was going to be able to meet **Erick Wujcik** at an upcoming Palladium Open House. I had known Kevin for a while by this point, and heard tons of stories about how awesome of a guy Erick was. This did nothing but add fuel to the fire of my excitement to meet him. When I finally did, I found Erick to be one of the most down to earth and genuine people I had ever met. We chatted casually throughout the event, as I was unsurprisingly not the only person who wanted to meet one of the creators of games many of us had spent a lifetime playing.

At one point, Erick pulled me aside and wanted to talk privately, and as a young writer and game designer, I was star-struck. To this day I can tell you where we were standing, what he was wearing, how long we spoke and all kinds of details. Here's the thing, though: Whereas I know all of these completely mundane details, I cannot for the life of me tell you what we talked about. I mean, I know he asked me certain questions about where I saw the industry going and we discussed some thoughts on gaming with kids and people brand new to RPGs, but here was ERICK WUJCIK and he proceeded to tell me all about a game design he had specific to that demographic ... and I don't remember a word of it.

This is my biggest regret in my professional career. I don't know if I was just stunned. I don't know if I thought he was actively developing the idea. I don't know if he wanted to get feedback from a fresh perspective. All I know is Erick spoke with me about a design, a moment where I should have been soaking up information like a sponge, taking notes, or recording (pre-smartphone), and I don't remember a word he said. I can't tell you how many times I've wondered how much Erick knew about his cancer at that point and was maybe trying to get that idea out there, or if he was just trying to give a young writer some inspiration for the future. It has always haunted me and something that I've aspired to never relive.

(A Siembieda Note: I can answer that for you, Brandon. Erick had no idea he had cancer at that point. If only he had, it might have saved his life. Instead, he felt great and was happy to be losing weight [he didn't know that was the cancer] and happy at his new job. Life was big and rich and endless at that moment in time. Erick and I loved talking to young, aspiring creators, and I had sung your praises, so I'm sure he was looking for your thoughts and opinions while sharing some of his own ideas. – Kevin Siembieda)

To this day, I try to talk with as many gamers and designers as possible, but especially those who have been around the industry. Their knowledge is invaluable. Though, for me now, this goes beyond game design. I speak to Kevin regularly, though admittedly not as much as I should, but when I do, I know that I'll at least remember what we discuss. I talk to him about games I'm working on, artists I work with, publishing insights, writing tips, and pretty much everything under the sun. We talk about family, personal joys and struggles, and just how crazy life can be sometimes.

Erick Wujcik inspired me to be a creator myself. I now own my own gaming company and have a number of titles I've worked on as a creator, designer or freelance writer. More importantly though, he taught me to live in the moment. Be present for those you love and care for. Take a moment to talk with people who might look up to you. Help motivate those who might need a nudge to take a step they might not have the courage to take themselves, and finally to learn from those who inspire you, so you can go on and be an inspiration to others.

My lasting impression of Erick Wujcik

By Glen A. Evans, Palladium Freelance Writer

I met the late, great *Erick Wujcik* at the Palladium Open House in 2007. My initial impression, he was the epitome of a gamer, yet he radiated this guru of wisdom.

At one point, while he was signing my copy **Dragons & Gods™**, I asked him about an issue that had been bothering me for a long time. “How did you create the stats for the **Ninja Turtles®**, because looking at them in the TMNT sourcebook and based on the rules you made for creating mutant animals, it's not possible to generate enough Bio-E points for them to exist as they're written?”

His response, “Eh, I made them up.”

Now my mouth is hanging open when he said this. My response was something like, “So when you're creating NPCs in a game in which you just provided the reader an account as to what the rules are, you just broke the rules to create those characters?”

His response was, “Hey, they're the Ninja Turtles, so they have to be bad ass for the game.”

I took a quick ten seconds to process this and I said, “So the narrative you're telling trumps the rules?”

Erick replied, “All the time.”

Now I suspect there are some people out there (and not just rules lawyers) who are appalled at Erick's admission and comment. That he “cheated” to create those characters. I didn't ask him if he bothered “rolling their stats up with actual dice” because at that moment, I realized there was a greater truth to his comment, *story triumphs over rules*.

At no point does he advocate tossing out all the rules, otherwise why buy the game in the first place? However, you as a writ-

er or Game Master can *bend* the rules in a way that allows you to tell the narrative in the way you want, in order to acquire the necessary game play you want out of your players and to make the world you're trying to create.

Think about it. The game is called **TMNT® & Other Strangeness**. It would be pathetic if the main NPCs of the game were pushovers. Therefore, I believe that “fudging” rules as the Game Master is okay in order to get what you want if it creates a superior gaming experience.

I'm not talking about rolling the dice and telling your players you rolled a 19 when you actually rolled a three. I'm talking about when you're creating your adventure/campaign. Suppose in the narrative, the bad guy pops out of a trapdoor and surprises the characters because they fail to spot the secret door. Now in regular game play, you could have the trapdoor spring open and the characters roll for their surprise attack, and the dice betray your little trap and give you strike rolls of 5, 2, and 8. Well, that's very anti-climatic. Therefore, to ensure “something” bad happens, written into the story could be pre-determined die rolls of 15, 16, and 18.

Now the player characters have to dodge or they get shot or clobbered or captured. Maybe a character with a Natural Armor Rating pushes one of the weaker characters out of the way. Maybe one of the characters with Sixth Sense will suspect something, but even with a +3 bonus to dodge, there's still a chance he gets hit. That's exciting and provokes an exciting response.

I'm not advocating you as the G.M. “predetermine” or “plot train” the future for your players or every moment. But I am advocating that you at least control the narrative with some rule bending to uphold tension and danger and make a great story. Some may say rules are meant to be broken, but I prefer just a slight bending and twisting. The last thing you want to do is give your players a cakewalk adventure, or kill them off. Regardless of what level their characters might be, they should feel challenged and have fun.

What Erick also said about falsifying the Turtle stats without making them completely comply to rules he wrote in the first place, has also served as a foundation for how I create lots of things in my games, whether it's a monster, hero NPC, or whatever. That bit of insight has stayed with me and helped contribute to my improvements as a Game Master and a writer.

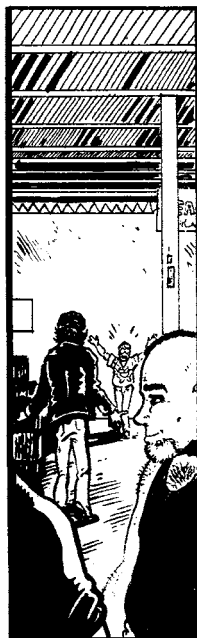
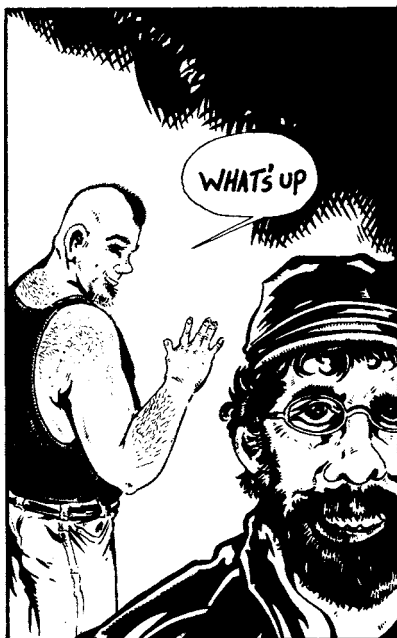
All of this, I gained within two or three minutes of talking with the man. That's it. To me that is so extraordinary. I spend two or three minutes with the guy and walk away with a bit of wisdom that I carry on to this very day. I can only speculate what it was like spending hours or days with a guy with such an insightful imagination. I shall always remember that brief encounter.

When writing **Bizantium and the Northern Islands™** I wanted to retain much of original foundation that Erick created when he wrote about Bizantium in the Palladium Fantasy sourcebook **Adventures on the High Seas™**, and I hope he would have been pleased that I caught on to the tiny hints he made in **Dragons and Gods™** in regard to the Northern Gods.


When I think back about that two or three minute conversation there is so much more I want to ask him. More than I thought possible back then. Yet all I can do is draw upon that moment and see what other useful tidbits of info I can extract from it. You'd be surprised how much there is to learn from a simple chance encounter.

I Recall it
was in 2007
at the Palladium
Books OPEN House.
This was on
Thursday before
the first day.

Me, Jason Richards
and Sinsapaugh were
hanging out by the
warehouse door
then this guy
walks in and says
hello to us.



Turns out it was
ERICK WUJCIK
and that was the
time I met him.
- Nick ^{THE BRICK} BRADSHAW



Remembering Erick Wujcik

By Allen Stroud, Writer and Video Game Developer

When I first started role-playing, I began like many people my age, with *Dungeons and Dragons*, specifically, *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* 1st and 2nd Edition. After tiring of its limitations, I started looking for something a little different. It was then that I found the *Amber Diceless Roleplaying Game*.

Strangely, it was Erick Wujcik's elegantly designed game that introduced me to Roger Zelazny's fantasy fiction world on which it was based.

When I first read how Amber worked, letting players bid for attributes and ranking them in relation to the other players, working out who was the strongest, the fastest, the greatest warrior, etc., my mind was blown. Wujcik's simple approach to capturing the essence of Zelazny's work revealed to me, a teenage Games Master with aspirations to write my own games, the boiled down priority of rules design – creating player characters and giving them a means of measuring their effect on the game world.

Later, I experienced more of Wujcik's work, playing **Rifts® China One** and **After the Bomb®**. All three of these creations helped me think about rules and campaign material in a different way. Instead of trying to write a perfect set of rules, I realized rules have to be a part of the fiction and that they are an expression of that fiction, drawing players into the imagined world they want to be a part of.

These days, I write a fair amount of fiction and lore, whilst contributing to the rules design on a selection of computer games, board games, role-playing games and live role-playing games. Wujcik's ideas have stayed with me, and ensured I always think about the player experience when I make a game.

Ninjas, Fun & Adventure

By Matt Reed, Freelance Writer, Gamer and Podcaster

I never got to meet Mr. Wujcik myself, I had only heard of him secondhand. He was a bit of a mysterious figure, a gentle, creative soul that could make anything better by simply listening to any particular pitch, and bouncing off of that. I could see that creativity and lateral thinking present itself in one of the very first game systems I had ever played from Palladium, **Ninjas and Superspies™**.

The Guides to the Megaverse podcast played **Ninjas and Superspies™** for almost three years solid, every other week, as a group of skilled investigators, gizmoteers, and agents who sought to undermine the complex power structures of a world-spanning organization. Oh how we leapt off of roofs, dove for cover, fired blindly, and learned the intricacies of advanced hand-to-hand combat. Why, one of my fondest memories of gaming was in that setting, where I had to fight a Russian kickboxer aboard a torn apart train that carried a nuclear weapon towards Denver. I kicked him in the stomach, and pulled the trigger on my bootgun, and stamped out the resulting fire in my shoe as I screamed, "I can't believe that worked!"

Only now do I see the amount of research he put into the game and its myriad of martial art forms, in order to bring the high-octane game of **Ninjas and Superspies™** to life. I've said several times now that it was *Erick Wujcik* who was the designer that inspired me to start writing. I will never be able to follow in his footsteps, since the footprints of greatness are far too deep

to repeat, but I have tried to emulate his mindset of wonder in the items I have written. I even hunted down posts of his on the Palladium Forums, just to get a better insight into his mind, not to mention that I have a photo of him next to my workspace as a reminder of how I should approach matters.

Erick Wujcik had been such a positive memory in my gaming career, and those thoughts and ideals he had held dear, they still live in the games of Palladium, and may they do so forevermore.

Ninjas and Aliens

Ryan McDaniel, Gamer and Video Game Developer

I first met Erick Wujcik in my imagination. I had just read through the rules for **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® & Other Strangeness** at my friend's place and we were going to make our first characters to run in the adventure in the book. This was in 1986 and my 7th grader self was enamored with his heroes and the way I could create my mutant tiger just the way I wanted to (even if he had to be smaller than I had hoped to get all the cool features with my BIO-E). In my mind this guy must have looked just like an older version of me (because I was the coolest kid I knew), but with an awesome beard and mustache. I met him again in High School when we started playing **Heroes Unlimited** with **Ninjas and Superspies**. A friend of ours (the G.M.) was a martial arts aficionado himself and there was no better game to represent the martial arts than *N&S*. Now in my brain, Erick had kind of transformed into some Eastern Monk – think Bruce Lee combined with the Dalai Lama. This was the image that would stick with me for years.

Then I actually got to meet Erick in real life. We were at the *2007 Palladium Open House* and Erick was there. He was doing panel talks and even running games! I sat in on a panel and discovered that Erick was not what I had pictured in my head. Tall, thin, with wire framed glasses and a beard and mustache that somehow looked neat and unkempt all at the same time. It was great hearing him and Kevin chat back and forth on a variety of things and gleaning a bit of fan boy wisdom from them in the process.

Saturday I got to game with him as my Game Master in an amazing sounding *HU/N&S* game. So I got to the table as soon as my other game finished and sat down, pulling out my copy of *N&S* to have him sign. Erick got there right after I did and sat down and started chatting with me. I don't remember all the details, but we quickly started talking about his travels around the world and his time in Asia and how it affected him and his views on basically everything.

It was great hearing him recount time in China and thoughts on game design. As some other people started to show up, we switched gears to the game and he asked us what characters we brought with us to play. That was a big switch for all of us, as no one had prepared characters, so we started to randomly roll some PCs up. I ended up with an alien martial artist with Particle Beam blasts and since I was done first, Erick had me help out the other players with their characters too. It was fun watching Erick enjoy the process of everyone creating their characters and then listening as he seamlessly weaved this disparate group of misfits into a Chinatown nightclub and the ensuing cinematic battle that took place.

In the span of a few hours of sitting with and gaming with Erick, he showed me how to roll with the punches, adapt an outline

on the fly, the value of cinema in gaming, and how the players can be in control of the story without the G.M. ever losing control. I saw how his worldly experiences blended in with his gaming universe and how his love of what he did was so easily passed on to people who were total strangers just minutes before. When we left the table he shook my hand and told me to have a good time and that he was glad he had gotten to meet me.

I was honored that he chose to sign my book as “Your Friend, Erick Wujick” and saddened to learn just a short time later of his sudden illness. He was a great person and I am blessed because I was able to have him in my life, even for a short while in person, but he will live on forever in my memory and imagination. And F*CK Cancer, btw.



Mutant Animals and Humanity

By Michael Leonard, Gamer, G.M. and Artist

I had the honor and privilege of meeting Erick Wujcik at the 2007 Palladium Books Open House. I thanked him for how his work influenced my life and he told me that I needed to tell the world, so here it is.

I have Asperger’s Syndrome, which most of you know is a form of highly functional Autism. Because I grew up in the 70’s and 80’s, I went undiagnosed through my formative years. Back then, we were just the nerdy weird kids.

Thanks to my differences, I naturally had difficulty making friends. I was bullied relentlessly throughout Elementary School and into Junior High. To escape, I collected comics, and one of my favorites was the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles®** black and white comic from Mirage Studios. One day I was standing in line at my local comic shop and noticed a book in the dark corner of the store. Even from across the room I was sure that I was seeing the distinct art style of Kevin Eastman, and after a moment, I gave up my place in line to go over and examine it more closely.

Mutant dingos, kangaroos and koala bears with crossbows battled humans and mutant frilled lizards who attacked from dirigibles! Yes, it was Palladium’s **Mutants Down Under™**. I had never seen a role-playing game before, but this was too cool to pass up, so I put back a few comics and bought it on the spot.

After spending a couple of days reading it from cover to cover, two things were clear. One, I wanted more! And two, I had to buy the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® & Other Strangeness RPG** to really use this awesome book. That was the beginning of my collecting all of Palladium’s books.

But there was a problem. These were social games. I had no friends to play with, and social awkwardness was a large part of my life.

Then one day in the school cafeteria, I spotted a copy of **Ninjas & Superspies™** and went over to its owner in excitement, saying, “Do you play? I have all the Palladium RPG books!” He hadn’t played yet but was interested, and after a brief introduction, we started talking. He introduced me to his friends, and before long I was drafted to Game Master my first session of **Palladium Fantasy®** for eight people.

Erick was signing books for other people at the Open House as I explained all of this, but he had invited me to sit with him at the table while he did so, and paid close attention. At this point in the story I paused until he looked at me and then I said, “That guy’s been my friend for 19 years. All of the friends I have I’ve made playing Palladium Books RPGs. I met my wife, the mother of my three kids, when I was running a **Rifts®** game.”

Erick smiled and said, “That’s awesome!”

I said, “Yeah, but here’s the thing. It’s not just the connections I’ve made. When I figured out how to play the games, I realized if I wanted to be good at it, I had to figure out what made people tick. To play a character you have to understand it and I did not understand people at all. So I set about studying normal human behavior, to better mimic it in my games. This led me to build my “facade of normalcy,” which I eventually grew into. RPGs helped me overcome my autism, all thanks to those first RPG books that you wrote.

Erick signed my copy of **Mutants Down Under™**: “For Madman Mike, Thanks!” I was blown away. Here was one of my idols, someone who’s work inspired me to improve my life exponentially, and he was thanking *me!*

“Mike, you need to tell that story to as many people as you can. People need to know the power of gaming.” He gave me a hug and we took this picture. I walked away and cried. It felt like, maybe I had succeeded in getting across just how important he was to me and my life. That I felt I owed literally everything I was and had to Erick and Kevin.

I have been blessed to become a part of the Palladium Books family of freelancers, and I strive to honor Erick’s memory with each project I am a part of. If I can inspire one gamer the way he inspired me, then I will have lived a good life. It is the absolute least I can do.

Opening new worlds

By Eric Grubb, Gamer and Artist

My introduction really to the world of **TMNT®** beyond the cartoon was the RPG game. It was 7th or 8th grade for me, I can’t remember clearly which year it was. I had made a friend early on during 7th grade because of **Robotech**. We had started dabbling with Palladium’s **Robotech® RPG** during that year and eventually Don got a copy of the **TMNT® & Other Strangeness RPG** book. It opened a whole new world to my young brain. I remember also thinking that the author of the book, Erick, had my name. I didn’t really know anyone with any variation of the name Eric that was famous and it sort of blew my mind thinking he was famous and we shared a name. Between the **TMNT® RPG** books and the **After the Bomb®** series, and the work he’d done on **Heroes Unlimited, Rifts®, RECON®,** we played those games nearly every weekend, and sometimes at school, for the next 3

years until I moved away. To this day *Erick Wujcik* is a name I associate just as much with **TMNT®** as I do Eastman and Laird.

I remember when it was announced he was sick, when it was announced he had passed from his cancer. It was a sad day for me. One that my junior high/high school self would have never thought possible for all the fun and imagination his work had made possible for myself and my friends. I've had few regrets in my life, but one of those has been that I never really had a chance to just tell him thank you. It's why now when I get an opportunity to thank someone for having done work that I like, I do my best to make sure I do.

My first exposure to the work of Erick Wujcik almost killed me

By Brett Caron, Gamer and Freelance Writer

Well, almost killed my first *Rifts* character, a level one Headhunter. A group of battle-hardened *Eandroth* rogues got the drop on us in the Chi-Town 'Burbs, and one of Erick's reptilian creations took off my character's arm with a well-placed laser pulse that almost had me rolling up a new character. It was tense, fun, and their unique heat point ability kept us on the back foot during their initial ambush – and left a distinct impression of the weird, eclectic world of **Rifts®** (and especially Erick's personal style). I've never forgotten that early foray into **Rifts®**, and I wouldn't have that memory if it wasn't for Erick Wujcik.

Fast forward 20 years. I played my first game of **Revised RECON®** just a couple of weeks ago with an experienced, history-buff Mission Director who has loved the game since its release. It was one of the most fun role-playing game experiences I've had in a while. Erick's love for the material is apparent on every page, in every random encounter, and in the fluid game design. I can't wait for my next game.

It's fair to say that Erick Wujcik has been a part of my RPG life from the very beginning right up to the present. I have no doubt that I'll continue to encounter his work in my Palladium Books games for years to come. In my little corner of the Megaverse®, his legacy runs strong, and his memory is close at hand.

Erick Wujcik

By Taylor White

I never had the chance to get to know Erick Wujcik. I only met him once at one of the Open Houses. We shook hands, I told him I was a fan of his work, and that was about it. It was probably for the best because I only would have gushed to him about his own books for hours.

The first role-playing game I ever read was **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® and Other Strangeness**. I was in junior high and the very concept was beyond me at the time. A friend at school handed me the book and said we could play the Turtles and I was instantly hooked. More of my RPG obsessions would also be written by Erick.

I mean, have you even read **Transdimnsional TMNT®**? Can I tell you how I used to read **Mystic China** over and over again? Or when **Rifts® China** came out and I sent the group there and they had to fight against the Yama Kings and they became celebrities to the *Geofront* and *Heroes of the Celestial Court* (even though they were unruly bastards)? Erick's writing taught me that



life is about movement, action, energy. When water stays in one place for too long, it becomes stale, stagnant, and a place for demons. I loved Palladium while growing up and Erick Wujcik's ideas and his spin on things were always a step above to me. Although I never got to know him, I feel that his imagination and his passion must have been beyond us all.

Two Things About Erick

By Eric Campion, Gamer

I did not know Erick well, I spoke with him briefly a couple of times at Open Houses and via email. In fact, I still have the last PM he sent me on the Palladium Forums, I cannot bring myself to delete it. I feel as if it is a piece of him that lives on.

There are two things about him that stick out in my mind. First off is his willingness to take the time to assist others. Every time I read something he wrote on forums or listened to him speak at the convention, you could tell he really wanted to make sure he did his best to relay his knowledge. I recall hearing firsthand from others just how fun his games were to play in, and I do regret never getting the chance to play in one, however, I can make use of his writings in various Palladium products to continue to enhance my games. As someone who also has an interest in Chinese history, I particularly enjoy the **Rifts® China 1** and **2** books.

Second, I could tell he enjoyed life. Hell, even when he knew his cancer was terminal and was going through chemo, he kept on living. He had written me to let me know that he was happy to

be feeling better after a couple rounds of chemo so he could make more travel plans. Instead of languishing, he was out enjoying the last bit of time he had, as bittersweet as it must have been. He made rounds about the RPG circuit, saw his family and friends, and even snagged some awards. I hope I could do the same if I were ever in his situation.

He will be missed, and I think the best way to honor him is to enjoy his games and remember the good times he gave.



Flights of Imagination

By Paula Layton Leasure Blumm, Gamer and Friend

I met Erick in 1968. We had both joined the *Wayne Third Foundation*, a science fiction fan club at *Wayne State University* in Detroit where we were both freshmen. Erick would walk me to the bus stop on Warren after the meetings and wait with me until the bus came, kiss me goodbye, then go and catch his own bus home. In later years, he liked to introduce me as the first girl he ever kissed. We soon found other romantic interests, but we remained very close friends.

In college, the Wayne Third Foundation was the center of our social lives. In the 1960s and 70s, being a nerd was an invitation to be mocked, and nothing said nerd like being a science fiction fan. When you found people who you could actually talk to about the books that made you think, and who would go with you on flights of imagination, you stuck with them. So we were an exceptionally close knit group. I am still friends with many of my old Wayne Third friends today. Now Erick was one of us, and like most of us, had some annoying qualities. Erick usually had wonderful manners and was a naturally kind person, but we were teenagers (Erick and I were 17 when we met) and subject to moodiness.

Erick went through a phase around 1970 where he did “social experiments” on us, his friends. For instance, he sent me a note (I still have it) with a newspaper clipping of a girl who looked a lot like me in a skimpy bathing suit, and threatened to tell ev-

eryone about my “secret life.” He just wanted to get a reaction. Before long he had gotten on everyone’s nerves with these “experiments,” and we were fed up. So we decided to turn the tables.

Whenever Erick did something annoying, we would just look at him and mutter “April 23rd.” This went on for weeks. This made Erick nuts, because no one would tell him what April 23rd meant. That was because we had no idea; it was just a phrase that kept him at bay. But as April 23rd approached, we decided that we had to DO SOMETHING.

At this time Erick and *Dan ‘Boom Boom’ LaFlesch* were living behind a small neighborhood store that they ran on the west side of Detroit. On April 23rd, the entire Wayne Third group went over and set up an empty coffin in the living room.

When Erick came in after closing the store, we held a mock funeral for him. Weeping and carrying on, we ceremoniously placed items that Erick loved in the coffin; cans of root beer and tuna, his black leather Greek fisherman’s cap, and favorite sci-fi books. We told stories about Erick and how much we were going to miss him. We very thoroughly ignored the real Erick, who was trying hard to get anyone’s attention. By the end of the evening he just sat on the back of the couch and watched as we held a pretty great wake. We kept up the pretense for several weeks, as Erick came to all our parties, went out to eat with us, hung out in the student union where we had our regular corner. When he said something we would turn to one another and ask if we had felt a cold wind? A shiver? Don’t we miss Erick, even though he could be really mean sometimes? Finally, one by one, we relented and allowed Erick back into the land of the living.

Erick stopped experimenting on us, at least we never noticed anything again. Although I sometimes think that in gaming, he figured out a way to be annoying and controlling in a way that was fun for everyone. Erick, you sly dog!

For many years, Erick ran a Thursday night game. We met at the Detroit Gaming Center 2.0 on Woodward in Ferndale, Michigan, that *Matt Balent*, *Mike Robinson*, and I ran after Erick dropped it because he wanted to concentrate on game creation.

The Thursday game began as an unnamed *Fantasy Role-Playing Variant* according to some old dot matrix copies I have from 1983. I don’t remember that Erick ever gave the system a name, but the world it described became known as **Dragonwright™**. It shared a lot with traditional D&D; attributes, dice, magic spells, armor classes, hit points. It soon went off the rails in typical Wujcik fashion. The gameplay changed over the years, becoming almost entirely diceless. Erick never let dice rolls get in the way of a good story.

Anyone who gamed with Erick will remember his vividly voiced NPCs, and how he would use them to throw pole-axes into a player character’s best laid plans. He loved to force a dilemma onto an established character, to shake things up. For instance, my sort of lawful good, sort of Paladin character Trudy once spent some time in Hell, and only got released by accepting a small, not very bright imp in place of her heart – which remained in Hell. Let the internal conflicts begin!

Erick would bend any rule if he thought that doing so would improve the story. After a few years, I stopped going on Thursdays but the game continued until Erick and Kay left Michigan. Even then, when they were in town, Erick would run the game for anyone who could make it.

The last time we met was in January of 2008, not long before Erick died, at Paul Deckert's house. Erick wanted to wrap things up, and we players wanted to embrace our characters one more time. Twenty some years later, and we all fell effortlessly back into character – *Trudy, Trow, Bolton, Thorn, Alaric, Damien*, comrades all. At some point that evening, Erick said this, and I wrote it into my notes: "Souls are handy little pockets of energy. The universe constantly recycles energy."

Erick had planned a great final scene, a culmination of years and years of campaigning, a fitting end to our adventures. Together we described the destruction of our universe as we all became gods, and then recreated the universe the way we wanted it to be. There we left it.

I was one day older than Erick, which he never tired of reminding me. He liked to give me birthday presents, some of which were better than others. One year he gave me a belt he made of beads woven into a Native American pattern. I still have it. Another year he gave me a large trash can full of what he had cleaned out of his room. I didn't keep that.

My husband and I met through Erick. He invited what he considered a cross section of gamer friends to play-test a game idea he had, called **Aliens Among Us™**. We had a great time, the game was a lot of fun, and we had a few more play-testing sessions.

A couple of years later, John and I got married. Instead of the traditional giving the bride away, I asked *Erick* to walk with me down the aisle.

I worked with Erick a little with the game design, and for obvious sentimental reasons, kept all my notes. The game has never been published, but hey ... I recently showed Kevin my notes, so ... maybe, one day. Nothing says love like blowing up aliens together.

A Note from Kevin Siembieda: Yes, this is *Paula Leasure*, a Palladium Editor for a brief while during the early days of the company. I think her first book was **Palladium Fantasy RPG®, 1st Edition**, or maybe **Weapons and Assassins**. Both came out in 1983 around the same time. And if I think Palladium can do it justice, you might just see the **Aliens Among Us™** game in the future.

My Friend, Erick

By Paul Deckert, Gamer and Life-Long Friend

I was one of the lucky few who got to play-test many of Erick's games. I didn't fully comprehend how much he did until after his death. He had asked me to take care of sorting through his things and to make sure Kay would be ok.

While sorting through the pallets of possessions, I found a tape from his answering machine. When I listened to it, I got a glimpse of how much he had going on. All the different people, from all over the world that were calling, and of course, Kay (Kozora) trying to confirm a lunch. I don't know how he did anything, with the amount of people he maintained contact with. I knew he tried to read a book every day and that he had more game ideas than a dozen men could ever have finished, but on top of that, he maintained contact with *thousands of people!*

For anyone that he didn't call back, just know, he didn't waste a minute. He scheduled naps, listened to books on tape and to

messages on his answering machine while he drove. When he was with you, he paid attention and was genuinely interested in whatever you had to say. He always had the best of intentions but there were so many things going on to sidetrack him! Kevin had to work very hard, to make sure he finished most of what you enjoy today.

Kay Kozora was also a big part of his life. In our Thursday game, she would call and he would answer "Hello, Sweetie." So we started yelling out for her to hear "Hello, Sweetie!" He thought of and did something thoughtful for Kay every day. She had said that she didn't know how she had gotten so lucky to have a man like Erick in her life.

When they gave him weeks to live, Erick first, decided he'd have at least a few months, and made a bucket list of things to do and see that would have taken me years to put together, and what did he do? He kept adding to the list.

I talked to him after he went off chemo. He was happy. He could finally read without falling asleep. One of his great joys was reading. In the end, he went with the two people closest to him in his life next to him (Kay & Sara). The only thing more you could have asked for is time.



A final bit of wisdom from Erick himself

Erick had survived six months longer than the doctors believed humanly possible, but the end was near. Erick had watched it looming closer for a while and was in hospice care surrounded by loved ones in San Francisco. The last time Erick and I spoke on the phone, very shortly before he died, he told me this (I paraphrase, but it's damn close. I will never forget it.):

"Kev, all that matters is joy and the people you love. Hold on to whatever brings you joy and never let it go. That's what's most important in life. In the end, nothing else matters but joy and love."

Amen.

– Kevin Siembieda, co-conspirator in the game of life

The Name Giver

Official Game Master and Player Tips for all settings

Reprinted from *The Rifter*® #1 (1998)

By Erick Wujcik

It isn't just a part of the job, as Game Master, it's what we do. Coming up with names. Rich, meaningful, resonant names. Interesting, quirky, memorable names. Cool, funny names that the players remember. Names that strike fear. Names that inspire awe.

Bucky, James the Timid, Isaac Gump, Urenfogger are all names that don't have much of a charge. They work perfectly for getting the player characters to underestimate the competition. Which shows that names can also be wonderfully misleading, a mask, or another truth-behind-the-truth.

Names for characters. Names for animals, creatures, monsters and bugs, from pet puppies to pet pterodactyls. Names for places, including buildings, towns and cities, geographical oddities, mountains and valleys and deserts and plains, streams and rivers and lakes and oceans, worlds and moons and comets and suns, clusters and galaxies, not to mention all the myriad alternate universes in the Palladium Megaverse.

Names for items, artifacts, foodstuffs, tools, weapons, whole new sciences and technologies. Philosophies, religions, magical systems.

There is really no limit to the number of names that a Game Master needs to invent.

The art of naming is complex.

On the one hand, the more research the better. Coming up with names involves book work, a keen observational eye, and a lot of doodling around with a pencil (better yet, a word processor) trying out different combinations of letters and syllables.

On the other hand, a really good Game Master can whip out names with lightning speed.

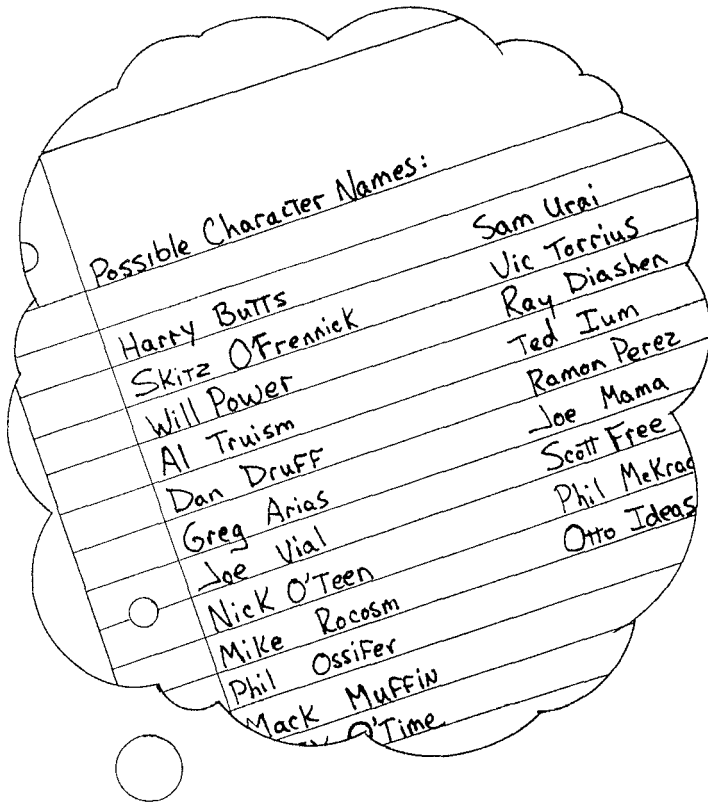
Want a model? Check out the movie "The Usual Suspects." For those of you who haven't seen it, I won't spoil things. Suffice to say, they used one of my favorite tricks for smoothly coming up with a lot of names.

That's one great trick. Here are a whole bunch of others...

Green-Grass Golem-Gash

Try saying it. "Green-Grass Golem-Gash." Do it fast, do it in strange voices, do it with an accent. Sure, you'll trip a few times, but it's not that hard to master a smooth rendition.

Green-Grass Golem-Gash is one of my all-time favorite names. I have no idea where it came from. It was just one of those things that popped into my head when I was trying to fill in a list of magical swords.



Since I had a “Circle of Twelve Mages,” and a “Circle of Twelve Artifacts,” in the early (the first!) Dragonwright Campaign, I thought there ought to be at least twelve interesting magical swords.

I had already come up with a handful of good names. Deathkiss, for example, was planted in the Tombs of Gersidi, a very early adventure in the campaign. Blackbright, a sword that could only be wielded by one who was undead, was another early entry. I sat down and started listing a bunch more. Ironfrost, Victrionix, Righteous Wraith, Bloodseed, and... hmmm... what comes after that?

Green-Grass Golem-Gash.

It sounded funny. It sounded good. It sounded right.

I had no idea of what it would be, what it would do, what purpose it might serve in the campaign. I just liked saying it.

Green-Grass Golem-Gash.

It worked beautifully. It was one of those unforgettable names, and it helped me create a personality for the sword that was unique. After all, if I liked saying “Green-Grass Golem-Gash,” it made sense that the sword itself also liked the sound of its own name, and that every time the sword spoke (which was a lot!), it liked to refer to itself, in the third person.

How do I know it was a successful name?

The only way to judge it is by getting the reactions of the player characters. Do they like the sound of it? Do they refer to it by name? Does the use of the name create a reaction? Green-Grass Golem-Gash was a success by any measure.

By the way, filling out the rest of the list of swords are Mercyblade, Krugenfelder, Dragon-Hewer, Tammarande and Opal’s Eye (no, the group still hasn’t found all these mystical blades). All interesting names. Some names that have become legendary. None as good as Green-Grass Golem-Gash.

Game Master Tip: One of the big advantages of coming up with a list of names, early in a campaign, is to build in a lot of anticipation. No, you don’t need to know what each item does, or even have a clue as to what the item is (for years the group debated the nature of such items as the “Ard of Bright” and the “Il-lonath Bareth”), just come up with the names. When the group found an old ruined temple, complete with the names (and a few tantalizing fragments describing the items), they were really excited to finally have a complete list of all the names of the “Circle of Twelve Artifacts.” It was a big deal. Finding each new item from the list, a task that took over ten years, was always exciting, because the anticipation was so great.

My Big Mistake

If there is one thing I did wrong, back in the early days of creating my various role-playing campaigns, it was taking names from other sources.

Back when I was young and stupid, too often I took the easy way. I stole names from wherever I found ‘em. From books, television, movies, whatever.

That turned out badly in the short run, and in the long run.

Right away, almost instantly, many of the names I used were recognized by the players (who would have suspected that so many upstanding young students would know all the names from an obscure television soap opera?). Whenever the names were recognized I had to put up with either (1) ridicule or (2) criticism.

It was worse later on. First were problems with getting things published (game manufacturers are a tad skittish about printing something bearing a name trademarked by, say, Disney, or Lucasfilm). Too many changes were needed, and I was always afraid that I’d slip up and miss one.

Even more important was the impact on the player characters. Names that I invented, that were my creations, had more of a long-term impact on the campaign. Players took them seriously. Original names had a chance of becoming legendary, at least among my circle of gamers (and really, when it comes down to it, does the opinion of anyone else really matter?).

I can’t emphasize it strongly enough.

Game Masters should create their own names.

Don’t think you are good enough? Work at it. As with any aspect of role-playing and Game Mastering, the more you do it, the more likely it is that you will get better, that you will find yourself with a valuable new skill.

Tools of the Namer

Dice

Using dice to come up with names has the advantage of being fast. However, just as the odds of coming up with a batch of monkeys banging on keyboards is unlikely to generate great literature, so using dice to come up with names is unlikely to produce any really epic name. Back in the old days, when I was in a hurry, I used the following technique.

First, roll a six-sided.

If the result is high (one, two or three), then roll a twelve-sided for the exact letter from the start of the alphabet. In other words, 1 = A, 2 = B, 3 = C, 4 = D, etc.

If the six-sided roll is low (four, five or six), then roll the twelve-sided and start in the middle of the alphabet, where 1 = M, 2 = N, 3 = O, 4 = P, and so on.

Not a perfect system, since it leaves out W, X, Y, Z, but I found that I tended to make too many names starting with X or Z anyway.

Since you need more vowels than consonants, alternate rolling a six-sided where 1 = A, 2 = E, 3 = I, 4 = O, 5 = U, and 6 = Y.

The good thing about rolling up names like this is that it is fast. Whenever the group would meet a new non-player character, or hear about a monster, or come into a town, I could come up with plenty of odd-sounding names.

The not-so-good thing about this system is that most of the names were garbage.

Oh, they were okay for an hour or two. It’s just that almost none of them stuck. None of the names turned into the names that the players would use when telling their war stories.

That’s not to say that I don’t use the dice anymore. Far from it. I’m always grabbing for the dice when I’m stuck for a name. Now, however, I only roll one letter, just as a starting place. Then I roll it around in my mind, seeing what kind of possibilities my imagination can generate.

Reference Books

While dice have their place, the main tool of a good name giver is a good library. Of course, make use of your local public

or school library. It's also a good idea to start putting together your own set of good reference books.

No, I'm not talking about spending money. A lot of my best volumes on naming were freebies.

One of the nice things about the books that come in handy for name reference is that they are mostly worthless. For libraries, bookstores and most book-owning people, it is important to have the latest, most accurate, most up-to-date version of a dictionary, encyclopedia, or any other reference book.

As someone looking for good names, new isn't necessarily better. In fact, some of the very best books are old. Obsolete, even.

For example, just last week, as I was preparing for the writing of this article, I stopped by a local used bookstore. There, sitting on the "free" shelves (ask, most used bookstores have a batch of books that they are eager to give away), was an old "Winston Simplified Dictionary," inscribed with "Kermit Jacobs – Nov 18 1920." Heavily defaced (by Kermit, or by later generations of Jacobs, I don't know), filled with graffiti, and otherwise pretty damaged (I don't know how, but somebody drilled a small hole all the way from the front cover to page 49, centering on the word "bathe"), this is still a handy book for any Game Master.

Oddly enough, the older the better. Why spend the big bucks on a brand new dictionary when it will be out of date in a year or two (in case you haven't noticed, our language is changing all the time; what with the internet, et al, even the rate of change is accelerating). Old dictionaries are better, partly because they are cheap (somewhere in your area is a scuzzy used bookstore, where there are piles of big old dictionaries, selling for something less than ten cents a pound). When it comes to dictionaries, I recommend getting one of the really big suckers, filled with all kinds of obscure words.

Speaking of obscure words, sometimes "real" words work very well as names. An example from the Dragonwright Campaign is "Heresiarch," defined as a messiah who preaches heresy. One of the players happily accepted the title of "Heresiarch" and used it for quite some time before he happened to find it in a dictionary.

Another category of free, or really cheap books, are old foreign language books. Scan through a French-English dictionary, or a textbook on Chinese, and you'll come up with plenty of odd sounding words.

One of my favorite tricks is using a foreign dictionary, and looking up a word that might be some kind of clue. For example, I see "betray" is "trahir," and "betrayal" is "trahison" in French. I wonder how many players might figure out that there is something wrong with "Trahir Trahison," the new sword they've hired?

Another good source for names is, no big surprise, name books. Again, check around the used bookstores. You'll find a surprising number of books on names. Among the cheapest, and also the most useful, are "baby naming books" (also ask your older relatives), which contain the names and meanings of hundreds of first names.

I paid real money for a copy of *The Writer's Digest Character Naming Sourcebook* by Sherrilyn Kenyon, *Writer's Digest Books, 1994*. It's pretty handy, especially if you need a name associated with a particular language, since it contains thirty-five different name lists, each divided in female and male sections. I haven't used them yet, but I never know when I'll need a list of

"Arthurian Legend Names," or names based on Native American or Teutonic languages.

Final stop on our list of good reference books is a volume that you may already have. It's called a telephone book. Especially when it comes to creating contemporary names, it is a great resource. Don't just take the names as they are. Either mix them up, matching different first and last names, or use the names as inspiration to create your own strange variations. Of course today there are online listings and name generators that can be of tremendous help.

Game Master Tip: Combining dice with books is another cool way to come up with names quickly. Take a quick peek at the total number of pages in a book. My 1945 *Japanese-English Dictionary of Sea Terms* by Lt-Cdr. C. Ozaki (another free book!) has 731 pages of dictionary. To generate a name I start by rolling an eight-sided, for the hundreds, and then a set of percentile dice. So a roll of 4 on the D8, and a roll of 51 on the percentile takes me to page 351 (round down on the D8, so you don't miss the first ninety-nine pages). Once there I notice that "Koganfu" means "inshore wind." Depending on what I need at the time I could use "Koganfu," shorten it to "Kogan," or just use the name "Inshore," which also sounds pretty good.

Computer Software

A good Thesaurus is an excellent reference book, but I much prefer the electronic version. I'd be surprised if you had to add a thesaurus on to your computer system, because most good word processors have one built-in. Once you get past the initial learning curve, finding neat names on a computer thesaurus is wicked fast.

For example, let's say the characters meet a character who is wearing a very fancy outfit. I start by looking up the word "fancy," which gives me a long list that includes the word "ornate." That's a possibility, but then I click on "ornate" and get "rococo." Nice sound, rococo. Jimmy Rococo? Andreas Rococo Vaughn? Rococo Zimphere? The possibilities are endless...

You might also want to check out some of the more advanced features of your spell checker. Using mine (I'm still using WordPerfect 5.1 on this machine, which dates from the age of MS-DOS), I can use the asterix character ("*") to do "wild card" searches. For example, if I need a word that ends with "ithian" (because I like the sound of the name "Corinthian" in Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* comics), I enter "*ithian," and get "nabothian" which sounds excellent (oddly enough, I can't find it in my big dictionary, so I guess I'll have to make a trip to the library)...

Building Original Names

As good as it is to consult reference books, the best names are often those that you invent from scratch. Of course spending a lot of time with dictionaries, breaking down words according to their component parts, and fiddling with the pieces, that's all a necessary part of the process...

Suffixes, Prefixes, & Infixes

Back in the late 1940's, my Aunt Camille received a scholarship to study art in New York City. Just as Camille was about to

leave on the train, her mother, my grandmother, had some kind of bad feeling.

“I’m coming with you,” said my grandmother, and hopped on the train as it pulled out of Detroit. Camille argued, pointing out that the school would take care of everything. Besides, what help could her mother be? Gram spoke fluent Armenian, but broken English, and she was on her way to New York, a city where she had no friends and no family.

Sure enough, when they got to New York, it turned out that Gram was right. Camille had no place to stay, and very little money.

So Gram, my wise grandmother, picked up a copy of the New York City telephone directory. Then she started calling Armenians all over Manhattan. And pretty soon she had set up Camille with all the necessary living arrangements, in a community where she would be looked after and protected.

How?

Simple enough. Most Armenians have a common suffix. That is, most (not quite all, but most), have a last name that ends in “ian.” Evarian, Dekarnikian, Gerarian, Kervorkian, Serafian, and Misralian. Go through any telephone book and, if you avoid the listings for names like “O’Brian,” you’ll find plenty of Armenians.

A lot of nationalities have common *suffixes*, or endings. “Chavez,” “Mendez” and “Vasquez” are clearly hispanic. “Atagnostopoulos,” “Kaloyropoulos” and “Panapolos” are obviously Greek.

A trio of the suffixes I’ve used in the Dragonwright campaign are “-al,” “-ahz” and “-nar.” This helps to identify names like “Ba-al,” “Aprek-nar,” “Muj-ahz” and “Unba-al” as belonging to a particular class of gods and demons, or with the characters who worship those demons and devils.

Prefixes that you might find in the telephone book include “van” and “van der” for Dutch names, “von” for German, and “O” for Irish.

I’ve come up with a bunch of family names, associated with a particular fantasy ruling class, all with the prefix “d’.” So “d’Althin,” “d’Fingal,” and “d’Voren” are all clearly marked.

Just as prefixes are standard chunks attached to the beginnings of names, and suffixes are the pieces stuck on the ends, so *infixes* are bits that go in the middle of a name. This isn’t common in English, but lots of other languages, such as the Philippine language, Tagalog, have all kinds of interesting infixes. For example, adding “le” into the word “valea” (meaning “stupid”), turns it into valelea (“stupidity”) in the Niutao dialect of Tuvaluan in Polynesia.

Take a couple of Niutao infixes, like “fu,” “ka,” and “pu,” add them to some standard English, and you easily generate some cool sounding names.

David can be Dafuvid or Dakavid or Dapuvid. Maryann becomes Mafuryann or Makaryann or Mapuryann.

Also consider the following names; BillyJoe Magee and BetsyJoe Magee, CindyLou and MaryLou and DonnyLou Krammer, EdnaLouise and SaraLouise Smith, not to mention JoeBob and JimBob Kowlowski. “Joe,” “Lou,” “Louise,” and “Bob” are all infixes in these examples.

While coming up with an infix is a bit more difficult, it can also have a certain rhythm when used with a whole batch of related character names.

Stream of Consciousness

So, now that you know about prefixes, suffixes and infixes, here is a detailed example of how they can be used.

My players have grown wary of a group of particularly nasty elves, who combine magic into a form of technology. Among these elves, who aren’t exactly enemies, but who can be quite dangerous, they’ve met characters named Chromatic, Necrophon, and Styolite.

Back when I first came up with the elves, I tried to make all the names sound vaguely technological. They do, to my ear. When I want to come up with another one of their group, when I need another name, I usually just try to take some contemporary technological term, and warp it.

So, “Prosak” could be “Prosakton” or “Sakrapon” or “Orsopak.”

How?

I start with “Prosak.”

Then add components of the names of the elves we’ve already met. Chromatic, Necrophon and Styolite. The suffixes would be “tic,” “phon” and “ite.” (I’ll leave it as an exercise to the reader to work out the prefixes and infixes.)

Adding extra sounds on the end, I could get Prosakton, Prosa-kic, Prosakite. Prosakton, of these three possibilities, just sounds better.

In this case, putting extra sounds at the start just doesn’t seem right.

Break it into “Pro” and “Sak.” One prefix, one suffix.

First, just switch ‘em around.

Sakpro?

Not enough of a name, I think.

Sakpronc? Maybe.

Sakprotic? No way.

Sakpropon? Okay, at least it sounds like a name. It’s just that “propon” is sort of hard to say. Too easy to twist up the tongue. “Sakropon” is better. “Sakrapon” is better yet, since it seems to lend itself to an interesting pronunciation; “Sa-KRA-pon.”

So how did I end up with “Orsopak?”

More switching around. “Pro” backwards is “Orp,” but “Orp” sounds dumb. “Or” isn’t too bad... If it started with “Or,” then what?

Orpak” Naw. Too short.

Orpropak? Hmm...

Orcropak? Ormapak? Oryopak?

I just kept messing around, putting in different sounds.

Until I came up with Orsopak.

It sounds good to my ear. I can say it out loud. It seems to fit in with the others, Chromatic and Orsopak, Orsopak and Necrophon, Styolite and Orsopak.

In other words, I just keep messing around until I come up with something that sounds right.

Magic Names

Playing around with suffixes, foreign dictionaries and software tools are all okay, but the real art of naming is finding a name that fits.

It isn’t science, or technique. There is no trick to this.

Finding just the right name is more a matter of instinct. It’s an art. Like all art, it’s impossible to explain. The best I can do

is come up with examples. Here are some of the best names I've invented.

Vagrant and Reaper.

In a conventional sense they aren't even "names." They are words that you might find in a dictionary. However, as names they have worked brilliantly.

Both are from my original *Amber Diceless Role-Playing™* campaign. In the case of "Reaper," I was looking for the name that would describe the father of several of the player characters. He wasn't going to be a nice guy (you probably figured that out, just by the name). More, he was going to be downright nuts. And I very much wanted the players to fear him. I'm happy to say that I succeeded. Even now, years after one of the player characters cut off his head, the name "Reaper" still inspires fear and dread in the players.

As for "Vagrant," I was looking for a name for one of the important figures in the Courts of Chaos (a kingdom of powerful demons and shape-shifters). As an assistant to the royal family I came up with a title, "High Lord of Protocol." He would be big and powerful, with incredible political clout. Someone who could intimidate with words alone. Someone who would always know exactly the right etiquette and proprieties in every situation. I pictured a huge demonic figure, covered in glittering green and black scales, wearing... nothing but a tuxedo vest and a black g-string. I have no idea where the name "Vagrant" came from. It seems so counter-intuitive. Yet the juxtaposition of the name "Vagrant" with the campaign's most "proper" figure worked out perfectly.

Doc Feral

When it comes to a character name, this is another of my perfect assignments. For those of you who don't recognize him, Doctor Victor Feral was the main villain created in the original Palladium game, **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles® and Other Strangeness™** (made way back in 1985). Here was a character who believed in putting humans first, and in subjugating mutant animals (i.e., the player characters). He was a delightful combination; a character who was totally upstanding in his dealings with humanity, and completely venal otherwise. Short, sassy, and full of spit, Feral is still a great name...

Haldeman and Napalm

Ask the players in the Dragonwright Campaign about really powerful mages, and you'll likely hear these two names.

Napalm was one of my very first, the holder of the entryway to "Napalm's Dungeon." There is no substance known as "Napalm" in the campaign, but the name is clearly evocative. I don't know if the players ever saw Napalm cast a fireball, but you know they've got to be thinking that he must have something pretty hot up his sleeve.

As you may recall, there was a prominent figure in Nixon's Watergate Scandal named Haldeman. Of course, that Haldeman didn't have exclusive rights to the name, since there are plenty of other Haldemans, famous and otherwise (Joe Haldeman, the author of "The Forever War," is a fine science fiction writer). Still, choosing to name the evil sorcerer in my fantasy campaign "Haldeman," has worked out very, very well. While the name has a modern ring, it works just fine in a Palladium setting.

Left-Side-Wound and Two-Trees

Early in the Dragonwright Campaign, nearly two decades ago, the characters first met up with Kankorin and Emerin (see Palladium's **Monsters & Animals™**). The ritual of being adopted into the tribe had two parts. First, each player character was paired with a young Kankorin and sent out for a ritual combat with an Emerin. The survivors were given tribal Kankorin names. However, the names were to be based on what happened during the ritual combat. The result was that many of the player characters have memorable names to this day. The names weren't really mine, I didn't invent them, but I can take credit for introducing the tradition. Speaking from experience, when a player character has a tribal name based on the wounds they received in a desperate battle, it is a very good name...

Game Master Tip: A couple of years ago, I ended up running a role-playing session with a huge group, along with two other Game Masters. While I had designed the scenario, I wanted to keep it open-ended, and to give the other two Game Masters enough freedom to move with the flow of events, as well as to invent new non-player characters (NPCs) as needed. Still, I wanted it to look organized, from the point of view of the players. Most of the NPCs would be demons, but demons from two very different realms. Rather than hand out a list of names, I came up with a pair of simple rules. One batch of demons were all to have names based on automotive parts, and the other on words for astronomical objects. No, not just "carburetor" or "Venus," but switched around a bit. It worked fine, and it was clear to the player characters that "Anarator" and "Exafold" belonged to one group of demons, while "Evenus" and "Ijupar" were clearly from another. It turned out to be an easy, very quick, way of inventing names (it was easy to segregate the demons according to their names, so a big tough guy might have a name based on "engine block" while a smaller, smarter one's name could be based on "accelerator"), and it was a technique that was invisible to the players.

Now it's your turn ...

I could go on.

Agranin, a major demon, Alstay the Bonestealer, a witch of supernatural proportions, Apnik, a minor demon-sprite, Ayeron the spider god... all the way to Zelerum, a suit of demon armor. All the good names found me, whispered in my ear, and demanded to be used.

All of my role-playing life I've been known as a guy good with names (for example, that little name, "Rifts," that was a good one). I like names, I like naming things, and I even like thinking about how to name things.

It didn't happen overnight. It didn't come naturally. Like just about everyone else, when I first started coming up with names it seemed impossible. As if the people who invented good names were some kind of tricksters.

It turns out that it wasn't magic. For me, for you, for anyone who wants the knack of naming, all it takes is work and practice. And a little imagination...

Game Master Tip: Check out Palladium's **Mystic China™**, for another take on coming up with names.

Thinking Big

Official Game Master advice for all settings

Reprinted from *The Rifter*® #2 (1998)

By Erick Wujcik

Last time around, on the subject of names and naming, I told you about some of my early errors, about how I made the mistake of “borrowing” names instead of inventing ‘em. I mentioned that the names I’d ripped off from books, movies, television, etc., came back to bite me long after they were introduced into my role-playing campaigns.

If you read that and thought, “no problem here, my campaigns never really last,” this column is for you.

This is where I’d like to talk about thinking big, about stretching your imagination, and how that can help you create a role-playing campaign that will last and last.

Bopping back to something else I mentioned back in *The Name Giver* article, you may recall that I described the “Circle of Twelve Mages,” and the “Circle of Twelve Artifacts,” as stuff from the first *Dragonwright*™ Campaign.

Remember, that campaign is now over twenty years old. The same story, the same universe. Heck, we’ve even got some of the same player characters. What is even more amazing is that the *Dragonwright* Campaign was started by a pretty dumb Game Master. As I look back on what kind of Game Master I was twenty years ago, that guy looks pretty clueless. He (the old me) had never run a role-playing campaign of any kind, wasn’t all that good a Game Master, and made a heck of a lot of mistakes.

Yet in one all-too-crucial way, I was a friggin’ genius.

Because I thought big.

Thinking big was a lucky accident, the coincidence of starting in on role-playing and Game Mastering right in the middle of some pretty exciting computer science classes. Back in those days (circa 1978), the latest thing in systems engineering was something called “Top-Down Design.” As applied to computer programming, the idea was to conceptualize the problem, whatever it was, in the most general way possible, and then to break it down into manageable pieces, one level of implementation at a time. That way, in theory, you could start with a really tough job (like designing a computer operating system), break it down into pieces (usually something like input, processing and output), and then break each of those pieces down into even smaller pieces.

For a visual image of “Top-Down” try to picture an organizational chart. You know, the kind with the little boxes and lines, with the “President” at the top level, then the various “Vice Presidents” at the second level, with progressively more little boxes as you go down through the “tree.” And at the bottom of the chart would be the “Workers,” the people who actually performed useful functions.

In computer programming you can use pretty much the same chart, the same visuals. However, instead of the boxes containing the titles of people, each box would describe some function of the computer program.

As I said, at the time I was pretty involved in this whole new way of doing things, because of my computer programming classes.

So it wasn’t much of a leap for me to apply exactly the same technique when it came to building my first big role-playing campaign, the monster that came to be known as “*Dragonwright*.”



Before the Big Ideas Hit

By the time I got around to designing the Dragonwright campaign, I had already built three “dungeons.”

The first one, “KiddieDungeon,” (which was, by the way, Kevin Siembieda’s very first encounter with role-playing), wasn’t much more than a collection of rooms stocked with monsters and treasures. Fun, in a limited way, but with nothing to keep the player characters interested for more than a couple of hours of killing and figuring out puzzles.

By the time I got to my third dungeon, “Napalm’s,” my designs were considerably more complex. There were dozens of levels, thousands of rooms, and whole categories of monsters. Better yet, the dungeon actually made sense (well, not really, but as much sense as you’ll find in most fantasy novels). Different areas of Napalm’s were controlled by the worshippers of competing gods, each charged with protecting various shrines, treasure rooms and artifacts.

Also, Napalm’s was enormous. Using the most detailed graph paper I could find, and a selection of colored pencils to represent all sorts of detail, I wrote up hundreds and hundreds of detailed descriptions. Plus mazes, traps and countless interesting magical items.

It was around that time that I figured out one big problem.

Napalm’s was really too big.

Oh, it was fun. For about half a year people would send their player characters tromping into Napalm’s, happily mapping and exploring, fighting and running, and grabbing all sorts of interesting loot (those happy few who survived—this was back in my days as a “killer” Game Master).

However, it started to become obvious, to me at least, that a lot of the important stuff in Napalm’s was never going to be discovered. It took hours and hours for the players to fight their way in, follow up on a few obscure clues, and then fight their way out.

Also, after a solid six months of work, as the designer, I was nowhere near finishing Napalm’s. Worse, it seemed like the more I built, the less chance there was that of any of the player characters actually finding the cool stuff I was inventing.

In other words, Napalm’s wasn’t all that much fun.

It was around this time that I had my epiphany.

Why, I thought to myself, spend all this time designing dungeon levels, forcing the players to wander around for hours, when I could just put the interesting stuff right in front of them?

My favorite authors didn’t waste pages and pages describing the boring parts. No, they’d just say something like “after two weeks of searching,” or “he crawled for hours,” and then jump right into the good stuff. Why couldn’t I do the same thing?

Instead of forcing the players to march through hallway after hallway, seeking the one real treasure room among the dozens of fakes, I could just skip ahead. Better yet, instead of drawing all those dozens of rooms, I could just concentrate on the fun part, just on designing the one room.

Whew! What a relief!

Right away I started moving stuff around in Napalm’s. Cool stuff from deep inside was moved right into the path of the oncoming player characters.

Suddenly the role-playing got a lot more interesting, and a lot more fun. Plus, it was easier for me...

Thinking Big for the First Time

Napalm’s, as I’ve described it, and in many other ways, was a beautiful learning experience. By trial and error I’d managed to figure out a lot of what made role-playing interesting, and also what could make it deadly dull.

I had learned that people liked following a chain of events, that they were more involved in the experience of the role-playing if they felt like every detail might be part of a bigger picture. In my own particular version of a fantasy world, that meant understanding the politics behind different gods and the religions that worship them (you thought it was a coincidence that I wrote the Gods section of *Dragons & Gods?*).

However, trying to work out all the details in a campaign, in advance, was looking to be a pretty futile exercise.

After all, what was the point of designing a really cool room if no one was likely to find it? Wouldn’t it be better to just design the stuff that was right in front of the player characters?

That was it. That was the trick.

I needed to think big, but I also needed to avoid wasting time on details that weren’t important.

Which brought me back to the scheduling part of the philosophy of Top-Down.

You see, it’s the job of a systems analyst to break apart a big problem, to separate it into manageable chunks, and then to assign the different parts of the problem to different computer programmers. Big projects usually require time scheduling as well, so that different parts are tackled at different times in the development schedule.

That way of looking at things can be translated into role-playing terms.

Think of the player character group as a set of problem solvers. Whatever the point of the overall role-playing campaign, it’s up to the player characters to meet the challenge, and to solve the problem.

Obviously, the player characters aren’t going to be able to solve everything at once, no more than a computer programmer can write an entire operating system in one sitting. They need to tackle the problem one step at a time.

In the case of the Dragonwright Campaign, in order to succeed, the player characters had to collect all the scattered objects that made up the “Circle of Twelve Artifacts.”

Now, since I was thinking big, back when I first created the Dragonwright Campaign, I already knew the purpose of the Circle of Twelve Artifacts (sorry, I can’t include that information here, since my players haven’t figured it out yet). Back then I didn’t even know what the artifacts looked like, what their names might be, or much of anything else.

I just knew that there would have to be a Circle of Twelve Artifacts, that there would be twelve of ‘em (duh!), and that they had all been scattered, hidden, and locked away, thousands of years before the player characters came on the scene.

Since each of the twelve artifacts was of major importance, I figured I’d have to work up, basically, twelve different “quests.” Yes, I had to work up the first one, in detail, pretty carefully, but the others could definitely wait.

So, as the campaign progressed, I gradually filled in more and more of the particulars. About a year after we started, the group

found a structure where all of the twelve artifacts were named and pictured, but that gave me a full year to figure out each of the names. Eventually, over the years, all of the twelve were discovered, and all fell into the hands of the player characters.

This was interesting for the player characters (imagine knowing about a mystic item for ten years, knowing its name, its appearance, and something about what it can do, and then, finally, finally, having the opportunity to get your hands on that very item!).

Even more important, for me as a Game Master, the Top-Down approach gave me a framework, a blueprint upon which I could build a campaign. A campaign that would prove to last for decades.



Thinking Big with Maps

Let's take worlds as an example.

Say you've decided to run a campaign where, for starters anyway, the player characters are going to be dealing with a little town.

You know the kind of place. In *Rifts* it would be a place with a few buildings, a couple of dozen scruffy inhabitants, maybe built on the ruins of an old intersection, where there used to be gas stations, strip malls, and maybe an old motel.

No big deal, just a place where the characters can rest up, have a couple of harmless encounters, maybe set up a bar fight.

Probably, if you're like most Game Masters, you know the town is not all that important. Certainly not worth putting in a lot of work.

After all, knowing the way *Rifts* player characters move around, they'll be there only a short time, they'll squash the place flat, and then they'll be off somewhere else, never to return.

Why waste time and effort on such a nowhere place?

Exactly because the player characters are going to be moving around. Because whatever happens in this little town is really only a set-up for the next big encounter.

One approach would be to start mapping with the town at the center of the map. You could figure out that the Coalition is this

way, and the Federation of Magic is over yonder, and there's a nasty Rift off to the south, and so on...

Then, as the group moves around, you can just fill in the necessary details, always adding to your map in little ways.

Which is actually a good approach.

It's just easier, and more effective, to start out with a big map in the first place.

Start with a world map (don't worry, it's mostly going to be blank). Now sketch in, in rough fashion, the big areas you know you're going want to include in your campaign. The Coalition, Atlantis, etc.

Now focus on the general area where you want to put your little town. Figure out what's in the general area. Add in some interesting details like rivers or mountains. As you get closer to the target area, to the exact location for the town, get more and more specific.

See the difference?

Yes, you can still extend your map, still fill it in as the player characters wander around. The difference is, starting with the big picture, with the big idea, is that you've got a map that is more manageable. It's clear, right from the start, how everything fits together.

In the long run, starting with a global map, with a world map, even if you have very little of it figured out, makes for a better campaign.

Thinking Cosmic Big

So far, so good. If you've paid attention up to this point, you probably realize that designing a world is, in a lot of ways, easier than designing one village at a time, one encounter at a time. Thinking big, at least when it comes to worlds, makes things easier for the Game Master.

Likewise, it makes sense to try to think big in time as well as space. That by building an interesting past, you also leave yourself open for some room to design a complex and interesting campaign.

Now prepare to really let loose.

The idea is to give your imagination full rein, full scope. To kick on your brain's afterburners, and really think big.

Bigger than worlds, bigger than solar systems, bigger than galaxies. Universe big. Cosmic big.

Cosmology big.

According to my big dictionary, cosmology is the branch of science that deals with the philosophy of the origin and structure of the universe, which includes such minutiae as the nature of time and space, the existence of god (or gods), and even stuff like causality (which came first, the chicken or the egg?).

For me, this is the real pay-off of role-playing, and the real kick I get out of Game Mastering. In just about any other creative endeavor, there are limits, boundaries (and budgetary constraints). Not so in our little hobby.

You have the power to decide, in your own pocket universe, exactly how creation happened. Who and what are the gods. You get to decide all the big questions.

Better yet, your universe can consist of many universes. Alternate dimensions (Rifts!), different time lines, realities based on whatever rules you wish to impose or create.

The bigger you think, the better.

The Impact of Age

Official Character Modifiers for the Nightbane® RPG

By Mark Oberle

Introduction

When I first co-wrote the **Nightbane® Survival Guide™**, I envisioned an updated and expanded way to represent the background of a Nightbane character. This, I felt, was especially called for given the expansion of the age range of the Nightbane themselves. Originally, the setting focused primarily on *teenagers* and *twenty-year-olds* adopting their newfound powers and identities in a very bleak fight for their very survival. While much of that motif remains today, the scope of the setting, as well as the characters, has broadened.

As such, the following material is meant to encapsulate as wide a variety of age range and expertise as possible for any given Nightbane. The idea is that younger characters having their first Becoming are skewed more toward their supernatural nature and abilities, while older Nightbane are more educated and skill-driven as well as having more contacts. The average 'Bane would balance between the two. For various reasons, these rules did not make the final cut for publication. They are presented to you here and now as they were submitted to Palladium, as another option for character development and expanded game play.

One final note is that while this rules set is designed for **Nightbane®**, the *Educational Character Class* can easily be adapted to **Heroes Unlimited™**, **Ninjas & Superspies™**, **Dead Reign®**, **BTS™**, or any other setting where a modern educational system exists.

The Becoming

First things first, stay calm.

If you lose your head now, you'll be putting yourself and everyone around you in even more danger than you already are. You've come here seeking advice because you're going through something that defies explanation. You've come here looking for answers to questions like, "What's going on?", "What am I?", and probably even, "Why me?"

Well, I'm sorry to say that even I don't have those answers. Although, you follow the advice I'm about to give you and ya' might live to see the sun rise. Then you can worry about the rest.

– *The Nightbane Survival Guide*

The "Becoming" is the first metamorphosis of a Nightbane and a point of drastic change for everyone who goes through it. The newly forming Nightbane undergoes a radical transformation akin to something from a horror movie, comic book, or role-playing game.

In most cases, they become a living nightmare that can often be a reflection of their own worst fears. For almost all who undergo the Becoming, it evokes feelings of fear and confusion that tend to subside as the initial shock of discovering their supernatural nature wears off. As that happens, more and more questions

arise such as who to tell and how to keep their new identity a secret.

Before Dark Day, most of these fledgling 'Bane would have had an older member of the race to guide them, but the massive influx of new Nightbane in recent times as well as Nightlord interference, has made this practice the exception rather than the rule. Now, most Nightbane are forced to go it alone, join one of the established Factions, or really go out on a limb and create a new group of their own.

Of course, that is only for those lucky enough to undergo their becoming in a safe, secluded place. There are cases of Nightbane undergoing their change in a public place, or more common than that, being discovered by a family member or friend. For these unfortunate souls, there can be serious repercussions for such a sudden (and in some cases, violent) Becoming. Family and friends who wall in on the monster may attack, shoot at and try to killed the "monster" without ever realizing it is their friend or loved one. They see only a horrible monster and their loved one is missing. Worse, the friend(s) or family member(s) witness the Becoming and see their loved one transform into a monster before their very eyes. Many run in terror and confusion, but others fight the "monster" to chase it away or to kill it. Whether they can accept that person as a Nightbane depends on the people and their upbringing. Some can accept the Nightbane and keep his or her secret, others reject and cast them out.

In the absolute worst case scenario for a First Becoming, minions of the Nightlords identify and attack the Nightbane before the newbie is able to learn about his powers or is able to defend himself, much less comprehend what is going on. Such ill fate typically results in the untimely demise of the Nightbane involved, unless he can somehow manage to escape or receives outside aid.

Another factor that can have an even bigger impact on a Nightbane than their location and the people around when they change, is the **age** when they endure their Becoming. While it is true that most Nightbane discover their true nature in their late teens or early twenties, it can theoretically happen at almost any age. The earliest known Becoming took place at the age of eleven, and there have been reports of some enduring the Becoming on Dark Day when they were already in their thirties (although the oldest reported age since then has been only twenty-six). Despite what some might think, there are positive and negative aspects to when undergoes the Becoming.

Young Nightbane

For those that change when young, especially before the age of fifteen, there can be some major difficulties to be faced. First of all, the typical adolescent is not fully developed mentally or physically. Thus, apply the following attribute penalties to all characters under the age of fifteen: -2 to I.Q. (**Writer's Note:**



This is due to the fact that the average adolescent doesn't have as much experience in the "real world" as adults or even older teens. I hated hearing this as I grew up, but it's true.), -2 to M.E. (-4 for males), -3 to M.A., -2 to P.S. (-4 for girls), and -3 to P.P., P.E., and P.B. However, at age 15 these penalties are negated by simply adding the subtracted numbers back to the appropriate attribute.

Another consideration is that the early teenage years can be emotionally turbulent for a "normal" person as is. Throw in waking up looking like an honest-to-goodness monster into the mix, and it is a recipe for chaos. At least those over the age of eighteen can legally leave home should they need to run from those who would hunt them, especially if a parent finds out the truth about their child and turns to the authorities for help or expels the child out of fear. A young Nightbane will not be able to legally get a job or place to stay on their own, which is why many runaway Nightbane end up living on the street, exposing them to many more dangers than just what the Nightlords have to offer. A Nightbane under the age of sixteen will also not even have (and may never get) a legal driver's license, increasing the difficulty of blending into society.

Even if the young 'Bane initially manages to keep their Morphus hidden from those who would not understand, there are still major hurdles to keeping their dual-identity a secret. This is especially the case in school and home life where the teen or college student can be under intense scrutiny from teachers, peers, and family members. It certainly means having to exercise even greater control of their emotions (which, again, is especially difficult for teens) than ever before, as distress of any kind has a chance of triggering a shift from human Facade into their inhuman Nightbane Morphus. This is even more the case for new Nightbane who haven't mastered their Becoming.

With that said, there can be certain advantages to undergoing the change at a younger age. First of all, younger individuals

tend to have a less rigid mindset, so they are more open to the idea of having "supernatural qualities." This means that young Nightbane tend to welcome and adapt to their new abilities faster than their older counterparts, and on average, are less emotionally disturbed about their monstrous Morphus and strange powers. Younger Nightbane also tend to be underestimated in general, giving resourceful youngsters an edge in battle not typically given to their older brethren.

Older Nightbane

For many Nightbane that change in their mid-twenties or older, there are also considerable challenges that may be faced in addition to those of an average 'Bane. First of all, older Nightbane tend to have already made plans for their lives. Things such as a certain career, getting married, starting a family, or long-term financial commitments like buying a house or starting a business. The Becoming has the high potential to force drastic changes in those goals or plans. For instance, how does one justify starting a family if they live in constant fear of their nature putting their loved ones in danger? If they wish to have children (keep in mind that most new Nightbane don't know at first that there is any difference in reproductive capability), will they be "special" too? As far as careers go, what if the Nightbane's hopes had been in public service? That would almost certainly be a bad idea given who is in control of the government and law enforcement.

On average, it is also harder for a person in this age range to adjust psychologically. Not only do you have the aforementioned social problems, but most people also tend to have a fairly stable view of the world when they reach adulthood. The Becoming shatters that world view and any sense of stability, and forces them to deal with a whole new perspective they are not prepared to face.

Needless to say, this can cause some severe mental and emotional instability.

Just as with teen Nightbane, this process is made even more difficult if the Becoming is witnessed by others. Imagine the consequences if a young adult went through their Becoming in front of their spouse or children or mom and dad! In such an instance, the new 'Bane may be forced to completely abandon his or her past life and family, taking on a new identity or even living completely apart from society. The consequences are just as bad if the Becoming happens at work ("Security! Someone call security or the police.") Or while on a crowded bus or subway car.

Luckily, most Becomings are not witnessed, and even when they are, the results may not be catastrophic. In fact, the witness or witnesses may be sympathetic and supportive or amazed and impressed – possibly helping to keep the Nightbane's identity a secret or funneling them information if they go underground – this happens more often than you or most Nightbane might think. Another likely alternative is complete denial of what they witnessed. Denying that they saw anything weird or terrifying, especially if they are offered an explanation that is even slightly more believable than the truth. ("Hey it was just a prank and a costume." Or, "smoke and mirrors." "A hallucinogen in the air or slipped into the food or water supply." And so on.)

Thankfully, even when things do go bad, many Nightbane prove to be extremely resilient and emerge from the circumstances without any severe psychological problems.

Another factor for an older Nightbane is that it seems the actual physical transformation is more difficult. Whereas younger Nightbane report relatively slight discomfort associated with the Becoming (usually in the form of a strong burning, itching, or crawling sensation), older Nightbane undergoing the Becoming can actually feel their bodies resist the transformation. This can cause an excruciating amount of stabbing or searing pain as every cell in the body has a tug-of-war contest to determine whether the Facade or Morphus manifests. Of course, this doesn't seem to happen if the Nightbane shifts in their sleep, leading many to believe that the cause of the discomfort is more mental than physical.

Depending on the Morphus of the individual involved, limbs may contort to odd angles, protrusions, wounds, boils, pus and blood may burst from the skin, steam may rise from the body of the 'Bane, and they may even melt into a puddle of liquefied flesh and organs from which the Morphus forms (all pretty standard fare for a "normal" Becoming). What is worse is that it will be coupled with an erratic pattern of change and the Nightbane writhing in agony or having a seizure. In the worst cases, it is said that the Becoming feels like the body literally tears itself apart to create the new Nightbane identity. This has helped lead to the outlook among some, especially older Nightbane, that Becoming a Nightbane is a curse or affliction akin to lycanthropy or leprosy.

Adapting to Power

Now it's time to lay down the ground rules, and rule number one is to keep your Morphus hidden.

The term "Morphus" refers to your new scary-lookin' new self if you couldn't figure that out. And for most of you it's pretty easy to see why you don't want to parade down Main Street wearing your Morphus form. The easiest way to keep hidden is not to transform in anyone's sight. That way, even if someone spots your ugly mug, it usually won't be traced to your human Facade – unless your Morphus looks enough like your Facade, then it sucks to be you. Another important thing to remember about your Morphus is that it's much stronger than your Facade. If you aren't careful, you can easily wreck stuff or hurt and even kill somebody by accident.

Just like your new form, the new abilities you have also need to be kept under wraps. They're just as supernatural and scary to most normal people as your Morphus, so you shouldn't use 'em in public unless it's life or death. Of course, most times you can't use them without changing into your Morphus, so that complicates things a bit.

When first learning to use your powers, they can also be pretty dangerous to those around you, and sometimes even to yourself. Use discretion and test your powers away from innocent people and prying eyes. You don't wanna burn down the school. Well, maybe you do, but you don't want to burn down Grandma's house.

I recommend finding a secluded spot away from your house or any hangouts you like to frequent, and practice with your Talents along the rail road tracks, or in an abandoned house, or abandoned warehouse or a field or wooded area at night. Even then, you gotta be real careful, as some of those goons who want you dead can sense when Talents are being used and track em' like a bloodhound. Hang around too long in one spot, and you may find yourself surrounded by a pack of demonic critters out for



your blood. I'm not kidding or exaggerating. There are demons hunting you as well as the authorities. And many of the police and such ain't what they seem. They're minions of the Nightlords in human guise ... but I'm getting ahead of myself. Just be damn careful. Don't play the fool or you'll end up dead or worse. Yeah, there are things worse than dyin'.

Also keep in mind that you only have so much energy to funnel into your Talents at a time. Once you are out of this energy ... this ammo ... you're easier prey.

– *The Nightbane Survival Guide*

A Nightbane's Talents can be the deciding factor in a fight against minions of the Nightlords or other foes. These powerful abilities are innate to all Nightbane, but that doesn't mean that a fresh 'Bane has a mastery of these gifts. Just like a newborn baby has to explore its fingers and toes and how it can manipulate them before it can walk, so too must a new Nightbane adjust to the superhuman powers and abilities of the Morphus form. This is represented by the Talents of a Nightbane character growing in power with level as well as the addition of new Talents at certain levels.

The optional rules below allow a Game Master to reflect the initial adjustment phase to the powers and abilities of the Morphus.

You may notice that it is easier to master abilities the younger a person is when they experience the Becoming and change into a Nightbane. This is due to factors such as youngsters tend to be more open-minded and flexible to change, have a less developed sense and fear of mortality/dying, and have a higher amount of free time than adults, as well as typically being more accepting of these new "gifts," even seeing them as exciting. If the Game Master wishes, this adaptation phase may be included in the character history or entirely role-played out. If the G.M. does not want to include the adjustment phase or modifiers in their game, they do not have to. Likewise, if G.M.s wish to modify these tables, they should feel free to do so.

The rules presented here are for those that want to portray what is probably the most uncertain and chaotic time in the life of a Nightbane.

Power Adaptation Modifiers (Ages 11-14)

+1D4x10 starting P.P.E.

+2 bonus to Mental Endurance saving throw for purposes of Becoming speed ONLY at level one (*instead* of the normal +1).

+20% to range and duration of all Talents.

Power Adaptation Modifiers (Ages 15-22)

None, this is the average age range for new Nightbane.

Power Adaptation Modifiers (Ages 23+)

-1D6x10 starting P.P.E. (2D6x10+20 base).

+1 starting spell selection if a mage.

-3 penalty to Mental Endurance saving throw at first level, -2 at second level, and -1 at third level for purposes of Becoming speed ONLY.

At fifth level, these 'Banes start getting their usual +1 bonus for every two levels over one (i.e. +1 at levels 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15).

Also, roll for or choose one of the following side-effects:

01-35%: The Becoming is disorienting, resulting in -3 on all combat rolls for the first melee round after transformation. Reduce this penalty by one every level starting at level two (for no penalty by level four).

36-70%: At first level, the Becoming is physically damaging, reducing the Nightbane's S.D.C./Hit Points by 60% whenever he changes from Facade to Morphus. Decrease this damage by 20% every level starting at level two (until no penalty at level four). Luckily, the rate of healing is unaffected.

71-95%: The 'Bane can not grasp how to properly use Talents, restricting the character to purchasing only one Talent per level of experience (this applies only to those Talents they have to purchase, not automatic abilities) and reduce range and duration by 20% until level three. Also, to successfully use a Talent after first acquiring it, a Mental Endurance saving throw of 12 or higher is needed for it to manifest, include the power adaptation penalty above. A failed roll means the Talent does NOT work! Luckily, no P.P.E. is expended if the Talent fails to manifest. Moreover, after three successful uses of the Talent, an M.E. saving throw is no longer required.

96-00%: Transformation is incomplete! Reduce the usual attribute and S.D.C. bonuses by half until level three. Furthermore, 10% of any damage done to either form transfers to the other upon transformation. This means that if the Nightbane's Morphus form is grievously wounded, changing back might kill the character! Luckily, the healing ability of the Morphus is not affected and any weapons, spells, or powers that specifically target Nightbane are only half as effective on this character (duration, effects, damage, etc.) until level three.

Educational Character Classes

The following skill packages simulate different levels of education that are available to Nightbane characters (as well as others such as Wampyrs) to simulate the education they received **before**, and occasionally even after, *their Becoming*. A player may roll on the table for their character's age level, or be allowed to choose the education that best fits their character.

Also note that each age range modifies the starting number of contacts. For more rules regarding these contacts, refer to pages 21-24 of the **Nightbane® Survival Guide™**.

Young Nightbane

This Nightbane is only 11-14 years old. May have only one low-level contact to start. Minimum Age: 11.

For Random determination roll percentile dice, otherwise select the educational level desired, as described below, and determine skills.

01-25% Street Schooled: Whether a runaway, dropout, or otherwise, this character never obtained a formal education. Instead, they learned what skills they have from their care givers, friends, or the streets.

E.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of one E.C.C. Skill Selection, or Martial Arts at the cost of two.), Language: Native, Streetwise (Wil-

derness Survival if a rural area) with a +10% bonus, I.D. Undercover Agent (+10%), Prowl (+5%), and either W.P. Knife or W.P. Blunt.

E.C.C. Related Skills: At level one, select one Rogue skill, one Technical skill, and four skills of choice from the following Skill Categories, below. Select two additional skills at levels 3 and 6, and one additional skill at levels 9 and 13 from the list below.

Communications: Any Language or Literacy skill (including Sign Language and Lip Reading), and Radio: Basic only.

Domestic: Any except Etiquette (+5%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics only.

Espionage: Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment, and Escape Artist only.

Mechanical: Automotive and Basic Mechanics only.

Medical: First Aid and Holistic Medicine only (-5%).

Military: Find Contraband and Recognize Weapon Quality only. (-5%)

Physical: Any except Acrobatics or S.C.U.B.A. Also unable to take Hand to Hand: Assassin or Commando.

Pilot: Any Boats (except Ships), as well as Automobile, Bicycling (+10%), Horsemanship, Motorcycle (+5%), Tracked & Construction Vehicles.

Pilot Related: None.

Rogue: Any except Computer Hacking, Con-Artistry, Safe Cracking, or Seduction (+5%).

Science: Mathematics: Basic only. However, if involved in drug production/distribution they may have Chemistry: Basic (-10%).

Technical: Any, except for Business & Finance, Computer Programming, Demolitions: Civilian, Excavation, Firefighting, Law: Advanced, Metalworking, Principles of Magic, and Technical Writing. Appraise Goods and Begging get +5%.

W.P.: Any, excluding Heavy Military Weapons.

Wilderness: Any, as long as they are from a rural area. NONE if raised in an urban setting.

Secondary Skills: This character may select three Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, two additional Secondary Skills at levels 4 and 7, and one additional secondary skill at levels 10 and 13.

26-00% Standard Education: This character may be age 15-25 years old, and has had enough schooling to get by, learning most of what they know from their primary education, caregivers, friends or on the street. Minimum Age: 15

E.C.C. Skills: This character starts with Basic Math (+10%), Language: Native, Literacy: Native (+15%), Computer Operations (+10%), one Domestic skill of choice (+15%), and one Technical skill of choice (+10%).

E.C.C. Related Skills: The character may select six other skills from the following list at level one, two additional at levels 2 and 5, and one additional at levels 8 and 12.

Communications: Radio: Basic and TV/Video only.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics or Computer Repair only.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Automotive or Basic Mechanics only.

Medical: First Aid and Holistic Medicine only.

Military: Military History only.

Physical: Any except Hand to Hand Assassin or Commando.

Pilot: Any except Hovercraft, Jet Aircraft, Jet Packs, and any Military piloting skills. (**Note:** just because the character has the proper skill to pilot a vehicle doesn't mean it is *legal* for them to.)

Pilot Related: Navigation only.

Rogue: Any, excluding Computer Hacking, Con-Artistry, Find Contraband, I.D. Undercover Agent, Safe-Cracking, or Seduction.

Science: Biology, Botany, Chemistry: Basic, Mathematics: Basic, and Mathematics: Advanced only.

Technical: Any, except for Business & Finance, Computer Programming, Demolitions: Civilian, Excavation & Rescue, Firefighting, Law: Advanced, Metalworking, Principles of Magic, and Technical Writing. Begging gets +5%.

W.P.: Any, excluding Flamethrowers and Heavy Military Weapons.

Wilderness: Any (+5%) if raised in a rural area. NONE if raised in an urban setting.

Secondary Skills: This character may select three Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, two additional at levels 3 and 6, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 9 and 12.



Average Nightbane

The average Nightbane is 15-22 years old. May start with one mid-level contact or two low-level contacts. Minimum Age: 15.

For Random determination roll percentile dice, otherwise select the educational level desired, as described below.

01-20% Street Schooled: The character either never made it to high school, or dropped out before graduating. Instead, they

learned what skills they have from their care-givers, friends, on the street or elsewhere. It is likely that this character has engaged in some kind of criminal activity at some point or another to survive, though some work two or three jobs and make other sacrifices to avoid turning to crime. Minimum Age: 15.

E.C.C. Skills: Starts with Hand to Hand: Basic (Can be upgraded to Expert at the cost of one E.C.C. Skill Selection, or Martial Arts at the cost of two.), Mathematics: Basic (+5%), Language: Native, Streetwise +15% (Wilderness Survival at +10% and Land Navigation +5% if grew up in a rural area), Prowl (+10%), Pick Locks (+15%), Running, and two W.P.s of choice.

E.C.C. Related Skills: Select six skills from the following list at level one. Select two additional skills at levels 3 and 6, and one additional skill at levels 9 and 13.

Communications: Radio: Basic and TV/Video only.

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics or Computer Repair only.

Espionage: Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment, Escape Artist, and Intelligence only.

Mechanical: Automotive and Basic Mechanics only (+5%).

Medical: First Aid and Holistic Medicine only.

Military: Find Contraband and Recognize Weapon Quality only.

Physical: Any, except Hand to Hand: Assassin or Commando (+5%).

Pilot: Any except Helicopters, Hovercraft, Jet Aircraft, Jet Packs, or any Military piloting skills.

Pilot Related: Sky Diving only.

Rogue: Any except Safe-Cracking and Seduction (+5%).

Science: Botany, Chemistry: Basic, and Mathematics: Basic only.

Technical: Any, except for Demolitions: Civilian, Excavation & Rescue, Firefighting, Law: Advanced, and Writing. Appraise Goods and Begging get +10%.

W.P.: Any, excluding Heavy Military Weapons.

Wilderness: Any (+5%) if raised in a rural area. NONE if raised in an urban setting.

Secondary Skills: This character may select six Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and two additional Secondary Skills at levels 4 and 8.

21-60% Standard Education: This is a “normal” high school student or college freshman with little in the way of “adventuring” skills at the time of their Becoming. Minimum Age: 17.

E.C.C. Skills: This character starts with Basic Math (+10%), Language: Native (+5%), Literacy: Native (+20%), Computer Operations (+15%), one Domestic skill of choice (+15%), and one Electrical, Mechanical, Science, or Technical skill of choice (+10%) limited only by prerequisites and the list below.

E.C.C. Related Skills: The character selects eight other skills from the following list at level one, two additional at levels 2 and 5, and one additional skill at levels 8 and 12.

Communications: Radio: Basic and TV/Video only.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Basic Electronics or Computer Repair only.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Automotive or Basic Mechanics only (+5%).

Medical: First Aid, Holistic Medicine, and Paramedic only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Hand to Hand Assassin or Commando.
Pilot: Any, except Helicopters, Hovercraft, Jet Aircraft, Jet Packs, or any Military piloting skills.

Pilot Related: Any except Read Sensory Equipment and Weapon Systems.

Rogue: Any, though unlikely and excludes Find Contraband, I.D. Undercover Agent, Safe-Cracking, and Seduction.

Science: Any, except Civil Engineer.

Technical: Any, except for Demolitions: Civilian, Excavation & Rescue, and Law: Advanced.

W.P.: Any, excluding Heavy Military Weapons.

Wilderness: Any (+5%) if raised in a rural area. NONE if raised in an urban setting.

Secondary Skills: This character may select six Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and two additional Secondary Skills at levels 4 and 8.

61-80% Associate’s Degree or Vocational Training: The character has received their Associate’s Degree, or the equivalent of two years of college education. Minimum Age: 19-20.

E.C.C. Skills: This character starts with Basic Math (+15%), Language: Native (+5%), Literacy: Native (+25%), Computer Operations (+15%), and three skills of choice (*excluding* Espionage, Military, and W.P.s) with a +15% bonus relating to their field of study (limited only by prerequisites and the list below).

E.C.C. Related Skills: Select nine skills from the following list at level one. Add two additional skills at levels 2 and 5, and one additional at levels 8 and 11.

Communications: Any (+5%).

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Any except Electrical Engineer, +5% to Basic Electronics and Computer Repair only.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Aircraft, Automotive: Basic, and Locksmith only (+10% to Automotive or Basic Mechanics only).

Medical: First Aid, Holistic Medicine, and Paramedic only.

Military: Camouflage and Recognize Weapon Quality only.

Physical: Any.

Pilot: Any except Jet Aircraft, Jet Packs, or any Military piloting skills.

Pilot Related: Any except Weapon Systems.

Rogue: Any, but unlikely.

Science: Any, except Civil Engineer.

Technical: Any.

W.P.: Any, excluding Heavy Military Weapons.

Wilderness: Any (+5% if raised in rural setting).

Secondary Skills: This character may select five Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and two additional Secondary Skills at levels 4 and 8.

81-90% Well Educated with Bachelor’s Degree: This character graduated from a four-year university or similar program, obtaining a Bachelor’s degree in some field. Or has an education that is roughly equivalent. Minimum Age: 21-22.

E.C.C. Skills: This Nightbane starts with Basic Math (+15%), Language: Native (+5%), Literacy: Native (+30%), Computer Operations (+20%), four skills of choice (excluding Espionage, Military, and W.P.s) with a +20% skill bonus relating

to their field of study (limited only by prerequisites and the list below), and either Technical Writing or Mathematics: Advanced.

E.C.C. Related Skills: Select nine skills from the following list at level one. Add two additional skills at levels 2 and 5, and one additional at levels 7 and 10.

Communications: Any (+10%)

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Any. +5% to all but Electrical Engineer.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Any except Vehicle Armorer (+15% to Automotive or Basic Mechanics only).

Medical: Any except Field Surgery (+10% to First Aid, Holistic Medicine, and Paramedic only).

Military: Camouflage and Recognize Weapon Quality only.

Physical: Any (+5 where applicable).

Pilot: Any except Jet Aircraft, Jet Packs, or any Military piloting skills (+5%).

Pilot Related: Any except Weapon Systems (+5%).

Rogue: Any, but unlikely.

Science: Any (+10% to all except Civil Engineer).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Heavy Military Weapons.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: This character may select six Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and two additional Secondary Skills at levels 4 and 8.

91-00% Military/Government Agency Training: If they were educated before Dark Day, this character has been through basic and specialized military training, officer school, or some kind of training program for government agents (FBI, CIA, Law Enforcement, SWAT, or something similar). AFTER Dark Day, such a character is most likely to have been trained by *Spook Squad*, *The Resistance*, or some other *independent paramilitary organization*. **Minimum Age:** 19 for noncommissioned soldiers, 21-22 for officers and government agents.

E.C.C. Skills: This Nightbane starts with Hand to Hand: Expert (can be upgraded to Martial Arts at the cost of one E.C.C. Skill Selection, or Commando at the cost of two.) Mathematics: Basic (+10%), Radio: Basic (+10%), Language: Native (+5%), Literacy: Native (+25%), Computer Operations (+15%), Pilot: one of choice (+15%), and two Modern W.P.s of choice (typically Rifle and Pistol/Handgun, or Rifle and Knife or Blunt).

E.C.C. Related Skills: Select eight skills from the following list at level one. Add two additional skills at levels 2 and 5, and one additional at levels 8 and 11.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Domestic: Any, but unlikely.

Electrical: Any. +5% to all but Electrical Engineer.

Espionage: Any (+10%).

Mechanical: Any. +5% to all but Mechanical Engineer and Weapons Engineer.

Medical: Any. +10% to First Aid, Holistic Medicine, and Paramedic only.

Military: Any (+10%).

Physical: Any (+5%, as applicable).

Pilot: Any (+10%).

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Any.

Science: Any, but unlikely.

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: This character may select six Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and two additional Secondary Skills at levels 4 and 8.

Older Nightbane (23-30 years old)

These Nightbane may start with four low-level contacts, two mid-level contacts, and one high-level contact (or two additional low-level and one mid-level contact instead of one high-level contact).

01-10% Street Schooled: Use the Street Schooled skill package listed above for this gutter rat 'Bane, +2 Secondary Skills at level one.

11-45% High School Grad/College Student: Use the standard skill package listed above for this basic educated Nightbane, +2 Secondary Skills at level one. Add an additional +5% bonus to all E.C.C. Skills.

46-70% Associate's Degree/Vocational Training: Use the Associate's Degree skill package above, +1 E.C.C. Related and 2 Secondary Skills at level one. Add an additional +5% bonus to all E.C.C. Skills.

71-90% Bachelor's Degree: Use the Bachelor's Degree skill package above, +2 E.C.C. Related Skills of choice and +3 Secondary Skills. Add an additional +5% bonus to all E.C.C. and E.C.C. Related skills.

91-95% Master's Degree: While rare, there are some characters that have attained a Master's level education, which is at least two to three more years of graduate school after a Bachelor's Degree is obtained. These highly educated individuals know their chosen field(s) well, and typically have a year or more of experience working in it. **Special Bonus:** +1 to I.Q. **Minimum Age:** 24.

In all cases above, use the following:

E.C.C. Skills: This character starts with Basic Math (+20%), Language: Native (+10%), Literacy: Native (+35%), Computer Operations (+25%), Research (+20%), +4 additional skills of choice (excluding Espionage, Military, Physical and W.P.s) each of which get a +25% bonus if they relate to the character's specific field of study (limited only by prerequisites and the list below), and either Technical Writing or Mathematics: Advanced (+10%).

E.C.C. Related Skills: Select eleven skills from the following list at level one. Add two additional skills at levels 2 and 5, and one additional at levels 7 and 10.

Communications: Any (+20%).

Domestic: Any (+5%).

Electrical: Any (+15%).

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Any (+15%), except Vehicle Armorer.

Medical: Any (+15%).

Military: Camouflage, Field Armorer, Military Fortification, and Recognize Weapon Quality only (+5%).

Physical: Any (+5%).

Pilot: Any except Jet Aircraft, Jet Packs, or any Military piloting skills (+5%).

Pilot Related: Any (+10%).

Rogue: Any (+10% to Computer Hacking only).

Science: Any (+15%, but only +10% to Civil Engineer and Psychology).

Technical: Any (+15%).

W.P.: Any, excluding Heavy Military Weapons.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: This character may select seven Secondary Skills from the list above at level one, and one additional Secondary Skill at levels 4, 7, and 10.

96-00% Military/Government Agency Training: Add Military Etiquette (+20%) to starting skills. Also add two E.C.C. Related and one Secondary Skill at level one. Add an additional +5% bonus to all E.C.C. and E.C.C. Related skills (other than Military Etiquette, use the bonus above).

A note on magic-using Nightbane: If these rules are used, the *Nightbane Sorcerer* and *Nightbane Mystic* use the standard O.C.C. for those aged 16-22. For those 23 and older, still use the O.C.C. listed but roll on the table for older Nightbane, above. Then, add the additional E.C.C. Related and Secondary Skill selections, as well as any other bonuses from the education roll (ignore any result over 95% and reroll).

There are no magic-using Nightbane under the age of 15 due to the length of study to master the arts of magic or mystic powers to manifest.

A note about aging out of skill lists: If at any point in time a character ages beyond the age category they belong to (14 to 15 or 22 to 23), the G.M. may allow them to acquire skills using their education level's list in the higher age category once they are eligible to select new E.C.C. Related or Secondary skills.

A final note about ages and skills: While a character must usually meet the minimum age requirements for any particular education level to be eligible for it, there may be a couple of special-case situations where age and skills won't match.

First, characters with an exceptional I.Q. may move through the education system much faster than others of the same age. Therefore, for each two points of I.Q. above 18, a character may be considered one year older for the purposes of meeting the minimum age for an education level. This means that a 15 year-old with an I.Q. of 24 could have an education level as high as Vocational Training (minimum age of 19).

A final issue arises when characters had their Becoming some time before the beginning of the game (i.e. as part of their backstory). These individuals may have had a chance to get more education even after their Becoming, so they might have power adaptation modifiers from their Becoming age and an education level that reflects their current age. Or not. Becoming a Nightbane may have consumed them and they may have spent time learning to hone their abilities and develop Talents rather than pursue a higher education.

Game Masters should use their best discretion as to when they allow power adaptation modifiers, as they and education levels are meant to balance one another out in regard to a character's power level. If the G.M. lets a character use the Young Nightbane power adaptation modifiers and an Older Nightbane education level, it could very well unbalance a game.

New Skills

Mentioned in the previous section are a number of skills that do not appear in the **Nightbane® RPG** at this time. Here are those skills that were newly written and are not available from other settings.

Domestic

Social Etiquette: Whether gained through training, practical experience, or otherwise, the character is skilled in the often unspoken rules (customs, taboos, etc.) that different cultures, socio-economic classes, and even personality types place on social interaction. On a successful roll, the character can alter their speech and mannerisms to conform to those around themselves or mimic another known culture, class, or personality type that they are familiar with. If the character is unfamiliar with the group they are trying to pass themselves off as, 5D6 minutes of study and a successful Perception roll of 13 or higher lets them pick up on the behaviors of those around them enough to pass or fake it. Only someone paying close attention will realize they are imposters.

A failed roll means that one or more behaviors or comments are incorrect, probably making others suspicious. Roll once more to see if the character can successfully pass it off or divert attention from his faux pas. If not, the character is revealed as a faker (-5 penalty to the M.A. of the fumbling imposter who people now either distrust and walk away from, or look upon him/her as potentially dangerous intruder or spy).

Base Skill: 30% +5% per level of experience. **Bonuses:** +2 to M.A. and +5% to *Barter*, *Impersonation*, *Performance*, and *Public Speaking* skills, where applicable. Also provides a base of 20% for *Invoke Trust/Intimidate* and *Charm/Impress* if not already possessed.

Rogue Skill

Con-Artistry: The knowledge of various techniques for illegally tricking, or conning, people, organizations, and agencies out of their money, secrets or other assets. These techniques include pyramid schemes, credit card and insurance fraud, fly-by-night contracting, identity theft, lottery and stock scams, and various other ways of ripping off the unsuspecting.

To recognize potential victims and *easy marks*, roll under the skill percentage. The lower the level of the "mark" the easier it is to con him. On a successful roll the character with this skill becomes aware of a person(s) upon whom he should be able to "con"/trick out of money, valuables, food or information. This skill also enables the con-artist to recognize "marks" who can be more easily pick pocketed and deceived (+10% skill bonus. Also see the bonuses to other skill this skill provides, below.)

What that might entail (how complex, the type of con, etc.) is left up to the player, and whether the con works is up to the Game Master and corresponding skill rolls. In many cases, one or more other skill rolls may be required to pull off the con. For example, Palming an object from the persons desk or table (like a wallet, coin, keys, piece of jewelry, document, etc.) requires a successful Palming roll. To get a "mark's" wallet

out of his/her pocket or purse might require the Pick Pocket and Palming skills. A simple, quick con job typically gains the character 1D6x\$100 or the specific item, object or information the character seeks. Other cons might require the Radio or TV/Video skill and so on.

For more involved jobs, it could hours, a day or several days. The long-con can take weeks or months to set up (making the proper contacts, research, set up fake identities, etc.) and should require a good amount of *role-playing* by the player(s) via the character and any partners he may have (G.M.s, play this up to the fullest as long as it is fun for all involved). Success and what the con-artist gains from such complex schemes (know as the “long con”) will depend the quality of the scheme, the role-playing, the success of various skills as well as this one, and teamwork. A successful con should enable the character to either get what he was working toward or something unexpected, such as cash/valuables worth at least 5D6x\$1,000 but could be many times more, and/or some new, vital information, clue, weapon, contact, ally, etc. (G.M.s, use your discretion but take advantage of this opportunity and make sure the reward is worth the effort even if it is something unexpected.)

Note that characters that engage in such criminal activity tend to move around the country or even world to avoid either the authorities or their victims from catching up with them. A good rule of thumb is to leave town after 1D6 successful simple con jobs, one big job, a successful long con, or any time a job is botched (blown cover, tipped off authorities, etc., and especially if it tips of a vicious enemy, the government or a crime lord). Also note that good and even some Unprincipled and Aberrant characters may not engage in con-artistry for personal gain, but may if it thwarts or hurts an enemy or bad guy (i.e. against dishonest and evil individuals, groups, villains and monsters), who tend to be harder to con. **Base Skill:** 20% +5% per level of experience. **Bonuses:** Con-Artistry provides a +5% to the following skills: Barter, Begging, Gambling, Gambling Dirty Tricks, Impersonation, Performance, Palming, Pick Pocket, and Seduction. **Penalties:** Criminals 4-6 level experience: -10% to the Con-Artistry skill. Criminal and law enforcement 7th level and higher as well as any crime lord/kingpin, gang leader, mastermind or Demon Lord of any level experience: -20% to the Con-Artistry skill. -60% to trick and con a deity or Alien Intelligence. Note: The G.M. may reduce or eliminate these penalties if the role-playing is outstanding the G.M. believes the con should work. Outstanding roleplaying should always have a mitigating impact on skills such as this.

Science Skill

Civil Engineer: The understanding of theories and practices of designing, building, and maintaining static structures such as buildings, bridges, water/sewage networks, dams, roads, railways, runways, and similar infrastructure. Included is the knowledge of surveying and cartography necessary for establishing construction sites. With the proper equipment, characters can attempt to design, modify, repair, construct, or sabotage any structure or element thereof. The player must first roll to see if his character can properly analyze or design the structure. If successful, roll again to determine whether the character can fix/change/build the required structural component (G.M.'s discretion as to how complex the process is; for buildings it could

be as simple as rolling once each for the foundation/flooring, walls, and ceiling/roof). If the second roll was successful, the repair, modification, or construction was properly done/made, and the structure is sound. Note that the average building is usually more than one person can complete on their own, even with the proper equipment. Therefore, the character will probably need a team of workers to complete all but the smallest projects. **Base Skill:** 25% +5% per level of experience. **Requires:** *Advanced Mathematics, Basic Electronics, and Literacy.* **Note:** The character also gets the *Metalworking* skill at 40% +5% per level as part of this package. **Bonuses:** +5% to the *Carpentry* skill, and +10% to *Military Fortification* and any *Demolitions* skills.

Technical Skill

Demolitions: Civilian (rare). A character with this rare skill must have acquired it through on the job training such as via the military, SWAT, mining operations, and construction/building demolitions. (A terrorist would acquire this skill through a rogue *military, para-military organization or terrorist cell*). This is NOT a skill one can acquire in college nor teach himself.

A character with this skill is well versed in the various civilian and construction applications of explosives, including blasting rock for construction, blasting tunnels and dams, mining, pyrotechnic displays, the demolition of condemned structures, and various other *legal* uses for explosives. The skill enables the character to handle, mix and use a wide range of explosives, detonators and timers. Able to properly measure and pack charges for specific purposes, set up and disarm properly set charges (can attempt to defuse mines and *improvised explosive devices* at -20%), know the properties of legal explosives, and is familiar with proper safety procedures to prevent anyone from getting injured at or around the blast site. Depending on the character's line of work, possessing this skill might mean they have ready access to explosives such as T.N.T. and/or its derivatives, black powder, blasting caps, and detonation equipment.

Such explosives and related material are typically only available through work, kept under lock and key, monitored closely, and available to licensed demolitions personnel. Those with the proper licensing can also purchase and use high-class pyrotechnic devices such as those used for fireworks displays, sporting events, concerts, etc. **Base Skill:** 60% +3% per level of experience. **Requires:** *Chemistry: Basic, Mathematics: Basic, Literacy* and employment (or past employment) to get the proper training and knowledge of how and where to access legal demolitions explosives and equipment. -20% to make and use homemade bombs/improvised explosive devices.

Hitting the Gym ... with the Physical Training Hero

Optional Rules for Heroes Unlimited™, 2nd Edition

By Matt Reed

“It was sixty feet down. Jake Merrill stared over the ledge for several long moments before raising his head. The next building was fifteen feet away. In track and field, he cleared that distance easily, but this... this was different. This was the rooftops of Cascade, an unforgiving environment in an unforgiving city.

Jake removed his armor, the “Olympian” outfit he had put together, and left it next to the air conditioning vent, then crouched down and removed his cell phone. Another message was recorded, as Jake kept his video log updated. His brow furrowed as he looked on to the ledge, and spoke into the camera. “I can do this. I know it. I’ve cleared eighteen feet before. The laser distancer says fifteen feet. The wind’s good, and I’ve dropped everything that’ll weigh me down.” He paused, “I’ve got to try this. I know you’re going to say how stupid it is if I fail, Mom, but... I have to do this. I have to know I can be a better someone. Love you and Casey.”

He hung up, returned to the edge, then paced back to the air conditioner, measuring his steps. Eight steps, he decided, was the perfect distance to cover before he made the leap. The would-be hero Olympian looked down at the bare, black helmet he had procured, focusing on his task. He let out two quick breaths in his starting position, then took off like he had trained so many times. He was faster, stronger, more disciplined. He knew the leap was just a formality at this point. The real test would come later, after donning his armor.”

The Physical Training hero is another character style that may seem underwhelming in a world of giant robots and invulnerable mutants. These characters, along with a good deal of the Special Training category of heroes, are underdogs by comparison. However, there’s a long history of characters that “just punch baddies” in comics history that have been renowned for exactly that, for being the courageous sorts who chose to put on the tights and a face mask in order to fight evil without the power of nuclear fire on their side. These are people who, having only the will and dedication on their side, turn themselves into a living weapon, forsake the “easier means” of firearms, to present a better way to do justice. They are a testament to the drive and determination of the human will.

Overall, the Physical Training hero is limited by what the human body can do, yet there are superhuman feats that can be accomplished even among the mere mortals. Years of dedication and conditioning can force the body to adapt and thrive in situations in which most of us would perish. Climbing, swimming, urban survival, mixed martial arts, freezing climates, falling great distances, all of these things can be trained for, to push humans to adapt, all with the goal of peak efficiency.

That is where the P.T. hero starts in the world, full of practiced skill and training and ready for the first challenges of a career.

Unlike the Super Sleuth and the Stage Mage, there’s only so far that a Physical Training hero can go due to their concept. My standard thought of “What would the world’s best P.T. hero do?” ends up at a place where it is indecipherable if the character is still human, or truly superhuman. If a mortal man ends up able to take a tank round to the chest, or lift up a building, he’s no longer a “mere mortal,” is he? This rewrite, instead, focuses on the versatility and adaptability for this heroic archetype. It stresses certain similar possibilities that can be shared with the Stage Magician (due to the flexibility and gymnastics) or Super Sleuth (due to the tough lifestyle), but yet comes away with its own specialties. So let’s hit the gym with the Physical Training hero and see what’s new.

Rebuilding a Physical Training Hero

There are three main aspects of the P.T. hero to be determined when creating one. The character’s *Focus*, which consists of their training regimen and their hand to hand, their *Signature Move*, which has additional qualities available to it, making the attack unique and dangerous, and the *Abilities* which are the more general aspects of training that can round out a hero.

As before, players can decide if they want to focus on Strength and Endurance, providing them with a character who lifts cars, runs for hours, and outlasts opponents in a brawl, and Speed and Agility, for the nimble, mobile characters that focus more on a rapid assault. This part of your Focus also decides which special ability category your character has access to, ones inclined more towards smash-mouth attacks, or finesse and weapon flurries.

As the second part of your *Focus*, you get the option of focusing your character further or rounding them out. Physical Training characters can choose one of two specialized hand-to-hand tables to represent how they will deal with foes, either Aggressive and Deadly, or Defensive and Fast. While both options are available, each tends to lean towards a specific Focus, as defined in its section.

Parkour is the P.T. hero superskill, combining Swim, Climb, Acrobatics, and Gymnastics into one catch-all movement skill that allows a character to traverse most anywhere. Parkour is also used in combat to gamble for extra bonuses in combat, allowing a P.T. hero to make better use of his environment than anyone else.

Signature Moves are a new addition to the P.T. hero, letting characters showcase tricks and tactics that give them a unique advantage in a fistfight. Characters have a wide array of moves to add to their arsenal, with certain effects working in synergy to showcase their exceptional training. As a character gains experi-

ence, he may learn new tactics and new Signature Moves to add even more to his repertoire.

Abilities are the final addition to the hero. While less options are available for the hero than in previous works (given their utter focus on training), the power category Abilities are small ways to help focus and define the character even further.

With all these items put together, combat will come alive like never before for the revised Physical Training Hero, with so many new options available for their tactics!

Step One: The Usual

Attributes: Determine the eight attributes as usual. Several attributes will change during the character creation process, as well as establishing a minimum attribute allowed if the bonuses provided don't reach a certain criteria.

Hit Points: Determine the character's Hit Points and S.D.C. as normal. Both will also be augmented by the creation process.

Step Two: Education

Education: Roll or select an education level as usual. *Subtract one skill program* to represent the training required to become this power category. In its stead, the character gains a selection of physical skills to represent his or her focus and training in the physical arts.

The character may have any level of training of education, as it is the training and discipline that makes a P.T. hero who they are. The Physical Training hero is one who has long practiced for the art of crime fighting, giving them a great deal of skills to help round out their training.

All heroes have access to the Physical Training program to represent some of this work, as well as the superskill of Parkour. Several skills are already included into the basic hero, such as acrobatics, and gymnastics, and those bonuses are already factored in to the power category for ease of use. *The Rifter #7* has some excellent resources for new Physical skills to work with the Physical Training program.

Parkour 70% +3% per level

Physical Training heroes are the ones that have trained their body and instincts to a point where their environment is as much an ally as anything. Ideally, the P.T. hero will use every bit of terrain between him and his enemies to win the day. A hero utilizing his or her environment could conceivably duck low behind a half-wall, kick off of a safe against the wall, and vault over the half-wall to surprise a thug, using that extra momentum to take him out fast.

This versatility is represented by the superskill Parkour. Consider Parkour to be the combination of Gymnastics, Athletics, Climbing, and Acrobatics, with an emphasis on movement, adaptability, and climbing, all at a higher starting skill base. In the instance of another skill having a higher percentage, use it when necessary (such as having specialized climbing gear).

Parkour is the skill of choice for the Physical Training hero to garner extra damage in combat by way of stunting. It also allows

a Physical Training hero to fall 30 feet without taking damage from the fall.

Stunting

The Physical Training hero is more than just a punch or kick artist; the revised hero makes use of his environment like few others. In fact, using Parkour in combat to gain an edge provides the character with far more versatility than previously seen. Given the right environment, a P.T. hero can leverage Parkour to garner extra bonuses to Strike or Dodge, or even damage. A hero might swing around a lamppost to garner extra momentum, or slip between racks of shelving to dodge a sword slash. Even in a flat field, a character might use one of his allies to push off of to get that needed spin.

Stunting costs an attack to do, and is done in concert with combat, so a character stunting to increase his strike will spend one attack to stunt, and one attack to strike. When using a stunt defensive, the same rule applies. Characters stunting to improve an automatic defense, like Auto-Flip, Auto-Parry, etc., will spend one action to stunt, and no further actions for the automatic maneuver.

Stunting works by garnering penalties to Parkour to gain combat bonuses. Every ten percent of a penalty taken nets a bonus of +1 to Strike, Parry, Dodge, or +4 to Damage. On a successful roll and attack action spent on using Parkour in combat, the very next attack spent by the P.T. hero gains the bonus gambled for. For a defensive move, like Dodge or Parry, the bonus gambled for with Stunting is applied to the next defensive action taken by the Physical Training hero.

Example: Olympian is in the middle of a warehouse fight, and the foe he is up against has proven very resistant to damage. He finds himself atop shelving racks when his target comes into sight. Olympian decides to be risky and declares he's going to Stunt for damage. Olympian decides to take a -20% to Parkour on this attack as he moves forward, in order to hopefully gain a +8 to damage on his next attack.

Olympian rolls a 21%, well underneath his modified Parkour skill. He immediately moves in to strike, as stunting is done as part of the attack. This attack of his gains +8 to damage in addition to his standard hand-to-hand bonuses. He spends two attacks to do this maneuver. If Olympian had failed his roll, that attack would be -8 to damage if he hit, perhaps denoting that the character had slipped and couldn't get his full power behind the punch.

Parkour Stunting Chart

Every -10% taken to a Parkour check can lead to...

- +1 to Strike, Disarm, or Entangle.
- +1 to Parry or Dodge.
- +1 to a Called Shot.
- 1 to the opponent's Armor Rating.
- +4 to Damage.

Physical Training Program

- Four Physical skills, excluding Hand to Hand Combat, Boxing, Acrobatics, and Gymnastics (+10%).
- Four Espionage or Rogue skills (+5%).



Step Three: Determining Focus

As mentioned above, the Physical Training hero is a rare breed, a person with focus, determination, and the will to make himself into a champion of good. Using incredible amounts of training, practice, and martial arts, the hero crafts himself into a powerhouse capable of doing astounding things.

Characters in this power category are tougher, faster, and stronger than most any human on the planet. This leads the character to a certain mindset as well, considering the dedication and

training they've gone through. If a character simply grabs a pistol first thing he's in danger, and spends all of his time using it, then he's denying everything he's ever worked towards. Modern weapons may be acceptable as needed, given the circumstances, but should not be considered the forte of the character. For those sorts of characters, please consider the Weapons Expert from the main book. Ideally, ancient weapons like the sword, spear, or staff, work best for the P.T. hero, as they are silent and graceful extensions of the body, a tool to add to the already robust skill set the hero has to offer.

P.T. heroes face a choice as to how they intend to fight crime, which can be distilled down to two categories, strength and endurance, or speed and agility. The focus here also affects certain

abilities later on, that help represent other options open to the hero. After selecting one of these categories, record the bonuses within, factor in all other skills, then raise to the minimum attribute required if below that number.

Strength and Endurance

- +5% bonus to Espionage or Rogue skills.
- +3D6+1 to P.S. (minimum of 24).
- P.S. is equal to the Minor ability of Superhuman Strength.
- +2D4+1 to P.E. (minimum of 20).
- +1 to P.P.
- +2D6 to Spd (minimum of 16).
- +1D4 to P.B.
- +6D6 to Hit Points.
- +3D4x10 to S.D.C.
- +20% to save vs coma/death.
- +3 to save vs disease/toxins and poisons.
- +1 attack per melee round.
- +2 to pull punch.
- +1 to initiative.
- +1 to parry.
- +2 to roll.

Typically studies *Aggressive and Deadly Hand to Hand Combat*. Reduce the Hit Point and S.D.C. bonuses above by half if the *Defensive and Fast Hand to Hand Combat* form is selected.

Speed and Agility

- +10% bonus to Espionage or Rogue skills.
- +2D6 to P.S. (minimum of 16).
- P.S. is equal to the Minor ability of Extraordinary Strength.
- +1D6+1 to P.P. (minimum of 18).
- +1D4 to P.E. (minimum of 14).
- +4D6+10 to Spd (minimum of 24).
- +1D4 to P.B.
- +3D6 to Hit Points.
- +1D4x10+10 to S.D.C.
- +10% to save vs coma/death.
- +1 to save vs disease/toxins and poisons.
- +2 attacks per melee round.
- +3 to pull punch.
- +2 to initiative.
- +1 to parry.
- +2 to roll.

Typically studies the *Defensive and Fast Hand to Hand Combat*. Halve the bonus given for Physical Prowess and Speed, and remove the minimum attribute requirement for those attributes, if the *Aggressive and Deadly Hand to Hand Combat* is taken.

Step Four:

Hand to Hand Combat, Signature Moves, and Abilities

The main forte of the Physical Training hero is melee combat. The character has spent years studying martial arts, boxing, and gymnastics, all to blend it together in a specific, unique style of combat. As before, there are two main schools of thought for melee combat: aggressive and deadly, or defensive and fast.

No matter what their Focus or hand to hand choices are, all Physical Training characters start with the skills and combat moves of W.P. Paired Weapons (all), Entangle, Disarm, Throw/Flip, Body Block, Karate style punch does 2D4 damage, Karate style kick does 2D6 damage, and start with 3 Holds and 2 Locks of their choice.

Aggressive and Deadly Combat

Level 1: +2 attacks per melee round. +3 to Roll, +3 to Pull Punch, +1 to Throw, +1 to Initiative, and 2 additional Holds of your choice.

Level 2: +2 to Strike and Disarm. +3 to Parry, +3 to Dodge.

Level 3: +2 to Initiative, +2 to Disarm, +2 to Entangle.

Level 4: +1 attack per melee round, +1 to Back Flip, and the hero gains a Natural A.R. (see below).

Level 5: Critical Strike on an unmodified 18-20. Automatic Knockout on a Natural 20.

Level 6: +2 to Initiative, +1 to Strike, Critical Throw (throws now deal 2D6 damage, Signature Throw deals double damage), +2 to Throw.

Level 7: +1 to Disarm, +1 to Parry, +1 to Dodge, Leap Attack.

Level 8: +2 attacks per melee round, +1 to Hold, +1 to Back Flip.

Level 9: Death Blow on an unmodified 19-20, Automatic Knockout on a Natural 18-20.

Level 10: +2 to Strike, +1 to Parry, +1 to Dodge.

Level 11: Auto-Dodge, +2 to Disarm, +2 to Entangle, Critical Strike on an unmodified 17+.

Level 12: +1 to Hold, +1 to Back Flip, +10 to Damage.

Level 13: +1 attack per melee round, Automatic Knockout on a Natural 17+.

Level 14: +1 to Parry, +1 to Dodge, +2 to Auto-Dodge.

Level 15: +1 to Strike, Death Blow on a Natural 18-20, +1 to Hold, +1 to Throw.

The Aggressive and Deadly hero gains a Natural A.R. of 7 at level 4, representing his or her years of shrugging off damage and internalized chi training akin to Chi Gung. This A.R. is applicable only towards mundane combat methods, such as unarmed, melee weaponry, and falls. Supernatural Strength, mutant abilities, magic, psionics, and modern weaponry like firearms ignore this Natural A.R. This A.R. goes up by +1 at levels, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15.

Defensive and Fast Combat

Level 1: +2 attacks per melee round, +2 to Initiative, +3 to Roll with punch, +3 to Pull punch, 2 additional Kicks of your choice.

Level 2: +2 to Strike, +2 to Disarm, +3 to Parry, +3 to Dodge.

Level 3: +2 to Automatic Back Flip, +2 to Throw.

Level 4: +1 attack per melee round, +1 to Hold.

Level 5: Automatic Dodge, Critical Throw (throws now deal 2D6 damage, Signature Throw deals double damage), Dodge Bullets (see below).

Level 6: Critical Strike on an unmodified 18+, Automatic Knockout on a Natural 20.

Level 7: +1 to Initiative, +1 to Strike, +1 to Automatic Back Flip, +2 to Automatic Dodge.

Level 8: Leap Attack, +1 to Dodge, +2 to Roll, +2 to Auto-Throw.

Level 9: +1 attack per melee round, +2 to Damage, +1 to Hold.

Level 10: +2 to Strike, +2 to Parry, +2 to Dodge.

Level 11: +1 to Auto-Back Flip, Automatic Knockout on a Natural 18+.

Level 12: Auto-Roll with a Punch/Impact, +1 to Disarm, +1 to Entangle.

Level 13: +1 attack per melee round, +2 to Parry, +2 to Dodge.

Level 14: +1 to Auto-Roll, +2 to Auto-Dodge, +2 to Auto-Throw.

Level 15: +1 attack per melee round, +1 to Auto-Back Flip, Automatic Knockout on a Natural 17+.

At level 5, the Defensive and Fast hero no longer suffers a penalty to dodge bullets (usually a -10 depending on the setting). The character has trained to rely on his or her instincts to anticipate firearms, as well as making erratic motions to help throw off an attacker's aim.

The Power of Signature Moves

The Swashbuckler crouched on a rooftop in her small neighborhood. The idea of looming from on high was silly to her, but it did keep people from laughing at her get-up. Her smile widened a bit. It had been four weeks since she donned the guise of "Swashbuckler," and the alter ego of hers was already becoming her true identity.

She crossed the next street, using an overhanging streetlight, and awning. That was when she saw the trouble. A group of toughs leaning up against someone's car, intimidating a young, out-of-place woman. She vaulted from on high, posting on the ledge, to land on the car's trunk. Her boots dented the hard plastic. Oops. "A damsel in distress, truly this is my night...and my fight, should you wish it." The Swashbuckler drew her rapier, hopped off the car, and was immediately surrounded. There was no fear, there were only confidence and joy. Kit Burns was going to take all of them down if she needed to do so. One large tough opened up his hands to grab at Swashbuckler. With an opening like that, she was being begged to strike. Her rapier flashed as she drove it forward toward the thug's rib cage, her practice coming into fruition as she yelled "L'empaler!" The blade repelled her victim back and down to the ground. She scoffed, "Surely someone else cares to dance?" Nobody else did.

Every Physical Training hero has some personal tricks of the trade that set them apart from other melee combatants. There are specific kicks, punches, or throws that the Physical Training hero has put extra energy into. In most accounts, the character either spends hundreds of hours practicing the specific move, or instinctively taps into his chi to perform some of the larger-than-life abilities of their signature move set. Classic examples of this move are leaping uppercuts, spinning kicks, back flip kicks, chi-infused spinning throws, and leaping attacks.

The P.T. hero may use this special ability three times a day at level 1, and gains one additional use per level. Each Signature Move acquired may only be used once per round, though if you learn multiple Signature Moves, each one may be used once per round. The Signature Move also counts as two attacks.

At level 1, a P.T. hero selects either a punch, kick, or throw as a base move to work with. He then selects two moves from the following list to make this particular move unique and

more effective. All Signature Moves automatically receive the Esoteric Strike technique for free. At levels 3, 7, 10, and 13, he can choose one additional ability to add to the Signature Move.

Signature Move Techniques

Blinding Strike

Upon dealing damage with your Signature Move, the foe must save vs magic (14+), or be blinded for the next full melee round.

Bulldozer Strike

Requires Pushing Strike and Flattening Attack. Upon dealing damage, your Signature Move knocks down opponents up to 30 feet (10 m) tall. If selected for a Signature Throw, this aspect allows you to throw foes up to this size.

Elemental Strike

Your Signature Move is imbued with an elemental power (fire, ice, earth, wind, energy, etc.), dealing an extra 1D6 damage. This move may be selected up to three times, increasing the damage by 1D6 each time.

Enlightened Strike

Requires Spirit Strike. Your Signature Move deals triple damage versus supernatural entities.

Esoteric Strike

Your Signature Move deals damage to invulnerable foes, as well as creatures of magic, and supernatural beings that aren't normally affected by hand-to-hand combat.

Flattening Attack

Upon dealing damage, your Signature Move knocks down opponents up to 10 feet (3 m) tall. If selected for a Signature Throw, instead the foe loses an extra attack in addition to the normal penalties for being thrown.

Haymaker Technique

When you use your Signature Move, add in additional damage equal to your character level.

Invulnerable Strike

The limb you use for your Signature Move is effectively invulnerable until after the attack ends. Any damage that could be caused by touching/striking a foe with spikes, unusual skin, or magic is ignored. Any damage that would affect the whole character (such as stepping into an aura, the Reactionary P.C.C.s ability of Backlash, or stepping on lava) is still administered. If selected for a Signature Throw, you do not take any damage from grabbing the creature as part of the attack.

Master of the Follow-Through

On a Critical Strike, your Signature Move deals max damage. Additional damage from extraneous gear, elemental damage, or weaponry is rolled normally.

Master of the Technique

Your Signature Move gains +2 to Strike, and deals increased damage for unarmed attacks (3D6 if a punch or throw, 4D6 for kicks).

Piercing Attack

Your Signature Move does half damage below Natural A.R.

Pushing Strike

Upon dealing damage, your Signature Move knocks your opponent back 2D6+1/level in feet.

Signature Stomp

Requires Sweeping Strike. You may attack all creatures within 10 feet (3 m) by a whirling strike, or a ground stomp. This is treated as an area attack, requiring all enemies to dodge the powerful move. The Signature Stomp does half damage to all foes hit.

Spirit Strike

Your Signature Move deals double damage versus supernatural entities.

Sprawling Strike

Requires Pushing Strike. Upon dealing damage, your Signature Move knocks your opponent back 6D6+1/level in feet.

Stunning Attack

Upon dealing damage with your Signature Move, the foe must save vs Stun (14+) or be stunned for the next full melee round.

Sundering Strike

Your Signature Move deals double damage versus inanimate objects, such as doors, robots, and armor.

Sweeping Strike

Your Signature Move may attempt to strike two foes if standing close to each other. The bonus to Strike with this move is halved. Damage is calculated normally. If selected for a Signature Throw, the Strike bonus is not halved.

Unleashed Strike

Your Signature Move becomes a Power Punch/Kick/Throw, dealing extra damage (generally 4D6 for Punch or Throw, or 6D6 for Kick). Your Signature Move costs three attacks to use.

Physical Training Abilities

As with the Super Sleuth (*The Rifter*® #81), and the Stage Magician (*The Rifter*® #79), the Physical Training hero picks up a certain amount of abilities as he levels. These special abilities are meant to showcase the specific focus of the P.T. hero, to make him a rate above anyone else with similar skills. As a Physical Training hero starts out, he may select four abilities from the General category, and either the Aggressive and Deadly category, or the Defensive and Fast category, matching which form of hand-to-hand combat he selected previously. P.T. characters gain

2 abilities at levels 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, and 15. They also gain access to the Advanced category at level 3.

Advanced Abilities

As heroes grow in skill and experience, they learn superior techniques or tricks to work with. The Advanced category is available to draw from at level 3, for either category of character.

Ambidexterity

You've long trained to use both hands well in combat, but with a bit of extra practice, the versatility pays off even more.

Rank 1: You can use either hand equally well. When using paired weapons, you gain a +1 to Parry. You also gain +5% to Parkour, Pick Locks, and Escape Artist.

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 an unarmed attack. When you succeed at an offensive combat move of any sort (strike, entangle, disarm, etc.), you immediately get a free melee attack on the same foe.

Rank 2: You also gain +2 to Strike, and +4 to damage on this special attack.

Clutch Defense

You bring your best to every life-threatening moment.

Rank 1: Twice a day, a character in imminent high-risk danger (such as about to fall off a building, be hit by a semi, high-caliber machine-gun fire, or punched by a powerful superhuman), the character may choose to gain a +4 to Dodge for this single action. The decision may be made after rolling the Dodge attempt, but must be decided before knowing the outcome of the attempt. After combat ends, or five minutes after using this power, the character becomes fatigued (halve attacks per round, combat bonuses, and foot speed for 1D4+2 minutes).

Rank 2: This ability may be used three times a day.

Clutch Skills

Your best is always better than anyone else.

Rank 1: Twice a day, a character in imminent high-risk danger (such as needing to leap through a car spiraling towards him, or carry someone to safety on a tightrope), the character may choose to ignore all penalties associated with the motion. This includes penalties from being stunned, wounded, or blinded, but does not include penalties from stunting. After combat ends, or five minutes after using this power, the character becomes fatigued (halve attacks per round, combat bonuses, and foot speed for 1D4+2 minutes).

Rank 2: This ability may be used three times a day.

Coup de Grace

When they end up vulnerable, you move in for the kill.

Rank 1: When a foe has no remaining S.D.C., or is helpless or otherwise deemed vulnerable by the G.M., your next attack against him gains +2 to Strike, and deals an extra +10 damage. You may only use this attack once per foe per day.

Extra Signature Ability

Better to focus on one kick a thousand times.

Rank 1: Select one Signature Move of yours. You may add one additional ability to it. This ability may be selected multiple times, each time selecting a different ability.

Extra Signature Move

Versatility and fluidity of motion is a staple in hand to hand combat.

Rank 1: Create a new Signature Move as described above, name it, and associate two abilities from the list above with it. You may have two or more of the same style of attack, e.g. you may have several kicks, each with its own unique qualities. This Move draws from the same pool of uses per day as your original Move.

Extra Signature Uses

You've trained to throw your best punch more often.

Rank 1: You gain an additional use of your Signature Move every day.

Rank 2: You gain another additional use (for a total of two extra) of your Signature Move every day.

Parkour Master

Poetry in motion.

Rank 1: Any penalties given to the skill Parkour, due to weather, pain, or stunting, are halved.

Physical Focus

Reps. Reps. Reps.

Rank 1: Select one physical attribute: P.S., P.P., P.E., P.B., or Spd. You gain +1 to that attribute.

Rank 2: You may gain another +1 to one of the aforementioned attributes.

Second Wind

With clarity, the resolve can be found to soldier on.

Rank 1: You may take a full round out of combat to recover 10+2D6 S.D.C. The character pushes aside the pain and aches, tapping into his willpower to remain in the fight. This does not heal wounds, nor stop bleeding. This may not heal over your maximum S.D.C., and does not affect H.P. You may use this ability once a day.

Rank 2: You may use this ability twice a day, but never within six hours of the first use.

Sucker Punch

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

Rank 1: When initiating combat, or when assaulting an unaware/stunned/blinded/incapacitated foe, your first melee strike against that target may be a Called Shot, but only cost one action.

Weapon Mastery

Perfection of body, perfection of weapon. Expect no less.

Rank 1: Select one weapon you are proficient with. You may select one Technique from the Ancient Weapon Master Special-

ist (see *The Rifter*® #74, pages 32-35), which you may use while wielding that weapon.

Aggressive and Deadly Abilities

Grappling Bonus

Leave the tricky kicks to others, getting in close is your favored tactic.

Rank 1: +2 to Hold/Lock.

Rank 2: +3 to Hold/Lock.

Rank 3: +4 to Hold/Lock.

Grasping Hands

Your hands land upon your foe, and the battle is all but over now.

Rank 1: After putting someone into a hold or lock, from the next round on, the hold or lock deals 2D6 damage per round. This damage increases by +1 to damage at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, and 14

Rank 2: While using Grasping Hands Atemi on a foe that you have in a hold or lock, you may deal the damage listed above every time the foe attempts to escape from the Hold or Lock. You may also inflict this same damage with a successful offensive Hold or Lock roll against the foe.

Rank 3: You add your P.S. Bonus (up to +5) to the damage listed above.

Haymaker

There's always the potential for more follow-through.

Rank 1: When you use a Power Punch or Power Kick, add in additional damage equal to your character level.

Indefatigable

Day long marathons, skyscraper climbs, it's all led to the day you simply will not stop.

Rank 1: You tire one quarter as fast as a normal hero. (The fatigue rate from Superhuman or Extraordinary Strength has already been factored in.)

Rank 2: You tire one eighth as fast as a normal hero.

Pain Tolerance

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

Rank 1: +1 to Saving Throws vs Pain.

Rank 2: +2 to Saving Throws vs Pain.

Shrug It Off

You've been hurt worse, and your body has learned to compensate.

Rank 1: Every time you heal S.D.C. from rest, you regain +4 more S.D.C.

Rank 2: Every time you heal S.D.C. from rest, you regain +8 more S.D.C. OR you may heal +2 H.P. more instead.

Tough as Nails

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

Rank 1: You permanently gain 8 S.D.C.



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

Rank 3: You permanently gain another 8 S.D.C.

Two-Handed Heft

You leverage some extra heft when you're swinging a larger weapon. Also available as an Ancient Weapon Master Specialist ability.

Rank 1: When wielding a two-handed weapon, you deal extra damage equal to your P.S. bonus, up to +4.

Rank 2: When wielding a two-handed weapon, you deal extra damage equal to your P.S. bonus, up to +8.

General Abilities

Archery Specialty

Noble, Elegant, Silent.

Rank 1: You gain 3 levels in W.P. Archery. E.g., if you are level 4, you count your bonuses with W.P. Archery at level 7.

Armor Piercing

An impact at the right spot will surely strike the wearer of any sort of armor.

Rank 1: The A.R. of enemies in combat with you is reduced by one.

Disarm Expertise

Remove the gun from the equation.

Rank 1: +1 to Disarm.

Rank 2: +2 to Disarm.

Duelist

Always considered a deadly fencer, you can handle any singles match.

Rank 1: While fighting a single foe one-on-one, you gain +1 to Strike and Parry against the foe. You must be wielding a single one-handed weapon, or unarmed to gain this bonus. Any interference in the fight removes the bonus until the start of the next round.

Rank 2: The bonuses increase to +2 to Strike and Parry.

Entangle Bonus

Get in close, and restrain the backup weapon.

Rank 1: +2 to Entangle.

Rank 2: +3 to Entangle.

Rank 3: +4 to Entangle.

Environmental Tolerance

Freezing cold and torturous heat have little effect on you after years of training for it.

Rank 1: You only start to suffer environmental hazards after the temperature reaches extreme situations, e.g. 190 degrees Fahrenheit (87.8 C), or -20 degrees Fahrenheit (-28.9 C).

Expert Control

With control comes strength, and clarity of purpose.

Rank 1: You gain +2 to Pull Punch.

Rank 2: In a situation where you are not hampered in any way (such as stunned, blinded, suffering penalties from injuries, etc.), you may always pull your punch with melee attacks.

Force of Will

Never. Give. Up.

Rank 1: The incredible ability to stay on one's feet even after all S.D.C. And Hit Points have been reduced to zero or below. The character has one attack per melee round, no ability to use his Signature Move, nor ability to use Chi (which is currently being used to keep the character alive). Speed is halved, and all bonuses are reduced to zero. The hero can function in this state for 24 hours, or until brought more than 40 points below zero. If the character's focus is Strength and Endurance, he may still function until 60 points below zero. Only professional medical treatment, magic, or other superhuman abilities may save his life at this point. The character must be brought back up to positive Hit Points before the 24 hours expires.

Rank 2: The character manages to still have three attacks per melee round when using Force of Will. All other penalties and restrictions remain the same.

Freeform Climber

Gear is nice, but not required.

Rank 1: You never need gear to perform a climb, unless the situation would be considered impossible. (E.g., climbing a pure energy wall without sophisticated gear designed for it.)

Initiative Bonus

See them coming first.

Rank 1: +2 to Initiative.

Rank 2: +3 to Initiative.

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.

Quick Feet

You can always slip away at top speed, when the situation requires it.

Rank 1: Your speed is no longer halved when Prowling.

Relentless

Nothing defends against you without paying the price.

Rank 1: You may choose to halve your Strike bonus. If you are parried by an inanimate object, the object takes half the damage intended for the opponent.

Signature Weapon Move

The same diligence, adapted into a new discipline.

Rank 1: Select one ancient melee weapon you are proficient with. You gain the ability to select Weapon Strike as a type of Signature Move. This does not grant you an extra Signature Move by itself. You must also select this ability at level 1, or also select Extra Signature Move to gain the full benefits.

Sleepless Nights

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.

Staff Specialty

Versatility in purpose, and always underestimated.

Rank 1: You gain 3 levels in W.P. Staff. E.g., if you are level 4, you count your bonuses with W.P. Staff at level 7.

Stealthy

You're no ninja, but in the right environment, who would know different?

Rank 1: You gain +10% to Prowl.

Rank 2: You gain a Quality Bonus of +10% to Prowl.

Rank 3: You gain another +10% bonus to Prowl.

Swimming Adept

You're more dangerous in the blue, than on land.

Rank 1: You swim a distance equal to 5X your P.S. in yards/meters per melee round, instead of 3x.

Rank 2: You swim at a blistering 7X your P.S. in yards/meters per melee round. Swimming is considered a "light activity" for purposes of fatigue, as per the swimming skill.

Defensive and Fast Abilities

Breakfall

Years of experience and training have honed your instincts to lessen the trauma of a fall.

Rank 1: Breakfall is the more advanced version of Roll with Punch/Fall/Impact. The character takes no damage from a fall if the Breakfall is successful, and only half damage if the roll fails. The bonuses start off at a +2 to Breakfall.

Rank 2: Your bonuses with Breakfall are now +4.

Rank 3: Your bonuses with Breakfall are now +6.

Double-Jointed

The flexibility required to escape holds and locks, also helps free one from handcuffs.

Rank 1: The Physical Training hero may attempt to escape from bonds upon the hands or feet, e.g. handcuffed or chained, one time a round with a 59% chance of success. The double-jointed hero may attempt to escape from body chains or a straight-jacket once a round, with a 26% +1% per level chance of success. The P.T. hero may contort his body to 50% of his normal height and width.

Finesse

Sometimes it's about how you do it more than how much strength you have to back it up.

Rank 1: When dealing damage, you may choose to add your P.P. bonus to damage instead of your P.S. bonus.

Kip Up

With a quick flex of the legs, you hop right back up, eager for more.

Rank 1: From a prone position and on your attack, you may stand up without taking an attack once per round.

Parry Arrows

Returning the arrow afterwards is optional.

Rank 1: The P.T. Hero can attempt to parry muscle-powered projectiles with his bare hands, or with a melee weapon. He is -2 to parry arrows, darts, or other thrown objects. The character may only attempt to parry the projectile of one opponent at a time, and must see the attack coming.

Wall Crawler

The skylight is always preferable to the front door.

Rank 1: As long as you have the proper gear, you only need to roll Climbing every 40 feet (12.2 m) you ascend, as opposed to every 10 feet (3 m).

Rank 2: You may fight from a wall or ceiling with no negatives, provided you are using the proper gear. Any penalties you may incur for climbing in dangerous conditions, injuries or such, are all halved.

Rank 3: As long as you have the proper gear, you only need to roll Climbing every 100 feet (30.5 m) you ascend, as opposed to every 10 feet (3 m).

Whirling Weapons

You don't lower your guard just because you're on the offense. Also available as an Ancient Weapon Master Specialist ability.

Rank 1: When wielding paired weapons, once per round, you can strike with two weapons at once *without* losing your ability to auto-parry.

Rank 2: Twice per round, you can strike with two weapons at once *without* losing your ability to auto-parry.

Step Five: Other Stuff

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

Hit Points: Determine as usual, plus bonuses from your *Focus*.

Structural Damage Capacity (S.D.C.): Physical Training Heroes start with 30 S.D.C., in addition to whatever their *Focus*, Abilities, or extra Physical skills may give them.

Hand to Hand Combat: The Physical Training character has a specialized, predetermined Hand to Hand skill, as described previously in this section.

Attacks per Melee (Hand to Hand): As with ALL super characters, the Physical Training hero automatically gets two attacks per melee, plus the additional attacks from the specialized hand to hand combat and *Focus* bonus. This character typically starts with five or six attacks per round. Additional attacks are developed through experience or Ability selection.

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

Available Financial Resources: 5D6x100 dollars are available in ready cash. This is in addition to any possible life savings. (See the *Heroes Unlimited™ RPG, 2nd Edition*, page 25.) There is a 1-89% likelihood that the character owns his or her own car. The car is 2D6 years old. Presumably, the character has at least a low paying or part-time job, apartment, and a reasonable amount of personal possessions.

Reputation: If a vigilante, the police will look at the character as a potentially dangerous criminal. He is likely to have 6D6% of the police force as sympathizers who will look the other way and make no genuine effort to apprehend or stop him.

P.P.E. Base: 6D6, does not increase with experience.

Sample Physical Training Characters

Olympian

The would-be hero Olympian's story began as Jake Merrill started high school. A natural at sports, Jake was in every sport season he could fit into his schedule. A model student as well as an all-star athlete, Jake was selected to represent the U.S.A. during the Olympics... in three events.

A week before the competition, Jake twisted his ankle, killing any chance of him achieving what he felt was his life's goal. Suffering from depression, and on a downward spiral, Jake was eventually approached by Snoop (see *The Rifter #81*, page 55) to join the Neighborhood Watch, and do something worthwhile again. It took some convincing, but Jake has started to find his place in the world.

Olympian

Level 4 Physical Training Hero (Strength and Endurance)

Name: Jake Merrill.

Alias: Olympian.

Land of Origin: Cascade, Michigan.

Alignment: Principled.

Quote: "If I am but a man, let me be a good one."

Description: Jake Merrill is a young, handsome black man, just out of his teenage years. While powerful and strong, his build focuses on having a strong core. Jake has a strong chin, and piercing, intelligent eyes, with his hair high and tight.

As Olympian, he wears custom-built armor that has a rather blank, bulbous look to it, and is flexible enough to keep up with his athletic lifestyle.

Disposition: Jake's something of a somber youth. Always haunted by a past that never materialized, he takes solace in doing some real good for his neighborhood. Jake is earnest, forthright, and disciplined, with a real grudge against manipulators and layabouts.

Age: 22

Stats: I.Q. 14, M.E. 11, M.A. 13, P.S. 24 (Superhuman), P.P. 10, P.E. 20, P.B. 19, Spd 16.

S.D.C.: 90. **Hit Points:** 47.

Parkour: 79%

Notable Skills: Natural A.R. of 7 against unarmed, and mundane melee weaponry. Sports (football, tennis, baseball, soccer), Track and Field, W.P. Targeting.

Signature Moves and Techniques (usable 6 times a day in total):

Kiss Of The Mountain – Punch – +4 to Strike, 3D6+12 damage, Master of the Technique, Master of the Follow-Through, Haymaker Technique, Esoteric Strike.

Whirlwind Heel – Kick – +2 to Strike, 1D6+4 damage to all foes within 10 feet (3 m), Esoteric Strike, Sweeping Strike, Signature Stomp.

Abilities Taken:

Capitalizer – Olympian may gain a free unarmed attack after landing an unarmed strike.

Extra Signature Ability – Kick – Whirlwind Heel.

Haymaker – Add in 4 bonus damage when using Power Punch or Power Kick.

Force Of Will – Rank 1– Stay standing after entering negative H.P.

Quick Feet – Olympian does not halve his speed when Prowling.

Stealthy – +10% to Prowl.

Never Outnumbered – Olympian is not outnumbered by foes of a lower level, unless there are six or more. Normally, a character loses initiative when in combat against four foes or more.

In Combat: Aggressive and Deadly Hand to Hand.

Initiative: +2

Attacks: 8

Strike: +2

Parry: +4

Dodge: +4

Armor: Olympian wears a custom suit of armor meant to maintain flexibility, and still afford maximum protection. Half Suit of Point Blank Vest. A.R. 10, S.D.C. 70.

Swashbuckler

Together, Kit and her sister Natalie Burns (a.k.a. Kelly Sharpe, see *The Rifter #79*, page 91) had always been two of a kind. As

parts of a broken home, the two could rely only on each other, strengthening their sisterly bond dramatically. The pair easily became the top contenders in their school for acrobatics and gymnastics. Graduation left them disoriented in the world. While her older sister struggled to find a career for herself, Kit found herself drawn to medicine. Given the pair's poor finances, Natalie saw the potential in her sister, and agreed to find a way to supplement Kit's education expenses.

The two moved to the Howard district in Cascade to take advantage of off-campus living. Natalie found that she had something of a talent as a Stage Magician, working in The Line. Kit continued her progress into Pre-Med, but eventually discovered that her only real solace was on the gym mat. It was her stress release, and her identity. Always a meek little thing, Kit developed a panache for capes and costumes when on the mat, which eventually developed into the Swashbuckler persona.

Finally, something felt right, like she was in the right skin. Male, female, it didn't matter to her how she was viewed, she was who she wanted to be. After secretly learning about her sister's derring-do of vigilantism, she took it upon herself to do the same, if secretly from Kelly Sharpe... she wouldn't want Natalie to worry about her, of course.

Swashbuckler

Level 3 Physical Training Hero (Speed and Agility)

Name: Katerine "Kit" Burns.

Alias: Swashbuckler.

Land of Origin: Detroit, Michigan.

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Quote: "One against four, eh? Well, you're still outnumbered!"

Description: Kit is a mousy, slender young college student with cute, but lightly androgynous features. She almost always has her short cut, brown hair feathered up to the side above her square rimmed glasses. While obviously in shape, Kit tends to hide her features with sweatshirts and thick pants to shelter her from the cold of the city.

As Swashbuckler, she wears a more modern version of the classic Musketeer outfit, with eyemask, playing off of her androgynous features to masquerade as a man. A jaunty cap, a red frilled shirt, with vest and tight pants, and a rapier at her side.

Disposition: As Swashbuckler: Flamboyant, eager for praise, flirty, and passionate about life and ladies.

As Kit: Intelligent, quiet, crippling social anxiety, coupled with compassion for the less fortunate.

Age: 22

Stats: I.Q. 19, M.E. 14, M.A. 17, P.S. 19, P.P. 18, P.E. 17, P.B. 11, Spd 29.

S.D.C.: 68. **Hit Points:** 32.

Parkour: 82% (penalties are halved due to Parkour Master).

Notable Skills: Fencing, W.P. Sword, Track and Field, French, Medical Doctor.

Signature Moves and Techniques (usable 5 times a day):

L'empaler – Used with Rapier for 3D6+3 damage, Esoteric Strike, Piercing Attack, Flattening Attack.

Abilities Taken:

Signature Weapon Move – Swashbuckler's initial Signature Move works with W.P. Sword.

Kip Up – Swashbuckler may stand from a prone position as a free action, once per round.

Sleepless Nights – Kit needs only 4 hours of sleep to be considered well-rested.

Duelist – Swashbuckler gains an extra +1 to Strike and Parry, when in a one-on-one fight.

Parkour Master – Swashbuckler halves any penalties to Parkour for stunting or other conditions.

Clutch Defense – Swashbuckler can gain a +4 to Dodge for a single action, twice a day.

In Combat: Defensive and Fast Combat: 2D6+3/3D6+3 damage (punch/kick damage).

Initiative: +2

Attacks: 6

Strike: +4

Parry: +5

Dodge: +5

Throw: +2

Automatic Back Flip: +2

With Rapier: 1D6+3/3D6+3 damage (slash/thrust damage).

Initiative: +2

Attacks: 6

Strike: +7

Parry: +8

Dodge: +5

Throw: +2

Automatic Back Flip: +2

Armor: None at the moment, though Swashbuckler is definitely hoping to come across something to protect against bullets.

Manik

Not much is known of the powerhouse Manik. He showed up in the police blotter one day after crushing a police car, and the officers inside. The whispers were that he was intent on rounding up a multitude of street gangs beneath his heel, and forming his own civilization where strength was the only thing that mattered.

Manik promoted highly aggressive, chaotic attacks by the gangs he led, for little reason more than to show his strength. He was last seen in a confrontation with the police where he had a full clip emptied into his head. He was written off as dead by the police. They were wrong.

Manik

Level 11 Physical Training Hero (Strength and Endurance)

Name: Unknown.

Alias: Manik.

Land of Origin: Unknown.

Alignment: Diabolic.

Quote: "Yer weak! Another useless infant firing off a gun instead of claiming yer OWN power like I did!"

Description: A massive, hulking man whose physique seems unrealistic, almost alien. Manik is a white male, that is seven feet of frightening muscle, with a shaved head, a malicious, constant sneer, and a nose that has been obviously broken. He wears an extra large white undershirt and cut off jeans to show off more of his frame.

Disposition: Manik has dedicated himself to the belief that the only thing that matters are power and discipline. Obsessed with eugenics, and dispelling weakness, Manik lives to dominate anyone that dares stand against him. Boldly aggressive,

and defiant, he seeks only to cause chaos, and force the world into submission. Manik is utterly ruthless and without morals, and is as much a threat to allies as enemies if they disrespect his talents, forcing him to lash out with frightening speed and power.

Age: 29

Stats: I.Q. 12, M.E. 13, M.A. 15, P.S. 52 (Superhuman), P.P. 13, P.E. 27, P.B. 8, Spd 26.

S.D.C.: 193. **Hit Points:** 81.

Parkour: 98% (penalties are halved due to Parkour Master).

Notable Skills: Most Physical skills involving combat.

Signature Moves and Techniques (usable 14 times a day):

Red Mist Fist – Punch – 5D6+48 damage, costs 3 attacks.

Haymaker Technique, Master of Technique, Unleashed Technique. Flattening Attack, Esoteric Strike, Invulnerable Strike.

Abilities Taken:

Haymaker – Add in 11 bonus damage when using Power Punch or Power Kick.

Force Of Will – Rank 2 – Stay standing after entering negative H.P., retain 3 attacks per round.

Capitalizer – Rank 2 – Manik may gain a free unarmed attack after landing an unarmed strike. He also gains +2 to Strike, and +4 to damage with this attack.

Parkour Master – Manik halves any penalties to Parkour for stunting or other conditions.

Duelist – Rank 2 – Manik gains an extra +2 to Strike and Parry when in a one-on-one fight.

Never Outnumbered – Manik is not outnumbered by foes of a lower level unless there are six or more. Normally, a character loses initiative when in combat against four foes or more.

Coup de Grace – Manik gains bonuses against foes without S.D.C., or deemed helpless.

Tough as Nails – Rank 3 – Manik has gained extra S.D.C., and is +4 to save vs knockout or stun.

Physical Focus – +1 to P.S.

In Combat: Aggressive and Deadly Combat: 2D6+37 Punch, 4D6+48 Power Punch.

Initiative: +2

Attacks: 9

Strike: +5

Parry: +7

Dodge: +7

Auto-Dodge +0

Throw: +3

Death Blow on 19+, Automatic Knockout on Natural 18+, Critical Strike on Natural 17+.

Armor: Natural A.R. of 10 against unarmed, melee attacks. Manik wears no armor. The very idea of avoiding damage just incenses him.

In Conclusion

The Physical Training Hero has gained some valuable new moves and tricks to keep combat fun and versatile. Between the new Signature Moves, Parkour, and their new Abilities, Physical Training characters now have the chance to define themselves far more thoroughly. Against tougher foes, where a P.T. Hero once had to just continue punching, now they can use Parkour to stunt their way into better leverage of the area, meaning a higher caliber of moves to work with.

In the future, there are several things I still wish to examine. The Secret Operative, the Hunter/Vigilante, and a new Special Training power category, the Street Knight, as well as the companion based “Bonded Hero,” who works in concert with his ally to prove the power of two.

As always, I’d 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). With them, I have had a lifelong sense of adventure, laughs, and imagination. Thanks are also given, of course, to those adventuring souls in The Dark City of Cascade Facebook Group for their assistance and support. Catch me on the Palladium Forums as zerombr for comments or questions!

Rifts® Chaos Earth® Nebraska

Part Three

Pyromancers and the Ashlands of the American West

Official Material for Rifts® Chaos Earth®

Written by Daniel Frederick, Matthew Clements and Kevin Siembieda

Pyromancers, also known as **Magma Mages**, are powerful elemental spell casters that have appeared across the western United States since the early days following the Great Cataclysm. With the return of magic to Earth, dormant volcanoes and places of geothermal power flared to life, many reacting to the resurgence of magic. The **Yellowstone super-volcano**, in particular, erupted with immense fury after sitting silent for many thousands of years, sending up perpetual clouds of smoke. A rain of ashes has continued unbroken since the Cataclysm, drifting back and forth depending on the wind, and rivers of lava snake across the land. Across North America, **the Ashlands** that this eruption has created now extend from *Oregon*, along the *West Coast*, inland to *Yellowstone* itself, through *Idaho*, *Montana*, *Wyoming*, the *Dakotas* and east all the way to *Nebraska*.

Throughout this hellish environment, many humans have begun to exhibit innate or latent magic abilities that utilize lava and fire to protect themselves and others from invading aliens, monsters, demons, and the supernatural. Presumably, being so close to the eruption of the Yellowstone super-volcano has made volcanoes, lava and fire a significant factor in the minds of those living nearby. This has, in turn, resulted in the appearance of mages who wield fire and lava as their primary form of magic. Their thoughts, hopes and fears manifest as an elemental source of strength and power for the **Pyromancer**. Their focus and orientation is on fire, volcanoes and lava, enabling them to use their own P.P.E. and the magic energy of ley lines, like a *Blue Zone Wizard*, to cast magic that utilizes these forces. Initially, this is all instinctive and reactive, without the spell caster even realizing it.

These intuitive new mages are unwittingly creating something that will later be formalized and dubbed **Lava Magic**, a form of magic that will exist in some areas of North America into the Dark Age until the Ashlands are overgrown and revitalized and it is replaced by other magicks, eventually to be forgotten. However, in the days of chaos immediately after the *Coming of the Rifts*, it is simply a way for these up-and-coming Pyromancers to protect themselves and help other survivors. They can alter the world around them using their newfound powers, even if they don't quite understand how and why they work. All they do know is that they and others like them can use their abilities to navigate and control a world set afire, slowly being buried in ash by chains of volcanoes.

The Yellowstone Caldera and the Ashlands

Super-volcanoes are enormous volcanoes of colossal size and power. Ticking geological time bombs that tend to erupt only once every 100,000 years or so. One such volcano sits at the former site of **Yellowstone National Park**. Slated to blow sometime over the next few thousand years, the Great Cataclysm triggered the super-volcano's eruption ahead of schedule, setting off a third extinction-level event in a matter of days after the nuclear war and the opening of the Rifts that have both rocked planet Earth.

The initial explosion completely erases Yellowstone national park and the natural wonders it contains, destroying a huge swath of Wyoming in the blink of an eye. Immense amounts of smoke and ash pour up into the atmosphere, blocking out the sun and creating a "nuclear winter" effect that reduces temperatures worldwide. Clouds of ash float across the entire continent, and the column of smoke rising from Yellowstone will linger in the air for more than a year.

While the rest of the planet is confusing and tumultuous, full of tidal waves, earthquakes, fires, civil unrest, Rifts and monsters unknown, **the Ashlands** that have formed in the western United States are like a hellish alien planet. The entire region is now covered in lava pools and flows of magma, with columns of rising smoke that blocks out the sun and causes a perpetual haze in the air. A continuous fall of ashes makes the landscape gray and unrecognizable, coating the ground in a few centimeters somewhere, a few meters elsewhere, rendering many places inaccessible, even to NEMA. Aircraft cannot fly, vehicles cannot drive, and the most terrifying inter-dimensional beasts that stalk the ashen wastes are sometimes overcome by smoke and ash, and choke and die just like their measly human prey.

The outermost areas of the Ashlands seem quiet and peaceful compared to what awaits further ahead. Columns of refugees shuffle beneath ash that falls like soft snow, muffling sound and making the land and people all look monotonously gray. Meadows, cornfields, trees and buildings are all slowly covered in this strange precipitation of cinders. Grass and pavement quickly become indistinguishable from each other, making driving hazardous, and parked vehicles and small obstacles start to become absorbed into the rising ash drifts.

When rain falls, thin layers of ash are washed away, but the really thick ashfall turns into a kind of muddy concrete, burying and entombing the old world beneath it and leaving a volcanic desert up above.

Press further into the land of ashes and one will begin to see the bright orange of magma and blue of ley lines in the distance, dulled by the heavy smoke that hangs in the air. Survivors become rare and interdimensional terrors lurk in half-buried buildings and forests of gray-stained trees that cough with smoke when shaken by some passing beast. Virtually all native life has been extinguished, right down to the bugs and plants. Cities and towns have become warrens, systems of man-made caverns that now criss-cross through mountains of ash and lava, studded with collapsed roofs and windows that have broken inward. Here the Pyromancer is in his or her natural element, seamlessly crossing lakes of lava and cutting through thick drifts of fallen ash. Where others choke and die, Pyromancers breathe clear and shrug off blazing fire. They have already created supply caches and safe houses amongst the buried towns and farmsteads, sanctuaries where they can hide out for a night or tuck away a few survivors on their way towards the (slightly) greater odds of survival outside the fire-swept wasteland.

At the center of the Ashlands is Wyoming, the land that used to be Yellowstone National Park, and the super-volcano itself. While other places have been buried in ashfall, Yellowstone has been essentially *turned over* as the super-volcano brought up millions of tons of earth and rock from deep below the surface and replaced what was once above. Flows of magma since then have added to the transformation, creating fresh ground, shorelines of obsidian and volcanic stone rising up out of a sea of ash. Many parts of this inner region now resemble an alien planet more than the Earth that once was, without a single recognizable building, a road sign, tree, or even a blade of grass.

The very center of the Yellowstone super-volcano is the **caldera**, a vast, hollow mountain sloping up towards an exposed lake of lava more than three miles (4.8 km) across. Bubbles the size of skyscrapers rise up out of the liquid rock and burst, splashing many-ton gobs of magma across the ashen wastes all around. Occasionally, massive rivers of lava overflow the caldera and carve hissing paths through the ash, further warping and layering the landscape.

The caldera is a natural wonder few will ever survive to see, and the Pyromancers of the Ashlands are some of the handful of witnesses to the massive fountain of smoke and fire that is transforming the world and inspiring their magic. This will be their domain for decades before the caldera cools, earth fills-in and life reclaims the ashen wastes.

Ionia, Island in the Ashes

Located in Nebraska, the Ionia Volcano, north of Sioux City, was once referred to as *Nebraska's Prairie Volcano*. Not an actual volcano, the smoky fumes that early settlers saw rising from the land were actually a byproduct of a chemical reaction going on underground. After a flood, however, the reaction slowed to a halt, but the name stuck. A curiosity and tourist attraction, the site was also held sacred by the local Native American tribes as a place of strong mystical energy and spirits.

When the Great Cataclysm struck and the Wyoming super-volcano erupted, a trio of powerful ley lines flared to life around

Ionia. The source of the ancient spirits the area was known for, they formed a wedge of protected, blessed ground where the smoke, fire and ash could not inundate the land. While everything else in sight was covered in ash, burnt, blasted and destroyed, Ionia stood out, visible for miles around amidst the gray wasteland. Refugees are drawn to the island of greenery and fresh air, even if they cannot understand how it resists the super-volcano's might.

A large concentration of survivors have become *Pyromancers*, making Ionia a kind of nexus for their niche magic. Cooperation and collaboration inspires and enables others to follow their path. Desperate and welcoming of these "fire powers," the Pyromancers are diligent in trying to learn and understand how their (magic) abilities work and teach the art of volcanic Pyromancy to others. This enables them to develop this wild, unproven magic in a stunningly short time. The vast land of ash and lava around Ionia attracts many fledgling and developing Pyromancers to the area, making it a kind of birthing-ground for the young students of magic. Locals, police, military, NEMA and budding magic users have built a kind of idyllic refugee camp, pooling together resources and doing their best to protect each other from the demons and monsters that have no problem crossing the layers of light and magic that keeps out the ash and smoke. There are almost 30,000 survivors crammed into Ionia, with limited access to food and water, so the camp is already running on borrowed time, but the promise of magic answers more of the refugees' needs every day, and many are beginning to depend on the strange force for the basic necessities of human life.

From the "island," Pyromancers are less than 100 miles (160 km) from the half-buried but still occupied cities of **Lincoln** and **Omaha**, connected by highways that have only received a light dusting of ash, at least at first. These are Nebraska's population centers, where people can still be rescued and vital technology recovered. To the west and north are the Ashlands themselves, with the increasingly alien world of Chaos Earth beyond them.

Offutt Air Force Base, and the NEMA soldiers rallying there, have received a few reports from refugees about Ionia and a green sanctuary amidst the blizzard of ashes. In the days after the Great Cataclysm strikes, however, these stories sound no stranger than anything else, and neither NEMA nor the regular military can spare the manpower or resources necessary to check things out. They are preparing to retake Lincoln from the *Lost Skeletons Citizens' Militia*, and are nearing the breaking point just trying to organize civilian refugees. Any Pyromancer that helps them in either cause will have a good chance of overcoming their natural suspicions and mistrust of people with strange powers.

NORAD, the Big Bunker

North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), is based out of Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado. Within the blanketing fall of ash, the bunker lost contact with the outside world shortly after the Great Cataclysm, and no one can be sure if the President is alive, sheltered inside, or if any of the emergency infrastructure designed to manage the apocalypse has remained intact. Getting to Cheyenne Mountain is no easy task, and requires navigating the Ashlands and the D-Shifting Rocky Mountains, difficult or impossible without a Pyromancer at one's side.

Getting inside the bunker, even if it is still there, will be a monumental challenge, but the fate of the future could hang in

the balance. There is always the chance that nothing remains but a smoking crater, however, as Cheyenne Mountain has been subjected to severe geological and dimensional upheaval.

Nebraskan Pyromancer O.C.C.

Imbued with the power of fire and ash, lava and magma, Pyromancers are people transformed by the dual effects of the Rifts and the super-volcano, just like the land they once thought they knew. These fledgling mages and other survivors left to fend for themselves are quick to rely on these new abilities and the people who wield them in order to stay alive. Few question how these “powers” have come into being or how they work. They are simply grateful to find a defense against the array of aliens and monsters they now face in a world that has gone mad.

Thanks to popular culture, most Pyromancers initially think of themselves as supermen or mutants with super abilities. Not as sorcerers drawing upon magic energy to cast fire- and lava-based magic spells. The particulars, however, don't necessarily matter. What does matter is that potential spell casters see others summoning and using these “powers” under life-and-death circumstances. It is firsthand exposure that leads more people to believe such things are possible and to try to repeat the wonders that they have beheld. Those with determined belief, combined with a focus born from terror and deep-rooted survival instincts, help them follow in the early Pyromancers' footsteps to also wield Magma magic. It is ironic, but many of the early forms of Chaos Magic are developed out of fear and desperate need, long before people learn to understand and formalize the mystic arts. In the aftermath of the Great Cataclysm, all that is needed is passion, fueled by powerful emotions – be it hope or fear – for some people to inadvertently tap into the massive amounts of ambient P.P.E. (Potential Psychic Energy) currently rippling across the surface of the planet.

While emergency responders and the military are helpless in many situations thanks to the effects of the super-volcano, Pyromancers can travel through and survive within this world unto itself. Their ability to cross through the Ashlands region makes Pyromancers a vital link between east and west as communications networks fail and pockets of survivors become more and more isolated. The Rocky Mountains are a significant obstacle, both geologically and magically unstable, but Pyromancers slipping through using smoke and ash as cover can evade demons and monsters, overcome the forbidding geography, and light their way through black, starless nights and dim, haze-choked days. From the huddled survivors' camps that fill with refugees fleeing the blast zone, these heroes head in the other direction, towards the mighty volcano, towards the hellscape that has been created.

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

1. Impervious to Lava, Fire and Heat: Pyromancers create a magic aura or field of heat resistance, making their bodies, the clothes they wear and items on their person (including a backpack and belt pouches, holster and the gun or knife inside the holster, and similar), completely impervious to lava, fire and heat – no damage. Mega-Damage Lasers, plasma, napalm, and magic fire inflict only 20% of their usual damage. Other energy weapons, projectiles, explosives, cold attacks and other forms of magic and psionics inflict full damage.

Impervious to toxic gases, smoke, sulfur and ash, which enables the Pyromancer to see and breathe without protective gear with only minor difficulty at lava fields, blazing infernos, and other hellish environments filled ash, smoke, noxious fumes and intense heat. Minor Penalties: Reduce range of vision by half, reduce speed by 10%, and -1 to strike, parry, dodge, disarm, and entangle. Breathing is not encumbered in and around volcanos and other infernos where most people would find the air too thin, hot and toxic to breathe and too hot to survive. Moreover, the Pyromancer suffers no short- or long-term health ramifications from breathing in ash, smoke, sulfur and other toxic gases and airborne particles common to volcanic activity and fires. No special air mask or oxygen supply is needed by the Pyromancer to function and survive within such conditions.

2. Walk On and Through Lava: Pyromancers can walk and run on the crusty surface of lava as it slowly begins to cool and harden, but is still burning hot. Neither they or the belongings on their person suffer damage from walking across solid but still burning hot, hardening lava – enough to melt the bottoms of shoes and the tires on land vehicles. Penalty for Travel over Hardening Lava: Reduce Spd by 20% and -10% to Climbing.

Even more impressive, the Pyromancer is able to *walk through boiling lava* as if he were wading through water. This is done without injury to him or destruction to his belongings. For example, the shoes and clothes should catch fire and burn right off the mage's body, as should his flesh, but do not thanks to the Pyromancer's aura of protection. (See #5. *Impervious to Lava, Fire and Heat*, below.) Nor is the mage swept away by the movement of the lava's flow, but travel through lava is like wading through mud and is a slow journey. Penalty: Reduce Spd by 50% for lava that is a few inches to as deep as coming up to the knees. Reduce Spd by 70% if the lava comes up to the waist and by 90% if it comes up to the collar bone or chin. Even the Pyromancer cannot travel through deeper lava flows without using magic like *Swim through Lava*.

3. Concealed in Ash and Smoke: The Pyromancer can meld into smoke and ash caused by volcanos, fire, pyrotechnics or magic, and seems to vanish within it. From time to time, only glimpses of a silhouette-like shadow reveals the Pyromancer's momentary presence before the shadowy shape again vanishes in the shifting smoke or ash fall. Extremely well-camouflaged (+20% to the Camouflage and Prowl skills) while in physical contact with smoke and ash. Attackers that shoot at the mage from a distance greater than 7 feet (2.1 m) are -6 to strike. Even those within 3-7 feet (0.9 to 2.1 m) are -3 to strike. Only those locked in melee combat with the mage do not suffer a penalty to strike. However, the concealment within the smoke or ash is lost the moment the Pyromancer is steps clear of it or rushes out from its concealing embrace to attack. This ability only works in smoke and ash clouds larger than the mage.

4. Sense Location and Direction of Super-Volcano: Just as some animals can sense True North, the Pyromancer can always find his way back to the Yellowstone Super-Volcano. This assists the character in navigating the Ashlands and provides a +5% to all Navigation-based skills. The mage can also sense the location of other, active volcanoes within one mile (1.6 km) per level of experience, and knows if the volcano is going to blow within 48 hours. In addition, this ability lets the Pyromancer tell the difference between an earthquake and the rumbling caused by pressure building in a volcano or volcanic hot spring or geyser.



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5. P.P.E. Base: 1D6x10+66 plus 2D6 per level of experience. Intuitively Learns new spells like the Blue Zone Wizard/Line Wizard. Can learn spells not listed below but casting non-Pyromancer spells costs an additional 6 P.P.E. per level of the spell. This hindrance is due to the lateral thinking necessary to learn this new form of magic.

6. Initial Spells & Learning New Spells: At level one, select a total of 1D6+6 Pyromancy magic spells. Spell selection is made from Pyromancy Magic and related spell levels 1-5.

The Pyromancer seems to intuitively develop new Pyromancer spells with each new level of experience. One new Pyromancer spell (or related magic as listed in the spell section) upon reaching even experience levels (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, etc) and two new spells at odd levels of advancement (3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, etc.).

Spell selections of more powerful spells, Levels 6 and higher, are NOT possible until the mage has reached fifth level experience. At that point, the Pyromancer may select Pyromancy spells from levels 1-10.

7. Influence of a Ley Line: The duration and range of the Pyromancer's spells and other magic abilities are increased by 50% whenever on or near (within 1,000 feet/305 m) a *ley line*. Double the duration, range and damage of the mage's powers when on or near (within 1,000 feet/305 m) of a *ley line nexus point*.

Pyromancer O.C.C.

Also Known As: Magma Mage and Lava Mage.

Alignment: Any, but most see themselves as heroes and lean toward Principled, Scrupulous and Unprincipled alignments, especially in the early years after the Great cataclysm.

Racial Restrictions: None, but only Pyromancers can learn Pyromancy Magic.

Attribute Requirements: I.Q. 9 or higher. Those not required, a high M.A. and P.E. attribute are helpful.

O.C.C. Bonuses: Add +1 to I.Q., M.A. and P.E. Also see Special Abilities, above.

O.C.C. Skills:

Climbing (+15%)

Computer Operation (+30%)

First Aid (+15%)

Land Navigation (+10%)

Language: American at 90%

Language: Select one additional (+20%).

Literacy: American (+20%)

Land Navigation (+15%)

Lore: Demon & Monster (+10%)

Pilot: One civilian piloting skill of choice, but most vehicles do not work well in the ash-filled land and skies.

Spelunking (+10%)

Swimming or Running, pick one.

Wilderness Survival (+10%)

W.P. Ancient, one of choice, probably Staff, Blunt, or Archery.

W.P. Modern, one of choice, probably W.P. Handguns or W.P. Rifle.

Hand to Hand: Basic can be selected as one O.C.C. Related Skill or Expert for the cost of two.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select five other skills at level one and one additional skill at level 3, 5, 9, and 12. All new skills start at level one proficiency. Focused on learning magic not skills. Communications: Any.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Basic only.

Espionage: None.

Mechanical: Automotive only.

Medical: Paramedic and Field Surgery only (+5%).

Military: Any.

Physical Any.

Pilot: Any, except Military grade vehicles, Robots and Power Armor.

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: None.

Science: Biology and Math skills only (+10%).

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P.: Any, except Harpoon & Spear Gun and Military W.P.s like Heavy Weapons, Heavy Energy Weapons, Torpedo and Sharpshooting.

Wilderness: Any (+5%)

Secondary Skills: The character also gets to select two Secondary Skills at levels 2 and 6. These are additional areas of knowledge that do not get the advantages of the bonus listed in parenthesis. All Secondary skills start at the base skill level.

Standard Equipment: 1D4+1 sets of clothing and seem to prefer black, reds, orange, yellow and earth tone colors; a hoodie, a long coat, hooded cloak or poncho, good walking shoes or boots, tinted goggles, untinted goggles, baseball cap or hat or knit cap, first aid kit, tent, knapsack, backpack or saddlebag, three canteens, emergency food rations (two weeks supply), 1D4 hardball baseballs or golf balls, 1D4+1 softball to brick-sized rocks, 1D4+1 smoke grenades, one weapon plus 1D4 ammo clips suitable for each W.P. skill and some personal items.

Money: The character starts off with 3D6x100 in credits or tradeable goods.

Cybernetics: None.

Experience: Uses the same experience table as the **Blue Zone Wizard** from **Chaos Earth®: Rise of Magic**, page 62.

New Pyromancy Spells

Ideas and Spells Inspired by Daniel Frederick.

Level One

Armor of Ash (7)

Ash Bomb/Sphere (2)

Cauterize (2)

Fiery Dagger (4)

Fire Spark (2)

Hot Rocks (3)

Lava and Heat Seal (5)

Lava Torch (2)

Shed Lava (2)

Shoot Stream/Blast of Steam (3)

Level Two

Cool Lava (5)

Fiery Spearhead (6 or 12)

Flaming Sphere or Rock Projectile (6)

Shoot Stream of Burning Embers (4)

Smoke Screen (5)
Volcanological Divination (7)

Level Three

Create Campfire or Curtain of Fire (8)
Eyes of Fire (8)
Fiery Arrowhead (4)
Fiery Sword or Axe (12)
Fiery War Hammer (12)
Fiery Whip (12)

Level Four

Armor of Magma (14)
Flaming Spear Projectile (10)
Firebrand (8)
Hot Blooded (8)
Pyroclastic Calling (7)
Write in Lava (8)

Level Five

Burning Hands (10)
Fire Jump (Teleport; 15)
Flaming Lava Projectile (10)
Heal Burns (10)
Rain Ash (10 or 24)
Summon Fireflies (10)

Level Six

Healing Lava Pool (15)
Lava Dam (17)
Line of Traveling Fire (12)
Shoot Lava Bolt (15)
Walk on Lava (10)

Level Seven

Enchant Weapon with Fire (5 or 20)
Drain Lava (20)
Magma Well (21)
Pyroclastic Cloud Attack (25)

Level Eight

Magma Geyser (20)
Glass Cloud Barrier (20)
Swim Through Lava (12 or 24)
Wings of Flame (30)

Level Nine

Ash Storm (35)
Hallucination of Lava (65)
Stop Lava Flow (50; temporary)

Level Ten

Guide Lava Flow (50)
Ocean of Ash (55)
Pyroclastic Sphere of Protection (60)
Rain Lava (110)

Additional Related Fire-Based spells available to Pyromancers

See **Rifts® Book of Magic** for all descriptions.

Ballistic Fire (25)
Blinding Flash (1)
Cap Volcano (80)
Circle of Flame (10)
Close Fissures (30)
Cloud of Ash (5)
Cloud of Smoke (2)
Cloud of Steam (10)
Dragon Fire (40)
Extinguish Fire (4)
Fireblast (8)
Firequake (160)
Fire Ball (10)
Fire Blossom (20)
Fire Bolt (7)
Fire Globe (40)
Fire Gout (20)
Fuel Flame (5)
Ignite Fire (6)
Impervious to Fire (5)
River of Lava (50)

New Pyromancy Spells Listed by Level

Level One

Armor of Ash

Level: One.

Range: Self or one other by touch.

Duration: 10 minutes per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Seven

This armor can be cast on oneself or another (up to 50 feet/15.2 m, line of sight required). The armor appears as soot smeared across the body and ash-coated clothing. The armor covers the whole body but does not provide an oxygen supply or protection against smoke, ash, gases or chemical sprays. And despite its soft and dirty appearance, does not wash off in the rain or if submerged underwater.

It does blend in beautifully with a landscape covered in ashes, however, making the “wearer” +10% to Prowl and Tailing and +15% to Camouflage skills *outdoors in the Ashlands* only. If the person in Ash Armor intentionally hides or stands/crouches completely still, unmoving, he is likely to remain unseen – lost in the ash all around him until someone comes within 20 feet (6.1 m) of him. Even then, those walking by are -3 on Perception Rolls, -6 if there is also falling ash or smoke. The wearer of Ash Armor becomes noticeable only when he his moving or attacking, and when he is more than 100 feet (30.5 m) away in *falling ash, smoke, fog or falling snow*, becomes little more than a blur. Those using range attacks against the blur are -4 to strike. And if he drops to the ground in a prone position and doesn't move, is completely lost from sight and those looking for him are -6 on Perception Rolls.

Ash Armor also makes the wearer undetectable to infrared optics as well as heat sensors/optic systems!

Physical Armor protection is light: 5 M.D.C. per level of the spell caster.

Note: On an S.D.C. world, Ash Armor has an A.R. of 13 and 5 S.D.C. points per level of experience, as well as the special bonuses and features noted above.

Ash Bomb/Sphere

Level: One.

Range: One Ash Bomb per casting, thrown up to 6 feet (1.8 m) +1 foot (0.3 m) per level of experience.

Duration: Instant result.

Damage (special): 1D4 S.D.C. when struck in the body and creates a big, gray dust mark. No damage if wearing a heavy coat or any type of armor, even if it is just S.D.C. armor.

Head Shot Damage and Penalties: Victims who are not wearing protective goggles/eye-wear and a mouth/nose covering such as a gas mask or protective helmet, and are struck in the face, take 1D4 S.D.C. damage and are partially blinded by the ash with the following results: Loses 1D4 melee attacks/actions that initial melee round, and all combat maneuvers (strike, parry, dodge, etc.) are -6 while the victim tries to blink and squint through the gritty particles that get in his eyes. The penalties last for 1D4 melee rounds or until the eyes are flushed with water.

To strike the face requires a *Called Shot* and a roll of 12 or higher to hit, plus the opponent can try to parry or dodge the attack.

Throwing an Ash Bomb at someone wearing a helmet, gas mask or armor or a cyborg, creates a momentary puff of ash that causes the victim to lose initiative and is -2 on all combat maneuvers (strike, parry, dodge, etc.) until he wipes the powdery ash from his visor, helmet's faceplate or cyborg eyes/lenses, which uses up only one melee attack to perform.

Saving Throw: Dodge or parry only, with a -1 penalty.

P.P.E.: Two, but ash must be physically available and the act of bending down to scoop up ash counts as one melee attack and throwing the Ash Bomb as another. However, if walking through an ash field, the ashlands or when ash is falling all around the mage, the Ash Sphere magically appears in his hand to throw, and circumvents the need to physically scoop it up. This holds true even if the ash is wet from rain. **Note:** Can make ash magically appear in his hand, anywhere, but costs 15 P.P.E.

The spell caster can scoop up a fistful of ash and magically turn it into a ball to throw. Damage is only 1D4 S.D.C. (no damage if the opponent is wearing armor of any kind, S.D.C. or M.D.C.), and range is short, but if thrown in an adversary's face, the Ash Bomb explodes into a small cloud of ash, causing him to cough and partially blinding him. See Damage, above, for exact details and duration of penalties.

Cauterize

Level: One.

Range: By touch.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Two

Pyromancers use the power of a super-heated stone to sear a bleeding wound shut and stop blood loss. The magical precision and skill of the spell caster allows small wounds to be closed and can be used to treat fairly complicated cuts and tears, and when assisting a healer or doctor that includes the cauterization of internal bleeding. This spell does not restore H.P. or S.D.C., nor does it restore function or feeling to damaged limbs/body parts. By stopping the loss of blood, however, it can dramatically increase someone's survival time before they require immediate medical attention.

Fiery Dagger

Level: One.

Range: Weapon held by Pyromancer only. Cannot be thrown.

Duration: One melee round.

Mega-Damage: 1D6 M.D.; creatures vulnerable to fire take 50% more damage.

Saving Throw: Parry, dodge or disarm.

P.P.E.: Four

This spell turns an ordinary S.D.C. knife into a flame-covered Mega-Damage weapon by creating an M.D. flaming aura around it. So if the small bladed weapon did 1D4 S.D.C. damage it now does 1D4 M.D. as a flaming weapon. If S.D.C. damage was 1D6 it now does 1D6 M.D., and so on. Knives never do more than 2D4 or 1D6+2 S.D.C. damage so 2D4 or 1D6+2 M.D. is the maximum possible from this magic. 1D6 M.D. is the norm. **Note:** See Fiery Sword for larger blade weapons. ALL Fiery weapons return to normal and can be used repeatedly (unless stated otherwise). The flame around the weapon goes out when the weapon is released or knocked out of the mage's hand.

Fire Spark

Level: One.

Range: Self only.

Duration: Instant

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Two

The Pyromancer can create a fiery spark, like the flick of a lighter, to catch kindling and highly flammable materials on fire. Mainly used to start a proper campfire, light a cigarette or candle, or to light a fuse. A Fire Spark has a 50/50 chance of setting spilled or an open container of fuel/gasoline/lamp oil on fire. The spark is not enough to set someone's clothes, furniture, hair or a hay bale on fire.

Hot Rocks

Level: One.

Range: By touch.

Duration: Instant result that lasts for one hour +30 minutes per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Three

The Pyromancer can heat ordinary stones, by touch (so two rocks the size of a grapefruit or brick, or as many smaller stones that can be held in the hands, per spell casting) to generate heat without generating fire or smoke and without requiring combustible materials like kindling wood. Each heated pair of grapefruit- or brick-sized rocks radiates heat, but is

not red hot, and is hot enough to warm an area for one or two people as well as to cook one simple, small meal. The heat lasts for one hour +30 minutes per level of the spell caster. A pile of 10-20 rocks can heat an area 10 feet (2 m) in diameter equivalent to a small or medium campfire and cook a larger meal or several small, individual meals. The rocks are hot to the touch and will burn anyone who picks one up (does 1D6 S.D.C. damage). It can also sear wood and fabric black, but will not set dry brush, clothing or wood on fire. Each stone can be no larger than a grapefruit or standard brick used to build houses. Ideal for camping, adventuring, keeping warm and cooking. **Note:** The stones can be no smaller than a golf-ball. Smaller rocks, pebbles, sand, clay, mud and ice cannot be heated via this spell. If so desired, the spell caster can cancel the magic before its full duration runs out.

Lava and Heat Seal

Level: One.

Range: Self and one other person by touch, or two other people by touch (not self and two people). It can also be applied to as many as four sealed containers like backpacks, suit cases, plastic tubs, barrels, and canisters by touch. Cannot seal off a vehicle or robot, but can be used on body armor and light to medium power armor.

Duration: 30 minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Five

Sometimes Pyromancers wade through lava without harm. While they are not hurt by the molten rock, and neither are their clothing and the belongings carried on their person and on their backs, the lava still gets everywhere. Inside pockets, under clothing, in the hair, inside backpacks, belt pouches, etc. This spell magically seals off and closes all openings to prevent the lava from seeping into these locations and prevents combustible materials that are worn or contained inside from catching fire or melting! It can also be applied to containers, like bottles, containers, backpacks, sacks, satchels, barrels, trunks, plastic tubs, wooden crates (not cardboard boxes), and similar sealable containers, to prevent lava from destroying the container or leaking into the container.

Lava Torch

Level: One.

Range: Self, handheld. Range of illumination 10 feet (3 m) with brightest light being nearest the torch; equivalent to a 60 watt bulb.

Duration: One hour per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Two

The spell enables the mage to dip the tip of a club, baseball bat, staff, chair or table leg, a thick tree branch and similar object and turn it a few times to get a wad of lava to wrap around one end. When removed from the lava flow and held up, the glob of lava does not run down the shaft but stays in place and radiates light as if it were a fiery torch (equal to a 60 watt bulb). This illumination is wider, brighter and burns longer than what an actual glob of lava would provide. Moreover, it does minimal damage to the wooden torch itself.

This spell is used to illuminate. It is not a weapon. If it is used as a blunt weapon to hit someone, it inflicts a mere 1D6 S.D.C. points of damage and falls apart after 1D4 impacts and goes dark. Lava is necessary to perform this magic. The spell caster may douse the Lava Torch with a wave of his hand.

Shed Lava

Level: One.

Range: Self and one other person by touch, or two other people (not self and two others) up to 20 feet (6.1 m) away; line of sight required.

Duration: Instant with permanent results.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Two

Sometimes Pyromancers walk or swim through streams and rivers of lava without harm. While they and the belongings on their backs are not hurt by the molten rock, the lava still gets everywhere. Inside pockets, under clothing, in the hair, inside backpacks, belt pouches, etc. This spell magically sheds all the lava on the character's person and belongings. All the lava dropping off into a puddle around the mage in just six seconds. This spell is also ideal for quickly getting lava off people or possessions before the magma does more damage over the next several melee rounds.

Shoot Stream/Blast of Steam

Level: One.

Range: 100 feet (30 m) +10 feet (6 m) per each additional level of experience.

Duration: Burns for three melee rounds.

S.D.C. Damage: 2D6 S.D.C. +1 S.D.C. point per each level of experience.

Saving Throw: Dodge only.

P.P.E.: Three

The mage can fire a stream or blast of steam from one of his hands or from his mouth (-2 to strike for blasts from the mouth unless the target is within 12 feet/3.6 m, then no penalty). Ideal for S.D.C. combat, riot control, and chasing away animals.

Level Two

Cool Lava

Level: Five.

Range: Touch or up to 20 feet (6.1 m) away, but requires line of sight.

Duration: Instant with permanent results.

Saving Throw: Not applicable unless the healing is unwanted, then a standard save applies.

P.P.E.: Five

The spell immediately cools small amounts of burning lava (two pounds/0.9 kg per level of the spell caster), and is ideal for stopping splatters of hot lava from burning and inflicting additional damage to victims splattered or sprayed with lava. Once cooled the lava can be plucked off the individual, however, whatever damage was sustained from the molten rock remains in place.

Fiery Spearhead

Level: Two.

Range: Weapon held by Pyromancer only. Throwing range 100 feet (30.5 m), but -2 to strike (no penalty if the character has W.P. Spear).

Duration: One melee round.

Mega-Damage: Short Spear or Javelin: 1D6 M.D., Long Spear: 2D6 M.D., Lance: 2D6+3 M.D.; not applicable to pole arms. Not ideal for throwing (-2 to strike); see Flaming Spear Projectile for a thrown spear/javelin. The flame around the weapon goes out when the weapon is released or knocked out of the mage's hand.

Saving Throw: Parry, dodge or disarm.

P.P.E.: Six for a Short Spear or Javelin, 12 P.P.E. for a Long Spear or Lance.

Fundamentally the same as the Fiery Dagger spell in form and function except it is the Spearhead at the end of a spear shaft that becomes a flaming Mega-Damage. 1D6 M.D. is the norm for spears. 2D6 M.D. applies only to long spears and Lances. **Note:** Creatures vulnerable to fire take 50% more damage.

Flaming Sphere or Rock Projectile

Level: Two.

Range: The weapon is held and enchanted by a Pyromancer but then thrown with dramatic effect. Throwing range is 70 feet (21.3 m) +5 feet (1.5 m) per level of experience.

Duration: One melee round or until impact.

Mega-Damage: 1D4+1 M.D. when held and used to strike as a blunt weapon. 1D6 M.D. when thrown. The flame around the sphere or stone goes out after impact and will not cause dry brush or combustibles to catch on fire.

Bonus: +1 to strike when throwing a flaming rock or ball no larger than a softball or grapefruit. -3 to strike if larger or not a ball shape such as a brick.

Saving Throw: Parry, dodge or disarm.

P.P.E.: Six

As long as there are ordinary stones laying around that are the size of golf ball to that of a grapefruit, the Pyromancer has Mega-Damage combat capabilities! This spell turns an entirely ordinary S.D.C. stone or S.D.C. toy ball (golf ball, baseball, rubber ball, etc., but can be no larger than a grapefruit) into a flame-covered, low Mega-Damage bludgeon or a Mega-Damage projectile that can be thrown. But this must be done before the duration ends, or else the object reverts back to normal. Upon impact, the entire rock or ball explodes in a blast of fire, damaging whatever it hits. The item is completely destroyed. **Note:** Creatures vulnerable to fire take double damage.

Shoot Stream of Burning Embers

Level: Two.

Range: 50 feet (15 m) +10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.

Duration: Counts as one melee attack.

Mega-Damage: 1D6 S.D.C. per level of the spell caster, plus a 50% chance of setting combustible material – dry grass, hay, furniture, blankets, clothing, etc. – on fire. This is a series of small fires that will quickly spread if not quickly extinguished. Mega-Damage clothing and materials are immune to this attack.

Saving Throw: Dodge at -2.

P.P.E.: Four

This Pyromancy spell is useful for leveling structures and destroying parked vehicles. The stream of embers moves slowly and does limited damage at first, but for a small expenditure of energy, the Pyromancer can maintain the stream, dealing greater and greater damage over time until burning embers are flowing like a waterfall of sparks. The damage builds up consistently, so unless the target moves it will eventually be destroyed or the spell caster will run out of P.P.E.

Smoke Screen

Level: One.

Range: Self only.

Duration: 5 minutes +1 minute per each additional level of experience; quadruple the duration when only the head and face are concealed.

Damage: None.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Five

This spell can be used to mask one's face or entire body. When just the face/head is concealed, it appears to be covered in or actually made of ash. The face is mostly featureless, with a slit for the mouth and two dark spots for the eyes. When the entire body is concealed the Smoke Screen creates a swirling or flowing aura of smoke or ash perpetually around a single, human-sized body about four feet (1.2 m) in diameter. Within the cloud is a vaguely human silhouette that can be seen for a split second, from time to time, but he or she or it, is otherwise concealed. No identifying features, marks, clothing, armor, weapons, etc.

The Smoke Screen makes attacks from a distance -4 to strike. Anyone entering the Smoke Screen to engage in hand to hand combat is *partially blinded*, even if wearing a gas mask or helmet, due to the swirling smoke, ash, and grit, suffering a penalty of -6 on all combat rolls (initiative, strike, parry, dodge, etc.). Only the spell caster is not blinded.

Volcanological Divination (Ritual)

Level: Two.

Range: Self only.

Duration: The ritual takes 2 minutes (8 melee rounds) to perform.

Mega-Damage: None. The spell caster glows with a dim orange light as he performs the ritual.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Seven

This magic ritual allows Pyromancers to sense volcanic activity and divine likely events such as whether the volcano is likely to erupt soon (tomorrow or within a few months) or no time soon (years or decades from now), the duration of the event, the amount of lava and the direction its flowing lava streams are likely to take, whether there will be a pyroclastic event (massive destructive cloud of smoke, ash, debris, and rolling mud) and the course it will take, areas likely to suffer deadly bombardment of rock, ash and molten rock, fires that may be caused by it and where they will occur, seismic events and other events related to volcanic eruption and activity. He may also be able to tell if the event is natural and magically induced. Such information can be crucial in saving lives, evacuating communities in the line of destruction and so on. To have premonitions about a particular

volcano, the Pyromancer must be at the site of the active or dormant volcano in question. The exact time and complete details will be lacking, but there is enough information to avoid disaster and save lives. As events are always changing, such premonitions may be unreliable, especially when they relate to events a year or more in the future.

Level Three

Create Campfire or Curtain of Fire

Level: Three.

Range: 50 feet (15.2 m), line of sight, open space.

Duration: Instant result. 1D6 melee rounds as a barrier, or one hour per level of the spell caster for a campfire.

Damage: 1D6 S.D.C. damage per level of the spell caster to anyone who runs through a curtain or wall of fire.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Eight

This spell can be cast in two ways. First, it can be used to create a campfire, for warmth, to cook over, as a light source or to keep animals away. The campfire can be canceled and made to go out instantly by the spell caster or doused with dirt or water to put it out like any normal fire.

In the alternative, the spell can be cast as a **thin, wall-like barrier** or curtain of fire.

When cast upright, it can be used to block a doorway, window or a narrow alley passage. In this case, the flaming barrier is a maximum of six feet (1.8 m) tall and three feet (0.9 m) wide.

When cast horizontally, the wall of fire is only six inches (0.15 m) tall per level of the spell caster, but it may be enough, especially for higher level Pyromancers who can make taller horizontal walls, to momentarily hold an animal, enemy or creature fearful of fire at bay. This thin fire wall is always a straight, right and left line, or diagonal line of flames no longer than 10 feet (3 m).

In both cases, vertical and horizontal fire barriers (regardless of the height of a horizontal one) is a thin sheet or curtain of flames 1D6 inches (2.5 to 15 cm) thick, but remains intimidating. Most people will hesitate a few seconds (loses two melee attacks) before deciding whether or not they will run through the curtain or line of flame. Many will not brave it.

Non-predatory animals and beings afraid of fire or to whom fire does greater damage, will NOT cross such a barrier, not even a low wall. However, there is a chance an intelligent being who is not protected against fire will still take the chance of leaping over or running through it.

Of course, M.D.C. creatures, heavily armored adversaries and those who are impervious to fire suffer no damage from this magical fire, nor are they impressed by this pitiful fire display, and should not hesitate to go right through it.

S.D.C. Damage: The spell creates normal S.D.C. fire. Anyone and their possessions who goes through the thin, fiery barrier – a quick hop – suffers only 1D6 S.D.C. damage per level of the spell caster, and the spell caster can regulate the amount of damage done in increments of 1D6 S.D.C.

Note: The flames radiate with heat and looks worse than it is (Horror Factor 14), so it may still work as a deterrent against some foes. In addition, a curtain of fire used to fill and block a doorway, window or narrow passageway, as well as a tall hori-

zontal wall can be used to obscure what's on the other side and cover an escape. This short-lived, thin fire barrier only has a 20% chance of setting a window frame, door or door frame, etc. on fire, and cannot be cast right on top of a person or object, it is always created in an open area.

Eyes of Fire

Level: Three.

Range: Self only.

Duration: 10 minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Eight

This spell makes it look as if the Pyromancer's eyes are on fire or fire burns in place of his eyes. The magical effect provides the mage with Nightvision and infrared heat-seeing vision for 1,000 feet (305 m). It enables the mage to see through smoke and ash, magic or normal, with perfect clarity up to the same distance. The Eyes of Fire also gives the spell caster a Horror Factor of 9 and a +15% bonus to impress or intimidate.

On the downside, Eyes of Fire stand out significantly at night and is likely to make the spell caster a target of enemies and monsters.

Fiery Arrowhead

Level: Three.

Range: Arrow enchanted by touch from the Pyromancer, but anyone can use and fire the arrow provided they do so within one melee round/15 seconds. Range of the arrow varies by type, see Damage, below, for range as well as damage.

Duration: Lasts one melee round, so it must be fired quickly.

Mega-Damage: As per arrow type.

Short Bow: 1D6 M.D. – 340 feet (104 m).

Longbow: 2D6 M.D. – 640 feet (195 m).

Compound Bow: 2D6+1 M.D. – 700 feet (213 m).

Pistol Crossbow: 1D6 M.D. 120 feet (36 m).

Light Crossbow: 2D4 M.D. – 340 feet (104 m).

Heavy Crossbow: 2D8 M.D. – 600 feet (183 m)

Saving Throw: Dodge only, -5 to dodge arrows.

P.P.E.: Four per each arrow that is enchanted. Can enchant as many as one arrowhead per level of experience, but two arrows costs 8 P.P.E., three 12 P.P.E., four 16 P.P.E., five arrowheads 20 P.P.E. and so on. These fiery-tipped arrows can be quickly handed off to other archers for immediate use.

This spell turns an ordinary S.D.C. arrowhead into a Mega-Damage, flaming arrowhead that can be fired from an ordinary bow or crossbow. But this must be done before the duration ends, or else the arrowhead will revert back to normal. **Note:** Creatures vulnerable to fire take 50% more damage.

Fiery Sword or Axe

Level: Three.

Range: Weapon held by Pyromancer only. Cannot be thrown.

Duration: Three melee rounds.

Mega-Damage: Short Sword, Scimitar, Saber, Machete: 2D4 M.D. Medium Swords or Broadsword: 2D4+1 M.D. Bastard Sword and Long Sword (two-handed): 2D6 M.D.; Very Large 2-Handed Swords, Claymore, Flamberge, Executioner's Sword: 3D6 M.D. **Note:** Hand-Axe/Hatchet does 1D6 M.D. Tomahawk:

2D4 M.D. Two-Headed Axe and Fireman's Axe: 2D6 M.D. and Battle Axe: 3D6 M.D.

Saving Throw: Parry, dodge or disarm.

P.P.E.: Twelve

This spell turns an ordinary S.D.C. sword or axe into a flame-covered, Mega-Damage weapon by creating an M.D. flaming aura around it. So if the sword or axe does 2D6 S.D.C. damage it now does 2D6 M.D. The flame around the weapon goes out when the weapon is released or knocked out of the mage's hand.

Fiery War Hammer

Level: Three.

Range: Weapon held by Pyromancer only. Cannot be thrown.

Duration: Three melee rounds.

Mega-Damage: Hammer/Tool: 1D6 M.D. War Club (Wood): 2D4 M.D. War Hammer (any), Mace, Morning Star, Sledgehammer and Maul: 2D6 M.D.

Saving Throw: Parry, dodge or disarm.

P.P.E.: Twelve

This spell turns an ordinary S.D.C. hammer or club into a flame-covered, Mega-Damage weapon by creating an M.D. flaming aura around it. So if the small hammer or club does 2D6 S.D.C. damage it now does 2D6 M.D. Not applicable to the fists of cyborgs or robots. The flame around the weapon goes out when the weapon is released or knocked out of the mage's hand.

Fiery Whip

Level: Three.

Range: A physical whip must be held by the Pyromancer (not another person), but the magic extends the length/range of the weapon by an extra 2 feet (0.6 m) per level of experience. Cannot be thrown.

Duration: Two melee rounds.

Mega-Damage: Light Whip (3-4 feet/0.9 to 1.2 m long): 1D6 M.D., Cat-O-Nine-Tails (3 feet/0.9 m long): 2D6 M.D. Bull Whip (8 feet/2.4 m long): 2D6+3 M.D.

Saving Throw: Parry, dodge or disarm.

P.P.E.: Twelve

This spell turns an ordinary S.D.C. whip into a flame-covered Mega-Damage weapon by creating an M.D. flaming aura around it. An aura that extends 2 feet (0.6 m) per experience level of the spell caster. Damage is listed above. Not applicable to string, rope, wire, or strips of ordinary rawhide, must be a whip. The flame around the weapon goes out when the weapon is released or knocked out of the mage's hand.

Level Four

Armor of Magma

Level: Four.

Range: Self only. Can be created and worn only by the spell caster.

Duration: Five minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Fourteen

Flowing, red and black liquid lava covers the entire body of the recipient. The spell can be cast on one's self or another

by touch, and provides air filtration and protection against gas, smoke and falling ash. Fire, plasma and heat weapons do *no damage*, not even magic fire attacks. All other forms of attacks from M.D. punches and rail gun rounds to energy weapons, explosives and cold-based magic inflict their normal damage.

Grants a protection of 10 M.D.C. per level of the spell caster. Moreover, the wearer can be completely immersed in lava for up to 10 minutes before overheating and needing to remove himself from the lava. After that time, the Armor of Magma suffers 1D6 M.D. per melee round. When reduced to zero, its protection is completely gone and the person inside the armor falls will take damage unless he exits the lava while there is still at least one M.D.C. point.

Note: On an S.D.C. world, Magma Armor has an A.R. of 17 and 10 S.D.C. per level of experience, as well as the environmental protection from heat, gases and ash.

Flaming Spear Projectile

Level: Four.

Range: The weapon is held and enchanted by the Pyromancer, but then thrown by the mage with dramatic effect. Throwing range is 130 feet (40 m) +30 feet (9.1 m) per level of experience.

Duration: One melee round.

Mega-Damage: 1D6 M.D. per level of experience regardless of the type or size of the spear or javelin. Not applicable to pole arms.

Bonus: +1 to strike when thrown.

Saving Throw: Parry, dodge or disarm.

P.P.E.: Ten

This spell transforms an entire ordinary S.D.C. spear or javelin into a flame-covered Mega-Damage projectile to be thrown. Upon impact, the entire spear explodes in a ball of fire, damaging whatever it struck and half damage to a three foot (0.9 m) wide blast diameter around it. The spear is completely destroyed. **Note:** Creatures vulnerable to fire take double damage.

Firebrand

Level: Four.

Range: Self only or one person by touch or up to 20 feet (6.1 m) away; line of sight required.

Duration: One melee round per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: Standard.

P.P.E.: Eight

This spell fuels the fire of the recipient's passion in adversarial and crisis situations, like combat, increasing his level of intensity for one or a few melee rounds. Provides the following bonuses and penalties: +1 melee attack or action, +10% to speed, +1 on initiative, +1 to combat maneuvers (strike, parry, dodge, disarm, entangle, etc.) that is *being performed to save a life* (his own or another), as well as +5% to skill performance, +10% to charm, impress or intimidate, but no Perception Roll bonuses whatsoever, not even existing ones (focused on the task at hand), is not aware of what's happening around him or approaching danger, and -1 melee attack and reduce speed 10% for the next 1D6 melee rounds after this magic spell ends.

Hot Blooded

Level: Four.

Range: Self or other by touch.

Duration: One hour per each level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Eight self. Fifteen to cast upon others.

The spell caster lights a fire in the mage's own, or another person's, body, providing instant relief from the cold and healing the effects of frostbite and hypothermia. The recipient of the magic is able to stay warm and escape frostbite, even if dressed in summer clothes or is buck naked, in temperatures below zero as low as -100 degrees Fahrenheit (-73 Celsius).

Pyroclastic Calling

Level: Four.

Range: Length of a lava stream or anywhere within an active volcano with flowing lava.

Duration: One melee round +1 melee round per additional level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

Restrictions & Limitations: Requires volcanic or geothermal activity to use this magic, as well as on the heat, flames and smoke of forest fires. Cannot be cast without one of these conditions.

P.P.E.: Seven

The Pyromancer uses lava, fire or smoke generated by volcanic or geothermal activity (including hot springs and geysers) as a medium with which to send his or her voice to a distant location or a specific person in the area. Stepping within reach of a lava flow, burning fire, smoke cloud or pyroclastic cloud generated by volcanic activity, the spell caster simply speaks and his or her words are broadcast to any point (or to a specific person) of choice along that same lava flow, line of smoke, or fire, for however long it goes, or within three miles (4.8 km) per level of experience around the caldera (center) of an active volcano, or for the length of a lava flow. A pyroclastic cloud is the massive rolling cloud of smoke, ash and rock that comes rolling out of volcanoes, resulting from medium to large eruptions. Such pyroclastic clouds may travel 3D6 miles (4.8 to 29 km)!

The spoken message is relayed as telepathic or magical message that can be made to be heard by one specific person, a group of specific people, or everyone within range or along the path the lava or cloud travels.

A typical calling is something like "Wayne Smith, come to me" or "Dan Frederick, you are needed at X location." "There are people in need at Y." It can also be a warning, "Flee (or prepare), the Coalition Army is coming your way." They can also be used to harass or unsettle an enemy. "Leave this place or be destroyed." "Doom comes at midnight." Alternatively, it could be words of hope. "Fear not, help is coming." And so on. The message could also be a set of coordinates or phrase that only has meaning for the person(s) it is intended. In the case of a call to join the mage or meet someplace, the recipient will always receive an impression of where that location is. The calling or message is always short and only broadcasts once per spell casting.

Write in Lava

Level: Four.

Range: Self only.

Duration: 30 minutes per level of the spell caster if generated out from the ground or the side of a rock, cliff, or mountain or hillside. 1D4 days +1 day per level of experience if written using molten rock pulled from a nearby, active lava stream or located in an active lava field or the side of an active volcano. It takes one melee round to create the word or symbol.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Eight

The spell caster can write a giant word or two ("help" "this way" "landing zone," "beware," "come no further," "turn back," "Danger," "Magic Zone," "Demons," and so on). In the alternative, the Pyromancer may create a giant symbol such as an arrow, a circle or X in lava. Each letter can be as large as five feet (1.5 m) per level of the spell caster (symbols proportionately large). This spell may be used to create markers, messages and warnings to be seen from the air, at a distance and at night, and to intimidate an enemy.

Level Five

Burning Hands

Level: Five.

Range: Self only.

Duration: One melee round.

Mega-Damage: 5D6 S.D.C./Hit Point damage from a slap or restrained punch, 1D4 M.D. from a full strength punch and 1D4+2 M.D. from a Power Punch, but the latter counts as two melee attacks; +1 M.D. for characters with a P.S. of 16-20, +2 M.D. for P.S. of 21-24, +3 M.D. for P.S. of 25-28, +4 M.D. for P.S. of 29-34, +5 M.D. for P.S. of 35-39, and +6 M.D. if stronger than that.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Ten

This enchantment makes the Pyromancer's hands and forearms hot and turns them into modest M.D. weapons. Each punch inflicts damage, as described above. In addition, the mage can pick up and handle burning hot coals, embers, hot metal, lava, molten metal, burning objects, etc. without injury to his hands. This can be helpful in emergencies and rescue operations.

The mage can also leave his hand-print(s) burned into wood, plaster, painted surfaces, and other suitable materials, like a brand, to mark his passage. Burning Hands are NOT hot enough, long enough, to start a fire with his hands.

Fire Jump

Also Known As: Fire Teleport.

Level: Five.

Range: Self only, or self and someone wrapped in both of the mage's arms. That may also include one or two small to medium-sized animals that can be held in his arms; not a horse, lion or tiger. Whoever is in his arms is Fire Jumped with the mage.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Fifteen

Often used for dramatic effect, the Pyromancer, who is impervious to lava and fire to begin with, can let a lava flow wash over him and seem to consume him or jump into magma and vanish. Many would presume this individual to be destroyed, especially if they don't know the character is a Pyromancer. When this spell is activated, the spell caster can teleport up to 2,000 feet (610 m) by stepping into lava or a man-sized fire and stepping out of another currently existing flame or lava. The spell also works with molten metal. The Pyromancer must be able to see the destination flame or lava. If there is no destination flame or molten material, the spell caster disappears for a moment (1D4 seconds), before reappearing in a puff of smoke at the exact same location.

Flaming Lava Projectile

Level: Five.

Range: The weapon is held and enchanted by a Pyromancer, but then thrown. Throwing range is 90 feet (27.4 m) +10 feet (3 m) per level of experience.

Duration: 1D4 melee round or until impact, whichever comes first.

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. upon impact (thrown), but the lava sticks and continues to inflict +1D6 M.D. for one melee per level of the spell caster.

Bonus: +1 to strike.

Saving Throw: Parry or dodge, with a -2 penalty.

P.P.E.: Ten

An ordinary S.D.C. rock, brick or object such as a knife, stapler, cell phone, bottle, canteen, cooking pan, a piece of pipe or debris, is turned into a glob of molten lava that can be thrown at an opponent with surprising accuracy and distance. The lava glob must be thrown before the duration ends, or else the object reverts back to normal. Upon impact, the molten object does its initial 2D6 Mega-Damage but the lava splatters and continues to burn and inflict 1D6 M.D. per melee round equal to the level of the spell caster or until the molten material is scraped away. Scraping it off requires all attacks/actions of one complete melee round! Combustible materials such as clothing, dry grass, straw, and wood have a 33% chance of catching fire; open gasoline and fuel ignites into flame on contact. **Note:** Creatures vulnerable to fire take double damage.

Heal Burns

Level: Five.

Range: Touch or up to 15 feet (4.6 m) away, but requires line of sight.

Duration: Instant with permanent results.

Saving Throw: Not applicable unless the healing is unwanted, then a standard save applies.

P.P.E.: Ten

The spell immediately soothes and heals damage caused by burns/lava, restoring 2D6 Hit Points or 4D6 S.D.C., or 1D4 M.D. if a Mega-Damage creature, but scarring is left behind. For 20 P.P.E. the scarring from burns is minimal and barely noticeable.

Rain Ash

Level: Five.

Range: Up to 500 feet (152 m). Covers a 20 foot (6.1 m) diameter area +10 feet (3 m) per each additional level of experience.

Duration: The ash falls for 1D6 minutes per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Ten in the Ashlands of Montana, Wyoming, the Dakotas and Nebraska, and wherever there is a lot of ash available, which is most of North America and many other places around the world for at least a few years after the Great Cataclysm.

24 P.P.E. to create the same raining Ash where there is no heavy amount of ash and later in the early decades of the Two Hundred Years Dark Age.

The mostly harmless ash falls like a heavy snow in the designated area. The ash covers everything – people, objects, vehicles, ground – a monotonous gray-white – making them a difficult to spot from above or afar (-3 on Perception Rolls), especially when they are hiding or motionless (-6 on Perception Rolls).

Shooting at targets inside the area of ash rain is done with a -3 to strike penalty, but the same penalty applies to those inside the raining ash when they are shooting at targets outside the area the ash. The ash can also be used to cover tracks and after 1D6+2 minutes smothers any small, normal fires inside its area of effect. The ash can also be used by the mage for other spells requiring ash to be an available component in its magic.

Summon Fireflies

Level: Five.

Range: The fireflies appear in a cloud-like swarm above the spell caster. The silent swarm can be sent up to 100 feet (30 m) ahead/away +15 feet (4.6 m) per each additional level of experience. Or to hover around a particular stationary target/location or to follow a particular person/vehicle/target, though their maximum speed is only 20 mph (32 km). Can light up a 20 foot (6.1 m) diameter bright enough to read (100 watts), or a 50 foot (15.2 m) diameter bright enough to see in a dim light (40 watts).

Duration: Ten minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Ten

A means of heatless illumination, this magic summons a swarm of enchanted fireflies or firefly-like insects from another world that appear fluttering above the spell caster's head. They illuminate the mage and the area with a soft, greenish light. The intensity of the light can be turned down to the equivalent of 40 watts or up to 100 watts. The cloud of fireflies can be used to light the immediate area or sent head 100+ feet (30.5 m) to light the way. They are especially helpful in lighting up tunnels and hallways, and to see what may lurk in the nearby darkness. Similarly they can be spread out to illuminate a larger, albeit in the lowest brightness, 50 feet (15.2 m) in diameter.

Fireflies can also be used to hover around and follow a particular building, vehicle, robot, power armor, cyborg, demon or monster to "mark" a target for attack or bombardment. At night in the open plains and among the ruins of toppled cities, their light can be used to signal aircraft and other fliers to illuminate enemies and give away their position. Likewise, casting this spell several times means more and more Fireflies that may be used to light a much larger area or length, or to mark a trail or tunnel to safety (or to set an ambush or a trap).

Level Six

Healing Lava Pool

Level: Six.

Range: 50 feet (15.2 m), line of sight and open ground required.

Duration: Appears instantly. Lasts 5 minutes +1 minute per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None, unless opposed to being healed, then the standard save vs magic applies.

P.P.E.: Fifteen

A pool of lava as large as six feet (1.8 m) in diameter appears on the ground where it is cast. The pool is 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) deep at its center. Oddly enough, this is not a pit trap but rather a healing spell. Any person who submerges himself up to his shoulders in the warm, comforting pool of lava and enjoys the soothing heat for at least five minutes receives healing. Restores 1D6 S.D.C. and 2D6 Hit Points (or 5D6 S.D.C. if there is no Hit Point damage) to S.D.C. beings or 2D4 M.D.C. to Mega-Damage creatures. In addition, any recent wounds (no more than a month old) caused by fire are soothed, healed and leave minimal scarring! The lava runs off the body, clothing or armor of the individual(s) as he emerges from the pool. As many as one person per level of the spell caster can be healed at the same time, provided they can all fit comfortably inside the Healing Lava Pool; typically 4-5 human-sized individuals.

Note: The lava cannot be cast on a person or object, and cannot be made to appear under the feet of a person, animal or object, or the wheel(s) of a vehicle nor a portion of a building, tower, post, pole or tree to knock it over. The Healing Lava Pool can only be made to appear on open ground, including clay, sand or solid rock. The pool can also offer a bit of temporary warmth to anyone standing around it.

Lava Dam

Level: Six.

Range: Up to 1,000 feet (305 m) away, line of sight required. Area of effect, up to a diameter of 30 feet (9.1 m).

Duration: 10 minutes per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Seventeen

This powerful magic creates an invisible force that blocks lava and heat, and makes it flow around the mage or the people, object or area where this spell is cast. This, in effect, creates an island or bubble as large as 30 feet (9.1 m) in diameter, untouched by the flowing lava all around it. The heat is still tremendous and stifling, but even it is much reduced and survivable by humans compared to what is all around it. Anyone or anything protected within the invisible bubble needs to be rescued quickly, probably from the air, before the Lava Bubble Damn magic ends and the lava quickly pours into this temporary gap of safety.

Line of Traveling Fire

Level: Six.

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m) +10 feet (3 m) per each additional level of experience. Requires a specific end/target and/or line of sight. Typically a straight line, but if the spell caster is watching and controlling the fire as it travels down its intended path, the mage can cause it to bend and move 20% to adjust its course to prevent

it from hitting an innocent or to make sure the line of fire hits the desired target.

Duration: 15 seconds per 25 feet (7.6 m) traveled.

Damage: Possible fires described below, and a likely fire at the end.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twelve

This invocation creates a thin trail of fire from one spot to another, with a maximum reach of 100 feet (30 m) +10 feet (3 m) per each additional level of experience. The fire acts like a fuze, wick or trail of gunpowder or accelerant, with the fire starting at one end of the trail and slowly running to the other. Unlike simply pouring a line of gasoline and lighting it, however, this spell can be cast and ignited silently from afar, and has only a discernable smell the instant it ignites and begins to move, there is no chemical smell or preparations necessary that might give it away. The fire can serve as a distraction, or be used to set flammable objects ablaze, set off explosives, etc.

It takes the line of fire about 15 seconds (one melee round) to travel 25 feet (7.6 m) of distance. The fire inflicts 1D4 S.D.C. damage to those that come in contact with the small, traveling line of fire as it moves along its designated, straight line (or mostly straight line) path. Any fires it starts to dry grass or flammable material along the way should be easy enough to put out, but it takes 1D6 melee rounds of effort and causes quite a commotion. When the Line of Traveling Fire comes to an end it does so with a larger "poof" of flame.

The "poof" at the end of the line of fire is large enough to set a hay bale or haystack, pile of cloths or rags, hanging linens or blankets, a wood pile, canister of fuel, a stack of books, a bush or underbrush to on fire. Likewise, if an S.D.C. box of ammunition or explosives is set on fire, it will explode in 1D6 seconds. An M.D.C. container of ammo or explosives has a 50/50 chance of exploding every melee round (15 seconds) it is on fire.

If no one responds quickly to putting out the fire(s) that may have been started, the fire spreads. Game Master discretion as to how quickly and big it becomes. If a person is at the end of the small fiery burst at the end of the Line of Traveling Fire, some of his clothes will catch fire and require immediate action, probably with screams of surprise if not pain, while he struggles to put it out.

Such fiery distraction or explosion should distract everyone from the actions of the mage and his teammates for the duration spent battling the fire and then trying to figure out what the heck happened here and who might be responsible. The only exception is someone who was watching the mage or his teammates like a hawk, and who did not look away to see what the commotion is all about.

Note: If the fire travels along dirt, gravel, clay, mud, grass and vegetation that is not dry, then the line the fire travels will NOT start any fires. Likewise if the final poof at the end of the line does not hit something combustible or flammable, the burst is just a bit of pyrotechnics without damaging effect, and the fire line burns out without human intervention in less than a melee round.

Shoot Lava Bolt

Level: Six.

Range: 50 feet (15.2 m) per level of experience.

Duration: Instant, but burns for three melee rounds.

Mega-Damage: 6D6 M.D., and after it hits, it continues to burn and inflict 1D6 M.D. for an additional three melee rounds. The

mage can regulate the amount of damage that is inflicted by increments of 1D6 to inflict less damage if so desired.

Saving Throw: Dodge or parry at -3.

P.P.E.: Fifteen

The mage can conjure a lava bolt out of thin air and fire it like a rocket from his hand (point and shoot), making it difficult to see coming or avoid. After the glob hits, the boiling lava burns and sizzles where it lands, inflicting an additional 1D6 M.D. per melee round or until it is scraped off.

Walk on Lava

Level: Six.

Range: Self or one other up to 20 feet (6.1 m) away per level of experience. Can also be cast upon an object, canoe or raft, enabling the item to float on the surface of lava without melting or burning up in seconds. Such an item or object can be pulled along or paddled across magma.

Duration: Five minutes per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Ten

Ability to walk on the surface of molten lava without sinking into it or one's feet or footwear and clothing catching fire. This also means the individual is temporarily impervious to heat, sulfur, smoke and falling ash from the lava. Walk on Lava means the character can also ride with the flow of lava.

Note: The character is not safe from flying rock and debris or attacks by others. Speed in half the usual Spd attribute number.

Level Seven

Enchant Weapon with Fire

Level: Seven.

Range: The spell caster must touch the weapon to make all but its handle covered in S.D.C. or M.D. fire. Unlike the earlier Fiery Weapon spells that only the mage can use, this fire weapon can be used by anyone the Pyromancer allows to have one. However, the spell caster can cancel the magic whenever he may desire.

Note: Applicable only to handheld weapons, not bullets or other projectiles.

Duration: Three melee rounds per level of the mage, but the spell caster can cancel the magic at will.

Mega-Damage: Varies. See below.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: S.D.C. fire costs 5 P.P.E., but Mega-Damage fire costs Twenty.

If the weapon is intended to inflict S.D.C. damage, then the magic flames doubles the weapon's usual damage capacity. For example, if a machete normally does 2D4 S.D.C. damage it now does 4D4 S.D.C. damage. Costs 5 P.P.E. to enchant.

If the fiery enchantment is intended to be a Mega-Damage flame, it costs 20 P.P.E. and turns an ordinary S.D.C. weapon – club, dagger, spearhead, sword, axe into a flame-covered, Mega-Damage weapon. See the Fiery weapon spells for the exact damage for many common weapons. This is done by creating a M.D. flaming aura around the weapon. So if the spear or sword does 2D6 S.D.C. damage it now does 2D6 M.D., and double damage to creatures vulnerable to fire. The flame around the weapon goes out when the weapon is released or knocked out of the us-

er's hand. **Mega-Damage Weapon Note:** If the weapon was a *non-magical Mega-Damage weapon* to begin with, like a Vibro-Blade, this spell covers it in magical M.D. flame that adds 2D6 M.D. to its damage capacity while the enchantment is in place. Yes, this magic can be cast upon cyborg and power armor melee weapons like a retractable, finger blades/claws, dagger, sword, drill, saw, etc., but NOT their fists/hands or small weapons like knuckle spikes and other body spikes. Cannot be cast upon *giant-sized weapons* such as those used by or built into giant robots and vehicles UNTIL the mage is more powerful, 5th level or higher. HOWEVER, when cast on giant weapons the magic only lasts for one melee round per level of the spell caster.

Drain Lava

Level: Seven.

Range: 100 feet (30 m) plus 50 feet (15 m) per each additional level of experience.

Duration: Instant.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty

The spell caster focuses on a small area of molten rock, cooling the lava within it and forcing it to drain harmlessly down into the earth. The spell affects an area 15 feet (4.6 m) in diameter or a two foot (0.6 m) wide and 20 foot (6.1 m) long path through the lava. Using it on a large, hot, active lava flow is a waste of P.P.E., as the lava quickly flows into the empty space created, but the spell can be used to eliminate a small pool or narrow stream of lava, as well as on a stationary or slow-moving lava flow to eliminate sections of it or to create a safe passage through a thin lava stream. Likewise, hardened, but still soft/malleable mounds of lava can be eliminated to clear a path, restore streets, etc. Clearing warm and cool lava from roads and paths is impressive when a group of Pyromancers do so using this spell. In all cases, the lava effects vanish back into the ground, where it does become rock, as if it was never there on the surface. It goes down 10 feet (3 m) per level of the spell caster.

Magma Well

Level: Seven.

Range: The well is created at a point where the Pyromancer touches the ground with one hand.

Duration: 12 hours per each level of the spell caster's experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty-One

Vital for creating camps and shelters in the broken and devastated world of Chaos Earth, the Magma Well conjures up a long-lasting pool of molten lava that is four feet (1.2 m) in diameter. This enchanted ring of magma lets out heat and light, enough to see by at night or beneath a sky-darkening ash cloud within a 20 foot (6.1 m) diameter. Its warmth staves off hypothermia even in the dead of winter, with a soothing, benign heat that doesn't burn or stifle, and is suitable for cooking. The Magma Well itself is no threat, unless someone happens to be careless enough to fall into it. It also provides a source of lava for other spells that require it.

In addition, the amount of ash, burning embers and falling debris from volcanic activity as well as rain, wind and snow that fall

over this protected area is 10% less severe, per level of the spell caster, than conditions around it.

Note: The Magma Well must be cast in an open area and cannot be made to appear under the feet of a person, object or vehicle.

Pyroclastic Cloud Attack

Level: Seven.

Range: 130 feet (40 m) for Wind Rush version. 300 feet (91.4 m) for the large, vision obscuring cloud.

Duration and Penalties: *One melee round* for an *ash-filled Wind Rush*, but those with unprotected eyes are temporarily partially blind (-6 on all combat rolls) for 1D6 melee rounds or until eyes are flushed with water.

The large, less powerful, vision obscuring cloud has a duration of 1D6+1 melee rounds and is of considerable size. See below for details about it providing cover and obscuring vision. Penalties are the same for unprotected eyes while inside the cloud AND for 1D6 melee rounds after exiting unless eyes are cleaned with water.

Saving Throw: A roll of 18 or higher saves those caught in the ash-filled Wind Rush of a mini-pyroclastic cloud from getting knocked down and/or losing some possession(s) swept away by the wind.

P.P.E.: Twenty-Five

This spell enables the Pyromancer to create a small pyroclastic cloud composed of ash and grit. The powerful wind is reminiscent of the *Wind Rush spell* except it also creates a large cloud of ash that lingers and makes it difficult to see and fight.

This powerful pyroclastic-like wind gust hits at 60 mph (96 km), which is capable of knocking people down (roll to save), knocking riders off horseback and hovercycles (roll to save), and blowing any loose or poorly secured small objects 20-120 feet (6-36 m) away, by creating a brief, powerful, mini-ash storm or Pyroclastic Cloud. The wind can be directed by the spell caster to strike a specific target or a general sweep can be made (maximum wind width is 20 feet/6.1 m). Anyone caught in the wind is helpless and unable to attack or move forward for the duration of one melee round (15 seconds), and unless they make a successful saving throw are knocked off their feet and lose initiative and two melee attacks.

Moreover, unless the head and eyes are protected from the ash and particles in the wind, or the character(s) caught in a Pyroclastic Cloud Attack makes a successful saving throw, he suffers the usual penalties for partial blindness: -6 to all combat rolls (strike, parry, dodge, etc.) for 1D6 melee rounds after the mini-pyroclastic wind strikes or until the eyes are flushed clean with water. It also takes 1D6 melee rounds to find and gather up all the items that may have been blown away.

In the alternative, the pyroclastic cloud can be lessened in severity to create a much larger, 80 foot (24.4 m) diameter rolling cloud of ash that stops to engulf the enemy and hangs over their position. It inflicts all the penalties of the *Ash Cloud* as follows. Victims caught in the cloud cannot see beyond 10 feet (3 m), they lose initiative, speed is reduced by half, and the whole situation is uncomfortable. It is difficult to speak, cast spells and even breathe without choking on dust and dirt. Eyes, nose and mouth must be covered and protected from the grit that is swirling around.

Those without protection for the eyes (goggles, helmet with visor, environment body armor with a helmet and radio, etc.),

experience the most difficulty and discomfort and are partially blinded (-6 to all combat rolls) while inside the cloud, and for 1D4 melee rounds after exiting the cloud. That can be reduced by flushing the eyes with water (that takes one melee round in and of itself). Shooting weapons through the lingering cloud of ash (1D6 melee rounds) results in shooting wild. Running through the cloud is dangerous because you will not know what waits beyond it until you exit the ash cloud (and perhaps until you wash-out your exposed eyes). Protected eyes suffer no such penalty.

Both uses of this spell are often deployed to create confusion, impair the enemy or to cover a strategic retreat, escape and to delay enemy pursuers or force them to go around the cloud or come out of it potentially blind and vulnerable.

Level Eight

Magma Geyser

Level: Eight.

Range: The geyser or mini-eruption from an existing river or pool of lava can be made to happen up to 50 feet (15 m) away, per level of experience. A geyser that shoots in a diagonal or horizontal straight line at a specific target has a range of 100 feet (30.5 m) +20 feet (6.1 m) per level of the spell caster.

Duration: Instant.

Mega-Damage: 1D6 M.D. to a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius via a vertical geyser splatter attack – the geyser of lava goes straight up, spraying the area all around it. Or 1D6x10 M.D. for a focused horizontal attack. See below for details and additional damage.

Saving Throw: Dodge at -2.

P.P.E.: Twenty

The spell causes a geyser of a lava to erupt from an *existing* pool or stream of hot lava. If no lava or molten metal is available, the mage cannot use this spell.

The Magma Geyser has two possible uses. One is splattering and area with lava. In this case, the lava geyser shoots straight up 50 feet (15.2 m), spraying a shower of lava that does 1D6 M.D. to everyone within a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius. Everyone struck by the boiling lava suffers an additional 1D4 M.D. per melee round for 1D4 rounds, or until the burning lava is scraped off. It takes one melee round (15 seconds) to scrape off the glob of lava.

Or the mage can direct the full force of the Magma Geyser at one specific target – person, monster, vehicle, etc. – inflicting 1D6x10 M.D.! The lava continues to burn and inflict 2D6 M.D. for 1D6 melee rounds or until it is scraped off; 4D6 M.D. if more than half of the body is covered in burning magma. The lava blast covers 2D4x10% of the target it strikes, while anyone and anything standing within in a 3 foot (0.9 m) diameter is splattered and suffers 1D6 M.D. for 1D4 melee rounds or until the burning lava is scraped off. Characters vulnerable to fire and heat suffer double damage.

50% chance the fallout from the geyser sets flammable items, including clothing, dry grass, open canister of fuel, etc., on fire, given enough time.

Glass Cloud Barrier

Level: Eight.

Range: The cloud can be created up to 200 feet (61 m) away, +20 feet (6 m) per each additional level of experience. The cloud

itself is 100 feet (30 m) in diameter, +15 feet (4.6 m) per each additional level of experience.

Duration: Two melee rounds per level of experience.

Damage: Breathing in the super-hot, razor-sharp glass fragments deals 2D4 S.D.C. damage per melee round.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twenty

This spell unleashes a cloud of fine glass particles and magic into the air and causes them to hang in the air like a twinkling air fog or cloud, a number of yards/meters in front of the spell caster. This field of material disrupts and diffuses the output of energy weapons, particularly lasers. When this spell is cast, a magical glass cloud barrier (may be straight or curved) is formed and expands to fill a wide space where the mage wants it.

Lasers that go through this barrier are diffused within the cloud reducing damage by half. **All other types of energy weapons** are reduced by 25%. This applies to incoming and outgoing energy blasts that go through the barrier. Does not block physical projectiles, vehicles or people. However, any mortal being who steps into the Glass Cloud and breathes in the particles without an independent air supply or air filtration system suffers 2D6 S.D.C. damage per melee round they spend in the Glass Cloud. Breathing the tiny fragments of hot, sharp glass causes damage and internal bleeding.

Swim Through Lava

Level: Eight.

Range: Self or others within 50 feet (15 m).

Duration: Ten minutes, +5 minutes per level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Twelve on self or a fellow Pyromancer, 24 if used on a non-Pyromancer.

The recipient of this spell's magic is able to swim unharmed, on the surface and in lava/magma as if they were in water! The character can dive under the surface of lava and swim as long as they can hold their breath. The magic also preserves their clothing and any equipment on their person; no damage. However, loose items may fall or be pulled out by the movement of the lava and lost. Likewise, unless actively swimming the lava will carry the mage (and others) away as it moves like a river away from the caldera.

When cast upon other people, they find they can swim through the thick molten rock without harm, but do so slowly; swimming speed in lava is half their Spd attribute. Pyromancers, enchanted by this spell, on the other hand, can swim through lava at their full normal Spd attribute, and do so without tiring for the duration of the spell. Those enchanted can maintain their speed even when going against the current.

Wings of Flame

Level: Eight.

Range: Self only.

Duration: 20 minutes + 5 minutes per each additional level of experience.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Thirty

The spell caster grows wings of fire and can fly at a speed equal to their running Speed attribute +22 (15 mph/24 km). Alti-

tude is limited to a maximum of 2,000 feet (610 m). Wings have the equivalent of 100 M.D.C. each, but they are made of magical flames and cannot be damaged by conventional or M.D. weapons. HOWEVER, water and ice/cold magic and cold/water-based magic weapons (rare) do full damage, as does ordinary rain and snow. Being inundated by water weakens and destroys the wings quickly, requiring the mage to recast the spell to recreate the wings to give him time to land.

Water, cold and ice magic does full damage. Light rain does the equivalent of 1D6 M.D. per minute. Typical, steady rain does 2D6 M.D. damage per melee round. Heavy rain, heavy snow or sleet does 5D6 M.D. per melee Round. Monsoon, hurricane, tornado, and blizzard conditions does 1D4x10 M.D. per melee round.

Level Nine

Ash Storm

Level: Nine.

Range: 200 feet (61 m) plus 50 feet (15.2 m) per level of the spell caster. Affects a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius +10 feet (3 m) per level of experience. Requires ash to be available in the area, whether it is wet or dry.

Duration: Ten minutes per level of the Pyromancer.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Thirty-Five

The spell caster whips up a swirling ash storm 200+ feet (61 m) away. Victims caught in the storm are buffeted by 20 mph (32 km) winds and ash. They find their vision (both nightvision and normal) reduced to a distance of about 10 feet (3 m). Plus they lose initiative, speed is reduced by half, as well as finding the whole situation uncomfortable. It is difficult to speak, cast spells and even breathe without choking on dust and dirt. Eyes, nose and mouth must be covered and protected from the grit that is swirling around. Those without protection for the eyes (goggles, helmet with visor, environmental body armor with a helmet and radio, etc.), experience the most difficulty and discomfort and are partially blinded; -6 to combat rolls.

An ideal spell to use to cover an escape, create a diversion, to erase a trail, or block a particular passageway. Such an obstacle may require an enemy force to have to travel around the storm or wait it out.

Hallucination of Lava

Level: Nine.

Range: 100 feet (30 m) +50 feet (15 m) per each additional level of experience.

Duration: Two minutes +1 minute per each additional level of experience.

Saving Throw: -2 to save. -4 to save if the Hallucination is created among real lava streams and volcanic environment or conditions.

P.P.E.: Sixty-Five

With their innate familiarity with lava and magma, Pyromancers are capable of producing an extremely convincing illusion of lava and magma flows. While it is completely imaginary, the magical Hallucination of Lava looks and behaves just like real lava. There is even the sensation of heat and smell of sulfur,

though both are only a fraction of real lava which should tip off characters familiar with lava and volcanoes – such as Pyromancers, Fire and Earth Warlocks, Elemental Fusionist, etc. – that something is wrong and may not be what it seems. When that happens, these individuals get to roll again to save vs magic/illusions and do so without the -2 or -4 penalty above. A successful save means they recognize the Hallucination of Lava as not real, and can tell what is and what is not real lava (if any).

Of course, there is no lava or heat and mechanical sensor systems will indicate this to be the case. However, many people find it difficult to not believe what their senses are telling them. They would rather trust their own perception than machines and sensors. If they question the lava illusion because of sensors, roll to save again, but they still do so with the -2 (or -4) penalty.

The illusion deals no damage, however, so if someone accidentally falls into the lava or decides to call the spell caster's bluff and walks into the lava *without saving vs magic illusion*, they will think and behave as if they fell into the real thing, suffering until someone pulls them out of the imaginary lava. Of course, they suffer no real physical damage. (Though the trauma might result in an insanity; G.M.'s call.) If a character who has saved vs magic/illusions is seen to walk through or stands in the lava unharmed, everyone witnessing this gets to roll to save again WITHOUT penalty and +1 to save. For those who do not save after this, the Hallucination is unshakable until the magic duration ends, and they respond as if the lava is real, trying to move around it, over it, knocking enemies into it, and being surprised when such enemies are unharmed and strike back, etc.

Note: When this illusion is cast amongst real lava flows or placed near a blast furnace, molten slag, or other lava-like situations, the illusion seems all the more authentic and blends in perfectly with the real molten material. In short, victims are -4 to save under this circumstance and unlikely to be able to tell what is real and what is in their head.

In all cases, the spell caster can see the illusion but knows what is real and what is not in his illusionary creation.

Stop Lava Flow

Level: Nine.

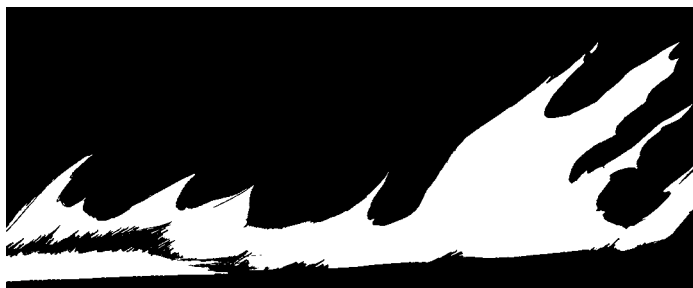
Range: Adjacent self.

Duration: One melee round per level of the spell caster.

Saving Throw: Dodge only. Best to leave before the lava flow arrives.

P.P.E.: Fifty

This is a very temporary measure that may be used to rescue people, animals, and property. The stress on the mage is tremendous and this spell cannot be cast again for at least five minutes. When the lava flow begins to move again, it does so at the speed it was traveling before it was momentarily halted.



Level Ten

Guide Lava Flow

Also Known As: Redirect Lava Flow.

Level: Ten.

Range: Can send lava flowing 500 feet (152 m) farther per level of experience, or cause a small stream to branch off from a much larger flow to go in a new and different direction, traveling 500 feet (152 m) per level of experience.

Duration: Special, as per the flow of lava.

Saving Throw: Evacuate. Sometimes a dodge is applicable. People should be able to see a lava flow coming for miles away. However, those who wait till the last minute, are engaged in rescue operations or not paying attention when it hits are -6 to dodge. Flowing lava, especially the first few weeks (or months) after the eruption, travels much faster than most people realize, on average 30-40 mph (48 to 64 km) and up to 60 mph (96 km), so trying to avoid a stream that could be hundreds or thousands of feet wide, even miles, can mean dodging is NOT an option. Climbing on top of an M.D.C. structure is likely to be only a temporary refuge lasting minutes (G.M. discretion); climbing atop an S.D.C. structure is likely to provide only moments (1D4 melee rounds) of safety.

P.P.E.: Fifty

Mega-Damage From a Lava Flow: 1D6x10 M.D. on impact and an additional 1D6x10 M.D. per melee round as the molten rock melts and consumes everything in its path. The only way to minimize damage after being immersed in a lava flow is to exit the boiling lava, and that may necessitate being pulled out. **For example:** An M.D.C. tank could drive out and a giant robot can walk out of the flowing lava provided the pilot inside acts quickly to get out of the lava within one melee round (15 seconds). HOWEVER, lava is molten rock and wheeled or track/tread vehicles may have all their wheels or treads destroyed immediately (as per the damage above) the moment the lava reaches them. Moreover, it is difficult to move through the dense molten rock. S.D.C. vehicles, structures, people, animals and light M.D.C. vehicles don't have a chance. The initial 1D6x10 M.D. setting them ablaze and burning them alive in a matter of seconds. Likewise, any M.D.C. hover vehicles whose lower and rear thrusters and jet engines get immersed and covered by lava are immediately clogged and unable to fire-up to get out of the lava.

Similarly, people in M.D.C. body armor and power armor as well as cyborgs who get caught in the lava flow are likely killed within a few melee rounds. Unless you are a Pyromancer, trying to walk or swim through molten rock is like trying to maneuver through wet concrete. Wet concrete that is 1,000-6,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Even flowing lava that is cooling can be 500-1,000 degrees Fahrenheit (260 to 538 C).

Damage and Penalties Inflicted Upon People in Armor: Reduce Spd by 95% when caught or knocked into flowing magma, and swept away by the current.

Cyborgs and Power Armor: Reduce Spd by 90% and they are swept away and pulled down into the flowing lava. A six foot human will be pulled under and completely submerged by lava within 1D4+4 melee rounds! If they can even survive that long. It is best to pull them out via chain, magic, levitation, airlift or any means available as quickly as possible.

Once pulled under, the person or object is gone from sight. Remember, anything that is caught within, or dropped into, the lava flow suffers 1D6x10 M.D. per melee round (every 15 seconds).

Armored Vehicles: Reduce Spd by 80%. Even tanks, giant robots (probably topple over or dropped to their knees within 2-4 melee rounds) and other armored vehicles are likely to be swept away, melted down and consumed by lava in a matter of a few minutes.

Buildings and Standing Structures: S.D.C. structures are bowled over as if hit by a bulldozer and are burned to a crisp. Lampposts, street signs, and towers are also knocked over or their base melted and the structure topples into the lava stream and is melted to nothing. Likewise, M.D.C. buildings, bridges, sections of highway, etc., caught in the flow of the magma are subjected to continuous damage at their base and foundation until they finally partially collapse or completely topple over to be further consumed. Some portion of the building, especially if large, like an apartment complex or skyscraper, is likely to survive, but 2D4x10% will be completely destroyed, the rest of the shattered structure protruding from solid rock after the molten stone hardens like concrete. Its melted and contorted body like something out of a surrealistic painting.

It is always best to evacuate and flee an approaching lava flow.

Speed of a Lava Flow: Slow moving: 4-10 mph (6.4 to 16 km). Typical: 30-40 mph (48 to 64 km). Fast moving flow: 60 mph (96 km). The farther from the volcano, the slower the flow.

Distance: Lava can flow as little as 1-6 miles (1.6 to 9.6 km) from the caldera to as far as 100 miles (160 km) under normal conditions before the Great Cataclysm. With the stress and pull of forces caused by the Coming of the Rifts, dimensional energies and magic, easily double that. The massive, Yellowstone Super-Volcano is a special case due to its immense size and creating a blast crater and caldera 60 miles (96 km) in diameter. Streaming from all around it are lava flows the size of lakes, rivers and streams. Many flowing in all directions for 2D4x100 miles (320 to 1,280 km). And Pyromancers can extend that length/range even farther, or make smaller lava tributaries branching out from these larger magma rivers. Many of these will burn for decades.

Width: A small, narrow lava flow is 2D6x10 feet (6.1 to 36.6 m) wide. A typically lava flow is 2D6x100 feet (61 to 366 m) wide. A large lava flow can be 2D4x1,000 feet (610 to 2,438 m) wide. A massive lava flow can be 1D4 miles (1.6 to 6.4 km) wide!

Thickness: The depth/thickness of a lava flow from the Yellow Stone Super-Volcano ranges from 10-60 feet (3 to 18.3 m); two and three times that within 50 miles (80 km) of the massive blast crater! Narrow, river-like crevices in the earth filled with boiling magma can be 60-500 feet (18.3 to 152 m) deep and 8-30 feet (2.4 to 9.1 m) wide. They are most common around the massive Yellowstone crater/caldera but a few stretch for hundreds of miles. One of which leads a crooked trail through Wyoming and into the northwestern corner of Nebraska.

This spell enables the Pyromancer to loosely control and guide the direction of an existing lava flow. He cannot make a lava stream appear out of nowhere. The mage is able to change the course of the lava stream by 4% per level of experience to divert

and bend it to flow around objects and locations along the magma flows edges, and he can even split it down the middle to go into two different directions in a V-shape. The Pyromancer can also try to direct lava safely into channels, ravines and highways, or toward low ground and already devastated areas. Note that directing the lava into fresh water is likely to pollute the water and kill aquatic life, so diverting it away from fresh water is another mission.

The mage cannot speed up or slow down lava, so the lava flow continues to travel at its own pace, but he can have it follow him or a particular path/direction of his choosing, provided he has sufficient power to reach the desired destination. Pyromancers can also make the lava flow travel faster than it might have done on its own by 5% per level of experience, and force it to travel a bit farther as per under *Range*, above.

The Guide Lava Spell can also be used as a weapon of mass destruction by redirecting the flow against enemy camps and strongholds, and leveling standing structures, destroying parked vehicles, giant robots, crumbling ruins, entire towns and portions of a city. The typical lava flow moves across the land at speeds of 30-60 mph (48 to 96 km), consuming everything in its path, and starting grass and forest fires along its perimeters, burning swaths through cities and scorching the land. People in the lava's path need to get out of the way or die. Fortunately, the flow and accompanying fires are seen miles away, enabling most people to evacuate, but they may lose everything except what they can carry or haul away before the lava flow arrives.

Ocean of Ashes

Level: Ten.

Range: 200 foot (61 m) radius per level of experience that can be cast 300 feet (91 m) away per level of the spell caster.

Duration: Five minutes +1 minute per each additional level of experience.

Saving Throw: -3 for living creatures. Vehicles, robots, power armor, and cyborgs that are more than 50% machine do not get to save. A successful save means penalties

P.P.E.: Fifty-Five

Ocean of Ashes creates a dense, slightly shimmering mist or cloud of ash that hangs low to the ground about 3-4 feet (0.9 to 1.2 m) above the surface. Movement through the low-hanging ashes is difficult, as if walking against the wind or through water. The speed of vehicles, robots, power armor, full conversion cyborgs and giant animals going through the is forcibly reduced by half, and the individual or vehicle must exert maximum energy, as if running/driving at full speed, to go at half speed. Reducing speed makes movement even slower. The speed of human-sized beings and smaller NOT clad in armor are only slowed by 25%. Combat in the Ocean of Ash sees the number of attacks per melee and combat bonuses all reduced by half! Only the spell caster and fellow Pyromancers (and Fire and Earth Elemental beings) are immune to the effects of this magic, and move unimpaired.

Pyroclastic Sphere of Protection

Level: Ten.

Range: Can be cast up to 100 feet (30.5 m) away to protect someone else or around the mage and his teammates. Creates an area

of protection that is 10 feet (3 m) in diameter per the level of the spell caster. The mage can adjust the size as he deems necessary or desirable within his limitations.

Duration: The spell casting use up three melee attacks and takes about 6-8 seconds to perform. The sphere of protection lasts for 30 minutes per level of the spell caster's experience. That time period can be extended with an additional 50 P.P.E.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: Sixty

This powerful spell creates a magic sphere used to provide shelter from the force and power of what an erupting volcano it is likely to release. While it functions like a force field against the forces of destruction unleashed by a volcano – including a pyroclastic cloud, mudslide, rockslide, lava (both flowing lava and raining lava), falling hot embers, magma, rocks and debris raining down, as well as raging fire, ash, smoke, toxic gases, intense heat that would otherwise kill a human in minutes and even an avalanche or flash flooding “if” it was caused by the eruption of a volcano or related geothermal event – it does not provide protection against man-made weapons, missile bombardment, magic, psionics, people or any directed attack. This is a much more powerful spell than the Lava Dam as it only has influence over the movement of lava and reducing intense heat.

When the pyroclastic cloud, mudslide, lava, etc. have passed, the Pyroclastic Sphere of Protections stands out like an oasis in the desert or an island in the ocean as a small area spared utter destruction by the volcanic event. Everything within the area of effect is untouched, but only for as long as the magic is maintained. That is not long. People needs to be rescued quickly.

Rain Lava

Level: Ten.

Range: Can be cast up to 200 feet (61 m); line of sight required. Covers 40 feet (12.2 m) in diameter +10 feet (3 m) per each additional level of the spell caster.

Duration: The lava falls for one melee round (15 seconds) +1 per each additional level of experience.

Mega-Damage: 2D6 M.D. per melee round to human-sized targets caught in the lava rain; 4D6 M.D. per melee round to vehicles, robots, and buildings the size of a sedan or bigger. Has a 50% chance of setting dry grass and combustibles on fire. The lava continues to burn for 1D6 melee rounds after it stops raining and then vanishes as if it never was. However, any fires that may have started continue to burn and expand.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E.: One Hundred Ten

The spell caster causes it to rain molten rock within a small, focused area. Everything inside the target area is saturated with lava droplets, dealing Mega-Damage, killing unarmored individuals, burning into concrete and body armor, and has a 50% chance of starting fires. While the spell does a lot of damage over time, the area of effect cannot be moved once cast, so targets that make a run for it will be able to save themselves as long as they survive the initial lava fall and can find cover or get out of the radius of effect.

Other Source Material

Zone Twisters

The most turbulent and unnerving new type of weather to blast across the state are the massive, interdimensional storms that have been dubbed **Zone Twisters!** Zone Twisters are huge tornadoes brimming with magical energy, like a rolling, open nexus point, sparking and flaring with dimensional dangers. They are just as violent and unpredictable as an average Ley Line Storm, but also follow long distances when they travel and can actually stray from a ley line, spreading out the damage they inflict across a path of devastation that stretches dozens or even hundreds of miles. No one is sure if these rolling dimensional storms are spawned on ley lines or appear at random, sparked by a confluence of magical and dimensional energy, or if their torrents of magic are somehow spontaneous events and the Zone Twister is then pushed along by normal air pressure and wind.

As a sort of rolling open nexus point, Zone Twisters unleash oddities and monsters by briefly opening Rifts and D-Shifting the terrain as it rages across the land. Like a tornado, it too can cut a physical swath of destruction, but just as often Zone Twisters, worst along the *Platte Ley Line*, pass through buildings, trees and people as if they were a phantom tornado or simply a magical illusion one moment and into a true tornado the next. Other times the Zone Twister remains a phantom its entire existence, but is still able to deposit “things” from other worlds and realities into our own.

Zone Twister Random Effects Table

Zone Twisters move quickly, but sometimes they linger over an area for a time, passing back and forth, just like a normal tornado. Roll 1D4 to determine the number of minutes a Zone Twister takes to pass. For each melee round/15 seconds, roll once on the following table to see what effects the twister creates. There is no need to roll again if the players are scattered or dislocated away from the twister. It is assumed that they are transported far enough away to be safe from more after-effects.

01-04% Vacuum: All of the air around the players vanishes as the space around them is D-Shifted into a void with no atmosphere. This condition only lasts for 15 seconds, so no one is in real danger of suffocation, but the shock leaves anyone without an independent air supply with a -3 on Perception Rolls, -3 on initiative and -2 to strike, dodge, parry, and disarm for the next two melee rounds. Non-magic flame is snuffed out, and any vehicle with an internal combustion engine stalls and must be restarted (requires 1D4 melee rounds) after the Zone Twister moves on. Low flying Helicopters and normal aircraft must roll to save vs the pilot's piloting skill or will crash land with no air to support their flight.

05-10% Scattered: The player characters are all magically teleported and deposited in different directions, ending up 1D6x1000 feet (1D6x305 m) away from their starting location, all in different directions.

11-20% D-Bees: 2D4 random humanoid D-Bees (G.M.'s discretion) are transported into the area around the players. They are not hostile monsters, but are confused and frightened, and may lash out in perceived self-defense. See **Rifts® World Book 30: D-Bees of North America**. It might also be fun to throw some other world beings such as the slave stock D-Bees in **Rifts® World Book 2: Atlantis** or **Rifts® World Book 21: Splynn Dimensional Market**, at your players, and maybe even Minions of Splugorth torn from their own world or reality. Of course, you can also bring in aliens from any of the **Rifts® Dimension Books**, as well as other game settings (may require some modification) or D-Bees of your own design.

21-30% Demons: 1D4+1 demons – these can be Chaos Demons (see **Chaos Earth® Creatures of Chaos**), Archaic demons (see **Rifts® Mystic Russia**), Daemonix (see **Coalition Wars®/Siege on Tolkeen 2: Coalition Overkill**), demons of Hades, Devils of Dyval, or other demonic or demon-like creatures (Brodkil, Thornhead, Neuron Beast, etc.), from **Rifts® World Books**, **Dimension Books**, **Nightbane®**, **Palladium Fantasy RPG®** titles, and, well, anywhere. May substitute lesser deities and godlings.

31-45% Monsters: 1D4+1 hostile monsters like Demon Hoppers (Xiticix), Ash Worms, or creatures from beyond Nebraska or of the G.M.'s own design, or from any number of RPG resources. *From Rifts®* that can include Black Faeries, Witchlings, Worm Wraiths, Fury Beetles, Devil Unicorn, Oborus-Slitherers, Panthera-Tereon, Giant Canyon Worms, dinosaurs, perhaps even Monstrous Bees or aliens/monsters from **Rifts® Dimension Books** (G.M.'s discretion) appear around the player characters. See the upcoming **Rifts® Bestiary Volume One and Two**, for a wide range of creatures, big and small.

46-50% Instant Nightfall: The sun is momentarily gone as the entire area reverts to night or an alien darkness or weird night-like sky. Visibility is limited to about 200 feet (61 m), half that if there are no stars or moon. Heat vision, infrared optics and passive nightvision optics can be of help. This night scene lasts for 1D6 minutes before everything returns to normal.

51-60% Path of Fire: In the wake of the Zone Twisters is black, hardened lava with narrow streams of boiling lava flowing through it or a pool of lava. The area of effect is either a 1D6x100 foot (30.5 to 183 m) long, 1D4x10 feet (3 to 12.2 m) wide swath of scorched earth. The 2D6 lava streams are only 1D6 feet (0.3 to 1.8 m) wide and may run a few yards/meters or the entire length of this new Path of Fire. A *lava pool* is 1D4x10 feet (3 to 12.2 m) in diameter. Once created, they burn and boil for 3D6 years. Pyromancers can utilize the lava to assist in their magic.

In the alternative, everything/everyone around the Zone Twister is dealt 3D6 S.D.C. damage from a wave of heat and a blast of fire projected from another dimension. 50% chance of combustible items catching fire. Then it is gone in a flash.

61-70% Dimensional Blinkout: Suddenly, along the path of the Zone Twister is a lush, natural garden with Earth or alien fruit trees or berries as well as a fresh water spring. The food is edible and delicious as is the water. Enjoy it and eat or collect what you can, while you can, because this portal to Earth's past or an alien garden of Eden vanishes without a trace in 2D6 minutes.

71-75% Ley Line Lightning: Magic lightning bolts cast out from the Zone Twister in all directions. Each character must roll a dodge of 13 or greater to avoid being struck. Those who fail to dodge take 2D6 M.D. Static electricity remains in the air for 1D6 minutes.

76-80% Gravity Spiral: The player characters and anyone within 50 feet (15 m) of a small grey spiral, begin to “fall” upward and feel weightless. The heavier an object is, the higher it goes before the twister passes. Normal people are lifted 10-15 feet (3-4.6 m) off the ground, and power armor, Combat Cyborgs and large characters rise 30 feet (9.1 m), and robots, vehicles and giant characters 20+ feet (6.1 m) tall rise 100 feet (30.5 m) into the air. Anything that cannot handle the rough impact of hitting the ground suffers damage and may be possibly smashed apart. Vehicles may have to be flipped or righted before progress can continue. All lose 10% of their main body Hit Points or M.D.C., big vehicles lose 20%.

81-85% Relocated (Near): The player group is suddenly teleported 2,000 feet (610 m) away to a new location. Roll 1D4 to determine direction: 1 = North, 2 = East, 3 = South, 4 = West.

86-90% Relocated (Far): The player group and anyone within 50 feet (15 m) of them are teleported 1D6+1 miles (3.2 to 11 km) away to a new location. Roll 1D4 to determine direction: 1 = North, 2 = East, 3 = South, 4 = West.

91-95% Relocated Visitors: Suddenly a group of 1D4+1 people from the state of Nebraska appear of thin air within 100 feet (30.5 m) of the player group. These could be any of the following, roll percentile for random determination or pick one.

01-10% Innocent and frightened survivors who have no idea what just happened and need help.

11-20% Bushwhacking Ash Fallen!

21-30% NEMA troops! Foot soldiers or peacekeepers.

31-40% Evil Lost Skeletons!

41-50% Lorhan River People.

51-60% Nebraska National Guard.

61-70% Demon Hoppers (Xiticix) or other wicked monster!

71-80% D-Bees, hostile or friendly.

81-90% Armored NEMA troops (Silver Eagle, Chromium Guardsmen or other)!

91-100% Fellow Pyromancers or other group of practitioners of magic or psychics. They may be hostile or friendly.

96-100% Eye of the Storm: Everything is calm in the immediate vicinity around the player characters. They stand in awe as the world around them changes rapidly, one dimension swirling into another inside the Zone Twister. Any aliens, D-Bees, monsters, demons, etc. that are spun out of the tornado are hurled out of sight or trapped on the other side of the raging dimensional torrent. Conditions remain this way for 1D4 minutes before the Zone Twister bounces and moves on.

Notable Nebraska Characters

By Dan Frederick

The K-9 “officer” known as Kobe opened one eye as Cade sauntered into the briefing room. Something about the old Prepper felt familiar, comforting, and the dog slowly shut his eye and rested. It had already been a long day, and Kobe’s handler, Officer Buck Bauer, had taken the genetically designed K-9 on a five mile (8 km) run prior to making their way to the briefing room.

Neither Kobe or Buck had slept the night before, racing across the ash covered expanse outside Lincoln. The duo had avoided attacks by the extremists in the capital, and scouted out a fair amount of the area, returning to Offutt base for a run and a long-needed nap.

Officer Bauer lounged across two folding chairs, precariously balanced, with his armored trench coat rolled up as a lumpy pillow. He ignored the arrival of Crazy Cade.

Cade Williams grimaced at the lazy cops as he walked into the room. There was much to do to be properly prepared for what was coming. Shaking his head with disapproval, the famous Prepper and survival expert coughed for attention. Both K-9 and human officer ignored the noise. Sighing heavily, Cade dropped into an empty chair and waited for the start of the briefing. He pulled a flask from a chest pocket, surprised by the seemingly unconscious Buck who raised his arm out, waving at him to pass the hooch. Cade's frown deepened, but he passed the flask over to Buck, who took a long sip without opening his eyes.

A few minutes of silence later and Kobe growled and stood up. Buck took his cue from the dog, swivelling in the chair and sliding his coat back on. Brushing his hands through his unkempt hair, the cop sat up straight and suddenly looked like he hadn't been fast asleep 10 seconds before. Wondering what they were doing, Cade was again caught off guard as the door opened and a red-headed young lady walked in, followed by the base commander.

The Air Force general that now ran the base nodded at Officer Bauer and shook the man's hand. "Always ready for trouble. Good man. Mr. Williams, take stock. This is our finest right here."

Right behind the general, Dot made her way into the room. The young lady, sized up the others present, smiled down at Kobe. Worried about working with new people, she reminded herself that this was the best option for saving those in need.

The commander pointed at the chairs and stated, "Please, have a seat. Gentlemen, this is Dot Hawkens. Ms. Hawkens, make yourself at home."

Cade forgot his annoyance at the cop named Buck and looked at Dot, long red hair, dressed in a simple, dusty dress obviously salvaged from the remains of some store. She looked stunning, but far too young for him. He couldn't help but grin and nod hello. Her returned smile was ravishing.

"In a few minutes," the general started, "my techs will be here to propose an operation that I want you three..."

"Four," stated Buck.

"...four," acknowledging the police dog, "to go on a run. Officer Bauer, you and Kobe here have been doing exploration missions for us, now it's time to put what you've learned to use. I want to send you four on a rescue op. You're going out there – into the ashes."

Jonathan "Buckshot" Bauer

Omaha Police Officer

Prior to the Cataclysm, Jonathan "Buckshot" Bauer had twenty years on the force. For the last six, he has worked with the genetically enhanced K-9 officer Kobe (see below). Buck, as he is known to his fellow officers, earned his full nickname "Buckshot" after an armed robber hit him square in the chest with a twelve-gauge shell. His vest took the brunt of it, and saved his

life, but young Jonathan had seventeen pieces of buckshot removed from his arms, legs and face, and the story, and the little scars that cover his body, have kept the nickname fresh to this day.

Always a steady and loyal officer, Buck's sanity has been slowly unraveling since the Great Cataclysm struck and the world turned into a living nightmare or sci-fi story. The things he has seen in the short weeks that followed, and the things he has been forced to do to survive, weigh heavily on the man. Still, he routinely puts himself between innocent civilians and interdimensional horrors, enough so to scar him emotionally and mentally. Every day that passes pushes Bauer closer to a point where he might ... "bug out," as Cade would put it, and take off for a safer location with Kobe and all the firepower he can carry. His belief that there might not be a safer location, and his sense of duty to the survivors in and around Omaha, keeps him tied to Nebraska, at least for the moment.

O.C.C.: Law Enforcement Officer (See the upcoming *Rifts® Chaos Earth® First Responders™*)

Alignment: Aberrant.

Attributes: I.Q. 14, M.E. 12, M.A. 12, P.S. 21, P.P. 13, P.E. 15, P.B. 13, Spd 29.

Hit Points: 46

S.D.C.: 19

P.P.E.: 4

Height: 5 feet, 10 inches (1.78 m).

Weight: 188 lbs (85 kg).

Disposition & Description: In the days after the Great Cataclysm, Buck might not maintain the clean-shaven, sharp-pressed uniform look, but he still has the formal air of a cop on-duty. At the age of 48, he looks 30 or 32 years old thanks to Golden Age advanced genetics. With his enhanced lifespan he could live to be 160 years old, or die tomorrow with all the violence the collapse of society and the Great Cataclysm have brought. Genetic engineering provides Buck a bonus to his P.S. and Spd.

Experience Level: 7th level Omaha Police Officer, Law Enforcement.

M.O.S.: Motor "Street Cop" and K-9 Officer.

Notable M.O.S., O.C.C. and Other Skills: Automotive (Hovercraft) Mechanics 60%, Combat Driving, Computer Operation 85%, First Aid 68%, Language: American 98%, Language: Spanish 65%, Law: General 75%, Literacy: American 80%, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Pick Locks 66%, Pilot: Automobile 78%, Pilot: Hovercraft (Ground) 98%, Prowl 56%, Radio: Basic 66%, Roadwise: City 63%, Running, Targeting (all are +3 to strike), W.P. Automatic Pistol, W.P. Energy Pistol, W.P. Energy Rifle, and W.P. Paired Weapons.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None, although if he can survive long enough, at least Sixth Sense may become a power as time passes in the world of Chaos Earth.

Weapons: Dual .45 ACP Scorpion S.D.C. handguns, MIP 21 Mega-Damage Energy Pistol, and access to Omaha Police Department and National Guard S.D.C. and limited M.D.C. weapons, gear, vehicles, etc.

Kobe

Omaha Police Department Police Dog

Kobe is the perfect blend of German Shepherd, Doberman Pinscher, Malinois, Dalmatian and Dogo Argentino. He is one of only three genetically engineered K-9 units in the state, part of an experimental pilot program run by NEMA. Kobe is fast and aggressive, a strong and focused police dog utilized in situations where a perpetrator does not expect a lightning fast, face to face attack. Kobe was specifically designed to be able to cross a distance of 100 plus feet (30+ m) in seconds, snatch a weapon from a bad guy and take down the perpetrator with no fear. Fiercely loyal to Officer Buck, the two have been partners for several years prior to the Apocalypse. (See the upcoming **Rifts® Chaos Earth® First Responders™** sourcebook for more information on genetically engineered NEMA dogs.)

Speed: 45 mph (72 km).

Strength: 16

Size: 25 inches (63.5 cm) tall at shoulders.

Weight: 188 lbs (85 kg).

Hit Points: 34

S.D.C.: 35

P.P.E.: 16

Age: 6 of 12-18 years.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), Prowl 60%, track by smell 75%, swim 65%, leap 8 feet (2.4 m) high and 12 feet (3.6 m) across, and Special Attacks listed below.

Attacks per melee: 4

Bonuses: +2 on initiative, +2 on Perception rolls, +2 to strike, +3 to dodge, +1 to entangle, and +3 vs Horror Factor.

Damage: Bite: 2D6+2 S.D.C. Scratch: 1D6 S.D.C.

Special Attacks: Bite to Disarm, Pounce, Leap or Knockdown, Grappling Bite and Entangle Attack, as described in the **First Responders** sourcebook.

Equipment: K-9 Tactical Vest 35 M.D.C., Multi-Optics Suite and Receiver, Radio collar and Canine Internal Robot Medical Unit (see **Chaos Earth® First Responders™** for more details).

“Crazy” Cade Williams

The Nebraskan Prepper

Prior to the Apocalypse, which Cade fully predicted and was well prepared for, the old man was a well-known social media Survival Expert and “Prepper” with a show he called **Nebraskan Prepper!** What makes Cade so likable and fun to watch, even if you are not into Prepping, is his straight-forward words, outlandish speech, mannerisms and catchphrases. “If you aren’t prepared you likely gunna die” and “All’s you need is some smarts, some gear and your Harcher Shotgun!” He sold equipment with his endorsement and was known for saying, “Buy this one, not that one. If you don’t listen to me you likely gunna die! But do as a please.”

Even Crazy Cade couldn’t have predicted the full scope of the current living nightmare of monsters and magic, but he did claim the end was nigh and you better be ready for it or ... “you likely gunna die.” Cade is seventy years old, although he looks 45-50, and over the years he has acquired and set up several personal caches of equipment, gear, food and water located in and

out of Nebraska. He stays with those in Omaha both because it was his hometown and because he enjoys the company of his new friends, Dot, Kobe and even Buckshot. Being in the worst of it has been thrilling for him, enduring wild weather, disease, monsters, evildoers and the unexplained.

O.C.C.: Survivalist/Prepper (See the upcoming **Rifts® Chaos Earth® First Responders™** sourcebook.)

Alignment: Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 10, M.A. 14, P.S. 12, P.P. 10, P.E. 15, P.B. 17, Spd 12.

Hit Points: 38

S.D.C.: 30

P.P.E.: 12

Height: 6 feet, 2 inches (1.8 m).

Weight: 200 lbs (90 kg).

Disposition & Description: Behind the long hair and bushy beard is a very intelligent and calculating man, ready for almost anything. Cade’s show wasn’t just a hobby, he is a careful and thorough planner and an expert in survival situations. He is surprisingly well-read, even outside his field of specialty, and known for sprinkling some classic sayings and historical gems in with his own personal catchphrases.

Experience Level: 8th level Prepper.

Notable O.C.C. and other Skills: Basic Electronics 68%, Brewing 68%, Camouflage 68%, Computer Operation 86%, Cook 86%, Find Contraband 80%, First Aid 90%, Guitar 40%, Land Navigation 90%, Literacy: American 98%, Locksmith 80%, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Military Fortifications 89%, Pilot: Hovercraft 40%, Pilot: Motorcycle 70%, Recognize Weapon Quality 88%, Trap Construction 80%, Wilderness Survival 89%, W.P. Pistol, W.P. Rifle and W.P. Shotgun.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Expert.

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Weapons, Gear of Note: HB591 Brimstone Mega-Damage Shotgun, Cybernetic O2 Lung, Cybernetic Geiger Counter, in addition to his stashes of weapons, food and survival gear across Nebraska and beyond.

Dorothy “Dot” Hawkens

Pyromancer

Dorothy goes by Dot, and has since she was six years old when her twin brother started calling her by the shortened version of her name. Growing up in an age of super-technology did not stop her mother and father from teaching Dot about the old ways, traditions that have supposedly been with the family for generations. Witchcraft, Wicca, other religious teachings, and most important, care for Mother Earth.

Dot was about 30 years old when the Coming of the Rifts exploded on Earth, unleashing magic and opening portals to new worlds. Living in the northeast of Nebraska on her parents’ farm, she mourned the loss of the Golden Age, and her parents and brother who fell victim to it. Unlike most terrified survivors, however, she is also valiantly embracing the chaos, the magic and exploring her new power over fire and lava. The Pyromancer has struck out on her own, heading for the capital to join forces with others near

Omaha. With her new powers she intends to save others, in hopes of forgiving herself for not being able to save her own family.

O.C.C.: Pyromancer

Alignment: Scrupulous.

Attributes: I.Q. 15, M.E. 17, M.A. 14, P.S. 10, P.P. 11, P.E. 15, P.B. 20, Spd 9.

Hit Points: 28

S.D.C.: 15

P.P.E.: 122

Height: 5 feet, 4 inches (1.6 m).

Weight: 120 lbs (54 kg).

Disposition & Description: Dot is a fiery redhead and one of the few people who can persuade Officer Bauer to follow her lead. Through her power and her compassion for saving others, she has earned his complete trust, no easy feat. Dot is smart, funny and beautiful. She makes friends easily but is nobody's fool.

Experience Level: 2nd level Pyromancer.

Notable O.C.C. and other Skills: Climbing 64%, Cook 50%, Lore: Demons and Monsters 46%, Lore: Occult, Magic and Religions (Special) 80%, Mathematics: Basic 80%, Paramedic 565%, Pilot Hovercycle 44%, Wilderness Survival 45%, W.P. Archery and W.P. Pistols.

Combat Skills: Hand to Hand: Basic.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Magic: Pyromancy, including the Special Abilities of the Pyromancer. Refer to the new O.C.C. for more details. Her current knowledge of spells about a month and a half after 12-22 consists of: Armor of Ashes (7), Armor of Magma (14), Healing Lava Pool (15), Heal Burns (10), Fiery Dagger (4), Fiery Spearhead (6), Hot Rocks (3), Shoot Stream of Steam (3), Summon Fireflies (10), Walk on Lava (10) and Rain Lava (special). The last spell is unusual for a low level character and costs her half the usual P.P.E. (Only 55) because she is so "gifted." A natural when it comes to Pyromancy and magic in general.

Psionics: None.

Weapons, Gear of Note: Old .38 six-shot revolver, backpack with camping gear, clothing, a dozen candles, a few crystals, first aid kit, and some personal belongings.

Governor Mark Graves

Leader of the Nebraska Lost Skeletons

NEMA vs the Lost Skeletons Citizens' Militia

Mark Graves was born an hour after his twin older brother and always seemed to be one step behind. Prior to the end of days, Mark ran a successful construction company, but his modest accomplishments as a businessman were instantly overshadowed when his brother became mayor of Omaha, and then governor of the entire state of Nebraska.

Unlike his older brother, Mark grew up as a member of the *National Lost Skeletons Citizens' Militia*. When the Rifts tore across Nebraska and ash rained down on the world, he collaborated with a handful of his fellow Lost Skeletons and seized the opportunity to oust his brother from power. Since then, he has proclaimed himself governor and set up shop in the underground city government complex in Lincoln. Ruthless and relentless, Mark has been unleashed on the world and wishes to expand his power across the plains states.

Quick Stats for Governor Mark Graves

Alignment: Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 17, M.E. 16, M.A. 18, P.S. 18, P.P. 16, P.E. 13, P.B. 12, Spd 15.

Experience: 7th level Militia Member (and Carpenter).

Weapons and Equipment: Access to most weapons and gear from main Chaos Earth book.

Psionics: Sixth Sense and Intuitive Combat.

I.S.P.: 33

The Battle for Lincoln

Even as ash carpets the state, ley lines light up the skies and demons pluck refugees from out of huddled columns of survivors, newly self-appointed Governor Mark Graves is consolidating his power. From the executive bunker beneath Lincoln, he commands the Lost Skeletons Citizens' Militia, a force of survivalists, separatists and radicals that were armed and organized, even before the Coming of the Rifts. They are now fierce fighters who kill anything non-human they come across, but have also fallen out with NEMA and the legitimate authorities after Graves murdered his brother and took his place as governor of Nebraska.

While humanity should be pulling together, NEMA command does not know the full extent of the Great Cataclysm and is preparing its forces to dislodge Graves, with help from the Nebraska National Guard, a handful of regular military units, state police, local police and any survivor willing to throw in their lot to help reclaim the capital. Pyromancers will undoubtedly join with them as well, though the volcanic magic users will be fighting on both sides of the conflict.

The Lost Skeletons have possession of the bunker complex underneath Lincoln, Nebraska, though they do not have the expertise or familiarity to take full advantage of its sensors and systems. And while they are heavily armed, they are also not real soldiers, unlike NEMA and most of the troops at its disposal. With their superior training and weaponry, NEMA will certainly prevail over time, but they will take tragic losses in the attempt, unless a Pyromancer can use their special skills to help the defenders of humanity take down the new governor gone-rogue.

Mark Graves' grip on power within the Lost Skeletons is absolute, and the Coming of the Rifts has reinforced the beliefs of many of the doomsday preppers and survivalists within the militia. Desperate, crazy, or taken by his charisma, there are also refugees and citizens of Lincoln that have fallen under his sway, or look to the "Governor" and his soldiers for protection. With the state's emergency broadcast system under his control, Graves can call out to anyone able to get their hands on a radio, and while some of his broadcasts veer off into crazed, sleep-deprived rants, some are convincing imitations of real public-address system messages, and sound as official as anything NEMA can duplicate with its own scattered resources.

Governor Graves is under no illusions as to his own backing and support, and knows NEMA will be coming for him soon. To that end, he has had the Lost Skeletons Militia turn Lincoln into a maze of dead-ends, booby-traps, blocked doors, collapsed tunnels, pitfalls and ambush points. While this has helped with the overall defense of the city, it has also made it difficult or impossible for refugees to get in and out, costing many Cornhuskers their lives. When NEMA finally does go after Lincoln, it will be a bloody battle waged as ash flutters through the air and interdimensional horrors close in from all sides.

Rifts® Bestiary Preview

Official source material for Rifts®

By Kevin Siembieda, Charles Walton II and others

What follows are a few select, updated known monsters and a few new creatures as they will be appearing in the **Rifts® Bestiary Volume One**. All Rifts® Bestiary books will feature creatures collected from other Rifts® titles with updated and expanded stats and details as well as a number of new animals and monsters to thrill and delight.

The Rifts® Bestiary books are intended to be useful sourcebooks for players and Game Masters alike, with creatures that can be used as familiars, pets, riding animals, guard animals, and in some cases, even unlikely allies. Others are slobbering monsters or malicious predators who include humans and D-Bees among their prey. All provide you with plenty of ways to add spice to your characters and promote ideas for encounters and adventures.

We even surprised ourselves with how much new material is being added to these titles. Every single creature has some amount of new information and updates, but many are much more expanded and detailed than ever before. And each comes with a map that shows at a glance exactly where to find these beasts.

The Rifts® Bestiary, Volume One should ship the end of November. **Volume Two** the end of December or January.

Without further ado, here is a glimpse of what you can expect (minus the maps which will appear in **Rifts® Bestiary, Volumes One and Two**).

Alien Rex (Dinosaur)

By Kevin Siembieda and Todd Yoho

This scary bipedal monster has the same basic shape as the T-Rex or Allosaurus, but it heralds from a different planet, and is an unwanted import via the Rifts to the forests and marshlands of Dinosaur Swamp.

The Alien Rex is smaller, faster and more mobile than Earth's Tyrannosaurus, but it is just as deadly and more intelligent. The Alien Rex stands 15-19 feet (4.6 to 5.8 m) tall, has a pair of powerful legs made for running and leaping, and a tail that sticks straight out and is used as a rudder for balance. The upper arms are proportionately longer than Earth's T-Rex or Allosaurus and more resembles those of a Raptor or even a human. Its large head and gaping maw can easily bite a man in half, and its four, almond-shaped eyes, two large, two small, on each side of its head, only adds to its frightful alien appearance. Its hands have two fingers and an opposable thumb, all of which end in sharp, curved black claws the size of a man-made sickle. Its arms and hands are able to grab and hold prey as well as use its sickle-like claws for slashing attacks in combat and later, for slicing up the meat of its slain prey.

The monster's thumb is opposable, though much less flexible and articulated than a human's, but sufficient enough to allow the Alien Rex to use primitive tools like a tree branch as a lever or a probe, or a rock with which to bash open a door, lock or

skull. The Alien Rex uses simple tools in a similar way as a chimpanzee might for rudimentary tasks, but not with human-level intelligence. It does not build tools and the monster cannot use modern weapons, computers or other tech devices, nor is it smart enough to operate machines. However, the clever beast may figure out how to open a door, figure out how to turn a doorknob or push down or pull up on a lever, especially if it has observed others doing so. It is also known to recognize certain weapons, body armor and vehicles, and can even formulate simple plans and strategies, like hide in ambush and strike when its prey is distracted or injured.

The massive, rock hard head rests atop a thick, but flexible neck. The maw is filled with dagger-sized teeth ideal for biting and tearing flesh. The largest cluster of teeth is in the front of the mouth for biting off hunks of meat, while the teeth along the jaw are smaller and widely spaced, reminiscent of an Earth alligator, and are for biting and holding prey while the Alien Rex cuts it to shreds with its claws.

A pair of large, almond-shaped eyes are located on each side of the head. This gives the great beast superior peripheral vision to the side; can see 180 degrees like a bird. HOWEVER, the monster must turn its *entire head* to see what is directly in front of it. This means the Alien Rex can lose sight of prey or an enemy standing directly in front of it, but is seldom surprised by an attack or motion off to the side or toward the back. Thus, when the Alien Rex pursues prey, it often runs with its head cocked to one side, and may suddenly switch its attack to another target off to the side or behind it. The strange positioning of the eyes makes it an ideal predator for attacking packs and herds of smaller animals, enabling the behemoth to charge in and grab the nearest prey. Animals that travel in groups usually scatter when attacked, with some falling back, others veering left or right. The Alien Rex's side and back vision enables it to see these evasive side actions and to quickly swing its giant head to snap closed on the nearest animal. Consequently, the Alien Rex often swings its head from side to side and make sharp maneuvers as it switches from one target to another. The attack may seem helter-skelter, but it is very effective.

A line of small black or dark brown horns run from the center of the head down the back of the skull. The skin of the Alien Rex is thick and lumpy, providing protection from the horns and teeth of the monster's prey. Its skin color can be a wide range of various shades of green to greenish brown, with a dark underbelly. The bones of the head and jaw are thick and hard as Mega-Damage concrete.

Thankfully, the Alien Rex is not one of the dinosaur-like creatures who uses magic or exhibits human intelligence. Bad enough that they often travel in pairs and packs of three or four. These small hunting groups use simple tactics to herd and chase large prey into the arms of a fellow hunter, and the kill is shared by all. The Alien Rex may also be encountered as a solitary hunter. In fact, most young Alien Rex and bull males hunt alone.



Alien Rex – Carnivorous, Alien Dinosaur

Alignment: Animal predator, considered Miscreant or Diabolic.

Attributes: Animal attributes are very consistent and offer a smaller range of attribute aptitude. I.Q. 1D4+6 (high animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+6, M.A. 1D6+6, P.S. 1D6+25 (Supernatural), P.P. 1D6+16, P.E. 1D6+16 (Supernatural), P.B. 1D6+4, Spd 2D6+32 (23-30 mph/37-48 km).

M.D.C. by Location:

Head – 175

Neck – 110

*Eyes, Large (2, side) – 12 each

*Eyes, Smaller (2, side) – 7 each

Forearms (2) – 75 each

*Clawed Hands (2) – 25 each

Legs (2) – 130 each

Tail – 100

Main Body – 6D6x10+60

* A single asterisk indicates a small and/or difficult target to strike. It may be protected by armor plating, boney ridges, or just located in an a place that is hard to target. The shooter or attacker must make a “Called Shot” to hit at a penalty of -6 to strike.

Note: *On S.D.C. worlds*, the Alien Rex has 2D6x10+66 S.D.C., Hit Points equal the P.E. attribute number x10, and an A.R. of 11. The damage inflicted by the creature’s bite and other attacks does an equivalent amount of S.D.C. points rather than M.D.

Horror Factor: 14

Size: 15-19 feet (4.6 to 5.8 m) tall; the tail is another 8-12 feet (2.4 to 3.7 m); the reach of its forearms is about 6 feet (1.8 m).

Weight: 2-3 tons.

Average Life Span: 25-35 years.

P.P.E.: 2D6

Disposition: While aggressive on a hunt, Alien Rex are smart enough not to press an attack against prey that proves to be tougher than they thought. The creature is not cowardly, but retreats when M.D.C. is reduced by half. The Alien Rex is intelligent enough to wound large, dangerous prey then retreat to a safe distance or trail it to see if it dies from its injuries without risk of further combat, or waits until the prey weakens from blood loss and becomes more vulnerable to a later attack. The Alien Rex is also known to pick off stragglers and target the injured as well as lay in ambush and use the element of surprise.

Equivalent Skill Abilities: Climbing 20%, Detect Ambush 35%, Detect Concealment 35% (also see track by scent, below), Land Navigation 75%, Prowl 42% (+10% in forest), Swimming 30%, Tracking 70% (by sight; humans and animals) and Tailing 85%.

Natural Abilities: A nimble and swift runner for its size, the Alien Rex can maintain its top speed (typically 28 mph/45 km) for up to 20 minutes. Leap: 10 feet (3 m) high and 15 feet (4.6 m) across. The monster’s leaping ability is used to leap up and over obstacles like fallen trees and burned out vehicles without missing a step or losing speed. It may also leap to pounce on potential prey. Heals at a rate of 4D6 M.D. per 24 hours.

Excellent sense of smell enables the Alien Rex to Track prey by scent at 65% (+20% to track the scent of blood) up to two miles (3.2 km) away. Poor Swimmer (30%).

Attacks per Melee: Five.

Mega-Damage: Head Butt 2D6+2 M.D., bite inflicts 5D6 M.D., claw with forelimbs 3D6 M.D., claw with hind limbs 5D6 M.D., kick 5D6+6 M.D. with a 01-55% chance of knocking human-sized targets off their feet, slash with tail inflicts 3D6 M.D. with a 01-50% chance of knocking down human-sized targets.

Pounce Attack (special): 4D6 M.D. with a 01-35% chance of pinning down its opponent, rendering him/it unable to fight back. Counts as two melee attacks.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +1 to Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +2 to strike with claws or tail, +3 to strike with bite/jaws, +2 to dodge, +2 to roll with impact, +7 to save vs Horror Factor, and a +2 to save vs poison.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Enemies: Other predators, including the Razorback Rhinoceros, T-Rex, Allosaurus and other large hunters. Preys mainly on large animals, including humans, and will attack and eat anything that won’t eat it first.

Allies: None, other than a mate or other members of its own species. The Alien Rex typically ignores or tolerates members of its own race, particularly the young, and frequently hunt in pairs, threes or fours. Rarely more than that, but groups of six and seven have been reported.

Habitat: Mainly the forests and marshy lowlands throughout Dinosaur Swamp. Over the last few years, there have been rumored sightings of the creature as a lone hunter, pairs and small groups further north along the forests of the Eastern seaboard and up into southern Canada, as well as in the Magic Zone (Ohio Valley) as the creature expands its range. Those in the Magic Zone are likely the result of careless Shifters bringing the monster in.

Value: None, only Shifters, Simvan Monster Riders and Psi-Stalkers have any chance of using the Alien Rex as a riding or attack animal, and even they have trouble controlling mature adults (age four and up). The Splugorth sometimes use the monsters in the gladiatorial arena and will pay 1,000-2,000 credits for young and 4,000-6,000 for an adult, provided they are in the market for one at the time.

Note: Originally appeared in **Rifts® World Book 27: Adventures in Dinosaur Swamp™**, page 27.

Allosaurus Dinosaur

By Todd Yoho and Kevin Siembieda

It remains a mystery as to whether or not dinosaurs and pre-historic creatures are actually from Earth’s past or from a parallel Earth where such beasts still roam the land. Whatever the case, they emerged from the Rifts and have adapted well to the savage wildernesses of Rifts Earth. In North America, most dinosaurs are found in Florida and the South East, and are so numerous the region has become known as Dinosaur Swamp.

At first glance, many adventurers unfamiliar with dinosaurs confuse the Allosaurus with a small or juvenile Tyrannosaurus Rex. An easy mistake when a slobbering, tooth-filled maw is racing toward you, and the finer points of dinosaur identification is largely unimportant. While they are carnivorous theropods of similar builds, the adult Allosaurus are about half the size of Tyrannosaurs, and have small horns, fins and bony ridges decorating their skulls. Its hide is covered in an intricate camouflage pattern



of greens, browns and dark red patches and the forearms are longer than the T-Rex. In fact, its forearms are extremely dexterous and used to grab and hold onto prey before making the kill with one or more bites from its massive maw filled with serrated teeth.

Allosaurus are typically solitary hunters and scavengers, though they have been known to congregate in *family packs* to raise their young. Lone males are notoriously single-minded and known to pursue prey to the exclusion of all else.

There are unconfirmed reports of a breed of Allosaurus that can turn invisible at will, but such stories have been dismissed as folklore. That said, the Allosaurus's camouflage patterning and stealth abilities make them deadly hunters who can seem to appear out of nowhere.

Allosaurus – Carnivorous Dinosaur

Alignment: Animal Predator, considered Miscreant or Diabolic.

Attributes: Animal attributes are very consistent and offer a smaller range of attribute aptitude. I.Q. 3+1D4 (medium animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+4, M.A. 1D6+6, P.S. 1D6+30 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+15, P.E. 1D6+19 (Supernatural), P.B. 2D6+4, Spd 2D6+28 (20-27 mph/32-43 km).

M.D.C. by Location:

Head – 100
Forelimbs (2) – 40 each
Hind Limbs (2) – 150 each
Tail – 90
Main Body – 1D4x100

Note: *On S.D.C. worlds*, the Allosaurus has a main body of 3D6x10 S.D.C., 2D6x10+30 Hit Points and an A.R. of 12. All other body locations have S.D.C. equal to the M.D.C. number listed above (2D6+30 M.D.C. = 2D6+30 S.D.C.). The damage inflicted by the creature does an equivalent amount of S.D.C. points rather than M.D.

Horror Factor: 15

Size: 20 feet (6.1 m) long from snout to tip of tail, 8-10 feet (2.4 to 3 m) tall.

Weight: 4,000 lbs (1,800 kg).

Average Life Span: 20-26 years.

P.P.E.: 3D6

Disposition: Patient and persistent – an Allosaur will lay in wait for hours until the exact right moment to ambush its prey. Will pursue its prey for great distances, and will seldom back down from a fight.

Equivalent Skill Abilities: Camouflage 75% (coloring enables them to blend in with their surroundings and ambush prey;

coloring and detail vary), Land Navigation 90%, and Prowl 60%. Cannot Swim or Climb. **Note:** Will not enter water that is more than 4 feet (1.2 m) deep!

Natural Abilities: Swift runners for their size, they can maintain their top speed for 25 minutes. Excellent day vision, fair night-vision 300 feet (91.4 m). Have an excellent sense of smell, can smell prey up to 2,000 feet (610 m) away, double the range to smell blood, and can Track by smell 70% (+10% to follow blood scent).

Accelerated Healing (special): Recovers from damage at a rate of 6D6 M.D.C. per hour but only when on a ley line or nexus point. Otherwise, normal recovery is 2D6 M.D.C. per 24 hours.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Mega-Damage: Head butt 1D6+6 M.D., bite 1D4x10 M.D., claw with forelimbs 3D6 M.D., kick 5D6 M.D. with a 30% chance of tripping human-sized targets, claw with hind limbs 6D6 M.D., slash with tail 1D4x10 M.D. with a 01-60% chance of knocking down human-sized targets.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +2 to dodge, +1 to roll with impact, and +9 to save vs Horror Factor.

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

Psionics: None.

Habitat: Forests and marshy lowlands, though tends to stay on the fringes of wetlands. Most common to the forests of North and South Carolina, but its range has increased to the forests of Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee, and occasionally in Georgia, Alabama and Arkansas. Dislikes the colder climates of the North, but one or a few might make their way farther north in the Summer months, but head back south when temperatures drop below 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 Celsius) on a regular basis.

Enemies: Other predators, anything that might be a food source.

Allies: None, except for members of their own packs when they form them, and which may include 1D4 *Ghost Allosaurus*, described below.

Value: None, though Simvan sometimes use them as mounts and the Splugorth as monsters in the gladiatorial arena.

Note: Originally appeared in **Rifts® World Book 26: Dinosaur Swamp™**, page 15.

Ghost Allosaurus

By Kevin Siembieda

The rumors are true. There are Allosaurs that are able to turn invisible. This *mutant sub-class of Allosaurus* is included here, because they are identical in appearance and behavior to the classic Allosaurus in every way except a few. Those differences – P.P.E., slightly higher attributes, skill equivalents, other magic – are noted below.

Ghost Allosaurus – Carnivorous Dinosaur

Alignment: Considered Miscreant or Diabolic.

Also Known As: The Invisible Allosaurus and Devil Dinosaur.

Attributes: There are some differences between this species and the classic Allosaurus. I.Q. 1D4+6 (predatory animal intelligence.) M.E. 1D6+6, M.A. 1D6+6, P.S. 1D6+30 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+13, P.E. 1D6+17 (Supernatural), P.B. 2D6+4, Spd 2D6+30; (20-27 mph/32-43 km).

M.D.C. by Location: Same as Allosaurus, above.

Horror Factor: 15, same as Allosaurus, above.

Size: Same as Allosaurus, above. 20 feet (6.1 m) long, 8-10 feet (2.4 to 3 m) tall.

Weight: 4,000 lbs (1,800 kg).

Average Life Span: 30-38 years.

P.P.E.: 5D6+20

Disposition: Same as Allosaurus, above, a patient and persistent hunter.

Equivalent Skill Abilities: Camouflage 75% (coloring enables them to blend in with their surroundings and ambush prey), Detect Ambush 40%, Detect Concealment 30%, Land Navigation 90%, and Prowl 65% and Tailing 75%. Cannot Swim or Climb. **Note:** Will not enter water that is more than 4 feet (1.2 m) deep!

Natural Abilities: Same as Allosaurus, above, plus the ability to turn invisible, below, and the ability to cast two spells.

Accelerated Healing (special): Recovers from damage at a rate of 6D6 M.D. per hour but only when on a ley line or nexus point.

Sense Ley Lines (special): The Ghost Allosaurus is able to sense when it is on a ley line or within five miles (8 km) of one. It is smart enough to know it is at an advantage at such locations and as a result, the creature likes to hunt and live on or near ley lines.

Turn Invisible (special): Ghost Allosaurs are able to turn invisible at will and maintain invisibility for an hour at a time, to hide and stalk prey. When the monster hears or smells potential prey approaching (up to 2,000 feet/610 m away; double the range to smell the scent of blood), it turns invisible and waits to ambush prey from the shadows, or it slowly sneaks closer before it charges out of nowhere to attack. As soon as The Ghost Allosaurus attacks or begins to run, the invisibility is gone and the beast is revealed in all of its fury and terror. **Bonus:** This initial surprise attack provides a bonus of +2 to strike. **P.P.E. Cost:** Turning invisible costs 4 P.P.E. points.

Also see *Magic*, below.

Attacks per Melee: Four, same as Allosaurus, above.

Mega-Damage: Same as Allosaurus, above.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): Same as Allosaurus, above, except for the additional +2 to strike when appearing out of nowhere (was invisible).

Magic: In addition to healing at a rate of 6D6 M.D. per hour when on a ley line or nexus point, and the ability to turn invisible at will (cost 4 P.P.E.), the Ghost Allosaurus can also cast the following spells upon itself: Death Trance (1), See the Invisible (4), and Resist Fire (6; self only, half damage). Cannot learn additional magic spells and does not speak any discernible language, it is an animal. P.P.E. for use of magic: 5D6+20. The Ghost Allosaurus recovers P.P.E. at a rate of 1D6 per hour, double along a ley line or at a nexus point.

Psionics: None.

Habitat: Same as Allosaurus, above, but are drawn to ley lines, and to the Magic Zone in the summer.

Enemies: Same as Allosaurus, above.

Allies: Same as Allosaurus, above. Ghost Allosaurs may be counted among the members of an ordinary Allosaurus pack.

Value: Same as Allosaurus, above.

Note: New, described for the first time in this book.

Armored Slayer

By Kevin Siembieda

The origin of these bizarre, quasi-humanoid creatures remains a mystery. One's first impressions is that the creature is some sort of armored soldier or alien being reminiscent to the Bio-Wizard creations of the Splugorth of Atlantis. However, it becomes quickly evident that these armored juggernauts are some strange, semi-intelligent monster from the Rifts.

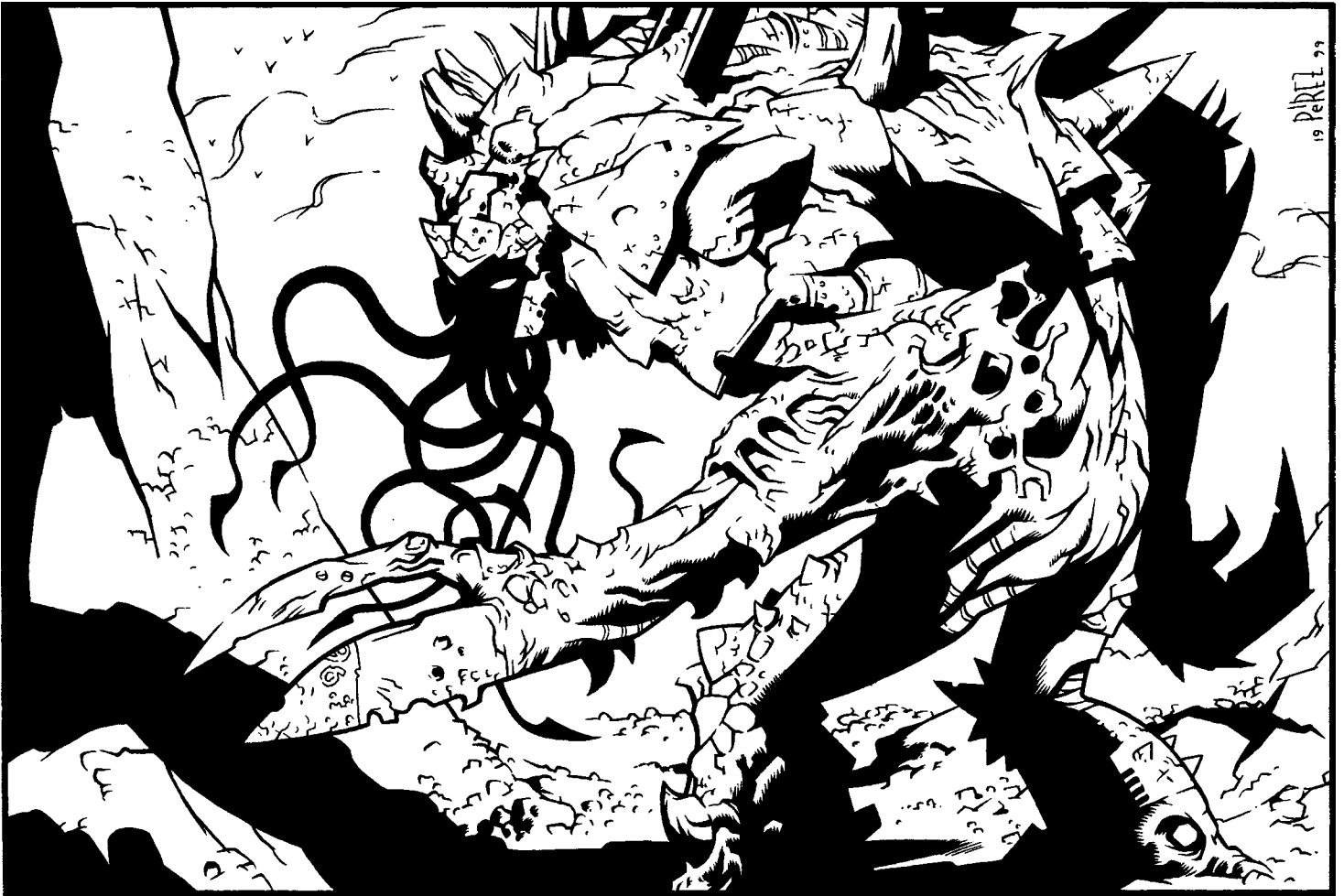
The Armored Slayer is a barrel-chested, walking mound of organic plates, spikes and gnarled bone. A humanoid thing clad in rough and jagged armor not unlike an anthropomorphic rhinoceros wearing bulky, multifaceted plate armor. Upon closer inspection, the armor plating appears to be a composite of fragments made from metal, stone, wood and bone that has been covered and built upon with a light grey resin that is hard as rock. The Armored Slayer typically has two thick, stumpy legs, a pair of thick arms, huge 2-3 fingered hands, broad shoulders, hunched back, and a thick, short neck with the head shoved into its shoulders. From what is assumed to be the mouth are six, prehensile tentacles. Each is roughly ten feet (3 m) long, can act in unison or independent of each other and end in a spear-like tip that is used for slashing and stabbing. The fingers of the oversized hands are usually made of jagged chunks of M.D. metal or swords (including Vibro-Blades or magic swords), or the barrels of inoperative rail guns. They are connected to the hand by the resin and used to cut, stab, jab and hit rather than to use as articulated digits; that's what the tentacles are for.

Just as the Hermit Crab of Earth finds an empty shell to use for its body, this alien being uses scrap armor and debris glued together, strengthened, built upon and molded with a secreted resin into the shapes and body plates of its artificial body.

Why a roughly humanoid shape is chosen is unknown. The genuine creature is a large, pale red mass of flesh that resembles a giant brain with two yellow eyes and a mass of six tentacles extending from underneath the front part of the body mass. The eyes are on short stalks located above the tentacles. Without its armor the creature resembles the Metztla of Atlantis, but there is no relation. This *tentacled brain* is the size of the upper torso of a human (roughly three feet/0.9 feet tall and 4 feet/1.2 m long; not counting tentacles). It sits in the chest of its armored body with the glowing yellow eyes peering out of the armor-plated head and the tentacles protruding from what appears to be the mouth. It controls its artificial body through a network of thread thin tendrils that extend from its own body into its artificial construct much like the network of nerves in a living animal. It is further assisted by Telekinesis and other psionic powers.

If its armored body is destroyed, the actual flesh and blood creature is vulnerable to attack, as it is only a minor M.D.C. being, and crawls along using its tentacles at a painfully slow pace, though it often climbs up into trees (if available) where it can move faster and can disappear and hide among the branches and leaves. Without the armored shell, the creature is much less formidable, but far from helpless with its tentacles and psionics to defend itself.

Despite the massive size and weight of its artificial body, most Armored Slayers move and battle with the grace and lethal efficiency of a Juicer. They move much faster than their size and



bulk would suggest, and they can perform back flips, somersaults, leaps and karate-style strikes at lightning speed and with astonishing fluidity.

Armored Slayers never eat flesh or any other type of physical food. The monsters feed by absorbing Potential Psychic Energy (P.P.E.) and psychic energy (I.S.P.) from other living beings similar to the Psi-Stalker. Like the Psi-Stalker, the Armored Slayer must capture and incapacitate its prey, then cover them with a slimy yellow substance secreted from the tentacles and mouth area. This slime has no negative effect on its victim other than somehow allowing the monster to absorb their P.P.E./I.S.P. through it. The tentacles weave and slide through the slimy goo, painlessly sucking up the slime and at the same time, the victim's psychic energy. When all the slime is removed/reabsorbed, the victim will have lost $1D4 \times 10 + 60\%$ of his P.P.E. and/or I.S.P., up to 100 points at a time. Of course, the victim will naturally regenerate said energy, so any loss is only temporary, and potentially dangerous only if the individual needs to defend himself with magic or psionic abilities.

As a result, the monster's favorite prey are beings with high P.P.E. or I.S.P. such as demons, dragons, Faerie Folk, psychics and practitioners of magic. In the case of demons and opponents whom the Armored Slayer plans to fight to the death, the creature will slime that foe just before killing him. At the moment of death, the yellow substance captures *all* escaping P.P.E. energy, doubled at the time of death, even if the body vanishes, leaving only the goo behind, which is then devoured as usual. (When slain, demons and many other supernatural beings usually disincorporate.)

The creature gets its name from the fact that it seems to hate supernatural beings (demons, vampires, entities, alien intelligences, etc.) and goes out of its way to destroy them. As an armored "slayer" of demons and monsters, the creature should be accepted by other D-Bees and humans, except that it is so alien and has a great deal of trouble comprehending humanoids, their language, behavior, society, science and laws. Thus, Armored Slayers are at best the equivalent of a monstrous, mentally challenged child who understands and communicates to a limited degree. It is easily distracted and confused, does not understand technology and tends to respond to, and with, emotions and instinct.

The Coalition States have been responsible for killing thousands of these "nightmarish monsters" over the decades, so Armored Slayers have learned to recognize the Death's Head symbol representing savage destroyers and enemies to be feared and avoided. This has also made them leery of humans in general and to avoid cities and large towns where they are likely to cause a panic and get attacked. Sadly, this makes the Armored Slayer one of the most feared and misunderstood of all alien life forms in North America. That changes slightly as a result of the Minion War when it becomes obvious that demonic beings are the natural enemy of the creature and therefore an ally of humanity by default. **Note:** Technically, the Armored Slayer is not actually a D-Bee and is regarded by most people to be a monster, which is why it is here among animals and monsters in the **Rifts® Bestiary**. The term *Dimensional Being* is usually reserved for intelligent, bipedal humanoid aliens with at least a vaguely human body shape. The alien organism that is the Armored Slayer isn't even remotely human, humanoid or bipedal. It is a multi-tentacled

blob that creates an artificial, armored body that has a humanoid shape. An appearance it intuitively takes for its massive artificial body in a feeble attempt to fit in with the dominant life forms on our world, humanoids.

This hunter of supernatural evil from an alien world seems to act on animal instinct, but only kills those who threaten it or who are its instinctive enemies, like demonkind. At times it exhibits near human intelligence and can be surprisingly clever and cunning, especially in combat. An Armored Slayer exploits any advantage that it sees, including taking advantage of confusion or distractions, uses surprise attacks, strikes from the cover of invisibility, uses the cover of night, sets ambushes, sets simple traps by using other demons as bait (or things that they want), and even feigns injury or confusion to trick its enemies!

Despite being misunderstood and attacked by humans and D-Bees, Armored Slayers *may* join bands of humanoids, particularly those who hunt and battle supernatural evil, dragons and dangerous creatures of magic. That includes the Minions of Hell and the Splugorth and their Minions. The problem is that the clever but simplistic monster is difficult to direct and control, and has trouble understanding such concepts as teamwork and subterfuge. Likewise, it seems to have no comprehension of human laws, regulations, politics or society. Consequently, if it recognizes a demon (perhaps metamorphed in human form) through a window in a bar or in a crowd of people in a town square, the Armored Slayer's natural instinct is to bellow, charge and kill; knocking innocent people out of its way and smashing displays and merchandise. It is very much a bull in a china shop. Likewise, it quickly grows bored with lengthy discussions of strategy and will suddenly turn and charge or go off to fight on its own rather than wait while the group talks. Additionally, it cannot implement elaborate plans and usually takes a direct approach to everything – a locked door, kick it in; a damsel in distress, rush in to save her; a monster threatens or challenges, attack it; and so on. **Note:** Armored Slayers can learn to understand several languages, but never at better than 70% comprehension, but rituals, laws and tradition are always lost on it. They can even speak simple words and phrases in a soft, hissing voice that sounds like escaping air from a radiator or air hose.

Before the Minion War came to Earth, the Armored Slayer was most common around the Hudson Bay, Nunavut, the northern islands, and the coast of Newfoundland where the creatures are most likely to be encountered as lone individuals, pairs or small groups of 3-6. When not hunting humanoid prey of their magic or psychic energy, they seem to be most frequently found in the ruins of cities, forests and marshlands. They have great difficulty navigating rugged land and avoid mountains as well as inhabited cities. The Armored Slayer was also occasionally encountered as a lone hunter and in pairs (rarely groups of own kind) in the old Provinces of Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Upper Michigan, and around the Great Lakes (Wisconsin, northern Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York) – rarely any farther south or west. They seemed to favor being around bodies of water, especially large rivers, lakes, bays and seas, despite the fact that they are not particularly good swimmers and seem to dislike the water.

Since the Minion War, Armored Slayers have moved west and are found fighting the Minions of Hades and Dyval everywhere. While still rare and exotic beings, their numbers seem to have increased. Leading some to wonder if those on Rifts Earth have somehow reached out to Armored Slayers on other worlds to come

join the fight here on Earth and specifically the battle for North America. They still tend to avoid Coalition troops, but will assist them in combat against demons and monsters, leaving as soon as the battle is over. Armored Slayers seem to gravitate toward other groups, most notably the Native American warriors and Shamans, Cyber-Knights, Lynn-Srial Sky-Knights, Tundra Rangers, Atlanteans, Lemurians and warriors and mages from Lazlo.

Armored Slayer, Alien Demon Slayer

Player Note: Whether or not an Armored Slayer is allowed as a player character is left entirely to the G.M. If allowed, remember to play the character simply with direct-mindedness and lack of understanding about human society, laws, morals, etc. Use the same experience table as Dragons and add 2D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

Also Known As: Tentacle Warrior, but will become known as the Armored Demon Slayer as the Minion War goes on for several years.

Alignment: Any, but typically the equivalent of Scrupulous (55%), Unprincipled (25%) and Anarchist (15%). Only a tiny percentage are evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+5, M.E. 2D6+7, M.A. 2D6+2, P.S. 2D6+22 for the armored body, but 1D6+11 for each tentacle (both are Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+11 of tentacles and big body, P.E. 2D6+10 for the organism (Supernatural), P.B. 2D4 for both the blob and its artificial body, 3D6+16 (13-23 mph/21-37 km) for the armored body. Only 1D4+1 (1-3 mph/2-5 km) for the living organism on the ground, triple that speed when swinging through the branches of trees via its tentacles.

M.D.C. by Location of the Armored Body:

Hands (2) – 100 each

Arms (2) – 150 each

Legs (2) – 225 each

Head – 150

*Tentacles (6) – 20 each

*Eyes (2) – 8 each

Main Body – 300-420

* The tentacles are small targets that are constantly moving, so to hit one the attacker must make a “Called Shot” and even then is -5 to strike. The eyes are small, shielded, and need a “Called Shot” to strike with a penalty of -7.

Loss of limbs and damage to the main body does not hurt the organism inside the armored body. Moreover, it can replace the lost limbs of its artificial body and restore lost M.D.C. by rebuilding its body with more M.D.C. scraps. See Natural Abilities for more details. If the entire main body is destroyed, the alien organism is revealed and vulnerable to attack.

Note: *On S.D.C. worlds*, the Armored Slayer's artificial humanoid combat body has 3D6x10+200 S.D.C. and an A.R. of 17. The damage inflicted by the creature's attacks does an equivalent amount of S.D.C. points rather than M.D.

M.D.C. of the Creature Without its Armor (a blob with two eye stalks and six tentacles): P.E. attribute number x2. (On S.D.C. worlds, 1D4x10 for S.D.C., P.E. attribute number +2D6 for Hit Points, and an A.R. of 8).

Horror Factor: 13 for most people who think it is a monster. No Horror Factor for those who come to realize it is a force of good, unless they have to fight one for some reason. Horror Factor 15 for demonic beings who know Armored Slayers are demon slayers!

Size: 9-12 feet (2.7 to 3.6 m) tall.

Weight: 1,500-4,000 pounds (675 to 1,800 kg).

Average Life Span: Unknown, believed to live 300-600 years.

P.P.E.: 4D6

Disposition: While Armored Slayers are direct in confrontations with the supernatural or when threatened, they can be quite child-like in their thoughts, emotions and reactions outside of combat.

Equivalent Skill Abilities: Climbing 60%/40%, Land Navigation 80%, Lore: Monsters and Demons 80%, Track animals 60%, Track humanoids 65%, Swimming 40% (+15% if the organism abandons its armor), Prowl 40%, and understands English at 70% and 1D4+1 other languages at 50% (may increase up to 70% with experience).

Natural Abilities: Sharp vision and can recognize an enemy from a mile away, nightvision 1,000 feet (305 m), see the invisible, incredible strength and reflexes, seems to be impervious to disease, poison and cold, resistant to heat, can hold breath underwater for one minute per each P.E. point, can survive depths up to 2,000 feet (610 m) and is probably better off walking on the bottom of a lake (if necessary) than trying to swim, but dislikes water. The living organism can also regenerate damage at the rate of 3D6 physical M.D.C. per 12 hours, and is able to regrow damaged or lost tentacle at the rate of one foot (0.3 m) per month and eyes within 1D6+6 weeks.

Create Armored Body: Uses metal, stone, concrete, debris, machine parts, vehicle armor, etc. to build its artificial humanoid body. These scraps are used as the basic skeletal framework, weapons and armored plating of the hulking body. All of which is held together with a powerful, M.D.C. bonding resin. This gray substance is secreted from the tentacle and dries to become a hard, M.D.C. material itself. This enables the organism to constantly repair and improve itself by adding new parts and plating to its body and removing damage and replacing it with new armor and parts. The creature can also secrete a solvent to dissolve its own resin to remove or modify plates and parts as it sees fit.

The maximum amount of M.D.C. for the main Body is 420 points, with 300 being average. The main problem with maintaining its armored body is finding suitable M.D.C. materials and the time it takes to modify, improve and rebuild. An Armored Slayer can make a complete basic appendage (arm, leg, etc.) within half its normal M.D.C. within 24 hours and a complete body with 150 M.D.C. within 72 hours. **Note:** Like a Hermit Crab, the alien organism can leave its armored body at any time and occasionally does so to trick or escape an enemy.

Prehensile Tentacles (special): All Armored Slayers have six tentacles that can extend up to ten feet (3 m) in length. Each can move like an independent appendage or in unison with two or three others. They are use to attack, parry, and entangle. It has been observed that the creature can use these tentacles to grab or entangle objects, strike like a whip, and impale even Mega-Damage materials. The tentacles can use melee weapons like swords or clubs, but rarely do. **Note:** If damaged or lost, a tentacle will regenerate at the rate of one foot (0.3 m) per month until it reaches its full length.

Attacks per Melee: Nine!

Mega-Damage: As per Supernatural P.S. (typically P.S. 26-30 that does 5D6 S.D.C. on a restrained punch, 3D6 M.D. on a full strength punch or kick, and 6D6 M.D. on a power punch, but

counts as two attacks) or by weapon. Bladed sword-like fingers/claws usually add 2D6 M.D. or 3D6 M.D. to P.S. damage.

Tentacle Strike: 2D6 M.D. and cannot be augmented.

Tentacle Power Strike/Impale/Stab(special): 4D6 M.D. per single tentacle (double if two strike simultaneously and triple if three strike; not more than three can strike the same target at the same time), but counts as two attacks.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +3 on initiative, +3 to strike, +6 to parry (includes use of the tentacles), +6 to entangle, +6 to pull punch, +3 to disarm, +6 to save vs Horror Factor and +6 to save vs possession.

Vulnerabilities: The alien's lack of understanding about people, society and the laws of civilization can get it into trouble as can its rash actions and monstrous appearance. The latter changes to a large degree during the Minion War in which people realize this beast should be named the *Armored Demon Slayer*, and is one of the good guys.

Magic: None.

Psionics: Psychic powers are limited to Death Trance (1), Detect Psionics (6), Empathy (4), Intuitive Combat (10), Impervious to Cold (2), Impervious to Fire (4), Meditation (0), Mind Block (4), Sense Magic (3), Telekinetic Lift (6), Telekinetic Push (6), and Telekinesis Super (10+). **I.S.P.:** M.E.x2 +4D6.

Habitat: Before the Minion War anywhere, but primarily Eastern Canada and USA, and all around the Hudson Bay. With the advent of the Minion War, Armored Slayers are found across the US and Canada, often joining other demon slayers and heroes, particularly Native Americans, Inuit Shamans, Cyber-Knights, Lynn-Srial Sky-Knights, Tundra Rangers, Atlanteans, Lemurians, warriors from Lazlo and heroes of renown. Few have ventured into Mexico to fight vampires as the Minion War is seen as the most immediate and overwhelming danger.

Enemies: Demons and evil supernatural beings are enemy number one, but Faerie Folk, creatures of magic, practitioners of magic and psychics are all considered prey and often slain by these strange beings. Only those of good alignment may be spared, as well as those who are members of a group with whom the Armored Slayer joins or associates with. However, if threatened, challenged or attacked by such a teammate, or if that individual is seen consorting with the enemy, the Slayer will attack and fight him to the death. CS soldiers are also considered dangerous enemies (or untrustworthy allies) best to be avoided. Generally, takes no crap from anyone who threatens it. It should be noted that ALL evil supernatural beings are on the Armored Slayer's hit list, including the Splugorth and their minions. Nor do they trust Shifters or Witches or anyone who enslaves and manipulates others.

Allies: Fellow Armored Slayers and Demon Slayers, Inuit, Native Americans, Shamans, Cyber-Knights, Lynn-Srial Sky-Knights, Tundra Rangers, Atlanteans, Lemurians, warriors from Lazlo and heroes of renown. Since the advent of the Minion War, Armored Slayers are known to join groups of heroes and associate with humans and D-Bees to protect the innocent and stop the demonic invasion.

Typical Gear and Equipment: They can use simple melee weapons such as clubs, swords and spears, but rarely do so. Never use guns, technological devices or vehicles, though they will ride on one or inside vehicles piloted by others. The creature has no need for any valuables or possessions other than salvage and scrap material to repair and improve its artificial armored body.

Value: A few have been captured and sold to Atlantis for arena combat, something the Slayers hate but are uniquely suited for. The noble creatures hate Slavers almost as much as supernatural evil and it will intercede to free slaves whenever it can. Whenever enslaved, the Armored Slayer will try to work out a way to escape and free as many other slaves as it can with it, or come back with other heroes to rescue them.

Note: Originally appeared in **Rifts® World Book 20: Rifts® Canada™**, page 140.

Covenant Falcon

By Kevin Siembieda, inspired by an idea from Carmen Bellaire

The Covenant Falcon, also known as the *Demon Slaying Falcon*, is an otherworldly, parasitic creature that resembles an Earth bird of prey. Its most unique attribute is the ability to create a symbiotic bond between itself and humans or D-Bees. This bond provides the animal with a constant food source (i.e. the person to whom it is linked), but in exchange, the human host/partner gets a loyal companion, combat bonuses and the power to see through the animal's eyes, among other things. Nobody understands why it likes to bond to humans and to a lesser degree, D-Bees, especially human-like D-Bees, but there is some force that seems to attract the avian creatures to them. Moreover, it is not fooled by shapeshifters and can tell if the person is truly mortal or something else in human guise.

This bird of prey is roughly the size and shape of an Earth Falcon, but has feathered, bat-like wings, and is a Mega-Damage creature capable of fighting and killing S.D.C. and light M.D.C. creatures. One glance up close tells you this is not a bird from Earth, but from a distance it is easy to mistake it with an ordinary falcon or hawk.

This alien bird enjoys the taste and euphoric sensation it experiences from feeding on the blood and emotions of its handler, and bonds with its *humanoid food source* in an agreeable way. While this may sound disturbing, it is actually a fairly positive symbiotic relationship between the Covenant Falcon and its humanoid host. For one, the Covenant Falcon behaves more like a loyal dog than a bird, and shows affection and protects its humanoid "partner" (and food source).

If there is a downside to this symbiotic relationship, it is that the bird and the human or D-Bee to whom it bonds, become inseparable. For the humanoid, the bird-like creature is thought of and treated more like a human partner and friend than a pet or an attack animal. Both become emotionally bound to each other and will give their own life to protect the other. For the humanoid that means talking to it like another person and thinking of it almost as an extension of himself.

The Covenant Falcon shares a similar connection and sense of unity and synchronicity with its humanoid partner, but in reality that person is its host upon which it regularly feeds. The host/partner is rarely aware that he is his bird friend's *daily meal* because there is nothing painful about the process and the union is *mutually beneficial* – but it is still a parasitic and symbiotic relationship. After one month of the initial bonding between the two, its humanoid "partner" becomes the creature's *primary food source*, eliminating the need for it to hunt other prey, except when it so desires, is commanded to do so, or is necessary. If the humanoid host is killed, the Covenant Falcon suffers serious damage (loses half its M.D.C.) and begins to waste away. It must find a new humanoid host/partner within 14 days or it dies from starvation and loneliness.

Covenant Falcons feed upon P.P.E., emotions, and the blood of the person to whom it is bound. The first two forms of feeding can be performed even when the bird's partner is clad in body armor, power armor or is a partial cyborg. The last condition requires a bit of effort and a willingness to do so.

P.P.E. Nourishment: The Covenant Falcon consumes a total of 4-6 P.P.E. per 24 hours, usually one or two P.P.E. points every four hours and usually AFTER the P.P.E. it has eaten earlier has already, naturally recovered. This is done simply by resting on the person and showing affection. Since most people are not aware of their P.P.E. nor draw upon it, it is of little consequence to them. Moreover, the bird rarely bonds with mages and never to creatures of magic, so there is no conflict.

Emotions: It is unclear how the emotional connection to a human or D-Bee nourishes and pleases the creature, but it does. Some scholars and scientists believe the Covenant Falcon uses the emotions more like a drug to experience a range of stimulation, highs and lows, and actually becomes addicted to its host human. It feeds upon the emotions by being linked to its host.

Blood: This is the least pleasant part of the symbiotic relationship, but it too is fairly painless. Whenever its humanoid host/partner is cut and bleeds the bird will want to drink some fresh blood. Just a little, and requires only four ounces (118 milliliters) a week. Of course, it is happy to consume more blood as often as it is offered or made available to it, but four ounces (118 milliliters) a week meets the minimum nutritional requirement. This can be done very cleanly and humanely by having the blood drawn with a syringe and put in a bowl or bottle. In fact, many mercs and adventurers with a Covenant Falcon draw enough to feed it for a few weeks. The trick is keeping the blood fresh while in the field.

Other Food/Prey: If Psi-Stalkers were a bird, they would be a Covenant Falcon. Like Psi-Stalkers, the bird of prey likes to feed upon the P.P.E. of evil supernatural beings and wicked creatures of magic, and in much the same fashion. For this reason, it stays near its host/partner whenever he and his teammates battle such monsters so that it may gorge itself upon the doubled P.P.E. released at the moment of death. By just being within a 20 foot (6.1 m) radius of the kill, the animal can capture 2D4x10% of the escaping P.P.E. and keeps it satisfied for a week or two. The Falcon gets all the P.P.E. if the bird is the one who delivers the killing blow itself! It is also likely to drink some of the monster's blood and eat some of its flesh if there is any available.

The powerful link between the Covenant Falcon and its One:

Two Who Are One – Empathic Connection: As all of this suggests, only the Covenant Falcon's *humanoid partner* enjoys the array of special insight and abilities provided by this unique bond. In a way, the two do become one. Each sensing the other's emotions, particularly strong emotions like fear, anxiety, hate, anger, despair, hunger, and love. All functioning as signals that their partner might be in trouble and need of the other's help or companionship, or that all is fine and good.

This empathic connection enables each to try to comfort, assure or cheer up the other. This is done via touch, chirps, body language and nuzzling by the bird. Petting and soft words or singing by the humanoid. Covenant Falcons love listening to singing and music, bobbing their heads and sometimes even dancing along, as best it can, to the music.



These two best friends and companions always know how the other is feeling: Hungry, thirsty, cold, hot, sad, happy, angry, relaxed, scared or worried, and so on. This makes each member of this symbiotic relationship keenly aware of, and responsive to, the other's needs, fears, and comfort level. And each will try to help alleviate things like being hungry or thirsty, hot or cold, sad or worried. Hot emotions like fear, anger, and sudden spikes in adrenaline alert each to potential danger or impending violence, and provide a bonus to react. Bonuses are listed, below. Also see Combat Bonuses, listed separately.

Skill Bonuses to the Humanoid Partner: This symbiotic union adds a +5% bonus to the following skills if its humanoid partner has any of them: +5 to Animal Husbandry, Detect Ambush, Horsemanship (any), Identify Plants & Fruits, Sing, Tailing, Track & Trap Animals, and Tracking (people), and +10% to Land Navigation and Wilderness Survival.

Sensory Link – Shared Vision: The humanoid partner linked to a Covenant Falcon must stop and focus for one full melee round (15 seconds) to establish a sensory link. Once the link is established, the human partner sees, hears and experiences the Covenant Falcon's senses (mainly sight and sound) from its perspective – seeing through the other's eyes and hearing through the other's ears. Which is often a bird's eye view from the Falcon.

This is always a two-way connection, and when sensory linked – which is usually most of the time – such a link enables the Covenant Falcon to hear and understand any words its human partner might vocally voice/speak out loud, which means he can give it directions, commands, cues and warnings from a distance. No limit as long as man and fowl are in the same dimension.

For humanoids, the sensory link is ideal for aerial reconnaissance, scouting ahead and spying. It can be maintained while the animal is

flying, gliding or perched someplace inconspicuous. Sensory links are also initiated to “check in” on each other to make sure their partner is okay and does not need assistance or protection.

The link can be maintained while the humanoid is walking, sitting, resting, driving or performing very simple tasks like sweeping the floor. However, he is distracted, rather like trying to do one thing while watching and listening to someone else's conversation.

Penalties from the Sensory/Seeing/Listening Link for Humanoids: The human partner is -3 on Perception Rolls when it comes to what's happening around him, -2 on initiative, -1 on all combat rolls, -20% on skill performance that requires focus, concentration and dexterity, and it takes twice as long to perform the skill, all for the duration of the link. **Note:** The link can be broken with but a thought at any time. If it was broken to engage in combat or to focus attention on something threatening or dangerous, or fun and enjoyable, the animal partner knows it, and vice versa. The partner will respond accordingly to the situation and come quick if there is trouble.

Penalties From the Seeing/Listening Link for the Bird: The penalties for the Covenant Falcon while it is seeing and hearing what its human host is experiencing are less severe. -1 on Perception Rolls, -1 on initiative, -1 to strike, parry, dodge and other combat bonus and flying speed is reduced by -10% while simultaneously seeing through its humanoid's eyes for the duration of the link. It can break the link whenever it desires.

The Covenant Falcon can do the same and see and hear whatever its humanoid partner is experiencing. As an animal, this is mainly to keep tabs on its friend/companion and food source. If it suspects danger or trouble, the animal rushes back to protect its partner as necessary.

Note: Man and avian each knows when the other is watching and listening in this fashion, but don't mind. This connection

cannot be blocked, not even via Mind Block, because *the two are one*.

This means each knows when the other is ill, tired, injured and roughly how badly, and when the other fears death, is physically near death, or has died, whether the sensory link is in force or not.

Fusion of Life: In life and death situations, one can fuse his or its own life energy into the other in an attempt to save the other. Of course, additional medical attention is likely to be needed for one or the other to fully recover and heal, but this can be an important starting point to keep man or beast alive! All that is necessary is a moment's focus and desire to heal the other by touch or close proximity (20 feet/6.1 m).

One of the Covenant Falcon's M.D.C. points from its Main Body provides 20 S.D.C. or 10 Hit Points to its human partner. (One M.D.C. if that partner is a Mega-Damage D-Bee.)

20 S.D.C. or 10 Hit Points from the humanoid to the bird provides the Covenant Falcon with ONE M.D.C. point. Obviously, this exchange is potentially more lethal to the human than to the Covenant Falcon as the M.D.C. cost is minimal to help heal a human, but high for a human to heal his Falcon Friend.

If the animal or person is already in a coma, this fusion of life energy works to jumpstart the heart/body and provides a +40% bonus to save vs coma and death as well as the infusion of the Hit Points or S.D.C. or M.D.C. described above.

Bonuses from the Union: The Person: +1 on all Perception Rolls in regard to recognizing signs of danger, animal and demonic predators, and impending attack from wild and domesticated animals, predatory monsters and supernatural evil. +1 to dodge, +1 to save vs the Horror Factor of animals and monsters, and the person develops perfect, sharp vision. If his eyesight was less than perfect (nearsighted, farsighted, etc.) prior to the union, it becomes perfect within 48 hour of linking with a Covenant Falcon friend.

The humanoid's connection to the bird makes him aware of the meaning of the sounds it makes and recognizes the Covenant Falcon's battle cry and other sounds it makes when it is happy, sad, angry, scared, concerned, agitated, etc. (clucks, chirps, whistles, shrieks, etc.). The person also becomes more aware, appreciative and considerate of nature and animals in general.

The connection to the Covenant Falcon and sharing its senses and emotions turns many partners/hosts (75%) into speed-freaks who enjoy fast vehicles and flying by any means. And any fear of heights is eliminated and he is impervious to any phobia about heights or speed while connected to the Covenant Falcon. This might compel the character to want to ride in, or drive, fast vehicles like hovercycles, rocket bikes and jet packs.

The human partner also knows when this strange bird of prey senses supernatural evil and knows if the evil is a big, medium or small threat. Such moments are a good time to see through its eyes to get an idea of what monsters or demons it may be seeing or about to attack.

Bonuses from the Bonding for the Falcon: +1D6 to its P.P.E. base, +3D6+16 years added to its lifespan, and the link provides it a much larger understanding of spoken human language (as per its humanoid host/partner). The animal is able to understand words and their meaning at twice the level and range of dogs or horses.

The bird also becomes very comfortable and remains calm and at ease around large groups of people and technology. It is unafraid in urban environments or being taken indoors where it probably rides on its human partner's shoulder or backpack, or flies ahead a short way before finding a perch or rejoining its hu-

manoid partner. This includes being in crowded, noisy cities like the Chi-Town 'Burbs, MercTown and Northern Gun, as well as being inside buildings, hallways, small rooms, elevators, tunnels and riding inside vehicles.

Bonding Conditions & Restrictions: It is the Covenant Falcon who chooses the human or D-Bee to bond with. A person can offer himself but the bird makes the final decision. Good aligned practitioners of magic and Psi-Druids may try to select this animal to be a familiar without actually using the Familiar Link spell. However, this creature tends not to bond with practitioners of magic and Master Psychics, with the exception of Psi-Stalkers (fellow demon hunters).

If one bonds with a mage, the Covenant Falcon is likely to accept a mage who has an additional *Familiar Animal* but is not completely satisfied as long as the other animal is part of the team. In such an instance, the Covenant Falcon is likely to leave the mage at some point, in favor of a new partner willing to devote himself to it exclusively. **Note:** The bird does not have a problem sharing its human host/partner with a spouse, children, family or friends, just other animals.

In most cases, once the *two become one*, the bond is permanent for life, lasting until one or the other dies. However, there are instances in which the animal may choose to sever the link and leave that particular host, usually for a more emotionally and alignment compatible partner. Anarchist alignments are acceptable even if the bird is itself good. This may occur when the Covenant Falcon has no other available option, or the two share the *same* Anarchist alignment (a compatible match), or that despite the selfish alignment, the good Covenant Falcon finds something about the person that it likes or finds interesting and positive.

If the Anarchist "partner" becomes too chaotic or his selfishness hurts others on a regular basis, the Covenant Falcon may choose to abandon him in favor of someone with a closer alignment and temperament. **Note:** When the Covenant Falcon breaks the symbiotic connection (or when it dies), the connection to it and any special abilities and bonuses are immediately severed and gone.

It never bonds with evil or cruel beings, nor beings that enslave and abuse animals. Thus, they dislike *Simvan*, *Horune Pirates*, *Minions of Splugorth*, *evil Shifters*, *Witches*, and other cruel or evil beings. They seem to favor *Psi-Stalkers*, *Cyber-Knights*, *Lynn-Srial*, *Native Americans*, *humans* and *D-Bees* of good alignments.

For reasons unknown, Covenant Falcons generally avoid bonding with Dog Boys and other *animal-like mutants and D-Bees*. Perhaps they are seen as too animal-like or too unfamiliar and alien. The bird is incompatible and unable to bond with creatures of magic and supernatural beings and never tries.

Why bond with humanoids at all? A great question to which there is no answer. Some Rogue Scientists and Scholars have speculated that these alien birds of prey must have been partially domesticated and trained to suit the needs of the, presumably, human-like beings from whatever world or dimension they originate. A relationship, like our own domesticated dogs, that may have existed for thousand or tens of thousands of years. As a consequence, the birds are instinctually imprinted to seek and establish a symbiotic bond with intelligent humanoids of recognizable shape and size, and compatible alignments.

That makes sense, but if so, it makes one wonder if the human-like aliens were once Rifted to Earth? And if so, what happened to them? Perhaps they perished during the Two-Hundred Year Dark Age. If they were demon hunters, they could have been targeted and wiped out during one of the Demon Plagues.

Covenant Falcon, carnivore and P.P.E. vampire

Also Known As: Demon Slaying Falcon, Bonding Falcon and Falcon Friend.

Alignment: Unusual. Most of these predators are Principled (15%), Scrupulous (45%), Unprincipled (15%) and Anarchist (15%) and partner with humanoids of compatible alignment.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6+9 (high animal intelligence), M.E. 2D6+10, M.A. 2D6+12, P.S. 1D6+13 (Supernatural), P.P. 1D6+14, P.E. 1D6+15 (Supernatural), P.B. 1D6+16, Spd 1D6 on the ground (2 mph/3.2 km), 1D4x10+50 (42-62 mph/67-99 km) flying, but maximum speed is *typically 50 mph (80 km)* and can dive at 200 mph (320 km) but counts as three melee attacks (see Mega-Damage). Maximum altitude is three miles (4.8 km) or roughly 16,000 feet (4,877 m).

M.D.C. by Location:

*Wings (2) – 1D6+24 each

Main Body – 3D6+28

* A single asterisk means a small and/or difficult target to strike and requires a Called Shot to hit. Even then the attacker is -5 to strike. Reducing the M.D.C. of one wing to zero makes flight impossible until the bird can heal, which takes 2D6+6 days. Lost limbs do not regenerate.

Note: *On S.D.C. worlds*, the Covenant Falcon has a main body of 1D6+12 S.D.C., 1D6+18 Hit Points and an A.R. of 10; wings have 25 S.D.C. each. The damage inflicted by the creature does an equivalent amount of S.D.C. points rather than M.D., so its bite that does 1D6 M.D. on Rifts Earth does 1D6 S.D.C. on S.D.C. Worlds.

Horror Factor: None unless under attack by it, then H.F. is 10.

Size: 17-22 inches (43-56 cm) tall and has a wingspan of 3-3.6 feet (0.9 to 1 m).

Weight: 3-4 pounds (1.35 to 1.8 kg).

Average Life Span: 40 years.

P.P.E.: 6D6

Disposition: Friendly, inquisitive, bold, brave and confident. It finds humans and similar humanoids to be fascinating and desirable in a symbiotic relationship. Dislikes, and is hostile toward, cruel and wicked predatory monsters and supernatural evil, and is happy to help humans fight and destroy them. Aggressively protective of its human host/partner. Will starve themselves in captivity and try to escape or kill their captor, if evil or Anarchist, at every opportunity.

Prior to bonding with a human or D-Bee in a symbiotic relationship that sustains the bird and helps the human, Covenant Falcons prey upon small animals like birds and rodents, feeding upon their flesh, blood and their doubled P.P.E. at the moment of death. They also hunt and kill small, evil creatures and evil supernatural beings like Black Faeries, Headworms, Witchlings, and even lesser demons like Imps, Gremlins, Bonelings, and similar – making them part bird of prey and part Psi-Stalker.

Note: This animal cannot be “tamed” without it developing a bond between it and a humanoid partner. It is highly resistant to the influence of the Simvan, Psi-Stalkers and Psi-Druids unless the bird wants to bond with one of them. That said, the animal is attracted to Psi-Stalkers and seems to like Psi-Druids.

The bird can be forced to become a familiar via the *Familiar Link spell*. When this happens the mage gets double the Hit Point bonus and the Blood Falcon gets one additional M.D.C. point. HOWEVER, in this case, the mage has all the bonuses

and abilities of the *Familiar spell* NOT those from *bonding* as described above. The two are not one. Moreover, the Falcon will struggle to break the unwanted magic of the Familiar Link EVER SINGLE DAY (+1 to save). When it does save vs magic (needs a 15 or higher), the bird flies away and never agrees to bond with anyone it was magically forced to serve regardless of alignment or good intentions. If the animal is slain while a Familiar, the mage to which it is linked takes double the usual damage from the severed link.

Similarly, a Covenant Falcon can be summoned and controlled by *Shifters*, but are +2 to save when summoned AND can try to save vs magic/Shifter control/dominance over it once ever 24 hours. +2 to save; +4 to save if the Shifter is a creature of magic or a supernatural being!

Equivalent Skill Abilities: Climb 50%/40%, Land Navigation 95% (-20% at night), Tailing 75% (-10% to tail animals in dense woods and a person/people on crowded streets and in massive groups and at night; +10% to tail them on the open plains and empty streets), Track 70% by sight, includes tracking people and animals, but -10% to track in dense woods, crowded city streets, and in heavy rain, snow, fog or at night.

Natural Abilities: Flight can ride wind currents indefinitely and fly for 16 hours before needing to stop and rest. Extremely sharp hawk-like vision that enables the bird to see a rabbit up to two miles (3.2 km) away, excellent other senses, Supernatural Strength and Endurance, incredible agility and speed. Prefers to be a daytime hunter, but can function at night, able to see about 600 feet (183 m), farther if seeing through the eyes of its human partner using technologically enhanced vision (night optics, binoculars, gun scope, etc.). Recovers from damage at a rate of 1D6 M.D.C. per 24 hours or 2D6 M.D.C. per every 12 hours on a ley line.

Bonuses vs Supernatural Evil/Demons (special): +1 on Perception Rolls regarding anything to do with supernatural evil, +4 M.D. per attack against supernatural evil, +1 additional melee attack when fighting supernatural evil, and +1 to strike, +1 to save vs Horror Factor, and +2 to save vs possession and mind control, but only from the supernatural.

None of these bonuses are applicable when fighting evil creatures of magic or ordinary people or animals, only against supernatural evil.

Sense Evil Creatures of Magic, 65% (special): The Covenant Falcon is sensitive to the distinctive psychic aura and scent of *wicked creatures of magic* such as Black Faeries, Black-Winged Monster Men, evil Faerie Folk, Witchlings, the Loup Garou, Werebeasts, Windigo, Worm Wraiths, evil dragons, and similar, up to 600 feet (183 m) away at 65%, but not applicable to the mortal Minions of Splugorth, Black Priests, Witches, Necromancers, or evil practitioners of magic.

Sense Supernatural Evil, 75% (special): The Covenant Falcon is sensitive to the very distinctive psychic aura and scent of supernatural evil such as entities, demigods, godlings, vampires, undead, Thornhead Demon, Brodkil and other sub-demons, demonic host races, and the demonic of all kind, as well as hell-spawned monsters like demon worms, demonic War Steeds, Netherbeast, up to 1,000 feet (305 m) away at 75% (+10% to sense Great Demons, Demon Lords, evil deities and Alien Intelligences. -20% to sense supernatural beings of good alignment).

Track Supernatural Evil by Scent/Sense Alone, 45% (special): The Covenant Falcon can sometimes track the aura and

scent of evil supernatural beings as well as evil creatures of magic within its sensing range at 45% (+10% to sense and locate Greater Demons, deities and Alien Intelligences). **Note:** +10% to Track and Tail skills whenever the Covenant Falcon has visual contact with the monstrous target from the start. Its psychic sensitivity helping to keep the bird on track to hunt or follow the creature(s). May lose track or sight of a specific demon if the target joins with a large group, pack or army of similar creatures (66% chance).

Also see Psionics and the abilities and bonuses from bonding with a human or D-Bee.

Attacks per Melee: Four. Five when fighting supernatural evil, see *Bonuses vs the Supernatural (special)*, above.

Mega-Damage: Attacks with razor sharp beak and talons, usually making swooping and diving attacks.

Bite: 1D6 M.D., Claw Strike: 1D6+3 M.D., Swooping Claw Strike or Swooping Bite Attack: 2D6+2 M.D., but counts as two attacks. Power Dive (special): 5D6+4 M.D. but must be its first attack of the melee round and uses ALL melee attacks/actions other than the ability to fly away at half its usual speed at the end of its Power Dive attack. Speed remains half for the next melee round (15 seconds), but it has all of its melee attacks for that melee. Diving attacks take a lot of energy and cannot be repeated more than every third melee round.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses and those for fighting the demonic): Alert and +1 on all Perception Rolls in general, +1 on initiative, +3 to strike, no parry, +4 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack), +3 to pull punch/strike, Critical Strike on a roll of a Natural 19-20 (double damage), +2 to roll with impact/fall, +4 to save vs poison and disease, +2 to save vs Horror Factor. Needs a 12 or higher to save vs psionic attacks.

Vulnerabilities: Cannot swim. It may become overconfident and take dangerous risks, especially to protect its host/partner, seasonal mate or young (one month during the spring). Most Covenant Falcons will fight to the death to protect the human with whom it has bonded.

Magic: None.

Psionics (limited): Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x2. Abilities are limited to the following: *Bio-Regeneration (Self, 6 I.S.P. and restores 1D6)*, *Empathy (4; receiver only, not transmission)*, *Sense Evil (2)*, *Sense Magic (3)*, *Sense Time (2)*, and *Sixth Sense (2)*.

Covenant Falcons are considered Major Psychics with special psionic sensitivity as described above. This means they roll a 12 or higher to save vs psionic attack. **I.S.P. Recovery:** Two I.S.P. per hour of activity or 6 per hour of play, rest or sleep.

Habitat: Temperate forests, plains, and mountains of America, Canada and Mexico, from coast to coast, but can survive in most environments and climates other than arctic cold.

Enemies: Blood Hawks and other predators that feed on birds as well as humanoids, but supernatural evil and wicked creatures of magic are regarded as natural enemies.

Dislikes Simvan, Horune Pirates, Minions of Splugorth, slavers, evil Shifters, Witches, and other cruel or evil mortals and monsters such as the Darkhound, Devil Unicorn, Dragon-Ape, Shadeling, Soul Snake, evil dragons, and many others.

It is interesting to note that the Covenant Falcon adds the enemies of its humanoid partner to its list of enemies. Likewise, the human or D-Bee connected to the bird develops a

deeper disdain for creatures the Covenant Falcon considers dangerous or enemies.

Allies: Other Covenant Falcons, humans and D-Bees of good to Anarchist alignment. Favor humans, Psi-Stalkers, Cyber-Knights, Lynn-Srial, Native Americans, True Atlanteans, Lemurians and people who do NOT wield magic or great amounts of psionics; see Bonding Requirements, above, for details.

Value: None per se. Covenant Falcons that are tethered or caged die in captivity unless they can find a humanoid with which to bond and become a valued partner.

Note: Covenant Falcons who do not bond to a humanoid, do exist. Their behavior is feral. Such lone wolves avoid human interaction and function like Wild Psi-Stalkers, feeding upon the blood and P.P.E. of wild animals, lesser demonic beings and minor creatures of magic they kill as prey.

This is a new creature appearing for the first time in this book.

Devil Serpent Tongue

By Kevin Siembieda. Inspired by the art of Nick Bradshaw.

The Devil Serpent Tongue is a bizarre creature from another world. As big and bulky as a bear, you would think it would be easy to track and hunt down, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Its appearance and behavior is a series of contradictions, almost as if it were cobbled together by a madman. It's rock hard head is massive. Easily six to eight times larger than a human's. Its neck is half as thick as its hulking body, and the mouth is made up of three, scissor-like mandibles used to cut out chunks of meat from its prey. A pair of green, pincer-like appendages can be used to bite, but are mainly for pushing food into its maw.

The Devil Serpent Tongue usually walks on its hind legs, like a man, but may also walk on its knuckles, like a gorilla, and runs in a slow, loping manner on all fours. But it is also a superior climber that can lurk along the ceiling or a cave wall and pounce from above. The arms are disproportionately long with forearms nearly equal in length to half its height (5-6 feet/1.5 to 1.8 m), and provides the monstrosity a long reach. The tentacles that gives the creature its name, extend from its mouth, and provides an even longer and deadlier reach.

Powerful suction cup fingers are able to climb up stone and wet, hard surfaces and to cling to rock and ceilings from high places. While the suction cup fingers and hairless, green skin lead some people to mistake the Devil Serpent Tongue as some type of monstrous amphibian, the mandibles suggest to others that it is some sort of insect, but the creature is neither. At least not like any amphibian or insect we know on Earth.

Its strangest feature is the one that gives the monstrosity its name – its four mouth tentacles. Each curled up and compressed inside that tree trunk of a neck, until they are needed to attack. Then they uncurl and shoot out of the maw like angry serpents, working in concert to overcome a single prey or striking out at 2-4 opponents as if they had a mind of their own. Though the mouth tentacles can entangle and drag prey to the monster, they are more often used to strike and stab. The tips of the mouth tentacles are able to adjust their shape from a bulbous bludgeon to a stabbing spike. Both of which are used to slay prey from a distance. Often without the Devil Serpent Tongue from having to leave the shadows.



Most people will tell you the Devil Serpent Tongue is a cave dweller, but that's not entirely true either. The Serpent Tongue likes to inhabit caves, ruins, tunnels and other dark, damp envi-

ronments where its climbing capabilities and long reaching mouth tentacles give the hulking beast a distinct advantage. However, it is just as likely to make its nest or lair up in the rafters or girders

of a building or the support beams of a bridge or the underbelly of a concrete overpass. Moreover, while the Devil Serpent Tongue is happy to feed on any prey that might come within striking range of its nest/lair, it does most of its hunting on the surface, outdoors or on city streets. Yes, you heard that correctly. Though you would might not want to believe it, Devil Serpent Tongues love to inhabit and hunt in bustling cities. The bigger and older the city, the better. Most of the Chi-Town 'Burbs, Old Bones, Free Quebec, Kingsdale, Whykin and other communities have a serious problem with this monster. Serious because in addition to feasting on rodents, it also feeds upon house pets and people. And people in the city, especially children, the elderly, street people and the intoxicated, are easy, large delicious prey. They are also a serious problem, because they are incredibly elusive and difficult to track and hunt down.

In a city environment, the Devil Serpent Tongue finds a dark, isolated location that people seldom frequent. This could be a dark, dank place where many people walk over or under to get to work or travel every single day, but rarely notice. This could be an access tunnel, or a dark corner up in the rafters of an attic or warehouse, or the struts and support beams on the underside of a bridge, tower, or building. Other favorable lairs include under the stairs, inside access tunnels and elevator shafts, corners and ceilings in parking structures, under the porch, down in a sewer or cave or tunnel, and inside abandoned buildings and crumbling ruins. As long as the beast's hiding place goes unnoticed and undisturbed by people, and it feels safe, the Devil Serpent Tongue is content to sleep during the day and wait, munching on whatever kill it has dragged to its lair to munch on, until the next hunt. This safe lair may be just a few feet (a meter) from where great masses of humanity walk past every day. The Devil Serpent Tongue is that bold and brazen. As long as it is not bothered by the people, it is content. Moreover, it may be a place where the monster can observe potential prey and snatch an unsuspecting passerby, especially at night and during commotions, when its attack and people going missing are not likely to be noticed. Like most predators, it is attracted to "animals" (and people) that get separated from the herd or exhibit some sort of incapacitation (injured, sick, drunk, lame, elderly, a child, etc.).

As ground animals ourselves, our lives tend to be rooted to the ground. We think of monsters lurking in caves and subterranean places and often forget to *look up above* our noses. That myopic conditioning works to the monster's advantage, because Serpent Tongues prefer to make its lair up in high places. The monster likes to go up and hide where it can lurk, like a spider, waiting for prey to walk under it or come close enough to strike. Likewise, the beast may hang from the ceilings of caves, tunnels, ruins, trees large enough to support its weight, as well as from the ceiling and sides of buildings and the underside of tunnels and bridges. A favorite tactic is to drop down upon unsuspecting prey from above. Or to hold on with one hand and swing down, like an ape, to grab prey with its other hand. Better yet, it loves to find a nice, dark corner or area to hide, unseen but able to see out (or down) and send out two or more of its mouth tentacles to incapacitate prey and pull it up to itself. A cunning predator, the nocturnal hunter often climbs along the sides of buildings only 20 or 30 feet (6.1 to 9.1 m) above the sidewalk. Moving slowly and sticking to the shadows of dark, poorly lit streets and alleys, it waits for the right moment to strike. Using its long reach or tongue tentacles to literally pluck victims off the street and to their doom.

Whenever possible, the Devil Serpent Tongue prefers to use its tentacles to fight and kill prey from a distance, rather than come down to the ground or out from the sheltering shadows. This means anyone who falls under attack is likely to face a barrage from its flailing tentacles rather than fight the beast face to face. Those who manage to escape or fight off the barrage may not even realize what the "snakes" or "tentacles" really were or where they came from. Never suspecting it was a Devil Serpent Tongue. The monster is not opposed to climbing down and fighting with fists and mandibles, but it is safer and more efficient to use the element of surprise to attack and kill prey via its tongue tentacles than open itself up to attack.

The creature is a nocturnal hunter, but may come out during the day and certainly takes advantage of any prey that may come its way or enter its lair. Devil Serpent Tongues are generally solitary hunters, though a mated pair may hunt together. Likewise, a female that is still caring for her 1D4 young will take them on hunts to teach them how to be efficient stalkers. These young (half the size, M.D.C., and number of attacks of an adult) follow mother's cue, and will fight to protect her, just as she will fight to protect them.

In many cities, the Devil Serpent Tongue has one more thing going for it, a *cover-up*. Most authorities and civil leaders want their citizens and visitors to feel safe, so they try to never mention the monsters and cover-up when people go missing. They blame bandits, D-Bees, practitioners of magic, or any number of other candidates, rather than identify the true culprit as a Serpent Tongue. This kind of cover-up is so ubiquitous and effective that the average citizen has never heard of nor seen pictures of this monster. And because the creature is so big, and seems impossible to hide for long, they believe it when the authorities claim to have quickly tracked down and "exterminated" the monster. Of course they have! How could something that big hide for long. Right?

Most people living in the Chi-Town 'Burbs and most cities have no idea this danger exists. In fact, though they deny it, rumors in certain circles have it that the Serpent Tongues has successfully infiltrated the walls of Chi-Town itself. Surviving on the lower levels and in the labyrinth of service tunnels. Feeding on rodents and people alike, and somehow managing to escape the Dog Boys that hunt them. (See *Natural Abilities* for insight on how that is possible.) If a rat infestation your neighborhood suddenly seems to go away, odds are you have a Devil Serpent Tongue in the area. If pets and homeless people start to go missing, it's almost a certainty. Pray that it is only one or two of the monsters.

Devil Serpent Tongue – Carnivorous Predator

Also Known As: The Cave Lurker and simply as the Serpent Tongue.

Alignment: As a predator and waylaying killer, it is considered to be Diabolic or Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+7 (high animal predator intelligence), M.E. 1D6+10, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 1D6+20 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+10, P.E. 2D6+10 (Supernatural), P.B. 1D4, Spd 1D6+13 on land and climbing (about 9 mph/14 km).

M.D.C. by Location:

Head – 1D6x10+100

Neck (thick) – 1D4x10+80

*Mouth Tentacles (4) – 2D6+25 each

Arms (2, long) – 2D6+40 each

*Hands (2, large) – 1D6+24 each

Legs & Feet (2) – 3D6+50 each

Main Body: 2D6x10+100

* Items marked with an asterisk are difficult to strike, so the attacker must make a "Called Shot" and even then is -4 to strike.

Note: *On S.D.C. worlds*, the Devil Serpent Tongue has a main body of 2D4x10+10 S.D.C., 1D6x10+70 Hit Points and an A.R. of 10. All other body locations have S.D.C. equal to the M.D.C. number listed above (1D6x10+100 M.D.C. = 1D6x10+100 S.D.C.). The damage inflicted by the creature does an equivalent amount of S.D.C. points rather than M.D. (i.e. 2D6 M.D. = 2D6 S.D.C.).

Horror Factor: 15

Size: 10-12 feet (3 to 3.7 m) tall in a hunched over stance. 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) wide at the shoulders.

Weight: 700-1,000 pounds (315 to 450 kg).

Average Life Span: Unknown, believed to be 50-60 years. Mates every two or three years. Males stay with the female and young for one or two years before leaving the child-rearing exclusively to the female. Young are half the size and possess half the number of melee attacks and M.D.C. of a mature adult. They leave their mother's side when they reach full maturity and full strength in 3-4 years.

P.P.E.: 1D4x10

Disposition: Quiet and stealthy, this predator is a lurker that watches and waits like a spider, attacking when opportunity presents itself and when it can no longer stave off its hunger pangs. This makes the Serpent Tongue a methodical, patient and somewhat lazy hunter. If the prey has too much fight in it or quickly hurts the monster (losing two tentacles or having its main body reduced by 60%), it flees back into the shadows or climbs up and away until it is out of sight.

Equivalent Skill Abilities: Climbing 98%/98% (-10% on slimy surfaces), Detect Ambush 70%, Land Navigation 90% (+8% to find its lair), Prowl 65% (+10% at night and in its lair and immediate home territory, knowing all the hiding places and dark corners), Swimming 70%, and Tailing 70%.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision and infrared vision 3,000 feet (914 m), adequate daytime vision (1,000 feet/305 m), good sense of smell, Track by smell 40% (+20% to follow blood scent, +30% to track the scent of its mate and young, or to track a female in heat during mating season). Hisses and clicks to communicate with its own kind. Bellows only when it loses one of its tentacles or is near death. Can hold breath for one minute per P.E. attribute point. Favors dark, damp, and cool or humid locations and can Swim 70%. It does not mind shallow water, but dislikes deep and fast moving water. Bio-Regenerates lost limbs, fingers, toes, mouth tentacles, and mandibles within 1D6 days; severed forearms and lower legs within 2D6 days. Cannot regenerate an entire limb or the eyes. Recovers from damage at a rate of 3D6 M.D.C. per 24 hours, but 1D6x10 M.D.C. per 24 hours at ley lines and the creature knows this.

Can go for as long as four weeks without eating if necessary, but likes to hunt daily when feeding on small prey like rats and pigeons, every day or two when feeding on larger prey like cats and dogs. Eats most land animals from frogs, snakes, birds and rodents to cats, dogs and people. In fact, people are seen as easy prey and a preferred, big meal. A Serpent Tongue does not have to eat for five days after feeding on an adult human. Devouring virtually every part, bones and all. Eats live food and carrion.

Disguise Scent (special): The creature has glands that enable it to disguise its own scent by mimicking the scent of the animal or people that dominate the area or once lived in its lair/nest, like a bear, wolverine, wolf, Burrower Bruin, or humans or a particular D-Bee, to *throw off scent trackers* like hunting dogs, Dog Boys, and certain D-Bees and wild animals. This can also be used as a hunting tactic. For example, a bear returning to its den is not expecting to be attacked by a Devil Serpent Tongue, because it only smells its own scent! An easy ambush for this terrible monster.

Maw and Triple Mandibles (special): Three sets of mandibles for slicing through M.D.C. flesh and bone, biting off limbs, and swallowing them in large chunks. Eats the flesh and bones of its prey, including the skull. Also see Mega-Damage, below.

Mouth Tentacles (special): Actually located under the mouth, but the tentacles appear to be coming out of the maw and create the illusion that they are the beast's *tongues*. The tentacles coil and compress inside channels in the monster's long, thick neck, and can extend for a staggering 24 feet (7.3 m). They are completely prehensile and can entangle prey to be drawn to the deadly mandibles. However, more often than not, they are used like hammering bludgeons or dagger-tipped tentacles to pound, slash and stab prey. Small prey like rats, birds, cats and dogs can be impaled and killed with a single blow and brought back to the mouth to be gobbled up in one or two bites; sometimes while still alive.

The ends of the mouth tentacles can morph and change shape to become a thick bludgeon, like a blackjack or club capable of striking with the full strength of a punch, or formed into a pointed spike to stab, slash and impale prey. The latter is especially useful in spearing and retrieving small and medium prey. However, they are just as deadly against large prey, including armor-clad humans and D-Bees. The Devil Serpent Tongue has no fear of humans, though it is smart enough to understand that it should avoid large groups of them and that armored humans are stronger and fiercer prey than unarmored people. Still, with eight attacks per melee round and slashing and pounding mouth tentacles that can strike from 24 feet (7.3 m) away, this is a deadly creature even for seasoned adventurers and soldiers. Moreover, when speared or entangled by two tentacles, even large and heavy humans and D-Bees can be pulled toward its slobbering maw and powerful mandibles.

As noted earlier, the Devil Serpent Tongue likes to remain hidden in a tunnel, behind a fence or wall, or in the shadows up high on the ceiling or the side of a wall, or in the rafters or a tree, and use its tentacles to do all or most of the fighting. This clever tactic keeps the rest of its body out of harm's way in melee combat as well as gives the creature the opportunity for an easy retreat, when necessary. If the tentacles are fighting through holes in a wall or from a hole or tunnel or sewer in the ground, the victim(s) may not even know what they are fighting, because all they see are these long snake-like things attacking them.

See Mega-Damage for complete combat and damage capabilities.

Suction Cups on Fingers and Prehensile Toes (special): Provide superior climbing capabilities and the creature can hang upside down or on the side of a wall or ceiling indefi-

nately even while sleeping. Can scale most surfaces, including metal, plastic, glass and slick and slimy surfaces.

Attack per Melee: Eight attacks per melee round, plus one when defending a mate or young.

Mega-Damage: As per bite, tentacle strike or as per Supernatural P.S. which is typically P.S. 23.

Bite (full strength): 3D6+3 M.D., a nip does 1D6 M.D.

Tentacle Strike: Restrained Strike (Blunt): 1D4x10 S.D.C., Full Tentacle Strike (Blunt): 1D6 M.D., Slashing/Stabbing Tentacle Strike: 2D6 M.D., simultaneous dual strike by two tentacles is 4D6 M.D.; cannot perform a simultaneous strike with more than two.

Other Physical Attacks: Restrained Punch or Swat with Hands: 1D6x10 S.D.C., Full Strength Punch: 2D6 M.D., Head Butt: 1D6 M.D., Body Block: 2D6 M.D., Pouncing/Drop Down Attack from Above: 2D6 M.D. and counts as one attack. It is likely (01-75% chance) that opponents up to 12 feet (3.6 m) tall are knocked off their feet. Victims that are knocked down lose initiative and one melee attack, AND there is a 01-40% chance the monster has its victim *pinned* and unable to physically move/fight. (Time for psionics or magic!) That means the Serpent Tongue is able to continue its attack on the pinned prey with bites and/or tentacles. Cannot kick or stomp with legs.

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): The Hulk-ing Creature: +3 on initiative, +3 to strike, +2 to parry and disarm, +1 to dodge, +4 to roll with impact, impervious to disease, resistant to cold (half damage), and +2 to save vs Horror Factor. All bonuses are in addition to attribute bonuses.

The Four Tongue Tentacles (each): +3 on initiative, +3 to strike and entangle, and +4 to auto-dodge.

Vulnerabilities: Slow. Lazy. Overconfident. All of which can get the creature into trouble.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Habitat: Dark, dank places high or low to make a lair just about anywhere across North America. Prefers cities and 'Burbs with plenty of places to hide, and those that develop a taste for humanoids, seek out such environments. But tend to avoid living in small towns and villages, though they may raid them and farms from their hiding place in the nearby wilderness. Rather lazy hunters, Serpent Tongues dislike having to travel more than eight miles (12.8 km) in search of prey. When prey becomes scarce, the monster moves on to find a more plentiful hunting ground.

In the wilderness the creature is found where there are caves, tunnel networks (natural or man-made), ruins of pre-Rifts cities, fallen trees, large animal burrow, and low mountains where prey are plentiful. There are too few animals at higher elevations.

Enemies: They have no enemies, per se, but consider most animals and humanoids to be prey.

Allies: None, really, other than a mate or a mate and 1D4 young for until they reach maturity in 3-4 years. Cannot be controlled and commanded by Simvan Monster Riders, but can be summoned and used by Shifters.

Value: None, except perhaps in the gladiatorial arena. As monsters for the arena, they fetch 2,000-8,000 credits. They are not edible and their soft, squishy hide is not suitable for textiles. The mouth tentacles decay within 24 hours. The mandibles,

however, are sometimes used as axe blades, hoes and digging implements.

Note: This is a new creature appearing for the first time in this book.

Eeracrech Riding Lizard

By Charles Walton II and Kevin Siembieda

In the wild, the Eeracrech is a savvy predator that hunts other reptiles, dinosaurs, bovine and most creatures that are smaller than itself. That should include humans, however, the creature is smart enough to realize that humanoids are different and dangerous with their M.D.C. armor and Mega-Damage weapons. Though the Eeracrech appear to be a giant reptile from another world, the creature seems smarter than Earth lizards exhibiting an I.Q. more on par with Earth predatory felines. As a result, Eeracrech (pronounced Ear-rah-kretch) tend to leave humanoids alone. That changes only when the beast is very hungry or if the potential human prey seems to be sick, injured, or weak; then all bets are off and the reptile may attack. Worse, some Eeracrech have been known to develop a preference for human or D-Bees and become man-eaters. However, the creature is more likely to attack and drag off a human's horse, mule, or livestock than the person himself.

Eeracrech are surprisingly stealthy for an animal its size. Whether a lone hunter, mated pair or small pack of 2D4+2, the creature(s) usually stalks its prey, waiting for the right moment to strike, quietly prowling in as close as it can before launching a violent attack. Excellent wall climbers and leapers, the Eeracrech may surprise its prey by striking from above.

This large reptile also possessed excellent running speed and the agility of a jungle cat. Rogue Scholars and scientists have speculated it may come from a world beyond the Rifts that is mountainous or filled with canyons, ravines and caves. As a result, the Eeracrech has evolved to scale the sheer cliffs of canyon walls, cave networks and/or towering mountains.

The Eeracrech – also known as the Lizard Stallion – were first used as riding animals by the Simvan Monster Riders. Wild Psi-Stalkers also use the beasts as war mounts, and it was the Psi-Stalkers who discovered Eeracrech can be tamed as massive, dog-like pets, watchdogs, attack animals and riding animals, but not as beasts of labor. They soon began to trade the tamed Lizard Stallions to human adventurers and mercenaries as riding animals.

A well-treated and well-fed Riding Lizard can become as loyal, friendly and reliable as any horse. As a result, they have a strong appeal to wilderness people and for some assassins, bandits, dimensional raiders, Simvan Warriors, Shemarrians, Wild Psi-Stalkers, and Shifters, as well as certain adventurers, explorers, mercenaries, Headhunters, Black Marketeers, and some traveling shows and merchant caravans. They are particularly common as riding animals in the southern and southwest portion of the Old American Empire, and parts of Mexico and Central and South America. Kittani and certain off-world clients of the Splu-gorth, including Tattooed Men and especially the infamous Sunaj Assassins, find the Eeracrech to be very desirable riding animals and attack animals. They like that the animal has an M.D.C. body (no man-made body armor necessary), Mega-Damage combat abilities, and climbing and stealth capabilities. After all, there are



few riding animals able to prowl, and fewer still able to climb walls or run along walls and ceilings. **Note:** Most Native Americans prefer true horses and Psi-Ponies, and even cyborg and robot horses over the Lizard Stallion and exotic animals from other worlds. For many Native Americans, the horse is regarded as part of their heritage and legacy. Many Cowboys, Gunfighters and Gunslingers of the New West share that sentiment, preferring horses and other riding animals over riding “a dang giant lizard.”

However, there is a growing number of Pecos Bandits (estimated at 10-15%) who have adopted the Eeracrech Riding Lizard as a favorite riding animal.

It is important to note that the Eeracrech is a very poor beast of burden. The giant lizards love to run and climb and hunt and become very unhappy and belligerent when forced to plow fields or pull wagons. Riding Lizards forced to perform labor can be more stubborn than a mule. Worse, it has the teeth, claws and

strength to tear such taskmasters to pieces. An unhappy or mistreated Eeracrech – and being forced into labor is mistreatment for this beast – will butt and snap at the person forcing it to do the labor as well as anyone who comes within reach. Given the opportunity, it may also attack and slaughter other beasts of burden, cattle, livestock, and pets out of spite/anger to show its displeasure or to extract revenge. At some point a frustrated and angry or abused Riding Lizard will lash out to kill its wicked master and try to escape. Attacking anyone who tries to prevent it from getting away. Others in captivity kill themselves trying to escape or stop eating and waste away.

Eeracrech Riding Lizards live to hunt, prowl and run. As long as they have ample opportunity to do any or all of those things, they are happy and don't mind having a rider on its back or a master to direct it. Adventurers, mercenaries and bandits who retire are wise to set their animal free or to sell it to someone who understands the Riding Lizard's nature and will give it plenty of opportunities to do what it does. Assassins, hunters and warriors love this creature, because it is not afraid of combat, loves to tail and stalk prey (i.e. an enemy or monster) and can do so with startling stealth.

Eeracrech Riding Lizard – Carnivorous Predator

Also Known As: The Lizard Stallion, Riding Lizard and Assassins Steed. Some people mistake the animal as a baby dragon or as a dinosaur, but it is neither.

Alignment: As an animal predator and scavenger it is generally considered to be Anarchist or Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6+7 (high animal intelligence), M.E. 1D6+9, M.A. 1D6+11, P.S. 1D6+23 (Supernatural), P.P. 1D6+17, P.E. 1D6+19, P.B. 1D6+11, Spd 2D6+48 (35-40 mph/56 to 64 km) and can run at near full speed (reduced only by 10%) when running along the sides of buildings and cliff facings.

M.D.C. by Location:

*Armored head and Neck – 1D6x10+60

*Tail – 1D6+20

Main Body – 1D6x10+70 M.D.C. +P.E. attribute number for main body. Add an additional 2D6 to a fully mature female and 3D6+6 to a fully mature male (at least 4 years old).

* Items marked with an asterisk are difficult to strike, so the attacker must make a "Called Shot" and even then is -4 to strike.

Horror Factor: 9 for one Eeracrech. 11 for 2-5 members. H.F. 13 when the pack has greater numbers.

Size: 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) at the shoulders, 8-10 feet (2.4 to 3 m) from snout to rump. The tail usually adds another 8-10 feet (2.4 to 3 m) to the overall length.

Weight: 950-1,700 pounds (427 to 765 kg).

Average Life Span: 1D6+16 years in the wild, 2D6+24 years for most domesticated Riding Lizards used as mounts or pets that are not constantly used in combat or as attack animals. Reaches full maturity in four years. Females give birth to 1D4 young as often as every three years.

P.P.E.: 4D6+20; see Magic.

Disposition: Temperament and behavior is similar to the African lion or a dog. Playful and inquisitive, the animal is not easily spooked and loves to prowl, hunt, run and climb. Wild Eeracrech are wary of humans and keep their distance. Smart enough to recognize and stay away from armor-clad people,

cyborgs and combat vehicles. Like cats, the lizard is not fond of water but is a good swimmer and will dive into to water to escape a threat or to get at prey.

Most Lizard Stallions, even when there are 8-10 of them, are not likely to attack a small group of 3 or more armed humanoids unless the animals are starving or feel threatened or cornered, or are protecting young. No sudden moves and you should be fine. Loners and stragglers, however, are watched carefully for any sign of being a threat or weakness such as injury or fatigue; and may be preyed upon if they are not cautious and alert.

Wild Eeracrech Riding Lizards are most aggressive toward humanoids when the animals are in a large pack of eight or more. However, kill the pack leader, usually the largest male, and the rest should back off or engage in tearing their fallen leader apart and devouring him like a pack of jackals; ignoring any people nearby unless they are threatening. Travelers should take this savage moment to put as much distance between themselves and the pack as possible, as the animals will not pursue and forget about them after they feed.

Equivalent Skill Abilities: Acrobatics 70%, Climbing/Scale Walls 95% (-15% when climbing at near full running speed), Land Navigation 85%, Prowl 70% (+5% at night), Swimming 70%, Tailing 90%, Track by Smell 50% (+25% to track blood scent or decaying meat).

Natural Abilities: Leap 1D6+16 feet (5 to 6.7 m) across or high, and Scale and run along walls, ceilings and steep cliff faces. Nightvision 500 feet (152 m), normal heeling recovers 3D6 M.D.C. per 24 hours, but much more along a ley line.

Also see Magic for special Healing and Chameleon ability.

Climb and Run Along Sheer Walls (special): The Riding Lizard can climb sheer cliff walls, sides of building, or upside down along ceilings with excellent speed and agility. The -14% Climbing penalty noted under Equivalent Skill Abilities, above, only applies to the Riding Lizard when it is climbing at near its maximum running speed (70% or greater). Moreover, the rider suffers a -20% Exotic Horsemanship skill penalty and shoots wild. (An aimed shot is not possible at such speed while the lizard is climb up or along the side of a wall or building). A failed Horsemanship roll means the riding is fighting to stay on the animal's back and cannot attack or perform any skill nor cast magic. A successful skill rolls means no penalties.

A character without the Exotic Horsemanship skill holds on for dear life at any climbing speed from the very beginning. He cannot attack or perform any skill nor cast magic, and is -6 on Perception Rolls while the animal is climbing up or along a sheer surface or on a ceiling! Roll a D20 to see if the unskilled rider falls off the climbing Riding Lizard. 11-12 means the rider hangs on. 13-17 means the rider is dangling half off the creature and suffers 2D6 damage from being jostled and banged around, plus he drops any object he was holding in his hand other than the reins. 18-20 means the character falls off the lizard!

Stable Riding Animal (special): The Lizard Stallion is a strong, stable riding animal that delivers a surprisingly smooth ride. It is the fast and sudden turns that riders need to get used to, as well as the animal's inclination to leap and run along the sides of buildings.

Also see Magic, below.

Attacks per Melee: Four unless trained to be an attack animal, in which case it has five attacks per melee.

Mega-Damage: Bite (primary attack): 2D6+2 M.D., Claw Strike: 3D6 M.D. (the most common attack), Pouncing Claw Strike (counts as one attack): 3D6 M.D. and has a 55% chance of knocking an opponent/prey as large as itself off its feet and onto the ground. Victims of a pounce attack lose initiative and two melee attacks. Tail Whip: 1D6 M.D., Head or Horn Butt (blunt attack): 1D6 M.D., Horn Strike/Goring: 2D6+2 M.D. and is also used to tear and rip at the soft underbelly and throats of large prey! Ramming Charge Attack with Horn: 3D6+3 M.D. but counts as two attacks.

The Eeracrech may also leap onto the back or side of very large prey, like the Aegis Buffalo and dinosaurs, hold on with its claws (counts as a claw strike) and continue to attack via biting. **Note:** Hanging from or holding onto large prey prevents subsequent claw and horn strikes and uses up one melee attack per round to hang on. Only bite attacks are possible when hanging onto large prey. The jaws of these predators are extremely powerful and they shake prey wildly back and forth to keep the victim disoriented and from attacking the predator. A P.S. equal to the Riding Lizard's P.S. is needed to pry its jaws open but only half that to hold them shut.

In the wild, packs of Eeracrech work in teams to cut animals from a herd and tag-team large prey by taking turns attacking. A favorite tactic of Eeracrech packs is for two or three animals to be threatening to keep prey confused, while one or two charge in to attack and often another clamping onto a hind leg to impair the prey's movement (reduce Spd by half and a half ton monster holding on to one hind leg prevents prey from kicking).

Bonuses (in addition to possible attribute bonuses): +2 on initiative, +3 to strike, +2 to parry, +1 to disarm, +3 to dodge, +2 to roll with impact/fall, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Vulnerabilities: Dislikes water and will hesitate before diving in. Loyalty to its pack as well as to its rider is likely to compel the animal to fight to the death trying to protect its rider (provided the animal is treated well), mate, young and fellow members of the pack. Enjoys cat and mouse games, like a cat, and sometimes plays with potential prey for too long, giving it a chance to escape or strike back, and the Riding Lizard may take on an opponent that is too big or powerful for it. While that is dangerous for the animal, these are all the reasons assassins and warriors like the creature: it is fearless, loyal and works well with its riders to double team and kill prey/enemies together.

Magic: Eeracrech are not related to dragons nor creatures of magic, but do possess two magic abilities.

Ley Line Regeneration (special): They heal quickly when resting on a ley line and instinctively go to a ley line when injured. Ley line recovery is 6D6 M.D.C. per 12 hours and regrows a severely damaged or lost horn, toe, foot or tail within 36 hours.

Chameleon Field (special): The Lizard Stallion possesses the spell equivalent of Chameleon equal to a 4th level spell caster! Double the duration on a ley line.

Once activated, this magic enables the Riding Lizard to alter the color and pattern of its scaly physical body, enabling it

to blend into the surrounding environment and disappear from sight. Movement disrupts the effectiveness of this magical field.

The Creature is 90% undetectable if unmoving.

70% undetectable if moving 2 feet (0.6 m) per melee round or slower, like when its is Prowling or stalking prey.

20% undetectable if moving 6 feet (1.8 m) per melee round. Totally ineffective if moving any faster.

This magic is effective against normal vision, see the invisible and most optic systems. A thermo-Imager is likely to reveal the creature, especially if it is hiding in a cold environment. However, if the air or background temperature that the lizard is hiding against is around the same temperature as the lizard's body temperature or within five degrees, the creature is concealed even from it.

Note: The large central curved horn atop of the Riding Lizard's head can be lowered to lie flush down the center of the creature's skull and head crest, and the crest made to fold back. When this happens, the magical Chameleon field around the animal is extended to its rider or young, providing they are nestled close and touching or clinging onto the lizard. Juvenile Eeracrech do not have this ability until they are three and a half years old.

Range: Self or Others by touch.

Duration: 18 minutes (72 melees), double on a ley line.

Saving Throw: None.

P.P.E. Cost to Chameleon Camouflage: Six P.P.E. per use.

Psionics: None.

Habitat: Found throughout North America, but seems to be most numerous in and around mountains as well as the New West, Southern and Southwestern United States and Mexico. Though reptilian, the Riding Lizard functions well even in low temperatures during colder seasons, but does not like it when its gets down below freezing and looks for warmer climates when temperatures drop to zero or below without any sign of warming up soon.

Enemies: Other large predators and people.

Allies: Wild Eeracrech trust other fellow Lizard Stallions, Simvan Monster Riders and Psi-Stalkers. Everyone else is potential prey.

When they are treated well, tamed Riding Lizards can be affectionate and protective pets, guard animals and riding animals that are fiercely loyal to their owners/humanoid companions whom they regard to be their pack leader.

Value: 3,000 to 12,000 as a trained riding animal or war steed, guard animal or attack animal. Not suitable as a work animal as they hate mundane chores like plowing a field or pulling a wagon, and runs away if subjected to that life. Riding Lizards need to be able to roam, run and hunt or they are miserable and become mean and violent.

Assassins and spies love these animals and see them as the ultimate riding animal due to their intelligence, loyalty, combat capabilities, stealth and ability to climb the walls of buildings and leap from rooftop to rooftop to make a fast getaway.

Note: This is a new creature appearing for the first time in this book.



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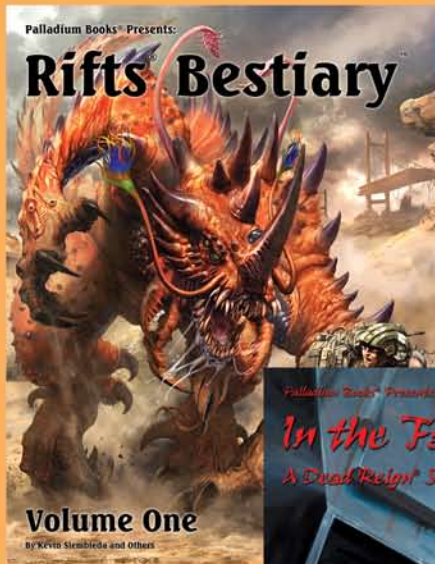
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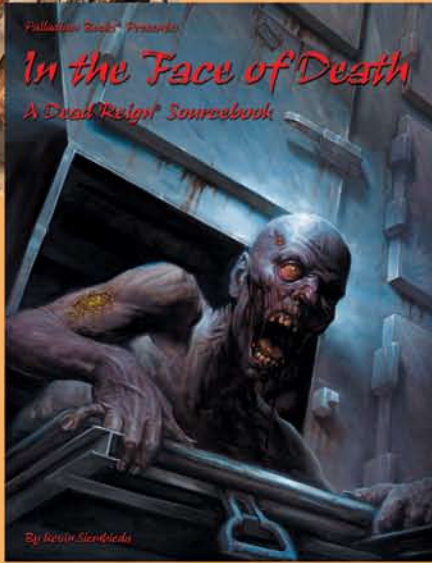
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